

4 Lick-Wilmerding School San Francisco, California

A MASTER PLAN AND NEW LIBRARY/ARTS CENTER BY CATHY SIMON BRING A PRIVATE SCHOOL UP TO DATE WHILE RECALLING ITS ORIGINAL MISSION.

by Eric C.Y. Fang, AIA

Project: Library/Arts and Humanities Center, Lick-Wilmerding High School San Francisco, California

Architect: Simon Martin-Vegue Winkelstein Moris—Cathy Simon, principal-in-charge; John Long, project manager; Liza Pannozzo, project architect; Stephen Phillips, Dan Cheetham, project team; Alyosha Verzhbinsky, master plan; Donald Cremers, interiors

Engineers: Steven Tipping + Associates (structural); O'Mahony & Meyer (electrical); JYA Consulting Engineers (mechanical)

Consultants: Illumination Design Collaborative (lighting); Richard Vignolo (landscape); Wilson Ihrig & Associates (acoustical)

General Contractor: Plant Construction Co.

Project Statistics

Size: 17,000 sq ft

Cost: \$2.95 million

Cost per sq ft: \$174

Number of students: 345

Number of teachers and staff: 40/20

Grades in school: 9–12

Lick-Wilmerding High School was founded as a vocational school in a lower-middle-class district of San Francisco in 1895. Today, while focusing on college preparation, Lick-Wilmerding maintains a strong commitment to technical arts, requiring students to take at least five semesters in wood, metal, and machine shop, or drafting and design. This belief in the enabling potential of technical skills is summed up in the school's pragmatic motto, "Education for the head, heart, and hands"—leading one educator to describe Lick as "John Dewey come alive."

But with its academic program and reputation long since having outpaced its utilitarian 1955 campus, a new library was a top priority on the school's long list of physical needs. Familiar with the work of Simon Martin-Vegue Winkelstein Moris (SMWM) at other local prep schools (such as the Urban School and University High School), Lick-Wilmerding's board of trustees hired the firm in 1989 to develop a master plan for the school.

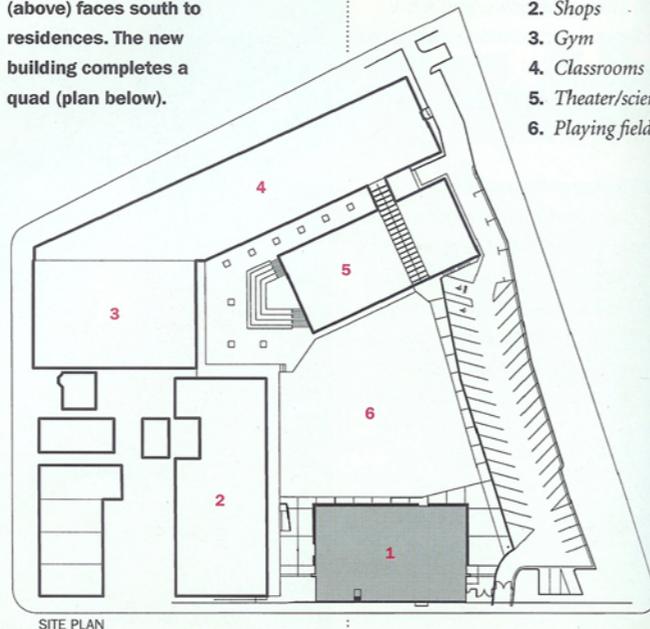
Planning strategy

SMWM's plan established a quad-angle facing out toward the city to serve as the symbolic heart of the school. By terracing a new faculty

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A classroom wing (above) faces south to residences. The new building completes a quad (plan below).



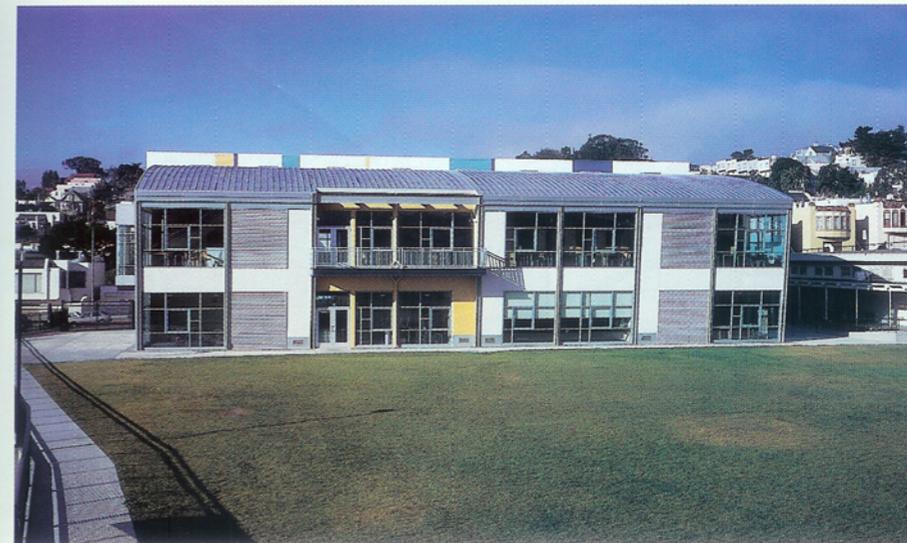
1. Library/arts
2. Shops
3. Gym
4. Classrooms
5. Theater/sciences
6. Playing field

parking lot 13 ft below the quad on the east side of the property bordering a freeway, the plan banished cars from sight within the campus. SMWM's plan also recentered the school on the shops (metal, wood, and machine) located on the west side of the existing L-shaped complex by placing the new library on the south side of the school.

