

Landmarks Preservation Commission
April 23, 1985, Designation List 179
IP-1449

INTERNATIONAL BUILDING, ground floor interior consisting of the central Fifth Avenue entrance lobby extending westward to the eastern wall of the elevator banks; mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the Fifth Avenue entrance lobby extending westward to the eastern wall of the elevator banks; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including, but not limited to, wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, escalators, light fixtures, indicator signs, directory boards, service doors, and revolving doors; 630 Fifth Avenue, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1934-35; architects The Associated Architects.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1266, Lot 1 in part consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On September 20, 1983, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the International Building, ground floor interior consisting of the central Fifth Avenue entrance lobby extending westward to the eastern wall of the elevator banks; mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the Fifth Avenue entrance lobby extending westward to the eastern wall of the elevator banks; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including, but not limited to, wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, escalators, light fixtures, indicator signs, directory boards, service doors, and revolving doors; and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 4). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Nineteen witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The representatives of Rockefeller Center, Inc., expressed support for a limited designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The ground floor interior with accompanying mezzanine floor interior of the International Building, built in 1934-35 to the designs of the Associated Architects, is one of the grandest and most dramatic interior spaces in the Rockefeller Center complex and a major component of the Center's second largest building. The International Building in its form and siting is aligned along an east-west axis at the northern end of the Center, and the main lobby follows that axis. This four-story high space with its sleek materials and streamlined forms draws visitors and tenants from Fifth Avenue up the high speed escalators to the mezzanine and into corridors leading to elevator banks rising the height of the 41-story building. While a wide array of sculpture adorns the exterior of the building, the lobby gains its effect, not primarily from its art, but from the form of the space and its decorative finishes. The elements of the design and rich materials are not only characteristic of modernistic design, but are also some of the finest examples of their type. All appropriately enhance the progressive and international image of one of New York's finest office buildings. Incorporation of sculptural pieces in 1975 and 1978 have only enhanced that effect.

The International Building and Rockefeller Center

Rockefeller Center is one of the most important architectural projects ever undertaken in America. It was unprecedented in scope, near visionary in its urban planning and unequalled for its harmonious integration of architecture, art and landscaping. The complex grew out of an ill-fated plan to build new midtown quarters for the Metropolitan Opera Company. When the original scheme collapsed, the project was transformed into the private commercial enterprise of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Construction of the original complex began in 1931 and ended with the completion of the fourteenth building in 1939.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (1874-1960) was born in Cleveland, Ohio. After graduating from Brown University in 1897 he joined his father's office and for some years held directorships of such businesses as the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, United States Steel Corporation and Missouri Pacific Railroad among others. By about 1911, however, Rockefeller had become almost totally involved with philanthropic, civic, educational and religious enterprises such as the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, the Rockefeller Foundation, Rockefeller Sanitary Commission and International Education Board to name a few only. A devout Baptist, he also founded the Institute for Social and Religious Research and funded construction of Riverside Church (1927-30). The latter was just one of the many architectural undertakings which Rockefeller sponsored. He also funded the restoration of the palaces at Fontainebleau and Versailles and Reims Cathedral in France, the Agora and Stoa of Attolos in Athens, and in America, Washington Irving's "Sunnyside" home, Colonial Williamsburg and the birthplace of George Washington. He also supplied the land for the Museum of Modern Art, for the Rockefeller Institute and Fort Tryon where he built the Cloisters. Later, in 1946, Rockefeller donated land for the construction of the United Nations along the East River and gave generously to Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.[1] Although never an opera devotee, he supported the Metropolitan Opera project as just one more worthy civic and cultural cause.

Rockefeller's involvement in the project to relocate the Metropolitan Opera began on May 21, 1928, when Benjamin Morris presented the scheme to potential investors during a dinner at the Metropolitan Club. Among the guests was Ivy Lee, Rockefeller's public relations manager. He recommended the proposal to his employer, noting that it would "make the [Opera] Square and the immediate surroundings the most valuable shopping district in the world." [2] Rockefeller was interested. He, his sister and father lived in three large houses on W. 53rd and 54th Streets (just three blocks north of the proposed Opera site) and owned a good deal of real estate in the area. Development of a cultural center would insure the quality of his neighborhood while increasing the value of his speculative properties. But before making any commitment, Rockefeller sought development advice from prominent real estate advisors, the Todd, Robertson & Todd Engineering Corp. among them.

John Reynard Todd (1867-1945) was a lawyer who, in partnership with Henry Clay Irons, became accidentally involved in construction and rentals. Todd & Irons developed their building activities into a lucrative business through which they erected and sold at large profits numerous hotels, apartments and commercial structures. Among them was the Cunard Building

whose lobby was designed by Benjamin Morris and which stood directly across the street from Rockefeller's Standard Oil Building at 26 Broadway. When Irons retired in 1919 Todd went into partnership with his physician brother, Dr. James M. Todd (c.1870-1939), and Hugh S. Robertson (1880-1951), a specialist in real estate and financial management. Together they were responsible for the internal planning, construction and rental of the Ritz and Barclay Hotels, Postum Building and the fabulously successful Graybar Building which they linked to Grand Central Terminal with corridors.

