

Landmarks Preservation Commission
February 16, 1988, Designation List 200
LP-1571

RODIN STUDIOS, 200 West 57th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1916-17; architect Cass Gilbert.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1028, Lot 33.

On December 10, 1985, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Rodin Studios as a Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 9). The hearing was continued to March 11, 1986 (Item No. 7). Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. One witness spoke in favor of designation; three letters were received in support of designation. There were no speakers or letters in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

The Rodin Studios building, built in 1916-17, was designed by Cass Gilbert specifically for artists. Named for the most innovative living artist of the time, it represents a refinement on the earlier essays in what was a relatively new building type. The two principal elevations of this fourteen-story, reinforced concrete frame building, are sheathed in rough brick, polychromatic -- buff to gray, laid in American bond. The elaborate and extensive terra cotta and iron trim is molded and cast in the late Gothic-early Classical motifs which characterize the French Renaissance style, the style of the neighboring Arts Students League as well as a style Gilbert thought appropriate for artists. The studio windows on the West 57th Street elevation with their cast iron canopies are particularly noteworthy. The brickwork is remarkable also; the broad and narrow bay reveals, linking the building's base and cap, give this elevation a distinct visual coherence.

Background of the Studio Building Type

The Rodin Studios building (plate 1) is prominent in the development of the studio building type in the early years of this century. The Van Dyck Studios, c.1889, 939 Eighth Avenue, and the studios in Carnegie Hall, 1894, at 881 Seventh Avenue, were mixed use buildings. The first studio buildings designed in this century specifically for artists were built on West 67th Street between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue.¹ In an effort to provide satisfactory space for artists, Henry Ward Ranger (1858 - 1916), the successful landscape painter, rallying a group of artists agreeable to renting space in any building erected for that purpose, approached potential investors to underwrite the financing of such a building.² Because so novel a concept found little support, the artists themselves raised the necessary capital. They elected officers and formed a corporation to which each contributed and, in return, became an owner with the exclusive right to occupy or sublet one of the studio apartments within the building. Maintenance costs were assessed according to the amount of

space each artist owned. Not all the studios were sold; it was decided to hold a few for rental. The income thus produced provided capital to maintain the building.

The earliest West 67th Street studio buildings were designed by Pollard & Steinam (Sturgis & Simonson, 1903; Simonson, Pollard & Steinam, 1903 - 1905; and Pollard & Steinam after 1905). Inevitably any new concept is evaluated against existing standards and the initial building, The Sixty-seventh Street Studios, was found to be in violation of the city's tenement law. To qualify for reclassification from tenement to Class A Hotel, a public restaurant was introduced on the ground floor,³ and as a result of building code requirements subsequent studio buildings were constructed on avenues, not streets.

Securing capital to construct the Rodin Studios building was, like its predecessors on West 67th Street and Central Park South, done through a corporation of artists. The president of Rodin Studios, Inc. was Lawton S. Parker (1868 - 1954), the vice-president was Georgia Timken Fry (1861 - 1921), and her husband John Hemming Fry (1861 - 1946) was treasurer. All three were painters and all three had travelled from early training in the Midwest to study in Paris: Parker from Michigan to the Academie Julian, Fry from Indiana also to the Academie Julian, and Mrs. Fry from Saint Louis to work with Aimee Morot and Jules Cazin. Both Mr. and Mrs. Fry had attended the Saint Louis School of Fine Arts in the early 1880s where Parker was later to teach in 1892. Though not one of them is well-known today, the least obscure of the three in the second decade of this century was Parker.

Lawton S. Parker was identified in the early 1910s with the small group of Americans in Paris calling themselves The Giverny Group. Frederick Carl Frieseke (1874 - 1939) is by far the best known of these Monet devotees. Like Frieseke, Parker had turned from his academic training in the late 1880s (Benjamin Constant, Jean-Paul Laurens, Robert Fleury) and embraced Impressionism. Back in New York he studied with Harry Siddons Mowbray and William Merritt Chase at the Art Students' League in 1897. He exhibited with the Giverny Group at New York's MacBeth Gallery in 1910 and was accorded a one man show at the Art Institute of Chicago two years later.

Georgia Timken Fry's strength was landscape in which she synthesized the humble subject matter of Francois Millet with the misty Impressionism of her teacher Cazin; the painting Harvest in Normandy was exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1885. John Fry appears to have remained true to the academic principles first established by Poussin and as this pedagogy deteriorated, he was given to diatribes against contemporary art -- "a bedlam of confusion."⁴ Fry had formed a small teaching collection, leaving it to the Canton (Ohio) Art Institute with the conviction -- no doubt founded on his own experience -- that a sound national culture could only develop in the Midwest far from the vulgarization and novelty of New York and Hollywood.⁵ Included was the small Rodin bronze Maternity, which Fry purchased three years after his wife's death.

Parker and the Frys were but part of the wave of young American artists who, from the mid-seventies on, had been drawn to Paris and who, upon their return to New York, populated the area near the Art Students' League. The League was housed in Henry H. J. Hardenburgh's recently

completed American Fine Arts Society Building, 1892, at 215 West 57th Street, just half a block from the new Carnegie Hall, 1891. Hardenbergh's use of the Francois 1 style for the building's West 57th Street facade was in keeping with the League's French sympathies. From the late nineties until the First World War, Parker was back and forth between Paris and this country, teaching and painting. The Frys returned to New York about 1902 and resided in several studio buildings until, nine years later, they moved to 222 Central Park South, the Gainsborough Studios.⁶ They remained at the Gainsborough for at least seven years in which time John Fry became vice-president of the Gainsborough corporation, no doubt learning the responsibilities of running a studio building corporation.

The Architect

In retrospect, the Rodin corporation officers' choice of Cass Gilbert (1859 - 1934) as architect for their new studio building should not surprise us. Gilbert was known to be sympathetic to artists. Had he not shown himself a worthy inheritor of McKim's ideal of the unity of the arts when he selected at least a dozen nationally known artists to embellish his well-publicized Minnesota State Capitol (1895 - 1905)?⁷ This patronage continued throughout his professional career; however, following his Minnesota Capitol and New York Customs House commissions he often contracted the interior work out to a firm of architectural decorators. One such firm with whom Gilbert collaborated frequently was Paris & Wiley (later Paris, Wiley & Martin).⁸ Like Gilbert, William Francklyn Paris (1876 - 1954) was an unabashed francophile. It was Paris who initiated the Hall of American Artists at New York University's Gould Memorial Library in 1917. Based on the Institute de France, it has served as a pantheon in which the most accomplished artists of the so-called American Renaissance -- the academic tradition that bred Lawton and the Frys -- are honored. Supported through an agency of volunteer patrons committees, both Cass Gilbert and John Hemming Fry were committee chairmen.⁹ Paris also admired Albert Besnard, the French painter and etcher, in whose atelier Lawton Parker had worked. These mutually cherished, aesthetic sympathies suggest that Parker, the Frys, William Francklyn Paris and Cass Gilbert were acquainted or could easily become so.

