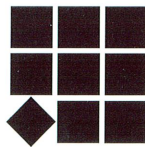


May 18 - July 7, 1996

ROBERT TRAYNHAM COLES: ARCHITECT



Burchfield-Penney Art Center Buffalo State College May 18-July 7, 1996



EDUCATIONAL: 10,000 Seat Alumni Arena/Health, Physical Education and Recreation Complex, State University of New York at Buffalo, Amherst Campus

As the University's main Convocation Center, this 200,000 square foot project has 2,500 fixed seats and 7,500 bleacher seats, and includes Training Rooms, Handball and Squash Courts, Locker Facilities and Offices. It was the site of the New York State Empire State Games in 1985 and 1986, and the 1993 World University Games.



OFFICE BUILDING: Frank Reeves Center for Municipal Affairs, Washington, District of Columbia

Built around an eight-story glass atrium, this 450,000 square foot mixed use office/housing/retail complex will stimulate the redevelopment of an urban renewal area. It includes 400 underground parking spaces. Interior Space Planning of the offices was part of the project. The Center received the 1987 Environmental Improvement Award for the District of Columbia, and the 1983 National Capital Area Energy Conservation First Prize.



RAPID TRANSIT: Lindbergh Center Station, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit System (MARTA), Atlanta, Georgia

This open cut intermodal heavy rail station on the outskirts of Atlanta includes an ancillary building with system wide train control and security, and a 2,500 car parking area. Collaboration with sculptor George Smith of Buffalo resulted in the station's skylight becoming an art object of shifting monochromatic colors that light the platform and trains.



RAILROAD: Union Station, Northeast Corridor Improvement Project, Providence, Rhode Island

One of two new stations on the \$2.5 billion Northeast Corridor Improvement Project, this complex includes the new station, a 400-car underground parking structure, and track relocation to open up the adjacent area for development opportunities. It was awarded a 1983 Progressive Architecture Magazine Design Citation.



TRANSPORTATION: Operations Control Center, Metrorail Light Rail Transit System, Buffalo, New York

This 16,000 square foot building for the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority is the first of its kind in the nation to function as a nerve center for a light rail system. Located in an in-town industrial research center, the building's curvilinear form reflects both the hi-tech character of the system it encloses and its inherently industrial nature. A skylight viewing gallery, enhanced by a colorful mural, allows the operations of the facility to be observed by the NFTA Board and the public.

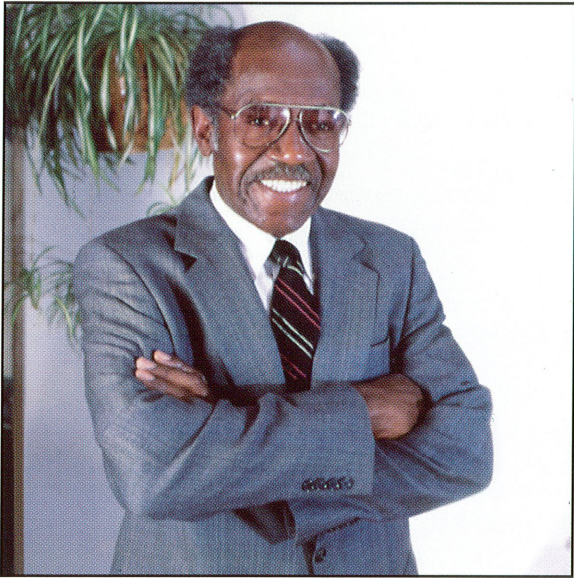


photo by David A. Gordon

ROBERT T. COLES, FAIA, PRESIDENT

Registered Architect for over thirty years. Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and recipient of the Whitney E. Young, Jr. Citation. Member of the New York State Board of Architecture. Langston Hughes Distinguished Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Kansas. Rotch Traveling Scholarship. Graduate of the University of Minnesota with a Master in Architecture from M.I.T. Honorary Doctor of Letters Degree from Medaille College. Associate Professor of Architecture at Carnegie Mellon University. Founder and Director of the National Organization of Minority Architects. Founder and President of the Community Planning Assistance Center of Western New York. Director of the Buffalo Architectural Guidebook Corporation. Sam Gibbon's Eminent Scholar Chair Holder at the University of South Florida. Chancellor of the AIA's College of Fellows.

