

S

U

S

-

m

o

m

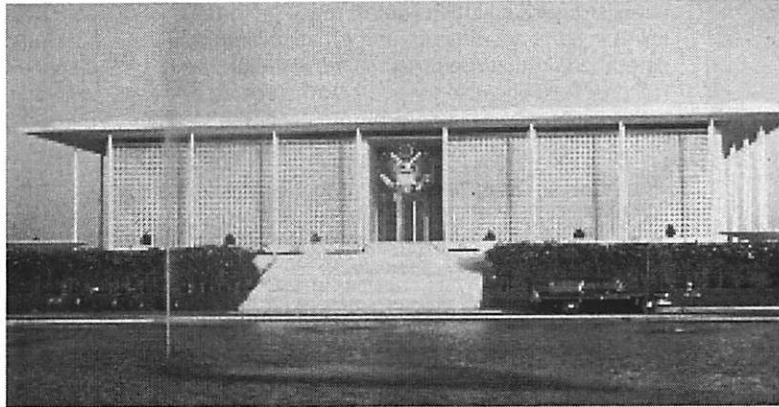
o

m

o

## Stone's New Delhi Embassy on State Department Register

In April the State Department added a modernist icon to its list of most valued historical properties—**Edward Durell Stone's** Chancery in New Delhi (1954-59), the project that resurrected the architect's career and influenced American embassy design for a decade or more. As the Department notes in its announcement, "The Embassy is a hallmark example of modernist philosophy by Stone, one of the earliest exponents of the International Style... In India the Chancery continues to



**U.S. Embassy, New Delhi, India; Edward Durell Stone, 1954-59.**  
*(photo: U.S. Department of State)*

observe the type of consideration afforded historical landmarks, as appreciation for the preservation of modernist architecture grows worldwide."

No group of buildings better exemplified the meaning of modernism than the embassies built by the U.S. government in the early postwar years. From New Delhi to Havana, prominent and soon-to-be prominent architects tackled the task of representing the United

States at a time when the mood was expansive and the buildings were open and intentionally inviting. The architecture was supposed to promote goodwill and express American identity, and, at least from the viewpoint of the design community, it accomplished both.

The list of those who won prized commissions from the State Department's Office of Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO) reads like a "Who's Who" of modern masters. It included **Walter Gropius** (Athens), **Marcel Breuer** (The Hague), **Ludwig Mies van der Rohe** (São Paulo), **Richard Neutra** (Karachi), **Ralph Rapson** (Stockholm and Copenhagen), **Eero Saarinen** (London and Oslo), **Harry Weese** (Accra), **Josep Luis Sert** (Baghdad), **I. M. Pei** (Montevideo), and **Hugh Stubbins** (Tangier). Except for São Paulo, all were built. Some, like

*cont'd on p. 6*

## NATIONAL NEWS | fall 2004

### ARTICLES

- 1 Stone's New Delhi Embassy on State Department "Register," by *Jane Loeffler*
- 2 Neutra in the News: The Cyclorama at Gettysburg by *Chris Madrid French*, The George Kraigher House by *Stephen Fox*
- 4 Serenity in the Midst of Sprawl: The Paul R. Schweiker House by *Julie McKeon*
- 5 Building Obituaries: Robert Reichert's Egan House, Seattle, Washington; Gardner Dailey's Coral Casino and Cabana Club, Santa Barbara, California

### DOCOMOMO NEWS

- 2 Welcome
- 3 Chapter News
- 3 DOCOMOMO 2004 Conference

### UPCOMING CONFERENCES

- Modernism in Havana and Miami**  
Cornell University School of Architecture, Ithaca, NY September 17-18
- "Import-Export: Postwar Modernism in an Expanding World, 1945-1975."**  
VIth International DOCOMOMO Conference  
New York, NY September 26-29
- "Restore America: Communities at Crossroads"**  
**National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference**  
Louisville, KY September 28-October 3
- Modernism Unplugged: Modern Architecture Before the International Style**  
Univ. of Virginia School of Architecture  
Charlottesville, VA October 1-2

