

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name 1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion

other name/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number Flushing Meadows-Corona Park  not for publication

city or town Flushing N/A vicinity

state New York code NY county Queens code 081 zip code 11368

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Name of Property

Queens County, New York  
County and State

### 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

- public-local
- private
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(check only one box)

- district
- building(s)
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

2

3

buildings  
sites  
structures  
objects  
Total

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE/ world's fair

RECREATION & CULTURE/theater

RECREATION & CULTURE/art gallery

#### Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE/theater

vacant: Tent of Tomorrow/Observation Towers

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

Walls concrete

roof concrete, steel

other glass

#### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1    **DESCRIPTION**

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**Summary**

The New York State Pavilion consists of two structures and one building of reinforced concrete and steel construction located in the southern portion of the central section of Corona Park in Flushing Meadows, Queens. The park was created as the product of the 1939-40 World's Fair and also served as the site of the 1964-65 World's Fair. The New York State Pavilion stands in the former federal and state exhibition area, one of five areas of the Fair. The three components of the Pavilion are placed in a symmetrical composition oriented on an essentially north-south axis. The largest structure, the "Tent of Tomorrow", is elliptical in plan, and stands at the southernmost position. It consists of a perimeter of slip-form, hollow, reinforced concrete columns that support what was at the time of the Fair the largest cable suspension roof in the world, and which encloses a steel mezzanine promenade and exhibition deck that in turn surrounds a terrazzo floor with a map of New York State.

To the northwest of the Tent stands the Observation Towers, the tallest structure of the Fair. The three towers consist of concrete columns that are essentially identical to those of the Tent except in their varying height (the tallest is over 200-feet high) and observation platforms of steel construction formerly accessed by two elevators on the western tower. The final component of the Pavilion is the Theaterama, originally a single, drum-shaped volume of reinforced concrete. The Theaterama has been added onto twice: an entry volume was placed on the west of the building in 1992-1993. This was augmented in 2008-2009 by a round glass lobby volume, again on the west, and an administration and café theater wing on the north. As a whole, the Pavilion retains integrity of location, design, structural materials and workmanship, association and feeling, thereby being able to convey its significance under Criteria A and C.

**Narrative Description**

***Setting***

The New York State Pavilion of the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair in Flushing, New York, was designed and built in 1962-1964 by the architect Philip Johnson (1906-2005) of the firm of Philip Johnson and Richard Foster. The Pavilion is located in the southern end of the central portion of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, which served as the site of both the 1939-1940 World's Fair and the 1964-1965 World's Fair. The Pavilion sits approximately 700-feet to the north of the Long Island Expressway and 400-feet to the east of Grand Central Parkway.

The relatively flat and open topography of Corona Park, which straddles the Long Island Expressway and Grand Central Parkway, retains a selected number of features of both the 1939-1940 and 1964-1965 Fairs, including the Meadow Lake, a group of processional and radiating roadways, fountains and basins, sculptures, and a number of structures and buildings, including the Queens Museum and the Unisphere to the north of the New York State Pavilion. This is generally typical for World's Fair buildings and structures since most structures and buildings were intended as temporary and were demolished after the respective fairs. The

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 2      **DESCRIPTION**

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Unisphere, a stylized steel globe, served as the symbol of the 1964-1965 Fair's main themes of "Peace through Understanding" and "Man's Achievement on a Shrinking Globe in an Expanding Universe." It is arguably the most recognized historic feature of the park, in addition to the New York State Pavilion. The areas between the roadways are maintained as open lawn with evergreen and deciduous trees both interspersed and clustered in different locations, often adjacent to or near the roadways. To the north of the Unisphere, New York Pavilion, and Queens Museum is the large complex of buildings and structures of the National Tennis Center and Citifield (the ballpark that replaced Shea Stadium).

During the time of the Fair, the Pavilion was located in the southern portion of the federal and states exhibition area, which was one of five that included the international and industrial (the largest) areas to the east of the federal and states area; the lake amusement area just to the north of the Meadow Lake on the south side of the Long Island Expressway; and the transportation area that took up the portion of the park to the west of Grand Central Parkway. The majority of the state exhibitions occupied "blocks" or areas that were separated from each other by the roadway system of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, and which survives to the present. The Pavilion occupies one of the largest of these blocks of all the former state exhibitions: Block 46. Like the other former states' exhibition areas, Block 46 is bounded on all sides by asphalt roadways, the southern segment of which is asymmetrically curvilinear with respect to the north-south axis. Block 46 is bounded on the north by United Nations Avenue South and on the west by the Avenue of the States. The roadways to the south and east are unnamed. The area around the block of the Pavilion is generally open, and is landscaped with lawns and groups of trees with the roadway system from the Fair creating intervening avenues.

***New York State Pavilion Complex***

The Pavilion consists of three components that form a single resource. These components are the two structures known as the Observation Towers and the "Tent of Tomorrow" and one building called the Theaterama (now the Queens Theater in the Park. The three components are arranged in a symmetrical composition that lies on a nearly north-south axis, with the Observation Towers on the northwest of the tent and the Theaterama on the northeast. In addition to their ordered arrangement, the three components are unified as a single resource by their common, relatively simple curvilinear geometry and by a common palette of their visible construction materials of painted steel and exposed, smooth-finish, reinforced concrete. As part of the original design, the structures and building were also unified by a decorative tripartite primary color scheme of red, yellow and blue against a background of white (unpainted) concrete, although this is less evident today with the loss of decorative roofing materials and secondary components such as lamp shades. Yellow paint is still visible on steel surfaces throughout the Pavilion. Although massive in scale and sophisticated in structure and engineering, the components in some ways are relatively simple, and thus monumental in design conception.

The original plan of all three components of the Pavilion is based on "pure" curvilinear geometric forms which, at their large scale, contribute to the monumentality of the original design. Specifically, in plan, the three circles of the decks of the Observation Towers are distributed equally and radially within the circle of the ground-level entry enclosure. The Theaterama's original, drum-shaped volume is of equal diameter as the entry enclosure.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 3      **DESCRIPTION**

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The two, round-plan components thus fronted the elliptical plan of the tent structure on the south, creating a longitudinal composition that filled out Block 46. Because of the size of the Pavilion, this geometry is not particularly evident on the ground, but is clear in plan and through aerial photography.

The former main entrance to the complex during the Fair lay between the three components on the north side. There, visitors could reach all three from a circular plaza fronted on the north by a shallow set of steps and diagonal paths leading from the perimeter roads on the northwestern and northeastern corners of the Block. This entry way has been altered by changes to the Theaterama which has placed the new lobby entry on this plaza. Plantings for the Fair consisted mainly of trees at the northwest and northeast corners of the Tent to control foot traffic and direct visitors to the entrances to the three components of the Pavilion. Currently, the landscaping in this area consists principally of the entrance pathway to the Queens Theater in the Park lobby addition to the Theaterama. Yellow "lollipop" lights (metal globes that housed spotlights) could be found in a number of locations around the Pavilion site but most have been removed. During the Fair, large scale signs in block letters with a sans serif font identified the individual components of the Pavilion, as well as the exhibitions within the Tent. These were removed after the Fair's use of the Pavilion.

***Observation Towers***

As noted, the Observation Towers stand in the northeast section of the Pavilion. At ground level, the Towers rise from a circular concrete platform that is encircled by the original enclosure, which in turn consists of reinforced concrete uprights that formerly featured on the outside a schematic map of the state of New York within a medallion and doubled steel top rail (consisting of an inner and outer ring), as well as a steel wainscot rail. Formerly the wainscot rail was located around most of the perimeter except at the entry and exit points at the east and west, but is now missing in some locations. The top rail formerly supported a series of regularly spaced light fixtures with short posts and blue glass globes around its perimeter. The top rail also had spotlights directed up at the Towers that were located between the rail rings. The lights have been removed, but the steel rails retain much of their original yellow paint. A concrete entry/exit ramp with cheek walls also survives at the western entry to the enclosure. The ramp and enclosure are now themselves enclosed by a chain-link security fence. The ground-level elevator entry cage also survives at the base of the westernmost tower.

In addition to their individual positions, the three Towers (west, north, and south) differ significantly in height and in the number of their observation decks, but are consistent in their construction materials and finishes, and in the dimensions of their components other than the height of the individual column. Each tower's main structural and vertical component consists of the hollow, slip-formed, reinforced concrete shafts of the same diameter. Each column is in two halves separated by vertical slits and joined at regular intervals by slightly recessed, integral, reinforced concrete horizontal beams. Steel fire and access stairs are original to the project and are contained within each column. Each tower features round observation platforms of the same diameter and of steel construction.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 4      **DESCRIPTION**

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In addition to the difference in overall heights, the highest western Tower is marked by a double tier observation deck. The lower two Towers have single decks with circular "cutouts" around the western column to allow for the former "Sky Streak capsule" elevators. These are roughly pod or bean-shaped cars that were originally installed on opposite sides of the western tower. The western elevator was to conduct visitors directly to the top deck of the western tower, and the eastern elevator served all three Towers' observation decks. The elevators have been removed for safety reasons but survive on site within the Towers' circular enclosure, albeit in poor condition. The steel rails on which the elevators traveled survive in their original configuration *in situ* on the western tower, and are hung on and supported by integral projecting reinforced concrete blocks. As noted, the western tower is the highest, rising to a height of 226-feet. The southern tower is the lowest, with a platform height of 85-feet, and the northern tower's platform floor stands at 160-feet.

The construction of the circular plan observation platforms is evident from below. The radial steel girders, cross-braces, stringers, and corrugated steel under-decking are clearly visible since the removal of the original, non-structural concrete finish layer on the underside. The removal was done for public safety reasons to eliminate the risk of falling debris because of advancing deterioration. The steel has had losses to its yellow paint throughout, but still retains much of this finish coat.

All the main metal components also survive on the upper sides of the observation decks, including the enclosures for the elevators, the underside of the platform ceilings' radial steel roof beams and stringers, the original railings, as well as the metal doors and frames for the enclosures on the lowest platform and steel grating in perimeter locations. Also surviving is the stairway connecting the upper and lower levels of the double-tiered deck of the western tower. The original concrete decking also survives. As for the concrete finish under the decks, a number of finish materials were also removed for public safety reasons to reduce the risk of falling debris, or have been lost. These materials include the translucent Kalwall composite roofing tiles and the aluminum grid in which they were installed, as well as the transparent partitions of the enclosures on the southern Tower that provided an air conditioned space, and the transparent wainscot around the perimeter of the lower tier of the highest tower. During the fair, globe light fixtures on short posts with blue glass shades were located at the perimeter of the roofs of the decks, under the roofs of the middle, northern tower deck to illuminate it at night, and in the vertical slits of the Towers' columns.

**Theaterama: Exterior**

In its exterior original form, the Theaterama was a single, drum-shaped volume of reinforced concrete construction with a shallow, wooden dome roof and regularly spaced, rectangular, unglazed openings around the entire perimeter of the building at the first level at grade on the western side of the building. The scale and proportions of these openings echoed the openings in the circular enclosure around the Observation Towers' enclosure and have a slightly chamfered edge. As with the Observation Towers, wainscot steel beams directed visitor traffic. Here they were originally installed in all but three of the openings, thus defining the three entrance openings to the building on the western side (on axis with the existing theater entrance on the interior).

