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The New Visitor Center at Shofuso: Expanding Site Interpretation Through New Construction

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Abstract
The design and master plan of the new Shofuso Visitor Center address the topic of new construction in historic settings beyond the existing academic focus on contextualism and style. Considering the low rate of visitation and organizational growth that has put many house museums in a vulnerable state, I believe scholars should extend their judgment pass physical attributes and also assess how new constructions can reinforce the vitality of these sites. By letting both management concerns and place values guide the design, the new building will make the site more meaningful as well as ensure sustainable expansion.

Based on the value-based conservation model, the best way to create a successful historic site is to enhance the interpretation of its core values and mission in a way that is relevant to the present day audience and stakeholders. While Shofuso is valued for its authentic Japanese house and garden experience, there are two gaps in the current interpretation of Shofuso. The first is its role in the development of modern western architecture as a major exhibit at the MoMA. The new visitor center design can bridge this gap by exhibiting Shofuso's relevance to modernism, emphasizing on the four major characteristics that inspired Modernism: flexible room arrangements, strong indoor and outdoor connection, ornamental structural system, and skeleton frame construction. This way, visitors can perceive how the Japanese house has influenced modern buildings around them. The second is the narrative of the Japanese house as a legacy of the 1976 Centennial Exposition, which gets addressed through the reestablishment of an old road as a gateway and the proposal for a temporary pavilion installation.

Keywords
Shofuso, visitor center, house museum, new construction in historic settings, site interpretation

Disciplines
Historic Preservation and Conservation | History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology

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THE NEW VISITOR CENTER AT SHOFUSO:
EXPANDING SITE INTERPRETATION THROUGH NEW CONSTRUCTION

Parima Sukosi

A THESIS

In

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To my parents and grandparents.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis grew out of a summer internship at Shofuso after my first year in the Historic Preservation graduate program. Having learned about their ambitious 5-year plan to erect a visitor center and office building on the property, I was prompted to investigate the current practice of new development in historic settings and use my background in architectural design and preservation to formalize an original design.

Professor David Young introduced me to this site in the Historic Site Management class and introduced me to the right people that made the internship possible. Shofuso’s Executive Director, Kimberly Andrews, has been generous in sharing documents and her vision for the visitor center. It was also a joy to work for her over the summer along with other friendly staff.

Thank you Frank Vagnone, Executive Director of the New York City Historic House Trust, and Sean Kelley, Eastern State Penitentiary’s Senior Vice President and Director of Public Programming, for sharing your thoughts over the interview. Thank you Laura Werther, Associate Principal of GWWO, Inc./Architects, for sharing information regarding the Ford Orientation Center and Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center at Mount Vernon.

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Parima Sukosi, 2014
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INTRODUCTION

Although the staff and board members at Shofuso Japanese House and Garden were honored that their site won Philadelphia Magazine’s Best Hidden Tourist Attraction in 2012, they still look forward to the day it would no longer be considered the city’s “hidden” asset. Since Kimberly Andrews joined Shofuso as Executive Director in 2010, the organization saw remarkable growth and recognition. Recent notable achievements include the opening of the Sakura Pavilion in 2012—a restoration of two original structures from the 1876 Centennial Exposition into a multi-programmatic space, and getting listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 2013. Seeing their hard work paid off, the organization is more confident than ever that the right momentum has been set towards achieving their most ambitious goal yet: to erect a new visitor center, which will also house office space, by 2018 for the 60 year anniversary of Shofuso at Fairmount Park.

The 60 year anniversary carries a symbolic meaning to Shofoso. In Japanese culture, the sixtieth birthday is known as kanreki, a special occurrence that represents five completions of the Chinese zodiac cycle where the individual is believed to be reborn. With the opening of the new visitor center on October 18, 2018, Andrews hopes that the site “will experience rebirth and sustain to celebrate our next kanreki.”

If the new visitor center is to help sustain the operation of Shofuso for many generations to come, it is crucial for the architect to consider how the building’s design and programmatic layout will impact the social and financial sustainability of the organization. The aim of this thesis is to provide an effective solution for this demand through design. In addition
to fulfilling Shofuso’s programmatic requirement, the design process will attempt to integrate theoretical and practical aspects of adding to a historic site.

**Identifying the Problem**

Although managing a new visitor center and office will be a challenging undertaking for Shofuso, a small non-profit with only three permanent staff; however, they welcome this challenge because it is the only way the organization can grow. Shofuso is in need of an on-site office building because the staff currently carries out administrative tasks from a remote office a mile away at 5070 Parkside Avenue. This fragmented composition makes it difficult for Shofuso to grow.

Organizational growth is crucial for Shofuso because although they are small in size, they have a large amount of expenses to cover in order to sustain their mission of preserving the site. In addition to their operating budget, which was 364,493 dollars in 2011, they have to raise an extra 1.5 million dollars for roof replacement every 25-30 years. If Shofuso can increase their revenue by expanding their programs and services with the visitor center, they can stop relying heavily on donations for preservation projects, which will relieve the staff and board members of a lot of financial pressure.

New development within a historic boundary is a controversial and sensitive topic since any form of changes can be a threat to the values attached to the site. For example, the Getty Conservation Institute reports that at Hadrian’s Wall in Ireland, where new development “can increase the number of visitors and therefore the economic and social value of the site” because the heritage is a wall that does not support tourist activities, the issue becomes regulating unsympathetic construction that threatens the authenticity of the landscape (Mason, et al, 20).
The current academic discussion on the topic of new construction in historic settings is almost entirely dedicated to stylistic debate—concerned with if the new shows enough sympathy or sensitivity towards its surrounding. Considering the low rate of visitation and organizational growth that has put many house museums in a vulnerable state, it would become more effective if scholars address this issue by extending their judgment past physical attributes and also assess how new constructions can reinforce the vitality of these sites.

Shofuso’s Five Year Master Plan

The design portion of this thesis is guided by the programmatic requirement proposed by Kim Andrews:

The preliminary vision for a visitor center is a one-story building with a total floor area of 4,315 square feet. It will house a ticket office/reception area, lobby, gift shop, lavatories for Shofuso visitors, office space, library, multipurpose activity room, and storage space in the basement for collections, archival records, and work materials. The multi-purpose room will open to a tent and festival lawn where large programs, performances, and rental events can be held.

The building will be located to the southwest of Shofuso. A car, bike, and pedestrian entrance will be created from Avenue of the Republic and a permeable surface parking lot will be constructed out of the view from Shofuso’s veranda (Andrews, 2013).
With this expansion, Shofuso seeks to establish a stronger connection with the legacy of the Centennial. Shofuso has successfully revived two Centennial buildings into the Sakura Pavilion and now seeks to reopen a road from the Centennial era as their new entry. This road, which is now mostly covered in vegetation, is significant because it connects the site to the Avenue of the Republic—a historic path with the Please Touch Museum as a neighbor. A street presence off this main avenue is part of a larger effort to make the site more visible with exposure to much higher traffic than it currently receives, without spoiling the peaceful quality of the landscape.

**Guiding Concepts and Methodologies**

The design development of the master plan for the Shofuso Visitor Center will be unique in that it will consider a dimension that is rarely discussed in architecture: time, or the fourth dimension. In other words, the project will take into account how it can perform successfully and contribute to the growth of Shofuso after its completion. In order to achieve this, particular design decisions seek guidance from the Getty’s values-based conservation model. The model suggests that the best way to create a successful historic site is to enhance the interpretation of its core values and mission in a way that is relevant to the present day audience and stakeholders. Thoughtful changes are welcomed because a rigid chronology can undermine a site’s identity in present time.

While Shofuso is valued for its authentic Japanese house and garden experience, there are two gaps in the current interpretation of the site. The first is its role in the development of modern western architecture as a major exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art. The new visitor center design can bridge this gap by exhibiting Shofuso’s relevance to modernism, emphasizing
the four major characteristics that inspired that style: flexible room arrangements, strong indoor and outdoor connections, ornamental structural systems, and skeleton frame construction. This way, the site’s identity will become relevant to the present audience; they can perceive how the Japanese house has influenced modern buildings around them. The second is the narrative of the Japanese house as a legacy of the 1976 Centennial Exposition, which will be addressed through the re-establishment of a former Centennial-era road as a gateway and the proposal for a temporary pavilion installation. The new installation program aims to reflect the Centennial’s legacy of introducing the public to experimental and ground-breaking designs, as well as attract modern architecture enthusiasts who are unaware of Shofuso’s relevance to Modernism.

The proposal for a temporary architectural installation as a new interpretive program was developed through interviewing program directors at historic sites with experience in this type of programming, and the study of precedents of other sites’ temporary installation plans to answer the question. Another important component considered is the market for this kind of activity in order to see if it has the potential to increase visitation to Shofuso. The answer was determined by looking at visitors records at other sites’ temporary installation exhibitions.
The Main Questions

Figure 1.1. An integrated design model where all decisions will consider Shofuso’s mission, sustainability, and programming.

