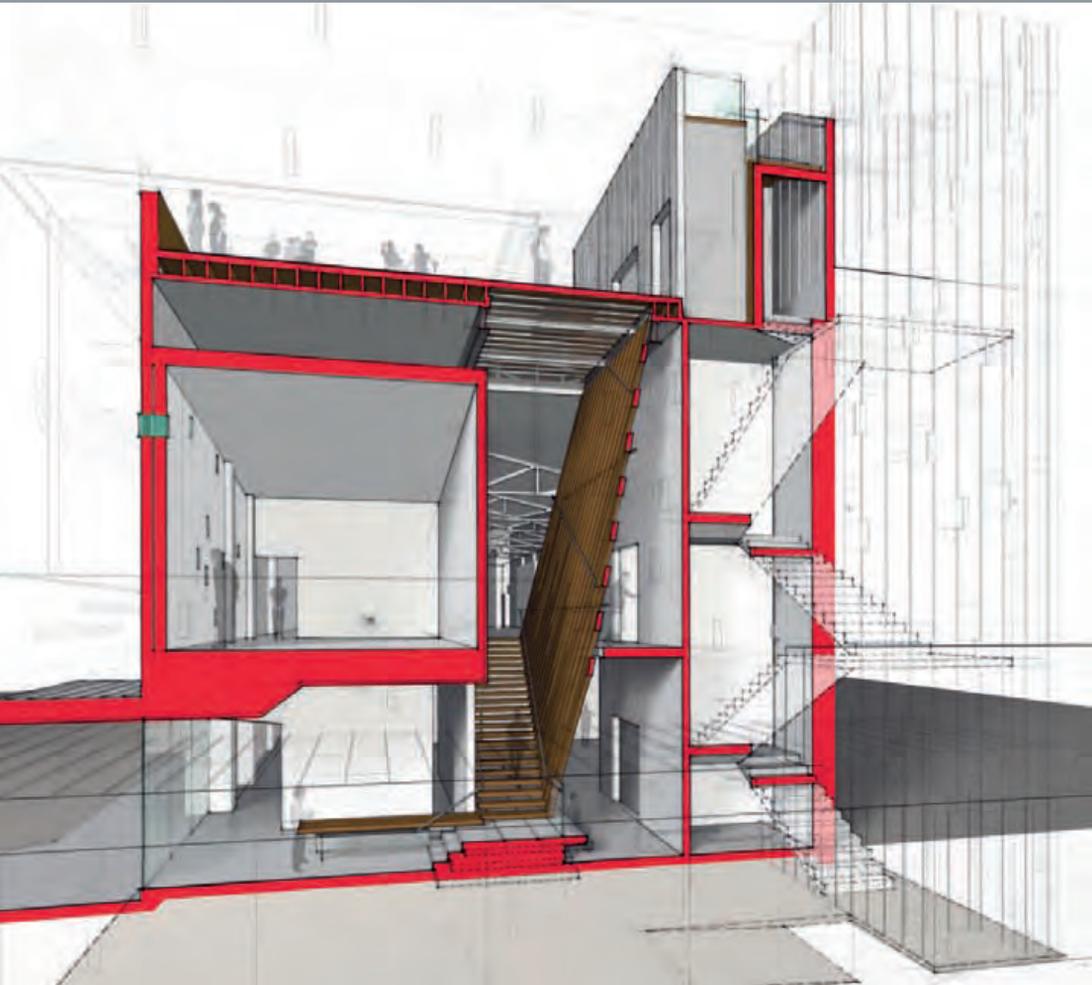




LTL ARCHITECTS

Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis





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This exhibition brings together eighteen built and speculative architectural projects by the award-winning New York-based firm, LTL Architects, founded in 1997 by principals, Paul Lewis, Marc Tsurumaki, and David J. Lewis. In their practice, LTL's research and tactical approaches mine program, site, and constraints to surface possibilities and fulfill function through highly layered and interactive architectural interventions. They do this by consciously remaining open to possibility and seeking the “perhaps” and “why not?” instead of the default human binary of “either/or.”

In their 2008 monograph, *Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis: Opportunistic Architecture*, they assert, “. . . LTL is an architectural practice driven by a curiosity about the world and optimism about the architect's role in shaping the built environment. We aim to create a practice that is simultaneously critical and engaged, working between these often-polarized positions in the discourse of architecture . . . This approach situates the architect not as utopian visionary or dutiful professional but as equal parts alchemist and realist . . .”¹ Although the architects state that they employ numerous tactics in their practice, the following essay explores just three—playful curiosity, the potential inherent in constraints, and public experience.