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 5    **DESCRIPTION**

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Grooves in the concrete mark the upper levels, which because they are service corridors on the perimeter of the drum, are not true stories but more like mezzanines. Like the uprights on the enclosure, every other wall section between the openings featured a map of the state within a circular medallion. On the southeastern side of the building, a set of reinforced concrete steps with four landings gave access to the former art gallery entrance on the lower level and a brick-paved terrace on the southeast side of the building. Reinforced concrete steps to this level also survive on the eastern side of the building. As on the Observation Towers (and the "Tent of Tomorrow"), blue globe lights provided both illumination and decoration. On the Theaterama exterior, they were located at the roofline of the building and were removed around the time of the addition of a second dome. Yellow and white finished "can" lights were also located around the perimeter of the building over the medallions at the first floor level and some appear to survive on the building.

Alterations were first made to the building for its use as a proscenium stage performance theater as early as the 1970s. The first changes on the exterior were the filling in of the original openings either by closing them in with masonry or fixed sash glazing. Two major campaigns of renovation, one in 1992-1993 and one in 2008-2009, have modified the building by three additions to the original drum volume. The first of these projects (architect Alfred De Vido Associates) added an entrance on the northwest side of the drum, relocating the main entrance to the building to the north. This addition consisted of a projecting, segmental arch plan volume with two engaged circular reinforced concrete towers at the corners topped by decorative, tiered metal lights echoing the observation tower decks. In this renovation, those openings not previously filled in by masonry were filled with glass block, the main surface material along with reinforced concrete of this addition itself, and a second roof was added over the original surviving wood dome in order to provide for better sound insulation.

The second, more substantial campaign of work in 2008-2009 (by Caples Jefferson, Architects) added a new, essentially circular-plan, flat-roofed lobby volume on the northwest, fronting the 1992-3 addition. The new lobby is built in a vocabulary of fixed, metal-sash lights, with a diagonal ramp motif that carries from the exterior entrance through to the ceiling of the interior. The other principal components of this more recent project are two connected, two-story performance and office volumes on the north side of the building that are finished in concrete on the exterior, and whose wedge-shaped plan with segmental arch exterior walls echo the original vocabulary of the building. The larger office volume on the east features a strip of fixed, metal sash windows below the roofline and an open terrace on the west at this level.

**Theaterama: Interior**

At the time of original construction, the Theaterama's configuration was relatively simple, like that of the rest of the components of the Pavilion. The lower level is below grade on the western side of the building for housing service facilities and air-conditioned gallery space for paintings by New York-based artists. Both original concrete block partitions and the gallery's concrete coffered ceiling survive in this portion of the building. Changes include the creation of office space on the southeastern portion of the building in the most recent renovation campaign and openings for elevator access in the Caples Jefferson-designed addition on the northeast. Inside the exterior drum, above was a secondary, reinforced concrete drum essentially the same

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 6      **DESCRIPTION**

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height as the exterior one. On the interior of the inner drum on the main level was the 360-degree projection of a film that presented and promoted New York State primarily as a tourist destination. Between the two drums on the first floor level is a circulation corridor which originally ran the periphery of the entire building. The surviving main entrance into the theater space retains its original red oak door and many of the original openings to the exterior of the building remain visible or in use as access to the additions. On the interior of the theater itself, risers and theater seating as well as steps up from the entry vestibule have been added for more conventional stage production, as well as acoustical panels on the wall. A catwalk was added and alterations include the removal of portions of the interior drum on the east to create stage and backstage area. Original vertical oak battens survive on the perimeter of the theater and on the partial height wall that directed visitors and minimized light leakage into the theater. The battens were also originally installed on the outer wall of the inner drum in the first floor corridor, but have been replaced with laminate.

Both the first and second mezzanine levels in the original building are above the first floor circulation corridor, and provide service and storage space for the theater. The original concrete and concrete block finishes are evident throughout. The mezzanine spaces were originally accessed by steep steel stairways at the rear (east) side of the perimeter corridor. An original projection booth survives on the second level on the west side of the building, as well as the original adjacent cooling tower. At the roof deck level, a second dome is clearly visible added above the original in the 1992-1993 campaign of work for soundproofing.

***Tent of Tomorrow***

The largest component of the Pavilion is the "Tent of Tomorrow" structure. The tent itself consists of four principal parts. These are the perimeter of slip-form, reinforced concrete, hollow columns that support the cable suspension roof and enclose the mezzanine platform, underneath which lies the terrazzo floor. The sixteen hollow, 98-foot, slip-form columns are placed as regular intervals in the elliptical plan of the Tent. They are essentially identical in appearance, diameter and detail with the columns of the Observation Towers. Like them, the pattern of the slip form is clearly visible on the surface of the reinforced concrete and the two "halves" of the columns are joined, also at regular intervals. Unlike the Observation Towers, however, the tent perimeter columns do not contain steel fire stairs, and have been closed off from access by concrete blocks at ground level. The columns formerly featured two relatively short flag poles each at their top during the fair, from which were flown pennants with the names of the New York counties at the time of the Fair. The catwalks that accessed these flag poles survive at the top of the columns.

The mezzanine is of painted steel construction and retains its perimeter balcony rails on both the outside and inside edges of the promenade deck. The mezzanine structure's open spaces under the deck were originally used to house exhibitions on the northwest and northeast of the Tent and a restaurant (under the wide portion of the mezzanine on the south) during the Fair. These spaces and the perimeter of the mezzanine were enclosed by red and white stretched canvas panels and some fixed-steel panels and gates. The space under the mezzanine deck is now enclosed by concrete block, painted to reflect the striped effect of the original canvas. The three main openings that served as entry passages to the Tent survive *in situ*. The main, northern passage is open on top, and provided access from the former plaza between the Observation Towers and the Theaterama. Another entry

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 7      **DESCRIPTION**

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passage is on the east at the midpoint of the ellipse on that side and on the west in the corresponding position. The promenade deck, which primarily served as the site of exhibitions installations during the Fair, is surfaced in asphalt on top of corrugated steel. The deck is accessed by steel stairs on the eastern and western sides of the Tent, by another set of steel stairs on the eastern side of the northern entry passage, and by an escalator on the western side of the same passage, all of which survive in place. Like both the Observation Towers and the Theaterama, blue globe lights were part of the lighting and decorative scheme in the Tent. In the Tent, they were found around the inner and outer edge of the deck on top of the balcony rail and the steel stairs and had longer stems than those on the Towers and the Theaterama. These stems survive *in situ* in the Tent.

On the interior of the mezzanine is a terrazzo floor with a map of the state of New York based on a printed Texaco map. It is oriented so that the map's north is on the eastern side of the Tent. In addition to the map, which is generally in deteriorated condition due to vegetative growth, four original concrete tree planters survive in or near their original location during the Fair at the southern end of the terrazzo floor.

The final main element of the Tent is the cable suspension, pre-stressed roof canopy, built almost exclusively of steel. The roof itself is similar to a bicycle wheel in its essential configuration of an outer, compression ring or girder, an inner tension ring, and cable "spokes" between the two. The compression ring consists of three principal elements: two girder rings (the outer of which is greater in height than the inner) between which are located paired, splayed "battle-axe"-form steel plates whose vertical high and low points serve as termini for the steel cables that connect to the inner "spoke hub." Smaller secondary cables also follow the elliptical form of the overall structure in the manner of stringers, and connect the upper and lower cables to each other at regular intervals. Four larger cables (two each on the long sides of the ellipse) join the central ring to the perimeter concrete columns. The roof canopy as a whole is supported on the columns by steel, H-beam brackets and was formerly was clad in translucent, Kalwall plastic laminate panels installed in an aluminum grid. The individual panels were in one of three different red tones, or blue. Spotlights were originally installed above the Kalwall panels in line with the suspension cables to illuminate the roof from above at night.

***Integrity***

While there is evidence that the Pavilion was planned to survive the 1964-1965 Fair as a permanent fixture of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, it nonetheless shares the essential fragility of World's Fair exhibition buildings/structure. Most of these resources are fundamentally temporary in materials if not conception, and particularly subject to deterioration because of the exposure of those materials to weathering forces. The Pavilion is therefore a notable survivor among such resources. Despite the expectable loss of decorative materials given their exposure to weather, the New York State Pavilion retains historic integrity as a single resource springing from a unified design and construction project. The Pavilion retains integrity of location. Because of the temporary nature of World's Fairs and the planned demolition of the majority of the exhibitions from the 1964-1965 Fair, its setting is no longer as it was at the time of the Pavilion's construction, although the fundamental park setting and the configuration of roadway and open park blocks survive that marked the Fair's fundamental structure. Further, while most of the exhibitions are gone, the Corona Park setting that preceded and followed the Fair does survive intact.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 8    **DESCRIPTION**

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Although multiple decorative finish materials of the Pavilion may have been lost, and the Pavilion's materials as a whole range from fair to poor condition, the essential concrete and painted steel structural materials and their workmanship survive and retain integrity. Because so much of the character-defining aspects of Philip Johnson's scheme rest on the simple, monumental forms of the Pavilion, it retains integrity of design, and is thereby able to convey this key aspect of the Pavilion's significance. While the Theaterama has sustained additions and alterations, its original theater and gallery spaces and key material details have been preserved, as well as the primary circulation and service areas that marked its essential function at the Fair. Finally, because its overall monumental design, essential structural elements, and theater and gallery spaces survive intact, the Pavilion continues to convey the essence of the experience of visitors to the Fair, and therefore retains the important aspects of integrity of feeling and association.

## 8. Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # NY-333

### Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Art

Education

Engineering

Entertainment /Recreation

### Period of Significance

1963-1965

### Significant Dates

1964

### Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Philip Johnson (1906-2005), firm of Philip Johnson & Richard Foster, Architects Lev Zetlin (d. 1992); firm of Lev Zetlin & Associates

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository:

New York Public Library/NYC Parks & Recreation

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 1

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Pavilion is nationally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Art, Entertainment and Recreation, and Education, for its association with and its role in the New York 1964-1965 World's Fair, an event of national and world significance. The Pavilion also holds national significance under Criterion A for its association with the political, planning, and development interests of Nelson Rockefeller, at the time Governor of New York, and Robert Moses, New York City-based planner. As one of the most important and popular works of the eminent architect, curator, and critic Philip C. Johnson (1906-2005), the Pavilion also has exceptional significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The substantial structural achievements of the firm of Lev Zetlin Associates deployed in the creation of the Pavilion also embody national significance under Criterion C in Engineering. Although 45 years of age, the New York State Pavilion of the New York 1964-1965 World's Fair has exceptional significance as a rare survivor of the fragile resource type of a World's Fair exhibition building.

**Period of Significance:** The period of significance corresponds to the time of the Pavilion's construction and use during the World's Fair of 1964-1965, the period in which it was created and in which it was associated with the important cultural events of the Fair.

**Summary of Significance Under Criterion A**

The 1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion is nationally significant under Criterion A in several areas for its association with, and role in the Fair, one of the great events of the twentieth century. The Pavilion is significant in the area of Recreation/Entertainment and Education as one of the Fair's most prominent and most visited exhibitions. There, the public was awed and delighted by the great colorful roof and open space of the "Tent of Tomorrow," the "high spot of the Fair" and the "sky-streak" elevators of the popular Observation Towers, and enjoyed performances, art exhibitions, and fashion shows. The Pavilion also presented exhibitions that conveyed many aspects of and information on New York State, its geography, highways, tourist attractions, natural resources, and its newly completed St. Lawrence hydroelectric plant. The Pavilion is also significant in the area of Art for its presentation of Pop Art, one of the most important art movements of the twentieth century, to a broad public for the first time, through architect Philip Johnson's commission and display on the outside of the Theaterama of works by prominent members of this movement, including Andy Warhol.

