



***Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to stand, and I shall move the world.***

**— Archimedes**

Brian Tolle named this 40-foot high sculptural façade of a 17<sup>th</sup> century canal house after Archimedes — the brilliant, Greek, polymath — who after discovering the principle of “buoyant force,” went running through the streets of Syracuse, Sicily screaming “Eureka! Eureka!” or translated: “I found it! I found it!”

The resurrection of *Eureka* — first exhibited in Jan Hoet’s *Over the Edges* (2000) — in Federal Hall, is intended to inspire a critical hall of mirrors that dates back to its own architectural and political history as a structure that was constantly morphing.

Federal Hall, like Archimedes’ principle of leverage, often seemed to be engaged in complex trade-offs or balancing acts between positions of force and distance — both as a structure, as well as a location, where governing bodies pondered how to move parts of a nation that were philosophically, as well as physically, at great distances from one another, closer together.

Federal Hall in its original incarnation on this site was a city hall. It was where numerous historic events took place that required complex leveraging, such as the 1735 trial in which the newspaper publisher, John Peter Zenger, was acquitted of libel for exposing government corruption, establishing the first steps toward securing the freedom of the press; the Stamp Act Congress meeting in 1765, which protested taxation without representation; passage of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787 by Congress, that prohibited slavery in several of the U.S.’ new territories; and the drafting of the U.S. Bill of Rights in 1789, which guaranteed under the new U.S. Constitution, personal freedoms and rights, the limits of governmental power, and the autonomy of the judiciary.

Especially central to many of these negotiations, was the notion of tolerance. First introduced by the Dutch, as a governing principle intrinsic to religious freedom, tolerance became the fulcrum, upon which hinged many a heated discussion within the illustrious, every-changing walls of Federal Hall.

In a sense, Tolle’s *Eureka* — whose surface incorporates the wave structures found in the water that lapped up against its original foundation — reminds us of the Federal Hall where the earliest public debates about difference, rights, and position were leveraged. The Stadt Huys (Dutch for State House), considered the first city hall of New Amsterdam (now New York) was located on the edge of the East River, on the corner of today’s Pearl and Broad Streets. Peter Stuyvesant, the

Dutch Director-General of New Netherland (1647-1664), originally had converted the tavern into City Hall (1654) as a central hub of discussion, a vital attribute of the Dutch governing style.

However, Stuyvesant was extremely intolerant of any religious expression outside of the Dutch Reformed Church and, indeed, quashed any diversions, often with violent means. This was met with outrage and resistance by English settlers in Flushing, also part of New Amsterdam's territory, and they authored a petition known as the *Flushing Remonstrance* (1657).

The latter called for an exemption on Stuyvesant's aggressive ban on Quaker worship, just one of the voices being suppressed under his rule, which included, Lutherans, Jews, and Roman Catholics. The Remonstrance becomes one of the main documents informing the future provision on freedom of religion in the U.S. Constitution as laid out in the Bill of Rights, drafted at Federal Hall.

Rather than the higher ground of "tolerance," the Dutch might be viewed as master negotiators, willing to listen, argue, and rethink their positions. Indeed, Stuyvesant was eventually forced to step down and was replaced by John Bowne, of English descent, who had railed against Stuyvesant's tyrannical policies and was dedicated to ending religious persecution in New Amsterdam. One year later (1664), the British took control and New Amsterdam became New York.

Federal Hall, like the original model for *Eureka*, was — throughout its history — an amalgam of architectural histories. Similarly, the Baroque and Gothic features of many canal houses had, in fact, been cobbled together from more illustrious structures found throughout the city.

In 1699, a new city hall structure was proposed and built at the corner of Broad and Wall Streets — erected by the British to signal the transition of New Amsterdam into colonial New York — fashioned after Georgian architecture which mimicked the symmetry and proportion of classical Greek and Roman antiquity. By 1783, New York was firmly in the hands of the American colonists — but only after decades of a disenfranchising of Native Americans by all colonial parties — and the City Hall was remade yet again, into Federal Hall, under the direction of the French architect and engineer, Peter Charles L'Enfant (1788).

He furthered the already grandiose gestures of antiquity, by expanding chambers and adding an imposing second-floor balcony, upon which George Washington stood and swore his oath as the first President of the United States. By 1842, L'Enfant's version had been demolished and rebuilt by Davis Associates into the Neo-Classical monument to national history that it is today, its facade featuring majestic Doric columns, reminiscent of the ancient Greek Parthenon, considered by many to be an important symbol of Athenian democracy, a model for Western civilization. Likewise, its dome, designed by the artist, John Frazee, is modeled after the ancient Roman Pantheon, whose circular shape, coffered dome and oculus represent the pluralistic worship of all the gods of a people, collectively and equally.

It is fitting that *Eureka* — a displaced architectural model designed by an artist — is situated within these historic walls, encouraging us to think back through Federal Hall's history, exposing the mutable facades and charged discussions of democracy's tourney.