



INVENTORY

NEWS FROM THE JOUKOWSKY INSTITUTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE ANCIENT WORLD

REMARKS AT THE REDEDICATION OF RHODE ISLAND HALL

Rhode Island Hall is a warhorse of a building. A campus fixture, it was first constructed in 1840, and paid for to a great extent by the people of Rhode Island. Today we rededicate this building, and commit a community to its good and productive use as the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World.

Rhode Island Hall has had, to put it mildly, its longitudinal ups and downs, before receiving the 'extreme makeover' of its life. But through it all, the building has served Brown well, with dignity, and with an accumulating history. Accumulating history, of course, is just another way of saying archaeology. And we invite you to encounter and explore the building as an archaeological site, an archaeological project. The 'archaeology of Rhode Island Hall' is everywhere on display inside: in architecture, artifacts, images: even in the furniture.

But some things are more vital than even these happy characteristics. Archaeology both creates and challenges traditional understandings of 'the way the world works' – and not only in the past but in the present. Which makes it a powerful enemy and a complicated friend, a subject to be treated lightly by no one, and never to be ignored. At its best, archaeology can illuminate, indeed is the only way to illuminate, the lives of the vast majority of the people who have spent time on this earth, a people otherwise 'without history'. At its best, archaeology can cast a balanced and ethical spotlight on fundamental questions: who owns the past? What do we do about our fast disappearing archaeological heritage? The Joukowsky Institute, in this new home, is profoundly committed to doing archaeology 'at its best', while recognizing that that is not always the most obvious, or the easiest, thing to do. So let us celebrate

Left: Professor Jenks' taxidermy class on the back steps of Rhode Island Hall, 1875

Right: Graduate students and faculty of the Joukowsky Institute with Artemis and Martha Joukowsky, 2009



So we are here to rededicate an old part of Brown. We are also here to celebrate the new purpose to which the building has been given. Now archaeology – oddly – can be a tough thing to explain (to put it bluntly, what do we do to deserve a building like this?) In some ways, the field's activity and appeal seem manifest: digging, dirt, discovery, drinking. And that's all fine. But archaeology is also an intellectually gregarious discipline. It was interdisciplinary to its core before ever that popular term was invented (and if ever a building was designed to be welcoming to multiple scholarly partners and conversations, you are looking at it). Archaeology is also global by nature, demanding international connection and dialogue.

archaeology, a discipline whose enormous exuberance is matched with enormous responsibility.

Enormous exuberance, enormous responsibility – words that are also, of course, a perfect match for Artemis and Martha Sharp Joukowsky. Sufficient thanks are, impossible – so all we can offer is a promise to make them proud.

October 16, 2009

Sue Alcock, Director
Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World
Joukowsky Family Professor of Archaeology
Professor of Classics; Professor of Anthropology

WHAT WERE THE ARCHITECTS THINKING?

The combination of the new Joukowsky Institute program (its needs, desires, and philosophical underpinning) with its proposed building site (in historic Rhode Island Hall) is a project type generically known in the architecture world as “adaptive re-use”. The essence of our architectural design emerged from the relationship between two primary elements:

the exterior historic building shell and a new interior liner. This is a design strategy of mutual amplification, created through contrast. Anmahian Winton Architects is not a classicist or preservationist firm, and we viewed Rhode Island Hall somewhat objectively as an artifact, an historic reference point for a new architectural vocabulary.

Rhode Island Hall has seen many uses in its lifetime. A double-height natural history gallery – once the building’s hallmark space – was later obliterated by a rabbit warren of partitions and dropped ceilings. Our design approach was founded on several basic assumptions: that the entire contents of the extant building would be gutted (walls, floors, structure); that the original skylight openings would become the source for daylight; and that our liner would, among other things, become



a means of distributing that light. This was also essential to our sustainable design strategy to achieve a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver rating.

We designed the structure of the interior as a system, or a kit-of-parts. Wood-veneered panelling is a great material for this because it can be used in large flat panels, small ribs, structural fins, and so on. We also like plywood because it can be milled (cut and shaped) digitally, with designs taken directly from our own drawing files. This allowed us to explore unusual geometries and intricate assemblies of wood panel, glass, and steel. Specific details were developed according to the function of the rooms and our capacity to enhance, diffuse, or deflect daylight, and following our desire to create rooms that would be both transparent and private.

Ultimately, the materials and design strategies selected for Rhode Island Hall were intended to produce various qualities of revealing and concealing, providing a sense of openness and light that would facilitate teaching, research, and different kinds of social interaction.

- Nick Winton '85, Anmahian Winton Architects

IMPRESSIONS OF RHODE ISLAND HALL

Rhode Island Hall, Brown University’s fourth oldest structure, has left a variety of impressions on the people who have worked in, and interacted with, the building over time.

Built originally as “another College edifice for the accommodation of the Departments of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Mineralogy, Geology, and Natural History” (letter from Nicholas Brown to the Corporation, March 18, 1839), Rhode Island Hall boasted an extensive collection of taxidermy and osteological specimens, displayed in the Museum of Natural History on the building’s second floor. This collection was overseen by Professor J.W.P. Jenks, one of the most colorful characters in the history of Brown University.



Jenks conducted voluntary taxidermy classes in the east room of the basement, and eventually met his demise on the building’s very steps in 1894. Last year the total gutting of the building revealed one of the wooden stands on which stuffed birds were mounted, as well as a dusty, musty taxidermy mouse (now on display in the Joukowsky Institute).

