

Construction of Upton Hall

SMJ: This is March 14, 1977. Dr. Stanley Czurles, professor, former director of the Art Division at the State University College at Buffalo will talk about the idea behind and the features of Upton Hall. This is the Fine and Industrial Arts building here on campus, Dr. Czurles:

CZURLES: Sister, that building represents the third goal that I had outlined to President Rockwell when I was offered the opportunity to be the Director of the Art Department. I came here because I envisioned art education as being a major program, not a collection of odds and ends. I told President Rockwell the first thing that I wanted to have the freedom to do was to select the faculty, because the faculty is what makes the program. In this case, it was necessary to build a new type of program in which all materials could become art materials. This differed from the traditional at that time in which the arts were mainly the gallery arts. I received all kinds of freedom violating the so-called "requirements", because I wanted to pick a staff that would represent art in all areas. I felt that once we had the staff, we should be able to have a building which no one had ever seen before. Historically, no one had a building that encompassed all those arts. The art faculty would then build a curriculum, not according to anything in the books, but according to the ideas of the man who was an expert in his field. When I did take over the chairmanship of the Art Education Department, we had an affiliation

with the Albright Art School, and everybody was saying that we would never be able to break it and have a building of our own. I kept persisting with the idea, because I thought eventually it would come true.

SMJ: Your offices and classes were housed in the Albright Art building then?

CZURLES: The Albright Art School gave the studio classes to our students. We were in Rockwell Hall. We taught the class because art schools wouldn't touch it, and we also taught art education. My office was located on the Rockwell Drive side, and, at that time, I was also teaching stage design in the basement which was then unfinished. After the war, when the campus started building planning, I asked for the right to plan an art building. President Rockwell told me very kindly that we were still affiliated with the Albright Art School, and it would be a waste of time since we were the baby department, and he had to take care of the Home Economics, Industrial Arts and the Elementary Education Departments first. By August 4, 1950, I submitted a plan for building that would encompass the visual arts, music, drama, speech and visual education. At this time, I was also doing theater design, and I was into the visual arts. I saw this building as one of the first art buildings as such. They allowed me to file the plan. Three years later, unexpectedly came the break for which we were waiting. Albright Art School was sold to the University of Buffalo, and overnight everybody panicked about what they were going to do now. We pulled out the 1950 plan and immediately began

to abstract. It's all in my records. The date was January 6, 1954. At the same time, the Industrial Arts Department was planning a building which was to be in back of Rockwell Hall, a \$400,000. unit. Dr. Brown and I combined our efforts and asked for a combined Fine and Industrial Arts building which would give him much more space and it would also give us something. It was agreed that we could go ahead and start this plan. I would like to take a little more time here and explain what was behind the plan. First of all, Dr. Brown and I both believed that our fields were a part of the general education. In his area, he would have people who did not work in industry but they would understand how things around them were made. We started to plan a building in which the arts and industrial arts could interrelate. Both of us were concerned about taking raw materials and then modify them for human use. In our case, it was primarily modifying them so the sensory latitudinal meanings were involved. We were also concerned about the hand crafts, everything from sculpture to furniture and jewelry making. They were concerned about picking up design and then putting it to manufacture. One of the things that we tried to have featured in the building was to interrelate the facilities. For example, there is a wing in the building which we call the noise wing because it is separated from the rest of the building due to all the machinery. When you go down to the hall this is what you would see; on the right and side we developed the studio in design for wood. There you would start working from just appreciating a piece of wood as nature is made it. Then you would move on to

doing abstractions and sculpting and designing. Across the hall we located the actual wood shops. This is where manufacturing on a large scale is involved. We could design on the right a studio and then move on to the left. The other area was that either student in either field could enlarge his field within the departments. Also, people who were designing from the art stand point would understand the mechanical stand point and process in large scale manufacturing. Next to that was our design with metal. This class involved all ways metal can be shaped. Across the hall from that were metal shops. Next to the metal is jewelry, a smaller version of the metal and beyond that is the sculpture. We would have the opportunity on the right hand side. In the basement, since only one side was being used, we put along side each other, the clay studios. We also had studios for the art people which were primarily hand processes. The Industrial Arts had all kinds of equipment from mixing clay to ovens for baking things. In the same way, upstairs in the main section we put the graphic arts (lithographs, engraving) on one side and along the side of those, you had print shops. Our dream upstairs was to have drawing and painting studios located across from the electronics because, at that time, I was already working with audio-visual education, and I envisioned that the television one day could be an independent medium for creation. For example, traditionally, we think of television as mirroring something that exists out in space, people and such. The point is that television is mainly a god of light. I envisioned that we could create our own patterns. The idea was,

