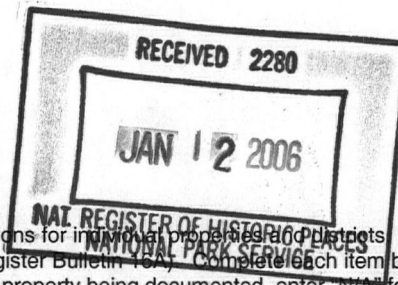


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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.



1. Name of Property

historic name The Seagram Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 375 Park Avenue [] not for publication

city or town New York [] vicinity

state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10022

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [X] nationally [] statewide [] locally. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William Carlos, SAPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

12/14/05
Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

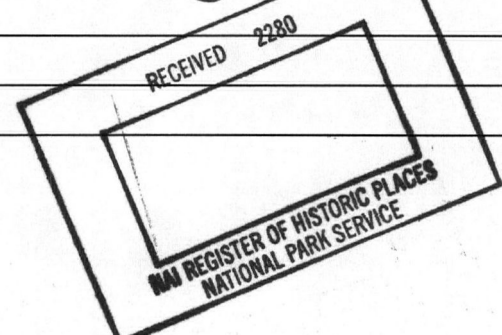
I hereby certify that the property is:

- [X] entered in the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
[] determined eligible for the National Register
[] see continuation sheet
[] determined not eligible for the National Register
[] removed from the National Register
[] other (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

[Signature] *2-24-06*



Seagram Building

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

0

buildings

sites

structures

objects

TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business; restaurant

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business; restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern: International Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls Bronze. Glass.

Muntz metal.

roof

other granite, marble, travertine, tile, terrazzo

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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7. Description

Site

The Seagram Building (375 Park Avenue) is located on the east side of Park Avenue, between East 52nd and East 53rd Streets, New York, New York County. The building is a 38-story tower with shorter rear wings set behind a plaza on a raised podium, 100' east of Park Avenue.

The Seagram Building occupies a slightly irregular site that slopes down from east to west. The site extends the full 200'-10"-long block of Park Avenue from East 52nd to East 53rd Street; the site extends east on East 52nd Street 295' and east on East 53rd Street 302'. The site slopes down from east to west.

The western portion of the site contains a plaza set on a raised podium. The plaza and the sidewalk surrounding the entire building site are constructed of pink granite. A set of three pink steps lead up to the plaza from the Park Avenue sidewalk. A low retaining wall on Park Avenue is also constructed of pink granite. This retaining wall extends east on 52nd and 53rd Streets. At the east end of the retaining wall two sets of pink granite steps lead up from the side streets to the north and south lobby entries of the building. The parapet walls along 52nd and 53rd Streets are topped with *verd antique* marble.

An arcade is created by the exterior line of columns on the north, west and south sides of the tower. The pink granite paving of the plaza extends through the arcade and into the lobby of the building. The ceiling of the loggia and the lobby is covered in ceramic tile, approximately 1" square. Recessed light fixtures are located within the ceiling of the arcade. A pair of full-height travertine-clad stair enclosures extend into the north and south arcades. The stair enclosures each have shorter extensions, also clad in travertine.

The plaza is symmetrically arranged with a rectangular pool at the northwest and southwest corners, and three planting beds to the east of each of the pools. The pools are filled with water to just below the level of the plaza and each contain closely-clustered fountain jets (altered from the original configuration of the jets). The beds are planted with ivy and each contains a ginkgo tree. The plaza was originally planted with weeping beeches, but these were replaced by the hardier ginkgo trees in the Autumn of 1959.¹ The only asymmetrical element within the plaza is a bronze flagpole, located near the south pool.

¹ John C. Devlin, "Park Ave. Plaza Gets New Trees," *New York Times* (October 29, 1959): p. 22.

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Building exterior

The Seagram Building is a 38-story (520') tower clad predominantly in bronze, Muntz metal (a bronze-like alloy) and pinkish-gray glass. The building rises from the plaza to its full 38-story height without setbacks. A 38-story spine containing the fire stairs extends off the east of the main tower; smaller 5 and 11-story wings (referred to as the "bustle") are located behind the spine to the east.

The building is constructed of steel frame clad in concrete and gypsum block for fireproofing. The first floor of the tower is an open arcade created by bronze-clad structural columns which are set on the plaza. A Muntz metal marquee with two rows of recessed light fixtures is centered on the west wall of the building at the top of the arcade level. The walls of the first floor, recessed behind the arcade, are constructed of floor-to-ceiling glass. The tower is articulated by mullions fabricated from 4 1/2" by 6" bronze I-beam extrusions. These mullions run the full height of the tower from the second floor up, and provide vertical articulation and shadow lines to the tower. Muntz-metal spandrel panels and windows of pinkish-gray glass are set between the mullions.

The 38-story spine of the building is articulated in a similar fashion, but substitutes green serpentine marble panels for glass on the north and south elevations, in order to hide steel-and-concrete shear walls. Secondary lobby entries are located at the base of the spine on both the north and south elevations. Bronze-and-glass canopies extend north and south from these entries to the base of the steps located at the east end of the plaza.

A louvered screen approximately 3 stories tall is located above the 38th floor of the tower and spine. Rooftop mechanical equipment is located behind the screen.

The five-story wings extend out to the property line on the north and south elevations. The base of the wings (at the ground-floor level) is clad in pink granite. Double-height windows are located at the first floor on both elevations. A bronze-and-glass restaurant and bar entrance is located on 52nd and 53rd Streets, respectively. Each of these entries has a canopy extending to the curb, also constructed of bronze and glass. Garage entries are located at the far east end of the wings on both 52nd and 53rd Streets.

An 11-story wing matching the width of the spine extends to the east property line. This "bustle" and the five-story wings noted above, have the same façade articulation of the tower, with bronze I-beam mullions, Muntz-metal spandrels and pinkish-gray window glass.

A small ±7'-wide alley is located to the east of the building on East 53rd Street, between the Seagram Building and 610 Lexington Avenue. This alley was necessary to retain the symmetry of

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the building's footprint on an asymmetrical site. The east wall of the building, facing onto the alley, is faced in dark tan brick.

Building interior: lobby

The materials of the plaza and the arcade continue inside to the main lobby of the building, which is located at the first floor of the tower and spine. The lobby level is laid out with a main lobby to the west, banks of elevators in the center, and a secondary lobby to the east. A set of seven stairs leads up to the east from the secondary lobby to the Four Seasons Restaurant.

The lobby floor is pink granite, and the ceiling is $\pm 1'$ -square gray glass tile. A row of recessed light fixtures is set into the ceiling behind the west wall of the lobby. Three bronze-clad revolving doors are evenly spaced along the west wall of the lobby. Secondary entries of bronze and glass double doors are located at the north and south end of the main lobby. The exterior walls of the lobby are clear glass set in bronze mullions, with a bronze railing approximately 42" above the floor level and a horizontal mullion set at the top height of the doors.

The main lobby contains a row of bronze-clad structural columns running north to south, halfway between the east wall and the walls of the elevator enclosures. The center of the lobby is occupied by four travertine-clad rectangular elevator and stair enclosures, oriented east to west. The northern and southern elevator enclosures extend out to the arcade; these enclosures contain three elevator cabs facing onto the lobby, and fire stairs which exit to the arcade. The two center elevator enclosures contain six elevator cabs each. Service closets and vertical chases are also located within each of the four enclosures.

The secondary lobby, which sits below the spine of the tower, contains bronze and glass double entry doors to the north and south, with a pair of revolving doors at each entrance. The remainder of the north and south walls are constructed of clear glass set in bronze mullions, matching the walls of the west lobby. The east wall of the secondary lobby is faced in travertine, with bronze-clad columns at the recess for the pink granite stairs and landing to the restaurant. A full-height bronze and glass wall with bronze and glass double entries doors is located at the top of the stairs.

Building interior: Four Seasons Restaurant

The Four Seasons restaurant is located on the first floor and ground floor of eastern portion of the Seagram Building (in the "bustle" of the building)². The restaurant consists of five dining rooms

² Portions of the interior description of the Four Seasons are excerpted from New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "*Four Seasons Restaurant* [interior designation report]," (New York: City of New York, October 3, 1988).

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which together accommodate 400 persons. The dining rooms and associated public spaces include two main dining rooms: the Pool Room at the north side of the building and the bar/grill room at the south side of the building. These two dining rooms are connected by a lobby which is located at the top of the steps leading up from the east lobby of the Seagram Building itself. A street-level entrance to the restaurant is located on East 52nd Street; a broad staircase leads up from the lobby for this entrance to the southern dining room. Other dining areas include two small private dining rooms located behind a balcony overlooking the south dining room, and a fifth dining room located on a mezzanine off the Pool Room.

The main entrance lobby to the Four Seasons has a glass wall overlooking the east lobby of the Seagram Building. A pair of bronze double doors connects the building lobby with the restaurant lobby. Like the building lobby, the restaurant lobby has travertine walls and a gray glass mosaic tile ceiling. The floor of the restaurant lobby is travertine as well, distinguishing it from the pink granite floor of the building lobby. A pair of bronze-clad columns is located at either end of the lobby, flanking Picasso's painted curtain, "The Three-Cornered Hat", which hangs on the east wall of the restaurant lobby. A bronze light box with alabaster panels is located on the lobby floor beneath the curtain and lights it from below. Recessed light fixtures are located in the ceiling.

Bronze and glass double doors are located at the north and south end of the lobby, leading to the Pool Room and bar/grill room, respectively. The north and south lobby doors open onto vestibules that have dropped ceilings of brass-colored egg-crate grids illuminated from above. The eastern wall of the north, Pool Room, vestibule is a glass wall, with a climate-controlled wine cellar visible beyond. The eastern wall of the vestibule for the southern dining room is clad in French walnut, with doors opening to a coat-check area.

The Pool Room is a double-height space located at the northwest corner of the bustle. A table-height 20' square pool is located in the center of the room, with large trees in cylindrical bronze planters at each corner of the pool. The trees are changed seasonally as part of the restaurant's "four seasons" theme.

The western and northern walls of the Pool Room are glass with bronze mullions and a dividing rail set about 5' above the floor. The floor-to-ceiling windows have metal draperies of thin brass-, bronze- and cooper-colored anodized aluminum chains set into vertical channels in the mullions. The chains are designed to ripple with the movement of air from heating and air conditioning diffusers which are set into low travertine ledges at the base of the windows.

The south wall of the Pool Room is faced walnut with a row of rectangular gray rawhide panels at the base of the wall and rectangular natural rawhide panels throughout the rest of the wall. Openings in the south wall lead to the restaurant lobby (above) and the kitchen. Bronze-clad engaged columns are set into the south wall.

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A broad staircase at the center of the east wall leads up to a mezzanine-level dining room. The east wall of the Pool Room is comprised of a series of panels constructed of French walnut that pivot to close off the mezzanine-level dining room from the Pool Room when needed. The base of the east wall of the Pool Room has gray rawhide panels. The railings at the staircase and at the mezzanine level have balusters comprised of staggered thin metal rods.

The north wall of the mezzanine dining room is a continuation of the glass and bronze north wall of the Pool Room. The eastern and southern walls of this room are covered in beige carpet panels. A large painting by James Rosenquist is located at the center of the eastern wall.

The ceiling of the Pool Room and the mezzanine dining room is constructed of off-white square perforated aluminum panels set above a recessed grid. Recessed "darklites" are located at the intersections of grid members, and troffers are set in the ceiling above the south wall.

The floor of the Pool Room is covered in wall-to-wall carpeting with a grid pattern echoing the overall geometry of the room. The existing carpeting was designed by Philip Johnson, but is not original to the room.

The bar/grill room contains a small seating lounge at the northwest corner of the room, a bar is at the southwest corner, and a dining area at the center of the room. A broad set of stairs located at the western end of the room between the seating lounge and the bar leads down to the 52nd Street entrance lobby. An additional dining area is located on a balcony located along the eastern wall, which is reached by stairs located at the north and south ends of the balcony.

Like the Pool Room, the southern dining room is a double-height space with floor-to-ceiling glass and bronze-framed walls on two sides (south and west). The bar/grill room has the same ceiling system and curtains as the Pool Room. The interior (east and north) walls of this dining room are finished in French walnut, while the carpeting is a darker version of the design used in the Pool Room. The staircase leading down to the 52nd Street lobby has bronze railings with balusters of thin staggered metal rods.

The floor of the bar area is ebonized walnut. The square-shaped bar has leather panels along its face. The bar area is dominated by a large Richard Lippold sculpture which hang above the bar itself. The sculpture is constructed of groups of gold-dipped brass rods of different lengths, suspended from the ceiling by thin, nearly invisible, wires. A smaller Lippold sculpture of the same construction hangs above the balcony at the east end of the room.

The bar area and dining area are separated by a low partition of laminated, cracked glass. Designed by Philip Johnson in 1983, this partition replaced an earlier trellis with climbing ivy. A

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French walnut service desk, which separates the lounge area from the dining area, is located just inside the doors leading from the restaurant lobby.

The two private dining rooms are located at the north and south end of the balcony overlooking the southern dining room. Walnut paneled doors lead from the balcony to each of these dining rooms. A large doorway with sliding walnut doors separates the larger of the private dining rooms, to the north, from the smaller of the private dining rooms, to the south. The south wall of the southern private dining room is the glass and bronze exterior building wall; the interior walls of the two private dining rooms are faced in rectangular panels of polished hardwood set on a darker wood surface. The ceiling of the private dining rooms is of similar construction to the ceiling of the main southern dining room and Pool Room, except that the panels have a black finish and small punched holes in a random pattern, which are lit from above.

Entrance to the East 52nd Street entrance lobby from the street is through double bronze and glass doors with vertical stripes etched into the glass. The main doors open onto a small vestibule with a brass-colored egg-crate ceiling. A second set of double bronze and glass doors lead from the vestibule to the entrance lobby itself. The lobby floor and walls are finished in travertine. Engaged bronze-clad columns are set within the walls, with a bronze clad ceiling beam running between the columns. Doors set in the eastern, southern and northern walls lead to restrooms, an office, and a coat-check room, respectively. The staircase to the southern dining room leads up from the western side of the entrance lobby. The low ceiling of the lobby is painted white, and has recessed light fixtures.

Building interior: Brasserie

The Brasserie is located at the ground-floor level on the north side of the Seagram Building, below the Four Seasons' Pool Room. The entrance to the Brasserie is on East 53rd Street, through a bronze and glass revolving door flanked by a pair of bronze and glass swinging doors. The entry doors lead to a small lobby area with restrooms and a coat-check room to the east and the west. Entrance to the main dining room is to the south.

A flight of stairs leads from the Brasserie lobby to the main dining area. The stairs have wood handrails and tinted glass side panels. The main dining room is enveloped by a series of bent hardwood-veneer plywood panels. These panels overlap to form the north wall, ceiling and south wall of the dining area. A series of booths, separated by painted bent plywood panels, line the east wall of the main dining area. A bar is located on the northern portion of the west wall of the main dining area. A small dining alcove is located to the south of the bar. An opening between the bar and the dining alcove leads to a second dining room. The floor of the main dining room is

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finished in hardwood strip flooring; the floor of the bar, dining alcove and second dining room are carpeted.

The panels forming the north wall separate the main dining area from the entrance lobby. The panels forming the south wall separate the main dining area from the kitchen, with waiter's stations immediately behind the plywood panels. The ceiling panels in the main dining area are punctured by rows of recessed lighting fixtures. The ceiling above the panels and throughout the rest of the space is flat plaster, painted white. A door in the south wall, behind the dining alcove, leads to a staircase that connects the Seagram Building's fire stairs and to the main building lobby.

Building interior: Offices

The office floors are laid out around the central elevator and stair core. The office floors are designed for flexible layouts, and many of the tenant spaces have been changed over time.

The elevator lobbies have green terrazzo floors with large aggregate, travertine walls, gray-painted elevator doors and surrounds, and gypsum board ceilings with recessed light fixtures and acrylic elevator indicator lights. The elevator cabs have carpeted floors, bronze and chrome beaded wall coverings with stainless steel trim, and single piece molded white luminescent ceiling panels.

The Seagram Building was designed on a modular plan. This plan used a 4'-7.5" module for a partition system designed by Hauserman. The system included standardized parts such as floor-to-ceiling doors and partitions. The doors leading into tenant spaces were constructed of blond wood with satin metal hardware and lettering.

The office spaces have a hung ceiling grid with acoustic tile panels at all interior spaces. The ceiling at the perimeter walls has one row of acoustic ceiling tiles adjacent to the windows, with large luminescent panels beyond. These panels are part of the overall building lighting system, and are operated on timers at night to provide a glow to the building.

The offices have floor to ceiling windows, with low HVAC diffusers at the base of the windows. Every window is outfitted with a Venetian blind which has only three positions (down, middle and up) and slats set at a particular angle. This Venetian blind system was designed by the architect to provide a uniform appearance to the building.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ **A** Property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave
- ☐ **D** a cemetery
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☒ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by historic American Building Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Engineering

Period of Significance:

1957-1958

Significant Dates:

Significant Person:

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder:

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe with Philip Johnson;

Kahn & Jacobs associate architects

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8. Statement of Significance

The Seagram Building is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C, as one of the iconic structures of post-World War II International Style architecture, and as the work of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, two of the most important architects of the Modern and post-Modernist movements. The Seagram Building is seen as the apotheosis of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's minimalist philosophy of architecture, famously summarized by his aphorism "less is more", and represents one of Philip Johnson's earliest works. From the time of its completion in 1958, it has been hailed as one of the most important works of American architecture. This acclamation continues to the present day both among academics and in the popular press. At the time of construction, the Seagram Building set the gold standard for post-war corporate architecture in America. The influence of the building on the course of American architecture can be seen up and down Park Avenue, in the immediate vicinity of the building, and in suburban corporate office parks throughout the country. Its iconic plaza was the primary inspiration for the plaza bonus enacted as part of New York City's landmark zoning resolution of 1961.

The Seagram Building was designed with a famous attention to detail, using the finest materials and craftsmanship. It was the first building to use extruded bronze as a façade material, and is itself a work of art. The building was designed by Mies in conjunction with Philip Johnson, with Kahn & Jacobs associate architects. At the time, Mies was an internationally-acclaimed architect at the height of his career, while Johnson was a renowned architecture theorist at the beginning of what would be a significant and productive career as an architect. The Seagram Building is also significant for its association with the House of Seagram and the Bronfman family, specifically Phyllis Lambert Bronfman, who collaborated closely with the architects in the design and construction of the building. As a building of exceptional significance that has achieved significance within the past 50 years, the Seagram Building is eligible for listing under criteria consideration G.

The Seagram Building was designed and constructed between 1954 and 1958. From the outset, Samuel Bronfman, Chairman of the Board of the distillery company Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, intended to commission what would be regarded as an "important building".³ In 1951, the company acquired a site occupying the full block on the east side of Park Avenue between 52nd and 53rd Street, diagonally across the street from Lever House (built 1950-52; National Register listed)⁴. In 1954 Seagram announced that it would build its corporate headquarters on the site. The new building, to be completed in time for the firm's centennial in 1957, was to be designed by

³ Arthur Drexler, "The Seagram Building," *Architectural Record*, July 1958, p. 139.

⁴ New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Seagram Building* [exterior designation report]. (New York: City of New York, October 3, 1988), p. 4; hereafter cited as *Seagram Building Exterior Designation Report*.

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the architecture firm Pereira & Luckman.⁵ Pereira & Luckman designed a 34-story tower of marble, glass and bronze that occupied the full footprint of the building site.⁶

The Pereira & Luckman design was not well received. *Architectural Forum*, for instance, described it as an “enormous cigarette lighter.”⁷ More significantly, Bronfman’s daughter Phyllis Bronfman Lambert saw a picture of the Pereira & Luckman design and was horrified at the mediocrity of the scheme.⁸ She convinced her father to hire a world-class architect who would design an architecturally compelling building.⁹ Bronfman agreed, and authorized his daughter to conduct a search for a new architect.

During the search, Lambert was introduced to Philip Johnson, who at the time was the director of the Museum of Modern Art’s Department of Architecture and Design. At Johnson’s urging, Lambert studied the work of the leading Modern architects of the time, including Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, George Howe, William Lescaze, Eero Saarinen, Louis Kahn, Frank Lloyd Wright, Minoru Yamasaki, I. M. Pei, Le Corbusier and Mies. Lambert interviewed a number of architects, and ultimately settled on Mies. Bronfman retained Mies, with Johnson as co-architect and Kahn & Jacobs as associate architects.¹⁰ Bronfman also appointed his daughter as director of planning for the construction of the building.¹¹

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe¹² (1886 – 1969) was one of the most important architects of the twentieth century. Born in Germany, Mies had no formal schooling as an architect. His first architectural training came in the office of Peter Behrens. Mies’ most important works before he emigrated to America were the Barcelona Pavilion (1929) and the Tugendhat House in Brno (1930). Mies’ early study for a glass office tower in Berlin (1919) was an important precursor to his later skyscraper designs. Mies directed the Bauhaus for three years in the early 1930s. In 1937, Mies emigrated to America and became the head of the Armour Institute (later renamed the Illinois Institute of Technology). At IIT, Mies designed a master plan and a number of buildings, including Crown Hall (1952). During this period Mies also designed the Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois (1952; listed on the National Register), the Promontory Apartments (1949; listed on the National Register) and the Lake Shore Drive Apartments (1951; listed on the National Register), both in Chicago. The Lake Shore Drive Apartments “became the prototypical Miesian

⁵ Luckman had been the Chairman of Lever Brothers during the construction of that building, and had since returned to the full-time practice of architecture.

⁶ Robert A. M. Stern, et al, *New York 1960* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), p. 342.

⁷ “Seagram Plans a Monument,” *Architectural Forum*, No. 101 (August 1954), p. 52.

⁸ Stern, et al, p. 342

⁹ *Seagram Building Exterior Designation Report*, p. 4.

¹⁰ Stern, et al, p. 344.

¹¹ *Seagram Building Exterior Designation Report*, p. 4.

¹² Adolf K. Placzek, ed., *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: The Free Press, 1982), pp. 183 – 195.

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high-rise structure,”¹³ and was the starting point for many of the ideas which were refined on the Seagram Building.

By the 1950s, Philip Cortleyou Johnson (1906 – 2005) was well established in his second career as an architect, having already made a name for himself as an architectural critic and theorist. Johnson took an undergraduate degree at Harvard University, and soon after graduation began his first career by founding the Department of Architecture at New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). In 1932, Johnson and critic and historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock organized the seminal MOMA exhibition “Modern Architecture,” and co-authored the accompanying book *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*. The exhibition and book were credited with introducing European modernism to an American audience, by highlighting the works of such masters as Mies, Corbusier and Gropius, as well as for popularizing the term “international style,” which would come to describe the main current of mid-century corporate architecture in America. Johnson earned a degree in architecture from Harvard in 1943, and embarked on his second career as an architect. His early work included a number of influential residences, including his own Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut (1943, a National Historic Landmark). Other important work completed prior to the Seagram commission included the MOMA sculpture garden (1953) and the first of two additions at MOMA (1950). Johnson also designed a second addition for MOMA (1964). Three of his more influential works in New York City illustrate Johnson’s transition from Modernist to post-Modernist: Asia House (1960, located within the Upper East Side Historic District); the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center (1964); and the AT&T Building (1984, with John Burgee). In 1978, the American Institute of Architects awarded Johnson its highest honor, the Gold Medal.¹⁴

Associate architects Kahn & Jacobs was a partnership of Ely Jacques Kahn (1884 – 1972) and Robert Allan Jacobs (1905 - 1993). Kahn, one of New York City’s leading architects, was educated at Columbia University and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, where he was the first American to win the *Prix Labarre*. In 1917, he joined the firm Buchman and Fox, where he became a partner in 1919, and soon after assumed control of the firm, which was renamed Buchman and Kahn. In 1929, the firm became Ely Jacques Kahn, Architects. Kahn’s earlier works include the Bergdorf Goodman Store (1927) and the Film Center Building (1929, listed on the National Register), both in New York City.¹⁵

Jacobs was educated at Amherst College and Columbia University, where he received his architecture degree. In 1934 and 1935 he worked in Paris for Le Corbusier, after which he returned to New York, where he worked for Wallace Harrison. Jacobs went to work for Kahn in

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 193.

¹⁴ Portions excerpted from New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Four Seasons Restaurant* [interior designation report].” (New York: City of New York, October 3, 1988), p. 3; hereafter cited as *Four Seasons Designation Report*; and Placzek, ed., pp. 499 – 501.

¹⁵ Placzek, p. 537.

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1938, and in 1940 the two formed the Kahn & Jacobs firm. That firm was responsible for the design of the Municipal Asphalt Plant in New York City (1944, listed on the National Register), and the American Airlines Terminal at Kennedy Airport (1960, demolished).¹⁶

Upon coming to New York for the Seagram project, Mies was "disgusted" by the setback zoning required under the City's 1916 zoning resolution.¹⁷ In place of the wedding cake buildings that resulted from the maximization of the zoning envelope, Mies sought a solution for a freestanding tower. He was able to accomplish this by setting the building 100' back from Park Avenue on an elevated plaza. The footprint of the building thus occupied only 50% of the site, making the plaza a "heady expenditure of dollar-laden ground area for an effect remarkably monumental."¹⁸

The plaza was one of the innovative aspects of Mies' design. At the time, many New York architects, including Kahn & Jacobs, were urging the City to adopt the "tower in the park" concept as part of its zoning resolution. But at the time Mies' design for the Seagram Building was unveiled, there was no direct precedent in midtown Manhattan for this planning scheme.¹⁹

Mies' original concept for the plaza included the installation of sculptures, with no pools. Unable to find a suitable artist to create the art work, Mies and Johnson decided instead to install the reflecting pools and fountains. During the course of construction and in the years following, Mies continued to consider the installation of sculpture in the plaza, discussing it with such artists as Pablo Picasso, Constantin Brancusi and Henry Moore. From time to time, the building's owners have installed temporary art exhibits in the plaza, and have allowed the space to be used for dance recitals.²⁰

Seagram's willingness to spend money to create a building that would be the "crowning glory of everyone's work"²¹ did not end with the plaza and the sacrifice of rentable space. The materials Mies selected for the building – bronze, warm-toned glass, pink granite, travertine and two types of green marble – were of the finest and most luxurious quality. At the same time, their application on the project was strikingly minimalist and sparing, thus epitomizing Mies' philosophy of "less is more."

