

Events

DETAILS AND MORE, P. 14 & 15

I.M. PEI'S DESIGNS FOR NEW YORK CITY HOUSING
September 15, 6:30 pm
DOCOMOMO fall lecture, see p. 3

JEAN PROUVÉ: A TROPICAL HOUSE
November 11, 6:30 pm
Lecture and film, see p. 3

SANTIAGO CALATRAVA: SCULPTURE INTO ARCHITECTURE
Metropolitan Museum of Art
October 18–January 22, 2006

ROMANTIC MODERNIST: THE LIFE AND WORK OF NORMAN JAFFE
Through September 18
The Parrish Art Museum,
Southampton, NY

VERNER PANTON: THE COLLECTED WORKS
Through October 1
AXA Gallery

Monthly Meetings

Second Tuesday of the month.
Email nytri@docomomo-us.org
to confirm date, location and time.
Sign up for our email list at:
www.docomomo-us.org and get
all the details.

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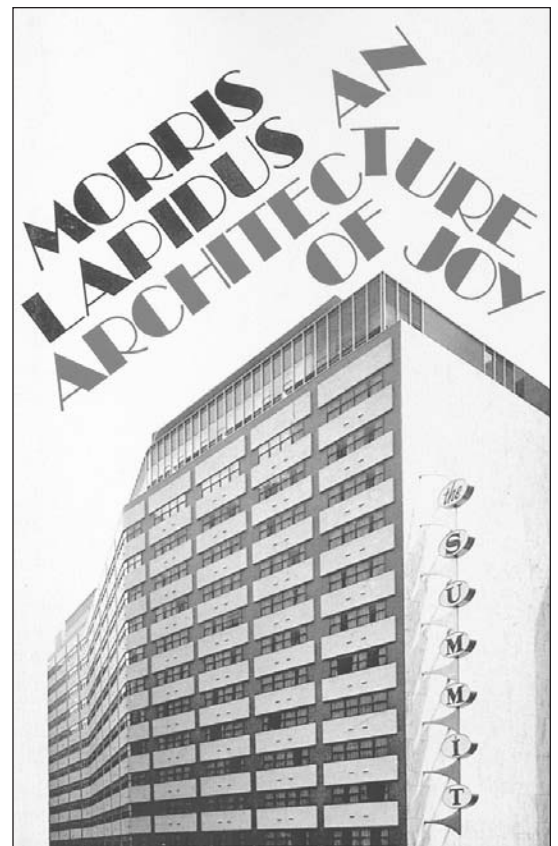
MORRIS LAPIDUS AND THE SUMMIT HOTEL, ARCHITECTURE OF MOTION AND EMOTION

New York City has always been a tough customer for outsider architecture. This was probably never more evident than when Morris Lapidus unveiled his Summit Hotel in August of 1961. The critics snapped "It's too far from the beach." It was embellished Modernism, the kind the architecture establishment loved to hate. Prior to the Summit, the last new hotel to open in Manhattan was the Waldorf-Astoria in 1931. Lapidus' swank hotel, with its sea green façade and signature zigzag was a new breed. The locals may have gasped, but hordes of visitors made reservations.

The Summit followed Lapidus' three-year blitz of successful projects in Miami: The Fontainebleau (1954); The Eden Roc (1955) and the Bal Harbour Americana (1956). Lapidus continued the trend, designing three more major hotels in New York for Loew's Hotels, later Tisch Hotels, in the early 1960s. Not to mention somewhere near 200 other hotel projects the firm completed around the world before Lapidus retired from a prolific and commercially successful practice in 1984.

*A little glamour and a little escape
were good for business. Hence Lapidus'
premise of an "architecture of joy."*

Morris Lapidus was actually not an outsider. While his firm and its work were strongly connected to South Florida, Lapidus had lifelong connections to New York. Born in 1902 in Odessa, Russia, his family immigrated to the US shortly thereafter, settling first in the Lower East Side, followed by Williamsburg and East New York. Lapidus studied acting briefly at New York University before transferring to Columbia University where he earned his architectural degree in 1928. After positions as a draftsman at several of the city's leading firms, he spent the next 15 years as a designer in the offices of Ross-Frankel. Here he mastered, and certainly helped shape, modern retail design—"merchandising laboratories" as he referred to his storefronts and stores—designing over 500 across the country before opening his own architecture office in 1943. The hotel work that soon followed came to define Lapidus' career although it was complemented by commissions for luxury apartment buildings (over 140); malls, synagogues, performing arts centers, hospitals, resorts and a cruise ship interior or two. This work propelled his office to 60 persons at its height, split between New York City and Miami.



*The Summit Hotel's unconventional façade is clad with dark green mosaic tile panels overlaid with a grid of sea green glazed brick panels. Because this defining feature is relatively intact—exception being the new windows—the hotel retains much of its original "outsider" character. Image is cover of Lapidus' 1979 book, *An Architecture of Joy*.*

Lapidus valued form above all else and you would be hard pressed to find a boxy building in his portfolio. As he claimed in his autobiography, it wasn't form for the fun of it. "My work never tried to follow the changing trends; it was always a sort of plastic form that was molded by the most important feature of my buildings, the interiors, for which all buildings are designed." Regardless of derivation, Lapidus' addiction to unusual forms had clear precedent and he was forthcoming about his inspirations. He found the non-linear undulat-

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Welcome

This year the New York/Tri-State Chapter has been focusing on local preservation advocacy issues. Some excellent examples of Modern architecture were at risk or may soon be: Two Morris Lapidus' buildings, the Odd-Job Building at Union Square—now lost—and the Summit Hotel—now landmarked; the former Jamaica Savings Bank in Queens—also now landmarked; Lincoln Center's North Plaza by Dan Kiley; and I.M. Pei's Silver Towers superblock. The Chapter has also been an active participant along with many other preservation organizations in calling for a designation hearing on 2 Columbus Circle. We applaud the work of local preservation organizations taking the lead on these efforts. All voices count and DOCOMOMO is lending its support when the subject is significant Modern architecture.

In April the Chapter had a productive meeting with the Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Robert Tierney and key staff to present the Manhattan Modern Map (a joint project with the Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture and the World Monuments Fund), review the status of pending Requests for Evaluation and suggest additional Modern buildings for consideration. The chapter will continue to work with the Commission to research and recommend future Modern landmarks. Please let us know if you are interested in working on research and advocacy efforts. DOCOMOMO: All volunteer, all the time.

If you are receiving the newsletter and have not yet joined, now is the time. DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State needs members to be effective at everything we do and want to do. More members means stronger advocacy, regular events and greater visibility for Modern architecture. Please join today.

—Nina Rappaport
Co-chair

SUMMIT HOTEL IS DESIGNATED A NYC LANDMARK

In May, the Summit Hotel (1961), now Doubletree Metropolitan Hotel, became one of the select Modern buildings to gain local landmark status. The designation was a little late in coming as a recladding of the 51st Street façade and a window replacement using inappropriate units was underway before the Landmarks Preservation Commission calendared a public hearing. [Original windows were divided horizontally into two stacked panes and had dark frames; the replacements have light aluminum frames and are undivided.]

The building was brought to the attention of the Commission years ago and was supposedly on the radar, but once again the system demonstrated an oddly perfunctory attitude toward an eligible building. At the March 29th designation hearing, support came from a cross-section of preservation advocates and Modern architecture enthusiasts, including groups and individuals in Miami. DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State provided testimony at this hearing and a continuation hearing in April. The Modern Architecture Working Group was especially critical to the effort, undertaking primary research and securing a stop work order for façade alterations lacking permits but underway while the Commission was deliberating.

Credit also goes to Matthew Postal of the LPC who did the bulk of the research and wrote the designation report, and to the entire Commission for recognizing the significance of this unusual, yet signature Modern structure. In the designation press release Commissioner Robert Tierney calls Lapidus' building "one of the most important examples of modern architecture in New York City," and notes further that the "shape, color and details of [the Summit Hotel] represented a breakthrough in design."

The hotel owner, Oxford Capital Companies, did not contest the designation, however its representatives, including its architects, claimed they did not know the building had architectural significance.

The window replacement was completed and designation failed to halt the recladding along 51st Street. Requests for Certificates of Appropriateness for additional changes are entering the review process now at Community Board 6. We hope that the Oxford Capital Companies might see the benefits of keeping more rather than less of what distinguishes their hotel from all the others and consider marketing the hotel as an attractive, amenity-laden mid-century Modern destination. Even more wishful is that the grid of white opaque glass plastered over Lapidus' white marble aggregate concrete panels and green tile reveals will someday be removed.

Please stay tuned and attend the upcoming hearings to assure that any inappropriate changes to the building are not pushed through.



This 1960s image shows the original Lexington Avenue design. A planter with a trio of saucer lamps marked the north corner and a second, south of the entrance, held three flagpoles.



Summer 2005. White marble aggregate panels separated by narrow rules of dark green mosaic tile have been covered over with shiny white opaque glass squares. Sidewalk seating for the coffee shop now fills much of the open sidewalk space.

