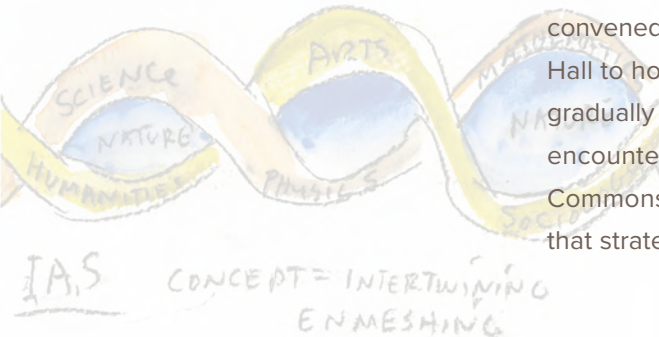


Dear Friends,

I am delighted to express my immense gratitude to all who have taken part in the creation of Rubenstein Commons. I am sure that my predecessor Robbert Dijkgraaf would agree that one of the greatest joys of being Director at the Institute for Advanced Study is collaborating with those who, like David Rubenstein, are committed to supporting exceptional minds in pursuit of fundamental knowledge.

At the groundbreaking ceremony for the Commons, architect Steven Holl expressed the hope that from a “sacred cut in the earth when you put the shovel in the ground” a space for the distillation of ideas through conversation would be born. Today, with the opening of this forum for curiosity, discovery, and critique, we celebrate both the fulfillment of that hope, and the Institute’s enduring commitment to the nourishment of the global collective intellect.

I mean nourishment literally as well as metaphorically. Realizing that serendipitous sociability sparks intellectual surprise and novel scholarship, the Institute’s earliest Faculty convened for tea and cookies even before there was a Fuld Hall to house them. Since then, the Institute’s campus has gradually taken on a shape designed to produce frequent encounter and unexpected discovery. The Rubenstein Commons is an intentional and beautiful distillation of that strategy.



Anna Bokov, former Member in the School of Historical Studies, wrote of the design for Rubenstein Commons that like “a hadron collider, the building smashes atoms (or, to paraphrase David Rubenstein, collides great brains together) in order to expand the horizon of our knowledge and collective human consciousness.” For my part, as I move within the building’s pools, roof gardens, and rooms dancing with light, I am reminded less of CERN and more of the stoa of Athens or the courtyards of the Alhambra. This is a place whose beauty will stimulate contemplation and whose space will invite the dialogue necessary for questioning at its most profound.

In short, Rubenstein Commons is a monument to the beauty and truth that stand at the center of the Institute’s seal and mission. To David and to everyone who has helped build this monument, the Institute offers its collective thanks.

With best wishes,

David Nirenberg