

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS MAKE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER VISION A REALITY

Philadelphia, PA – As the dream of the National Constitution Center moved closer to becoming a reality in the late 1990s, two renowned firms were given the task of transforming the third block of Independence Mall into a museum with an engaging visitor experience. The two firms chosen were Pei Cobb Freed & Partners and Ralph Appelbaum Associates.

Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, led by founding partner Henry “Harry” N. Cobb, was the principal architect for the Center, and Ralph Appelbaum, president of Ralph Appelbaum Associates, designed the Center’s visitor experience and exhibition halls.

Cobb has designed dozens of projects, including the nationally acclaimed United States Courthouse in Boston and Commerce Square in Philadelphia. His firm, Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, is known for striking designs of public buildings, including the expansion of the Grand Louvre, Paris, France; the East Building of the National Gallery of Art; and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.

Ralph Appelbaum Associates is best known for museums with complex educational content like the National Constitution Center. Appelbaum’s interpretive museum design is at the core of the most important museums in recent history, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC; the Newseum, Arlington, Virginia; and the Museum of African American History, Detroit, Michigan.

“These two great designers have been responsible for the most remarkable buildings and museum experiences of our generation,” said Joseph M. Torsella, National Constitution Center President and CEO. “The Constitution Center provided them with an incredible opportunity to

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combine their creative genius where the end result will be a national treasure and a powerful legacy for generations to come.”

“A central theme in our built works is the conception of architecture as preeminently an art of *place making* – an art embodying, above all else, a concern for the quality of public space and public life,” said Cobb. “The Constitution Center is to be a place for visitors, but not just a tourist attraction; a place for exhibitions, but not just a museum; a place for scholars, but not just a study center; a place for discussion and debate, but not just an auditorium; a place for public gatherings, but not just a reception hall,” Cobb explained.

“The basis of our approach is bringing an interdisciplinary effort to bear on a project from its inception through its execution,” said Appelbaum. “The result is that our clients aren’t really producing exhibits, they’re creating complex, intergenerational learning experiences in a public setting. We know that the Constitution Center will be a place that will revive wonder at our American enterprise – this adventure of personal expression and political debate which is our country, this commitment to negotiating a way to be ourselves together, while beckoning more and more of our neighbors to join the dialogue,” Appelbaum continued.

Day & Zimmermann, a national Philadelphia-based project management firm, worked on the project from its inception as an extension of the National Constitution Center project staff. Turner Construction Company, one of the nation’s largest and most experienced construction firms, was the general contractor for the project.

Additional members of the construction and design team included: Leslie E. Robertson Associates, R.L.L.P., New York, NY; Brinjac Engineering, Inc.; Olin Partnership, LTD.; Hellyer Berman Lewis, Inc.; Daniel J. Keating Co.; Rimon Associates, Inc.; Joel Katz Design Assoc.; International Consultants, Inc.; Urban Engineers, Inc.; URS Greiner Woodward Clyde, Blue Bell, PA; Fisher Marantz Stone, New York, NY; Rolf Jensen & Associates, New York, NY; Cerami & Associates, New York, NY; Kroll Schiff & Associates, Inc., Chicago, ILL; Pennoni Associates, Inc.; Calvin Kort Associates, Glen Rock, NJ; Hopkins Foodservice Specialists; The Graham

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Company, Philadelphia, PA; Maltbie Associates, Mount Laurel, NJ; Electrosonic Systems, Inc., Burbank, CA; Donna Lawrence Productions, Louisville, KY; A More Perfect Union, Plymouth, MA; StudioEIS, Brooklyn, NY.

Pei Cobb Freed & Partners and Ralph Appelbaum Associates were chosen through the “Design Excellence” procurement process pioneered by the General Services Administration. The program stresses creativity and reduces costs by streamlining the procurement process.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia’s Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, “Freedom Rising”. The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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