Certainly by 1915 Gilbert's reputation as an architect was not unknown to Lawton Parker and to John and Georgia Timken Fry. Not only had the Woolworth Building (1913), a "cathedral for commerce," been his design, but Gilbert's training, though not identical, approximated theirs. He had studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1878 -80) with Eugene Letang -- whom William Ware had brought from the Ecole des Beaux Arts -- and though he did not study at the Ecole himself, Gilbert admired the national French school's principles and method. After travel abroad (England, France and Italy) in 1881 he returned to New York to work for McKim, Mead & White within the same year. Like the Rodin Studios' corporate officers, Gilbert had come from the Midwest as well -- Zanesville, Ohio and St. Paul, Minnesota. And again like the Rodin's officers Gilbert thought of himself as an artist.¹⁰

Gilbert returned to St. Paul in 1883 where he opened an office, joining James Knox Taylor in partnership the following year -- an arrangement which continued until Taylor became Supervising Architect of the Treasury in 1892. But seven years later Gilbert's Broadway Chambers

project brought him back to New York. Models and drawings of this building were featured at the International Universal Exposition held in Paris in 1900, garnering Gilbert some recognition abroad and useful publicity at home.¹¹ Meanwhile, his design for the New York Customs House won the national competition (1899). Gilbert then turned to commercial office building design in New York; the West Street Building (1905) and the Woolworth Building are the best known of these. Both, though steel frame structures, are articulated in the late Gothic style characteristic of 15th century France. Not only was this style considered an appropriate one for a tall building, but it evoked for Gilbert the dawn of the French Renaissance, an epoque exemplary for the conscientiousness of its craftsmen and the reawakening of classical values. These allusions he would see as equally valid for his artist contemporaries. And there is no reason to doubt that the Rodin corporation officers were in accord.

The Building

In choosing a name for their building and corporation in 1916, Parker and the Frys chose to honor Auguste Rodin (1844-1917) - a Frenchman, a sculptor and a living artist. The Frys had occupied the studio buildings named in honor of Van Dyck and Gainsborough, painters associated with the English School. Although their francophilia has been acknowledged, we must rely upon contemporary evaluations of Rodin to understand the significance of the corporate officers' choice. Towards the end of his lifetime Auguste Rodin was recognized as an undisputed genius. His dedication to his craft triumphed over the adverse criticism that attended his early production so that Rodin had become a symbol to American artists trained in France. In 1905 Kenyon Cox discussed the essential character of Rodin's work -- his reverence for the quality of his material was as important as his romantic realism. So too, these Americans, immersed in Impressionism, returned to the challenge of acceptance in their own land.¹² Rodin's was an appropriate name to grace their efforts and distinguish their abode.¹³

The site of the Rodin Studios building would have been familiar to former tenants at Carnegie Hall. Originally part of the Cornelius Cozine farm devised to his granddaughter Rebecca Cozine and conveyed into lots in 1833, this parcel on the southwest corner of Seventh Avenue and West 57th Street saw several owners until 1881 when it was purchased by William F. Croft. Croft secured John D. Prague to design and construct a seven story, brick and stone building of French flats to house twenty-four families. It was called "The Inverness" and subsequently "The Grenoble." The Inverness/Grenoble changed hands three times before 1916 when Rodin Studios, Inc. purchased it from the executors of Mary Chisholm and were issued a demolition permit. This corner site with its adjacent broad street widths was well-chosen; any of the problems which Ranger's corporation had incurred on West 67th Street were precluded.

The Rodin officers were looking for a new and homogeneous expression of the several functions their building would serve. Gilbert's program for the Rodin Studios building called for stores on the first floor and business offices on the second and part of the third floor. Simplex apartments and two sizes of duplex studio were to occupy the balance of the third floor and the eleven floors above. The studios were either working studios (with kitchenettes, bathroom and space for sleeping) or studios with adjacent living apartments. All of the duplex studios were to be

positioned across the building's northern front -- a room height and orientation which provided the maximum light with minimum shadow, the conditions necessary to a painter's work(plate 2). To maximize this important orientation fully, Gilbert repeated Buckham's solution at the Gainsborough Studios, one he could easily have seen upon a visit to the Frys' Gainsborough studio. The Rodin's broad corner site allowed him to place five studios abreast across the West 57th Street elevation rather than the two to which the Gainsborough's narrower mid-block site had limited Buckham. But, as Buckham had, Gilbert isolated the smaller, working studios in the central three bays of this elevation, staggering the studios of the center bay so that a portion of each studio unit, a bathroom or kitchenette, overlapped that of its neighbor -- as in an interlocking joint. The building's corner studios were the ones with apartment accommodations behind them (plate 3). The simplex apartments were behind these.

As a consequence, in plan the Rodin Studios building does not fill its lot but roughly approximates the letter F. Two wings extend south from the F's staff -- the building's full northern front on West 57th Street (114', 11 1/2 "). The longer wing along Seventh Avenue (92', 4 1/2") reaches to within ten feet of the southern lot line. The shorter (76', 4") is separated from the longer to the east and the western lot line by open light wells and extends almost as far into the lot. These wings contain the simplex apartments.

The fourteen-story structure (plate 1) is of reinforced concrete and the walls are faced with rough, subtly varicolored brick, predominantly buff, rising from a base faced with granite. The comprehensive ornamental program is iron and terra cotta. The building's principal elevations, on West 57th Street (plate 4) and on Seventh Avenue (plate 5), follow the traditional tall building canon: a two story base, ten story shaft, and a cap consisting of the upper two stories and the cornice. An alternating rhythm of broad and narrow bays, articulated both at the base and the top by the building's decorative program, is spread horizontally across the two elevations.

The West 57th Street Elevation

The building's base is comprised of five broad bays with a central entrance and four shop windows; the narrow bays contain shop doors or smaller show windows. A row of five double-hung sash windows fill the five bays on the second story.¹⁴ Single, double-hung sash windows fill the narrow bays. The five broad bays within the building's main-section contain the duplex studio windows (plate 4). The staggered studio windows within the center bay are the only exterior clue to the system of interlocking units within. Instead of five, the center bay contains four duplex windows; single story windows (on the third and twelfth floors) compensate for the interlocking arrangement. The four narrow bays contain single double-hung windows on each story, lighting the overlapping bathrooms and kitchenettes of the interlocked studio units in the building's three center bays. Within the building's cap the five broad bays contain duplex studio windows and the narrow bays, as below, single windows at each of the cap's two stories, repeating the interlocked system below.

The Seventh Avenue Elevation

Here (plate 5), as on the West 57th Street facade, the broad bays at the building's base contain four shop windows, though not all the narrow bays contain these shops' entrances. On the second story paired double-hung sash windows fill the broad bays and single, double-hung sash windows the narrow bays. This pattern is repeated across the building's main-section although, originally, there were no windows on the fourth, sixth, eighth, tenth and twelfth stories of the northernmost broad bay (plate 3). The left-hand windows in the southernmost broad bay, again on the fourth, sixth, eighth, tenth and twelfth stories, remain blind (plates 3 & 5). In the building's two-story cap, the pattern of paired and single windows is retained, though the paired windows (plate 7) in the northernmost bay on the fourteenth story, as well as the single window in the niche to the right and the left-hand window in the southernmost broad bay, are blind.

South Elevation

Looking north on Seventh Avenue from West 56th Street, (plate 8) several bays of the building's southern elevation are apparent but only the first contains a window type unlike those in either of the preceding elevations. These windows are tripartite, a broad, central double-hung sash flanked by narrower fixed lights. The face brick here is uniformly buff; there are neither polychrome brick nor other decorative elements.

West Elevation

The visible portion of the western elevation, a lot line wall, is faced with stucco over brick and contains a vertical row of windows.

Ornamental Program

Much of the building's original ground story ornament was removed by its second owner, especially at the base.¹⁵ However, these portions of the building had been photographically recorded by Gilbert's firm and are described below.¹⁶ The building's architectural ornament is expressed in three materials, the brickwork itself, terra cotta and cast and wrought iron.

