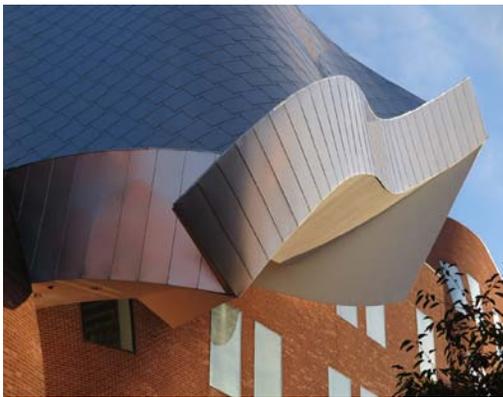


William T. Eberhard AIA, IIDA: ESSAYS ON ARCHITECTURE:

## Peter B. Lewis Weatherhead School of Management

Case Western Reserve University; Cleveland, OH



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Essays on Architecture:

**Frank Gehry's Peter B. Lewis School of Management**

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In a 2006 article that called for the City to raise its design standards, *Cleveland Plain Dealer* architecture critic Steven Litt observed, “Case Western Reserve University had a huge opportunity in 1997 when it hired Frank Gehry to design the shiny metal Peter B. Lewis Building for the Weatherhead School of Management. But the university gave the architect a less-than-prominent site at Ford Drive and Bellflower Road. Halfway through the design, former university president Agnar Pytte subtracted a substantial amount of land from the project, forcing midstream corrections that added cost and squeezed the project’s bulk into a smaller footprint.”

“Rather than illustrate the pitfalls of hiring a star, the project demonstrates what happens when the client-architect relationship isn’t as strong as it should be.”

One additional detail that did not help Gehry or the project was the revolving door at the President’s office. Gehry’s project was completed in 2002 and from 1999 – 2002, CWRU had four Presidents. When the original groundbreaking was held, Gehry arrived with a small model. Prior to the ceremony, when it was shown to President Pytte, Gehry reported that Pytte asked with horror who had sat on the model to squash it on the flight in. Pytte was obviously unfamiliar with Gehry’s architectural grammar.

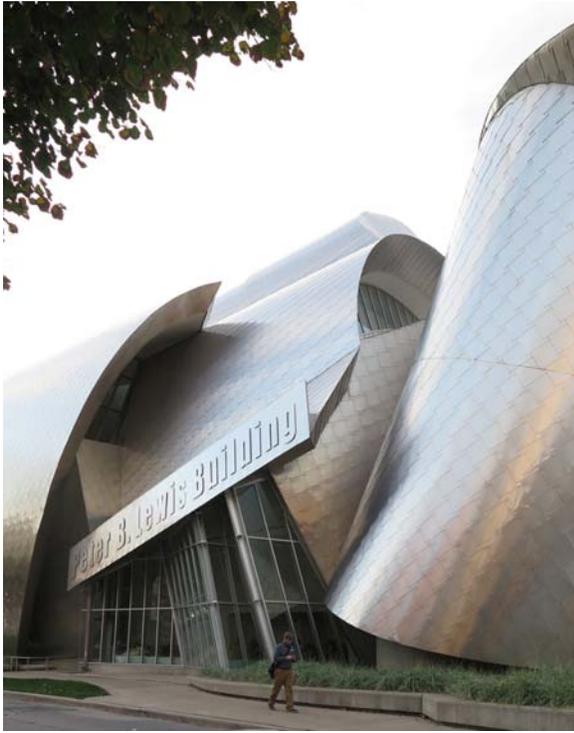
The reported project cost at that time was \$24.7 million

that Lewis proudly volunteered to provide. Perhaps most significantly, Pytte stated that the groundbreaking marked a decision by CWRU to commit itself with the Gehry project and future projects to a new higher standard of architectural design excellence.

A second groundbreaking eight months or so later featured a larger more conventional model. By this ceremony, and the project’s cost had risen to \$36.9 million. Lewis announced that he would increase his contribution to the new \$36.9 million, but “no more. I know how this guy works,” referring to his experience with Gehry on his house.

In an exhibition of Gehry’s work at London’s Sloane Museum in 2006, the CWRU project was heavily featured, as was Gehry’s design for Peter Lewis’ home. Gehry has repeatedly credited Lewis for the decade-long design process of developing concepts (and \$6M in fees paid to Gehry) for the Lewis house designs which funded his research and development of his polymorphic vocabulary. Gehry’s Lewis-fed ideology led to the iconic Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, which opened in 1997 and made Gehry a starchitect and propelled his rising career further.

Lewis started with a reported \$5 million budget for his home, which grew and grew as he acquired more fine art and expanded his entertainment needs. Lewis finally pulled the plug on Gehry when the home’s projected



Left: Weatherhead School Bellflower Rd. presence  
Right Top: Guggenheim Museum; Bilbao, Spain by Frank Gehry  
Right Lower: Lewis Residence Model from Above; Lyndhurst, OH



Guggenheim Bilbao and Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles combined.

cost reached above \$76 million.