Architectural strategy

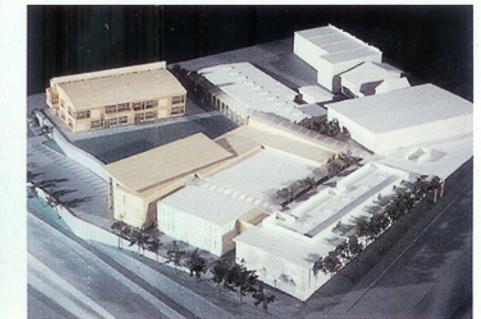
The new library, which SMWM was hired to design in 1994, mediates between a neighborhood of primarily single-family houses on the south side and the quad to the north. SMWM exploited this duality by adopting an "inside-outside" massing strategy with a flat-roofed classroom wing facing the street and shielding a vaulted structure on the campus side that contains the studios and library. Separation between these two components is articulated by a brightly colored 38-ft-high wall running the length of the building. The street side of the classroom wing is a carefully composed and residentially scaled, if conventional, stucco box. Shading devices, intended to reduce solar loads and provide articulation to the south-facing windows, were eventually eliminated to save money.

The designers focused their energies on the campus side, where they deployed flat and corrugated cement panels in a grid to provide

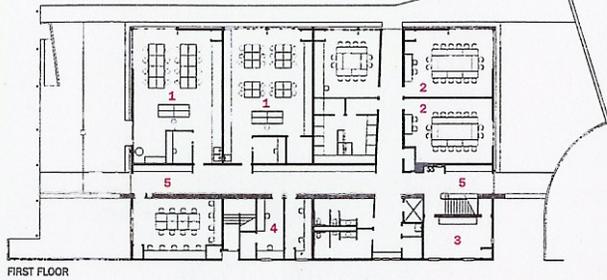


A model shows the entire school as envisioned by the SMWM master plan (below). The library portion of the new building, along with studios tucked

underneath, faces the quad to the north (left). Smooth and corrugated cement panels are used as exterior finish on the north and east facades (bottom).

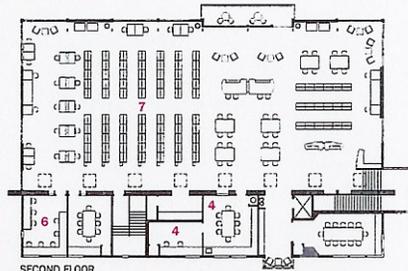


1. Studio
2. Classroom
3. Lab



FIRST FLOOR

4. Office
5. Gallery
6. Audiovisual
7. Library



SECOND FLOOR

an interesting play of light. The panels themselves (which other architects such as Jim Jennings and Mark Horton have experimented with in Bay Area residential projects) allude to the industrial characteristics of the existing buildings around the quad. At approximately \$8 per sq ft, SMWM's face-fastened, caulk-joint system for the cement panels is a cost-effective alternative to other comparable exterior finish systems such as stucco and EIFS.

Interior detailing is disciplined by a proportioning system derived from the exterior grid. This system carries through to the SMWM-designed furnishings, carpeting, and signage. As a result, the design works together at different scales, while an overlay of freely disposed primary colors keeps the grid from becoming overbearing—a pronounced *de Stijl* influence.

The "head, heart, and hands" trinity is felt throughout: from SMWM's decision to expose the structural elements at the library's vaulted roof and cement-panel fasteners, to the choice of materials such as Italian artisan plaster and stained concrete, which evidence technique and weathering.

Programming

The library building was originally intended to house fine arts studios on the ground level with a 7,100-sq-

ft library located on a piano nobile above. Classrooms were subsequently added to the program to keep the new building from becoming the exclusive domain of the arts. SMWM sought to maintain a workshop atmosphere below with stained-concrete floors and corrugated aluminum ceilings (later cut to save money) while providing a gallery for student projects along the main circulation spine.

Plans call for the library to eventually expand from the present 9,000 volumes to 25,000 volumes. To entice students to spend time at the library, the programmers drew from popular retailing concepts such as all-night copy centers and Barnes & Noble superstores. Thus the library is equipped with scanners, CD writers, a sound-dubbing system, a copy center nicknamed "mini-Kinko's," and a lounge with a balcony and views of the city. ■

Manufacturers' Sources

Flat cement-board panels: *Eternit (Eflex)*

Corrugated cement-board panels: *Comfort (SupraCem)*

Composite-metal building panels: *Alucobond Technologies*

Preformed-metal roofing with zincalume finish: *BHP*

Aluminum windows and entrance system: *Vistawall*

Corrugated-metal ceiling system: *USG Interiors (Dann Centricitec)*



A wood-frame building with plywood shear walls, the library has composite giulam-and-steel-rod roof trusses exposed in the main reading room (above). The colorful panels included in the gridded library walls give the composition a distinctive *de Stijl* flavor (opposite). The east-west corridor on the ground floor was designed with lighted alcoves to function as a long gallery for the exhibition of students' work (left).