The goal of this research was to achieve an optimal design solution through the integration of design and management concerns as part of decision making. By letting both management concerns and place values guide the design, the new building will make the site more meaningful as well as ensure sustainable growth (Figure 1.1). The design process explored how new constructions at Shofuso can reinforce the sustainability of the site and enhance its interpretation by addressing three interrelated questions:

1. How can the new visitor center add interpretation value to Shofuso?
2. How should new construction be sympathetic to the historic character of the environment?
3. Can a temporary installation expand the audience and increase return visits?
Figure 1.2. Diagram of the three interrelated questions that helped guide design decisions.

Figure 1.2 is a diagram showing the relationship of these questions, where the solution to each is beneficial towards the other two. At the top is Question 1 that anchors any decisions to relate back to the site’s mission and interpretation. When that is considered, the solution to the next question would be a design that respects the historic character of the site—which is the foundation of Shofuso’s cultural significance and the reason people come to visit and learn.

Question 3 highlights the fact that a new program’s success is not only defined by enhancement of site values, but also by its ability to increase visitation and revenue. More revenue and audience means more budget and market support for Shofuso’s mission and its programs, which ties back to Question 1’s concerns. Figure 1.3 shows the topic of concern for each of the questions and how these concerns are all essential components to the management of any house museum, which are:

1. Interpretation and mission.
2. Respecting the environment.
3. Increase visitation and revenue.
The Scope of Study

The structure for this thesis follows the chronology of the thesis process—from initial research to the final drawings of the Shofuso Visitor Center. This *preservation design* thesis takes on a research-based approach where the information gathered is used to inform design decisions. Chapter 2 presents the research on the history of Shofuso and its cultural significance. Many people are unaware of the fact the Japanese House was conceived as an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, in 1954 before settling in permanently in Farimount Park in 1958. It is important to obtain a thorough understanding of the building’s history and its significance because it is the only way to determine whether there is a gap in the interpretation of the site. The goal for the new design should be to strengthen existing values of the site by filling in these gaps.

Chapter 3 provides an overview and analysis of the current academic discussion on theoretical aspects surrounding new construction in historic settings. It presents what scholars from different professions view as appropriate or successful new development in historic

![Figure 1.3. A relationship diagram of the issues that the three questions in Figure 1.2 seek to address.](image)
settings, and also what the National Trust for Historic Preservation views as appropriate new construction as laid out in the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. Chapter 4 takes a look at the more practical aspects of the subject with the examination of two noteworthy case studies: the Darwin D. Martin House Visitor Center by Toshiko Mori Architect, and the visitor center at Mount Vernon, also known as the Ford Orientation Center and Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center, by Baltimore-based firm GWWO Architects.

Chapter 5 discusses the incorporation of a temporary installation program as part of the new visitor center design proposal, and how it can reinforce the sustainability of historic house museums like Shofuso, and enhance its interpretation to visitors. The purpose is to expand the idea of new construction at historic sites beyond the current emphasis on stylistic and visual compatibility (between the new and old), by incorporating preservation management concerns into the design strategy as a way to ensure that the new visitor center will help increase Shofuso’s cultural values, as well as revenue. The chapter will highlight temporary installation programs at Philadelphia’s Eastern State Penitentiary, Physick House Museum, Powel House Museum, and London’s Serpentine Gallery, to demonstrate their success with attracting new visitors, strengthening site interpretation, and increasing revenue.

Chapter 6 presents the final product of the thesis, which is the master plan and architectural design of the Shofuso Visitor Center. Information regarding physical attributes of the existing landscape, such as maps and architectural plans were obtained during a summer internship at Shofuso from May–August 2013. The work involved creating a historic structure report of the Japanese House and Garden. The internship was a valuable opportunity to get a sense of the everyday experience at the site and its operation, which helped inform future
design decisions for the visitor center. Moreover, drawings that were produced during the internship provide accurate drawings of the existing site to be added on to.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with important takeaways from the entire process. More specifically, it describes how the design of the new Shofuso Visitor Center addresses the three main issues from the diagram in Figure 1.2, which concern with how the expansion will enhance site interpretation, integrate harmoniously with the environment, and increase visitation.
THE HISTORY OF SHOFUSO

The Architecture

In 1953, Shofuso, or “Pine Breeze Villa”, was the third house to be displayed in the courtyard at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City as part of its “House in the Garden” exhibition series (Figure 2.1). Designed by Junzo Yoshimura (1908-1997), a prominent Japanese architect who worked with Antonin Raymond, Shofuso would join the company of previous houses in the series by Marcel Breuer and Gregory Ain. The museum’s then director of the Architecture and Design Department, Phillip Johnson (1906–2005), and architectural curator
Arthur Drexler (1925–1986) were responsible for the idea to display a tradition Japanese dwelling, which was unusual considering that it was part of a series that promoted modernist works.

The reason was because both men were aware of the direct influence ancient Japanese architecture had on the development of Modernism in the West. They wanted to expose Americans to a different mindset, one which saw beauty in the minimal. Drexler saw four main characteristics in Japanese architecture that were relevant to Modernism:

1. *Post and lintel skeleton frame construction,*
2. *Flexible room arrangements,*
3. *Close relation of indoor and outdoor areas,*
4. *And the ornamental quality of the structural system itself* (MoMA, 1956).

The making of Shofuso was a collaborative effort between MoMA, the American-Japan Society, and the Japanese government. In February 1953, Drexler, along with John D. Rockefeller III, who was then the president of the American-Japan Society, visited Japan to select a Japanese house suitable for the exhibition and to gain support from the Japanese government.

After a 2 month architecture survey in Japan, Drexler selected the architectural style of *shoin-zukiri* from the 16th and 17th centuries because it fits the Museum’s requirement of “an authentic representation of Japanese architecture,” (Ozawa, 8) that exhibit the four relevant influences on modernism. Shoin-zukiri describes a desk-centered interior arrangement, where the shoin, or desk with bookshelves, is situated in the corner of the main room. This type of residential architecture was usually built by “a scholar, a warrior, or an abbot”(Ozawa, 7) for himself. Drexler also selected Yoshimura Junzo as the architect, who he found to be most qualified based on Junzo’s understanding of MoMA’s vision, fluent English, exceptional portfolio, and his well-known technique of incorporating traditional Japanese elements into modernist
designs. After the visit, Drexler wrote to the president of the American-Japan Society, describing the project’s intentions:

The Museum strongly believes that an exhibition of Japanese architecture would be of inestimable value to the American public. Modern Western architects have borrowed so many ideas from the traditional architecture of Japan, that the exhibition of an actual house would show to Americans the origin, in its present form, of all those ideas and techniques we so long admired.

With help from Rockefeller, who had a political agenda and saw an opportunity to reestablish friendship between the United States and Japan after World War II, Drexler successfully convinced the Japanese government of Shofuso’s significance as a cultural exchange and gained their sponsorship. A Japanese folk art enthusiast and affluent businessman, Rockefeller believed that Shofuso would be a beneficial political gesture and even sold his Standard Oil Bonds to make donations for the project.

The exhibition was held in two seasons, June 19–October 31, 1954, and April 27–October 16 1955. The turn-out was far beyond anyone’s expectation with 223,124 visitors, tripled that of the two previous houses by Breuer and Ain. Shofuso received an average of 1,000 visitors per day, who stood in long lines along 54th Street.

To Japanese-Americans at the time, Shofuso meant much more than a cultural exchange; it held sentimental values that were important to their identity. In *Story of Shofuso*, Yuichi Ozawa wrote: “This elegant architecture made Japanese Nisei feel proud of their motherland and elevated their morale, which was at its lowest after World War II. Louis Maehara, a Hawaiin Nisei and the oldest board member of Friends of the Japanese House and
Garden, was so impressed with the Shofuso that she visited it twice from Philadelphia” (Ozawa, 23).

At the closing of the exhibition, MoMA received offers from several places seeking to be the permanent home to Shofuso, including proposals from California and Australia. After thoughtful considerations, MoMA director Rene d’Harnoncourt became most intrigued by the enduring Japanese presence since the Centennial at Fairmount Park, and made the final decision to present the house to the City of Philadelphia. Charles Thompson, President of the Fairmount Park Commission, was excited to welcome Shofuso to “establish once again in such a splendid fashion, the link with Japan in Philadelphia’s Fairmount Park” (Ozawa, 26).

