

ISLAND HOUSE



COMMUNITY PROVISIONAL RESIDENCE



VILLAGE TOWNHOUSE



ST HILDA'S &amp; ST. HUGH'S SCHOOL



19 WASHINGTON SQUARE NORTH



Murphy Burnham and Buttrick (MBB) was formed 12 years ago from the union of three partners from different firms: Jeffrey Murphy, Mary Burnham, and Harold Buttrick. Murphy and Burnham were friends who had worked together years earlier and who liked to meet up regularly to talk shop; Buttrick was a sole practitioner whose firm had grown steadily over the years. The partnership offered an opportunity for Buttrick, who was looking to scale down from his large office; for Murphy and Burnham, it was a chance to scale up from their small firms and take on more complex projects.

The group's portfolio includes a strong roster of institutional and educational work, particularly of Eastern-influenced designs for institutions in New York with roots in Asia or the Middle East. A contemporary Tibetan library in the West Village blends the red and white palette and tiered shapes of Tibetan architecture into a minimalist background, and the American University in Beirut's New York headquarters creates a clean modern design in Lebanese cedar and Jerusalem stone. Both paved the way for MBB's Manhattan outpost of New York University's Abu Dhabi campus, recently completed at 19 Washington Square North.

Though they have no official area of specialization, Murphy and Burnham say they like working with institutions that are operating out of too-small, too-old, or otherwise dysfunctional headquarters, and creating a new space that fits the institution's mission. With upcoming projects including the renovation of St. Patrick's Cathedral and a Montessori school in a former firehouse, the partners are grateful for their firm's medium size. "We're big enough to do large-scale work, but small enough that we can be involved in all the projects," Murphy said. **JG**

ISLAND HOUSE  
FISHERS ISLAND,  
NY

For a family on Fishers Island, MBB is designing a primary residence that they refer to as the Island House, looking out to wooded grounds on one side and to Long Island Sound on the other. The house will be built of locally-sourced stone, and topped with a green roof and photovoltaic panels. The library and the cedar-sided living quarters will be connected by a glass corridor, with walls that open up on both sides to allow passage through the house from the backyard down to the water. "We wanted to create a layered experience," Burnham said, "from the trees to the broad horizon."

COMMUNITY  
PROVISIONAL  
RESIDENCE  
NEW YORK

In preparation for future Katrina-like disasters, the City of New York Office of Emergency Management launched the *What If NYC...* design competition in 2008 to solicit ideas for sheltering New Yorkers who lose their homes to a coastal storm. As one of the winners, MBB is in the process of realizing their design, which they titled *Community Provisional Residences*. The house is constructed from a boxed kit of floor, roof, and side-wall panels made of a recyclable lightweight honeycomb resin composite, a material inspired by MBB's studies of the aeronautics and boat-building industries. The houses are designed to stack, making them practical for urban settings as well as exurban spaces.

VILLAGE  
TOWNHOUSE  
NEW YORK

Although their highest profile work is institutional and educational, MBB likes to carry the techniques of translucency and light they developed for those projects over to their residential work as well. In 2008, they renovated a West Village townhouse for a family with two children, using a gray-toned palette modulated by the different rooms' varying levels of daylight, and accented with occasional splashes of color like a wall of blue glass in the bathroom. A basement-level living room looks out onto a courtyard under the piano nobile's balcony, which the architects outfitted with a glass floor to allow sunlight into the courtyard below.

19 WASHINGTON  
SQUARE NORTH  
NEW YORK

MBB turned a five-story townhouse on Washington Square into a portal to the Middle East, replacing the internal structure with an event space and conference rooms where students and faculty can remotely attend classes in Abu Dhabi. To evoke the sun-drenched sister campus, MBB tried to bring as much light as possible into the former townhouse, opening up the stairway to a central atrium, and replacing walls between offices and hallways with screens of translucent resin. Etched in the resin is a Pentagram design, composed of the NYU torch logo arranged in the repeating diamond pattern of traditional Arabic art.

ST HILDA'S & ST.  
HUGH'S SCHOOL  
NEW YORK

For the past ten years, MBB has been gradually transforming St. Hilda's & St. Hugh's, an Episcopal day school on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Beginning with the lobby, they went on to renovate the school's other major spaces, finishing with the science labs and a greenhouse on the upper level. "We've done a number of masterplans for schools and we've found that you have to take the first step strategically. As the success of each project hits, the community realizes the school's potential," Murphy said. Over the course of the renovations, MBB has discovered spaces the school was unaware existed, including a room between two stair bulkheads on the roof which now serves as a sunny additional classroom.