



Norton Center for the Arts  
Name of Property

Danville, KY  
County and State

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register NA

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

RECREATION AND CULTURE/MUSIC FACILITY

**Current Functions**

RECREATION AND CULTURE/MUSIC FACILITY

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

Modern Movement – Mid-century Modern | Organic Architecture

**Materials:**

Principal exterior materials of the property: Poured Concrete

Foundation: Concrete (poured)

Walls: Concrete (poured)

Roof: Other: Membrane roof

Other: Brick veneer; Glass, Metal

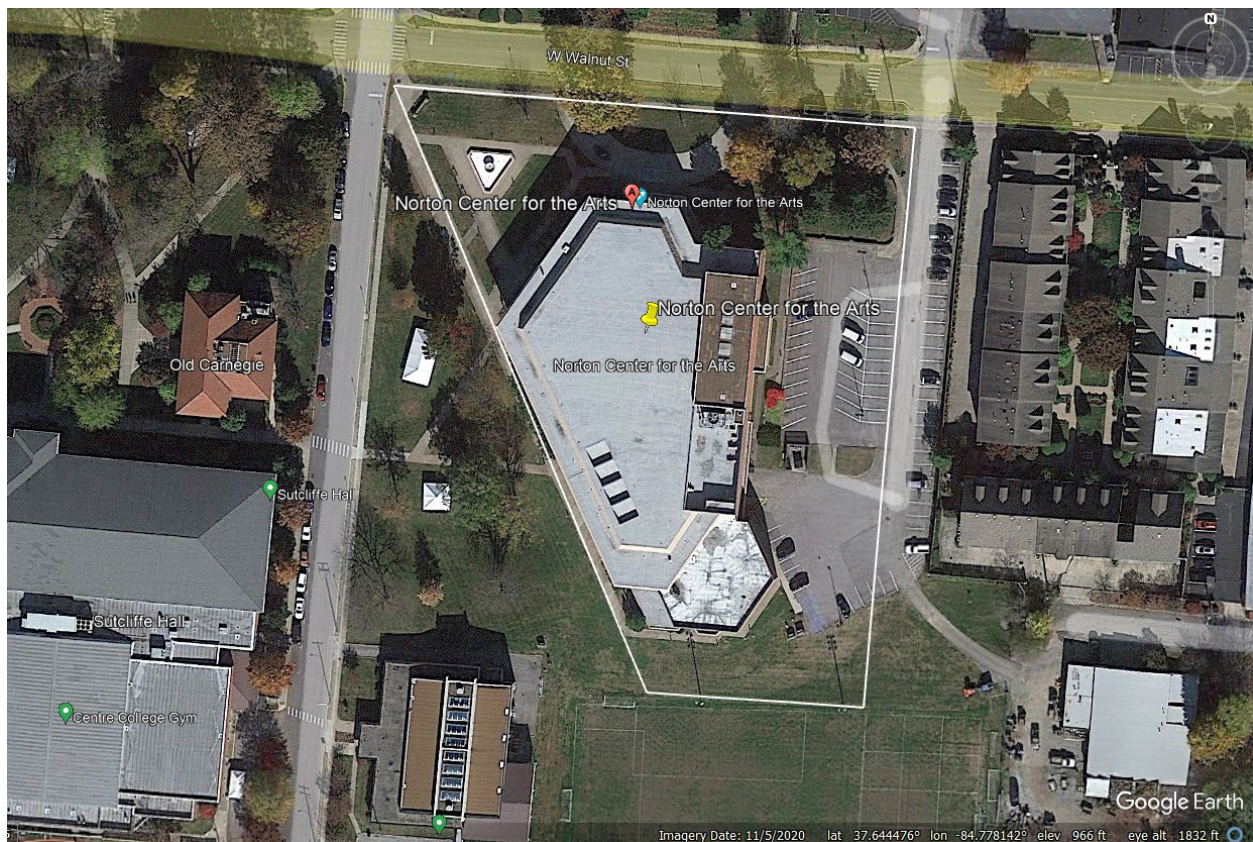
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## Narrative Description

### Summary Paragraph

Located on the campus of Centre College, the Norton Center for the Arts (BOD 26, originally named the Regional Arts Center) opened its doors in 1973. The building stands at the southeast corner of West Walnut and College Streets in Danville, seat of Boyle County, Kentucky. The building was designed by William Wesley Peters of the Taliesin Associated Architects, taking many of its cues from the Johnson Wax Headquarters in Racine Wisconsin, designed by Peters' mentor, Frank Lloyd Wright. The building contains 85,000 square feet with performance and exhibition spaces, and facilities for the College's dramatic arts, music, and dance programs. The Center has two theaters, the 1,476-seat Newlin Hall and the 367-seat Weisiger Theatre. One distinctive feature of the building is the relative absence of right angles within and outside of the building, to employ Wright's concept of organic architectural forms. The area proposed for National Register listing includes 2.93 acres, and contains one feature, a contributing building. The property is being interpreted for its architectural values and for its function as a performance space.



Boundary proposed for listing shown in white.

Latitude 37.644476° Longitude -84.778142°

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## Narrative Description

### Norton Center Lot

The Norton Center for the Arts is on the campus of Centre College at the southeast corner of Walnut and College Streets in Danville. The lot is situated at the northeastern reach of Centre College campus. Centre College sits within Danville's downtown area. The town has 17,236 residents according to the 2020 US Census, and while the campus and town share an urban setting, an almost suburban feel is imparted to the campus due to the broad expanse of grassy lawns and deciduous trees. The grounds are highly maintained and integrated well within the larger Centre College campus. The only hard definitions of the boundary are the north and east sides; the west and south boundary lines were chosen arbitrarily, as there are not obvious boundary markers to distinguish that part of the Norton Center's lot from the campus at large.

