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MODERN IN THE VILLAGE: LESSONS FROM WEST 12TH STREET

Bastion of postwar Modern architecture is not the first image Greenwich Village brings to mind. Narrow, idiosyncratic streets lined with an eclectic assortment of Federal and Greek Revival row houses, Italianate brownstones, tenements and lofts, joined by a wave of elevator apartment buildings from the 1920s would be the popular perception. Yet given the neighborhood's celebrated association with the avant-garde it should come as no surprise that Greenwich Village would foster a flurry of buildings illustrating, in microcosm, the evolution of postwar Modernism in New York City.

West 12th Street is an especially instructive example of this evolutionary microcosm. Joseph Urban's Bauhaus-inspired design for The New School for Social Research (1929–1931) is an apt architectural expression of the progressive philosophies of the school and the neighborhood, while maintaining the scale of the 19th-century streetscape. Between 1958 and 1960, the firm of Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass, with project architect William J. Conklin, completed additions to Urban's building that created an appropriately Village-scaled campus. The glass and aluminum grid façade of Conklin's nine-story, Miesian inspired addition to the west is respectfully set back from W 12th and the Urban building. The addition's airy glazed volume plays counterpoint to the dark brick mass of the older building and provides a connecting lobby for the Urban building. A new mid-block courtyard connects Conklin's new 11th Street building to the south. Spanning the courtyard, a two-story, glass-walled bridge supported in part by welded pipe trusses in an "X" pattern, makes the same connection above grade. The wider 11th Street building, although employing the same grid-patterned glazing as its 12th Street kin, is more contextual, maintaining 25-foot structural bays that echo the width of row houses on the block. As Gordon Bunshaft did at Lever House, Conklin playfully expresses the building's structural columns as a colonnade at ground level. In the process, he provides a soothing glimpse of the landscaped courtyard through the glass to passersby on W 11th. The New School's postwar expansion manages to be true to the progressive philosophies of Modernism while respecting the scale and vibe of the neighborhood. These attributes will be employed by the same firm, Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass, in its better known project down the street: Butterfield House.



JOHN KRISKIEWICZ

*New School for Social Research, 11th Street Building,
William Conklin/Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass, 1958–1960*

William Conklin and James Rossant drew from both neighborhood building types and Modernist themes while expanding upon the bifurcated thru-block courtyard building type to create the rare luxury building appropriate for the Village. Completed in 1962 and sited between W 12th and W 13th Streets, Butterfield House responds to each street independently while providing a southern exposure for the courtyard and north block. On W 12th, the architects conceived a seven-story block, contextual to the picturesque row houses and older

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Welcome

Let's start 2011 by publishing a 2010 newsletter. In about the time it takes you to read this column I could have changed the datelines to 2011. Our determination to catalog two newsletters per year stopped me short. We trust you'll find the contents useful despite the tardiness.

And not to steal any thunder this newsletter might have, but as soon as you finish reading it you really should visit our website. It launched in August and has been helping the organization expand its programs, broaden networking channels and raise awareness of activities around Modern architecture ever since.

www.docomomo-nytri-org.

We could definitely use more people power. An email from the site's "contact us" page is all it takes to volunteer with DOCOMOMO NY/Tri-State. Here's a little refresher of some of what awaits, you choose:

- ADVOCACY (research, drafting letters and testimony, attending hearings, press outreach);
- REGISTER (research, writing fiches and helping with building surveys);
- COMMUNICATIONS (website, "Email News" and this newsletter) and
- PROGRAMS (speakers, venues, tour planning and event logistics).

If you know one of our board members below you can also let them know you're interested.

Time to get started on the *first* 2011 newsletter. Send us your article ideas, comments and suggestions.

—Kathleen Randall, editor

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A FIRST FOR NEW CANAAN MODERNS

In September eighteen New Canaan Moderns were added to the National Register of Historic Places or to Connecticut's State Register. The event marked the first use of the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) in a statewide, thematic listing of mid-century Modern houses. The form has been used for other building types, but never before for Modern houses, according to Ginny Adams of Public Archaeology Lab in Pawtucket, RI, the firm that conducted research and prepared the nominations.

Included in the listings are Marcel Breuer's first New Canaan house, which he built for his own family; Alan Gelbin's Murphy House; Eliot Noyes's Chivvis House; and Hugh Smallen's Tatum and Parsons Houses. John Black Lee, whose work was prominently featured in *Preservation* magazine this year, also had two listings: Lee House I (built for his own family on an outcropping of rocks) and the System House, a modular design by Lee with Harrison DeSilver.

Alicia Leuba of the National Trust's Northeast office and Gretchen Mueller Burke of the Philip Johnson Glass House directed and coordinated the year-long project. Partnering with the Trust were Janet Lindstrom of the New Canaan Historical Society, Richard Thomas of the New Canaan Preservation Alliance, Stacy Vairo of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism (CCCT), and the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. Funding came from CCCT with additional support by William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty. Ginny Adams and Jenny Scofield of Public Archaeological Laboratory (PAL) guided the nominated properties through the various stages of review. The last stop was the National Park Service, the official home of the National Register.

Homeowners had to volunteer to join the multiple registry effort... "Nowhere has the buy-in or enthusiasm been as strong as it has been here in Connecticut."

Burke described the MPDF as "a detailed overview of the history of the development of Modern architecture and design in the State of Connecticut that provides an umbrella-like structure for the nomination of individual Modern houses to the State and National Register of Historic Places." The houses listed on the State Register were all built after 1960, said Burke, and haven't yet reached the 50-year mark. The 50-year guideline can occasionally be trumped by other historical factors.

David Bahlman, director of the CCCT's Historic Preservation Department, commended the owners "for their open and willing spirit of participation in the process." Not every eligible New Canaan Modern was listed. Homeowners had to volunteer to join the multiple registry effort. Bahlman, Burke, and Leuba hope that the multiple registry in New Canaan will be a model nationwide, and as Bahlman said at a Glass House gathering to celebrate the event: "Nowhere has the buy-in or enthusiasm been as strong as it has been here in



Parsons House, Hugh Smallen, 1964



System House, John Black Lee & Harrison DeSilver, 1961

Connecticut." PAL's documents call Connecticut's contributions to Modern residential architecture "nearly unparalleled in scope and impact."

