

# ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

## Modernism's Reign in Spain

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# Pierson College

## New Haven

# 2

**KIERANTIMBERLAKE ASSOCIATES ADDRESSES YALE UNIVERSITY'S NEEDS IN THE PRESENT WHILE RESPECTING ITS PASSION FOR TRADITION.**

By Sara Hart

**Architect:** KieranTimberlake Associates—Stephen Kieran, FAIA, design partner; Christopher MacNeal, AIA, associate in charge; Jamie Unkefer, AIA, project manager; Marcell Botticelli, Brian Carney, Kannikar Peterson, Karl Wallick, Project Architects; Andrew Evans, Castor Kong, Elisheva Levi, Rachel Mainwaring, Mihar Morimoto, Mark Rhoads, Kathy Speicher, Matt Sauer, Adrienne Swiatocha, Kurtran Wright, design team

**Client:** Yale University

**Consultants:** BVH Integrated Systems(m/e/p, fire protection); CVM Engineers (structural); Towers/Golde (landscape); Tigue (lighting); Metropolitan Acoustics (acoustics)

**Size:** 165,500 square feet

**Cost:** Withheld

**Completion date:** September 2004

### Sources

**Doors:** Duratherm (Upper Court addition); Steelcraft (metal)

**Windows:** Marvin (wood); Moduline (aluminum)

**Elevators:** Holtz

**Acoustical ceilings:** Tectom

**Resilient athletic flooring:** Dodge-Rugopol; American Harlequin

For more information on this project, go to Projects at [www.architecturalrecord.com](http://www.architecturalrecord.com).



By the first part of the 20th century, Yale had gained renown as an elite university. Such status spurred aggressive building, expanded curriculum, and increased enrollment. Concerned alumni and administrators sensed the atmosphere was becoming increasingly impersonal and, therefore, detrimental to students. They moved to organize the campus into a network of smaller, self-contained residential colleges, loosely based on the model of Oxford and Cambridge. They reasoned that an intimate, domestic environment would not only be more conducive to academic achievement, but promote emotional and social well-being.

Architect and Yale alumnus James Gamble Rogers (1867–1947), who had already designed many of the academic buildings, was tapped to carry out this new direction. Rogers

designed 10 of the 12 residential colleges at Yale, including Pierson.

The college, on the western edge of Yale's undergraduate residential campus, is an excellent example of Rogers's command of scale, proportion, and detail. Completed in 1933, the college occupies five floors plus a basement, arranged in wings containing student housing around a large courtyard. The exteriors are Georgian Colonial brick and stone with slate roofs over a concrete-encased steel structure.

### Program

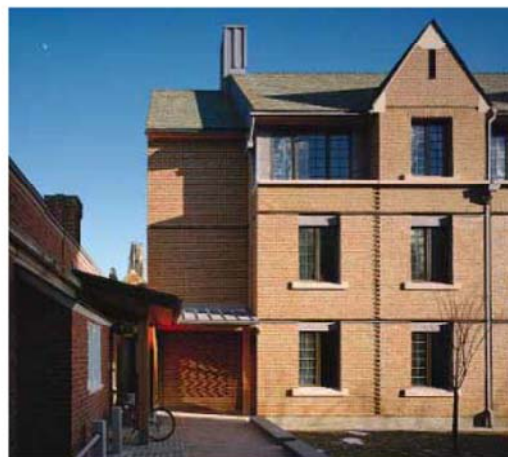
The university commissioned Philadelphia-based KieranTimberlake Associates (KTA) to tackle a daunting program of tremendous scope. The program included life-cycle renovations, utility upgrades, compliance with life-safety codes and accessibility regulations, dorm-room upgrades and

additions, and improvement to the dining services and student-activity areas. The scope was not limited to the buildings. The program called for a new landscaped walkway and courtyard along the previously undeveloped east side of the college.

