

# OCULUS

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Interview with  
Joan Ockman

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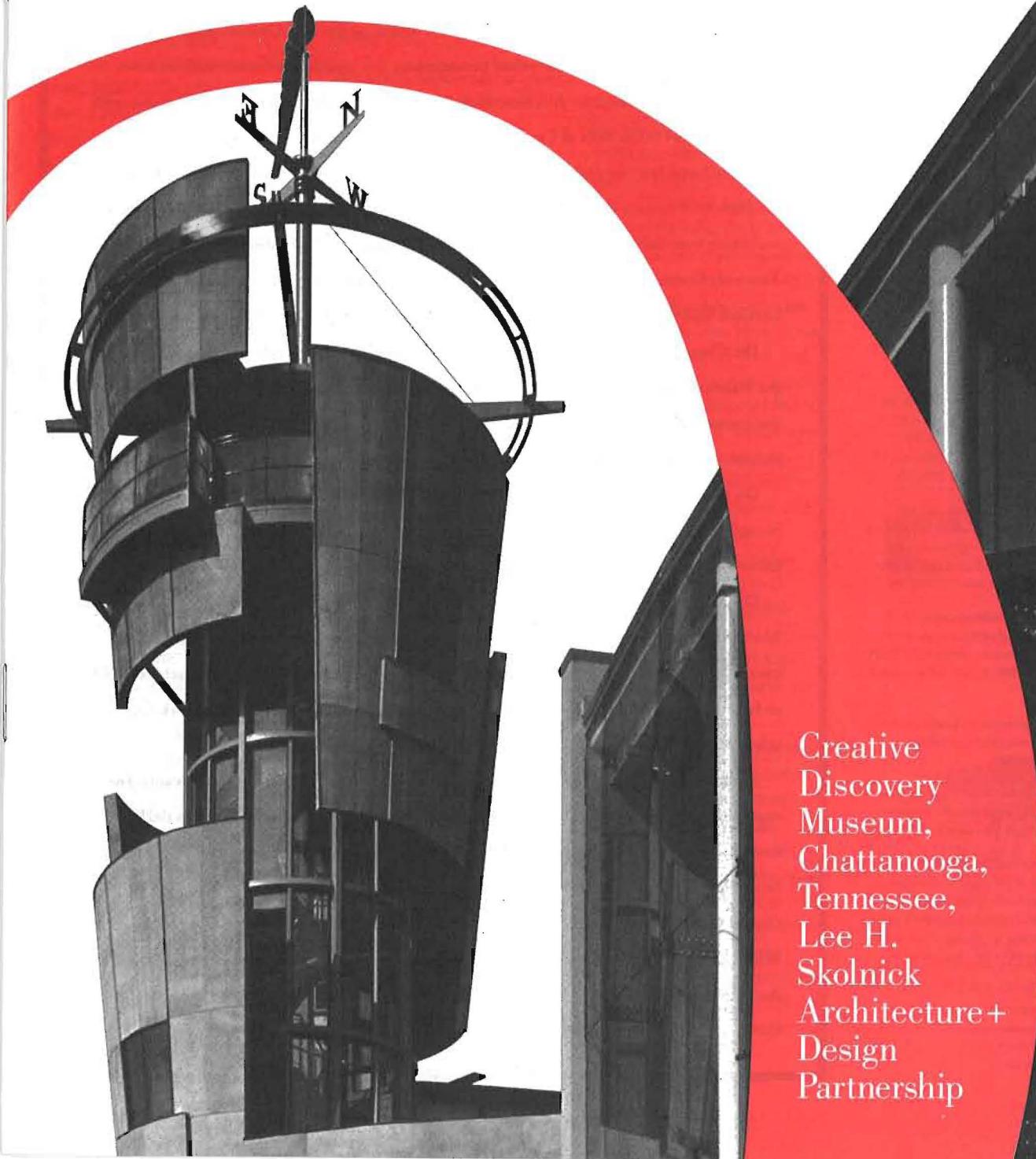
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Museum,  
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Architecture +  
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Partnership

**Field Reports**

by Matthew Barhydt

**T**he Flatiron district is the city's latest hotspot for opening restaurants; now a swank Upper East Side cooking school has followed suit.