### EXHIBITS

- Ezra Stoller Architectural Photography**  
Williams College, Williamstown, MA  
Through December 14
- Joseph and Anni Albers: Designs for Living**  
Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, New York, NY  
October 1-February 27
- Beyond the Box--The Architecture of William P. Bruder,**  
Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV  
Through October 18
- "The Sixties: Montreal Thinks Big"**  
Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, Canada  
October 20 2004--August 14 2005

### DOCOMOMO US

Email: [info@docomomo-us.org](mailto:info@docomomo-us.org)  
Mail: PO Box 230977  
New York, NY 10023

[www.docomomo-us.org](http://www.docomomo-us.org)

## Building Obituaries *(cont'd)*

year the building was landmarked by the County of Santa Barbara.

This remarkable structure has withstood years of oceanfront exposure and the changing tastes of hotel operators. It demonstrates the fundamental design principles of the modern movement, including: emphasis on horizontality, angular walls, glazing, and minimalist detailing; spatial continuity between exterior and interior spaces, incorporating the work of **Lockwood de Forest**, an important local landscape designer; building massing elevated to appear as floating above the ground, with an open floor plan merging a series of interconnected spaces emphasizing vista; a façade detached from the structural columns; a flat roof; innovative detailing, including horizontal redwood siding painted with a sand texture to mimic board-formed concrete.

Perhaps the most significant International Style structure in the region, the Coral Casino is steeped in local cultural history, and its exterior appearance is remarkably unchanged, in terms of massing, scale, materials, color, landscaping, and composition. Still, its survival is not assured. Local attempts to preserve the casino have been hampered by the current lack of public appreciation for modern design. Older structures, such as adobes, tend to more easily attract political support. And while a succession of owners did little damage to the essence of the Coral Casino's original design, almost eight decades of seaside weathering have resulted in the expected maintenance issues, and the need for repairs has stirred fears that the building is deteriorating, and might require wholesale alteration and "renewal." In addition, another difficulty faced by preservationists is the casino's "politically incorrect" program. The Coral is a private beach club on the California coast, and thus it has been hard for activists to whip up enthusiasm and support for a building used by people assumed to be rich and spoiled. Locally, the controversy has been dubbed "the millionaires against the millionaires."

The developer proposes to remove some later, compatible, and reversible additions to this remarkably intact modern landmark, in exchange for permission to destroy historic fabric, cut a new entrance in a primary façade, and add on a new, irreversible restaurant and kitchen, topped by a sundeck. The developer, who titles his proposal the "Coral

*cont'd on next page*

## Embassies *(cont'd)*

Baghdad, were lost long ago, but many others still stand and function as diplomatic facilities. The world has changed dramatically since the 1950s, however, and if new and more stringent security standards are applied to all U.S. embassies, many of those from the 1950s will be altered beyond recognition or replaced by walled compounds.

Modernist embassies are particularly important because they illustrate the oft-cited relationship between openness and democracy, and they add a crucial dimension to the history of U.S. diplomacy. From the standpoint of architectural history, they provide remarkable examples of how architects struggled, with varying success, to adapt modernist dogma to regional differences.

Immediately following World War II, FBO chief architect and director **Leland King** connected the future-oriented look of International Style modernism to America's growing foreign presence. King visited SOM's **Lever House** in New York City, and deciding that it perfectly expressed the newness and eye appeal needed for proposed consulates, apartments, and information centers in war-ravaged Germany, he hired **Gordon Bunshaft**, of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, for the job in 1952. He also

