



a century of design

THE U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

1910 | 2010



In 1910, Congress acknowledged the importance of good design when it created the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) to advise the federal government on the location and design of public parks, monuments, fountains, and sculpture within Washington, D.C. Over the century, the CFA's mandate expanded to include the design review of all public projects in the city as well as private buildings in certain areas of the District of Columbia. The CFA would also become responsible for reviewing the design of U.S. coins, medals, and insignia.

The impetus for a commission on design can be traced to the Senate Park Commission of 1901, often called the "McMillan Commission" after Senator James McMillan who sponsored the originating legislation. The members of the Commission—Chairman Daniel H. Burnham, the designer of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago; landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.; architect Charles F. McKim; and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens—were renowned designers of the day. The Commission produced a visionary plan in 1901 that built upon Peter Charles L'Enfant's 1791 design for Washington. This grand scheme focused on the Mall as the symbolic core of the capital—and the nation—and proposed that it be a formal, public space framed by neoclassical architecture to express the ideals of American democracy.

The CFA guided the comprehensive reinvention of the Mall as envisioned in the McMillan Plan, and has provided design advice on public and private projects throughout the city. Design philosophies and styles have changed over the century, and the design thinking of the CFA has evolved with these changes. But, its task has remained the same—to ask: "What is good design?"

This exhibition features 10 projects—organized in four broad categories: commemorative works, public projects, public parks, and historic integrity—and reflects on the CFA's contributions to the definition and design of Washington, D.C.

THE COMMISSION AND “FINE ARTS”

The legislation creating the CFA specified that its membership should be “composed of seven well-qualified judges of the fine arts.” Some of the country’s most esteemed sculptors, painters, and designers have served as members of the CFA. Advising the federal government on the artistic merit of public art, as well as objects of national symbolism such as medals, coins, and insignia, are among the CFA’s earliest responsibilities. Its role also came to include the depiction of

national symbols, such as memorials and grave markers, in military cemeteries in the U.S. and overseas. The CFA’s attention to art and design is evident in the design and ornamentation of public buildings around Washington, as well as in the city’s public spaces and streetscapes. This concern for the details of the city’s appearance has upheld the perception that Washington, itself, is a national symbol.



ABOVE *In William Kendall’s original concept, pairs of allegorical figures representing the fruits of harmony and peace lined Arlington Memorial Bridge; ornamentation was later simplified to only the bas relief eagles on the bridge piers, c. 1923.*

COMMEMORATIVE WORKS

The CFA has remained committed to preserving the spirit of the McMillan Plan's vision for the Mall and to expressing an appropriate design language for the architecture of remembrance. This language has continued to evolve. The plan created a formal park organized along a cross-axis linking recognizable icons of our national identity—the Capitol, White House, and Washington Monument—and suggested locations for new commemorative works such as the Lincoln Memorial. In essence, the plan outlined both an identifiable federal precinct and a designated space of national remembrance and celebration. The CFA's recommendations regarding the Mall and the memorials built within it—our national “sacred space”—have not been without controversy.

THE MALL BEFORE 1910

At the turn of the 20th century, the Mall was a landscape of contradictions, not national symbolic space. The Washington Monument was completed in December 1884, but it would remain the only major monument on the Mall for several decades. Areas of the Mall near the Smithsonian Institution were a meandering and wooded Victorian park rather than L'Enfant's grand, open centerpiece for the city. In 1850, the noted landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing had developed a plan for the Mall defined by groves of trees rather than long vistas. The scheme was reminiscent of New York's Central Park, which it predated by nearly a decade, but Downing died before his design was fully implemented. In other sections, the Mall was a working landscape with a railroad station and tracks, greenhouses, and ponds where the U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries raised carp and shad to stock rivers across the country.



ABOVE (PHOTO) *The Mall landscape with woods, train tracks, and development, c. 1890s.* Photo by Edmonston Studios

ABOVE *Currier & Ives engraving of Washington, D.C. before both the completion of the Washington Monument and landfill created the western end of the Mall, 1880.* Courtesy Library of Congress

ABRAHAM LINCOLN MEMORIAL

Mall at 23rd Street NW

Dedicated 1922

architect: Henry Bacon

sculptor: Daniel Chester French

A neoclassical design was assumed by all parties to be appropriate for the proposed Lincoln Memorial. However, its location on reclaimed land on axis with the Capitol was not. The McMillan Plan identified the site as ideally suited to honor the slain 16th president; Commission member Charles McKim conceived of the memorial as a temple. The CFA endorsed the site and design approach in early 1911, when the effort to develop the memorial began in earnest. Members of the Congressionally-mandated Lincoln Memorial Commission

found the site, renamed Potomac Park, too remote from the rest of the city. Months of study and review ensued, and the CFA diligently considered other sites, including Arlington Cemetery, Union Station, and Meridian Hill. In July 1911, the CFA formally approved the Potomac Park site as most fitting. John Russell Pope and Henry Bacon, both well known architects of the day, vied for the project. By 1912, the CFA had selected Bacon's rectilinear, Greek temple topped by a Roman "attic" and construction began in 1914. The CFA remained involved, advising on the choice of materials, ornamentation, landscaping, and the selection of Daniel Chester French, formerly chairman of the CFA, as the sculptor of the seated Lincoln.

"In judging the site of a memorial to endure throughout the ages, we must regard not what the location was, nor what it is today, but what it can be made for all time to come." Commission of Fine Arts, Eighth Report, January 1, 1918 to July 1, 1919



ABOVE John Russell Pope's rendering of his proposed memorial to President Lincoln on Meridian Hill, 1911.



ABOVE Henry Bacon's winning design for the Lincoln Memorial shows the influence of Charles McKim's earlier concept, 1912.



ABOVE Interior view of the Lincoln Memorial, c. 1922. Courtesy National Park Service, Museum Resource Center



ABOVE During the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the Lincoln Memorial was reinforced as a symbol of civil rights, August 28, 1963. Courtesy National Archives, Records of the USIA, photo no. 306-SSM-4D (89)3

RIGHT Ornamentation on the attic of the Lincoln Memorial includes the names of each state in the Union at the time, 1922.



THOMAS JEFFERSON MEMORIAL

Tidal Basin at 15th Street SW
Dedicated 1942

architects: John Russell Pope;
Eggers and Higgins

sculptor: Rudulph Evans

The Tidal Basin, south of the Washington Monument, had been approved in the 1920s as the site for the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial, which was never built. By 1934, plans to honor Thomas Jefferson were underway and several sites, including the Tidal Basin were proposed. As it had in the 1920s, the CFA counseled for both practical and aesthetic reasons that a memorial at the Tidal Basin should be small. John Russell Pope's concept, however, was monumental: a domed Roman pantheon, set in a landscape of pools and terraces, within a dramatically reconfigured Tidal Basin. In March 1937, the CFA approved the memorial's location but disapproved the design's scale and its

strict academic classicism; this represented a shift in the CFA's design thinking and reflected a changing attitude in the design profession, which now considered classicism outdated. Pope died in August 1937, and the CFA approved a posthumous revision of his scheme in February 1938. The pantheon was replaced with the colonnaded plaza from his winning design for the Roosevelt Memorial. However, Pope's widow refused the design's use. The review process abruptly ended when the Congressionally-mandated Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission sought and gained approval from President Franklin Roosevelt for a scaled-down pantheon scheme. The completed memorial was dedicated in 1942. While the CFA never approved either the memorial's design or Rudulph Evans' Jefferson statue, it did succeed in simplifying the memorial and its treatment of the Tidal Basin.

