

Paul Richard Foote III (1955-2023)

Paul Richard Foote III, an architect and manuscript editor, died March 14 of glioblastoma at his home in Brookline, Mass. He had recently turned 68. His husband, Prof. Angel David Nieves, was with him. Possessed of a quick and irreverent wit, restless and wide-ranging intelligence, and an encyclopedic recall of detail, Mr. Foote - known as Dick or Richard - designed buildings that suavely combined elements of Classical Revival and Mid Century Modernist styles. He imposed clarity and order on demanding academic prose, and explored unusual cinematic and written forms of memoir.

At the time of his death, Mr. Foote was a visiting scholar in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH) at Northeastern University in Boston, where his husband serves as a professor of Africana Studies, History, and Digital Humanities, director of the graduate program in public history, and director of public humanities.

Mr. Foote was born Feb. 28, 1955, in Rochester, N.Y., and grew up in Seneca Falls, a town at the north end of Cayuga Lake in the Finger Lakes district of New York. His mother, Lois Johnston Foote, was a nurse. She died in 1998. His father, Dr. Paul Richard Foote, worked for many years at the Eastman Kodak Company in Rochester and served at one time as Kodak's medical director. He died in 2013. Mr. Foote was the third of five siblings. He is survived by all four sisters: Caroline Foote and her husband William Breckwoldt of Winchester, Mass., and their children Julia, Scott, and Tim; Ellen Foote and her husband Steve Hindy of Brooklin, Me., their daughter Lily and son-in-law Alejandro Armas of Los Angeles, and granddaughter Emilia; Martha Foote and her husband Joseph Burke of Brooklyn, N.Y., and their son Johnston; and Sarah Foote-Claflin and her husband Edward B. Claflin of Nyack, N.Y. Another nephew of Mr. Foote, Sam Hindy, died in 2007.

After graduating from Mynderse Academy in Seneca Falls in 1973, Mr. Foote enrolled at Yale College. During a year off from his studies, he worked for the architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) in its Washington, D.C., office. In his senior year, 1977 to 1978, he served as editor-in-chief of the *Yale Banner* yearbook and the *Yale Literary Magazine*. He also belonged to Book and Snake, one of Yale's senior societies.

Mr. Foote's design career began in earnest in San Francisco in 1983, when he was hired by Amick Harrison Architects. In 1987, he joined the practice of Charles T. Young Architects in Manhattan. Projects on which Mr. Foote worked included the restoration of the 40-room Elm Court mansion in Butler, Pa., for Frederick R. Koch, an heir to the Koch Industries fortune. In 1990, at Chan and Mohny Architecture in Manhattan, Mr. Foote worked on the neo-Classical interior design of the 120-foot-long private yacht *Our Toy*, which was then under construction at the Feadship Royal Dutch Shipyards in the Netherlands.

With that, he hung out his own shingle as Paul Richard Foote Architectural Design. His most significant commission in this period was the renovation of an apartment owned by the investment banker John Rydzewski in the legendary Dakota Apartments overlooking Central Park in Manhattan, from 1992 to 1993. But Mr. Foote was limited in the kind of work he could take on without a formal architectural degree, so he enrolled in the School of Architecture at

Syracuse University in 1994. That was where he met Angel David Nieves, with whom he began a 29-year relationship. The two were married on May 14, 2017.

Besides being loving life partners, Mr. Foote and Professor Nieves were constant professional collaborators. Each was deeply engaged in the other's work.

Upon receiving his master's degree in architecture from Syracuse in 1997, Mr. Foote worked in Rochester for DeWolff Partnership Architects from 1998 to 2000, and at Mossien Associates Architects from 2001 to 2002.

Dr. Foote, by then a widower, suffered a devastating fall in 2002. Mr. Foote elected to put his architectural career on hold to care for his father in Seneca Falls. That endeavor would occupy the next 11 years of his life.

The period was not without professional achievements, however. Between 2004 and 2009, Mr. Foote designed renovations for the homes of three of his sisters (Martha, Caroline, & Ellen).

A big break came in 2011 with the commission to design the renovation of a 1920s fraternity house on the Hamilton College campus in Clinton, N.Y., as the Days-Massolo Center, which is dedicated to increasing and supporting diversity on campus. Mr. Foote said his intention was "to retain the domestic character of the original building while also accommodating larger-scale public programs."

