DORMITORY
The dormitory rooms require natural light and a view, but also privacy and a noise buffer from the streets. By placing the dormitory on the northwest corner of the site, away from the two facing streets, the needs of this space are addressed.
The entryways to the dormitory rooms are inset from the hallway. This creates the feeling of entering a house from the street, thus giving the rooms more privacy. The rooms are small, yet efficient, with built-in furniture and storage. “Thickened walls” house bunk beds, storage space and desks. The desk area has a floor-to-ceiling window which is operable at the bottom. The bunk beds have built-in drawers and a recessed window shelf. Each dorm room has a private bathroom with a shower.
A metal panelled wall behind the desk gives students a place to hang their work. A curtain can be pulled across the ceiling to separate the bunk bed space from the desk area, thus allowing for privacy and mediating the light entering the sleeping area. The walls are wood-panelled and the built-ins are also made of wood. This creates a warm, intimate environment in the dormitory rooms.
A thin strip of colored glass is inserted between a column and a wall in the bunkbed area, creating unique lighting conditions. The transition from one material to another (concrete column to CMU wall) is mediated by the recessed colored-glass window. This interstitial element is used to draw attention to and enhance the connection.
STAIRTOWER AND ENTRY
The two stairtowers and entries to the building are located diagonally, at the intersection of living and learning spaces. In this way, each stairtower acts as a joint connecting the classrooms, studios, and dormitories. They also signify entry to the building. The stairtowers are essentially separate entities from the building, although structurally connected at each floor, and this is expressed visually by their non-cubic proportions and their material construction, along with their irregular window openings. They have a steel-frame construction with metal panels hung on the interior and exterior, with fire-rated glass block windows. The stairs are structured independently of the shell and are pulled away from the walls by 6 inches, but connected to the main building at floor levels. The glass block windows are arranged to create different lighting conditions and views as you traverse floors.
Entry to the building occurs on each street facade where stairtower and building meet. The entries are recessed from the street facade and provide a vertical transition from structural grid to stairtower block and mediates the change in material between building parts. The use of a regular arrangement of square glass block windows also mediates the change in fenestration between the stairtower and the classrooms. The entryways mark the points of intersection of the two original overlapping forms.
The ground floor of the building is the public realm. The perimeter gallery is visually open to the street, with transparent glass windows framed on the inside of the exterior columns. The columns, the glass, and the 2-foot-high exterior wall create viewing spaces outside the building, allowing a view of the art exhibited in the gallery. The interior gallery wall is composed of wood panels set into the column grid. The gridlines are reinforced in the floor, which is black terrazzo with brass inlaid on the tartan gridlines. The darkness of the gallery floor is continued outside the building with black granite sills. The 2-foot-high exterior stone walls provide a physical barrier to protect the large glass windows of the ground floor and also help delineate entry to the building.
The interior gallery walls have a clerestory of glass block which allows natural light from the perimeter gallery windows to enter the auditorium. The auditorium has a small stage with storage underneath. Like the perimeter gallery, the walls are wood panels set into the concrete grid. Wood ceiling panels are suspended from the floor above and hang between the concrete grid, revealing the concrete beams which span the auditorium.
The 12-foot ceilings of the ground floor drop to 10 feet for the faculty offices. This provides a more intimate space and also creates a cubic volume for each office. The offices are located away from the street facades, giving them more privacy. Since they face a driveway and the blank wall of the adjacent building, frosted glass blocks are used to bring natural light into the offices while blocking views.
Each office shares a common wall of bookshelves similar to the classroom shelves. Wooden boxes are inserted into a wooden shelving grid, opening to alternate sides. The boxes can be adjusted to various positions to create a dynamic wall. The opposing shared wall houses ventilation shafts along the sides, opening to both offices.