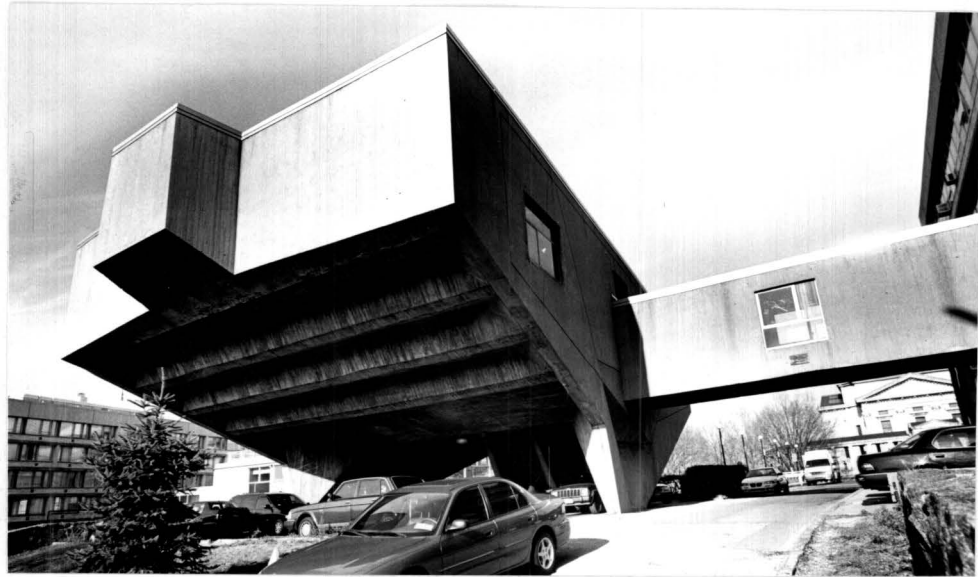


BEGRISCH HALL AT BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

City University of New York, 2050 Sedgwick Avenue, University Heights, The Bronx.
Built 1956-1961, Marcel Breuer and Associates, Architects.

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 3222, Lot 62, in part, consisting of a site including all of the land beneath Begrisch Hall and the enclosed bridge connected to Gould Technology Building, as well as the land to the west, extending to the east side of the rubble wall; to the east, extending to the west edge of the upper (east) service road; to the north, extending to the south edge of the paved terrace; and to the south, incorporating the slope that extends south between the rubble wall and the upper service road to where the rubble wall and the upper and lower (west) service roads converge.

On November 20, 2001 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Begrisch Hall at Bronx Community College, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 3). The hearing had been advertised in accordance with provisions of law. Six witnesses testified in favor of designation, including representatives of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Municipal Art Society, the Modern Architecture Working Group, DOCOMOMO US, and the Historic Districts Council. No witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission also received a statement in support of designation from the Campus Planning and Facilities Office at Bronx Community College.



Summary

Completed in 1961, Begrisch Hall stands in the southwest section of the campus of Bronx Community College, located in University Heights. This remarkable trapezoidal structure was designed by Marcel Breuer, one of the mid-twentieth century's leading architects. Breuer, who emigrated to the United States to join the faculty at Harvard University in 1937, began his career at the Bauhaus in Germany, studying design and serving as head of the carpentry workshop. During the late 1940s, New York University embarked on a major building campaign. Many prominent architects participated, including Breuer who relocated his practice to New York City in 1946 and was commissioned in 1956 to design a comprehensive master plan for the University Heights campus. Among the five structures built, Begrisch Hall was the most daring. Executed in exposed reinforced concrete, it features a pair of sloping cantilevers that spring from side-wall trusses and appear to defy gravity. These bold sculptural forms reflect specific programmatic requirements, enclosing a pair of steep-floored lecture halls, seating a combined two hundred-and-fifty students. These elevated rooms are reached by a staircase that rises from ground level and by an enclosed concrete bridge connected to the Gould Technology Building. The principal facades, at east and west, are decorated with intersecting channels that divide the textured walls into triangles, trapezoids and rectangles. An important work by this noted architect, Begrisch Hall exemplifies his later career, a period when Breuer frequently investigated the expressive qualities of reinforced concrete, anticipating such notable structures as the Whitney Museum of American Art.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Marcel Breuer (1902-1981)¹

Begrish Hall was designed by Marcel (Lajos) Breuer, one of the mid-twentieth century's leading architects. Born in Pecs, Hungary, in 1902, he attended the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany (1920-24), served as head of the school's carpentry workshop in Dessau (1924-1928), and emigrated to the United States in 1937 to teach architecture at Harvard University (1937-1946).²

During the first decade of his career, Breuer was a leading innovator in furniture design. Many of his best-known pieces were executed in bent tubular steel, juxtaposed against leather, canvas, and woven rattan. These daring cantilevered works became classics, and various models, such as the Wassily chair, continue to be manufactured. Breuer received his first architectural commission, the Harnismacher House, in 1932. Located on a sloping garden site in Weisbaden, Germany, the stuccoed concrete structure recalled projects by his professor and colleague Walter Gropius and the Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier.³ In the United States, he and Gropius became partners. Between 1937 and 1940, they collaborated on a series of notable residences, combining local and modern materials. In 1946, he moved his architectural practice to New York City. One of his first projects was an exhibition house, presented by the Museum of Modern Art in 1949. This exhibit was extremely popular and enhanced his reputation. In the decade that followed his practice flourished, resulting in numerous designs for private and institutional clients, including the UNESCO Headquarters (1958) in Paris, France, Saint John's Abbey Church (1953-61) in Collegeville, Minnesota, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (1963-68) in Washington, D.C. He received many awards during his career, including the AIA Gold Medal (1968) and the Grande Medaille d'Or from the French Academy of Architecture (1976).⁴ The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, acknowledged his achievements in 1973, devoting its first one-man architectural exhibition to his work. In Manhattan, Breuer designed the acclaimed Whitney Museum of American Art (1963-66, part of the Upper East Side Historic District).

New York University

In 1956, New York University hired Breuer to design a comprehensive master plan for its "uptown" campus. Located in the University Heights section of the Bronx, the hilltop campus was originally part of Fordham Manor and was known as Fordham Heights

during the American Revolution. The landscape retained its rural character throughout much of the nineteenth century and several country estates were located on the school's present site overlooking the Harlem River and Manhattan. Three houses, built for Gustav Schwab (1857-58), William Henry Mali (1859), and Loring Andrews (c. 1880), survive from this period and are now part of the college.

