

MID-CENTURY COMMERCIAL MODERNISM: DESIGN AND MATERIALS

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Abstract

During the mid-20th century unparalleled and dramatic changes in the design of commercial buildings transpired across the United States. Much of the current analysis and attention given to recent-past resources has focused on larger scale high-rise buildings, high-style single family examples or signature architect designed institutional buildings. Often, however, it was the more humble mid-20th century bank, clothing shop, cinema or automobile dealership that was the first architectural expression of modernism to reach a town or city. Advances in materials manufacturing, product design and marketing all had a decisive impact on the mid-century commercial setting.

Many of these modern commercial designs were created by some of the more talented architects and designers practicing across the country, many of whom wrote publications on store design that widely influenced commercial construction. Meanwhile, the companies that produced many modern materials, such as glass and aluminum, also heavily promoted commercial building renovation. Glossy brochures showing sophisticated shoppers coaxed store owners into updating their stores in order to match the newest styles of goods and fashion.

Newly constructed, Exaggerated Modern massing and experimental structures captured the interest of the modern consumer. Savings and loans displayed folded plate roofs, while restaurants contrasted rustic wood with large areas of glazing. Owners of older downtown buildings covered unused upper story windows with porcelain enamel, gold-anodized aluminum, Vitrolux glass or plastic slipcovered facades. Channel-set and reverse-set neon, internally illuminated backlit signs and cursive or sans serif stainless steel letters all broadcast a new modernity to a fast-moving, auto-driving public.

Asymmetrical and angled storefronts reduced glare while their diagonal plans drew the shopper into the store. Picture-framed, cantilevered, projecting or inset display cases were crafted out of tempered glass and extruded aluminum framing. Tempered glass storefronts turned store interiors into a new form of window display. Vertically stacked textured brick, tile or structural glass contrasted with sleek white or gold metals. Glassy store-

fronts spilled new lighting methods onto busy sidewalks for evening shoppers. The results were striking, celebrating up-to-date looks worthy of an optimistic post-war age. In short, main street became modern.

This paper addresses smaller scale commercial and downtown resources such as specialty shops, restaurants and banks. A discussion of these resources within their mid-century design and commercial context will be augmented by analysis and illustration of their commonly used modern materials and design vocabulary.

Mid-Century Commercial Modernism: Design and Materials

In the mid-20th century, countless owners of shops, banks, restaurants and other commercial businesses built new buildings, or were inspired to update and modernize their existing ones. At the same time, whole new categories of 20th-century building types and automobile-oriented businesses multiplied, including gas stations, car dealerships, drive-up banks, fast-food restaurants, shopping plazas and shopping centers. Often, these buildings were the first architectural expression of modernism to reach a community. These new and modern, or newly modernized commercial buildings fully utilized a variety of new materials in their quest for an up-to-date image.

New materials fostering new design is not an unknown phenomenon for commercial buildings. In the mid-19th century, architectural cast iron columns and lintels replaced huskier storefronts of brick and stone, allowing for larger plate glass display windows.¹ Near the end of the 19th century, the introduction of the steel shelf angle lintel allowed for full storefront expanses of glazing to replace the 8-foot spacing of cast iron columns, increasing the front display area and allowing more daylight inside the store.² Also at the end of the 19th century, prism glass transoms above store displays came into use and bounced light a reputed 30 feet inside the building.³ Now the need for front store windows was reduced, and commercial buildings with prism glass transoms could



First Prize: Seymour R. Joseph, Architect, New York City

Figure 1: Left, a Vitrolite-clad clothing shop entry in the 1935 Modernize Main Street Competition. Right, the Store Fronts of Tomorrow Competition First Prize winning entry shows a new "deconstruction" of the front facade, *New Pencil Points Magazine*, 1943

have shorter floor-to-ceiling heights.⁴ In the 1930s, commercial buildings benefitted from new pre-fabricated storefront systems that incorporated plate glass windows with structural glass or porcelain enamel panels, mounted within extruded aluminum or stainless steel framing in strikingly modern designs.⁵