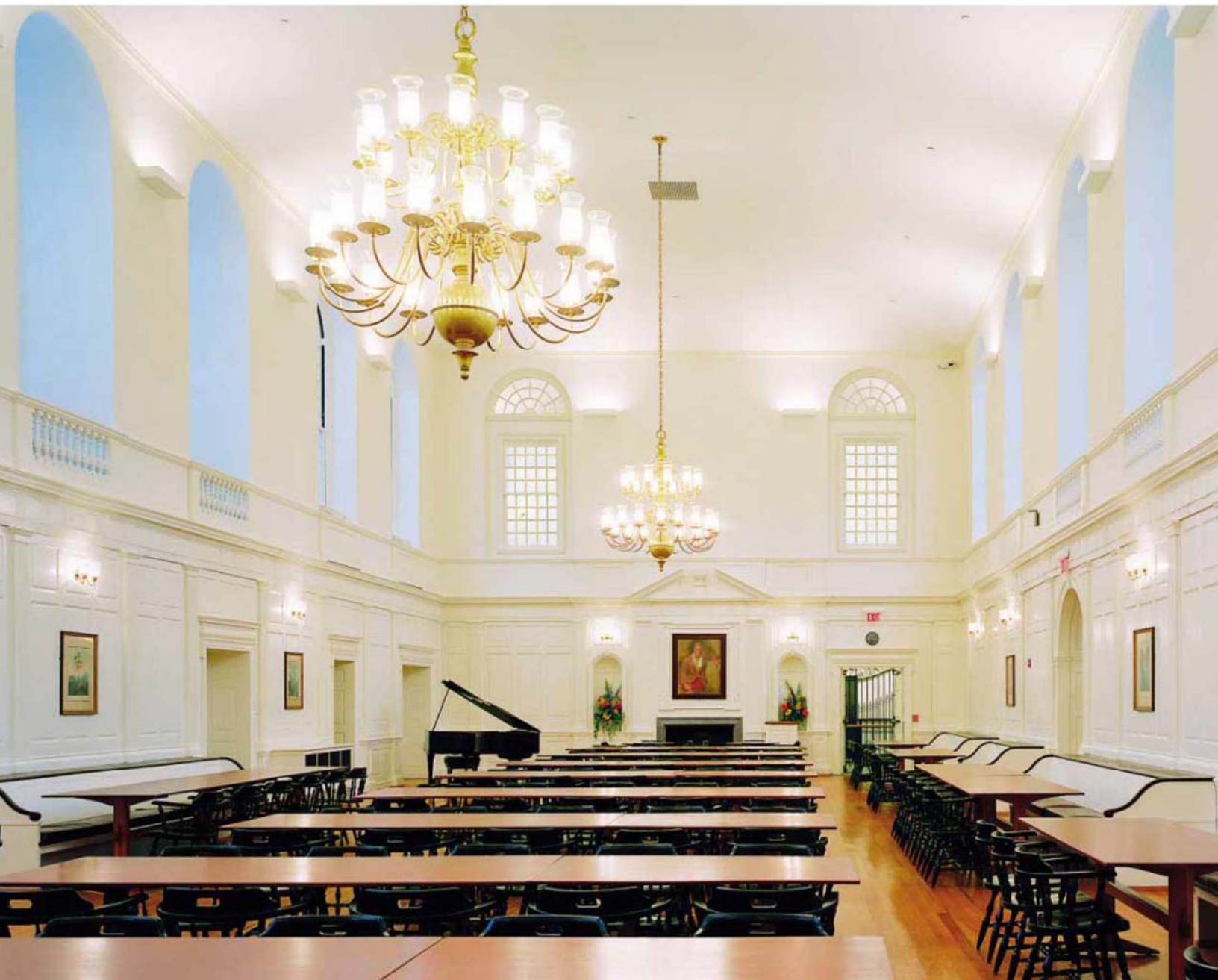
### Solution

First of all, many of the most difficult solutions are invisible. In the areas to be preserved, such as the dining hall and library, KTA dismantled the interiors; stored the woodwork; upgraded the mechanical, electrical, and fire-safety systems; and then reinstalled the finishes as if nothing had been disturbed.

Other changes are more obvious, and required as much finesse as skill. "In Modernism, a preconceived design system does not readily accommodate the special circumstances or unexpected dis-



In their renovation of Pierson College (opposite, left), the architects dismantled the dining hall (below), upgraded the HVAC systems, and relocated the servery to the adjacent pantry (right). They infilled the Upper Court with a three-story addition of suites, accommodating 24 beds (opposite, right).





FIRST FLOOR

- |                   |                |                         |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Courtyard      | 4. Common room | 7. Servery              |
| 2. Administration | 5. Dining hall | 8. Student suites       |
| 3. Master's house | 6. Kitchen     | 9. Upper Court addition |



The original library (left) was dismantled, the systems upgraded, and the paneling reinstalled. At the same time, the architects converted two squash courts into an expansion that provides more study cubicles and a meeting room (opposite, bottom).