Consistent with the design motif of the building's plan and interior décor, the boundary chosen is a lot that is nearly triangular, following the footprint of the building, with a slight margin of land to the north along Walnuts Street, and a parking lot to the east. The western portion of the boundary is defined by a sidewalk along the side of the building running in a northwest-southeast direction. The building occupies approximately one half of the land area proposed for listing. The landscaping surrounding the building is grass, sidewalks, asphalt parking lot, and trees of no great age. A fountain is found northwest of the building within the area proposed for listing. The triangular fountain carries the Norton Center's geometric motif onto the surrounding grounds.

### Exterior Description

The Norton Center's exterior is mainly expressed as a subtle play between large masses of brick with two main entrances. The parapet of the building does not project, and is relatively short, not calling attention away from the brick masses it caps.



North entrance at left, West entrance at right



Image from the original drawing of Center



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The public entrance to the building addresses Walnut Street and is marked by a bank of entrance doors underneath a relatively subdued one-story stuccoed overhang. Toward the campus, on the building's western side, is a more elaborate three-story entrance intended for the student population, with broad expanses of glass and projecting stuccoed overhangs articulated with a slight dentil cornice. This entrance incorporates architect Peters' customary use of natural light as a fundamental architectural design element.

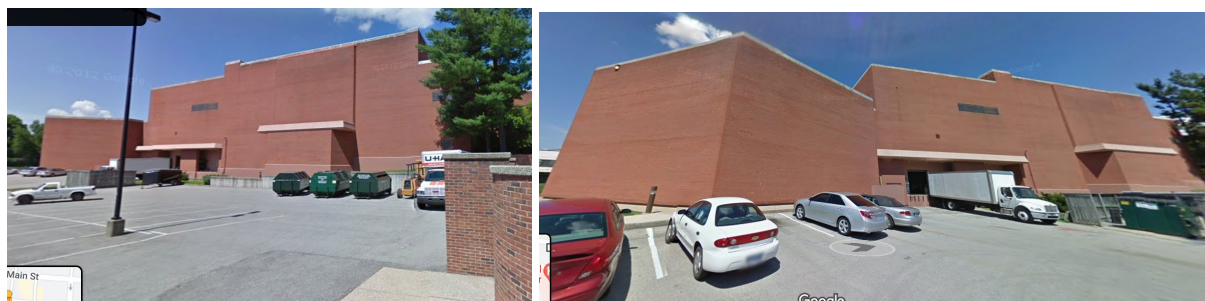


Walnut Street entrance



West side entrance

The east side of the building includes parking lot and large entrances for truck deliveries. The openings on the east side area also rather subtly defined by small projecting overhangs covered in a stucco-like material.



Views of the East side of Norton Center

The wide brick walls are mainly without interruption, rising for the Arts's exterior is a testament to architect William Wesley Peters' thoughtful consideration of geometric unity. According to architectural historian Cristina Carbone, Peters chose to design the Center as "a set of intersecting geometric volumes" that reflect the diverse, but "harmonious" events that would take place inside. (Carbone, "Norton Center for the Arts," *Archipedia* entry). This concept resulted in the Norton Center's highly angular, polygonal shape, which sets it apart from the Georgian architectural style that dominates Centre College's campus. Despite these formal differences, the brick veneer used on the Norton Center's exterior walls was made to match the bricks used for the other college buildings, resulting in an aesthetic bridge between the campus's existing structures and the Mid-Century Modern effect of the Norton Center.

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### Interior Description:

#### Grand Foyer

The angled geometry of the Norton Center's exterior harmonizes thoughtfully with its overall interior design. The rectilinear Grand Foyer, which has its main entrance on the building's western side, mirrors the building's exterior angles and partially surrounds Newlin Hall – the Norton Center's primary performance space. High ceilings, dramatically angled staircases, and hexagonal light recesses further unify the foyer's angular qualities and capitalize on its generous vertical space. In keeping with Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural tenets, Peters also incorporated natural light as an element of the Norton Center's interior design. As sunlight streams through the two-story windows of the campus-side entryway, linear patterns of their panes are cast on the nearby floors and walls. Throughout the day, these patterns change in position and intensity, effectively representing organic architecture's aesthetic commitment to harmonizing built space and the natural environment. Also in keeping with the legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright, Peters chose colors from the Taliesin Foundation palette for the Foyer's interior wall and carpet colors which have been maintained ever since.



Grand Foyer Staircase, Norton Center



Grand Foyer Windows with sunlight

When facing the main entrance from the building's interior, the Grand Foyer's coat closet area is to the immediate left. The coat closet connects to a concessions preparation room and finally terminates at a concessions counter. On the opposite side of the counter is an area that is a dedicated café and meeting space.