The Brickwork

The building's rough, face brick is laid in common, or American, bond (plate 9).¹⁷ On the two principal facades a tight range of polychromatic hue was specified. Though predominantly buff in color, there are stretchers of gray and headers of a burnt gold color randomly placed throughout the bond, a combination giving the surface a particularly rich texture. The correspondence between building parts does not rely solely on the building's more conspicuous decorative materials; where there is little terra cotta and no cast iron, the continuity of the building's decorative program is continued in the brickwork. The reveals (plate 9), a column of headers next to a column of stretchers, separating the broad and narrow bays on both elevations are more visible on the Seventh Avenue facade where, without the duplex windows to offer contrast, they function visually as piers, connecting the building's base to its cap.

Some of the ornamental brickwork can still be seen below the shop windows' terra cotta corbel table cornices.¹⁸ The terra-cotta panels in the broad bay spandrels between the thirteenth and fourteenth stories are framed in two borders of brick (plate 7): a border of headers inside a border of stretchers.

Terra Cotta Ornament

Like the Broadway Chambers, West Street and Woolworth Buildings, the Rodin Studios attests to Gilbert's predilection for terra cotta. It is the rich combination of classical motives and late Gothic tracery molded in terra cotta which gives the building its early French Renaissance character. On closer inspection the brittle character of the ornament make it very much of this century. It is remarkable for two reasons: much of it has been molded in high relief and the consequent shading and deep shadow offer a striking contrast to the building's planar surfaces; and the mythic animal and human representations are rendered in vivid caricature. The repetition of motifs emphasizes the cohesion of the building's decorative scheme.

Adjacent to the gateway south of the building's Seventh Avenue elevation are a broad terra-cotta molding (plate 11) -- fluted molding between cable moldings -- just above the granite base and a string course (cavetto/cyma recta in section), suggesting the top rail of a dado, a bit above it.¹⁹ The building's entrance is arched and now faced with travertine.²⁰ At present the travertine revetment extends to and around the building's northeastern corner (plates 1, 4 & 5) to the second broad bay from its southeastern corner, incorporating the building's rhythm of broad and narrow bays. The broad bays are square headed and glazed with narrow, bronzed metal framing; a horizontal mullion, bearing the shop's name (illuminated at night), separates the lower plate glass window and door from the upper. Two openings, one above the other, articulate the narrow bays including those at the building's northeast corner. The lower openings contain a single plate glass window set in bronzed metal framing. The upper contain gold color metal grilles pierced with a symmetrical pattern incorporating the building's West 57th Street number, 200, right side up, upside down and inverted. Only on the Seventh Avenue (plate 5) elevation has the integrity of the broad and narrow bays been compromised; the second narrow bay from the building's northeast corner has a doorway flanked by glazed, single pane windows abutting the plate glass windows of the adjacent, broad bays. The horizontal muntin extends south across the travertine to include a broad bay, a narrow bay and a portion of the second southernmost bay, an arrangement necessitated by the BMT Subway staircase.

The original corbel table cornices above the broad bay show windows remain (plate 13). The twelve corbel arches are supported by a series of five antic figures, or "marmosets": a frog, a rapt reader, a sky gazer, a frontal supporting figure and a supporting figure in profile, repeated as necessary.²¹ Above the corbel arches the cornice comprises a fluted frieze and Roman molding. The cornice carries a long paneled sill the width of the paired windows above.

In a wall extending from the building's south wall to the southern lot line, a few feet back from the building line along Seventh Avenue, there is an arched gateway (plate 11), originally permitting access to the

building's basement and rear yard but now the service entrance to the one-story restaurant addition of 1932-33. The gateway's foliated surround and ogee drip molding terminate in a crocketed accolade. Still in place within the arch's head is the original wrought-iron tympanum and lantern. Above the arch, three rectangular plaques containing a tracery design -- a circle and four mouchettes -- ornament the wall surface. The accolade's finial becomes the central element in the design of the middle plaque. The wall's coping is supported on a corbel table cornice like those above the shop windows.

Most of the ornament in the building's main-section is on the West 57th Street elevation and most of this is iron. Terra cotta is limited to two string courses and five drip moldings. The string courses (both cavetto/cyma recta in section) run the breadth of the 57th Street and Seventh Avenue elevations (plate 9): the thinner just above the second story windows, the thicker above it at the third-story windows' sill. These separated the building's base from its main-section. Above each of the adjacent windows (plate 9) in the northernmost broad bay of the Seventh Avenue facade -- at the third, fifth, seventh and eleventh stories -- there is an ogee, drip molding and accolade, borne on "marmoset" corbels. Not unlike the gateway diagonally below, the accolade finial is incorporated into the tracery design -- a circle and four mouchettes -- of the rectangular plaque above the window.

The terra cotta of the building's two-story cap (plate 14) is largely intact and the arched corbel motif from over the shop windows below is reintroduced in great variety. An arched corbel course and frieze between the twelfth and thirteenth stories on both the 57th Street and Seventh Avenue elevations separates the building's cap from its main-section. Across the broad bays the corbelled course comprises twelve arches, like the shop window cornices, and thirteen marmosets; the narrow bays course have only four arches and five "marmosets." The "marmosets" are not a repetition of those below. There are three: one wears a head band, another is hooded, and the third bears an expression of stress. In both the broad and narrow bays all but the narrow panels at the extreme ends of the deeply molded frieze depict paired dolphins supporting a disk above a reeded basin; the narrower panels contain flambeaux in low relief.

Corbelled pilasters corresponding to the brick reveals below mark the broad and narrow bays in the building's cap. Like the masks of comedy and tragedy the "marmosets" alternate in expression: one depicts a grinning ancient grasping a palette; the other a distraught ancient pointing to a slender statuette. Each "marmoset" supports a paneled plinth faced with an urn in low relief. The pilaster rises from this plinth and, like the plinth is paneled. Its lower portion is fluted. Like the "marmosets," the pilaster capitals alternate also, though both are early Renaissance variations of the Corinthian order. The volutes of one are griffins; instead of a fleuron, a flambeau appears between them. The griffin capital crowns the pilaster resting on the "marmoset" of the grinning painter. The volutes of the other capital are cornucopia flanking a palmette; instead of the fleuron there is a mask of a hooded gnome. The "marmoset" of the distraught sculptor supports the pilaster with the cornucopia capital.

Terra cotta plaques in brick borders (plate 7) face the spandrels between the paired windows of the thirteenth and fourteenth stories.

Canopies of small pendant arches articulate the tops of the broad bays, above the duplex windows of the 57th Street elevation and the paired fourteenth story windows of the Seventh Avenue elevation. All of the single windows on the fourteenth story in both elevations (plate 15), have become niches with corbelled sills articulated with escutcheons bearing fleur de lys and flanked by antic eagles. Repeated above each face of the tri-faceted canopies is the mask of the hooded gnome. (The left side of the central canopy on the Seventh Avenue elevation is damaged.)

The cornice itself is an elaborate corbel table (plate 16); the small arches therein incorporate the shell motif (first seen in the candelabra niches which once flanked the building's entrance) and are supported on modillions. Between each of these modillions, on the bottom face of the corbel table, the winged heads of putti are molded in low relief. The cornice cymatium is articulated in a variation of a Roman molding; the acanthus leaves alternate with fleur de lys. A parapet originally rested on the cornice; it carried a pattern, most likely, akin to that of the frieze between the twelfth and thirteenth stories.

