

60 Wall Street (formerly the J.P. Morgan Building)
Individual Landmark Request for Evaluation
June 2022

The 55-story Postmodern office tower formerly called the J.P. Morgan Building, located at 60 Wall Street in Manhattan is widely admired for its distinctive massing, synthesis of highly abstracted classicizing and reference to the vigorous buildings located along Wall Street and constructed in the early 20th century. 60 Wall Street was completed in 1989 by the firm of Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo & Associates during a period when architectural theory and taste cycles were forcing architects to reject Modernism and more specifically to move on from the International Style slab that had dominated the Financial District for the last thirty years and return to earlier theories of skyscraper design. No style was better equipped than Postmodernism to synthesize modern technology with classical design and no building in New York City better showcases that thinking than 60 Wall Street, where the idea of a column is used in a schematic way to articulate each section and the overall composition.

Park Tower Realty hired Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo & Associates to design a new mid-block speculative office tower in 1983. Roche's office prepared plans for a 52-story, 1.7 million SF glass and granite clad tower described as "the first new skyscraper in the financial district whose design responded to the then widely debated Postmodern classicism." (Stern, New York 2000, 243). Roche derived the basic columnar parti on Adolf Loos's Chicago Tribune Tower entry, dividing the tripartite tower into base, shaft, and capital. Rising from its four-story base, the shaft is composed of alternating horizontal bands of granite spandrels and antique silver reflecting glass rising to the forty-second floor where bay windows imitate a giant order of paired columns at the corner of each elevation that appear to visually support the roof cornice where the copper-clad mansard shaped roof conceals mechanical equipment.

The base is notable for its 70-foot grand arcade of paired columns standing on podiums designed to harmonize with 55 Wall Street across the street. Eight pairs of free-standing columns define the portico with two additional sets of columns flanking the public plaza entrance on the western-most end of the south-facing façade. The ground-level granite features an oversized brick pattern with deep recessed horizontal mullions with thin and flat vertical mullions. The massive granite columns rest on plinths that increase in height as the building slopes to the east while the chamfered corners replicate the corner treatment of the tower. The column appears as mirrored images, with base and capitals repeated as nearly identical forms that are inverted. Roche's treatment of the base columns does not derive from direct historical quotation but instead relies on formal abstraction to convey the archetypal ideal of the column and its constituent parts. The column facets alternate between rough and polished gray/pink granite, displaying Roche's skillful handling of texture and mirror-like surfaces. The evolution of the columns at 60 Wall Street can be traced to Roche's earlier work at the Central Park Zoo renovation (1980-88), where he designed a pergola with brick columns that would reappear through his subsequent projects (they figure prominently, for instance, in the designated interior of the UN Plaza Hotel).

In composition, 60 Wall Street is a 51-story shaft rising out of a four-story base with a total of 26 floors. The shaft, which is square in plan and has a central indentation on all four sides and recessed corners, rises uninterrupted to the 42nd -floor where a projecting band ties together the vertical elements of the shaft below and forms a base for the expression of the next eight floors. These eight floors are marked by

grouping of 15-foot-wide bay windows, four on each face, arranged in a manner which when provided with their own base and capital, suggests eight-story pilasters supporting the 51st floor and this, by being projected slightly out, suggests a cornice. The crown is a 40-foot-high copper green mansard roof containing mechanical equipment. The exterior patterning of ribbon windows and masonry banding reinforces the horizontal while the shadowing reinforces the vertical offering two opposing views depending on where the eye is focused on.

During the design development a total of 29 different building schemes were prepared. Considerable care was given to blend the tower to the base and consider the entire visual length of the Wall Street façade and form a visual bridge. Cornice lines at the base were added to complement the height of the original Merchants House building at 55 Wall Street and create the effect of a series of setbacks from the street. A 1989 presentation by KRJDA of the completed project shows an evolution of eight exterior designs.

The central lobby entrance is bifurcated by a single column whose capital appears to merge seamlessly into a cavetto, restating the interrelationship of parts to whole and the column-as-building metaphor. Vertical bronze mullions at the main lobby entrance invoke Art Deco detailing. This architectural synecdoche further alludes to the nearby entrance portals of the City Services Building (70 Pine) where the center trumeau contains architectural models of the very skyscraper it adorns (skyscraper-on-a-skyscraper vs. column-on-column). The lobby entrance column of 60 Wall Street returns as a signature element in the atrium public space.

Despite her skepticism towards overt historicism in contemporary design, Ada Louise Huxtable conceded 60 Wall Street was one the most striking skyscrapers of the decade and admired Roche's skillful handling of the tower's visual language. In *The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered* (University of California Press, 1993), she writes: "[It] securely challenges Loos's famous Tribune tower column in its unconventional use of that eternal and indefatigable classical theme. What separates Loos's paradoxical radicalism and Roche's rethinking of the matter, however, is the way Roche's reinterpreted classicism serves as a solidly dramatic framework for the evocation of architectural and cultural values through calculated visual messages that double as abstract architectonic devices... There is no mistaking Roche's greater mastery of this curious form." (72)

Upon its completion, architectural critic Paul Goldberger remarked that 60 Wall Street was one of the few 1980s office towers erected in Manhattan with staying power. "[I]t has a presence on the skyline that is both energetic and dignified. ... Also like its distinguished older neighbors, this building pays attention to the street: it is not a piece of sculpture plopped down on open space, but a building designed to strengthen the fabric of the streets of which it is a part. On Wall Street there is a strong granite base, echoing in abstracted form the columned facade of the old Citibank headquarters right across the street. It gives access both to a huge public space and to the building's office lobby. This tower of gray granite and reflective glass mimics the form of a classical column...but it does so in such a way as to reinvigorate historical form with modern meaning, which is very different from slavishly copying it for easy effect." (*The New York Times*, "A Tower Competes With Wall Street's Last Golden Age," 3/4/1990)