

## INVOLVE YOURSELF

### 2 COLUMBUS CIRCLE

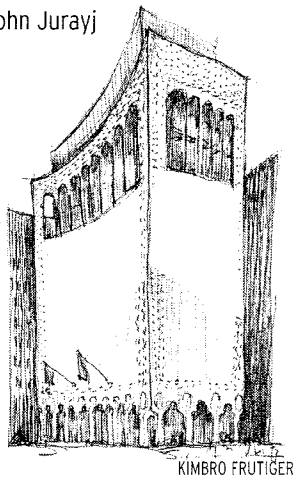
The New York Economic Development Corporation (EDC), a private entity, has yet to make a decision after review of responses to the RFP it issued in Fall 2000 for redevelopment proposals for 2 Columbus Circle and the Huntington Hartford Gallery. Local preservationists and DOCOMOMO members following this activity believe that the EDC clearly favors proposals from developers who intend to demolish E.D. Stone's 1964 edifice as part of their redevelopment of the site.

Meanwhile, the application for State and National register "eligible status" languishes on Governor Pataki's desk—a casualty of gubernatorial/mayoral politics. While "eligible status" does not carry legal protections, it reinforces the building's historic value. More importantly, if Governor Pataki signs off on the SHPO's recommendation for eligibility there would likely have to be some form of public hearing before 2 Columbus Circle is demolished by a developer.

Please write Governor Pataki and urge him to allow eligibility for 2 Columbus Circle to proceed and public input to be heard.

Hon. George Pataki  
Governor of New York State  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

—John Jurayj



## SAVING CORPORATE MODERNISM

Assessing Three Landmark Buildings by Gordon Bunshaft  
of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill  
Yale University

Exhibit January 8–March 3, 2001 • Symposium February 9–10, 2001

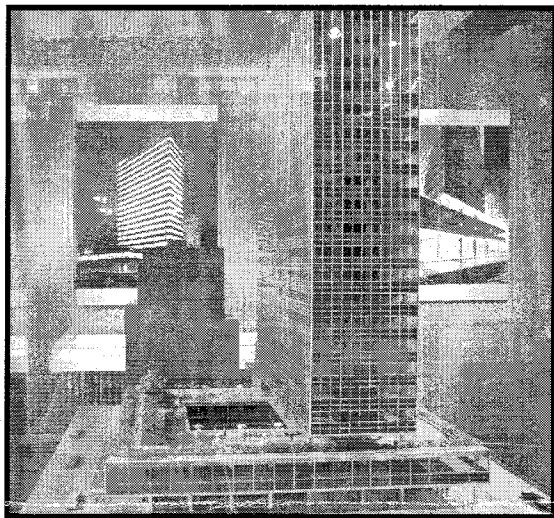
In a highly proactive gesture of advocacy toward the preservation of significant works of the Modern Movement, the Yale University School of Architecture hosted an exhibit and symposium regarding the history and present status of three signature works of postwar corporate modernism designed by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM). The buildings, Lever House (1952) in New York City, and the Connecticut General (1957) and Emhart (1963) corporate headquarters (now collectively owned by the CIGNA corporation) in Bloomfield, Connecticut. Designed in collaboration with many artists and designers of the era including sculptor Isamu Noguchi, interior designer Florence Knoll, industrial designer Raymond Loewy, landscape architect Joanna Diman and graphic designer Lester Beall, the buildings stand today as premier examples of what would become the defining corporate aesthetic for the postwar era. The exhibition, designed by Yale's director of exhibitions, Dean Sakamoto, and curated by DOCOMOMO'S Nina Rappaport, historian Catherine Lynn and R. Anthony Fieldman of SOM, consisted of original drawings and models, photographs by Ezra Stoller, and contemporary photographs by Vicky Sambunaris, as well as a video.

The CIGNA buildings are imperiled by a proposed mixed-use development. It is their plight that generated the impetus for the exhibition and symposium. Lever House is undergoing an admirable restoration with curtain-wall expert Gordon Smith, SOM and landscape architects Ken Smith and Gavin Keeney. Tyler Smith of Smith/Edwards architects is spearheading the preservation effort for CIGNA with support from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and DOCOMOMO, among other organizations.

The symposium was keynoted by Anthony Vidler who spoke on "Modernism after Modernism," and the often ambiguous relationship between the European Modern Movement and its postwar progeny, which was centered in the United States. Other sessions focussed on the history and restoration of Lever House with talks by historians Carol Herselle Krinsky and David Childs of SOM. Gordon Smith and Ken Smith pursued topics of material authenticity and compliance with original design intent—philosophical issues often faced in the preservation of works of the Modern Movement. A session on Connecticut General included Jeffrey Inaba's presentation on Connecticut General within the greater context of the style, demographics and the "urbane-ization" of the megalopolitan suburban landscape, while Ana Maria Torres and Donald Albrecht dealt respectively with the Noguchi/Bunshaft collaboration and with the work of Raymond Loewy on Lever House and Florence Knoll on Connecticut General in developing the modern interior office landscape. Tyler Smith closed the paper sessions with an impassioned defense of the complex that included his own alternative proposal to develop the site without demolishing the major buildings and landscape features. The symposium closed with a panel discussion by

historians and theorists as well as DOCOMOMO's Theo Prudon, placing the themes within the larger contemporary dialogue on issues such as assessment of Modernism's transformation from a social to a corporate movement in the postwar era; the questionable merits of the "urban de-congestion" of the 1950s as the incubator of the present dilemma of sprawl; and the possibilities for the adaptation of these structures for contemporary use. Many questions were raised and few were answered, but all agreed that these issues and buildings clearly merit a closer look.

—David Fixler, DOCOMOMO/New England



THE EXHIBITION FEATURED EXCELLENT PHOTOGRAPHS, BOTH NEW AND ARCHIVAL. THE ORIGINAL LEVER HOUSE MODEL ON LOAN FROM MOMA, ABOVE.

This exhibition will be traveling to other venues. Contact Yale University School of Architecture for details.

## (MIS)SPOKEN

In December 1953, Louis I. Kahn wrote to Ann Tyng: "I saw the Lever Building—it is dead—it looks like something made flat in Hoboken in one piece and picked up, put in place in one piece vertically (the name Whitman Chocolate rubbed off) in Manhattan." In the exhibition Saving Corporate Modernism, the part devoted to Lever House highlights many ways in which Kahn was wrong. The drawings and perspectives reveal how the rich materials and well orchestrated spaces set this building apart from descendants of the industrial world. While much of Isamu Noguchi's attempt to integrate nature into the courtyard was aborted, the plans, photos, and models in the exhibition reveal that the garden that was created cannot be dismissed as unimportant or anti-humanistic. Kahn, intent on redirecting Modernism, was unwilling to see the American version as anything but a bland derivative of its European antecedents.

—Susan Solomon