"...this is a cold, soulless and too formal a representation as an expression of a memorial to so great a man...." Paul Manship, CFA member, 1937

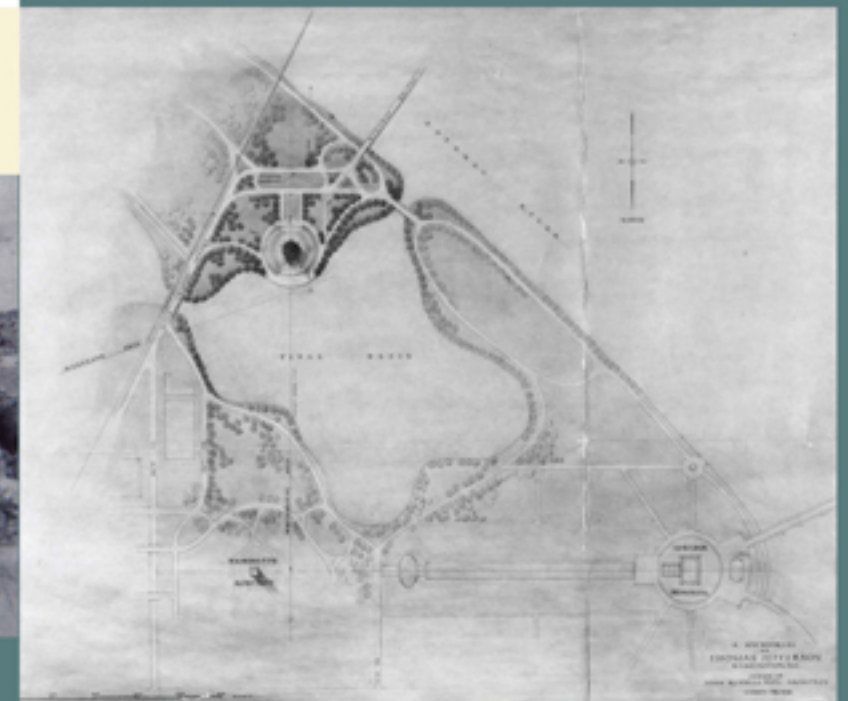


ABOVE View of the Jefferson Memorial in spring, c. 1960s.
Courtesy National Park Service, Museum Resource Center

BELOW Plan view of the revised pantheon scheme, March 1938.
Courtesy National Park Service, Museum Resource Center

FAR LEFT Model of John Russell Pope's proposed design for the Jefferson Memorial, March 1937.

LEFT Posthumous revision of John Russell Pope's design by his associates Otto Eggers and Daniel Higgins, which reflected Pope's earlier scheme for the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial, February 1938.



VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

West Potomac Park between 21st and 22nd Streets NW
Dedicated 1982

designer: Maya Lin

architect: Cooper-Lecky Partnership

In the 1980s, the CFA would encourage a redefinition of what is appropriate design vocabulary for a memorial on the Mall. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial design, abstract and simple in the landscape, was lauded by many, including the members of the CFA, for its quiet dignity and power. The concept—the result of an open competition sponsored by the non-profit Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund—was presented in July 1981 to the CFA by its designer, Maya Lin. It was quickly approved, but public controversy over the design arose almost immediately. Objections varied but most related to the

memorial's lack of traditional symbolism and statuary, the use of black stone instead of white, and its sunken rather than elevated position. Over the next few years, even as the Lin-designed memorial was built and opened, the CFA navigated the controversy. A 50-foot flag pole and two sculptural ensembles were eventually approved and sited amid mature trees near the memorial's southwest entrance. This location gave these more traditional elements prominence and scale without diminishing the clarity of Lin's statement. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is now recognized as having established space-intensive landscape design as a new typology for commemoration nationwide with a wall of names as part of its expression. It also established West Potomac Park, west of 17th Street NW, as the preferred location on the Mall for war memorials.



ABOVE Winter view of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, looking east toward the Washington Monument, 2002. ©Mark Wilson/Getty Images

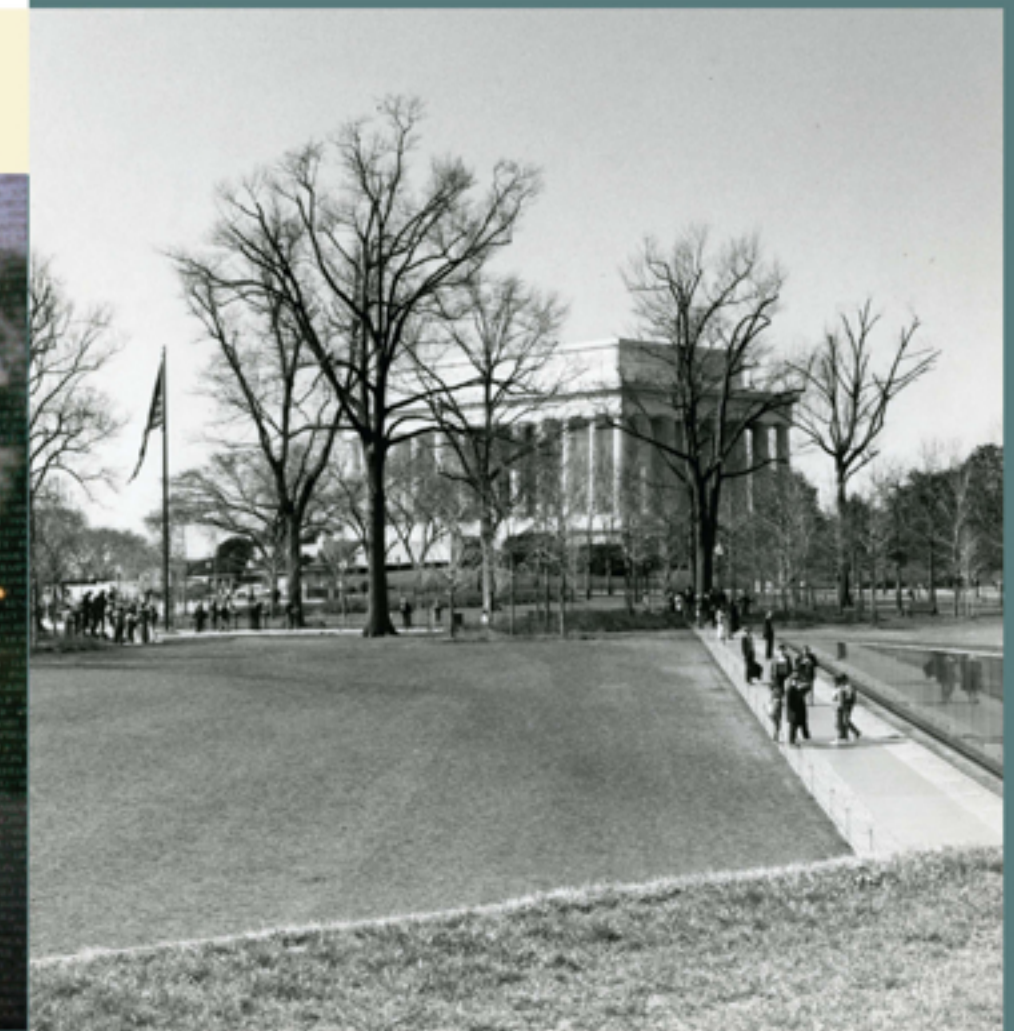
“...the design has a simplicity and sense of dignity that befits an important memorial for this site and complements the character of the park.” J. Carter Brown, CFA chairman, 1981



ABOVE “Rolling Thunder” bikers visit the memorial, 2005. ©Mark Wilson/Getty Images

RIGHT A visitor and the Washington Monument are reflected in the wall of names, 2005. ©Win McNamee/Getty Images

FAR RIGHT View southwest from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial showing a sculptural ensemble and flag pole, 1985. Photo by Sue Kohler



WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

17th Street NW at the Rainbow Pool
Dedicated 2004

design architect: Friedrich St. Florian

architects: Hartman-Cox Architects,
Leo A. Daly

landscape architect: Oehme van Sweden
& Associates

sculptor: Ray Kaskey

The site and design of the World War II Memorial would introduce a new element into the central axis of the Mall—for the first time since the completion of the Lincoln Memorial nearly 80 years before—and it would undergo fierce public scrutiny as a result. In 1995, the American Battle Monuments Commission identified a site on the Mall for the memorial near Constitution Gardens, just north of the Rainbow Pool. If the memorial was to be on the Mall, the CFA stressed that the national significance of the war warranted a stronger relationship to the Lincoln Memorial and Washington

Monument. CFA Chairman J. Carter Brown suggested the Rainbow Pool, on axis with these memorials; this was the site eventually approved in 1995. Public outcry was immediate. Opposition increased when the classically-inspired winning design was unveiled in 1997. Many detractors felt the scheme was too imposing in the Mall's iconic vista; others felt that the design's classical references were too closely associated with fascist architecture. The CFA became deeply involved in trying to guide the design into a simpler, more focused scheme; it approved a revised design concept in 1998 and a final one in 2000. The design was still classically-inspired but reduced in scale with a less complex program; the CFA maintained that classicism was appropriate for this site's particular location on the Mall. With intervention by Congress, the project was built as approved.



ABOVE The completed Memorial on axis with the Reflecting Pool and Lincoln Memorial; the museum requirement and consequent berm were omitted from the final design, 2004. ©Mark Wilson/Getty Images

“...the style has a certain elegance of its own...in context with the dominant ethos of our hallowed architectural symbols....”

J. Carter Brown, CFA chairman, 2001

“...the design...is banal and timid, overly concerned with being well mannered.” Paul Goldberger, architecture critic, *The New Yorker*, 2004



LEFT The World War II Memorial plaza, 2004.
©Mark Wilson/Getty Images

FAR LEFT Friedrich St. Florian's winning design included an elevated berm housing a museum, part of the original program, 1997.

LEFT Rendering of a tower and memorial columns in the revised design, 1998.

PUBLIC PROJECTS

Over the course of the 20th century, the CFA's review of major public projects beyond the Mall addressed how best to express the dignity and significance of the nation's capital and influenced the urban fabric of Washington. As with the monuments on the Mall, the CFA's review of both public and private projects during these years reflected a changing design vocabulary. By mid-century, the CFA had accepted Modernism as the most appropriate design language for buildings of the day. Design vocabulary and expression would continue to evolve over the last half of the century, but, despite changing design "isms," the CFA continued to look to the L'Enfant Plan and the McMillan Plan for guidance.

FEDERAL TRIANGLE

Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues
between 7th and 15th Streets NW

architects: Various, 1920s–1930s

Classicism was still favored in the mid-1920s when the CFA reviewed plans for the Federal Triangle, an enclave of federal office buildings framing the Mall first suggested in the McMillan Plan. The project would transform a portion of the city south of Pennsylvania Avenue from a rowdy mix of commercial and industrial uses into a federal precinct. The CFA contributed three key concepts to the early planning of the area: the building program should be comprehensive rather than piecemeal; it should reflect the intent of the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans; and it should be long-term, with construction occurring over a decade.

In 1926, the CFA reviewed the initial site plan for the project and suggested it more closely resemble the Louvre-Tuilleries complex in Paris, closing several east-west streets and allowing larger, longer facades. The CFA encouraged simpler, more coherent design compositions, especially in relation to the Mall and Pennsylvania Avenue. By the end of the 1930s, seven buildings would be built between 6th and 15th Streets, coherent and legible in massing as a designed ensemble, but each with its own character, such as the French Renaissance-inspired Post Office Building by Delano & Aldrich, the academic neoclassical National Archives by John Russell Pope, and the Art Deco Department of Justice Building by Zanzinger, Borie & Medary.



ABOVE The Federal Triangle between Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues NW looking west, c. 1940. Photo by Fairchild Aerial Survey, Inc.

“The purpose of Congress...has been not only to clean up the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue but also to develop between the Avenue and the Mall a series of notable buildings which, while housing Government activities, shall represent the dignity and power of the Nation.” Charles Moore, CFA chairman, 1937



ABOVE Designed by Zantzinger, Borie, & Medary, the Department of Justice Building nears completion at Pennsylvania Avenue and 10th Street NW, 1934. Photo by Commercial Photo

LEFT The CFA reviewed designs for works of art throughout the Federal Triangle, including Man Taming Commerce by sculptor Michael Lantz in front of the Federal Trade Commission, c. 1942.



ABOVE View of the Mall and Pennsylvania Avenue showing dense development where the Federal Triangle would be built, c. 1925.