The 2010 group joins an illustrious group of New Canaan moderns by Philip Johnson, Frank Lloyd Wright, Eliot Noyes, and Landis Gores already designated as historic houses. And there may be other listings in the future. Burke is in the process of writing a set of guidelines for the Glass House website to help modern house owners prepare individual nominations.

New Canaan's 2010 National Register Listings:

Breuer II [first New Canaan House], Marcel Breuer 1947
Durisol House/Risom House, SMS 1949
Lee House I, John Black Lee 1952
Ford House, Gates & Ford 1954
Techbuilt/Swallen House, Carl Koch 1954
Beaven Mills House, William Pedersen 1956
Mills House II, Willis Mills of SMS 1956
System House, John Black Lee and Harrison DeSilver 1961
Hall House, William Pedersen 1962
Tatum House, Hugh Smallen 1962
Murphy House, Alan Gelbin 1964
Chivvis House, Eliot Noyes, 1979

2010 New Canaan listings on the Connecticut State Register:

Lindstrom House, Gary Lindstrom 1964
Papp House, Laszlo Papp 1959–1964

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DIAGRAM IN A DIAGRAM: RAYMOND & RADO'S ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL

The first thing to say about Raymond & Rado's Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School in Borough Park, Brooklyn is that Antonin Raymond, the protean Modernist who has lately become something of a cult figure, had nothing to do with the project. Although Raymond entered into a New York-based partnership with fellow Czech émigré Ladislav Rado in 1945, he returned to Japan within four years, and after 1955 his ties to the office were entirely nominal. This arrangement seems to have suited both architects: with Raymond off pursuing expressive structural forms, Rado continued in a pragmatic, goal-oriented mode shaped by his studies with Gropius at Harvard and his work in Norman Bel Geddes' industrial design studio.

Rado's predilections are starkly expressed at the Roosevelt School, which reads as a throwback to the straight-ahead efficiency of prewar Modernism, transplanted to 1965 Brooklyn.

Edmund Caddy, the project architect (and partner in the firm from 1968 on), put it bluntly: "There is too much style in contemporary architecture...The objective in designing a school is to concentrate on a solid solution."¹

Caddy's "solid solution" had to account for some dispiriting circumstances. New York's public schools had become the focus of an orgy of vandalism—the seemingly willful fort-like designs of the time were, in fact, exasperated responses to the barrage of rocks aimed at every unprotected window. Further, the client for the Roosevelt

School was the Board of Education's Bureau of Construction, which did little more than provide a standard program for a 3,500 student facility. Finally, the site was a peculiar one for a public building: a strip of land through the center of a block, with short street frontages at either end, residential backyards to the south and a cemetery to the north.

The Raymond & Rado office faced up to these circumstances and even managed to exploit them. In the absence of an end-user client to negotiate with, the architects could treat the arrangement of the program on the difficult site as a pure logic problem. They rejected the city's schematic proposal to compress the whole school into a multi-story building at one end of the lot, arguing that this complicated both structure and circulation. Instead, they laid out the school as a tightly packed campus of low buildings and small courtyards. The gymnasium, cafeteria, and auditorium are pushed to the street edges, making them easily accessible for public

functions and presenting a minimum area of glazing to vandals. Extracting these blocks of large-scale specialized program leaves the center of the site free for the core educational spaces, which are accommodated in a perfectly square, obsessively regularized courtyard building.

The rhetorical extremity of this resolution saves the Roosevelt School from dry rationalism. It also lays bare a basic tension in approaching design as a logical unfolding of project requirements: the imperative to respond to circumstance versus the temptation to perfect a generic type. This is literalized in the relationship of the differentiated gym, cafeteria, and auditorium blocks to the platonic classroom building: the school is essentially a utilitarian, circumstantial diagram that contains, at its heart, an ideal diagram. Further, the circumstantial diagram supports and serves the ideal diagram, both

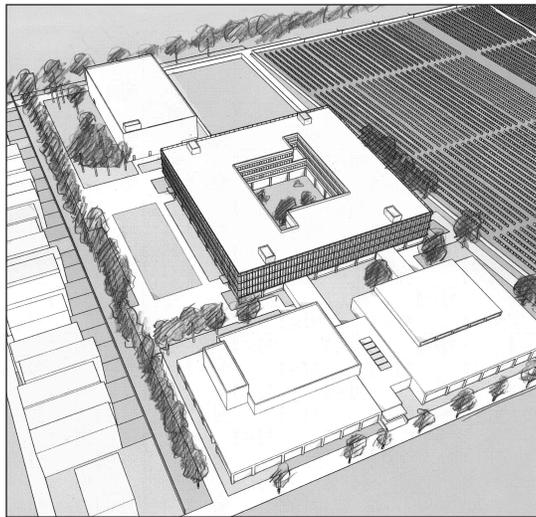
cradling it and accepting all the anomalous uses excluded from it.

Circumstantial versus platonic is signaled over and over again in the Roosevelt School's design. While the secondary program elements sprawl across the site, often running together into a continuous single-story mat, the classroom block is a precise, prismatic form, "raised" off the ground by a heavily glazed first floor. The gym, cafeteria, and auditorium are framed in steel, allowing for various long spans, changing roof heights, and opportunistically shifting bay sizes that read clearly on the exterior

elevations. By contrast, the central palazzo is a relentlessly regular concrete structure with a module that corresponds exactly to a single classroom, and stairs and services organized in rigorous symmetry. Most obviously, the secondary programs have frame-and-infill facades that could hardly be dumber, while the classroom block has a revetment of finely proportioned precast concrete panels to make high-end corporate architects weep with envy. In fact, these panels themselves are highly idealized: although they frame real windows, their deep modeling suppresses the actual sill and head locations in favor of suggesting elegantly attenuated floor-to-ceiling openings.

In practice, the Roosevelt School functioned much as anticipated, with some exceptions. Rock-throwing vandals broke into the adjacent cemetery to get at the windows of the classroom building, and the central courtyard was locked shut after teachers found it projected even the softest noises into the surrounding rooms.

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Fort-like school design was a sign of the times; Rado & Caddy buffered their platonic classroom building with utilitarian blocks for the gym, cafeteria and auditorium

KIMBRO FRUTIGER

dear friends

It's winter and we're still spinning from fall. In August we launched our new website designed by Kathleen Randall. You can see the organization's projects, browse a selection of Modern building histories and keep up with Modern architecture activities through our events calendar.