Business owners, attuned to new styles and trends, recognized new materials as a means of proclaiming their modernity.⁶ Storefronts reflected updated styles, while banks displayed modern efficiency.⁷ Commercial business owners were encouraged in their quest for modernity by construction product marketing, professional journals and even the federal government. New Deal programs aimed at strengthening commerce during the Great Depression⁸ led to the Libbey-Owens-Ford Company (LOF) sponsoring the "Modernize Main Street" competition in 1935.⁹ This competition, and resultant publication, showcased elegant modern facades utilizing Vitrolite, LOF's colorful opaque structural glass. Competition entries combined intensely colored structural and plate glass with white metals into two-dimensional Art Moderne and Art Deco partis.¹⁰ Most designs were colorful, planar and glossy. However, some merchandise display boxes and stainless steel or aluminum pro-

jecting canopies hinted at the three-dimensional revolution that was to become common in the next decades.

To try to combat the dampening effect of the depression, architectural journals, as well as glass, aluminum and steel storefront advertising, aggressively promoted designs similar to the Modernize Main Street design competition. Structural glass was praised not only as a glamorous, sleek and colorful new material, but also because it could be easily fastened with mastic to both new construction and existing masonry walls.¹¹ Porcelain steel manufacturers also published examples of similar recladdings utilizing colorful modular porcelain enamel panels.¹² Even less durable laminated veneer panels such as the Formica Insulation Company's were promoted as solutions to updating facades in the 1930s.¹³ The marketing combined with federal incentives was effective; a surprising number of storefronts, theaters and gas stations were reclad.¹⁴ However, by the end of the 1930s, US commercial design began to move beyond two-dimensional Moderne designs to a new aesthetic.¹⁵

During the Second World War, the architectural journal *New Pencil Points* published another competition, entitled "Store Fronts of Tomorrow."¹⁶ While the Modernize



Figure 2: Left, a Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Co. brochure: *Visual Fronts*, 1942. Center, a Libbey-Owens-Ford advertisement in the *Saturday Evening Post*, October 15, 1949: "How to make the sidewalk an AISLE OF YOUR STORE." Right, a simple open front from Danville, Illinois, photo: IHPA archives



Figure 3: Left, The Rambles hardware store design by Ketchum, Gina and Sharp combines dramatic signage with linear display boxes that run from the exterior plywood and aluminum frame through the open front and on into the store. The sign and slat backing are porcelain enamel and the exposed columns are polished aluminum. From *Machines for Selling*, Kawner, Niles Michigan, 1946. Right, the Hub Clothiers, formerly in Springfield, Illinois, displayed dramatic porcelain enamel signage on a granite textured porcelain enamel backdrop above the stone veneer and plate glass lower floor, photo: author

Main Street competition had tried to overcome the depressed construction and consumer economy of the 1930s, Store Fronts of Tomorrow was looking ahead to the post-war promise of greater availability of construction materials. The 1935 Modernize Main Street facades had been primarily still two-dimensional, excluding some aluminum and steel canopy projections. But by 1943, this new competition illustrated how the front wall of a commercial building could be more dramatically altered. The Store Fronts of Tomorrow competition showcased new "open fronts" and more three-dimensionality.

World War II inspired a wealth of research into the creation and development of new materials and new stan-

dardization of production that benefited construction.¹⁷ At the end of the war, as a post-war economy burst into action, modern commercial designs utilizing new materials filled architectural journals, design books and product advertising. Dramatic commercial building designs by signature designers such as Raymond Loewy, Morris Lapidus, Victor Gruen and Morris Ketchum Jr., were widely published and promoted to architects and building owners.¹⁸

Another influential publication came out immediately after the war. *Machines for Selling* was published by the storefront company Kawneer in 1946. The publication explains how in the 20th century, a "new generation of