LAFAYETTE SQUARE COURT OF CLAIMS AND NEW EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING

Pennsylvania Avenue and H Street, Jackson Place
and Madison Place NW
1968–1969

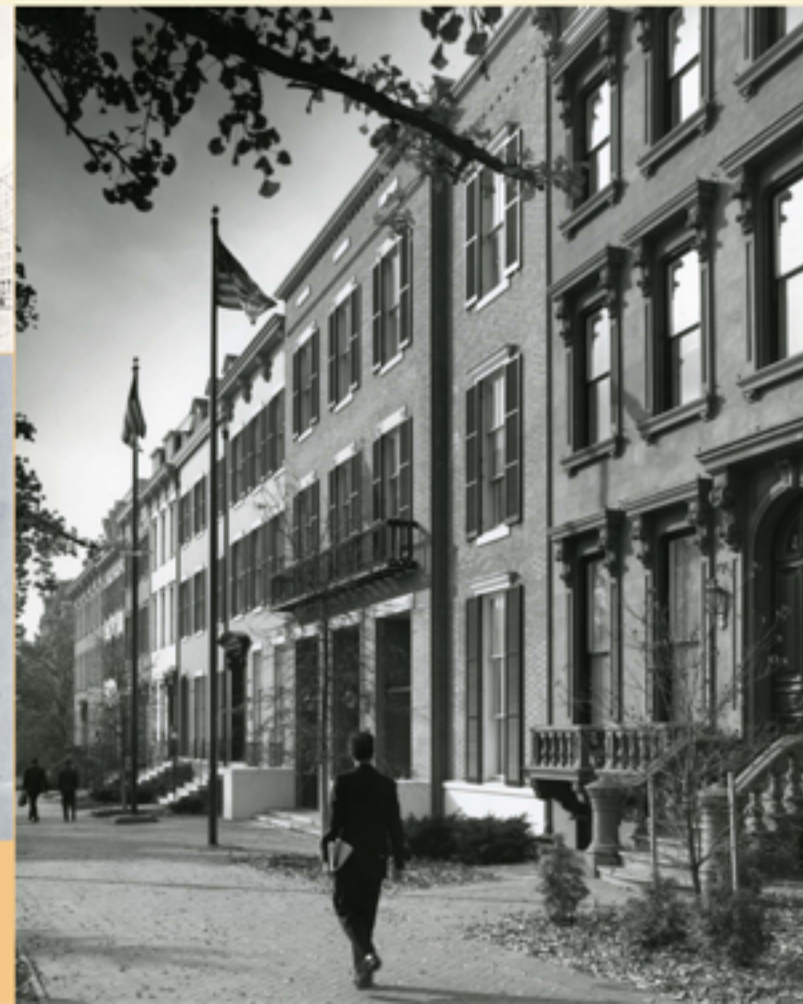
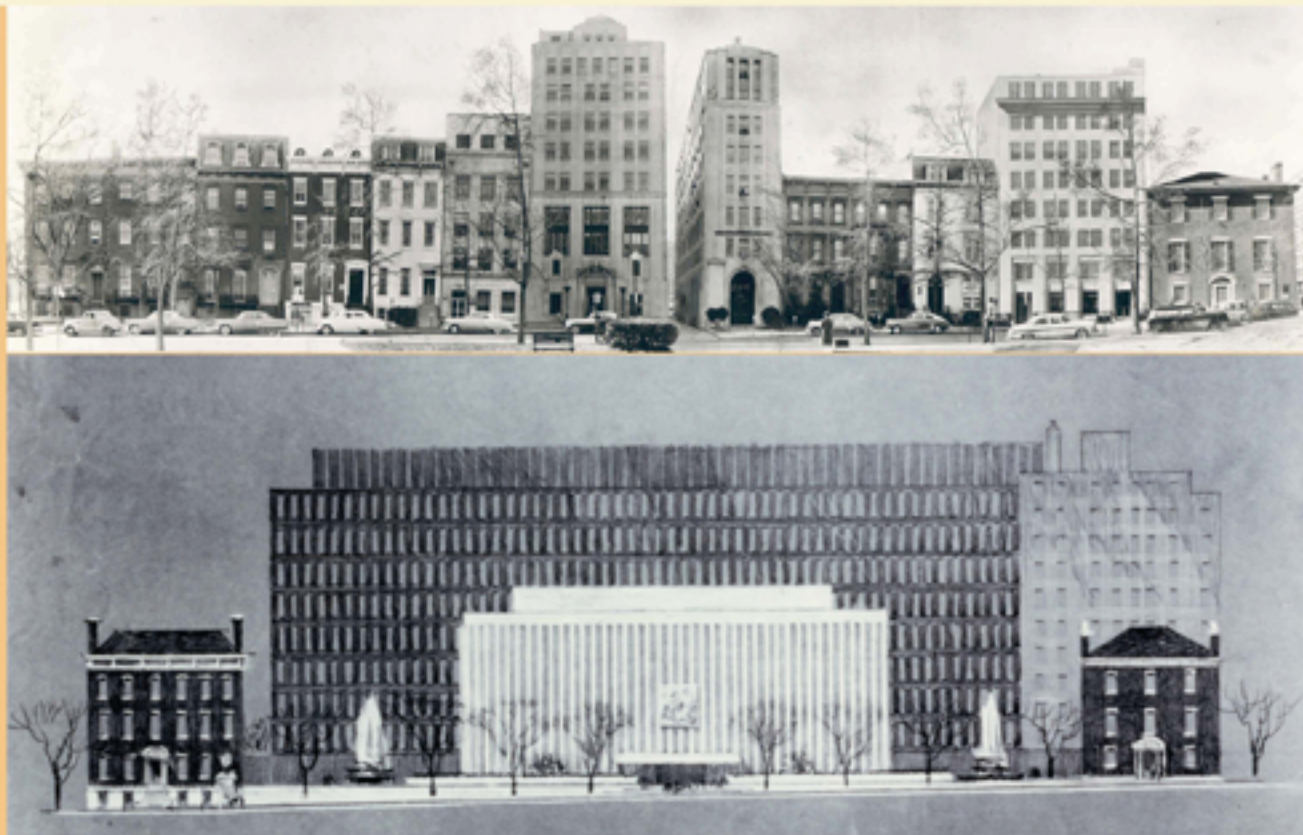
architect: John Carl Warnecke & Associates

When First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy learned of redevelopment plans for Lafayette Square across from the White House in 1961, she advocated for a design more respectful of the square's scale, context, and history. In response, John Carl Warnecke's design set new, taller buildings housing a federal court and executive offices back from the square. The design also incorporated the remaining historic Federal-style houses into a continuous street frontage with new, architecturally compatible structures. The CFA reviewed Warnecke's design at a

heated meeting on October 16, 1962, where CFA members expressed deep division about the scheme. Ralph Walker and Douglas Orr, both architects, strongly opposed the design as a missed opportunity for Washington to achieve greatness through new architecture. Other members, such as landscape architect Hideo Sasaki, argued that the old houses of Lafayette Square had significant historic and cultural meaning and should be preserved. With dissent from Mr. Orr and Mr. Walker, the CFA approved the design concept with its emphasis on preservation and adaptive use. Lafayette Square would be among the first large-scale redevelopment projects in the nation to successfully modify historic buildings for new uses and integrate them with new construction.



"...we live in an age of bigness. We don't live in an age of tiny little things put together—this is one opportunity we had of making that [Lafayette Square] one of the most important squares in the whole world....What we have done is frivolously piddled it away in the restoration of unimportant buildings..." Ralph Walker, CFA member, 1962



ABOVE, WITH MODEL Jacqueline Kennedy reviewing the Lafayette Square model with architect John Carl Warnecke, 1962. Photo by Robert Knudsen, #KN24273 John F. Kennedy Library

ABOVE John Carl Warnecke's design for Jackson Place, 1962.

FAR LEFT, ABOVE Jackson Place on the west side of Lafayette Square, c. 1950. Courtesy National Park Service, Museum Resource Center

FAR LEFT Proposed design for a new court building on Jackson Place by Shepley Bullfinch Richardson & Abbott, 1961. Photo by Shepley Bullfinch Richardson & Abbott

LEFT Flagpoles flank John Carl Warnecke's infill townhouses on Jackson Place and mark the new courtyard entry to the Executive Office Building, c. 1970. Photo by J. Alexander

METRORAIL SYSTEM

Opened 1976

architect: Harry Weese & Associates

engineer: DeLeuw, Cather & Co.

In 1967, the CFA reviewed the design of Metrorail, a long-awaited new rail transit system for the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The project was big, complex, and an opportunity to shape the city and the region for decades to come. In the opinion of the CFA, it also needed to reflect a dignity and simplicity appropriate for the nation's capital. The station design schemes presented by the architecture firm Harry Weese & Associates in April, June, and September of that year met stiff criticism from the CFA. The CFA members found the station design too driven by the needs of the engineers and the budget rather than a cohesively

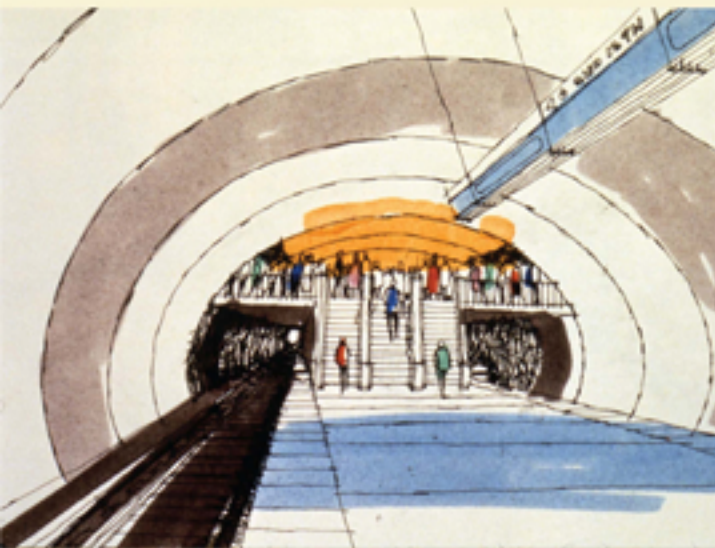
articulated "big idea." In the contentious September meeting, blunt and outspoken CFA member Gordon Bunshaft rose from his chair in frustration and started sketching an idea on the back of a presentation board. Bunshaft's simple oval sketch of a vaulted station section recalled an early Weese idea that had not been developed. The Bunshaft sketch seemed to break the conceptual logjam. Weese's associate Stanley Allan later recalled that, within a week of the meeting, the architects had developed what would become the signature elements of the Washington Metro—vaulted stations, coffered ceilings, indirect lighting—modern in expression but, like the Federal Triangle, a unified design concept appropriately dignified for the nation's capital. The new station concept was unanimously approved by the CFA in October 1967.