John R. Todd was the personal friend of Thomas M. Debevoise and Charles O. Heydt, Rockefeller's legal and real estate advisors and it was due to them that he became involved in the Opera project. It was through Debevoise that Todd's son Webster (in the engineering firm of Todd & [Joseph O.] Brown) was engaged in Rockefeller's restoration of Colonial Williamsburg in 1928. And through Heydt that Todd, his brother and Robertson were hired to develop Rockefeller's midtown complex. Heydt informed Rockefeller that Todd had been involved "in very large enterprises, [had] architects in his own office, and --- [had] never made a failure. He [understood] thoroughly the matter of financing the construction of large buildings...and would be in a position to help prospective tenants...construct their own buildings." Todd, he said, was "a hard-headed business man." [3]

Todd, Robertson & Todd was one of five real estate firms to advise Rockefeller on the development potential of the Opera project in autumn, 1928. In addition to the Opera and its plaza (to be designed by Benjamin Morris), the firm recommended a remarkably progressive mixed use complex including hotels, apartment and office buildings, a shopping arcade and department store (the latter in continuation of the development of Fifth Avenue with such fashionable counterparts as Saks and Altmans). The plan also included two new private streets and a lower level for vehicular traffic, parking and freight deliveries. The scheme was prepared over Labor Day weekend, 1928, by two little known, 38 year old architects on Todd's staff: I. Andrew Reinhard and Henry Hofmeister.

Under Todd's directive, Reinhard & Hofmeister prepared an improved plan in mid-September, 1928. Two weeks later (October 1, 1928) Rockefeller made a commitment to lease from Columbia College the three blocks between 48th-51st Streets. The land stretched west from Fifth Avenue but stopped short of Sixth Avenue where street frontage was privately owned. (In subsequent years Rockefeller acquired the western lots as well). The Columbia contract was not actually signed until December 31, 1928, at which point Rockefeller agreed to pay approximately \$3.5 million annual rent during 1928-1952 with options for three 21-year renewals.

On October 1, 1929 (precisely a year after Rockefeller agreed to lease the Columbia property) Todd, Robertson & Todd were appointed managers of the project. Their mandate was to "build the thing, put it on a profitable basis, and sell it to the world." [4] By the end of October their staff architects (Reinhard & Hofmeister) were named architects of the development. They were experienced in the internal layouts preferred by Todd and familiar with his theory that "business property income production supercedes pure aesthetics." [5] Todd recommended at the same time that Harvey Corbett and Benjamin Morris be engaged as consulting architects

(although the latter declined after December, 1929). He also suggested employment of Raymond Hood, the man of ideas whose reputation as a leading skyscraper designer had skyrocketed in recent years.

Todd selected architects "who would be primarily interested in good planning, utility, cost, income, low operating expenses and progress...[men who were not too] committed to the architectural past [nor] too much interested in wild modernism." [6] The pooling of eight different talents from three different firms allowed for a division of labor and for an undertaking too large for most private offices of the day. Architecture by committee modified the singular dominance of any one personality, but also seems to have generated competition and controversy. The situation was resolved in February 1930, when the architects united in a collective known as the Associated Architects. Thereafter all drawings bear the three firm names in strict alphabetical order: Corbett, Harrison & MacMurray; Hood, Godley (until 1931) & Fouilhoux; Reinhard & Hofmeister.

The Associated Architects

Corbett, Harrison & MacMurray

Harvey Wiley Corbett (1873-1954) was born to physician parents in San Francisco, California. He was educated at the University of California (1895), the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris (1906) and the atelier of the historicist Jean Louis Pascal. Between 1903 and 1912 he was in partnership with F. Livingston Pell and between 1912 and 1928 with Frank J. Helmle. While a lecturer at the School of Architecture of Columbia University (1907-11, 1920-35), Corbett trained many students in the "Atelier Columbia," which was modeled after the system of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. One of Corbett's major works was the Bush Terminal Building on W. 42nd Street (1923) which established his reputation as a practitioner of "modern" architecture. Its success led Irwin Bush to commission from Corbett designs for the \$10,000,000 Bush House in London. Dedicated to "the friendship to English speaking peoples," this American-English center was to find its counterpart in the British Empire Building at Rockefeller Center.

Corbett was an early and strong advocate of the skyscraper as an urban building form and wrote and lectured extensively in support of this concept. He was a practical architect who envisioned the future city with super-block skyscrapers, tiered streets and multi-level transportation systems. Corbett had a reputation as a skilled planner who worked within budget while remaining aware of the cityscape and urban design. He acted as a consultant to the Regional Plan Association and served on the architectural planning committees for the 1933 Chicago Century of Progress Exposition (beginning in 1929) and the 1939 New York World's Fair.

Corbett was a fellow of both the American Institute of Architects and the Royal Institute of British Architects and received honorary degrees from the University of California, the University of Liverpool and Columbia University. He was a member of the Fine Arts Commission of the State of New York and served as president of the Architectural League of New York and the National Arts Society. [7]

Corbett submitted his "Symposium" design after the retirement of Frank

Helmle in 1928 and his establishment of a new partnership with William MacMurray and Wallace Harrison. Together they designed the Roerich Museum and Master Apartments on Riverside Drive in New York and the Horace Bushnell Memorial Hall in Hartford, Connecticut. Because of the latter experience in theater design and because of Corbett's formidable reputation, the Rockefeller developers were anxious to secure the firm's expertise.

William H. MacMurray (1868-1941) became associated with Corbett some time before 1927. His prime concern was the partnership's business affairs. He had little to do with the design of the Rockefeller Center project.[8]

Wallace K. Harrison (1895-1982), by contrast, was very much involved in matters of design and after the death of Raymond Hood in 1934 he exerted an increasingly strong influence on Rockefeller Center's architectural form. He was also responsible for one of the Center's new buildings on the west side of Sixth Avenue.

Harrison was born to a foundry superintendent in Worcester, Massachusetts. He quit school at 14 to take a \$5.00/wk job as an office boy with the contracting firm of O.W. Norcross, simultaneously attending Worcester Polytechnic Institute. In 1915 he became a draftsman in the New York office of McKim, Mead & White and attended evening classes at the atelier of Harvey Corbett. In 1917 Harrison enrolled in the Ecole des Beaux Arts. He then returned briefly to McKim, Mead & White before winning a Rotch Traveling Scholarship and a year at the American Academy in Rome. Upon his return to New York in 1922 Harrison became a draftsman for Bertram Goodhue who was then engaged on the Nebraska State Capitol. In 1926 Harrison married Ellen Milton whose brother was the son-in-law of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and in the following year, joined in partnership with Corbett, Helmle (soon to retire) and MacMurray.

