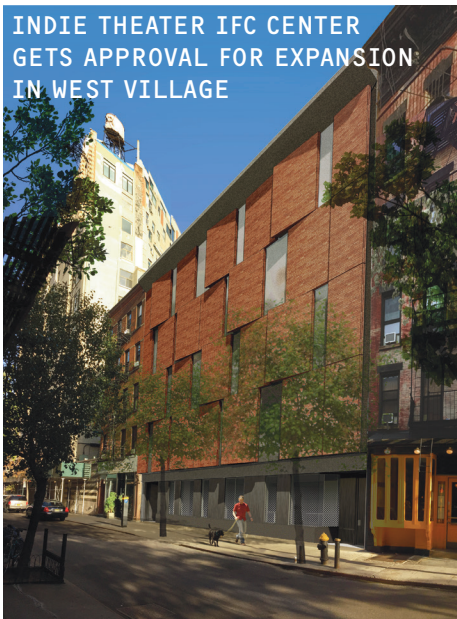


THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER FEBRUARY 3, 2016

INDIE THEATER IFC CENTER GETS APPROVAL FOR EXPANSION IN WEST VILLAGE



After years of hosting DOC NYC, the nation's largest documentary film festival, and earning the highest gross-revenues in the country for many popular film screenings, the Sixth Avenue IFC Center will finally expand its venue in West Village. The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) has approved the plans by New York City-based Kliment Halsband Architects (KHA) to double the size of the cinema to 20,000 square feet by building on an adjacent empty lot behind the current theater on Cornelia Street. With the expansion, the existing ground level screen will be removed and eventually added to the cellar, making room on the ground level for events. Then, six screens will be added to the existing five, raising capacity from 480 to 940 seats.

From the exterior, the brick and glass facade appears to be four stories—melding with the street condition. However, the interior consists of two tall theaters above the lobby lounge. Currently, there is no lobby, so theatergoers stand along the sidewalk on Sixth Avenue. By adding this expansive

space on the ground floor, the cinema will be able to better accommodate the many events it hosts throughout the year.

The Cornelia Street structure will serve as a lobby lounge, while the main entrance will remain on Sixth Avenue. According to KHA, there is no plan to mimic Cornelia Street's authentic elements. "Designing a building that blends in from the distance, but is completely unique close-up, is a victory for us," KHA's founding partner Frances Halsband told AN.

LPC wanted the lobby to be public but not too visible. In response, the firm designed a fritting, made of ceramic glaze over glass, to regulate the degree of transparency at street level. Enveloping the theaters above, the facade will have "movement and shadow" to provide visual interest despite its lack of windows.

According to KHA, the awkward triangular shape of the lot and division in zoning are the expansion's main challenges and it has taken two years to decipher what could be done. Additionally, because the two lots have different zoning designations—one residential



COURTESY KLIMENT-HALSBAND ARCHITECTS

and one commercial—the theaters have to be triangular. KHA needs to consolidate the zoning on the lots in order to build square theaters and reorganize circulation. Therefore, the firm is filing with the New York City Board of Standards and Appeals to begin these processes in a few weeks.

The IFC Center plays a big role in the downtown arts scene and hopes the expansion will enable their works of cinema to reach a broader audience.

KHA hopes to begin construction this summer, which will take approximately a year. **MEM**

MOVIE ON UP

BALTI-LESS IS MORE continued from front page has, at last count, more than 16,000 vacant houses. Baltimore is one of the oldest cities in the country; the dominant housing type is the attached row house. When one of these is left vacant, or is demolished, the entire block has less insulation, less structural integrity, and less social cohesion. Vacancy and demolition here can be especially costly and destructive.

A 2001 report on vacant housing in Baltimore, by James Cohen of the University of Maryland Urban Studies and Planning program details how vacant homes "contribute to neighborhood decline and frustrate revitalization efforts by becoming eyesores, fire hazards, and sites for drug related activity, vagrancy, and rodent infestation." A vacant house can become a location for crime, but it can also play a part in the larger economic system surrounding illegal activity. The same report cites the ownership and use of vacants for laundering profits from drug operations as a persistent hindrance to the city's attempt to renew empty neighborhoods.

