

William T. Eberhard AIA, IIDA: ESSAYS ON ARCHITECTURE:

Tinkham Veale University Center, Case Western Reserve University
Cleveland, OH



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One of Cleveland's great architects, Don Hisaka, gave CWRU a fun and coherent university center in 1980 when he carefully placed an skylight-capped linking element between the Thwing and Hitchcock Halls. Thwing was acquired by the university in 1931 for use as a library while Hitchcock was originally a residence. Hisaka renovated both buildings with improved and expanded space for programs, services and activities.

But as CWRU has grown and evolved, it felt that it had outgrown the Thwing-Hitchcock buildings. It also wanted to give the campus a new brand identity after two decades of schizophrenic architectural under-design and over-design. When the design for Tinkham Veale was released in 2011, CWRU's VP for campus planning and facilities management Stephen Campbell said, "This will give us an identity. It's really the first facility that represents the university as a whole and resolves the federation of the two universities that started in the 1970s."

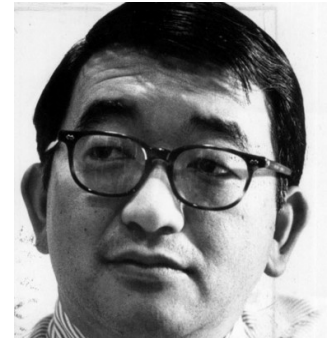
Tinkham-Veale was added to house six campus departments, events and provide six dining solutions for students and faculty. Designed by Ralph Johnson of Chicago's Perkins + Will where he is global design director, the T-V project is a thoughtful shaping of its elements into a site with multiple geometries and architectural gestures demanding attention.

To the east sits Hisaka's Thwing Center and Hitchcock Hall. To the north sits Frank Gehry's 2002 Peter B. Lewis Weatherhead School of Management. To the west sits Raphael Vinoly's Cleveland Museum of Art additions to the original Hubbell and Benes museum. To the southwest sits Hartman-Cox's neo-classical Kelvin Smith Library, completed in 1996. To the further south sits Walker & Weeks' Severance Hall, completed in 1931, and expanded in 2000 by David M. Schwartz. Three smaller buildings to the northeast – Haydn, Mather, and Guilford to complete the architectural mosh pit for Johnson's building.

Haydn is a three-story red brick Collegiate Gothic structure designed by Charles Schweinfurth in 1902 as Mather College's first student center.

Mather House was designed by Abraham Garfield and completed in 1915 as a four-story dormitory in an English University style with red brick and limestone band courses and trim with slate and copper roofs.

Guilford House was designed by Coburn and Barnum and was completed in 1892. The four-story building was the first woman's dormitory for Western Reserve University. Today it houses English, Modern Languages and Literature departments.



Above Left, Clockwise:

1. Ralph Johnson FAIA
2. Don Hisaka FAIA
3. Thwing Center & Hitchcock Building Renovation by Don Hisaka FAIA, 1980
4. Haydn Hall, Charles Schweinfurth, 1902
5. Smith Library East Elevation, Hartman-Cox Architects, 1996





Above Left, Clockwise:

1. Mather House; Abraham Garfield, 1915
 2. Guilford Hall; Coburn & Barnum, 1892
 3. Peter B. Lewis Weatherhead School of Management; Frank Gehry FAIA
 4. Severance Hall Addition; David M. Schwartz, xxxx
 5. Cleveland Museum of Art, Hubbell & Benes, 1919; Addition by Raphael Vinoly, 2009
- Right:
CWRU Tinkham Veale University Center Site Plan



The surrounding buildings represent a potpourri of architecture styles in late nineteenth and early twentieth century traditional architecture, as well as Hisaka's small but clean modern intervention and Gehry's exuberant gymnastics next to Vinoly's sedate, almost boring Art Museum addition.

