



The 3-minute interview: Hany Hassan

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Hassan was the architect on the newly remodeled D.C. Court of Appeals building. The project has won a host of design awards, including — most recently — the National Merit Award from the Associated General Contractors of America.



Hany Hassan (Courtesy photo)

What was the biggest challenge in the project?

The biggest challenge was really to accommodate the program of the D.C. Court of Appeals ... into the existing city hall, which is was the original use. So, really a modern reuse of an 1820s era building.

Are you confident that you preserved the 19th century style and feel without sacrificing the modern demands?

We were very, very sensitive to the historic fabric, internally and externally. For instance, we were able to thread the new contemporary mechanical ducts through the crevasses in the building without damaging the building. The original building was heated with fireplaces and chimneys, which were removed in 1917. We were able to fit the ducts within those cavities.

How hard was it to explain all this to a bunch of lawyers and judges?

They were unbelievably receptive and respectful to what we have done. But in order to reach that point, we had to be really thoughtful and very deliberate about our analysis.

What's your favorite, subtle part of the new building?

The interesting part is what you do not see today: When we suspended the portico up in the air for nine months to accommodate the new ceremonial courtroom. ... What you do see is the glass entrance pavilion on the north side of the pavilion, which really created a new sense of place for Judiciary Square.

Did you come across any strange artifacts?

The one thing that got everybody nervous was we found some bone remnants. After those were analyzed, they were found to be deer bones. People were in a panic about that for a while.

-- *Bill Myers*

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