

JOHNSON EXAMINED, CONTINUED

fact an expert on some construction issues—admittedly visible ones—such as masonry detailing. I have heard him advise fellow architects on mortar joints.

Other pragmatic issues of architectural design were also skipped over. More than one speaker made the obvious comparison between Johnson's Glass House and Mies's Farnsworth House, noting that Mies raised his several feet above the ground while Johnson placed his firmly on the earth—as if this were a matter of aesthetics. But whatever the aesthetic effect of Mies's hovering floor plane, Farnsworth had to be raised to deal with the site's periodic flooding. One speaker even showed Farnsworth prettily reflected in high water, without acknowledging this as a flood condition.

Almost nothing was said about Johnson's succession of professional partners, who shared credit for most of his buildings. One speaker showed a published full-spread photo of Johnson and his one-time partner John Burgee, without identifying Burgee. The fact is that these professional partners had a profound impact on Johnson's opportunities and what he produced. With early partner Richard Foster, Johnson did mainly institutional projects. With Burgee, his practice produced a prodigious number of office buildings—a new realm for him.

There was only slighting reference to developers such as Gerald Hines, who commissioned several of the office towers. Johnson was portrayed as a cultural force—which he surely was—but with hardly any reference to practical circumstances. A few thoughtful minutes were devoted to his long-time personal partner, the curator David Whitney, who apparently guided Johnson's extensive art collecting—and undoubtedly had a stabilizing effect on his inherent volatility.

The overflow audience learned a lot, but some key aspects of Johnson's multiple lives remain mysterious, even when they are thoughtfully examined.

—John Morris Dixon

2 COLUMBUS CIRCLE: THE GOODBYE PHOTOS

Following complete lack of attention by the Landmarks Preservation Commission and a see-nothing, know-nothing, do-nothing stance by the City, and despite heroic efforts by numerous local preservation organizations, most notably Landmark West!, 2 Columbus Circle never had its day in "Landmarks court." Edward Durell Stone's 1964 Gallery of Modern Art was denied timely, contemporary debate on its cultural and architectural significance (a 1993 decision by a small group of Commission staff sealed its fate).

In December 2005 The Museum of Arts and Design began its transformation of the building by stripping the white Carrera marble from the façade. Shortly before the scaffolding went up Docomomo US New York/Tri-State and the World Monuments Fund had a chance to make a final walk through. Our photographer Megan Wurth captured the final state of "2CC" with a large format digital camera. We present in "black and white" a sampling of what is lost.

