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# Light after Darkness

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ALUMNI

*Light after  
Darkness*

Architect David Ziskind ensures there will be a grand welcome for the public at the World Trade Center

By David McKay Wilson '76

Photograph by Andrew Ziskind

**David Ziskind '61 had a meeting scheduled for the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, at the World Trade Center, in the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's offices on the 73rd floor.**

As fate would have it, that meeting was postponed. And over the past 15 years, Ziskind, chief architect at the international engineering and design firm STV Inc., has worked in every aspect of rebuilding at Ground Zero.

As architect of record, Ziskind's STV team implemented the vision of architect Santiago Calatrava, whose design evokes a bird in flight. The monumental World Trade Center Transportation Hub, with its cathedral-like white marble interior, features a grand concourse longer than Grand Central Terminal's, and a canopy that reaches 160 feet high. Its crowning spine is a skylight that will open each year on Sept. 11.

Through the skylight looms Tower 1 of the World Trade Center, for which STV was the construction manager. "There will be a wedge of light streaming down," Ziskind said.

Wrote architecture critic Paul Goldberger: "New York City has built a truly sumptuous interior space for the benefit of the public."

One late afternoon in July, Ziskind led a tour of the transit hub, which officially opened in May and, when completed by 2018, will serve about 200,000 commuters a day. He grinned when he saw commuters streaming across the white Carrera marble floor to the PATH rail platform or to 10 subway stops, which are connected by broad passageways that extend from the concourse. "What excites me is seeing all these people moving through here," Ziskind said.

Ron Lem, the Transportation hub's senior project architect, said an important part of the execution of Calatrava's design was Ziskind's concern for the hub's users. "Plus he's got such charisma and style," Lem said.

Building the \$4-billion transportation hub presented significant engineering challenges. During construction, the MTA's No. 1 subway line, which was high up in the subterranean parcel, and the New Jersey PATH station, much farther underground, had to remain open. Then came 9/11's 10th anniversary and the demand that the plaza over the hub be ready for that ceremony. That required Ziskind's team to ensure the project could be built from the top down so it could be completed in time. "It's like you were building it in reverse," he said.

At 77, Ziskind says he's not ready for retirement. In July he was off to Iowa to meet with corrections officials regarding

a women's prison he has designed. His eyes light up when discussing the fine arts library he's designing with Austrian architect Wolfgang Tschapeller for Cornell University. Ziskind's STV also designed a new residential barracks at the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School at West Point.

Then there's his company's role as construction manager for the rebuilding of New York's LaGuardia Airport terminal as well as the ongoing competition STV has entered for a new Penn Station, and the expansion of New York's Javits Convention Center.

Ziskind became STV's chief architect in 1994 after the company bought his firm. "When I had my own firm, I did everything but architecture as a psychologist, philosopher, accountant, and HR director," he said. "Coming here was the best thing I ever did."

## Building Blocks

**From art history at Colby to architecture in Florence, Samantha Jaff's path was set on Mayflower Hill**

On the day before Samantha Jaff's final review at the Yale School of Architecture, who randomly appears on a New Haven sidewalk but Colby Professor Emeritus David Simon, the art history scholar who supported Jaff's decision to create an independent major in the field while on Mayflower Hill.

"I thought I was hallucinating," said Jaff '11, who received the school's Sonia Albert Schimberg Prize for outstanding academic performance. "There I was, with my stress level so high, and he was exactly the person I wanted to see. I ran over and gave him the biggest hug."

Jaff recalls taking Simon's Survey of Western Art class during fall of her first year, and becoming captivated by art history. She also immersed herself in Simon's classes in architectural history. When he became her academic advisor, they hatched the idea that she should create an independent major in architecture. Simon helped her find Syracuse University's pre-architecture program in Florence, Italy. She took studio art classes, calculus, physics, and studied design as well, ending up with a double major in art history and architecture.

Since June she has worked in the Manhattan firm Davies Tang and Toews consulting on a project for architectural superstar Frank Gehry.

"I owe so much to Colby," she said. "There's not a thing that I'm doing today that I would be doing if not for David Simon and the liberal arts structure that Colby fosters."