

Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Springfield, Massachusetts

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GWATHMEY SIEGEL ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS USED STRONG, YET SIMPLE FORMS TO SYMBOLIZE THE ACTION-PACKED ENERGY OF THE GAME.

By Charles Linn, FAIA

Design architect: Gwathmey Siegel Associates Architects—Robert Siegel, FAIA, Charles Gwathmey, FAIA, principals; Nancy Clayton, senior associate; Barry Yanku, project architect

Architect of record: Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype—Joel Bargmann, AIA, principal; Thomas Scarlata, AIA, associate principal; Robert Del Savio, senior associate

Client: City of Springfield, Massachusetts; Springfield Riverfront Development Corporation

Consultants: Scenic Technology, Hottop Associates (exhibit designers); Weidlinger Associates (structural); AHA Consulting Engineers (mechanical/electrical); Mather/Jorgensen (lighting); Acoustic Dimensions (acoustics); VBH - Vanesse Hagen Brustlin (civil); Bovis Lend Lease, O'Connell Development Group (project managers)

General contractor: Peabody Construction

Size: 280,000 square feet

Cost: \$35,500,000 (building); \$11,500,000 (exhibits)

Sources

Dome cladding: VerCeram

Exterior cladding: STO; Alply

Metal ceilings: Ceilings Plus

Acoustical ceilings: Armstrong

Programmable dome lights: Color Kinetics

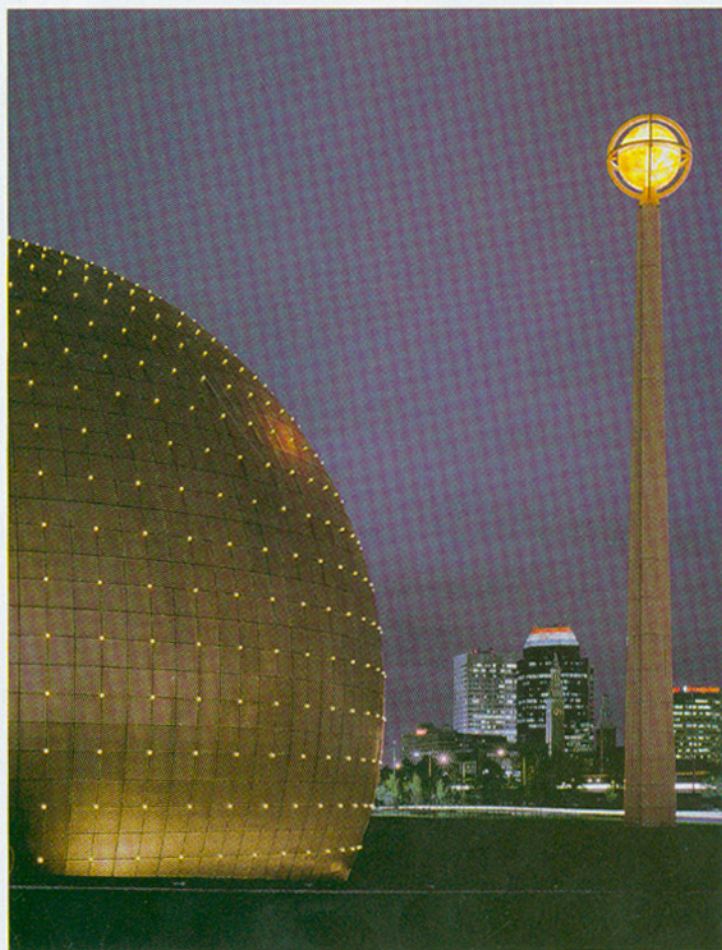
www For more information about the people and products involved in this project, go to Building Types Study at architecturalrecord.com.

For its design for the new home of the Basketball Hall of Fame, dedicated to the game's inventor, James Naismith, Gwathmey Siegel Associates relied on forms that anyone who has ever watched the game can understand: a hemisphere and, nearby, a spire surmounted by a great illuminated basketball. A wink and a nod to the famed Trylon and Perisphere of the 1939 World's Fair? Not at all, says Robert Siegel, FAIA, but very much in keeping with the firm's tradition of using straightforward geometry.

Program

The Basketball Hall of Fame's public-private client structure is complex. Representatives of the City of Springfield and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts intended for the building to be a catalyst for urban revitalization and riverfront development. After investing more than \$80 million in the project, these agencies wanted to ensure that the museum would become a destination for large numbers of tourists, attract important retailers to the large areas dedicated to stores, and generate profits enough to pay off bonds issued to cover construction costs.

The hall's board of trustees comprised athletes; sports broadcasters; and representatives from professional, collegiate, and amateur basketball organizations. They would all be involved in the museum's campaign for private donations and



tapped as sources for the ongoing supply of new exhibition materials needed to keep people coming back. These sponsors were concerned about how the story of the game would be told and how its players would be represented. All of the groups understood that the facility needed to have a recognizable image that would appeal to people

