

# THIS IS NEW YORK, 1968-2008

THE 196 CULTURAL WORKS THAT BEST DEFINED THE CITY SINCE THIS MAGAZINE BEGAN



APRIL 14, 2008

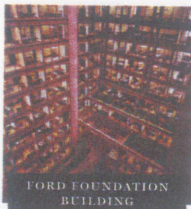
THE  
NEW YORK  
CANON

## Architecture

Where the mightiest towers meet the most delicate details.

BY JUSTIN DAVIDSON

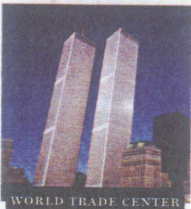
**Y**ES, YES, I KNOW: *What!? 40 Bond but no 40 Mercer? Yes to the Lipstick Building, but no to the LVMH Tower?* I share your pain: Despite what people say, we just don't live in a design-poor city. So I chose work that had major impact, upheld its ideals, and became a part of our lives. I left out most private interiors, and I chose each architect's greatest, not largest, work. That's why Renzo Piano's Morgan Library made the cut and his Times Tower didn't. And I omitted the new Pritzker winner, Jean Nouvel, because I think his best New York work is yet to come.



FORD FOUNDATION BUILDING

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1968

Dinkeloo designed a corporate terrarium that oxygenates the office air. Employees look in, not out, on nature: The best views are of the atrium. It's a vertical park, and one that East 42nd Street sorely needed. (Technically, it opened in December 1967, but it was the talk of '68.)



WORLD TRADE CENTER

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1973

Minoru Yamasaki's Twin Towers seemed to have stepped on the city rather than grown out of it, but in their defiant bulk they did represent New York swagger. Even the holes they left, in the sky and in the ground, triggered a surge of interest in the city's future shape.



CITICORP CENTER

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1977

A pillar of brawn in a silken skin, Hugh Stubbins & Associates' Citicorp defies a midtown skyline full of flattops with its rakish

Long before green became a cause more than a color, Kevin Roche and John

slanted roof. The tower seems to be hoisting itself into the atmosphere, an impression strengthened by the sunken plaza and the boosterlike columns at the midpoint of each side, at once powerful and dainty.

BATTERY PARK CITY  
1979  
(MASTER PLAN)

Thirty years after it was planned as a brick-and-nostalgia evocation of the Upper West Side, Battery Park City has rescued the waterfront from a century's worth of defunct docks. Sailboats launch from an adorable marina, joggers commune with harbor views, and a neighborhood built on landfill has finally, unexpectedly, acquired character.

PAUL RUDOLPH PENTHOUSE  
1977-1997

Perched like an urban tree house on a block stiff with Knickerbocker gentility, Rudolph's four-level assemblage of modern boxes and lattice-covered balconies foams over the top of a Georgian town-

house. Twenty years of his tinkering added floating planes, stairs without railings, and vertiginous openings to multistory drops; it's a showcase for the glamorous, childless Manhattan life.

FIREHOUSE FOR ENGINE CO. 233, LADDER CO. 176  
1985

A Brooklyn cocktail, toughness topped with theory. In Peter Eisenman's Bed-Stuy firehouse, the first floor is all no-nonsense defiance. Then the silvery upper story sweeps back at 45 degrees to the street, following the line of the nearby el and giving depth to the Mondrian grid.

THE NOGUCHI MUSEUM  
1985

In one of those undistinguished old factory buildings that litter neighborhoods like Long Island City, the sculptor Isamu Noguchi birthed what would become a posthumous museum to himself. Outside, it looks like nothing, but the concrete floors, exposed I-beams, and rough/polished hunks of stone, bathed in milky daylight, make it a lovely postindustrial oasis.

THE LIPSTICK BUILDING  
1986

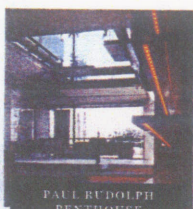
Philip Johnson, that wily New York character, could make appalling errors in judgment, but this seemingly retractable tower wasn't one of them. The oval cylinder sheathed in coral-colored stone, bearing a smaller cylinder and then another, might have been another preening postmodern gewgaw if it were in, say, Houston. On blah Third Avenue, it's more like a reproach: *Lighten up!*

NEW YORK TIMES PRINTING PLANT  
1997

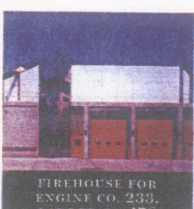
In the world's capital of branding, even the Gray Lady plasters her name across its plant, like a giant copy of the *Times* hanging off the breakfast table. The paper made the switch to color late, but with gusto, installing new presses in Pol-



BATTERY PARK CITY



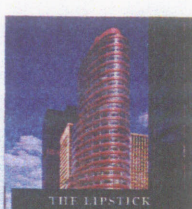
PAUL RUDOLPH PENTHOUSE



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THE NOGUCHI MUSEUM



THE LIPSTICK BUILDING