New York University was founded in 1831. During most of the century, the college was located in Manhattan on the east side of Washington Square. Under Henry Mitchell MacCracken, who was chancellor from 1891 to 1910, the various schools were reorganized and the decision was made to relocate most programs to an eighteen-acre site that "would fulfill more nearly the American ideal of a college."⁵ The architect Stanford White consulted on the project, initially suggesting that the school's original neo-Gothic building (Town & Davis, 1835, demolished), be moved and reassembled. White's plan was eventually rejected due to cost, but his firm, McKim, Mead & White, was hired to design the Bronx campus.

White's plan subscribed to Beaux Arts-style principles; it consisted of two U-shaped groups of classroom buildings flanking a central mall. To the west, was the most prominent structure, the Gould Memorial Library (1897-99). Reminiscent of the Pantheon in Rome, the east facade has a monumental domed temple front, and the interior, an auditorium and circular reading room. To the south is the Hall of Languages (1892-95), and to north, the Cornelius Baker Hall of Philosophy (1892-1912).⁶ These buildings are linked at the rear by the Hall of Fame (1912), a raised semi-circular colonnade, commemorating important figures in American history. Inspired by antique and Renaissance sources, these structures employ a consistent neo-Classical vocabulary and are all faced with yellow Roman brick, limestone, and terra cotta (these structures, including the interior of the Gould Memorial Library, are designated New York City Landmarks).

White's plan was only partially executed. While the undergraduate and engineering students attended classes in University Heights, the law, education, medical, and business programs remained in Manhattan. By the 1930s, New York University was the largest privately supported university in the United States, with fourteen schools at seven centers in Manhattan and the Bronx.

Modern Architecture and the American University⁷

Prior to the 1930s, most American universities were inspired by European and Jeffersonian models, featuring neo-Classical and neo-Gothic structures that recalled Oxford, Cambridge, Charlottesville, as well as other historic centers of learning. After World War I, European architects began to question this approach, claiming that traditional forms were no longer desirable or appropriate. These ideas attracted considerable support in the United States in the late 1920s and 1930s. The New School for Social Research (a designated New York City Interior Landmark, part of the Greenwich Village Historic District) was one of the first buildings in New York City and one of the first college buildings in the United States to exhibit characteristics of the so-called International Style. Designed by Joseph Urban in 1930-31, the clean-lined glass and brick facade stood in sharp juxtaposition to its nineteenth-century neighbors. By decade's end, several modern-style campuses were planned or under construction, including Florida Southern University (Frank Lloyd Wright, begun 1938), the Illinois Institute of Technology (Mies van der Rohe, begun 1940), and Hunter College (Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, Harrison & Foulhoux, 1938-41). After World War II, this trend accelerated, transforming the appearance of Harvard University, Yale University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

New York University embarked on a major building program during the late 1940s. To help guide the school's expansion, a Buildings and Grounds Committee of the Board of Trustees was formed in 1952. George F. Baughman, the school's vice president and treasurer praised their vision:

Without their willingness to take risks, we could do nothing. As an example, because of their enthusiastic aid, we have been able to employ some of the most exciting architects now practicing . . . a cross section of talent representing the best of contemporary American architecture.⁸

Many exceptional firms participated, including Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), Harrison & Abramowitz, I. M. Pei, and Breuer. Among them, SOM was responsible for the school's first structure in the International Style, the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, part of the NYU-Bellevue Medical Center complex (begun 1949), facing First Avenue, between 30th and 34th Streets.

Under president Carroll V. Newsom, seven new buildings were planned by 1959. *The Architectural Record* enthusiastically reported:

New York University – largest in the nation – is matching its size with a building program that calls for thirty-five million dollars worth of construction in one year!⁹

Included in the program was Nichols Hall (SOM, 1959), Graduate School of Business Administration, on Trinity Place, and the Loeb Student Center (Harrison & Abramowitz, 1957-59, demolished) on Washington Square South. The later building was particularly notable; in contrast to neo-Georgian Vanderbilt Law School (Egger & Higgins, 1949-51), which recalls earlier buildings in Greenwich Village, the student center was boldly modern, juxtaposing a slender glass and aluminum tower with an irregularly-shaped red brick auditorium.

Planning the University Heights Campus

The academic center at University Heights served two schools: the College of Arts and Pure Science and the graduate division of the College of Engineering. By 1940, the forty-five acre campus had grown to include eighteen structures. It was said to have the "charm of a small-town college," and according to the *NYU Self-Study* (1956), the students and faculty had developed a "deep and natural attachment" to the campus. The first addition after the Second World War was the Gould Student Center (Egger & Higgins, 1953-54). Located on the Mall, opposite Gould Memorial Library, the style of this low-rise, light-colored, brick and limestone building is neither classical nor modern. In subsequent projects, however, a less conventional approach was encouraged.

Breuer was chosen for his credentials as a modern architect and for his experience as a designer of buildings for educational institutions. He had been a faculty member during construction of the Bauhaus (Walter Gropius, 1925-26) and one of his first projects in the United States was an un-executed design for the campus of Black Mountain College (with Gropius, 1939-40). Commissions from American colleges dominate Breuer's oeuvre after 1950. In the New York region, he produced buildings for Vassar College (1950), Sarah Lawrence College (1950-52), the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton University (1954-57), as well as Shuster Hall at Herman H. Lehman College (originally Hunter College Uptown, 1955-59) – his earliest permanent work in New York City.¹⁰

Breuer developed a comprehensive master plan for the University Heights campus during 1956-58. It was designed in collaboration with the architects Hamilton P. Smith and Robert F. Gatje, both of whom joined Breuer's office in 1953.¹¹ In contrast to the

unified and often symmetrical Beaux-Arts and monastic plans favored earlier in the century, his scheme was laid out as series of a formal juxtapositions, contrasting mainly low-rise horizontal blocks to buildings with more unusual shapes. The boomerang-shaped residence hall, for instance, conforms to the route of Sedgwick Avenue, while the exteriors of Begrisch Hall and several unrealized structures reflect specific uses and activities.