"...I raise the fundamental point...of what the hell should a subway be like in Washington."

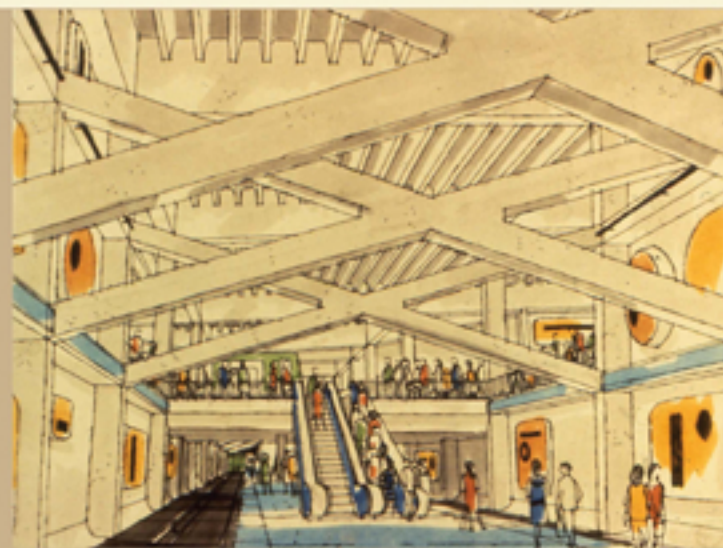
Gordon Bunshaft, CFA member, 1967



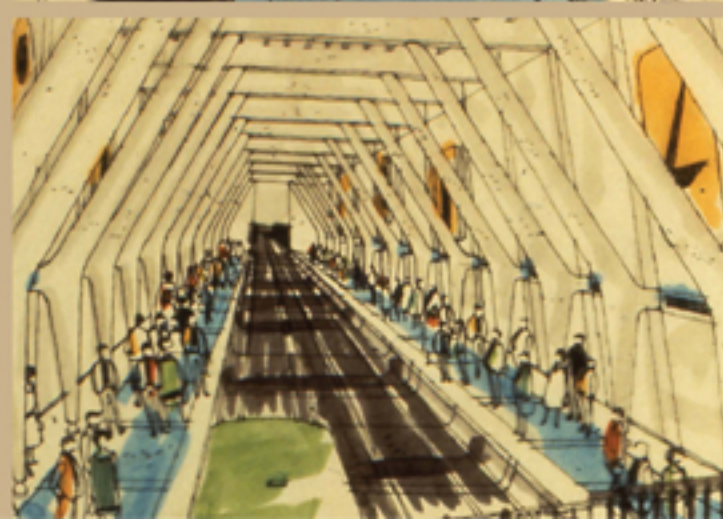
ABOVE Dupont Circle Station interior with train, 2000. Courtesy Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority



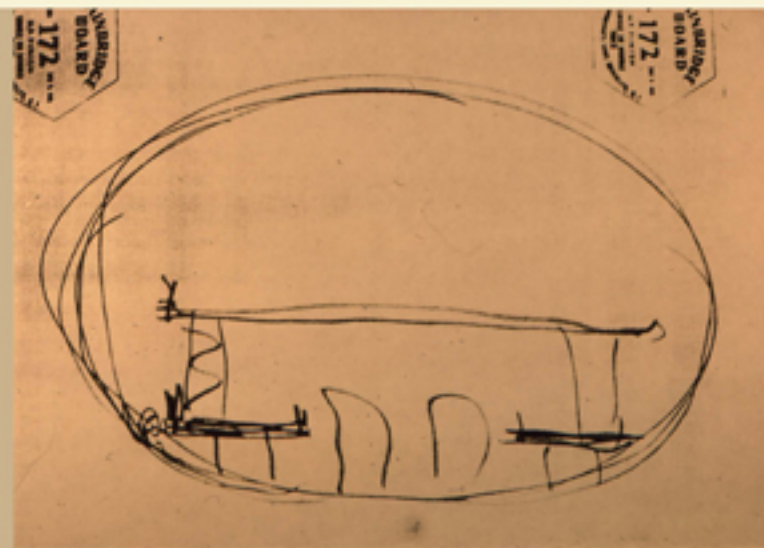
ABOVE Early Harry Weese & Associates sketch of a vaulted underground Metrorail station, 1966.



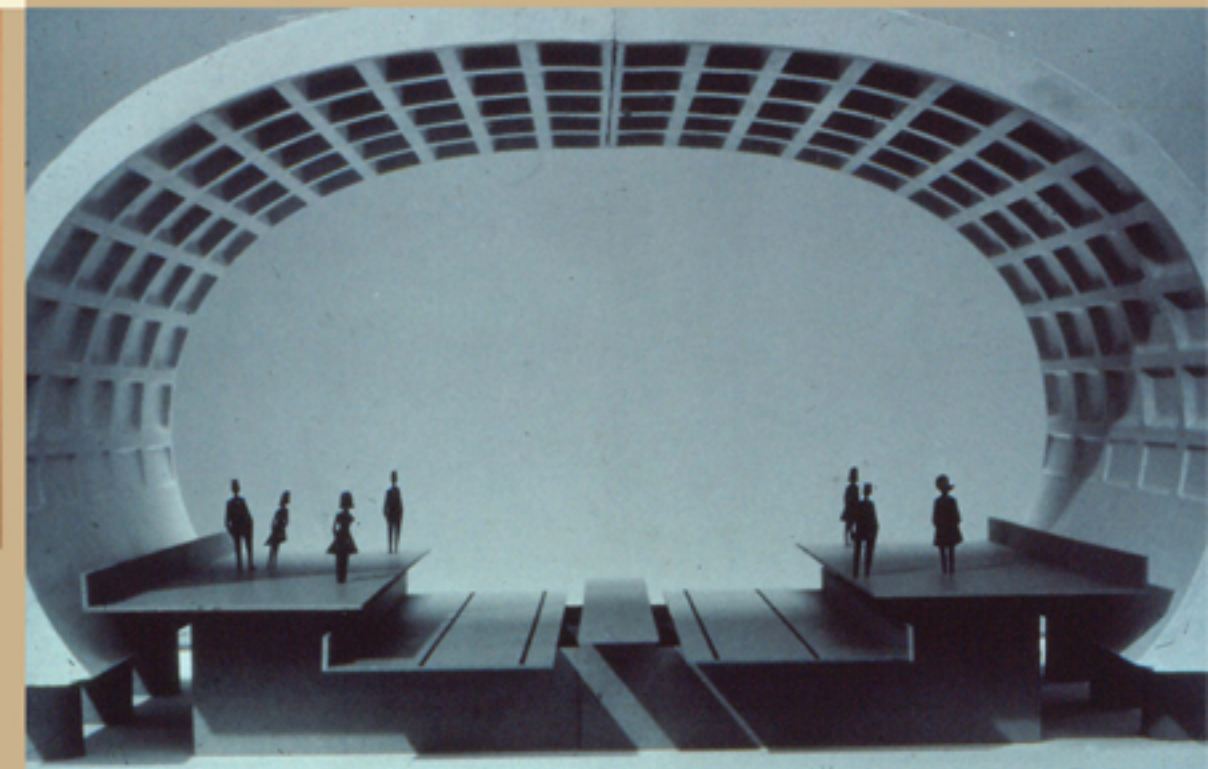
ABOVE RIGHT Harry Weese & Associates sketch of a box-like station interior with cross-braced supports, 1967.



RIGHT Harry Weese & Associates sketch of a box-like station interior with side-bracing, 1967.



ABOVE Gordon Bunshaft's sketch for a vaulted station interior, September 1967.



