

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **THE NEW SCHOOL DEDICATES SHEILA C. JOHNSON DESIGN CENTER**

**Innovative “Urban Quad” Provides Dynamic Street-Front Presence for Parsons The New School for Design at The New School’s Greenwich Village Campus with Galleries, Auditorium, Meeting and Learning Spaces**

**Exhibitions on View Include “Women Empowered: Photographic Portraiture by Phil Borges”; “Soft Parade: Selections from The New School Art Collection”; and “Parsons Design Workshop: The Margaretville Pavilion”**

NEW YORK, February 20, 2008—Today, The New School celebrated the dedication of the Sheila C. Johnson Design Center. The 32,800-square-foot center for Parsons The New School for Design was made possible in part by a \$7 million gift from New School Trustee and Parsons Board of Governors Chair Sheila C. Johnson. With an award-winning design by Lyn Rice Architects, whose principal Lyn Rice was part of the team behind Dia:Beacon, this new campus center combines learning and public program spaces with exhibition galleries. It provides a dynamic street-front presence for the New School campus at the highly trafficked intersection of Fifth Avenue and 13th Street in Greenwich Village and an important new downtown destination for art and design programming.

“The Sheila C. Johnson Design Center is only possible because of the leadership of Sheila Johnson as well as longtime supporters Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen and Arnold and Sheila Aronson,” said Bob Kerrey, President of The New School. “They understood the importance of our creating vibrant learning spaces for our students and faculty, as well as fostering new connections to the city around us.”

Combining the ground level of four historic buildings to form an innovative, contemporary “urban quad” on the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 13th Street, the Center features the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Gallery and Auditorium, and the Arnold and Sheila Aronson Galleries. These spaces will present exhibitions and public programs exploring key issues within contemporary culture through the work of architects, artists and designers. The Center also provides a new home for the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Archives, a significant collection of drawings, photographs, letters, and objects documenting 20th-century design. In addition, several learning and meeting spaces are incorporated into the design, including an innovative student critique area located in the highly visible corner space that will enable the public to observe the design dialogue that is central to a Parsons education.

“My vision for this center is a place where students, faculty and the general public can come together to expand their knowledge of art and design,” said Sheila C. Johnson, a trustee of The New School and chair of the Parsons Board of Governors.

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"I continue to be impressed by the dedication and intelligence of our students. My hope is that the center will enable them to flourish in their studies and enrich their appreciation of how design can bridge gaps between nations and improve lives around the world. The center will also give the public the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the importance of design by providing a behind-the-scenes look at the process," Johnson said.

The Johnson Design Center gives physical form to the ambitious academic planning currently underway at the university and Parsons. "Increasingly, design is about addressing collaboratively some of the world's most complex issues—from sustainability to globalization," said Tim Marshall, the dean of Parsons The New School for Design. "Parsons is actively engaged in creating new programs that strengthen the connections between the arts, design, international affairs, management and urban policy, the liberal arts, and the social sciences. The New School is the rare place where a comprehensive art and design school can engage such a range of programs, and Parsons is taking the lead in bringing these areas together to provide students with a more progressive education."

The center is part of a larger planning effort currently underway at the university to create a world-class campus for its students and the larger community. "We are looking to transform 13th Street and Fifth Avenue into a true cultural crossroads," said President Kerrey. "This includes plans for a new academic building that will integrate the full range of disciplines offered at The New School and will feature new performing arts spaces. In addition, we want to create an interactive information and welcome center at the northeast corner that will enable prospective students to learn more about the university."

### **Background on the Center**

The Sheila C. Johnson Design Center unites at street level several historic buildings at Fifth Avenue and 13th Street dating from the early 1900s, which the university has occupied since the early 1970s. Previously a series of small, disconnected spaces, the center creates an open and welcoming campus center filled with natural light and strong connections to the surrounding city. Honored with a 2007 Merit Award for Architectural Design from the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the center's design preserves and enhances the architecture of the existing buildings, while underscoring The New School's commitment to the new.

By opening up the existing spaces, the architects created a "double-height, skylight-covered public space or "urban quadrangle" out of aluminum, glass, and raw concrete, which connects the center's main spaces. A series of deep-framed bay windows provide a visual relationship to the street, as well as seating and display areas for student work. In the prominent corner space, a pivoting wall opens to define a student critique area with pin-up surfaces and two large sliding monitors, placing the design process on view to passersby on the street. The quad also is enlivened by super-sized graphics of student work, which wrap two of the elevator banks. These displays will change periodically to highlight the range of disciplines taught at Parsons. In addition, poplar bark covers the east wall of the quad, while expanded aluminum mesh encases a new passenger elevator.

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Among the center's amenities are the state-of-the-art, 3,200-square-foot Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Gallery, a museum-quality exhibition space that is designed as a box within a box visible from 13th Street. This highly refined space set within the raw structure conceals audio-visual technology, ductwork, pipes, and conduit, which are accessed via slots cut into the floor and ceiling. The 89-seat Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Auditorium is conceived as a bamboo shell that features a sound-absorptive, graphically treated rear wall and a slate-covered front wall that functions as a giant blackboard. The renovated Arnold and Sheila Aronson Galleries have been reconfigured to create a more open and flexible space by increasing the size of the galleries, simplifying their configuration, and incorporating movable display walls. The Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Archives Center provides 900 square feet for the storage and study of the archive collections. A series of suspended, UV-protected fluorescent fixtures provide an intimate scale to the double-height space, while a continuous perimeter of felt creates an acoustically quiet zone for scholarly research. Other spaces include a bamboo-paneled orientation center for presentations to prospective students; a double-height, glazed meeting room carved out of a niche adjacent to the Kellen Gallery; and a cantilevered, mezzanine-level meeting pod that overlooks the quad.