FOOTNOTE

Lapidus' Crawford Clothes building (1949) on Union Square South, more recently known as the Odd-Job building, was heard before the Commission, which in the end voted against a designation. The building, its tower already demolished when the hearing took place, will be replaced by a new 10- to 15-story building.



PHILIP JOHNSON'S PORT CHESTER SYNAGOGUE LOOKS GOOD AT 50, BUT FACES FUNCTIONAL RISKS

Although the Kneses Tifereth Israel synagogue in Port Chester, NY is rarely cited among Philip Johnson's major works, it represents a pivotal moment when Johnson was introducing Classical motifs into his Modernist vocabulary. Dating from 1956, the synagogue was also one of Johnson's first works at larger than residential scale. (The MoMA garden of 1953 preceded it, and the Seagram collaboration was roughly simultaneous.) The synagogue has survived essentially unaltered for 49 years, largely beneath the historians' radar.

An item in the Sunday *New York Times* on March 27 indicated that the synagogue was threatened with alterations. Talks with the president and a long-time member of the congregation, plus a site visit, reveal no near-term threat, but a range of functional and maintenance issues typical of half-century-old buildings, even where ownership and use remain unchanged.

Crowning each of the spatial bays they define are shallow plaster vaults that recall John Soane's famous breakfast room ceiling.

Set on well landscaped grounds, the synagogue's big, shoebox-shaped sanctuary is barely visible behind a screen of rooftop-high evergreens surrounding it (thought by the congregation president to be original, but overdue for trimming). What is visible is the elliptical entrance lobby, an obvious Baroque reference. Rising

For the present-day congregation at Kneses Tifereth Israel (KTI), this historically significant sanctuary interior is simply too big a volume for their regular services, and too costly to heat and air-condition (with a system that doesn't handle extreme conditions well). The half of the space to the east of the entry axis seats about 400,



This view toward the rear of the sanctuary with its temporary partitions shows the shallow plaster vaults that help define each vertical bay.

more than enough for weekly services, and the entire sanctuary holds 800 for special holidays. On either side of the entrance bay are demountable partitions—very utilitarian-looking—that allow other functions in the rear half. But in terms of air treatment and acoustics, the space remains essentially one big room.

Aside from the dividing partitions, the sanctuary seems largely intact. The ritual platform at the front of the room looks much too ordinary to be a Johnson design, but is visually inconsequential among Johnson's striking architectural devices. The sculpture-bedecked wall above this platform represents a kind of 1950s abstraction (sculptor's identity not known as this goes to press) that could never have fit well into its Classically inspired setting.

A more serious drawback of the building for the congregation is that it doesn't provide the spaces needed for "life-cycle events"—weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs—which ideally call for a sequence of sanctuary, reception space, and banquet space. Congregations in nearby towns do provide such accommodations, so attract members who might otherwise belong to KTI.

The congregation members I talked to (the president and another long-time member) both recognize the special quality of the architecture—and personally enjoy it. They also report that there are members who don't appreciate it, considering the building just a white elephant. (It is certainly white!) And the president necessarily sees his primary goal as maintaining "a thriving synagogue" rather than preserving an architectural treasure. To that end, he has a strategic planning committee, charged with coming up with strategies that will make KTI more functional and attractive. One objective is to minimize spending on "band-aid" maintenance and other measures that have little overall effect. At this

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Coming this fall

DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State has organized two fall lectures:

I.M. PEI'S NEW YORK CITY HOUSING

Janet Adams Strong, Ph.D., architectural historian and former Director of Communications at Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, will talk about I.M. Pei's designs for New York City housing, specifically Kips Bay Plaza and University Plaza at NYU—both are potential candidates for designation as New York City landmarks.

Thursday September 15; 6:30pm
AIA New York, Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Place

JEAN PROUVÉ: A TROPICAL HOUSE

Robert Rubin, architectural historian, will give a talk on Jean Prouvé's Tropical House, an early and innovative attempt at prefabricated housing, and show his film on the reconstruction and restoration of a Tropical House.

Friday November 11; 6:30pm
AIA New York, Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Place

DOCOMOMO is co-sponsoring this event with the AIA New York Chapter. The talk is part of the Center for Architecture and Exhibitions International's Friday night film series on Design Visionaries. For more information: www.aiany.org.



The reconstructed Tropical House (Jean Prouvé, 1949–1951) on exhibit at Yale School of Architecture, spring 2005.



Kneses Tifereth Israel's rectilinear sanctuary is complemented by an elliptical entry building. Clad in white marble, both buildings are striking in their pastoral setting.

symmetrically behind this almost freestanding oval is the volume of the sanctuary, its walls crisply divided into bays by vertical bands of stained glass. The whole exterior is clad in white marble, clearly detailed as thin cladding.

From the sanctuary's white plaster interior, the vertical bands of colored glass—in random, abstract patterns—are even more prominent. Crowning each of the spatial bays they define are shallow plaster vaults that recall John Soane's famous breakfast room ceiling—a motif Johnson used at closer to original scale in the brick-walled guest house on his own property.

IN THE LAND OF BEAUX ARTS, MORETTI'S WATERGATE COMPLEX IS DESIGNATED

On February 24, 2005, the building complex made famous by the political scandal that bears its name was designated a District of Columbia Historic Landmark. Constructed between 1964 and 1971, the six-building Watergate complex is the design of Luigi Moretti (1907–1973), prominent Italian Modernist and founder of the architectural journal *Spazio*. An exuberant Modern masterpiece commanding spectacular views of the Potomac, Watergate is one of only a handful of postwar sites to receive local landmark designation in Washington, whose monumental core is dominated by Beaux Arts classicism, and whose populace harbors a general distaste of Modernism due both to a lack of understanding of the movement and the proliferation of all too many poorly executed examples. The designation is an exciting victory for Modernism in Washington, and for students of Luigi Moretti, a major figure in 20th-century Italian architecture whose impact

the Board was presented with an even stronger application that included additional information and numerous letters of support from national leaders in the study and preservation of Modernism.

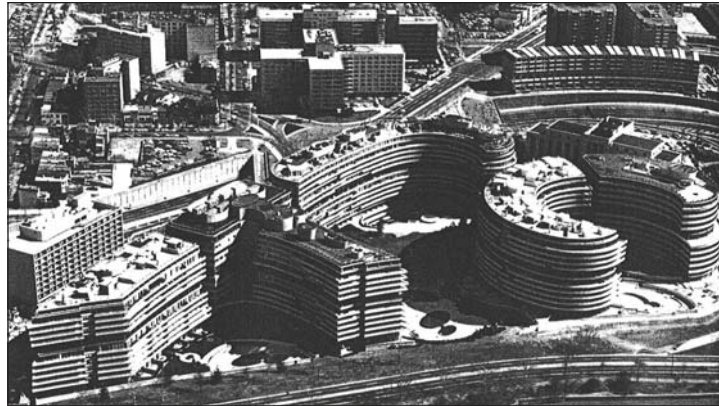
Unofficially, resistance from both members of the Board and the general public appears to have had less to do with the lack of understanding of

the category of architecture and urbanism, as an outstanding example of the Modern Movement and as the first private initiative Planned Unit Development (PUD) in the city.

Watergate is the physical manifestation of what Moretti referred to as “parametric architecture,” a theory of design in which Classicism (particularly the Baroque period) was com-

From a planning standpoint, Watergate incorporated all the defining elements of the PUD: mixed uses, mixed incomes, common amenities and cooperative occupant ownership. Since then, the PUD has become a common urban planning solution and major factor in the revitalization of cities across the country.

Subjective, aesthetic prejudice against Modern buildings remains a major hurdle in Washington, which still faithfully clings to Daniel Burnham’s City Beautiful vision. Modern masterpieces have yet to be embraced by a citizenry lacking the framework within which to understand the Modern Movement. Architectural historians and historic preservationists face the difficult challenge of educating the public, government agencies and review boards as to the value and contribution of the Modern Movement to the fields of art and architecture, and to the Washington urban experience. The designation of Watergate,



AIA JOURNAL, APRIL 1974

The sculptural qualities of Moretti’s concrete forms are most pronounced when viewed from the air. Construction complexities required one of the first known uses of CAD.



CARRIE ALBEE

“The ends are too sharp” said a Fine Arts Commission member in 1962.

has gone greatly underappreciated in Italy and abroad.

Despite an extensive application detailing Watergate’s exceptional significance and strong support from the DC Historic Preservation Office, the Historic Preservation Review Board deferred moving on the application at its initial hearing in September 2004 on the grounds that they did not have enough information to establish Moretti as a creative master. At the hearing in February

Moretti than with the perception of the building as “unattractive,” a common obstacle confronting advocates of Modern architecture nationwide.

Moretti’s flamboyant and expressive design has provoked vehement controversy since its initial unveiling to the Commission of Fine Arts in 1962. Dubbed “Antipasto on the Potomac” in *Architectural Forum*, Moretti’s design went before the Commission countless times between 1962 and 1967, eliciting concerns that the complex would mar the city skyline, detract from the Rock Creek National Park and the monumental core (particularly the Lincoln Memorial), and have a detrimental impact on the adjacent, yet-to-be-built, John F. Kennedy Center. One commissioner complained that “some of the ends of the proposed buildings... were too sharp and too high.”