ABOVE Model of Metrorail station section showing vaulted, curved profile and coffered ceiling, October 1967.

designing public open space

PUBLIC PARKS

Washington, D.C. was planned with parks in mind: the L'Enfant Plan provided Washington with numerous public squares in addition to the central Mall, and the McMillan Commission included in its plan a comprehensive park system beyond the Mall. Parks and public squares in the nation's capital would become areas of respite and recreation, as well as opportunities for commemoration. Since 1910, the CFA has reviewed and advised on park design and the design of the ornamental and commemorative elements in them. The CFA plays a key role in establishing new parks and public squares across the city, and has used their placement to support larger urban design goals. Notions of commemoration and landscape design have dramatically changed over the course of the century, and the CFA has helped to shape those changes.

MERIDIAN HILL PARK

16th Street between W and Euclid Streets NW

Completed 1936

landscape architect: George Burnap, 1913-1914

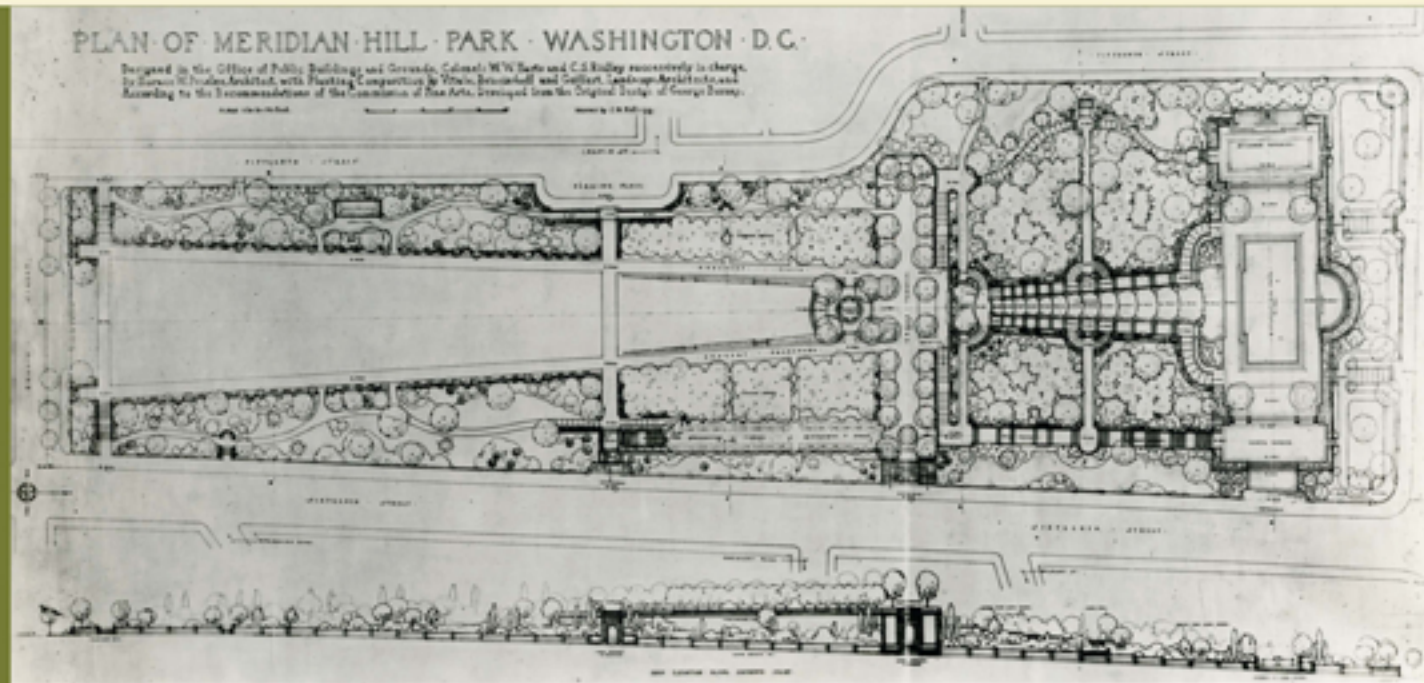
architect and landscape architect: Horace W. Peaslee, 1917-1935

planting plan: Ferruccio Vitale of Vitale, Brinckerhoff, and Gelfiert

In the late 19th century, Mary Foote Henderson, the socially and politically influential wife of Senator John B. Henderson wanted to develop 16th Street NW, into the "Avenue of Presidents" with significant public buildings, monuments, and palatial residences. Her plan included a magnificent public park on 12 steeply-sloped acres with views of the White House. The CFA understood the importance of 16th Street as the northern extension of the Mall's cross-axis and helped convince Congress to buy the site in 1912. The CFA

would remain involved in the park's design for more than 25 years. The CFA's design direction emphasized simplicity and elegance but, in contrast to its work on the Mall, favored Italian Baroque rather than Greek Classicism. Prominent features of the park's design included an upper terrace, a long water cascade, and several commemorative statues—among them a memorial to President James Buchanan—donated by private patrons. A concert pavilion provided entertainment for neighborhood residents and children sailed toy boats in the lower park's reflecting pool. While most of Mrs. Henderson's vision for 16th Street would not be realized, Meridian Hill Park, now also known as Malcolm X Park, would become, in the words of CFA chairman Charles Moore, "the Italian garden" in the city.

"This small park overlooking the city offers opportunities to enjoyment comparable to those furnished by the famous Roman gardens." Report of the Commission of Fine Arts, June 1916



ABOVE Plan of Meridian Hill Park, 1920.

RIGHT The Jeanne d'Arc statue—a copy of the original that stands in front of the Cathedral Notre Dame in Reims, France—was sculpted by Paul DuBois with architects McKim, Mead, & White; it was a gift to the women of America from the Societe des Femmes de France of New York, c. 1922.



ABOVE Photos from the McMillan Commission's tour of Europe in 1901 line the studio where this Meridian Hill Park model was developed, 1919. Courtesy National Park Service, Museum Resource Center

ABOVE Meridian Hill Park looking north toward water cascade; concerts and theater productions drew large crowds to the park, c. early 1940s. Courtesy National Park Service, Museum Resource Center

LEFT The water cascade, looking south, c. late 1930s. Photo by Commercial Photo

FREEDOM PLAZA AND PERSHING PARK

Pennsylvania Avenue and E Street,
between 13th and 15th Streets NW
Dedicated 1981

Freedom Plaza architect: Venturi, Rauch
and Scott Brown

Pershing Park landscape architects:
Paul Friedberg and Jerome Lindsey

**General Pershing Statue
sculptor:** Robert White

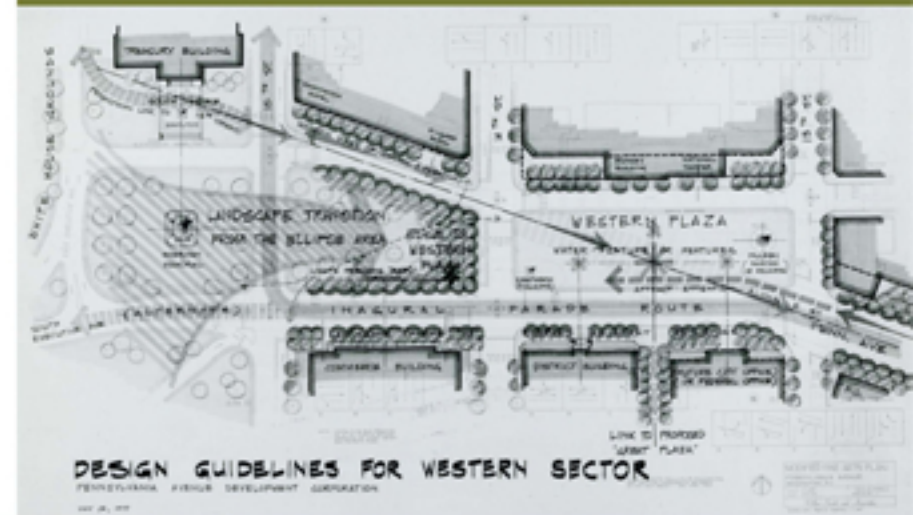
A 1964 redevelopment plan envisioned Pennsylvania Avenue lined with new buildings and terminating at 15th Street in a massive plaza similar to the Place de La Concorde in Paris. Historic buildings such as the Willard Hotel and the Hotel Washington would have been demolished. Later schemes produced by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC), a federal redevelopment authority established in 1972, modified the plan, reducing the plaza's size and adding a memorial to General John J. Pershing, but closing Pennsylvania Avenue