Finally, the Pavilion is significant in the area of Architecture for its association with the redevelopment and construction projects orchestrated by planner and New York City Parks Commissioner Robert Moses and New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller. The Pavilion's association with Moses' architectural projects is multifarious: as New York City's Commissioner of Parks, as the president of the World's Fair Corporation, and as the President of the Board of the New York Power Authority, Moses had a direct hand in shaping the Pavilion and its exhibitions, which were in turn connected to the shaping of Fair overall and thereby of Corona Park, and to the Niagara and St. Lawrence Power Projects. The Pavilion is one of multiple construction projects strongly influenced or directly created by Governor Nelson Rockefeller whose "edifice complex" shaped not only New York's state university campuses but also multiple other initiatives that had national influence and visibility during his administration. Many key aspects of the Pavilion can be credited with Rockefeller's direct

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET.**

Section number 8 Page 2

interest and intervention, and it was intimately linked with the creation of the State Theater at Lincoln Center (itself a key redevelopment project in which Moses and Rockefeller were both involved), which was billed at the time as one of New York's cultural contributions to the Fair.

**Summary of Significance Under Criterion C**

The Pavilion is nationally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as one of the most important and popular works of master architect Philip Johnson, whose career has influenced architectural theory and practice through his curatorial and design activities. The Pavilion represents a key public commission that brought him to substantial popular attention and acclaim at a turning point in his career. The Pavilion is also significant in the area of Engineering as the work of master engineer Lev Zetlin, and for the remarkable structural achievements the Pavilion represents in its single-span, cable roof.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary: Criterion Consideration G**

Although only 45 years of age, the New York State Pavilion has exceptional significance as a surviving World's Fair structure, thus placing it in the category of fragile and short-lived resources that may achieve significance before the 50-year mark. The Pavilion also has exceptional significance as one of the most important works of the nationally significant architect Philip Johnson, whose design importance has been recognized broadly by both scholars and the public; and for the nationally significant engineering achievements in the creation of what at the time of its construction was the largest cable suspension roof in the Tent of Tomorrow by Lev Zetlin and Associates.

**DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY**

**Summary History**

The project for the New York Pavilion at the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair was initiated in 1960 by Robert Moses almost immediately after the initial decision to hold a World's Fair in New York had been endorsed by then outgoing President Eisenhower. Although the question of whether the Pavilion was to be permanent would not be settled immediately, Moses's original interest in an enduring structure near the Long Island Expressway would come to fruition. By May, 1961, the location for the exhibition within the Fair had been determined. In the following spring, Philip Johnson was selected as the architect for the Pavilion. Ground-breaking in the form of a pile-driving ceremony was held on October 9, 1962 with the governor officiating. Refinements and permitting continued through to the spring of 1963. June of 1963 brought one of the most dramatic events of the construction of the Pavilion with the continuous slip-form pour of the reinforced concrete of the Towers. Equally remarkable for observers must have been the assembly on site of the roof canopy structure for the "Tent of Tomorrow" and the jacking of it into place in August-October, 1963.

When the Fair opened in April 1964, the Pavilion provided visitors with a varied program of activities and exhibitions and continued to do so over its two summer seasons. (The Fair was only open between April and October.) The Pavilion was one of the most popular exhibitions at the Fair. After the Fair's close, the Pavilion found a number of uses, particularly as a performance stage for concerts and later, as a roller skating rink. The

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 3

part of the Pavilion that has seen the most active use to the present is the Theaterama, which has been the venue of a succession of theatrical groups. The most successful of these, and the one with the longest tenure, is the Queens Theater in the Park, which remains the present tenant in the building.

Within the last half-decade, the Pavilion has increasingly been the focus of scholarly attention, and of efforts for and interest in its preservation. Thanks to the efforts of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, and graduate programs in Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University, the Pavilion has been documented through three historic preservation master's theses and its conservation studied extensively in 2006-2008 by the Architectural Conservation Laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania.

Between January and May 2008 an exhibition entitled "The Texaco Road Map Project" was held at the Queens Museum which presented conserved sections of the map from the floor of the Tent of Tomorrow. The Pavilion will again be the focus of study by the University of Pennsylvania's Historic Preservation Program in the fall of 2009. The Department of Parks and Recreation continues actively to pursue avenues for preservation for the Pavilion. Through the support of the World Monuments fund, designation is being sought for listing in the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places, with the future goal of achieving National Historic Landmark designation and the protection afforded by local designation of New York City Landmark status.

**History of the Pavilion**

The project for the New York State Pavilion at the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair was initiated in 1960 by Robert Moses in his capacity as president of the World's Fair 1964-1965 Corporation (WFC), following the lead of a small group who in 1958 had the idea for a fair on the tercentenary of the founding of New York as a British colony.<sup>1</sup> Moses's initiation of the State Pavilion project came almost immediately on the heels of the re-formation of the WFC after the initial decision to hold a World's Fair in New York had been endorsed by then outgoing President Eisenhower.<sup>2</sup> Moses put in motion the project for the New York State Pavilion before even officially assuming his role at the WFC in May, 1960.<sup>3</sup> In January, 1960, he issued a memo to Stuart Constable (later WFC Vice President), asking him to "please get up a memo on State Commission and plan for New York State exhibit at World's Fair. Indicate whether building should be temporary or permanent, hitched on to State Amphitheatre or elsewhere, cost and some notion of main features of the exhibit." Moses also suggested that a "permanent building at the Long Island Expressway" would be desirable, and directed Constable to begin organizing the necessary state legislation.<sup>4</sup> Thus were two fundamental aspects of the project established: the Pavilion's very existence and the important matter of a permanent versus temporary structure or building. As had been the case for the 1939-1940 fair, it was planned that most of the exhibitions were not to survive the event.<sup>5</sup> Although the question of whether the Pavilion was to be permanent would not be settled

<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Rydell, John E. Findling, and Kimberly D. Pelle, *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States* (Washington, D. C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 106.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence R. Samuel, *The End of Innocence: the 1964-1965 World's Fair* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 5-7.

<sup>3</sup> Marc H. Miller, "Something for Everyone: Robert Moses and the Fair," in Queens Museum, *Remembering the Future: The New York World's Fair from 1939 to 1964* (New York: Rizzoli International, 1989), 45.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Moses (RM) to Stuart Constable, 16 January 1960, Folder "P0.1 New York (1960) States / Participation," Box 262, World's Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, New York Public Library, New York City (hereafter WFC records).

<sup>5</sup> Only the Fountain Lake Amphitheater and the New York City Building (now the Queens Museum) survive from the 1939/40 fair; of the 1964/65 fair, the New York State Pavilion and the nearby Unisphere, the Hall of Science, Space Park, Heliport, as well as sculptures and smaller structures survive.

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 4

immediately, Moses's original interest in an enduring structure near the Long Island Expressway would come to fruition.

In the fall of 1960, the question of location was being discussed for the Pavilion (with competition with New Jersey at issue) and in May, 1961, exhibition Block 46 had been definitely selected for the Pavilion "so that New York's site will be bigger than that of New Jersey. Block 45 (New Jersey) is 125,000 sq. ft. plus. Block 46 would be 130,000 sq. ft. plus."<sup>6</sup> In the following spring, Philip Johnson was selected as the architect for the Pavilion and took control over the design of its architecture. According to the architect, his selection for the New York State Pavilion was Governor Rockefeller's choice.<sup>7</sup> Documents also indicate that there was an "informal competition" conducted by the New York State Commission on the World's Fair among five architects, resulting in Johnson being chosen.<sup>8</sup>

By the time when Moses and his staff were notified of Johnson's part in the project, designs had been at least partially developed, since both test borings in Block 46 and the final selection of a contractor for the Pavilion (Thompson-Starrett) also took place that month. Although Johnson had superseded Moses's authority to a certain extent on the project, he expressed his gratification that Moses "would like to have the theater as a permanent feature in the park."<sup>9</sup> By the beginning of June, the two agreed on the plan "that the Theatre should be permanent construction and the remainder temporary," a scheme that would change in the coming months.<sup>10</sup>

Although the WFC had settled on a maximum height for state exhibitions of 80-feet, Governor Rockefeller soon pushed for the New York State Pavilion to exceed this through Johnson. Johnson reported in late June of 1962 to the WFC that Rockefeller "wants an observation tower 160 feet in the air."<sup>11</sup> By August, the WFC had conceded. The highest of the three Observation Towers was ultimately built to a height of 226-feet.<sup>12</sup>

With the fundamentals of the design finalized, a ground-breaking in the form of a pile-driving ceremony was held on October 9, 1962, with the governor officiating.<sup>13</sup> Refinements and permitting continued through to the spring of 1963.<sup>14</sup> At an unknown point, either during this final design episode or before, the architect and the governor made the decision to provide sufficient support in the piles and in the overall structure so that the Pavilion in its entirety could survive the Fair as permanent installations. The decision of whether or not to keep

<sup>6</sup> JAP to RM, 5 May 1961, Folder "P0.1 New York (1961) – Participation," Box 262, WFC records. A letter of intent to lease Block 46, with a total area of 130,595 sq. ft., was issued on 29 May. Ibid. The lease for the block was not actually signed until February of the following year. Press release, 1 February 1962, "P0.1 New York, January-June 1962 – Participation," Box 262, WFC records.

<sup>7</sup> Hilary Lewis and John O'Connor, *Philip Johnson: the Architect in His Own Words* (New York: Rizzoli, 1994), 83.

<sup>8</sup> Kristin U. Fedders, "Pop Art at the 1964/65 World's Fair" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2005), 64.

<sup>9</sup> William S. Chapin, General Manager and Chief Engineer, Power Authority of New York, to RM, 23 May 1962, Folder "P0.1 New York January-June, 1962 – Participation," Box 262, WFC records.

<sup>10</sup> WEP to Philip Johnson (PJ), 1 June 1962, Folder "P0.1 New York January-June, 1962 – Participation," Box 262, WFC records.

<sup>11</sup> WEP to RM, 26 June 1962, Folder "P0.1 New York January-June, 1962 – Participation," Box 262, WFC records; the process of approval is documented by correspondence and memos in Folder "P0.1 New York July - December, 1962 – Participation," Box 262, WFC records, and File "C1.0101 - New York / States / Construction, Box 114, WFC records.

<sup>12</sup> Promotional Brochure, n.d., Folder "P0.1 New York State Brochure / States / Participation" Box 262, WFC records; final approval for the height (232' above mean sea level) had to be obtained from the FAA.

<sup>13</sup> "Governor Starts Pavilion at Fair," *New York Times* (10 October 1962).

<sup>14</sup> Folder "New York / States / Construction / N," Box 114, WFC records.

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 5

the Pavilion as part of the Corona Park grounds, however, rested at least ceremonially with Robert Moses, who publicly endorsed its retention at the dedication in April, 1964.<sup>15</sup>

June of 1963 brought one of the most dramatic events of the construction of the Pavilion, with the continuous slip-form pour of the reinforced concrete of the Towers. This operation took almost a week of round-the-clock work on site (the pouring of the perimeter columns for the Tent had taken place in the spring). Equally remarkable for observers must have been the on site assembly in the previous spring of the roof canopy structure for the "Tent of Tomorrow."<sup>16</sup>

The final program for the Tent of Tomorrow was set by the summer of 1963. In addition to the Power Authority exhibition and the map of the state on the main floor, there would be a "floor level stage ([with] continuous shows), a Schrafft's restaurant ([with] 700 seats), [an] Art Museum, [a] Fashion Area," and "State exhibits on the balcony."<sup>17</sup> By the time the roof was in place further detail on these items had been worked out: a "portable platform will be used over map for fashion shows" and the "Art museum [in the Pavilion] will be sponsored and operated by New York State Council of the Arts" and was to "display masterpieces."