Figure 4: Left, a Freeport, Illinois, angled stone pylon. Center, a Moline, Illinois example of the common post-war angled open storefront, shown here in structural glass. Right, a much more unusual design angles the entire porcelain enamel facade out from top to base. Left photo: author, center and right photos: IHPA archives



Figure 5: Cantilevered display cases in outdoor lobbies deconstructed the front plane of retail buildings. Left, a design in Long Beach, California, from *Design for Modern Merchandizing*, April 1948, p. 126. Center, similar displays in Bloomington, Illinois. Right, the former Bakers Shoes in Chicago, Illinois, had a free-standing display table, well lit cantilevered display cases and a curved open front display window on the second floor, photo: author. Center photo: IHPA archives.

store designers" was incorporating new machine-age research into commercial building design. These designers gained insight by talking to business owners and observing consumer preferences. "They studied materials and construction—worked with cabinet workers, store-front manufacturers...They found that success depended on machine-like coordination of every working part of a store...From sidewalk to service alley, stores should be 'Machines for Selling'."¹⁹ The machine-age aesthetic of modernism was coming to main street.

The result of the competitions, advertisements, new technology, post-war material availability and a vibrant growing economy was that the front facades of commercial buildings moved from streamlined Moderne to

exciting new designs. The commercial facade was no longer two-dimensional; rather, it combined an open glazed front with dynamic three-dimensional features to create a deconstructed front facade.²⁰

With steel lintels now easily spanning across an entire facade, transparent "open" fronts replaced earlier opaquely-backed display windows, and the well-lit store, theater lobby or restaurant seating area itself became the display. Perfectly flat and clear plate glass, now easily produced and transported in sheets as large as 10 by 25 feet, allowed direct visual connection between the building interior and the sidewalk.²¹ The terms "open front" and "visual front" were utilized by glass and storefront manufacturing companies to describe

