

Dominated by a presidential election and the opening of The New York World's Fair, 1964 was witness to the Beatles, Pop Art, the Space Race, the signing of the Civil Rights Act and passage of the fateful Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Apropos, the year's anthem was Bob Dylan's "The Times, They Are a-Changin'."

The anthem of change applied to architecture as well. Unlike the seemingly elegant conformity

New York State Theater at Lincoln Center and Alvar Aalto's Edgar J. Kaufmann Conference Room survive to transport us back to 1964. In memoriam, we have Edward Durell Stone's Huntington Hartford Gallery of Modern Art at Two Columbus Circle. Philip Johnson and Richard Foster's New York State Pavilion from the 1964/65 World's Fair continues to remind us that architecture—even as ruin—can inspire powerful emotions, nostalgia aside.



of Modern architecture of the 1950s, some of the most significant buildings of 1964 reflected a quest for relevant architectural expression in a period of accelerating cultural commotion. There was as yet no sign of panic or mutiny, but leading architects were discreetly taking a turn from what they had done the decade before. In Connecticut, 1964 brought Gordon Bunshaff's sumptuous Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale and Victor Lundy's wildly sculpted Unitarian Meeting House in Hartford. In New Jersey 1964 saw Wallace Harrison's Institute of Advanced Studies/Social Science Library at Princeton, another highly sculptural roof structural system integrated with warm wood interiors, and Lundy's punch card-textured, Pre-Columbian-inspired IBM Building in Cranford. On Long Island, Paul Rudolph's Endo Labs in Garden City continued the vocabulary of highly textured, complexly sculpted forms, perplexing many a passerby on the parkway.

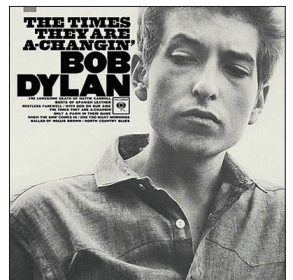
In New York City, four buildings from 1964 give a sense of change in the air: Philip Johnson's

THE TIMES

The trauma of November 22, 1963, was felt around the globe. Shock, confusion, melancholy. What sort of country had we become? JFK's vice president, suddenly President Lyndon Johnson, shepherded his ambitious Great Society agenda to continue Kennedy's domestic priorities and to square the circle of military intervention abroad and social justice at home. What would become known as the Credibility Gap ended up thwarting many of the Johnson administration's loftiest goals.

What was obvious in this period of growing unease was that the country was changing. Demographers note that 1964 was the last year of the post-WWII Baby Boom. 78.3 million Americans were born between 1946 and 1964; by 1964 many were in their teens. Widely documented and debated, the effect of this demographic bubble was cleverly summarized by *Vogue* fashion editor Diana Vreeland as the "youthquake."

André Courrèges introduced his "Space Age" collection inspired by the geometric shapes and new materials of Modern architecture. The themes of Space, Technology and Futurism still held positive associations in 1964. Accessories included helmets, goggle-like sunglasses and short white boots...perfect to wear dancing in the new dis-



cothèque, “a go-go.” Hemlines made headlines at three inches above the knee. Mary Quant coined the term “Mini” for the short fashions that would define the youthfulness of the decade. Rudi Gernreich’s topless bathing suit was a provocateur’s statement of youth culture and rapidly changing sexual mores.

The Beatles dominated the airwaves in 1964 with a highly original, beguiling synthesis of early American Rock & Roll and Rhythm & Blues that put 12 songs on the Billboard charts in April alone. However, the same “Billboard Hot One Hundred” included Folk, Surf, Instrumentals, the R&B artists of Motown and Stax, the “wall of sound” of Phil Spector and Bosa Nova from Getz, Jobim and Gilberto. Well-known artists from previous decades explored new genres; Louis Armstrong had a hit with “Hello Dolly” from Broadway while, Nat King Cole’s “Ramblin’ Rose” had a country flavor. Popular music ruled the turntables and air waves and it was all over the map.

Growing unease with nuclear weapons was keenly expressed in two popular films. *Fail Safe* offered a sober warning of the danger of nuclear brinkmanship. *Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love The Bomb* was a dark comedy whose premise would have been unthinkable as the subject of a major Hollywood film just a few years before.