**Japanese Presence at Fairmount Park**

Shofuso is not standing on the same ground as the original Japanese Dwelling (Figure2.2) from the 1876 Centennial Exposition. The original Japanese Dwelling stood about half a mile west of Shofuso, near the Mann Center for the Performing Arts. The reason Shofuso is placed in its current location is due to the pre-existing Japanese Garden on the site that was created in 1878. In 1908, Fairmount Park installed the Nio-mon Temple Gate on the site and had the garden redesigned by Y. Muto in 1909. The gate, known as the “Japanese Pagoda,” (Figure2.3) was a gift from two Philadelphians who purchased it at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition. The installation of the gate was sponsored by John T. Morris of Morris Arboretum, who mistakenly took the site as the original grounds of the Japanese Dwelling. Although one could easily make this mistake because the site is adjacent to the previous grounds of the Centennial’s Japanese Bazaar and Tea Room, also referred to as ‘Ground for the Japanese Government’ in a Centennial map (Figure2.4). The gate, or Japanese Pagoda, was a popular site until it burned down in 1955.
Figure 2.2. A postcard image of the Japanese Dwelling from the 1876 Centennial Exposition. (Shofuso archive)

Figure 2.3. A postcard of the Japanese Pagoda before it was destroyed by fire in 1955. (Shofuso archive)
Figure 2.4. Map of the Centennial Exposition highlighting the Ground for the Japanese Government in proximity to the current location of Shofuso. (Shofuso archive)

Figure 2.5. Current view of Shofuso Japanese House and Garden, Fairmount Park, Philadelphia. (Shofuso archive)
The dedication ceremony of Shofuso at Fairmount Park (Figure 2.5) took place on October 19, 1958. The site in Philadelphia achieved even greater authenticity with the house taken out of Manhattan and relocated in the peaceful green environment of the Park (Figure 2.6-2.7). To create a complete Japanese experience, the pre-existing Japanese garden received an upgrade by Sano Tansai, the landscape architect who designed the garden at MoMA. Two major restoration efforts took place after the opening. The first was a joint effort with the Japanese government in honor of the Bicentennial in 1976, and the second took place in 2007. Another notable effort was the restoration of the hinoki bark roof in 1999, which cost 2 million dollars.

Shofuso and modern art intersected once again in 2007, when world renowned Japanese artist, Senju Hiroshi, donated 20 paintings to be installed as murals and sliding door panels. Senju initiated this effort after learning that the original 1954 murals were destroyed by vandals in 1967. The contemporary pieces depict abstractions of waterfalls that were inspired by the natural landscape of Shofuso. The fact that Shofuso welcomed modern art at the site speaks to the organization’s thoughtful and open-ended approach to interpretation.

After fifty five years of operation in Fairmount Park, Shofuso received official recognition by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and became listed in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Out of the 10 total ‘criteria for designation,’ Shofuso was nominated based on 7 points of significance:

- *Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,*
- *Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style; or,*
- *Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,*
- Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**Today’s Operation**

Shofuso’s facilities features the Japanese House and garden, the off-site administrative office at 5070 Parkside Avenue, and the newly restored Sakura Pavilion. The facilities are administered and operated by Friends of the Japanese House and Garden (FJHG), a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization comprised of 18 board members and 6 staff, 3 of whom are permanent. The group was formed in 1982 with the mission: “to preserve, restore, and maintain Shofuso, Japanese House and Garden, as a professionally run, financially secure resource where educational and cultural programs are made available to interpret and promote intercultural understanding of traditional Japanese architecture, landscape, and culture.”

The site hosts a variety of public programs, including summer camp, tea ceremonies, traditional Japanese dance and musical performances, and kimono dressing demonstrations. These programs enrich the art and culture scene of Philadelphia and also generate income for the site, although a majority of Shofuso’s revenue comes from entrance fees, event rentals, and site rental for photo shoots.
Figure 2.6. Map of Shofuso in a .5 mile radius context. (By Author)

Figure 2.7. Aerial view of Shofuso. (Google Earth)
New Construction in Historic Settings

The idea of erecting new structures in historic settings has always been, and continues to be, met with skepticism due to the fact that any visual change to the landscape is a threat to its authenticity and *genius loci*, or spirit of place. If authenticity is lost, the historic quality of the site will diminish. On the other hand, the birth of the modern visitor center in the United States in the 1960s indicates that our natural and built heritage often needs the support of new buildings in order to survive. This movement is known as Mission 66, a National Park Service (NPS) campaign to improve parks facilities and the visitor experience by constructing 114 new visitor centers at heritage sites around the country.

The tourist boom of the 1960s, fueled by the rise of automobiles, permanently expanded the scope of work in preservation. Since historic sites could now generate revenue through admission fees, souvenirs, or food and lodging services at large sites like Mount Vernon or Williamsburg, a business operation approach was needed in order to sustain operations. And like businesses, they must take into consideration customer satisfaction as a measure of success. Preservation experts agree that it would be irrational to deny visitors the modern standards of sanitation, comfort, and accessibility for the sake of preserving a pristine historic environment. NPS reports from the 1960s indicate that lack of accommodations, such as shelter, could yield more adverse effects— as people didn’t have a place to hide from dangerous weather or wildlife, and some vandalized sites by setting up ad hoc amenities (Gross &
Visitors comfort and safety, however, should not take priority over preserving the historic character of the site. For example at Stonehedge, the visitor center is located over a mile away, and experts would agree that preserving the ancient landscape justifies the long walk tourists must endure (Strike, 1994).

Faced with the urgent need to accommodate modern tourists at historic sites and regulate new development in American cities after WWII, preservation scholars slowly began to assess these issues under an overarching topic of *new construction in historic environments*. The existing body of literature on this topic has primarily focused on the debate over architectural theories and formal design elements. There is a lack of scholarship regarding practical issues with this type of new development, where no one is assessing the success of a project by how much it contributes to growth of the organization it was designed to support. Preservation and architectural scholars are only judging the success of these projects based on visual compatibility or enhancement to their historic surroundings. Celebrated designs are usually praised for being “sympathetic” or “sensitive” to other adjacent historic buildings.

The same respectful design intent is also recommended in the U.S.’s most well-known architectural preservation guideline, the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standard for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, first written in 1976. Standard 9 states, “...*new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*” The problem with these prescribed methods of intervention is that they can be interpreted subjectively to varying degrees in the absence of an effective system to rate the success of the outcome. Preservation and heritage scholars, including James Strike, Paul Byard, John Warren,
Steven W. Semes, Michael Gross, and Ron Zimmerman, respond to this issue by attempting to form their own design standards that are a further elaboration of Standard 9. Drawing on many years of practice and observation, these authors offer design theories, strategies, and factors to consider when designing in historic contexts, and present their curation of ‘successes and failures’ as a way to help readers form a vocabulary of good practice.

The rejection of imitation or false sense of history in preservation and architecture has left professionals in both fields searching for answers to the question: how can new constructions enhance the aesthetic and cultural values of historic places without replicating its history? Based on the existing academic discussion, the ideal new structure in a historic environment should embody a “sense of continuity,” or the idea that new buildings should strive to carry on values that are embodied in the site. Architects for these buildings must have a deep understanding and “awareness of historic circumstances and a sense of responsibility to historic evidence” (Warren, 1998, 8). Unlike a non-historic site, architects must acquire a deep understanding of the values and meanings when working with a historic site because, as American architect Randolph Langenbach explains, “Buildings which society has deemed to be historic have meaning, and the designer’s understanding of this meaning has everything to do with the success of the results of the interventions...the designer has to evaluate and explore this meaning in the design process” (Strike, 1994, 141).

This sense of continuity lies in the balance between the architect’s response to the genius loci, or “spirit of place,” and the zeitgeist, or “spirit of age”. For a new development to enhance site values and interpretation, it must symbolize both ‘spirits.’ This is not easy to achieve because the goal of capturing both the spirit of age and place is contradictory, since the first is a response to present values and needs, while the latter looks at the past for inspiration
and validation. The integration of traditional and contemporary architecture is further complicated by the fact that today’s architects are disconnected to the design approaches undertaken by the ones practicing prior to Modernism. Steven W. Semes, American architect, educator, and author of *The Future of the Past: a conservation ethic for architecture, urbanism, and historic preservation* (W.W.Norton, 2009), is doubtful when architects claim that their design is sympathetic to the adjacent historic building(s) by containing architectural references to the traditional orders, such as proportion, in their design because he sees it as a shallow attempt to connect with the past. “The subjectivist, intuitive approach of modernist design, rooted in the values of originality and individual genius, would seem to be unsympathetic to a practice that implies an objective standard of beauty” (Semes, 2009, 103).

Although Hegel’s idea of zeitgeist heavily influenced the architecture and preservation fields, where differentiation of time period has become the accepted practice, however this does not mean that architects see the “being different for the sake of clear distinction” philosophy as a justified design approach in historic preservation. Semes argues that “[w]hile it is true that our judgments about the art and architecture of the past are inevitably colored by our interests in the present, it does not necessarily follow that we are obligated to contrive our designs today so that they will appear ‘different’ when juxtaposed with historic examples, as some preservationists have insisted. In truth, the architecture of our time is whatever we choose to make it as it emerges from the conditions of contemporary practice” (Semes, 40).