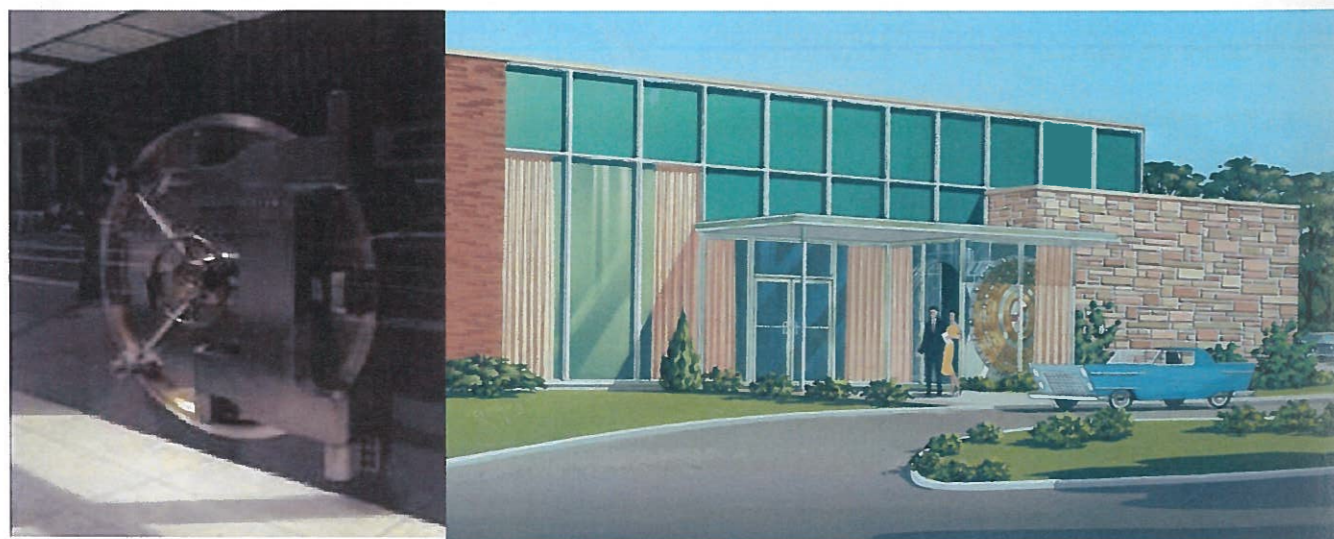


Figure 6: Right, the University Bank of Carbondale, by the Bloomsdale Bank Building & Equipment Co., c. 1960, combines a white metal curtain wall and projecting canopy with stone and brick. Between the customers and car, the modern bank vault door is visible through the open front. This bank was clearly influenced by the widespread publicity about Manufacturers Hanover Trust Branch Bank in New York. Left, a photo of the New York bank's vault door visible through the open front glazing, photo: author. Rendering: author's collection.

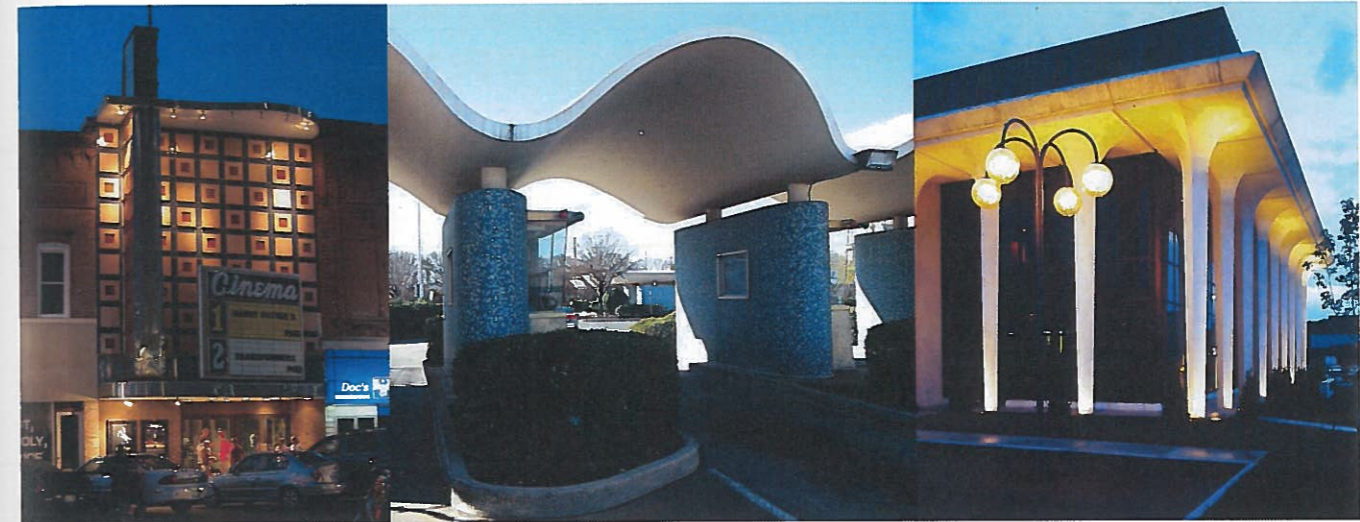


Figure 7: Left, a Taylorville, Illinois cinema was refaced in the mid-century with polychromed porcelain enamel panels and a swooping stainless steel and aluminum canopy, roof and dramatic pylon, photo: IHPA archives. Middle, the elegant Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Central Motor Bank drive-up, built in 1959, combines a thin-shell concrete roof with bright blue mosaic tile encased piers, photo: Ann V. Swallow. Right, precast concrete columns surround a dark curtain wall on this Moline, Illinois, bank, designed by John Van Schellema of the Illinois Bank Building Corporation in the 1970s, photo: John Van Schellema.

this dramatic new look.²² Large windows allowing a view inside the business now appeared in a variety of commercial structures, including theaters, gas stations, restaurants and shops.