The plan was to proceed in several phases, beginning with construction on a steeply, sloping site in the southwest corner of the campus, adjoining the Hall of Languages and Butler Hall. Visible to cars traveling on the near-by expressway, the new complex would be relatively hidden from the older parts of campus. This vacant site had been ignored by McKim, Mead & White in their unrealized master plan; however, Breuer's terraced scheme made skillful use of the change of grade. The tallest building, the seven-story residence hall, with room for more than six hundred students, was located at the bottom of the hill, preserving the continued prominence of the Gould Memorial Library. Built for male – and for the first time on the University Heights campus – female students, the dormitory was linked to the community hall and dining facilities by two “flying bridges” at the fourth story. These mid-level bridges served two purposes; to separate the sexes and to eliminate the need for costly elevators.¹²

On the most elevated part of the site, to the east, Breuer situated the Gould Technology Building and Begrisch Hall. Rather than absorbing these structures into a single unified volume, Breuer expressed their functions independently, giving each a distinct architectural character. Among the first architects to explore this approach was Le Corbusier. In proposals for the League of Nations (Société des Nations, Geneva, 1927) and the Palace of the Soviets (Moscow, 1931), the main rooms of assembly were given a separate and monumental identity. The “free-floating asymmetry and technical innovation” explored in these projects influenced many subsequent government complexes, most notably the United Nations Headquarters (International Committee of Architects, Wallace Harrison, chairman, 1947-53, 1963) and the Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza (Wallace Harrison, 1962-77) in Albany, New York.¹³

Early plans, renderings and models of the complex portray Begrisch Hall as the centerpiece. Despite its relatively small size, approximately two stories tall and measuring no greater than ninety-eight feet in length, the trapezoidal building commands attention. As originally conceived, the almost windowless sculptural form floats above its surroundings, juxtaposed against

the technology building's more conventional metal and glass facade, or in contrast to the adjoining lawn and road, which descend sharply to the south. It is a dramatic gesture, one that spotlights the structure and its place in the academic landscape.

Breuer and Functionalism

Breuer's daring design reflects his life-long interest in functionalism. During the first decades of the twentieth century, many architects embraced a stylistic philosophy in which structure, plan, and materials are directly expressed. This approach flourished in Europe and United States after the Second World War, re-shaping the design of humble domestic objects, low-cost housing projects, as well as office and civic structures. It is reflected in Breuer's early furniture, where he exploited such industrial materials as steel and plywood, as well as in his later architectural projects. Begrisch Hall reflects this modernist philosophy. *The Architectural Record* praised Breuer's design, observing that it had “been designed to be an exact envelope for its interior spaces, fitted to their particular functions.”¹⁴ The placement of various windows, the angle of the roof, and the increased width toward the south end, express the size and configurations of the lecture halls.

The rise of modern architecture and the expansion of American campuses coincided with the growth of science departments and related facilities. During the 1950s, science instruction changed dramatically, as small classrooms were replaced by demonstration theaters where students could observe live and filmed presentations. Begrisch Hall clearly reflects this trend. The *NYU Notebook* reported:

More than two hundred students, in two lecture rooms, can watch demonstration experiments on the slate-topped tables at the fronts of the rooms. They can look at slides and movies projected on pull-out screens, or even – in the larger hall – watch a play.¹⁵

These functions are clearly expressed on the exterior, through the contours of stepped rows of seating visible on the building's underside, in the box-like shape of the projection booth that extends out from the south facade, and in the modest size and limited number of windows, permitting the darkening of each classroom. These enclosed rooms required “efficient mechanical heating and ventilation and high levels of illumination.” Consequently, Begrisch Hall was planned to be the “only completely air-conditioned structure on campus.”¹⁶

Consideration was also given to circulation and the building's secondary spaces. Sociologist Michael

Cassidy advised:

Students from different departments, schools of study or whatever – will queue before lectures, share seminars and have coffee together. This contact must be optimised [sic]. How can the architect contribute towards the productivity of these contacts. By making the lecture or seminar room comfortable of course, but also by considering the spaces immediately outside.¹⁷

Breuer accomplished this by providing two entrances (a central staircase and a bridge that could double as an exhibition gallery leading to Gould Technology Building), a roomy second-story foyer, and by elevating the main part of the building off the ground, a semi-enclosed plaza for students to gather. Television equipment could also be positioned here, protected from the elements and “hooked up to direct lines” for transmission.¹⁸

Concrete and “Brutalism”¹⁹

Reinforced concrete entered the architectural mainstream during the mid-1950s. In contrast to earlier decades when it was used primarily for industrial structures and clad in brick or terra cotta, during this period it was frequently left exposed. It became an extremely popular and versatile material, touted in the architectural press and visible in many prominent commissions.²⁰ This development occurred, in part, due to restrictions on the use of steel during the Korean War, but also because architects were receptive to this material as a way to expand the modern aesthetic and still express their functional philosophy. One of the first architects to recognize the “rugged grandeur” of exposed concrete was Le Corbusier. In the *Unité d’Habitation* (1947-52), an apartment building built at Marseilles, France, he celebrated the exterior’s surface imperfections, leaving knots, blemishes and formboard patterning visible. This sensibility became known as “Brutalism” in the 1950s. It was promoted by the architects Allison and Peter Smithson and the critic Reyner Banham as an honest and ethical style, appropriate to public buildings and for use in institutional settings.²¹

A pioneering example of an exposed concrete structure in New York City is the Municipal Asphalt Plant (now Asphalt Green Recreational Center, Kahn & Jacobs, 1941-44, a designated New York City Landmark), near the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Drive, between 90th and 91st Streets.²² Featuring a dramatic parabolic arch, the plant was notable for its soaring sculptural form and unobstructed interior space. Similar ideas were explored by Frank Lloyd

Wright in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (a designated New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark), first proposed in 1943. Unprecedented in form and technique, the spiraling design was executed primarily in poured and sprayed reinforced concrete. Built 1956-59, this widely-anticipated building generated considerable discussion, paving the way for such non-traditional structures as the TWA Flight Center (Eero Saarinen, 1958-62, a designated New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark) and the Civic Center Synagogue (now Congregation Shaare Zedek, William N. Breger Associates, 1965-67, located within the Tribeca East Historic District).

Begrish Hall was conceived and planned as the Guggenheim Museum was rising. In contrast to Wright who covered the concrete with an “ivory-colored vinyl plastic skin,” Breuer left the various surfaces bare, allowing the color and texture of the raw concrete to define his aesthetic.²³ It became his signature material:

I like to use concrete because it has a rugged quality. It is not a sweet material. It is a relief in modern architecture from all that glass and steel. Also concrete can do almost anything in a building. It represents both structure and enclosure and per consequence it expresses structure more directly than any other material . . . Flowing forces can be expressed in the exterior of a building, giving it an organic character.²⁴

Begrish Hall is faced entirely in reinforced concrete. This material was economical and helped preserve the general color scheme of various structures on the University Heights campus. To produce it, an elaborate full-size form work or shuttering made of wood boards was fabricated on site to serve as the mold into which the liquid concrete (a mixture of cement, aggregate and water) was poured and allowed to set.