The Lewis residence design process was described by *Washington Post* writer Linda Hales as a “saga” which was memorialized in a film noire, “A Constructive Madness,” aptly subtitled “Wherein Frank Gehry and Peter Lewis Spend a Fortune and a Decade, End Up With Nothing and Changed the World” – which Hales observed summed up the design folly.

The film begins in 1987, a decade before the titanium facade of the Guggenheim Bilbao museum would catapult Gehry to mainstream renown. Lewis had attended a lecture by Gehry and called him the following day. The request seemed simple: Design a \$5 million trophy manse in a suburb of Cleveland. But the project took on a life of its own.

With Lewis pushing and paying, the architect was encouraged to pursue ever wilder dreams. Boxy structures gave way to squiggles and blobs inspired by fish, horse heads and flocks of birds. The “house” morphed into a 35,000-square-foot village, with unexpected geometries set around a courtyard where Lewis, a contemporary art collector, could entertain. Scribbled drawings and elaborate models suggest a final design with the explosive qualities of Gehry’s

Lewis blanches on camera as he calculates paying \$40 million, but he proceeds. After the amount doubled, he called the whole thing off. Because Lewis hired a camera crew to document every meeting with the architect, viewers can join Gehry as he gets the bad news in a surreal sequence around a conference table. Lewis reveals that he “couldn’t understand the spaces,” but says, “We had to carry it over the top in order to kill it.”

Paul Goldberger, architecture critic at the *New Yorker*, says in the film, “I know of nothing else in architectural history quite like it, where there’s a single project that serves as a laboratory paralleling other built works all along.”

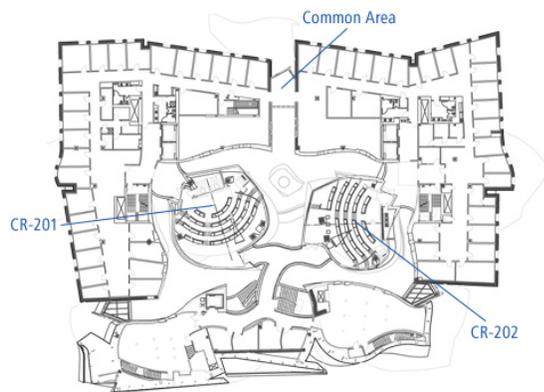
For Case, Lewis famously challenged Gehry to design a building “that would start fights in bars.” At Gehry’s presentations, he claims he began design by using simple orthogonal wood blocks in a series of blocking and stacking models, supposedly arranging the elements of the program based on their affinity and adjacency needs. Yet as completed, the building locates faculty offices, classrooms and meeting areas on each of its five floors atop one another to encourage informal interaction.

The third and final groundbreaking involved a massive eight-foot by eight-foot model in sections that one could actually walk in to. By that time, the project’s cost had floated to \$60

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Left Above: Guggenheim Museum Interior; Bilbao, Spain  
 Right Top: CWRU Lewis Weatherhead School Interior  
 Right Lower: CWRU Lewis Weatherhead School Rooftop  
 Below: Weatherhead School of Management Second Floor Plan



million, and Lewis reminded Case and the crowd that his contribution capped at \$36.9 and the rest was on CWRU. But Lewis became aware that the project's cost continued to spiral out of control.

So did others. A number of Contractors working on the project were justifiably proud of their work on the unusual design with its curving, swooping, polymorphic forms. The drywall contractor gave our firm three tours of the building as it staggered to completion. We were told that their original base bid contract was \$3

million, and on the final tour approximately two months before the project was to be occupied, their contract stood at \$9 million with "hundreds of thousands of dollars" in outstanding change order requests from them pending along with "millions" from the rest of the contractors.

They also reported, as did another contractor, that the approved construction cost at that time as reported at the latest job meeting two days earlier was \$77 million with over \$10M in outstanding change order requests pending. We learned that the fixtures, furnishings and equipment for the project were a \$5M expense. Gehry's fees were reported to be 20% of the construction cost - 10% for design and 10% for the CAD steel fabrication shop drawings.

This information got back to Lewis who was outraged that his graduate school of management project was so mismanaged by CWRU. He wrote an infamous public letter that *Cleveland* magazine published in which he harshly criticized Case for their lack of management. Lewis imposed a boycott against all Cleveland philanthropic contributions in protest of what he saw as an "incestuous old-boy network of interlocking board members on local charities, including CWRU (*Plain Dealer*; 11-25-13)."

To those of us with first hand knowledge, it has been fascinating to see CWRU publicly claim after the project was completed and occupied that its cost was an alleged \$67 million when hundreds if not thousands of Clevelanders know the actual cost was approximately \$100 million.