¹⁶ Richard D. Lyons, "Robert Jacobs, 88, An Architect Noted for Asphalt Plant [obituary]," *New York Times*, Nov. 5, 1993, p. D17.

¹⁷ "Seagram's Plans Plaza Tower in New York," *Architectural Forum*, No. 102 (April 1955), p. 9.

¹⁸ "Seagram's Plans Plaza Tower in New York," p. 9.

¹⁹ *Seagram Building Exterior Designation Report*, p. 5.

²⁰ Stern, et al, pp. 345, 348-49. See also McLandish Phillips, "Olmec Head to Be on View 2 Weeks," *New York Times*, May 19, 1965, p. 49 and Grace Glueck, "5-Ton Head From Easter Island Is Put On Pedestal," *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1968, p. 49.

²¹ Phyllis Lambert, Testimony given before the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission at a public hearing, May 17, 1988. Item No. 1 (LP-1664).

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In his design of the lobby, Johnson created a seamless transition from exterior to interior by carrying the pink granite of the plaza into the lobby and allowing the travertine of the lobby to push out to the arcade beneath the tower. As with the plaza, the overall effect of the design is to create a grand yet understated space, accentuated by the use of rich materials and fine detailing. The lobby has been cited in surveys such as "The Ten Best Lobbies in New York," and has been praised as "one of the best urban spaces built in Manhattan this century."²²

The Brasserie and the Four Seasons restaurant comprise the other public spaces, and are integral to the overall design of the building. The Four Seasons Restaurant was designed by Johnson in 1958, and opened in 1959. Johnson was assisted by designer William Pahlmann, lighting consultant Richard Kelly, landscape architect Karl Linn, horticulturist Everett Lawson Conklin, and weaver Marie Nichols. Artist Richard Lippold was commissioned for the gold-dipped brass sculptures in the Bar/Grill Room; Ada Louise and Garth Huxtable were commissioned for the design of the Restaurant's silver and glassware.²³

Critics have praised the restaurant interiors as among the finest International Style interiors in the United States. Built and operated by Restaurant Associates, the Four Seasons was the most expensive restaurant ever built at the time of its construction. As with other aspects of the building, the restaurant design used rich materials, innovative technology and attention to detail to create an understated and elegantly proportioned interiors, which reflect the modular system employed for the design of the building overall. The Four Seasons remains one of New York's premier dining experiences.²⁴

The attention to detail that characterized the building's exterior and public spaces was carried in to the interior as well. The interior fittings of the office floors, including the restrooms, were all custom designed, in work largely overseen by Johnson.

The Seagram Building was also the first fully modular modern office tower, with a modular planning grid which integrates the partition system, the lighting system and high- and low-tension electrical services.²⁵ To maintain a uniform appearance of the building from the exterior, Mies used special Venetian blinds with only three settings, and a grid of Mylar ceiling panels adjacent to the exterior glass walls. Lighting within the ceiling panels and for the lobby and exterior of the building was all controlled by a time clock to give the building a uniform glow at night.²⁶

²² Peter Blake, "The Ten Best Lobbies in New York," *New York Times Magazine*, Dec. 28, 1975, p. 13. For further information on the lobby, see New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Seagram Building, First Floor Interior* [interior designation report]. (New York: City of New York, October 3, 1988); hereafter cited as *Seagram Lobby Designation Report*.

²³ *Four Seasons Designation Report*, pp. 3 - 5.

²⁴ Portions excerpted from *Four Seasons Designation Report*, pp. 1 -2.

²⁵ *Seagram Building Exterior Designation Report*, p. 6

²⁶ *ibid.*

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In addition to its design innovations, the Seagram Building includes a number of structural and mechanical innovations. At 520', the steel-frame tower was the tallest constructed to date with high-strength bolts; the tower also included an unusual vertical truss wind bracing. The exterior columns and all beams in the building are encased in concrete, while the interior columns are encased with gypsum block for fireproofing. The poured concrete floors included ducts for utilities, such as electric, telephone and closed circuit television cables.²⁷ The building was the first skyscraper in New York City to use floor-to-ceiling plate glass.²⁸ The glazing system in turn required special mechanical innovations such as a specially designed peripheral air conditioning system consisting of low modular units which would cool the building without obstructing views.²⁹

In December 1957, Seagram moved into its offices on the lower floors of the building, and the building was formally opened on May 22, 1958. The reaction from architecture critics and the popular press was immediately enthusiastic. The New York Times called it "one of the most notable of Manhattan's post-war buildings,"³⁰ and said of the plaza that it had become "an oasis for office workers and passers-by."³¹

Lewis Mumford wrote about the Seagram Building "Mies van der Rohe has demonstrated ... how to do, with superb esthetic aplomb and with all but unerring taste, what his colleagues do coarsely and clumsily."³² He further praised the "human scale" of the plaza, and the "noble scale" of the lobby, which showed the "serene effect of pure space itself." Despite his general praise, Mumford was not pleased with some aspects of the project, such as the detailing of the plaza, including the selection of weeping beech trees, the lack of formal seating and the craftsmanship of the fountain.³³

Progressive Architecture described the Seagram as "probably the most heralded new building in the U.S.," which "becomes a stunning roseate shaft on the skyline when lighted at night."³⁴

Some years later, *New York Times* architecture critic described the Seagram Building as "dignified, sumptuous, severe, sophisticated, cool, consummately elegant architecture; architecture for the 20th century and for the ages".³⁵

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ "P/A News Survey," *Progressive Architecture*, No. 37 (July 1956), p. 75.

²⁹ "Air Conditioning: Office Buildings," *Progressive Architecture*, No. 39 (March 1958), p. 116.

³⁰ Thomas W. Ennis, "Building is Designer's Testament," *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 1957, sec. VII, page 1.

³¹ "Footsore Here Find Oasis at Seagram Building Plaza," *New York Times*, Jul. 26, 1958, p. 12

³² Lewis Mumford, "The Skyline: The Lesson of the Master," *The New Yorker*, No. 34 (Sept. 13, 1958) p. 150.

³³ Mumford, p. 145

³⁴ "Seagram House Formally Opened," *Progressive Architecture*, No. 39 (July 1958), p. 41.

³⁵ Ada Louise Huxtable. "Mies: Lessons from the Master," *New York Times*, Feb. 6, 1966, sec. II, p. 24.

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In addition to critical praise, the Seagram building and its architect received a number of awards. The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects awarded its medal of honor to Mies in 1958.³⁶ In 1965 the New York Board of Trade awarded its architecture prize to the Seagram Building, noting its “elegant form and utilization of materials” as well as the community benefit of the plaza.³⁷ In 1966, the Municipal Arts Society called the Seagram Building a “modern landmark”, and awarded the building and its architects the society’s bronze plaque.³⁸

Even before it was completed, the Seagram Building had a profound effect on the design of high-end corporate headquarters buildings in Manhattan and throughout the country. The glass and metal carried out with such elegance soon became the *de facto* cladding for corporate office towers in New York and beyond, and came to typify the International Style for the rest of the world.

In addition, several towers of the late 1950s and early 1960s utilized the open plaza and set back tower pioneered by Mies at Seagram, even though this required forgoing the use of maximum floor area. Included among these were the Time & Life Building (1959), the Union Carbide Building (1955-1960), and the headquarters of the Chase Manhattan Bank (1960).

The true effect of the Seagram Building plaza came in 1961 with the passage of a new comprehensive zoning resolution for the City of New York. Among many changes to the 1916 zoning, the 1961 resolution provided for a plaza bonus, which would allow building owners to build taller buildings in exchange for setting aside a portion of their site for a public plaza. The Seagram Building was the “ultimate tower prototype” for the revised zoning regulations.³⁹ The proposal for the zoning resolution, prepared by Voorhees, Walker, Smith & Smith, used the Seagram Building as an illustration of the plaza bonus concept (even though Seagram had never received a floor area bonus for its plaza).⁴⁰

The plaza bonus of the 1961 zoning resolution had a profound impact on the landscape of New York City. The 1961 resolution took away the “wedding cake” as the most profitable skyscraper type, and replaced it with the tower in the park. With height and bulk incentives tied to the construction of plazas and other public spaces, developers were now willing to follow the Seagram model. However, the quality of the plazas and their associated buildings was mixed at best, and few compared with Seagram.

The Seagram Building had another important effect on architecture in New York City, this one decidedly less positive. In 1960, the City determined that the formula used to determine the

³⁶ “Architects’ Award Goes to Mies van der Rohe,” *New York Times*, Jun. 23, 1958, p. 53.

³⁷ “Board of Trade Giving Awards for Commerce’s Role in Arts,” *New York Times*, May 17, 1965, p. 46.

³⁸ “Arts Society Honors Noted Works Here,” *New York Times*, May 27, 1966, p. 14.

³⁹ Jerold Kayden, *Privately Owned Public Spaces*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000), p. 10.

⁴⁰ Voorhees, Walker, Smith & Smith, *Zoning New York City*, (New York: City Planning Commission, 1958), p. 128

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taxable value of a property (largely based on rentable area), did not take into account the “prestige value” of a building such as Seagram. The building was reassessed based on the costs of construction. As a result, Seagram was forced to pay higher taxes for their building’s lavish details, high cost of construction and ample plaza (which required sacrificing rentable square footage to construct). Seagram appealed the tax ruling, and in 1964 the New York State Court of Appeals upheld the higher taxation, determining that the taxes for the building should be based on its “real replacement value”, not its rental income.⁴¹

The decision was derided as a “special method of taxing architectural excellence.”⁴² Ada Louise Huxtable wrote the “crux of the whole matter seems to be that disturbing (to the city) discrepancy between a building that cost \$36,000,000 and worth, on the market, less than half that amount... [the] difference, of course, is architecture.”⁴³ The Regional Plan Association said that court’s ruling would “result in a continuing tax on the extra costs a builder spends to achieve beauty, extra costs that do not produce extra rents”, and that it could “destroy the hope of great commercial architecture in New York State.”⁴⁴

In 1976, Edgar Bronfman, by then the president of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, petitioned the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission to designate the Seagram Building as an individual City Landmark. Because the New York City Landmarks Law has a strict 30-year cutoff date, the Commission refused to calendar the building for a designation hearing. In 1988, as the building turned 30 years old, the Landmarks Commission designated the Seagram Building, its main lobby and the Four Seasons Restaurant.

While Seagram Company sold the building to the Teachers Investment & Annuity Association in 1979, the company maintained its headquarters in the building until 2001. The current owner acquired the building in 2000 from TIAA. The building continues to function as an office building, and retains a great deal of its original fabric.

The initial praise which greeted the Seagram Building upon its opening in 1958 has continued to the present day. While many critics have rethought the tower in the park planning concept, particularly as it was executed in many lesser buildings, Seagram itself has continued to be one of the most highly praised works of post-war American architecture. It is rare to find a history of contemporary architecture after 1958 that does not include a reference to it. The building is almost universally viewed by historians as a milestone in American architectural development. The Seagram Building retains a special place in American architecture as one of the most famous corporate expressions of the International Style in postwar America.

⁴¹ Stern, et al, pp. 350 – 351.

⁴² Ada Louise Huxtable, . “Another Chapter in ‘How to Kill a City,’” *New York Times*, May 26, 1963, sec. II, p. 11.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ “A Blow to Beauty Seen in Tax Ruling on Seagram Tower,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1964, p. 25.

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Paul Goldberger has described Seagram as “one of the greatest buildings of the twentieth century”, and the Four Seasons as “New York’s first consciously modern postwar restaurant, and it remains the best”.⁴⁵ G. E. Kidder Smith wrote in 1981 that the ensemble of the tower, plaza, interior and Four Season restaurant was “In toto incomparable.”⁴⁶ In 2000, Jerold Kayden wrote that the Seagram Building “with its elegant plaza and duet of flanking fountains...remains the city’s quintessential International Style masterpiece of ‘tower in the park’ architecture as well as a strong element of urban design.”⁴⁷

More recently, in a 2005 survey by the Skyscraper Museum of 100 architects, brokers, builders, critics, developers, and other real estate professionals, 76 chose the Seagram Building as among their favorite towers in New York City, second only to the Chrysler Building with 90 votes. In comparing the two buildings, David Dunlap wrote: “[what] they have in common is that both express the spirit of their times, Chrysler playing a jazz-age flapper to Seagram’s man in the gray flannel suit”.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Paul Goldberger, *The City Observed: New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 160 – 161.

⁴⁶ G. E. Kidder Smith, *The Architecture of the United States: New England and the Mid-Atlantic States, Vol. 1*, (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Press, 1981), p. 550-551.

⁴⁷ Kayden, p. 144.

⁴⁸ David Dunlap, “In a City of Skyscrapers, Which is the Mightiest of the High? Experts Say It’s No Contest,” *New York Times*, September 1, 2005, p. B3.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.38 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 586710 4512240
Zone Easting Northing

3 18
Zone Easting Northing

2 18

4 18

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ward S. Dennis

organization Higgins & Quasebarth date 23 September 2005

street & number 270 Lafayette Street, Suite 810 telephone (212) 274-9468

city or town New York, NY state NY zip code 10012

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name 375 Park Avenue, L. P.

street & number c/o RFR Holding LLC, 390 Park Avenue telephone (212) 308-1000

city or town New York state NY zip code 10022

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20503

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary is outlined on the accompanying map. The nominated property occupies the Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1307, Lot 1. The lot extends 200'-10" on Park Avenue, 295' on East 52nd Street, and 302' on East 53rd Street. The boundaries include the entire area of the building lot.

Addresses: 371 to 379 Park Avenue, 99 to 127 East 52nd Street, 100 to 120 East 53rd Street.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the entire parcel historically and currently associated with the building.

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11. Photograph List

Seagram Building

New York County, New York

All photos by Ward S. Dennis, 21 September 2005.

Original negatives held by:

Higgins & Quasebarth

270 Lafayette Street, Suite 810

New York, NY 10012

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Photo 1 | General view of the Seagram Building, looking northeast from Park Avenue between East 51 st and East 52 nd Street. |
| Photo 2 | View looking southwest from Lexington Avenue and East 53 rd Street. |
| Photo 3 | Detail of bronze I-beam mullions and spandrel panels, and gray glass ceiling tiles, northeast corner of tower. |
| Photo 4 | Looking northeast across plaza toward front entrance of building. |
| Photo 5 | Canopy and stairs at north entrance to main lobby. |
| Photo 6 | Looking west on East 52 nd Street toward Park Avenue. Street-level entrance to Four Seasons restaurant is at right in photo. |
| Photo 7 | Lobby view, looking southwest toward plaza. |
| Photo 8 | Lobby view, looking west toward Park Avenue. Building across Park Avenue is the Racquet Club (McKim, Mead & White, 1916-1918, National Register listed). |
| Photo 9 | Main lobby, eastern portion, looking southeast toward Four Seasons lobby entrance. |
| Photo 10 | Four Seasons restaurant lobby, with Picasso "The Three-Cornered Hat" on wall at left. |
| Photo 11 | Four Seasons restaurant, Pool Room, looking northwest. |

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| Photo 12 | Four Seasons restaurant, bar/grill room, looking southwest toward bar and Lippold sculpture over bar. |
| Photo 13 | The Brasserie, main dining area, looking northeast toward restaurant lobby. |
| Photo 14 | Elevator lobby, 10 th floor, looking east. |
| Photo 15 | Office corridor, 10 th floor, looking east. |
| Photo 16 | Office floor, Suite 1009, looking north. |
| Photo 17 | Office floor, Suite 1009, looking northwest. |

200 000 FEET
(NY LONG ISLAND)

40°45' 74°00'

2 010 000 FEET (NY LONG ISLAND)

57°30"

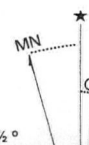
Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1966. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1977 and other sources. Photoinspected using imagery dated 1995; no major culture or drainage changes observed. Survey control current as of 1966. Boundaries, other than corporate, revised 1999. Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS charts 226, 274, 745, 746, and 747 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes

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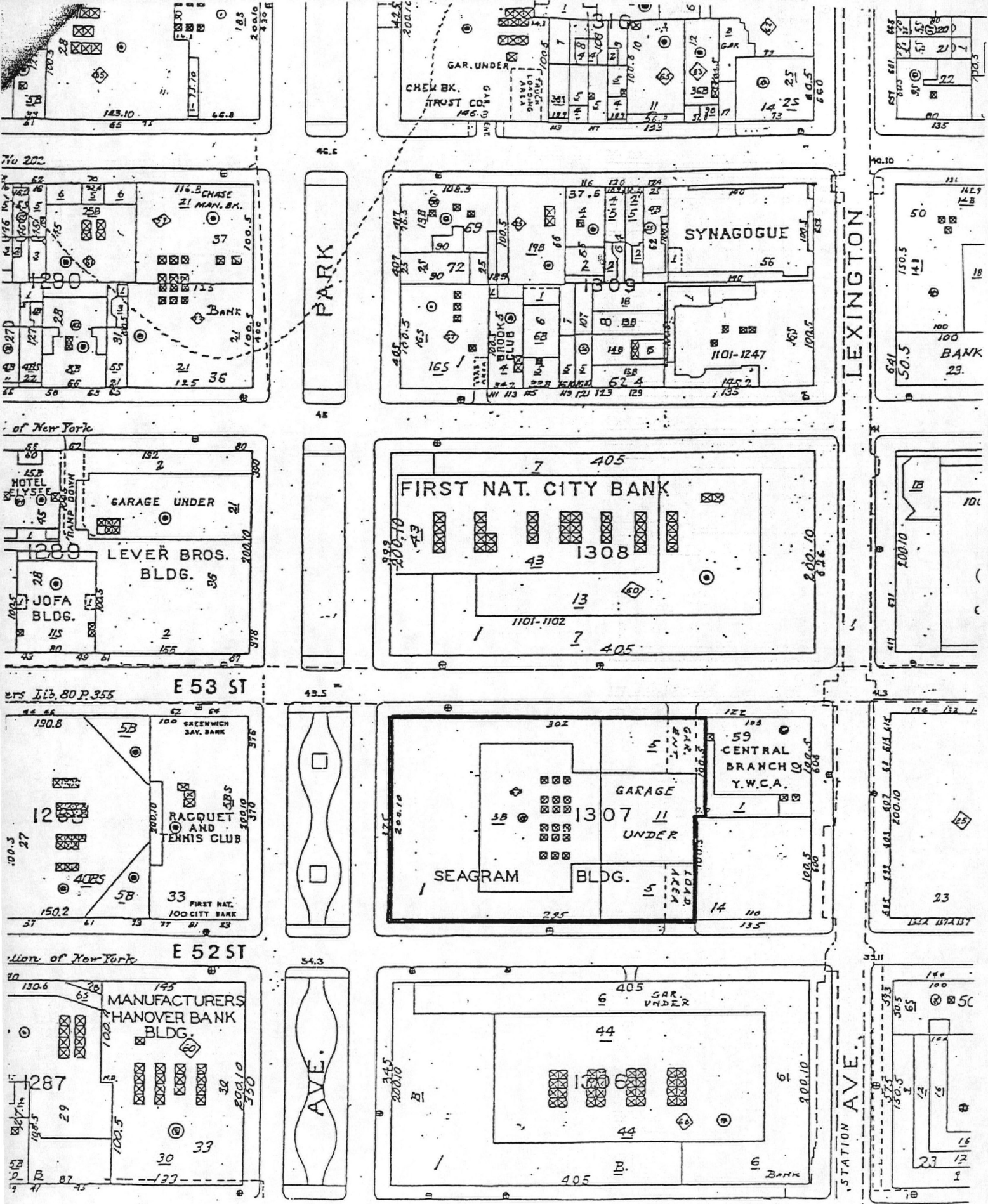


Seagram Building
375 Park Avenue
New York County,
NY

Zone 18
Easting 586710
Northing 4512240

USGS
Central Park Quad
1:24000

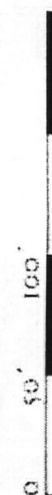
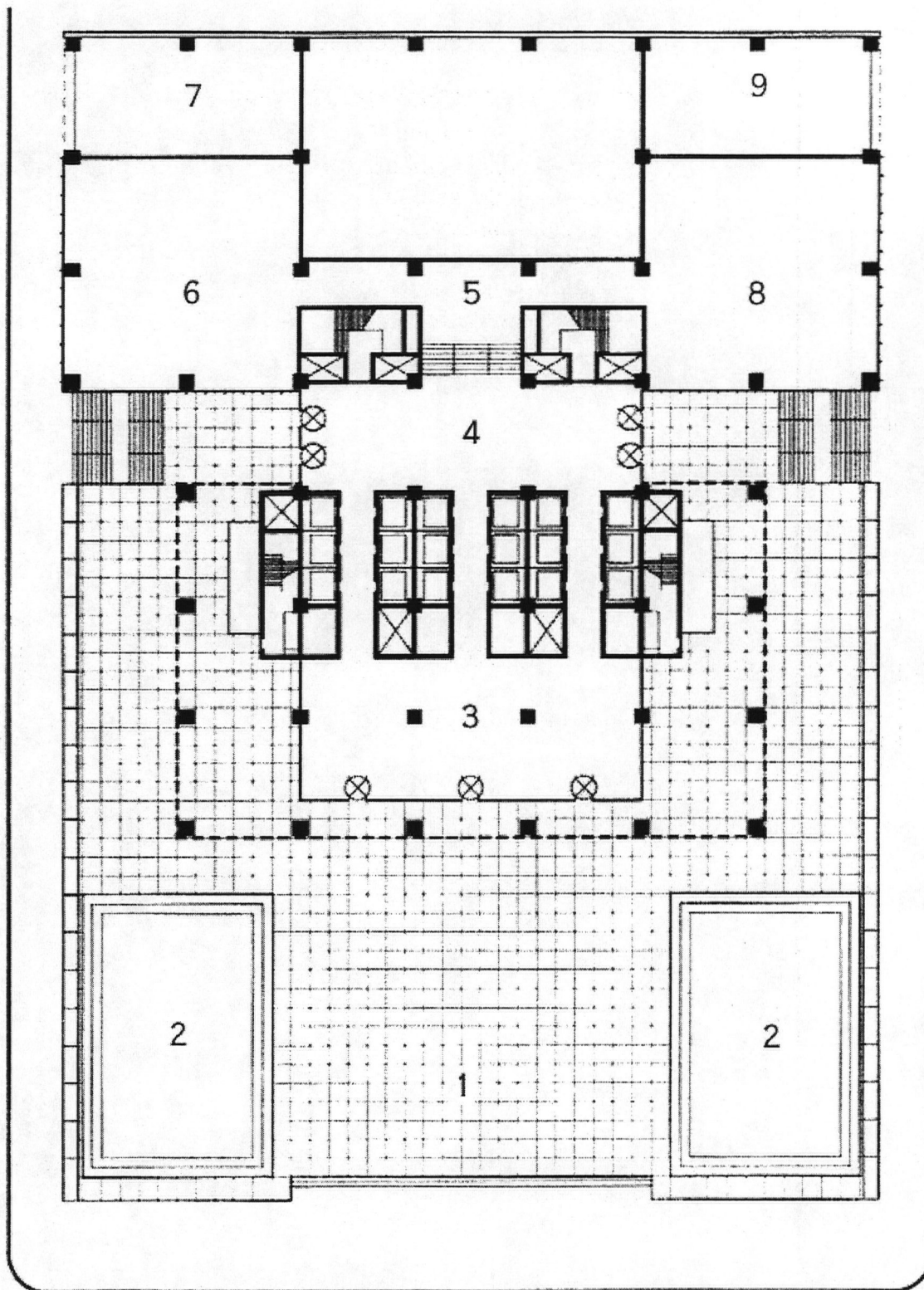




Seagram Building
375 Park Avenue
New York County, NY

Source: Sanborn, Manhattan Land
Book, 1988-89, pls. 78, 84

3/4" = approx. 100'

