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MODERN LANDMARKS AT VASSAR

The Vassar College campus in Poughkeepsie, NY, was launched with a massive all-purpose Main Building in the French Second Empire mode (James Renwick, Jr., 1865), which remains the iconic center of its campus. But styles of subsequent buildings include Collegiate Gothic, Jacobean, Georgian Revival—you name it. And among these stylistically varied specimens are some scattered gems of mid-century Modernism.

Vassar's earliest example of Modernism is strictly an interior, but it is notable for its purity and for its completion date of 1937. This suite of rooms, the school's art history library, looks as if it were retrofitted in an older structure, but was in fact created simultaneously with its Collegiate Gothic exterior. It is located in a wing of the Gothic main library and designed by successors to that building's designers, Allen Collens & Willis. The pioneering Modernist interior was designed by John McAndrew, with Theodore Muller. McAndrew was then both a Vassar faculty member and successor to Philip Johnson as curator of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art—and he had accompanied Johnson on a 1929 scouting trip to Europe.

The rigorously functional space, faithfully restored in 2008 by Platt Byard Dovell White Architects, has cork floors, metal shelving finished in a muted blue, and

indirect lighting bounced off severe white ceiling planes. Glass block inserts in interior partitions echo the grid pattern of the ample Gothic Revival windows. The interior-exterior split here apparently contrasts the progressive interests of the arts faculty with the college's demand for consistency on the exterior.

After this library, Vassar added hardly any new facilities until the 1951 completion of a landmark of Modernism, the Dexter Ferry Cooperative House by Marcel Breuer. The donor chose Breuer, providing one of his earliest commissions for other than single-family houses. The building housed 26 students (all female, as Vassar didn't become coed until 1969) who carried out their own domestic duties. Ferry was originally to be located among older, traditional dorms but, facing objections to its avant-garde design, the board of trustees moved it to a less visible site behind Main, an area then dominated by the campus power plant and other utilitarian structures.

The building is a textbook example of the International Style, as adopted for American construction. Student rooms are laid out in one long bar, hovering at the second level, with ground-floor common spaces slipped partly underneath it. Breuer designed cabinet-

continued



JOHN ARBUCKLE

Noyes House dormitory, Eero Saarinen & Associates, 1958.

Welcome

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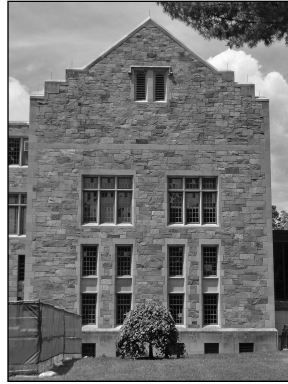
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—Kathleen Randall, editor

VASSAR CONTINUED

work for the rooms and specified furnishings such as Saarinen chairs and Knoll fabrics. A 2002 restoration by Herbert Beckhard Frank Richlan & Associates, successors to Breuer's firm, included delayed execution of the original landscape plan.

With its small scale and its palette of white-painted brick and wood, metal sunshades, and flagstone paving, Ferry has always looked somewhat out of place in its institutional setting. Until recent years, its siting appeared to be strangely random, but better integration into the campus has now been accomplished by the Fergusson Quadrangle (landscape architect Diana Balmori, 2003) a minimalist rectangle of sunken lawn framed at one end by the Center for Drama and Film (Cesar Pelli & Assoc., 2003) and on the long side by Ferry.



JOHN MORRIS DIXON



JONATHAN WALLEN

Art history library, Allen Collens & Willis; interior architects, John McAndrew, with Theodore Muller, 1937.

Modernism at full institutional scale arrived in 1958, with Noyes House by Eero Saarinen & Associates. A dormitory for 156 students, it was prominently located—unlike Ferry—near most of the other dorms. Its design was closely integrated with its location on the Circle, an open space 500 feet in diameter, laid out in 1864 as an exercise field surrounded by a track for running or riding. Saarinen drew up a master plan for this portion of the campus, showing two arc-shaped dormitories along two



JOHN ARBUCKLE

Dexter Ferry Cooperative House, Marcel Breuer, 1951.

quadrants of the Circle, but only this one was built.

Noyes House is a notable example of Saarinen's efforts to reconcile Modernism with its architectural context. The scale and materials of neighboring buildings are echoed in the four-story, brick-walled structure. Full-height angular projecting bays recall the verticality and delicacy of Gothic precedents. These are juxtaposed to rigorously Modern cast-in-place entrance canopies. (Saarinen's roughly contemporaneous women's dorms at the University of Chicago and the University of Pennsylvania make no such bows to traditional architecture, but the Stiles and Morse residential colleges at Yale, following these in 1962, respond to their context with overtly Medieval allusions.)

Noyes's first-floor parlor is an all-white space, punctuated by swoopy structural supports revealing the expressionist tendencies embodied in the TWA and Dulles terminals. A signature feature of this space is the



JOHN ARBUCKLE

Noyes House, Eero Saarinen & Associates, 1958.

sunken seating area, dubbed the "passion pit" by students when it appeared, similar in concept to those in Saarinen's Miller House and the TWA terminal (allowing a group to occupy the center of a space without obstructing the view across it). Complete with white-pedestaled Saarinen tables and chairs, the room was authentically restored in 2000 by Leonard Parker of Minneapolis, who had worked on it in Saarinen's office.

Following closely after Noyes House was Chicago Hall (Schweikher & Elting, 1959) designed to house Vassar's modern language departments—and still doing so. Paul Schweikher is not well-known today, but his work had been included in the landmark 1933 Museum of Modern Art exhibit that heralded the International Style, and in 1959 he was head of the Architecture Department at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, having previously held the same post at Yale. (His partnership with Elting dissolved soon after this project, and his national visibility diminished.)

Occupying a fairly central position on the campus, Chicago is an unassertive one-story structure. Its site was originally quite open, but it is now overshadowed by extensions of the main library (more about that below). Its cast-in-place structural frame features shallow vaults spanning only 6 ft. 8 in., with one bay allotted to each faculty office, two to each of the intimate language classrooms, and several for an auditorium. Interior gardened courtyards assure daylight for every room. The building's



Chicago Hall, Schweikher & Elting, 1959.

bristling air conditioning units are a reminder that cooling systems were rarely provided for school buildings of the 1950s.

Some other Modernist insertions into the campus have not fared as well. The Lockwood Addition to the repeatedly expanded main library (Hellmuth Obata & Kassabaum, 1977) attached a Brutalist volume, with large glass areas framed by bold projections, to a Gothic Revival fabric. This obvious clash, at a central campus location, has since been largely masked by a further addition in the Postmodern mode (Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates, 2001), though expanses of the Brutalist envelope can still be seen at the rear of the sprawling complex.

Meanwhile, in the sciences zone of the campus, a relatively recent Modern laboratory building is facing demolition. The anticipated 2015 opening of the proposed Integrated Science complex, by Ennead Architects is to spell the end for the Seeley Mudd Chemistry building (Perry Dean Rogers & Partners, 1984). While displaying a lot of glass, metal framing, and exhaust ducts, Mudd has a compact, symmetrical massing similar to three neighboring science buildings dating from 1901 to 1926. There are good reasons, according to Vassar's head of buildings & grounds, why Mudd is doomed while its older neighbors will remain: its 26 separate flat roofs result in chronic leak problems; its floor layouts, tailored to a 1980s program, are not adaptable; it stands in a formerly open quadrangle that Vassar wants to restore under a 2009 master plan for the campus by Michael Van Valkenburgh.

Over recent decades, Vassar has completed a number of Modern buildings and additions that are not discussed here, generally with careful consideration of their relationships to existing buildings and open spaces. There has been notable adaptive reuse of buildings formerly used as workshops, laundries, garages, etc. to expand the school's arts programs, and appealing open spaces have been rather ingeniously developed between them. The current master plan calls for phased reduction in the amount of the central campus area devoted to roadways and parking, promising more appealing landscaped settings for Vassar's landmarks of all periods.

The campus is an easy day trip from anywhere in the New York metro area, and a 2004 guide in the Princeton Architectural Press Campus Guide series covers most of the works discussed here. It's a rewarding destination for devotees of Modernism.

—John Morris Dixon

dear friends,

This is my first time writing this column. We rotated our board roles in May 2012 and I became chapter president. Nina Rappaport, a founding board member and long-serving president, has become a vice president focusing on development. We are very grateful to Nina for her many years of leadership and service to DOCOMOMO and her effective advocacy on behalf of Modern architecture.