Above: Interior view of *ipe* wood stair looking down from the second floor gallery at Arthouse at the Jones Center, Austin, TX, 2010. Photography: Michael Moran

Front top: Entrance to Arthouse at the Jones Center, Austin, TX, 2010. Photography: Michael Moran

Front bottom: Cross-section of entrance to Arthouse at the Jones Center. Drawing: LTL Architects

The first tactic, playful curiosity, is probably the most persistent operational modality used by LTL, often taking the form of driving program function through floors, walls, and out of the building envelope as a means of developing not only interior/interior and interior/exterior dialogue, but also conduits for public experience. This is apparent in Bornhuetter Hall (2004), a residence hall on The College of Wooster campus with cantilevered study nooks that escape the buildings' twin masses to overlook and maybe even surveil the entry courtyard below, and reaches an apogee of sorts in Arthouse at the Jones Center (2010), a contemporary *kunsthalle* located in downtown Austin, TX. (Arthouse is housed in a building that began as a 1920s theatre, and was adapted into a department store in the 1950s). Here, the *ipe* wood of the rooftop deck cascades down through the building to form a dramatic floating stair that wraps around at the lower level to become the front desk. Primary for Arthouse's goals as an organization are the ways in which the building's most recent re-adaptation telegraphs its mission as an “active” citizen, from the 177-laminated glass filled perforations in the front and side of the building whose density correspond with interior activities, to the second floor “picture” window that becomes a rear-projection video screen at night providing what amounts to access to contemporary art 24/7 in downtown Austin. Similarly, at the recently completed Claremont University Consortium (CUC) offices in Claremont, CA, a 740-foot cedar surface designed to define the entry and exterior gathering space playfully slips inside to frame the reception area and café before moving outside again to encompass a large patio area.

The second tactic underlying some, if not all, of LTL's projects is the proposition that constraints—whether site, program or budget—are actually catalysts to be embraced as a means of provoking unexpected solutions. At Arthouse, this took the form of an interior brick wall layered with the painted remnants of past histories being preserved by the architects even though it created the larger problematic of maintaining flexibility within a space that, at times, requires a neutral fourth wall for exhibiting art. This self-imposed constraint-turned-opportunity resulted in a highly unusual solution for a museum space—a 57'-long suspended wall that moves across the gallery space radically reconfiguring the gallery for each installation. At CUC, the structural steel spans in what was a maintenance building provided ample room for over 100 open-concept offices in addition to preserving a large central area that serves as a gathering space for the campus and community, complete with a bleacher rising out the expanse of red carpet.



Entrance, Claremont University Consortium Administrative Campus, Claremont, CA, 2011. Photography: Luke Gibson

The goal in this work is to intensify and expand the impact of a reduced set of operations, asking less to be more, through the interweaving of functional engagement and material conditions.²

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Interior, Claremont University Consortium Administrative Campus, Claremont, CA, 2011. Photography: Luke Gibson

Yet, for sheer scale and complexity, the speculative project *Water Proving Ground* (2010), posed perhaps the most significant physical and culturally charged design impediments to date. As part of the exhibition, *Rising Currents: Projects for New York's Waterfront*, organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, LTL was one of five architecture firms selected to research and execute a design proposal on the future impacts of rising sea levels on the New York harbor.³ For their proposal, LTL was given the Liberty State Park area, which includes the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Instead of designing sea walls or increasing the height of the existing landfill, their design solution reshaped the existing landfill into a series of gradual slopes that would engage both the fluctuations in tide and higher sea levels through aquaculture, parks, a water hotel, and a produce market, to become an amphibious landscape activated by rising tides and connected by both land and water transportation.⁴ An economically desirable aspect of their design is the considerably increased coastline within a highly populated urban area.



Study nook overlooking the entrance courtyard in Bornhuetter Hall, The College of Wooster, Wooster, OH, 2004. Photography: Michael Moran

The third tactic employed by LTL—which both informs and is informed by playful curiosity and the potential of the problematic—is that of public experience, or put another way, thinking about how to use architecture to bring people together. In *Opportunistic Architecture*, LTL maintains that, “At a time in which technologies of social, interpersonal isolation are multiplying . . . we are particularly interested in the critical role an architecture of multivalent performance can play in intensifying everyday public experiences through overlapping functions and creative juxtapositions.”⁵ This is perhaps LTL’s most prescient and socially significant focus as isolation is increasingly cited as the next great social illness, if it isn’t already (think crowded coffee house with individuals engaged in parallel work). And while there are numerous theories regarding the epidemiology of social isolation, including being inundated by what amounts to a fire hose of data, there is little disagreement about its deleterious effects on human beings.

Ultimately, by focusing their practice on ways to create opportunities for physical nexus—as seen in Bornhuetter’s study nooks, *Water Proving Ground*’s intersection of research and recreation, and Arthouse’s externalized mission—LTL’s tactical endeavors coalesce to not only reflect the realities of our era, but could very well serve as a model for ameliorating what may increasingly ail us.