We have been active on the advocacy front as well with research, discussion, letter writing, coalition building and testimony. Since summer we've weighed in on: Japan Society, Terminal 6 and Terminal 3 at JFK, Guggenheim Museum, Look Building, 23 Beekman Place, University Village (aka Silver Towers) and Manufacturers Hanover Trust (interior).

Our tours continue to educate broad audiences about the significance of Modern buildings in our region and provide access to sites often off limits. Following a July visit to Kahn's Trenton Bath House, a well-organized Fall series coordinated by John Arbuckle and Kyle Johnson opened doors at Russel Wright's Manitoga and I.M. Pei's Kips Bay Plaza—as part of Open House NY. In November we screened a new film on Louis Sullivan at Knoll's New York showroom. Stay tuned for a new event series at Knoll in 2011.

Please sign up for our monthly email newsletter and visit the website often. Volunteer or make a contribution so we can stay busy protecting our Modern architectural heritage.

—Nina Rappaport

NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO BECOME A MEMBER OF DOCOMOMO US FOR 2011

Head to the website for that as well:

www.docomomo-nytri.org

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■ **Virginia Smith** is a professor emerita of art at Baruch College of CUNY and the author of two books on graphic design: *The Funny Little Man* and *Forms in Modernism: A Visual Set*.

VIGNELLI CENTER FOR DESIGN STUDIES OPENS AT RIT

The path is a gently rising curve that terminates in a rose bush at the entrance to the gridded facade of the new building at Rochester Institute of Technology—the Vignelli Center for Design Studies. Not a bad visual metaphor for Lella and Massimo Vignelli, whose collaborative achievements in graphic design, corporate identity, product design, interior design and exhibition design are archived within. Geometry is always their base, to which they add refinement of forms, mellow curves and practical direction.

The Vignelli Center for Design Studies is a place for design education, research and critical examination. The key concept in all areas of the Center's work is the rigorous reflection of Modernism and the ongoing discourse of Modernism. Speaking at the September 16 dedication, Massimo Vignelli set sights on the Center as "a global hub" for the 17,000 students of Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and the world beyond. Scholars have long recognized the Cary Graphic Design Archive at RIT, which holds rare, printed material from as early as the Gutenberg era. Since 1984 professor Roger Remington has built a unique archive of contemporary printed work, acquiring the output of mid-century American graphic pioneers such as Lester Beall, Will Burtin, Bill Golden, Leo Lionni and dozens more.



VIRGINIA SMITH

This core archive is now enriched by the vast range of the Vignellis' professional work: signage (1972 NYC subway map), corporate identity programs (Knoll, Stendig), packaging (Bloomingdales, Barney's), book design (Rizzoli, Penguin), publications (*Oppositions*, *Architectural Record*), interior design, exhibition design (the Louvre, Corning Glass), products (Heller dinnerware, Arteluce lamps), furniture (Poltronova). As an application of 'appropriateness'—a guiding principle of the Vignellis'

work—the more solid brick cube portion of the new building contains the irreplaceable archive collections, while the transparent glass cube is to be used for "interpretive purposes," such as changing exhibits and classes.

The Vignellis came to the U.S. from Milan in the late 1950s, Lella as an architectural fellow at MIT, later working at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Massimo as founder of Unimark International. In 1971 Lella joined with Massimo to found Vignelli Associates, a creative Milan/New York studio. The practice exemplifies their belief that the principles of design, once absorbed, can be applied to any project—"spoons or cities" as Massimo has said.

Massimo is credited with bringing the grid to American graphic design. To the rigid Swiss grid system appearing in *Graphis* and *Neue Graphik* in the late 1950s he added elements of surprise and scale; witty elements enlivened the complex material he designed for the U.S. government. The grid for the National Park Service became no less style setting than his grid for the lively *New York Herald*.

The Center for Design Studies (designed by HBT Architects, Pittsford, NY in collaboration with the Vignellis) is seen primarily as a resource for students who are encouraged to follow the Vignelli emphasis on history, theory, and criticism as the educational foundation for all design careers. The Center is an extension of RIT's School of Design in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences. The College's programs reference pioneer industries of Rochester—Eastman Kodak and Xerox—as well as craft studies in glass, wood, metal and ceramics. With the opening of the Vignelli Center for Design Studies, RIT anticipates adding new Masters programs in Design Studies and in Architecture—and an invigorated Modernism across its design programs.

—Virginia Smith



VIGNELLI ASSOCIATES

Vignelli Associates designed the corporate identity for major companies. In 1972 the firm designed the space for the Knoll exhibition at the Louvre.

LOUIS I. KAHN'S TRENTON BATH HOUSE AND DAY CAMP RESTORED

On July 28, DOCOMOMO New York/Tri-State helped sponsor a press tour of Louis I. Kahn's Trenton Bath House and Day Camp (completed in 1955 and 1957 respectively) in Ewing, NJ. Approximately 40 journalists and friends of Modern architecture gathered to witness the ongoing restoration work, touring the property with architects from Farewell Mills Gatsch Architects, LLC and landscape architects Heritage Landscapes. Representatives from Mercer County

and National Registers in 1984, prior to having reached 50 years of age, reflecting their high level of significance within Kahn's portfolio as well as their importance within the history of the development of Modern architecture at mid-century.

The Bath House is noted for its spare elegance. Built of simple materials (concrete block, wood trusses, and asphalt shingles) it comprises five square pavilions arranged in a Greek cross plan, four of them roofed,

views of the sky and trees.

The Day Camp pavilions, like the Bath House, were built using relatively standard, inexpensive materials. The four rectangular pavilions are centered on a small courtyard, each set at a slight angle to the next. Vertical members were created with terra cotta flue tiles stacked one on top of the other and filled with reinforced concrete. The roofs, or horizontal members, were reinforced concrete beams; the floors concrete slab. Two pavilions were completely open, while the others were either partially or fully enclosed with brick to house toilet facilities and an office for the Camp Director.

The restoration of the Bath House has included removal of elements not designed by Kahn but added after the building's completion, including a "temporary" snack bar that had been appended to the south elevation. A storage shed, fencing, and foundation

pavilions have been repaired.

The project team also studied Kahn's plans closely in designing a new, free-standing Snack Bar, decorative fencing, and accessibility ramp. The Snack Bar has been sited to the west of the Bath House, in one of the many locations shown by Kahn in his design drawings, and is separated from the Bath House by a new, larger picnic area that accommodates increased usage. New trees have been planted to the south of this area to establish a segment of Kahn's framing bosque. The Snack Bar was constructed of materials compatible with the Bath House structure but does not mimic it; the roof is a wing-like structure supported on wood trusses that hovers over the concrete block walls like the pyramidal roofs of the Bath House. The design intent was to honor the Kahn work but to make clear what is historic and what is not.