I am proud to also announce that we added two new members to our Board of Directors. John Kriskiewicz is a recognized architectural historian, educator and tour guide who has been actively involved in local preservation advocacy. Marissa Marvelli, a graduate of Columbia's graduate program in Historic Preservation, has already enhanced our communications program, most notably by giving NY/Tri-State a Facebook presence.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of our dedicated continuing board members. Ours is very much a working board and our accomplishments are a direct result of the time and expertise generously shared by board members. Sincere thanks to: Kyle Johnson, AIA (vice president), Djuro Villaran-Rokovich (treasurer), Kathleen Randall (secretary), John Morris Dixon, FAIA, Leslie Monsky and Meredith Bzdak. Under the dedicated and effective leadership of this board, NY/Tri-State has expanded its membership and its activities and become recognized as a leading regional voice in preservation.

From a year of great progress, let me share one recent highlight. On October 7, as part of Open House New York Weekend and DOCOMOMO US Tour Day, we co-sponsored an open house at Eero Saarinen's TWA Flight Center at JFK Airport. Approximately 1,500 architecture enthusiasts had the rare opportunity to see the interior and exemplary restoration of one of the most celebrated icons of Modernism.

DOCOMOMO connects you to a community of architects, historians, preservationists, students and architecture enthusiasts working to advance a wider understanding and appreciation of the Modern Movement in the U.S. Memberships and tax-deductible contributions make it all possible—educational programs, effective advocacy and the opportunity to launch new projects.

We are looking forward to another great year and hope that you will both participate in our activities and consider supporting DOCOMOMO NY/Tri-State.

John S. Arbuckle
President, DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State



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CHATHAM GREEN AT FIFTY

So much attention has been paid to Lower Manhattan's Chatham Towers by Kelly & Gruzen over the years that its slightly older sibling Chatham Green, also by Kelly & Gruzen, has flown under the radar, its contributions to post-WWII modern architecture, public housing and the cityscape of New York overlooked.

Fifty years ago this past March, presiding over the building's official dedication ceremony, Mayor Richard Wagner declared Chatham Green the city's "newest landmark in the growth and renewal of the city." Designed by Barnett Gruzen, this 21-story ribbon-shaped apartment building on Park Row just east of Foley Square, marked the first of several buildings in and around New York's Civic Center realized by this firm and its successor firm Gruzen & Partners.

Noteworthy for its undulating facade, Chatham Green was the first residential structure in New York City "to exploit the free-form design made possible by up-to-date methods of projecting reinforced concrete skeletons" as the *New York Times* described it in October 1963.

Despite the fact that Chatham Green was to be subsidized middle-income housing, Gruzen wanted to imbue the structure with features and innovations more often reserved for luxury buildings. The *New York Times* reported that Gruzen's design sought "to avoid the monolithic, block type of buildings that have brought criticism to large housing developments."

One way Gruzen achieved this was by dividing the sweeping curve of the building into smaller sections delineated by the brick clad north and south ends, two intermediate brick clad vertical sections and three vertical circulation towers expressed on the exterior of the building. The resulting subdivisions of the facade established a more intimate scale for each of the corridors leading from the elevators to apartment entrances, something often missing in large-scale projects of this kind. The corridors themselves were unconventional in that they were open-air vs. traditional interior hallways.

All of Chatham Green's original 420 units, ranging from studios to three-bedroom apartments, had been sold by February 1960, two years before the building was complete. The most attractive selling features were conceived in the early design phase. The narrow width of the building allowed all apartments, even studios, to be floor-through thus providing residents not only with stunning views from the higher floors, but two exposures (east and west) as well as through-ventilation. In addition, most of the apartments above the sixth floor had terraces. Three entrance lobbies, a playground, underground parking and a small shopping center were also part of the amenity package.

By the time of the dedication in March 1962, Chatham Green's uniqueness had aroused such interest that two apartments were kept vacant and made available for public viewing. As the new residents of the other 418 apartments were moving in, the two "show" apartments were professionally furnished and decorated, then opened from noon until 8:00 pm six days a week so that the public and housing specialists could satisfy their curiosity.

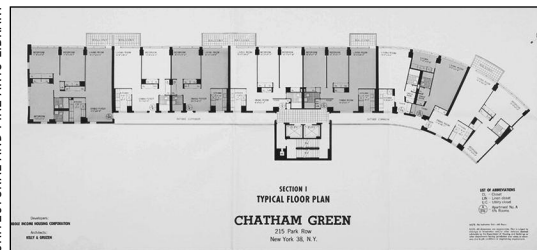
Given its proximity to the Civic Center area and to the financial district, Chatham Green was, as Manhattan Borough President Hulan Jack put it at the time, a "central factor" in the city's plans to revitalize lower Manhattan as a "walk-to-work" community.

History of the Site Development

Wedge between the Civic Center, Chinatown and what is now Police Plaza, Chatham Green's site came about through a number of changes occurring in Lower Manhattan in the 1950s. In 1955, the demolition of the Third Avenue Elevated train that ran along Park Row opened up the eastern edge of Chinatown. Shortly there-



Ribbons of windows and balconies alternate with those of brick on the east facade.



Typical floor plan of one section showing floor-through apartment layouts.

The narrow, curving structure is 637 ft. long and sits on a 4.5-acre trapezoidal site. Gruzen was inspired by the curvilinear designs of Affonso Reidy and Oscar Niemeyer whose work he had seen in Brazil. Most closely related to Chatham Green, perhaps, is Reidy's *Pedregulho* outside of Rio de Janeiro. This seven-story serpentine-shaped government housing building from 1947 is situated on a hillside, its form following the contours of the site.

JOEL RASKIN; WWW.JRDIGITALMEDIA.COM

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after in 1956 the city announced plans for a large-scale housing development to be built just east of Chinatown's traditional boundaries, south of Chatham Square and north of the Brooklyn Bridge along Park Row. It was given the name Chatham Green.

The six-block site had been part of the old Five Points neighborhood, but was now designated as part of the 1958 Federal slum clearance project. By the 1950s the area was mostly tenements, rooming houses and small business. In May 1958 the city condemned and resold the site and its derelict buildings to the Association of Middle Income Housing, Inc., a nonprofit corporation/developer and relocated 410 families, a number of boarders and 75 small businesses.

Construction was subsidized under the 1949 Federal Title I Program of the National Housing Act. This program permitted private developers to buy land at reduced prices from municipal redevelopment authorities. After the city acquired the land, it resold it to the developer at a loss. The city assumed one-third of the loss; the federal government the remaining two-thirds.

The Association for Middle Income Housing, Inc. headed by Mr. Shirley H. Boden, also developed the neighboring Chatham Towers two years later. Sponsors of both projects were the Municipal Credit Union and the Credit Union League.

The Chatham Green project was not without controversy. In 1957 after the Kelly & Gruzen plan had been approved and published, an architect hired by St. Joachim's Catholic Church located on the proposed site, presented an alternate design that would prevent the razing of the church. Vito Battista, founder of the Institute of Design and Construction, put forth a modernist composition of rectangular slabs at right angles allowing the 1888 Romanesque Revival-style church to remain, tucked into one of the corners of the new plan. Battista's plan was not accepted and the Kelly & Gruzen plan stood.

Chatham Green Today

How is Chatham Green faring at the half-century mark? Still unique and somewhat of a curiosity, its warm terra cotta brick softens what might have become a more menacing "Great Wall of

Chinatown." It holds its own as a welcoming presence in the neighborhood, particularly in the face of the dozen 15–17-story cruciform buildings of Alfred E. Smith Houses directly to the east with their more standardized public housing characteristics. However, Chatham Green never became a modernist icon. Paul Goldberger, in his 1979 *The City Observed*, thought the building already looked dated.

Compared to the bold Brutalist forms of Chatham Towers just to the north, Chatham Green's painted railings, apartment doors in bright colors and concrete open air corridors can take on a worn 1960s look. Facade and corridor repair work is currently underway, but patches of earlier poorly-done brick and mortar repairs are evident. Some of the landscaped areas along the back and sides of the building are in need of refurbishment. Post-9/11 security measures have resulted in barricades around much of the site and restricted vehicular use of the area. Still, Chatham Green apartments, no longer subsidized, provide Lower Manhattan with much needed middle-class housing and even in a down economy, they command solid market prices.