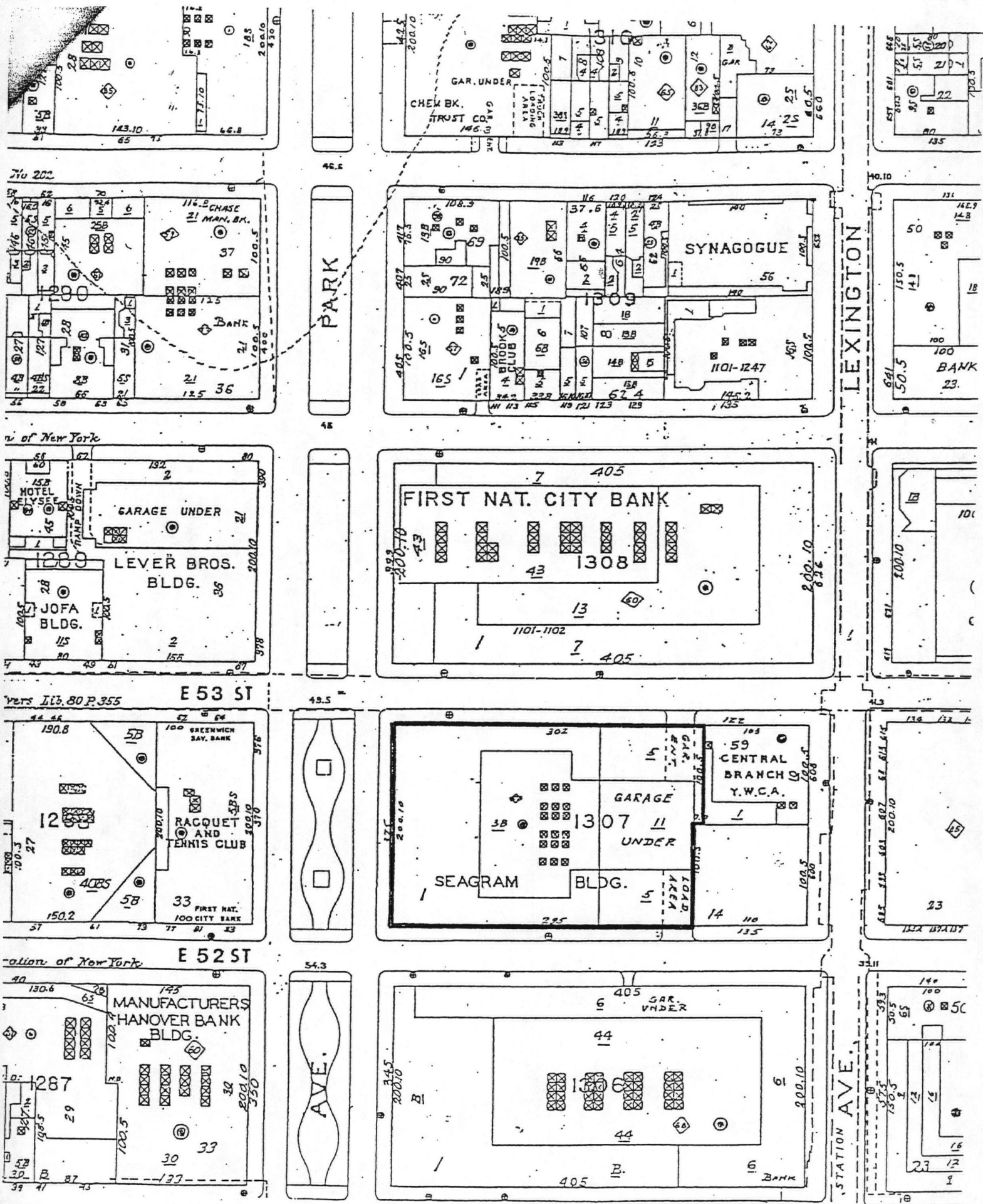


PARK AVENUE

KEY

First floor plan

- 1 Plaza
- 2 Fountains
- 3 Building lobby (west)
- 4 Building lobby (east)
- 5 Four Seasons Main Lobby
- 6 Four Seasons - Pool Room (Brasserie below)
- 7 Four Seasons - Pool Room mezzanine
- 8 Four Seasons - bar/grill room (52nd Street entrance lobby below)
- 9 Four Seasons - bar/grill room balcony



Seagram Building
375 Park Avenue
New York County, NY

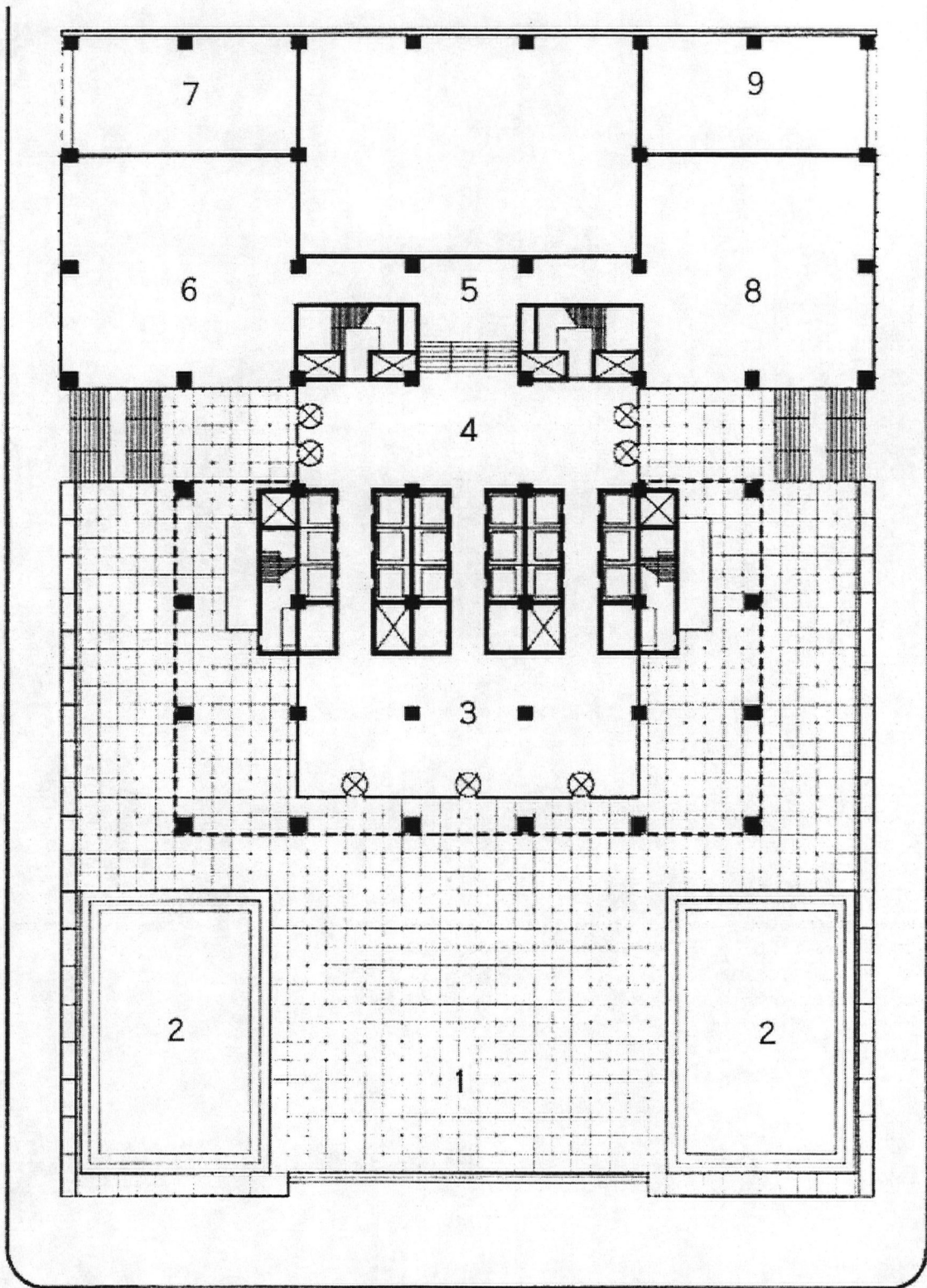
Source: Sanborn, Manhattan Land
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PARK AVENUE

Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 3, 1989; Designation List 221
LP-1664

SEAGRAM BUILDING, INCLUDING THE PLAZA, 375 Park Avenue, Manhattan. Designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe with Philip Johnson; Kahn & Jacobs, associate architects. Built 1956-58.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1307, Lot 1.

On May 17, 1988, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Seagram Building including the plaza, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Twenty-one witnesses, including a representative of the building's owner, spoke in favor of designation. No witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission has received many letters in favor of designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

The Seagram Building, erected in 1956-58, is the only building in New York City designed by architectural master Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Carefully related to the tranquil granite and marble plaza on its Park Avenue site, the elegant curtain wall of bronze and tinted glass enfolds the first fully modular modern office tower. Constructed at a time when Park Avenue was changing from an exclusive residential thoroughfare to a prestigious business address, the Seagram Building embodies the quest of a successful corporation to establish further its public image through architectural patronage. The president of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Samuel Bronfman, with the aid of his daughter Phyllis Lambert, carefully selected Mies, assisted by Philip Johnson, to design an office building later regarded by many, including Mies himself, as his crowning work and the apotheosis of International Style towers. The innovative, modular design of the building was a feat furthered by a coalition of talented consultants, a successful collaboration rarely realized in twentieth-century architecture, and by pioneering efforts of research and fabrication. The juxtaposition of the structural members, articulated by extruded bronze, with the transparent glass surfaces of the elegant curtain wall creates the balance between solid and void which typifies International Style design. Still virtually intact due to the foresighted maintenance plan of the Seagram Company, the building and plaza have inspired the work of many subsequent designers, affected New York's zoning regulations and real estate tax assessment, and provided a favorable environment for work and repose.

History of the Site¹

The history of Fourth (now Park) Avenue begins with the advent of the railroads. In 1834 the New York and Harlem Railroad first carried passengers

Answer
AA
735
N4
ZSe13

along grade-level tracks down the center of Fourth Avenue from 42nd to 96th streets. By 1848 the New Haven Railroad entered Manhattan along Fourth Avenue. As railroad traffic increased, the avenue was widened to permit additional tracks, and the city mandated depressed tracks to minimize problems of noise, smoke, and the danger of fire and injury. By the 1880s, Fourth Avenue officially became known as Park Avenue and was lined with one- and two-story commercial buildings and carriage houses serving the brownstone residences on nearby side streets; the trains ran in an open cut below grade to the Grand Central Depot. The east side of Park Avenue between East 52nd and 53rd streets contained the finishing manufactory of the renowned Steinway & Sons piano company; erected in the 1860s, it was a large brick building of five stories. The remainder of the site which would eventually be occupied by the Seagram Building was divided up into brick-faced tenements on East 53rd Street and brick- and brownstone-fronted rowhouses on East 52nd Street.

In conjunction with the reconstruction of Grand Central Terminal (1903-13) and the electrification of the railroad (1903-07), Park Avenue was rebuilt solidly with a planted mall and the open wells were covered over. The avenue gradually became a thoroughfare lined with large apartment houses for the wealthy. One of these, the Montana Apartments, an eight-story neo-Romanesque building designed by Rouse & Goldstone and faced in brick and stone, was begun in 1919, replacing the Steinway piano factory.

The 1916 zoning resolution designated the portion of Park Avenue north of East 50th Street as residential, but by 1929 major property owners on the avenue, which was overtaking Fifth Avenue as the city's most prestigious address, succeeded in having the area between East 50th and 59th streets rezoned to permit commercial use. Not until the building boom that followed World War II did these efforts come to fruition with the completion in 1947 of the Universal Pictures Building at 445 Park Avenue, designed by Kahn & Jacobs. The transformation of Park Avenue into a commercial avenue was assured by the rash of new office buildings in the 1950s: Lever House (1950-52, a designated New York City Landmark); Olin Building, 460 Park Avenue (1954); Colgate-Palmolive Building, 300 Park Avenue (1954); 425 Park Avenue Building (Kahn & Jacobs, 1956); and the Seagram Building.²

Samuel Bronfman and Joseph E. Seagram & Sons³

Beginning his business career in the hotel industry in Winnipeg, Samuel Bronfman (1891-1971) later operated a mail order liquor company throughout Canada, eventually founding the Distillers Company, Ltd. In 1928 this company bought out its major competitor, Joseph E. Seagram & Sons and incorporated the name. With the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, Bronfman began planning an impressive Manhattan headquarters for his Seagram group, not to be realized until the 1950s. At the time of his death, Bronfman had amassed at least \$400,000,000 and his company was the world's largest distiller, with annual sales exceeding \$1.3 billion.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe⁴

Among the most prominent and influential architects of the twentieth

century, German-born Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) was initiated into architecture through the fields of masonry, stone carving, stucco decoration, and furniture design, before working as an architect in the office of Peter Behrens. By the end of the 1920s, Mies had emerged as one of Germany's leading architects, noted for his visionary skyscraper projects (wherein the apparently weightless and clearly revealed "skin and bone" modern construction permitted the greatest play of light on the building surface), leadership at the Weissenhof housing exhibition (1927) in Stuttgart, and designs for the Barcelona Exhibition (1929) and Tugendhat House (1928-30) in Brno. His work was significant for its attempt to address problems such as standardization of architectural features and Baukunst (the art of good building, as opposed to manipulation of form for its own sake). Soon after supervising the Bauhaus design school in 1930-33, Mies emigrated to the United States and assumed the directorship of the architecture department at Armour Institute (now Illinois Institute of Technology) for which he designed a master plan (1939-41) and several buildings. Later Mies received commissions for apartment buildings in Chicago: Promontory Apartments (1946-49) and 860-888 Lake Shore Drive Apartments (1948-51), the latter considered the prototypical Miesian (that is, International Style) high-rise structure with features that would recur in his buildings of the next two decades. Refinements of this prototype are found in the Commonwealth Promenade Apartments (1953-56) and especially the Seagram Building in New York (1954-58). Among his last works was the New National Gallery in Berlin, West Germany (1963-69). He received, among other awards, Gold Medals from the Royal Institute of British Architects and the American Institute of Architects.

Philip C. Johnson⁵

Critic, historian, and architect Philip Johnson (b. 1906) was graduated from Harvard University and became associated with the Museum of Modern Art soon after its founding in 1929, directing its innovative department of architecture and later designing its sculpture garden (1953) and two additions (1950, 1964). With the critic and historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, he organized the momentous exhibition, "Modern Architecture" (1932), and coauthored The International Style (1932), a manifesto for the vanguard architecture of Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe. Johnson was responsible for inviting Le Corbusier and Mies to the United States. Completing his professional degree in architecture at Harvard in 1943, he subsequently designed several influential residences, including his own Glass House (1949). His association with Mies on the Seagram Building, particularly his design for the Four Seasons Restaurant (1958-59), was a highlight in Johnson's career. His later work includes many New York projects: Asia House (now the Russell Sage Foundation/Robert Sterling Foundation Building), 112 East 64th Street (1958-60), located in the Upper East Side Historic District; New York State Theater at Lincoln Center (1964); New York State Pavilion (1964, with Richard Foster) for the World's Fair in Flushing; Elmer Holmes Bobst Library and Tisch Hall, New York University (1972, both with Richard Foster); and the American Telephone and Telegraph Building, 550 Madison Avenue (1980-84). In 1978 the American Institute of Architects awarded him its highest honor, the Gold Medal.

Pritzker?

Kahn & Jacobs

Born in New York City, Ely Jacques Kahn⁶ (1884-1972) was educated at Columbia University and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Soon after joining the firm of Buchman & Fox in 1917, he became a partner and assumed effective control of the office, then known as Buchman & Kahn. His best-known designs are those for many skyscrapers of the 1920s and 1930s, which merged the stylistic influences of Art Deco and the Vienna Secession with his interest in oriental art and archaeology.⁷ Extensive travel permitted Kahn to develop a specialized knowledge of building materials. As part of his devotion to architectural education, he organized numerous exhibitions which introduced new ideas in interior and industrial design. Kahn wrote widely for professional journals and in 1935 he published Design in Art and Industry. A fellow of the American Institute of Architects, he lectured extensively, was consultant to the United States Housing Authority, and served as president of the Municipal Art Society.

From 1941 to 1972 Kahn's partner was Robert Allan Jacobs⁸ (b. 1905). Also a native of New York City, Jacobs was educated at Amherst College and Columbia University. After working in Paris as a designer and draftsman for Le Corbusier in 1934-35, he returned to New York and joined the newly formed firm of Harrison & Fouilhoux. In 1938 Jacobs began working for Kahn and was soon elevated to partner. In addition to its involvement in the Seagram Building, the firm's commercial, industrial, and institutional commissions include the Municipal Asphalt Plant, erected in 1941-44 (a designated New York City Landmark), admired as an early use of reinforced concrete in the United States, and several buildings in the Upper East Side Historic District.⁹

Design and Construction¹⁰

The Seagram Company decided to locate its symbol of corporate achievement on Park Avenue, New York's finest residential boulevard which was quickly becoming a center of international business. In 1951, Seagram paid \$4,000,000 for 50,950 sq.ft. of property, including the Montana Apartments, on the east side of the avenue between East 52nd and 53rd streets. In 1954 the company announced it would erect an office building to be completed in 1957, intended to coincide with the centennial of the House of Seagram. In planning its headquarters, Seagram joined that group of American companies which, since the mid-19th century, have sought to establish further their corporate image through architectural patronage, particularly for tall office buildings, a conspicuous symbol of American capitalism.¹¹ The commission was first awarded to the firm of Pereira & Luckman; however, after seeing this proposal, architect-to-be Phyllis Bronfman Lambert convinced her father to hire an architect who would distinguish the company with an architecturally compelling design. After a two-and-one-half month search, she recommended Ludwig Mies van der Rohe with Philip Johnson as his associate. Bronfman approved the choice and appointed his daughter director of planning.¹² After selecting the final architects, it was decided more land was needed, so an additional 9,000 sq.ft. of adjacent land was bought for \$900,000.

Plans for the new design were filed in March of 1955.¹³ At that time the site was occupied by the twelve-story Montana Apartment Building on Park Avenue, a nine-story apartment building on East 53rd Street, and a five-story tenement and row of four-story buildings, all on East 52nd Street. These were demolished between June, 1955, and March, 1956. Construction began soon afterward.

The owner's "simple" requirements were that the building "be the crowning glory of everyone's work, his own, the contractor's, and Mies's."¹⁴ The building was designed by Mies and Johnson, with Kahn & Jacobs preparing the working drawings. Other consultants were: Jaros, Baum & Bolles, mechanical engineers; Severud-Elstad Krueger, structural engineers; Clifton E. Smith, electrical engineer; Richard Kelly, lighting consultant; Charles Middleleer & Karl Linn, landscape architects; Bolt-Beranek & Newman, acoustical consultants; and Elaine Lustig, graphic consultant. The general contractor was the George A. Fuller Company.¹⁵ By April, 1955, photographs of a model of the new design were published.¹⁶ It was clearly distinguished from contemporary (and nearby) buildings which, like the General Reinsurance Building at 400 Park Avenue (Emery Roth & Sons, 1956-57), were unmodern "ziggurats" dressed in modern materials, or like the Union Carbide Building, now Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company Headquarters, at 270 Park Avenue (Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1960), conformed to International Style tenets but lacked the impressive amenity of public space. In short, the Seagram Building was the "ultimate logical development of the revolutionary ideas which [Mies] evolved thirty-five years earlier."¹⁷

One of Mies's innovative decisions which aggrandized the design was the use of a broad elevated plaza (with a radiant heating system to keep it ice-free), symmetrically arranged with fountains and weeping beech trees. This was in accordance with the viewpoints of several New York architectural firms such as Kahn & Jacobs, which had been urging Parks Commissioner Robert Moses to propose a revision to the zoning regulations, in order to replace full-site ziggurat towers with large buildings surrounded by open spaces. At that time there were no direct precedents in midtown Manhattan for this planning scheme. The Rockefeller Center mall, which serves a very different urban design role, unites a complex of buildings (Associated Architects, 1932-40, and 1947-73, a designated New York City Landmark). Lever House, a glass-skinned slab balanced on a low-rise pedestal which permits entry into an atrium open to the sky, is an earlier solution by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill to the urban siting of modern skyscrapers. Nor were there many precedents in Mies's previous designs: historian Franz Schulze has noted that the Seagram Building "is almost unique in [Mies's] American oeuvre for the excellence with which it is wedded to its urban situation."¹⁸

Mies located the thirty-eight story tower, which occupies only fifty-two percent of the entire site, 100 feet back from Park Avenue. Using the glass-enclosed lobby and raised tower (elements refined from his designs for the 860-880 Lake Shore Drive buildings), and a slab marquee and continuous pavement, Mies provided the Seagram Building with a unity between indoor and outdoor spaces. This, in addition to the monumental spaces for a bar and restaurant located in the opposing wings behind the lobby, satisfied the program's demand for a large public space on the ground story. To

accommodate program requirements, the pristine slab rests on three subterranean levels¹⁹ and is backed by a ten-story "bustle," full-height spine, and five-story wings.

Structural and mechanical innovations abounded in the design. The 520-foot steel frame was the tallest office building so far ever erected with high-strength bolts and was unusual for its vertical truss wind bracing.²⁰ Exterior columns and all beams are encased in concrete; interior columns are fireproofed with gypsum block. Four-inch thick concrete floors contain utility ducts (including closed circuit television cables).

Great care was taken in selecting cladding materials, even ensuring that appearances would improve as the building aged. The thirty-eight story tower has a curtain wall composed of 153,000 sq.ft. of bronze cladding and 122,000 sq.ft. of pinkish gray tinted glass, features which enhance the luxuriousness of the building. The sides of the "bustle" are covered in serpentine marble. Traditional granite, travertine, and verde antique marble in the plaza were arranged in opposition to the modern bronze alloys and extrusions and the warm tone of heat absorbing glass, all products of pioneering efforts of research and fabrication.

The Seagram Building is considered to be the first fully modular modern office tower due to the modular planning grid which integrates the partition system (designed by Hauserman, the company's first) the lighting (the first fully modular low-brightness system, designed by Richard Kelly), and the modular high- and low-tension electrical services. Supported by a steel skeleton of columns on 27'-9" centers, the building accommodates a 4'-7.5" module used to furnish the interior with standardized parts such as floor-to-ceiling doors and partitions and low profile perimeter diffusers which permit mostly unobstructed views through the floor-to-ceiling windows. The juxtaposition of the structural members, articulated on the exterior by extruded bronze, with the transparent glass surfaces of the elegant curtain wall creates the balance between solid and void which typifies International Style design. To maintain a uniform window appearance, Mies incorporated special Venetian blinds with only three positions and slats angled to maximize the full impact of the building's illumination when viewed from the sidewalk. Mylar ceiling panels in a grid pattern, visible from the sidewalk, illuminate the window-wall spaces. An automatic time clock control permits nighttime display lighting and guarantees a uniform low-intensity glow around the whole tower.²¹

All details, including square serif lettering and special door hardware, were painstakingly designed to harmonize. Seagram's own offices received furniture Mies himself had designed and works of art were both bought and specially commissioned.²²

The plans were arranged to permit the Seagram Company to occupy the first seven stories or about one-third of the total office space of approximately 854,000 sq.ft. The \$50/sq.ft. construction cost²³ (including the price of the land) was twice the usual cost for contemporary office buildings. However, over 115 tenants would pay high rents to share the remainder of the building, and partake of its luxurious materials,

prestigious address, and spacious plaza, not to mention the cachet of having an office in a building designed by an internationally renowned architect. Therefore, the owner expected a thirteen percent return in the first year on the initial investment.

The Seagram Company moved into its new offices in December of 1957. By the next July, the popularity of the plaza among New Yorkers was acknowledged in a newspaper account.²⁴ Although temporary Certificates of Occupancy were issued by the Department of Buildings in 1958, the final certificate was not issued until 1959.²⁵

Description

The symmetrically arranged thirty-eight story tower is surmounted by a tall mechanical story. The tower's first story, recessed to reveal the outermost row of bronze-clad columns, is faced in clear glass with bronze mullions. A Muntz metal²⁶ marquee with two rows of incandescent recessed light fixtures extends on the west facade. The tower is articulated by four-and-one-half by six inch bronze I-beam extrusions, continuous vertical elements applied to represent structural intent and provide shadow to the surface. Horizontal bands, created by Muntz metal spandrels and pinkish-gray glass, balance the exterior's strong verticality. The five-story wings, ten-story "bustle," and full-height spine resemble the tower in their exterior articulation except that in portions of the ten-story section the glass is replaced by serpentine marble panels. Restaurant entrances on East 52nd and 53rd streets have sidewalk canopies, double glass doors, and metal signs. Recessed from the face of the building within a bronze-clad entry, which is illuminated by three recessed light fixtures, the doors on East 52nd Street are flanked by two square bronze planters at the sidewalk. Service entrances on these streets are large rectangular openings with roll-down garage doors.

Other details ensure uniformity throughout the elevations. Each window contains a Venetian blind which may be adjusted to only three levels (open, half-closed, and fully-closed) and the angle of its slats is set at forty-five degrees so that during the day the exterior has a harmonious composition. Around the perimeter of each ceiling there is a twenty-foot band composed of luminous panels in a grid pattern; therefore, at night the building is characterized by its consistent lighting level.

Elevated three risers above the Park Avenue sidewalk, the pink granite podium of the plaza is bound on its north and south sides by long parapets of verde antique marble and contains identical rectangular pools, each with water jets gathered in a tight group near the center.²⁷ Near the southern pool stands a bronze-clad flag pole, the only asymmetrical feature of the plaza. Flanking the base of the building are ivy-covered planting areas with gingko trees and, on each side, one staircase with two metal railings which leads to the sidewalk. The grandeur of the plaza is extended to the adjacent sidewalks, likewise paved in pink granite.

+ canopies

Impact

Architectural critics have overwhelmingly praised the Seagram Building. Lewis Mumford called it a "Rolls-Royce" of buildings with "the aesthetic impact that only a unified work of art" enjoys.²⁸ Another contemporary review opined, "Seagram challenges accepted skyscraper practice all the way down the line."²⁹ A generation later, historians would refer to the building as "seminal" and, in describing the ensemble of tower, interior, and Four Seasons Restaurant, "In toto incomparable."³⁰ William Jordy credited the Seagram design as an influence on other prominent office buildings, among them the Inland Steel Building, Chicago (SOM, 1956-58) and the Union Carbide Building, 270 Park Avenue (SOM, 1960).³¹

The design was influential in other ways. Soon after the erection of the Seagram Building, the tax assessment of the building became the subject of an important controversy when the high cost of construction was used as the basis for a tax assessment in excess of capitalized rental income. In 1963 the New York Appellate Division, in supporting the city Tax Commission's challenged assessment of the building, stated "The building was of a type ... not only serving the owner's obvious commercial purposes but also advertising its business and contributing to its prestige."³² The Appellate Division's decision was affirmed by the Court of Appeals in 1964. Also, the Seagram Building's plaza was considered so successful that the 1961 revision of the zoning code included a provision which permitted a building to be larger if a public plaza was provided.³³

Conclusion

The Seagram Building's high standards of design and construction have been augmented by a rigorous maintenance program which includes annual oiling of the bronze curtain wall and periodic resetting of the pavement in the plaza (under way during the summer of 1989). In 1980 Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc. sold the building to Teachers Investment & Annuity Association; the sale agreement required the new owner to seek New York City Landmark status for the structure when it became eligible under the thirty-year age requirement.³⁴ The building continues to be one of New York's most prestigious business addresses.