James Strike, English architect and author of *Architecture in Conservation: Managing Development at Historic Sites* (Routledge, 1994), sees more value in inserting new construction that is in opposition to the historic context, because that means they share the same value at the core, from which each opposite outcome is derived. Strike argues that this approach is more
valid since it attempts to translate a continuation of ideas or values, which are particularly important to consider when adding to a historic context because they give meaning to the site.

While working as an architect at the Central Architectural Practice of English Heritage, Strike noticed a lack of design regulation for new buildings in historic areas compared to the more established guidelines for restoration, something thought of as more in line with preservation practices. Preservationist were not to blame for this oversight; after all, people at the time were just realizing the potential of new buildings as a “possible option for conserving our past” (Strike, 2). Wanting to start a debate on the issue by offering a strategic framework, he converted personal notes written over the course of his career at English Heritage into a 163 page book.

Strike is the first scholar to assess new construction at interpretive historic sites. His focus differs from other scholars in that it concerns new construction within designated historic boundaries as opposed to looking at new buildings in a general urban context, like historic districts or cities. Accordingly, his work is most useful and relevant to this thesis, which is the design of a new visitor center at a historic house museum.

Drawing on his experience at English Heritage, Strike believes projects that purposefully embody a site’s significance are more likely to achieve long-term success than the ones that reject past values. The best way architects can capture spirits of both place and age is by producing new schemes that are both functional and “respect the original use of the site.” Allusion to the site’s original intended use “helps reveal the building’s history’ and retain its identity.” He warns that new designs must address “the conservation and cultural aspects,” of the site, otherwise the project will not achieve long term success (Strike, 141).
Strike’s strategy to express continuity in new designs by forming an affinity with important values and the original use of the historic site is contrasted by Semes’ approach to continuity. Semes argues that what we need to continue are not the values attached to any specific period style or building, but the logic in how architects create buildings since the times of Ancient Rome. Semes believes that the foundation of “any serious architectural discourse,” is grounded in Vitruvius’ timeless proclamation that all architecture should satisfy the requirement of “firmness, commodity, and delight” (Semes, 41). Using this design philosophy as the starting point, Semes believes architects should be able to “design what seems most appropriate for the character of the historic settings in which we build, without slavish imitation of current fashion or a contrived evocation of ‘difference’ simply so the work will be seen as ours” (Semes, 40).

This notion of continuity of practice is perhaps the most popular among architects because it leaves a lot of room for architectural interpretation and creative freedom. In an essay titled “Contributing to Historic Settings without Kow-towing,” English architect Edward Cullinan favors a similar design approach as Semes where the emphasis is placed on the practice, not the continuation of style: “I want tradition in architecture to mean a shared and continuous development of the way of doing things towards practical artistic and social ends. I do not want it to mean in the estate agent’s sense old-fashioned-looking housing estates and supermarkets, they are not being traditional, they are being no more than old-fashioned or nostalgic” (Warren, 129).

In The Architecture of Additions: Design and Regulation (W. W. Norton, 1998), Paul Byard posits that a new building can form an affinity with the past if it conveys a sense of hierarchy that doesn’t overshadow the existing historic assets. A prominent American scholar, Byard was a lawyer, architect, and director of the Historic Preservation Program at Columbia
University. He believed new buildings that possess a sense of hierarchy within a historic context are more likely to be accepted and admired because they are “works of art like others, organized and given meaning by their hierarchy. Where a public interest in preservation is involved, that hierarchy should reflect the importance of the thing preserved” (Byard, 1998).

Figure 3.1. Carré d’Art, by Norman Foster, situated in the backdrop of First Century B.C. relic, Maison Carrée. (Foster & Partners)

Unlike Semes, Byard appreciated architectural expression of zeitgeist and new designs that draw inspiration from previous works to strengthen schematic cohesion. While Semes dismissed the “proportional affinities” between Norman Foster’s 1991 Carré d’Art (Figure 3.1) and Maison Carrée (First Century B.C.) by calling out that the modern arithmetic system cannot be diffused with the ancient geometric system, Byard found the relationship between the new and old to be “pervasive” and “illuminating.” Byard praised Foster’s modernist building for not only playing background to the ancient monument, but also using it as a formal resource (Byard,
The new construction was a success because it reinforced a clear sense of hierarchy and sense of continuity, getting the point across that the Maison Carrée came first and is the most important building in the surrounding area. “As a rectangle with its axis toward the square, the Carré d’Art addresses the side of the Maison Carrée, neither competing with nor reinforcing its orientation, making it and its relationship to the city together the object of its attention” (Byard, 59). To further reinforce his argument about the importance of displaying hierarchy, he concluded that the main reason Marcel Breuer’s proposal of a modernist tower atop Grand Central Station (Figure 3.2) was rejected was because, even though the scheme was successful as an expression of its time, “the combination on its own terms did not adequately honor the protected public asset” (Byard, 182).

Figure 3.2. Marcel Breuer’s 1968 rejected proposal for a tower atop Grand Central Terminal in New York City. (Paul Byard, The Architecture of Additions: Design and Regulation, W.W. Norton, 1998)
For non-architect professionals in the preservation field, the idea that a building should be an honest expression of zeitgeist is not as important compared to its embodiment of the genius loci. This is perhaps because other disciplines, such as urban planners and curators, are proponents of different values that don’t involve the concept of zeitgeist, whereas architects incorporate the idea, some more than others, to guide their methodology. In their book, *Interpretive Centers: the history, design and development of nature and visitor centers* (University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Foundation Press, Inc., 2002), Michael Gross and Ron Zimmerman, both professors of environmental interpretation, advocate that architects should respect the genius loci and use it to guide their designs. As interpreters, they are more concerned with educating the public about the significance of site. “Site design and development should be a response to strong genius loci. The significant stories, myths, and natural and cultural ecology of a site should be explored before themes are identified or visions are developed” (Gross & Zimmerman, 60). To them, a well-designed new building is one that “harmonize[s] with the wealth of a place’s history, people, and landscape” (Gross & Zimmerman, 42).

The planners who wrote *The Historic Urban Landscape: Managing Heritage in an Urban Century* (Wiley-Backwell: West Sussex, 2012), Francesco Bandarin and Ron Van Oers, value the juxtaposition of historic and contemporary as key to a resilient historic city. Because historic areas “contribute significantly to the value of the city by branding the city’s character,” planners want new development in that area to ensure “continuity and compatibility with the historic setting in terms of form and function” (Bandarin and Van Oers, 87). Unlike architects who respond to the needs of a particular site, planners respond to the needs of an entire city—
composed of multiple districts, where the historic sections often function as cultural centers, serving the livelihood of the community and attracting tourists.

**Problem with the Current Academic Discussion**

The problem with the current academic discussion or critique on new constructions in historic settings is that it has primarily focused on design theories that revolve around the visual impact new buildings have on their historic urban setting or landscape. For example, in *The Future of the Past*, the most recent work on this topic published in 2009, Semes tells readers from the beginning that “the primary focus of this book will be on the physical appearance of buildings and cities...” (Semes, 41). By focusing on the visual relationships, the debate ignores how new construction may impact the management of historic sites, which is a critical factor that should be used to determine the success of new constructions. As scholars, we should be assessing beyond how well a new visitor center visually enhances its surroundings and pay attention to how well it helps support and expands on the site’s mission. In addition to asking: How can new construction add more interpretive value to a historic site? We also need to address: How can architects make designs that support the site’s mission as well as sustainability? If preservation professionals are to answer effectively, we must consider the success of both visual and programmatic enhancement of the new building.

Small historic sites, like the Japanese House, engage first time visitors with an interesting story and tangible history, but what are the chances that these visitors will return for the second time knowing that these sites will remain exactly the same. Issues regarding returning visits pose the biggest challenge to the preservation and sustainability of small historic houses that are open to the public. This is because admission fees not only bring in revenue, but
the number of visitors also validates how important and relevant a historic site is to the public, giving donors and foundations a valid cause to donate or approve grants.

In reality, historic houses must compete with numerous other cultural attractions in the business of cultural tourism and they are losing. While a city’s collection of cultural attractions serve to complement each other in order to enrich its tourism economy and the livelihood of local communities, house museums struggle much more to expand their audiences and bring back returning visitors in comparison to larger organizations, such as art or science museums, that have more to offer in terms of large permanent collections and rotating exhibitions. In an article published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation titled *Are There Too Many House Museums?* (2008), former Trust President Richard Moe brought to light a critical challenge that must be addressed in the field: “[w]hat I do know is that there are still thousands of historic house museums in the United States, mostly run entirely by dedicated volunteers, which are financially strapped, struggling for visitors, and badly in need of repair.”

