HONNEN ARTS | COLORADO SPRINGS | KENNEDY & VIOLICH ARCHITECTURE

From the Vault

At Colorado College, a distinctive but disused hockey rink gets a new lease on life as a visual arts hub.

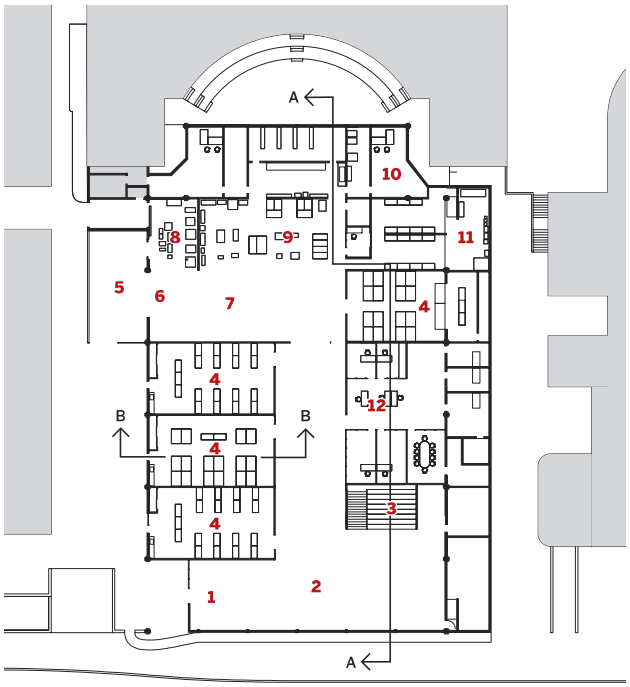
BY DAVID HILL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANK OOMS

WHEN Sheila Kennedy and J. Frano Violich, founding principals of Boston-based Kennedy & Violich Architecture (KVA), first stepped inside Honnen Ice Arena, they were startled by what they saw. Located on the campus of Colorado College, a small liberal-arts college in Colorado Springs, the building—a thin-shell concrete structure from 1963—had sat unused for several years after the construction of a new arena for the school's Division I hockey team. The building, designed by local practice Lusk & Wallace, was dark, dank, and mildewy. The arena's 80-foot-high ceiling vaults had been covered with foil-faced batt insulation. Daylight barely penetrated the rows of narrow, fiber-reinforced plastic windows, which had yellowed with age. No wonder the college had once considered demolishing the building.

"You would have quit on the spot if you had seen what it looked like," says Violich, who quickly saw the building's potential for reuse. The ceiling, in particular, captured the architect's imagination. "I immediately thought of Louis Kahn's Kimbell Art Museum," Violich says. "There's something monumental about a vaulted space like that."

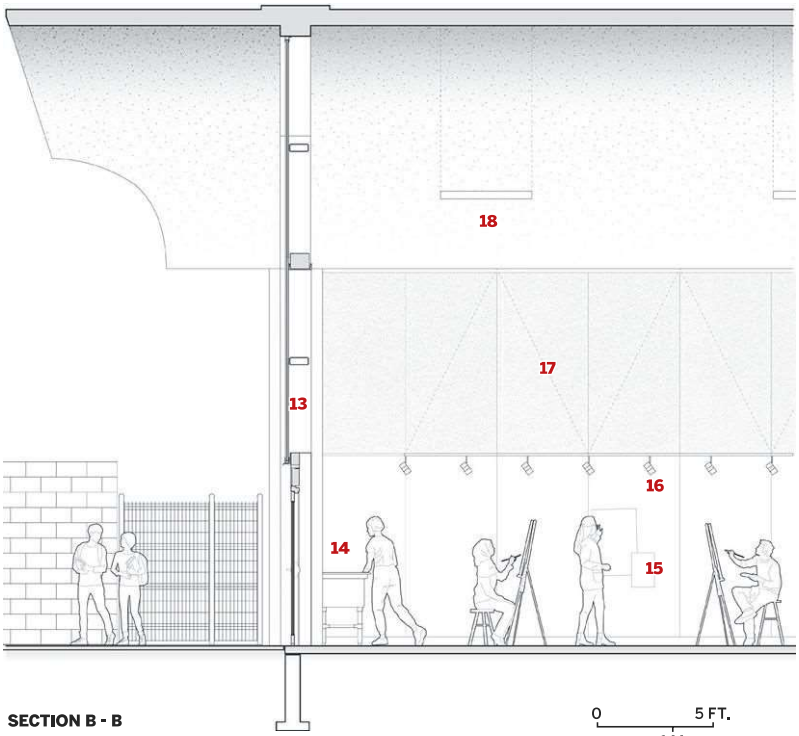
PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY COLORADO COLLEGE ARCHIVES (LEFT)