—Gail Cornell

Contributors

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- **Nina Rappaport** is an architectural historian, critic, curator and educator. She is the publications director at Yale School of Architecture, and author of *Support and Resist, Structural Engineers and Design Innovation*. Her current project is the exhibition Vertical Urban Factory
- **Rich Ray** earned an MA in American Studies with a focus on political culture because it seemed a reasonable thing to do at the time. As a consequence, he views Modern architecture through an unconventional lens.



Articulated elevator towers leading to open corridors on the west facade of Chatham Green provide vertical overlay to the stacked apartment floors.



Chatham Green's serpentine form (foreground) holds its own against its formidable Civic Center neighbors.

“NEW YORK BRNO DAYS” HIGHLIGHTS VILLA TUGENDHAT

New Yorkers had a chance in early October to be introduced to the exceptional cultural and architectural genius loci of the city of Brno, Czech Republic. Presented as “New York Brno Days,” the first day was dedicated to a seminar on the iconic, UNESCO-listed Villa Tugendhat (1930) designed by Mies van der Rohe. The second day presented the business, research and development potential of the city with an all-day conference entitled, “Brno—Knowledge Economy City.”

The seminar, held October 1 at Bohemian National Hall/The Czech Center New York on Manhattan’s Upper East Side, brought together six panelists from the Czech Republic who cleverly and clearly put into context Brno’s prominence, using the Villa Tugendhat to tell the story not only of the magnificent residence, but of the city itself.

Vladimir Slapeta, professor at the University of Technology’s School of Architecture in Brno, spoke of the city in the decades after the decline of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the creation of the new nation of Czechoslovakia in the early 20th century. A fierce determination in forging a national identity led to strong development in the arts, including architecture and design. Not only was modernist pioneer Adolf Loos a native



Villa Tugendhat, as it appears from the street at the top of the sloping site.

texture. Architects Bohuslav Fuchs, Arnošt Wiesner and Josef Gocár built a remarkable group of buildings in the city, many of which were featured in architecture publications locally and abroad.

Architectural historian Iveta Cerna told the story of the genesis of the Villa Tugendhat project and chronicled the building’s many lives throughout its eight decades of existence. Because Brno was home to wealthy textile merchants, prominent architecture was manifested in elaborate mansions. Over the years 1928–1930, wealthy Jewish residents Greta and Fritz Tugendhat had a house built according to designs by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The house is celebrated as one of the most significant villa structures in the world because of its construction (first steel-frame

Czechoslovakia during and after WWII. The family left the house in 1938 and it served as a private office by 1942. In 1945 it became barracks to a Russian cavalry unit that devastated the house and used the wood furnishings as fuel. The Tugendhats left Europe for good in 1948, settling in Venezuela. The villa served as a dance school and as a physical therapy institute for children from 1946 to 1960.

In 1967 Greta Tugendhat visited Brno, and along with Mies van der Rohe and other concerned local architects and scholars, began discussions to restore the villa for cultural use. The less than sympathetic atmosphere after the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 brought considerations for rehabilitation to a halt for almost two decades.

city but out of reach to the local population. After the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution in 1989 the villa was briefly made accessible while remaining a government building. In 1994, after the creation of the new Czech Republic, the villa was placed under the administration of the Brno City Museum and subsequently declared a National Cultural Monument in 1995. In 2001 it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Architects Tomas Rusin and Ivan Wahla from Atelier RAW presented a PowerPoint of the second restoration campaign. Between 2010 and 2012 their firm, along with Omnia project and Architeam, carried out a three-tiered project: a thorough conditions survey of the structure; research of the construction history and subsequent interventions; and restoration of the monument. A group of architects and scholars created the Tugendhat House International Committee (THICOM) to supervise the restoration in an advisory capacity. THICOM set their goal to return the house, to the greatest extent possible, to the state when the Tugendhat family lived there. The restoration involved not only the structure, furniture and finishes, but restoring the electrical, heating, cooling and mechanical systems to



Foyer and stair down to main level.



Greta Tugendhat's room on the upper level.



The onyx wall, polished aluminum cruciform columns and retractable window wall are signature features of the house.

of Brno, the city was a prosperous textile center due to its proximity to Vienna. As such it was fertile ground for the founding of prominent technical schools and universities. During the interwar years Brno became synonymous with avant-garde design and Rationalist/Functionalist archi-

villa in Europe), spatial arrangement, technical features, finish materials, Mies-designed furnishings and its relationship with the surrounding landscape.

According to Cerna, the fate of the villa and its owners is essentially a portrait of both Europe and

In 1980 the villa was transferred from state ownership to the City of Brno. From 1981 to 1985 the building underwent restoration, but without any historical research as a basis. The aim was to assure the structural integrity and water tightness. The villa remained the property of the

original operating capacity of the 1930s. The landscape, an integral part of the original design, was also restored.

The restoration was financed by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic at a cost of approximately \$9 million. The Villa Tugendhat, now

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ON THE MARGINS: GUERON, LEPP AND ASSOCIATES' MANHATTAN REHABILITATION CENTER

Hardly among the most visible civic works that New York City produced in the late 1960s but maybe one of the most telling, the former Manhattan Rehabilitation Center (MRC) on Tenth Avenue between 40th and 41st Street is a snapshot of the era's architectural climate and social unease.

The MRC was one of scores of addiction treatment facilities opened throughout New York State after 1966 as part of the Rockefeller administration's Civil Commitment Program, an attempt to head off the escalation of heroin use and related crime by institutionalizing addicts, voluntarily or not. Many of these facilities were nothing other than repurposed prisons, but of the few that tried to create environments that engaged with social needs, the MRC stands out.

As the Civil Commitment Program was being implemented, a group of young architects including Henri Gueron and Stephen Lepp approached New York State's Department of Mental Hygiene with a portfolio of mostly residential work. Unexpectedly, they came away with a commission for a 400-bed treatment facility for women addicted to narcotics, perhaps because DMH hoped they would bring a less institutional feel to an unglamorous project.

The site, in the shadow of the Port Authority Terminal's bus ramps, included two existing buildings: a handsome terra-cotta faced public library turned meat-packing plant and the banal Riviera Congress Motel, built for the 1964 World's Fair and immediately obsolescent. Given the budget, there was no question these buildings had to be reused. The motel translated directly into a dormitory and the old library was restructured as common spaces including a gym, reading room, and chapel. Adaptation of the existing structures was completed in 1967; in 1969 Gueron, Lepp and Associates added a new 50-bed "intake" building turned perpendicular to 41st Street. Its design exemplifies the struggles with the fortress mentality of public construction at the time. In fact, the anxiety was even higher than usual, as *Progressive Architecture* noted:

A narcotics pusher is said to be capable of delivering a tiny drug pellet by peashooter from 140' away. Moreover, the women inmates are just as likely as not to parade nude before uncovered windows, a practice disconcerting to passers-by.

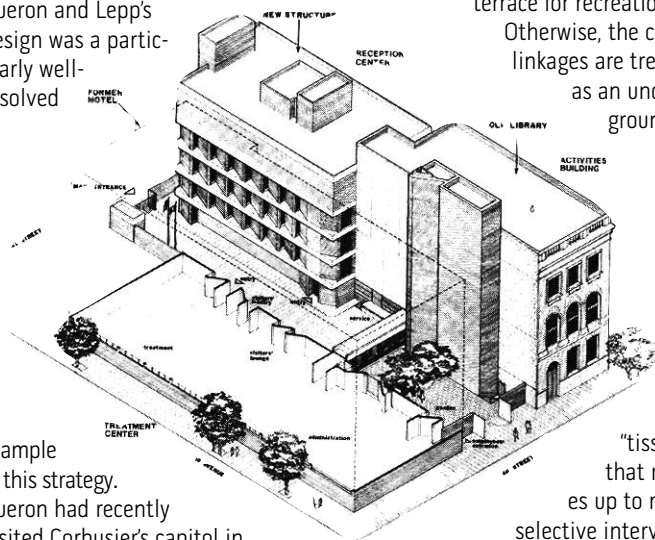
Which is to say, openings visible from the street were forbidden. By the late 1960s, New York City architects had evolved a strategy for these kinds of unforgiving situations: sculptural compositions of solid forms that signaled the presence of occupation without revealing it. Gueron and Lepp's design was a particularly well-resolved

example of this strategy. Gueron had recently visited Corbusier's capitol in Chandigarh and here he translated its brise-soleil facades into serrated ranks of patient rooms opening away from the street. The resulting deeply modeled façade of dark iron-spot brick is cut across by exaggerated concrete horizontals at the floor edges, while the narrow street end is jogged around a partially embedded stair tower. The corrugated resident floors are topped by a tall entablature-like level, which was, surprisingly, just a large storage attic.