Report prepared by David M. Breiner
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Report edited by Marjorie Pearson
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NOTES

1. This account is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, Lever House Designation Report, report prepared by Alex Herrera (New York, 1982), 3 and Christopher Gray, "Is It Time to Redevelop Park Avenue Again?" New York Times, Real Estate Report "Commercial Property," sec. 13 (May, 14, 1989), pp. 44-47. See also: Robert A.M. Stern, et. al., New York 1900 (New York, 1983), 353-58; Stern, et. al., New York 1930 (New York, 1987), passim; Atlas of the City of New York and Part of the Bronx (New York, 1885), pl. 18; Moses King, King's Handbook of New York, 2nd ed. (New York, 1893), 942-43; New York Public Library, Photographic Views of New York City, 1870's - 1970's (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1981), fiche 0946-C3, D5, E2, E3, F2; Manhattan Land Book, City of New York (New York, 1934), pl. 78; New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 1307, Lot 1. NB 257-1919.
2. See "High Rise Office Buildings," Progressive Architecture 38 (June, 1957), 162 and Insurance Maps of the City of New York, Borough of Manhattan, vols. 4, 6E (New York, 1920-present).
3. Who's Who in America, vol. 31 (Chicago, 1960-61), 362. Samuel Bronfman obituary, NYT, July 11, 1971, p. 46. Bronfman was a noted philanthropist. In recognition, his children established the Samuel Bronfman Biblical and Archaeological Museum at the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem.
4. Mies's biography is based on "Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, ed. Adolf K. Placzek, vol. 3 (New York, 1982), 183-95 and Encyclopedia of 20th Century Architecture, gen. ed. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, rev. & enl. ed. (New York, 1986), 221-28.
5. "Johnson, Philip," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, vol. 2, 499-501; Encyclopedia of 20th Century Architecture, 181-82; American Architects Directory, 2nd ed., ed. George S. Koyl (New York, 1962), 354; LPC, Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report, vol. 1 (New York, 1981), 188.
6. See: "Kahn, Ely Jacques," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, vol. 2, 537; American Architects Directory, 2nd ed., 363; Ely Jacques Kahn obituary, NYT, Sept. 6, 1972, p. 48.
7. These include, all in New York, the Squibb Building at 745 Fifth Avenue; 120 Wall Street Building; 2 Park Avenue Building; and buildings at 1400, 1410, and 1450 Broadway. Kahn was also the architect for: Bergdorf Goodman Store; the Jay-Thorpe Building, West 57th Street; the Film Center; Montefiore Hospital; and Hospital for Joint Diseases. For the World's Fair of 1939-40 he designed the Maritime Transportation Building, the General Cigar Building, and the Ballantine Inn. Kahn's residential projects included: part of the Fort Greene Houses; Gowanus

Houses; Carver Houses; and Hudson Manor Apartments.

8. See American Architects Directory, 343; "Inventory of a Collection of Architectural Drawings from the Office of Kahn & Jacobs, Including the Works of their Predecessor Firms, Compiled by Janet Parks" (typescript at the Avery Architectural Library of Columbia University, 1978).
9. See LPC, Municipal Asphalt Plant Designation Report (New York, 1976); LPC, Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report (New York, 1981). Other works by Kahn & Jacobs include: 100 Park Avenue Building; 1407 Broadway Building; parts of Mount Sinai Hospital; and the American Airlines Terminal at J.F. Kennedy International Airport.
10. See Paul Noll, "Discriminatory Taxation: The Seagram Building," Comment 3, no. 2 (Apr., 1965), 17; "New Thinking on Office Buildings," Architectural Forum 99 (Sept., 1953), 123; G.E. Kidder Smith, The Architecture of the United States: New England and the Mid-Atlantic States (New York, 1981), 551-52; "Bronze Monument in the Sky," Empire State Architect 16 (Oct., 1956), 72; "Seagram's Bronze Tower," Architectural Forum 109 (July, 1958), 68-77; Arthur Drexler, "The Seagram Building; Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, Architects," Architectural Record 123 (June, 1958), 140.
11. See Kenneth Turney Gibbs, Business Architectural Imagery in America, 1870-1930 (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1984), esp. 1, 4, 169.
12. Franz Schulze, Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography (Chicago & London, 1985), 270-71; "Park Ave. To Get New Skyscraper," NYT, July 13, 1954, p. 25; "Seagram's Bronze Tower," 77. "Seagram's Plans Plaza Tower in New York," Architectural Forum 102 (Apr., 1955), 9.
13. The plans filed on March 29, 1955 must have been submitted as an amendment to the original application (NB 97-1954) because the docket book shows no new applications for that site on that date. The block and lot folder is incomplete. See "Seagram Offices Get Final Plan," NYT, Mar. 30, 1955, p. 50. Regarding the demolitions, see NYC, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 1307, Lot 1. DEMO's 367-1955, 387-1955, 524-1955, 31-1956.
14. Phyllis Lambert, Testimony given before the LPC at a public hearing, May 17, 1988. Item No. 1 (LP-1664).
15. "The Seagram Building," Arts and Architecture 77 (Jan., 1960), 15.
16. "Seagram's Plans Plaza Tower in New York," 11.
17. Jurgen Joedicke, A History of Modern Architecture, trans. James C. Palmes (London, 1959), 77 [caption to fig. 132].
18. Franz Schulze, Letter to LPC dated May 10, 1988, n.p. (LP file.)

19. The underground levels accommodate parking, storage, off-street loading platforms, and service space for the first-story tenants.
20. "A Skyscraper Crammed with Innovations," Engineering News Record 15? (195?), 8-9.
21. "A Skyscraper Crammed with Innovations," 9; Nicholas Polites, "The Seagram Building: Living with a Landmark," Building Economics (May, 1986). According to Carla Caccamise Ash, Curator of Collections for the Seagram Company, in a conversation in July, 1989, the nighttime illumination system has not been used since the 1970s, but is still in place. LPC is also indebted to Ms. Ash for supplying other pieces of important information and copies of Ezra Stoller's photographs of the building.
22. See Peter Blake, The Master Builders (New York, 1960), 253.
23. In 1958 the estimated cost of the building was published as \$35,000,000. According to Seagram Vice President Arthur S. Margolin, in a conversation on June 26, 1989, the cost of construction was approximately \$40,000,000.
24. "Footsore Here Finds Oasis at Seagram Building Plaza," NYT, July 26, 1958, p. 12.
25. See "Monument in Bronze," Time, Mar. 3, 1958, p. 54; NYC, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 1307, Lot 1. C of O 48433-58 (temp) and C of O 51303-59.
26. Muntz metal is an alloy resembling bronze in color, but containing a higher proportion of copper. See "L'oeuvre de Mies van der Rohe," L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui 29, no. 79 (Sept., 1958), 103.
27. Mies originally expected the pools to contain abstract sculptures, but instead rows of evenly spaced jets were installed. The current condition of grouped jets, therefore, is not original.
28. Lewis Mumford, "The Lesson of the Master," Journal of the A.I.A. 31 (Jan., 1959), 19-20.
29. "Seagram's Bronze Tower," 67.
30. William J.R. Curtis, Modern Architecture Since 1900 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1983), 266; Smith, 550-51.
31. William H. Jordy, The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century. American Buildings and their Architects, vol. 5 (New York & Oxford, 1972), 159, 276.
32. "Original Cost of Expensive Commercial Building of Striking Design Used to Justify Tax Assessment in Excess of Capitalized Rental Income (Joseph E. Seagram & Sons v. Tax Comm'n, N.Y. App. Div. 1963),"

Columbia Law Review 63 (1963), 1528-32. The decision immediately provoked comment from architects, art critics, corporate sponsors, and the general press. See Noll, 17; "New York Court Upholds Tax on Seagram Tower," Architectural Forum 121 (July, 1964), 5.

33. Zoning in New York City: A Proposal for a Zoning Resolution for the City of New York submitted to the City Planning Commission by Voorhees Walker Smith & Smith, August, 1958 (New York, 1958), 128; William H. Whyte, The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces (Washington, D.C., 1980), 14; Carol P. Wright, Blue Guide to New York (New York, 1983), 313.
34. "Extract of Closing Memorandum Sale of Seagram Building, entered into between Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc. and Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America in virtue of Agreement of Purchase and Sale dated February 15, 1980," Articles 26 (pp. 56-73) and 28 (p. 75) (photocopies submitted to LPC by Canadian Centre for Architecture.)

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this structure, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Seagram Building, including the plaza, has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Seagram Building, including the plaza, is a seminal example of International Style architecture, which has inspired the work of many twentieth-century architects; that it was designed in 1954-55 by architectural master Ludwig Mies van der Rohe with Philip Johnson and erected in 1956-58; that it is Mies's only building in New York City and is the climax of his ideas on tall office structures, which began in the 1920s; that the granite and marble plaza, an oasis of amenable public space, is inherently bound to the design of the tower; that the realization of building and plaza were made possible by a rare coalition of talented consultants and by pioneering efforts of research and fabrication; that the elegant curtain wall of extruded bronze, Muntz metal spandrels, and tinted glass--shaded by specially designed interior blinds--presents itself as a serene slab of pervasive uniformity; that the juxtaposition of the structural members with the transparent wall surfaces creates the balance between solid and void which typifies International Style design; that a special lighting design for the perimeter offices was included to allow uniform illumination at night; and that this first fully modular office tower was commissioned by the notable firm of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons and has been kept virtually intact through a foresighted maintenance program.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Seagram Building, including the plaza, 375 Park Avenue, Borough of Manhattan and designates as its Landmark Site Manhattan Tax Map Block 1307, Lot 1.

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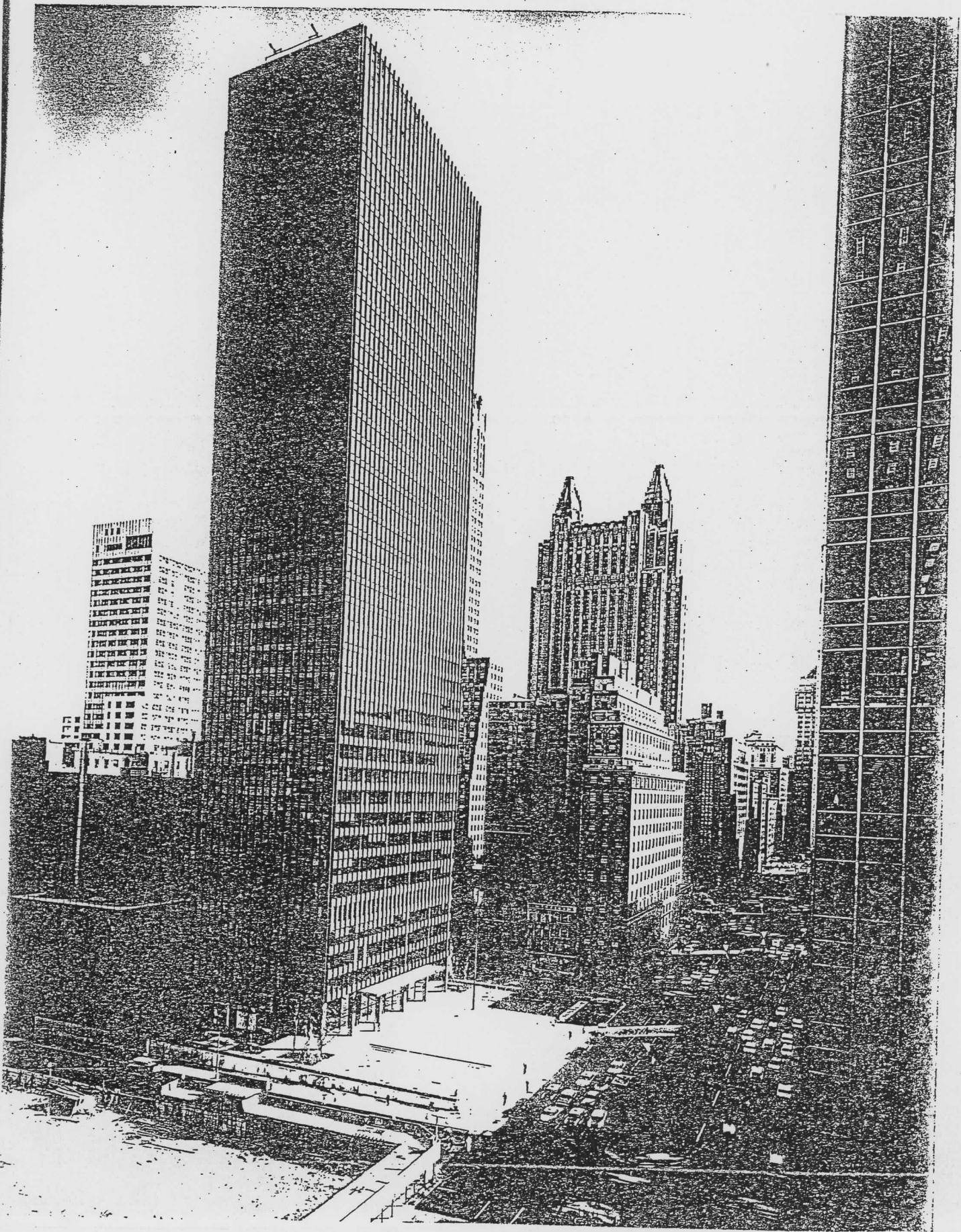
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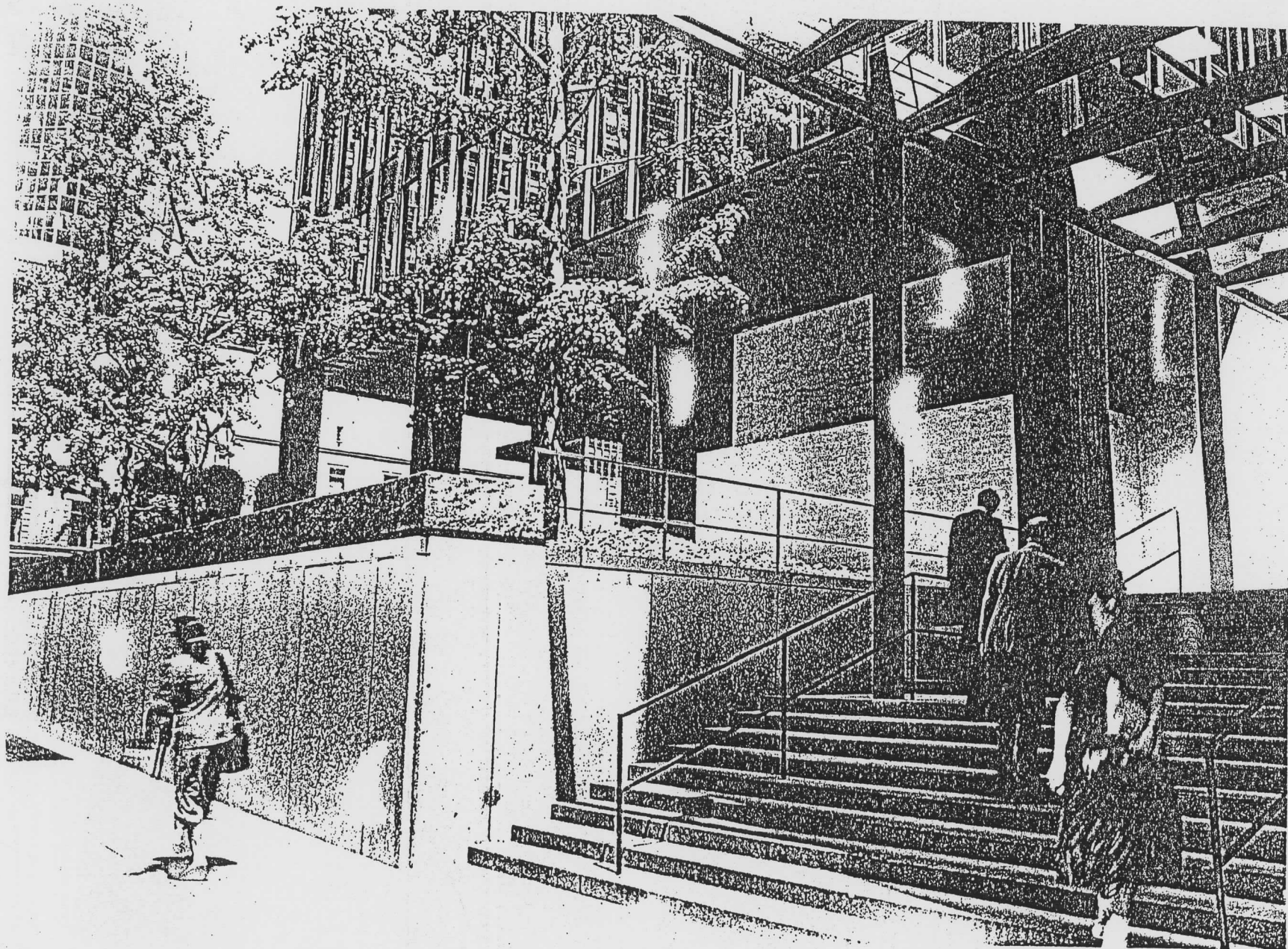


SEAGRAM BUILDING. photograph by Ezra Stollen 1950



SEAGRAM BUILDING (1989)

Photo credit: David M. Brinson



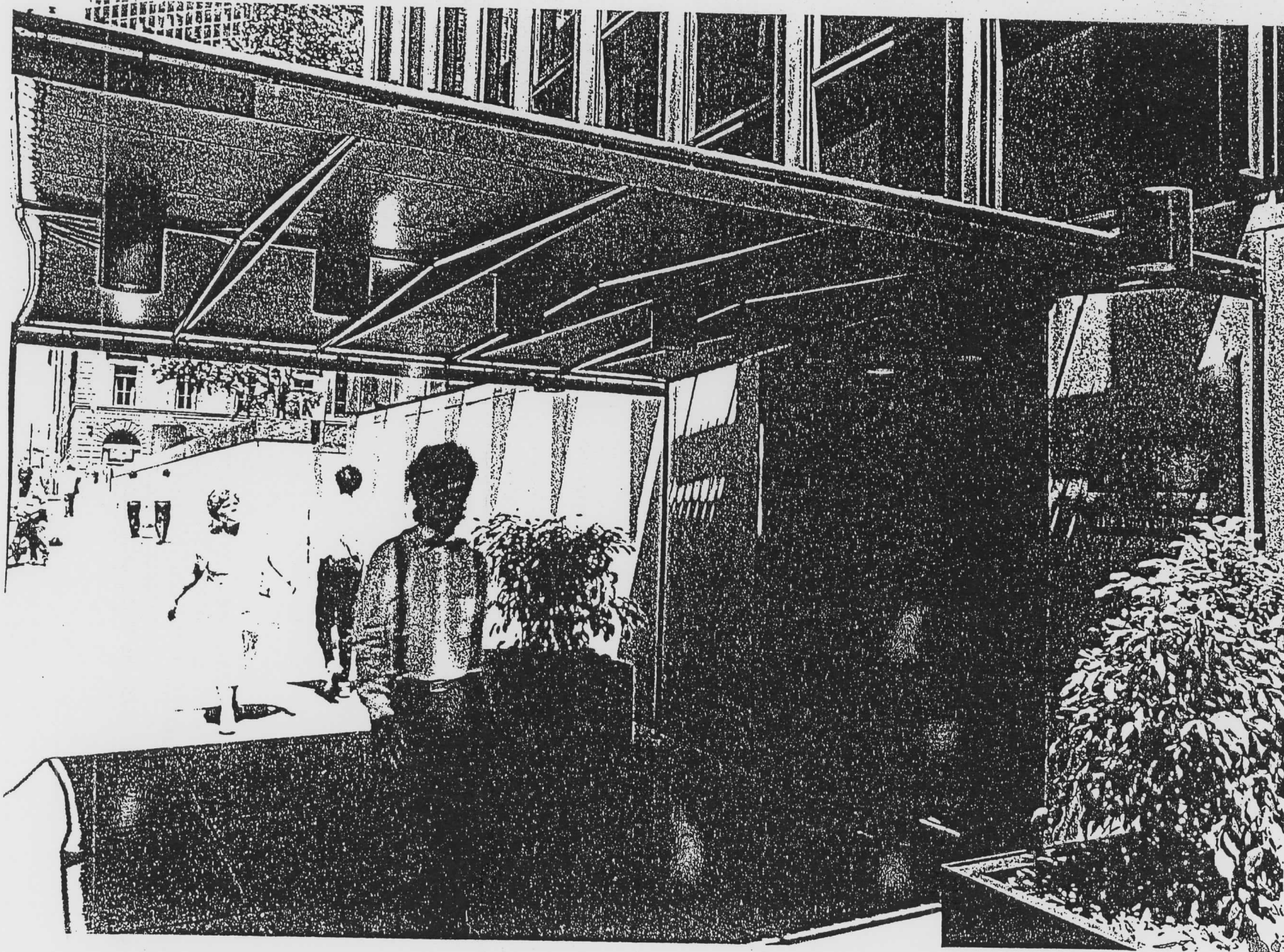
SEAGRAM BUILDING, Entrance at 52nd Street

Photo credit: David M. Breiner



SEAGRAM BUILDING, Entrance at 52nd Street

Photo credit: David M. Breiner



SEAGRAM BUILDING, Commercial entrance

Photo credit: David M. Breiner

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31 CHAMBERS ST
NEW YORK CIT

Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 3, 1989; Designation List 221
LP-1666

FOUR SEASONS RESTAURANT, GROUND FLOOR INTERIOR consisting of the entrance lobby and the staircase leading from the entrance lobby to the first floor interior; FIRST FLOOR INTERIOR consisting of the restaurant lobby including the freestanding piers, the Pool Room vestibule, the Pool Room (dining room) including the marble pool, the staircase leading to the mezzanine dining room, the mezzanine dining room, the Bar Room/Grill Room vestibule, the Bar Room/Grill Room (dining room) including the bar, the staircases leading to the balcony level, and the balcony, and the balcony level dining rooms; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall surfaces, floor surfaces, ceiling surfaces, doors, railings, hanging sculptures, and metal draperies; 99 East 52nd Street, Manhattan. Designed by Philip Johnson. Built 1958-59.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1307, Lot 1.

On May 17, 1988, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Four Seasons Restaurant ground floor interior consisting of the entrance lobby and the staircase leading from the entrance lobby to the first floor interior; first floor interior consisting of the restaurant lobby including the freestanding piers, the Pool Room vestibule, the Pool Room (dining room) including the marble pool, the staircase leading to the mezzanine dining room, the mezzanine dining room, the Bar Room/Grill Room vestibule, the Bar Room/Grill Room (dining room) including the bar, the staircases leading to the balcony level, and the balcony, and the balcony level dining rooms; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall surfaces, floor surfaces, ceiling surfaces, doors, railings, hanging sculptures, and metal draperies; and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 3.) The hearing was continued to July 12, 1988 (Item No. 1.) Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Twenty witnesses, including the operator of the restaurant, spoke in favor of designation. Three witnesses, all representatives of the owner of the Seagram Building, spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission has received many letters in favor of designation, and several letters against designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

An integral component of the highly-acclaimed International Style Seagram Building designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (a designated New York City Landmark), the Four Seasons Restaurant Ground Floor and First Floor Interiors have been praised by architectural critics as among the finest International Style interior spaces in the United States. Designed in 1958 by celebrated architect Philip Johnson and built in 1958-59 as an innovative first-class restaurant for Restaurant Associates, it opened amid much fanfare and was at that time the costliest restaurant ever constructed. The

interiors produced by Johnson and a stellar team of consultants are considered to be among Johnson's last projects to mirror the architectural theories of his mentor Mies van der Rohe. The designers used rich materials, installed with expert craftsmanship to accentuate their inherent beauty, innovative technology, and distinctive architectonic elements to shape the understated and elegantly proportioned interiors, which reflect the modular system employed in the design of the Seagram Building. The operations of the award-winning Four Seasons Restaurant were taken over in 1972 by Tom Margittai and Paul Kovi, who have kept the interior spaces in virtually intact condition and have been faithful to their original, influential design. Among the creative features of the restaurant is its seasonal theme, which inspires the meals served as well as plantings and color-coded appointments. A cultural magnet for tourists and the city's elite, it is one of New York's premier dining spaces due to the architectural preeminence of its design, the richness of its exquisite interiors, its location in the the Seagram Building, and the restaurant's exceptional culinary reputation.

History of the Seagram Building¹

The Seagram Building, erected in 1956-58, is the only building in New York City designed by architectural master Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Carefully related to the tranquil granite and marble plaza on its Park Avenue site, the elegant curtain wall of bronze and tinted glass enfolds the first fully modular modern office tower. Constructed at a time when Park Avenue was changing from an exclusive residential thoroughfare to a prestigious business address, the Seagram Building embodies the quest of a successful corporation to establish further its public image through architectural patronage. The president of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Samuel Bronfman, with the aid of his daughter Phyllis Lambert, carefully selected Mies, assisted by Philip Johnson, to design an office building later regarded by many, including Mies himself, as his crowning work and the apotheosis of International Style towers. The innovative, modular design of the building was a feat furthered by a coalition of talented consultants, a successful collaboration rarely realized in twentieth-century architecture, and by pioneering efforts of research and fabrication. Still virtually intact due to the foresighted maintenance plan of the Seagram Company, the building and plaza have inspired the work of many subsequent designers, affected New York's zoning regulations and real estate tax assessment, and provided a favorable environment for work and repose.