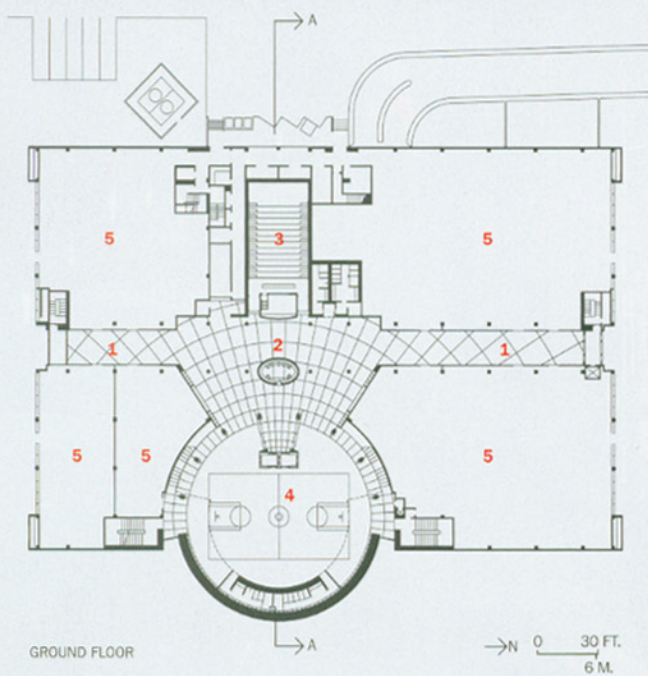
who might need to be convinced that a "museum" can be an entertaining place to visit.

Solution

The building's forms are almost self-explanatory. The hemisphere-shaped dome houses exhibits and a full-size basketball court. It is constructed of rolled steel sections and covered by

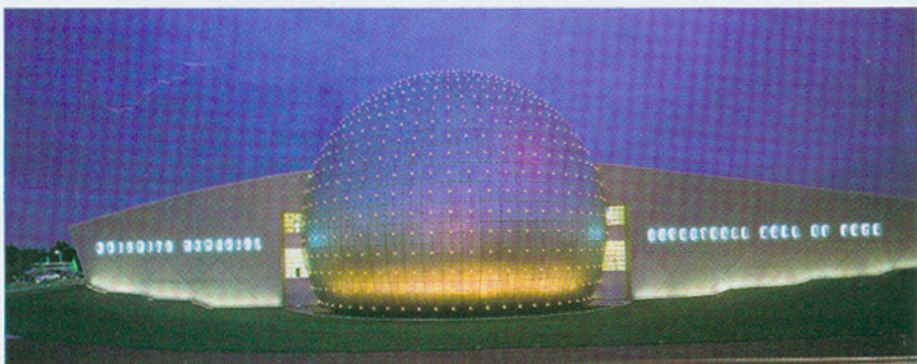
Strong geometries allow the building to be instantly identified (opposite and this page, top), whether it is being observed from nearby I-91 or on television screens. An elevator (below) whisks visitors to the museum's third level, the Honors Ring (next page, top). From there, they descend through second-floor exhibits and finally to the Center Court on the ground floor.





1. Retail concourse
2. Lobby and ticketing
3. Screening room
4. Basketball court
5. Retail/food service

An abundance of balconies and open staircases (above and opposite) help visitors avoid the feeling of being lost in the kind of dark, disorienting spaces typical of many museums.



ceramic-based composite panels that have a semispecular finish. The building's retail spaces, main corridor, ticketing booth, and large screening room are covered by a gently curved roof, characterized by Siegel as a "swoop." He notes, "We looked for forms that would be readily appreciated by all ages. The clients wanted it to appeal to everyone, not just people who were educated in architecture. The building had to be able to stand up as a brand, so whether it was being seen at high speed from Amtrak or Interstate 91 [which run next to the site], or on television screens across the planet, it would be instantly recognizable."

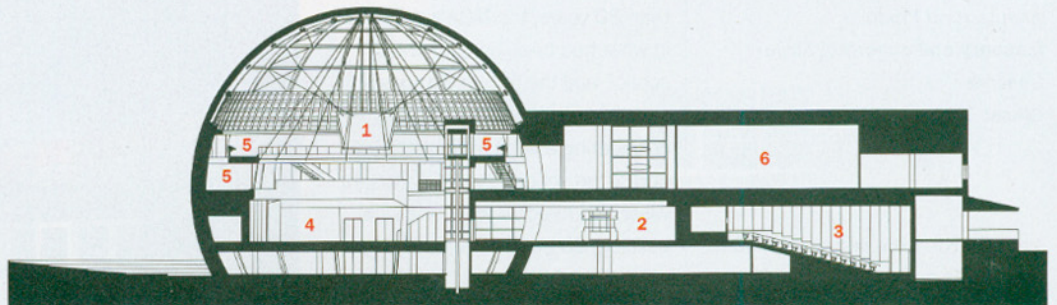
A major design decision made by the architects and Scenic Technology, the exhibit designers, in collaboration with the museum staff, was to lead museumgoers through the hall sequentially, from the top of the building down. Visitors to the hall are whisked by elevator to the building's third level, the "Honors Ring," where interactive displays teach them about Hall of Fame members. At the second level, exhibits tell the story of basketball. When visitors arrive at the ground floor "Center Court," they can take a few shots at the baskets.

Commentary

The architects have succeeded in giving the building an unmistakable identity. It is well organized and a fun place to visit. Museums that appeal to the devotees of a single area of interest, like this one, face special challenges in attracting repeat visitors. With such a strongly iconic building as a foundation, the museum's success now depends upon the ingenuity of its curators. ■



1. Scoreboard
2. Lobby and ticketing
3. Screening room
4. Basketball court
5. Exhibits
6. Administration



SECTION