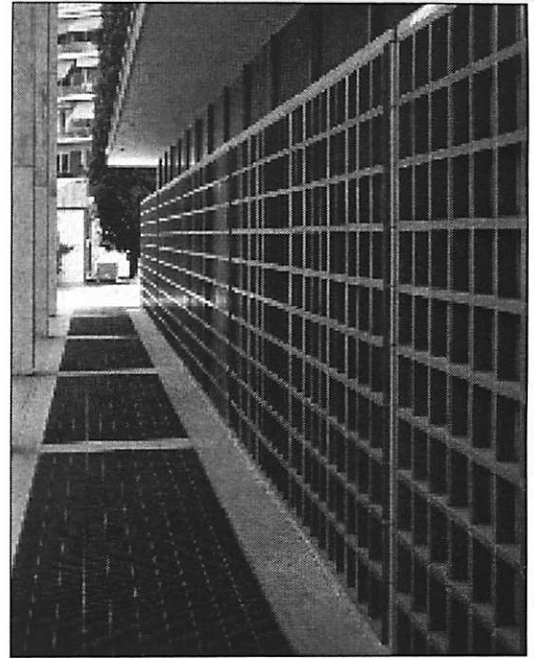


**U.S. Embassy, Havana, Cuba; Harrison & Abramovitz, 1950-52.** (photo: Leland King)

admired the United Nations, under construction, and retained **Harrison & Abramovitz** to design high-profile chanceries in Rio de Janeiro and Havana. Although he lost his job in the reshuffling that followed the 1952 election, his vision did not die. Despite opposition from Congress and the recommendation that new embassies be built in the classical idiom, FBO maintained its commitment to modernism until security started to shape design decisions in the late 1960s.

Modernist designs were uniquely vulnerable because many were raised off the ground on *pilotis* and sheathed in glass. Also, the screens or grilles that covered the glass walls added to risk because people could climb them. It is easy to see why it was difficult to add security to such structures, few of which could meet the stringent new security standards recommended by Admiral Bobby Ray Inman in the aftermath of bombings of U.S. facilities in Beirut in 1983. The Inman program also called for the replacement of nearly half of all existing embassies. By the late 1980s, some at FBO were voicing alarm for the fate of historic buildings that merited special safeguards. Slowly, architects, historians, and administrators began to collaborate to identify projects of significance, aided by the publication of *The Architecture of Diplomacy* (1998), a history of the foreign building program.

Undersecretary of State for management **Bonnie Cohen**, a former executive at the **National Trust for**



**U.S. Embassy, Athens, Greece; Walter Gropius and The Architect's Collaborative, 1956-59.** (photo: Jane Loeffler)

**Historic Preservation**, took interest in the initiative; in 2000, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright established the Secretary's **Register of Culturally Significant Property**, naming eight properties to the list.

In 2001, the State Department established the Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) as part of a reorganization that created a new management structure for the former FBO. Despite concern that the Secretary's Register would itself disappear in the transition, it has not. In fact, Major General Charles E. Williams, OBO Director and Chief Operating Office, nominated four additional properties, including the New Delhi chancery, to that list, and Secretary of State Colin Powell recently approved the nominations. Similar to the **National Register of Historic Places**, the list is honorific and does not constrain the use of properties, but, according to a Department statement, it does "insure that necessary alterations preserve cultural value." It also means that each building is initially documented—a crucial first step in terms of establishing its role in history.

Criteria for inclusion on the Register include the following: (1) designation or acknowledgment by a government; (2) part of the United States' overseas heritage; (3) association with a significant historic event or person; (4) important architecture and/or by an important architect; (5) distinctive theme or assembly; (6) objects or unique visual feature; and (7) archeological site. If a property, like the 15th-century Schoenborn Palace in Prague, is included on a city's historic register and recognized locally, it is more likely to win recognition from the State Department.

*Those wishing to contact the State Department regarding specific buildings should write to the Cultural Resources Committee, Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, U.S. State Department, Washington, D.C. 20522-0602. Readers interested in visual documentation of embassies should consult Elizabeth Gill Lui's upcoming book, **Building Diplomacy** (Marquand Books and Cornell University Press, Fall 2004), as well as the author's **The Architecture of Diplomacy** (Princeton Architectural Press, 1998).*

—Jane Loeffler