In 1935 Harrison left Corbett's office and formed a partnership with J. Andre Fouilhoux who had worked with Raymond Hood until the latter's death in 1934. Six years later Max Abramowitz (1908-1959) was taken on as a partner. When Fouilhoux died in 1945 the firm survived as Harrison & Abramowitz and went on to become one of the most successful postwar architectural concerns in America. Included among its works are parts of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Nelson Rockefeller's Empire State Plaza in Albany and the United Nations (for which Rockefeller donated the land in 1946). In 1967 Harrison was awarded the gold medal of the American Institute of Architects for his "demonstrated ability to lead a team in producing significant architectural works of high quality over a period of more than 30 years." [9]

Hood, Godley & Fouilhoux

Raymond Mathewson Hood (1881-1934) was born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. He studied at Brown University before transferring to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1900 and later, the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris (1905, 1908-10). As a draftsman he was employed in the offices of Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson, Boston; Palmer, Hornbostel & Jones, New York; and Henry Hornbostel, Pittsburgh. He set up his own office in New York in 1914, but did not achieve any great architectural success until

1922. In that year John Mead Howells asked Hood to join him in submitting a design for the Chicago Tribune competition. Their winning scheme was a soaring tower terminating in setback peaks and flying buttresses of neo-Gothic design, distinguished by its logical plan and clarity of design. The competition established Hood's reputation as a skyscraper designer and brought his firm several notable commissions: the American Radiator Building, Daily News Building and the McGraw Hill Building, all in New York City, and all in the years immediately preceding Rockefeller's development. Hood was also associated with Harvey Corbett on plans for the Chicago Century of Progress Exposition of 1933.[10] His good working relationship with Corbett, together with Hood's originality and the publicity generated by his previous skyscraper designs, were positive factors in his selection for the new complex. Before his premature death in 1934, Hood played a dominant role in the design of Rockefeller Center. He was responsible for the introduction of building setbacks and rooftop gardens, the establishment of uniformly low-rise elevations along Fifth Avenue and significantly, the suggestion to bring the radio industry to the Center.

Hood was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, a president of the Architectural League of New York, and a trustee of the Beaux Arts Institute of Design. He received the Medal of Honor of the Architectural League in 1926, and in 1940 was posthumously awarded a gold medal from the New York Chapter of the AIA.

Hood brought to the Center Godley and Fouilhoux, his partners since the mid 1920s. Frederick A. Godley (1887-1961) received his B.A. from Yale University (1908), an M.A. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1910) and a diploma of architecture from the Ecole des Beaux Arts (1913). After working in the Boston architectural office of Guy Lowell, he established his own firm in 1915 (Godley & Haskell, 1913-18; Godley & Sedgwick, 1918-24). In 1924 he joined Raymond Hood in the firm of Hood, Godley & Fouilhoux, specializing in the business affairs of the office. He left the firm in 1931, while the Rockefeller Center project was underway, to join the faculty of the Yale University School of Architecture, where he taught until 1947. Godley was also a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and chairman of the educational committee of the Beaux Arts Institute of Design.[11]

Jacques Andre Fouilhoux (1879-1945), a Paris-born engineer, received his training at the Ecole Centrale des Arts et Manufactures. Emigrating to the United States in 1904, he established the firm of Fouilhoux & Whiteside in Portland, Oregon in 1908. He later worked for Albert Kahn, noted industrial architect, in Detroit, among others. After World War I Fouilhoux moved to New York where he formed a partnership with Raymond Hood in 1927. Following Hood's death, Fouilhoux became partners with Wallace K. Harrison (formerly of Corbett, Harrison & MacMurray) and together they continued to be involved with Rockefeller Center. With their new partner Max Abramowitz they designed the Rockefeller Apartments, general plans, major buildings, Trylon and Perisphere for the New York World's Fair of 1939. In collaboration with others Fouilhoux designed the Fort Greene and Clinton Hill housing projects in Brooklyn. He fell to his death from one of their roofs in 1945. Fouilhoux was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and served as treasurer of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design.[12]

Reinhard & Hofmeister

I. Andrew Reinhard (1891-1964) was the son of a carpenter-cabinet maker who, at age 14, became an office boy for Benjamin Morris (the architect initially commissioned to design the new Opera). Reinhard then studied at the Mechanics Institute in New York and finished his formal education at the Beaux-Arts Society of Design. He then returned to Morris' firm as a junior designer and worked in other prominent offices, notably that of Raymond Hood (who would later make some of the greatest contributions to Rockefeller Center). Reinhard then spent eight years with Todd, Robertson & Todd during which time he and Hofmeister worked on rentals and interior layouts for the Graybar Building. In 1928 Reinhard & Hofmeister formed a partnership.[13]

Henry Hofmeister (1891-1962) was a self-trained architect who, after only two years of high school, joined the firm of Warren & Wetmore. He worked there for 17 years before joining Todd, Robertson & Todd. Hofmeister acquired a reputation for being methodical and having a good knowledge of such practical matters as plumbing, ventilation and efficient interior layouts. He organized the Rockefeller Center architectural office and supervised the preparation of the necessary architectural drawings. He was, according to Reinhard, "the man who got the work out." Following the completion of Rockefeller Center, the partners received gold medals for their work from the Architectural League of New York and the Fifth Avenue Association.[14]

Other works later executed by Reinhard & Hofmeister include the World's Fair Hall of Music of 1939 (which has many spatial similarities to Radio City Music Hall); the Federal Building at John F. Kennedy International Airport; the Chrysler Building East; buildings for the New York Medical College; Chase Manhattan Bank; the Italian, Swedish and Waterman steamship lines; the Dun and Bradstreet home office building in New York; the surgical building and research center of the New England Medical Center in Boston; the Deeds Carillon Tower in Dayton, Ohio; and the World War II American cemetery chapel at Neuville en Condroz in Belgium. In 1947 the firm expanded as Reinhard, Hofmeister & Walquist, but dissolved upon Reinhard's retirement in 1956.

