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Yale Center for British Art begins first phase of major building conservation project

NEW HAVEN— This summer the Yale Center for British Art will begin the first phase of a major conservation project addressing some of the interior spaces of its landmark building by architect Louis I. Kahn. Beginning in June and continuing through early January 2014, the Center will restore its Study Room and areas used by the departments of Prints and Drawings and Rare Books and Manuscripts, which have not been refurbished since the building opened to the public in April 1977.



During the renovations, the second- and third-floor galleries will be closed to the public. The Reference Library, located on the second floor, will be open for its regular hours, though there will be periods of disruption. There will be no access to the Prints and Drawings and Rare Books and Manuscripts collections during the summer months. Beginning September 3, access to the collections, which will remain in the building, will be by appointment only and two weeks' advance notice will be required. It is expected that normal services in the Study Room will resume in early January.



The permanent collection will remain on view in the fourth-floor galleries. In addition, a special exhibition, *Sculpture by Nicola Hicks*, will be installed on the fourth floor from November 14, 2013 to March 2, 2014, juxtaposing works by Hicks with selections from the collection. The Center will maintain its regular public hours and the Museum Shop will be open.

Due to noise from construction, the Center's schedule of programs will be limited and most lectures, concerts, and films will take place at alternate venues. On-site programs will include the opening lecture and reception for *Sculpture by Nicola Hicks* on November 13. There will also be Art in Context gallery talks on most Tuesdays at 12:30 pm. In addition, introductory tours of the collection and architecture tours will take place on Sundays this fall. Requests for private tours of the fourth-floor galleries will need to be made three weeks in advance. Regrettably, the Center will be unable to host Visiting Scholars during this period.



PROJECT DETAILS

This project is the first to be undertaken since the publication of *Louis I. Kahn and the Yale Center for British Art: A Conservation Plan* (2011) by Peter Inskip and Stephen Gee, in association with Constance Clement, the Center's deputy director. The conservation plan—the first of its kind in the United States—was the result of nearly a decade of research by Inskip and Gee, of Peter Inskip + Peter Jenkins Architects in London.

Led by George Knight (Yale MArch 1995) of Knight Architecture LLC, Yale's Office of Facilities, and Turner Construction Company, the 2013 project will replace worn carpeting and discolored wall linen and renew millwork that is soiled and bleached from the sun. In order to accommodate the Center's growing collections, some new storage units will be fabricated that replicate the original white oak cases. Additionally, some office spaces will be reconfigured to suit the needs of the expanded departments more effectively. Technological improvements will be undertaken, and code and life-safety issues will also be addressed.

The second phase of the project will take place during 2015 when the public galleries on the second, third, and fourth floors will be refurbished. These spaces were last renovated in 1998 and are showing signs of wear due to the Center's active schedule of special exhibitions, expanded programs, and increased visitation. Linen and carpet will be replaced, new pogo partition walls will be created, and oak millwork will be refurbished. Throughout 2015 the public and scholars will have limited access to the building, no special exhibitions will be mounted or visiting fellowships awarded. When the Center reopens in 2016, the permanent collection will be reinstalled completely on all floors, and the Lecture Hall will have been totally refurbished as well.

YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College Class of 1929), the Yale Center for British Art houses the largest and most comprehensive collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. The collections reflect the development of British art, life, and thought from the Elizabethan period onward. The Center offers a year-round schedule of exhibitions and educational programs, as well as numerous academic resources.

THE STUDY ROOM AND CENTER COLLECTIONS

The Study Room is the primary access point to works in the Center's Prints and Drawings and Rare Books and Manuscripts collections. The Department of Prints and Drawings is responsible for more than twenty thousand drawings and watercolors and thirty thousand prints, a collection that offers a comprehensive view of the development of British graphic art from the Tudor age to the twenty-first century. The Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts holds approximately thirty-five thousand volumes, representing a broad range of material relating to the visual arts and cultural life in the United Kingdom and the former British Empire that dates from the fifteenth century to the present.

ABOUT THE ARCHITECTURE

The Yale Center for British Art is designed by the internationally acclaimed American architect Louis I. Kahn. Located across the street from his first major commission, the Yale University Art Gallery (1953), the Center

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was Kahn's final work and was completed in 1977, three years after his death. The Center's exterior of matte steel and reflective glass confers a monumental presence in downtown New Haven. The geometrical, four-floor interior is designed around two courtyards and is comprised of a restrained palette of natural materials including travertine, white oak, and Belgian linen. Kahn succeeded in creating intimate galleries where one can view objects in diffused natural light. He wanted to allow in as much daylight as possible, with artificial illumination used only on dark days or in the evening. The building's design, materials, and sky-lit rooms combine to provide an environment for the works of art that is simple and dignified.

In 2005 the Center received the prestigious Twenty-five Year Award of the American Institute of Architects which each year honors a single architectural landmark, completed twenty-five to thirty-five years prior, which has withstood the test of time.

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