

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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BUILDINGS FOR BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT ON VIEW AT MUSEUM

Six buildings commissioned by business and government will be shown at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from February 26 through May 5 in an exhibition demonstrating the important role a new kind of patronage is playing in the current building program that is changing the face of our country and the face it presents abroad. Actual sections of walls of glazed brick, pierced tile, glass and aluminum, a suspended ceiling of aluminum discs and granite paving have been built in the Museum's galleries to show visitors the fine materials used in these buildings. Large models are accompanied by photographic murals to show the individual character of each building as fully as possible.

Selected by Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, Buildings for Business and Government illustrates a range of contemporary architectural problems and possibilities. The General Motors Technical Center in Detroit, designed by Eero Saarinen and Associates, and the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill are large, complex projects composed of several buildings on three and four hundred acre sites. The Seagram Building at 375 Park Avenue by Mies van der Rohe and Philip C. Johnson, and the Chase Manhattan Bank building in the Wall Street area by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill are being built in two of the most famous and crowded areas in the world, where space is the most valuable commodity. The St. Louis Air Terminal by Hellmuth, Yamasaki and Leinweber must fit today's needs and yet be easily expanded for tomorrow's traffic and population. The US Embassy in New Delhi by Edward Stone is an example of the excellent work being done abroad by the government where architecture is an important representative of America. Mr. Drexler says:

Business and government alike are rediscovering the rewards of fine building, and the results can be seen not only in individual works of great beauty but in a generally higher standard of excellence....The United States no longer demands that major government commissions be executed in antique styles. Embassies being built abroad by the State Department, as part of a program which began in 1946, and the new Academy for the United States Air Force, look like what they are: modern American buildings. Business organizations are now undertaking building programs that deliberately exceed strict utilitarian limits. Happily our buildings are beginning to benefit from the attention to material, craftsmanship, and detail lavished on the automobile and other industrial products. Today's most valuable material, however, is space. In the present condition of our cities the use to which land is put is a decisive factor in architectural quality. Releasing part of a site so that it may be used as open space allows light and air to penetrate narrow streets, and makes it possible to see the buildings--a consideration of some importance if we are to have architecture at all. The concern with esthetic and social values shown by government and business through these buildings is not in itself new. It denotes rather a shift in emphasis: clients are becoming patrons.

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As the visitor enters the Museum's third floor galleries, he steps onto a 23 x 40' area paved with cast quartz aggregate slabs with divider strips of black Albarene stone. This material is under study for the plaza of the 60-story Chase Manhattan Bank in downtown New York. The plaza will be decorated with trees and sculpture. The site, comprising 1 1/2 narrow blocks, provides an outstanding example of the difficulties of urban site planning. By making an agreement with the city to trade some land for wider sidewalks in return for the right to incorporate Cedar Street into the area given over to the plaza, the architects, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, have been able to provide a setting for their building so that it can be seen as well as be a pleasant oasis in the urban canyon.

A model, as well as photographs and plans, show that on the building's perimeter, columns measuring 3 x 5' are placed outside the walls to release floor space within. The walls are of glass; column and spandrels will be sheathed in stainless steel or aluminum. Bank offices open on a circular pool below the plaza area.

A tile wall and a mesh ceiling of the US Embassy in New Delhi by Edward Stone are reproduced in the Museum exhibition. A 15' grille of pierced terracotta tile, similar to that which will protect the glass-walled building from India's sun, has been erected in the galleries along with a suspended mesh ceiling of aluminum discs anodized gold which will shade the interior patio pool around which the offices are grouped. Stepping stones in the actual pool will lead to tree-shaded islands. The model in the exhibition also shows an overhanging extra roof which serves as a parasol three feet above the building proper. This parasol roof projects well beyond the terra cotta grille and is supported at its perimeter by slender steel columns. It is perforated along its edge to cast lines of light on the richly shadowed tile.

This building is one of a series commissioned during the last ten years by the Foreign Buildings Operations of the Department of State. "Clear organization of its elements gives this building much of its distinction. The choice of materials and colors, and the architect's intelligent adaptation of such locally traditional amenities as pools and pierced tile walls, give it an atmosphere appropriate to its purpose," Mr. Drexler says.

The air terminal building for Lambert Field in St. Louis by Hellmuth, Yamasaki and Leinweber presented some typical 20th century architectural problems. The building has to be seen easily from automobiles approaching on the ground and by planes approaching from the air. "More important, it had to be conceived as an

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unfinished composition. The design also had to allow for additions that would enhance rather than destroy the architects' conception," Mr. Drexler notes.