Restored Bath House with newly planted framing bosque

and Ewing Township were also on hand to discuss their role in the project and answer questions.

A key work within Kahn's oeuvre, the Bath House in particular represented a new way of defining space and of fusing modernism and classicism. It was the first building to reflect Kahn's distinction between primary spaces ("served" spaces) and spaces of lesser importance that provided support to the served ("servant" spaces). The project also helped to launch the most prolific decades of his career, during which he designed such seminal works as the Richards Medical Research Building and Biological Research Building at the University of Pennsylvania (1957–1961); the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, CA (1959–1965); and the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, TX (1966–1972). Both the Bath House and Day Camp were listed on the New Jersey



Restored entrance mural

the fifth open to the air. The roofs, pyramidal in shape, rest on concrete "columns" (slabs that comprise the roofs of the servant spaces) and appear to float freely. The void between the base of the roof and top of the unfinished concrete block walls is one of the design's most distinctive features, providing not only air but also filtered light and framed



Kahn's Day Camp pavilions with columns constructed of terra cotta flue tiles stacked and filled with reinforced concrete

plantings; reconstruction/restoration of elements designed by Kahn but later removed, including the entrance mural and the gravel circle in the square atrium; and upgrading of the complex to current standards, including barrier-free accessibility, fire protection, and sanitary requirements. The two largest pavilions of Kahn's Day Camp have been completely reconstructed, following thorough documentation, and the two smaller

Work was completed in October, and the Bath House and Day Camp continue to serve as a recreational and social center for the local and regional population, much as they have since their initial completion. —Meredith Arms Bzdak

For a full history of the Bath House and archival photos visit:
www.kahntrentonbathhouse.org

New Jersey...

The Modern Movement in the Garden State, has, until now, been an under-studied subject. However, with the help of a series of graduate and undergraduate interns from Rutgers University's Art History department who are working with DOCOMOMO New York/Tri-State, the topic is gradually coming into focus. Creation of a database that brings together basic information on property names, original owners, original architects, dates of construction, and historic and current photos is underway and is beginning to shed light on the variety of modern buildings and landscapes that populate the state. DOCOMOMO New York/Tri-State board member Meredith Bzdak launched the survey project with the assistance of Nina Rappaport and is now organizing volunteers and overseeing its progress.

New Jersey is home to work by a range of nationally and internationally recognized architects, among them Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Louis Kahn, Eero Saarinen, Robert Geddes, and Minoru Yamasaki. Princeton University, which boasts one of the country's best known and most architecturally distinguished campuses, attracted and nurtured many talented architectural faculty during the modern period. Their legacy lives on in Princeton Borough and Princeton Township, as well as in more distant locations across the state. One of the most significant legacies is that of Thaddeus Longstreth (1909–1997), whose archives reside at the University of Pennsylvania. Longstreth, who graduated from Yale and Princeton Universities, worked for Los Angeles architect Richard Neutra early in his career, assisting with such well known projects as the

continued next page

GREENWICH VILLAGE CONTINUED

apartment buildings while on W 13th a wider twelve-story block is more appropriate to that street's loft buildings. Living spaces face the streets and bedrooms face the tranquil courtyard. Rational and gracious planning, subdued allusions to ornament for scale, and a clear relationship between the private and the public—the façade expresses the size of the apartments—place Butterfield House among the best of postwar apartment buildings in New York.

Unfortunately, Butterfield House was the exception, rather than the norm in the Village. Much of what was being constructed was banal and blind to scale and context. One positive is that these lesser buildings galvanized the community, leading incrementally to the establishment of the Greenwich Village Historic District in 1969.

The postwar development beyond W 12th Street was generally mixed at best. Yet there is plenty to learn from these early attempts at Modern contextual design and planning, as well as from the positive role of neighborhood activists. One such example is Two Fifth Avenue. Responding to a 1944 proposal for a block-wide building towering over the north side of Washington Square Park, the community forced a change of developers and architects that resulted in a project with more contextual massing. As rendered in 1952 by Emery Roth and Sons, Harvey Wiley Corbett and Arthur C. Holden, the result is successful from a planning point of view, but perhaps too compromised to be a great work of Modernism. The modest scale of the five-story red brick wing along



PHOTOS: JOHN KRISKIEWICZ UNLESS NOTED

Butterfield House, William Conklin and James Rossant/Mayer, Whittlesey & Glass, 1962

Washington Square North mitigated the bulk of the 20-story gray glazed brick apartment block and its impact on the park. Steel casement windows (since replaced) gave scale and texture to the façade while a curvilinear entrance canopy added a piquant note.

In 1950 plans were announced for the redevelopment of 21 acres east of Fifth Avenue held by the Sailors' Snug Harbor charitable trust. Between 1951 and 1966 over 2,400 units were completed. The most innovative component was an entire city block—30, 40 and 60 East Ninth Street. The project, designed by H.I. Feldman, synthesized of the best aspects of two opposing planning ideologies: respect for the street championed by Jane Jacobs and the light, air and greenery credo of Le Corbusier's tower-in-the-park planning.

Feldman's urbane configuration holds the street line on busy University Place and Broadway with six-story, red brick buildings incorporating ground floor retail. The 12-story, buff brick apartment tower is approached by crossing through a garden from residential East Ninth Street, while the important cross-town shopping street of East Eighth is reinforced by a continuous run of shops.

Snug Harbor's preference for individual leases led to piecemeal development of their properties. Such would not be the case with the bold plans announced in 1951 by Robert Moses acting as chairman of the Mayor's Committee on Slum Clearance for the area south of Washington Square Park.