THE ARCHITECTURE

Reflecting on the year’s architecture, critic Eugene Raskin thought it was “...most notable for the kinds of efforts that were made to break away from the overriding pattern of the preceding decade—functionalism.” He noted “There was a sharp revolt in 1964 against unemotional structure exposition in favor of more dashing and expressionistic approaches. ‘Excitement’ is the key word and efforts

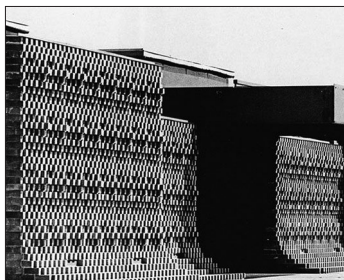
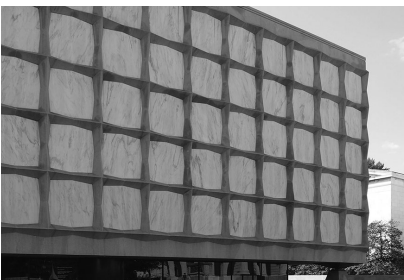
to achieve excitement ranged from the inspired... to the desperate.”

EDGAR J. KAUFMANN CONFERENCE ROOM
 “Inspired,” critics agreed, describes Alvar Aalto’s Edgar J. Kaufmann Conference Room, completed in 1964 in a loft-like space overlooking the United Nations and the East River at the top of Harrison, Abramowitz & Harris’s 12-story Institute of International Education. Aalto’s wave-form ceiling flows upward across the space to double-height windows at the terrace. At the donor’s request, the rooms were fabricated under Aalto’s direction in Finland to ensure both unity of design and a high level of craftsmanship. Birch, ash and plaster are punctuated by expanses of cobalt blue tiles. These signature Aalto materials are bathed by daylight filtered through birch screens mounted on the upper half of the glass wall. At night, as the United Nations complex is illuminated, the interior takes on an unexpected glamour as gold-plated copper fixtures lend a warm glow.

Ada Louise Huxtable praised the space as “the most beautiful and distinguished interior in New York in many years.” It was not only the superbly crafted details, but “the sensitive and loving manipulation” of the architectural space which she found “frankly sensuous rather than severe.”

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD GALLERY OF MODERN ART

Critics tended to place Edward Durell Stone’s Huntington Hartford Gallery of Modern Art at Two Columbus Circle at the desperate end of Raskin’s spectrum of efforts at architectural excitement. Raskin remarked “that this design should come from the boards of the truly talented Mr. Stone is taken by many of his admirers as that inconsistency that makes him human” That was gentlemanly com-