The lack of continuity gave Johnson free rein to continue his revival of his International Style vocabulary from the 1990's. When I met Johnson at his office in 2000, he proudly showed my over one dozen polymorphic high-rise office towers he was designing in the Pacific Rim, specifically claiming to have disavowed his award-winning International Style period which he said he found too limiting. It appears that pulling the forms out of the ground has given Johnson a rejuvenated enthusiasm for the style.

Johnson characterized the T-V site as a space between three distinct existing zones of the CWRU campus. Johnson saw the project as an opportunity to tie the three zones together with shared dining and gathering spaces. The facility was designed as a folded plate of green roofs that grow out of the site with glass walls to open the interior experience to the outdoors. At the intersection of the building's three wings is a double-height gathering space that brings together the two floors of the facility.

As is the case on every college campus, students will move from one destination to the next in the most direct path - whether there is a paved surface provided or not. At the rear of Thwing Center, a long, straight pathway from the Library to the plethora of buildings to the north of campus was present. Johnson respected the path and



Johnson also had to contend with the then-in-progress Nord Family Gateway Project design to create an inviting landscape axis and pathway to the newly acquired 'western' CWRU campus past the Cleveland

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Museum of Art, Wade Lagoon, Martin Luther King Drive and East 105th Street. The building immediately above the T-V Center on the site plan is the former Cleveland Institute of Art Building which has been demolished after CIA sold the property to CWRU and the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Completed in 2014, T-V is not a particularly large project, delivering 89,000 sf of space. The project has been honored with numerous design awards, including AIA awards in Chicago, Georgia and Washington, DC. The project is a smaller version of Johnson's 300,000 sf One Haworth Center in Holland, MI he designed for the contract furniture manufacturer offices that was completed in 2009. Like Haworth's building, Johnson's T-V crawls out of the ground with a grass roof and presents cantilevered roofs to shade large glass areas.

Johnson's Shanghai Natural History Museum, completed in 2015, also crawls out of the ground but with a curling narrow form that winds into a backstopping mass, creating a central circular garden.

Johnson's other signature projects include Boeing's World HQ in Chicago, the O'Hare International Airport Terminal, the Skybridge condominium building in Chicago. Johnson also designed the award-winning Perry, OH Community Education Village complex, completed in 1993.

Johnson also was obligated to anticipate the Nord Family Gateway project instigated by CMA and CWRU in 2016, designed by Boston's Sasaki & Associates. The Nord Gateway connects CWRU's recent western campus with expanded their reach to the western portion of East 105th Street and rolls up to TV's 'front door.'

Johnson's western elevation delivers a glass façade nearly perpendicular to the Nord lawn and Johnson twisted the northern wing to allow the orthogonal Nord lawn to creep up to Bellflower and allow an arcing sidewalk to acknowledge that pedestrians along East Boulevard would otherwise cut the corner if heading east on Bellflower.

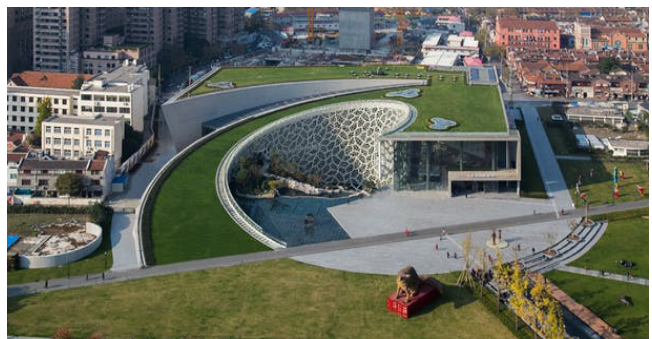
Johnson gave the western elevation a two-story glass rendering to bring in daylight and arranged lounge and dining elements while pushing the larger meeting element to the northeast on a southern mass and arranging smaller office, meeting and seminar rooms in a second 'finger' to the northeast.