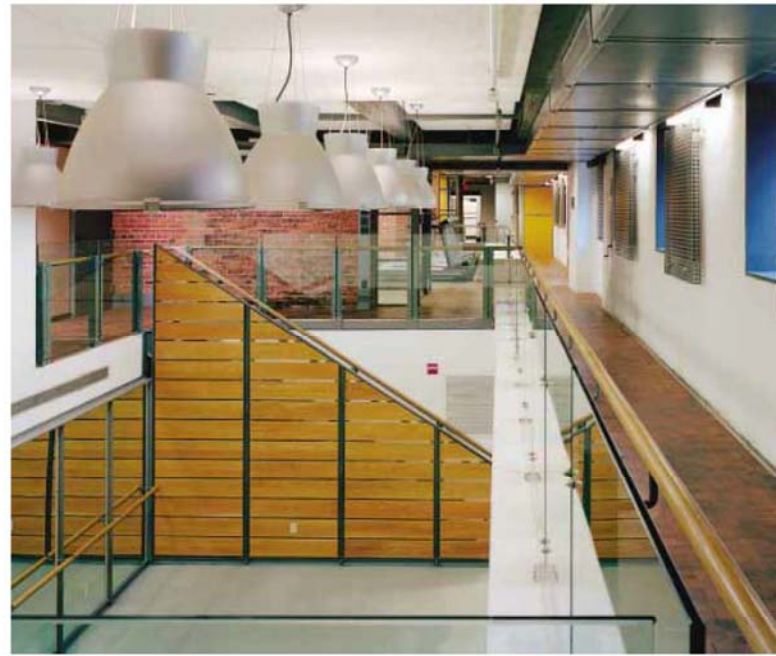
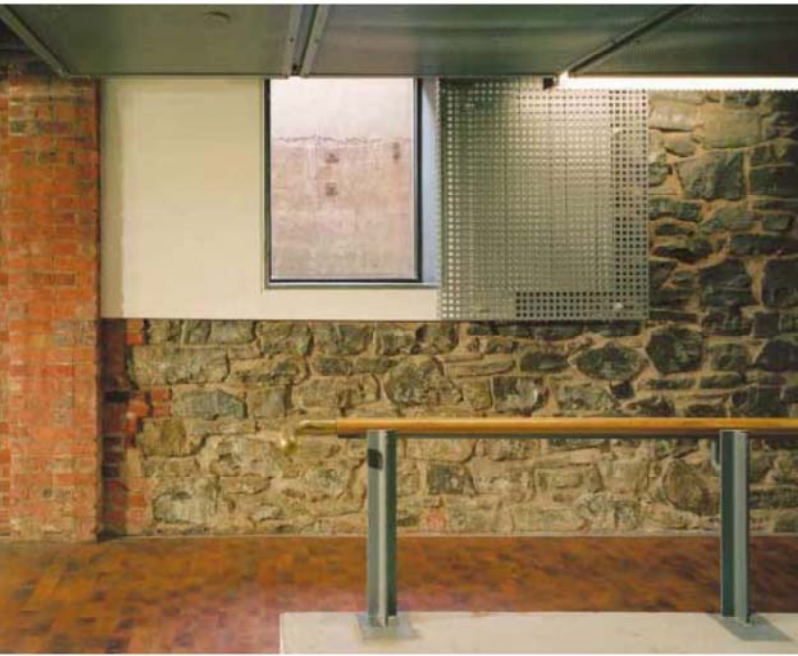
covers that are inevitable in historic buildings," explains KTA principal Stephen Kieran. "The effort that goes into inserting new programs into existing structures teaches the Modernist to take advantage of those picturesque opportunities when they're revealed." Kieran's observation became a guiding design principle, as the firm went about converting squash courts and basement spaces to social and recreational uses, including exercise facilities, aerobics/dance space, and music practice rooms. Additional squash courts on the second floor were converted for use as an annex to the existing library with computer facilities.

To alleviate the bed shortage, KTA renovated existing suites by combining two adjacent suites into one, annexing closet space into the bedrooms, and consolidating circulation. They designed a three-story, 11,500-square-foot addition on the Upper Court between the college quadrangle and the University Theater. The addition provides a total of six suites, accommodating up to 24 beds.

### Commentary

It takes vision and confidence to seek out the unpredictable, especially after completing the tedious upgrade of the building systems. When time came to extract form and function from the derelict basement and other awkward interstitial spaces, a lot of architects would have chosen the path of least resistance—patch and paint. Instead, KTA saw the opportunity for artistic expression, especially in the basement's gloomy labyrinth of steam pipes, electrical conduits, and makeshift storage. They added and subtracted layers of materials, creating a palimpsest of past and present.

When possible, the stone foundation was left exposed. Plasterboard sections formed transitions between materials, producing a series of collages throughout the corridors. Sealed shafts were opened to provide orientation to the outside as well as light. Rogers would have admired their boldness, especially since it kept him in the picture. ■



Renovation of the basement (above two) required relocating the steam tunnels to the exterior walls, creating light wells everywhere possible, and peeling back the layers while applying new ones to create a collage of textures surveying the building's past.