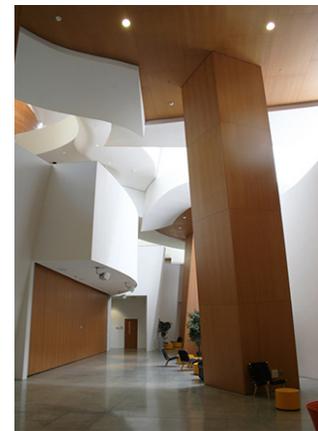
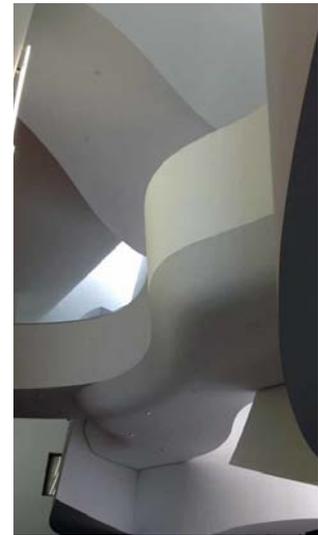


Lewis had long felt dismissed and insulted by Cleveland's elite. He was a vocal critic in expressing his conviction that Cleveland has been in decline because it has too many lawyers in civic leadership:

"Lawyers are functionaries hired by the people who do something," he said, "but we've got a situation where they're running the town. It's absurd. Those aren't the people who drive creativity. Their whole job is to keep people from doing things."

When the budget creep continued at CWRU, Lewis asked to meet with the Board - and was refused. The individual who provided the largest contribution in the school's history was denied an opportunity to address the institution's leaders. While it may have been fear, Lewis stated that he thought it was because "they can't stand me." But they took his money.

Architecturally, to those expecting a Bilbao-like soaring interior of romantic curving forms and light-filled common areas, the interior of Gehry's school at Case is disappointing and tense. Two full-time painters roam the building, patching surfaces from water leaks and touching up the exposed drywall knee walls and partitions that daily use cause to get scuffed and nicked. Faculty offices are narrow and tall with rolling ladders to access reference materials. Furniture is inexpensive and originally, their floors were exposed



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Left Above: CWRU Lewis Weatherhead School of Management  
Right Top: CWRU Weatherhead School Lounge



concrete with inexpensive lay-in ceilings and strip lighting.

In lecture halls, all of the audio-visual elements are slapped on surfaces after the fact, giving the appearance, deserved or not, that Gehry never gave a single thought to integrating these instructional assets needed for the function of the program he was charged to design.

Functionally, perhaps the most disingenuous aspect of the building is that when Pytte reduced the size of the land available for the project, Gehry found it necessary to eliminate the student-faculty lounge which was the primary program element to justify the building in the first place – a place where students and faculty could meet and interact, exchange ideas and learn from one another. Ethically, it is difficult to imagine that the 150,000 sf building that stands today did not have a prioritized program of needs that would have exempted such an important element from being scratched.

In the ultimate irony, even though it had by then been eliminated, Lewis reported at the initial groundbreaking that he and Gehry had spoken of a need for the project to have a Rathskeller/ bar-like area where students and faculty could talk, debate and exchange ideas. Lewis saw this space as the most important space in the project. Lewis acknowledged repeatedly that he asked Gehry to design a building “that would start fights in bars” as evidence of his wish to facilitate the earnest exchange of ideas and to incorporate the nature and value of creativity.

So when President Pytte reduced the site for the project during the design process, Gehry deleted the very area that compelled Lewis to give money to build the building in the first place. Gehry instead located a widened circulation space between classrooms on the lower level of the project, one floor below the street grade entry.

The building's exterior features a series of warping and undulating stainless steel sheets or sails atop curving and warping walls with windows punched in them. The stainless roof forms have a thickness, but the impact of their mass is dimmed somewhat by the fact that their undersides are simply white painted drywall. The forms of the building's masses and roof elements also do not translate into wonderful soaring spaces in the interior that transpose those forms - or justify them.

Gehry is dishonest here, for such robust and expensive forms deserve an ideology and a *raison-d'être*. Here, the purpose, absent any other cause – or effect – seems to be an exterior composition that enables Gehry to earn the next commission from a prospective client lured to him by his seductive forms seen mostly on the outside.

The building is a dramatic collision of melting masonry and stainless steel curvilinear forms that pour out toward the sidewalks and streets and curl back towards the center of the mass. At its top, the roof forms appear to be giant ribbons or fabric shapes, undulating into and over one another, leading one to imagine that there are spectacular interior volumes to be experienced inside.

At a symbolic level, Gehry's intent seems to be a celebration of a state of alchemy - a medieval magical notion of transformation of base metals into gold. But Gehry's polymorphic forms are not melting - they are visually heated to the point of folding and warping onto and under one another - but not to the point of melting to liquid form. Litt has fairly credited Gehry and Case with the project presenting a brand identity of the school that “encourages unconventional training.”

On the interior, Gehry's brick and steel forms give way



Left Above: Gehry and Lewis at the building opening, 2003  
Right Top: CWRU Lewis Weatherhead School  
Right Middle: Lewis Residence Model; Lyndhurst, OH; Unbuilt  
Right Lower Middle: Gehry Preliminary Concept Sketch, Lewis Center  
Right Lower: CWRU Lewis Weatherhead School Rooftop

to wood slats and painted drywall. Lots of painted drywall. And while the lecture labs push into an awkward and tense multi-level space that could be called an atrium, it is rather a spatial void that is made tense by the constraints likely imposed by Gehry having his site reduced during the design process. It is a reasonable question to wonder if the change in site should not have elicited from Gehry a different design response.