An integral part of the elevations is the imprint left from the carefully planned and executed wood planking. The east and west facades are decorated with intersecting channels and inverted triangles, formed by boards that were deliberately positioned to interrupt the flow of concrete. These lines and shapes divide the textured surfaces into various sections, forming triangles, trapezoids, and rectangles. Breuer’s associate, Robert F. Gatje, later explained that the origin of this abstract design was “pure poetry.”²⁵ It likewise recalls the work of many contemporary artists, including Josef Albers, Ellsworth Kelly and Tony Smith, and is evocative of shooting stars or satellites leaving traces in a clear night sky.²⁶ Between

the dark channels, running parallel to one of the edges that frame each section, slightly-raised reliefs are visible. A by-product of the form work employed during construction, these patterns were of great interest to the architect, who later observed:

*The greatest esthetic design potential in concrete is found through interrupting the plane in such a way that sunlight and shadow will enhance its form, while through changing exposure a building will appear differently at various moments of the day.*²⁷

Beneath these facades, on the hall's underside, the pattern is much more regular. While the more visible sections follow a tight, vertical, north-south orientation, the pattern on the surfaces closest to the ground extend from east to west.

Construction

Ground was broken for Gould and Begrish Halls in November 1958 and construction began in June 1959.²⁸ The linked structures were budgeted individually; while most of the \$2 million cost of the four-story laboratory and classroom building was covered by a 1956 gift from Frank Jay Gould, a long-standing benefactor to the University Heights campus, initially, no donor was found for the attached lecture wing of "cantilever design."²⁹ In 1961, with construction underway, NYU announced that it had received \$180,000 from Frank Begrish, a retired contractor and president of Realty Managers, Inc. and Corporate Properties, Inc., and his son Frank W. Begrish. The gift was made to honor the memory of Lillian (Lillie) Keese Begrish.³⁰

The contractor was Caristo Construction Corporation of Brooklyn, and Smith was the associate architect in charge of the project, with Murray Emslie overseeing the construction phase and Bernard Marson making tri-weekly inspections.³¹ In late September 1961, the combined facilities opened to students and faculty, serving the Physics, Electrical Engineering, and Mathematics Departments.³²

Reception

Breuer's design was well-received. *The Architectural Record* praised the overall site plan and claimed that Begrish Hall's dramatic silhouette was "without precedent."³³ It received the Albert S. Bard Award from the City Club of New York in 1964 for "excellence in urban architecture." Among the jurors was Peter Blake, editor of *Architectural Forum*, who praised NYU, calling the lecture hall "a vigorous, imaginative and highly sculptural expression of the possibilities of reinforced concrete." He also said it

was "equal" to Breuer's best work, as well as work by other architects in this medium.³⁴

Many books unrelated to Breuer's career feature images or discussions of the hall, most notably *The Science Lecture Room* (1967) and *Transformations in Modern Architecture* (1979).³⁵ The later publication, by Museum of Modern Art architecture curator Arthur Drexler, includes it under the category "Sculptural form: Brutalism," and groups it with works by Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, and Paul Rudolph. While both the 1967 and 1987 *AIA Guide to New York City* include the same arresting photograph of the building's south cantilever, the later edition describes it as suffering "from a concrete pomposity." The most recent edition, published in 2000, carries a more respectful tone, referring to it as part of a "modern set of sculptural essays."³⁶ In *New York 1960*, the authors characterized it as a "dramatic, seemingly airborne concrete monolith that exuded modernity."³⁷ Gatje, who worked in Breuer's office for many years, included a photograph and drawing of the hall in his memoir devoted to the architect, published in 2000. He said that Breuer "had never done anything like it" and that it was one of his "most successful inventions and a monument to his constant search for programmatic "accidents" that would justify the articulation of one part, as opposed to the whole."³⁸

Subsequent History

In September 1970, NYU completed its fifth and final Breuer-designed structure, Technology II. Clad in precast concrete panels, the eight-story research tower dominates the campus. Construction coincided with an almost fifty percent drop in student enrollment at University Heights. This decline led to empty dormitories and a growing deficit. The State of New York authorized the purchase of the campus for \$62 million in 1972, saving the school \$5.5 million annually.³⁹ While some officials hoped it would be converted to a science and technology center, in 1973 it opened its doors as Bronx Community College, a junior college of the City College of New York, offering classes in career training, liberal arts, and adult education.⁴⁰ At present, Begrish Hall is in good condition and the lecture halls are primarily used by the radiology department.

Description

Begrish Hall is located in the southwest corner of the campus of Bronx Community College in University Heights, the Bronx. To the south is West 180th Street, to the west is Colston Hall, Community Hall and Sedgwick Avenue, and to the northwest is Butler Hall and Language Hall, as well as the Mall.

Made almost entirely of concrete, the building rises from two faceted sculpted sidewall trusses, and is connected to the Gould Technology Building by an enclosed bridge. The shape of the building reflects the general size and shape of the classrooms and other spaces contained within. Non-historic metal flashing has been installed where the walls meet the roof. The east and west facades are nearly identical. They are simply treated: intersecting channels divide the concrete surface, forming triangles, trapezoids, and rectangles. The lines emphasize the facade's almost triangular shape, and in three instances, intersect with window openings. Between the lines, distinct formboard patterns are visible, generally paralleling the edges that frame each section. Overall, the concrete is in good condition. Some stains and repairs are visible, mostly on the east and west facades, near the base.

The **west facade** has four historic silver metal-framed rectangular windows, each a different size and shape. Each opening has a different number of panes (from north to south: 3, 1, 2, 2), one of which can be opened. Close to the ground, on the west side of the truss, is an inverted triangular form. A non-historic lighting fixture has been installed immediately below the upper-most window. It is connected to a thin metal conduit.

The **east facade** has three historic silver metal-framed windows, each a different size and shape, two on the north side of the bridge, and one to the south. Each opening has a different number of panes (from north to south: 3, 2, 2). Directly above where the concrete bridge meets the facade is a rectangular ventilation grate. Close to the ground, on the east side of the truss and below the bridge, is an inverted triangular form. The **north and south facades** have no windows. At the center of the south facade a rectangular shape projects out from the center of the wall.

The raised **entrance** faces north and is located below the cantilevered structure. A vestibule and interior staircase is reached by six granite risers flanked by metal hand rails. Non-historic cement has

been inserted between the risers and metal rails. The entrance consists of a pair of silver metal-framed doors with a glazed transom that may be original, set between a pair of concrete trusses. Attached to the east truss is a non-historic sign identifying the building as Begrisch Hall. Directly above the entrance and pressed into the lower section of the north facade are the words "BEGRISCH HALL." The letters consist of light-colored stones embedded in concrete.

The building's **underside** exhibits a pattern that is distinct from the other facades. It steps down toward the center from the north and south, expressing the floors of the two classrooms. On most surfaces underneath the formboard patterns follow a vertical orientation, while near the bottom they are horizontal, laid east to west. Rust marks, mostly in the form of dots, are visible in many places. A non-historic horizontal metal conduit is located on the inner wall of the west truss, as well as a non-historic lighting fixture to the south of the entrance stairs.