Many of the most evocative new designs were found in retail because of the emphasis on consumer tastes and current styles. Furthermore, new mid-century retail methods directly linked consumers and products. Customers no longer waited at a counter for a clerk to bring them an item; they could browse through the shop to look at items, and the shop was designed to draw them in. Glass facades were entered through entry doors of heat-toughened tempered glass, completely clear with only minimal hinges and stylish handles. Butt-glazed glass corners and slim metal framework further opened the facades.²³ After World War II, anodized aluminum in transparent or colored shades of champagne and gold joined the earlier clear-coat and mill-finished aluminum framing.²⁴ Interiors were brightly lit with affordable fluorescent lighting to further show the interior business to the passersby.²⁶

Post-war designers further experimented with the front plane of commercial buildings beyond the open front. Another design component that occurred parallel with, and often as part of, open front design was the asymmetrical angled front. Glass front walls were dramatically angled—either pitched inward from top to bottom to reduce glare, or angled back on a horizontal plane towards the entrance in plan. Simple asymmetrical open fronts, angled back in plan towards a tempered glass door, were repeated widely all across the country. Some walls curved instead of angled, but still led the custom-

ers into the store. Facades were nearly always asymmetrical. The symmetrical plans of recessed, arcaded, exterior lobby fronts of the 1920s reoccur, but by now had become strongly asymmetrical. Angles were everywhere. Stone pylon walls projected out at jaunty angles from front facades. Large angular signage or angled rooflines appear and reinforce the dynamism.²⁷

Not all modern storefronts were completely open. Dramatic post-war designs showed front facades further deconstructed into three dimensions. Picture box display cases were embedded into solid side walls that flanked an open front or projected proudly from glazed or solid planes. Some glazed front windows were enframed with heavier fluted aluminum trim, turning the front into a picture frame for interior displays. Freestanding "table" display cases, or projecting display boxes, appeared outside within asymmetrical exterior lobbies.²⁸ Further deconstructing the front plane, steel or aluminum canopies jutted out horizontally, or sliced at an angle through the glass front wall.²⁹

As the 1950s and 1960s moved forward, more evidence of modernism appeared in commercial buildings. Buildings were clad in steel or aluminum curtain wall systems, combining plate glass with colored spandrel glass or porcelain enamel panels. The use of porcelain enamel continued throughout the 1950s in curtain walls and facade recladdings, but it now included stamped patterns or rougher textures.³⁰

Sleek International style buildings utilized both metal storefront and curtain wall systems on main street. One noteworthy example was the highly publicized 1953

