

ELINOR BUNIN MUNROE FILM CENTER | NEW YORK CITY | ROCKWELL GROUP

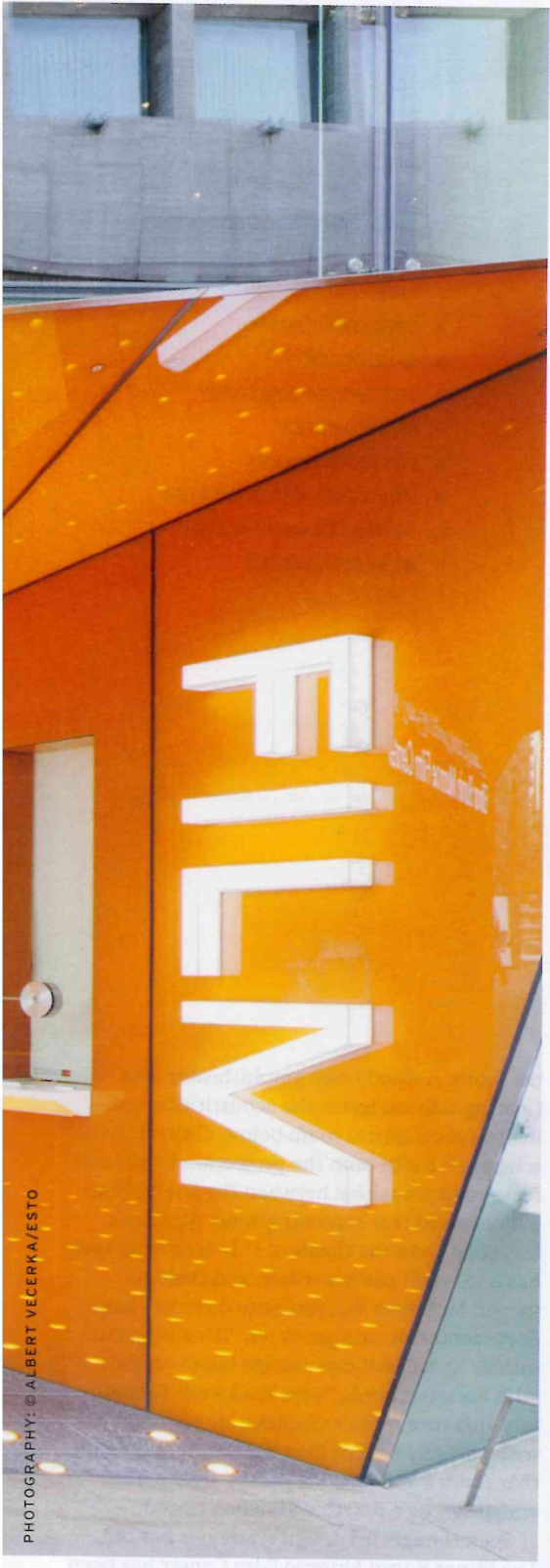
READY FOR ITS CLOSE-UP

David Rockwell's new film center invigorates the Film Society of Lincoln Center with first-rate screening rooms, a café, and a cinema shop.

By Linda C. Lentz



ABOVE: The new film center fronts West Sixty-fifth Street with a vivid orange marquee, an LED carpet, and a welcoming transparency that reveals its community-friendly public areas as well as the central amphitheater, directly beyond.