and still is, that you could create sound and motions artificially, and above everything else, you could combine every kind of visual communication of from photographing scenes to creating cartoons to just manipulating the sound. This was all part of the idea which has not been used. That is still more great potential for that particular building. In the building itself, I had to perceive what was coming in the future. Planning a building means looking ahead 50 or 100 years. There were two major concepts from the arts stand point. One is that, forever we will be dealing with the visual, so the building itself had to be a visual teacher. It didn't have to depend on people alone. The way that it was done, is first of all there is about 1/2 mile of display space in that building. Every hall was outfitted so that we could display things. The kind of display equipment is related to what we are displaying. The whole idea was that anyone entering that building would be taught just by looking. The people who were art majors would be seeing things for four years even though they are not doing them. The other way to teach by the building, was that lockers were to be placed in the hallways, and I said all the lockers should go to one end. I needed those hallways, to have windows all along. I know that activity makes students feel like imitating or doing it, so we planned that every room wherever it was possible, had windows. Anyone going through the hall could constantly see what was going on. For example, a freshman going through the hall looks through the window and sees a block of wood, a chunk of clay, a stone and some metal. A few weeks later, he

comes by, and somebody is working on each of those materials. Maybe he won't take the course right away, but he is already getting an education. He would be getting a much richer and constant education that was possible just by sitting in an isolated classroom. Secondly, he would see that everybody was a creator. The art process was the same, but that you were choosing different materials and turning out different ideas. We worked very hard and we got many windows put in, but a lot of faculty became very self-conscious and today most of them are blocked off. The third aspect was that anyone coming into the building had to see the gallery. It was right in the middle of traffic. That was given up because of theft. Most of the windows are also pasted up now, but the auditorium is still used for such purposes.

SMJ: Couldn't that gallery be locked up?

CZURLES: It is locked all the time, but when unlocked no one is there to guard the contents. These were the three ways which I was adding to art education which never were used before. The constant viewing was inspiration. Every subject would be seen and studied for four years. The interrelationship could be viewed. I wanted to put in another feature because they were talking about preparing teachers. People would think it was ridiculous if painters would be sitting in classes and being told about painting for three years, and then in the fourth year he was put in a studio and told to paint. But a lot of teacher preparation was that way. I wanted the student to see children for four years. I planned a high school art room and an elementary art room right in the

building. I was told we couldn't have it because such classrooms belonged in the Campus School. I modified my statement a little bit and said I needed an elementary curriculum laboratory and a secondary curriculum laboratory. Then they let me have it. Rooms 408 and 410 were designed to be secondary and elementary art rooms to which we would bring children from the Campus School. For four years, students going through could look in through the windows and get a feel of what children are and can do. The exhibit area in that space was also to have all of the children's art work all the time. In between the two rooms, I built the first viewing room with one way mirrors, which is now closed off and was made into an office. The idea was that those classes could go on undisturbed, and you could observe as you went through the halls. When you were teaching something about education, or art education, you could take students into that room and show them what was going on and discuss it. They have a very similar system now in the Campus School. That was the other innovation which greatly enriched the preparation of teachers. After it was done, and I revealed these plans to the people on campus, it didn't work out. The third point that was important in planning that building is that I realized that changes would need to move in the future. That building had to be made so that it could be changed at any time. I do have slides showing that there were no walls from one side of the building to the other, just the halls walls. We put all utilities unto it and we made the rooms from simple concrete blocks so that anytime you had to move it to enlarge it you could do it at a

minimal expense. That building is built to be flexible. the other area that were able to incorporate in there was an audio visual room. I did describe the details in another tape. That was the first room on campus which was to be fully automatic using every means of interpretation. The auditorium has an interesting story also because when I asked for an auditorium, I could not have one. The reason is that according to regulations, there was only suppose to be one auditorium on campus, and Rockwell Hall had one even though it was falling apart. Dr. Brown and I had to modify our request by changing the words again. We asked for a large lecture hall. We had 600 majors in each department and we were having visiting demonstrations. We started out with just a flat floor rectangular room with a semicircular platform at one end. Then we asked if that could be extended. We thought it would be nice if the floor was elevated. Step by step we succeeded in getting it to be an auditorium. For the first time, drama had a stage on which it could perform. The other point is the audio-visual room had a service pit so anyone who came in to demonstrate had facilities. The next thing that we wanted to was, a kind of building with equipment that worked better than the standard equipment. We started a little bit different from what most buildings are planned. We asked for so many square feet for some rooms and immediately they said you are allowed only so much space. We began to argue that we can't contain it in that area. Here is an interesting story of something I did which I never thought I would perpetrate. I finally got Albany to change specifications for art