The architects' most forward-looking work, however, was knitting together a modest campus by drawing on heterogeneous operations of preservation, renovation, and augmentation. The MRC is a great example of the disintegration of Modernist "clean slate" polemics finally reaching the institutional level in New York City. And if the driving force here was financial reality rather than urban thinking, the result was the

same: a new situational pragmatism that engaged, not erased, existing patterns. The existing library and hotel are adapted with a clear understanding of their functional and formal aspects worth retaining. The architects also recognized the strip of "found" space between the buildings as an amenity. To keep it open, the central dining hall is set partially below grade and lit by clerestory windows. A narrow, glazed connection runs across at surface level, bisecting the open space into an entry court at the north and a south-facing walled terrace for recreation.

Otherwise, the central linkages are treated as an underground



"tissue" that reaches up to make selective interventions in the angular architectural language of the intake building: an egress stair tower for the library and a suite of support rooms on the ground floor of the motel.

The MRC's design was recognized for making the most of very little (it appeared in *Architectural Record* under the ill-considered headline "Architecture to help drug addicts calls for speed") but it couldn't resolve the hollow premise of the Civil Commitment Program. The architects, along with many others, were dismayed to find that in the absence of any successful treatment model, addicts were simply held indefinitely. Then, in the early 1970s, New York State's narcotics policies were transformed by two contradictory developments: the Rockefeller administration abandoned Civil Commitment in favor of aggressive criminal prosecution and the FDA conditionally approved methadone

treatment. The MRC remained in partial use until 1979 when it was sold to Covenant House as a youth crisis shelter, which it remains today.

The MRC's evolving use over 45 years suggests that some circumstances call for refocusing preservation goals from a building's physical fabric to the continuity of its societal role. The latter is hard to pin down, and sometimes even to perceive: despite the many stories that can be told about the MRC, it disappeared from the latest *AIA Guide to New York City* to make more room for eye-gouging new developer towers along 42nd Street. Preservationists focused on the 20th century, however, have become especially attuned to issues of program, given that many Modernist structures are tailored to specific uses and bereft without them (Saarinen's TWA Terminal springs to mind).

At the MRC, the cultural value of the "bricks and mortar"—accomplished as the design may be—is simply less compelling than the buildings' ongoing societal role as a refuge. But rather than take this as a rebuke to preservation concerns, Covenant House's occupation of the facility can be understood as a convincing instance of "programmatic preservation," extending and improving on the mission of the 1960s design—and thus maintaining its truly important core. By this measure, physical changes in the service of realizing greater potential as a social refuge could, rather provocatively, be seen as fundamentally aligned with the ethics of preservation.

Covenant House is, in fact, in the course of long-term adaptations to the Tenth Avenue complex. If these are unlikely to be carried out with the same inventiveness as the 1960s work, they nevertheless continue Gueron and Lepp's strategies of reuse and adaptation. It may be that the MRC's primary interest for preservationists is the clear baseline it establishes in the effort to balance the values of physical fabric and programmatic continuity.

—Kimbro Frutiger

many thanks

DOCOMOMO NY/Tri-State would like to express our sincere appreciation to Knoll for its ongoing generosity in hosting our "Modern Conversations" series in its beautiful Chelsea showroom over the past two years. Knoll's classic furniture designed by Modern masters such as Saarinen, Breuer and Mies van der Rohe has provided a particularly appropriate setting for our talks. Thanks to everyone at Knoll and especially David Bright and German Bosquez.

Knoll will be relocating its showroom to Midtown in 2013 and has kindly invited us to continue to hold programs in the new space starting in May. We hope you can join us for more "Modern Conversations" at the new Knoll showroom in 2013.

—John Arbuckle

Knoll



TUBES: EXOSKELETON ENGINEERING AND THE TOWERS THAT CHANGED ROCHESTER'S SKYLINE

During the postwar period American urban centers were being reshaped as zoning favoring plazas and demand for signature corporate towers converged. The isolated tower on the plaza became an emblem of the modern city, opening up dense blocks of low- and mid-rise buildings, many dating to the 19th century, to light and air. Rochester, NY, is a prime example of the effect this architecture and urban planning mindset would have on smaller cities across the country.

Rochester's Community War Memorial and Monroe County Civic Center, both large-scale projects begun in the 1950s, featured buildings of contemporary design sited adjacent to a large open space, but both were at the edge of downtown and lacked a blockbuster tower. It was not until the late 1960s, following Victor Gruen's

Xerox Tower (1965–1968), Welton Becket Associates

In 1959 the Haloid Photographic Company, following in the footsteps of film giant Eastman Kodak, created a new industry in imaging: the photocopy. Later, the company would take the name that became the de-facto term for a photocopy. In the late 1960s the Xerox Corporation considered building its world headquarters in the suburbs, closer to its manufacturing and research facilities, but eventually chose to build a tower downtown, the tallest in the city—assuming that distinction from the older Kodak Tower.

Xerox chose Welton Becket Associates for the project. The architects designed a concrete and garnet-aggregate-faced tower rising a sheer 400 feet above a flared base of 12 columns to a height of 443 feet in 30 stories. The plaza incorporated a meeting hall and sunken ice rink. An additional tower was projected but was never built. Sandblasting the concrete façade was meant to expose the garnet aggregate and give the tower a gem-like twinkle but in the end only caused air quality problems during blasting.

Xerox Tower's engineering combined a concrete "waffle" slab flooring system with a centralized core and a closely spaced external cage of concrete to provide the desired open floor plan. The effect on the façade is similar to that of Yamasaki's destroyed World Trade Center towers. At certain angles the tower appears as a windowless solid, at others, a glass shaft.



ROCHESTER MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES

Rochester's three tube-in-tube towers: L to R, Lincoln First, Xerox and Marine Midland.

mixed-use Midtown Plaza (1962) in the heart of downtown, that plans for a trio of ambitious corporate towers took shape: Xerox Tower, Marine Midland Bank and Lincoln First Tower.

Advances in materials and engineering made possible a divergence of approaches to tall buildings. What is unique about Rochester's trio is that each used a tube structural system, essentially an exoskeleton that moved the load-bearing structure to the outside of the building, often with its members expressed on the façade. Interior spaces could be free of obstructions, thus providing more leasable space than would be possible with conventional engineering. This structural system was, in a way, a throwback to the masonry load-bearing wall systems that dominated construction before rigid frame and curtain wall construction made Modern skyscrapers possible. Innovative structural engineers like Myron Goldsmith, Leslie Robertson, and Fazlur Rahman Khan worked closely with architects, often becoming an associate architect of sorts, to bring about these advances.



Marine Midland: The lower image shows Khan's solution of variable column thickness to achieve the load transfer at the base.

TOP: ROCHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY; LOWER: ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

Marine Midland Bank (1968–1970), SOM

Fazlur Khan, engineer, and Bruce Graham, architect, were well-established visionaries by the time the Marine Midland Bank hired the two senior Skidmore Owings & Merrill partners to design its Rochester tower. The site was across the street from Xerox Tower and a block east of Midtown Plaza along a new stretch of road envisioned by Victor Gruen as part of a system of loop roads that would relegate the automobile to the fringes of the CBD, freeing the core for pedestrian use.

Khan and Graham developed and refined the **tube-in-tube** structural system in their Chicago buildings—most notably John Hancock Tower (1965–1969) and Sears Tower (1974–1976). However in their earlier concrete-framed tube buildings (Brunswick Building, 1962–1964; and Dewitt-Chestnut Apartments, 1963–1966) they were not completely satisfied with the solution for transferring the load of the upper structure's closely spaced slender columns to the stout, widely spaced columns required at the base. To do this, Khan had to employ a giant beam to transfer the load from the cage of concrete above to the base columns, thus making desirable open space at the building's entrances possible. This solution irritated Khan's purist tendencies. He became determined to solve the problem of routing the load of the entire structure to the base columns without the use of the transfer beam.

The result of his quest to nix the transfer beam is visible in the unique way the concrete structure of the Marine Midland Building seems to buckle and bend as it lands on its pedestal of 12 travertine-sheathed columns. Khan used computer modeling to map the gravity load on the external structure and either thickened or reduced the size of the structural members as needed. This created a visible arching effect on the lower floors of the tower. Although a relatively unknown building to most people, even in the field, the Marine Midland tower in Rochester has been the subject of studies and thesis projects due to its unique structural solution and its importance in Khan's career.