At the same time, another key aspect of the program was added by Philip Johnson, apparently outside of the ongoing process at the WFC and the State Commission. Specifically, Johnson had commissioned a group of ten large-scale artworks for display around the outside of the Theaterama above the first level arcade.<sup>18</sup> This commission presented the work of a group of young, largely emerging artists, including Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Ellsworth Kelly, and James Rosenquist. When the Fair opened in April 1964, the Pavilion provided visitors with a varied program of activities and exhibitions and continued to do so over its two summer seasons.

After the close of the Fair, the Pavilion was used as a performance stage for concerts and later, as a roller skating rink. According to the original concept, the Theaterama continued in use as a theater and is currently the home of the Queens Theater in the Park. As a result of its role in the Fair and being a remnant, the Pavilion has increasingly been the focus of scholarly attention, and of efforts for its preservation. The building has been well documented and is currently owned by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation who is actively pursuing ways to stabilize and preserve the Pavilion. The Pavilion was recently featured in an exhibit in the Queens Museum and was included in a recent exhibit on the life and legacy of Robert Moses. The World Monuments Fund is currently seeking local, state and national landmark designation with the intent of achieving additional notoriety and progress toward the Pavilion's preservation. The World Monuments Fund is a private organization that has been working for over forty years to save the world's most important architectural and cultural heritage sites and considers the New York State Pavilion one to be preserved.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Carlson, "State Wins Praise for Fair Pavilion," *New York Times* (24 April 1964). Construction between the architect and the WFC suggests that the provision for permanent structures may have been part of the project as soon as June, 1962, when Johnson reported that "our engineers are calculating the piles and we have to get going." Johnson to Michael Pender, Folder "P0.1 New York / States / Participation / January-July 1962," Box 262, WFC records.

<sup>16</sup> Folder "New York / States / Construction / A-M," Box 114, WFC records.

<sup>17</sup> W. R. Pender, Director of State Exhibits for WFC, Memo. to file, 25 July 1963, Folder "P0.1 New York / States / Participation / July-Dec. 1963", Box 262, WFC records.

<sup>18</sup> "Avant-Garde Art Going to the Fair: Huge Works Commissioned to Adorn State Pavilion," *New York Times* (5 October 1963).

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 6

**Historic Contexts**

The 1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion is appropriately placed and its significance understood within a group of historic contexts. The first of these is the event of the Fair itself, which in turn must be understood within the context of World's Fairs in general. Author Morris Dickstein echoed the words of President William McKinley when he remarked, "If [world's fairs] are successful they become markers of historical time."<sup>19</sup> At the very least, fairs have "exerted a formative influence on the way Americans have thought about themselves and the world in which they live "by introducing "generations of Americans to pathbreaking scientific and technological innovations ...[along with] visionary schemes."<sup>20</sup> Like the World's Fairs that preceded it, the 1964-1965 Fair embodied, conveyed, and influenced the values of its age, and the New York State Pavilion played an important role in this event. The Pavilion does not, however, embody all of the multifarious aspects of the significance of the Fair, since other exhibitions represented other historic themes, and some significant events within the Fair itself are not meaningfully associated with the Pavilion. The Pavilion can also be further understood within the context of the traditions of Fair architecture and engineering, which showcased remarkable technological and industrial advances and achievements.

In addition to the single event of the Fair, the Pavilion can also be understood within the context of the pattern of developments that affected the built environment. Both New York City and New York State were profoundly impacted by the achievements of planner Robert Moses and Governor Nelson Rockefeller that included the Pavilion which both embodied and presented projects of the city and state to the international visiting public through its exhibitions. The significance of the Pavilion is further illuminated by the context of the architecture of Philip Johnson and of engineering achievements of the period.

**Significance, Criterion A**

The Pavilion's place within the contexts of the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair and World's Fair traditions more generally are key to its significance in the areas of education and entertainment/recreation. It is a simple statement that World's Fairs, which, most sources concur, began with the "Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations" in London in 1851 (usually called the Crystal Palace exhibition), are, by definition, global events. The complexity of what is presented to the world, however, and by whom, as well as who constitutes the "world" audience are matters that have changed and varied widely over the course of the history of World's Fairs. American Fairs have been classified by time periods and type in various ways. Robert Rydell, John E. Findling, and Kimberly Pelle divide them chronologically by era into "Fairs in the Age of Industrialism's Advance," "Fairs of the Imperial Era," "Fairs between the World Wars," and "Fairs in the Atomic Age," corresponding, respectively, to the fairs of the nineteenth century, of the turn-of-the-twentieth century to 1918, of the inter-war period, and of the postwar period.<sup>21</sup> They can also be classified in ways that relate more to their appearance, as "Glass Houses," "Industrial Villages," "Plaster Cities," "Projections of the Future," and "Scientific Spectacles," corresponding respectively in this case to the 1850s and 1860s, to the 1870s and 1880s, to the 1890s through 1910s, to the 1930s and 1940s, and to the 1950s through 1970s.

<sup>19</sup> Morris Dickstein, "From the Thirties to the Sixties: the New York World's Fair in its own Time," in *Remembering the Future*, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Rydell, Findling, and Pelle, *Fair America*, 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, *passim*.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 7

There have been some 74 expositions that qualify under the more general category of World's Fairs in this country.<sup>22</sup> Among the themes that have run through many of these are the presentation and promotion of new technologies and industries, displays of inventions and scientific discoveries, projections of the shape of the future, the forwarding of the role of the United States in world culture and commerce, as well as the exhibition of art, of unfamiliar ways of life and foreign nations, and even the unsavory objectification of ethnic peoples through the display of "exotics." The entertainment of visitors has also been chief among the goals of fairs: the term "midway" came from the Midway Plaisance, an entertainment area of the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition.

The first of the American Fairs, the New York Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1853, sought to capitalize on the commercial and popular success of its immediate London predecessor. A group of interested New Yorkers, who sought to promote international trade and the stature of the nation through the exhibition of art and industry, obtained a lease for land that is now the site of Bryant Park for the fair location in 1852, launched an architectural competition for the building, and opened in July, 1853. The fair failed to gain the endorsement or support of the federal government, however, largely because of lack of support for the endeavor by Southerners, who saw it as a sectionalist endeavor. The first New York World's Fair failed to find a sufficient audience for it to succeed, however, and Americans did not attempt another such project until after the Civil War.<sup>23</sup>

The Philadelphia Centennial of 1876 marked the first successful American fair. There, American industrial advance and accomplishment was at center stage with the Corliss engine dominating Machinery Hall, although, unlike the earlier Crystal Palace Exhibition, the Centennial presented visitors with multiple buildings with different themes and sponsors, including different nations. It has been noted that "the exhibits demonstrated [that] the future growth and progress of the United States (and implicitly, the entire world) would come about only under the guidance of the superior Anglo-Saxon race. That notion was suggested in the Main Building and Machinery Hall where foreign exhibits were arranged on a racial basis, with the more Anglo-Saxon nations awarded more central locations."<sup>24</sup>

Just as the Centennial had in part presented the accomplishments of its host, so the 1893 Chicago Fair presented the advances of a city perceived by many to be uncivilized and unsettled as well as the new aesthetics of the City Beautiful Movement in its axial planning and gleaming white exhibition buildings. The Midway Plaisance held a feature that came to be seen as the signature of the event and as its most prominent structure. To rival the centerpiece of the 1889 Paris Universal Exposition, the tower designed by Gustave Eiffel that still marks the city's skyline, engineer George Ferris provided a 264-foot-high wheel that would become a carnival fixture into the twenty-first century. American Fairs of the Imperial Age moved more clearly toward presenting Euro-American culture as dominant, not just in the United States but in the world, by the more extensive presentation of "primitive" peoples of color.

In the wake of World War I, "international leaders urged the use of expositions to promote international understanding rather than industrial competition. Exposition planners shifted themes from industry and

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Rader, "International Expositions Sites in the United States, 1850-1975, National Historic Landmarks Survey Theme Study," ca. 2007, on file at the National Park Service.

<sup>23</sup> Rydell, Findling, and Pelle, *Fair America*, 16-17.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 8

imperialism to the role of science and technology in everyday life.”<sup>25</sup> The Sesquicentennial Exposition of 1926 in Philadelphia also found a safe subject in the celebration of the past: in an 80-foot image of the Liberty Bell in light bulbs. The New York Fair of 1939-1940 expanded on Chicago’s Century of Progress Exposition of 1933-1934, finally staging a successful fair after the problems of the Crystal Palace endeavor of the century before. The 1939-1940 Fair was the first to be staged in Flushing Meadow and organized by Robert Moses. Its site, the former Corona Dump (the “Valley of Ashes” of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Great Gatsby*) was selected to a great extent so that it could become a park at the geographic center of New York City’s five boroughs.<sup>26</sup> One of the principal themes of the fair was an idealized vision of the urban future. Also, the fundamental layout of roads and exhibition areas that would underlie the 1964-1965 Fair, as well as Corona Park, was established.

The period after World War II brought fairs that particularly embraced scientific themes as well as visions of the future starting in 1962 with the Century 21 Exposition in Seattle. The Seattle Fair was an “exhibitionary and financial success,” thus encouraging the false hope that the 1964-1965 Fair would also be.<sup>27</sup> The 1964-1965 Fair’s themes of “Peace through Understanding” and “Man’s Achievement on a Shrinking Globe in an Expanding Universe” sought to celebrate and promote international accord and “the boundless potential of science and technology for human betterment.”<sup>28</sup> Despite the aspirations seemingly presented in these mottoes, the 1964-1965 Fair straddled a crucial chronological divide. As Lawrence R. Samuel explored in depth, the 1964/65 Fair marked a pivotal point in American culture. Its “Eisenhower-style aura,” boosterish tone, and presentation of familiar themes were seen as trite if not “passé and stifling” by some in its “undeniable conservatism.”<sup>29</sup>

Significant events, such as the opening held “just five months after the assassination of President Kennedy,” lent a sense of irrelevancy to much of the Fair to some audiences.<sup>30</sup> As Samuel remarked:

The Fair thus took place at a key turning point in American history and during a period of remarkable cultural upheaval (much like the previous [Flushing Meadows 1939-1940] New York fair). In the eighteen months from the beginning of season one in April 1964 and end of season two in October 1965, a bevy of key events related to the two major sources of conflict in the mid-1960s—civil rights and the Vietnam War—took place.<sup>31</sup>

Native New Yorker Robert Rosenblum characterized the Fair in general as a “collision of postwar realities and prewar fantasies” that “gave one the choice of weeping or smiling.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Rader, “International Expositions,” 6.

<sup>26</sup> Miller, “Something for Everyone: Robert Moses and the Fair,” in *Remembering the Future*, 48; Susan Singh, “Complexities in Conservation of a Temporary Post-War Structure: The Case of Philip Johnson’s New York State Pavilion at the 1964-65 World’s Fair” (master’s thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 4.

<sup>27</sup> Rydell, Findling, and Pelle, *Fair America*, 105.

<sup>28</sup> Sheldon J. Reaven, “New Frontiers: Science and Technology at the Fair,” in *Remembering the Future*, 76.

<sup>29</sup> Samuel, *End of Innocence*, xv.