The association of the building with scientific disciplines long continued, with Biology remaining in the building until 1915, and Geological Sciences until 1982. Members of the

geology faculty (interviewed in 2008) were “glad enough to move out” as it was “homey” but “not a modern building”; generally ill-equipped for a modern scientific discipline, one of the teaching rooms “felt like it was out of the 1800s”. With the transfer of Geological Sciences elsewhere, Rhode Island Hall became a highly fragmented, multi-purpose space. For example, in the building’s last term before renovation (Spring 2008), it housed a set of eclectic occupants including the Office of International Programs, the Writing Fellow’s Center, the Wayland Collegium for Liberal Learning, and Psychological Services. Student impressions of the building ranged from finding it “disappointing and kind of run down” to “antique and quaint”. But the most frequent answer when undergraduates were asked about Rhode Island Hall was: “wait, which building is that again?”



Rhode Island Hall’s general neglect, however, did not do justice to its varied history and prominent position on the Main Green. I predict that, with the building’s new, coherent purpose as the home of the Joukowsky Institute, Rhode Island Hall will leave a more lasting impression in the years to come.

- Elise Nuding '11

FURNITURE AS ARTIFACT

Beginning in 2008, four Brown students engaged in a project to furnish the Joukowsky Institute’s interior with innovative furniture designs built from Rhode Island Hall’s original wooden beams – a fittingly ‘archaeological’ project.

Peter Scheidt designed two initial pieces, both benches, for a class in furniture design that he started with two friends, Miles Fujiki and Alexander Malkin. Using beams salvaged from the Rhode Island Hall renovation, Peter’s designs treated the reclaimed wood as an artifact to be preserved and displayed. The benches feature steel legs, welded in 2009, which were fitted around rough-hewn timbers hand-chopped in 1838.



Richard Fishman, Professor of Visual Art at Brown, brought the benches to the attention of both the Joukowsky Institute and of Anmahian Winton, the architects

responsible for the renovation of Rhode Island Hall. Their excitement over the benches led to the realization that still more of Rhode Island Hall’s architectural history could be re-purposed as furniture for the new building. Responding to this enthusiastic prompt, Peter, along with Alex, Miles and a fourth graduate, Pete Fallon, formed a design collaborative, BILT, to tackle the project. Touring the gutted building in May 2009, the students witnessed Rhode Island Hall’s long-hidden architectural framework; stripping away plaster revealed a structure of hand-laid stone walls and 30 foot long wooden beams.

Inspired by these materials and working out of Brown’s Tockwotton studio space, BILT spent the summer of 2009 designing and building ten pieces of furniture for the new building: five benches and a collection of five tables (now in the basement and on the first floor of Rhode Island Hall). Consulting regularly with the architects and user community, the group produced pieces that preserved the historical legacy of the building – transforming rough-hewn beams into furniture suited to the new, sleek re-design.

The designers’ work brought them into contact with numerous people eager to share esoteric knowledge, for example of the history of American forestry, and of mid-nineteenth century construction practices. Perhaps the greatest



learning experience of all, however, was what they learned through their own experience – of the value and techniques of effective teamwork. The resulting pieces are the products of all four minds and all four pairs of hands.

- BILT Furniture
www.biltfurniture.com

To learn more about the Institute’s events, faculty, fieldwork, and activities, visit our websites, at www.brown.edu/joukowskyinstitute and proteus.brown.edu/joukowskyinstitute.

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Director, Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World
Joukowsky Family Professor in Archaeology
Professor of Classics and Anthropology

Douglas Anderson
Professor of Anthropology

Michelle Berenfeld
Visiting Assistant Professor of Archaeology

Laurel Bestock
Assistant Professor of Archaeology and Egyptology & Ancient Western Asian Studies

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Postdoctoral Research Associate in Archaeology

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Joukowsky Family Professor in Archaeology
Professor of Classics and Anthropology

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Ömür Harmansah
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Professor of Archaeology

Morag Kersel
Postdoctoral Fellow in Archaeology

Krysta Ryzewski
Postdoctoral Research Associate in Archaeology and Engineering

John Steele
Associate Professor of Egyptology & Ancient Western Asian Studies

Ian Straughn
Postdoctoral Fellow in Archaeology; Joukowsky Family Librarian of Middle-Eastern Studies

THE MINASSIAN BEQUEST AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

In 1996 Brown University received a unique bequest of museum quality ceramics and other items that represent the rich tradition of Islamic arts and technology. The collection, with items ranging in date from the 12th to 19th century, documents the heritage of ceramic production from Islamic lands, as well as offering an important record of cosmopolitan tastes from the Muslim world that drew on artisanal skills from the



diverse regions of Persia, China, Anatolia, Central Asia and the Arab Middle East.

Highlights from the collection include numerous examples of glittering lustre wares, a technique developed first in the Muslim world sometime in the 9th century, and

the turquoise glazed "silhouette" wares of northwest Iran, as well as the unparalleled colors of Ottoman Iznik pottery. As markers of status these works of art served as both part of the furnishing of high-status dwellings and as testament



to the technological and manufacturing traditions which spread across the Muslim world and beyond, through trade routes and international markets.

The collection, the bequest of Adrienne Minassian, includes all manner of ceramic objects, from stunningly ornate plates to simple bread-stamps, from a cistern cover to the tiles that decorated the walls of stately homes.

While only a small sample of the collection is now on display in the new Rhode Island Hall, it is hoped that this rich material will serve as a teaching tool and resource for future investigation and curatorial opportunities for students and researchers alike.

- Ian Straughn, Postdoctoral Fellow, Joukowsky Institute, and Joukowsky Family Librarian of Middle-Eastern Studies