Of the many urban renewal proposals executed, two complexes are distinctly Modern and above the norm: Washington Square Village and University Village, both undertaken by New York University. Paul Lester Weiner working with S.J. Kessler completed Washington Square Village between 1956 and 1958. Wiener's work with Le Corbusier and José Luis Sert on a number of South American projects is recalled in his use of vibrant glazed brick detail—cobalt blue, chrome yellow and vermilion—to enliven the grey glazed brick expanse of the twin 600-foot long, 17-story slabs carried on trusses over Greene and Wooster Streets. Corbusian exuberance extends to the 30-foot-tall sculptural elements hiding mechanical and elevator equipment on the roof and the vestigial pilotis that recall the liberated ground plan that Corbusier advocated. The complex's 1.5-acre garden, designed by Sasaki/Walker and Associates and completed in 1959, was one of the first parking structure roof gardens in the country. The garden humanizes the project's vast scale, but its placement on a platform over the garage unfortunately cuts it off from public view and access. A third slab was planned but was scuttled due to community opposition and market conditions.

Just south, University Village (aka Silver Towers, 1961–1966) was the University's next urban renewal intervention. Designed by I.M. Pei & Associates (James Ingo Freed design partner, with A. Preston Moore and Theodore Amberg) University Village utilizes a dynamic asymmetry of three 32-story towers set on a pinwheel plan and concrete grids of deep-set windows juxtaposed with smooth concrete shear walls to achieve an animated composition. There is carefully calculated harmony in the relationship of open space to the towers. Glazed entrance lobbies are grouped around a central greensward graced by Picasso's *Sylvette*. The transition between the existing



Sailor's Snug Harbor Development, 30, 40, and 60 E Ninth Street, H.I. Feldman, 1954



Washington Square Village, Paul Lester Weiner with S.J. Kessler, 1956–1960



National Maritime Union, Curran/O'Toole Building, Albert Ledner, 1964

street grid and the complex seems more welcoming, more permeable, than at Washington Square Village. At the intersection of the South Village and SoHo, the Pei project is an oasis of calm between two areas that have evolved, in the intervening decades, from blighted to vibrant. The complex received landmark designation in 2008.

Returning to W 12th, one discovers two distinctive buildings by former students of Frank Lloyd Wright that embody the complexity and contradiction that Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown would champion almost a decade after their construction.

Edgar Tafel's First Presbyterian Church House (1958–1960) reflects a growing sensitivity toward architectural context and precedent. Perhaps a result of Tafel's background as a Villager and his Taliesin training, this self-effacing building channels a common vernacular tradition firmly integrated with Modern movement ideology. Set back from Fifth Avenue by a sizable lawn, the Church House is entered "Prairie style" perpendicularly from W 12th. Its dark brown Roman brick harmonizes with the

brownstone of the original 1842 church. Horizontal bands of cast stone quatrefoils riff upon the Gothic revival parapets of the church, while vertical green terracotta moldings recall the color and form of the church's tracery. Tafel's design is a modest, yet sophisticated amalgam that predates the contextual movement by 30 years.

Two avenues West on W 12th, Albert C. Ledner's 1964 Joseph Curran Building (now O'Toole Building) is worlds away from the reticent Church House on genteel Fifth Avenue. Holland Tunnel traffic speeding down Seventh Avenue passes a structure that creates its own context. Built for the National Maritime Union, Ledner's design communicates the union's maritime focus and its progressive, modernization agenda. Two expansive circular spaces—clear spans enclosed in glass block—make up the hiring hall on the ground floor, above which four progressively cantilevered administrative floors are stacked, topped with executive offices overlooking a landscaped roof. This self-contained program projected an air of modernity through its relentless whiteness and sculptural expression. Often dismissed by critics, these two very different postwar buildings on W 12th can be seen as harbingers of architectural debates that continue to the present.

West 12th Street can be walked in a few minutes. Its lessons in architecture and urban planning are subtle, varied and invaluable. Here, in one of New York's most iconic historic districts, a cluster of Modern structures embodies a deft and unique response to the trends affecting Greenwich Village in what were arguably its most transformative decades.

—John Kriskiewicz



First Presbyterian Church House, Edgar Tafel, 1958–1960

...gets a survey

Kaufmann House in Palm Springs, CA. After moving to Princeton, he designed many residences for faculty and the Institute for Advanced Study, as well as authoring the Princeton Public Library, buildings for Princeton's Hun School, and libraries in Millburn and Roxbury.

Although great progress has been made, the New Jersey Modern Survey needs your help in uncovering the state's "lost" modern heritage. For more information, or to tell us about your favorite modern work, please send a note to our chapter's email box:

info@docomomo-nytri.org



New Jersey State Museum, GRAD partnership, 1960s



Stockton College Campus, Robert Geddes, 1971.

Exhibition

VERTICAL URBAN FACTORY

DOCOMOMO board chair Nina Rappaport is guest curator of a new exhibition at the Skyscraper Museum we think our readers will be interested in seeing. —editors.

Vertical, as in multi-story, urban factories have been a typology for design innovation and experimentation for engineers and architects since the 19th century. From mills in towns dependent on water power to cities tapping steam and electric power, the factory building type was a place to freely explore new materials and structural systems and the larger clear-span spaces. As a Modern program, the rational factory represented a fresh focus and the potential for design experimentation. The program meshed perfectly with the progressive era of scientific development and the optimism coming out of mass production technologies resulting from rampant capitalism.

The verticality of the Modern urban factory, both organizationally and physically, became a new corporate organizational system and resulted in a new "spatial product," as Henri Lefebvre would observe.

European Modern architects praised the early 20th-century American factory buildings, after visiting the grain silos and expansive factories made possible by new reinforced concrete frame systems designed by engineers. As documented in essays between 1911 and 1923 by Walter Gropius, Erich Mendelsohn and Le Corbusier, these factories came to be icons for the functional structures, undecorated surfaces, primary forms and expansive glazing that the Modern architects desired.

A selection of these iconic Modern factories are featured in "Vertical Urban Factory," on view at the Skyscraper Museum *continued next page*

NEW CANAAN CONTINUED

Parsons House, Hugh Smallen 1964
Latham House, Richard Bergmann 1968
Goldberg House, Alan Goldberg 1977
Brandon House, Victor Christ-Janer 1977

The New Canaan Mid-Century Modern House Survey can be seen in full online at preservationnation.org, the website for the National Trust for Historic Preservation (Search on "New Canaan Survey"). Photo links and more information about the historic multiple registry can be found on the Glass House Blog, which is linked to the website philipjohnsonglasshouse.org.
—Gwen North Reiss



Ford House, Gates & Ford, 1954



Mills House II, Willis Mills of SMS, 1956



Fiat Lingotto, Rooftop Testing Track, Giacomo Matte-Trucco, Turin, 1916–1926

FDR HIGH SCHOOL CONTINUED



DAVID HIRSCH/PROGRESSIVE ARCH, MARCH 1967

Rado and Caddy's smartly detailed precast concrete facade suggests floor-to-ceiling openings and a transparency on par with the best corporate campuses of the period.