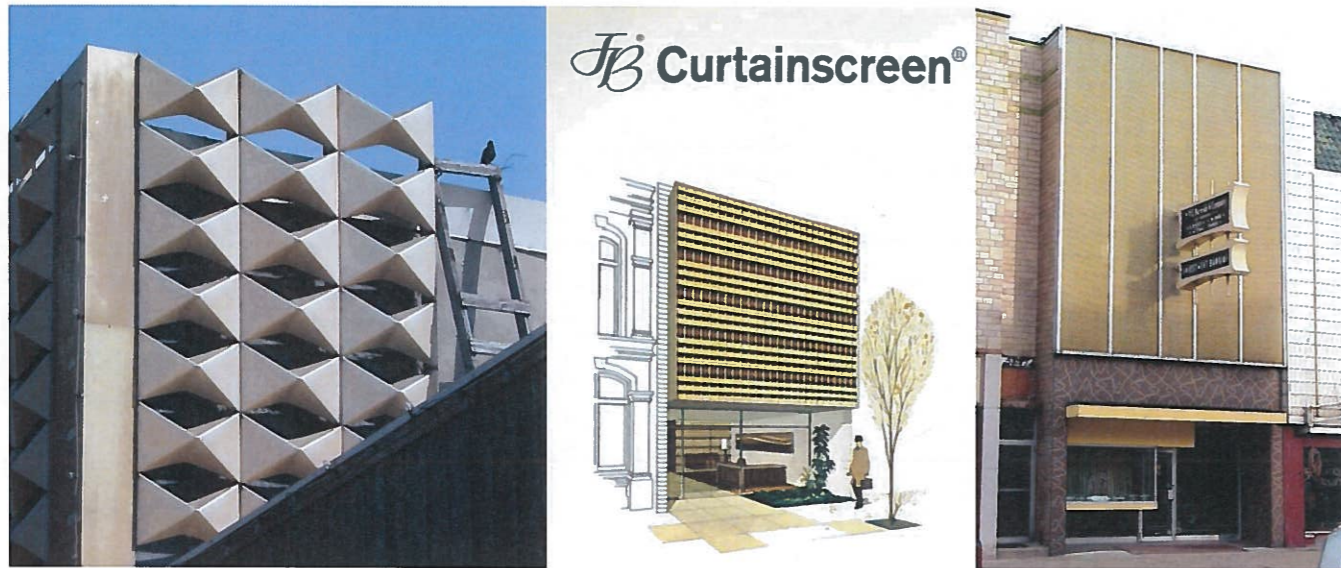


Figure 8: A close-up of the Octilinear Grille by Sculptura panels, Kansas City, Missouri, St. Mary's Bank. Center, "The Art of Refacing the New Art in Architecture," Julius Blum & Co.'s Curtainscreen, 1965. Right, Burnside and Co., Danville, Illinois, is an excellent example of a gold anodized aluminum slipcover, a cantilevered display case, tiled storefront and period signage. Photos: IHPA archives

Manufacturers Hanover Trust Branch Bank in New York City. Designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, the bank was nationally influential in bank design.³¹ This building incorporated immense 10-by-24 foot plate glass vertical sheets in its curtain wall design. Following the concept of the open front, the bank showcased its modern efficiency by placing the Henry Dreyfuss newly designed bank vault door right behind the "storefront" window of the glass.³² This type of symbolic proclamation of a bank's functional modernity to attract progressive-minded customers was taken up by other bank designers of the period such as the University Bank of Carbondale in Illinois.³³

In the post-war period, curtain wall systems combined with other materials into boxy, basic designs found their way to downtowns across the country. Many of these designs incorporated rectilinear blocks of brick or stone laced together with curtain-walled entrance lobbies or

partially glazed facades. The University Bank of Carbondale, discussed above, is just one example.

Other mid-century commercial buildings utilized progressive new structural forms by the 1960s. Some buildings might be simple masonry or curtain wall boxes but dramatically topped with experimental roof forms, such as metal folded plate, or thin-shelled concrete vaults. In other examples the unusual structure became more integral to the entire design. Theaters, restaurants, savings and loans and bowling alleys were among the common representatives of this style. Dramatic pylons, soaring rooflines and expressive structural and sculptural massing all contributed to a style called "Ultra-Modern" at the time, or defined by Chester Liebs in *Main Street to Miracle Mile* as "Exaggerated Modern."³⁴ These buildings sometimes combined atomic and space-age imagery in signs, pylons and structure.



Figure 9: Left, Block & Kuhl's "California style" remodeling by Raymond Loewy Associates in Danville Illinois. From the *National Magazine of the Home Furnishings*, August 1948, 43. Right, the Kankakee Title and Trust in Kankakee, IL, also combines wood, stone and asymmetry in its elegant facade. Photo: IHPA archives.

