

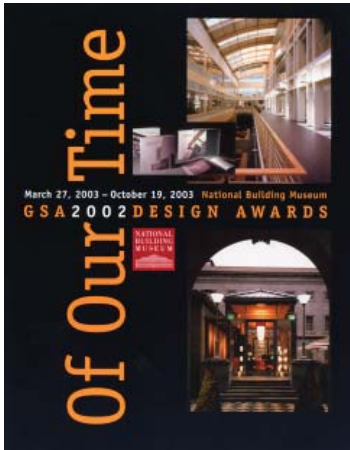
UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE

General Services Administration
Camden, New Jersey
Completion 1999

A new addition / renovation revives an historic courthouse and renews its usefulness



A practical need is reinterpreted as an architectural opportunity with the addition of the Gallery, a link between the two courthouses that is also a striking new public room.



Project Goals

The project involves the complete interior and exterior renovation and restoration of a nationally registered historic courthouse in downtown Camden, New Jersey. Built in 1930 to house the U.S. Post Office and U.S. District Court, the courthouse is a five-story structure clad in limestone and brick with decorative terracotta trim. In 1992, a new federal courthouse was built behind the historic one, linked temporarily with a metal bridge. Over the years, eight courtrooms had been packed in the historic courthouse, originally designed for two. Wishing to increase the effectiveness of the building and to consolidate the judicial community, GSA decided to renovate and add tenants.

Firm Responsibilities

MGA Partners is responsible for masterplanning and programming; survey; design and documentation; and construction administration services for the project.

Design Solutions

This project renews a fine federal building, putting it in service for another generation. The extensive planning and spatial changes on the interior modify the building in important ways: new tenants are housed, security standards are met, and the two courthouses are united with new circulation. The most important piece of the project, the Gallery, is a new building addition placed on the roof of the first floor where the footprint of the original building transforms from a rectangle to a 'U' shape. The Gallery is a public room that links the two sides of the 'U' for effective circulation and also joins the bridge which crosses to the new building. It is a room of satisfying scale, proportion and material quality for use as the main public space in the building complex. A forty-foot long mural by Ben Shahn, a noted American WPA-era artist and New Jersey resident, is restored for permanent installation on the Gallery south wall.

Select spaces of historic significance are renovated and restored in accordance with U.S. Department of the Interior Standards for Historic Structures. New interior construction is designed to be consistent in character with the building, resulting in the integration of historic restoration and new architecture.

Project Data

Area:
87,700 gsf

Cost:
\$14,500.00

Client:
General Services Administration
Region 3, Philadelphia
U.S. District Court of New Jersey

Contact:
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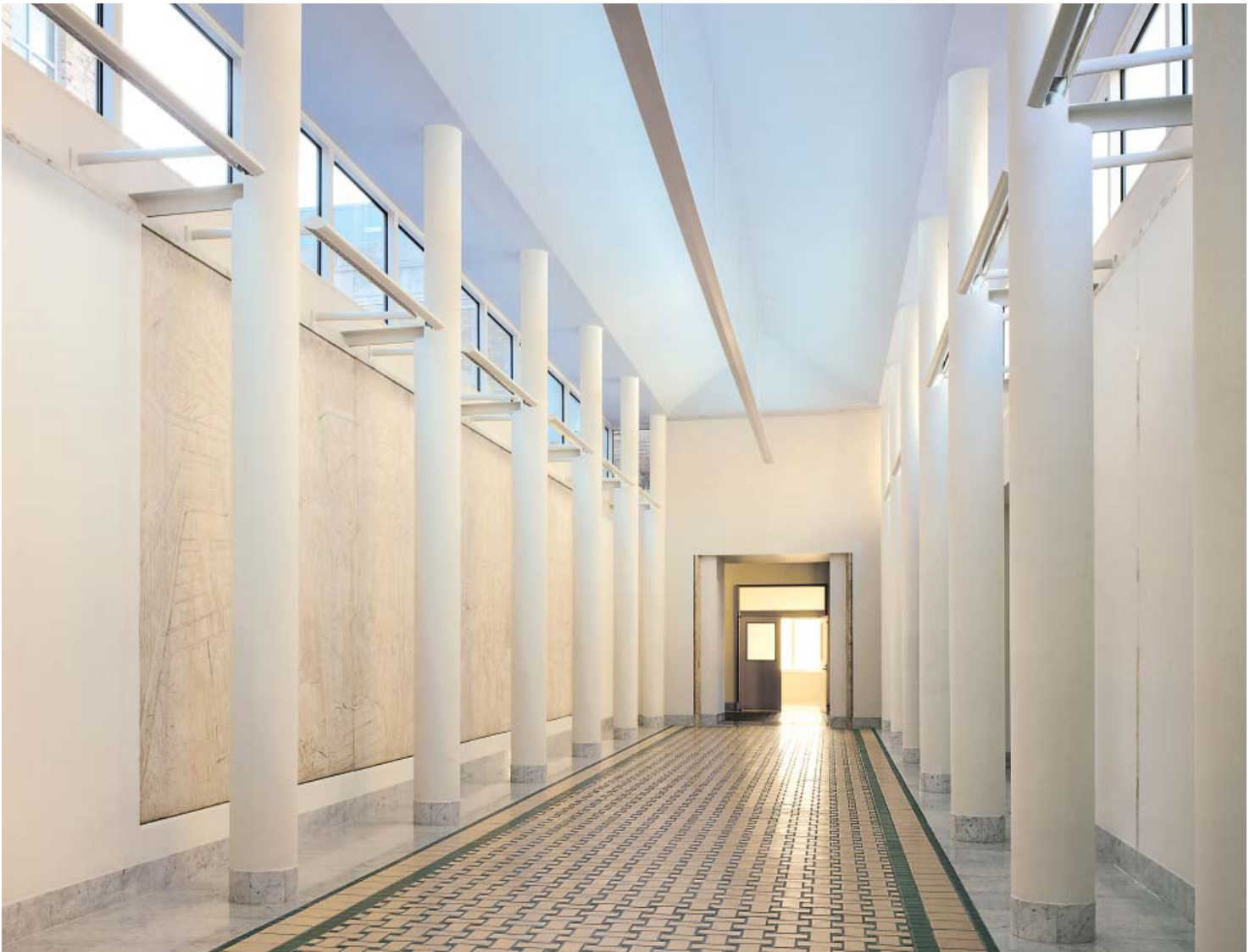
Awards:
Citation, GSA National
Design Excellence Award
Program; 2002

Award for Design Excellence
Philadelphia AIA, 2001

Exhibit:
In Our Time, National Building
Museum; 2003



The Gallery is the culmination of the new public route via an added stair. Seen from the new courthouse, this small structure fits between the two wings and recalls the historic building materials.



The Gallery, a grand and light-filled space, serves several roles: circulation link, public room, and art gallery. The Ben Shahn mural was installed in collaboration with the GSA Fine Arts Program.