rooms. The art rooms had about 700 square feet in the public high schools. The regulations said the equipment should be such that if it is not used for art, you should be able to use it for something else. That was a 1913 specification. I was appointed and finally developed a booklet published by the State Education Department on planning secondary art rooms in 1954. In it I stated that there should be rooms at least 2,000 square feet. In 1913, it was mainly drawing, but now we were into ceramics and crafts and so forth. The first time we put down specifications for studios, they came back and very nicely smiled. They said they thought I had done a good job of planning but once in a while we go overboard such as in asking for a room this size. They had a booklet in their office, and it said it should be 700 square feet. I said, "Are you kidding me? You know that there was a new booklet published in 1954 and it states that a studio had to be 2,000 square feet." This were we benefitted greatly. When it came to equipment, it was the same thing. I realized we would be using every kind of material, and surfaces had to be there for every kind of usage. For example, the tables that we designed were mainly maple tops. The most important thing in art is perceiving an idea, then getting the materials. Most art rooms limited the kind of materials you could use by purpose and availability. The plans here involved starting with a basic maple top wooden table. Here's an example. Four people are sitting around the table. One person is working on a project requiring the use of a torch. Another one using chemicals still another, just a little surface. How do you provide for it? In the

plans would be a provision that I could go to the storage room and slip on an abestese cover for that 1/4 of the table using the torch. Slip on a masonite cover for the 1/4 of the person with the tools. A stainless steel sheet for the person using the chemicals. Most art rooms when you look at the shelves is dead space. You may have an eight inch space on a shelf, but it would only have about 2 inches of material. When the space was a foot high you had a terrific waste. The second thing is that students have to get up and run around the room to get the particular materials. The third thing is that you couldn't have enough variety of equipment for everybody in those rooms. We figured that all the storage under the counters would be in units that were movable. There were some 70 units that were in the building. A certain number of them would be equipped with wood tools, a certain number would be equipped with torches, a certain number would be equipped with acids and such. Those would be movable and interchangeable throughout the day. This way you did not have every room outfitted with all the materials. In this way, each person would be taken care of as far as materials. We never received the money to do it, but it still is an idea. The other thing about equipping these rooms was, that every art room had to have surfaces for all of these things, not just here, but permanent surfaces. In all general art rooms there is a section which is covered with asbestees so if anyone needs to use torches they won't burn the wood table. After a long fight I got stainless steel sinks a sections of counters are stainless steel for the use of chemicals of various kinds. Other surfaces

are wood so that you can carve on top of it. Also, around each room, realizing we were coming to the electrical age, there is a band of electrical outlets so you can plug in equipment tools. We had all the provision for any tool materials and power source throughout that building. The other thing about the equipment was we weren't satisfied with the traditional tables and so on. Because it was to be very large contract, we finally got permission to design the units there, and they became a prototype for equipment all over the counter. In addition to these things, we wanted to have small units that could be installed just like your kitchen. We designed all these flexible units and they were used. One of the toughest things to do was to break through and get permission to do this. Let me tell you the story of how we did that. When we got permission to plan this building, (the combination building) we were allowed to plan very shortly after we had submitted the plan for just an art building. By 1956, Dr. Neuhardt of Industrial Arts and faculty we had working here started planning what we wanted. At that time we were not allowed to the architects. We could only talk to the president. The president could only talk to Dr. Cooper, the head of Teacher Education. Dr. Cooper could talk only to the University Building Planning Committee, and they could only talk to the Division of Public Works. The Division of Public Works had the final say. They proposed that our span of rooms be 24 feet. We said it has to be at least 30 feet. What we had to do every time was to draw the plans, put all the equipment in, show the traffic lanes and show

the clearance around that machines that would be necessary. Even then when they finally saw the plans they said change them. We couldn't. Finally, Dr. Brown and I did one of the first sit-ins of objection. We decided that we just couldn't get anyplace unless we talked directly to the architect. One day we sat in on Dr. Rice's office until he got there and we said we weren't moving out there until he called Albany and arranged for us to talk directly to the architects. We weren't received as too well. He finally did call, and we were able to meet with the architect and with all the people in Albany. That way we could directly face some of the problems head on. Up to that time, when we started to plan equipment, they said not to bother until we get the rooms built. We said you can't build the rooms until we figure the space we need for the equipment. We had other arguments. For example, we were supposed to have 25 people in a class. They gave us a certain size, even with what they felt was generosity, and it could only handle 20 people. They said that it was our problem. I said that they didn't have the right to reduce the size of my classes. These were the kind of arguments we had. We began to win space because of the terrific amount of work that the faculty did individually outlining exactly what needed to be done there.