Cast and Wrought Iron Ornament

Cast and wrought iron in combination are also used within the building's decorative program. Except for the tympanum in the gateway adjacent to the Seventh Avenue elevation, most of the iron is found on the West 57th facade (plate 1,2,4, & 17). Iron is used exclusively for the canopies which project from between the duplex windows. Gothic choir stall canopies appear to have been the model for these elements. Each is five bays wide, corresponding to the windows below and above, and each bay is separated by a thin rib and pinnacle. It is on these pinnacles that the winged finial figures perch.²²

One of these iron canopies should be described from bottom to top (plate 17). A narrow ivy frieze runs across the top. The thin ribs correspond with the mullions between windows and rise across the ivy to become brackets supporting the canopy; the top of the bracket is attached to the back of the pendant pinnacle. The panel (the spandrel) above the window and below the canopy is divided in half vertically by a thinner rib. Running behind the canopy pinnacles are three horizontal moldings: the lowest one of pendant arches; a broad rinceaux; and a cable molding on top. Each pinnacle carries a winged creature finial; a foliate boss is the pinnacle's lower terminal feature.

Iron grilles once covered the second story, narrow bay windows (plate 2). Ten stories above there were once balconies fronting the single windows on the West 57th Street elevation (plate 2, twelfth story).

Conclusion

The Rodin Studios (1916-17), commissioned by a corporation of artists -- the painters Lawton S. Parker, Georgia Timken Fry and her husband John Hemming Fry-- was designed by Cass Gilbert for a site in the heart of what once was Manhattan's artistic community. Not only did he refine the existing studio building type for them but he gave them a building comprising the best of contemporary building technology. And because he empathized with the earlier tradition of fifteenth-century French artists

and artisans he gave his clients a building articulated in the French Renaissance style. Handsome and elaborate molded terra cotta and cast iron were the mediums of the style and where the building's function and its style came together, imaginative solutions, like the cast-iron canopies between studio windows on the West 57th Street elevation, were introduced. And for their building the corporate officers chose the name of the most innovative and revered contemporary artist, the sculptor Auguste Rodin (1844 - 1917).

Report prepared by
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Notes

1. The Studio Building, 27 West 67th Street, started in 1901; the Atelier Building, 33 West 67th Street, 1902; The Central Park, 15 West 67 Street, 1906. Subsequent studio buildings attest to the popularity of this new type: The Gainsborough Studios, 222 Central Park South, designed by Charles W. Buckham in 1907; 130 and 132 West 57th Street, Pollard & Steinam, 1908; and the Studio Apartments at Lexington and 66th Street, Charles A. Platt, 1911.
2. It was Henry Ward Ranger who established the Ranger Fund, a bequest to the National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, to purchase work of American artists.
3. This is the Cafe des Artistes with Howard Chandler Christie's provocative and charming wall murals. The Studio Building was fourteen stories, articulated as seven, and too high to classify as a tenement building. Artists' studios, to be effective, need to be eighteen to twenty feet high. In response to the Building Code, the width of the floors was diminished in Pollard & Steinam's subsequent West 67th Street studio buildings; flat arches were introduced between ceiling beams.
4. John Hemming Fry, Paintings, Drawings, Bronzes, (Canton, Ohio: Art Institute, 1944).
5. Work attributed to Veronese, Flaxman, Couture, Gerome and Kenyon Cox was represented, but the bulk were paintings by Fry himself and a few by his wife. The Timken fortune was made from precision roller bearings for steel train wheels; the original Timken works is located in Canton, Ohio.
6. Upon their return the Frys resided at the Van Dyck Studios, 939 Eighth Avenue; five years later they moved to a studio at 881 Seventh Avenue in the new Carnegie Hall.
7. Daniel Chester French, John A. LaFarge, Edwin H. Blashfield, Elmer E. Garnsey, Kenyon Cox, Frank D. Millet and Douglas Volk among others. Gilbert's New York Custom House (1899 - 1905) facade sculpture was by

French and interior murals included work by Charles Grafly.

8. This firm carried out architectural decorative programs for Gilbert at the West Street Building, the Detroit Public Library, the Arkansas Capitol, and the Supreme Court Building, among others. Frederick J. Wiley had been in charge of the painting of the Rathskellar ceiling in Gilbert's Woolworth Building.
9. W. Francklyn Paris, The Hall of American Artists (New York: New York University, 1943). Fry and Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert were listed as donors, also.
10. Paul Starrett, Changing the Skyline (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1938), p.272.
11. Robert A. Jones, Cass Gilbert (New York: Arno Press, 1982), pp. 74-75.
12. These were the artists who congregated in the neighbourhood of the Art Students' League.
13. One need only read Gabriel Mourey's vivid summary of Rodin's life to comprehend how a younger generation could empathize with genius, bounteous and potent, faced with obstinate hostility. Gabriel Mourey, "A Few Words on the Death of Rodin," The International Studio, 64 (1918), 57-62. Rodin's death coincided with World War I; he was eulogized in emotional terms appropriate to patriotism. Barbara Irwin, "Rodin as Colorist and Mystic," Op.cit., ix-xi.

John Fry's addition to his small collection of Rodin's bronze cast, Maternity, in 1924 speaks of his admiration for the great French sculptor in a personal way.

14. Originally, over the building's entrance there was a five-light oriel (plate 6); now replaced by a row of five double-hung sash windows.
15. In 1944 The Rodin Studios Building was sold to the Sipal Realty Corporation. Within a span of almost thirty-five years of ownership, Sipal accommodated a variety of ground story tenants by changing shop fronts, designs reflecting contemporary styles rather than in sympathy with the lines of the building itself. The current owner, without benefit of the building's earliest appearance, has returned the ground story to a semblance of the original in that, at least, the integrity of the broad and narrow bays has been somewhat restored.
16. Cass Gilbert Collection, Classics, Avery Library, Columbia University.
17. For every four courses of stretchers there is one course of headers.
18. Two stretchers at a forty-five degree angle make a lozenge pattern within the corbel arch; and just above the recent travertine revetment can be seen a course of headers (plate 10).
19. These moldings may still be seen adjacent to the gateway south of the

building's Seventh Avenue elevation (plate 11).

20. Originally the five centered arch had an oriel above it (plate 6). Flanking the top of the arch (plate 12) were two round medallions bearing the heads of Leonardo da Vinci (on the right) and Michelangelo (on the left) in profile. Outside each of these medallions (plate 6) was placed a classical niche containing a candelabra in low relief; a shell motif filled the niche head. The niche acted as a console supporting a cornice and its cresting, elements effecting the transition to the oriel above. The cresting was populated with mythic beasts and antic figures; a central escutcheon bearing a pine tree in low relief (the symbol of Saturn, under which all those who create are born) was supported by seated figures flanked by recumbent dragons. A pinnacled canopy capped the oriel (lighted by five trefoiled casement windows). It was on each of these pinnacles that the winged creatures -- which still perch on the pinnacled canopy-spandrels between duplex windows -- were introduced. It is likely that these winged creatures were designed by T.R. Johnson of Gilbert's office. There were four of them in all: an eagle, a penguin, a bat and an albatross. The bat and the albatross were repeated to make the full six. The bat, enfolded in its own wings, evokes the stance of Rodin's now famous statue of Balzac in his dressing gown. Johnson was responsible for the lobby corbel caricatures of the major personages involved with the erection of the Woolworth Building. Both the Woolworth corbels and these winged figures, along with the other animated architectural elements in the Rodin Studios building scheme, display the same faceted modelling technique. Flanking the oriel were niches with hoods of pendant, flamboyant Gothic tracery.