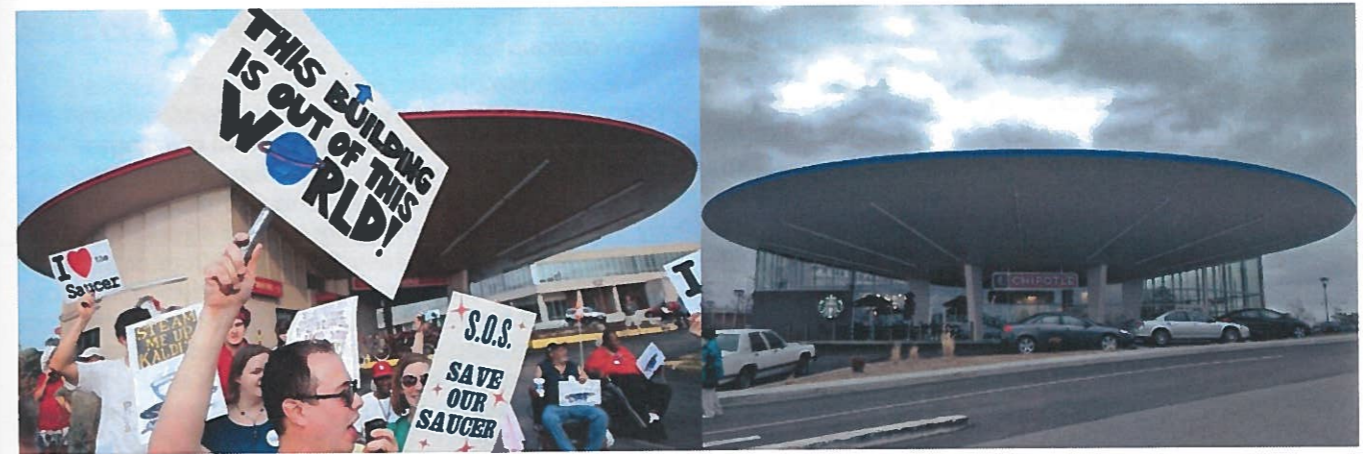


Figure 10: A vigorous public campaign saved the St. Louis Saucer from demolition. The fully renovated building now hosts a coffee shop and restaurant. It was originally built as a Phillips 66 gas station in 1968. Left photo by David Carson dcarson@post-dispatch.com, Right photo from: <http://blogs.riverfronttimes.com/gutcheck/chipotlegranddave550.jpg>

Structural Expressionism, Neo-Formalism and Brutalism all brought concrete to main street. Brutalist concrete structures appeared primarily in the 1960s and their brusque qualities were more often accepted for large or institutional buildings like parking structures, hotels, banks or service offices than for retail buildings. Formwork was often designed to create rough textures deliberately left on the concrete surface. Some smaller scale Brutalist style buildings were brick but had similar blocky massing and geometric cutouts. More refined examples of concrete included Neo-Formalist banks or offices ringed with smooth precast concrete columns in the style of Minoru Yamasaki or Edward Durrell Stone in the 1960s to 1980s.³⁵ Concrete screen block panels also faced more elegant commercial buildings as well.³⁶

Beginning in the 1960s, changing downtown economics created vacant or underutilized upper floors. Now upper floor windows could be covered, and whole facades could be "slipcovered" with glass curtain walls, porce-

lain enamel panels or aluminum spandrels during modernizations. When daylight was still desirable on upper floors, open weave metal, usually lightweight aluminum, or plastic grills could be used.

Installing these metal or rigid synthetic material grills or opaque panels over the upper floors not only created a new modern image but also a backdrop for giant signage, clearly legible to a driving public. Often, earlier cornices or window hoods were sheared off to simplify the installation. Some of these building reclassings were elegantly designed and representative of an important time in commercial history. When they still exist today as part of an overall facade design, complete with a contemporary modern shopfront below, they deserve serious evaluation by preservationists.³⁷

Not all mid-century commercial building materials were new in the mid-20th century. Older materials were retooled to create newer modern effects. Starting in the

A Mid-Twentieth Century Storefront Components Guide



Figure 11: For additional photographs and information about mid-century modern storefront components and materials, along with examples of design solutions, (such as the design for Moxie in Springfield, Illinois, by IHPA designer Anna Margaret Barris, shown right), go to: *How to work with Storefronts of the Mid-Twentieth Century: A Mid-Twentieth Century Storefronts Components Guide* by Carol J. Dyson, posted on the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency's website: www.illinois.gov/iHPA/Preserve/mid-century/Documents/modern-storefront-glossary.pdf