Lincoln First Tower (1969–1973)

John Graham Company

In 1969 Lincoln Rochester Trust Bank broke ground on a 400-foot, 28-story tower. Its flared profile and crenellated roofline resembled a space-age turret, or to some observers, the Atari video game logo. Though lesser

known than Welton Becket or SOM, the architect of the third tube tower, the John Graham Company, was a prominent West coast firm that counted the Seattle Space Needle of the 1962 World's Fair as one of its most visible projects. The New York office, led by Jack Follette, was responsible for the design of the tower and its accompanying pedestal-style plaza. Unlike the two earlier tube-in-tube towers, Lincoln First Tower would be a concrete/steel hybrid. The core was poured in place, followed by the erection of the tapering external steel columns and floor beams.

The tower thrusts upward and tapers from a wide base housing the banking operations to a square tower of alternating white and black verticals. The white stripes are engaged columns, half of which are structural, the other half house utility conduits. The black areas are dark tinted glass and anodized aluminum spandrel panels.

Aside from its whimsically Modern exterior, the vastness of Lincoln First's double height lobby resembles a set piece from the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The white Carrara-marble-clad core and the flaring external structure are visible and the space is unobstructed except for the twin escalators leading up to the lobby sky bridge and elevator banks. It is a very "groovy" space and worth a look during business hours.

Like many of its contemporaries, the tower experienced problems stemming from improperly mounted marble panels and panels fabricated thinner than the architect had specified. In 1984, at a cost of \$18



Lincoln First Tower: John Graham Company's tower design started with a concrete core but switched to steel to form the external structure with its signature flaring base.

million, the marble was replaced with enameled aluminum on the exterior, while some of the original panels were retained inside at plaza level.

Lincoln First is now Chase Tower, Marine Midland is HSBC Plaza and Xerox has lost the big red "X" at its roofline. All three buildings have undergone recent renovations that should allow them to continue to be viable real estate as well as the defining features of the Rochester skyline for decades to come. The forces shaping 1960s Rochester were not unlike those in other cities—urban renewal, civic optimism, corporate expansion. The engineers and architects of Rochester's trio were the ones thinking beyond the box.

—Daniel Palmer

Mod Con at Knoll

In 2011 DOCOMOMO NY/Tri-State launched its "Modern Conversations" series of informal talks on subjects related to Modern architecture and design. Our second year proved even more successful than the first. Below is a recap of the past year's talks.

If you have suggestions for future programs or would like to volunteer to help with organizing the programs please contact us at: rsvp@docomomo-nytri.org.

To receive invites to the 2013 "Modern Conversations series" be sure you are signed up for our monthly News + Events email list at: www.docomomo-nytri.org

2012 recap:

February 15: Mark Halstead

Westport Modern: Victor Civkin and Other Discoveries

April 17: Carla Yanni

The Architecture of Residence Halls in the USA: Three Case Studies

June 19: John Harwood

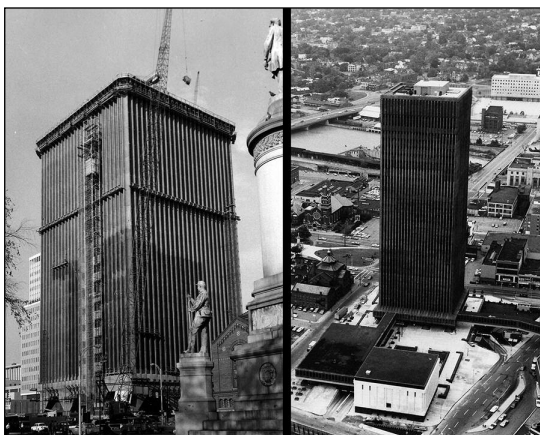
The Interface: IBM and the Transformation of Corporate Design, 1945–1976

September 19: Caroline Zaleski

Long Island Modernism 1930–1980

November 29: John Kriskiewicz

Park Avenue In Context, In Films



Xerox Tower: Welton Becket Associates' tower employed an exoskeleton of narrow concrete columns resulting in a facade that changed dramatically depending on one's the angle of view.

What's in Midtown?

These are some of the standout buildings in the proposed East Midtown rezoning that DOCOMOMO NY/Tri-State is following in its advocacy work:

- 711 Third Avenue**, William Lescaze & Associates, 1956, including lobby interior
- 777 Third Avenue/U.S. Plywood**, William Lescaze & Assoc., 1963
- 830 Third Avenue/Girl Scouts**, SOM (Roy Allen & William Meyer), 1957
- 909 Third Avenue/Post office and offices**, Max O. Urbahn + Emery Roth & Sons, 1968
- 270 Park Avenue/Union Carbide**, SOM (Gordon Bunshaft, Natalie De Blois), 1960
- 280 Park Avenue**, Emery Roth & Sons + Henry Dreyfuss, 1963
- 350 Park Avenue**, Emery Roth & Sons, 1960
- 400 Park Avenue**, Emery Roth & Sons, 1958
- 410 Park Avenue**, Emery Roth & Sons + SOM (façade), 1959
- 445 Park Avenue/Universal Pictures**, Kahn & Jacobs, 1947
- 450 Park Avenue/Franklin National Bank**, Emery Roth & Sons, 1972
- 300 East 42nd Street**, William Lescaze & Associates, 1963
- 150 East 45th Street**, Gibbons Heidtmann & Salvador, 1949; addition 1967
- 225 East 43rd Street**, Oscar I. Silverstone, 1950

Landmarked buildings in the rezone study area:

- Lever House
- Seagram Building
- Socony-Mobil Building
- Pepsi-Cola Building
- Look Building

PARK AVENUE, IN CONTEXT, IN FILMS

PARK AVENUE. The name alone conjures glamorous images in the popular imagination. For the historian, Park Avenue presents a series of mutable stages in New York City's development. For the film buff, the transformation of Park Avenue from a Beaux-Arts boulevard of masonry apartments and hotels to a premier office district of Modern glass towers is captured in a number of classic mid-century films.

Sprawling and smoky, a noisy slum of rail yards and related industries—that was Park Avenue immediately north of 42nd Street's Grand Central Depot in 1871. Between 1903 and 1913, the construction of a new Grand Central Terminal on the depot site and the sinking of the rail yards below grade made possible the construction of "Terminal City," a concept by William J. Wilgus. Completed by 1931, Terminal City transformed the rail yard slum into a Beaux-Arts-style landscaped boulevard of similarly scaled mid-rise limestone-trimmed brick apartment buildings and hotels. The distinctive tower of Warren & Wetmore's New York Central Building (1927), placed astride Park Avenue, acted as Terminal City's focal point—equal parts obelisk and arc de triomphe. Park Avenue's solid Beaux-Arts homogeneity would survive a mere generation.

A confluence of factors, immediately following the end of WW2 transformed the Avenue:

- continuation of wartime rent control made luxury apartment buildings unprofitable,
- mass movement of the managerial class to the suburbs changed the demographics of the Avenue and consequently changed Grand Central Terminal's primary use from long-distance gateway to commuter portal,
- pent up demand for modern office space in the expanding postwar economy led to a boom in commercial real estate development,
- new technologies accelerated the rapid change that was already occurring in the spatial needs of corporations.

These factors spurred development of a new high-end office district within walking distance of Grand Central.

The transformation was captured in a series of popular films shot on location between 1948 and 1961. The very newness of the buildings and the Avenue's striking modern ambiance was used by filmmakers as short hand for progress, success, and on occasion romance.

Universal Pictures Building (Kahn & Jacobs, 1947), the Avenue's first postwar office building in what had been a luxury residential district, plays a supporting role in Mark Hellinger's ground breaking film of 1948, *The Naked City*. Riding a construction elevator, we follow detectives past the prismatic repetitiveness of floor upon floor of strip windows to the roof of the stepped back tower. Built under the 1916 zoning resolution but reflecting the new aesthetic of the International Style, the Universal Pictures Building is an important link between the Avenue's past and what it will become. As detectives question a construction worker on the roof, the camera captures the neoclassical masonry facades of the residential avenue such as Warren & Wetmore's 430 Park



Hope Lange in *The Best of Everything* (1959)

Avenue (1916), soon to be supplanted by commercial development and the International Style.