THE COLLEGE'S new home for 3D arts (this image, at right) was built as a hockey rink (left) and is comprised of repeating thin-shell vaults like its adjacent natatorium (this image, at left).



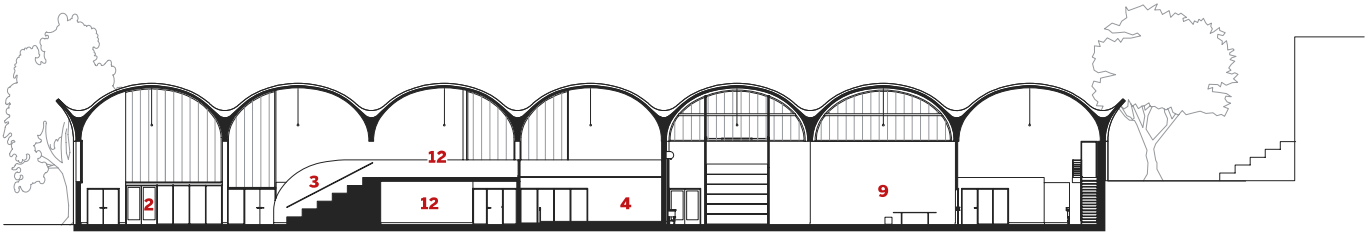
GROUND-FLOOR PLAN

0 30 FT. 10 M.



SECTION B - B

0 5 FT. 1 M.



SECTION A - A

0 20 FT. 6 M.

1 PUBLIC ENTRY
2 EXHIBITION
3 BLEACHER STAIR
4 STUDIO/CLASSROOM
5 OUTDOOR WORK YARD
6 STUDIO ENTRY
7 INDOOR/OUTDOOR WORKSPACE
8 METAL SHOP
9 WOODSHOP
10 FACULTY OFFICE
11 FABRICATION LAB
12 CENTER FOR CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION
13 1-INCH IGU
14 CLEANUP SINK
15 PIN-UP SURFACE
16 TASK LIGHTING
17 ACOUSTIC PANELS
18 AMBIENT LIGHTING

Kennedy, too, imagined possibilities. "With adaptive reuse," she says, "you have to be able to look at the future. You can't just stop and be satisfied with the existing conditions. It has to be transformative."

It has been. After a $5.5 million renovation, the ice arena has become Honnen Arts, a 29,000-square-foot facility for 3D-arts offerings. Ironically, the college's previous 3D-arts workshop—an '80s-era concrete-block building much loved by students and faculty—was located on the site of the new hockey arena, which opened in 2020. When the workshop was demolished, the program had to make do with temporary quarters, including a portable classroom. Some fabrication equipment was put in storage for several years. Call it poetic justice that the 3D-arts program's new location is the hockey team's old home.

Given the project's modest budget, KVA's design strategy was to retain most of the building's exterior features while focusing on the vast interior space. "One of our main considerations, and challenges," Kennedy says, "was to preserve the unique spatial character of those large, free-span vaults." The architects added a new, recessed entry at a prominent street-facing corner, using a reddish-orange paint scheme as a wayfinding signal. Inside, in the space once occupied by the ice rink and bleachers, are work desks, classrooms, offices, new bath-

REDDISH ORANGE is used both inside and out as a wayfinding device and to accentuate certain elements, including some in the gallery (above) and the woodshop (right).