As seen in the model in the exhibition, the building in its present state consists of three pairs of intersecting barrel vaults made of concrete, four inches thick and sheathed with copper. They attain a maximum height of 32 feet and together the three pairs enclose a room 412 feet long. During this year, an additional unit will be added on the east; at a later date two more will be added on the west, doubling the building's present size and making the rhythm of the vaults even more effective through repetition.

The building is shown in photographs as well as by a model lighted from inside.

The office building for Joseph E. Seagram & Sons at 375 Park Avenue, designed by Mies van der Rohe and Philip C. Johnson, is shown in a model and by a full scale mockup 20 feet long of part of a wall. The 38-story tower will be sheathed with gray-pink glass and hand-rubbed bronze mullions and spandrels. The long dimension of the tower parallels Park Avenue, facing a plaza approximately 100 x 200 feet and paved with pink granite. Formal pools on each side of the plaza, and a grove of beech trees on the north and south sides of the building, echo the symmetrical plan and elevations. The construction of this building is now in process.

This is the first building in New York by Mies van der Rohe and is also the first opportunity the world-famous architect has had in the United States to execute a large building with the fine materials characteristic of his European work. Mr. Drexler calls 375 Park Mies' most powerful expression of a theme first stated in his twin glass and steel apartment towers in Chicago in 1951, and says that the mullion detail in particular may be compared with the delicate adjustments of line and shadow characteristic of the Ionic column.

The model includes studies for sculpture by Mies. These will be 30' sheets of bronze in three contrasting finishes. To be placed in each of the building pools, they will be the first sculptures executed by Mies van der Rohe.

The General Motors Technical Center, one of the two projects in the exhibition which is completed and in use, is shown by a model, color stereo slides and a 20' wall of the red glazed brick used for end walls and by a 10' aluminum and glass window wall. Occupying a 320 acre site--equivalent to the area from 59th Street to 79th Street and Fifth to Eighth Avenue in New York City--the terminal center is organized in five sections or groups of buildings which are ranged around a twenty-two-acre artificial lake. In general the buildings, designed by Eero Saarinen and Associates, are long rectangles with north and south elevations

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composed of pre-assembled aluminum frames, ten feet wide and one story high. Into these frames are placed sheets of green-tinted glass and two inch thick panels made of gray porcelain-enameled steel bonded to honeycombed paper. The modular rhythm is stopped abruptly by end walls of brick glazed bright red, yellow, orange or blue.

"Elegant and often beautiful, such details, together with exquisitely finished materials, suggest product design and manufacture as much as building," Mr. Drexler says. "The architect has created an attractive environment that plainly belongs to that part of American society whose values are increasingly determined by manufacturing and marketing techniques. Although the architect's designs produce effects unrelated to the company's products, the buildings are a kind of celebration of mass production. As such, they have more than architectural significance."

A ten by fifteen foot model of the new Air Force Academy now under construction in Colorado Springs is shown in the exhibition. A raised floor makes it possible for visitors to view it from two levels. A 25-foot photo-mural of the dramatic 17,500 acre site bounded by the Rampart Range of the Rocky Mountains covers the wall behind the model.

Six of the seven major buildings in the academy, which will occupy a 400 acre area, have been grouped on paved platforms modeled out of the site. The Cadet Quarters is the pivot of the composition. It consists of two floors above and two floors below an open arcade, where the cadets are assembled and where supervisory offices are located. This building is more than a quarter of a mile long with the upper part divided into two sections by an open garden court. There are three interior courts with landscaped gardens and streams.

Other buildings shown in the model are the Dining Hall for 3,000, with a two acre roof supported by 16 columns, the Social Hall, the Administration building, the Academic building and the Physical Education building which accommodates 15 basketball courts, three swimming pools and a rifle range.

The Chapel, for which the final design has not yet been made, is indicated by a simple block in the model. It is planned to contain one chapel each for Protestants, Catholics and other faiths. Acoustic controls will allow the three chapels to be used simultaneously.

"Architects Walter Netsch and Gordon Bunshaft," Mr. Drexler says, "have given the buildings an architectural unity difficult to achieve on so large a scale, without sacrificing variety in the design of individual buildings and their groupings."

For further information and photographs contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. Circle 5-8900.