ROBERT TRAYNHAM COLES, ARCHITECT, P.C.

offers a complete range of architectural and planning services to its clients: Architecture, Urban Design, Interior Design, Master Planning, Graphic Design, Community Planning, Programming, Site Analysis, Feasibility Studies, Cost Estimating, and Adaptive Re-use.

Founded in 1963, this award-winning architectural firm provides comprehensive design services to clients including the planning and design of Commercial, Institutional, Medical, Social Welfare, Recreational, Educational, Cultural, Residential, Transportation, and Correctional facilities.

CLIENTS

- Bedford Stuyvesant Family Health Care Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.
- Chautauqua Institution, N.Y.
- City of Buffalo, N.Y.
- City of Buffalo Board of Education
- City of Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority
- City of Niagara Falls, N.Y.
- City of Rochester, N.Y.
- City University Construction Fund, New York, N.Y.
- County of Erie, N.Y.
- County of Ontario, N.Y.
- District of Columbia
- Federal Railroad Administration
- Friendship House of Western New York, Lackawanna, N.Y.
- Geneva B. Scruggs Health Care Center, Buffalo, N.Y.
- I.C. Housing Corporation, Rochester, N.Y.
- Medaille College, Buffalo, N.Y.
- Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority
- New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation
- New York City School Construction Authority
- New York State Department of Correctional Services
- New York State Facilities Development Corporation
- New York State Insurance Fund
- New York State Office of General Services
- New York State Office of Mental Health
- New York State University Construction Fund
- New York State Urban Development Corporation
- New York Telephone Company
- Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
- Urban Mass Transportation Administration
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Postal Service
- Veterans Administration
- Y.M.C.A. of Buffalo and Erie County

OFFICES

506 Lenox Avenue
 New York, New York 10037
 (212) 939-2452

730 Ellicott Square
 Buffalo, New York 14203
 (716) 842-2280

**THE CIRCLE AND THE SQUARE:
ROBERT TRAYNHAM COLES, FAIA**

The poetry of Langston Hughes often addresses the history and tradition of African-American builders and architects.

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of
human blood in human veins.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers...
I build my hut near the Congo...
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
Langston Hughes, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," 1925.

Under my hands the pyramids rose...
I made the mortar for the Woolworth building...
Langston Hughes, "I am a Negro," 1925.

Robert Traynham Coles' office logo utilizes nine pronounced white squares on a black background with the seventh square slightly skewed. The firm's logo immediately engages the viewer and forces a struggle to define its many implications. Does it imply marching to a different drummer? The "seventh son"? Does it suggest a new or different approach? Or is it but another variation of the "skewed grid," so often implied and utilized by contemporary architects? We are immediately struck by the considerable implications of this skillful and subtle design.

Equally engaging are the implications of consistency and continuity implied with the circle form in the Design Diaspora exhibit logo. Combined, the logos prepare the visitor for the dynamic range of international, national, and local accomplishments of work by architects of African descent. That the need for these exhibitions is long overdue is indicated by historian Michael Adams, who stated: "Despite over 200 years of involvement in the building of America, the historical contributions of Black designers remains obscure."¹

The use of such strong geometry in the logos is more than coincidence. The circle of Design Diaspora implies the long tradition and continuity of architects of African descent, which expresses the exhibit's intention to be "a tribute to the achievements of the thousands of unheralded Black architects — male and female; past, present, and future — who have created and continue to create contextual, solution-oriented architecture that enriches the human spirit and environment."

Robert Traynham Coles has described African-American architects as an "endangered species." A local and national trail blazer, Coles has built his way to the top of the profession.² When Coles began his practice in 1963, some 233 African-American architects operated less than 50 architectural firms in the country. Since that time, Coles has emerged as an educator, mentor, and leader in his field. He was elected to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) College of Fellows in 1981, and in 1995 he was elected Chancellor of that prestigious organization, the first African-American to be so honored.

