



CELEBRATING 110 YEARS OF AN AMERICAN FAMILY BUSINESS:
THE RAMBUSCH COMPANY

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DATES: Tuesday, 23 December 2008 – Thursday, 15 January 2009

RECEPTION: Monday, 12 January 2009, 4 p.m. – 7 p.m.

PLACE: The National Arts Club, Marquis Gallery, 16 Gramercy Park South, NYC.
N.B. This is a private club, so please call for open hours: (212) 475-4324.

Designs and commissions executed by the Rambusch Company during its 110 years of activity can be found in every state of this nation and in many different contexts from rural communities to small towns and major cities. The firm has completed work in more than 40 state capitol buildings and also in the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. Despite the small size of the company (there are just 40 employees), Rambusch has completed commissions in a surprising number of countries, including Australia, Canada, Columbia, El Salvador, Finland, Ghana, Hong Kong, Mexico, Panama, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Singapore, and Venezuela. Now in its fourth generation, it is led by Edwin P. Rambusch (president) and Martin V. Rambusch (chairman), the twin sons of Viggo B. Rambusch, FIES, ASID. Viggo is still active in the company as a senior project manager.

A small, but visually rich and diverse exhibition will be mounted in the Marquis Gallery at the National Arts Club in New York City. Focusing on current work, it has an historical component with never-before-displayed drawings from the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University. These drawings are just part of an extensive archive of the company housed at the library.

“In a real sense, because the Rambusch Company has been awarded repeat commissions in so many public buildings, both religious and secular, the building itself becomes the firm’s client,” notes Edwin Rambusch. A case in point is Saint Joseph’s Cathedral in Wheeling, West Virginia. One of the drawings from Avery, dated 1927, depicts a wrought iron *prie-dieu*. During the intervening years, Rambusch designed and completed many more commissions for this cathedral. This year, for example, a state-of-the-art lighting system was installed to enhance the majestic Romanesque-inspired interior.

The historical component of the exhibition serves as backdrop for the diverse work currently emanating from the studios and workshop, now located in Jersey City, New Jersey. Old or new, in-process or just completed, what distinguishes the design and craft of Rambusch projects are the custom-made aspects of each object. Whether the company considers a streamlined recessed luminaire, a decorative replica chandelier, a mosaic, or a stained glass window, the object is the result of a business model that is now rare and all but lost in modern culture. The design, from conception to execution, is an individualized response to the client’s needs and requirements. In its own workshops and studios, Rambusch designers, artists and craftspeople collaborate to achieve the final, custom-made result.

“Some of our favorite commissions are those that call on us to refurbish, refresh or adapt anew our designs executed decades ago,” remarks Martin Rambusch, who heads the stained glass studio that opened in 1930. The studio has been the subject of a recent master’s thesis by Caron Pelletier, entitled, “Persistent Innovation: The Rambusch Company, American 20th Century Stained Glass and Decorative Glass, 1930-1980” (Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture).

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Displayed as scaled shop drawings and maquettes, current work in the exhibition includes:

UTAH STATE CAPITOL, Salt Lake City, Utah

This multi-year project for the Rambusch Company was part of a complete seismic upgrade on the building, originally constructed in 1916. The commission consisted of three parts: refurbishing of historic fixtures (including a 6,000 pound chandelier), the creation of a new family of bronze fixtures that would harmonize with the original antique units, and the design of other new units incorporating elements from the original fixtures.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY, Boston, Massachusetts

After a half century, Rambusch was commissioned once again to work in this place of learning; this time with the lighting designer, Chris Ripman. Part of the restoration and functional upgrade of the major spaces within this library included the Cheverus Room, the Abbey Room, the Trustees Room, and the Sargent Gallery.

THE BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, Washington, D.C.

Rambusch has worked in this monumental Byzantine-Romanesque style interior since it was first erected in 1926. They designed and completed the Basilica's very first chapel that was dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes in 1931. Recently, Rambusch was responsible for the installation of two mosaic domes, each of which is sixty feet in diameter and clad with more than one million precious glass tesserae. The subjects of the domes are the Redemption and the Incarnation.

9/11 FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL, New York City

A fifty-six foot long, 8,000-pound bronze bas-relief honoring the 343 firefighters who perished on September 11th is mounted on the west wall of 10 House adjacent to the World Trade Center site. Since the unveiling about two years ago, Rambusch's work has become a cherished memorial both for New Yorkers and visitors alike.

The hallmark of these projects and others produced by the Rambusch Company is their supreme craft orientation. At a time when craft has become separated from art and design, craft historian Peter Dormer observed that there is a "separation of having ideas from making objects." The Rambusch Company works against this tide. It prides itself on the articulation of the idea of the object as being integrally linked to the process of its making.

Objects designed and made by the Rambusch Company are now in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of the Moving Image, the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, and The Wolfsonian.

For a self-guided walking tour of the Rambusch Company's recent works *in situ* in Manhattan, an itinerary will be available at the exhibition.

For more information, please call Catha Grace Rambusch (201) 333-2525 x240.