

Excerpts from expert opinion letter by Colin Koop to Village Board of Trustees

I am writing as a Partner at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), the firm where Walter Netsch practiced while he designed the L.J. Long Library, Campbell Art, and Barler Music buildings for Wells College. We consider all three buildings to be significant works of architecture and support the designation of Campbell and Barler as Local Landmarks in Village law. Like the Library, the Art and Music buildings not only exemplify and possess special historic and aesthetic interest of value for the Village, but they are also nationally significant as expressions of Netsch's groundbreaking Field Theory. Together the three buildings constitute what he believed to be his "best" work.

We have compiled supporting materials into Google drive folder, including Netsch's biography, a selection of published press pieces on his work at Wells College, and some additional information about Field Theory.

As you'll see in that folder, Mr. Netsch's work at Wells was published in several international magazines as exemplars of design excellence and, more specifically, as the very first projects designed using his Field Theory. This is a recognized and published concept noted by the profession, still studied and researched today. (We receive dozens of inquiries from academics and students every year specifically on this topic).

We do not agree that Barler and Campbell are less representative of the architect's work or a different design style than Long Library. We know Mr. Netsch did not feel that way. And crucially, the library's Field design was extended beyond its footprint to serve as an overall organizational tool to guide the later site development, landscape, and buildings. One can see in a plan overlay that the subsequent commission for the Arts and Music was designed upon this same unifying field.

In the words of my colleague SOM Consulting Partner Craig Hartman, FAIA, who worked with Netsch on some of his best-known Field Theory projects: *The design creates a unique fine arts and cultural center. It is based on a consistent approach to material and form that unites the Library, Arts, and Music buildings. The result is a harmonious architectural ensemble in which each piece establishes additional meaning for its neighbors. Together with their natural setting, these Field Theory buildings establish a harmonious, unique, and appropriate composition that no one of them could achieve alone. Netsch's work at Wells was widely published and the historic architectural significance of this ensemble—Arts, Music, and Library—should be honored and preserved.*