If historic house museums hope to stay open, Moe suggests that they need to reassess and expand their interpretation beyond the old “velvet rope” model, in order to attract more audiences and keep them interested. Architects working within historic boundaries must consider how their work can contribute effectively to this solution, if their buildings are to have any future along with these sites. The academic discussion on new construction in historic contexts can contribute to expanding their assessment to look inside the walls and see how well the floor plans and overall scheme enhance the programmatic function of historic sites. In this way, the discussion can help inform designers of effective designs that not only enhance historic sites visually, but also enhance their function and resiliency.
This thesis’ objective for the new visitor center at Shofuso is to help increase the cultural significance of the site by expanding site programming and fill in the gaps of interpretation, thereby increasing potential revenue and number of visitors. Chapter 5 will explain how the Values-Based Conservation Model from the Getty Case Studies, was incorporated into the design methodology in order to address both management concerns and values of the site.

Values-Based Conservation is an interdisciplinary approach to historic site management, where every decision is guided by shared values among stakeholders. In order to achieve effective results, the administrator must issue a strict plan, or mission, prioritizing the different values ascribed to the site—keeping in mind that a single-value approach, such as only addressing decay, is unsustainable (Mason, et al). Kate Clark, Australian museum and heritage specialist, differentiates heritage site management from other forms of property management by pointing out that “the fundamental purpose of cultural heritage management should be to preserve the values ascribed to a site—be they aesthetic or historical or social. Heritage sites are not simply visitor attractions, there to provide customer satisfaction and a reasonable profit.” By also letting the site missions guide the design and programmatic layout of the visitor center, in addition to the spirit of place and time, the new building can achieve its own novelty without diminishing the cultural and historic values of the place.
CASE STUDIES

The design theories from Chapter 3: Literature Review are proposed for ideal situations, since they are blind to the unique circumstances of each project. Because we do not live in an ideal world, designers must balance theoretical concepts with practical solutions in order to optimize aesthetics and function. Because the goal for the Shofuso Visitor Center is a contemporary design that enhances the historic landscape and supports sustainable growth, two case studies of outstanding visitor centers that have accomplished just that were examined. The first case study is the visitor center at the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Darwin D. Martin House in Buffalo, NY, by New York-based firm, Toshiko Mori Architect. The second case study is the visitor complex at George Washington’s Mount Vernon estate, by Baltimore-based firm, GWWO Inc./Architects. Extensive research enabled these two firms to obtain a thorough understanding of the original design intentions at their site. As a result, they were able to reinterpret these intentions through their original designs without replicating any features of the historic buildings. Their designs respect the historic sites by carrying on the ideas that are germane to their identity and character.

Darwin D. Martin House Visitor Center (The Eleanor and Wilson Greatbatch Pavilion), Buffalo, NY, by Toshiko Mori Architect, NY

The visitor center by Mori is the latest addition to the iconic 1904 residential complex associated with Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie Style. Situated on a corner lot in Buffalo’s affluent Parkside East neighborhood, the complex is comprised of the Darwin D. Martin House, the George F. Barton House, and smaller outbuildings including a conservatory, carriage house,
gardener’s cottage, and pergola. When Mori won the commission from Martin House Restoration Corporation back in 2002, she envisioned a visitor center that must “have its own presence but can’t be overwhelming.” In other words, it had to “be read as a contemporary addition but also as part of a family” (Mori, 2010) An accomplished architect, Mori reveres Wright’s legacy but had no intention to be in his shadow. She is principal at Toshiko Mori Architects in New York City, which she founded in 1981. She has also served as chair of the Department of Architecture at Harvard Graduate School of Design from 2002 to 2008.

From the exterior, the 7,775 square foot building, also known at the Eleanor and Wilson Greatbatch Pavilion, is a single story rectangular glass structure with a cantilevered reversed-hip roof supported by four interior columns (Figure 4.1). The pavilion sits unobtrusively parallel to the complex, separated by a new paved courtyard. It is situated in alignment with the Martin House, in both plan and elevation, to convey a sense of unity and to present itself as its “child”
(Mori, 2010). The orientation of the pavilion towards the Martin House establishes a sense of hierarchy that presents the house as the main attraction. The glass-paneled exterior yields absolute transparency on three sides of the building, allowing visitors to see the entire complex and orient themselves before the tour. The back glass wall is interrupted by a concrete mass housing private bathrooms, kitchen, and coat check (Figure 4.2).

![Floor Plan](image)

**Figure 4.2.** Floor plan of the Martin House Visitor Center by Toshiko Mori Architect. (Toshiko Mori Architect Website)

Visitors can access the interior through the entries along the shorter side walls. The interior is an open floor plan that functions as event rental space, exhibition space, permanent galleries, and ticketing area. In addition to the transparent walls, natural light also enters the building through a rectangular skylight opening framed by the four roof columns below (Figure 4.3).
In color theory, the way to make something red appear even redder is to place it next to something green. And if the Martin House by Frank Lloyd Wright is red, then Mori’s visitor center would be green, because, like the colors, they are opposite, but nonetheless complementary. English preservation architect James Strike would find this design strategy suitable as a way for new constructions to identify with the historical significance of their sites. While Strike agrees that contemporary architecture should read as the spirit of its time and reject a false sense of history, he does not believe that these concepts justify designs that are intentionally ‘different’ for the sake of contrast and period differentiation. Instead, he promotes the idea of ‘opposition’ because things that are opposite mean that they at least share similar values at the core. He believes this concept helps guide the use of contrasting objects or ideas to achieve complementary results.

Mori’s design strategy proves that complementary effects can be achieved with thoughtful articulation of contrast. She engages Wright’s masterwork through a dialogue of
opposition, where she set out to “go against him all the time.” The result is a dynamic conversation with each side expressing their “shared interest in innovation through the exploration of new materials, technologies, and techniques” (Toshiko Mori Architect, www.tmarch.com). For example, this notion of ‘complementary opposition’ is apparent in Mori’s reversed hip roof, which goes against Wright’s hip roof but still shares his signature low, horizontal profile and cantilevered effect. And while Mori’s material choice of glass clearly contrasts Wright’s choice of brick, she still references his clear and straight-forward application of a dominant material on the exterior as a way to give character to the building. The transparency of the visitor center stands in antithesis with the introversion of the Martin House (Figure 4.4–4.5).

Figure 4.4. Exterior view of the Martin House Visitor Center. (Toshiko Mori Architect Website)
Figure 4.5. The transparency of the new structure in antithesis to the solid exterior of the Martin House. (Toshiko Mori Architect Website)

The Martin House Restoration Corporation is happy with their new building because it costs very little to operate and maintain. Mori’s innovative approach to sustainability combines excellence in design and engineering. She collaborated with top engineering consultants, including ARUP and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, New York City. The building does not have an HVAC system. Air is circulated through a system of displaced ventilation and uses geothermal heating and cooling. This thoughtful building operation scheme was intentionally executed to reflect Wright’s innovative technique of hiding the HVAC system by incorporating easily accessible service spaces into the floor plan. The glass-paneled walls and skylight provide the interior with sufficient lighting throughout the day, which cuts electricity cost enormously by eliminating the need for artificial lighting from 10-4 P.M. on most days.

The 5 million dollar Greatbatch Pavilion found success in both function and design. The building supports sustainable growth of the site by saving energy bills with self-sustaining
systems. Its compelling spatial layout, described as “a spectacular venue for all types of social and professional gatherings,” (www.darwinmartinhouse.org) helps generate more income through event rentals. The attached courtyard enables both indoor and outdoor gatherings with unobstructed views of the historic complex. The architectural design enhances the existing landscape through the juxtaposition of contrasting formal elements that amplify the unique characteristics of the Prairie Style. Since it opened on March 14, 2009, the project has received wide publicity and the majority of responses from architectural critics and the design field have been positive. The project has received numerous awards, including the AIA Buffalo/Western New York Honor Award in 2009, and AIA New York State Award of Excellence in 2010.

**Ford Orientation Center and Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center, Mount Vernon, VA, by GWWO, Inc./Architects, MD**

The 500-acre Mount Vernon landscape is home to George Washington’s Georgian style residence, which he built in 1757. The site is closely related to the identity of our country’s first president because he was involved with every step of its creation, from master planning all the way down to minute details like wall color. Mount Vernon is also the birthplace of grassroots preservation in the US. In 1853, the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association of the Union was formed by Ann Pamela Cunningham for the purpose of saving and preserving Washington’s former estate after it fell into a state of disrepair.

Their original mission was to open the site to the public as a national landmark. In 1986 the mission expanded to include public education. A series of studies was implemented in the early 1990s to get a sense of how people perceived Washington and his legacy. The Association was startled by how little people knew about his personal life, character, and other achievements outside the battlefield. As a result, they pursued an ambitious 60 million dollar
campaign to build the Ford Orientation Center and the Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center. In 1995, Architects were invited to submit proposals for the new facilities that required 71,000 square feet of program space (Figure 4.6). They were looking for something “elegant and memorable but also aesthetically comfortable for both exhibits and people” (Lewis, 2007, x).

