

# Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

9/22/09

## A GLOBAL GLOW FOR PITT

Nationality Room additions will represent Turkey and Switzerland

By Marylynne Pitz  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

As sure as Queen Cleopatra and her Egyptian court dazzled those first Roman visitors, introductions to new cultures can be a captivating experience.

With that in mind, savvy G-20 visitors may want to steal away to Oakland this week and tour the 26 nationality classrooms at the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning.

Launched in 1926, the classrooms emphasize a country's outstanding design or architectural traditions. No political symbols or donor recognition are permitted in the spaces, and the regions must be recognized by the U.S. Department of State.

Two new classrooms close to fruition will represent Turkey and Switzerland, which means they are nearing the end of a process that typically takes a decade or longer.

Already represented in this world tour are Africa, Armenia, Austria, China, Czechoslovakia, Early America, England, France, Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Sweden, Syria-Lebanon, the Ukraine, Wales and Yugoslavia.

Others in the planning stages are Korean and Latin American/Caribbean rooms, along with countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, Finland and Denmark.

Architect Omer Akin, who teaches architectural ethics and research methods at Carnegie Mellon University, said \$420,000 has been raised to build the Turkish Room. Construction is slated to start next April and finish in the fall of 2010.

The room's long entryway is modeled on typical receiving rooms found in Anatolia, a region of eastern Turkey. The focal point is a ceramic panel of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who established the Turkish Republic in 1923. The image shows Ataturk unveiling the 29-character Latin alphabet, which replaced the Arabic script alphabet, a significant achievement in literacy for the country.

Other artworks in the receiving room will reflect three major cultures from Turkish history — the Uygurs, the Seljuks and the Ottomans, said Dr. Akin, a native of Turkey.

The classroom's ceiling and walls will showcase *kundekari*, an intricate woodwork that creates geometric patterns and has been practiced since the last half of the 12th century in Turkey. Dr. Akin, the project architect, said American and Turkish carpenters will be asked to bid on the work.

Kundekari uses small pieces of different kinds of wood.

"These pieces lock together without the use of glue or metal fasteners. They dovetail. They are mitred, too. They interlock like a puzzle to create these magnificent patterns," Dr. Akin said.

The vaulted ceiling will harken to the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, home of the Ottoman Sultans for 400 years. The palace is a UNESCO world heritage site and tourist attraction.

Patterns in the Turkish Room's leaded glass windows will reflect the Ottoman tradition. Ceramic tiles on the floor will represent a typical Asian pond. Students will sit against the walls next to one another, because in Turkey it is rude to turn your back to someone, Dr. Akin said.

Just as the Turkish room pays homage to Ataturk, the Swiss classroom will honor two men who advocated educating all children, regardless of their class.

Portraits of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Pestalozzi will hang in the rear of the room. Archival, giclee prints of these men will be sketched in the style popularized by Swiss painter Hans Holbein, who created memorable portraits of King Henry VIII and statesman Sir Thomas More.

The local Swiss committee has approved a design modeled on a typical 17th-century schoolroom preserved at the Landesmuseum in Zurich, said Frederick H. Carlson, a Monroeville-based illustrator and vice chairman of the committee.

The room will house four trestle-style tables that represent languages spoken in Switzerland — German, French, Italian and Romansch. The professor's fifth table represents the Swiss abroad, Mr. Carlson said.

The backs of each of the 26 chairs will bear a design from one of the 26 *cantons* or states that make up Switzerland. Dr. Heinz Kunz, chairman of the Swiss room committee, has donated a 17th-century map of Switzerland that will hang on one wall.

A *kachelofen*, a ceramic tile oven that burned coals or wood for heat, will stand in the front right corner. Plank flooring will be made of white oak and not use any nails so that it typifies woodworking of the 1700s. High-tech lighting will be inserted into rosette trim in the wooden beamed ceiling.

The committee has raised \$175,000 and needs an additional \$70,000, Mr. Carlson said. Dominique Schinabeck, chief executive officer of Acutronic USA Inc., a Swiss-based company that makes motion simulators and has offices here in O'Hara and in Zurich, is assisting in the fundraising.

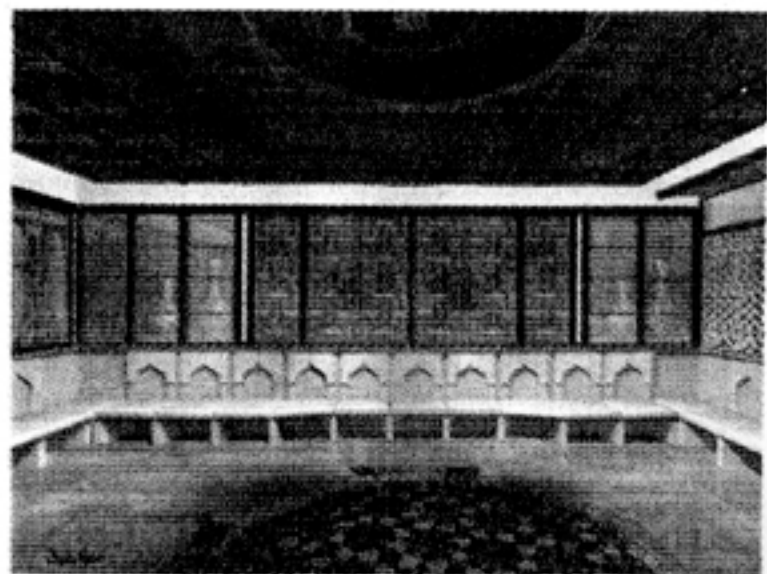
Justin Russli, an architect who will design the room and is based in Lucerne, visited the U.S. in August, conferring with committee members during an Aug. 1 picnic. That date commemorates Swiss independence from the house of Habsburg, a royal dynasty that ruled Austria-Hungary for 1,000 years.

Construction of the Swiss Room is slated for the spring of 2011 and completion for the fall of that year.

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A portrait of Jean-Jacques Rousseau will hang in the Swiss Nationality Room.



Virtual image of Turkish Nationality Room design at the University of Pittsburgh.