Each of the shop windows was a five centered arch, also. Ribs extended up either side of the arch head to terminate as crocketed pinnacles within the outermost corbel arches of a corbel table cornice.

21. It is probable that these figures were conceived by T.R. Johnson, also.
22. There are twenty-five canopies on the northern elevation and, therefore, one hundred fifty winged creatures. On all but one canopy, the lower easternmost, the order is from left to right: eagle, Balzac-like bat, albatross, the bat again, albatross and penguin. The order from left to right on the lower easternmost canopy: eagle, bat, albatross, albatross, bat, penguin.)

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 Rodin Studios 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 Rodin Studios, built in 1916-17, has a significant place in the architectural and cultural history of New York City; that it was designed by the nationally eminent architect Cass Gilbert as a refinement of what was a relatively new building type, studios and living quarters for artists; that Gilbert borrowed Buckham's Gainsborough Studios solution of stacked studios and interlocking subordinate areas (kitchenettes and bathrooms), broadening it to five bays and including larger studio establishments as well as separate apartments; that the extensive and elaborate terra cotta and iron trim is molded and cast in the French Renaissance style; that this is a style which for Gilbert and his contemporaries evoked the industry of medieval and early Renaissance craftsmen and Classicism's reawakening and was seen as appropriate for the abode of artists; that the cast-iron canopies of the West 57th Street studio windows are a significant and imaginative solution, adding a welcome texture to the broad, planar surfaces of the studio windows while maintaining the building's stylistic integrity despite the alterations to the ground floor; that the rich terra-cotta ornament serves to articulate the building's north and east elevations; and that the polychromatic brickwork, especially the broad and narrow bay reveals, linking the building's base with its cap, is a significant element of the building's design.

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 Rodin Studios, 200 West 57th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1028, Lot 33, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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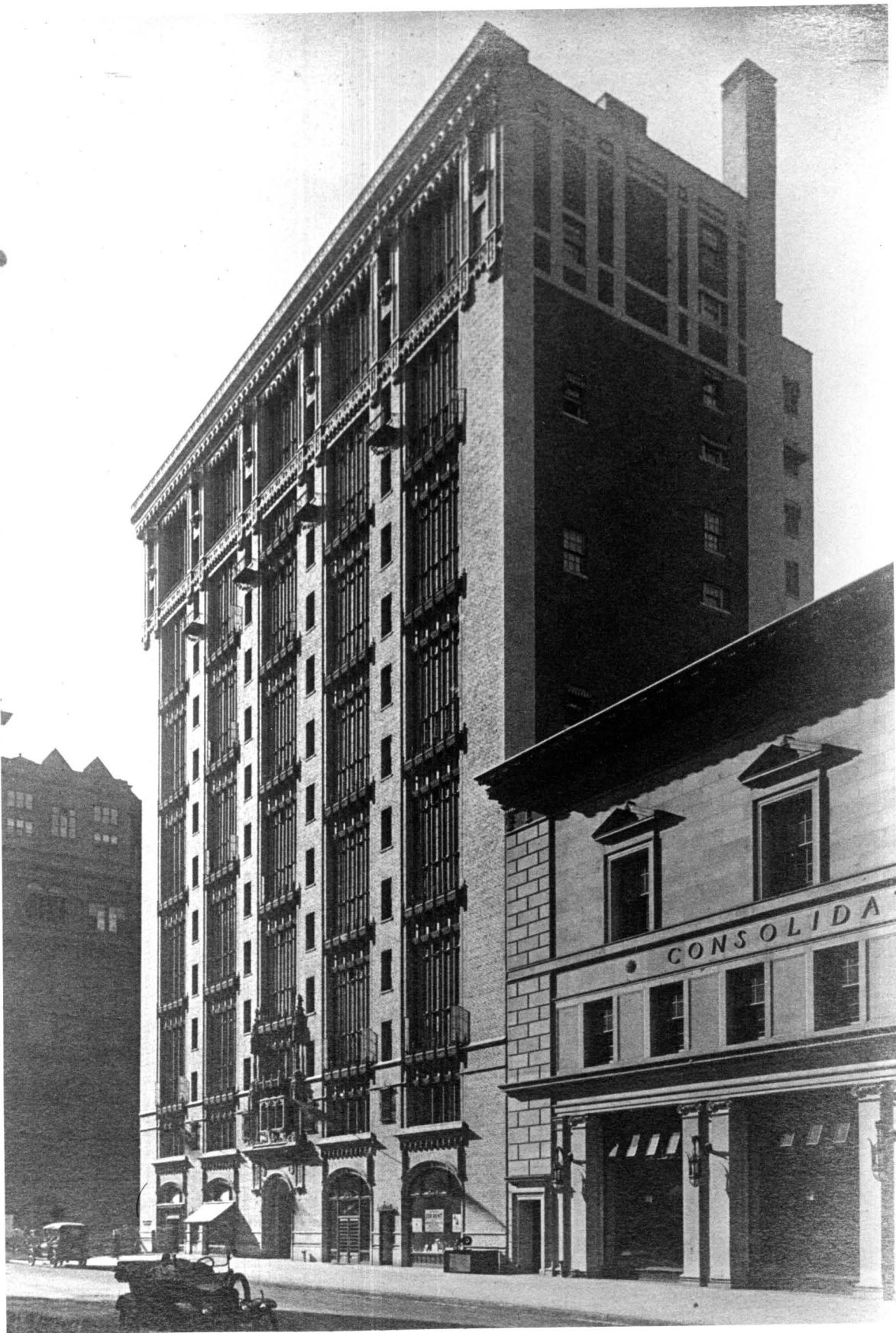
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Plate 1. Rodin Studios Building, 1916-17, 200 West 57th Street,
Cass Gilbert, architect.

(Carl Forster)



(Cass Gilbert Collection, Avery Library, Columbia University)

Plate 2. Original West 57th Street elevation.



