

3/9/95
NATIONAL DESIGN AWARDS

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 9, 1995

REMARKS BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
AT THE NATIONAL DESIGN AWARDS

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much. I am grateful to Roger Johnson for this opportunity to be with all of you and also with his wife Janice. I am delighted that I had the opportunity to share this platform with Jane Alexander, who is doing a superb job of pointing out the relationship between the arts and the quality of our society. And I am particularly honored that I had the chance to share this platform with Senator Hatfield, and I think, by the reception you gave him this afternoon, you too were honored by his presence.

It is a particular pleasure to be with those of you who work day in and day out with the GSA and those of you who were involved in helping to choose amongst the many designs that were presented to you as members of the jury, and particularly to all of the honorees.

I am especially glad that we are holding this honorary ceremony here, in this building, which is one of my personal favorites in Washington, but I am usually inside of this building at night, at some event or another, so to be here during the day, especially with the sun shining, is a particular pleasure.

The work that we are honoring today, certainly goes far beyond any recognition that we can give you this afternoon. Because each day, what those of you who are being honored do, affects tens of thousands and even millions of Americans, who over the course of the lifetime of the buildings-- they too feel what you have attempted to impart to them in the way of your vision, your idea of what a public building should look like. Too often public buildings do not represent the best in any society. They do not reflect the work that goes on in them or do they in any way represent anyone's vision. They are strictly utilitarian and oftentimes not even effectively that.

But today we honor work that will stand the test of time. Sometimes that is not immediately apparent to the people of a building's or a design's time. You heard Senator Hatfield talk somewhat of the history of our Capitol. Well, both the Capitol and the White House were the results of a competition sponsored by President Washington. Many, many people complained about the results for both designs. Often the President's House, as the White House was called then, was referred to as undistinguished, disproportionate. And yet today it is, as is our Capitol, a

signal and a symbol of our democracy and what we as a nation stand for that is immediately recognized and appreciated around the world. Each of your designs are making a mark in the cities in which you worked. From the energy efficient border station in International Falls to the new technology which will strengthen the structure of the US Court of Appeals in San Francisco to resist future earthquakes, to a program which asked New York school children to interpret through art the significance of an African burial ground discovered during construction of the Federal Office Building.

All of these awards that are being honored today span a wide range of designs. And the fact that we are all affected means that each of us has a stake in the work that is done. Each of us has to in some way recognize that those buildings are us. They represent who we are, who we intend to become. The GSA, in partnership with the NEA, deserves great credit for encouraging creative design in our nation's infrastructure. Together they have encouraged preeminent national designers to participate in this process. These kinds of public/private partnerships are essential to bringing out the best, not only in government, but also in the private sector. As the world's leading purchaser of design services, the federal government should be the leader in fostering design excellence. Good design can affect our lives by beautifying our surroundings, improving our productivity and helping to affect positive social change. Too often we take our surroundings for granted. Too often we forget that the spaces we work in influence the way we live and do our jobs, the way we interact with each other, how we enjoy our days. I am lucky enough to be spending my days in very beautiful federal buildings-- The Old Executive Office Building, The West Wing, The White House. They say to me every day as I walk through the doors, this is a very special country, because the people who came before cared enough to think about the designs of the buildings they lived and worked in. And they wanted their vision, whether it was the Oval Office President Franklin Roosevelt put in, or the Truman Balcony, to say something about the kind of nation we were.

Federal buildings tell us a lot about our history, our culture and how we see ourselves as a people. The designs that are commissioned should reflect not only the best execution, but, as Senator Hatfield pointed out, the wise use of taxpayer's money. This year's 14 winners reflect both criteria, and it is a great pleasure for me to be part of saying thank you and congratulations.

End

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