The exhibited projects reflect the history, progress, and consistent urban commitment of Coles' firm. They also provide a brief, but significant view of the struggle of African-American architects. Equally important, with images of brick and mortar the exhibit heightens our curiosity for a broader understanding of the African-American architect in the Queen City of the Lakes. What has been the contribution of the African-American architect in this city famed for architectural statements of Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, H. H. Richardson, and Louise Blanchard Bethune, the nation's first female architect?

A product of ethnic industrial Buffalo, Coles knew little of these architects when he embarked on architectural studies. As a student at Buffalo's premier Technical High School, he was sidetracked into building design. After high school, Coles departed for Hampton Institute, the Virginia school attended by Booker T. Washington, followed by the University of Minnesota to continue his architectural studies. By the time he returned to Buffalo in 1963, Coles had completed one year of study and travel in Europe, as well as his masters degree in architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Coles' designs for the John F. Kennedy Recreation Center and his own residence mark the beginning of the architect's Buffalo practice of thirty-plus years. This exhibit focuses on three major periods in Coles' career. Varying both in scale and location, the projects reflect Coles' strong commitment to public service and community involvement. The large number of public and governmental projects in both exhibits suggest a paradox of the Black architect: an opportunity to impact on his/her community, but much too often being limited or excluded from major private commissions and fees.

Bob Coles' return to Buffalo marked a milestone in the beginning of the rebuilding of Buffalo's urban core. His M.I.T. thesis in part had focused on urban renewal and the design of recreational facilities. The study centered on Buffalo's Ellicott Renewal district. Coles' very first projects during these early years are centered around this early Black community

and its history. Five years after the historic Niagara Movement meeting in 1905, the established Black community in Buffalo — almost invisible throughout the 19th century — had expanded to 1,773. The 1920 census reported 59 Black architects in the country. In 1930, the number increased to 63. By the late 1920s, 2 of those 63 Black architects had relocated to Buffalo. William L. Evans (1885-1966)³ and John E. Brent (? - 1959) were among the varied professionals and laborers who had swelled the Queen City's Black population beyond 9,000.

The names of early Coles' projects conjure up images of members of the Buffalo Pantheon of African-American heroes and heroines — names such as Geneva B. Scruggs, Sherman L. Walker, and Reverend Jesse E. Nash. Each of these individuals played a pivotal role in the development of Buffalo's historic Eastside African-American community. As far back as 1830, the tight area between Broadway and William Street on Michigan Avenue became the center. By the 20th century, Montgomery's Little Harlem, Michigan Avenue Baptist Church, Roger Smith's Drugs, and the Club Moonglow were among its landmark structures. During the years preceding the depression, Blacks moved west along Michigan Avenue. During this period the famed Michigan YMCA, designed by pioneering Buffalo African-American architect John Brent, was constructed. Unfortunately, this move west and the impact of the depression further contributed to the area's decline. In 1975 the Michigan Avenue YMCA was demolished. With the recent loss of Montgomery's Little Harlem, only the tiny red brick Michigan Avenue Baptist Church remains of these historic structures.

Fortunately, in 1982 Robert Coles received the commission for the William-Emslie YMCA, which was intended in part to replace the historic Michigan Avenue building. Coles' design for the Williams-Emslie continues the tradition of the Michigan Avenue YMCA by providing a multipurpose facility for that community.

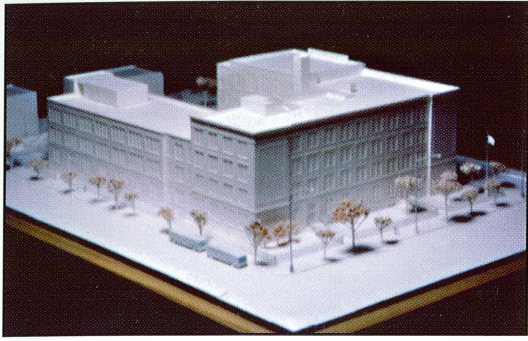
Over the past fifteen years Coles has expanded his horizons to include architectural offices in Washington, D.C., and New York City. A significant collaboration involving a majority firm and the Black architectural firm of Devroux and Purnell Architects resulted in the \$35,000,000 Frank Reeves Center for Municipal Affairs in Washington's urban area. It was heralded as a bold and innovative solution. In addition, Coles, a sought-after lecturer, commutes regularly to architecture schools in Kansas, Pennsylvania, and Florida.