A more ambiguous concern was raised by the school's principal, who regretted that "you cannot see the building from the street." Of course, this isn't literally true, but the campus layout certainly submerges its most impressive architecture within a nondescript perimeter. On the other hand, this reticence is sort of charming, especially since a public path through the block allows anyone to discover how the "perfect" classroom building is nested inside the extensive infrastructure that supports it.

The Roosevelt School is a work of great competence, if that word has any positive sense left. Moreover, Raymond & Rado's design suggests that competence can even develop its own kind of lyricism—precisely by elaborating that signifier of bloodless reductivism: the functional diagram. The school's architecture is activated both formally and conceptually by the play of inclusive and exclusive diagrams, encapsulating an ideal schema within a circumstantial one. As a building, the Roosevelt School provides not only the solid solution Caddy aimed for, but also heeds his open-ended qualification that "...perhaps it is possible to give the client something far in excess of his program."

— Kimbro Frutiger

1. All quotes from "Urban School Design/The F.D.R. School" *Progressive Architecture*, March 1967.

WHIG HALL: UNUSUAL MODERN LANDMARK RENOVATED

One of the Modernist landmarks of the early 1970s is not a freestanding building, but a new construction within a Classical Revival shell. After Whig Hall on the Princeton University campus was gutted by fire in the late 1960s, the university commissioned then-emerging architects Charles Gwathmey and Robert Siegel—not to replicate what was lost, but to create a new structure within its marble-faced walls. The resulting remarkable hybrid, completed in 1973, has recently been fully renovated.

Built in 1837 for one of Princeton's debating societies, Whig Hall had to meet additional demands in the 1970s. It still required a two-story-high meeting hall, but the building's total floor area was to be increased from 7,000 to 10,000 square feet for a variety of meeting and support spaces—within the original envelope. While solving

Whig Hall was designed at a turning point in American architecture when renovation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings began to be recognized as a premium commission and a boost to a firm's reputation.

this three-dimensional puzzle, the architects took an audacious architectural step: opening up a side wall of the temple-form building to reveal their Modernist insertions.

While exposing its Modernist intentions, the design was not based solely on formal considerations, but responded as well to special structural challenges. The original walls had long been exposed to the elements and were no longer reliable supports for a rebuilt interior and roof. A new frame had to be inserted, and its footings had to be separated from the footings of the old walls. The solution was a concrete frame reminiscent of Le Corbusier's "Dom-ino" prototype, with columns (in this case round, not square) set well apart from the outer walls.

In the 1990s, to meet accessibility standards, Gwathmey Siegel &

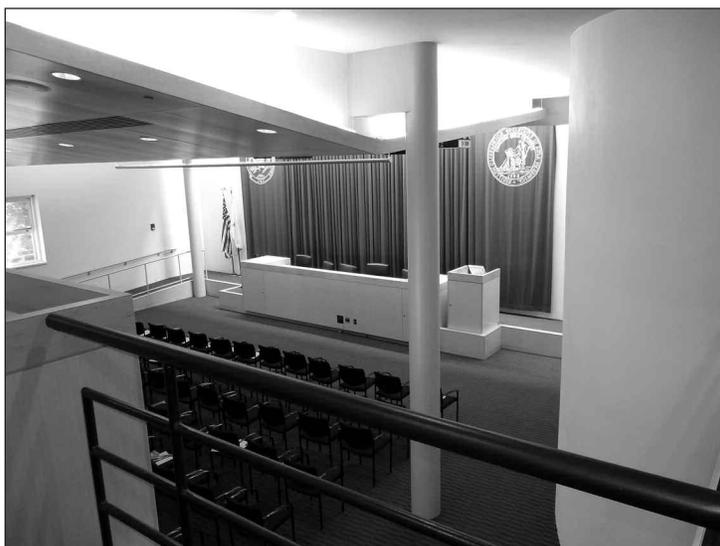
Associates designed a cylindrical external elevator tower, which is linked to the building by glazed landings. Last year, a thorough renovation of the structure was completed by the Princeton architecture firm Farewell Mills Gatsch. The main objectives were improved internal circulation, acoustics, and mechanical systems. The most prominent alteration is an angular wood-clad canopy over the debating hall, which serves to upgrade the room's acoustics, lighting, and air distribution without violating the Modernist aesthetics.

Whig Hall was designed at a turning point in American architecture when renovation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings began to be recognized as a premium commission and a boost to a firm's reputation. Gwathmey & Siegel's Corbusian composition here, literally showcased within a historic fabric, won a P/A Award as a design and was widely published when completed. And it has now been respectfully updated for many more decades of effective use.

—John Morris Dixon



Whig Hall on Princeton University's campus. 1837 meets Modern with interventions in the 1970s and 1990s. A thorough renovation was completed in 2009.



The slender round columns supporting the inserted structure are prominent elements in Whig Hall's main debating hall.

through June 26. Guest curated by Nina Rappaport, the exhibition looks at key examples of multi-story factories in cities: Henry Ford's Highland Park in Detroit, MI (Albert Kahn, 1910), where the first automatic assembly line was put into use; the Fiat factory, Lingotto, in Turin, Italy (Giacomo Matte-Trucco, 1923), with its iconic rooftop testing track; the Van Nelle factory in Rotterdam (Brinkman & Van der Vlugt, 1927–1930), with the experimental glass curtain wall; Sainsbury's factory in London (Owen Williams, 1936); Bata's town in Zlín, Czechoslovakia, a key factory city of the Modern era (1928–1938); Duval & Claude garment factory (Le Corbusier, 1951), exemplifying the architect's brise-soleil, "modular," exposed concrete and rooftop gardens; and the Toni Dairy Factory (Zurich, 1974) one of the largest urban factories of the time. Never before exhibited is Buckminster Fuller's scheme for a vertical cotton mill, designed with students from North Carolina State University in 1952.

"Vertical Urban Factory" traces the evolution of mass production technologies and related social issues, focusing on the verticality of manufacturing in cities both historically and as a model for renewed industrial development in the future. Another key component of the exhibition is a series of films by documentary filmmaker Eric Breitbart. Historical footage from the Ford Motor Company, Van Nelle, Fiat and Modern textile factories immerse the gallery visitor in the factory environment of conveyor systems and manufacturing processes.