The land directly below the hall is mostly covered with black asphalt and is presently used for the parking of automobiles. Facing the entrance, evergreen bushes are planted and arranged in a U-shaped configuration. Granite pavers are used as edging. To the south is a sloping triangular lawn, flanked on the east by a service road, and to the west, by a rubble wall.

The **enclosed concrete bridge** extends over the upper (east) service road and is aligned directly above the west entrance to Gould Hall. On the north and south side of the bridge, near center, are single historic silver metal-framed windows, each with three different-sized panes of glass. On the lower side of the bridge the formboard patterning is visible, as well as a non-historic lighting fixture.

Report prepared and written by
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NOTES

1. The most complete discussions of Breuer's career are found in Robert F. Gatje, *Marcel Breuer: A Memoir* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2000); Isabelle Hyman, *Marcel Breuer, Architect: The Career and the Buildings* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001); and Tician Papchristou, *Marcel Breuer: New Buildings and Projects* (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1970). For a detailed study of his career as a furniture designer, see Christopher Wilk, *Marcel Breuer: Furniture and Interiors* (New York: Museum of

- Modern Art, 1981). Breuer's papers are located at Syracuse University and at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art in Washington, D.C. Considerable thanks go to Jean Fitzgerald, Archives Specialist at the Archives of American Art, who provided copies of numerous papers and photographs related to the NYU commission.
2. Breuer completed his studies in 1924, "becoming one of the few students who actually graduated from the Bauhaus." Wilk, 32.
 3. *Ibid.*, 110-12.
 4. Donald I. Johnson and Donald Langmead, *Makers of Modern Architecture: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*, 1977.
 5. Quoted in Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Gould Memorial Library Interior Designation Report* (LP-1087) (New York: City of New York, 1981), report by Andrew Dolkart, 2. Also see *Gould Memorial Library Designation Report* and *Hall of Languages Designation Report* (LP-112, LP-114) (New York: City of New York, 1966).
 6. These halls served various purposes. The Hall of Languages also contained the offices of the Director and Dean. See *Rider's New York City: A Guide Book for Travelers*, Freemont Rider, ed. (New York, 1923), 513.
 7. Paul Venerable Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (New York: The Architectural History Foundation and the MIT Press, 1984).
 8. "A University Builds," *NYU Notebook*, vol. 5, no 1 (September 1961), 2.
 9. "College Buildings: NYU, Nation's Largest University Constructing Seven Buildings," *Architectural Record* (September 1959), 186.
 10. The library and classroom building, designed with Robert F. Gatje, is located at the southeast corner of Goulden Avenue and Bedford Park Boulevard. The school was renamed Lehman College in 1967. Robert A. M. Stern, Thomas Mellins and David Fishman, *New York 1960: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Second World War and the Bicentennial* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), 948.
 11. Smith (b. 1925) graduated from the School of Architecture at Yale University in 1950 and for a brief time was associated with Eero Saarinen. He collaborated with Breuer on the design of the Whitney Museum and the addition to the Cleveland Museum of Art. Gatje (b. 1927) graduated from the College of Architecture at Cornell University in 1951 and worked as a draftsman in the office of Percival Goodman in 1952-53. Breuer's firm relocated to a larger space at 201 East 57th Street in August 1956.
 12. In 1958, the Board of Trustees approved the school's change to co-ed status. According to the *New York Herald Tribune*, it was the last of NYU's fourteen schools and colleges to "open its doors to women." The \$4.1 million dormitory was financed by a loan from the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency. For articles on the expansion, see "N.Y.U. to Erect \$2,000,000 Building for Engineering," *New York Times*, May 26, 1958; "Education . . . N.Y.U. on Heights Goes Co-Ed in Fall," *New York Herald Tribune*, December 5, 1958, 2; "N.Y.U. to be Co-Ed in Bronx in Fall," *New York Times*, December 5, 1958; and "New Look at NYU's Bronx Campus," *New York Construction News*, May 4, 1959, 8.
 13. Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980/1985), 158-60.
 14. "Flying Bridges Link NYU Campus Group," *Architectural Record* (April 1962), 142.
 15. "A New Study/Living Complex," *NYU Notebook* (September 1961), 4.
 16. During the 1960s, most lecture rooms in Britain were built without windows and day lighting. Taylor, 18; "Architects Award Begrich Building Merit Certificate" (March 17, 1964). Files, NYU Archives.
 17. Quoted in Taylor, 20, 22.
 18. "Architects Award."
 19. This section is based on Carl W. Condict, *American Building Art: The Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford Press, 1961; "Reinforced Concrete" *Encyclopedia of Modern Architecture*, Wolfgang Pehnt, ed. (1964), 234-241; and Donald Friedman, *Historical Building Construction: Design Materials, and Technology* (New York

and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995).