In addition to its primary, campus-facing entrance, the Grand Foyer can be entered from a set of glass doors that are located on the North-facing side of the building. When entering these doors, entrances to Newlin Hall's house left area are on the immediate right, with stairs leading down to the Orchestra seating level and a ramp leading up to Grand Tier balcony seating. These entrances are mirrored on the Grand Foyer's far side, which allow access to Newlin Hall's house right area. Also visible upon entering this set of doors is the Norton Center's administrative office suite, which is located to the right. The Grand Foyer also has a set of men's and women's restrooms, which are located along the Grand Foyer's interior wall, and a box office window, which is

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located near the campus-facing entrance. At the Grand Foyer's topmost level, which is accessible by both stairs and elevator, is a private board room.



Grand Foyer Exhibition Walls, Norton Center for the Arts

**NEWLIN HALL (Large Theater)**

Entry to Newlin Hall, the Norton Center's largest performance space, is accessible on either side of the Grand Foyer. The theater's house has continental seating and can accommodate 1,467 audience members across two levels - the orchestra section (accessible by stairs and elevator) and the grand tier (accessible by ramp). Both sections echo the linear shape of the surrounding Grand Foyer, resulting in angled rows of seats that embrace the performance stage.

The Newlin Hall stage has a proscenium width of 56 feet and can accommodate a maximum height of 23 feet. The stage also has a hydraulic lift orchestra platform that measures 48 feet wide and 12 feet deep. Newlin Hall possesses a fly loft, multi-line t-bar track counterweight systems, original Casavant Organ, and original 30-ton retractable acoustical shell.



Newlin Hall views, Norton Center for the Arts

**WEISIGER THEATRE (Smaller Theater)**

Weisiger Theatre's primary entrance is located on the building's exterior along the southwestern side. It has its own box office and intimate lobby, which leads to the entrance of its 367-seat house. Designed as a thrust theater, the Weisiger stage extends into the house so that audiences view and hear productions partially in the round. The first row of seating is level with the performance stage with subsequent rows lifting upward, resulting in a close and interactive



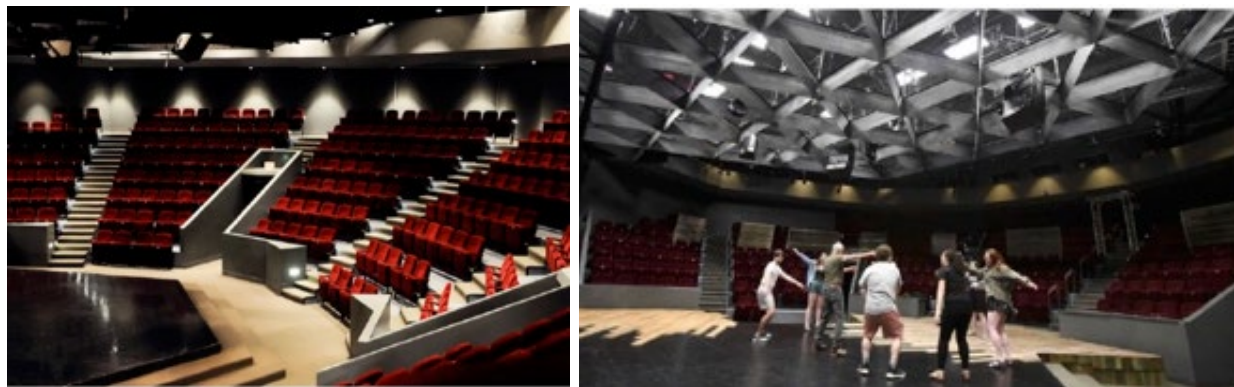
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theatrical space with no obstructed audience views. As with the other Norton Center interior spaces, the Weisiger Theatre incorporates the use of dramatic angles, which works to further cinch the seating and stage sections into a unified, intimate space.



Weisiger Theater views, Norton Center for the Arts

The Weisiger stage is 37 feet at its widest point and narrows to a width of 18' 9" at its upstage edge. The entire stage is covered by a wire woven lighting grid, which hangs 16' 3" above the floor and allows for flexibility for hanging and focusing lights. The system, which was designed by famed theater technology innovator George Izenour, was one of the first of its kind. It has since been regarded as a standard in the industry.

**A NOTE ON ACOUSTICS**

Both Newlin Hall and the Weisiger Theatre are credited with having exemplary acoustics – a quality that is owed to the design work of William Wesley Peters. Peters, who designed other performing arts centers, was known for his attention to acoustics in his architectural work (Carbone). Upon entering either theater space, it is apparent that there are minimal right angles used in their interior constructions (other than door frames, stairs, etc.). With minimal usage of 90 degree angles, sound from the stages does not get “cornered” and can seamlessly travel throughout the venue for amplified and refined acoustics.

**GRANT HALL**

Grant Hall, which serves as the academic arm of the Norton Center, is accessible through the Grand Foyer and by exterior entrances located around the building’s back half. This section, which is subdivided across five floors, houses classrooms, practice rooms, dance studios, faculty/staff offices, and access to Newlin Hall & Weisiger Theatre backstage areas. While each of Grant Hall’s floors are accessible via elevator, they are also connected by a central staircase that mirrors the dramatic angularity of the building’s other geometric highlights.

**DECORATIVE ELEMENTS**

The original interior design concept for the Norton Center is attributed to Olgivanna Lloyd Wright (1898-1985), who was married to Frank Lloyd Wright until his death in 1959 (Stewart, 135). In order to best maintain the integrity of her atmospheric vision, original building elements

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have been restored and maintained as often as possible, especially in public-facing spaces. Throughout the Norton Center, original elements such as door handles, Tivoli chandeliers, carpet color, hexagonal light recesses, and other decorative details remain intact. Since opening in 1973, Taliesin-approved paint-colors have also enjoyed continued use both inside and outside the Norton Center. Finally, several pieces of original furniture have also been retained for regular use.