At the second hearing fact prevailed over personal taste. Watergate was designated on three criteria: its association with the events that led to the toppling of president Richard M. Nixon; as a masterwork of architect Luigi Moretti and landscape architect Boris Timchenko; and in

combined with mathematical and functional principles to produce new forms. Throughout his career Moretti’s designs were characterized by the use of concrete as the principal building material—highly sculptural masses often combining rectangular and elliptical shapes, strong horizontality created by bands of windows or balconies and a regular repetition of alternating linear solids and voids. Watergate represents the maturation of Moretti’s design aesthetic during which he departed from the restrained minimalist rectangular forms and stark surfaces characteristic of Fascist architecture and experimented with the more organic plasticity of concrete in large, undulating elliptical forms. Translating these forms to construction drawings proved so challenging that engineers were hired exclusively to make the necessary calculations with the aid of a computer, making Watergate one of the earliest known uses of computer-aided architectural design.



CARRIE ALBEE

Watergate—DC’s first private initiative Planned Unit Development—remains a prestigious address today.

however hesitant, is an encouraging step, one that will help lay the groundwork for the recognition and appreciation of such Washington Modern masterworks as Roman Fresnedo-Siri’s Pan American Health Organization building of 1964, Marcel Breuer and Associates’ Department of Housing and Urban Development of 1968, and Edward Durrell Stone’s Kennedy Center of 1971.

—Carrie Albee
EHT Tracerics, Inc., Washington, DC

ROUND TWO FOR I.M. PEI'S KIPS BAY PLAZA

In April of 1993, a group of Kips Bay Plaza residents filed a "Request for Evaluation" with the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission for their I.M. Pei-designed complex located between 30th and 33rd Streets, and First and Second Avenues. The property had reached the 30-year mark, however the Commission was not ready to consider landmarking such a young building, or for that matter, any Modern building that had not already gained national or international acclaim. Twelve years have passed and a new effort is underway to repeat the process and hopefully garner a designation hearing and landmark status for this innovative and admired residential complex.

Designed in 1957 by I.M. Pei & Associates and built for the major urban renewal developer Webb & Knapp, Inc. from 1961–1963, Kips Bay Plaza has two 21-story buildings, each with 560 apartments, ranging from studios to three bedrooms. The buildings are situated on a ten-acre site, of which three acres are landscaped plaza and playgrounds (fenced off for private use in 1980 when the buildings became condominiums), with a retail arcade (not visually or architecturally connected to the Pei project) and parking in both aboveground lots and an underground garage. [Note: There was also a name change to Kips Bay Towers in 1980.]

Pei Cobb Freed's description of the project states "The twin slabs are oriented to the New York City street grid and positioned to maximize skyline and river views. Because the facades are load-bearing units, fewer internal supports are required so that the apartments enjoy greater amounts of usable space inside. Apartments have floor-to-ceiling windows protected by a deep concrete grid which shields from glare and direct sun while at ground level each lobby opens to a shared plaza in order to bring the buildings into unity with the surrounding areas." The NYU residence on the east side of the complex and the retail arcade and multiplex theater to the west were not part of Pei's project and would likely be considered non-contributing archi-

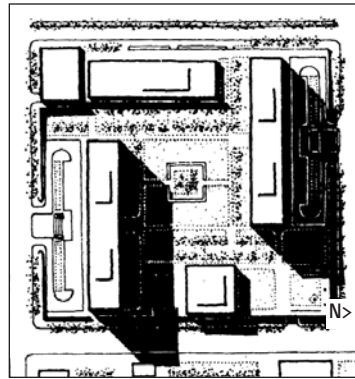
ture in a designation of the Kips Bay Plaza site.

Shortly after opening, the complex received awards from the City Club as well as federal housing and urban renewal associations. Paul Goldberger, architecture critic and dean of the Parsons School of Design, supported the original designation effort, noting the project's "tremendous architectural integrity," as did Robert A.M. Stern, dean of the School of Architecture at Yale University. In 1983, Ieoh Ming Pei was awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the third American so honored.

According to the architects, "The challenge [of this Title I urban renewal project] was to develop a construction system suitable for high-rise residential buildings which would not only be economically competitive with conventional methods but which would also offer aesthetic potential over the concrete-frame brick-skin apartment houses that had become standard in American cities since the beginning

unbroken grid of columns and floor plates is visible on all sides of the freestanding slabs, making it a truly defining characteristic of Kips Bay Plaza. A small but elegant detail made possible by the fluid character of structural concrete is the rounded corners at the top edges of each window recess.

Kips Bay Plaza is one of twelve buildings called out for sooner-rather-than-later attention on the *Manhattan Modern Map*. To that end the local chapter will be working with residents this fall to prepare



New and sparse in 1963. Today the two offset slabs combine with two newer perimeter buildings to create a more private courtyard that is lushly landscaped and shaded with 40-year-old trees—a true urban oasis.

of the century. The solution, a pioneering application of cast-in-place architectural concrete, involves the marriage of architecture and engineering whereby structure is clearly expressed on the building exterior in architectural terms unbound by the straight lines and dimensional characteristics of masonry units." This

and submit a new Request for Evaluation and urge the Commission to calendar a public hearing. The map's descriptive caption notes Kips Bay Plaza's "urban-scale grandeur." Yes, a 410 foot-long run of perfectly gridded, carefully detailed structural concrete has a grandeur all its own. —Karen Hecht and Kathleen Randall

Update

Pei across town

Kips Bay Plaza is one of two highly regarded works of residential architecture by I.M. Pei in New York. The other is the 30-story University Plaza, aka Silver Towers, on the New York University campus (Bleecker/Houston/West Broadway).



GVSHIP

The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation (GVSHIP) continues to work with the Board of 505 LaGuardia—the residential coop within the Silver Towers complex—and Councilmember Alan Gerson, who represents the area and lives at 505, to see that this well designed superblock housing site is granted a designation hearing, hopefully followed by landmark status. The group has met with Landmarks Commissioner Robert Tierney who in turn, has met with New York University (NYU) representatives. NYU owns all of the land and all of the buildings on the block except 505 LaGuardia. The other buildings are two NYU faculty towers, a gym, and a small supermarket.

Earlier this year at a public meeting with Community Board 2 leaders, Commissioner Tierney expressed strong support for and interest in the designation of Silver Towers—specifically the towers and the central plaza they surround, including its Picasso sculpture—but expressed reservations about inclusion of areas of the superblock outside of the towers and central plaza. The supermarket site, which NYU

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Good Things

Risom returns to showrooms

It won't be flea market prices, but if a Jens Risom table or sofa is what you've been hankering for, you can find an excellent selection of new pieces at Ralph Pucci International in Manhattan. Risom's well-known and widely appreciated work, beginning in 1942 with his Kroll 600 line, is credited with helping introduce Scandinavian craftsmanship and innovation to US furniture manufacturing and with helping popularize the rich woods and sophisticated lines of European modern design with the American furniture-buying public. Risom has updated a 30-



piece collection that will be manufactured and marketed by Pucci. Included are upholstered pieces, benches, and a variety of tables: magazine, nesting, coffee and dining.

Risom's stateside career began with his arrival in 1939, when Edward Durell Stone picked him to design the furniture for the Collier's House of Ideas, a model house built on a terrace at Rockefeller Center. After notable work for Georg Jensen and Hans Kroll, Risom started his own company in 1946.

At 88 Risom is still working, both on this project and others, through his company Design Control, based in New Canaan, CT, where he has lived for many years.

Ralph Pucci International
44 West 18th Street
www.ralphpucci.com

JAMAICA SAVINGS BANK DESIGNATED

New York City has officially received its youngest landmark, the former Jamaica Savings Bank in Elmhurst, Queens. (89-01 Queens Boulevard; now North Fork Bank). We commend the Commission under Chair Robert Tierney for making this bold choice and for moving ever closer to the 30-year mark of eligibility for landmarks in New York by designating a building completed in 1968.

As the Commission's designation report expertly documents, the Elmhurst branch was commissioned by the Jamaica Savings Bank in 1966, the year the bank was celebrating its centennial. The William F. Cann Company and the Bank Building & Equipment Corporation of America, both of St. Louis Missouri, were asked to design this small branch bank as a structure that would stand out in the urban congestion of Queens Boulevard. Noted for having helped to introduce modern aesthetics into the banking mainstream after the war, the Bank Building & Equipment Corporation chose to employ a hyperbolic paraboloid of thin-shell reinforced concrete that covered a column-free interior. Supported by a pair of concrete piers, the copper-clad roof spans 116 feet, reaching a height of 43 feet above the main entrance. Recalling the work of Eduardo Catalano, Felix Candela and Eero Saarinen, the Jamaica Savings Bank is a bold expression of mid-20th century engineering applied to a small scale neighborhood commercial structure.

Because the bank is being designated now, at 37 years—while still in good condition and long before redevelopment plans and demolition permits are in hand—it has a certain future as a Modern icon on Queens Boulevard and as a fascinating note in New York City's slowly growing collection of landmarked buildings from the Modern period.