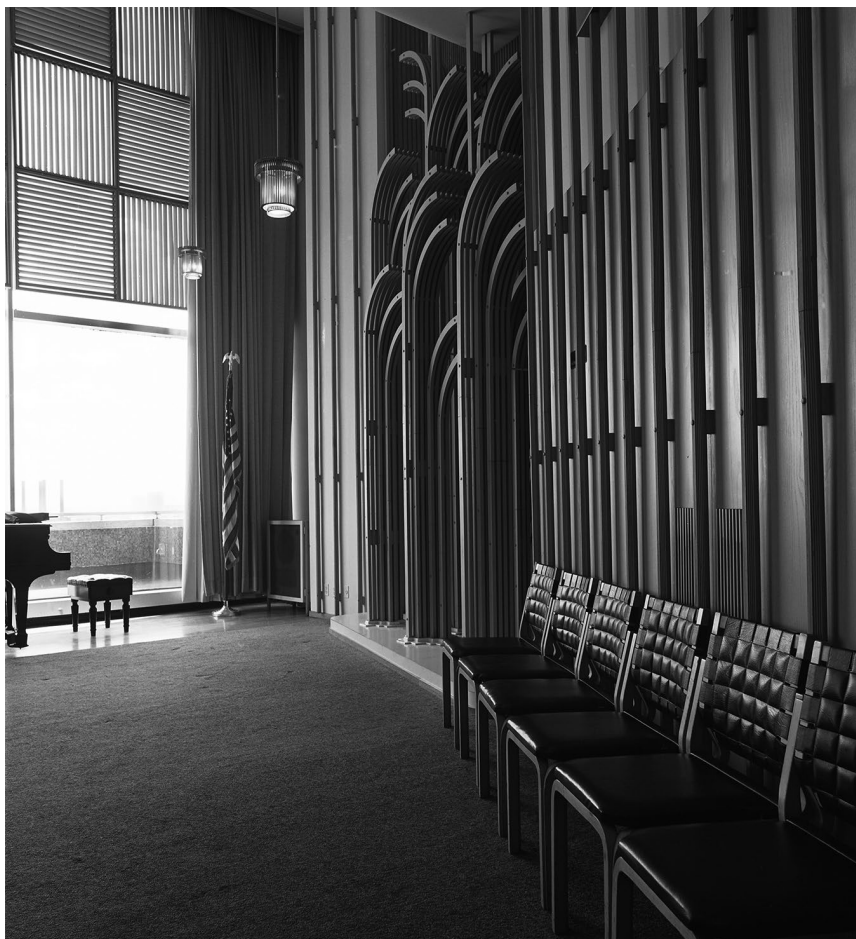


pared to the firestorm the building provoked when it was completed in 1964. From the beginning, the project seemed problematic. An overly ambitious program required a 154-seat auditorium, an espresso bar and restaurant, galleries, curatorial and storage spaces on a constricted site facing a deteriorating Columbus Circle. Add to the equation a millionaire playboy client with an exuberantly revanchist curatorial program.

Today, it is hard to see what all the fuss was about, architecturally. During the previous decade, Stone had moved away from strict Modernist tenets and began to fuse the formalism of his

early Beaux-Arts training with a romantic historicism. "I believe the inspiration for a building should be in the accumulation of history" Stone wrote in 1962. The inconsistency of these ideas with those of the Modern tenets of the day was damned as heresy. Yet today, Stone's concern for context, unexpected changes in scale, playful allusions to the past and the vernacular seem to have been prescient.

In his 1964 book, *God's Own Junkyard; The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape*, the architect and *Architectural Forum* editor Peter Blake makes an impassioned case against the "venality, vulgarity and general, if not systematic 'uglification' of the environment." Illustrating his thesis are photographs of Las Vegas, Times Square, suburbia, vernacular roadside structures and cityscapes, all anathema to the diagrammatic purity of Modernism. While Blake was railing, Robert Venturi would be



Edgar J. Kaufmann Conference Room at Institute of International Education, Alvar Aalto, 1964, New York. Photo: © Wijnanda Deroo. Courtesy: Robert Mann Gallery, New York.

formulating his "gentle manifesto." *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, published in 1966 a scant two years after Blake's, took an approach to understanding architectural composition and complexity drawing from both vernacular and high-style sources. Venturi uses some of the same photographs to draw opposite conclusions. Where Blake saw 'uglification,' Venturi saw richness and interest.

NEW YORK STATE THEATER

Two works by Philip Johnson highlight his facility to surf the wave of changing architectural attitudes in the mid-Sixties. Complexity and contradiction, playfulness and celebration, as well as a strong sense that the architecture was designed to encourage public participation are hallmarks of his New York State Theater at Lincoln Center and New York State Pavilion at the 1964/65 New York World's Fair at



Huntington Hartford Gallery of Modern Art, Edward Durell Stone, 1959–1964, Columbus Circle, New York. Photo: © Ezra Stoller/Esto.

Flushing Meadows. The buildings opened in 1964 a day apart—April 21 and April 22 respectively—and represented New York State’s participation on the World’s Fair stage and governor Nelson Rockefeller’s progressive stance regarding art, architecture and culture.

The New York State Theater was more consciously baroque than Max Abromowitz’s 1962 essay in space age classicism across the plaza. Philip Johnson employed the same travertine cladding as Philharmonic Hall, but continued the material inside to the walls and floor of an intimately scaled lobby and up sinuous stairs that appeared carved of the material rather than veneered. At the top is a piano nobile lobby of grand proportions conceived as a

living room for the people of New York State. This overt historicism as well as certain architectural details expose Johnson’s changing loyalties and interests by 1964. Where travertine meets bronze, a reveal is subtly employed to separate the materials in the Miesian fashion, as in Johnson’s 1959 Four Seasons restaurant at the Seagram Building. By contrast, exterior and interior lighting fixtures are overscaled “brilliant,” a nod to *au courant* Pop or camp sensibilities.

“But is this homage or parody?” John Morris Dixon wrote in *Progressive Architecture*. Dixon praised Johnson’s use of materials, classical vocabulary, and spatial organization at the New York State Theater, but questioned the auditorium

detailing. “At this point, it seems Johnson ran out of both steam and travertine.” Critic Olga Gueft noted that despite praise from some quarters, the reaction of the scholar-journalist is “...more ambivalent” to the point that Johnson stood “...accused of the sin of abandoning his Miesian apprenticeship. A defection to romanticism more annoying than Edward Stone’s.”