Figure 4.6. Map of Mount Vernon showing the 71,000 square footage designated area for the new expansion. (GWWO, Inc./Architects)

GWWO, Inc./Architects won the design competition with a contemporary design that respects the historic landscape and embodies the spirit of George Washington. Their buildings are not architecturally distinguished, but well integrated into the site. Their designs did not express innovation, but rather a continuation of ideas.
Their design approach was research-based, informed by a profound understanding of the entire 500-acre landscape’s “topography, vegetation, microclimate, landscape details and materials, views, approaches and pathways, existing structures and their various architectural vocabularies” (Lewis, ix). They were observing the past and present to identify “a single, unifying concept” that would connect the current site’s mission with Washington’s legacy at Mount Vernon. Learning from the past proved beneficial for GWWO. Their proposal appealed to the judges, who obviously cared deeply for the site, and received high praise from Mount Vernon Executive Director, James C. Rees:

GWWO was the smallest of the four finalists in our design competition, and I'd say they started as an underdog. But they clearly listened better than anyone else. They cast their own egos aside and allowed the architecture and landscape created by George Washington to remain at center stage. [Their approach] was really quite brilliant. (GWWO, Inc./Architects Website)

GWWO was able to identify with the spirit of Washington with a unifying concept that reinterprets the 18th-century approach to Mount Vernon that Washington laid out himself. The red line in Figure 4.7 represents the historical sequence of procession that Washington had planned for visitors before reaching the bowling green gate. He wanted to build anticipation by providing different vistas of the mansion at particular points along the long and winding path from the main entry, or the “west gate.” “Washington placed a premium on first impressions,” architect and historian, Roger Lewis, explains (Lewis, 61).
Figure 4.7. The red line represents the historical sequence of procession that Washington had cultivated for visitors to heighten their anticipation before reaching the bowling green gate. (GWWO, Inc./Architects)
Because modern-day visitors must now go through the Ford Orientation Center before getting to the Mansion, GWWO employed Washington’s strategy of “vistas” to heightening visitors’ anticipation in hopes that their experience will be memorable from start to finish. And because the main intention for this expansion was to educate visitors about who Washington really was, the entire 71,000 square foot master plan is laid out like one giant exhibition. The architects inserted non-architectural features, such as sculptures, and framed scenic views in order to create moments of pause that would allow visitors to make stops along their path to educate themselves about Washington’s life by observing or reading interpretive panels. This circulation strategy also helps the site to control the flow of visitors so that when hundreds of visitors arrive all at once,
they are not all rushed to the Mansion, where they will have to wait for a long time (Figure 4.8).

Today’s visitors no longer approach Mount Vernon from the west gate, but begin their tour at the Texas Gate, which is located much closer to the Mansion. The first thing they see through the black iron gate is an unobstructed view of the pasture (Figure 4.9). This first impression is meant to convey “the estate’s vastness and agrarian character,” which immediately introduces visitors to Washington’s peaceful and simple way of life. Visitors feel the connection with the past while still unable to see the Mansion; anticipation kicks in.

![Figure 4.9. Entrance to the Ford Orientation Center. Visitors enter the property and are welcomed by the unobstructed view of Mount Vernon’s pastoral landscape. To their left is the orientation center, where they would buy tickets before going in. (GWWO, Inc./Architects)](image_url)

After taking in the vast and peaceful setting, to the left is the orientation center where visitors are directed to purchase ticket before entering. The center is an obvious
contemporary edition, composed of a brick and glass exterior with copper framing. At the center of the façade is a white stone wall with a metal relief profile portrait of Washington that demonstrates GWWO’s concept of an ‘exhibition’ master plan, where this feature invites visitors to observe, or pause for a photo opportunity. Once inside, visitors are directed to walk along a path formed by the sweeping elliptical glass wall on the right that captures the view of the pasture from a different angle. Along the curved path, they glimpse the Mansion in a miniature model of the exterior and sectional interior. They are then directed to go inside a theater for a 20 minute film before exiting into a “forested path” that takes them directly to the bowling green gate. This is where the anticipation is finally rewarded with a spectacular, authentic view of the Mansion.

*Figure 4.10.* The different arrows illustrate the sequence of procession that attempts to build anticipation in the 1995 master plan by GWWO, Inc./Architects.
GWWO’s master plan supports Mount Vernon’s mission to interpret Washington’s estate “in his time” by following the board’s suggestion to place “most, if not all, of the new construction” underground. The result is a scheme that separates the programmatic spaces into two zones: the Museum and Education Center is located almost entirely underground beneath grassland, and the Orientation Center is tucked in a corner where the surrounding trees conceal its presence from the historic core. This strategic layout enables the association to have a technologically advanced visitor and interpretation center close to the main attraction without compromising its historic character. In 2007, the project received the AIA Maryland Design Award and was the AIA Baltimore Design Award Winner.

**Takeaways**

Both case studies demonstrate Byard’s concept of “hierarchy” that is necessary for the integration of new buildings at historic sites. This concept helps the observer to determine the appropriateness of new constructions. At the Martin House, Mori formed a dialogue with the historic house through opposition—for instance, the use of glass in antithesis to the impenetrable bricks of the residence that is meant to convey its function as a private space. The transparent material choice establishes a sense of hierarchy by capturing a panoramic view of the entire Martin House estate inside the interior, while the visitor center is not the dominant view from the interior of the house.

Shofuso is even more private in nature than the Martin House since it does not bare any glass windows. And if the exterior of the new Shofuso Visitor Center is transparent glass, it would convey the same sense of hierarchy at the Martin House. By framing a view of Shofuso inside the visitor center, it appears to be the focal point of the site. And as we see at the Martin
House Visitor Center, glass walls can help cut costs by providing sufficient lighting from morning to late afternoon.

The architects at GWWO partially followed Mount Vernon’s request to have the new expansion be completely underground. By putting the orientation center above ground and the museum beneath the pasture mound, GWWO was able to impose a hierarchy that respects the historic landscape, without compromising the visitor experience. The architects did not see fit to make the visitor walk down into the orientation center and up again to go towards the mansion. They journey would be awkward and impractical—an unjust compromise for the sake of keeping a pristine colonial landscape. GWWO were able to get a pass on building the orientation center above ground by concealing it from the Colonial section behind a thick wooded area. It is important to keep in mind that there are more ways to harmoniously integrate contemporary structures into a historic landscape besides placing it underground.

Toshiko Mori Architect and GWWO, Inc./Architects were able to enhance historic sites through thoughtful conciliation of past values and aspirations with contemporary design sensibility and standards. At Mount Vernon, GWWO employed Washington’s cultivation of scenic processions toward the Mansion as a common denomination that ties the new and old together. Mori’s design engaged the Martin House through a dynamic dialogue of opposition. Even though the buildings express visual contrast, they still share design principles that are germane to the identity of the Martin House, such as the cantilevered roof, accentuated horizontality, and material innovation. Both case studies provide important lessons in style, by demonstrating how modern architecture can be harmoniously integrated and capture the spirit of historic contexts without having to apply popular trends or mimic historical features.
5

Proposal for a Temporary Installation Program at Shofuso

Unlike the house museums from the previous chapter, Shofuso is atypical in that it never served as a residence to a notable individual or a witness to a significant moment in history. Mount Vernon and Martin House both have giant names like Washington and Wright attached to their sites that give the public enough incentive to pay a visit. At Shofuso, Yoshimura’s name does not resonate enough with the general public or even architectural enthusiasts that we should expect to attract an audience with an exhibit about his life and work. And because no one has ever lived in the house, how do you make an exhibit about a house museum with no living history?

The best exhibit type for Shofuso is a temporary architecture installation; an experimental pavilion that will become one of the city’s cultural attractions in the summer. The first inspiration for this idea is the fact that Shofuso is itself temporary, only opened to the public from April through October. The temporary pavilion installation will be displayed where the Japanese Bazaar and teahouse once stood during the 1876 Centennial Exposition.

The intention for introducing ‘Shofuso Summer Pavilion’ is to attract new and returning audiences with a dynamic annual event that reflects the Centennial’s legacy of temporary avant-garde architectural exhibits and Shofuso’s origin as a “modern” installation at the MoMA. This will be an opportunity for architecture students and young professionals to show their work at a historic site and get their names out. By having the pavilion visible from Avenue of the Republic, there is high potential for it to receive a lot of traffic because that section of Fairmount Park is a
cultural hotspot for people of all ages who go to the Mann Center and the Please Touch Museum.

Feasibility Study

The summer pavilion program is feasible because current research shows that temporary installation exhibits do attract more visitors to historic sites and that there is a large market audience for it. This conclusion is the result of looking at programmatic precedents at four other sites to see if there is a pattern of positive feedback.