Reinhard was a member of the National Commission of Fine Arts in Washington in 1945-50, a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and served as an officer of the New York Chapter of the AIA, the Architectural League and Municipal Art Society. Hofmeister served as a consultant during World War II to Nelson Rockefeller, then coordinator of Inter-American Affairs with the State Department. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects, the New York Building Congress and the Architectural League of New York, directing the League's program for aiding unemployed or needy architects for a number of years. Shortly before his death, Hofmeister served as a planning consultant on the Lincoln Center project.

Throughout the proceedings Rockefeller had intended to share costs with the Opera and to develop the site with buildings constructed by individual tenants. He never planned to carry the entire lease by himself, nor did he ever consider taking on full responsibility for its architectural development. But finding himself at an annual loss of more

than \$3,000,000 for the lease of the 12 acres, he boldly proceeded --- in the teeth of the Depression --- to develop the largest private enterprise ever undertaken in America.

Arrangements had been made for the Radio Group to occupy the western half of the site, but the prestigious Fifth Avenue frontage was still undetermined. In the course of evolution the design had variously called for a department store and fashionable shopping arcades leading off Fifth Avenue only to be replaced by a scheme for a grand open plaza in the foreground of the Opera. This plan was succeeded in turn by others, the most notable being Rockefeller's infamous "oilcan." An oval structure intended to draw pedestrians around its curve into the heart of the complex, it was too unconventional for the sedate traditions of Fifth Avenue. In spring 1931, this design was also abandoned when its expected tenant, Chase National Bank, failed to win exclusive banking rights at Rockefeller Center.[15] In subsequent schemes the oval was replaced by paired, low-rise rectangular blocks. This modification was not only more sympathetic to the scale and character of Fifth Avenue (an aspect which would be continued in the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Building of 1950-52), but had the additional advantage of increasing commercial space. Only one problem remained. The buildings had no tenants, nor were American prospects likely as the Depression forced corporate retrenchment.

Hugh Robertson solved the problem in the spring of 1931 when he suggested occupancy by foreign interests. His proposal was realized during a trip to Europe that autumn when contracts were signed with English and French consortia. The former agreed to take the northern rectangle on Fifth Avenue; the latter, its southern twin. The landscaped passage between these English and French buildings was appropriately dubbed "The Channel Gardens."

From 1932 to 1934 lease negotiations for the other international buildings were conducted with various clients, including representatives from Sweden, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Germany, China, Japan and even Russia. There were also discussions with a Pan-American group. Aside from favorable publicity, tenant inducements included an attractive federal policy of delayed duty payments and the establishment of a Customs Bureau at Rockefeller Center, thereby obviating costly charges for storage and shipping from port to Customs to final outlet.[16]

Among the potential foreign tenants only the Italian group became a major long term occupant. With the resultant Palazzo d'Italia, in combination with the English and French buildings to the south and the multi-tenant International Building to the north and west, Rockefeller Center became a symbol of cooperation among nations. It was especially significant in the inter-war years when, despite Woodrow Wilson's advocacy, American isolationism prevented the country's membership in the League of Nations. According to Rockefeller, the buildings in the complex were "symbols in stone and steel of the common interests, mutual understanding and good will" among world powers, representing "the spirit of cooperation and brotherhood among all nations...the only foundation [for] enduring world peace and prosperity."[17]

The International Building (together with its two six story wings) was the seventh unit to open at Rockefeller Center.[18] Forty-one stories high,[19] it was one of only two skyscrapers completed in Manhattan in 1935 (the other being Cass Gilbert's 36-story Federal Court Building in Foley Square).[20] It had the added distinction of setting a new record for

safety and speed of construction. Rising at an average of 4 feet per day, only 136 working days elapsed from the setting of the first steelwork in the excavations until the opening of the 512 foot slab.[21] The building was also noted for its innovative "Selective Cooling System" ("the most important single advance since the genesis of the air cooling industry")[22] as well as for the fine craftsmanship, materials and design. It is also distinctive for the dramatically open mechanical housing on its upper floors along Fifth Avenue.

A tall office building had been envisioned for this site ever since the Associated Architects had worked up their earliest commercial plans in 1929-30. It was intended to have a N-S axis, thereby complementing a similar building two blocks south (as ultimately realized in the former Time-Life Building). Early landscaping plans also called for its connection by a bridge to a full network of rooftop gardens. Over the years the bridge was abandoned while the tower's projected height fluctuated between 14 and 45 stories, at one time being dismissed all together. But financial pressures required that the tower be reinstated.

When the Palazzo d'Italia and International Building North were reduced from nine to six stories, the tower was enlarged by realignment along an east-west axis, its lobby essentially replacing the galleria originally planned between the two smaller Fifth Avenue pavilions. In consequence of the modification the northeast block became an important integrational hinge in the complex: its tower echoed at smaller scale the RCA Building to its southwest while its two wings continued the genteel scale of the six story units along Fifth Avenue. The solution was one of the most effective architectural statements in the complex. Lewis Mumford thought it the best.[23]

Like the earlier RCA Building, the International Building was designed for maximum rental space. It was, however, set back as far as possible from Fifth Avenue while still allowing reasonable return. In an admirable display of urbanity, developer John R. Todd had instructed Hofmeister to recess the tower sufficiently behind its six story pavilions in order to "retain [their] beauty, charm and light." [24] The architects went further and offset the Palazzo d'Italia and International Building North by giving the slab a single story entrance, the monumental (Egyptian-like) simplicity of which emphasizes the two lower wings while subtly compensating for its own soaring shaft.