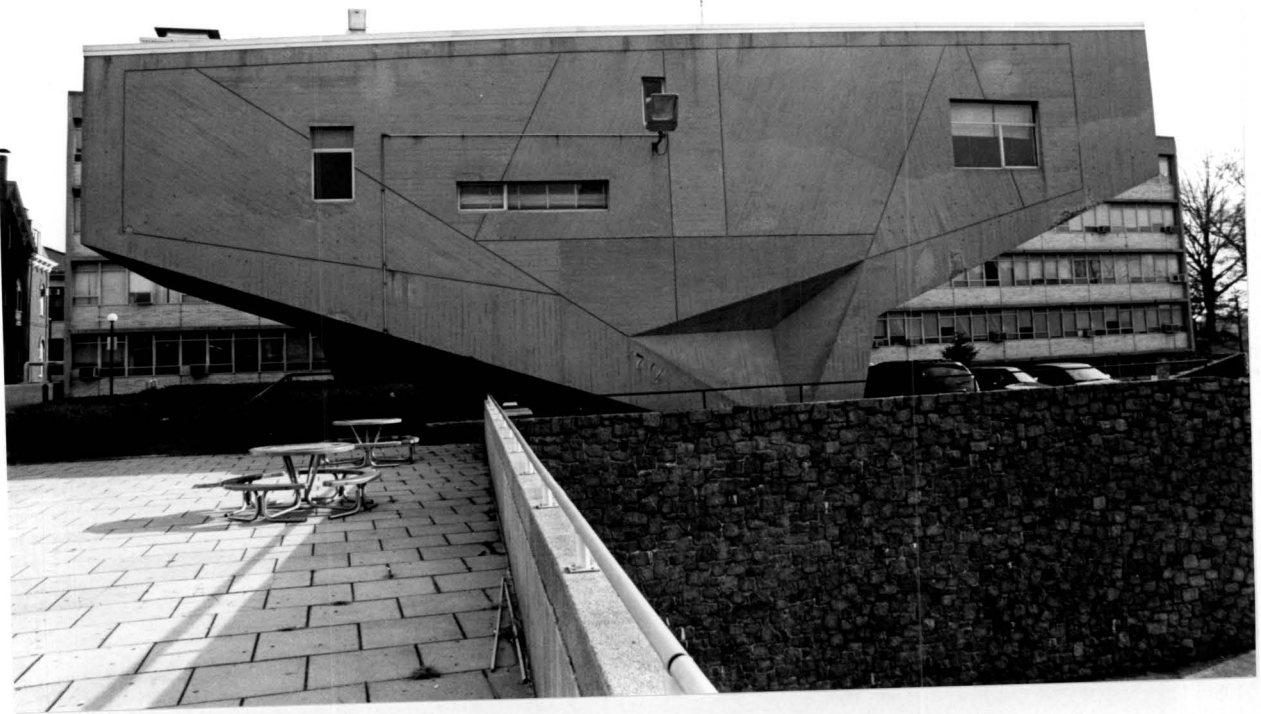
20. According to Friedman's list of structural landmarks (appendix B), one of the earliest reinforced concrete buildings on the east coast of the United States was the Borax Factory (1897) in Bayonne, New Jersey, 163. A notable group of examples from the 1910s are located in Long Island City, Queens. See Long Island City Survey, unpublished manuscript, LPC files.
21. For discussions of Brutalism, see Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism; Ethic or Aesthetic?* (London: The Architectural Press, 1966) *Modernism Without Rhetoric: Essays on the work of Alison and Peter Smithson*, Helen Webster, ed. (Academy Editions, 1997); and Frampton, 224-230, 262-279.
22. LPC, *Municipal Asphalt Plant Designation Report* (LP-905) (New York: City of New York, 1976). Other pioneering examples of exposed concrete structures in New York City include Kips Bay Plaza (1959) and Silver Towers (1966), both designed by I. M. Pei, and Chatham Towers (Kelly & Gruzen, 1961). The former National Maritime Union Building (Albert Ledner & Associates, 1964, part of the Greenwich Village Historic District) was covered with tile at a later date.
23. LPC, *Solomon Guggenheim Museum Designation Report* (LP-1774) (City of New York, 1990) by David Breiner, 9.
24. From an unpublished profile of Breuer by Winthrop Sargeant, quoted in Hyman, 157.
25. Gatje told this to Hyman in 2001. Reported to author via e-mail, 2001.
26. In October 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik I. In May 1961, the United States launched the first man into space, Alan B. Shepard, Jr., followed by the first man to orbit the earth, John Glenn, in 1962.
27. Quoted in Hyman, 155.
28. "NYU To Be Co-Ed," *New York Times*, December 5, 1958; "Projected Record Book: NYU Technology Building," 1960, Smithsonian Archives of American Art.
29. Gould also gave \$1.5 million for the student center. *New York Times*, March 16, 1956, 20.
30. "New Lecture Hall at N.Y.U. Will Honor Benefactors," *New York Times*, April 17, 1961.
31. Marson had an engineering degree from NYU. He also worked on the Whitney Museum of Art. Gatje, 304.
32. "Projected Record Book."
33. "Flying Bridges." 142.
34. Other buildings to receive this award include the Pepsi Cola Building (a designated New York City Landmark), the Premier Apartments, and Cinema I and II. See "Architects Award Begrish Merit Certificate" (March 17, 1964). Files, NYU Archives.
35. Arthur Drexler, *Transformations in Modern Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1979).
36. Roger Feinstein wrote the Bronx entries in the 1967 edition. Elliot Willensky and Norvall White are identified as the authors of later editions.
37. Stern et al, *New York 1960*, 948.
38. Gatje, 77, 81.
39. Thomas J. Frusciano and Marilyn H. Petit, *New York University and the City: An Illustrated History*, 241.
40. Bronx Community College was established in 1957. *Encyclopedia of New York City* (New York: Yale University Press, 1995), 146.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

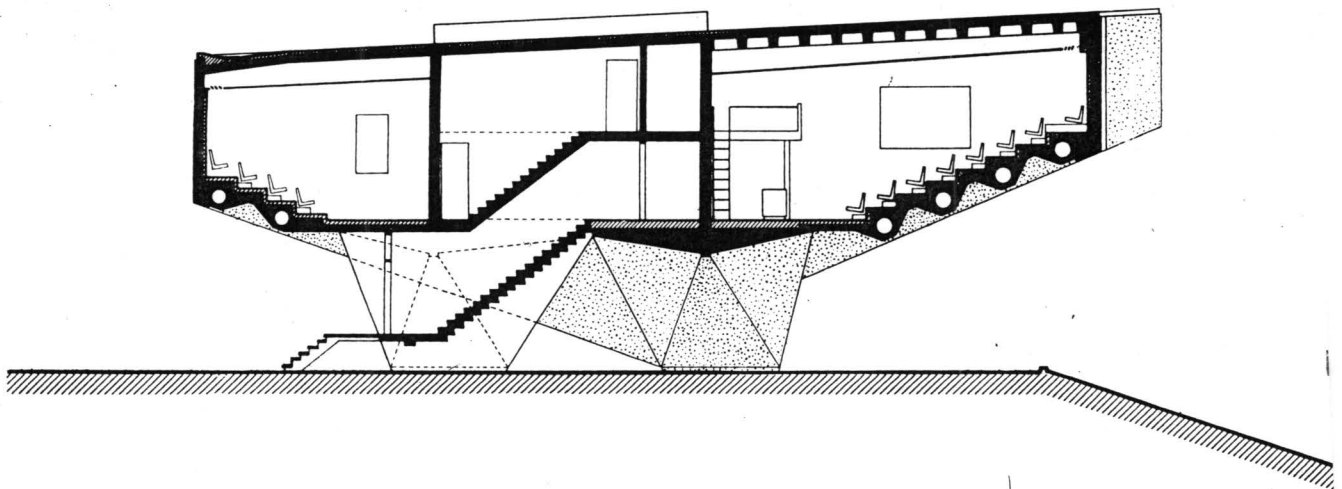
On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that Begrisch Hall at Bronx Community College has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, Begrisch Hall, completed in 1961, is a remarkable cantilevered trapezoidal structure designed by Marcel Breuer, one of the mid-twentieth century's leading architects; that Breuer gained his training at the Bauhaus in Germany during the 1920s and emigrated to the United States in 1937; that in 1956 New York University commissioned him to design a comprehensive master plan for the University Heights campus; that among the five structures built, Begrisch Hall was the most daring; that its bold sculptural form, executed in exposed reinforced concrete, features a pair of sloping cantilevers that spring from side-wall trusses and appear to defy gravity; that the building's shape reflects specific programmatic requirements, enclosing two steep-floored lecture halls, seating a combined two hundred-and-fifty students; that the principal (east and west) facades are decorated with intersecting channels that divide the textured surfaces into triangles, trapezoids and rectangles; and that Begrisch Hall exemplifies the architect's later career, a period when Breuer frequently investigated the expressive qualities of exposed reinforced concrete, anticipating such notable structures as the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21) 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 Begrisch Hall at Bronx Community College, City University of New York, 2050 Sedgwick Avenue, University Heights, Borough of the Bronx, and designates Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 3222, Lot 62, in part, consisting of the land beneath Begrisch Hall, and the enclosed bridge connected to Gould Technology Building, as well as the land to the west, extending to the east side of the rubble wall; to the east, extending to the west edge of the upper (east) service road; to the north, extending to the south edge of the paved terrace; and to the south, incorporating the slope that extends south between the rubble wall and the upper service road to where the rubble wall and the upper and lower (west) service roads converge, as its Landmark Site.