The first two sites are Philadelphia’s Physick House Museum and Powel House Museum, where former Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks’ Executive Director Frank Vagnone, commissioned art installations as part of the Landmarks Contemporary Projects program. The Projects reported a drastic increase in visitors in the two months they were on display (Table 5.1). In comparison to the same period from the previous year without any exhibit, the Candy Depew exhibit at the Physick House in 2006 increased income by 14% and attendance by 67% after the first month. By the second month, they finished off with a 169% increase in income and 152% increase in attendance. During the first month of the Karen Kilmnik exhibit in 2007, Powel House saw a 14% increase in income and 14.5% increase in attendance. By the second month of the exhibit, there was an increase in income by 210% and attendance by 286% (Table 5.1).

Both exhibits received minor attention during their first month, and later gained enormous success with audiences in the second month. This pattern indicates that the exhibits gained more attention through word of mouth as more people attended and recommended it to others, and that people are more compelled to go to an exhibit when they realize it will soon no longer be on display. Temporary exhibits, whether large like the World’s Fair or small like these
house museum displays, give people incentives to go to places that are not normally at the top of their list and to return to places they have been. Time is precious; therefore we see more value in transient occurrences and feel ourselves more drawn to them.

The third site is the Serpentine Gallery in London, which hosts the most famous temporary architecture installation event in the world known as the Serpentine Pavilion. It is an annual exhibit described as “one of the most hotly anticipated event[s] in the cultural calendar” (www.serpentinegalleries.com). It lasts from June 26 to October 19 each year. Conceived in 2000, the Gallery continues to invite world-renown architects to create experimental designs on the lawn next to the 1934 gallery building. Julia Peyton-Jones, site director, states that “[t]he intention of the commission is to show people the extraordinary richness of contemporary architecture and allow them to compare their personal experience of one Pavilion with the next, and thus to become engaged and involved in architecture” (Massey, 2007, 7).

The main reason why the Serpentine Pavilion is a temporary program is because it is on England’s royal property in Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park. The pavilion is their main summer attraction and is used as a platform to hold special events such as concerts and lectures. Shofuso can apply this strategy of using the pavilion to hold outdoor recreational events that will increase the number of attendance (Table 5.2), thereby increasing the organization’s economic and social values. The Gallery further uses the pavilion to benefit the citizens of London by extending the program’s eligibility requirement to architects who have never built in the United Kingdom before. This way, Londoners have the opportunity to visit buildings by famous names without having to travel overseas.
Table 5.1. Landmarks Contemporary Projects visitation record at Physick House in 2006 and Powel House in 2007. (Source: Frank Vagnone)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Daily#</th>
<th>Total#</th>
<th>TotalSite#</th>
<th>PercentageTotal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Koolhaas and Balmond with Arup</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>265,996</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Frank Gehry</td>
<td>2,665</td>
<td>245,159</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>SANAA</td>
<td>3,099</td>
<td>303,741</td>
<td>734,353</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Jean Nouvel</td>
<td>2,979</td>
<td>294,910</td>
<td>736,072</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Peter Zumthor</td>
<td>1,493</td>
<td>161,292</td>
<td>825,837</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Herzog &amp; de Meuron and Ai Weiwei</td>
<td>1,054</td>
<td>143,323</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2. Serpentine Pavilion visitation record from 2006 to 2012. ([www.theartnewspaper.com](http://www.theartnewspaper.com))

The Serpentine Gallery uses the pavilions to improve their financial standing by selling them to the highest bidder at closing, and attracting corporate buyers that want to market their patronage of the arts to sponsor the construction. Because these experimental structures are conceived by the world’s top architects and artists, they often demand a high budget. The resale allows them to cover up to 40 percent of the budget (Jodidio, 20). *The Guardian* reported in 2006 that, “previous pavilions have sold for between £250,000 and £500,000, plus a £150,000 dismantling fee” (Rose, 2006). The pavilion by Rem Koolhaas and Cecil Balmond in that year sold for £750,000, which is about 1 million US dollars. These effective business strategies prove that large scale temporary installations are financially feasible through thoughtful planning.

The art installation program at Eastern State Penitentiary (ESP), Philadelphia, is not set up to expand audiences or increase revenue, but is intended to deepen visitor understanding of the site, and how its legacy is connected to prison culture today. The program started in the early 1990s when local artist groups teamed up to display artwork inside the building. A guideline for exhibits was created in 1999 to ensure legitimate proposals. It has developed into a well-known outlet among artists to display their work, receiving 83 proposals in 2013.

Sean Kelley, Senior Vice President and Director of Public Programming, said in an interview that the arts program plays an integral part in their interpretation efforts because
artists think of connections that the administration had never thought of before. He recalls getting a positive feedback from a simple installation where the artist showed video clips of scenes inside today’s prisons. From that, the audience was able to form an understanding of how ESP has influenced the modern prison system. This last precedent complements the previous three by going beyond the justification that rotating installations at historic sites do increase visitation and revenue, and show that, more importantly, they enhance interpretation values for today’s audience as well.

**Program Development**

The proposal guideline for Shofuso Pavilion looked at precedents from Socrates Sculpture Park, Eastern State Penitentiary, and Serpentine Gallery, and modifying them to align with the site’s missions.

**Call For Proposals: Shofuso Pavilion**

**Description:**

Shofuso Japanese House and Garden invites emerging architects and designers to submit a proposal for a full-scale experimental pavilion that will serve as Philadelphia’s cultural attraction during the summer. This annual program plays an interpretive role that reflects the Japanese House’s conception as a temporary installation at the Museum of Modern Art, NY, to demonstrate traditional Japanese influences on the development of western modern architecture. Moreover, the program also follows the architectural tradition of the 1876 Centennial Exposition, where many innovative and experimental structures once stood across the grounds of Fairmount.

Our mission is to continue the pioneering spirit of the Centennial and the Shofuso MoMA exhibit. The Shofuso Pavilion should be a statement about what’s possible with contemporary
architecture today. Keep in mind that the transient nature of the pavilion is an opportunity to explore architecture outside the canon. The tradition of temporary installations, exhibits, and pavilions has introduced the world to many ground-breaking architectural innovations, including the Geodesic Dome by Buckminster Fuller, Barcelona Pavilion by Mies Van der Rohe, and Vasarely Pavilion by Shigeru Ban (Figure 5.1). The winning proposal will be selected based on originality of concept and design, sound structure, and innovative use of material.

![Figure 5.1. The Vasarely Pavilion (2006) by Shigeru Ban. (www.shigerubanarchitects.com)](image)

**Eligibility:**

Participant must hold a bachelor or graduate degree in architecture or a related field with structural knowledge. Teams working together must consist of a 1 to 1 ratio between architect and other profession(s).

**Mission Concept:**

The Shofuso Pavilion is intended to be an experimental extension of Shofuso the Japanese House.

**Site:**

The previous grounds of the Centennial’s Japanese Bazaar and Tearoom, situated at the southwest corner of the new Shofuso Drive and Lansdowne intersection (Figure 5.2).
Figure 5.2. Designated site for Shofuso Pavilion. (Parima Sukosi)

**Project Dimensions:**
Project scale can be at any size but should consider the available lawn square footage. Shofuso may ask the chosen designer to adjust project size if it is deemed as unsafe or inappropriate, meaning too large or small in relation to human scale.

**Budget:**
$5,000 maximum will be funded by Shofuso. Participant may acquire additional funding from external sources to go towards production.

**Recycling Plan:**
Participant must submit a plan for recycling 100% of their construction material.

**Resale Plan:**
In the event that the installation receives sale offers, all sales decisions will be determined by Shofuso. Participants will receive 50 percent of all proceeds.

**Submissions:**
A written statement explaining the design concept, recycling plan, and budget plan. Writings must be accompanied with illustrations.
DESIGN PHASE

The most effective way Shofuso can thrive with the opening of a new visitor center is through sustainable growth planning. Chapter 5: Proposal for a Temporary Installation Program at Shofuso addresses this concern with the proposal for Shofuso Pavilion, an annual program aimed at increasing attendance and expanding the audience to include those interested in modern architecture. This chapter also intends to address sustainable growth, but through a more permanent strategy with the new Shofuso Visitor Center.

Because the project will operate as part of a historic house museum, the new visitor center seeks to become an effective contributing member by engaging in a dialogue with the existing house and landscape. By drawing on architectural affinities with the Japanese House for the new design, the result is a timeless dialogue between the new and old that is independent from the evolving style and trends in architecture. This ‘architectural affinity’ is not formed by visual association, such as imitating the proportion or use of material, but instead attempts to translate the Japanese House’s relevance to modern architecture. Arthur Drexler, former curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York who brought Shofuso from Japan to be displayed in the Museum’s courtyard in 1955, saw four main characteristics in Japanese architecture that directly influenced Western notions of Modernism:

1. Post and lintel skeleton frame construction,
2. Flexible room arrangements,
3. Close relation of indoor and outdoor areas,
4. And the ornamental quality of the structural system itself (MoMA, 1956).