Conception and Design

One enters the building from Fifth Avenue, having passed the large figure of Atlas in the courtyard, and the soaring, grand space of the lobby opens about one. Press accounts of the time describe the lobby as the building's "one big splash," calling it "one of the best things of its kind that has yet been done" and "a most convincing solution." [25]

Lobbies of office buildings of this period generally combined two functions: a grand entrance and public space, and a passageway to the elevator system. The Chrysler Building's lobby (1928-30) is a prime example: a highly ornamented triangular-shaped lobby, whose vertex is the entrance and whose base is a wall opening with two sets of elevator banks. The Empire State Building (1930-31) because of its size and layout required a separation of the two functions, with a chapel-like grand entrance space, and a series of corridors leading to the elevators. The International Building lobby employs a similar scheme. The layout of the lobby floor was in large part dictated by that of the general office floor plans. Because of Todd's requirement that no office be more than 27-1/2 feet from a window, the elevators were placed in central banks and surrounded with corridors and offices. On the ground floor these elevator banks are surrounded with corridors and shops. (Neither component is a subject of this designation.)

An effect of grandeur was sought in the entrance lobby. Because the International Building is not as large as the RCA Building, the service core occupies a smaller area, and the lobby is a relatively large space, made even grander by extending its height to the equivalent of four stories. The focus of the lobby is on the escalators which emphatically emphasize the quality of movement through the space, an ongoing concern of modernistic architecture of the period. One contemporary account states that "the hard, machined perfection of their forms is in complete harmony with the almost mechanical severity of the room." [27] The use of rich, elegant materials, such as veined green marble whose patterns were called "sufficient decoration in themselves," [28] nickel bronze, and copper leaf, and the attention to detail are characteristic of the quality displayed throughout the construction of Rockefeller Center. The details themselves are modernistic in design and some of the finest examples of their type.

At the time of construction the intent was also to use the lobby for exhibitions; show windows on the north and south walls were to be part of the display, and the escalators were intended to lead to another exhibition level on the mezzanine. [29] While this scheme was not realized, the lobby remains one of the most dramatic spaces of its kind in New York City, a fitting image of Rockefeller's dream of progress and international understanding.

Incorporation of sculptural pieces into the lobby has only enhanced the overall effect. A bronze bust of Charles Lindbergh by Paul Fjelde (b. 1892) was installed on the mezzanine in 1975. The metallic sculptures of Michio Ihara (b. 1928) were installed in the show windows in 1978. This sculpture was specifically designed for viewing from different angles; the appearance depends on the level and movement of the viewer through the space. [30]

Description

The entrance lobby opens off Fifth Avenue. On the eastern wall is the major entrance, and at the west are the escalators leading up to the mezzanine and down to the underground concourse. The walls of the lobby are surfaced in a dark green veined Tinos marble from Greece, which rises from floor to ceiling terminated by a nickel bronze molding. The ceiling is covered with copper leaf which creates a subtle contrast with the marble. The lower portion of the entrance wall contains three sets of revolving doors of glass and nickel bronze framed with nickel bronze and gray-brown granite (continued from the exterior base) and flanked by panels composed of diagonally-placed nickel bronze fins. Nickel bronze letters spelling out "FIFTH AVENUE" are placed above the revolving doors on nickel bronze lintels. Rising above the doors are three-story high windows set within a continuous marble surround. These windows were also designed to hold displays and are subdivided by horizontal framing members which held removable structural glass floor panels.

Flanking the escalator banks are four giant piers, H-shaped in plan and covered with marble veneer, also terminating in nickel bronze moldings. The channels of the piers, facing east-west, are faced with a lighter green marble, and hold nickel bronze vertical light reflectors. The outer walls of the escalator bank are also of green marble, and marble parapets flanking the outer escalators conceal radiators. The escalators themselves have a nickel bronze finish. Nickel bronze service are set into the escalator bank at the sides. Indicator signs in this area are framed in nickel bronze with streamlined motifs.

The side walls of the lobby are punctuated by three-story openings above shop windows, the north and south elevator hallway openings, and the openings to the International Building North and Palazzo d'Italia entrance hallways. These openings, originally used as show windows for displays, are framed in continuous marble surrounds like the windows on the Fifth Avenue wall. These now contain Michio Ihara's metallic sculptures, consisting of vertical stainless steel cables holding stainless steel leaves with gold patina. The background of each opening is also of gold. The shop windows and doors at ground level are framed in nickel bronze, and similar framing sets off the openings to the north and south elevator hallways and the International Building North and Palazzo d'Italia hallways (not a subject of this designation).

The ground floor lobby extends to the eastern wall of the eastern elevator bank. The corners of this wall are accentuated by reeded marble moldings. A freestanding painted wooden wall holding a directory board recently has been installed in front of the elevator bank wall. The floor throughout the lobby is of dark red and dark green terrazzo panels separated by nickel bronze strips.

The mezzanine at the western end of the lobby has a balcony faced in green marble and surmounted by a nickel bronze railing set on knobs. The central wall section at the top of the escalators is accented by light green marble facing. Paul Fjelde's bronze bust of Charles Lindbergh is placed on a marble pedestal below an inscribed quotation from Lindbergh on

the wall. The corners of the wall by the hallway openings are accentuated by reeded marble moldings as at the ground floor. Directory boards framed in nickel bronze are placed on the side walls, and nickel bronze letters reading "MEZZANINE NORTH CORRIDOR" and "MEZZANINE SOUTH CORRIDOR" are placed on the wall above the hallway openings. The mezzanine floor surface is of dark red terrazzo set in large rectangular panels created by nickel bronze strips.