<sup>30</sup> See the essays in *Remembering the Past*; Rydell, Findling, and Pelle, *Fair America*, 110; and Samuel, *Age of Innocence*, “Introduction.”

<sup>31</sup> Samuel, *End of Innocence*, xv-xvi.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Rosenblum, “Remembrance of Fairs Past,” in *Remembering the Future*, 17.

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 9

Despite these ambivalences about the Fair, and with the notable exception of Philip Johnson's presentation of contemporary art on the outside of the Theaterama and the Civil Rights demonstrations at the Pavilion and elsewhere, the Fair presented the contemporary world to the fairgoer. More important was that it presented sincere aspirations for international peace and cooperation. It also showed the world as it was lived and understood by "regular folks" who found "a sanctuary from the cultural storm that was rapidly approaching in the mid-1960s."<sup>33</sup>

As much if not more than any other exhibition at the fair, the New York State Pavilion straddled these two worlds of the conservative, Eisenhower-era values and those of the stormy 1960s. It could be seen, particularly its "Tent of Tomorrow" as both grand, serious entertainment and education, or as high camp: it is in part the architectural equivalent of the way Rosenblum described Pop Art at the Pavilion in the context of the Fair, which he noted was "only two years old" at the time of its opening. Rosenblum succinctly noted Pop Art's "poker-faced ironies—if you can't lick it, join it."<sup>34</sup> Rosenblum quoted another observer:

It is both grandly serious and ironic at the same time. This duality is nowhere more evident in a strong subtext to the Pavilion's creation and reception. In addition to the very visible battles for civil rights for African Americans that affected the New York State Pavilion and other sites in the fair, the issue of gay and lesbian rights (a battle yet to be publicly fought) haunted the Pavilion, particularly in respect to the life and culture (still very much in the closet) of its architect and the most famous contemporary artist who participated in the project, Andy Warhol.<sup>35</sup>

Although not a financial success for its organizers, the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair was certainly successful by the measure of the number of visitors. It had been called "one of the most popular world's fairs [and] perhaps one of the most popular events of any kind to be held."<sup>36</sup> The millions of world citizens who passed through the New York State Pavilion were entertained and educated by the exhibitions on display, awed by the grand scale of the Tent of Tomorrow and the Observation Towers. They travelled through what its architect described (in terms that conflated both American democracy and state magnificence) as: "an unengaged free space as an example of the greatness of New York."<sup>37</sup>

When the Fair opened in April 1964, it welcomed visitors for two summer seasons from April through October. The New York State Pavilion provided visitors with a varied program of activities and exhibitions and for an admission fee of fifty cents for adults and twenty-five cents for children, the Observation Towers "High Spot of the Fair," provided a view of not only the entire fair but much of the surrounding area as well.<sup>38</sup> Visitors were enticed to experience the "breathtaking rise in the Sky Streaks, clear, plastic-enclosed capsules, which will soar to the various platforms" and were promised that "with the capsules operating outside of the columns, visitors will have not only a dramatic ride but the feeling of a free ascent through the air."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.; on the perception of the Pavilion as "camp," see Fedders, "Pop Art," 63. Fedders relies on Charles Jencks's definition of the term in Johnson's architecture.

<sup>35</sup> For some of the relevant intrigue regarding Warhol's *Thirteen Most Wanted*, see Fedders, "Pop Art," 165-175.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel, *End of Innocence*, xiii.

<sup>37</sup> Mildred Schmerz, "Architecture at the New York World's Fair," *Architectural Record* 136, No. 1 (July 1964): 144.

<sup>38</sup> *Official Guide: New York World's Fair, 1964-1965* (New York: Time Life Books, 1964), 193.

<sup>39</sup> Promotional brochure, n.d., Folder "P0.1 New York State Brochure / States / Participation," Box 262, WFC records.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 10

The Theaterama's "A 'Round New York," 360-degree film presentation was enjoyed for 50 cents, and presented "a panoramic motion picture of New York State as a place to live, study, work and play."<sup>40</sup> Paintings by well-known New York-based artists, including Childe Hassam, Edward Hopper, and Jackson Pollock, were on view in the lower level gallery.<sup>41</sup> Within the Tent of Tomorrow, the Power Authority exhibition attracted crowds to see a display "of the largest hydroelectric complex in the Western World, the Niagara and St. Lawrence Power Projects."<sup>42</sup> Another exhibition of New York art masterpieces, curated, like the gallery offerings in the Theaterama, by *Saturday Review* critic Katherine Kuh, presented "Art in New York State" through colonial era portraits and paintings of the renowned Hudson River School.<sup>43</sup> The "Wing of Fashion" stage offered haute couture and also provided the platform for glee clubs and other regional performers from around the state. The "Mezzanine Tour of New York State" was where visitors could "walk along a miniature highway lined with glimpses of the state's life that included a conservation area, a rose garden, exhibits from regional museums and other attractions."<sup>44</sup>

The Tent itself was billed as one of the Fair's biggest attractions and as the "heart of the state exhibit." Described as "huge and colorful," this "graceful, elliptical structure with 100-foot high white, concrete columns," was presented as "supporting the world's largest suspension roof" (with a weight of over 2,000 tons), and as "larger than a foot ball field," with "rainbow-hued, translucent plastic panels bath[ing] the interior of the Tent in an everchanging glow of light."<sup>45</sup>

Near the close of the first season, it was reported that the Pavilion received 55,000 visitors a day and "one out of every four people who attend the Fair [went there]." This corresponded to a visitation of "more than 10,000,000," which placed the Pavilion as the "third most popular pavilion at the Fair [of the total 114 exhibitions] ranking behind General Motors and the Vatican which run 1-2 in attendance."<sup>46</sup> However, in addition to this substantial popularity, and equally significant, the Pavilion was one of the sites in the Fair targeted by Civil Rights demonstrators.<sup>47</sup>

The Pavilion also holds a significant place in the context of the architecture of World's Fairs. It stands squarely in the grand (and sometimes grandiose) tradition of the large-scale, innovative buildings and structures that mark the design and engineering ambition and achievements of these key world cultural events. Like Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace of the landmark 1851 Crystal Palace exhibition in London and the Eiffel Tower of the 1889 Paris exposition, the Pavilion is a very public and dramatic expression of structural innovation. Its great slip-form colonnade and cable suspension roof proclaim themselves as both novelties and great achievements for both the amusement and wonder of visitors.

<sup>40</sup> Promotional brochure.

<sup>41</sup> Samuel, *End of Innocence*, 134.

<sup>42</sup> WFC press release, 28 July 1964, Folder "P0.1 New York / States / Participation / July-Dec. 1964," Box 262, WFC Records.

<sup>43</sup> Samuel, *op cit.*, and New York Commission on the World's Fair Press Release, 26 Nov. 1963

Folder "P0.1 New York / States / Participation / July-Dec. 1963," Box 262, WFC Records.

<sup>44</sup> *Official Guide*, 193.

<sup>45</sup> Promotional brochure, and Construction Fact Sheet / New York State Exhibit / 1964-65 World's Fair," 18 November 1963, Folder "P0.1 New York State Brochure / States / Participation," Box 262, WFC records.

<sup>46</sup> "Sunday News," clipping, 27 September 1964, Folder "P0.1 New York / States / Participation / 1964," Box 262, WFC Records.

<sup>47</sup> Samuel, *End of Innocence*, 33-34.

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 11

In contrast to much of the architecture of the 1964-65 Fair, which was generally not well reviewed by contemporary critics, the New York State Pavilion was singled out for praise. Mildred Schmerz, writing in *Architectural Record*, proclaimed the Pavilion as "one of the Fair's most successful" exhibitions, and noted that it "has the gaiety of the circus and is in the best tradition of Fair design." Among Vincent Scully's scathing remarks on the Fair entitled "If this is Architecture, God Help Us" that appeared in *Life Magazine*, he singled out the Pavilion as the only exhibition meriting any praise at all, calling it a "grand gesture of towers and canopy."<sup>48</sup> The most sophisticated and laudatory contemporary account, by Ada Louise Huxtable, noted that in "Johnson's work, everything—whether unusual construction, like the tension-compression ring design of the great bicycle roof of the World's Fair pavilion; or just a preoccupation with the play of light and shadow of classically inspired colonnades—is a means to a single end. It is beauty he is really after."<sup>49</sup>

The New York State Pavilion's significance in the context of World's Fairs lies in its successful integration of many of the enduring aspects of these important American cultural events. Among these might be noted that, like the Ferris Wheel, it entertained and educated about the marvels of American technological achievement through the use of sublimely scaled yet ingratiating marvels such as its "Sky-Streak" elevators and the enormous, colored roof of the Tent of Tomorrow. It presented and promoted its main subject, New York State, its industries, its achievements, its natural resources, and its culture in the form of its citizens itself and its art through the exhibition of paintings. The Pavilion also is connected to the troubled legacy of Fairs in matters of race. Although not the only site of protests at the Fair, the Pavilion was targeted by Civil Rights demonstrators.<sup>50</sup> Much of the popular success of the Pavilion at the Fair was derived, however, from the fact that it partook of the traditions of World's Fairs that made it part of a "wonderful, unforgettable experience unlike any other."<sup>51</sup>

In regard to Criterion A in the area of Art, the Pavilion is significant for its presentation of Pop Art to a broad popular audience for the first time.<sup>52</sup> Pop Art, which has been defined as "making impersonality a style," employed the images of commercial art and mass media to a new, bold effect, and was a major art movement just emerging in New York at the time of the Fair.<sup>53</sup> Among its most famous practitioners was Andy Warhol (1928-1987), perhaps best known for predicting that everyone would be famous for fifteen minutes in the future. Warhol "represented [Pop Art's] most extreme form" and celebrated mechanical repetition by reproducing comic book images and Brillo boxes. Philip Johnson, apparently outside of the ongoing process at the WFC and the State Commission on the Pavilion, commissioned a group of ten large-scale artworks for display around the outside of the Theaterama above the first level arcade.<sup>54</sup> This commission presented the work of a group of young, largely emerging artists, many of whom would come to dominate contemporary American art in the following decades, including Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Ellsworth Kelly, and James Rosenquist. The installation of their work at the Pavilion represented the first broad exposure of their work to a

<sup>48</sup> Vincent Scully, Jr., "If This is Architecture, God Help Us," *Life Magazine* (31 July 1964), 9.

<sup>49</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, "He Adds Elegance to Modern Architecture," *New York Times* (24 May 1964).

<sup>50</sup> Samuel, *End of Innocence*, 33-34.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, *End of Innocence*, xv.

<sup>52</sup> See Fedders, *passim*.

<sup>53</sup> Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Visual Arts: A History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 787.

<sup>54</sup> "Avant-Garde Art Going to the Fair: Huge Works Commissioned to Adorn State Pavilion," *New York Times* (5 October 1963).

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 12

general audience, although Johnson's selection engendered controversy almost immediately.<sup>55</sup> Warhol's contribution, arguably the most provocative, was *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*, a silk-screen presentation of a group of New York Police mug shots Warhol had surreptitiously obtained.<sup>56</sup>

In regard to Criterion A in the area of Architecture, the Pavilion is significant for its association with the pattern of public works created through the initiatives directed by planner Robert Moses (1888-1981) and by Governor Nelson Rockefeller (1908-1979). Both had a direct hand in the creation of the Pavilion, and its program of exhibitions. Various aspects of the Pavilion project are emblematic of each man's activities and attitudes in respect to public construction programs. In addition to its association with each individual, the Pavilion project also indicates the relationship between the two of them in connection with such endeavors. Their activities in association with the Pavilion's creation are part of a significant pattern of events that led to buildings and public works projects throughout the State of New York as well as New York City.