Coles often speaks of a broad approach to architecture. He once said he saw himself not as a Black architect, but as an architect who was Black. He would later restate it to say he saw himself as "a Black architect." We all have benefited from Coles' vision and leadership in the profession and in our cities. In his work and philosophy Robert Traynham Coles links us to those whose record of struggle on the playing field of architecture in Western New York has been all but annihilated. Although Coles, as the Langston Hughes scholar, has spoken of the Black architect as an endangered species, he, like Langston Hughes, has preserved and made a living at his art.⁴ Like Langston Hughes, Coles is always willing to give a little more to the profession and the race.

Coles has unmistakably woven his drive for equality, opportunity, and love and concern into the social and architectural fabric of Buffalo. In the 1960's Coles came to Buffalo to implement his M.I.T. master's thesis, "A study for the revitalization of the Historic Ellicott District" in the rapidly deteriorating urban core of Buffalo. Importantly, he has done it with sensitivity, care, and commitment few architects could equal. He has infused his local vision of Buffalo with a vitality and creativity that makes a strong statement for the African-American architect in both Western New York and across the country. He has extended his efforts, energies, and effectiveness to the future, affecting architects of tomorrow with his involvement. If the Black architect is in fact moving off the endangered list, it is due in large part to the efforts of architects such as Robert Traynham Coles, who have done so much to enrich our environment and continue the "circle."

Dr. Richard K. Dozier, AIA
Professor, School of Architecture
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University

1. Adams, Michael. "A Legacy of Shadows." *Progressive Architecture*. February, 1991, 85-87.
2. See "The Practice of Architecture in a Post-Industrial City: The profile of a Black Architect-An Endangered Species." University of Kansas Lecture, Robert Coles, March 28, 1989.
3. It was Evans who presented Coles' thesis design for a community center and recreational facility to the Ellicott District Urban Renewal and Development Authority.
4. Coles often quotes Langston Hughes' term "endangered species" which refers to African-American architects.



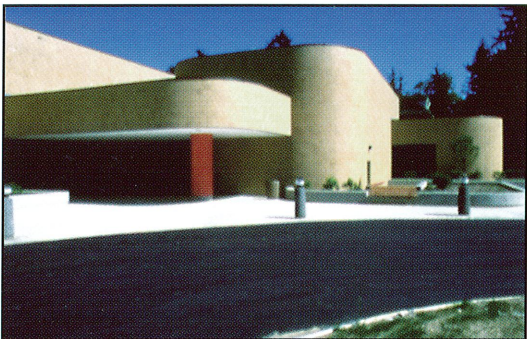
EDUCATIONAL: Public School No. 233, New York City School Construction Authority

This \$15 million project includes the addition of a 35,000 square foot three story wing, and the modernization of an existing four story, 70,000 square foot building, as well as extensive site-work. The new addition contains numerous classrooms, as well as a new Food Service Complex including Staff and Student Dining areas, Kitchen, and Food Storage areas.



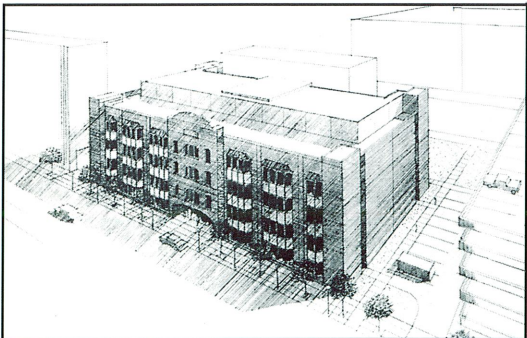
EDUCATIONAL: Elementary School No. 40, Board of Education, Buffalo, New York

This K-6 School includes a Gymnasium, Multi-purpose Room, Music Room, and an Academic area of two Kindergarten rooms and sixteen primary and secondary classrooms. The solution to a restricted site was to offset the classrooms and allow windows to face south. The school is the most energy efficient of the over seventy schools in the district.



MEDICAL: Rehabilitation Treatment Facility Gowanda Psychiatric Center, Helmuth, New York

This 35,000 square foot facility serves as the Town Center for the clients and staff of this upstate Psychiatric Center. Grouped around a central atrium are Gymnasium/Multi-purpose Room, Library, Auditorium, Community Store and Cafeteria, Contract Workshop, Classrooms, and Administrative Offices.