Grant Hall central staircase



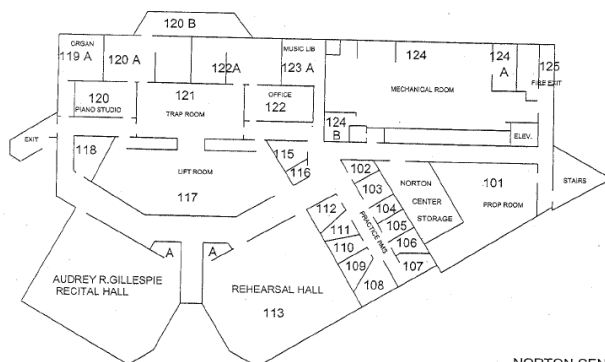
Grant Hall Practice Recital Room



Door Push

**CHANGES TO THE BUILDING SINCE PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Since opening in 1973, the Norton Center for the Arts has undergone changes that have been necessary for its continued use as a functional performing arts center. Most notably, a 2009/2010 renovation resulted in the addition of an administrative office suite in the Center's Grand Foyer, the addition of American Disabilities Act-compliant seating, the installation of an elevator for accessibility access to Newlin's Orchestra level, and the enlargement of the Foyer's women's restrooms (*The Wright Angle*). To keep the building's historic integrity intact, Taliesin Associated Architects provided Centre College with a suitable consultant who advised the project's primary architect on how to best proceed with these necessary updates (*The Wright Angle*). Also in keeping with safety and industry standards, Newlin Hall received a major lighting upgrade between 2021 and 2022.



NORTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS  
CENTRE COLLEGE

FIRST FLOOR LEVEL  
SCALE: 1/32"= 1' 0"

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

### Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

PERFORMING ARTS

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### Period of Significance

1973

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**Significant Dates**

1973

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Peters, William Wesley (Taliesin Associated Architects) architect  
Wehr-Constructors, Inc. Louisville, KY – General Contractor



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## Statement of Significance

### Summary Paragraph

The Norton Center for the Arts (BOD 26) meets the first and third terms of National Register Criterion C: it is a type of construction—a theater—and it has high artistic values. Its performance values are considered within a statewide historic context, below. Its artistic values are considered within a national context considering the works of Frank Lloyd Wright and his successor firm, Taliesin Associated Architects. The building is considered within the broader context of American architectural history, as a project by William Wesley Peters, a Taliesin Associated Architect and former Frank Lloyd Wright protege. From its opening in 1973, the Norton Center greatly changed the cultural landscape of Centre College, the surrounding community of Danville, and ultimately, the central part of Kentucky. The Norton Center's location, combined with its distinct aesthetic and versatile building qualities, have not only made it a premier site for performing and visual arts, it has also placed those arts within reach of central Kentuckians.

### Historic Context: Cultural Performance Centers in Danville and the Surrounding Region, 1930-1980.

Before the construction of the Norton Center for the Arts, Danville was not devoid of performing arts events. However, the establishment of a state-of-the-art building with a versatile, modern design made it possible to attract a consistent stream of nationally and internationally renowned artists. In the words of Floyd R. Herzog, the Center's first Managing Director, made at the time of the Center's 1973 opening:

“...The Regional Arts Center provides a flexibility of theatrical houses which encourages a wide variety of performances and gallery displays. The programming for the Concert Hall's Subscription Series, special inaugural year Gala Performances is designed to exploit this flexibility, since the Hall, by varying the combinations of acoustic, stage, and proscenium relationships, and audience capacity, insures optimum conditions for all forms of theatre...These performances not only make available additional national and international talent to the region, but also showcase and enhance the finest artistic endeavors throughout Kentucky and neighboring communities.” (*The Coming of an Idea...*, 8)

A review of formal performances documented to have occurred at Centre College/Danville from 1930 to 2022 provides traceable evidence of how dramatically access to live performance art increased after the opening of the Center (see “Additional Items”). Between the years of 1930 and 1973, 120 formal performing arts events were staged by either Centre College or the City of Danville at various local venues, resulting in an approximate average of three events per year (*The Wright Angle*). In its inaugural year, the Norton Center staged nine formal programs, starting with the Kentucky Opera Association's presentation of Verdi's *Otello*. Since that time, the Norton Center has presented nearly 900 public performing arts events that, because of the

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building's versatility, have covered a range from ballets and recitals to concerts and plays. This number does not include performance events related to Centre academics, such as student orchestral concerts, dance recitals, keynote lectures, or drama productions, which also add to the Center's historic contributions to the larger mission of the college.

While dramatically increasing the quantity of performances in the region, the integrated design of the Norton Center also set a standard for how the performing arts could and should be experienced. In writing for Louisville's *Courier-Journal* on the Center's opening presentation of *Othello*, critic William Mootz declared the Centre as both "magnificent" and the "perfect setting" for the opera's premier and described the performance hall as a "phenomenon in the midst of contemporary theatrical architecture – an absolute marvel." (Mootz, p. 21). He went on to say: "Not only is the hall receptive to the sound that results from the combination of soloists, chorus, and orchestra, it is flattering to such a sound." As such, the Center's opening marks a period of an enhanced quality of performance in addition to an increased quantity.