Moses' initial involvement with the Pavilion was as New York City's Commissioner of Parks and as the president of the 1964-1965 World's Fair Corporation, a role he reprised from the 1939-1940 World's Fair that was also in Flushing Meadow. As noted previously, the location for the 1939-1940 Fair was driven to a significant extent by Moses' desire to create a public park that was in the geographic center of the five boroughs. As has been abundantly documented by Moses' biographer Robert Caro, and by more recent projects like Hilary Ballon and Kenneth Jackson's *Robert Moses and the Modern City*, Moses transformed the City of New York, its housing, public parks, highways, and bridges over a particularly long and fruitful career.<sup>57</sup> He has been described as the person who has "had a greater impact on the physical character of New York City than any other individual."<sup>58</sup>

In addition to Moses' role in transforming the city of New York, the New York State Pavilion reminds us of his significant projects throughout the state. As the head of the board of the New York State Power Authority, among other roles, Moses' sphere of influence went well beyond the City. The Power Authority exhibition at the Pavilion, presented (*inter alia*) what is now called the Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant, which at the time of its completion on the eve of the Fair in 1961, was the "largest hydropower facility in the Western world."<sup>59</sup> His public works projects, by example, have influenced the thinking on such endeavors both positively and negatively throughout the country. The Pavilion reflected both in its existence and in its exhibitions not only Moses' own achievements as arguably the nation's most influential and important planners and redevelopers of the twentieth century, but also the international public's knowledge and understanding of those achievements.

<sup>55</sup> The artists were: Alexander Liberman, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Indiana, Ellsworth Kelly, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol, Peter Agostini, Roy Lichtenstein, John Chamberlain, and Robert Mallary. *Ibid.*, and Fedders, "Pop Art," 90. On the public's negative response, see Fedders, 4.

<sup>56</sup> It was deemed unacceptable by Moses and was painted over in silver paint. Fedders, "Pop Art," 165-175.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974); Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson, "Introduction," in Ballon and Jackson, eds., *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2007)

<sup>58</sup> Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson, "Introduction," in Ballon and Jackson, eds., *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2007), 65.

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.nypa.gov/facilities/niagara.htm>, accessed 5 July 2009.

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 13

The Pavilion also reflects the achievements of Nelson Rockefeller in the same vein. During his administration as Governor of New York, Nelson Rockefeller shaped the course of construction throughout the state on a similarly grand scale. As a builder, the governor undertook "a vast expansion of the state's educational plant—large, beautiful new campuses all across the state."<sup>60</sup> The projects completed under his campaigns included large-scale state office buildings in Albany and the creation or expansion of multiple highways, including the Long Island Expressway that nearly abuts the Pavilion's site. It cannot be construed as coincidental that one of the main exhibitions (on the mezzanine of the Tent of Tomorrow) was a highway through New York State.

The two men's interaction on the Pavilion began almost immediately after Moses first initiated the exhibition project. A few days after his initial communication on the subject of a New York State exhibition, Moses wrote directly to the governor, pushing forward the steps necessary for the Pavilion's creation and communicating his ideas for its form and content. Moses wrote that "obviously there must be a State exhibit and therefore a state commission, and this will require legislation . . . My present thought is that the State might use the entire amphitheatre for a pageant celebrating its history and accomplishments . . ."<sup>61</sup> Given the ultimate choice of architect Philip Johnson for the Pavilion's design, it is notable that there was a direct connection made later that year to what was to become the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center, itself a key redevelopment project in which both Moses and Rockefeller were involved. Specifically, by the summer of 1960, Rockefeller agreed that the creation of the State Theater would be part of the state's contribution to the Fair.<sup>62</sup>

In the fall of 1960, Moses was working on a program of exhibits for the Pavilion relating to geographical regions of the state, as well as tourist areas such as Jones Beach and the Adirondacks. There was particular emphasis on an exhibition by the New York Power Authority. He wanted to present the achievements of the massive power generation facilities nearing completion at Niagara Falls and in the St. Lawrence.<sup>63</sup> By September, 1961, there had been extensive debate among Moses, lieutenant governor Malcolm Wilson, Moses's staff, Keith McHugh (State Commissioner of Commerce), and others about the exhibition program of the Pavilion, including the question of whether there would be emphasis on the fashion industry as an indigenous New York trade.<sup>64</sup> A "tour through New York" was also being considered by Moses and the lieutenant governor, and a "theater portion" of the project was contemplated.<sup>65</sup> McHugh was urging Moses, through his staff, to hire an "exhibit designer first who can put together a show that will sell New York State." McHugh went on to pronounce that "the architect follows."<sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Caro, *Power Broker*, 1068. For an extended review of Rockefeller's construction campaigns as governor, see Samuel E. Bleecker, *The Politics of Architecture: A Perspective on Nelson A. Rockefeller* (New York: Rutledge Press, 1981).

<sup>61</sup> Robert Moses to Nelson Rockefeller (NR), 22 January 1960, Folder "P0.1 New York (1960) States / Participation," Box 262, WFC records.

<sup>62</sup> RM to NR, 17 August 1960, Folder "P0.1 New York (1960) States / Participation," Box 262, WFC records. The state bill (Print number 5383) wasn't signed until April, 1961.

<sup>63</sup> RM to J. Anthony Panuch (JAP), Vice President, Industrial, Federal, State and Special Exhibits, WFC, 13 October 1960, Folder "P0.1 New York (1960) States / Participation," Box 262, WFC records.

<sup>64</sup> JAP to WFC Executive Vice President William E. Potter (WEP), 19 September 1961, Folder "P0.1 New York (1961) – Participation," Box 262, WFC records. Among others, Bernard Gimbel got into the debate about the role of fashion at the Pavilion.

<sup>65</sup> Malcolm Wilson, head of New York State World's Fair Commission to RM, 18 September 1961, Folder "P0.1 New York (1961) – Participation," Box 262, WFC records.

<sup>66</sup> WEP to RM, re. meeting with McHugh, 20 September 1961, *ibid.*

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 14

The following spring, this picture of the project changed substantially as Rockefeller began to assert himself more strongly in connection with it. By May 1962, Philip Johnson had been selected as the architect. Important aspects of its exhibition program began to shift in his direction as well: Moses was informed that an exhibition presenting the New York Power Authority and its projects, which he had viewed as taking up much of the exhibition program, would have a lesser part, although it remained as one of the exhibitions that was created under the promenade deck of the Tent.<sup>67</sup> Johnson's selection for the Pavilion undoubtedly had a lot to do with his winning the commission for the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center in June, 1961. Johnson gained that project in part because of his friendship with Lincoln Kerstein, the founder of the New York City Ballet, who strengthened Johnson's growing relationship with Governor Nelson Rockefeller as a client.<sup>68</sup> According to the architect, his selection for the New York State Pavilion was Governor Rockefeller's choice and came "in the middle of the design for the [Lincoln Center] theater."<sup>69</sup>

The governor also asserted his supremacy in regard to a key aspect of the Pavilion's design: its height. This fact of the Pavilion, along with its overall grandiose scale, embodied the scale of Rockefeller's vision and construction campaigns, if not his ambition. Johnson's report to the WFC that Rockefeller "wants an observation tower 160 feet in the air," was to exceed the 120-foot height exception given to the "two highest exhibits (U. S. and the USSR)," and was well above the 80-feet allowed for all other buildings and structures at the fair.<sup>70</sup> By August, the governor had gotten his way, apparently due to Moses's intervention in the deliberating Conformity Committee, although Johnson recalled Moses as an antagonist on this issue, saying that "Nelson had a terrible time with Moses."<sup>71</sup> Johnson further claimed that the Towers were in fact Rockefeller's idea, in order to make the New York exhibition the most outstanding one at the fair.<sup>72</sup> It is telling that highest of the three Observation Towers was ultimately built to a height of 226-feet, and thus both represented and promoted the accomplishments of both Rockefeller and Moses.<sup>73</sup> The Pavilion provided a commanding view of the Fair and of the territory around, much like the one held by the two men who were its prime movers.

**Significance, Criterion C**

In regard to the New York State Pavilion's significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, it holds the key place in the work of Philip Johnson, whose architecture has been recognized as nationally significant from almost the moment he began his independent practice with his own Glass House in New Canaan,

<sup>67</sup> General William E. Potter (WEP), Executive Vice President, WFC, to RM, 2 May 1962, Folder "P0.1 New York January-June, 1962 – Participation," Box 262, WFC records. The Power Authority exhibition was located in the northwest portion of the Tent of Tomorrow, under the promenade deck of the mezzanine.

<sup>68</sup> Lewis and O'Connor, *Philip Johnson*, 82; Kazys Varnelis, ed., *The Philip Johnson Tapes: Interviews by Robert A. M. Stern* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2008), 151-152; Press release/announcement, 25 June 1961, Folder "P0.1 New York (1961) – Participation," Box 262, WFC records.

<sup>69</sup> Lewis and O'Connor, *Philip Johnson*, 83.

<sup>70</sup> WEP to RM, 26 June 1962, Folder "P0.1 New York January-June, 1962 – Participation," Box 262, WFC records; the process of approval is documented by correspondence and memos in Folder "P0.1 New York July - December, 1962 – Participation," Box 262, WFC records, and File "C1.0101 - New York / States / Construction, Box 114, WFC records.

<sup>71</sup> Nelson Rockefeller wrote to RM expressing his gratitude for Moses's "intercession" in the matter, 20 August 1962, and File "C1.0101 - New York / States / Construction, Box 114, WFC records

<sup>72</sup> Lewis and O'Connor, *Philip Johnson*, op cit.

<sup>73</sup> Promotional Brochure, n.d., Folder "P0.1 New York State Brochure / States / Participation" Box 262, WFC records; final approval for the height (232' above mean sea level) had to be obtained from the FAA.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 15

Connecticut (designed 1945-1949, completed 1953; NHL, NR97000341). In addition to his nationally recognized built work, which included such important later projects as the Boston Public Library Addition (1972, Philip Johnson and John Burgee) and the AT&T Building (1984; Johnson/Burgee Architects) that put the designer on the cover of *Time* magazine in January, 1979, Johnson was one of the most important early promoters in the United States of the International Style, along with architectural historian and professor Henry-Russell Hitchcock, as the influential first curator of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art. One of Hitchcock and Johnson's achievements was to de-politicize the architecture they were presenting by presenting it in almost exclusively formal terms – rendering it a style rather than a social(ist) philosophy.<sup>74</sup>

The New York State Pavilion belongs to a group of buildings that saw Johnson move dramatically and publicly beyond the tropes of "pure" International Style (a term he coined with Hitchcock). In the earliest period of his practice, his use of the style in works such as the Glass House brought him to national attention. From the beginnings of his interest in the style when he was an undergraduate at Harvard, Johnson had been an enthusiast for and champion of, the "pure" strain of modernism embodied in the work of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius as it had emerged at the Bauhaus: pure, prismatic rectilinear volumes marked by curtain wall construction, glass and steel, and open, "universal" space within. Johnson's engagement with Mies culminated in one of the German-born architect's most famous American projects, the Seagram Building in Manhattan (1957-1958; SR 12/14/2005, NR2006-02-24). Johnson secured the project for the master architect through Phyllis Lambert, the daughter of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons president Samuel Bronfman, and was responsible for the design of the Four Seasons restaurant in the building, as well as the Seagram & Sons Executive Offices.<sup>75</sup>

By the time of the New York State Pavilion commission, Johnson's intimacy with the International Style was over three decades old. The landmark exhibition organized at the Museum of Modern Art by museum director Alfred Barr, Johnson, and Hitchcock and the resulting book had been completed in 1932. In the intervening decades after the appearance of the *International Style: Architecture Since 1922*, Johnson had moved on from his role as the independently wealthy first curator of architecture at the fledgling Museum of Modern Art. Johnson returned to Harvard at the end of the 1930s as an architecture student after a period of restless travel and minor political intrigue, and emerged after World War II military service to start his own independent architectural practice in New York City, also returning to his role as director of architecture and design at MoMA in 1949.