Time to get busy. There are plenty more examples of significant architecture from the 1960s and early 1970s that should be considered for landmark designation. Waiting until the 50-year mark only increases the likelihood of demolition or detrimental alterations.

—John Jurajj



PHOTOS: COURTESY NEW YORK LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Now a branch of North Fork Bank, the former Jamaica Savings Bank occupies a diamond-shaped site at the intersection of 56th Avenue and Queens Boulevard. The bank's dramatic prow and parabola combo has been a neighborhood landmark for 37 years. It is now an official NYC landmark—the 51st building to be designated in Queens.

RUSHING TO PROTECT: DEMO NOTIFICATION BILL

There are almost one million buildings in New York City. While only a small percentage are significant works of architecture, the number represents far too many for even the most dedicated friends of historic architecture to keep watch over. All too often the preservation community is forced to engage in last-minute battles to save buildings that rightly deserve the protections of designation or at least careful consideration before a stealth demolition. To help remedy this situation the Historic Districts Council (HDC) has been working closely with New York Councilmember Michael McMahon (D, Staten Island) to sponsor legislation that will build a safety net into the demolition request process. The goal is a rational system that will give the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) time to review all buildings over fifty years old that are proposed for demolition. Council Member McMahon introduced the Demolition Delay Bill,

Intro 317a, to the City Council Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting & Maritime Uses in April 2004. The bill has 27 council members signed on as co-sponsors (a majority of the council) as well as support from over 70 preservation and neighborhood associa-

The goal is a rational system that will give the Commission time to review all buildings over fifty years old that are proposed for demolition.

tions, including DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State.

The bill establishes a time-critical procedure mandating that the Department of Buildings forward all applications for the demolition of a building over 50 years old to the LPC for review. The Commission then has 15 days to determine if the building is significant. If it is not, the demolition permit can be issued; if it appears to be sig-

continued next column

NOTIFICATION BILL, CONT.

nificant, the LPC must hold a public hearing within 30 days to determine if the building should be "preferably preserved." Again, if at the hearing preservation is not deemed appropriate, the demolition permit may be issued. If it is to be "preferably preserved," no demolition, construction, or alteration permits can be issued for one year, during which time the LPC can proceed with its usual process of researching the building's history, calendaring it for public hearing, holding the hearing, and officially designating the building if the commissioners vote to do so.

HDC, and the preservation community as a whole, fully understand that not every building over 50 years old should be preserved. This bill will create a safety net for the truly worthy ones. In regard to Modern architecture, the bulk of which is now hitting the 50 year mark, the demolition delay bill will become more important and useful with each passing year.

The bill has had two hearings at the subcommittee level, and HDC is currently lobbying for it to be passed along to the full council. Please send a letter to your city council representative urging them to support this bill. With the help of the New York Public Information Group, HDC has created a very handy online form for doing this. Please visit:

<http://www.nonprofitmaps.org/action/descrip.asp?Cname=hdc&AlertID=16>

—Simeon Bankoff, HDC

WITTY, BOLD AND INVENTIVE IN WESTHAMPTON



Andrew Geller's 1959 Pearlroth House in Westhampton Beach is a modest, quirky little place with a colorful history richly expressive of its time and place. It was recently hailed by architecture critic and historian Alastair Gordon as "one of the most important examples of experimental design built during the post-war period...witty, bold and inventive." Maybe so, but this spring it faced possible demolition when the current owner made known his intention of building something bigger and probably less witty.

Thanks to the efforts of the knowledgeable and concerned, including Geller's grandson, historian/filmmaker Jake Gorst; the organization Exhibitions International, a NYC-based art group; and the Town of Southampton, the house will most likely be saved. In an effort to preserve the original house the owner volunteered to donate it to Gorst provided he and others interested in its preservation could move the house off the property. The Town of Southampton stepped in as a willing recipient. As of late July, the preservation team is waiting for permits and working to raise the balance of the \$50,000 needed to move the 600-square foot structure to a new, public home on Pikes Beach in the Village of Westhampton Dunes.

Geller, a longtime designer for the Loewy Corporation, worked on such monuments as Lever House, but he was best known for his whimsical

East Coast beach houses, with impossibly playful names like The Box Kite, The Cat, The Milk Carton and The Reclining Picasso.

In the 1950s and 60s, Geller's clientele built vacation homes, mainly of wood, on the beaches of the Jersey Shore, the Hamptons and New England, with modest budgets and no more ambitious aim than to enjoy summer weekends in a setting of comfortably stylish good humor. Alastair Gordon's book *Beach Houses: Andrew Geller* presents dozens of these residences while his *Weekend Utopia* puts the Hamptons houses into the larger context of the area's transition from an artist's colony in the 1940s to the more exclusive community it is today.

Perhaps the most intriguing phase of Geller's career came with his role as project architect for Leisurama, a community of prefabricated, ranch-style summer homes in Montauk, NY. [See MOMO To Do, p. 14, for more on Leisurama and details of an upcoming documentary.]

Current plans call for turning the Pearlroth House into a museum of architecture and design once additional funds are raised for some light restoration and museum operations. Find out more, and contribute to the rescue and restoration effort at www.ei-ny.org. A dedicated site www.pearlrothhouse.com is under construction.

Good Things

New stamps feature Modern favorites and more

In May the US Postal Service issued a new commemorative sheet featuring 12 icons of modern architecture. The stamps combine dramatic black and white photos with the building name, location and date—the latter only if you can read 2 point type. Flip the sheet over and you'll find the architect's



name and a paragraph description of each building. Paul Goldberger, architecture critic and dean of the Parsons School of Design, made the selections using a rather broad definition of modern architecture. The set starts with William Van Alen's Chrysler Building (1930) and ends with Frank Gehry's Disney Concert Hall (2003). Order a sheet or two at www.usps.com.

Google goes Modern

The Google logo, known for morphing to reflect holidays or other themes, did a stint as Modern architecture in May. If you missed it, here it is:



2 COLUMBUS CIRCLE: HISTORY IS BEING WRITTEN

Efforts to gain a public hearing to consider the designation of Two Columbus Circle's iconoclastic façade may well go down in history as one of the liveliest and sharpest tussles in preservation history, regardless of outcome. The action has not slowed in the summer months:

June

- World Monuments Fund adds Two Columbus Circle (2CC) to its "2006 Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites."

- The *New York Times* Editorial Board gives 2CC twelve inches in the left column calling for a designation hearing and a Landmarks Preservation Commission willing to "weigh openly questions of taste against questions of historical merit." (6/29/05; p. A22)

- The Museum of Arts & Design (MAD) obtains a demolition permit for the façade of 2CC.

July

- Tom Wolfe pens a piece in *New York* magazine outing emails between Landmarks Commissioner Robert Tierney and MAD project

step in consideration for listing on the National Register.

- July 14. Landmark West! organizes a "People's Hearing" to draw attention to the Commission's refusal to hold a legitimate hearing. Co-sponsored by a cadre of City Council members, state senators and assembly members, over 150 people attend and hear lively and compelling testimony on the merits of our most controversial building.

Chapter Testimony

The bulk of DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State's testimony, read at the hearing by John Arbuckle, follows:

"We live in an age of architectural transition and the more exuberant forms are finding favor with a new generation."

That's Edward Durell Stone speaking in 1964 about the museum he designed at Columbus Circle. It's equally true today.

DOCOMOMO's primary mission is research, documentation and education to expand the understanding of Modern movement architecture in

the United States. Preserving and interpreting the historical record of architectural ideas and built works is critical to developing this understanding. Stone's significant works, of which the Gallery of Modern Art at Two Columbus Circle is one, are essential components of the historical record. This building specifically demonstrates for scholars and the interested public a transition in cultural and architectural attitudes following the pivotal postwar period and the mainstreaming of American Modernism.

Edward Durell Stone was one of the country's most sought-out architects for 25 years. By mid-century his work and his firm were internationally known. Two Columbus Circle followed on the heels of prestigious commissions—the United States Embassy in New Delhi (1954–1959) and the US pavilion for the Brussels

continued page 13

ABRAMOVITZ'S "BOAT BUILDING" JOINS THE NATIONAL REGISTER

The Phoenix Mutual headquarters building (1961–1963) by Max Abramovitz is said to be the world's first two-sided building. True or not, this daring design by one of the country's master modernists is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

Hartford, CT has long been the epicenter of the insurance industry in the US. In 1961 the Phoenix Mutual company, which had been operating in Hartford since 1851, commissioned Max Abramovitz, of Harrison & Abramovitz, to design a headquarters that would not only be a beacon for the company but would also symbolize its commitment to the revitalization of downtown Hartford. Today, The Phoenix Companies, Inc. supported the listing of its signature headquarters and is undertaking a major renovation of the 40-plus year old building.

According to engineering types, the 13-story tower is technically an elliptic lenticular cylinder. The average passerby might say the 225-foot building looks more like a flattened football. The tower sits on top of a low building that fills the entire city block. This base building has a cut out area with a reflecting pool to accommodate the "boat" like tower. The connection between the tower and its "island" is dramatic—almost delicate—as the tower is supported



THE PHOENIX COMPANIES, INC.