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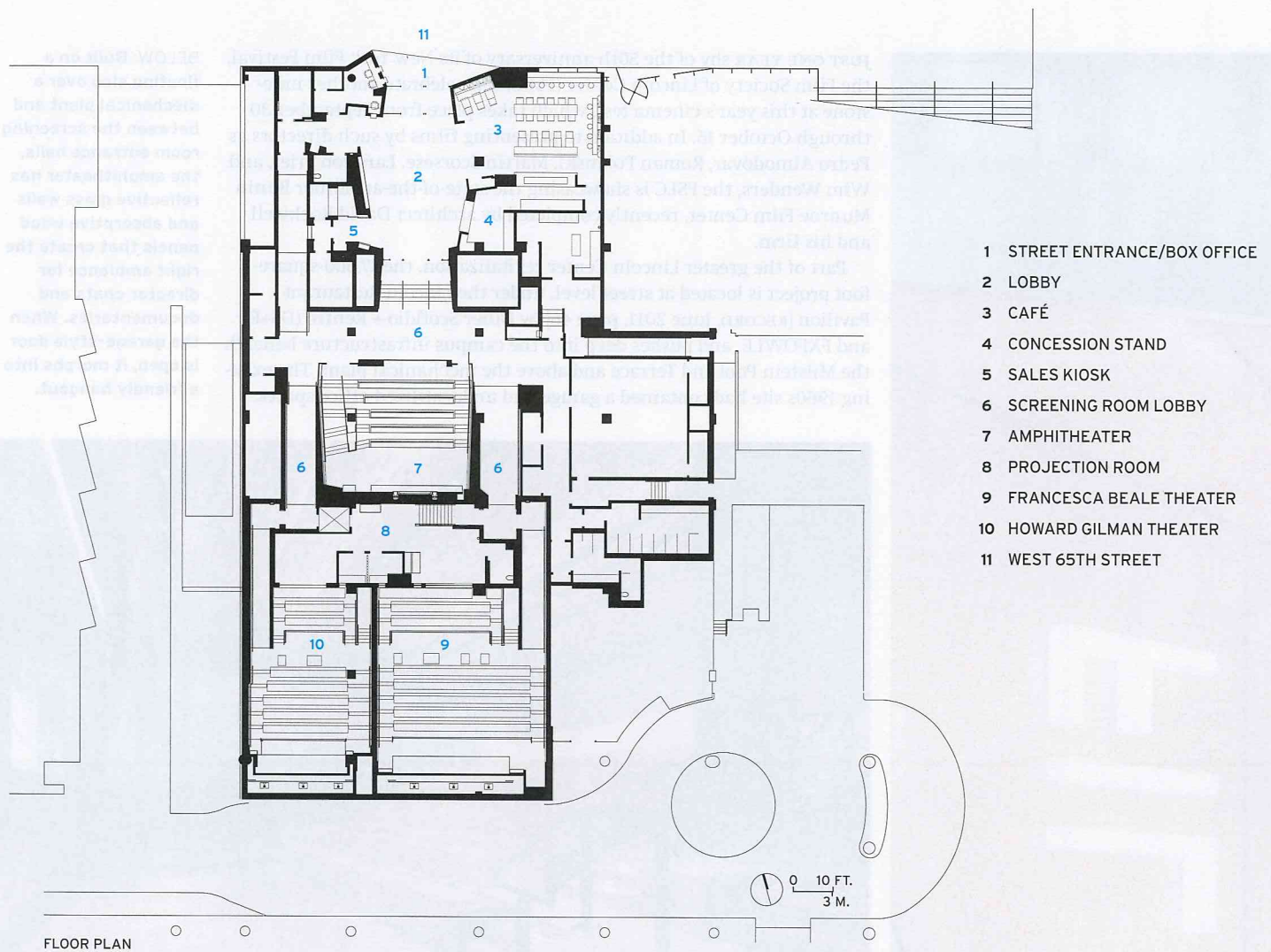
JUST ONE YEAR shy of the 50th anniversary of its New York Film Festival, the Film Society of Lincoln Center (FSLC) can celebrate another milestone at this year's cinema fest, which takes place from September 30 through October 16. In addition to presenting films by such directors as Pedro Almodóvar, Roman Polanski, Martin Scorsese, Lars von Trier, and Wim Wenders, the FSLC is showcasing the state-of-the-art Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center, recently completed by architect David Rockwell and his firm.

Part of the greater Lincoln Center revitalization, the 17,500-square-foot project is located at street level, under the Lincoln Restaurant Pavilion [RECORD, June 2011, page 46] by Diller Scofidio + Renfro (DS+R) and FXFWOLE, and pushes deep into the campus infrastructure beneath the Milstein Pool and Terrace and above the mechanical plant. The existing 1960s site had contained a garage and underutilized office spaces.

BELOW: Built on a floating slab over a mechanical plant and between the screening room entrance halls, the amphitheater has reflective glass walls and absorptive wood panels that create the right ambience for director chats and documentaries. When the garage-style door is open, it morphs into a friendly hangout.



The Lincoln Center campus has long been a place where all three worlds in one space meet in one place. Now, says FSLC executive director Rose Kux, "It's allowing these two worlds to meet at the New York Film Festival in a great way. It's a place that's been in our history."