As one of the amenities of the building, the Seagram management from the beginning had the intent to provide large, elegant interior spaces with public access from the lobby. In discussions as early as 1956, several options were considered: a museum of crafts, a stylish automobile showroom (along the lines of Frank Lloyd Wright's Mercedes-Benz showroom further north on Park Avenue), and a first-class restaurant. Mies and Johnson began preliminary work on the overall design of the interior spaces prior to the selection of Restaurant Associates as the tenant.²

Restaurant Associates

The Seagram Company decided that a first-class restaurant should occupy

the space adjacent to the lobby of its new building, and in 1957 Seagram's leasing agent, Cushman & Wakefield, made arrangements with the firm of Restaurant Associates.³ Restaurant Associates, Inc. was founded in 1947 by A.F. Wechsler, leader of one of the world's largest companies which roasted coffee for commercial use. Holding a substantial interest in the restaurant chain that owned Rikers restaurants, Wechsler selected his son-in-law Jerome Brody (born c.1924) as the president of R.A. Mr. Brody expanded the company's activities to include the operation of snack bars and cafeterias for outside interests; he also negotiated contracts to operate the food services at Newark Airport and the Lexington Hotel in New York, and purchased the tourist-enticing Leone's. After their successful expansion into the first-class restaurant business with the Forum of the Twelve Caesars, Brody and vice-president Joseph Baum (born c.1921), a prominent American restaurateur, dedicated themselves to establishing the Four Seasons Restaurant in the Seagram Building as a first-class restaurant with a seasonal theme.⁴

Philip C. Johnson⁵

When approached by Lambert regarding who should design of the restaurant interiors, Mies recommended Johnson. Critic, historian, and architect Philip Johnson (b. 1906) was graduated from Harvard University and became associated with the Museum of Modern Art soon after its founding in 1929, directing its innovative department of architecture and later designing its sculpture garden (1953) and two additions (1950, 1964). With the critic and historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, he organized the momentous exhibition, "Modern Architecture" (1932), and coauthored The International Style (1932), a manifesto for the vanguard architecture of Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe. Johnson was responsible for inviting Le Corbusier and Mies to the United States. Completing his professional degree in architecture at Harvard in 1943, he subsequently designed several influential residences, including his own Glass House (1949). His association with Mies on the Seagram Building, particularly his design for the Four Seasons Restaurant Interiors (1958-59), was recognized by architectural critics as a highlight in Johnson's career. His later work includes many New York projects: Asia House (now the Russell Sage Foundation/Robert Sterling Foundation Building), 112 East 64th Street (1958-60), located in the Upper East Side Historic District; New York State Theater at Lincoln Center (1964); New York State Pavilion (1964, with Richard Foster) for the World's Fair in Flushing; Elmer Holmes Bobst Library and Tisch Hall, New York University (1972, both with Richard Foster); and the American Telephone and Telegraph Building, 550 Madison Avenue (1980-84, with John Burgee). In 1978 the American Institute of Architects awarded him its highest honor, the Gold Medal.

Design Consultants

Johnson selected a stellar team of design consultants to work with him on the Four Seasons Interiors; in addition, he was aided by William Pahlmann, who was the principal designer for Restaurant Associates.

A graduate of the Parsons School of Design in New York and the Parsons School in Paris, leading interior designer William C. Pahlmann,⁶ F.A.I.D., (1900-87) worked as a stage designer and in 1931 established a New York office as a private interior consultant. He became head of the decorating department at Lord & Taylor in 1936; his designs there earned him the reputation as "the best known department store decorator in the U.S."⁷ Praised for his colorful designs, he then became a military camoufleur as a captain in the Army Air Corps. Noted for both his eclecticism and innovativeness, Pahlmann "exercised a pervasive influence on American taste"⁸ and helped turn interior designing and decorating into an important component of the multi-billion-dollar home-furnishings industry. At the Four Seasons, he is credited with proposing the marble pool for the north dining room, its placement in the room with four trees at its corners, and the floral festoons at the windows. The New York chapter of the American Institute of Interior Designers granted him the Elsie de Wolfe Award in 1964.

Architect and lighting consultant Richard Kelly⁹ (c.1911-1977) designed the lighting for the Seagram Building and the Four Seasons Restaurant Interiors. While studying at Columbia College, Kelly supported himself by designing and selling light fixtures; after graduating in 1932, he opened his own office as a lighting consultant. During his career, Kelly, the "most outstanding lighting consultant in the country,"¹⁰ collaborated with such prominent architects as Louis I. Kahn and Eero Saarinen, as well as Mies and Johnson. He produced many exceptional lighting designs, including those for: the Seagram Building; Lincoln Center (except for the Metropolitan Opera), New York (1962-64); Dulles Airport, Chantilly, Va. (1958-62); General Motors Technical Center, Warren, Mich. (1945-56); Sculpture garden at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1953); Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, or St. Louis Arch (1948-64); Philip Johnson Glass House, New Canaan, Conn. (1949); Eric Boissonnas House, New Canaan, Conn. (1956); Kneses Tiferith Israel Temple, Port Chester, N.Y. (1956); Toronto City Hall (1961-65); Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn. (1951-53); Mellon Center for British Art and Studies at Yale University, New Haven, Conn. (1969-74); Corning Glass Center, Corning, N.Y. (1950-51, 1955-56); Lake Shore Drive Apartments, Chicago (1948-51); and the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Tex. (1966-72). Kelly also published extensively on illumination.

Other consultants were Karl Linn, the landscape architect and a professor at the University of Pennsylvania; Everett Lawson Conklin,¹¹ the horticulturist and award-winning floral designer; and Marie Nichols,¹² a weaver who designed the aluminum chain draperies for the Four Seasons Interiors and had collaborated with Richard Kelly on several projects. Artist Richard Lippold¹³ designed the suspended gold-dipped brass sculptures in the Bar/Grill Room.

Still others were selected for their designs of movable features which, although significant to the history of the Four Seasons, are not included in this designation.¹⁴ The chairs were designed by Mies much earlier in his career and originally shown in Czechoslovakia in 1927. Additional chairs were designed by Charles Eames (1907-78), pull-up hassocks and small

tabouret tables by Eero Saarinen (1910-61), two prominent architects and designers who collaborated on furniture designs for Knoll Associates as well as on architectural projects. Ada Louise and L. Garth Huxtable produced over sixty special designs for the silver holloware, glassware, and silver services—which are still in use at the Four Seasons.

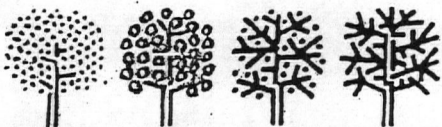
Design and Construction¹⁵

Having provided the Seagram Building with a unity between indoor and outdoor spaces, Mies carried the modular design, clearly evident on the building's exterior, into the interiors of the grand public rooms. Johnson used the structural system and generously proportioned volumes as his point of departure for the design of the restaurant interiors, substantially completed in 1958. His design took advantage of the space to create dramatic effects and elegant proportions achieved through varied ceiling heights, a controlled system of circulation through the rooms, and architectonic elements, such as the pool and the bar, which further define distinct volumes within the larger spaces. The interplay of solid and void is artfully exemplified by the sturdy bar with its delicate sculpture above. These large public spaces were conceived to have elegant interiors to complement the Seagram Building itself: walls of the spacious rooms covered with expensive wood paneling washed in light from invisible sources and floor-to-ceiling windows screened by metallic chain curtains which ripple when the ventilation system is operating. The restrained ceiling, elegant staircases, ingenious lighting scheme, sculpture, and furnishings were carefully designed to create the sophisticated simplicity associated with the International Style. Johnson's early works were noticeably indebted to Mies's architectural theories, and this design is generally regarded as Johnson's last such project.

The Four Seasons Restaurant

Five dining rooms accommodate 400 persons. Its two wine "cellars" permit the Four Seasons to boast one of the largest wine collections in the country. Upon the opening of the restaurant in July of 1959, first-class service was assured by daily indoctrination for waiters by James Beard, the famous wine and food authority.¹⁶

The seasonal theme inspired the Four Seasons to maintain its own herb garden, an innovative venture in American restaurants. Eclectic menus combine American bounty with international culinary concepts and techniques, making the Four Seasons a pioneer of what would later be called the "New American Cuisine." These concepts are reflected visually in the restaurant's decor. Rotated seasonally, the four trees at the corners of the marble pool complement the restaurant's logo, which determines the color scheme for each season. Thus auxiliary planting as well as appointments such as uniforms, menus, and even ash trays were originally rotated every three months: pink for spring, green for summer, burnt orange for autumn, and brown for winter.¹⁷ Establishing an optimum micro-climate for plant survival allowed the designers to



THE FOUR SEASONS

integrate interior planting from the beginning of the project.¹⁸

The total cost of approximately \$4.5 million for the Four Seasons, making it at that time the costliest restaurant ever built, included architectural alterations and furnishings, linens, uniforms, art, kitchen equipment, silver, service carts, china, glassware, menus and other printed matter, plants and flowers, and design and consultation fees. The Seagram Company underwrote part of the cost, including the installation of the air conditioning system, the walls, and the partitions.

The Seagram Company enhanced the International Style interiors by lending the restaurant several masterpieces of modern art.¹⁹ These features, while long associated with the restaurant spaces, are not part of this designation. Pablo Picasso's "The Three-Cornered Hat," a painted curtain completed in 1919 for Diaghilev's ballet "Le Tricorne" hangs in the restaurant lobby. This dedication to modern art, continued over the years, includes works by Frank Stella and Jackson Pollock. In 1984 the current restaurant owners commissioned James Rosenquist for a painting later titled "Fish, Flowers, and Females for the Four Seasons," now displayed in the mezzanine dining room overlooking the Pool Room.

The Four Seasons opened to the public in July, 1959, and was followed, in the subsequent year, by a neighboring restaurant, The Brasserie, also designed by Johnson and Pahlmann (not included in this designation).

Description

Located on portions of the first floor and the ground floor at the eastern end of the Seagram Building, the Four Seasons Restaurant Interiors are composed of several interior spaces, each with a distinct character and spatial quality but united by certain design elements. The Interiors of the Four Seasons Restaurant include two major dining rooms, the Pool Room at the north side of the building and the Bar/Grill Room at the south side, linked by an Entrance Corridor/Lobby which adjoins the Lobby of the Seagram Building. The East 52nd Street Entrance Lobby located at the ground floor provides access to the Bar/Grill Room by means of a broad staircase. Two small, adjoining private dining rooms are situated behind a balcony that overlooks the Bar/Grill Room. Another dining room is located at the mezzanine level of the Pool Room. The restaurant is furnished with movable custom furniture, fixtures, and accessories which still adhere to the original designs.

The Entrance Corridor/Lobby:

The entrance to the Four Seasons Restaurant Interiors from the Seagram Building Lobby (a designated New York City Interior Landmark) is reached by broad travertine steps. A glass wall provides visual continuity between the two spaces, which share certain design features: walls and floors lined in travertine, ceilings composed of gray glass mosaic set in black cement, and engaged bronze piers of the building's structural system. The bronze-framed tripartite glass wall is bisected by a central meeting rail and contains paired glass doors. A flat bronze band intersects the lower portion of the wall. Bronze piers are located near the eastern wall of the corridor,

flanking Picasso's painted curtain, "The Three-Cornered Hat" (not subject to this designation). Designed to be illuminated from below, a row of raised alabaster panels, framed in bronze and protected by posts with suspended chain, is located along the floor beneath the curtain. Recessed light fixtures illuminate the space and incandescent recessed troffer lighting fixtures wash the eastern wall with light. Metal-framed glass doors at each end of the corridor lead to vestibules serving the major dining rooms. The vestibules have dropped ceilings formed by brass-colored egg-crate grids illuminated from above. The glazed eastern wall of the Pool Room vestibule reveals a wine "cellar," and the eastern wall of the Bar/Grill Room vestibule is lined in French walnut with openings to accommodate a coat-check area.

The Pool Room:

A lofty, square space with a twenty-foot high ceiling, the Pool Room is dominated at the center by a table-height twenty-foot square pool of white Carrara marble filled with continuously bubbling water. Cylindrical bronze planters holding trees sit on the floor at each of the four corners of the pool; the trees, which change seasonally, are illuminated from below with bucket lights set into the planters.

The western and northern walls are composed of continuous windows which rise above low travertine ledges. The windows are divided into vertical panels by bronze mullions; metal draperies of thin anodized aluminum chains are fitted into vertical channels in the mullions. The chains, in shades of brass, bronze, and copper, subtly ripple with the movement of air from diffusers set into the ledges below. Bronze bowl planters are suspended in front of the windows from nearly invisible wires. The southern wall, pierced by openings for the entrance and the kitchen, is lined with rectangular rawhide panels set on walnut. The bottom row of panels is gray, and those above are natural. Each wall in the room is punctuated by engaged bronze piers.

At the eastern end of the Pool Room is a rectangular mezzanine-level room reached by a broad central staircase. The base of the mezzanine is paneled in gray rawhide. The stairs and the edge of the mezzanine are lined with bronze railings composed of thin staggered rods, which, when viewed as one passes them, create the effect of movement. Panels of French walnut, designed and crafted to emphasize the prominent grain of the wood, are set behind the railings; they also pivot so that the mezzanine-level room may be either closed off or function as an extension of the Pool Room. The glazed northern wall is continued in the upper room, while the eastern wall, dominated by a large painting by James Rosenquist (not subject to this designation), and the southern wall of that room are covered in beige carpet panels.

The specially-designed ceiling is composed of square off-white panels of perforated aluminum layered over a recessed grid; the intersections of the grid are fitted with "darklites," a recessed incandescent fixture from which light is directed by bronze-finished reflectors. Recessed troffers wash the southern wall with light. The wall-to-wall carpeting has a grid pattern which echoes the overall geometry of the room. (Although not

original, it was designed under the direction of Philip Johnson).

The Bar/Grill Room:

The Bar/Grill Room is divided into several different areas. A small lounge area located at the northwest corner of the room is separated from a bar area at the southwest corner of the room by a large, broad stairwell linking the space with the East 52nd Street Entrance Lobby. A dining area occupies the center of the room and a narrow balcony-level dining area, reached by stairs at each end, spans the eastern side of the room.

The Bar/Grill Room has some of the many architectural elements as the Pool Room, including the twenty-foot high specially-designed ceiling, window walls with metal draperies rising from travertine ledges at the west and south, French walnut paneling lining the northern and eastern walls, wall-to-wall carpet, and the balcony. The face of the balcony is now washed with light from below by a bay of incandescent lamps covered by a grid. Engaged bronze piers punctuate the walls. The carpeting is a darker version of the same design used in the Pool Room.

The stairwell between the bar and lounge areas is lined in bronze railings of thin, staggered rods. The bar area is dominated by a square walnut bar fitted with leather panels and surrounded by an ebonized oak floor. Two sculptures by Richard Lippold, composed of delicate groups of gold-dipped brass rods of varying lengths, are suspended from the ceiling by nearly invisible wires. Following his usual procedure, Lippold designed the sculptures specifically for their present locations to enhance the organization of the Bar/Grill Room. The larger sculpture contrasts dramatically with the solid walnut bar directly beneath it, creating an intimate space within the larger limits of the room. This juxtaposition is balanced by the smaller sculpture over the balcony.²⁰ The bar is separated from the dining area by a partition of laminated, cracked glass; this was installed in 1983 under the direction of Philip Johnson and replaced a trellis of climbing ivy. A French walnut service desk to the east of the entrance from the Corridor/Lobby and round planters (which replace the original wood planters) between the service desk and the partition also serve to define the dining area.

Two adjoining rooms are situated behind walnut-paneled doors at the northern and southern ends of the balcony; these doors have an ebonized surface on the side of the rooms. The rooms are smaller and more intimate than the large rooms. A vestibule behind the northern end of the balcony leads to the larger of the two rooms, which is rectangular, and joins the smaller, square room to the south by a wide doorway with a sliding ebonized door. Except for the outer wall of the southern room which has continuous windows and metal draperies, the walls are lined with rectangular panels of highly-polished hardwood set onto a dark wood surface. The ceiling is of the same grid-and-panel design used in the larger rooms, except that the surface is black and the panels are pierced with holes roughly one-inch wide and spaced apart in a random pattern, which are illuminated from above. The floors are carpeted. The vestibule at the northern end is similarly finished.

The East 52nd Street Entrance Lobby:

The lower Entrance Lobby is reached at its southeastern end from East 52nd Street through two sets of glass doors separated by a vestibule with a brass-colored egg-crate grid ceiling. The outer doors are etched with vertical stripes. The floor and walls are travertine and pierced with openings along the eastern, southern, and northern walls for restrooms, an office, and a coat-check area. The space is illuminated by recessed fixtures set into a low white ceiling. Engaged bronze piers and a ceiling beam bisect the room on a north-south axis. At the western side of the lobby is a broad staircase with one landing; this links the Lobby and the Bar/Grill area. It is lined with bronze railings. The two round planters replace the original wood planters.

Subsequent History

Immediately after its opening the Four Seasons received enthusiastic reviews, both architectural and culinary; critics said that the "spectacular, modern and audacious"²¹ restaurant design "combines its exceptional sumptuousness with exquisite refinement."²² When it opened, the restaurant had no peer "in conception, in scale, in the wealth of talent behind it."²³

In the early 1970s, Transylvanian-born Tom Margittai, then vice-president of Restaurant Associates, was given the responsibility of selling off the business of a foundering Four Seasons Restaurant. Instead, he and the director of the Four Seasons, Hungarian-born Paul Kovi, jointly purchased it from R.A. in 1972 with the goal of reviving the restaurant. They hired chef Joseph Renggli, a Swiss native, and soon the restaurant became, as "one of America's leading symbols of good taste,"²⁴ extremely popular with New York's elite. A recipient of twenty-two major awards, the Four Seasons has hosted many memorable parties for national celebrities, international gourmet societies, and wine inaugurals.

Experts Ada Louise and L. Garth Huxtable, involved with the restaurant from its planning stages, have noted that the new owners "have been faithful to the [original] concept."²⁵ The design of these famous International Style interiors has been carefully maintained. Among the handful of physical changes was the removal of an ivy-covered screen and its replacement in 1983 by a laminated, cracked glass partition designed by Johnson.

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NOTES

1. This section is taken from LPC, Seagram Building Designation Report, report prepared by David M. Breiner (New York, 1989). Additional information about the Four Seasons Restaurant Interiors project was provided in a telephone conversation with Phyllis Lambert Sept. 25, 1989.
2. This information was provided in a telephone conversation with Phyllis Lambert, Sept. 25, 1989. The information was also confirmed by Philip Johnson through a telephone conversation on Oct. 2, 1989 with Carla Ash, curator for the Seagram Company, who passed the information to the LPC.
3. Ibid.
4. Craig Claiborne, "\$4.5 Million Restaurant to Open Here," New York Times, July 16, 1959, p. 33; "Modern Living," Time, July 27, 1959, pp. 61-65; Karen MacNeil, "Business," Avenue (Sept., 1980), 30.
5. "Johnson, Philip," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, vol. 2, 499-501; Encyclopedia of 20th Century Architecture, gen. ed. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, rev. ed. (New York, 1986), 181-82; American Architects Directory, 2nd ed., ed. George S. Koyl (New York, 1962), 354; LPC, Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report, vol. 1 (New York, 1981), 188.
6. William Pahlmann, "Viewpoints: A Series of Interviews with Architects, Interior Designers, Product Designers, and Observers of the Design Scene," Interior Design 43 (Sept., 1972), 143; "Exit Taxidermist Enter Couturier," Interiors 107 (Nov., 1947), 82-87; "American Art and William Pahlmann," Interiors 100 (May, 1941), 24; "Pahlmann's Private Practice," Interiors 102 (Sept., 1942), 44; Claiborne, \$4.5 Million Restaurant to Open Here," p. 33; O[lga] G[ueft], "The Four Seasons," Interiors 119 (Dec., 1959), 170; William C. Pahlmann obituary, NYT Nov. 11, 1987, sec. 2, p. 8.
7. "Pahlmann's Farewell," Interiors 101 (July, 1942), 34.
8. William C. Pahlmann obituary, p. 8.
9. Betty Kelly, "Richard Kelly, a Bibliography," American Association of Architectural Bibliographers 20 (Spring, 1961); "Lighting Start with Daylight," Progressive Architecture 54 (Sept., 1973), 82-85; Richard Kelly, "Lighting as an Integral Part of Architecture," College Art Journal 12 (Fall, 1952), 24-26; O[lga] G[ueft], 168; Richard Kelly obituary, NYT July 12, 1977, p. 32.
10. William B. O'Neal, foreward to Betty Kelly, n.p.

11. Everett Lawson Conklin obituary, NYT, Mar. 22, 1985, sec. 2, p. 5. Horticulturist and award-winning floral designer Conklin (c.1908-1985) installed floral displays in many prominent New York restaurants--including the Four Seasons, the Philharmonic Cafe at Lincoln Center, and the Promenade Cafe at Rockefeller Center--and other public locations, such as the Ford Foundation Building. Organizing Everett Conklin & Company International in 1957, he served as president and chairman until his retirement in 1982. A board member of the International Flower Show of New York, 1958-70, Conklin's positions included chairman of the floral decorations committee for President Nixon's inaugural balls (1969 and 1973) and horticulture adviser for the Lake Placid Winter Olympics (1980).
12. Betty Pepis, "Curtains of Steel Help to Improve Lighting in Room," NYT, Sept. 19, 1955, p. 20. These draperies are occasionally repaired with new chains of the same type.
13. Educated in industrial design at the School of the Art Institute, Chicago, Lippold left that field in the early 1940s to become a sculptor. His wire constructions, found in many private and museum collections, are acclaimed for their treatment of space and incorporation of rich materials. Lippold's abstract constructions for the Bar/Grill Room of the Four Seasons Restaurant Interiors (1958-59) were among the first of many designed for public spaces, including those at: Philharmonic Hall (now Avery Fisher Hall), Lincoln Center (1962); the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Atlanta (1966); St. Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco (1971); and the National Air and Space Museum, Washington, D.C. (1976). See "Art in America: An Artist's Point of View," Architectural Record 164, no. 8 (Dec., 1978), 69-71, 73 and "St. Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco," Architectural Record 150, no. 3 (Sept., 1971), 113-20.
14. Claiborne, "\$4.5 Million Restaurant to Open Here," p. 33; "The Four Seasons Story," typescript, 1-2; Ada Louise and L. Garth Huxtable, Letter to LPC dated May 11, 1988. See also "Eames, Charles O.," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, vol. 2, 1-3 and "Saarinen, Eliel, and Saarinen, Eero," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, vol. 3, 625-33.
15. Claiborne, "\$4.5 Million Restaurant to Open Here," p. 33; O[lg]a G[ueft], 80, 166-68; "New York's New 4 1/2 Million Dollar Restaurant," Look, Oct. 13, 1959, pp. 58-60; "More Elegance at the House of Seagram," Architectural Record 126 (Nov., 1959), 202; "The Four Seasons Story," (typescript in LPC files), 2-3; James Villas, "The Season of the Four Seasons," Town & Country (Sept., 1983), 218-19; Charles Noble, Philip Johnson (New York, 1972), 122. For The Brasserie, see "The Brasserie, in the Seagram Building, New York," Interiors 120 (Dec., 1960), 94-95.