The 1963 Phoenix Mutual Companies headquarters building in Hartford, CT, designed by Max Abramovitz. Jeter, Cook & Jepsen Architects, Inc., is heading up the current renovations.

on slender reinforced concrete T-shaped columns.

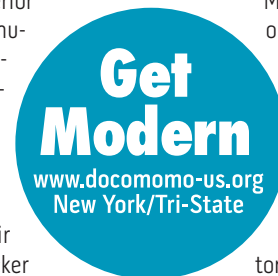
Recognition of Abramovitz's work is long overdue and this listing is a perfect example of the architect's unflinching push for uncharted forms and corporate image making. What startles is how contemporary this 1963 building looks on today's skyline.

ICFF MEETS DOCOMOMO: A BUTTON IS LAUNCHED

DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State made its presence known at the May 2005 ICFF conference in NYC via DOCOMOMO-blue lapel buttons that read "Get Modern. www.docomomo-us.org New York/Tri-State." The buttons are part of an effort to introduce the organization to interior design professionals and manufacturers and to create awareness in the greater community of DOCOMOMO's projects and priorities. The buttons were first introduced at the ICFF Opening night party held at MOMA. During the fair manufacturers Chilewich, Tucker

Robbins, Fire and Water, Modern Fan Co. and Bluedot as well as *Metropolis* magazine, distributed the buttons in their booths. On the evening of local showroom parties, Troy Soho and Bulthaup gave out the buttons to partygoers.

Many thanks to our fundraising coordinator Dale Cohen, who spearheaded the effort, and to all the sponsors who distributed the buttons during ICFF.



NEWS FROM NEW CANAAN

A 1960 pool house designed by Landis Gores, one of the "Harvard Five," is part of a 30-plus acre estate recently acquired by the Town of New Canaan for a public park. Discussions have been initiated regarding possible reuse of this modest modernist structure, which is reportedly well constructed and in reasonably good repair. (For some additional images of the pool house and more on Landis Gores visit: www.landisgores.com)

Elsewhere in New Canaan, several one-of-a-kind mid-century Modern houses are for sale: a 1962 three-bedroom designed by Hugh Smallen (MLS#126431); a 1956 four-bedroom by Willis Mills (Sherwood Mills & Smith, MLS#126534) and a 1956 four-bedroom by John Black Lee with renovations by Toshiko Mori and Thomas Phifer (MLS#126559—see p. 11).

In the "we think they are safe" category, Breuer House No. 2 (1951), the second house Marcel Breuer designed for his family, was sold last fall to new owners who are planning a sympathetic renovation and updating. The owners saw the house on a Modern house tour organized by the New Canaan Historical Society last October. When they learned it was empty and owned by a builder who planned to demolish it for something bigger and more McMansion like, they stepped in and made an offer. Local pressure from supporters of New Canaan's Modern movement heritage helped persuade the builder to agree to the deal.

A house designed by John Howe, a member of Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin Fellowship and one of Wright's most talented apprentices, is being purchased by new owners who reportedly intend to preserve the house. In true Wrightian fashion the house has exquisite stonework, fine wood wall paneling, built-in furniture and two floating terraces. A curved, double-height wall of windows encloses the main room.

Then there are the Philip Johnson-designed properties. The Hodgson house (1951), a perfectly intact gem across the street from the Glass House, is in the process of being added to the National Register of Historic Places. Family members of the original owner hope to have some protections, possibly even deed restrictions against demolition, in place before moving forward with a sale. The Ball house (1953), a small house with a private courtyard, was sold earlier this year but little is known of the new owner's plans for the house and site. And finally, the Glass House. Planning is proceeding for the operation of Johnson's entire collection of buildings as a National Trust property. Although no major physical changes are in order, the shift from private home to public place requires numerous adjustments. This effort is in good hands, and an opening is expected in 2006 or 2007.

For a thoughtful analysis of the New Canaan dilemma check out "Private Lives" by Fred Bernstein in the July 2005 issue of *Metropolis* magazine. Bernstein is realistic, not optimistic when he writes, "this collection of Modern houses is likely to remain forever vulnerable—and off limits."



PHOTOS: © PEDRO GUERRERO

The Gores-designed pool/guest house was built as part of a large private estate using finely crafted, high-end materials. The jambs, corner columns and mullions were milled from clear redwood heartwood and the massive central fireplace is hand-cleft dove gray slate.

DOCOMOMO INTERNATIONAL

Call for papers DOCOMOMO IXth International Conference: "Other Modernisms"

Istanbul/Ankara, Turkey
September 27–29, 2006
Submission deadline: Sept. 19, 2005
www.docomomo.org.tr

Every other year DOCOMOMO International convenes an international conference hosted by one of the 40 national working parties scattered around the globe. The three-day conferences include two days of academic and technical presentations followed by a day or more of tours to important Modern Movement buildings and sites. Registration is open to members and non-members and the gatherings historically attract 200–400 participants. A full Call for Papers is available on the website above, however a synopsis of the theme follows. Registration information will be available Spring 2006.

"Other Modernisms" proceeds from the growing consensus that the mainstream histories of 20th-century modernism based on canonic texts and buildings have marginalized or left out entirely, some important trajectories of the movement. These theories and built works are gaining an unprecedented legitimacy as new research and revisionist histories shed light on the differences within orthodox modernism itself, and hence question its canonical definitions. In addition, "non-western" contexts from Asia, Africa, South America and Eastern Europe, have been increasingly studied to broaden the scope of modernist production beyond Western Europe and North America. Instead of a modernist mainstream, we now talk about a plurality of modernisms both within the global context and within individual societies comprising it. The extensive network of DOCOMOMO does not confine itself to canonical centers of modernism, and is already a step toward the recognition of different and distant modernisms.

DOCOMOMO 2006 seeks contributions from scholars, educators, researchers, design and preservation professionals, and policy and law-

makers. Submissions may include: theory, history, cultural analyses, documentation/inventory, case studies, design, conservation, restoration and reuse, policy proposals, educational programs and artistic production among others. Please see the full Call for Papers for specific topic sub-themes and key words for directing a submission.

Seminar explores early innovations in building physics

IXth International DOCOMOMO
Technology Seminar
*Climate and Building Physics in
the Modern Movement*
June 24–25, 2005
Löbau, Germany

The DOCOMOMO International Specialist Committee on Technology in cooperation with the Hochschule Zittau/Görlitz (FH) and Technische Universität Braunschweig, presented "Climate and Building Physics in the Modern Movement" in June.

While Modern Movement pioneers considered structural design mainly a matter of geometry, climatic conditions and the real world issues of moisture and insulation obliged these architects to take an interest in the then emergent discipline of Building Science. This process was accompanied by conservative criticism of Modern Movement building praxis, which included the infamous "flat roof discussion."

The technical seminar was held at the Schminke House by Hans Scharoun (1933), a building of advanced and sophisticated performance vis a vis building physics. Experts in building science, technical and architectural history, and building restoration covered topics such as air conditioning, heat insulation and transmission, experimental houses, orientation, glass surfaces, thin walls, flat roofs and k-value norms. The seminars were complimented by a half-day tour in the Saxon region to visit Modern buildings recognized for the behavior of their internal environments.

DOCOMOMO ISC-Technology Committee member and local chapter member Kyle Normandin presented at the seminar.

The Modern Library



The Pan Am Building and the Shattering of the Modernist Dream

Meredith L. Clausen
MIT Press
December 2004
416 pages; 126 illustrations;
Hardcover, \$45

Here is a hefty new book devoted entirely to a building widely considered to be among the worst manifestations of Modern architecture in New York. We learn in Meredith Clausen's *The Pan Am Building and the Shattering of the Modernist Dream*, that the behemoth now known as the Met Life Building is noteworthy for reasons beyond its status as the sole work in New York by Bauhaus titan Walter Gropius. In fact, when completed in 1963, it was the largest commercial building in the world and its design, engineering and construction were unusually complex due to both its scale and location above the rails entering Grand Central Terminal. The original tenant, Pan Am Airlines, signed the largest lease for office space in the history of Manhattan real estate. However, what is most striking is the extent to which the building was so entirely ill-fated despite the efforts of those involved to create a lasting monument.

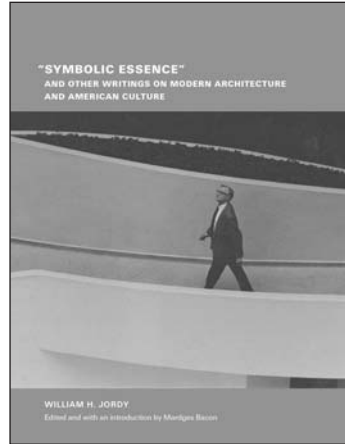
Not only is Pan Am viewed today as part of the generally uninspiring late Gropius oeuvre, from the time the design was announced it

received scathing criticism. Gropius, brought in along with Pietro Belluschi to make a massive project more palatable to the public through his unparalleled credentials, was so widely criticized for his involvement that his standing in the profession never recovered. Clausen, a professor of architectural history at the University of Washington and author of *Pietro Belluschi, Modern American Architect* (1994), argues that the building was a crucial point in the turning of the tide against the entire Modern Movement in the US.