MEDICAL: Ambulatory Care Facility, Harlem Hospital Center, New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation

This \$25 million, 125,000 square foot, four story facility, will serve the Harlem community with 250,000 patient visits annually. The facility contains six modular clinics per floor, each with their own visiting area with sweeping vistas to the north. The areas are color coded for easy identification. Twenty-five hospital departments are included in the project. Pediatrics and Obstetrics-Gynecology are located on the lower floors for easy access by the patients.



OFFICE BUILDING: Human Services Building, County of Ontario, Canandaigua, New York

This two story, 70,000 square foot facility houses the expanding state mandated social welfare programs for the County, as well as conference facilities. Located on a rural site, parking is provided for 250 cars, including a unique drive up station for welfare payments. Graphics and Interior Design services were provided for the building, including extensive open office landscapes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Robert Traynham Coles, Architect, P.C. was selected to be one of fifty prominent Black architectural firms from eleven countries included in "Design Diaspora: Black Architects and International Architecture (1970-1990)," a travelling exhibition organized by The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design with support from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. The Center is pleased to present Design Diaspora and supplement it with an exhibition elucidating the career and work of Robert Traynham Coles, FAIA, one of Buffalo's most respected and admired architects, and his firm. Both of these exhibitions are part of the Center's annual commitment to architecture and design programming.

Works of architecture, often associated with a single architect, are really intensive team projects. The same is true of the making of an exhibition. Leading the list of the many involved is Mr. Coles, whose commitment and contribution have been outstanding. The exquisite photo-enlargements are the work of David Gordon, created from his own photographs and those of Gerard Meyers. Glenn Staubitz designed the many fine architectural models which are included in the exhibition and Marilyn McTaggart is the designer of the firm's distinctive logo. Thanks are due to artist Robert Potzner, and Cooke Studio who created the wonderful renderings of several of the building projects.

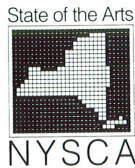
The design concept for this brochure, which was printed by Partners' Press Inc., was developed by Fern Logan of Logan Graphics. The brochure essay by former Buffalonian, Dr. Richard K. Dozier, AIA, Professor, School of Architecture, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, deftly places Coles' firm's work in an historical context of work by other African-American architectural firms from this region.

Finally, the Center staff and volunteers are to be commended for their efforts in preparing and installing the exhibition. Their care, concern, and dedication was the key in creating an exhibition of the highest caliber.

"Robert Traynham Coles: Architect" has been made possible by public funding from the Architecture, Planning and Design Program of the New York State Council on the Arts, the City of Buffalo, and the County of Erie. Additional support has been provided by AIA Buffalo/WNY, a Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and David Gordon Photography. WBLK and WKBW-TV are media sponsors for the exhibitions.



AIA Buffalo/WNY
A Chapter of the American Institute of Architects



Cover: EDUCATIONAL: Olympic Natatorium/Health, Physical Education and Recreation Complex, State University of New York at Buffalo, Amherst Campus

This project contains a 1,000 seat 50-meter Swimming Pool and separate Diving Tank with a 10-meter Diving Platform, a 400 seat Gymnastic Arena, a Triple Teaching Gymnasium, Combatives, Handball and Squash Courts, Laboratories, Locker Facilities and Offices. It was the site of the NCAA Division II Swimming and Diving Championships in 1988 and 1989, and the 1993 World University Games diving events. The project was awarded a 1986 Design Citation from the National Pools and Spa Association.

BURCHFIELD-PENNEY ART CENTER

Rockwell Hall
Buffalo State College
1300 Elmwood Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14222-1095

The Burchfield-Penney Art Center is a regional arts museum that is a part of a leading, public, urban college. Its mission is to collect, conserve, exhibit, and interpret the achievements of distinguished artists who live, or have lived, in Western New York, most notably Charles E. Burchfield, to whom the Center is dedicated. Located on the third floor of Rockwell Hall on the Buffalo State College campus, the Center serves as a significant cultural resource for the College, the Western New York community, and the nation.

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