16. A thorough training manual is used today to continue high standards of service and foster employees' appreciation of the history of the restaurant. See a photocopy of the manual in LPC files.
17. Today, instead of seasonal changes, the Four trees logo in four colors decorates appointments.
18. Portable mercury vapor lamps have been used to provide intense light for the trees while the restaurant is closed. See "The Four Seasons: Collaboration for Elegance," Progressive Architecture 40 (Dec., 1959), 142. The annual budget for planting alone was \$50,000. Claiborne, "\$4.5 Million Restaurant to Open Here," p. 33. Permanent plantings include ornamental fig and ficus trees. Seasonal plantings have consisted of azaleas and white birch trees in the spring, philodendrons and cocos palmosa in the summer, burnt orange and yellow chrysanthemums and oak leaf branches in the autumn, and white chrysanthemums and white birch in the winter with red poinsettias added during the Christmas season. "The Four Seasons Story," 3.
19. Claiborne, "\$4.5 Million Restaurant to Open Here," p. 33; Ann Landi, "Art a'la Carte," Manhattan, Inc. (June, 1988), 133.
20. In early correspondence from Arthur S. Margolin, vice president of the Seagram Company, in a letter to Gene A. Norman, dated July 7, 1988, it states that the sculptures belong to Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, and that the company "has no intent of removing...the Lippolds, so long as the use and character of the space...remains substantially the same as now." Subsequently, the LPC has received a letter from Phyllis Lambert on the behalf of the Seagram Foundation, dated Sept. 29, 1989, advising the LPC that the Seagram Company has agreed that the sculptures would "remain permanently on display in the Grill Room for so long as the Four Seasons remains a designated [New York City] landmark." In a letter from Richard Lippold to the LPC, dated Sept. 11, 1989, the artist states that "...my sculptures...are built into the room and technically virtually impossible to reinstall elsewhere." He adds that the materials, proportion and scale of the sculptures are closely related to the materials, proportion and scale of the room.
21. Craig Claiborne, "Food News: Dining in Elegant Manner," NYT, Oct. 2, 1959, p. 22.
22. O[lga] G[ueft], 80-81.
23. See MacNeil, 30.
24. MacNeil, 35.
25. Ada Louise and L. Garth Huxtable, Letter to LPC dated May 11, 1988, n.p.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Four Seasons Restaurant ground floor interior consisting of the entrance lobby and the staircase leading from the entrance lobby to the first floor interior; first floor interior consisting of the restaurant lobby including the freestanding piers, the Pool Room vestibule, the Pool Room (dining room) including the marble pool, the staircase leading to the mezzanine dining room, the mezzanine dining room, the Bar Room/Grill Room vestibule, the Bar Room/Grill Room (dining room) including the bar, the staircases leading to the balcony level, and the balcony, and the balcony level dining rooms; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall surfaces, floor surfaces, ceiling surfaces, doors, railings, hanging sculptures, and metal draperies; has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, and the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among their important qualities the Four Seasons Restaurant Interiors, integral components of the architecturally preeminent Seagram Building, are among the finest International Style interiors in the United States; that they were designed in 1958 by celebrated architect Philip Johnson and an accomplished team of consultants and built in 1958-59 for the expanding firm of Restaurant Associates as an innovative first-class restaurant; that innovative technologies and architectonic elements were incorporated to achieve the desired aesthetic and spatial effects; that the modular design of the exterior of the Seagram Building is carried into and helps to define the interior spaces; that the spacious, understated, and elegant rooms of exquisite proportions are excellently maintained; that they are outfitted with finely crafted rich materials such as bronze, white Carrara and travertine marbles, rawhide panels, French walnut and ebonized oak, and anodized aluminum; that these materials are installed with expert craftsmanship to accentuate their inherent beauty; that the distinctive design of the interior spaces and the exceptional culinary reputation of the Four Seasons make it a cultural magnet for tourists as well as New York's elite.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates an Interior Landmark the Four Seasons Restaurant ground floor interior consisting of the entrance lobby and the staircase leading from the entrance lobby to the first floor interior; first floor interior consisting of the restaurant lobby including the freestanding piers, the Pool Room vestibule, the Pool Room (dining room) including the marble pool, the staircase leading to the mezzanine dining room, the mezzanine dining room, the Bar Room/Grill Room vestibule, the Bar Room/Grill Room (dining room) including the bar, the staircases leading to the balcony level, and the balcony, and the balcony level dining rooms; and the fixtures

and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall surfaces, floor surfaces, ceiling surfaces, doors, railings, hanging sculptures, and metal draperies; 99 East 52nd Street, Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1307, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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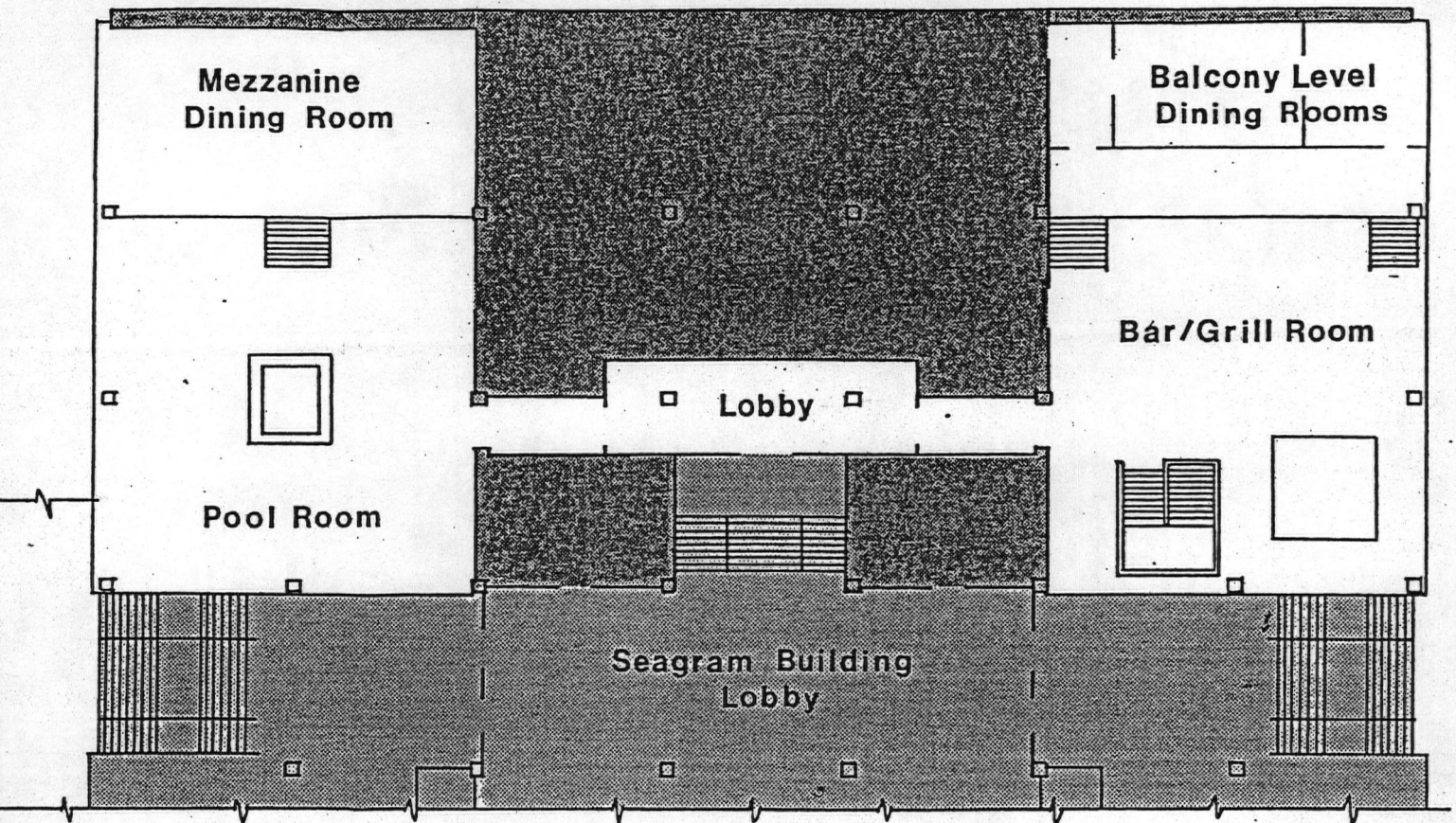
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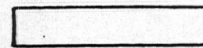


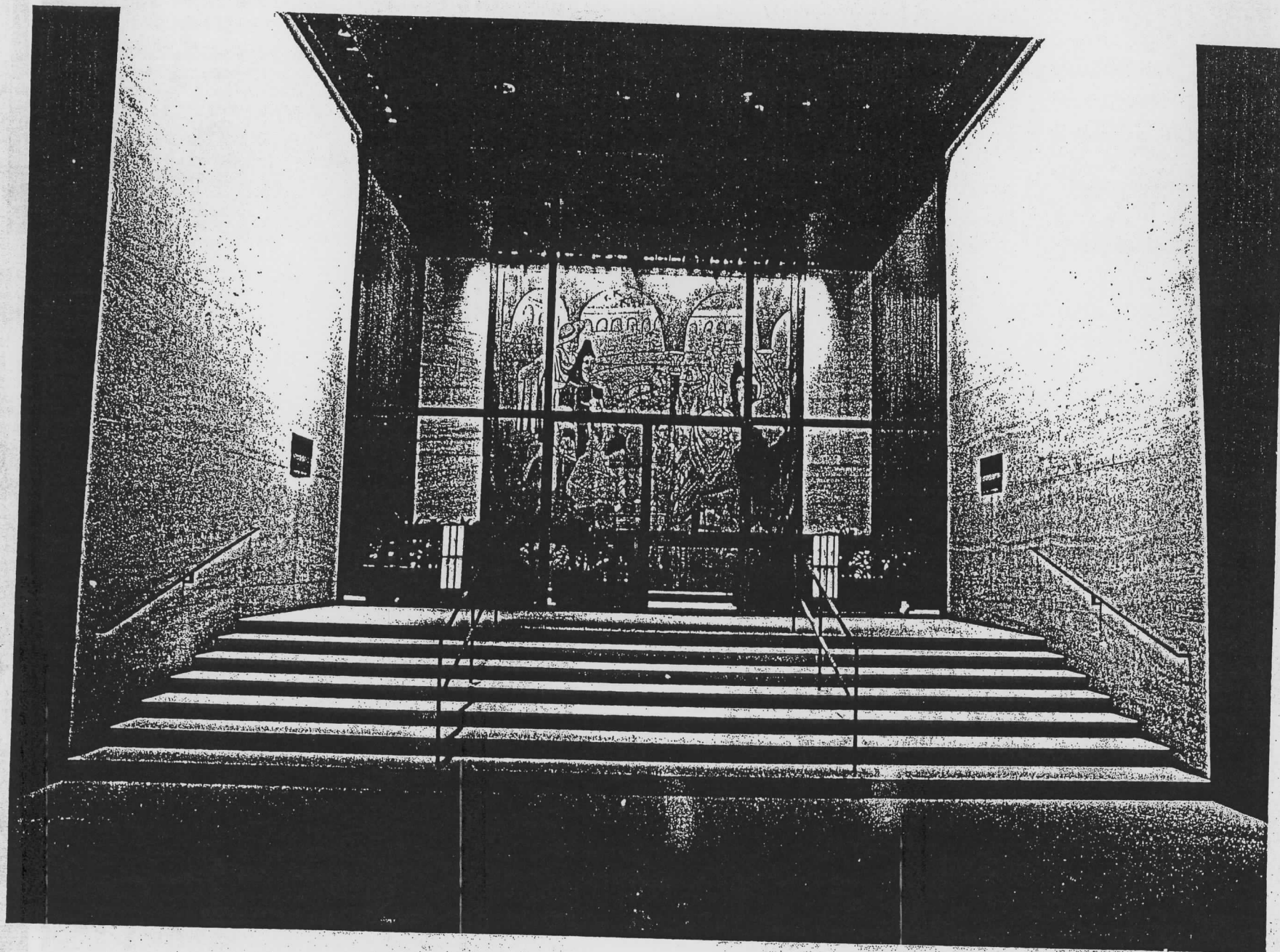
Four Seasons Restaurant
Landmarks Preservation Commission

99 East 52nd Street
Designated October 3, 1989

Interior Designation

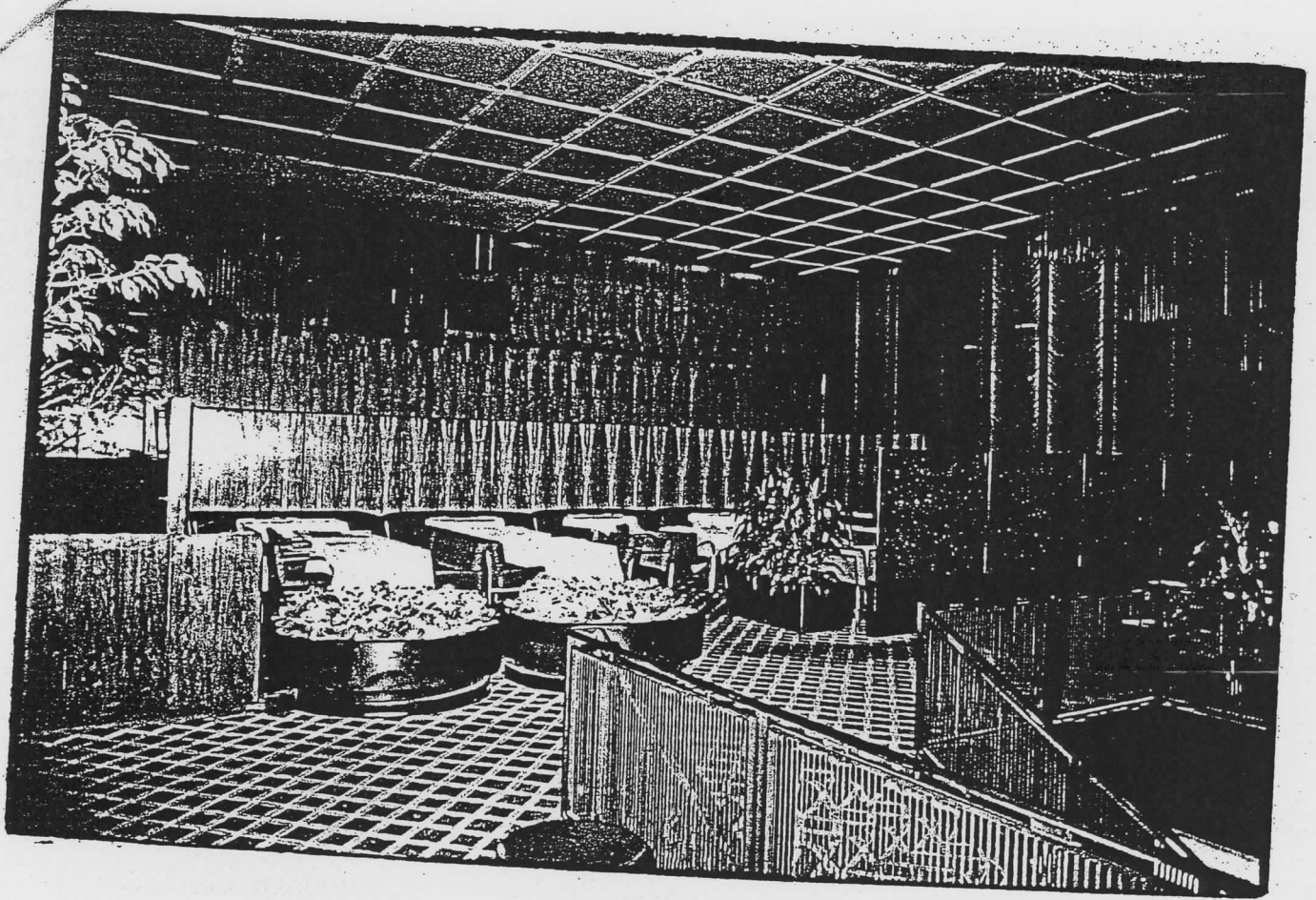
Seagram Building Interior Designation
& Plaza





FOUR SEASONS RESTAURANT View of Lobby from Seagram Building Lobby
FIRST FLOOR INTERIOR