"Vertical Urban Factory" aims to stimulate ideas for reintegrating industry in the urban fabric, asking how—given advanced computer technologies, material innovations and the demand for cleaner and greener industries—architects, engineers and urban designers can integrate industry with everyday life, creating more self-sufficient and sustainable cities.

For more information on the exhibit:
www.skyscraper.org/vuf

The Modern Library



Design Research: The Store That Brought Modern Living to American Homes

Jane Thompson and Alexandra Lange
Chronicle Books, 2010
192 pages, color and b/w illus.
hardcover; \$50

In 1953, Benjamin Thompson, one of the partners who founded The Architects Collaborative/TAC with Walter Gropius in 1946, opened Design Research in Cambridge, MA. At that time Modern furniture and housewares were rare in the U.S. and those that existed, such as products of Knoll and Herman Miller, were generally available only through architects and designers. Harry Weese, Ralph Rapson and others had opened design stores earlier but Design Research, or "D/R," achieved far greater prominence, longevity and influence.

Design Research offered not only the classic Modern furniture of Aalto, Mies and Breuer but items beyond the restrained Modern canon such as handcrafted and brightly colored objects, folk art, and boldly patterned fabrics, along with custom design D/R products. Ben Thompson (1918–2002) personally selected every item in the store and travelled extensively in Europe and elsewhere to procure new merchandise. He was the first to introduce to the U.S. the appliances of Braun, the designs of Joe Colombo and, most notably, the fabrics of

Marimekko, which became a major part of D/R's business and identity.

D/R arrived in the Tri-State area in 1959 with its first store outside of Cambridge, a small satellite in Manhattan at 866 Lexington Avenue. In 1963, D/R occupied an entire townhouse at 53 East 57th Street where it remained until the late 1970s when the company closed.

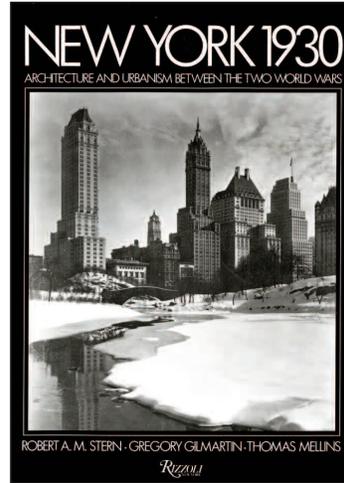
I fondly recall accompanying my mother to the San Francisco store, which launched at Ghirardelli Square in 1965. She was the typical customer: an educated, discerning and slightly unconventional woman, and she loved D/R. She bought our Eames Lounge, willow day bed, several lamps and a vast array of Marimekko items there.

Thompson's sleek new Cambridge flagship store opened on Brattle Street in 1969. Its use of recently developed frameless floor-to-ceiling glazing allowed uninterrupted views of the merchandise within. The widely acclaimed building is one of only two retail projects to have been recognized with the AIA 25 Year Award for enduring significance; the second is Thompson's groundbreaking Faneuil Hall Marketplace, the first "festival marketplace."

The breadth of Thompson's endeavors is remarkable. While running D/R, he practiced architecture as a partner in TAC and from 1966 on led his own firm, Benjamin Thompson & Associates. From 1963 to 1967 he was also chair of the Department of Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. In addition, he opened and operated several restaurants.

This handsome book, co-authored by Jane Thompson, Ben's business partner and wife, is the first to tell the D/R story. Its format recalls a scrapbook with reproductions of pages from catalogs, reprints of articles, extensive period photos, and pages of excerpts from interviews with dozens of the store's alumni and friends. Those who care about Modern design are likely to welcome this homage.

—John Shreve Arbuckle



New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars

Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin and Thomas Mellins
Rizzoli, originally published 1987,
reissued 2009
848 pages, 600 b/w illustrations
hardcover; \$95

Be forewarned. There is little certifiable Modern architecture in the book *New York 1930*. During the period between the two World Wars, the years actually chronicled in this book, there just wasn't much really Modern architecture in the city—or, for that matter, on the planet. But this was the period when the movement was gaining momentum, when increasing numbers of design professionals were freeing themselves from the reigning eclecticism and searching for an appropriate 20th-century expression.

First issued over 20 years ago, *New York 1930* had become a collectors item, commanding hundreds of dollars for used copies, by the time Rizzoli re-issued it late in 2009. Like the later Stern-team volumes *New York 1960* and *New York 2000*, indispensable references for the city's Modern architecture post-1945, this book is gracefully written, thoroughly researched, exhaustively footnoted, and full of period illustrations.

The city's signature pre-World

War II Modern building, the Museum of Modern Art, is given ample attention, including coverage of several Howe & Lescaze schemes that preceded the executed Goodwin and Stone design. Other incontestably Modern structures covered include a group of townhouses: the Lescaze House (1934), Kramer House (1935) and Norman House (1940–1941) of William Lescaze; Morris B. Sander's own house (1935); and the Fairchild House (1941) by George Nelson and William Hamby. The landmark Municipal Asphalt Plant from the end of the period (1944) gets a mere mention here—and is fully covered in *New York 1960*.

A number of other structures documented in the book are debatably Modern, if not doctrinaire International Style. Among these are several designated landmarks: the New School for Social Research (1929–1931) by Joseph Urban, which a 25-year-old Philip Johnson accused of producing only "the illusion of a building in the International Style"; the Rockefeller Apartments, fronting on W. 54th and W. 55th Streets, by Harrison and Fouilhoux (1935–1937), thoroughly Modern except for its uneven rooftop silhouette; the McCarren Pool building, by Aymar Embury and others (1934–1936), characterized in the *Guide to New York City Landmarks* as "in the Modern Classical style, with Art Moderne flourishes," now widely respected and undergoing restoration. Several other public swimming pool complexes of the 1930s discussed in the book display significant Modernist characteristics.

Structures embracing Modernism in spirit, if not detail, also include the Starrett-Lehigh Building and Raymond Hood's Daily News and McGraw-Hill Buildings. One rigorously Modern structure, recently demolished, was the eight-story retail/office building at 137 East 57th Street by Thompson & Churchill (1930), whose curtain walls were carried on slim tension members suspended from its roof.