Governor Hogan is hoping that this situation will be improved by removing vacant housing from the equation, and adding new empty space instead. "Fixing what is broken in Baltimore requires that we address the sea of abandoned, dilapidated buildings infecting entire neighborhoods," said the governor. "Together, we will transform these neighborhoods from centers for crime and drugs, to places our city, and

our entire state, can be proud of." Along with financing for redevelopment, Project CORE will spend \$94 million on demolishing vacant houses over the next four years, leaving grass filled lots behind.

The empty space in Hogan's rendering was reminiscent of another graphic recently produced by the Governor's office. In June of 2015, Hogan announced transportation spending for the state, with a map showing a vacant hole where Baltimore City should be. This came after the governor's announcement that the state would not be moving forward with a new light rail line in the city that had been planned for over a decade, and had already been approved for federal funding.

As architect and theorist Keller Easterling hints in her 2014 book *Subtraction*, on the architecture of building removal, the immediately obvious vacancy in the city can indicate other unseen things happening elsewhere within the larger system. The void left by the retraction of state funding for transportation in Baltimore may offer opportunities for the surrounding counties. And instead of the creation of new development through the addition of a light rail line, there is now the hope that subtraction of empty buildings can motivate renewal and reconstruction. With funds for "strategic demolition" set to rise as high as \$25 million a year by 2019, this program certainly offers new opportunities for architects in Baltimore. After all, who doesn't love a green field site? **FRED SCHARMEN**



AGATON STROM PHOTOGRAPHY/COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM

COOPER HEWITT FINISHES RENOVATION WITH NEW WALTER HOOD-DESIGNED PUBLIC GARDEN

Public Park-ing

The Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum recently finished the last phase of its decade-long renovation by remediating its 7,600-square-foot garden. The museum hired Oakland, California-based landscape architect Walter Hood, who collaborated with Diller Scofidio + Renfro and local RAFT Landscape Architecture to integrate the garden into the museum and enliven underused areas.

Although it is open to the public now, when the garden was first created in 1902, it was the largest private enclosed green space in New York City. To connect the garden to its past, Hood's team used landscape architect Richard Schermerhorn Jr.'s original 1901 drawings as inspiration. They began with Schermerhorn's proposed rockery to create a

prominent, almost sculptural focal point. "The bedrock, the Manhattan schist, was a starting point. It appears throughout Central Park," Hood said. "We took the opportunity to make the schist more visible, sourcing bedrock from the gardens."

Hood also pulled from Luis Barragán's gardens of El Pedregal outside Mexico City and the Eastern tradition of rock gardens to ground the site in the area's geological history.

For the plantings, Hood kept things local—just across the street to Central Park. "The Cooper Hewitt is directly adjacent Engineers Gate and the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir, and many of the plantings here are different than what you see in the greater park," Hood said. "These were planted during the City Beautiful era and grow in contrast to

[Frederick] Olmsted's curation of local flora and fauna."

The team selected plants from the reservoir's periphery such as Yoshino cherry trees, the red chokeberry, and rhododendrons as well as native herbaceous plants. Benches designed by Yves Béhar and playful Heatherwick Studio Spun Chairs provide ample seating and invite the public to stay and relax.

The museum is already ramping up with events for summer 2016. Cooper Hewitt Director Caroline Baumann told AN: "We are excited to be bringing back our ever-popular Cocktails at Cooper Hewitt series and expanding it to include live performances throughout the summer. We've invited some of New York's most exciting dance companies and music ensembles to participate, transforming the garden's lush environs into a lively performance space, and I think our visitors will be surprised and delighted by what transpires." **OLIVIA MARTIN**



The city presented a rendering that shows part of its vision for the downtown: An empty grass lot

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