

John G. Waite Associates, Architects Receives a 2019 Honor Award for Architecture from the American Institute of Architects



William J. Bates, FAIA, 2019 American Institute of Architects (AIA) President, announced that John G. Waite Associates, Architects, PLLC (JGWA) received a 2019 Institute Honor Award for Architecture for the Restoration of the Rotunda at the University of Virginia.

The Institute Honor Award program is the profession's highest national recognition of works that exemplify excellence in architecture. The award program celebrates the best contemporary architecture and highlights the many ways buildings and spaces can improve lives. AIA's five-member jury selected submissions that demonstrated design achievement, including a sense of place and purpose, ecology, environmental sustainability and history. Selected from hundreds of submissions, 9 recipient projects located throughout the world will be honored with Institute Honor Award for Architecture at the AIA Conference on Architecture in Las Vegas, NV June 6-8, 2019.

The following is the AIA notification:

This restoration of the symbolic center of the University of Virginia—widely considered Thomas Jefferson's single most important architectural achievement—relies on the highest level of historic preservation and building conservation care. Envisioned by Jefferson as a temple for learning, but largely relegated to administrative and ceremonial use, the Rotunda is once again a focus of university life.

The team began the project, commissioned to celebrate the Rotunda's 200th anniversary, with a thorough historic structure report and measured drawings in order to study and understand the original design and the changes made over time. The structure was severely compromised in a catastrophic 1895 fire that left only its brick walls standing. Later, Stanford White attempted to replicate Jefferson's design and intent but significantly altered the interior volumes. A poorly funded and researched renovation in the 1970s further compromised it.

The project tapped into some of the most advanced conservation measures available. A leaking roof was replaced with a copper one while specialist contractors cleaned, stabilized, and repointed the brick walls. The building's exterior metal moldings, dating from the 1890s, were restored, and the deteriorated replacement column capitals on the north and south porticos were replaced with Carrara marble capitals that accurately replicate Jefferson's originals.

Inside, the architects restored Jefferson's volumes, finishes, and architectural details on all three floors. In the dome room, acoustic plaster replaced the perforated aluminum ceiling while cast plaster column capitals from the 1970s were replaced by ones of carved wood, again echoing Jefferson's original intent. The project's least noticed but perhaps most important element is the construction of a new mechanical, service, and storage space contained in a vault that was excavated beneath the east courtyard.

During the renovation, a chemical hearth dating to the 19th century was unearthed on the ground floor, the only trace of the original chemistry facility. Freed from its tomb, it is now the star of an exhibition that celebrates Jefferson's Academical Village.

John G. Waite Associates, Architects, PLLC (JGWA) is an architectural firm with offices in Albany and New York City that is widely recognized for its work with the restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings. The firm has been responsible for the preservation and adaptive-use of some of the nation's most significant landmarks and historic public buildings, utilizing sustainable design solutions and state-of-the-art preservation technology. For more information about JGWA please visit www.jgwaarchitects.com.