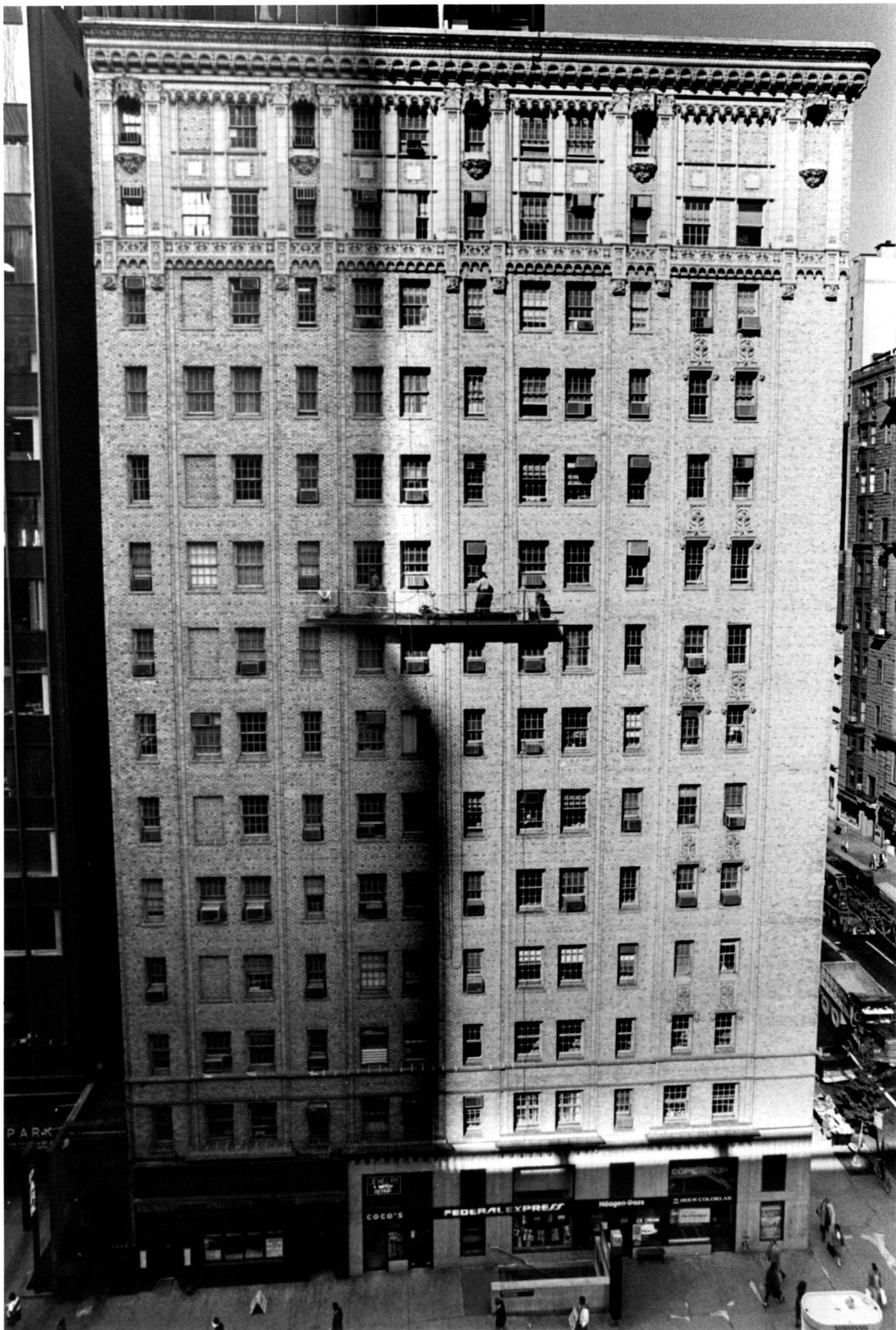
(Cass Gilbert Collection, Avery Library, Columbia University)

Plate 3. Original Seventh Avenue elevation.



(Carl Forster)

Plate 4. West 57th Street elevation.



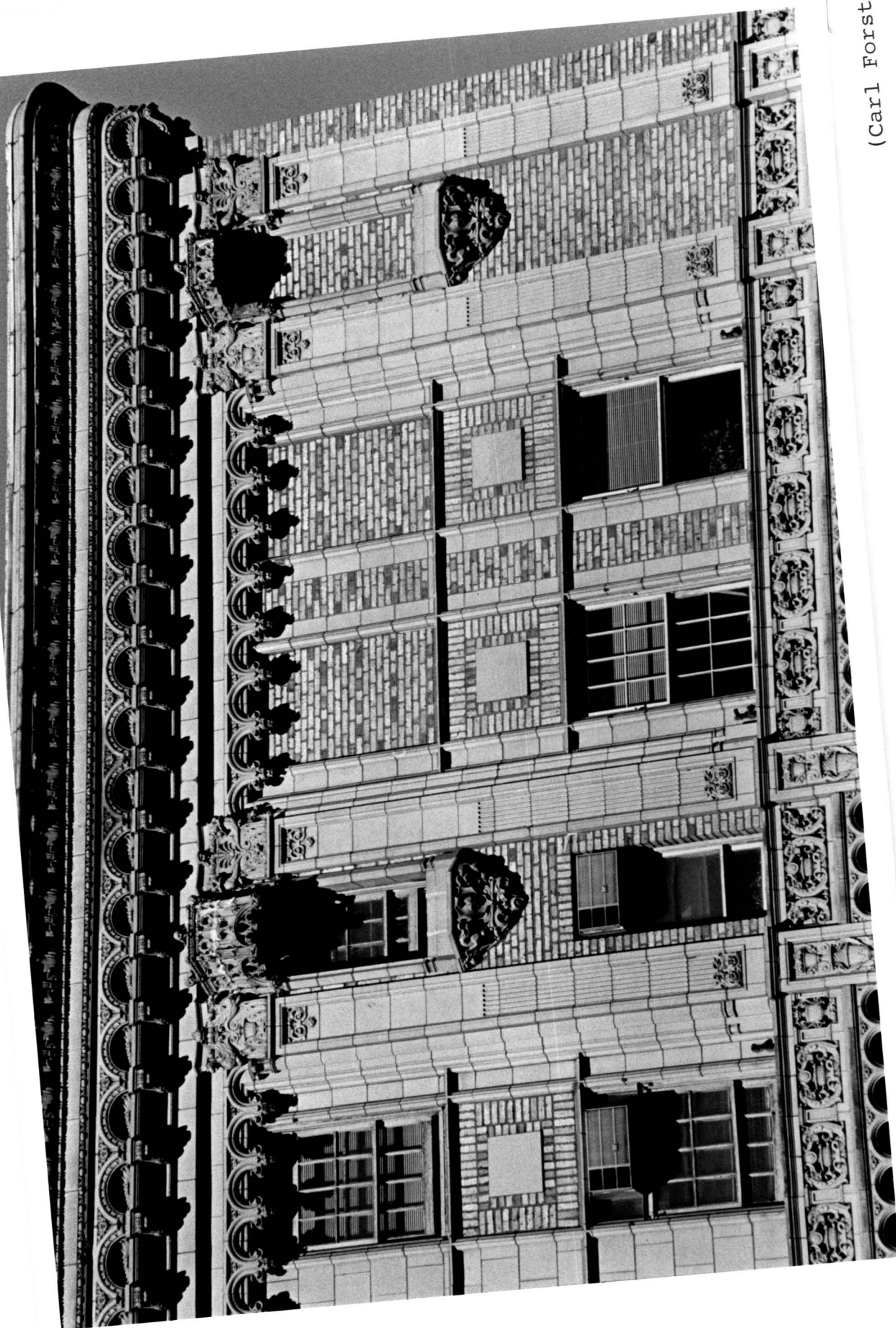
(Carl Forster)

Plate 5. Seventh Avenue elevation.



(Cass Gilbert Collection, Avery Library, Columbia University)

Plate 6. Original Entrance, West 57th Street.



