



GREELEY MEMORIAL LABORATORY

Reviving a modernist landmark

CLIENT

Yale University

TYPE

Renovation and Refurbishment

SIZE

4,800 sq ft

COMPLETION

2013

“Embodied energy,” describes the sum of all energy required in a building’s life cycle; it is used to determine how much the building either contributes to, or mitigates global climate change. Because so much non-renewable energy goes into creating a building, sustainable design experts agree that rehabilitating existing buildings is often the “greenest” choice.

There is another kind of embodied energy that exists in old structures, less measurable, though more palpable, as anyone who has ever walked through a historic district, sat in a 300-year-old cathedral, or avoided a creaky step on their way up a familiar old staircase well knows. The spirit of a place, particularly one with honest roots, adds immeasurably to our experience as we go about our daily lives, mostly in ways that work so quietly on us, we hardly notice — until it is gone.

You can imagine then, how rewarding it was for CWA to capture the environmental and spiritual energy embodied in the 50-year-old Greeley Lab, and channel it to release yet a third variety: social energy; in particular, that bracing mixture of idealistic stress, learned patience and carefree vitality known as a campus hub.

“Renovating [Greeley Lab] not only saved the building for the university, but has set a standard for the preservation of mid-century modern buildings all over the world.”

Robert A.M. Stern, FAIA

former Dean of the Yale School of Architecture



BACK STORY

The spiritual home of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Completed in 1959, the building is the first of Paul Rudolph's five built works in New Haven.

CONTEXT

Located in a field at the northern edge of campus, Greeley sits in an undefined area between Yale's Science Hill to the east and the department's greenhouses to the west. Despite its architectural significance, the building has been vulnerable to demolition since a 2001 planning effort.

"The foyer helped to revalue the building. The jury appreciated the whole composition, the lining, the furniture, that are well related and that make a whole. This is a very elegant, tasteful addition with an organic feel to a forceful design."

AIA CT Jury Comments (Winner: 2013 AIA CT Merit Award in The Encompassing Art category)

NUTS & BOLTS

Public space renovation includes reconfiguration to facilitate interaction, restoration of lighting, finishes, and a OEHS compliant wood shop. New elements include cork floor and custom seating consistent with the Rudolph vocabulary.

WHAT YOU DON'T SEE

Water. The relentless seep of groundwater that plagued the structure for decades is no more, thanks to a solution revealed by painstaking research and field analysis. It's so dry now, there's room for 10 post-docs to swap microscopes, notes and funny forestry stories.

BEST USE

Sitting on a skylit bench in the lobby with a colleague and a cup of coffee, surrounded by conversation.