It is possible to assert here that Gehry's composition is a challenge to students and faculty to encounter - and therefore anticipate - the unexpected which may appear chaotic and unorthodox, and in doing so, create order out of chaos. But given that Gehry's design motif is like an essentially identical suit of clothes that he adorns upon each project like a mannikin, this narrative attempt at decoding significance gives Gehry undeserved credit.

Instead, Gehry has repeatedly claimed to approach his work as sculptor, where the resulting building is an art object, albeit with required functional attributes. With this detached approach, Gehry attempts to buy himself a hall pass to avoid the obligation of an ideology which reliably - or at least purposely - justifies his designs and forms. But if his work is simply art, Gehry simply gets to stand back and have us determine if the results reflect any of the attributes we expect of art.

But we require more of our architecture than a level of compositional adequacy, though we do not always receive it. We require that our architecture - especially our most important, largest and/or most expensive works - provide shelter, support its intended activities and symbolically represent our values and beliefs in built form.

The interior forms, while interesting, do not literally map the



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exterior envelope, particularly as it meets the sky. Those wild roof billows do not often present themselves on the interior to delight one as could have reasonably expected. There are no wonderful grand spaces like Bilbao.

In 2012, local architecture critic Steven Litt wrote an interesting polemic on art and architecture in Cleveland. Litt traced the city's conservative and weak legacy in the arts and architecture to a number of factors, notably the city's ethnic heritage and its evolution as an industrial city with a pragmatic conservative value base.

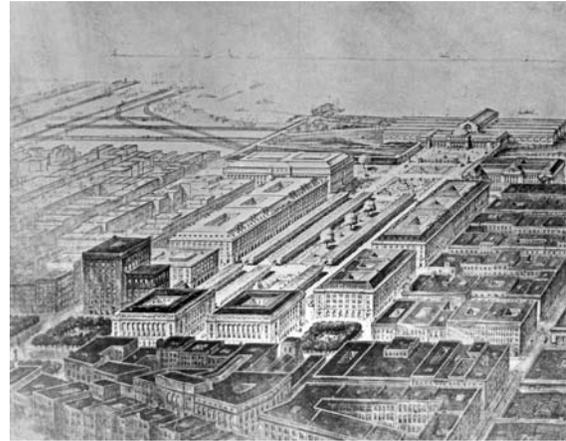
As the city rose to prominence in its industrial evolution from 1890 to 1930, those who supported the arts were wealthy white Anglo-Saxons: the Severance, Mather and Hanna families. They were interested in the arts and were generous, building the Music School Settlement (1912), the Cleveland Play House (1915), Cleveland Museum of Art (1916), the Cleveland Orchestra's hall (1918) and the Cleveland Institute of Music (1920).

Litt offers his perspective that the purpose of the generosity of these families was to expose the city's immigrants from "poor countries" in central and Eastern Europe to culture and to also compete for the prestige of elevated culture like other cities, perhaps to also be able to recruit top tier talent to grow their own businesses.

Litt observes that in contrast to other art patrons in the Midwest, Cleveland's early patrons did not personally guide their major museum and musical institutions to assure high standards of performance and achievement. Instead, Cleveland's elites appointed "professional managers" who pursued conservative approaches to art history, "thereby honoring the tastes and preferences on trustees, who actively discouraged directors and curators from investing in modern and contemporary art."

This detachment from the obligation to invest in the process of absorbing and determining what constitutes "good art" or "good architecture" damns Cleveland's community to this day. It explains why so many 'leaders' on the boards of institutions have no clue what constitutes design excellence and are so willing to abdicate their responsibilities and reach for a Get-Out-of-Jail Free card by engaging out-of-town firms. In doing so, they avoid their duty to the community by taking the time and trouble to identify the skills and criteria that their own projects require, against which alternative firms - regardless of the location of their mailbox - should be benchmarked to support an informed decision.

On Gehry's project, CWRU's detachment took the form of scope and cost becoming untethered and the spiralling costs signaled to Lewis that the university - on a graduate management program building - was incapable of



Above: Daniel Burnham's 1903 Cleveland Group Plan

managing the money he had given them when he was expecting at least a modicum of stewardship.

Peter Lewis was most assuredly not a conservative thinker. His affection for contemporary art was legendary as he built a respectable though not exceptional collection of contemporary art at his Progressive Insurance Company's headquarters to stimulate his employees to challenge themselves and motivate them to work creatively for Lewis.

But Cleveland's architectural heritage, like most cities, is rooted in neoclassicism, originally offered by Chicago architect Daniel Burnham with his 1903 Group Plan. Burnham proposed a series of neoclassical public buildings around a central civic green space that would stretch from the library, post office and courthouse just off of Public Square and extend to the north to between the country courthouse and city hall with a train station terminus overlooking Lake Erie.