Johnson allowed the corridor spline between the two on the second level to push through the west exterior wall, creating a triangular balcony projecting out to the



Top Down:

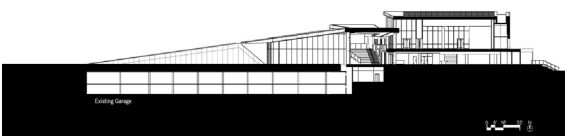
1. Tinkham Veale University Center; Perkins + Will; Chicago
2. Haworth Center; Holland, MI; Perkins + Will; Chicago
3. One Shanghai Natural History Museum; Perkins + Will; Chicago
4. Nord Family Gateway; Sasaki Associates, Inc.; Boston





Top Down:

1. Original Tinkham Veale Center west elevation rendering
2. Actual Tinkham Veale Center west elevation as constructed
3. Tinkham Veale center northwest termination with cantilevered roof
4. Tinkham Veale Center interior commons along west windowall



lawn, which serves as a practice field for CWRU band and athletic activities. The project's original renderings showed a western elevation with a deeply recessed glass wall and vertical fins at the southern mass that would have afforded a useful shading of the glass except for late summer afternoons and evening.

Additionally, the original rendering reflected a lower mass for the northern half of the western elevation. The project as constructed reflects a full two-story mass and no vertical fins with a taunt exterior glass wrapper. The result is less interesting than the original design, but the expanded mass is a more fitting visual terminus of the Nord Greenway. And instead of shading the glass with architectural forms, horizontal shades inside the double glass wall make the spaces habitable.

In the space between Johnson's eastern wings to T-V, Johnson created a courtyard that accommodates a portion of Philip Johnson's "Turning Point" sculptures, and CWRU will now relocate the balance of Cleveland native Philip Johnson's TP sculpture to a new 4.2 acre Bell park on the site of the former Cleveland Institute of Art which has been jointly purchased by CMA and CWRU.

The southern portion of Johnson's T-V comes to a blunted point at the upper level which cantilevers over the entrance to draw visitors and announce the right of entry. The western end to the north also tapers and also cantilevers out, this time to shade a small plaza with a stepped mini-theater area. While intended for casual student repose, the CWRU band uses it for their instrument cases when practicing on the field between T-V and the Smith Library.

Inside, all of the lounge and social interaction spaces face the west practice field and Nord Gateway, which extends the appeal and scale of the interior spaces which are not huge. A cliché amenity in the form of interior 'interaction' steps are incorporated at the north end, but they are relatively modest in scale. For such elements to work, they must be large enough to grant users their personal space with a separation which also serves to diminish capacity.

Johnson also had to work around and with the existing below-grade parking garage that supports the Smith Library and Severance Hall. As a result, T-V's footprint is irregular and inefficient. In an era when some owners and architects obsess about LEED ratings, the most efficient perimeter envelope is often pursued to diminish energy consumption to score the maximum LEED points. This strategy rarely leads to exemplary design. And we should be thankful that both Johnson and CWRU avoided that death trap for Tinkham Veale.

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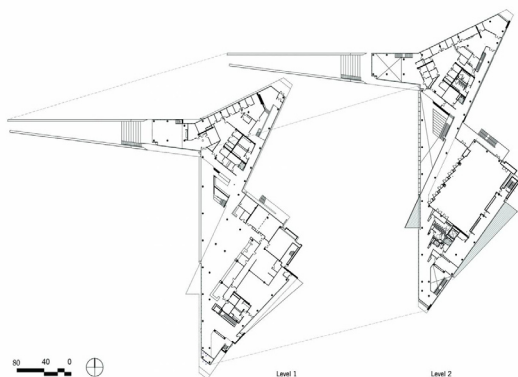
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Instead, Johnson and his team focused on how to make his energy beast of a full-height glass west exterior wall effective at managing heat loads to contain cooling demands and energy costs because experientially, the program's lounge and dining areas deserved the daylight and exposure to the Nord lawn asset.