Two years later, Mr. Foote reached the pinnacle of his constructed design work: the DHi Collaboratory at Hamilton, housing the Digital Humanities Initiative (DH*i*), of which Professor Nieves was then co-director. DH*i* was one of the first comprehensive digital humanities centers funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, started at a SLAC (small liberal arts college) on the east coast.

The 750-square-foot DH*i* Collaboratory was constructed within Christian A. Johnson Hall, a Collegiate Gothic-style structure that had been built as James Library in 1914. "We frankly profess our love for old buildings;" Mr. Foote wrote in 2013, "along with our fascination for the 'shock of the new.'"

Mr. Foote and his design partners did a skillful and appealing job of integrating an existing monumental leaded-glass window into an airy, luminous, transparent suite of offices and workrooms, wrapped around a 375-square foot common space. An otherwise intrusive horizontal steel channel, nearly eight feet above the floor, was turned into the frame for glass clerestories and a dividing line through the wood cabinetry.

"Interior detail was stripped out in a disastrous 1980s remodeling;" Mr. Foote wrote in 2013, "so I'm actually layering on detail."

"This is really a game-changer for digital at Hamilton," he wrote. "Functionality looks good, too. Also, the space has warmth, it's very mellow acoustically, and is full of light." With typical self-deprecation he added: "Who knew? LOL."

His partners in the project were Roseanne Hennessy of rhenDesign in Rochester and Charles Dilworth of HMC Architects in San Francisco. The millwork was by Jeffrey Ellis Carl Cabinetmakers of Rochester. Furnishings were by Knoll.

Following the DHi Collaboratory came commissions across New York State and Connecticut. His renovation and construction projects included the Seneca Falls Historical Society and the Seneca Falls Community Center; the Colgate Divinity School in Rochester; Quatela Medical Offices in Rochester; the Farmington Historical Society and Parson's Green mixed-use development in Farmington, Conn; and a renovation of the Book and Snake headquarters, or "Tomb."

The later phase of Mr. Foote's professional life was taken up editing academic manuscripts for publication. Among them were *Jewish/Christian Entanglements: Ancrene Wisse and its Material Worlds*, by Dorothy Kim (forthcoming); *Archiving an Epidemic: Art, AIDS, and the Queer Chicana Avant-Garde*, by Robb Hernandez (2020); *Becoming Transnational Youth Workers: Independent Mexican Teenage Migrants and Pathways of Survival and Social Mobility*, by Isabel Martinez (2019); and *An Architecture of Education: African American Women Design the New South*, by Professor Nieves (2018), to name a few.

But that was not the limit of his creative endeavors. Mr. Foote was working on a movie treatment at the time of his death. Its title, "A Hitch In It," was a salute to Alfred Hitchcock, whose films Mr. Foote greatly admired. The mise-en-scene treatment combined autobiographical details and pure fantasy to explore a family's secrets across two generations, including a father figure who is gay.

An unfinished memoir of his years caring for Dr. Foote revealed the strength of Mr. Foote's writing style – lean, declarative, and evocative. One poignant fragment concerned the years after Mrs. Foote's death and before Dr. Foote's accident when the two men inhabited the great old Greek Revival home in Seneca Falls:

"Dad and I continued our gradual retreat from the front of the house moving back toward the lake behind it, largely abandoning civitas and the front facade that overlooked the village park for something more liquid and private at the rear. As such, we were absent but in the center, as if the statue of 'Union' atop the Civil War monument across the street seemingly let us slip from her stern gaze."

On July 12, 2022, Mr. Foote suffered a grand mal seizure while walking his Shiba Inu, King, around the Cassidy Playground in Brookline. Professor Nieves found him there. Emergency surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital disclosed the glioblastoma, a pernicious form of brain cancer that came to widespread public attention with the deaths of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy in 2009 and Sen. John McCain in 2018. Until the last two months of his life, Mr. Foote retained an ebullient optimism about his outcome and never surrendered his knowing sense of humor, laced with references to high art and popular culture. As the use of computer apps began to challenge him, Mr. Foote struggled one evening to set his FaceTime screen horizontally. "I'm trying to find the odalisque button," he said.