Begrish Hall at Bronx Community College, west facade
 Photo: Carl Forster



“Section through Lecture Halls Wing” (1957-61)
Begrish Hall

Source: Smithsonian Archives of American Art



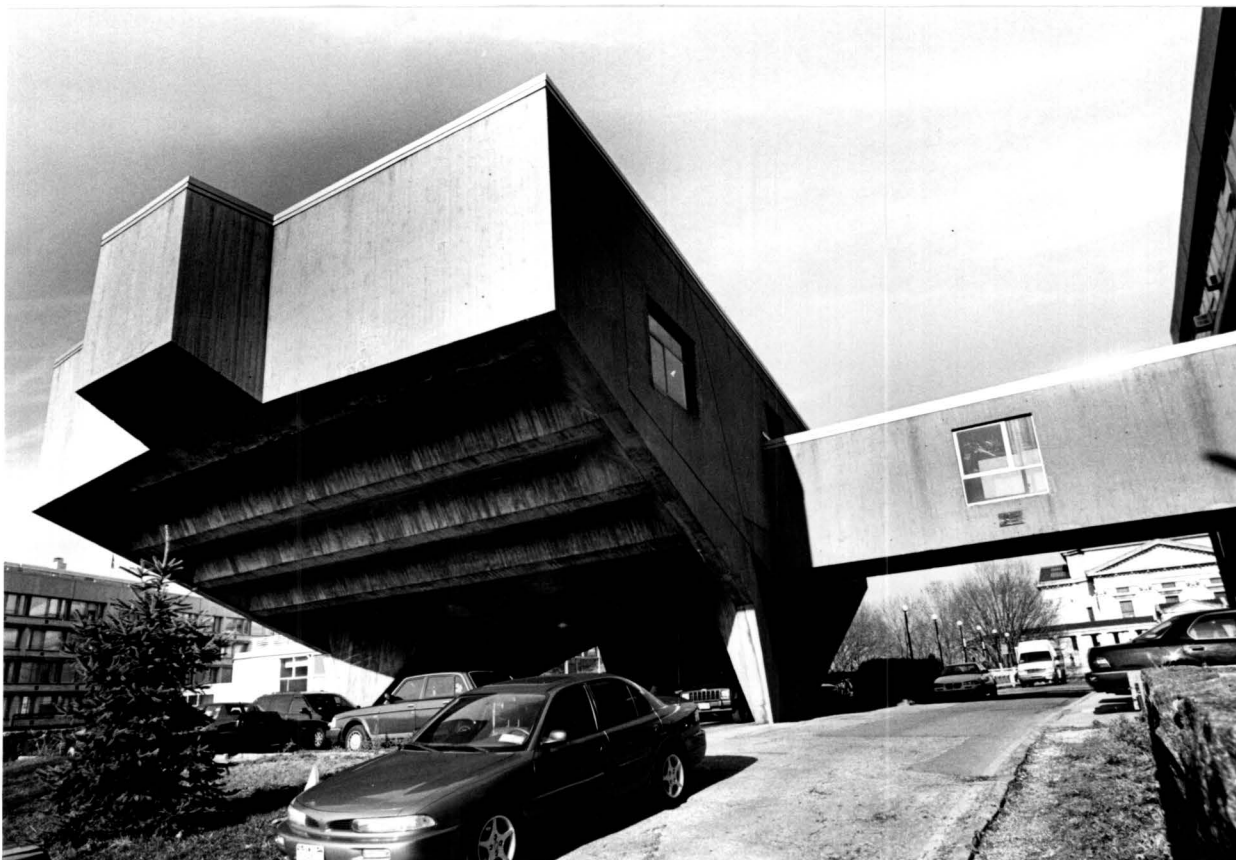
Begrish Hall, west facade

Photo: Carl Forster



Begrish Hall, south facade

Photo: Carl Forster



Begrisch Hall, south facade, enclosed bridge to east
Photo: Carl Forster



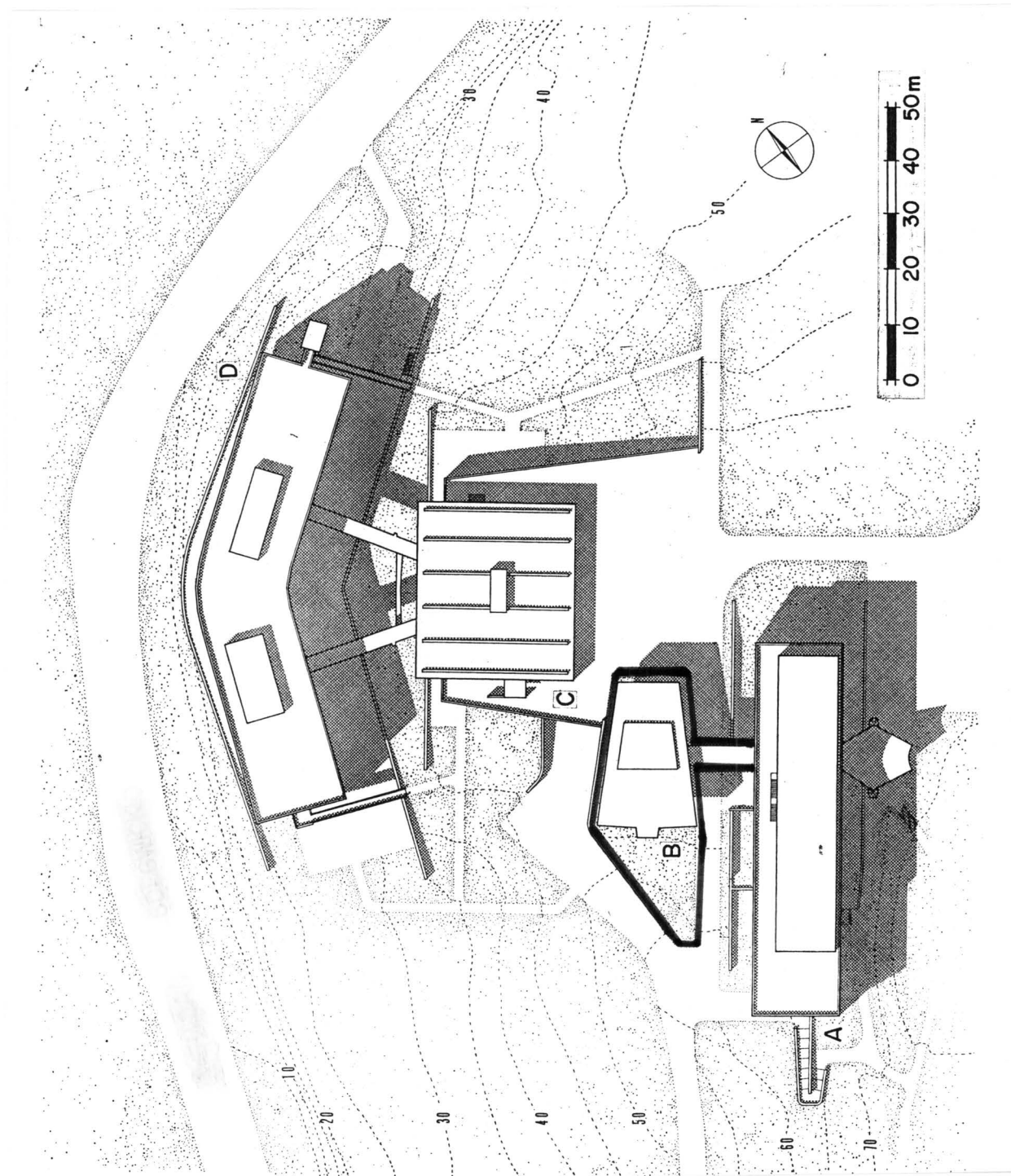
Begrisch Hall, north side of east facade
Photo: Carl Forster



Begrish Hall, entrance, north facade
Photo: Carl Forster



Begrish Hall, north facade, enclosed bridge to east
Photo: Carl Forster



Begrish Hall at Bronx Community College, LP-2110