In *The Best of Everything* (1959) director Jean Negulesco flies us over Manhattan for a lushly memorable title sequence juxtaposing the prewar towers of the Financial District and Midtown with the slowly awakening city. We land in front of Universal Pictures Building as the camera pans down Park Avenue to the New York Central Building, vividly exposing the construction a decade has wrought. The camera is now in front of the recently completed Seagram Building (Mies van der Rohe, Kahn & Jacobs, Philip Johnson, 1958), facing north toward the green glass façade of the pioneering Lever House (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1952). Our protagonist, Caroline Bender (Hope Lange) comes into frame. Interviewing for an entry-level job in the secretarial pool, she holds in her hand a help-wanted ad placed by a publishing firm at 375 Park Avenue—the Seagram Building. From her point of view the camera takes in the bronze and glass façade towering in splendid isolation in its plaza. The Seagram Building represents to this young aspiring editor all the promise and adventure of the new post-industrial, postwar city. Upon entering the publisher's offices, Caroline—along with her audience—takes a

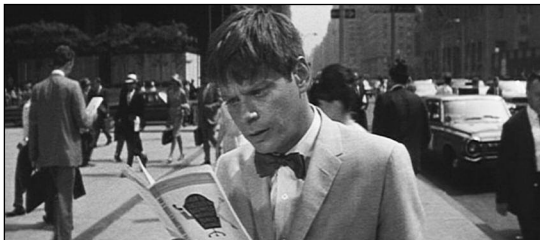


Audrey Hepburn and George Peppard in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961)

moment to contemplate the brave new world of open plan modernity. She studies the distance she will have to transverse between the open plan typing pool and the private offices of the editors at the perimeter—furnished in now classic pieces from Knoll, Herman Miller, Steelcase and Lightolier.

Many melodramatic twists and turns later Caroline has the job she dreamed of and strove for, but as she walks in isolation across the Seagram Building Plaza she has to make a pre-feminist life choice: continue in her career or marry. Her handsome love interest is waiting. Wordlessly, with Park Avenue as the backdrop, she literally removes her fashion-forward “editor’s hat” to signal her surrender to domesticity. The camera pans up and away toward the New York Central Building and the rising Union Carbide Building (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1960) under construction, as the music swells and the chorus intones “Romance is still the best of everything”.

In *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (1961) director Blake Edwards pans from the now completed Union Carbide Building to the plaza of the Seagram Building in one seamless shot as we see Holly (Audrey Hepburn) and Paul (George Peppard) contemplating the new International Style boulevard. Planning to leave the New York for a new life,



Robert Morse in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (1967)

Holly looks up the Avenue and exclaims; “They [her future children] must see this...Oh I love New York!” As the couple sits on the low verde marble wall that defines the Seagram Plaza, Paul asks; “Then why are you leaving?” In the golden light of an autumn afternoon, the calm of the plaza and bronze façade provides an intimate setting in the heart of the city as they sort out their futures.

David Swift revisits the opening sequence of *The Best of Everything* in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (1967). In less than a decade, Manhattan has been transformed from the Battery to Central Park and beyond into a corporate capital of glossy glass towers and high-rise apartment complexes that stand in contrast to the soot-begrimed landmarks of an earlier generation. Shot from the roof of the recently completed Pan Am Building (Walter Gropius, Pietro Belluschi, Emery Roth & Sons, 1963) the camera reveals a Park Avenue completely transformed by the postwar boom and the

continued page 15

MIDTOWN SURVEY BACK IN ACTION

In response to the October scoping meeting on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the East Midtown Rezoning, DOCOMOMO New York/Tri-State requested that specific Modern movement buildings in East Midtown be evaluated as part of the study, as outlined in *Task 6 - Historic and Cultural Resources*. The Proposed Action outlined in the preliminary zoning would upzone a number of sites in the area and could compromise the historic context of the targeted area and its architectural resources.

Fortunately, DOCOMOMO New York/Tri-State had completed intensive survey work on Midtown in 2004 making the current fast-track assessment feasible. Grants from the Untitled Foundation in 2003 and 2004 allowed us to conduct a preliminary study of 200 buildings in Midtown Manhattan with the assistance of Columbia University GSAPP Historic Preservation students. This work became the Midtown Modern Survey, a database of images and building information. We shared the Survey with the Landmarks Preservation Commission staff as a reference tool for its future work. In addition, it was used as the basis for an article published in the *DOCOMOMO Journal* (“The Midtown Modern Project,” Nina Rappaport, September 2004). The article outlined the issues of safeguarding vernacular corporate modern buildings as the need for sustainable upgrading intensified, issues related to maintaining the character of individual buildings as well as distinct business districts born of the Modern movement.

The postwar years in New York City were in part characterized by a large-scale building boom that transformed entire sections of the city. East Midtown Manhattan transitioned from masonry mid-rise structures to glass and steel skyscrapers. Much of the Midtown Manhattan that one experiences today was developed during this period. East Midtown exemplifies both the cultural development of new businesses that established themselves in Midtown and the architectural achievements that comprise a distinct building type pioneered in New York City.

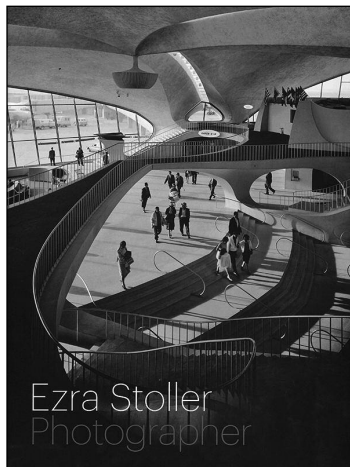
The area under consideration for rezoning holds five New York City Landmarks: Lever House, Seagram Building, Socony-Mobil Building, Pepsi-Cola Building and Look Building. These buildings inspired numerous others in both their material innovation and siting on the street grid. The setbacks and plazas of these early Midtown skyscrapers inspired a variegated streetscape that led to the 1961 New York City Zoning regulation. The standardization and mass production of curtain wall systems using extruded metal mullions and glass reinforced the systemization of corporate culture.

The EIS study area includes numerous buildings designed and constructed between 1947 and 1975 that would be impacted both directly and indirectly if the sites proposed for zoning changes were to be upzoned. Specific clusters of these buildings have significance as potential historic districts, as together they embody a postwar corporate culture unmatched in any other city in the world at the time. Mixed in are individual buildings, not yet landmarked, that should be considered for designation to safeguard their special significance and architectural character. More recently, assisted by Julie Rosen, we have continued to update and reformat of the Survey, and have shared a list of target buildings with the Landmarks Preservation Commission as Requests for Evaluation.
—Nina Rappaport



JULIE ROSEN

The Modern Library



Ezra Stoller, Photographer

Nina Rappaport and Erica Stoller, editors
Yale University Press, December 2012
288 pages
\$65 hardcover

Has a photographer ever been more allied to an architectural era than Ezra Stoller? His career spanned Modernism's apogee in the U.S., from the 1930s through the 1980s, a half-century during which he documented the landmarks of the movement. Recently released, *Ezra Stoller, Photographer*, presents Stoller as a complex artisan whose work covered many aspects of Modernism—not only architecture (for which he is best known), but industry, advertising and corporate America.

Stoller started his college education as an architecture student, but the tug of the camera came early. He graduated from New York University in 1938 with a degree in industrial design, and began taking photos for his architecture classmates. In an illuminating Preface by his daughter, Erica (who describes him as a “story-teller”) we come to understand Stoller as methodical and disciplined, an artist who documents architectural design intent through his photographs. Before beginning his shoot Stoller would talk to his architect-clients and spend hours or sometimes days at a building in order to understand it thoroughly. His storytelling helped lead the viewer through the architecture with

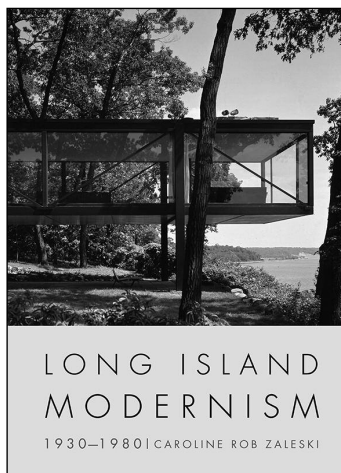
careful framing, employing a window, handrail, or some other building element to link one image to another so you could understand the movement through space. Stoller did not believe that one “money shot” could truly represent a work of architecture. Instead, his rendering of a building was comprised of a series of narrative images that told stories. Although he also shot in color, Stoller's fondness for black-and-white photography presented architectural form in its very best light and shadow. He sculpted space within the two-dimensional confines of his view camera.