Similar to the idea behind the Shofuso Pavilion temporary installation, these four points were chosen as the main design concept in order to expand the interpretation of Shofuso to cover the narrative of its conception as a ‘modern architecture exhibit,’ and thereby expand the audience to include modern Japanese architecture enthusiasts.
Design Process

Site Selection

Before diving into the actual design of the building, the first step dealt with practical issues of where to place the building. The location of the new Shofuso Visitor Center was chosen based on the following criteria:

1. Previously unoccupied by any Centennial structures
2. Leveled foundation surface
3. Suitable soil-type for urban development
4. Visible from the new entry road
5. Visitor center to be hidden from the sight line of the Japanese House veranda
6. The interior must capture scenic views of the Shofuso landscape

Through simple observation of the map of Shofuso in the context of Fairmount Park, it was concluded that the best location within the open area south of the main site (Figure 6.1), because there is plenty of square footage to support the building as well as parking spaces, and it is visible from the new entry on the Avenue of the Republic. ArcGIS, a geographic information system software, was also used to determine the most suitable location. ArcGIS found that the south lawn area consist of an UdB, or Udorthents, soil type that is suitable for urban development in a large flat surface area (Figure 6.2).
Figure 6.1. Area designated for the visitor center.

Figure 6.2. GIS soiltype map.
Concept Model

The design process began by translating MoMA’s ‘four relevant points’ into a three-dimensional space. The result is a concept model (Figure 6.3-6.6) that reinterprets post and lintel skeleton frame construction by replacing vertical columns with reinforced concrete walls as the main support. The four concrete walls partitions the floor plan into three linear sections that allows for flexible room arrangements within each area. The model demonstrates the third point, the importance of the close relation of indoor and outdoor areas, by giving two sides of the building total transparency, with the use of glass panels, that will bring in the view of nature into the interior. The entire volume was designed to appear to hover above a reflecting pool, thereby allowing inhabitants to look out into a calming view of the surrounding water and plants. The forth and last point, which is the ornamental quality of the structural system of traditional Japanese architecture, is captured in the sculptural form of the interlocking beams that support the roof. The roof assembly reinterprets a traditional construction techniques in Japan and China, known as the bracket system, in which the wooden beams are stacked to extend the cantilevered edges of the roof.
Figure 6.4–6.6. Concept model for the Shofuso Visitor Center exhibiting ‘the four points’ of architectural influence traditional Japanese Architecture had on the development of Modernism in the West.
Floor Plan

A floor plan was generated by modifying the concept model to accommodate Shofuso’s program requirements. The one story visitor center contains about 6000 square feet of programmatic space. The rectangular floor plan measures 150 feet long and 40 feet wide, which can be divided into thirty-six 15x10 feet grids. The floor to ceiling height is 14 feet.

Programmatic spaces are divided into three types of function: private, common, and public. As seen in the Floor Plan (Drawing 2), private functions, which include work stations, a meeting area, director’s office, lounge area, and archival library, are located on the west side of the building. Private and public functions are kept in separate rooms to protect administrative tools, such as computers, from getting stolen, and also to maintain an orderly working environment where staff do not have to worry about intruders. The public portion holds the main event space, a reception area and giftshop, storage room, kitchen, and lobby/waiting area. The indoor main event space opens out onto a stone garden and lawn area that can hold large outdoor events (Figure 6.7). In the middle, between the private and public areas, lies a common passageway that behaves as the main artery of the building, where all circulation paths intersect. The passageway is also where the ticket window and restrooms are located.

The Site Plan (Drawing 1) shows the rectangular layout of the visitor center and outdoor stone garden oriented towards the historic core of the site. The purpose of this orientation was to maximize the view of Shofuso for the people attending events both inside and outside the visitor center. People choose to hold events at Shofuso mainly to enjoy the scenic landscape and maximizing views would increase the appeal of these rentable spaces (Figure 6.8). While the historic core is visible from the visitor center because it is sitting on a higher elevation, the new structures are blocked from the view of the Japanese House veranda by tall trees (Figure 6.9).

In addition to creating a design that complements and engages the site, another important component is the project’s contribution towards the sustainability of the organization.
the case study of the Martin House Visitor Center, we see that the building’s high-performance design and engineering helps its organization by keeping operational costs low. The Shofuso Visitor Center aimed to save energy and resources with two main architectural features. The first is the 2-feet deep reflecting pool below the structure that would collect ‘dark water’ to be reused for plumbing. The other feature is the 14 feet tall glass walls on the north and south elevations of the building (Drawing 3), which would supply the interior with natural lighting throughout the day, while the cantilever roof prevents direct glare (Figure 6.10-6.11).
Figure 6.7. The event room inside the visitor center opens out onto a Japanese stone garden and lawn area designated for outdoor events.

Figure 6.8. Indoor event space.
Figure 6.9. The new visitor center is hidden from the view of the Japanese House veranda in order to preserve the traditional character of the landscape.

Figure 6.10. The archival library would be bathed in sunlight most of the daytime.

Figure 6.11. Path of sunlight at 10 AM the event room.
Sequence of Approach

The architecture of the visitor center respects and enhances the Japanese House by making it the focal point of the entire master plan. The sequence of procession towards the house is designed to reinforce this notion. When visitors first arrive, they are presented with a view of all the three attractions at the site, with a clear view of the Shofuso Pavilion (shown as the Vasarely Pavilion, by Shigeru Ban, in Figure 6.12 below) in the foreground and a glimpse of the Japanese House’s roof in the background. As visitors approach the new Shofuso Visitor Center, the building accentuates the perspective of the house by acting as a passageway that frames a partial view of it, like a painting as you walk through (Figure 6.11-6.13).

The building is unimposing. It does not behave as a destination, but as a portal to Medieval Japan. Visitors are not mandated to go inside the building since the ticket window and restrooms are located in the open passageway. The building’s unimposing nature is not a negative indication towards a lack of confidence, but rather speaks to its desire to complement the existing environment. Japanese architect Kengo Kuma describes this desire as integral to the making of architecture in Japan: “Japanese Architecture has traditionally emphasized the harmonious relationship with the place it sits on more that the monumentality of the architecture itself. In Japan, the design philosophy leaned towards an ‘unassertive architecture,’ which did not emphasize its own presence, but rather established relationships with the complex ground forms and diverse and beautiful natural environment in the vicinity” (Mehta and MacDonald, 216).
Figure 6.12. View of Shofuso as visitors arrive.
Figure 6.11–6.13. Sequential views of the passageway that frames the Japanese House.
CONCLUSION ON CONTINUITY

The problem with the current academic discussion on the topic of new construction in historic settings is that it has mainly focused on contextualism and style. By focusing on the visual relationships, the debate ignores how new developments can help reinforce the vitality of venerable historic sites, such as house museums. The goal of this thesis was to go against this trend by taking a far-sighted approach that takes into account how a new building can perform successfully and contribute to the growth of Shofuso after its completion.

The design and planning process attempted to achieve this goal by addressing three essential management components that enable sustainable growth at house museum: 1) mission interpretation 2) respect towards the historic character of the site 3) increase visitation and revenue. The design not only aimed to enhance the landscape of Shofuso, but also improve its function and resiliency.

Research suggests the most compelling design solutions are the ones that not only address the present needs of the organization, but also express a continuation of ideas that ties together the significance of the site in the past and the present. The Martin House Visitor Center, by Toshiko Mori, is considered to be a successful design solution because it contributes to the financial sustainability of the organization by generating revenue through rent, while maintaining low energy bills. The building itself engages the Martin House through a dialogue of contrast that enhances the uniqueness of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie Style. Through the reinterpretation of the house, Mori continued Wright’s interest in architectural and stylistic innovation.
Theoretical discussions regarding new construction in historic settings also support the continuity of ideas that are germane to place identity. The late Paul Byard promoted the formation of hierarchy between the old and new that reinforces historic assets as the focal point. James Strike suggests the concept of ‘opposition’ as a suitable way contemporary works can share a core interest, or idea, with existing historic structures. "What is interesting in these schemes that use the design concept of ‘opposites’ is not the visual statement of the opposing ends but the architectural characteristic that forms the common denominator" (Strike, 139).

The only way architects can establish a sense of continuity in a historic context is by taking a research-based approach. It is important to obtain a thorough understanding of a site’s history and its significance because it is the only way to discover previous concepts that can be reinterpreted in a way that is relevant to the present day audience, which can deepen their understanding of the site.

Through research, analysis, and design execution, this thesis hopes to contribute a valuable perspective regarding the development of visitor centers at historic house museums. Moreover, the proposal of the temporary installation program hopes to assert that change can be a good thing. Thoughtful changes at house museums should be welcomed because a rigid chronology can undermine their identity in present time.
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