A visual arts gallery was also integrated into the building design to provide even more opportunities for arts-based engagement. The Center's inaugural exhibition, "Postwar Painting from the Guggenheim Museum," consisted of an unprecedented loan from the Guggenheim, who until this occasion, had never lent works from its collection to non-museum spaces (*The Coming of an Idea...*, 19). This exhibition, which featured pioneering contemporary artists like Andy Warhol, Stuart Davis, and Frank Stella, brought leading artistic voices to a central-Kentucky audience and set an impressively high bar for subsequent exhibition programs.

While the opening of the Norton Center marked an era of unprecedented regional access to world-class arts and culture, the building was, and continues to be, an invaluable resource for Centre College students. Indeed, Herzog knew from the outset that while the Center would provide exemplary public programs, the facility would ultimately "...enlarge the horizons of the students at Centre College" by being available to the dramatic arts, dance, and music programs (Herzog, 8). All Centre students can experience the performances that came to the Norton Center, but those studying the performing arts would now have access to use the facility's stage spaces, practice rooms, and other studios. As such, the building's construction ushered in a new era of fine arts education for the region, thus influencing a new generation of performance artists.

While the Norton Center was designed to bring artistic excellence to its immediate community and the Centre student body, its impact also extended to the surrounding areas of Lexington and Louisville. At the time of the building's construction, neither city possessed venues that could present the diverse and exemplary productions the Norton Center was designed to showcase. In fact, it would be several years before either city embarked on constructing their own performing arts centers (Lexington's Singletary Center for the Arts in 1979 and Louisville's Kentucky Center for the Arts in 1983). As such, the construction of the Norton Center marks a historic change in the cultural landscape on both local and Commonwealth-wide levels. Indeed, its historical significance is only amplified by the standard it set for Kentucky's overall performing arts presence.

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Public reception of the Norton Center during its inaugural season demonstrates that not only did the building provide unprecedented regional access to world-class performing art, it also proved that there was demand for such access. Indeed, it was reported in the *Danville Advocate Messenger* on 15 November 1973 that a woman living 40 miles outside of Louisville awoke at 4:30 a.m. to ensure she would arrive at the Norton Center's box office in time to get one of only a limited number of \$2 ticket to see world-renowned organist E. Power Biggs ("Indiana Woman..."). Since that time, hundreds of thousands of patrons have attended Norton Center events with over 10,000 tickets redeemed during the ongoing 2022-2023 season.

**Historic Context: Frank Lloyd Wright's Career and Mid-century Modern Design**

The Norton Center is being interpreted as an extension of the design approaches of Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) whose career spanned more some 7 decades. His early career was spent in the office of another great architect, Louis Sullivan, with whom he clashed and departed to provide plans for residential patrons. His houses were distinctive creations, turning their back on the generations-long tradition of referencing historical architectural style from the classical eras. Wright's designs explored the relationships within a house's massing through the interplay of solid and void. Early in his career, he applied these concepts to the Arts and Crafts style. But soon, his buildings began to stretch horizontally, beyond what could be recognized within the limits of Arts and Crafts design. While developing his distinct building style for residences, he continued to borrow decorative detailing from the Arts and Crafts vocabulary, as seen in the doors, leaded glass, and furniture design within his houses.



Edward E. Boynton House (1908) Rochester NY



W.W. Willits House (1902) Highland Park, IL

By the 1930s Wright extended his practice in two ways that have an impact on the Norton Center. He continued experimenting in residential design of spare appearance yet great beauty. His so-called "Usonian" houses were more compact than his earlier designs, attempting to reconceive the notion of house for middle class owners. Wright adopted the freedom and spartan aesthetic of Modernism but went in a different direction than other practitioners. One of the hallmarks of Modern architecture, particularly as practiced by the International School, was an increasing use of glass in relation to the masonry walls in which the glass was held. Using structural steel framework, International Style buildings could give a growing amount of wall surface to glass and a shrinking amount to masonry, imparting a lightness to the overall visual effect. By contrast, Wright's Usonian homes are arrangements of typical International Style motifs but with decidedly more masonry or solid wall surface than the International Style

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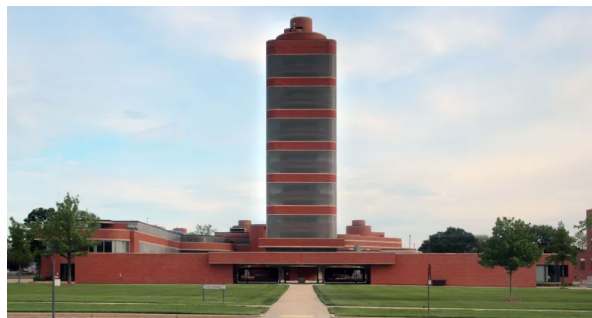
practitioners (see below). If the International Style intent was to maximize the use of glass in walls, to signal the triumph of the machine and technology in house design and construction, Wright's intent was more organic. Wright used the medium of glass with more subtlety, to provide an interplay between the house's interior and its exterior surroundings.



Jacobs House, Wright (1937) Madison WI      Glass House, Phillip Johnson (1948) New Cannan CT

As Wright's practice grew, he was commissioned to design institutional, corporate, and public buildings. In response to his growing popularity, in 1932 he opened his studio to architects who were given fellowships. This Taliesin Fellowship opportunity allowed over 600 young designers to learn from Wright during the latter years of his life (1932-1959). The Norton Center designer, William Wesley Peters (1912-1991) was the first Taliesin Fellow to be accepted. Peters' Wikipedia entry states that he worked closely with Wright in designing two key designs in Wright's career: the Johnson Wax Corporate Headquarters building and Falling Water. The entry notes that Peters remained loyal to Wright's design principals throughout his own career ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Wesley\\_Peters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Wesley_Peters)).