THE ARCHITECTS took full advantage of the lofty vaults in the classrooms (above and opposite) and throughout the building.

rooms, and a flexible gallery space. Kennedy and Violich employed the same reddish-orange color used at the entrance to create an interior "street" that leads to the enclosed workshops. Painted floor areas mimic the curves of the barrel vaults, an effort to give the building a new public identity. "Everybody knew the building as a hockey rink," Kennedy says. "How do you now make it known as the 3D-arts hub?"

The shops include equipment for woodworking, metal fabrication, 3D printing, laser cutting, and CNC milling. A garage door on the west end of the shop space leads to a fenced-off area containing kilns and a blacksmith forge.

When Honnen Arena first opened, the rink was open to the air on its sides; the vaulted concrete structure was designed as a pavilion to provide shade for the ice rink. (A similar building, Schlessman Natatorium, was constructed next door.) At some point, however, the rink was fully enclosed by concrete walls, stacked terra-cotta tubes, and those plastic windows. KVA created a sense of transparency by replacing the west-facing ceramic tubes and old windows with insulated glazing, allowing daylight to fill the interior spaces. (Because the vaults overhang by 12 feet or so, very little direct sunlight enters the building.) You can even catch a glimpse of Pikes Peak if you turn around just inside the entrance and look to the west.

KVA swapped out the existing fluorescent lights for energy-efficient fixtures that hang from the apex of the barrel vaults, taking advantage of the curved ceiling's reflective qualities.

Instead of a conventional—and costly—climate-control system, the building uses displacement ventilation, with conditioned air distributed from floor level at low velocities. The system also relies on Colorado's high-altitude, low-humidity climate to purge warm air overnight while bringing in cooler outdoor air. (Colorado Springs, at 6,035 feet above sea level, is even higher in elevation than mile-high Denver.)

For now, Honnen remains unfinished, with several interior spaces

empty and blocked off. KVA has drawn up plans for a second phase that would turn those rooms into additional studios, classrooms, and faculty offices. The plan also calls for a mezzanine, creating a "Center for Creativity & Innovation" with additional gallery space and student gathering areas, and offices, studios, and meeting rooms below.

Art professor Scott Johnson, who supervises the facility, still laments the loss of the old 3D workshop, but he's delighted the program has a new home in a distinctive 20th-century building. "The cathedral-like spaces are so conducive to creative work," he says. Repurposing an existing building, he adds, is in keeping with the college's sustainability efforts. (In 2020, Colorado College became the first Rocky Mountain–region institution to achieve carbon neutrality.) "It's a living example of what we do here." ■

David Hill, a journalist based in Denver, writes frequently about architecture, design, and urban planning.

Credits

ARCHITECT: Kennedy & Violich Architecture — Frano Violich, managing principal; Sheila Kennedy, principal consulting on design; Ben Widger, project architect; Nick Johnson, lead designer; Daniel Sebaldt, Katie Koskey, designers

CONSULTANTS: HCDA Engineering (structure); Farris Engineering m/e/p/fp; Terra Nova Engineering (civil); Available Light (lighting); Cavannaugh Tocci (acoustics)

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: GH Phipps Construction

CLIENT: Colorado College

SIZE: 29,000 square feet

COST: $5.5 million (construction)

COMPLETION DATE: March 2024

Sources

MASONRY: Basalite

STUCCO WALL ASSEMBLY: Sto

METAL ROOFING: Pac-Clad

METAL-FRAME WINDOWS: Tubelite

METAL DOORS: Assa Abloy

UPSWING DOORS: Overhead Door

HARDWARE: Schlage, LCN, Von Duprin

PANELING: Cardinal Acoustics, Homasote

TILE: Daltile

RESILIENT FLOORING: Tarkett

PAINTS AND STAINS: Benjamin Moore

LIGHTING: LUX Dynamics, 3G Lighting

VENTILATION DIFFUSERS: Price Industries

DUST COLLECTION: Camfil