Architecture was just one of Stoller's subjects. This book presents images that he produced of industrial processes, manufacturing and the corporate world. Television sets on an assembly line, the color printing process, pharmaceutical manufacture, hydro-electric power generation, laboratory research—Stoller captured these subjects and more, using the same methodical story-telling narrative that he used for architecture. Co-editor Nina Rappaport writes about Stoller's work as an industrial photographer in its historical context, and reveals how he helped his audience understand modern manufacture and science.

Three essays about Stoller's architectural photography give us different views of his work. John Morris Dixon's thorough examination of Stoller as the architectural photographer of his time is written with the benefit of Dixon's actually being there as it happened, in his many years as a distinguished editor of architectural publications. Akiko Busch writes about Stoller's photos of the postwar suburban home, while Andy Grundberg considers the artistic role of Stoller's oeuvre.

And, of course, there are the photos, a portfolio of 112 architectural works, followed by 65 industrial photos and a collection of 33 residential images. Followers of Stoller's work will find many old friends here, beautifully presented photographs that might have shaped one's architectural educa-

tion, or one's appreciation of the art, or one's architectural consciousness. For it is through Stoller's pictures that our very knowledge of Modern architecture has been shaped.
—Michael J. Crosbie



Long Island Modernism 1930–1980

Caroline Rob Zaleski
W.W. Norton, September 2012
336 pages, over 300 photos/drawings
\$80 hardcover

It's tempting to think that, as a result of a general familiarity with Long Island and a basic understanding of architecture and planning during the Modern period, one knows what was happening there: parkways and expressways, beach bungalows and big state parks, suburbanization and the rise of a weekend utopia at the eastern reaches. Caroline Zaleski's *Long Island Modernism 1930–1980* has arrived to clarify what was really happening on the longest, largest island in the lower 48, and why.

The book is more than a field study. Zaleski weaves extensive archival research, interviews and miles on the byways into a social and cultural history of Modernism on Long Island. From the mid 1930s on, architectural experimentation flourished, intensifying as the prevailing exuberance of the postwar years led civic and business leaders and indi-

viduals to embrace modernity and aesthetic unknowns.

Zaleski organized the book in 25 chapters, each covering the work of an architect or firm. The narrative benefits from research on 61 others that were part of Zaleski's field survey conducted for the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities. All 86 are included in an appendix listing their completed buildings in Nassau and Suffolk counties. Zaleski's detail-rich narrative reveals several crosscutting themes.

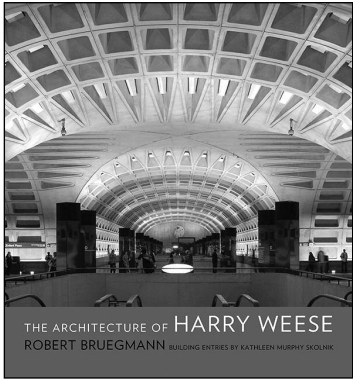
Exurbia begot suburbia. Roosevelt Field Shopping Center (1956, I.M. Pei's first large-scale project) replaced an airfield, and Levittown, potato fields. The great estates were divvied up for prize-view house lots or experimental SUNY campuses (Old Westbury and Stony Brook, stories in themselves, are covered in fascinating depth).

The Modernists were never afraid of new materials. In 1934, Lawrence Kocher used painted canvas wall panels to mimic aluminum on his weekend house. Domed Lucite skylights, probably some of the earliest, found a place in a house by John Stedman in 1953. Ultrasuede debuted not just in Halston's spring collection, but in Paul Rudolph's 1970 Deane house. Nor were they afraid to venture beyond the glass-laden frame building. The book's images surprise at every page turn and their large size pulls you into the design details.

Particularly fascinating is the network of influence and exchange that crossed social and professional alliances on Long Island. It's safe to say that the Harrisons, through Wallace's professional network or Ellen's family and social circles, were rarely out of the loop. Breuer was right up there.

When Zaleski writes that Rudolph's houses have stood the test of time because they “never lost the sense of being from the future,” she could be talking about much of Long Island's Modern architecture. It's there and this book will help you discover it.

—Kathleen Randall



The Architecture of Harry Weese

Robert Brueggemann
W.W. Norton, 2010
240 pages
\$60 hardcover

Aficionados of Modern architecture who are interested in “outliers” who have expanded the sometimes narrowly defined canon of Modernism (locally Edward Durell Stone and Albert Ledner come quickly to mind) should enjoy *The Architecture of Harry Weese* by Robert Brueggemann.

A Chicago architect, Harry Weese (1915–1998) may not be familiar to New York architectural observers. Even in Chicago, Weese was seen to be out of the mainstream, frequently highlighted as a pioneer maverick (along with Bertrand Goldberg and Walter Netsch) in contradistinction to the Mies–SOM–C.F. Murphy “Chicago School” of structural expression.

Brueggemann’s introductory essay includes considerable biographical content and discusses Weese’s diverse interests and architectural ideas. I was interested to learn that Weese maintained close relationships with Eero Saarinen, I. M. Pei, Ralph Rapson and Edward Larrabee Barnes, which led to referrals and collaborations—e.g. numerous commissions in Columbus, IN from Saarinen’s client J. Irwin Miller, and collaborations with Pei on the Hyde Park redevelopment project in Chicago and with Barnes at Crown Center in Kansas City.

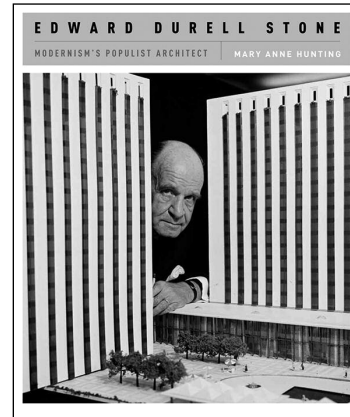
Weese was a pioneer in many ways. He was concerned with relating buildings to their neighborhood context before such thinking became *de rigueur*; his residential designs in Chicago often incorporated traditional architectural elements like bay windows, masonry arches and quasi-mansard roofs. He was interested in historic preservation at a time when few Modern architects were; his projects included restoration of Louis Sullivan’s Auditorium Theatre and conversions of old loft buildings for residential use. His interests extended beyond individual buildings to urban design and planning; he produced numerous schemes for improving Chicago’s lakefront and transit system. These concerns bore fruit in what is perhaps his most prominent commission, the design of the Washington, DC Metro system.

Weese’s activities also strayed beyond architecture and design. He collaborated with his wife, Kitty Baldwin Weese, in establishing a retail business specializing in modern furnishings, for which Harry designed the shop interior—an enterprise not unlike Ben and Jane Thompson’s Design Research in Cambridge, MA. He engaged in real estate development, on Chicago’s North Side and at Printer’s Row at the south edge of Chicago’s Loop, where former industrial loft buildings were converted to residential use. For many years Weese funded, published and wrote for *Inland Architect*, extending the life of that historic Chicago architectural journal. And somehow, besides all that, Weese remained a lifelong active sailor.

The project descriptions, written by Kathleen Murphy Skolnik, which comprise the bulk of the book are not comprehensive, but illustrate the variety of Weese’s work and the breadth of his ideas. (My disappointment at the omission of a prominent Weese building in my home town, the Milwaukee Performing Arts Center, was compensated by the inclusion of a lesser known but more innovative, modest yet urbane office building for IBM on that city’s main downtown street.)

All in all, the book provides a thorough and insightful account of the wide-ranging career of an amazingly multifaceted architect, which is long overdue.

—Kyle Johnson



Edward Durell Stone: Modernism’s Populist Architect

Mary Anne Hunting
W.W. Norton, November 2012
176 pages, 190 photos; 48 drawings
\$55 hardcover

The reputation of Edward Durell Stone is certainly one of the most fought over of American Modern architects. He is first seen as the rake who presented the good times decoration of the Art Deco period in Radio City Music Hall and then as the good soldier of modernism, designing the first MoMA building and finally as the apostate who prefigured the decorative postmodern era with the Gallery of Modern Art at Columbus Circle.

This year he is honored with two biographies, one by his son, the architect Hicks Stone and one by the historian Mary Anne Hunting.