The Johnson Wax Headquarters building consists of a low and wide Administration Building, which contrasts with a tall research tower behind. The Administration building is marked by the spare use of fenestration, while the Research Tower is lit by large bands of glass. The basic design qualities in the Johnson Wax Administration Building (1936-1939) are clearly evident in the aesthetic of the Norton Center. The high design quality of the Johnson Wax complex was recognized by National Historic Landmark designation in 1976, less than 40 year after its completion ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnson\\_Wax\\_Headquarters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnson_Wax_Headquarters)).



Johnson Wax Headquarters (1936-39) Racine WI



Norton Center for the Arts, Peters, 1973



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The architectural trends nationwide during the Modern era, which can be defined to run from roughly 1920-1980, tend to result in buildings with great variety, but with a few shared qualities. Typically, those buildings eschewed historical ornament, and use the contrast between solid (masonry or sometimes metal) and void (glass openings) as their raw design aspects. Roofs tend to be flat, with little overhang or presence, so that a cornice or parapet defines the vertical completion of the structure. Architects and builders gave in to the impulse to test new materials and construction techniques, with buildings sometimes appearing to reach the limits of those materials and structural systems to support their loads. The aesthetic was one of allowing the materials to perform the decorative function, which is distinct from previous eras, where decoration came in the form of applied ornamental features from the classical-era design vocabulary. In general, many public and corporate buildings expanded the use of glass as the exterior skin of the structure. As an original, Wright continued to explore the architectural dynamics of the solid wall surface, defined by concrete, stucco, brick, and on smaller structures, wood. Peters' continuation of this tradition with the Norton Center, shows him to be firmly within the design line of Wright, and proved to be prescient. In 1973, the year the Norton Center was completed, the Arab Oil Embargo began, greatly escalating oil and heating prices in the United States. Buildings with vast expanses of glass suddenly became much more expensive to heat and cool. A building wrapped in brick, such as the Norton Center, had much more control over its interior climate. Wright's and Peters' attention to the relationship between the interior and exterior spaces was not simply aesthetic, but proved to be a practical one, another earthy yet important accomplishment of its design.

### **Origins of the Norton Center for the Arts**

The story of how a Taliesin Foundation-designed performing arts center ended up on a small college campus in Kentucky is one of incredible foresight with a touch of serendipity. It begins with A. Chauncey Newlin, Centre College Class alumni of 1925. A successful New York tax lawyer, Newlin was named to Centre's Board of Trustees in 1959 and eventually served as its Chair from 1969 to 1977 (CentreCyclopedia). During his tenure as Chair, Newlin worked to advance the notion of constructing a world-class arts complex on Centre's campus and was instrumental in securing financial and institutional support for the project. A former board member for the Guggenheim Museum, Newlin had also become acquainted with Frank Lloyd Wright - the Museum's designer and one of America's most important architects. It was through this connection that William Wesley Peters - Frank Lloyd Wright's protege, chief apprentice and eventual chief architect for Taliesin Associated Architect - came to serve as designer for what would become the Norton Center (*The Wright Angle*). In 1975, the Center's primary concert hall was named in Newlin's honor.

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**Evaluation of the Significance of the Norton Center within the two historic contexts**

William Wesley Peters's vision for the Norton Center is both a tribute to Frank Lloyd Wright's professional influence and an expression of his own expertise. For instance, the thoughtful use of open space, harmonizing colors, natural light, and geometric unity in Peters's design embody several hallmarks of the organic architectural style that Wright brought to the public fore. What's less visible, however, is how Peters' skill as a structural engineer, combined with his own extensive architectural experience, would contribute to the Norton Center's sophisticated, integrated design as a living, breathing arts space. Indeed, the unity between form and function in the Norton Center's design was eloquently described in the inaugural season brochure:

“The Regional Arts Center [Norton Center for the Arts], designed by Taliesin Associated Architects of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, is a unique structure. It provides in one building the ideal needs of music, drama, and the arts; and by its design serves to integrate the arts.... The Regional Arts Center by its very nature includes facilities which should not be disciplined by any specific curriculum. As an example, the Concert Hall [Newlin Hall] is designed as a finely tuned instrument and as such has its own peculiar design requirement which must be satisfied. The principal concern, however, relates to human values and thus provisions for music, drama, painting, sculpture, and graphic design are all grouped into one harmonious arrangement of open spaces and interconnected galleries (*The Coming of an Idea...*, 10).

From this description, and from the fifty years of institutional knowledge that have been gained since its opening, the architecturally historical significance of the Norton Center lies not only in its physical representation and preservation of a Mid-Century organic architectural style. Necessarily, the full expression of Frank Lloyd Wright's — and, by extension, William Wesley Peters' — architectural philosophy can only be experienced when the building is being used to its fullest intention - as a dynamic performing arts venue. Now, fifty years past its opening season, the building's superb treatment of acoustics and its spatial flexibility have ensured it remains a desirable space for showcasing artistic performance in its myriad forms.