**Belmont Freeman Architects** completed work in July on a West 23rd Street branch of Peter Kump's School of Culinary Arts. The 6,000-square-foot facility contains two teaching kitchens for small classes; a demonstration kitchen equipped for presentations for up to 75 people; a prep kitchen; and a bookstore, sales shop, and lounge opening onto a small terrace. The firm's 1994 design for the Grand Central Optical store was awarded first place in the retail category of the 1995 ASID Interior Design Specialty Awards program.

□ The United States Military Academy at West Point is getting a new field of dreams.

**NBBJ Architecture Design**

**Planning/NY** is the architect for the future R. H. Johnson Memorial Stadium, named for the father of two of the project's sponsors, and planned for the parade grounds known as the Plain. Approval by the New York State Historic Preservation Office was necessary because of the historic nature of the site. Tucked away under 850 seats will be a low-hung, granite- and limestone-clad field house containing locker rooms, showers, coaches' offices, and a club room. Construction began in May; the dedication is scheduled for April 1996.

□ It changed its name and its logo, and now it is changing its look. The National Design Museum, formerly the Cooper-Hewitt, closed its galleries on August 20 for about a year in order to begin a \$20 million renovation. Planned and

designed by **Polshuk and Partners Architects**, the landmark Fifth Avenue Carnegie Mansion will be joined with two contiguous town houses owned by the museum on East 90th Street. The expanded facility will have reorganized and more accessible gallery spaces, a design resource center study-storage area, and a new climate control system. Improvements will be made to the Arthur Ross terrace and garden; the entire complex will be ADA compliant. Several museum departments will remain open during construction.

□ **Fox & Fowle Architects** is completing work on a new showroom and sales office for Herman Miller that will open this fall. The 20,000-square-foot facility is designed around the use of videos and computers at individual workstations. Clients will have the opportunity to interactively explore Herman Miller products while taking advantage of the firm's extensive library of industry research in areas such as VDT legislation and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

□ Following the design and construction of a prototype last December by **Daniel G. Failla Architect**, construction is in progress on the renovation of the Psychiatric Patient Toilet/Shower Rooms at Maimonides Medical Center's Community Mental Health Building. Initially, 20 rooms are to be redone — two at a time — at a cost of \$300,000.

Although each room is only five feet by five-and-a-half feet, the program called for a homelike atmosphere as well specific functional and safety requirements.

□ The last apparent legal barrier to **Riverside South** fell in late June, in a judgment against a suit brought by the Coalition Against Lincoln West. The New York State Court of Appeals

ruled that the New York City Department of City Planning acted properly in certifying that the requirements of the Uniform Land Use Review had been completely met by the Riverside South Planning Corporation. The court also denied the claim that the local community board had not been able to review the project adequately. With this obstacle surmounted, groundbreaking for phase one — comprising 1,626 apartments and part of the planned new park — will begin by early summer next year.

□ Development continues at a brisk pace on the Upper West Side. Construction was finished this summer on the huge, 1,000-unit West End Towers apartment complex on the west side of West End Avenue between 61st and 64th streets. Design architect was **Buck/Cane Architects**; architect of record was **Schuman, Lichtenstein, Claman and Efron Architects**. Two 38-story towers of light-colored brick and exposed concrete slabs, vaguely reminiscent in shape of several Central Park West prewar apartment buildings, stand atop a 14-story base of primarily red brick and concrete. Decorative cast stone and brick pilasters, infilled with metal-and-glass storefronts, line West End Avenue and front a 45,000-square-foot park built and to be maintained by the developer, the Brodsky Organization, on the 64th Street side.

□ If design opportunities for architects are limited, maybe they can design more bridges. **Fredenburgh Wegierska-Mutin Architects**, in association with the Houston engineering firm CBM Engineers, has won first prize in the first of two rounds of the Puerto Rico International Bridge design competition. The span is planned for the Rio Grande de Loiza River outside of San Juan.