Report prepared by Janet Adams,
Landmarks Preservationist, and
Marjorie Pearson,
Director of Research

FOOTNOTES

1. Fosdick, John D. Rockefeller: A Portrait, (New York: Harper & H.Row), 1956 and National Cyclopedia of American Biography, 44, pp.1-7.
2. Ivy Lee to JDR, Jr., May 25, 1928, quoted in Carol Krinsky, Rockefeller Center (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 31 n3.
3. Charles Heydt to JDR, Jr., August 19, 1929, quoted in Alan Balfour, Rockefeller Center: Architecture as Theater (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), p. 13 n16.
4. John R. Todd and William C. Vogel, Living A Life, New York, 1947, p. 83-84. See also, Krinsky, p. 42.
5. Ibid., p. 88-89; Krinsky, p. 45.
6. Ibid.
7. Carol Willis, "Harvey Wiley Corbett," MEA, I, p. 451; Krinsky, p. 37-39; The Builder, obit. (April 30, 1954) 186, p. 756; Architectural Forum, 100 (May 1954), 45-46; RIBA Journal, (July 1954) 391.
8. New York Times obit., 2/21/41, p.19:4.
9. Victoria Newhouse, "Harrison & Abramowitz," MEA, II, p. 324-26; Krinsky, p. 38-39; Architectural Record obit. (Jan. 1982), p. 34; AIA Journal (Jan. 1982) p. 99 and Samuel E. Bleeker, The Politics of Architecture: A Perspective on Nelson A. Rockefeller, (New York: Rutledge Press), 1981.
10. Walter H. Kilham, Jr., "Raymond M. Hood," MEA, II, p. 414-16 and Kilham, Raymond Hood, Architect: Form Through Function in the American Skyscraper, (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co.) 1973; Krinsky, p. 45-47; National Cyclopedia of American Biography, 28, p. 389-390.
11. "Frederick A. Godley Dies....," NYT obit., 2/22/61, p.25:2.
12. Carol Krinsky, "Jacques Andre Fouilhoux," MEA, II, p. 106; Architectural Forum obit., 83 (Aug. 1945), 86; John Ia Farge, S.J., "J. Andre Fouilhoux: 1879-1945," Liturgical Arts, 13 (Aug. 1945), 73.
13. Krinsky, p. 35; Krinsky, MEA, III, p. 359; "I. Andrew Reinhard, 72, Dies," NYT obit., 8/3/64, p. 25:5; Architectural Record, (Sept. 1964) p. 26.

14. "Henry Hofmeister, 71, is Dead," NYT obit., 1/9/62, p. 47:2 Krinsky, "Reinhard & Hofmeister," MFA, III, p. 539; "Henry Hofmeister," Architectural Forum, 116 (Feb. 1962) p. 14; NCAB, 48, p. 524.
15. Krinsky, p. 59.
16. Ibid., p. 67. See also, British Empire Building in Rockefeller Center (New York, 1933[?]), p. 6.
17. Balfour, p. 42.
18. NB 42-1934.
19. The number of stories includes those occupied by mechanical housing.
20. "Two Skyscrapers Near Completion," New York Times, 2/3/1935, Sect. 9 & 10, p. 1:8. See also "The New Buildings Open," Rockefeller Center Weekly, 2 (May 2, 1935), 20.
21. "New Skyscraper Record," New York Times, 6/26/1935, p. 40:6.
22. "Rockefeller Center, New York," Architectural Forum, 63 (November 1935), 457-468.
23. Mumford, quoted by Balfour, p. 148.
24. Karp, p. 63.
25. "Rockefeller Center," 457, 459.
27. Ibid., 461.
28. Ibid., 457.
29. Ibid.
30. Art Digest (New York: Rockefeller Center, May 1982).

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this interior, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the International Building, ground floor interior consisting of the central Fifth Avenue entrance lobby extending westward to the eastern wall of the elevator banks; mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the Fifth Avenue entrance lobby extending westward to the eastern wall of the elevator banks; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including, but not limited to, wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, escalators, light fixtures, indicator signs, directory boards, service doors, and revolving doors; 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 that the interior or parts thereof are thirty years old or more and that 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 ground floor interior with accompanying mezzanine floor interior of the International Building is one of the grandest and most dramatic interior spaces in the Rockefeller Center complex and a major component of the Center's second largest building; that this interior follows the east-west axis of the International Building at the northern end of the Center; that this four-story high space with its sleek materials and streamlined forms effectively draws visitors and tenants from Fifth Avenue up the high speed escalators to the mezzanine and into corridors leading to elevator banks rising the height of the 41-story building; that the lobby gains its effect, not primarily from art, but from the form of the space and its decorative finishes; that the elements of the design and rich materials are not only characteristic of modernistic design, but are also some of the finest examples of their type; and that all appropriately enhance the progressive and international image of one of New York's finest office buildings.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 64, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York, and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark the International Building, ground floor interior consisting of the central Fifth Avenue entrance lobby extending westward to the eastern wall of the elevator banks; mezzanine interior consisting of the upper part of the Fifth Avenue entrance lobby extending westward to the eastern wall of the elevator banks; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces including, but not limited to, wall surfaces, ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, escalators, light fixtures, indicator signs, directory boards, service doors, and revolving doors; 630 Fifth Avenue, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 1266, Lot 1 in part consisting of the land on which the described building is situated, Borough of Manhattan as its Landmark Site.