His private means allowed himself to create his first major work for himself that same year – the Glass House, in New Canaan, Connecticut, which grew to be complex of eight buildings over the course of the following decades.<sup>76</sup> The 1950s period of Johnson's career was marked by a series of residences for wealthy and influential clients, about which *New York Times* architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable would later write: "His houses are extravagant pleasure-palaces of carefully unostentatious richness for a Who's Who of art patrons and wealthy collectors. A Johnson house is something like a legendary Morgan yacht – if you have to ask how much

<sup>74</sup> This has been observed by Carter Wiseman in *Shaping a Nation: Twentieth-Century American Architecture and its Makers* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1998), 163.

<sup>75</sup> On the project, see, *inter alia*, Varnelis, ed., *The Philip Johnson Tapes*, 135-150.

<sup>76</sup> Bruce Clouette and Hoang Tinh, "National Historic Landmark Nomination, Philip Johnson's Glass House," edited by M. Carolyn Pitts, 1996, on File at National Historic Landmark Office, Washington, D.C.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 16

is costs, you can't afford it."<sup>77</sup> Among his clients in this period was Blanchette Rockefeller (Mrs. John D. 3<sup>rd</sup>). Johnson's guest house for her at 242 East Fifty-second Street in New York (1950) was his first project in Manhattan. Johnson's association with the Rockefellers was already long-lived at this juncture: he had known Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, the main patron of MoMA since its founding, and came to know her son Nelson socially through the family's association with the Museum. Blanchette Rockefeller's project, however, was the first architectural commission from the family for Johnson.

Although his Glass House received substantial attention in professional and even popular publications from its completion in 1949, the architect's public profile began to rise significantly with his two Museum of Modern Art projects: the Annex at 51 East Fifty-third Street (1951; demolished 1980), his first institutional project and followed in 1953 by the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden.<sup>78</sup> Other public and institutional commissions followed: a master plan and several buildings for the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas, and Congregation Kneses Tifereth Israel Synagogue, for which Johnson donated his services as atonement for his unsavory pre-war political views and activities.<sup>79</sup>

The 1950s and the first phase of Johnson's architectural practice came to a close with the Seagram Building. Johnson credited this project for providing him with a measure of standing that put him in the "august company" of more seasoned designers, including Wallace K. Harrison of Harrison & Abramovitz, whose 1950 United Nations Headquarters preceded their involvement with the redevelopment of Lincoln Square as Lincoln Center was beginning in 1958.<sup>80</sup> Just as clearly, Johnson had seen the limits of Miesian "less is more" before 1960, remarking in a seemingly off-hand manner that "it's all very well to say we admire Mies, and that some discipline is a good thing for young minds, but what if one is bored?"<sup>81</sup> Johnson's own evolution beyond the International Style had begun, in fact, before the Seagram Building project.<sup>82</sup>

Johnson's characterization of his perception of the Miesian idiom as "boring" is a typically casual (and thus understated) pronouncement: by 1960, architectural modernism's tectonic plates were beginning to shift noticeably, and rapidly. He was not the only designer to experience ennui, or worse, in connection with the philosophy of "less is more." Among the most notable and broadly recognized counterpoints to both Miesian style and to the Seagram Building itself was the work of Louis I. Kahn, in particular his Alfred Newton Richards Laboratories and Goddard Building project (1957-1965) at the University of Pennsylvania, which was almost immediately and widely recognized as an important design alternative to the International Modernist glass box. Kahn's approach in this project to the expression of load and weight in architectural materials and to

<sup>77</sup> Huxtable, "He Adds Elegance to Modern Architecture," *New York Times* (10 October 1962).

<sup>78</sup> For a bibliography on the Glass House, see Hillary Lewis and Stephen Fox, *The Architecture of Philip Johnson* (Boston, New York, and London: Bullfinch Press, 2002), 316. Project dates and details are from this source.

<sup>79</sup> Re. Keneseth Tifereth, see Varnelis, ed., *Philip Johnson Tapes*, 125-126.

<sup>80</sup> Varnelis, *Philip Johnson Tapes*, 154.

<sup>81</sup> Franz Schulze, *Philip Johnson: Life and Work* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 270. For an extended and informative discussion of Johnson's "boredom" see Stanislaus von Moos, "Playboy Architecture Then and Now," in Emmanuel J. Petit, ed., *Philip Johnson: The Constancy of Change*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 170-189.

<sup>82</sup> Phyllis Lambert, "Philip Johnson: Breaking with Modernism – the 'Whence & Whither' of It," in Petit, *Philip Johnson: The Constancy of Change*, 190-207.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 17

building organization (in his articulation of structure and function in "servant" and "served" spaces), as well as his positive response to history and to physical context, all become nationally influential aspects of his work.<sup>83</sup>

The "credit" Johnson had earned from the Seagram Building and Johnson's Rockefeller connections led to a new, much more public phase in the architect's career in which his shifting sensibilities were put on very visible display. Three prominent public projects in New York City in the same period brought him to broad popular attention: the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center, the Pavilion, and the East Wing, Garden Wing, and Upper Terrace of the Museum of Modern Art (1964). As Kristin Fedders has remarked: "both Johnson and contemporary critics then regarded [the Pavilion] as an essential member of this triumvirate."<sup>84</sup>

Contrary to what might be assumed, Johnson's evolution away from the International Style over the course of the first decade of his practice did not signal a fundamental change in his approach to architectural design. As Joan Ockman has observed, the place of Philip Johnson in the history of twentieth-century architecture is complex, since "canonical histories center on 'form-givers,' regarded as geniuses . . . [and] on epochal ideas, regarded as engines of historical changes. . . ."<sup>85</sup> Johnson's contribution cannot be classified this way. Johnson deployed his critic's understanding of contemporary idiom along with his profound knowledge of, and interest in history to create buildings that were highly intelligent quotations. Their originality and design success lies in his use of sources. While Johnson's later AT&T building was to become an icon of post-modernism, his essentially post-modern approach had been established earlier. The New York State Pavilion is arguably the most important example of the approach that reached key public attention at the time of the project.

This was publicly recognized at the time of the Fair's opening by critic Ada Louise Huxtable in an article that appeared in the *New York Times* in May, 1964, who prominently featured the Pavilion in her piece. She praised Johnson's "architectural elegance," asserting that this quality "has not been seen since the turn-of-the-century days of McKim, Mead and White and the splendid 'Renaissance' palaces built for the business aristocracy." She went on to say that Johnson's was "a kind of elegance in completely contemporary terms—a modern architecture with the timeless values of beauty and luxury that have a universal appeal." Johnson also articulated his approach to the critic, reporting that "I call myself a traditionalist, although I have fought against tradition all my life."<sup>86</sup> He went to further clarify his approach to historic sources: "I like to be buttoned onto tradition. The thing is to improve it, twist it and mold it; to make something new of it; not to deny it. The riches of history can be plucked at any point."<sup>86</sup>

Despite the fact that the New York State Pavilion clearly embodies this key and newly emerged approach in Johnson's work – bringing together classical temple, Roman Coliseum, and circus tent, among other sources—it has not received as much attention as some of Johnson's other work. Perhaps this is in part because it is anomalous in Johnson's career as an exhibition building, and because it was intended for a popular fair audience. The architect, however, thought it important enough within his oeuvre to place it on the cover of the

<sup>83</sup> Emily T. Cooperman, "National Historic Landmark Nomination for Richards and Goddard Buildings," 2008, on file with the National Park Service.

<sup>84</sup> Fedders, "Pop Art at the 1964/65 World's Fair," 64.

<sup>85</sup> Joan Ockman, "The Figurehead: On Monumentality and Nihilism in Philip Johnson's Life and Work," in Petit, ed., *Philip Johnson: The Constancy of Change*, 82.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 18

last monograph on his work to be published in his own lifetime. He noted in the foreword to this publication that in its contemporary state as a ruin "it is even more haunting than the original structure."<sup>87</sup>

In regard to the Pavilion's significance under Criterion C in the area of Engineering, the Pavilion is also the work of a master, and represents a significant achievement. Engineer Lev Zetlin (d. 1992), working with Johnson, established two key achievements in the design and construction of the project. The first of these was the vaunted cable suspension roof of the Tent of Tomorrow, widely publicized at the time of the Fair for its stature as the largest such structure in the world not only to professional audiences but to popular ones as well.<sup>88</sup> Roofs of this sort were compared at the time of the Fair with the "breakthrough" represented by the introduction of elevators in skyscrapers.<sup>89</sup> While the roof was not unprecedented in a World's Fair exhibition building (Edward Durrell Stone's American Pavilion for the 1958 Brussels Universal and International Exposition in particular), creating a cable-suspension roof at this scale, which allowed the Tent to be a single, uninterrupted open space, was a singular achievement that reflected a search in the period for technology for this very effect.<sup>90</sup> At the time of Zetlin's death in 1992, his structural design and achievements at the Pavilion were pronounced as his best-known work. The *New York Times* noted that "its multicolored Plexiglas roof, measuring 250 by 320 feet and strung from cables attached to concrete Towers, was the world's largest suspension roof. It weighed 2,000 tons, but conventional rigid construction would have weighed six times that."<sup>91</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that almost as significant in terms of building technology was the use of slip-forms for the pouring of the Pavilion's columns. An article published in a trade publication in 1963 while the concrete work was underway reported that "construction men everywhere are interested in the progress of the work at the New York World's Fair. [...] Concrete men especially have been intrigued by the sixteen concrete columns which have been erected to support the roof of the New York State Pavilion—the 'Tent of Tomorrow.'" The Nicholson Company, Inc.'s novelty of the "slip-form technique" required explanation:

This method of casting concrete requires the construction of forms for inner and outer surfaces of the shape to be cast, which are then pulled or jacked more or less continually while concrete is placed. Such a process is similar to the extrusion of metals, clay brick, and toothpaste, and has been used successfully for the construction of silos for many years. In recent years, in fact, slip-forming has been used in the construction of concrete pavement, with outstanding success.<sup>92</sup>

The Pavilion is thus significant for an early, notable use of this important construction technique of the period.

<sup>87</sup> See Lewis and Fox, *The Architecture of Philip Johnson*.

<sup>88</sup> A notable instance of this was Henry B. Comstock, "They Built the Roof on the Ground," *Popular Science* (March 1964): 98-101.

<sup>89</sup> Comstock, "They Built the Roof on the Ground": 98.

<sup>90</sup> See Tara Rasheed, "From Bridge to Building: Development of Steel Cable Roof Structures" (M.S. Thesis, Columbia University, 2009).

<sup>91</sup> Bruce Lambert, "Lev. Zetlin; an Expert on Structural Disasters," *New York Times* (5 December 1992).