Kentucky is home to a handful of other architectural projects connected to Frank Lloyd Wright and William Wesley Peters. For example, in the mid 1960s, Peters was commissioned by John Acree, Jr. — then president of Lincoln Income Life Insurance Company — to design a new corporate headquarters in Louisville, KY.

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Views of Kaden Tower, Louisville

The fifteen-story building is a testimony to Peters's understanding of structural engineering and also pays tribute to an unrealized Frank Lloyd Wright design that was slated to be built in Ahmedabad, India (Vivian, "Kaden Tower," *Archipedia* entry). However, the building is significantly distinct from the Norton Center, both in terms of form and function. The Kaden Tower, as it is now called, was intended to serve a corporate purpose and remains in use as an office building. As such, it wasn't designed to be the communal, experience-focused art space that the Norton Center was created to be. Indeed, the Norton Center for the Arts is the only building in the Commonwealth affiliated with the pair that was designed to be frequented and enjoyed by the public. As such, the building, which has largely been kept in its original state, embodies historical significance in both its appearance and its atmosphere. For fifty years, these two qualities have worked in tandem to ensure the philosophical and aesthetic vision represented by the organic architectural style remains alive.

**Evaluation of the Integrity between the Norton Center's significance and its Current Physical Condition**

The significance of the Norton Center for the Arts arises from the role it has played as a performance space of distinctive design. For a building such as this one, the integrity of feeling will be the primary integrity factor to reinforce that significance. As long as the building retains integrity of location, setting, materials, and design, it will be said to have integrity of feeling.

The Norton Center retains integrity of **location**. It sits at the edge of the Centre College campus, adjacent to the community, and intended to be an ambassador to the community. Other choices to site the building could have been made, putting it deep within the campus. That would have served student interests but provided less benefits for the surrounding community. Siting the building along one of Danville's main streets signaled the intention of the College to make the building something more than a building for Centre's students. If college is the place where

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young adults transition from youths into members of the adult world, then the Norton Center's location symbolically stands at a similar physical position, at the edge of the college campus and up against the community of Danville.

The Norton Center retains integrity of **setting**. The setting is much as it was when the Center was constructed. The Center for the Arts is visibly a recognizable part of Centre's campus. The landscaping immediately around the building indicates the building is part of the campus, and the larger setting reinforces the message that this is a special building connected with the Liberal Arts institution. The setting is deferential to the Center for the Arts, not in competition with it, such that someone viewing the building knows that it stands as a focal point within its setting and within the campus.

The Norton Center retains integrity of **materials**. The materials used to erect the Norton Center have remained intact and unchanged whenever possible - from the exterior veneer to the interior paint color. When renovations took place in 2009/2010, Taliesin Associated Architects provided Centre College with a suitable consultant who advised the project's primary architect on how to best proceed with the project, thus ensuring its integrity remains as time goes on.

The Norton Center retains integrity of **design**. First, its connection to the architectural legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright and William Wesley Peters makes it a significant structure in the context of American architectural history. Second, its enduring role as a premiere performing arts center and educational space has ensured that this region of Kentucky has had access to world-class performing arts and arts education for fifty years.

Because the Norton Center for the Arts retains integrity of location, setting, materials, and design, it can be said to have integrity of **feeling**, which is the primary aspect of integrity that supports the claim of Criterion C. Because it has significance and integrity, it is eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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*The Coming of an Idea - The Centre College Regional Arts Center*. RAC, 1973.

*The Wright Angle: The Norton Center for the Arts, William Wesley Peters and Frank Lloyd Wright*. Sept.- Dec., 2019. The Norton Center for the Arts, Kentucky.\*

Vivian, Daniel. “Kaden Tower.” *Society of Architectural Historians – SAH Archipedia*. <https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/KY-01-111-0039>. Accessed May 2023.

\*Archival material such as text from *The Wright Angle* exhibition is in the process of being digitally archived on a usable website by Centre College’s Digital Archives Librarian.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register

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- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** BOD 26

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 2.93 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Latitude: 37.644476 Longitude: -84.778142
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

- NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

**Norton Center for the Arts**

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- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The proposed boundary area for this listing is a 4-sided space on Centre College campus in Danville, Boyle County, Kentucky. The area is defined by Walnut Street on the north, the edge of the parking lot on the east side of the building on the property's east, the sidewalk on the west side of the building extended northward to Walnut Street and southward to the athletic fields, and those athletic fields on the south. See the map on Section 7 page 4, above.

**Boundary Justification**

This footprint represents the Norton Center's space of occupation on Centre College's campus as the Norton Center building, its decorative fountain, and associated footpaths are all contained within (and almost completely fills) this boundary.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Molly Baker (Engagement Services Manager) & Steve Hoffman (Exec. Director)  
organization: Norton Center for the Arts  
street & number: 600 West Walnut St.  
city or town: Danville state: KY zip code: 40422  
e-mail molly.baker@centre.edu  
telephone: 859-238-5422  
date: 4-25-23

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**Photographs**

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Norton Center for the Arts  
City or Vicinity: Danville  
County: Boyle

**Norton Center for the Arts**

**Danville, KY**

Name of Property

County and State

State: Kentucky  
Photographer: Various, as indicated  
Date Photographed: Various, as indicated  
Total Number of Photos: 35

**NORTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**PHOTO CAPTION LIST**

**1. Norton Center for the Arts (Exterior)**

- 1.1 Aerial Photograph of the Norton Center for the Arts (Danville, KY) Photographed by Matt Baker, 2019
- 1.2 Aerial Photograph of the Norton Center for the Arts (Danville, KY) Photographed by Hutch Digital, 2021
- 1.3 Aerial Photograph of the Norton Center for the Arts (Danville, KY) Photographed by Matt Baker, 2019
- 1.4 Norton Center for the Arts (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 1.5 Norton Center for the Arts Fountain (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 1.6 Norton Center for the Arts (Danville, KY) Photographed by Rebecca Redding, 2021
- 1.7 Norton Center for the Arts – Campus Entrance (Danville, KY) Photographed by Addie Osborne, 2022
- 1.8 Norton Center for the Arts – Weisiger Theatre Exterior Entrance (Danville, KY) Photographed by Molly Baker, 2023
- 1.9 Norton Center for the Arts (Danville, KY) Photographed by Rebecca Redding, 2021
- 1.10 Norton Center for the Arts (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 1.11 Norton Center for the Arts – Exterior Door Pulls (Danville, KY) Photographed by Molly Baker, 2023
- 1.12 Image from the original drawing of the Norton Center of the Arts. Photo Copyright © 2019 Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Scottsdale, AZ. All rights reserved. The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York)

**2. Norton Center for the Arts (Interior – Grand Foyer)**

- 2.1 Norton Center for the Arts; Grand Foyer Box Office (Danville, KY) Photographed by Rebecca Redding, 2021
- 2.2 Norton Center for the Arts; Grand Foyer Staircase (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 2.3 Norton Center for the Arts; Grand Foyer Windows with Natural Light (Danville, KY) Photographed by Steve Hoffman, 2019
- 2.4 Norton Center for the Arts; Grand Foyer Staircase to Orchestra Level (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 2.5 Norton Center for the Arts; Grand Foyer – Original Tivoli Light Fixture (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 2.6 Norton Center for the Arts; Grand Foyer with View of Hexagonal Light Recesses (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 2.7 Norton Center for the Arts; Grand Foyer View of Exhibition Walls (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 2.8 Norton Center for the Arts; Grand Foyer View of Exhibition Walls (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 2.9 Norton Center for the Arts; Grand Foyer View of Exhibition Walls (Danville, KY) Photographed by Steve Hoffman

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**3. Norton Center for the Arts (Interior – Newlin Hall)**

- 3.1 Norton Center for the Arts; Newlin Hall View from Stage (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 3.2 Norton Center for the Arts; Newlin Hall View from Grand Tier (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 3.3 Norton Center for the Arts; Newlin Hall View from Grand Tier (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 3.4 Norton Center for the Arts; Newlin Hall View from Grand Tier (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 3.5 Norton Center for the Arts; Newlin Hall View from Grand Tier (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 3.6 Norton Center for the Arts; Newlin Hall View from Grand Tier (Danville, KY) Photographed by Rebecca Redding, 2021

**4. Norton Center for the Arts (Interior – Weisiger Theatre)**

- 4.1 Norton Center for the Arts; Weisiger Theatre View from Stage (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 4.2 Norton Center for the Arts; Weisiger Theatre View from Stage (Danville, KY) Photographed by Addie Osborne, 2023
- 4.3 Norton Center for the Arts; Weisiger Theatre View from Stage (Danville, KY) Photographer/Date unknown
- 4.4 Norton Center for the Arts; Weisiger Theatre View of Izenour Grid System (Danville, KY) Photographed by Matt Baker, 2019

**5. Norton Center for the Arts (Interior – Grant Hall)**

- 5.1 Norton Center for the Arts; Grant Hall Central Staircase (Danville, KY) Photographed by Matt Baker, 2019
- 5.2 Norton Center for the Arts; Grant Hall Practice Recital Room (Danville, KY) Photographed by Matt Baker, 2019
- 5.3 Norton Center for the Arts; Grant Hall Dance Studio (Danville, KY) Photographed by Matt Baker, 2019
- 5.4 Norton Center for the Arts; Grant Hall Door Push Detail (Danville, KY) Photographed by Molly Baker, 2023



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**NORTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS**  
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PHOTO LOG (Contact Sheet)

1. Norton Center for the Arts (Exterior)



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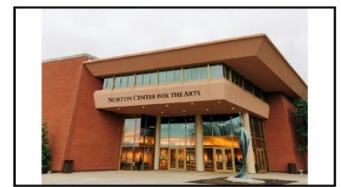
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PHOTO LOG (Contact Sheet)

2. Norton Center for the Arts (Interior - Grand Foyer)



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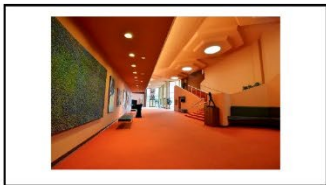
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PHOTO LOG (Contact Sheet)

3. Norton Center for the Arts (Interior - Newlin Hall)



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PHOTO LOG (Contact Sheet)

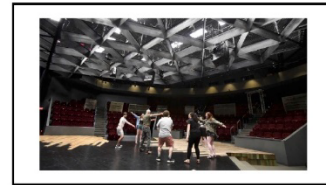
4. Norton Center for the Arts (Interior - Weisiger Theatre)



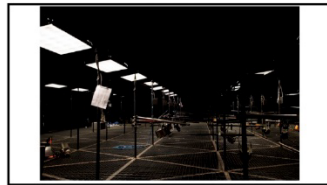
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PHOTO LOG (Contact Sheet)

5. Norton Center for the Arts (Interior - Grant Hall)



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