In conjunction with the dedication, the center will present "Women Empowered: Photographic Portraiture by Phil Borges," an exhibition of works created in partnership with CARE that depict inspirational stories of ordinary women who are catalyzing change in communities spanning from Ethiopia to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ecuador, Guatemala, Togo and Ghana (Feb. 22 – March 24, 2008); "Soft Parade: Selections from the New School Art Collection" (Feb. 22 – June 20, 2008), an exhibition underscoring the university's historic support for socially engaged art making; and "Parsons Design Workshop: The Margaretville Pavilion" (Feb. 22 – March 21, 2008), a look behind the scenes of the latest project of the school's acclaimed design-build program. Future exhibitions include "The I.D. Magazine 54th Annual Design Review" (July 9 – Sept. 28, 2008), a rare and timely look at the state of contemporary design; and "Beholden, Besotted, Betwixt: Democracy in the Age of Branding" (Oct. 9, 2008 – Jan. 30, 2009), which will feature work by a range of contemporary artists and designers.

### **Background on Sheila C. Johnson**

Sheila C. Johnson is an entrepreneur and philanthropist whose accomplishments span the arenas of hospitality, sports, TV/film, the arts, and humanitarian causes. Ms. Johnson is CEO of Salamander Hospitality, LLC, overseeing a growing portfolio of luxury properties and lifestyle businesses. As President & Managing Partner of the WNBA's Washington Mystics, and a partner in Lincoln Holdings, LLC, Ms. Johnson is the first woman to have a stake in three professional sports teams, including the Washington Wizards (NBA) and the Washington Capitals (NHL). She is also a TV pioneer, having been a founding partner of BET (Black Entertainment Television). Currently, Ms. Johnson is creating and championing films with a humanitarian message. A dedicated activist, Ms. Johnson serves as a Global Ambassador for CARE, whose mission is to fight global poverty. Her focus is building solidarity and empowering women and girls to become catalysts for change in communities around the world. An accomplished violinist and avid sponsor of the arts, Johnson dedicates her time to organizations that give children and young adults the opportunity to express their creativity. She presently serves as a Trustee of The New School and Chairman of the Board of Governors of Parsons The New School for Design. She also sits on the boards of VH1 Save the Music, Americans for the Arts, the Curry School of Education Foundation at the University of Virginia, and the University of Illinois Foundation.

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### **Background on Lyn Rice Architects**

Lyn Rice Architects is an award-winning, New York-based architectural practice that works on a range of building, planning, art and cultural research projects. The firm seeks to engage the public through innovative, contemporary built works that emerge from a rigorous and iterative design process. An emphasis is placed on the spatial and formal potentials of the program, and the integration of new construction techniques and materials. In addition to the Johnson Design Center, current and recent projects include a new Carriage Museum building on Staten Island, an Inner-Mongolian Villa (part of Ai Weiwei and Herzog & DeMeuron's *100 Ordos* Master Plan), offices for The Joan Mitchell Foundation in New York's Chelsea Arts Tower, a master plan for Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois, along with multiple exhibition projects. Rice was formerly a principal of OpenOffice Arts + Architecture Collaborative, where he was partner-in-charge of *Dia:Beacon* in collaboration with artist Robert Irwin, and *80 Arts: The James E. Davis Arts Building* for the BAM LDC.

### **Parsons The New School for Design**

Located in the heart of New York City, Parsons The New School for Design is one of the most prestigious and comprehensive colleges of art and design in the world. Parsons has been a pioneer in the field of art and design since its founding in 1896, establishing the first programs in Interior Design, Advertising and Graphic Design, and Fashion Design in the nation and being an early pioneer in Design and Technology. This visionary leadership has led to five generations of graduates who are some of the most highly recognized in their fields. Today, Parsons focuses on creating engaged citizens and exceptional artists, designers, scholars, and business leaders through a design-based education. Parsons students learn to rise to the challenges of living, working, and creative decision-making in a world where human experience is increasingly designed. As a vital part of The New School, Parsons is forging new ground at the intersection of design and the social sciences. For more information, please contact [www.parsons.newschool.edu](http://www.parsons.newschool.edu).

### **The New School**

Located in the heart of New York's Greenwich Village, The New School is a center of academic excellence where intellectual and artistic freedoms thrive. The more than 9,600 matriculated students and approximately 5,300 continuing education students come from around the world to participate in a wide range of undergraduate to doctoral programs in art and design, the social sciences, management and urban policy, the humanities and the performing arts. When The New School was founded in 1919, its mission was to create a place where global peace and justice were more than theoretical ideals. Today, The New School continues that mission, with programs that strive to foster engaged world citizenship. The eight schools that make up The New School are: The New School for General Studies, The New School for Social Research, Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy, Parsons The New School for Design, Eugene Lang College The New School for Liberal Arts, Mannes College The New School for Music, The New School for Drama, and The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. For more information, visit [www.newschool.edu](http://www.newschool.edu).