

For Immediate Release: June 29, 2004

Contact: Julia Waters 718.549.3200 x232
or Kathryn Heintz 718.549.3200 x233

PERKINS VISITOR CENTER TAKES ROOT, WELCOMING PUBLIC JULY 20, 2004

Designed by Robert A.M. Stern Architects, Perkins Visitor Center integrates architecture and landscape; offers enhanced visitor orientation and horticulture facilities; and marks Wave Hill's 40th anniversary year.

Center honors Perkins family for 1960 gift of estate to New York City

Following a private dedication ceremony on July 19, **Wave Hill**, a spectacular 28-acre public garden and cultural center in New York City, opens to the public its new **Perkins Visitor Center** on **July 20, 2004**. **Robert A.M. Stern Architects** transformed and extended an existing turn-of-the-century garage into an elegant, central facility for visitors that seamlessly integrates Wave Hill's landscape.

Wave Hill's largest capital project in two decades, the Perkins Visitor Center comprises a **staffed orientation area** featuring interpretive information about Wave Hill's gardens, landscape and cultural programming; an **expanded Wave Hill Shop**, with both indoor and outdoor components; and easily accessible, **ADA-compliant amenities**. The building's private quarters house expanded **horticultural workspace** worthy of the garden's celebrated 40-year history. The meandering quality of Wave Hill's gardens and pathways, the complexity of its terrain, and the picturesque, peripheral, locations of its two mansions create the intimate serendipity that distinguishes Wave Hill from its peers. The Perkins Visitor Center is a **much-needed, centrally located hub**, and the focal point of an institution-wide effort to bring visitors in closer touch with Wave Hill's living collections and nature-inspired programs.

Wave Hill President and Executive Director Kate French says, "We are proud to dedicate the distinguished new Perkins Visitor Center, which will welcome and guide



thousands of visitors each year, to the family of George W. Perkins. We are deeply grateful for the extraordinary contribution of their Bronx estate to the City in 1960, which laid the foundation for the public garden and cultural institution we now enjoy and whose stewardship continues to this day.”

Perkins Visitor Center

In 1994 Wave Hill’s turn-of-the-century garage was seriously damaged by fire, a potential tragedy that provided the opportunity for the creation of a central visitor and horticulture center. The existing building’s brick masonry was exposed and repointed, exterior architectural details were repaired and an elegant pergola planted with vines now serves as an entryway. A slate hipped roof and copper-clad skylight filter natural light to the orientation area and retail space, while timber trusses and custom lighting fixtures that take their aesthetic cues from 19th-century carriage house design further define the interior.

A signature aspect of the design is the board-and-batten exterior of the building’s northern portion. Traditionally used in Hudson River Valley cottages from the 1840’s, the choice of board-and-batten was inspired by Wave Hill’s setting overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades. Fieldstone piers and foundation, as well as a copper roof, complement this construction and relate to the fieldstone façade of Wave Hill House, located within view of the Visitor Center.

A highlight of the Perkins Visitor Center is an exuberant new **map and mural of Wave Hill painted by artist, designer and author Maira Kalman**. The map conveys the vitality of Wave Hill, beseeching visitors to explore the gardens or participate in an activity that will connect them with nature. The Visitor Center will also feature an information desk staffed by a garden interpreter and newly designed interpretive materials created by Pentagram Design to provide comprehensive information about the gardens and programs. As part of the Visitor Center project, Pentagram Design also developed the institution’s new identity and wayfinding systems.

Anchoring the east side of Perkins Visitor Center is the new, expanded **Wave Hill Shop** that includes an outdoor component. The Shop offers a selection of décor for the home and garden; horticultural books; and specialty Wave Hill items featuring the new, Pentagram-designed logo. *The Gardens of Wave Hill*, a new book featuring the work of garden photographer Mick Hales, will debut in the Shop.

Extending the building's footprint and relocating **Horticulture operations** provides a workspace worthy of Wave Hill's talented staff. The new space comprises an expanded workroom, adequate plant and tool storage, a root cellar and a compost yard. **Scott Canning, Director of Horticulture** at Wave Hill, notes, "While the south end of the building welcomes visitors, we'll be toiling away in our handsome and spacious facilities to the north. The Perkins Visitor Center gives us the tools we need to continue growing and evolving Wave Hill's outstanding gardens—we're thrilled."

Perkins Visitor Center Architects

Robert A.M. Stern Architects, based in New York, has an international reputation as a leading design firm with wide experience in residential, commercial and institutional work. The firm's design philosophy respects the continuity of tradition, while striving to create buildings that capture the spirit of the places in which they stand. The Perkins Visitor Center team was led by Robert Stern, lead designer; Gary Brewer, Project Architect and Associate Partner; and Julie Nymann, Project Manager. Some of the firm's best-known buildings include the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, MA; the Roger Tory Peterson Institute in Jamestown, NY; and the Ohstrom Library at the St. Paul's School in Concord, NH.

Other members of the Visitor & Horticulture Center design team include Michael Bierut and Tracey Cameron of **Pentagram Design**, a firm with offices throughout the United States and in London, England. Pentagram creates exhibits and environmental design for major museums, and cultural and urban centers internationally. Capital funding and administration was provided by the City's Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Design and Construction. Bovis Lend Lease managed construction.

Support

Wave Hill expresses gratitude to the underwriters of the Perkins Visitor Center, especially the City of New York, George W. Perkins, Jr. and Penelope P. Wilson. Generous support was also received from the Cleveland H. Dodge Foundation, Booth Ferris Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Barker Welfare Foundation, Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, The Hagedorn Fund, Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, The Zipp Family Foundation and an anonymous donor.

Wave Hill

Wave Hill is a 28-acre public garden and cultural institution overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. Award-winning gardens, greenhouses and woodlands offer people of all ages the opportunity to explore their connections to the natural world. Programs are offered in horticulture, environmental education, woodland management and the visual and performing arts. Wave Hill is located at West 249th Street and Independence Avenue in the northwest Bronx, and is accessible by car and public transportation.

HOURS

Open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and on Memorial Day, Labor Day and Columbus Day.

October 15-April 14: 9am-4:30pm

April 15-October 14: 9am-5:30pm

Open until 9pm on Wednesdays in June and July

ADMISSION

Tuesday: Free all day

Wednesday-Sunday: \$4 adults, \$2 students and seniors 65+, Free for Members and children under 6

Saturday: Free 9am-noon

Accessible by Car, Liberty Lines Express Bus, Metro-North rail (to Riverdale Station), #1/9 subway transfer at 231 St. to Bx 7/10 bus, A subway transfer at 208 St. to Bx 7 bus.

Phone: 718.549.3200 **Website:** www.wavehill.org