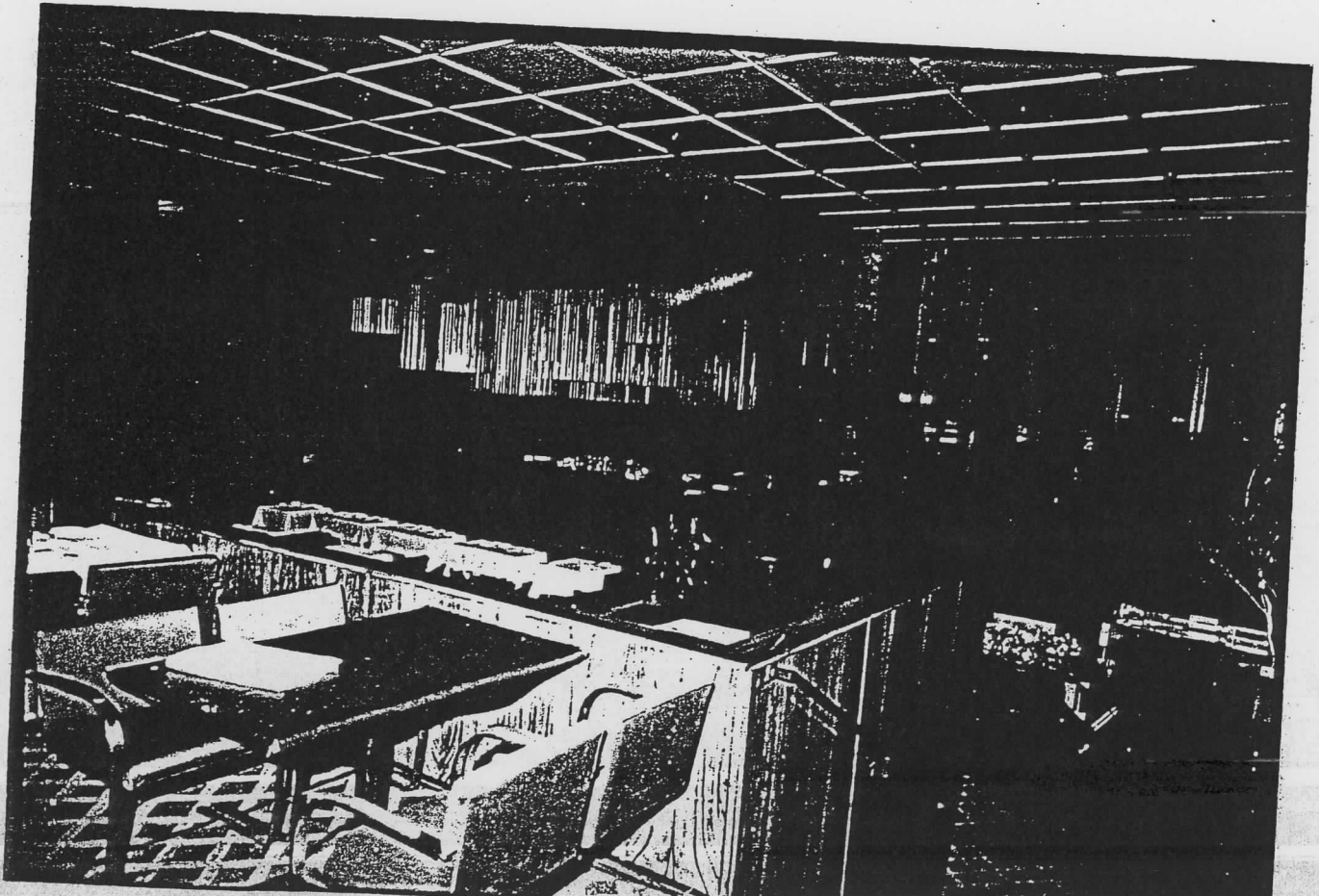
Photo credit: Carl Forster

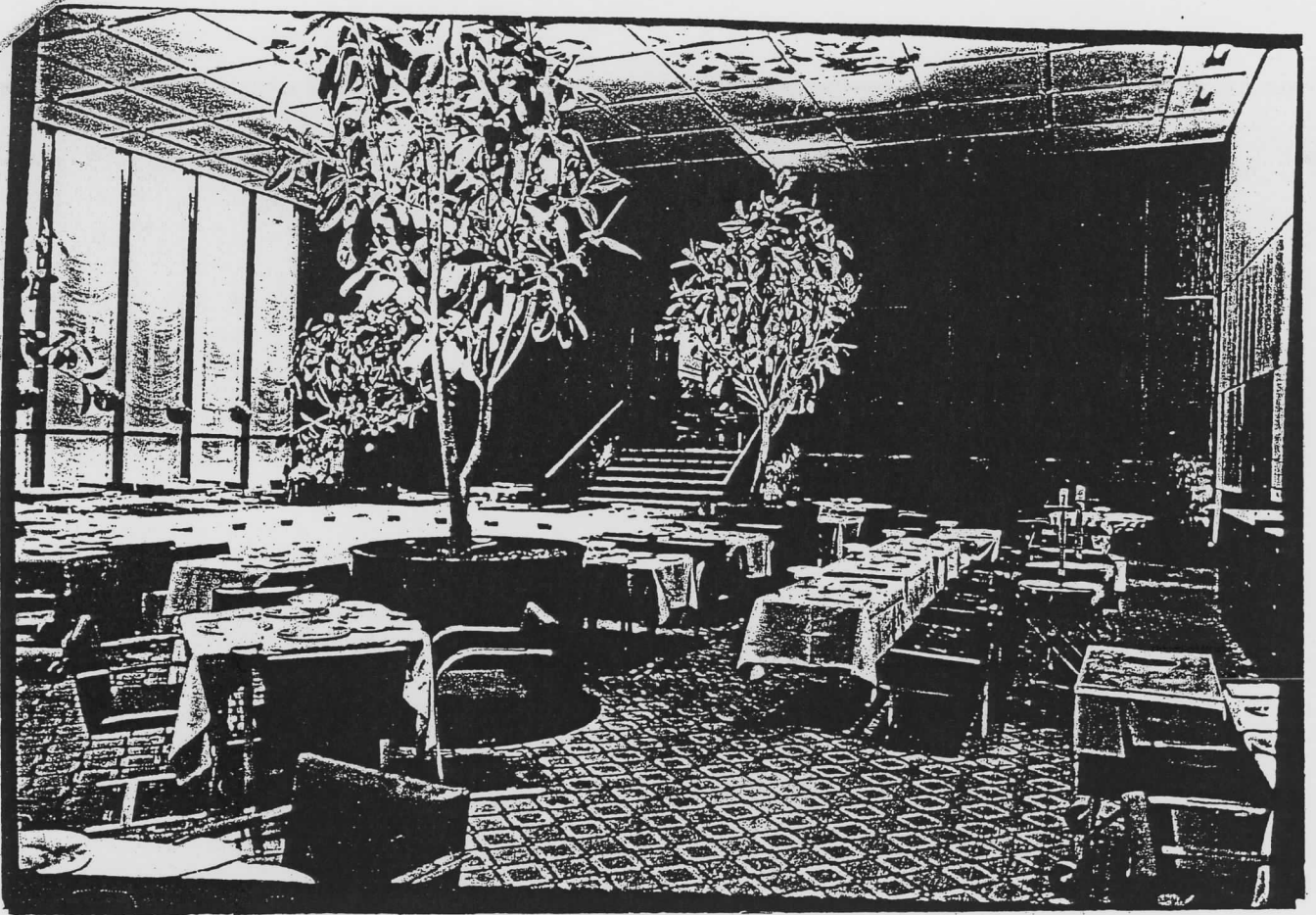


FOUR SEASONS RESTAURANT
FIRST FLOOR INTERIOR

Bar/Grill Room

Photo credit: Carl Forster

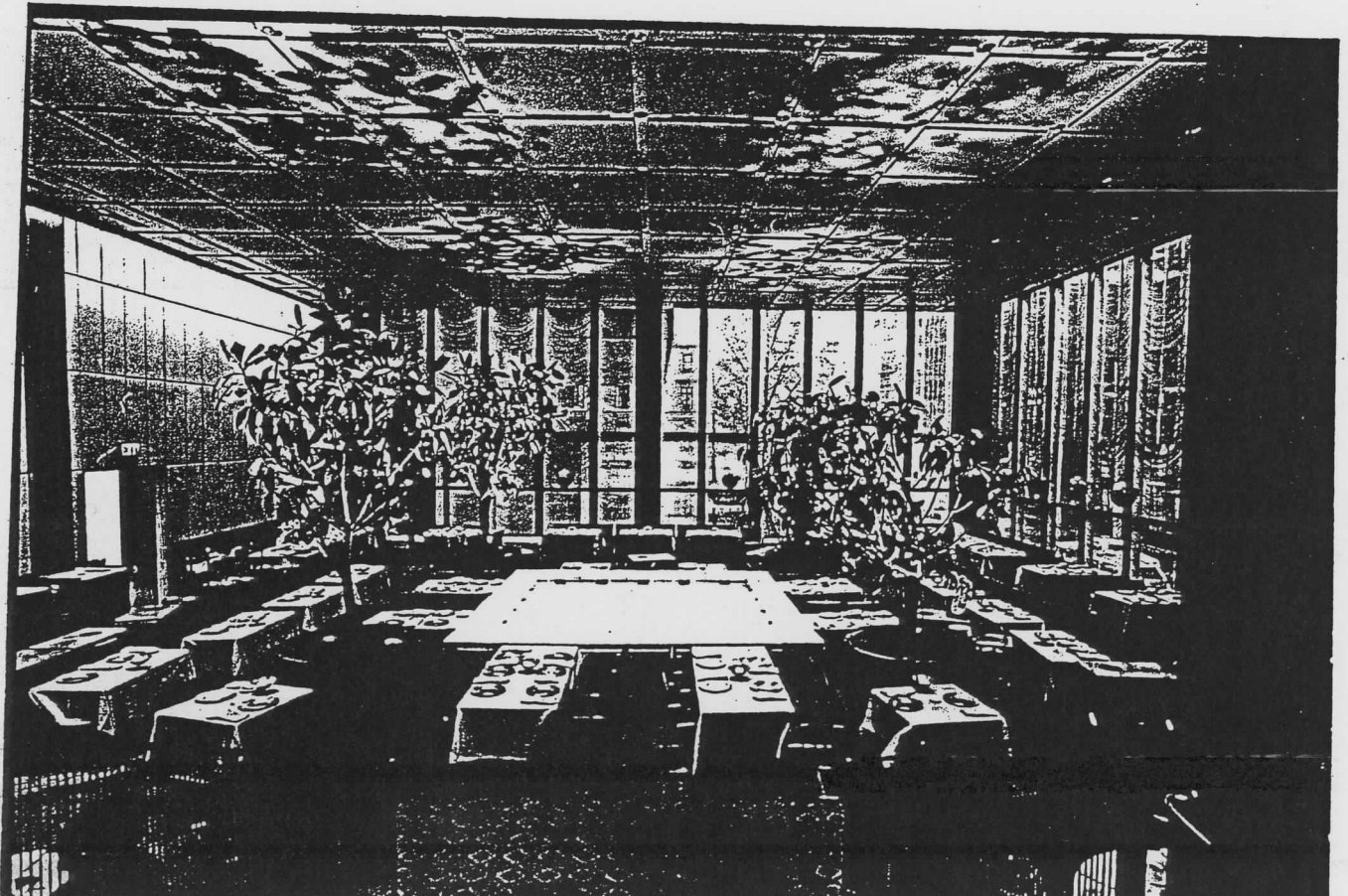


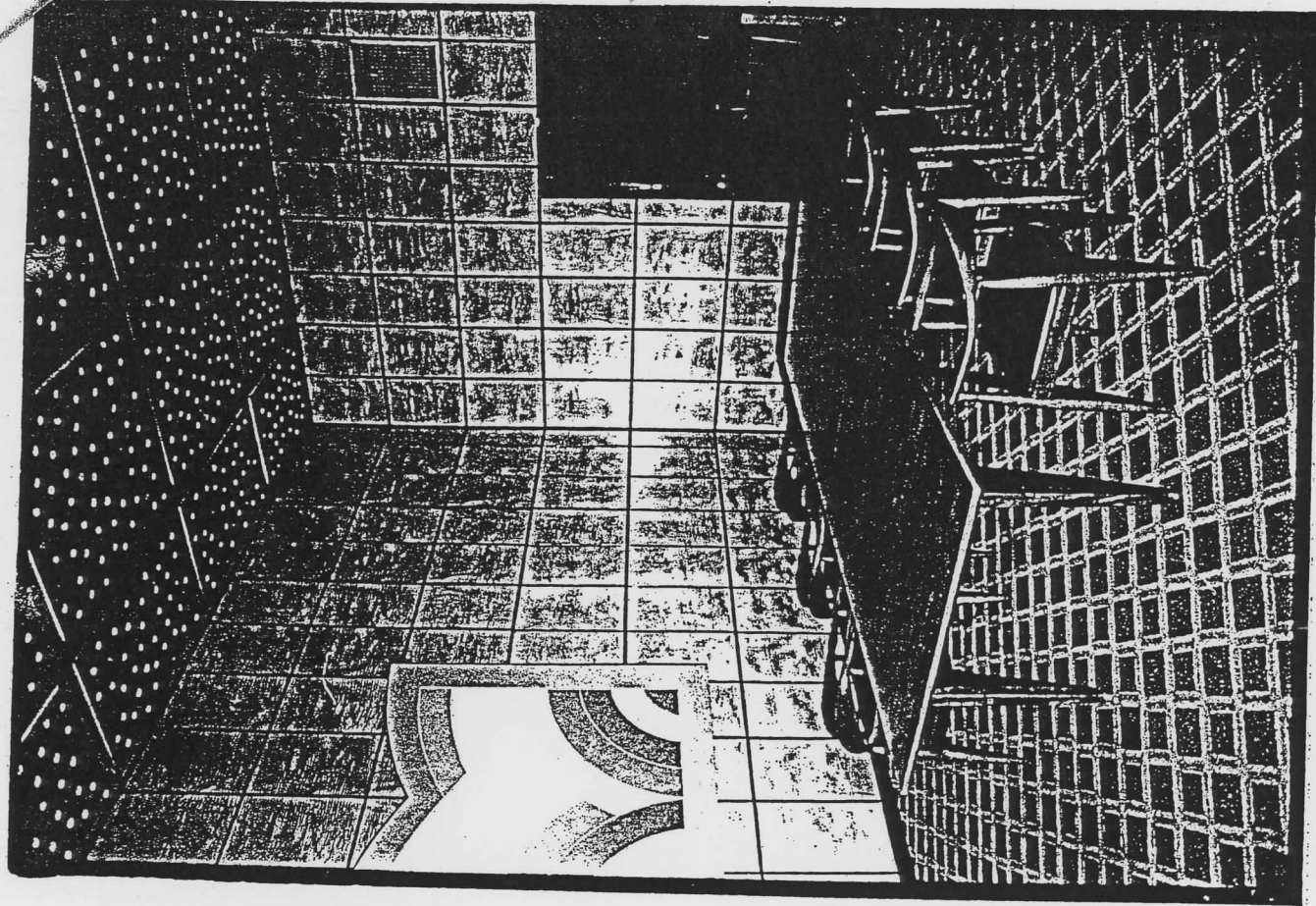


FOUR SEASONS RESTAURANT
FIRST FLOOR INTERIOR

Pool Room

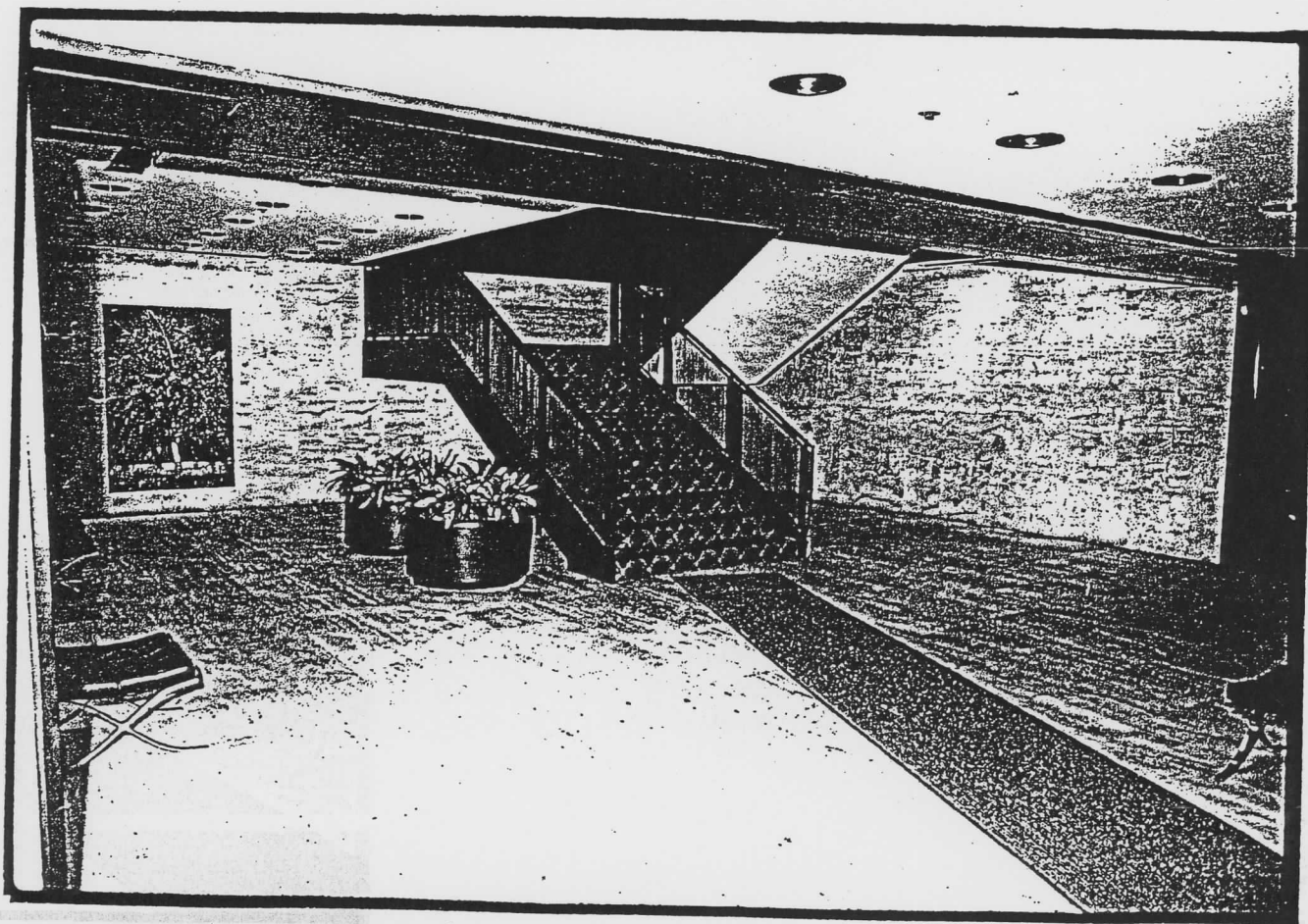
Photo credit: Carl Forster





FOUR SEASONS RESTAURANT Private Dining Room
FIRST FLOOR INTERIOR

Photo credit: Carl Forster



FOUR SEASONS RESTAURANT East 52nd Street Terrace

OCT 11 1989

Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 3, 1989; Designation List 221
LP-1665

31 CHAMBERS STREET
NEW YORK CITY

SEAGRAM BUILDING, FIRST FLOOR INTERIOR consisting of the lobby and passenger elevator cabs and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including but not limited to, interior piers, wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, railings, elevator doors, elevator indicators, and signs; 375 Park Avenue, Manhattan. Designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe with Philip Johnson; Kahn & Jacobs, associate architects. Built 1956-58.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1307, Lot 1.

On May 17, 1988, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Seagram Building, first floor interior, consisting of the lobby and passenger elevator cabs and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including but not limited to, interior piers, wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, railings, elevator doors, elevator indicators, and signs; and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Twenty witnesses, including a representative of the building's owner, spoke in favor of designation. No witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission has received many letters in favor of designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

The Seagram Building, erected in 1956-58, is the only building in New York City designed by architectural master Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Constructed on Park Avenue at a time when it was changing from an exclusive residential thoroughfare to a prestigious business address, the Seagram Building embodies the quest of a successful corporation to establish further its public image through architectural patronage. The president of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Samuel Bronfman, with the aid of his daughter Phyllis Lambert, carefully selected Mies, assisted by Philip Johnson, to design an office building later regarded by many, including Mies himself, as his crowning work and the apotheosis of International Style towers. The space of the tranquil granite and marble plaza extends into the first floor lobby, designed by Johnson. This unity is achieved through the use of common materials, continuous horizontal planes, and the transparency of glazed exterior walls. In addition, the design of the lobby is inherently bound to that of the tower: bronze-clad columns along with other carefully crafted rich materials are common to both. Johnson was assisted by a coalition of talented consultants, a successful collaboration rarely realized in twentieth-century architecture. Together they produced a grand but understated lobby, the architectural character of which is accentuated by innovative illumination and other technical features. Still virtually intact due to the foresighted maintenance plan of the Seagram Company, the building and plaza, along with the lobby, have inspired the work of many

subsequent designers and provided a favorable environment for work and repose.

History of the Site¹

The history of Fourth (now Park) Avenue begins with the advent of the railroads. In 1834 the New York and Harlem Railroad first carried passengers along grade-level tracks down the center of Fourth Avenue from 42nd to 96th streets. By 1848 the New Haven Railroad entered Manhattan along Fourth Avenue. As railroad traffic increased, the avenue was widened to permit additional tracks and the city mandated depressed tracks to minimize problems of noise, smoke, and the danger of fire and injury. By the 1880s, Fourth Avenue officially became known as Park Avenue and was lined with one- and two-story commercial buildings and carriage houses serving the brownstone residences on nearby side streets; the trains ran in an open cut below grade to the Grand Central Depot. The east side of Park Avenue between East 52nd and 53rd streets contained the finishing manufactory of the renowned Steinway & Sons piano company; erected in the 1860s, it was a large brick building of five stories. The remainder of the site which would eventually be occupied by the Seagram Building was divided up into brick-faced tenements on East 53rd Street and brick- and brownstone-fronted rowhouses on East 52nd Street.

In conjunction with the reconstruction of Grand Central Terminal (1903-13) and the electrification of the railroad (1903-07), Park Avenue was rebuilt solidly with a planted mall and the open wells were covered over. The avenue gradually became a thoroughfare lined with large apartment houses for the wealthy. One of these, the Montana Apartments, an eight-story neo-Romanesque building designed by Rouse & Goldstone and faced in brick and stone, was begun in 1919, replacing the Steinway piano factory.

The 1916 zoning resolution designated the portion of Park Avenue north of East 50th Street as residential, but by 1929 major property owners on the avenue, which was overtaking Fifth Avenue as the city's most prestigious address, succeeded in having the area between East 50th and 59th streets rezoned to permit commercial use. Not until the building boom that followed World War II did these efforts come to fruition with the completion in 1947 of the Universal Pictures Building at 445 Park Avenue, designed by Kahn & Jacobs. The transformation of Park Avenue into a commercial avenue was assured by the rash of new office buildings in the 1950s: Lever House (1950-52); Olin Building, 460 Park Avenue (1954); Colgate-Palmolive Building, 300 Park Avenue (1954); 425 Park Avenue Building (Kahn & Jacobs, 1956); and the Seagram Building.²

Samuel Bronfman and Joseph E. Seagram & Sons³

Beginning his business career in the hotel industry in Winnipeg, Samuel Bronfman (1891-1971) later operated a mail order liquor company throughout Canada, eventually founding the Distillers Company, Ltd. In 1928 this company bought out its major competitor, Joseph E. Seagram & Sons and incorporated the name. With the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, Bronfman began planning an impressive Manhattan headquarters for his Seagram group,

not to be realized until the 1950s. At the time of his death, Bronfman had amassed at least \$400,000,000 and his company was the world's largest distiller, with annual sales exceeding \$1.3 billion.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe⁴

Among the most prominent and influential architects of the twentieth century, German-born Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) was initiated into architecture through the fields of masonry, stone carving, stucco decoration, and furniture design before working as an architect in the office of Peter Behrens. By the end of the 1920s, Mies had emerged as one of Germany's leading architects, noted for his visionary skyscraper projects (wherein the apparently weightless and clearly revealed "skin and bone" modern construction permitted the greatest play of light on the building surface), leadership at the Weissenhof housing exhibition (1927) in Stuttgart, and designs for the Barcelona Exhibition (1929) and Tugendhat House (1928-30) in Brno. His work was significant for its attempt to address problems such as standardization of architectural elements and Baukunst (the art of good building, as opposed to manipulation of form for its own sake). Soon after supervising the Bauhaus design school in 1930-33, Mies emigrated to the United States and assumed the directorship of the architecture department at Armour Institute (now Illinois Institute of Technology) for which he designed a master plan (1939-41) and several buildings. Later Mies received commissions for apartment buildings in Chicago: Promontory Apartments (1946-49) and 860-888 Lake Shore Drive Apartments (1948-51), the latter considered the prototypical Miesian (that is, International Style) high-rise structure with features that would recur in his buildings of the next two decades. Refinements of this prototype are found in the Commonwealth Promenade Apartments (1953-56) and Seagram Building in New York (1954-58). Among his last works was the New National Gallery in Berlin, West Germany (1963-69). He received, among other awards, Gold Medals from the Royal Institute of British Architects and the American Institute of Architects.

Philip C. Johnson⁵

Critic, historian, and architect Philip Johnson (b. 1906) was graduated from Harvard University and became associated with the Museum of Modern Art soon after its founding in 1929, directing its innovative department of architecture and later designing its sculpture garden (1953) and two additions (1950, 1964). With critic and historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, he organized the momentous exhibition, "Modern Architecture" (1932), and coauthored The International Style (1932), a manifesto for the vanguard architecture of Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe. Johnson was responsible for inviting Le Corbusier and Mies to the United States. Completing his professional degree in architecture at Harvard in 1943, he subsequently designed several influential residences, including his own Glass House (1949). His association with Mies on the Seagram Building, particularly his design for the Four Seasons Restaurant (1958-59), was a highlight in Johnson's career. His later work includes many New York projects: Asia House (now the Russell Sage Foundation/Robert Sterling Foundation Building), 112 East 64th Street (1958-60), located in the Upper

East Side Historic District; New York State Theater at Lincoln Center (1964); New York State Pavilion (1964, with Richard Foster) for the World's Fair in Flushing; Elmer Holmes Bobst Library and Tisch Hall, New York University (1972, both with Richard Foster); and the American Telephone and Telegraph Building, 550 Madison Avenue (1980-84, with John Burgee). In 1978 the American Institute of Architects awarded him its highest honor, the Gold Medal.

Kahn & Jacobs

Born in New York City, Ely Jacques Kahn⁶ (1884-1972) was educated at Columbia University and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Soon after joining the firm of Buchman & Fox in 1917, he became a partner and assumed effective control of the office, then known as Buchman & Kahn. His best-known designs are those for many skyscrapers of the 1920s and 1930s, which merged the stylistic influences of Art Deco and the Vienna Secession with his interest in oriental art and archaeology.⁷ Extensive travel permitted Kahn to develop a specialized knowledge of building materials. As part of his devotion to architectural education, he organized numerous exhibitions which introduced new ideas in interior and industrial design. Kahn wrote widely for professional journals and in 1935 he published Design in Art and Industry. A fellow of the American Institute of Architects, he lectured extensively, was consultant to the United States Housing Authority, and served as president of the Municipal Art Society.

From 1941 to 1972 Kahn's partner was Robert Allan Jacobs⁸ (b. 1905). Also a native of New York City, Jacobs was educated at Amherst College and Columbia University. After working in Paris as a designer and draftsman for Le Corbusier in 1934-35, he returned to New York and joined the newly formed firm of Harrison & Foulhoux. In 1938 Jacobs began working for Kahn and was soon elevated to partner. In addition to the Seagram Building, the firm's commercial, industrial, and institutional commissions include the Municipal Asphalt Plant, erected in 1941-44 (a designated New York City Landmark), admired as an early use of reinforced concrete in the United States, and several buildings in the Upper East Side Historic District.⁹

Design and Construction¹⁰

The Seagram Company decided to locate its symbol of corporate achievement on Park Avenue, New York's finest residential boulevard which was quickly becoming a center of international business. In 1951 Seagram paid \$4,000,000 for 50,950 sq.ft. of property, including the Montana Apartments, on the east side of the avenue between East 52nd and 53rd streets. In 1954 the company announced it would erect an office building to be completed in 1957, intended to coincide with the centennial of the House of Seagram. In planning its headquarters, Seagram joined that group of American companies which, since the mid-19th century, have sought to establish further their corporate image through architectural patronage, particularly for tall office buildings, a conspicuous symbol of American capitalism.¹¹ The commission first was awarded to the firm of Pereira & Luckman; however, after seeing this proposal, architect-to-be Phyllis Bronfman Lambert convinced her father to hire an architect who would

distinguish the company with an architecturally compelling design. After a two-and-one-half month search, she recommended Ludwig Mies van der Rohe with Philip Johnson as his associate. Bronfman approved the choice and appointed his daughter director of planning.¹² After selecting the final architects, it was decided more land was needed, so an additional 9,000 sq.ft. of adjacent land was bought for \$900,000.

Plans for the new design were filed in March of 1955. At that time the site was occupied by the twelve-story Montana Apartment Building on Park Avenue, a nine-story apartment building on East 53rd Street, and a five-story tenement and row of four-story buildings, all on East 52nd Street. These were demolished between June, 1955, and March, 1956.¹³ Construction began soon afterward.

The owner's "simple" requirements were that the building "be the crowning glory of everyone's work, his own, the contractor's, and Mies's."¹⁴ The building was designed by Mies and Johnson, with Kahn & Jacobs preparing the working drawings. Other consultants were: Jaros, Baum & Bolles, mechanical engineers; Severud-Elstad Krueger, structural engineers; Clifton E. Smith, electrical engineer; Richard Kelly, lighting consultant; Charles Middeldeer & Karl Linn, landscape architects; Bolt-Beranek & Newman, acoustical consultants; and Elaine Lustig, graphic consultant. The general contractor was the George A. Fuller Company.¹⁵ By April, 1955, photographs of a model of the new design were published.¹⁶ It was clearly distinguished from contemporary (and nearby) buildings which, like the General Reinsurance Building at 400 Park Avenue (Emery Roth & Sons, 1956-57), were unmodern "ziggurats" dressed in modern materials, or like the Union Carbide Building, now Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company Headquarters at 270 Park Avenue (Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1960), conformed to International Style tenets but lacked the impressive amenity of public space. In short, the Seagram Building was the "ultimate logical development of the revolutionary ideas which [Mies] evolved thirty-five years earlier."¹⁷

One of Mies's innovative decisions which aggrandized the design was the use of a broad elevated plaza (with a radiant heating system to keep it ice-free,) symmetrically arranged with fountains and weeping beech trees. This was in accordance with the viewpoints of several New York architectural firms such as Kahn & Jacobs, which had been urging Parks Commissioner Robert Moses to propose a revision to the zoning regulations, in order to replace full-site ziggurat towers with large buildings surrounded by open spaces. At that time there were no direct precedents in midtown Manhattan for such a planning scheme. The Rockefeller Center mall, which serves a very different urban design role, unifies a complex of buildings (Associated Architects, 1932-40, and 1947-73, a designated New York City Landmark). Lever House, a glass-skinned slab balanced on a low-rise pedestal which permits entry into an atrium open to the sky, is an earlier solution by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill to the urban siting of skyscrapers. Elevating the Seagram tower above a first-story glazed exterior wall, Mies united the plaza to the lobby. This unity is enhanced through continuous travertine paving and a slab marquee which is, in effect, an exterior extension of the lobby ceiling. The "outside and inside are simply the same."¹⁸ The result was a departure from Mies's previous designs: historian Franz Schulze has noted

that the Seagram Building "is almost unique in [Mies's] American oeuvre for the excellence with which it is wedded to its urban situation."¹⁹

The lobby layout leads visitors to banks of elevators as well as to the monumental spaces for a bar and restaurant located in the opposing wings behind the lobby. Together these elements satisfied the program's demand for a large public space on the ground story.²⁰

Johnson arranged and detailed the lobby to coordinate with the overall character of the building. Great care was taken in selecting cladding materials, even ensuring that appearances would improve as the building aged. In terms of the lobby, this meant, among other items, travertine floors and walls, bronze mullions, and specially designed elevator cab interiors. All details, including square serif lettering and special door hardware, were painstakingly designed to harmonize.

The plans of the tower were arranged to permit the Seagram Company to occupy the first seven stories or about one-third of the total office space of approximately 854,000 sq.ft. Although the \$50/sq.ft. construction cost²¹ (including the price of the land) was twice the usual cost for contemporary office buildings, over 115 tenants would pay high rents to share the remainder of the building, and partake of its luxurious materials, prestigious address, and spacious plaza, not to mention the cachet of having an office in a building designed by an internationally renowned architect. Therefore, the owner expected a thirteen percent return in the first year on its initial investment.

The Seagram Company moved into its new offices in December, 1957, and January, 1958. By July, the popularity of the plaza among New Yorkers was acknowledged in a newspaper account.²² Although temporary Certificates of Occupancy were issued by the Department of Buildings in 1958, the final certificate was not issued until 1959.²³

Description²⁴

The serene lobby efficiently conducts people from the plaza to either the elevators or first-floor restaurant without leading the users to a monumental central space, as do lobbies of traditional Beaux-Arts style buildings. In that way, Mies characteristically relied on the inherent quality of space and detailing rather than the application of ornament to achieve elegance. Although unified by rich materials and understated detailing, the lobby can be divided into three sections: the rectangular (front) portion to the west, the central portion of three corridors and adjacent elevator interiors, and the T-shaped (rear) portion to the east. Uniform throughout these spaces are the ~~travertine~~ floors and walls; a twenty-four foot high ceiling covered in gray glass mosaic set in black cement; and exterior walls of clear glass set within bronze mullions and protected by one bronze bar at chair rail height, added in the 1970s to conform to state law. All lettering for signs is in the square serif style specially chosen for the building. Details and materials are original (or replicas of original components) unless otherwise noted.

granite

The western portion, entered through three revolving doors in the western glass wall, is illuminated by a row of recessed incandescent fixtures along the western edge and multi-bulb incandescent recessed troffer lighting fixtures along the other walls. Two bronze-clad columns divide the space into thirds. Two bronze-framed directory panels (which do not use the square serif alphabet) are located at the eastern side of the space.

The central portion contains three corridors, illuminated by recessed troffers along the long sides, each side of which contains two or three unadorned bronze elevator doors. Each elevator cab is lined with removable panels of stainless steel and bronze mesh in a cartridge-belt pattern and illuminated by a raised plastic grid of square white translucent panels. Each elevator door is surmounted by a recessed fluorescent fixture in the doorway soffit and a translucent signal bar in the wall above. Service doors, four-panel mail boxes, and a standpipe alarm box are all bronze.

The eastern portion contains a rectangular space, entered at the northern and southern sides by paired revolving doors. Two sets of paired service doors pierce the east wall; one bronze-framed elevator control panel, two directories, and one recent bronze-framed fire station panel are located in the west wall. A bronze slab-top desk with leather surface is fixed in the southern half of this space. Attached to this space is a rectangular appendage; it contains a stair- case, of seven risers with bronze railings, which concludes at a clear glass wall with bronze mullions and chair rail (proportioned to reflect the glass wall in the rest of the lobby) and paired central doors. This section is illuminated by a row of recessed fixtures.

Impact

Architectural critics have overwhelmingly praised the Seagram Building. Lewis Mumford called it a "Rolls-Royce" of buildings with "the aesthetic impact that only a unified work of art" enjoys.²⁵ Another contemporary review opined, "Seagram challenges accepted skyscraper practice all the way down the line."²⁶ A generation later, historians would refer to the building as "seminal" and, in describing the ensemble of tower, interior, and Four Seasons Restaurant, "In toto incomparable."²⁷ Always included in surveys such as "The Ten Best Lobbies in New York," the Seagram lobby has been praised as "one of the best urban spaces built in Manhattan this century."²⁸

Conclusion

The Seagram Building's high standards of design and construction have been augmented by a rigorous maintenance program. Soon after construction was completed, the fixed desk was added to its present location. Except for a fire station panel and similar modest additions, the lobby has not been altered from its original condition. In 1980 Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc. sold the building to Teachers Investment & Annuity Association; the sale agreement required the new owner to seek Landmark status for the structure when it became eligible under the thirty-year age requirement.²⁹ The building continues to be one of New York's most prestigious business addresses.

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NOTES

1. This account is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, Lever House Designation Report, report prepared by Alex Herrera (New York, 1982), 3 and Christopher Gray, "Is It Time to Redevelop Park Avenue Again?" New York Times, Real Estate Report "Commercial Property," sec. 13 (May, 14, 1989), pp. 44-47. See also: Robert A.M. Stern, et. al., New York 1900 (New York, 1983), 353-58; Stern, et. al., New York 1930 (New York, 1987), passim; Atlas of the City of New York and Part of the Bronx (New York, 1885), pl. 18; Moses King, King's Handbook of New York, 2nd ed. (New York, 1893), 942-43; New York Public Library, Photographic Views of New York City, 1870's - 1970's (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1981), fiche 0946-C3, D5, E2, E3, F2; Manhattan Land Book, City of New York (New York, 1934), pl. 78; New York City, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 1307, Lot 1. NB 257-1919.
2. See "High Rise Office Buildings," Progressive Architecture 38 (June, 1957), 162 and Insurance Maps of the City of New York, Borough of Manhattan, vols. 4, 6E (New York, 1920-present).
3. Who's Who in America, vol. 31 (Chicago, 1960-61), 362. Samuel Bronfman obituary, NYT, July 11, 1971, p. 46. Bronfman was a noted philanthropist. In recognition, his children established the Samuel Bronfman Biblical and Archaeological Museum at the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem.
4. Mies's biography is based on "Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, ed. Adolf K. Placzek, vol. 3 (New York, 1982), 183-95 and Encyclopedia of 20th Century Architecture, gen. ed. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, rev. & enl. ed. (New York, 1986), 221-28.
5. "Johnson, Philip," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, vol. 2, 499-501; Encyclopedia of 20th Century Architecture, 181-82; American Architects Directory, 2nd ed., ed. George S. Koyl (New York, 1962), 354; LPC, Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report, vol. 1 (New York, 1981), 188.
6. See: "Kahn, Ely Jacques," Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects, vol. 2, 537; American Architects Directory, 2nd ed., 363; Ely Jacques Kahn obituary, NYT, Sept. 6, 1972, p. 48.

