

LOST RIIS PLAZA, MANHATTAN

In 1966, the central open spaces of the Jacob Riis public housing project were converted to a much celebrated recreational landscape by the architects Pomerance & Breines and the landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg. Stretching from East 6th to East 10th Street along the axis of the project, a series of gathering places and playgrounds was centered on an amphitheater—enclosed visually by sturdy trellises—that could accommodate special events or informal socializing. The four-block-long “plaza” as a whole displayed Friedberg’s characteristic use of concrete for steps and tiered seating and his combination of stone blocks, timbers, and sand for play environments. Existing rows of trees, dating from Riis Houses’ construction in 1949, were accommodated in the reshaping of the terrain. In 1998 the plaza was largely replaced with grass and conventional play equipment, leaving only a few vestiges of its concrete land-sculpting.

—John Morris Dixon



Photo: David Hirsch, courtesy M. Paul Friedberg

LOST & FOUND

FOUND UNITARIAN MEETINGHOUSE, WESTCHESTER COUNTY

Nestled in the woods near Mt. Kisco, NY, is the meetinghouse of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Northern Westchester. Designed by the New Canaan, CT, architect Victor Christ-Janer in 1969, the building is rigorously Modern—as are many midcentury Unitarian gathering places. It is pointedly unassuming, except for some outdoor concrete sculptures by the architect. These monoliths—subject of endless puzzlement to the congregation—were said by Christ-Janer to represent the family, although separated by gender. The males, with triangular projections are gathered at the front entrance; the females, with the angular recesses, at the rear entrance. With much of the interior lighted by clerestories and monitors, the walls are largely windowless. The walls are of concrete



Photo: John Morris Dixon.

block the architect invented and used for multiple projects. The block’s saw-tooth profile sheds rain and minimizes weathering of mortar joints. Christ-Janer’s United Congregational church in Norwalk, CT, and Church of St. Matthew and St. Timothy in Manhattan also survive. —John Morris Dixon

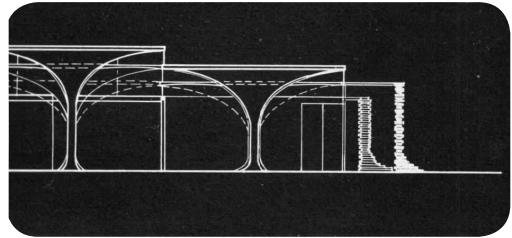
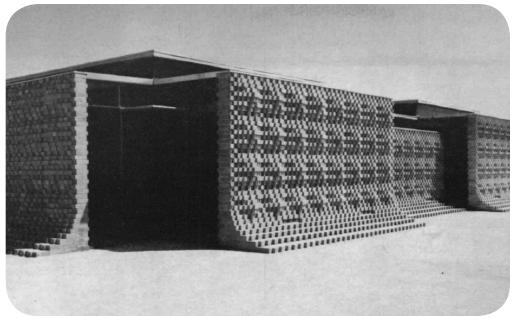


Photo: © George Csnera; drawing: Victor Lundy.

LOST IBM, CRANFORD, NJ

In 1965, IBM opened a 50,000-sf. office in Cranford, NJ. Designed by Victor Lundy, the building stood in plain view of the Garden State Parkway. It reflected an important period of corporate growth by IBM that engaged a number of the era's most talented designers, all of whom were selected and guided by IBM's Consultant Director of Design, Eliot Noyes. Lundy favored a bold, one-story scheme that employed thoroughly modern materials while embracing history. Inspired by the Mayan architecture of Uxmal, Mexico, the building's exterior was formed by patterned and layered concrete block with a pink-white tint that grew out of a terrace constructed of similar block. On the interior, ribbed, poured-concrete "trees" provided structural support as well as visual interest, rising in height from the perimeter to culminate in a lofty, central atrium illuminated by clerestory windows. New Jersey lost this striking example of suburban corporate expansion when the building was demolished c. 1990 to make way for a new office park. —Meredith Bzdak

LOST & FOUND



Photo: Marissa Marvelli

FOUND

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF PAINTERS AND ALLIED TRADES HEADQUARTERS, NYC

It is not obvious that the 1959 headquarters of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades on 14th Street is a heavily altered rowhouse from 1875. Far from simply stripping its ornamentation and recladding with a machine-made material, as was the norm of the period, William Conklin devised an elegant bronze trellis and sunshade system (the building faces south) that is scaled along the building's five-story rise. Its materiality and arched sunshades are a clear nod to New York's cast iron architecture. At the time, Harvard-trained Conklin was a lead designer for Mayer, Whittlesey & White, whose offices were on nearby Union Square and who were best known for Manhattan House (1947–1951), the first white brick apartment building in the city, which they designed with SOM. A nearby project that Conklin worked on with the firm that same year, Butterfield House, demonstrates the same attention to scale, sensitivity to the outdoor environment, and relationship with historic context, long before "contextualism" was a thing. —Marissa Marvelli