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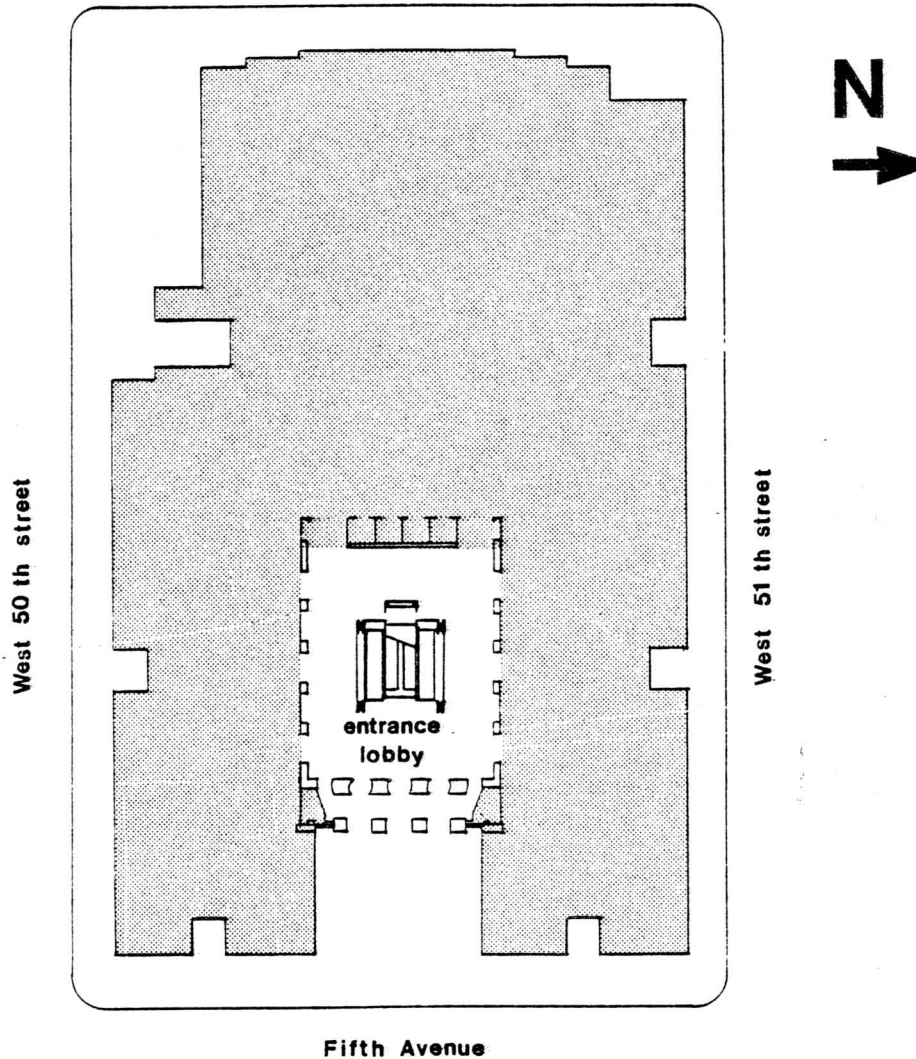
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For further references, see notes.



For additional bibliographic references, see Balfour, p. 243, and Krinsky, pp. 214-217.