Johnson utilized a double glass wall and exhausted heated air at the top - warm air rises - with axial plenum exhaust fans. Roller shades inside the glass plenum are somewhat effective in containing light and solar penetration. An air intake grate at the ground feeds both the plenum wall with makeup air to remove the heat gain and contribute ventilation make-up air to the parking garage below. This is responsible engineering and design to address needs beyond just those of T-V.

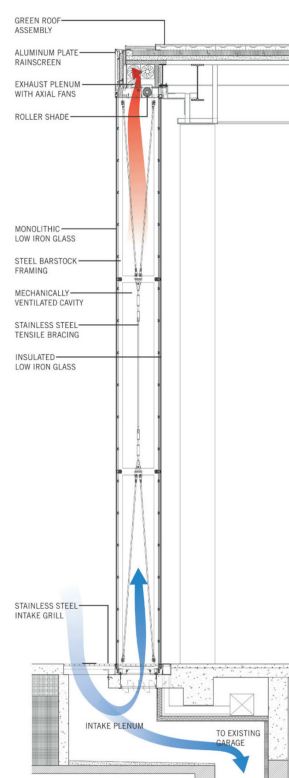
The Center's interior spaces are fine - neither Spartan nor lavish. Terrazzo floors are handsome and low maintenance. Small doses of wood paneling appear at interaction spaces to deliver a warm experience and present a harder and more durable surface than painted drywall. A modest two-story lobby at the south entry is welcoming with media screens that deliver information on events and the university's branding.

Meeting spaces are in multiple sizes to accommodate the various groups and the large banquet hall-type space seems a duplicate in volume of the grand third floor ballroom space in Hitchcock, but T-V's is much more accessible and the media integration is superior.



The T-V project represents yet another architectural statement and identity for CWRU. Like the revolving door at the President's office in past decades, the college has not had a coherent image of itself and has allowed its architects to add to a schizophrenic collage of buildings on the campus starting with the The Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences.

Completed in 1989, the project is the work of Akron native James Stewart Polshek, and may be the worst project of Polshek's otherwise decent career.



Above and Below:
1. Tinkham Veale Center Exterior wall section
2. Tinkham Veale Exterior wall
3. Tinkham Veale Lobby
4. Tinkham Veale Reception/ Student Service
5. Tinkham Veale Seminar Room
Left: Tinkham Veale Center Floor Plans

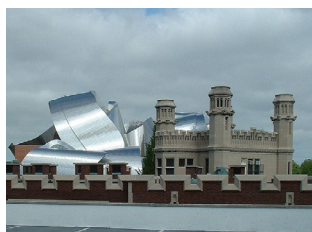




Above: Mandel School of Applied Social Science; James Stewart Polshek, 1989

Below, Left to right, top to Bottom:

1. CWRU Macro Molecular Kent Hale Smith Building; Shepley Bulfinch Architects, Boston
2. CWRU Macro Molecular Kent Hale Smith Building; Shepley Bulfinch Architects, Boston
3. George S. Dively Center; Architectural Resources Cambridge Inc., Boston
4. George S. Dively Center; Architectural Resources Cambridge Inc., Boston
5. Mather Memorial Hall; Abraham Garfield, 1915
- 6.-7. Peter B. Lewis Weatherhead School of Management; Frank Gehry; Santa Monica



Polshek was awarded that AIA's Gold Medal in 2018 – the highest honor attainable – and has dozens of excellent projects to his credit including the Rose Center for Earth and Space in New York, the Clinton Presidential Library, the Newtown Creek Water Treatment Plant and Akron's ill-fated Inventors Hall of Fame.

The Macromolecular Science and Engineering Building, now known as the Kent Hale Smith Building was designed by SBRA, since renamed Shepley Bulfinch, and completed in 1993.

The facility is also referred to as the Center for Layered Polymeric Systems. The facility's design is a fussy and overly animated tapered box with bands of pink granites, contrasted with green glass. The lobby is miniscule and entirely too detailed with an open atrium, exposed steel roof structure and a tiny skylight. The building provides classrooms, labs and faculty offices.