But the Van Swearingen's captured the railroad enterprises serving the city and moved the train terminal to Terminal Tower in 1930, stealing the mall and its promenade of its intended exclamation point. Litt fairly believes that Burnham's neoclassicism - "a backward-looking style" - influenced the city for decades as the chosen style for all major buildings, including Terminal Tower, Cleveland Museum of Art, the Federal Reserve Bank, and Severance Hall.

But, as Litt observes, by the mid 1930's, "Burnham-style neoclassicism was utterly passe." Art Deco arrived in a flourish in New York with Rockefeller Center (1930-1939), the Chrysler Building (1928-1930), the Empire State Building (1930-1931) and the New York Daily News (1929-1930).

The Cleveland firm of Hubbell and Benes designed the AT&T Huron Building (1925-1927) in the Art Deco style. CSU's Fenn Tower (1929-1930) by New York's George Post & Sons and Akron's First National Bank/ First Merit/ Huntington Bank Tower by Cleveland's Walker & Weeks (1931) bear evidence that northeast Ohio was not oblivious to those changing tastes in architecture. Yet Litt has a point: Cleveland has never been the place where the stone hits the water first when it comes to being the vanguard for new ideas in art or architecture.

Shortly after Gehry's building was completed in 2002, a Cleveland winter graced Gehry's cantilevered roof undulations with the winter snow. The Santa Monica-based Gehry had apparently not anticipated that the building's heat loss would turn snow to water and that as it moved down and beyond the planes of the heated building, it would turn to ice.

"You might have to walk on the road to make sure you don't get hit by ice," said Adam Searl, then a junior at Case Western's Weatherhead School of Management. "Maybe they should have thought about it before they had built the building. It's Cleveland. We get ice. We get snow. We get rain."

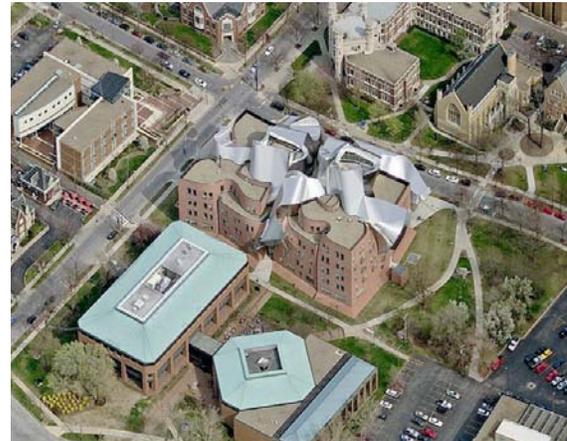
It is remarkable that none of the consultants or contractors on the project pointed out the omission before or during construction. The fear of injuries compelled the university to initially erect barriers to keep pedestrians outside the danger zones beneath the cantilevered roof forms. Case then removed the sidewalk areas in question and added landscaping in their place, giving Gehry is own Get-Out-of-Jail Free card.

At the initial groundbreaking, CWRU officials stated that Gehry's project would set a new high standard for architectural excellence that CWRU would champion into the future with its subsequent projects. Lewis beamed.

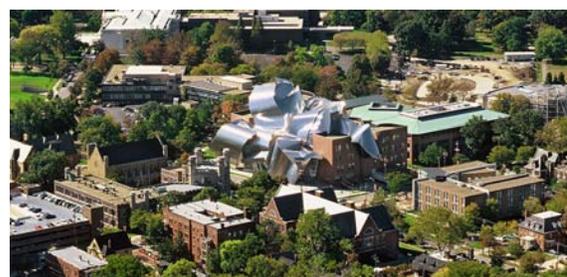
Upon the project's completion, following the public ridicule heaped on CWRU by Lewis for the project's spiralling costs, one of the university's project managers told me that the new president when reminded of Pytte's original pledge to achieve a new standard of design excellence, stated "Well, we'll never do that again."

## Context, Part I:

It bears noting that the site at the intersection of Ford and Bellflower that Gehry was given came with weaknesses. The irresponsibly weak pair of buildings on the north side of Ford are perhaps the weakest buildings on the Case campus. Directly across the street from Weatherhead is the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, designed



Left Above, Clockwise:  
1. Aerial view of Lewis Center  
2. Full-time painters at Lewis Center  
3. Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences by James Stewart Polsheck/ Ennead  
4. Aerial view of Ford & Bellflower



by Akron native James Stewart Polsheck, with the firm now rebranded as Ennead Architects following Polsheck's retirement. Polsheck's design is a primitive U-shaped double-loaded corridor form with a flat masonry exterior and a small stone and brick banded corner entry pulled back from the street.

The wings of the U-shaped Mandel building pair punched vertical windows atop one another in what looks like a cheap motel. And Polsheck failed to make the entry plaza a worthwhile public or civic element. The building reflects the lowest form of institutional

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design quality.