between 14th and 15th Streets to traffic. By 1975, the CFA was so concerned with the direction of these plans that its staff architects developed an alternative treatment. Based on precedents in the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans and the Federal Triangle design, they proposed a plaza be located in front of the District Building—shifting the focus one block east. This created a space framed by the nearby buildings and resolved issues of traffic flow as it drew attention away from the Avenue's abrupt 15th Street terminus. It also created a dignified setting for the District's city hall and other historically significant buildings. The PADC eventually reopened its study of the area and the CFA's suggestions became the basis for design guidelines governing redevelopment along this section of Pennsylvania Avenue. Pershing Park and Western Plaza, now called Freedom Plaza, opened in the early 1980s.



ABOVE View of new plaza and park, 1985. Photo by Sue Kohler

BELOW PADC design guidelines for a plaza between 13th and 14th Streets NW, based on a sketch created by CFA architects, 1977.



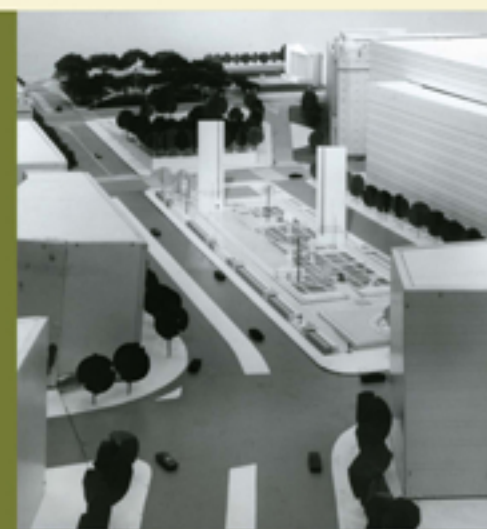
“...maybe the problem of Pennsylvania Avenue is that a lot of the attention was being focused on the wrong block....”

Charles Atherton, CFA secretary, 1975



FAR LEFT Pennsylvania Avenue at 15th Street NW, with two World War II-era “tempo” buildings at right, c. 1950s. Courtesy National Park Service, Museum Resources Center

LEFT Model of plan to redevelop Pennsylvania Avenue, 1964.



LEFT Design concept for Western Plaza (now Freedom Plaza) by Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown included pylons, flagpoles, and a miniature White House and Capitol, 1978. Photo by Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown

balancing old and new

HISTORIC INTEGRITY

As the federal government's advisor on design, the CFA has contributed to both change and preservation in Washington, D.C. Large-scale redevelopment projects have supported the city's growth and new urban design and architecture reflect its status as a world capital. In many ways, this result has fulfilled the vision laid out by the McMillan Commission when the 20th century began. But much of the fabric of the old city was lost in this remaking. Occasionally, even national symbols were threatened by changing tastes and priorities. By the late 20th century, the historic preservation movement—bolstered by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966—had established the value of preserving the past as an element of growth. The CFA has often found itself in the difficult position of striking a balance between old and new.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURT OF APPEALS NORTH ENTRANCE ADDITION

Judiciary Square between D and E Streets NW
Completed 2009

original architect, Old City Hall:

George Hadfield, 1820

entrance addition architect: Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP

This early example of Greek Revival architecture was the District's city hall from 1820 to 1873, when it became a federal court. During that time, east and west wings were built, complementing the original structure. In the early 20th century, additional court buildings were added to the north of the Old City Hall, facing Judiciary Square. This created a unified complex of buildings whose design referenced the original structure. By the early 21st century, the D.C. Court of Appeals, now housed in the old building,

had security requirements that needed to be accommodated. Rather than imitate the building's historic style, the designers chose to incorporate the programmatic requirements into a glass and steel cube entry addition that echoed the rhythm of the building's façade. Light and transparent, the addition was intended to defer to, not compete with, the historic character of the building. CFA members supported this approach but felt both the scale of the structure and the treatment of the columns needed to be refined. Over the course of several months, the designers reduced the height and depth of the structure to allow the existing building more prominence. The final design was approved in July 2004.

"I think its transparency is exactly right, the sense of arrival and the dignity."

David Childs, CFA chairman, 2004



ABOVE Rendering of a section through the existing building and the addition, showing the relationship and linkage, 2004. Rendering by Richard Chenoweth; Courtesy Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP

RIGHT View of the north portico, removed in a 1917 renovation, c. 1910. Photo from the Collection of the Architect of the Capitol; Courtesy Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP



ABOVE The completed addition, 2009. Photo by Joseph Romeo; Courtesy Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP

BELOW The north side of the D.C. Court of Appeals before the addition, 2003. Courtesy Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP



OLD GEORGETOWN BOARD

In response to lobbying by Georgetown residents, Congress established a special district in 1950—Old Georgetown—to preserve the architectural integrity of the city's oldest neighborhood. It also authorized the creation of a three-member review panel of architects—the Old Georgetown Board (OGB)—to advise the CFA regarding alterations and new construction visible from public streets and alleys within the district. The CFA considers the OGB's recommendations and reviews those cases involving new construction or major projects. Initially, the OGB tended to support designs that conformed to strict historical interpretation of the district's early architecture. Starting in the 1960s, this historicist approach began to evolve. Since then, other design vocabularies have been more broadly accepted, provided the design respects historic context in terms of massing and scale.



TOP *This new residential building at 3303 Water Street NW, designed by Handel Architects LLP with Schlesinger Associates Architects, uses masonry, metal, and glass to evoke the design vocabulary of Georgetown's historic industrial waterfront, 2004. Courtesy Handel Architects LLP*

ABOVE *"Mother & Child" House, a glass and brick rear addition to an 1893 Colonial Revival home, designed by Cunningham Quill Architects, is a modern interpretation that recalls the detailing and proportions of the original house, 2009. Courtesy Cunningham Quill Architects*



ABOVE *Cox Graae + Spack Architects renovated an existing building at 3233-3235 M Street NW, and included an addition whose proportions and horizontal lines reference those typical for commercial architecture in the historic district, 1999. Courtesy Cox Graae + Spack Architects*

THE DESIGN OF SECURITY



TOP *View of Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House, looking west, before the redesign of security elements, 2003.*

ABOVE LEFT *Shade trees enhance the redesign of Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets NW by the landscape architecture firm Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, 2009.* Photo by Elizabeth Felicella

ABOVE RIGHT *The redesign of Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets, NW by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates includes new paving, bollards, and checkpoints, 2009.* Photo by Elizabeth Felicella

Images courtesy Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc.

THE DESIGN OF SECURITY

The security of public structures is a major design issue in post-9/11 Washington. Old buildings have been retrofitted and new ones designed to address the latest requirements for blast protection. In this historic and symbolic city, the challenge has been and remains to incorporate perimeter security in a manner that does not disrupt the visual quality of public buildings and monuments. Immediately after September 11, 2001, government managers installed the ubiquitous and infamous “Jersey barriers” to restrict access. Over the last decade, the CFA has worked with agencies to design security elements and reduce their visual impact in the city. Fortunately, the best examples can actually enhance the design of existing structures and grounds.