2050 Sedgwick Avenue, University Heights

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 3220, Lot 62 in part

For complete description of boundaries, see page one of designation report

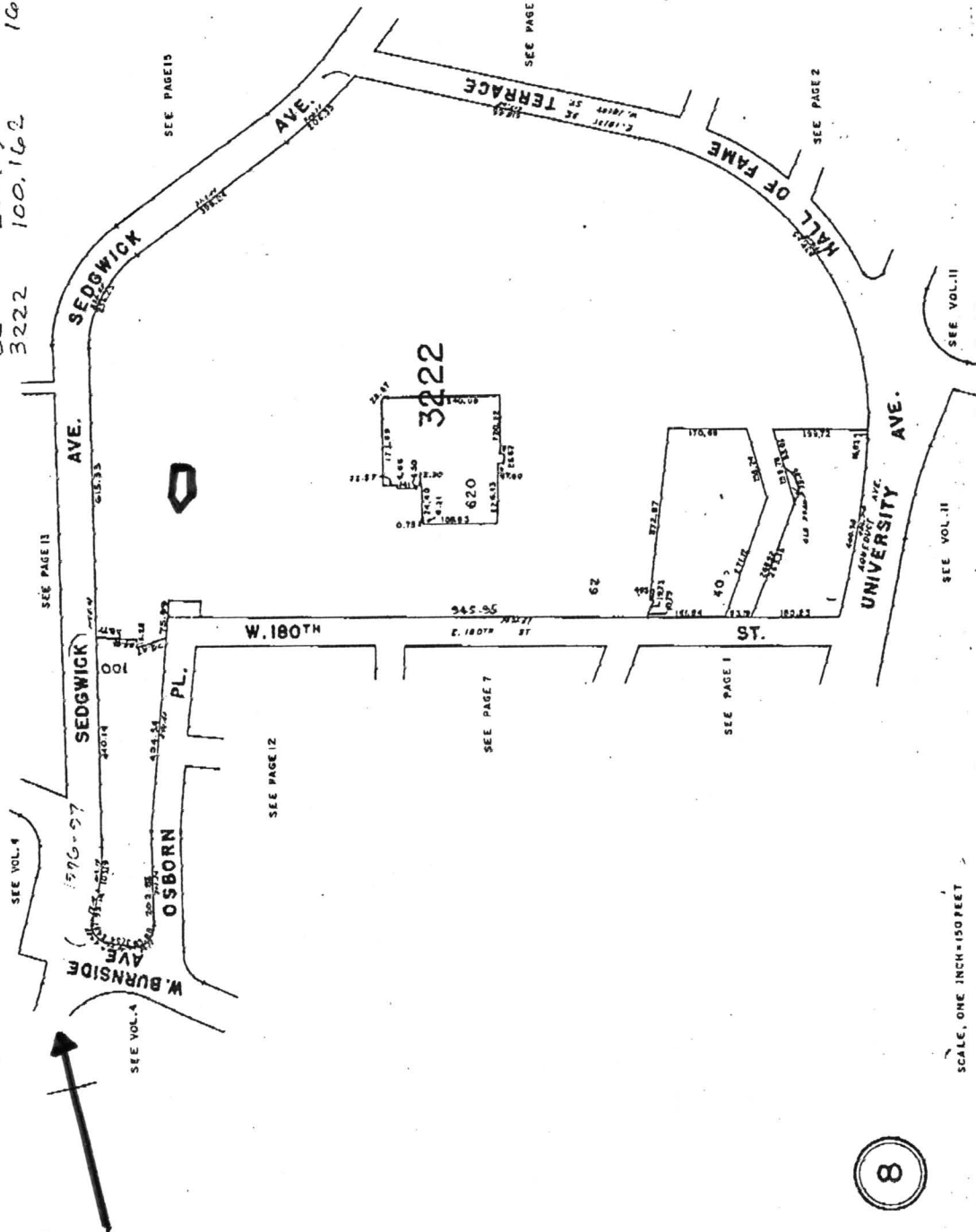
Source: Smithsonian Archives of American Art

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Begrish Hall at Bronx Community College, LP-2110: Area of designation
 2050 Sedgwick Avenue, University Heights
 Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 3220, Lot 62 in part
 For complete description of boundaries, see page one of designation report
 Source: New York City Department of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map