In 2016, CWRU spent \$9.2 million to renovate the Mandel building with WRL/ DLR Group, which at least brought a level of functional dignity to the interior.

Across the street on the northeast corner of the intersection is a glimpse into the result of the revolving door at the office of the President and an institution that had no clear brand identity at the time the project was conceived. Essentially a campus conference center, the George S. Dively Center was designed by Architectural Resources Cambridge, Inc. (ARC) of Boston in an overtly sweet cartoon-like postmodern style.

ARC was doubtlessly trying to fit in and possibly match the Mather Memorial Hall across Ford on the southeast corner which also connects to the intersection with a diagonal walk and a setback entry. But ARC's shallow attempts to emulate the stone and masonry details of 100 years ago, projecting bay windows below flush eyebrow windows above - a technical foul - and the false parapets in front of flat roofs appear cheap and flat in ARC's hands. This lack of design excellence also reveals the regrettable lack of design sensitivity on the part of the client, which until 1971, itself produced architectural graduates in an accredited degree program.

The Flora Stone Mather Memorial Building was designed in 1911 by one of Cleveland's greatest architects, Charles Schweinfurth, whose credits also include Old Stone Church, Trinity Cathedral, the Union Club, Church of the Covenant, and CWRU's Haydn Hall and Harkness Chapel.

Accordingly, Gehry's charge to nest his project into this irregular and spectacularly imperfect context essentially obligated him to respect only the nature of placing the right of entry to the building at the corner of the intersection of Ford and Bellflower, which he did - sort of. Beyond that, any architect with skill or self-respect would have justifiably felt duty-bound to disregard altogether the design, massing and materiality of the Mandel and Dively buildings. And it can be reasonably argued that Gehry's use of a red brick as one of his two exterior materials as well as his varied roof levels evidences a dutiful respect for Schweinfurth's Mather building.

**Context, Part II:**

Another litmus text for Gehry's Lewis Center should be other important higher education buildings of that time. And while subjectivity represents an opportunity for derailment, I will limit the comparison to a short



Above: George S. Dively Center; Architectural Resources Cambridge, Inc.

Below: Mather Memorial Hall; 1911-1913; Charles Schweinfurth

Middle left: Peter Lewis & Frank Gehry with Lewis Center presentation model #2

Middle right: Mather Memorial Hall; Charles Schweinfurth

Bottom: Peter B. Lewis Center roofscape





selection of projects from published summaries of 'the best academic buildings in America.'

While the list reflects buildings from 1970 to today, they reflect the compliment of compositionally formal architecture as well as projects that can be argued are intended in aspiration and execution to be merely handsome buildings without any pretense of supporting any intended symbolic interpretation.

Left Above, Clockwise:

1. Geisel Library, UC-San Diego; William Pereira
2. Geisel Library, UC-San Diego; William Pereira
3. Lewis Katz Hall, Dickinson School of Law, Penn State; Ennead Architects
4. Plan, Lewis Katz Hall, Dickinson School of Law, Penn State; Ennead Architects
5. Lewis Katz Hall, Dickinson School of Law, Penn State; Ennead Architects
6. Courtyard, Lewis Katz Hall, Dickinson School of Law, Penn State; Ennead Architects
7. Mansueto Library, University of Chicago, Helmut Jahn
8. Mansueto Library reading room, University of Chicago, Helmut Jahn
9. Mansueto Library section drawing, University of Chicago, Helmut Jahn
10. Mansueto Library automated retrieval system, University of Chicago, Helmut Jahn

William Periera's **Geisel Library at the University of California-San Diego** was completed in 1970 for only \$4 million. The eight-story structure sits at the mouth of a canyon as the college's central library with its collection on the top five floors and classrooms, learning labs and support areas on the lower three levels.



Periera intended the structure to look like hands holding up the books as symbols of knowledge to be revered. Though Brutalist in its materiality and geometry, it is a dramatic and respected landmark that works functionally and symbolically.

The **Lewis Katz Hall at the Dickinson College of Law at Penn State** is a 114,000 sf building completed in 2009. Its sinuous snake-like form integrates lecture labs and the school's law library in an effort to respond to the surrounding mountains/ hills and the geology of the valley claims Ennead Architects.



The courtyard is an open but public civic gesture with dimensions of organic and mechanical solidarity, possible because of the generous site availability that was not afforded Gehry at CWRU.

**The Mansueto Library at the University of Chicago** by Helmut Jahn delivers a level of innovation that while different from Gehry's, is more programmatically targeted and no less iconic. Jahn's oval glass dome reading room was completed in 2011 and sits atop an underground high-density automated asset retrieval system designed to accommodate the school's growing collection for the next 20 years.



Gehry's own Stata Center - now referred to as **Building 32 - at MIT** has an interesting place in the dialogue. Completed in 2004, the \$300 million 720,000 sf project's complexity in function and in form is dizzying.

The chaotic organization of the building's elements makes wayfinding an adventure. A review of the plans of the various levels reflects what appears to be a random organization of elements without regard to affinity or coherent circulation.



