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Since its formation in 1987, Caples Jefferson Architects has developed an exceptional portfolio of projects that evoke the unique potential of each place, a potential that is realized through a commitment to humanize each project.

"We wanted to create design responses that used means that are architectural," says Sara Caples, Founding Principal of Caples Jefferson Architects. "Over time, what that has come to mean is that we wanted to develop environments that create strong perceptions for the users, that bring them into the present and that have a strong sticky brain factor that intensifies their appreciation of the environment."

Caples and Co-Founder Everardo Jefferson observed that in the 1970s, architects failed to make a connection between architecture and sociology, as well as between purpose and form. The company, based in Long Island City, New York, believes that to create that connection, a program has to be translated into form, and in turn, that form has

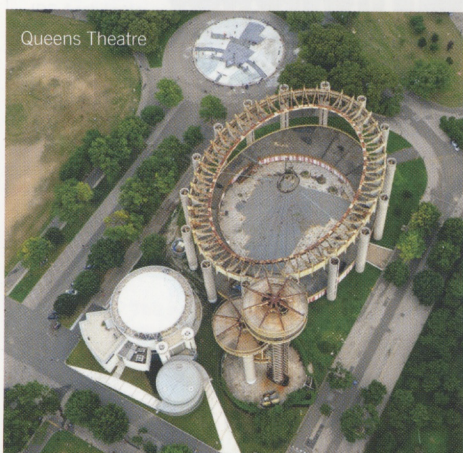
to rise to the level of architecture. To ensure this, Caples Jefferson Architects has derived three main criteria that it judiciously follows in its work.

KEY CRITERIA

These criteria mandate that the firm performs at least half of its work for a broader public, especially in poorer neighborhoods that are underserved by designers.

"In recent years, this has extended to buildings that serve the total city community, and that has affected our architecture in a number of ways," Caples says. "Because our buildings, especially our public domain buildings, are around for 100 years or more, it is important to us that the buildings are embraced by their user community and that they really are well-loved by the people who use them. That makes us listen to communities in a way that is different from other architects."

The firm's criteria also require that its projects are based on intensive research to uncover deepened



Queens Theatre



Queens Theatre Inside

Caples
Jefferson
Architects

Founding Principal
Sara Caples

Location
Long Island City, New York

layers specific to each site. This research encompasses issues like space and needs analysis, site history, physical characteristics and the philosophies that underlie its clients' endeavors.

"All design professionals have to do a fair amount of research, whether it is codes or materials research, but we try to take our research a couple of steps deeper," Caples says. "That means different things for different projects, but it means that we need to research into the deeper nature of the project."

Caples recalls that one of the first projects that incorporated this principle was a preschool for medically fragile children in the Bronx in the 1980s, at a time when the AIDS epidemic had just begun to strike New York. Back then, treatment protocols were not yet in place. As a result, Caples Jefferson did extensive research on preschools, with an emphasis on the pedagogy of how to teach and create a positive learning environment.

"That research really made us think about a design that was more organic to the educational methods that were being used to create strong environments for the children, and is really an example of how research deepens the designs that result," Caples says.

The final criterion for a Caples Jefferson project is to look into the multiple layers that are needed to fulfill connections between the conceptual and the physical, and zero in on the unique potential of a particular place.

The Queens Theatre is an example of this concept. An addition to the landmark 1964 World's Fair complex in Queens, Caples Jefferson worked to maintain the original circular geometries and make them the starting point for a new viewing pavilion called the "nebula room." The 600-person reception room stands on an axis with the huge oval of Johnson's New York State Pavilion, allowing visitors to appreciate the adjacent Unisphere and observatory tower that has been severely weathered over the years.

ONGOING COMMITMENT

The new structure is also designed to be energy efficient, as its curtain wall is coated with solar heat reducing emulsion and heating costs are kept low by using gas-filled insulating units. The structure's façade is also entirely glass, allowing the interior to be flooded with light.

"Green practices have been one of our commitments from time that Everardo and I were stu-

dents," Caples says. "As green design has evolved, we have become more and more environmentally responsible, and we now have continuous envelope buildings where the continuity of the weather resistance is much stronger and involves much deeper techniques mechanically."

Although the firm saw certain challenges during the recession, it has seen signs of significant growth in recent years. Currently, its team is working on five projects, including a luxury house in Barbados, a major systems renovation at a science center at City College, the Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn, a restoration of the Low Library at Columbia University and the Louis Armstrong House Museum Visitors Center in Queens.

"Our long-term goal is to keep our initial three commitments and to keep on learning from each client so that we can keep creating buildings that are meaningful to their users and sustainable for the long term," Caples says. "We love creating buildings for the public and we really just want to keep on doing that." **DDC**

NATIONAL CATHODE CORP.

National Cathode Corp. was extremely fortunate to work with Caples Jefferson Architects, not only as a manufacturer but also with them during the preliminary design concepts to fruition. The Q Tip project will be added to our specifier's portfolio of distinctive, outstanding and award winning projects from around the world.



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