Few of the figures and organizations associated with the project fared well. While successful financially, the developer Erwin Wolfson died before it was completed. The rooftop heliport, intended to provide rapid access from midtown to departing Pan Am flights at JFK, was decommissioned shortly after a gruesome accident. Pan Am Airlines, then led by Juan Trippe (recently portrayed by Alec Baldwin in "The Aviator"), was the pre-eminent American airline when it occupied the building but after a long decline folded in 1991.

Clausen set out "to provide a clear, solid historical account of the building itself, the discourse around it (that is, what was thought of it and written about it at the time), and its historiography (how the event was written up, or on the contrary, ignored, in history later)." The well-illustrated project history and the lengthy play by play of assessments by the various critics and commentators can be tough going but she has achieved her goals. This cautionary tale of a complex and confused project and its repercussions adds significantly to the documentary record of Modern architecture's tenure in the US.

—John Shreve Arbuckle



"Symbolic Essence" and Other Writings on Modern Architecture and American Culture

William H. Jordy
Mardges Bacon, ed.
Yale University Press
in association with Temple
Hoynes Buell Center for the Study
of American Architecture
April 2005
344 pages; paper \$35

As the era of mid-century modernism recedes into the distance, along with the fabric and feeling of the times, we must increasingly turn to the preserved artifacts to understand what transpired, what we valued then, and what of that lost world we value still. Yet it is not merely to the saved and lost buildings that we must look. Equally important is scholarship and criticism, both of architectural culture and the social, economic and technological forces that produced it. William H. Jordy, though perhaps not as familiar to most as the likes of Reyner Banham or Vincent Scully, weighed in on these important matters and deserves to be more widely known, for his was a truly synthetic view of the continuing and changing importance of both mid-century

modernism and earlier pioneering work from the first half of the twentieth century. Thankfully, with *"Symbolic Essence" and Other Writings on Modern Architecture and American Culture*, Columbia University's Temple Hoynes Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture has assembled an exemplary selection of Jordy's critical writing, giving him the recognition he deserves and reminding us of what is at stake for the future.

Equal in intellect to Banham or Scully, and an engaging and gifted writer to boot, Jordy taught over a generation of Brown University students to appreciate what was modern about modern architecture and art, as well as American culture's particular encounter with modernity. Covering a variety of topics, from leading American architects at the turn of the last century to the design goals and realities of the Tennessee Valley Authority to regionalism in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as critical assessments of mid-century icons and late modernism—Mies's Seagram Building, Kahn's Exeter Academy Library, Pei's China Tower and others—Jordy's writing is less preoccupied with proselytizing for a personal vision of modernism than with generating the kind of description that locates architecture within the complexity and diversity of modern culture. Thanks to a lengthy, clear and insightful introduction by Mardges Bacon, Jordy's knack for astute observation and delicacy of thought is foregrounded in this volume.

While until now somewhat overlooked, William Jordy's importance for the future is served well by this book. By no means a comprehensive history of the era, as provided by others of his generation, this collection of writings is immensely rewarding and thoroughly engaging.

—Brendan D. Moran

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The Architecture Traveler: A Guide to 263 Key American Buildings

Sydney LeBlanc
W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
2nd Edition, May 2005
291 pages; paper \$22.95

Organized chronologically starting with Frank Lloyd Wright's Home and Studio in Oak Park, (1889–1909) "the 'funny little house' that Wright began at age twenty-two with borrowed money from his boss, Louis Sullivan," and ending with Frank Gehry's Millennium Park (2004) in Chicago, Sydney LeBlanc's new edition of *The Architecture Traveler: A Guide to 263 Key American Buildings* takes you coast to coast with an eye toward architecture.

Reading Lapidus:

By Morris Lapidus:
Architecture: A Profession and a Business (1967)
An Architecture of Joy (1979)
Man's Three Million Year Odyssey (1989)
A Pyramid in Brooklyn (1989)
Too Much is Never Enough: An Autobiography (1996)

About Morris Lapidus:
Düttmann, Martina and Friederike Schneider, eds.
Morris Lapidus: Architect of the American Dream (Birkhäuser Verlag, 1992)
Desilets, Deborah
Morris Lapidus (Assouline, 2004)

Included in this chronology are many fine examples of Modern buildings and sites open to the public.

LeBlanc is very aware of the sea change that the world of architecture has experienced since she began writing her first edition almost twenty years ago, particularly the growing interest in Modern architecture and design. The revised edition is generally up to the minute, including the entry on 2 Columbus Circle—though that story is changing every day.

Each site is presented via a photograph and a full-page descriptive writeup complete with tour availability, contact information and other helpful details. Two useful indexes, one by architect and one geographical, make finding destinations a snap. Alternatively, maps keyed with site locations make it possible to plan excursions around a particular area.

LeBlanc is a New York City-based writer specializing in architecture and design whose work has appeared in magazines and in *The New York Times*. She participated in the visiting artist/writer program at the American Academy in Rome and is a consultant to Architecture and Design TV. As she notes in her preface, the only way to truly appreciate a building is to see it for yourself. Keep a copy next to your suitcase. —Leslie Monsky

In the market?



Who knew? Mies in Connecticut

The Greenwald House in Weston, CT (also known as the Wolf House) was designed by Mies van der Rohe in 1955–1956 for Morris Greenwald, the brother of Herbert Greenwald who commissioned the Lake Shore Drive apartments in Chicago.

Its steel frame is painted pristine white, with small areas of brick infill. Most of the walls are glass top to bottom, and many utilize window units left over from Lake Shore Drive.

In 1960 Mies added two bays to the house (at right in photo) and

orchestrated the switch to double glazing. In the 1980s two detached, brilliantly complementary pavilions (at left) were designed by Peter L. Gluck. The house is 4,900 sq. ft on five spectacular acres.

Mies designed only three houses in the US. This one happens to be on a desirable piece of property, hence its \$7 million listing price.

Spread the word. And take a look at www.mieshouse.com, the listing agent's informative website, even if you are not in the market.



ROGER STRAUS III

11th hour for classic New Canaan Modern

A 1956 house designed by John Black Lee (Lee House #2, more recently known as the Polish House) is facing an uncertain future unless a buyer interested in the architecture can quickly be found.

If you've been on any of the New Canaan tours or paged through Michael Webb's *Modernism Reborn* you know the house. It's a very Miesian steel and glass pavilion on a beautiful wooded site.

The current owners have been hoping for some time to sell the house to an owner who wants to keep it intact. Now they must sell. They have an offer, but it comes

with some telltale hints that a tear down might be the ultimate outcome. As of early August the owners are looking for another offer from a more promising buyer.

All the details of the house and the recent, careful updating by Toshiko Mori and Thomas Phifer can be found in the online listing. <<http://www.sothebysrealty.com/>> Enter property number: 53G0762 Listed at \$2,285,000.

Interested parties can also contact the owners directly at sleaming@optonline.net.

With a crash of glass, renovation of IIT's Crown Hall begins

On May 17th Mies van der Rohe's grandson Dirk Lohan took a sledge hammer to the huge glass curtain wall of Crown Hall, his grandfather's architectural triumph on the Illinois Institute of Technology campus. Thankfully, the "Smash Bash" was a kick-off for the long awaited renovation of the building. Lohan earned the privilege of smashing the first



JOHN ARBUCKLE

three panes in front of trustees and local TV crews by outbidding all other contestants on eBay. The final bid: \$2,705.

Crown Hall exemplifies Mies' concept of universal space. By moving the structural members of the building to the outside, the architect succeeded in creating an extremely flexible uninterrupted interior volume measuring 120 x 220 feet. Mies called Crown Hall "the clearest structure we have done."

Designated a National Historic Landmark in 2001, the Institute is undertaking a complete restoration of its most notable architectural attraction. The stabilization and building envelope work is expected to be complete this month.

For more information on Crown Hall visit IIT's Mies van der Rohe Society at www.mies.iit.edu/

LAPIDUS, CONTINUED

ing buildings of Erich Mendelsohn in the late 1920s a liberating development. Sensually curving forms were typical of Brazilian free-form Modernism starting in the 1940s and Lapidus acknowledged his debt to Oscar Niemeyer, whom he visited in 1949, as well as other Brazilians. At home, architects taking bold steps with color gained his attention. He praised Raymond Hood for his 37 stories of turquoise terra cotta tile at the McGraw Hill Building (1931). The development of new products such as tinted glass, anodized aluminum and colored aggregates he viewed as opportunities to put more color into cities. Lapidus considered cinema a powerful force in American culture and often viewed his architecture as a stage set where ordinary life could take on a little drama.

Lapidus was an early advocate of structural concrete and swore by it his entire career. The Summit was New York City's first hotel using a structural frame of reinforced concrete and was reported to have had an impressively short construction turnaround. Advances in engineering and form work in buildings contemporary to the Summit, such as the Guggenheim Museum (1956–1959), Bergrisch Hall (1956–1961) and TWA Terminal (1956–1962), were powerful testimony to the almost limitless potential of poured concrete.