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The building's forms, shapes and materiality seem to be Gehry's most outrageous and unrefined sculpture to date in the context of a rigidly orthogonal campus. Indeed, some of the praise heaped on Gehry's Stata was in celebratory contempt for the existing rigid campus geometry.

*Boston Globe* architecture columnist Robert Campbell wrote a glowing appraisal of the building on April 25, 2004. According to Campbell, "the Stata is always going to look unfinished. It also looks as if it's about to collapse. Columns tilt at scary angles. Walls teeter, swerve, and collide in random curves and angles. Materials change wherever you look: brick, mirror-surface steel, brushed aluminum, brightly colored paint, corrugated metal. Everything looks improvised, as if thrown up at the last moment. That's the point. The Stata's appearance is a metaphor for the freedom, daring, and creativity of the research that's supposed to occur inside it."

To others, it is a metaphor for chaos and failure. The Wicked Witch of the West is in there somewhere - melting along with Gehry's forms.

Campbell stated that the cost overruns and delays in completion of the Stata Center are of no more importance than similar problems associated with the building of St. Paul's Cathedral. But that's putting Gehry a bit too close to God for his efforts. It's an academic building, not a temple of worship.

The 2005 *Kaplan/Newsweek* guide *How to Get into College*, which lists twenty-five universities its editors consider notable in some respect, recognizes MIT as having the "hottest architecture", placing most of its emphasis on Gehry's Stata Center.

Though there are many who praise this building, and in fact from the perspective of Gehry's other work, it is considered by some as one of his best, there are certainly many who are less enamored of the structure. Mathematician and architectural theorist Nikos Salingaros has harshly criticized the Stata Center:

"An architecture that reverses structural algorithms so as to create disorder—the same algorithms that in an infinitely more detailed application generate living form—ceases to be architecture. Deconstructivist buildings are the most visible symbols of actual deconstruction. The randomness they embody is the antithesis of nature's organized complexity. This is despite effusive praise in the press for "exciting" new academic buildings, such as the



Left Above, Clockwise:

1. Stata/ Building 32, MIT, aerial; Frank Gehry
2. Stata/ Building 32, MIT; campus aerial; Frank Gehry
3. Stata/ Building 32, MIT; Frank Gehry
4. Stata/ Building 32, MIT; Frank Gehry
5. Stata/ Building 32, MIT; Frank Gehry
6. Stata/ Building 32, MIT, 4th Floor Plan; Frank Gehry
7. Stata/ Building 32, MIT, Ground Level Plan; Frank Gehry
8. Stata/ Building 32; Frank Gehry

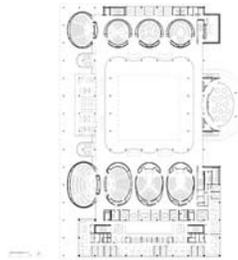


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Left Above, Clockwise:

1. Edward P. Evans Hall, Yale School of Management, Yale University; Sir Norman Foster
2. Edward P. Evans Hall, Yale School of Management, Yale University; Sir Norman Foster
3. Edward P. Evans Hall, Yale School of Management, Yale University; Sir Norman Foster
4. Edward P. Evans Hall, Yale School of Management, Yale University; Sir Norman Foster
5. Edward P. Evans Hall, Yale School of Management, Yale University; Sir Norman Foster
6. Edward P. Evans Hall, Yale School of Management, Yale University; Sir Norman Foster
7. Edward P. Evans Hall, Yale School of Management, Yale University; Sir Norman Foster
8. Edward P. Evans Hall, Yale School of Management, Yale University; Sir Norman Foster
- 9, 10. Stata/ Building 32; Frank Gehry



Peter B. Lewis Management Building at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, the Vontz Center for Molecular Studies at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center, and the Stata Center for Computer, Information, and Intelligence Sciences at MIT, all by Frank Gehry. Housing a scientific department at a university inside the symbol of its nemesis must be the ultimate irony.

Former Boston University president John Silber said the building “really is a disaster.” Architecture critic Robert Campbell praised Gehry for “breaking up the monotony of a street of concrete buildings” and being “a building like no other building.” The style of the building has been likened to German Expressionism of the 1920’s.

MIT filed a lawsuit against Frank O. Gehry and Skanska USA Building Inc., the construction company that built the Stata Center, alleging that Gehry was negligent in designing the building and that both Gehry and Skanska breached their contractual obligations.

The lawsuit cited “design and construction failures” on the Stata Center project which resulted in “masonry cracking” and “poor drainage” at the outdoor amphitheater, “persistent leaks,” “sliding ice and snow from the building,” and “mold growth.” Gehry’s insurance company and MIT finally resolved the lawsuit with a payment to MIT of an undisclosed sum. MIT paid Gehry’s Los Angeles-based firm \$15 million (over \$21/sf!) to design the building.

Sir Norman Foster’s **Edward P. Evans Hall at Yale**, completed in 2013, is a landmark project. It is also for Yale’s School of Management. While similar in scale and approach to Foster’s Educational Campus for CWRU and the Cleveland Clinic, the Evans Hall project has a more distinct, clear, expressive and exciting result than his effort in Cleveland.