The KHS building occupies a prominent site on Adelbert Rd. across from UH's Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital, and sits in front of CWRU's massive Physics Building. A bare, functionless plaza space in front of the building with crosswalks connects foot traffic on Adelbert with the interior north-south walkways that stretch from Euclid Ave. to the southeastern edge of the main campus.

The George S. Dively Center is now labeled as an 'executive education facility' by CWRU, accommodating groups of 12-200. The 48,000 sf post-modern facility at the spectacularly prominent corner of Ford Drive and Bellflower Road was designed by Architectural Resources Inc. of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Of the 144 educational projects featured on the architect's website, Dively is not present, for it is a weak attempt at paying homage to the distinguished Mather Memorial Building directly across the street.

Mather Memorial Hall was designed by Abraham Garfield, the President's son and completed in 1912. ARC oriented the Dively entry diagonally off of the intersection as Garfield had done for Mather. But the trite and flat window configurations at Dively fall painfully short of respecting the vernacular of Mather in shape, depth and materiality.

In 2002, the Peter B. Lewis School of Management was opened. Designed by architect Frank Gehry, the project reflects Gehry's out of control polymorphic vocabulary of warped and bending masonry planes, topped with curling ribbons of metal shapes locked in a state of alchemy.

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Gehry's building put CWRU on the international architectural map as the \$25 million project skyrocketed to over \$100 million, with patron Peter Lewis issuing a moratorium on his philanthropy when he discovered what he believed to be CWRU's inept management of the project.

Lewis and Gehry had made a pact to produce a building "that would start fights in bars" by getting students and faculty to interact in a rathskeller environment on the building's lower floor. But a change that reduced the site area cause Gehry to somehow justify removing from the program the very element that motivated Lewis to donate \$25 million - the original price tag, which he upped and capped at \$37 million when the revised estimate came in, to build the project.

Gehry's building was does not orient the building entry to the intersection at a 45 degree angle as Mather and Dively did, and instead pointed it at Polsheck's Mandel building. The curling roof forms only slightly appear in the interior, making Gehry's architecture dishonest. It overwhelms its corner.

At its groundbreaking, CWRU's present heralded the Gehry project as one which would raise the standard for all future architectural commissions at the university. Upon completion after being lambasted by Lewis in the local media, the then-president exclaimed, "Well, we'll never do that again!"

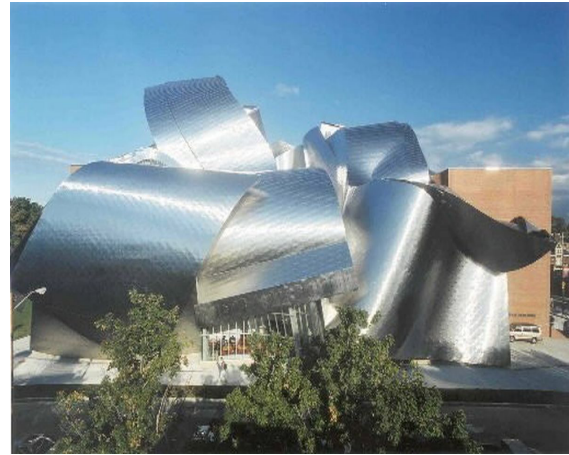
The Village at 115 was constructed by CWRU to meet the needs for upperclassmen and opened in 2005. The 740-bed 420,000 sf massive complex was designed by Boston's Goody Clancy Architects in a Gothic style as a series of seven four-story masses around an all-weather track and football field. The apartments accommodate groups of 4-9 juniors and seniors in what G-C calls "a contemporary interpretation of traditional collegiate Gothic architecture."

Plain Dealer architecture critic Steven Litt blasted the project for its revisionist aesthetic and CWRU's lost opportunity to set a new standard that reflected the values and beliefs of today's students - and those of tomorrow's students as well.