The book also gives ample

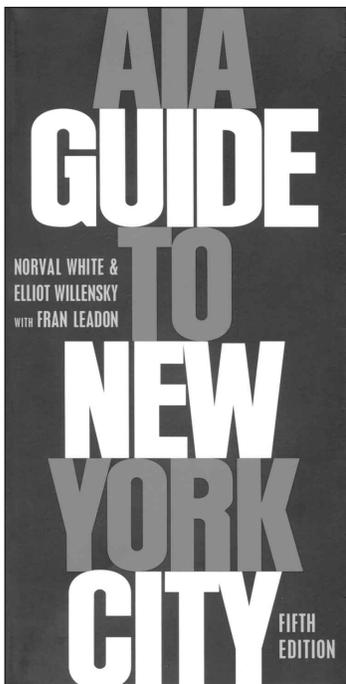
continued

attention to a special set of Modern works that are no longer with us: exhibits at the New York World's Fair of 1939, where many Americans experienced influential design by the likes of Alvar Aalto, Sven Markelius, and Oscar Niemeyer. The House of Glass by the little-known Landefeld & Hatch firm looks in the book like an accurate prototype for Modern houses to come.

Occasionally, the book shows a bias toward the picturesqueness and eclecticism that characterize most

of the period's work. The *Afterword*, in particular, paints a grim picture of the Modernism that would dominate the postwar building: "The stripped-down International Style Modernism would mirror perfectly the new brutally utilitarian concept of urbanism." Strange last-paragraph sentiment for a book that is for the most part evenhanded in tracing the developments of this transitional period.

—John Morris Dixon



AIA Guide to New York City, Fifth Edition
Norval White & Elliot Willensky with Fran Leadon
Oxford University Press, 2010
1,053 pages, illustrated, paper, \$39.95; hardcover \$99; and Kindle

In preparation for the 1967 AIA National Convention coming to New York the AIA New York Chapter's Publications Committee solicited proposals for a guide to the city's architecture. Norval White and Elliot Willensky proposed a guide in the Michelin mold—not only in physical dimension, but in tone. (Just think of the intrigue that could have ensued if they had adopted Michelin's star system.) White and Willensky were given the job. In 1968 the first trade edition was published and the institution known as the "AIA Guide" was born. The fifth edition remains a bountiful brick of a book.

One of the pleasures of reading or dipping into an *AIA Guide* is the authors' opinionated commentary. Whether raving praise or White's trademark "damning with faint praise," building after building, it's delightful and quirky. As the reviewer for *Curbed.com* suggests, the *Guide* is at its best when the authors are wittily hinting at what they consider "crapitecture."

Much of the text from earlier editions remains, both White and Willensky's and entries from their select roster of contributing writers. Willensky coauthored the first three editions. White coauthored all five. He died in December 2009 at age 83 two weeks after delivering the manuscript to the press. New on

the fifth edition is Fran Leadon, an assistant professor of architecture at the Spitzer School of Architecture, City College of New York, who taught with White. A team of 22 student research assistants was key to pulling off the mammoth guide. Someone from this collective visited and photographed each building/site in the guide. There are nearly 6,000 entries, over 3,000 new photos and 100 updated maps—all in 1,055 pages. (The first edition was 2,600 entries, 416 pages.)

On the first flip through you'll notice more big photos. A new two-column layout repurposes the white space of the old layout for useable page real estate. The new edition gained a "Necrology" section at the end of each geographical section. This text is in brown ink, as are historical images and drawings, to differentiate both from what you should be looking for on the street. Clever. The subject index and street address index have been split into two separate, superb finding aides. Brilliant. The glossary keeps its place up front with over 200 terms.

Upon further flipping you may notice that the type size used for the index went miniscule, location key numbers are close, but not exactly correct on some maps and there are typos aplenty. A few building deletions beg explanation. From the Modern camp, Kelly & Gruzen's Hebrew Home for the Aged (1967) in Riverdale is missing after years of inclusion; lesser buildings in the neighborhood held on. Victor Lundy's Church of the Resurrection (1965) in East Harlem was in past editions, but after its demolition in 2008 it did not make the Necrology. I.M. Pei's National Airlines Terminal at JFK is sadly advanced to Necrology while still standing. So as not to publish an outright error the authors subheaded its entry "Death Watch." And they don't pussy foot around with labels. Elsewhere a building gets "Good as Dead."

An itty bitsy Lever House icon remains the marker for entries deemed "Modern/Postmodern." The authors acknowledge the shortcomings of their catchall style category: "The breakdown of modern into component styles is a new phenomenon, based on the concept that modern as we know it today has its own internal history..." This is not really new or a phenomenon to the DOCOMOMO crowd. They go on to include a "Modern Revival style" in the mix. Originals and revivals should never commingle.

DOCOMOMO NY/Tri-State board member John Morris Dixon, FAIA, was present at the birth of the *Guide* and shared some of the background used for this book note. Dixon was on the AIA committee that selected White and Willensky's proposal and helped establish the format. He was one of seven contributing writers on the first edition, penning the sections on Midtown Manhattan—14th to 59th Street, Lincoln Center and Prospect Park, Brooklyn. He adds that White and Willensky were more than guidebook gurus. Both were pioneers in leading architects to the newly minted, but growing preservation movement, to which most architects had previously been indifferent, even hostile. The authors were also movers and shakers in the preservation movement—leading the picket line at Penn Station in August 1962.

Leadon comments in his front notes that White's research style was first person, pavement pounding, "fly-on-the-façade." What he was doing could not be done through book research or online sleuthing. And happily—for future editions—Leadon is of the same school. To experience architecture you must start by standing on the street facing it. The *Guide* will help you do this.

—Kathleen Randall

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EZRA STOLLER © ESTO

Follow the developments at:
www.docomomo-nytri.org/news

Manufacturers Trust Company Building

Designed by SOM and completed in 1954, the (former) Manufacturers Trust branch bank at Fifth Avenue and 43rd Street in Manhattan is certainly one of Modern architecture's most perfectly realized glass boxes. On February 1, the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission held a designation hearing on the building's first and second floor interior spaces. These spaces have been changed since their Stoller capture above, but key elements remain remarkably intact and are long overdue for landmark protection.

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NEW YORK | TRI-STATE

Documentation and Conservation of buildings, sites
and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement

NEWSLETTER 2010/No.2

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Meredith Arms Bzdak
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Kimbro Frutiger
John Kriskiewicz

Nina Rappaport
Rich Ray
Gwen North Reiss
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