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Dedication of The Republic Building  
Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie  
President, Indiana University  
The Republic Building  
333 Second Street  
Columbus, IN  
Thursday, January 31, 2019  
6:00 p.m.

## 1. OPENNESS AND CONNECTION: THE PROFOUND EFFECT OF ARCHITECTURE ON OUR CULTURE

In his 1914 work, *Glass Architecture*, German poet Paul Scheerbart lamented the fact that all of us live, for the most part, in closed rooms. Noting the profound influence of architecture on our broader culture, Scheerbart maintained that if we want our culture to rise to a higher level, we are obliged to change our architecture.

“This only becomes possible,” he wrote, “if we take away the closed character from the rooms in which we live... by introducing glass architecture, which lets in the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars, not merely through a few windows, but through every possible wall, which will be made entirely of glass.”<sup>1</sup>

Today, as we dedicate the home of Indiana University’s new J. Irwin Miller Architecture Program, we celebrate an exceptional work of modern architecture that is very much in the spirit of Scheerbart’s vision. For nearly half a century, the glass walls of the historic Republic Building have not only let in the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars, but they have also come to symbolize openness and connection to the Columbus community. And here in the heart of downtown Columbus, a city renowned as one of the nation’s most architecturally significant cities, the Republic Building now stands as a

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Scheerbart, *Glass Architecture*, (Verlag der Strum, 1914), as reprinted in Josiah McElheny and Christine Burgin, (eds.), *Glass! Love!! Perpetual Motion!!!: A Paul Scheerbart Reader*, (University of Chicago Press, 2014), 26.

visible symbol of the future of architecture—and as a symbol of Indiana University’s commitment to partnership with this wonderful city.

## 2. IU, COLUMBUS, AND ART, ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

IU has long recognized and appreciated the richness and greatness of the architectural heritage of the city of Columbus. The city’s magnificent buildings document the full sweep of modern architecture and its greatest exponents. They also demonstrate that architecture truly is one of humanity’s great arts—one that stands alongside painting, music, poetry, and literature as one of humankind’s greatest accomplishments.

Many of us at Indiana University have also long believed that the city’s remarkable architectural heritage provided an unmatched opportunity for IU to expand its academic programs in art and design to intimately involve Columbus.

In June 2009, I met with the late Dick Johnson to discuss this possibility. Out of that meeting came an agreement to establish, as a first step in this direction, what became the IU Center for Art + Design, which we dedicated in 2011. This agreement, as you have heard, grew out of a partnership with the Community Education Coalition of Columbus, led by John Burnett. The Center has since specialized in teaching design studies, drawing upon the great strengths and unique assets of this wonderful city.

In 2015, IU Bloomington established the School of Art + Design to provide a state-of-the-art education in art and design to students seeking careers in a radically new world where design is of fundamental and growing importance to nearly all areas of business and industry. Later that same year, as you heard from Vice President Stephan, the Community Education Coalition asked IU to consider establishing a master’s degree program in architecture to involve Columbus. IU rapidly developed a proposal for such a program, and it was approved by the IU Board of Trustees in June of 2016 and by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education nine months later, in March of 2017. With the

addition of this new program, the school was renamed the School of Art, Architecture + Design later in 2017.

Many of you were with us in the spring of last year—in this building—when we made a number of major announcements regarding the program. First, we announced that the IU Foundation had purchased the historic Republic building, and that it would be home to the architecture program.

Second, Columbus Mayor James Lienhoop, from whom we will hear shortly, announced that the people of Columbus would generously commit \$2 million to support the building out of this space through a public/private partnership involving the city's Redevelopment Commission, the leaders of the Community Education Coalition, and many of you who are here today.

And finally, we announced that the architecture program would be named the J. Irwin Miller Architecture Program in honor of former Cummins Chairman and CEO, J. Irwin Miller, whose vision, genius, and courage were, in large measure, responsible of the development of Columbus as one of the world's great centers of architecture.

### 3. THE REPUBLIC BUILDING

The historic Republic Building is one of seven Columbus buildings to have been named as a National Historic Landmark. When the building received this designation in 2012, it became the youngest architectural landmark to be so recognized in the history of the program.<sup>2</sup> The Republic Building is also one of the best examples of the work of the late Myron Goldsmith, a highly respected architect, architectural theorist, writer, and educator.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Harry McCawley, "Republic Building Named Landmark," *The Republic*, November 26, 2012, Web, Accessed January 25, 2019, URL: <http://www.hspa.com/republic-building-named-landmark/>.

<sup>3</sup> David V. Dunlap, "Myron Goldsmith, Architect and Engineer, Is Dead at 77," *The New York Times*, July 17, 1996, Web, Accessed January 28, 2019, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/07/17/arts/myron-goldsmith-architect-and-engineer-is-dead-at-77.html>.

The construction of this wonderful building was part of a master plan for Columbus conceived in the 1960s, in part by the architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, where Goldsmith was a general partner.

With the acquisition and re-purposing of the Republic Building, IU and its School of Art, Architecture + Design are using in the most appropriate way possible, a great and elegant building that itself exemplifies excellence in architecture, to build a superb design laboratory in the heart of Columbus. This architectural treasure will enable the school's students to acquire the knowledge and skills they will need to become civic-minded, innovative, and imaginative architects and designers.

#### 4. SPECIAL THANKS

There is a long list of people to whom we owe enormous debts of gratitude for helping us reach this moment.

On behalf of Indiana University, I want to express our most sincere thanks to all of those who helped make the refurbishment of this building possible through generous philanthropic contributions.

And, more generally, I want to express our thanks to Mayor Lienhoop, John Burnett, Rick Johnson, and many others of you who are here this evening, for your steadfast support for the establishment of IU's academic programs in design and architecture here in Columbus.

I want to commend IU Bloomington Provost Lauren Robel; Executive Dean of Bloomington's College of Arts and Sciences, Larry Singell; Peg Faimon, founding dean of the School of Art, Architecture + Design; T. Kelly Wilson, the director of the J. Irwin Miller Architecture Program, whose outstanding leadership of the Center for Art + Design has been integral to its success; and all of the faculty of the architecture

program for their dedicated efforts that have helped make the program and its home in the Republic Building possible.

I also want to commend the many design and construction professionals, both internal and external, who have overseen the refurbishment of this historic landmark.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In his influential book on architecture and the senses, the distinguished Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa writes that “The sense of self, strengthened by art and architecture, permits us to engage fully in the mental dimensions of dream, imagination, and desire. Buildings and cities provide the horizon,” he continues, “for the understanding and confronting of the human existential condition.”<sup>4</sup>

Today, as we dedicate the Republic Building as the home of the J. Irwin Miller Architecture Program, we celebrate just such a building in just such a city. Here in the heart of Columbus, Indiana, future architects will dream, imagine, and—inspired by the great architecture of this city—they will explore the human condition in ways that will benefit all of us.

We look forward to watching all of this unfold through the glass walls of this historic building.

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<sup>4</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, (John Wiley and Sons, 2010), originally published in 1996, 13.