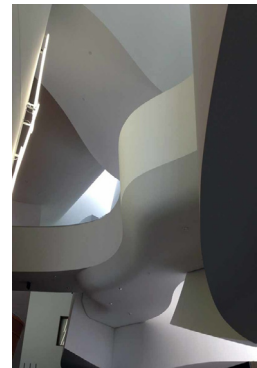
So the question on Tinkham Veale is how does Johnson's design fit its context?

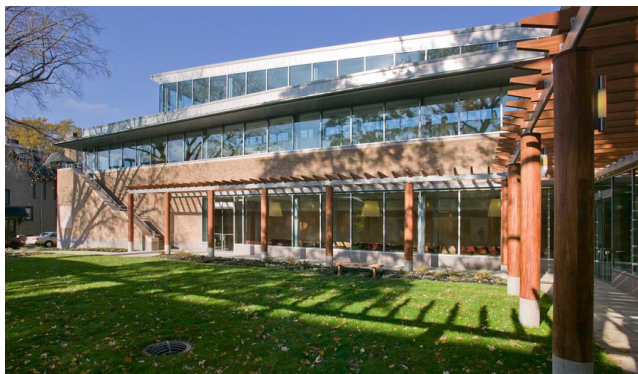
The answer is that it fits very well. Johnson matched the tonality of the adjacent Smith Library, Severance Hall, Thwing Center and Cleveland Museum of Art with his concrete and off-white metal panel exterior.

He also gave the composition an energy in a very



Above & Below:
Peter B. Lewis Weatherhead School of Management; Frank Gehry, Santa Monica
Bottom:
Tinkham Veale University Center; Perkins + Will; Chicago





Top: Mandel Center for Non-Profit Organizations; Kallman, McKinnell & Wood; Boston
Below: Village 115 Complex; Goody Clancy Architects; Boston



different and cost-effective manner than Gehry's wild polymorphic metal forms by using simple angles in plan and elevation that delineated existing movement patterns and gave the building a subtle but considerable presence in elevation without going to extremes.

At the same time, Johnson did not wimp out and try to make a 'background' building that simply sits quietly without commanding our interest or attention or representing the values of its constituents.

Litt has praised the Mandel Center for Non-Profit Organizations which is just down the road on Bellflower past Dively. Designed by Kallman McKinnell & Wood Architects of Boston, this tiny 25,000 sf building was completed in 2007 at a cost of \$10 million. KMW is also responsible for Cleveland's US Federal Courthouse Tower at Huron and Superior Avenue.

CWRU announced that they were closing the Mandel Non-Profit building after only ten years to consolidate its personnel and programs at the adjacent Dively and Weatherhead buildings. It makes you wonder what the hell is going on at CWRU regarding planning programs and facilities and what will be come of the \$10 million 'background' Mandel building with its handsome rear garden, essentially hidden from view and use on an increasingly congested campus.

Johnson's T-V project does not in itself give CWRU an architectural identity. The university's original Collegiate Gothic buildings tell the stories of the various institutions that are now under the CWRU umbrella, and the spread of the campus up Chester to the east and to the north around the substantial Church of the Covenant and Uptown apartment development make attaining a cohesive identity virtually impossible.

And no one wants a campus where every program and structure are cut from the same cloth. But a coherent experience and a coherent brand identity is a desirable outcome for any college or university. The transformation of the campus of the University of Cincinnati is an interesting example of how to go about it.

UC president in 1970, noted author Warren Bennis, plotted to have the city university become a state school, and in doing so, gain access to state funds. At the time, UC's campus was a jumbled mix of early handsome 20th century traditional buildings and a mish-mash of post WWII dreadful infills that made navigating the hilly campus challenging and unpleasant.

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Bennis recruited a loaned executive from the city, Ron Kull, to become campus architect and a 90-person campus committee was organized to work with George Hargreaves of Boston in implementing the new master plan. The plan called for many of the post-WWII buildings to be removed to create quality green space and improve access. One tricky problem that faced UC is that its topography makes the separation of service and student traffic an issue.