SMJ: Didn't the question you about the budget saying that you were going over the amount of money allocated for this?

CZURLES: No, this was planning money only. Gradually, they began to throw "the budget" of what was possible. For the Industrial Arts, they were going to have less that 1/2 million

dollar building. We ended up over 4 million dollar building. This had to be expanded. Dr. Brown and I did another thing that was partly necessary and partly for safety value. We put in 8 classrooms because at that time there were no other buildings planned and we were going to enlarge and needed them. They said we needed to cut. Finally when it came to the last shrinkage, we couldn't cut any more rooms so they just took a percentage and cut every room that way, just like squeezing an orange. In that way we did get somewhere near the size we wanted. The next part was the number of art rooms. Again their regulations said that you may justify a room if you can show its use 85% of the time. They gave me a small number of rooms on that basis and again I had to write up a whole statement and argue the fact that if you have an academic building you can do it. Once your through with a normal class the student can go to the library and do ceramics, etc. I finally won the right to allow one third of the time for individual student work; therefore, I increased my building by one third which was very necessary. There were some of the things with which we were confronted because they had never planned a Fine or Industrial Arts building before. First of all, we got what was called planning money in 1954. Then, all the faculty worked hard to plan what we wanted, and we told them this probably wouldn't happen to since, we are pioneering. You can have almost anything you can support. I only had two people that said they weren't hired to do architect. Let the architects do it. Those who worked hard recorded excellent facilities. We ended up planning a building

with potentials that are still unfilled. We ended up by planning equipment and other companies began to imitate that equipment. Eventually the building was accepted. I envisioned the roof as the outdoor studios and drew up plans. They figured it would cost too much to reinforce the roof and I lost that. However, Henry Clover who was on my staff and left to go to Kentucky asked for there types of roof. I went down there for the dedication of the building. There they had a boardwalk surface on all the roofs and it worked great. When the Upton Hall was ready to be built, the site of the building became a question. Our building was going to be put where Moot Hall is. At that time there weren't any buildings in that area and I asked for a change in site. The expressway wasn't built yet. I asked for the site where we are now, which at that time was a nice hill area sloping down to the creek. I explained how we could then terrace that and get into sculpture gardens and provide a beautiful place. The spot was given to us. At that time, right on that spot was the city's facility pool. The fisherman were practicing casting. The state had to trade some land in order for the casting pool to be moved. Before our building started to go up, the expressway plan came in. That lake was much bigger, then it is now. So area is a fill-in for the expressway. The building was approved and after the building was built, we had to get another budget for equipment. We had planned what equipment we needed, but it turned out to be an entirely different amount. It was necessary to release some faculty time. Dr. Brown and I pleaded to have Dr. Ball released to

help us. In September 1958, Dr. Ball was released. That was one of the most helpful things to the entire college. Charles Ball is a very sharp, well informed man on everything concerning construction. He was very systematic. His system of planning from the time we started the planning of equipment to the delivery of it became the system the state university used from then on. Charles was constantly on the job and we were able to get a great many things and get them the way we wanted.

SMJ: Is he still here?

CZURLES: Yes, Charlie is still here. He is teaching the plastic classes here. The construction started on October 10, 1960. I do have a set of slides that I will turn over to the archives from the time the first bulldozer came to the open field. Dr. Bulger was here by that time and he got into the picture also. We had a couple of bad storms then, that tore out part of the original structure and it had to be rebuilt. Fortunately I had the slides and the company received its insurance money because I showed the company the slides. We had seen other buildings go up, we noticed that underneath the basement section opposite the noise section there was a whole big area that was not going to be excavated. What they were doing to do was to dig holes and sink these piles. As I watched, I realized that they dug out as much soil that way and then put it back in again. Here a very long area and Charlie and I felt we just couldn't leave that not excavated. What we had asked for was a large storage room but fortunately at that time the state was very involved in air raid shelters.

Charlie got to the government and we were told that they were to excavate it as a shelter. It is still a huge beautiful area.

SMJ: I have been down there. Isn't there still some items stored there?

