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Celebrating a Legacy:

Ann Beha Architects Completes the Philip Roth Personal Library for Newark Public Library



Boston, MA and Newark, NJ — (August 3, 2021) — Boston-based [Ann Beha Architects](#) (ABA) has transformed a historic space for the [Newark Public Library](#) to create a home for the [Philip Roth Personal Library](#), a research and exhibition center capturing the author's engagement with reading, writing, and Newark. In 2016, Roth announced the bequeathal of his personal collection of 7,000 books to the library. After his death in 2018, the library received not only his books, but furniture and other personal items as well. ABA was retained to design the new center as a destination for researchers consulting Roth's works and an exhibition space for sharing material related to the author's work and life.

"An early visit to Roth's Connecticut home, an early American farmhouse, allowed us to experience its restored rooms and contemporary furnishings just as he left them," notes ABA Principal Thomas Hotaling. "The time we spent there made clear his appreciation for craft and his ability to beautifully balance heritage with modernism. We wanted to bring a corresponding balance to this renovation, respectfully restoring the space as Roth himself might have known it in his youth. It serves as a setting for a contemporary presentation of his work and life, highlighting his deep connection to Newark, the library, and design itself."

Partnering with [Shawmut Design & Construction](#), ABA upgraded this double-height room with all new mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and fire projection systems, as well as new climate control and LED lighting systems, to create a museum-quality research and exhibition space. Historic details, such as plaster molding, pilasters, wainscoting, and double doors, were repaired and restored, and new wood flooring was installed to return the room to its original luster. A broad range of design options, critiqued with library staff and exhibit designers [C&G Partners](#), designers of the bold and vibrant Philip Roth Inaugural Exhibition, led to the final spatial organization of the center, with a flexible exhibition area at one end and a studio-like research area at the other.

"Roth left us his books, memorabilia that mattered to him, and endowments to support programs, outreach and the library's broader needs," says Joslyn Bowling Dixon, director of the Newark Public Library. "This beautiful space, thoughtfully designed by Ann Beha Architects and the entire team, encourages exploration and fresh thinking. Programming developed specifically for the Philip Roth Personal Library will examine different perspectives, challenge norms and provide insights into how literature often reflects or predicts current realities, much as Roth did through his novels."

Project Team:

Ann Beha Architects

Ann Beha Architects (ABA) has more than 40 years of architectural and planning experience for cultural, civic, and academic clients. Led by Principals Philip B. Chen FAIA, Ann M. Beha FAIA, Thomas M. Hotaling AIA, and Steven Gerrard AIA, ABA is a minority-owned business with a talented and highly qualified 43-person professional staff. ABA's work establishes a dynamic discourse between heritage and the future, with a design philosophy equally dedicated to contemporary architectural expression and the revitalization of historic resources. Planning and designing worldwide, ABA sees architecture as a transformative and enduring force for change, growth, and celebration. The firm's projects shape and strengthen community life, establishing new directions, identities, and settings for exploration, collaboration, and innovation.

Client

Newark Public Library

Architects

Thomas M. Hotaling AIA, Principal-in-Charge
Ann M. Beha FAIA, Collaborating Principal
David Elzer AIA, Project Architect
Ric Panciera AIA, Senior Technical Architect

Exhibit Design

C&G Partners

Construction Manager

Shawmut Design & Construction

Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, and Fire Protection

Legacy Engineers

Structural Engineering

Silman

Lighting Design

Lightcraft

Exhibit Case & Shelving Fabrication

Hadley Exhibits Inc.



Michael Moran