- 1 STREET ENTRANCE/BOX OFFICE
- 2 LOBBY
- 3 CAFÉ
- 4 CONCESSION STAND
- 5 SALES KIOSK
- 6 SCREENING ROOM LOBBY
- 7 AMPHITHEATER
- 8 PROJECTION ROOM
- 9 FRANCESCA BEALE THEATER
- 10 HOWARD GILMAN THEATER
- 11 WEST 65TH STREET

FLOOR PLAN

The prominent frontage on West Sixty-fifth Street provides the community-friendly access that FSLC needs to grow. For years, the 42-year-old group had been limited to screenings and programs at one venue—the excellent but secluded 244-seat Walter Reade Theater, behind the Juilliard School—with occasional events at Alice Tully and Avery Fisher halls. The challenge, recalls Rockwell, was to carve out an area that was high enough for screening rooms with perfect sight lines and acoustics.

Working closely with the design and core-and-shell teams at DS+R and FXFOWLE, as well as acoustical consultant JaffeHolden, Rockwell and his crew burrowed south, away from the street, clearing the mechanical space and excavating behind it to create two sound-isolated screening rooms that share a rear projection booth: the 144-seat Francesca Beale and the 87-seat Howard Gilman theaters. Ever conscious of the primary objective—to make this a world-class film experience—Rockwell deftly integrated technical with decorative

elements, keeping the theater interiors visually quiet with a dark taupe color palette. Softly pleated perforated-steel walls absorb sound and flow into the vestibule to further buffer outside noise. Roomy custom seats are comfortable enough to enjoy the four-and-a-half-hour *Mysteries of Lisbon*, by Raoul Ruiz. And when the LED-backlit pilasters that frame the screens fade to black, the architecture disappears.

By contrast, the remainder of the film center is open, flexible, and bright, with polished concrete floors and exposed columns and ductwork—an homage to the roots of the space, says Rockwell. The entrance, too, is transparent. Here the architects fashioned an angular glazed “marquee” in vivid orange that mimics the roofline of DS+R’s restaurant pavilion above and beckons visitors to enter across a theatrical LED carpet.

Rockwell and his team split the house into public and programmatic areas with a smart, sit-down café and a diminutive film shop, for patrons and passersby, tucked to either side of

the lobby. A wood-lined amphitheater on a floating slab navigates the acoustically problematic mechanical room below. Central to the scheme, it backs onto the projection booth and serves as a transition between the lively front-of-house and rear screening zone. Although less quiet than the theaters, this congenial spot has a 152-inch plasma screen and cushion-topped bleachers that facilitate director chats, documentaries, and previews. “It’s a very ‘curatable’ space that can change based on the Film Society’s needs,” says Rockwell. To maintain this core room’s visibility, he enclosed it with partially frosted glass side walls and doors that flank a 16-foot-wide garage-style portal, which can be a fourth wall when closed.

Such thoughtful design strategies pay off. The Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center has been busy, with all three theaters in use since opening in June. Now, says FSLC executive director Rose Kuo, “it’s allowing us to host more films at the New York Film Festival. It’s a great success and signifies a new era in our history.” ■



CREDITS

ARCHITECT: Rockwell Group – David Rockwell, founder and CEO; Shawn Sullivan, principal in charge; Michael Fischer, design lead

CORE & SHELL ARCHITECT: Diller Scofidio + Renfro – Elizabeth Diller, Ricardo Scofidio, Charles Renfro, principals; FXFOWLE – Sylvia Smith, principal in charge

CONSULTANTS: Arup (structural, m/e/p, sprinkler); JaffeHolden (acoustical); Fisher Dachs (theater); Boyce Nemece Designs (a/v); Focus (lighting); Open (graphics)

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Yorke Construction

CLIENT: Film Society of Lincoln Center

SIZE: 17,518 square feet

COST: withheld

COMPLETION DATE: June 2011

SOURCES

GLAZING: W&W Glass; VividGlass (amphitheater)

GARAGE DOOR: Belu Tec (amphitheater)

WALLS: GageMetal (perforated/theater); DKDI (wood/amphitheater); Aswoon, Seetin (wood/café)

SEATS: Series Seating (theater)

FLOORING: Milliken (carpet); Get Real Surfaces (concrete); Lanes Flooring (amphitheater)

PLASMA SCREEN: Panasonic (amphitheater)



ABOVE: A leap above the usual snack bar, the tony café features communal tables and custom curved-wood focus walls made from recycled column covers by Brooklyn-based artisan Susan Woods of Aswoon.

LEFT: Two screening rooms are isolated from each other by a thick concrete wall to prevent sound leakage. Absorptive perforated steel walls, non-reflective recessed screens framed by theatrical backlit pilasters, comfortable wide seats, and perfect sight lines all maximize the movie-viewing experience.