CZURLES: Yes, it was filled with containers of water and so forth and we tried to sneak into it, but they wouldn't let us. Since then they have subdivided it, and we saved a huge space.

SMJ: It is still storage though, isn't it?

CZURLES: Yes, but it can be converted to useful space. If it hasn't been at that time it would never have been done. In September 1962, we began to move into the building. Everything was still not fully equipped so we suffered with workmen running around and such. A terrific amount of expensive equipment disappeared and also tools. Too many people had keys to everything. Some equipment was being delivered and some of it was being distributed. It was quite a blow, because there was so much money involved and it was mixed up, everything we wanted began to suffer a loss. There was only so much in the budget and we used it all up. If you don't get something on the big budget you can forget it. Let me go a little further now. I envisioned that building because I said stage 4 would be now having a full faculty and the curriculum labs. The building would now become an art center for the state. I have proposals that I will file with you as to how we were to be an art center for the state. Especially for this community. It started this way. The Buffalo craftsmen would schedule weekend craft shops and bring in outstanding ceramic artists and textile weavers and so

forth. People would sign up and come to learn. We ran into a lot of problems with the government with that because unless we had it totally supervised with faculty we could not use certain rooms. Throughout the history of that building I had already two lawsuits. If anybody got hurt and there wasn't a state paid worker supervising, even though he might be a graduate student teaching something professionally it still wasn't considered supervised. So a lot of our possible uses of that building were cut. This was also to be the exhibit area for all the schools. There is only a little change on the outside of the building. Originally the panels were suppose to be green so it would blend with the grass but they said it was cheaper to use black. So they used black. One thing that was not developed that I had hoped for almost received was the lobby as I had planned it. It was a bigger lobby, and in that lobby would be something that was made by hand and something made by machine. Some of it would actually be a part of the architecture. My office was to become an example. Then a couple of faculty members said they weren't going to do it. We should allow anyone to do it unless the state pays for it. At that time the state had no money to pay for this so we ended up with a building looking more like an industrial arts building because we lost out on the hand touch quality that I would have like to see in there.

SMJ: When was the dedication?

CZURLES: I don't know for sure. The last thing I have in my files is that we moved into it in September of 1962. The

dedication was named some time after that.

SMJ: Wasn't it named in 1963?

CZURLES: Yes, there were a couple other buildings also named at that time. How it became to be called Upton Hall is another thing. They started naming these buildings and they had to be named after people who had already died. Our building had somebody's name that had nothing to do with Art or Industrial Arts. Upton was a vocational man. I have an Eastern Arts book in 1909 in which it says Upton gave a lecture on industrial design. Since the early stages, industrial arts and art were apart of one organization, this man was close to someone who had something to do with it.

SMJ: Was there any another names beside Upton proposed?

CZURLES: Yes, there is a couple other names proposed. That building was the first such building in the country. Immediately we began to get people from all over the country coming to see how it was built. People from Penn State, NYU, Ohio, all over. A great many people came with tape recorders and cameras and took a picture of what was feasible. It also began then to be accepted that art would encompass all these areas, because many universities still looked down upon crafts as not a part of it. With the building we also expanded the faculty. When I took over as director in 1936 there were 5 on the faculty. We had close to 60 on the faculty before I stepped out as administrator.

SMJ: You must of been very proud of that building.

CZURLES: I still am proud of it. Things I write down might

disappear and might not be used, but that building is still being used. We began to have visitors from not only our country but from all over the world. This is how I met some of the people that I talk with in Japan and Australia. We also used to run some of our own conventions here. A lot of people who came to the conventions received in content part of what was being presented and partly to see what kind of building it was. I also began to lose faculty to colleges and universities planning art buildings. No one had the opportunity or experience that these faculty members had as we worked together. In fact, we worked right through the Christmas vacation. They were familiar with all the aspects and also with some of the politics that had to be done. From write ups and faculty and going to other places to build up departments, we became a very big thing.

SMJ: Do you have music there or is it in the Albright?

CZURLES: No, we don't have music there. It is in the Albright and there is another story I didn't tell about the problem we had getting that building going and not being forced to stick to the Albright. I won't reveal the details here. We had to keep the two departments apart so that one was rehab and the other new construction. I still would have liked to have a total fine arts building. After we finished this, places like Geneseo were able to get funds for these buildings. Even her plans like the expansion of music a lot of it goes back to the 1950 proposal. One of the things that disappointed me in planning the buildings for theater and music is the fact that they don't make the facilities in such

a way that the finest of talent can be developed here.