Lapidus challenged minimalist norms while competing commercially because his projects delivered from planning, technical, budget and public appeal standpoints. Deborah Desilets, an architect who collaborated with Lapidus on projects at the end of his career, likes to say he "fought the good fight for ornament, and for emotion and motion in architecture." He delivered emotion and motion through unusual shapes and floor plans, bold colors, theatrical public spaces, opulent materials and ornament, both the modern—chevrons, "woggles," cheese holes and amoeba shapes—and the blatantly historical. Lapidus openly acknowledged that these translations could conflict with mainstream versions of architectural good taste. He definitely pegged the desires of the

American psyche—both as shoppers and vacationers—at a very optimistic time in the country's history. A little glamour and a little escape were good for business. Hence his premise of an "architecture of joy." Lapidus was not afraid of critics and always had a retort. "Why be exotic in private?" has to be one of his best. When the AIA convention descended on his Bal Harbour Sheraton in 1963 and an audience of peers proceeded to lambast

"Why be exotic in private?"

Morris Lapidus

the hotel's design in one of the sessions, Lapidus put them in a gnarly quandary by asking, "Gentlemen, are you enjoying yourselves?"

In December 2000, a year before his death, the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum awarded Lapidus its prestigious "American Original Award." Lapidus lived to 98, and like Philip Johnson, who did likewise, he was not one to go with the flow of what was fully acceptable at any given moment. If you happen to find an intact Lapidus interior, you'll see he was probably the only Modernist with a taste for Baroque-inspired flourishes. He could easily be labeled an early postmodernist. In fact, in Lapidus' *New York Times* obituary Johnson calls him "the father of us all."

What comes through most strongly in his flamboyant, unapologetic architectural statements like the Summit Hotel is Lapidus' belief in architecture's capacity to elicit emotion, be it excitement, delight or dismay. Design with your head and your heart, he told a gathering of Columbia architecture students in the late years of his life, as "feelings find form."
—Kathleen Randall

Note: Much of the factual information for this article is from the designation report written by Matthew Postal of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission. Lapidus quotes are from Deborah Desilets, author of Morris Lapidus (Assouline, 2004).

SYNOGOGUE, CONTINUED

point, no strategy has been adopted, no architects interviewed, no funding earmarked.

An obvious alteration that has been discussed informally—and referred to in the *Times* article—would be double-decking the rear half of the sanctuary to create some desired function space inside the original envelope. But aside from its impact on the interior integrity, this would involve installing an elevator—and probably other code compliance measures. Attaching a new social hall would be more expensive yet and would not deal with the sanctuary's excess volume.



For full effect, imagine each of the narrow windows glazed with a different color of mottled glass.



JOHN MORRIS DIXON

Given the perceived drawbacks of the building for this congregation, it would be naïve to rule out non-architectural solutions, such as merging with another congregation and/or selling this undoubtedly valuable property. KTI's future bears watching.
—John Morris Dixon

2 COLUMBUS CIRCLE, CONTINUED.

World's Fair (1958)—and a major monograph/memoir, "The Evolution of An Architect" (1962).

The Gallery of Modern Art was a success on many fronts. It functioned well for the collection it housed, especially given the size constraints of the site. Even Ada Louise Huxtable, who has lately been quoted *ad infinitum* for her comment about "die-cut Venetian Palazzo on lollypops," stated in the same review "...its plan is an accomplished demonstration of one of the basic principles of architectural design—the expert manipulation of space by an expert hand."

At Two Columbus Circle Stone reconciles issues of function with qualities of urbanism—inviting scale, a site-hugging concave facade, an urban piazza as forecourt for a cramped site, a formality appropriate to Central Park's SW entrance—and

borne Venetian arcade lent formality and historical reference. The port-hole windows filtered light and controlled UV radiation for the museum environment, but they were also framed in bronze.

Stone's late work such as Two Columbus Circle did not follow the main trajectory of Modern architecture storming forward—progressive, experimental and abstract—as many critics thought it ought to. Rather, his work looked back at things that were not abstract. Again Huxtable, on the Gallery of Modern Art: "No traditionalist, he simply prefers a less controversial idiom, avoids the more provoking and stimulating experiments, smooths off the rugged edges and pads well with wall-to-wall luxury." We contend the reviewer missed the point. A historically informed idiom was Stone's experiment, his provocation.

SILVER TOWERS, CONT.

purchased a few years ago and has expressed a strong interest in developing, would fall into this exclusion. Using a community facility bonus in the existing zoning would allow NYU to develop a building of considerable bulk and height just a few feet from the front facade of 505 LaGuardia and in front of the main axis of the Silver Towers complex as viewed from Bleecker Street.

Past letters to Commissioner Tierney requesting a hearing for Silver Towers have been helpful and we encourage everyone to write again, applauding Tierney's publicly expressed interest in Silver Towers but urging him to consider the sensitivity of the supermarket site to the site as a whole.

Silver Towers was born of Robert Moses' 1950 superblock principles. However, I.M. Pei's complex dramatically improved upon these tenets both architecturally and as mid-century urban planning by readily connecting to the surrounding neighborhood. The visual continuation of Wooster and Greene Streets via pedestrian walkways through the superblock, the placement of open space at the perimeter of the block, the integrated public plaza and mews, and the mix of towers and low-rise structures make an inviting and innovative environment that triumphs over the negatives often associated with high-density urban renewal housing.

For more information about the Silver Towers preservation effort please visit www.gvshp.org/silvertowerssuperblock.htm

momo News

Rudolph's Umbrella House sells, but not at auction

One of Sarasota's most notable Modern houses, Paul Rudolph's "Umbrella House," of 1953 has been sold to owners who plan to continue its restoration and preservation. The house failed to sell at an art-style auction in February so the sale comes as a welcome turn of events.

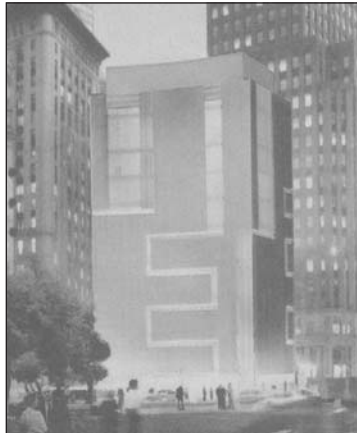
The previous owners retain credit for bringing the house back from very poor condition when they purchased it in 1997. The only thing they didn't restore was the namesake "Umbrella," a giant trellis that ran the width of the house and extended outward to cover the terrace and pool. It was destroyed in a storm back in the 1960s.

In true Rudolph form, the three-story house has nine usable levels—documented if you look at the section drawings. The 2,000 square foot house has many space tricks to increase its usable area and perceived volume. For example a set of drawers built flush into a bedroom wall projects into the atrium as a cubic ledge for display. To keep the house feeling open a bridge-like suspended hallway connects the two upstairs bedrooms rather than a hallway. More than half of the rear elevation consists of narrow louvered windows, testament to a time when bigger AC units were not the answer.

Sarasota has a rich collection of Modern homes built by Rudolph and a talented group of similarly inclined architects. Their collective work from 1941–1966 is known as the Sarasota School of Architecture and constitutes an important chapter of regional American modernism. Like many similar enclaves of older houses, Sarasota's

Moderns are regularly threatened by redevelopment. It's good news when one lands in good hands.

PHOTO, LEFT: EZRA STOLLER © ESTO; RIGHT: WSJ



The future: Restored facade vs. Redesigned facade.

with emotion. Two Columbus Circle triggers emotion because it makes a statement about tastes and the times. A perfect match of client and architect resulted in a startling dissenting opinion.

Throughout his search for "exuberant forms" via ornament and historical allusion, Stone never lost sight of the functionalism that was at the heart of the Modern movement. For the museum he used a reinforced concrete structural system for efficiency; ebony, bronze, book-matched walnut, marble and plush carpets for emotional expression. Split level galleries ingeniously made up for small floor plates, while nine stories of strikingly white Vermont Darby marble and an air-

Certain cultural artifacts are worth recognizing and preserving not because they are archetypes, but because they are not types at all. Two Columbus Circle is a signature Edward Durell Stone building encapsulating the architect's late career theories. It is of its time, categorically representing the small subset of the Modern movement where Historicism and Modernism colluded. Erasing Two Columbus Circle will not only erase one of New York City's most unusual buildings, it will erase an important and thought-provoking piece of evidence in our collective cultural record.



MOMO To Do List:

Macy's Sells Houses in Montauk

In the early 1960s Macy's did sell houses in Montauk. Leisurama, an ambitious, moderately successful effort to sell simple, creative beach homes on a standard-brand, mass market basis, resulted in a community of 200 homes that were quickly snapped up by buyers looking for weekend getaways. Herbert Sadkin, president of All-State Properties, conceived the idea following a 1959 visit to the USSR. What precisely his socialist visit had to do with his capitalist project is a question for historians of Cold War culture. Sadkin hired Raymond Loewy-William Snaith Inc. to design the homes and persuaded Macy's to sell them. Andrew Geller, a veteran designer of simple but inventive beach houses (see p. 7), worked for Loewy and was project architect. Demo models were built on the 9th floor of Macy's flagship store at Herald Square and at Flushing, Queens for the 1964 World's Fair. They could be purchased for as little as \$12,995, and came completely furnished, down to the Italian furniture, Melmac Dinnerware and even toothbrushes.