Kull and the university were bold enough to see that a high percentage of UC's buildings constructed after 1950 had to go create suitable educational and green space and they were thoughtful and determined enough to sell the plan to the Ohio Board of Regents to fund it.

Kull brought in starchitects for numerous projects including Henry Cobb from I. M. Pei's office, Thom Mayne/ Morphosis, Michael Graves, Frank Gehry, Cambridge Seven, Leers/ Weinzapfel, Bernard Tschumi, Charles Gwathmey, Peter Eisenman and David Childs.

But UC also had alumni Erik Sueberkrop/ Studios Architecture design the Crawley Center for Academic Research and Cleveland architect Richard Fleischman who designed the renovation of the Morgan and Scioto Towers residence halls. The master plan and each project also successfully reconciled UC's hilly campus by separating service vehicle traffic from student pedestrian movement.

Countless newspaper and magazine articles have chronicled and praised the UC's Master Plan efforts as a model to follow. The *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and *The Plain Dealer* as well as magazines like *Architecture*, *Trends*, and *Architectural Record* have all covered aspects of UC's Master Plan. The *Chicago Tribune* opined of UC: "The spectacular revamp is one of the most significant acts of campus planning since Thomas Jefferson laid out his 'academical village' at the University of Virginia... ."

Litt has observed, "In the process, the university has developed powerful skills as a client, enabling it to get the best from the designers it hires."

CWRU's embarrassment with its Gehry building is a blessing and a curse. It is important that projects like the Lewis Weatherhead School get designed and built. But Gehry's building failed to fulfill its program, thanks in part to the intervention of CWRU's president in shrinking his site for the building during the design process, and its massive cost overrun and high maintenance costs set a poor example of stewardship.



Top Down:

1. University of Cincinnati; Moore Rubell + Morphosis
2. University of Cincinnati main campus aerial
3. University of Cincinnati Student Recreation Center; Morphosis
4. University of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music; I. M. Pei
5. University of Cincinnati College of Design Art Architecture & Planning; Peter Eisenman





Top Down:

1. University of Cinn. College of Engineering; Michael Graves
2. University of Cinn. Pavilion; Leers Weinzapfel Assoc.
3. University of Cinn. Moltz Center; Frank Gehry
4. University of Cinn. Scioto/ Morgans Residence Halls Renovations; Richard Fleischman Architects
5. University of Cinn. Crawley Center; Studios Architecture



Hindsight can be unfair, but when Gehry's site was reduced during the design phase, Gehry should have stopped and the client and architect should have examined the program and site and explored alternatives such as a different site, managing the program differently or developing a more vertical response that included all of the elements that compelled donor Lewis to give so generously in the first place.

As a timeline contribution, Johnson's T-V Center should be accepted as a positive course correction away from the false historicism of Village 115 and T-V's adjacent Smith Library by Hartman-Cox Architects. It is also a discreet but emphatic rebuttal of Gehry's ego-centric Weatherhead beast that plays too far above its weight even as its size - 150,000 sf, dwarfs T-V Center's 89,000 sf.

One of CWRU's glaring faults over the last four decades has been its tendency to allow donors to call the shots on who is selected as a given project's architect. With the exception of Gehry and Johnson, most have been east coast firms who have accepted their \$25M CWRU projects which have been one-third or one-fourth of the size of their typical commissions. As a result, most of CWRU's projects have decidedly not received the A Team from each of those firms and the results reflect that. Oberlin College has suffered from the same disease.

The Dively and Mandel Social Science buildings are arguably the worst buildings done by their respective firms. And the Kent Hale Smith macro molecular building is eligible for admission to that list.

With the inevitable changes at the president's office and within the university's facility department, it may be too much to hope for that Johnson's thoughtful and balanced contribution to the CWRU campus is a sign that CWRU's design culture has recovered from its period of mental imbalance and that in the future, CWRU will manage site selection, funding, architect selection and design review with the effectiveness displayed by Johnson's T-V Center.

But we can hope.

September 2019