INTERNATIONAL BUILDING
630 FIFTH AVENUE

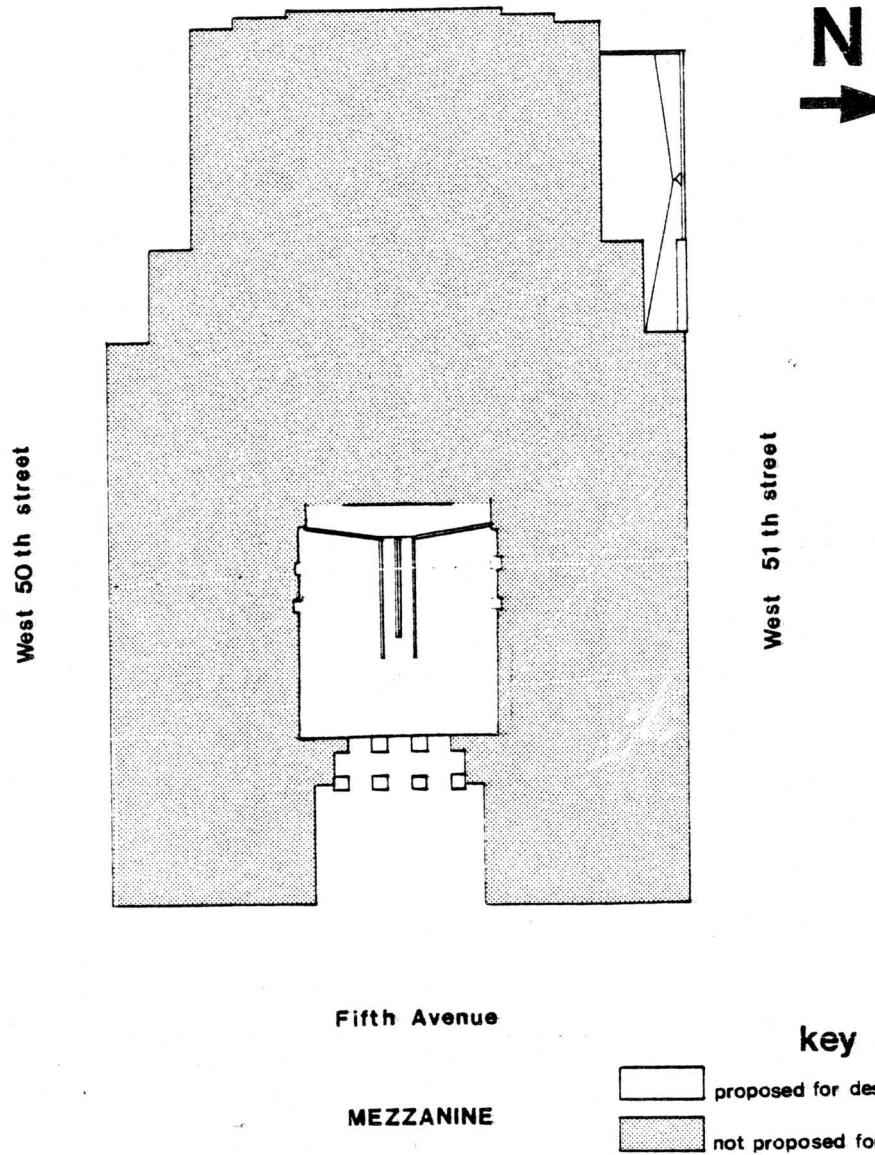


GROUND FLOOR INTERIOR

key

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
|  | proposed for designation |
|  | not proposed for designation |

INTERNATIONAL BUILDING
630 FIFTH AVENUE





INTERNATIONAL BUILDING INTERIOR
630 Fifth Avenue
Manhattan

Entrance Lobby

Built: 1934-35
Architects: The Associated Architects

Photo: Carl Forster
Landmarks Preservation Commission



INTERNATIONAL BUILDING INTERIOR
630 Fifth Avenue
Manhattan

Photo: Carl Forster
Landmarks Preservation Commission

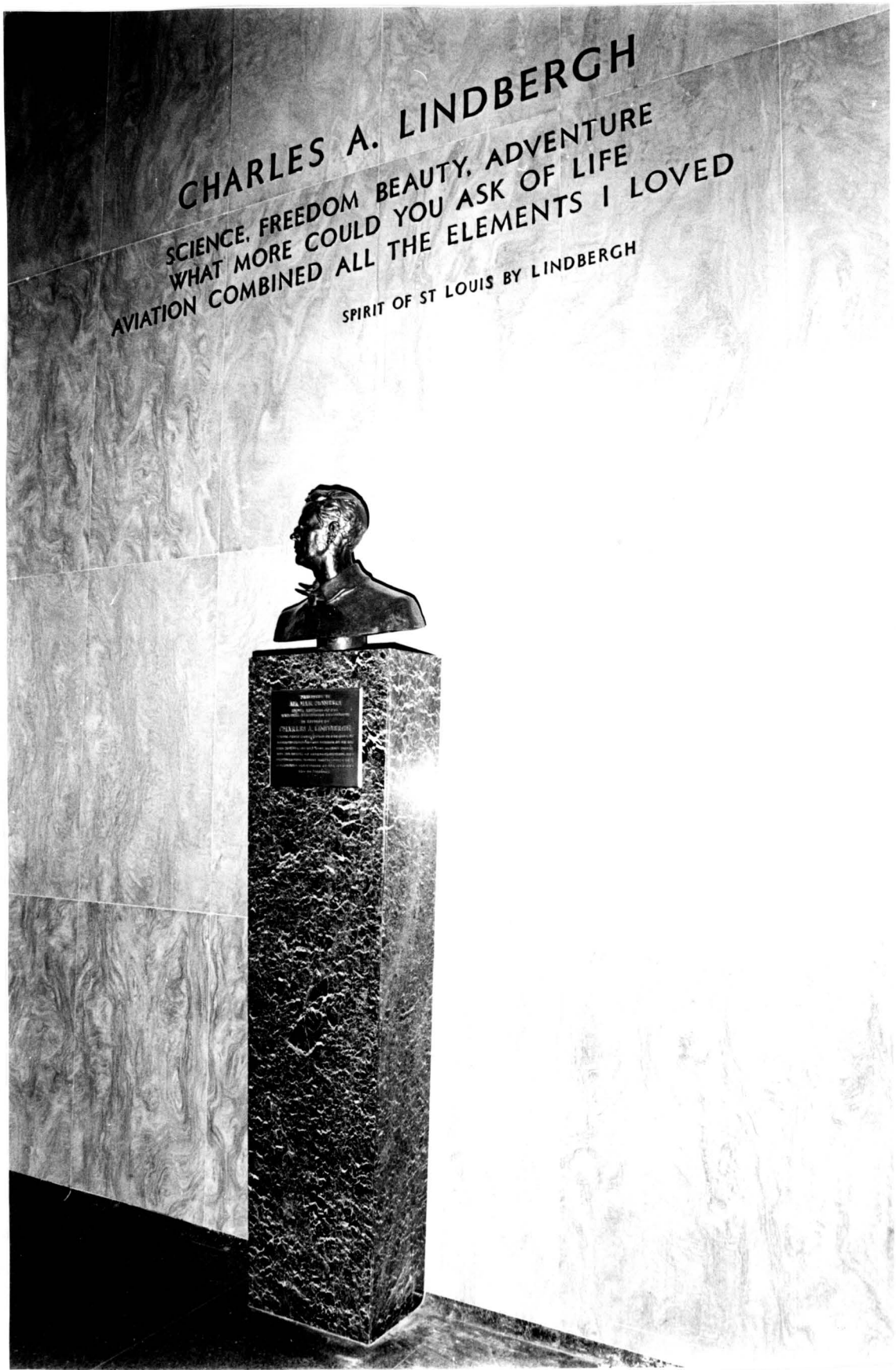
Entrance Lobby



INTERNATIONAL BUILDING INTERIOR
630 Fifth Avenue
Manhattan

Entrance Door

Photo: Carl Forster
Landmarks Preservation
Commission



INTERNATIONAL BUILDING INTERIOR
630 Fifth Avenue
Manhattan

Lindbergh Bust
P. Fjelde, sculptor

Photo: Carl Forster
Landmarks Preservation
Commission