The story of Leisurama is now told in a one-hour documentary by Jonamac Productions that will have its first TV airing this month on public television.

Leisurama - Channel 13
August 25, 8:00pm
August 28, 7:00pm
August 30, 1:30am

www.leisurama.info



Santiago Calatrava: Sculpture into Architecture

Santiago Calatrava (b. 1951), the author of some of the most beautiful structures of our epoch, spends much of his time drawing and conceiving sculptures. This exhibition will show how many of the forms of his celebrated buildings originated in independent works of art. It will include approximately two dozen sculptures in marble and bronze, many drawings, and 12 architectural models.

Metropolitan Museum of Art
October 18 through January 22, 2006
www.metmuseum.org

Romantic Modernist: The Life and Work of Norman Jaffe

Norman Jaffe is best known for his bold, sculptural beach houses on Long Island's East End. Beginning in the 1960s with small weekend retreats and moving into expansive summer estates, Jaffe designed over 50 houses in the area and was extremely influential in the development of what came to be known as "Hamptons Style."

The exhibition is curated by architecture historian Alastair Gordon and includes archival materials, personal communications and a documentary video. A color catalog was published by the museum with Monacelli Press.

Through September 18
The Parrish Art Museum
25 Job's Lane, Southampton, NY
(613) 283-2118
www.thehamptons.com/museum/

Verner Panton: The Collected Works

Work of the Danish architect and designer Verner Panton, assembled by the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein, Germany, is on display at the AXA Gallery in Manhattan. Panton, a master of the fluid and the futuristic who blended new technology with pop culture, achieved fame in the 1960s for his single-color interiors, unorthodox chairs and thoroughly modern lamps.

In the 1940s Panton studied with internationally known Danish lighting designer Poul Henningsen. In the 1950s he worked for Arne Jacobsen before taking off on a Beat years journey, traveling the continent in a mobile studio to learn the latest developments in international design and newly developed industrial production techniques. By 1960 Panton was designing and producing his own furniture and lighting as well as complete interiors. Through all of his work he was known for his fearless use of color and is quoted as saying "there should be a tax on white paint." In his interior design work Panton

The 1967 "Panton Chair" was the first chair made entirely of synthetic material. Shaped and formed through a single round of injection molding, it also broke technical ground as the first chair requiring no assembly in the manufacturing process.

challenged restrictive social conventions and sought environments that were casual, sensual and atmospheric. Panton more than any other designer brought the flower-power ideals of the 1960s and 1970s to design.

AXA Art is an international insurer of art for collectors and museums. The company is also helping fund a research laboratory at the Vitra Design Museum to study environmental requirements and best conservation practices for modern plastics.

Through October 1
AXA Gallery
787 Seventh Avenue (at 51st)
(212) 554-2015
www.axa-art.com

If you happen to be in London, the Design Museum is running a Verner Pantan retrospective through November 27.



Georg Jensen Jewelry

Georg Jensen (1866-1935) began his career as a sculptor and ceramist, but is associated today with the internationally renowned and exceedingly modern Danish jewelry firm that bears his name. Comprising more than 300 examples of jewelry, hollowware, drawings and period photographs, the exhibition provides an in-depth look

at the company's history and the stylistic development of Georg Jensen and the pioneering designers associated with the firm.

Through October 16
The Bard Graduate Center
18 West 86th Street
(212) 501-3000
www.bgc.bard.edu/exhibit/exhibits/jensen

Exhibition: If I Owned the Trenton Bath House

The Trenton Bath House, designed by Louis Kahn and revered by architects throughout the world, will soon be fifty years old. For a half century, families using the pool at the Jewish Community Center (JCC) in Ewing, NJ have had a most extraordinary source of shade and changing rooms. The structure, a seminal building in Kahn's career,



"The world discovered me after I designed the Richards Medical Building, but I discovered myself after designing that little concrete block bath house in Trenton."

Louis Kahn

has been on the National Register for two decades and is protected by local preservation ordinances. In spite of these designations, its long-term fate is unclear because the JCC will sell the property in the next few years. The transfer could be a good development if a new owner restores the Bath House. However there is nothing to prevent a less interested owner from allowing the Bath House to deteriorate to a point where demolition would be the only option.

Kahn's design for the Bath House is key to his mature work. While emphasizing human interaction, Kahn created a monumental building that has space flowing through it. He exploited geometric shapes—circle, square, triangle—to define individual parts; to celebrate the differences between primary ("Served") and secondary, infrastruc-

ture ("Servant") space; to let light penetrate, even decorate, his interiors; and to integrate landscape within the structure of a building.

In an effort to raise public awareness of the Bath House and prompt positive thinking about its future, architectural historian and Kahn scholar Susan Solomon envisioned and installed a small exhibition titled "If I Owned the Trenton Bath House...." Solomon asked 18 people who love the Bath House to describe what they would do if they controlled the building. The responses—from architects, art historians, critics, folks who have used or continue to use the pool—reveal the extraordinary possibilities that exist for the structure. Solomon sees the proposals as a plea to the trustees of the United Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks, the organization that oversees the community center, to seek the best possible owner for Kahn's small gem.



Landscape Architect Ken Smith's proposal mounted in one of the impromptu gallery rooms.

The collection of written statements and several drawings is installed at Art's Garage, a working Volvo repair shop that has also hosted local jazz concerts and art shows.

Through September 2
Art's Garage
326 4th Street, Ewing, NJ
(three miles from the Bath House)
Mon–Friday, 2:00–6:00pm
For further information call
(609) 937-6939

Jayne Merkel on Eero Saarinen

Jayne Merkel, author of the definitive monograph *Eero Saarinen* (Phaidon, May 2005) will discuss the life and career of the Finnish-born, American-trained master of Modern architecture.

September 20, 6:30–8:00 pm
Urban Center Books; 457 Madison Avenue
www.urbancenterbooks.org

NYC Architecture Week: October 6–11

Including the 3rd Annual Open House New York Weekend: October 8 & 9 More than 130 spaces and places in all five boroughs will be open for free tours and programs. The list of venues has not been issued at press time, but is bound to include some Modern architecture worth visting. Check Open House New York's web site early fall for the offerings.

www.ohny.org

Down the Garden Path: The Artist's Garden After Modernism

The exhibition is composed of work by artists who have either created gardens or thought long and hard about them, to present gardens as points of departure for understanding history, politics, and our relationship to nature.

The exhibition begins with three major artists for whom the garden was a central preoccupation in their work: Roberto Burle Marx, who lived and worked mainly in Brazil; Isamu Noguchi, who brings a decidedly Eastern perspective; and Ian Hamilton Finlay, who is based in the Petlands of Scotland. Expanding on this work, the exhibition features contemporary artists exploring ideas of paradise, memorial, private and public as well as working gardens.

Through October 9
Queens Museum of Art
www.queensmuseum.org

FURTHER AFIELD

Whimsical Works: The Playful Designs of Charles and Ray Eames

"Toys are not really as innocent as they look," Charles Eames once said. "Toys and games are the preludes to serious ideas."

This exhibition features toys, children's furniture, and whimsical films by Charles and Ray Eames, a lesser-known aspect of the work of this famous husband and wife team, who introduced molded-plywood and plastic furniture to America during the 1940s. These designs demonstrate the Eames' playful approach to serious things and their serious approach to playful things.

Through September 11
Arthur Ross Gallery, University of Pennsylvania
www.upenn.edu/ARG/

Going, Going, Gone? Mid-Century Modern Architecture in South Florida

A photographic journey through Miami-Dade and Broward counties of 80 outstanding mid-century Modern structures shot by veteran photographer Robin Hill. A preoccupation with rhythm, speed, and the Space Race combined with innovative uses of decorative concrete, aluminum, and glass to create a regional architecture that picked up where Deco left off. Although almost universally admired, many mid-century Modern structures are seriously endangered or have been demolished in both counties. This exhibition pays tribute to those that remain.

Through November 6
Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale
www.moaf1.org

NEWSLETTER: 2005/No.1

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Comments, articles and news items are welcome. Send to:
DOCOMOMO NY/Tri-State,
P.O. Box 250532, NY 10025 or
email: nytri@docomomo-us.org

Coming this fall:

DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State presents:

I.M. PEI'S NEW YORK CITY HOUSING

Janet Adams Strong will talk about I.M. Pei's New York City housing projects, specifically Kips Bay Plaza and University Plaza at NYU—both are potential candidates for designation as New York City landmarks.

Thursday September 15; 6:30pm
AIA New York, Center for Architecture
536 LaGuardia Place

JEAN PROUVÉ: A TROPICAL HOUSE

Robert Rubin, architectural historian, will give a talk on Jean Prouvé's Tropical House, an early and innovative attempt at prefabricated housing, and show his film on the reconstruction and restoration of a Tropical House.

DOCOMOMO is co-sponsoring this event with the AIA New York Chapter, Center for Architecture.

See page 3 for details

Email List sign up:

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documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the modern movement
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PIONEERING CAST-IN-PLACE CONCRETE

I.M. Pei's Kips Bay Plaza, 1961–1963, p. 5