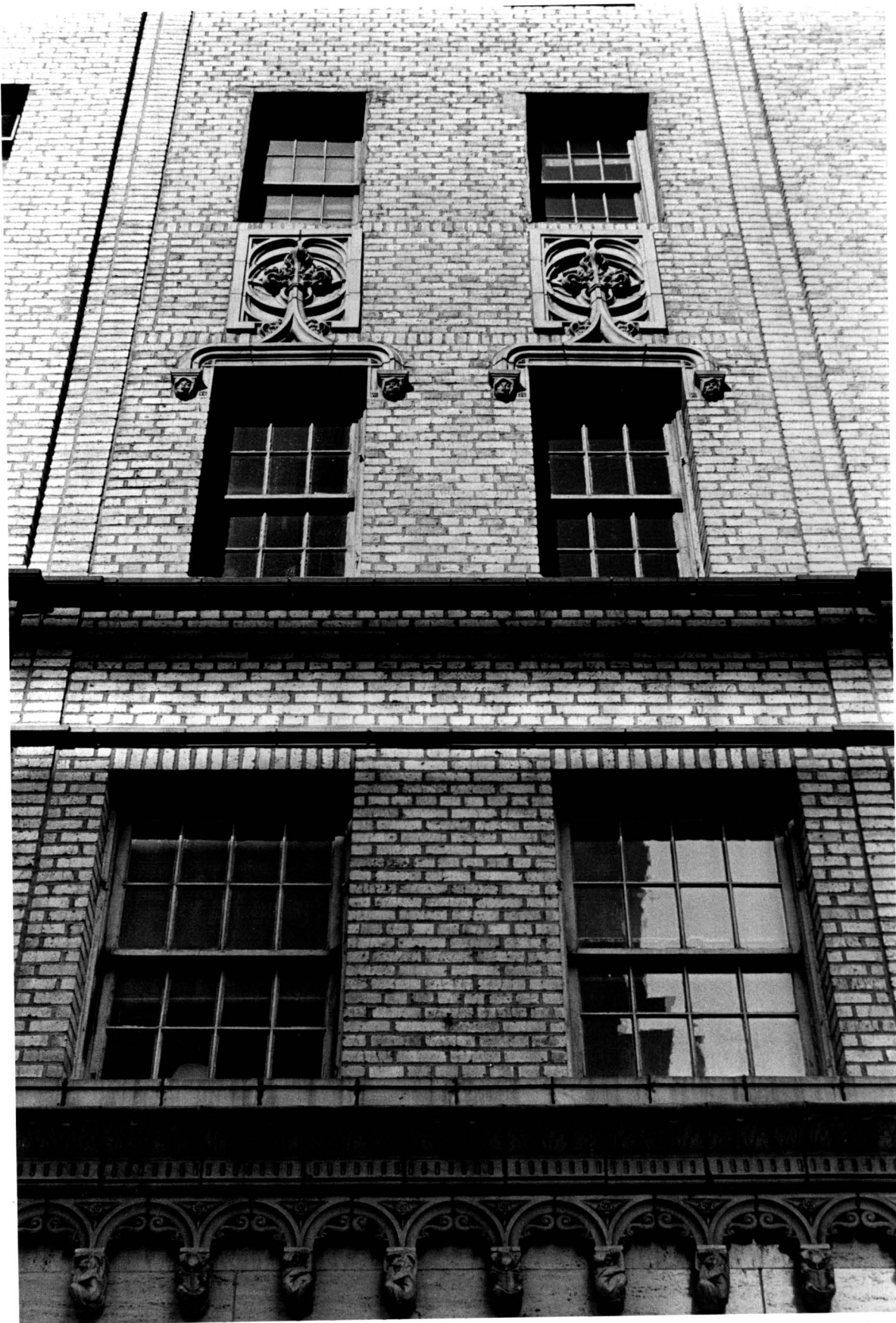
(Carl Forster)

Plate 7. Detail, Seventh Avenue elevation.



(Carl Forster)

Plate 8. Partial view of the southern elevation.



(Carl Forster)

Plate 9. Detail, Seventh Avenue elevation.



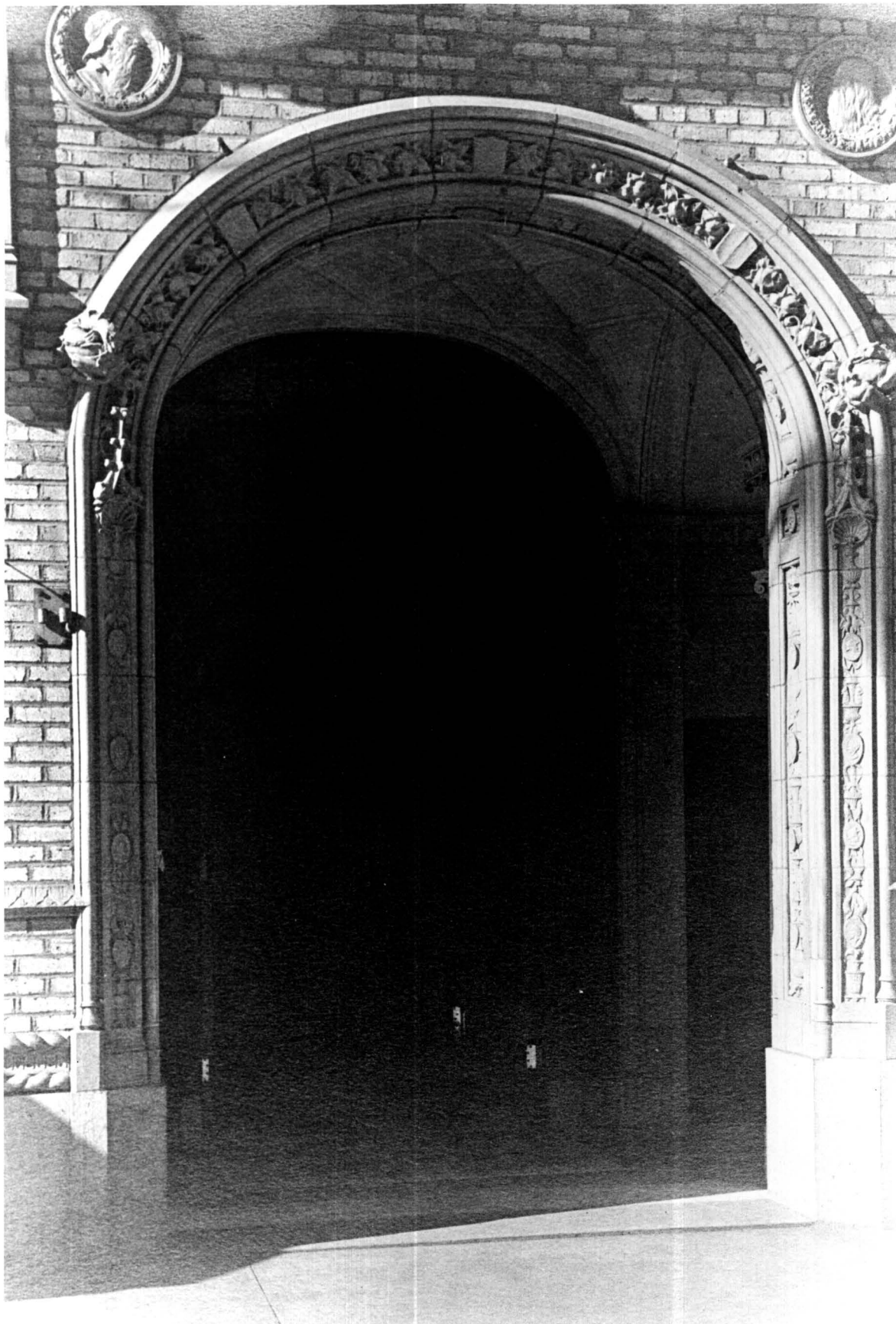
(Carl Forster)

Plate 10. Detail, West 57th Street elevation.



(Carl Forster)

Plate 11. Gateway, Seventh Avenue



(Cass Gilbert Collection, Avery Library, Columbia University)

Plate. 12. Detail, original entrance, West 57th Street.