Peter Kump's School of Culinary Arts,  
Belmont Freeman Architects



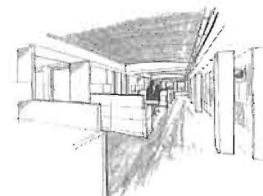
Christopher Wenzel

Grand Central Optical,  
Belmont Freeman Architects



Joe Barkley

R. H. Johnson Memorial Stadium,  
NBBJ Architecture Design Planning/NY

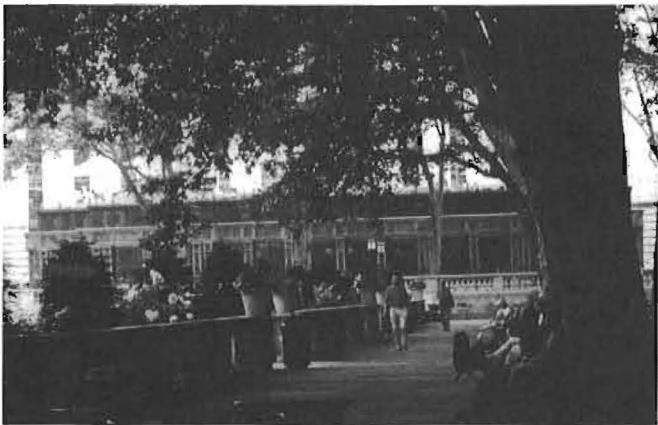


Christina Klumb

Herman Miller  
showroom and sales office,  
Fox & Fowle Architects

Christina Klumb

□ Perkins Eastman Architects, P.C., in association with Donegan & Associates of Stratford, Connecticut has been selected to design the new downtown Stamford campus at the University of Connecticut, on the site of the former Bloomingdale's department store.



Elliott Kaufman

*Places like Bryant Park are especially treasured at a time when the public domain is increasingly commercialized and filled with lively, usually franchised entertainment facilities (see "Welcome to Big Apple World," pp. 6-7). But isn't it a shame that there are no bold new modern public places with such style and dignity?*

### Quiet Please, This Is Bryant Park

by Matthew Barhydt

Rendered in "landmark green," the ubiquitous green-black color that seems to cloak every historically sensitive structure in the city, the new Bryant Park Grill at first glance seems undeserving of all the public controversy that preceded its realization. Why all of the fuss over a small garden pavilion in one corner of the park? Don't be fooled; the pundits were right to be concerned — and they have been proven completely wrong by the building's architect, Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer.

City approval was granted six years ago for a restaurant at the east end of the park. Construction finally began last year despite objections that any building in this location would sever the visual relationship between the monumental rear facade of the New York Public Library and the formal landscaping of the newly reconstructed park. After years of

neglect, Bryant Park, renovated by Hanna/Olin Landscape Architects of Philadelphia and Kupiec & Koutsomitis Architects of New York, is once again a midtown oasis of green; it was inconceivable that a permanent structure could be sensitively inserted within this calm.

Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer succeeded because it created a background building in the best sense of the term. The firm took its cues from the park. The building, sited in the southeast corner of the park terrace, is a one-story rectangle cut away at the northwest corner in deference to the monumental arch and seated statue of William Cullen Bryant that is the axial focal point of the park. Sitting atop a crenellated concrete base, a trellis of wood and woven aluminum infill wraps a green-black glass box. Flowers and vines are already beginning to crawl up the trelliswork.

The Bryant Park Grill is no postmodern bit of mimicry. The ardent modernist will find relief in the large steel casement windows topped with spandrel glass; the exposed, unpainted rivets that punctuate all of the metalwork are a special delight. The only discordant members in an otherwise careful composition of elements are the curved pipe rail and cable railings that surround the roof terrace.

When this nifty little building is joined by a mirror image on the other side of the Bryant statue, it will be even more apparent that HHP has done nothing but add to the sense of place that is Bryant Park.

**Joan Ockman, director, Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, Columbia University**

**Education:** Radcliffe College, B.A., 1974; the Cooper Union School of Architecture, B.Arch., 1980

**Oculus:** We've been finding ourselves journeying up to Columbia more and more since you took over. What have you been doing differently?

**Joan Ockman:** My predecessors tended to direct the Buell Center's program more narrowly to the scholarly constituency. I'm very interested in history but also in theoretical and especially public policy issues, in current debates relating to architecture. The center's mandate is to promote the study of American architecture, urbanism, and landscape design. I want to see all three represented in our program and gear it not just to scholars but also to a wider audience of professionals and the interested public.

**Oculus:** Who were your predecessors? Wasn't Richard Busford the last director?

**JO:** Before him it was Gwendolyn Wright, who did an excellent job, again, in relating to the academic community of Americanists. The center was founded in 1982 with Robert A. M. Stern as the first director. As you know, he is a great impresario, and he had the resources at the time to make the center a much more high-profile operation than it is today. Of course, the program reflected his more stylistic and traditionalist interpretation of American architecture.

**Oculus:** Were you at Columbia then?

**JO:** I first taught here in 1985 under Jim Polshek. I then cotaught a studio at Yale with Bernard Tschumi. After