THE 1964/65 WORLD’S FAIR

The World’s Fair precisely illustrates this feeling of transition. The Fair was conceived in 1958, a period of relative consensus regarding Modern architecture, the role of technology, and the hierarchy of what defined high, middle and low culture. By the time the fair opened these orthodoxies were



New York State Theater at Lincoln Center, Philip Johnson, 1957–1964, New York. Photo: © Ezra Stoller/Esto.

being questioned, if not subverted. Sometimes the subversion, unsanctioned of course, could be found at the Fair itself.

Ken Kesey, author of *Sometimes a Great Notion*, and his band of Merry Pranksters inverted the traditional route of American manifest destiny by traveling in a psychedelic painted school bus from California east to the Fair. As chronicled in the 2011 documentary “Magic Trip,” Kesey and the Pranksters visited the Fair to explore what would happen when hallucinogenic-inspired spontaneity confronted what he saw as the banality and conformity of American society. The counterculture, along with civil rights and anti-war protests, confronted the escapist consumer fantasies promoted at the Fair.

Most cultural critics were harsh in their evaluation of the 1964 Fair. For many architectural critics it seemed like an opportunity lost. *Life* magazine opined “the Fair is all candy colored bright, in a world that is in fact harsh.” In retrospect, the Fair put into bright contrast the growing chasm between postwar suburban American triumphalism and a

rising generation questioning those values. This rift would soon be known as the Generation Gap.

Ada Louise Huxtable anticipated Venturi when she conceded that although the Fair was “everything that the critics predicted it would be—disconnected, grotesque, lacking any unity of concept or style...yet it is just those accidental juxtapositions and cockeyed contrasts built in to the Fair that gave it its particular attraction and charm.”

NEW YORK STATE PAVILION AT THE FAIR

“Runaway success, day or night...a sophisticated frivolity...seriously and beautifully constructed... this is carnival with class” was Huxtable’s reaction to Philip Johnson and Richard Foster’s New York State Pavilion. Art critic Max Kozloff found it “more agreeably kitsch than Johnson’s new theater at Lincoln Center.”

The Pavilion is actually a trio of structures. A 100-foot diameter Theaterama immersed fairgoers in a 360-degree film touting the state of New York. Pop Art by Warhol, Rosenquist, Raushenburg, and



Tent of Tomorrow interior, New York State Pavilion, Philip Johnson and Richard Foster, 1962–1964, Flushing Meadows, Queens, NY. Photo: © Ezra Stoller/Esto.

Lichtenstein punctuating the façade. Three observation towers—the tallest at 260 feet—featured glass-walled elevators. The 250-by-350-foot elliptical Tent of Tomorrow had the world's largest cable-supported roof when built. As executed by engineer Lev Zetlin, the roof was supported by monumentally scaled slip-formed concrete columns at its perimeter and sheltered 50,000 square feet of open space. The roof was constructed on the ground and hydraulically jacked 100 feet up the columns.

Programmed under this colorful translucent fiberglass roof was the embodiment of those accidental juxtapositions that Huxtable praised. The architecture welcomed participation. One

could walk into the Tent of Tomorrow and view 19th-century Hudson River School paintings or a fashion show; enjoy a small town marching band from upstate or participate in a twist dance contest. This informal commingling of high and popular culture anticipated the world we live in today more presciently than the officially scripted future portrayed throughout most of the Fair. And the pace of change was accelerating. The World of Tomorrow had become as one critic quipped in 1964: "the World of Already."

A sense of generational change. A new pop sensibility. A re-discovery of sensuality, playfulness and symbolism. Alvar Aalto's Edgar J. Kaufman Conference Room, Edward Durrell Stone's Huntington

Hartford Gallery of Modern Art, Philip Johnson's New York State Theater and Philip Johnson and Richard Foster's New York State Pavilion enrich our comprehension and appreciation of a year of youthquake, transition, commotion, eclecticism—of the a-Changin' time that was 1964.

—JOHN KRISKIEWICZ

Title block: Briget Riley, Pause, 1964. Photos pages 30 & 31, L to R: NYS Pavilion postcard, collection of the author; Bob Dylan LP cover, © Columbia Records; Skidmore Owings & Merrill, Beinecke Library in New Haven, CT, 1964, photo: John Arbuckle; Victor Lundy, IBM Building in Cranford, NJ, 1964, found at www.loudpaper.typepad.com; André Courrèges, Space Age collection, found at www.formidablemag.com/andre-courreges.