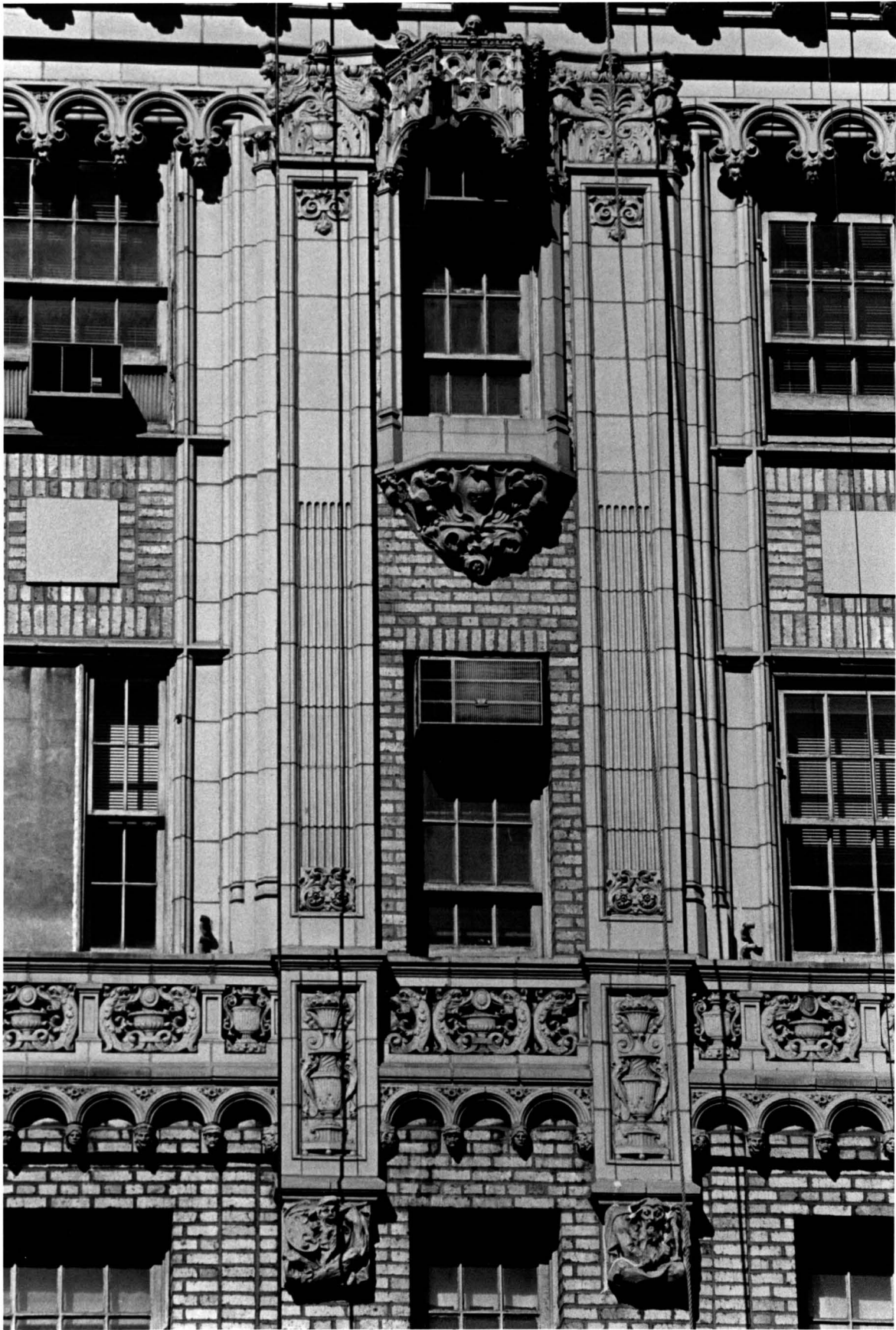
(Carl Forster)

Plate 13. Detail, West 57th Street elevation.



(Carl Forster)

Plate 14. Detail, West 57th Street elevation.



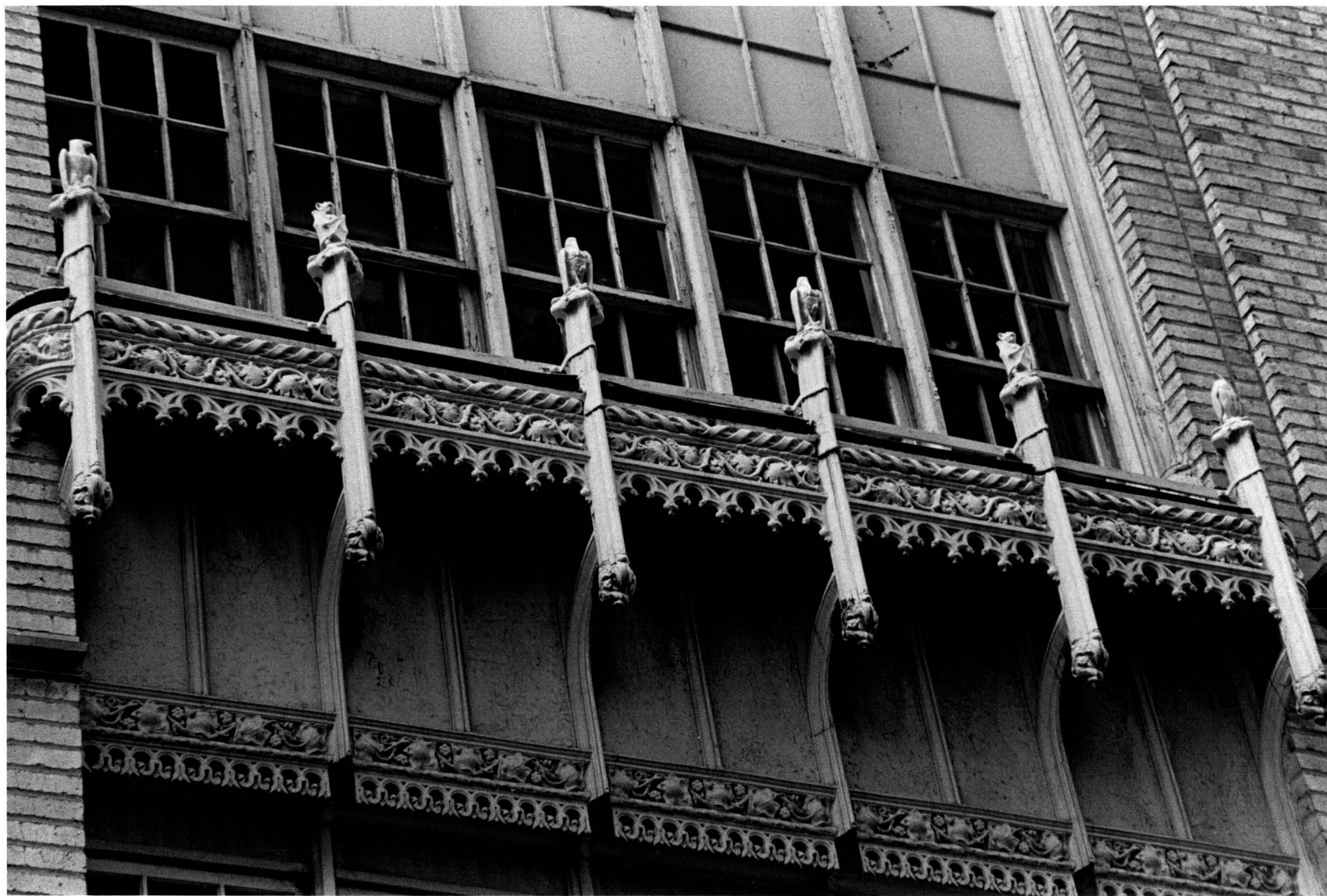
(Carl Forster)

Plate 15. Detail of the Seventh Avenue elevation.



Carl Forster)

Plate 16. Detail, the West 57th Street elevation.



(Carl Forster)

Plate 17. Detail, the West 57th Street elevation.