The \$189 million 225,000 sf project is a four-story mix of classrooms, offices, student and meeting spaces. The wafer roof, held aloft by hollow circular painted columns, caps a sinuous full-height perimeter glass wall. Inside are bright blue-clad lecture halls with undulating staging and lounge areas with custom furniture for a range of social functions, wrapped around an interior courtyard.

Unlike Gehry, Foster details the hell out of his projects and his lecture halls here integrate the best AV technology in an elegant and effective manner. Foster also integrated parking below grade which Gehry was not tasked to do.

Essays on Architecture:

**Frank Gehry's Peter B. Lewis School of Management**

Case Western Reserve University; Cleveland, OH

While one could easily cite a dozen other projects, the sample simply indicates that there are noteworthy projects being designed and built on campuses throughout the country that reflect the highest standards of design in delivering effective learning environments that also address the technological, social and civic needs of those educational communities. Gehry's Lewis Center gets low marks on the latter, in part because his site was squeezed. But his building should be more open and inviting than it is and he should have given a darn about successfully integrating technology. It would have delivered a more effective asset to CWRU.

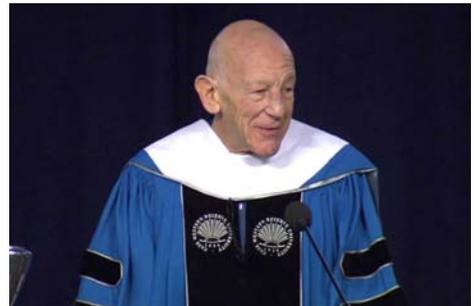
**Conclusion:**

Seeking to pull Lewis back into the fold and end his hiatus of financial support, CWRU invited Lewis to deliver its commencement address in 2013. The previous July, he had given \$5 million to the Cleveland Institute of Art, indicating a thaw in his frozen philanthropy in the region. In his commencement remarks, Lewis praised CWRU President Synder for leadership and encouraged CWRU to collaborate on the proposed Uptown development project, as they have since done, insisting on a high level of design excellence.

Lewis told graduating students that "living up to the highest possible standard of integrity will make your life simpler, happier and healthier," echoing his advocacy of transparency at Progressive at a time when corporate dishonesty led to the bankruptcy of the Houston-based energy trading firm Enron in 2001.

CWRU conferred upon Lewis an honorary doctor of humane letters in recognition of his leadership at Progressive and in the community through philanthropy. Prior to his death on November 23, 2013, Lewis had donated over \$500 million of his \$1.2B net worth. His largest benefactors were Princeton University (\$233 million), Case Western Reserve University (\$36.9 million), the Guggenheim Museum (\$50 million), Oberlin College (\$37 million) and the American Civil Liberties Union (\$15 million).

Pittsburgh architecture critic Charles Rosenblum praised Gehry's building: "The Peter B. Lewis building at Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Business is the most remarkable new structure in several states. Like his other work, Gehry's Cleveland building is brash to



Left Above, Clockwise:  
1. Peter B. Lewis & Frank Gehry  
2. Peter B. Lewis at CWRU Commencement, 5-19-13  
3. Lewis Center, CWRU; Frank Gehry



the point of being surreal. In addition to his characteristic eruptions of cascading bent metal, even the brick walls of the six-story structure curve and coil. The result is as if Dr. Seuss and Timothy Leary snuck in and finished the project while Gehry was asleep."

"The interior is a similarly amorphous festival: Curving passageways, floating volumes, skewed columns and picturesque overlooks abound, with barely a straight line in sight. Even the fire-exit maps look like abstract expressionist paintings, yet there is still something strangely gentle and humane about the whole enterprise. Not incidentally, the structure emphatically serves its purpose as a business school, with high-tech classrooms, offices, libraries and meeting spaces."

Others suggest Gehry is repeating himself. Critics claim the use of disjointed metal panoply - often titanium - that has become Gehry's trademark is overused, and that almost all of his recent work seems derivative of his landmark Bilbao Guggenheim. Even his horse head form appeared in models for the Lewis home, and was constructed in Vinoly's Princeton Lab building after being incorporated into the DZ Bank in Berlin.

There can be no argument.

The lack of advanced stewardship and project management by CWRU - and Gehry - enabled Gehry to get away with more than a few excesses and functional lapses. It is important that projects such as the Lewis Weatherhead School of Management get designed and realized, even if it is not Gehry's most complete or successful work. For all of his opportunities and lavish budgets, such an accomplishment has yet to be seen.



Above: Fisher Performing Arts Center, Bard College; Frank Gehry  
Middle: Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles; Frank Gehry  
Bottom Far Left: Lewis Residence Model, Lyndhurst, OH; Frank Gehry  
Bottom Left: DZ Bank, Berlin; Frank Gehry  
Bottom Right: Princeton Icahn Laboratory Conference Room; Frank Gehry