<sup>92</sup> Clipping from *Concrete Era*, March 1963, Folder "P0.1 New York / States / Participation / Jan-June 1963", Box 262, WFC records.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 1

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1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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**Section number 9 Page 2**

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** less than once acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

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Zone Easting Northing

3 18  
Zone Easting Northing

2 18  
Zone Easting Northing

4 18  
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Emily T. Cooperman, Ph.D.

organization ARCH Historic Preservation Consulting

date 31 July 2009

street & number 217 E. Evergreen Ave

telephone (267) 226-9145

city or town Philadelphia

state PA zip code 19118

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and **white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title City of New York Department of Parks & Recreation

street & number Olmsted Center

telephone (718) 760-6549

city or town Flushing

state NY zip code 11368

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

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1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion  
Queens County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 1

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundary begins at the roadway curb at the southwest corner of the intersection of an unnamed roadway leading southeast from the Unisphere, and United Nations Avenue South in Flushing Meadow-Corona Park (approximately 725 ft southeast of the Unisphere), proceeding southwest along the southeastern edge of United Nations Avenue South approximately 275 ft to the end of the curb at the southeast corner of the intersection of the Avenue of the States. It proceeds from this point southeast approximately 445 ft southeast along the northeastern edge of United the Avenue of the States to the point where the roadway curves toward the east then follows the curve of the edge the roadway around the southern end of the Tent of Tomorrow to the south, east, north, and then northwest approximately 285 ft until it reaches the straight portion of the unnamed roadway previously mentioned. It then follows the straight southwestern edge of the unnamed roadway approximately 375 ft to the point of beginning. The boundary is illustrated on the attached map.

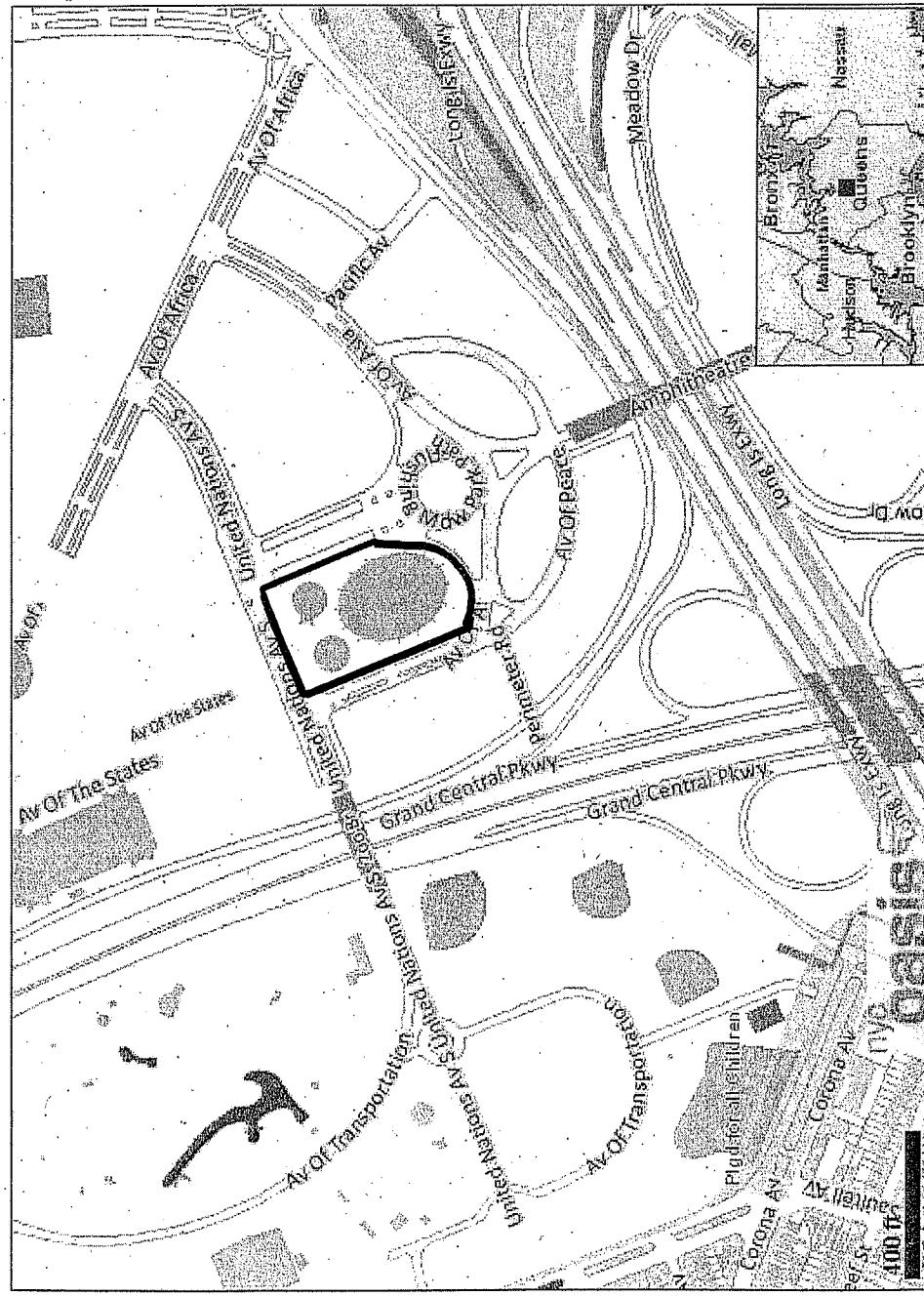
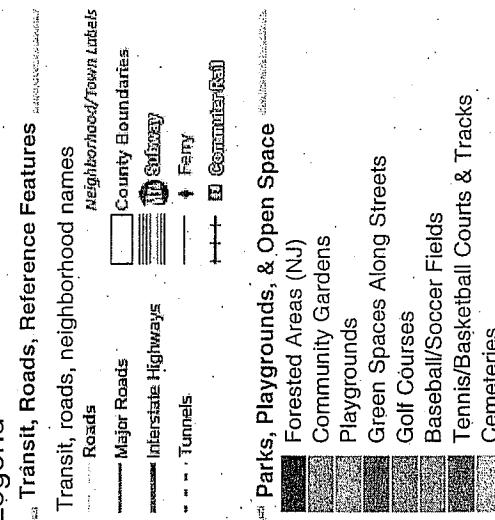
**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary corresponds to the limits of Block 46, which in turn reflects the limits of the 1964-1965 World's Fair New York State Pavilion property.

## NYS Pavilion

ny 6352.0 beta

## Legend



This map was created using the Open Accessible Space Information System (OASIS) website, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 3.0 United States License. Visit [www.oasisnyc.net](http://www.oasisnyc.net) for the latest information about data sources and notes about how the maps were developed. Contact [oasisnyc@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:oasisnyc@gc.cuny.edu) with questions or comments. OASIS is developed and maintained by the Center for Urban Research, CUNY Graduate Center.

(Not all items in the legend may be visible on the map.)

1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion

Flushing, Queens County NY

.75 inches =  $\pm 400$  feet

NR boundary:

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number Page 1

**PHOTOGRAPH LIST**

**1964-1965 New York World's Fair New York State Pavilion, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Flushing, New York**

Digital images taken by Dr. Emily Cooperman, images 1-13 on 29 June 2009 and images 14-29 on 1 December 2008. A copy of the digital images on disk is on file in the offices of the Field Services Bureau of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Peebles Island State Park, Waterford, New York.

Photo # 1: New York State Pavilion, seen from southeast, looking northwest

Photo # 2: Tent of Tomorrow, seen from southwest, looking northeast

Photo # 3: Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Unisphere at left, looking north from New York State Pavilion

Photo # 4: Observation Towers (center), with Tent of Tomorrow at right and Theaterama at left, looking southeast

Photo # 5: Theaterama and entry plaza, looking southeast from northwest of Pavilion

Photo # 6: Central portion of Tent of Tomorrow from Theaterama roof, looking south

Photo # 7: Theaterama 2008-2009 office and café theater addition, looking south from north side of building, suspension roof of Tent of Tomorrow at rear right

Photo # 8: Circulation corridor, first level, Theaterama, looking south on west side of building at original entrance openings

Photo # 9: Theaterama from west, looking east at original building (right, with original concrete stair), 1992-1993 addition (center left) and 2008-2009 lobby addition (left)

Photo # 10: First floor corridor, western side of Theaterama building, looking north, with entry to 2008-2009 office and café theater addition at rear

Photo # 11: Interior of theater, showing original oak battens on original interior entry partition, looking northeast

Photo # 12: Opening of mezzanine deck seen from Theaterama roof, showing escalator at main, north entrance, looking southwest

Photo # 13: Suspension roof, Tent of Tomorrow, from roof of Theaterama, looking southwest

Photo # 14: Observation Towers, seen from the interior of the Tent of Tomorrow, looking northwest

Photo # 15: Tent of Tomorrow, seen from Observation Towers, looking southeast

Photo # 16: Tent of Tomorrow, looking northwest from eastern side

Photo # 17: Tent of Tomorrow, detail of east side showing columns, looking northwest

Photo # 18: Tent of Tomorrow from Observation Towers, looking southeast, with Theaterama at left

Photo # 19: East side of Tent of Tomorrow seen from Theaterama roof, looking south

Photo # 20: Eastern stairway to mezzanine deck, Tent of Tomorrow, showing terrazzo floor and map in foreground

Photo # 21: Tree planters in Tent of Tomorrow, south portion, looking east

Photo # 22: View of cable suspension roof, looking southeast from lowest observation tower deck, showing positions of cables and detail of outer ring

Photo # 23: Observation Towers enclosure with Theaterama lobby at rear, looking east

Photo # 24: Western Observation Tower column and deck from below, with underside of northern tower observation deck at right, looking west from lowest (south) tower observation deck

Photo # 25: Sky streak elevators in Observation Towers enclosure, looking west

Photo # 26: Observation Towers from below, western tower at right, showing supports for elevator; looking south

Photo # 27: Elevator enclosure, lowest observation deck, looking west

Photo # 28: Frame for air conditioning enclosure and ceiling beams, lowest observation deck, looking north

Photo # 29: Stair connecting the levels of western (highest) tower, looking southwest, with Meadow Lake at left



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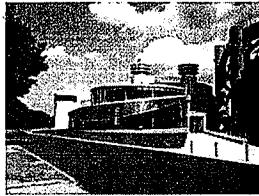
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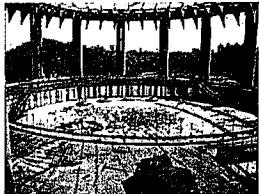
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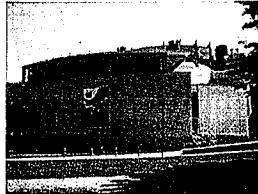
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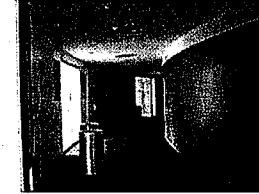
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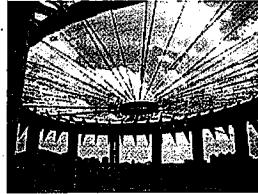
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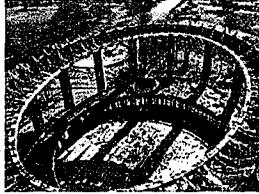
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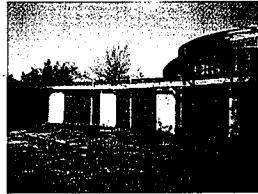
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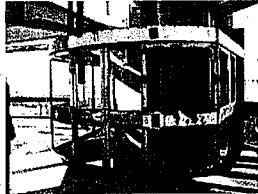
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