Kitty McManus Zurko, Director/Curator
The College of Wooster Art Museum

NOTES

1. David J. Lewis, Paul Lewis, and Marc Tsurumaki, *Lewis. Tsurumaki. Lewis: Opportunistic Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008) 6.
2. David J. Lewis, Paul Lewis, and Marc Tsurumaki, “Multivalent Performance in the Work of Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis,” *Design* 78, no. 3 (2008): 46-53.
3. The exhibition *Rising Currents: Projects for New York's Waterfront* took place from March 24–October 11, 2010, at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, and was conceived by Barry Bergdoll, The Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design, as part of MoMA’s *Issues in Contemporary Architecture* series.
4. LTL ARCHITECTS, *Rising Currents Exhibition, MoMA: Water Proving Ground*, 2010, <http://www.ltlwork.net/website/pdfs/moma.pdf>.
5. David J. Lewis et al, *Opportunistic Architecture*, 13.



Site plan of Water Proving Ground from *Rising Currents: Projects for New York's Waterfront*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, March 24–October 11, 2010. Drawing: LTL Architects



Detail of Water Proving Ground: Water Lodge, 2010. Drawing: LTL Architects



January 17–March 5, 2012
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About LTL ARCHITECTS

Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis (LTL Architects) is a design intensive architecture firm founded in 1997 by Paul Lewis, Marc Tsurumaki and David J. Lewis. Located in New York City, LTL Architects engages in a diverse range of work, from large-scale academic and cultural buildings to interiors and speculative research projects. The recipient of the 2007 National Design Award for Interior Design from the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum-Smithsonian, New York, NY, LTL Architects was also selected as one of six American architectural firms featured in the U.S. Pavilion at the 2004 Venice Architecture Biennale, Venice, Italy, and was included in the inaugural National Design Triennial at the Cooper-Hewitt in 2000. Their work is in the permanent collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Heinz Architectural Center at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA. In 2009, LTL was selected by the New York City Department of Design and Construction to participate in the Design and Construction Excellence Program, and they received a Texas AIA Award for Arthouse at the Jones Center, Austin, TX, in 2011. Other notable projects include the Administrative Center for the Claremont University Consortium Administrative Offices, Claremont, CA, Bornhuetter Hall at The College of Wooster, Wooster, OH, the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University, New York, NY, Villa 93 in Ordos, Inner Mongolia, and Xing Restaurant New York, NY. (Xing Restaurant was the recipient of the 2007 James Beard Award for restaurant design.) The principals are co-authors of two monographs, *Opportunistic Architecture* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2008) and *Situation Normal Pamphlet Architecture #21* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1998).

Paul Lewis, AIA, holds a Master of Architecture from Princeton University and a Bachelor of Arts from Wesleyan University. He is an Assistant Professor at Princeton University School of Architecture and has also taught at The Ohio State University, Barnard and Columbia Colleges, Parsons The New School of Design, and the Cooper Union. He is the recipient of the Mercedes T. Bass Rome Prize in Architecture from the American Academy in Rome, and is on the Board of Directors of the Architectural League of New York.

Marc Tsurumaki, AIA, holds a Master of Architecture from Princeton University and a Bachelor of Science in Architecture from the University of Virginia, and is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at Columbia University, New York, NY. Marc also taught at MIT, Parsons The New School for Design, Syracuse University, and Yale University as the Louis Kahn Visiting Assistant Professor. He has served on the Board of Trustees of the Van Alen Institute since 2002, in addition to serving on NYSCA panels for Architecture and Design and as a General Services Administration National Peer.

David J. Lewis, AIA, holds a Master of Architecture from Princeton University, a Master of Arts in the History of Architecture and Urbanism from Cornell University, and a Bachelor of Arts from Carleton College. David is an Associate Professor at Parsons The New School for Design, where he directed the Design Workshop and was on the faculty for the 2011 Solar Decathlon project. He has also taught at Cornell University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Limerick, Ireland, and The Ohio State University, and serves as a founding member of the Advisory Board of the School of Architecture at the University of Limerick.

Acknowledgments

This exhibition marks the first architecture exhibition at The College of Wooster Art Museum in over 25 years, and we are delighted to bring the renowned work of two Wooster, OH, natives, Paul and David Lewis, back to their hometown, along with the work of Marc Tsurumaki, the third LTL Architects principal. I would like to extend profound gratitude to Paul, Marc, and David for providing not only an extraordinary in-depth view into contemporary architecture, but for their exhibition design and the considerable efforts of their firm in making this project happen.

I would also like to thank Doug McGlumphy, Museum Preparator, for constructing and consulting on this exhibition since it really is Doug's varied and considerable skill sets which allow the museum to take on such complex endeavors.

In addition to the above, I would also like to extend a personal note of gratitude and appreciation for the many years of counsel and friendship of Paul and David's parents, Arn Lewis, Emeritus Professor of Art History, The College of Wooster, and Beth Irwin Lewis, Affiliated Scholar, The College of Wooster. I am just one of many whose life has been significantly enriched by these gifted scholars and teachers.