TOP *Redesign of the Washington Monument grounds by OLIN Partners improves security through landscape re-grading and new stone walls that can double as seating, 2007.* ©Peter Mauss/ESTO, Courtesy OLIN

ABOVE *Discreetly designed bollards discourage vehicular access to paths leading up to the Washington Monument, 2007.* ©Peter Mauss/ESTO, Courtesy OLIN

LEFT *After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, concrete Jersey barriers were installed at the Washington Monument, 2002.* ©Mark Wilson/Getty Images

REVIEW PROCESS

Design is a process that consists of establishing a design idea, refining that idea, and developing it into a more and more detailed form. For the projects within its scope of responsibility, the CFA—whose seven members are appointed by the President—is part of this process, reviewing designs and offering critiques at the conceptual and final stages of design development. The CFA's reviews are not an attempt to redesign projects but, rather, to offer suggestions or raise questions that often lead to more focused designs. The CFA's approval is an important step in the larger process of completing a project in the National Capital area. The CFA, which meets in monthly public meetings, does its work within a complex context of variables—economic, planning, and political—and strives to make the best design decision within this framework. On numerous projects, the CFA also shares responsibility with other reviewing bodies and agencies such as the National Capital Planning Commission, the D.C. Office of Historic Preservation, and the National Park Service.



ABOVE (PORTRAIT) *The current CFA, 2009. Standing left-to-right are Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Witold Rybczynski, N. Michael McKinnell, and John Belle; seated left-to-right are Pamela Nelson, Earl A. Powell III (chairman), and Diana Balmori.*

ABOVE *The CFA reviewing the Corcoran Gallery of Art's proposed addition presented by architect Frank Gehry, 2001. Left-to-right: J. Carter Brown (chairman), Edén Rafshoon, Carolyn Brody, David Capoccia, Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel (back to camera), Gehry, and Harry Robinson III.*

LEFT *An early meeting of the CFA, c. 1912–1916. Seated left-to-right: Charles Moore; Peirce Anderson; Edwin H. Blashfield; Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.; Cass Gilbert; Daniel Chester French; Thomas Hastings; and Col. W. W. Harts (secretary).*

Photo by Harris & Ewing

Members of the Commission, May 1910 to Present

CHAIRMEN

Daniel H. Burnham 1910–1912	William Walton 1963–1971
Daniel Chester French 1912–1915	J. Carter Brown 1971–2002
Charles Moore 1915–1937	Harry G. Robinson III 2002–2003
Gilmore D. Clarke 1937–1950	David M. Childs 2003–2005
David E. Finley 1950–1963	Earl A. Powell III 2005–present

ARCHITECTS/PLANNERS

Daniel H. Burnham, 1910–1912
Thomas Hastings, 1910–1917
Cass Gilbert, 1910–1916
Peirce Anderson, 1912–1916
Charles A. Platt, 1916–1921
William Mitchell Kendall, 1916–1921
John Russell Pope, 1917–1922
Louis Ayres, 1921–1925
Henry Bacon, 1921–1924
Milton B. Medary, Jr., 1922–1927
William Adams Delano, 1924–1928
Abram Garfield, 1925–1930
Benjamin W. Morris, 1927–1931
John W. Cross, 1928–1933
John L. Mauran, 1930–1933
Egerton Swartwout, 1931–1936
John Mead Howells, 1933–1937
Charles A. Coolidge, 1933–1936
Charles L. Borie, Jr., 1936–1940
Henry R. Shepley, 1936–1940
William F. Lamb, 1937–1945
Paul P. Cret, 1940–1945
John A. Holabird, 1940–1945
William T. Aldrich, 1945–1950
L. Andrew Reinhard, 1945–1950
Frederick V. Murphy, 1945–1950
Joseph Hudnut, 1950–1955
Edward F. Neild, Sr., 1950–1955
Pietro Belluschi, 1950–1955
Wallace K. Harrison, 1955–1959
Douglas W. Orr, 1955–1963
William G. Perry, 1955–1963
Ralph Walker, 1959–1963
Gordon Bunshaft, 1963–1972
Burnham Kelly, 1963–1967
John Carl Warnecke, 1963–1967
Chloethiel Woodard Smith, 1967–1976
Kevin Roche, 1969–1980
Nicolas Arroyo, 1971–1976
Victorine du Pont Homsey, 1976–1980
Frederick Doveton Nichols, 1976–1981
John S. Chase, 1980–1985

Walter A. Netsch, 1980–1985
George E. Hartman, 1989–1994
Rex M. Ball, 1994–1997
Carolyn S. Brody, 1994–2003
Harry G. Robinson III, 1994–2003
Donald A. Capoccia, 2001–2004
David M. Childs, 2002–2005
Witold Rybczynski, 2004–present
John Belle, 2005–present
N. Michael McKinnell, 2005–present
Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, 2008–present

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., 1910–1918
James L. Greenleaf, 1918–1927
Ferruccio Vitale, 1927–1932
Gilmore D. Clarke, 1932–1950
Elbert Peets, 1950–1958
Michael Rapuano, 1958–1962
Hideo Sasaki, 1962–1971
Edward D. Stone, Jr., 1971–1985
Neil H. Porterfield, 1985–1992
Diana Balmori, 2003–present

SCULPTORS

Daniel Chester French, 1910–1915
Herbert Adams, 1915–1920
James E. Fraser, 1920–1925
Lorado Taft, 1925–1929
Adolph Weinman, 1929–1933
Lee Lawrie, 1933–1937, 1945–1950
Paulanship, 1937–1941
Ralph Stackpole, 1941–1945
Felix W. de Weldon, 1950–1963
Theodore Roszak, 1963–1969
Frederick E. Hart, 1985–1989
Pascal Regan, 1985–1989
Elyn Zimmerman, 2003–2008

PAINTERS

Francis D. Millet, 1910–1912
Edwin H. Blashfield, 1912–1916
J. Alden Weir, 1916–1919

William Sergeant Kendall, 1920–1921
H. Siddons Mowbray, 1921–1928
Ezra Winter, 1928–1933
Eugene F. Savage, 1933–1941
Henry V. Poor, 1941–1945
Maurice Sterne, 1945–1950
George Biddle, 1950–1955
Emily Muir, 1955–1959
Peter Hurd, 1959–1963
William Walton, 1963–1971
George A. Weymouth, 1972–1977
Pamela Nelson, 2001–present

LAYMEN

Charles Moore, 1910–1940
Edward Bruce, 1940–1943
David E. Finley, 1943–1963
Aline B. Saarinen, 1963–1971
John Walker, 1967–1971
Jane Dart, 1971–1976
J. Carter Brown, 1971–2002
Eli S. Jacobs, 1976–1980
Philip W. Buchen, 1977–1981
Harold Burson, 1981–1985
Sondra G. Myers, 1980–1985
Alan R. Novak, 1981–1985
Carolyn J. Deaver, 1985–1990
Roy M. Goodman, 1985–1989
Diane Wolf, 1985–1990
Joan Abrahamson, 1990–1994
Adele Chatfield-Taylor, 1989–1994
Robert A. Peck, 1990–1994
Jeannine Smith Clark, 1992–1996
Susan Porter Rose, 1993–1997
Eden D. Rafshoon, 1994–2003
Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel, 1996–2005
Ann Todd Free, 1997–2001
Emily Malino, 1997–2001
Earl A. Powell III, 2003–present

SECRETARIES

Colonel Spencer Cosby, 1910–1913	H. P. Caemmerer, 1922–1954
Colonel William W. Harts, 1913–1917	Linton R. Wilson, 1954–1964
Colonel C. S. Ridley, 1917–1921	Charles H. Atherton, 1965–2004
Lt. Colonel C. O. Sherrill, 1921–1922	Thomas Luebke, 2005–present



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