The Hicks Stone biography is noted for the emotional content of a family reminiscence and a son’s attempt to reclaim the reputation of his father from the gossipy scandal of his time and the negative opinion of his work that followed the end of his career.

The Hunting book, *Edward Durell Stone: Modernism’s Populist Architect*, is the somber side compared to the Hicks Stone book. It is measured and methodical in its singular argument that Stone is underestimated and unfairly maligned in the profession. Stone, in Hunting’s view, was part of the inevitable absorption of modernism into American culture that led to postmodernism (from a European to an American sensibility) and was an unfortunate lightning rod for criticism of a larger group of architects including Yamasaki, Saarinen and Johnson.

Hunting sees Stone as more American than we would want to admit when she says about the Columbus Circle building: “...through the quality of kitsch—embodied in the building’s stylized historical memories, its challenge to the patently modern masculine disposition, and what’s more, its failed seriousness—Stone succeeded in engaging a general audience.” Stone had achieved popular success and was therefore immediately dated in the fast-moving trend cycle and isolated from the more formal architectural status signifiers.

Hunting’s admirable and meticulous research is shown in the range of information she has gleaned from sources high and low, illustrated in unusual items such as a “love” poem referencing Stone by Buckminster Fuller and an ad for a 1948 “Futurama” Oldsmobile with a futuristic Stone house in the background. Readers will enjoy the 190 photos and the 48 building plans that have been redrawn for graphic clarity and consistency.

If the life of Edward Durell Stone was made into a movie, it would be a mash-up of the 1934 *Fountainhead* and the 1950 *Sunset Boulevard*. The overheated heroism of the first countered by the fall from fame of the second, all the while wrapped in the stage set glamour of the 1950s, red velvet curtains and gold anodized aluminum.

—Christian Bjone

TWO DISTINCTIVE MODERN INTERIORS MAY SOON DISAPPEAR FROM THE MIDTOWN MANHATTAN CITYSCAPE

Hoffman Auto Showroom

Mercedes-Benz has announced plans to vacate its Frank Lloyd Wright-designed showroom at 430 Park Avenue, originally designed for Maximilian Hoffman and constructed in 1954.

The space features a spiral ramp surrounding a turntable for auto display, within a constricted space that is visually expanded by the application of mirrors to interior columns and on the ceiling above the turntable (the latter part of a 1982 renovation by Taliesin Associated Architects).

The showroom is one of only four executed spiral designs by Wright, culminating in the multi-tiered Guggenheim Museum. Its siblings are the 1948 V.C. Morris shop in San

Francisco and the 1950 David Wright house in Phoenix, AZ. The December 20 announcement that the David Wright house has been saved and awaits landmark designation leaves the Hoffman Showroom as the sole unprotected built work from Wright's experimentation with the spiral.

DOCOMOMO NY/Tri-State has expressed its support for the Request for Evaluation of the showroom submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission by the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy.

Ambassador Grill and Lounge

While there is still hope for Wright's auto showroom, the fate of Kevin Roche's Ambassador Grill and Lounge at the UN Plaza Hotel appears to be sealed.

Millennium Hotels has announced plans to update the hotel's lobby spaces, restaurant and bar, deeming the mirrored surfaces of the original 1975 design, as well as the 1983 lobby expansion into the newly constructed 2 UN Plaza tower, outdated. Ironically, the still near-intact 1970s design has survived long enough to once again approach fashionability—as well as qualify for landmark designation.

One is left to wonder whether the hotel might be better served by updating the restaurant's cuisine and bar offerings and expanding its operating hours. Sacrificing its distinctive design—once celebrated by both Ada Louise Huxtable and Paul Goldberger—removes it from the ranks of Schultze

& Weaver's Waldorf-Astoria and I. M. Pei's Four Seasons to the realm of generic "branded" hotels.
—Kyle Johnson



Ambassador Grill



Hoffman Auto Showroom (now Mercedes Benz) on Park Avenue, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1954.



K. RANDALL



Ambassador Lounge at UN Plaza Hotel, Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates, 1975.

LEFT AND ABOVE: COURTESY KRJDA



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FARNSWORTH ILLUSTRATION: KIMBRO FRUITGER

VILLA TUGENDHAT CONTINUED

a house museum and study center for Brno architecture from the 19th century forward, was inaugurated on March 2, 2012.

Photographer David Židlický closed the presentation with his take on how the Tugendhat family photo collection shows the symbiosis of the villa and the artistic inclinations of the family that occupied it. More specifically, he expanded on the relationship between Modern architecture and the lives of intellectuals at a particular time in Brno. We learned that the Tugendhats made the first color photograph taken in Czechoslovakia at the villa. With a Bolex camera in tow, Fritz Tugendhat captured the spirit and atmosphere of the house during the eight years the family lived there. Židlický shared intimate portraits of family members, as well as wonderful vistas of Brno through the now iconic glass wall of the main living space. He reminded us that the building was prominently featured on the cover of the companion book to the seminal 1932 MoMA exhibit, "The International Style." The years following the abandonment of the house were also captured in photographs showing the villa's varied incarnations along with images of its almost complete neglect to the point of ruin.

The seminar was followed by the official opening of the photo exhibit,

"Villa Tugendhat—Mies in Brno." Divided into eight sections, the exhibit summarizes the history of economic prosperity in Brno, the persons behind creation of the villa, particular construction stages, as well as the social-political history of the building recounting its glory days, its decline, and finally its recent renaissance and restoration.

To close the day's activities, the film "The Fate of the Tugendhat Name" had its international premiere. The documentary by Czech Television was filmed in Spring 2012 and presents significant moments in the history of the villa and the life of the Tugendhat family.

The Brno Days proceedings revealed the unusually complex and determined forces—both individual and collective—behind the 40-plus year return of the Villa Tugendhat to its trailblazing 1930s design and physical beauty. The City of Brno has an impressive collection of Modern architecture and is particularly proud of its newest monument. —Hänsel Hernández-Navarro

Editors Note: The Villa Tugendhat is open for tours six days a week. Space is limited and reservations one month ahead are recommended. For tour details, history, photo galleries and more visit: <http://www.tugendhat.eu/en>

PARK AVENUE CONTINUED

1961 zoning ordinances that, circuitously, were influenced by the planning parti of Lever House and the Seagram Building.

Emerging from the subway we follow J. Pierpont Finch (Robert Morse) as he picks up a self-help book at a newsstand—*How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. Panning down Park Avenue we follow Finch past the Banker's Trust Building (Emery Roth & Sons with Henry Dreyfuss, 1962) onto the plaza and inside the entrance of the Union Carbide Building (Gordon Bunshaft and Natalie de Blois, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1960), which plays the role of the World Wide Wickets company headquarters. Dressed in a suit as he walks into the building, Finch next appears on the roof of the tower in his yellow window washer's coveralls about to step into the window washing gondola (a technology first pioneered in 1952 at Lever House by Kenneth Young of SOM). Dangling more than 50 stories above the avenue, he still clutches the book. Emery Roth & Sons' 277 Park Avenue (1962), which in reality stands directly across Park Avenue, acts as the stand-in for World Wide Wickets in this scene because its rooftop pipe railing afforded the cinematographer panoramic views of the 1960s skyscraper city. At Union Carbide a solid Miesian parapet extending beyond the roof in homage to the Seagram Building precluded such views, hence the use of 277

Park Avenue as a stand-in.

Finch rides the gondola down the façade of 277 where he finds his way to the window of the reception area of World Wide Wickets, all the while singing the advice he is reading: "How to commute, in a three button suit...." As he steps through the window (impossible in the new hermetically sealed towers, but possible in a Hollywood musical, for which a perfect replica of 277 Park Avenue's facade has been created on a sound stage) he slips off his yellow coveralls to join the ranks of the managerial class in his grey suit and bow tie, book in hand. With Finch ensconced in what we think is the glass tower of Union Carbide the narrator intones, from the book: "...a company large enough that no one knows exactly what the other fellow is doing." The transparency of the International Style office building, in these scenes, is a metaphor for upward mobility afforded by the permeable yet anonymous large corporation.

A half a century later, Park Avenue is potentially on the cusp of another transformation in the form of the Grand Central/East Midtown District rezoning. What will remain of this no longer new, but iconic boulevard of International Style towers? We will always have this cinematic record of not only the physical form, but the cultural messages of Park Avenue's all-star skyscraper ensemble.

—John Kriskiewicz

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NEWSLETTER 2012/No. 2

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