The site of the Austin E. Knowlton School of Architecture at The Ohio State University is at the western edge of the old campus, close to the river and the football stadium, at the happily congested corner of West Woodruff Avenue and Tuttle Park Place. Bounded by raw concrete parking garages to the south and the staid red brick of the business school to the north, laboratory buildings to the east and the emptiness of the stadium parking lot to the west, edged and crossed by major campus pedestrian thoroughfares, the site is a dynamic zone, capable of sustaining a connective architecture and landscape and an inclusive urban form.

Asserting the belief that a school of architecture has a commitment to teach by example to both students within and the community at large, the architectural form and urban positioning of the new school is strategically active and interactive. The facades of the adjacent buildings are the spatial boundaries of the site of the school. The building form is generated by enclosing, defining, and confronting the spaces and existing buildings of this larger site. A sculpted green space between the school and the business school campus to the north modulates both the mess and vitality of the roadway and pedestrian activity. Studios overlook the newly captured spaces. Students are in the midst of the urban activity which they will study and will eventually help form and influence.

At the main entrance, the vertical circulation path begins. An inclined plane system moves up and through the building, passing studios and review spaces along the way. Faculty offices are placed along circulation patterns, visually accessible from the studios and intimately linked with the daily work of the students. The final event along the vertical path through the school is the library, a 30,000 volume collection with reading room and reference areas. The roof garden of the library extends out and over the forecourt below, bringing the inclined plane to its conclusion above its starting point. At night the glass clad library is a lantern signaling the history of architecture and the discipline of architecture as an intellectual pursuit, whose permanence is reinforced by the use of concrete throughout.

In addition to the forty-five studios, sixty-five offices, an auditorium and library, program areas of the school include a woodshop, café, digital imaging facilities, computer laboratories, classrooms, an archive, and an exhibition gallery. The collective construction of which utilizes 7,000 cubic yards of mild steel-enforced concrete, 8,000 cubic yards of post tensioned elevated concrete slabs, and over 750 tons of reinforcing steel, enabling a cantilevered slab of 25 feet at the roof garden and a span between columns below of 40 feet. The choice of site-cast reinforced concrete was absolutely fundamental to the realization of the structure. To meet the demands of a four-story atrium building, an inherently non-combustible form of construction was essential.

Structurally, concrete was the most cost-effective solution for a non-orthogonal structural grid; by utilizing site-cast post-tensioned flat slabs, the school was allowed the freedom of vertical supports (columns and walls) wherever the program demanded; the use of post-tensioned concrete allowed spatial organization to take precedence within the creative limits of structural requirements.

The use of concrete allowed a durable and beautiful finish material. The building is able to endure the notorious demands of an artistic studio environment and retain its material integrity.