7. These include the Squibb Building at 745 Fifth Avenue; 120 Wall Street Building; 2 Park Avenue Building; and buildings at 1400, 1410, and 1450 Broadway. Kahn was also the architect for: Bergdorf Goodman Store; the Jay-Thorpe Building, West 57th Street; the Film Center; Montefiore Hospital; and Hospital for Joint Diseases. For the World's Fair of 1939-40 he designed the Maritime Transportation Building, the General Cigar Building, and the Ballantine Inn. Kahn's residential projects included: part of the Fort Greene Houses; Gowanus Houses; Carver Houses; and Hudson Manor Apartments.
8. See American Architects Directory, 343; "Inventory of a Collection of Architectural Drawings from the Office of Kahn & Jacobs, Including the Works of their Predecessor Firms, Compiled by Janet Parks" (typescript at the Avery Architectural Library of Columbia University, 1978).
9. See LPC, Municipal Asphalt Plant Designation Report (New York, 1976); LPC, Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report (New York, 1981). Other works by Kahn & Jacobs include: 100 Park Avenue; 1407 Broadway; parts of Mount Sinai Hospital; and the American Airlines Terminal at J.F. Kennedy International Airport.
10. See Paul Noll, "Discriminatory Taxation: The Seagram Building," Comment 3, no. 2 (Apr., 1965), 17; "New Thinking on Office Buildings," Architectural Forum 99 (Sept., 1953), 123; G.E. Kidder Smith, The Architecture of the United States: New England and the Mid-Atlantic States (New York, 1981), 551-52; "Bronze Monument in the Sky," Empire State Architect 16 (Oct., 1956), 72; "Seagram's Bronze Tower," Architectural Forum 109 (July, 1958), 68-77; Arthur Drexler, "The Seagram Building; Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, Architects," Architectural Record 123 (June, 1958), 140.
11. See Kenneth Turney Gibbs, Business Architectural Imagery in America, 1870-1930 (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1984), esp. 1, 4, 169.
12. Franz Schulze, Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography (Chicago & London, 1985), 270-71; "Park Ave. To Get New Skyscraper," NYT, July 13, 1954, p. 25; "Seagram's Bronze Tower," 77. "Seagram's Plans Plaza Tower in New York," Architectural Forum 102 (Apr., 1955), 9.
13. The plans filed on March 29, 1955, must have been submitted as an amendment to the original application (NB 97-1954) because the docket book shows no new applications for that site on that date. The block and lot folder is incomplete. See "Seagram Offices Get Final Plan," NYT, Mar. 30, 1955, p. 50. Regarding the demolitions, see NYC, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 1307, Lot 1. DEMO's 367-1955, 387-1955, 524-1955, 31-1956.
14. Phyllis Lambert, Testimony given before the LPC at a public hearing, May 17, 1988. Item No. 1 (LP-1664).
15. "The Seagram Building," Arts and Architecture 77 (Jan., 1960), 15.

16. "Seagram's Plans Plaza Tower in New York," Architectural Forum 102 (Apr., 1955), 11.
17. Jurgen Joedicke, A History of Modern Architecture, trans. James C. Palmes (London, 1959), 77 [caption to fig. 132].
18. Lewis Mumford, "The Lesson of the Master," Journal of the A.I.A. 31 (Jan., 1959), 21.
19. Franz Schulze, Letter to LPC dated May 10, 1988, n.p. (LP file).
20. To accommodate other program requirements, the pristine slab rests on three subterranean levels and is backed by a ten-story "bustle," full-height spine, and five-story wings.
21. In 1958 the estimated cost was published as \$35,000,000. According to Seagram Vice President Arthur S. Margolin in a conversation on June 26, 1989, the cost of construction was approximately \$40,000,000.
22. "Footsore Here Finds Oasis at Seagram Building Plaza," NYT, July 26, 1958, p. 12.
23. See "Monument in Bronze," Time, Mar. 3, 1958, p. 54; NYC, Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets, Block 1307, Lot 1. C of O 48433-58 (temp) and C of O 51303-59.
24. "The Seagram Building," 14; "Seagram's Bronze Tower," 73.
25. Mumford, 19-20.
26. "Seagram's Bronze Tower," 67.
27. William J.R. Curtis, Modern Architecture Since 1900 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1983), 266; Smith, 550-51.
28. See, for example, Peter Blake, "The Ten Best Lobbies in New York," New York Times Magazine, Dec. 28, 1975, p. 13.
29. "Extract of Closing Memorandum Sale of Seagram Building, entered into between Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc. and Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America in virtue of Agreement of Purchase and Sale dated February 15, 1980," Articles 26 (pp. 56-73) and 28 (p. 75) (photocopies submitted to LPC by Canadian Centre for Architecture.)

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this structure, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Seagram Building, first floor interior, consisting of the lobby and passenger elevator cabs and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including but not limited to, interior piers, wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, railings, elevator doors, elevator indicators, and signs, has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, and the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Seagram Building, first floor interior, is an integral part of the tower, a seminal example of International Style architecture; that the bronze-clad columns and other carefully crafted rich components are common to both lobby and tower; that the lobby is inherently bound to the plaza through the use of common paving materials, transparent glass walls, and strong horizontal features; that the first floor interior was designed in 1954-55 by architectural master Ludwig Mies van der Rohe with Philip Johnson and erected in 1956-58; that it is Mies's only building in New York City and is the climax of his ideas on tall office structures, which began in the 1920s; that the realization of the building's interior was made possible by a rare coalition of talented consultants and by pioneering efforts of research and fabrication; that the mosaic-clad ceiling, bronze lobby appointments, specially designed elevator cabs and other features produce a rich but understated lobby; that this interior is accentuated by an innovative illumination scheme and other technical features; and that this first-floor interior was commissioned by the notable firm of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, and has been kept virtually intact through a foresighted maintenance program.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark the Seagram Building, first floor interior, consisting of the lobby and passenger elevator cabs and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including but not limited to, interior piers, wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, railings, elevator doors, elevator indicators, and signs, 375 Park Avenue, Borough of Manhattan and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 1307, Lot 1 as its Landmark Site.

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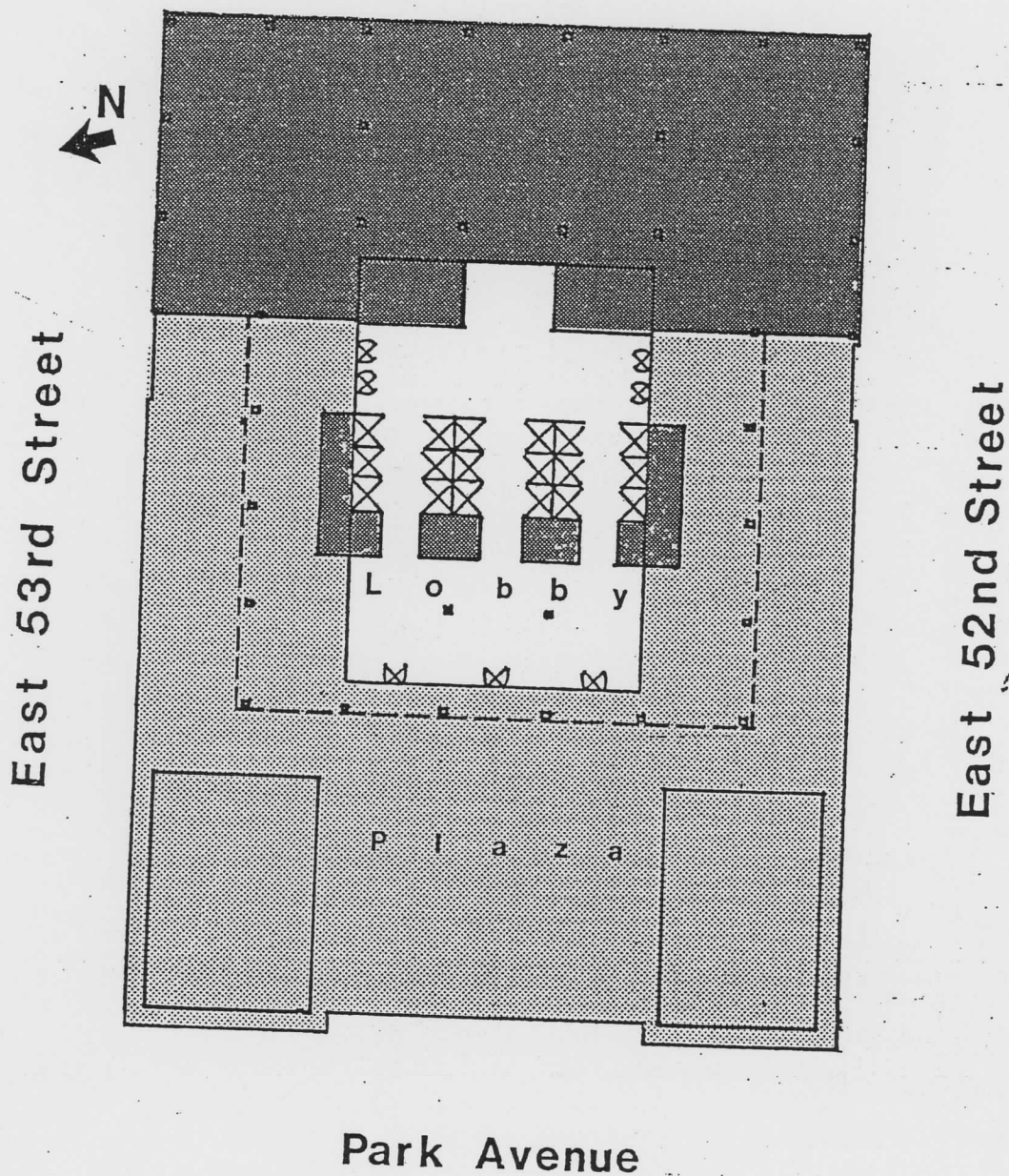
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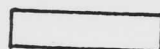


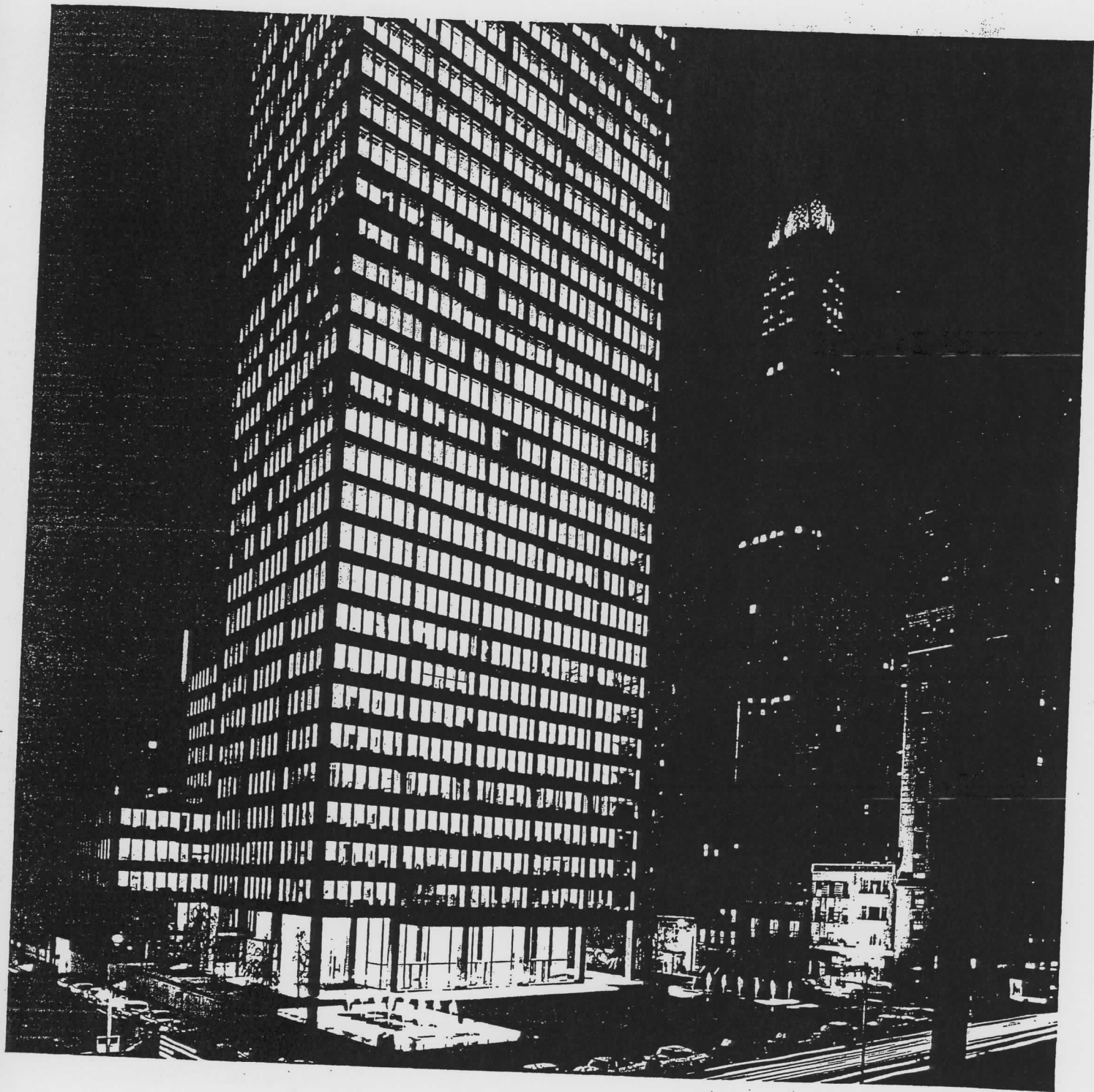
SEAGRAM BUILDING

375 Park Avenue

Exterior Designation

Interior Designation





SEAGRAM BUILDING, FIRST FLOOR INTERIOR Original plaza & nighttime lighting
Photograph by Ezra Stoller, 1958 Courtesy of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Seagram Building
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, New York

DATE RECEIVED: 1/12/06 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/03/06
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/18/06 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 2/25/06
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 06000056

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: Y
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

✓ ACCEPT _____ RETURN _____ REJECT _____ 2-24-06 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

An icon of the Modern movement and a seminal work of master modernist Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and an early example of Philip Johnson's work, the Seagram Building is an internationally acclaimed symbol of American corporate architecture. Retaining a high degree of historic integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, the building is nationally, exceptionally significant within the context of American modernism and the oeuvre of Mies' body of work.

RECOM./CRITERIA *Accept C, g.*

REVIEWER *Savage* DISCIPLINE *Architectural History*

TELEPHONE _____ DATE *2/24/06*

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



[49]646 0431 1 2

Seagram Building
New York County, NY
1.

SEAGRAM BUILDING
NEW YORK, NY
PHOTO 1



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Seagram Building
New York County, NY

2.

SEAGRAM BUILDING
NEW YORK, NY
PHOTO 2



[73]646 0431 1 1

Seagram Building
New York County, N.Y.
3.

SEAGRAM BUILDING
NEW YORK, NY
PHOTO 3



Seagram Building
New York County, NY

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SEAGRAM BUILDING
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Seagram Building
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5.

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SEAGRAM BUILDING
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Seagram Building
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Seagram Building
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SEAGRAM BUILDING
NEW YORK, NY
PHOTO 7



Seagram Building
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SEAGRAM BUILDING

NEW YORK, NY

PHOTO 8



Seagram Building
New York County, N.Y.
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SEAGRAM BUILDING
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Seagram Building
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SEAGRAM BUILDING
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PHOTO 10



Seagram Building
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SEAGRAM BUILDING

NEW YORK, NY

PHOTO 11



Seagram Building
New York County, N.Y.
12.

1590646 0431 1 1

SEAGRAM BUILDING
NEW YORK, NY
PHOTO 12



SEAGRAM BUILDING
NEW YORK, NY
PHOTO 13

Seagram Building
New York County, NY.

13.

[65]646 043111



Seagram Building
New York County, NY
14.

[25]646 0431 1 1

SEAGRAM BUILDING
NEW YORK, NY
PHOTO 14



Seagram Building
New York County, NY
15

[27]646 0431 1-1

SEAGRAM BUILDING
NEW YORK, NY
PHOTO 15



Seagram Building
New York County, NY
16.

1 1 1540 949001

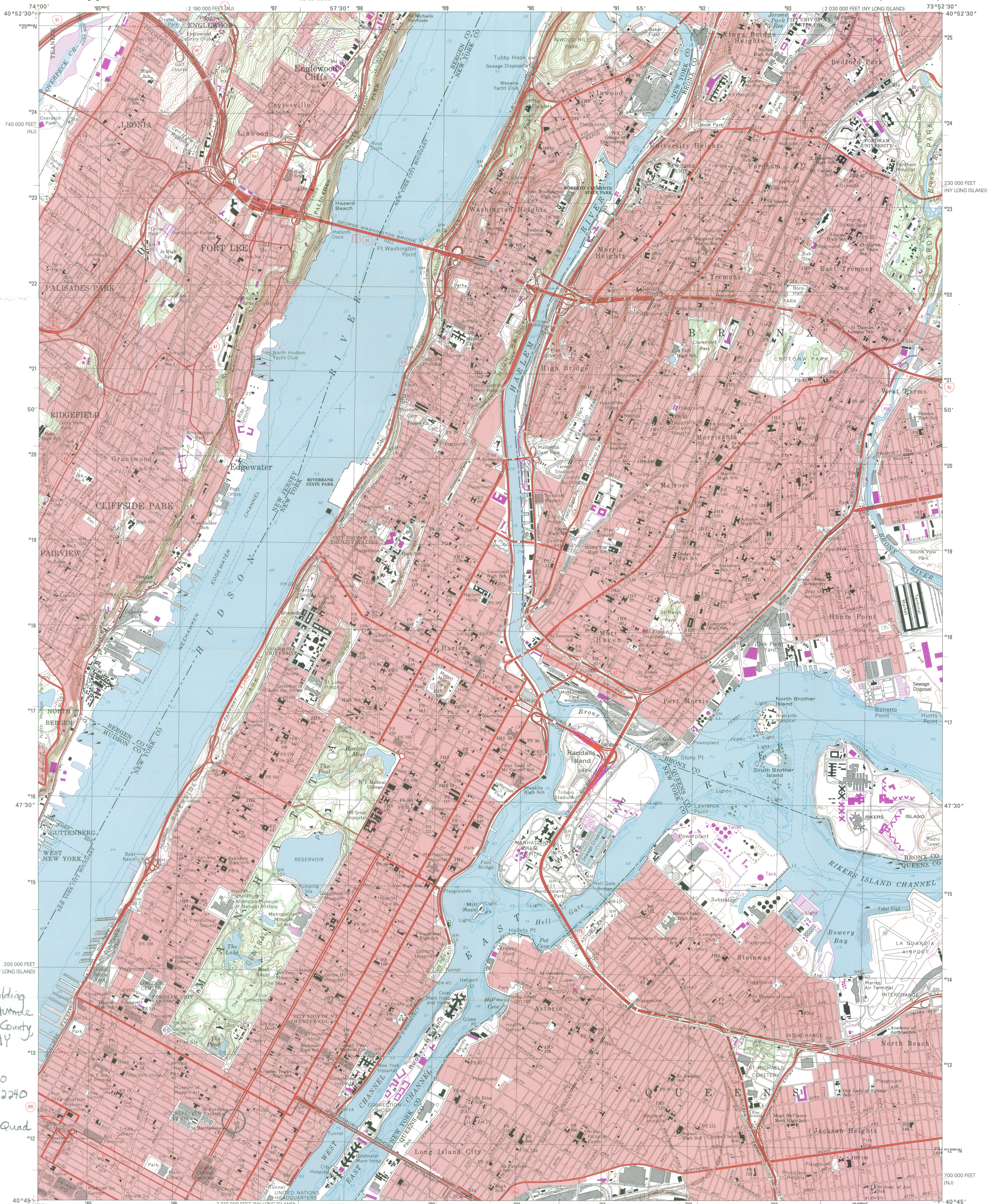
SEAGRAM BUILDING
NEW YORK, NY
PHOTO 16



Seagram Building
New York County, NY
17.

1 1 1240 949321

SEAGRAM BUILDING
NEW YORK, NY
PHOTO 17

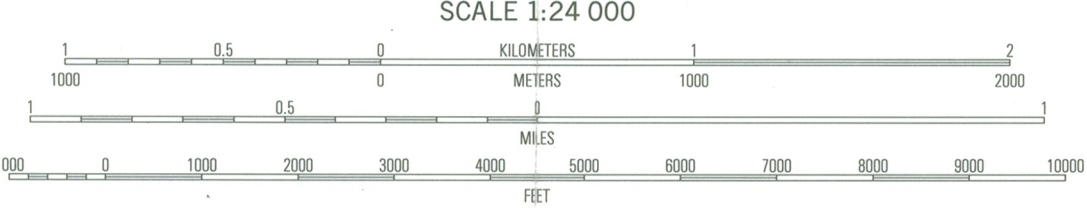
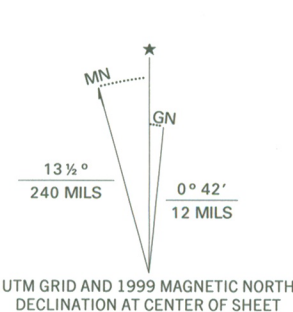


Seagram Building
375 Park Avenue
New York County
NY

Zone 18
Easting 586710
Northing 4512240

USGS
Central Park Quad
1:24000

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1966. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1977 and other sources. Photomapped using imagery dated 1995; no major culture or drainage changes observed. Survey control current as of 1966. Boundaries, other than corporate, revised 1999.
Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS charts 226, 274, 745, 746, and 747 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes.
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27)
Projection: New York coordinate system, Long Island zone (transverse Mercator)
10 000-foot ticks: New York coordinate system, Long Island zone and New Jersey coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 18
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software.
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map.
Information shown in purple may not meet USGS content standards and may conflict with previously mapped contours.



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET, DATUM IS MEAN LOWER LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY
4 FEET IN THE HUDSON RIVER AND 5.7 FEET IN THE EAST RIVER
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway
Secondary highway
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U.S. Route
State Route

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

CENTRAL PARK, NY-NJ
1995
NIMA 6265 IV SW-SERIES V821





The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North, New York NY 10007 TEL: 212-669-7922 FAX: 212-669-7797

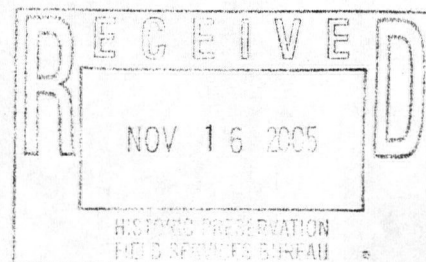
<http://nyc.gov/landmarks/>



RONDA WIST
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
rwist@lpc.nyc.gov

November 10, 2005

Ms. Ruth Pierpont, Director
New York State Office of Parks Recreation
and Historic Preservation
Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau
Peebles Island
P.O. Box 189
Waterford, New York 12188-0189



Re: Seagram Building, 375 Park Avenue, New York, New York

Dear Ms. Pierpont:

I write on behalf of Chair Robert B. Tierney in response to your request for comment on the eligibility of the Seagram Building in Manhattan for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The Commission supports the nomination of the Seagram Building. In 1989, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to designate the Seagram Building a New York City exterior and interior landmark. The only building in New York designed by the modern master Mies van der Rohe, the Seagram Building is considered to be the greatest of the International Style skyscrapers erected in the postwar era.

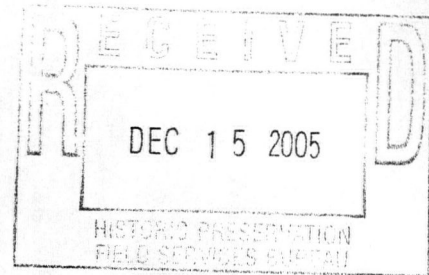
Based on the Commission's review of the building and the materials submitted by the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau, the Commission has determined that the Seagram Building appears to meet the criteria for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Sincerely yours,

Ronda Wist

cc: Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Mary Beth Betts

375 Park Avenue L.P.
c/o RFR Holding Corp
390 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10022



November 17, 2005

Ms. Kathy Howe
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
Peebles Island
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Re: National Register Nomination
Seagram Building
375 Park Avenue
New York, New York County

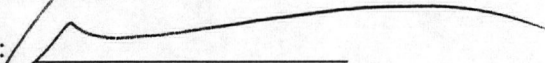
Dear Ms. Howe:

I am writing to express the enthusiastic support of 375 Park Avenue L.P., the owner of the Seagram Building, for the proposed listing of this building on the National Register of Historic Places.

Yours truly,

375 Park Avenue L.P.

By: 375 GP LLC
Managing Member

By: 
Aby Rosen
President



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau
Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

December 22, 2005

Ms. Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW
8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: Transmittal of National Register
Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to transmit two National Register nominations to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register as follows:

Seagram Building, New York, New York Co., NY

Charles Davis Homer House, Lloyd Harbor, Suffolk Co., NY

Please feel free to call on me at 518-237-8643 ext. 3258 if any questions arise.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Peckham
National Register
Program Coordinator

enclosures