

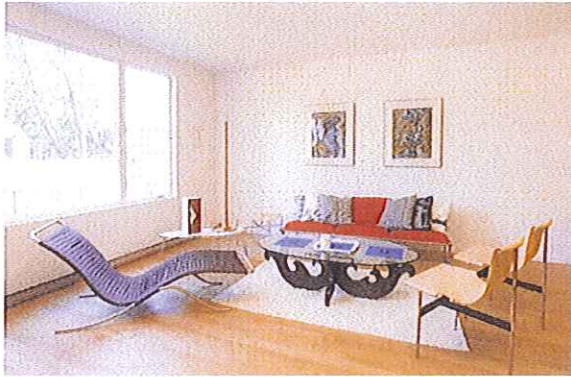
# THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER BLOG

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## Pratt Is Back

By William Menking

Pratt Institute was founded in 1886 by Charles Pratt, who had sold his family's Astral Oil works to Standard Oil in 1874. It was Pratt's original intention that the school train industrial workers for the changing economy of the 19th century, and this it did for many years before growing into one of the leading art and design schools in the country.



←Pratt designer-alumni have furnished this Rogers Marvel-designed townhouse in Carroll Gardens.

Like any institution, the school has had its stellar moments and its sleepy periods. The art department has been a training ground for dozens of important American artists, and its architecture school once had faculty like Sibyl Moholy-Nagy and experimental designers like John Johansen, Michael Webb, and Raimund Abraham. Pratt even spawned this country's most important community advocacy organization: the Pratt Center, founded by Ron Shiffman, a legend in the world of community planning.

Having weathered a rough stretch 15 years ago, when it was nearly bankrupt, the institute has undergone a transformation under its current president, Thomas Schutte. He has built a sizable endowment, upgraded the campus buildings and grounds (including a Steven Holl--designed school of architecture), strengthened its academic programs, and turned the institute into a design powerhouse with many of its programs rated in the top ten nationally.

Typical of its notion of itself as a New York-centered institution, tonight it will honor Marc Jacobs, David Rockwell, and Patti Smith at a special scholarship benefit party. If you want to see how far the school's industrial and product design departments have come, though, you can visit the new Rogers Marvel-designed townhouses at 115 Third Street in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn. Under the direction of Professor Anthony Caradonna, the institute has cleverly used both faculty- and student-designed furniture and household objects to furnish the residence, and has thrown in pieces by famed graduates including Eva Zeisel, Giovanni Pellone, Harry Allen, and William Katavolos.

Tags: David Rockwell, Marc Jacobs, Patti Smith, Pratt, Rogers Marvel, Ron Shiffman, Thomas Schutte