1940s, "natural materials" such as brick, stone and wood show up on commercial structures. The use of these materials was often described as "suburban" or "California style" in contemporary literature.³⁸ Brick veneers, often in blond colors or with darker textured surfaces, were stacked with continuous vertical joints rather than in running bond. Tile, formerly found in storefront bulkheads, now added color, texture and pattern to entire facades. Small, glazed mosaic tile in bright multi-color patterns was used frequently. Wooden walls with rough-sawn siding were often juxtaposed with brick. In the 1950s and 1960s, panelized imitation stone, concrete or tile veneer became affordable alternatives to the natural materials.³⁹

Even in downtowns, the influence of a more casual suburban lifestyle was evident. In 1948, Raymond Loewy Associates designed a new first floor shopfront and interior for the Block & Kuhl Company's downtown Danville, Illinois, furniture store.⁴⁰ The president of Block & Kuhl proudly described the storefront of Tennessee field stone and rough cypress, saying that the building was like a "rambling, but solid looking country club house... (and the) 'California atmosphere' of stone, wood and plants was carried on in the interior."⁴¹

Conclusion

During the 20th century, advances in materials manufacturing, product design and commerce all had a decisive impact on mid-century commercial building design. Although often overlooked today, mid-20th century banks, shops, cinemas and gas stations were often the first example of modernism to reach a city or town. These buildings reflect important developments in style, design, economics and technology that resonated across a new consumer-oriented America.

Unfortunately, many fine examples of these mid-century commercial designs have been demolished or irretrievably remodeled, and many of those that remain are endangered. Although materials such as aluminum, steel, brick, stone and tile, along with plate, structural or spandrel glass, are relatively durable, the bulkhead or sign zone areas of remaining structures may exhibit damage, or materials may look tired from lack of maintenance or changing aesthetics. Inexpensive and convenient new coverings, such as synthetic stucco or vinyl siding, may be as seductive today as elegant slipcovers were forty years ago. Often, the building design intent may not read well due to loss of historic signs.⁴² Distinguished signage, whether over-scaled, in elegant script fonts or brightly lit, were integral to mid-century commercial designs.⁴³ Due to new ownership, changing tastes or cheaper alternatives, most of these distinctive graphic messages have been removed and replaced with inappropriate signage. Thankfully, some communities have

recognized their historic recent-past signs in surveys or even designation.⁴⁴

Commerce by nature must be sensitive to shifts in consumer taste. Just as the desire to have buildings reflect up-to-date styles led to mid-century commercial designs, those same commercial buildings are imperiled by the perception of their being out of step with current styles. The popularity of retro-styled furniture or the *Mad Men* television series has not always led to a fuller appreciation of the built environment. Mid-century modern homes are starting to be recognized and appreciated. However, the same recognition does not seem to inspire public appreciation for many of the commercial buildings of the period.

There are, however, success stories worthy of recognition. In St. Louis, Missouri, the former Phillips 66 gas station, nicknamed the "Flying Saucer," was saved from demolition by a groundswell of popular support.⁴⁵ Twitter and Facebook campaigns helped convince the developer to save the building. Now fully rehabilitated, the saucer houses a popular Starbucks and Chipotle restaurant.

Taste and maintenance issues aside, over fifty years of commercial migration away from city cores has contributed to the under-utilization of commercial historic buildings in downtowns or older suburbs. There is, however, definite progress being made. Historic downtown redevelopment initiatives such as the National Main Street Program are creating encouraging turnarounds for many communities. Some designers and mid-century enthusiasts are trying to grow appreciation for these buildings. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency's Architecture Section has made available on the web facade designs that work sensitively with mid-century commercial buildings.⁴⁶ Other communities, such as Philadelphia, Tulsa, Los Angeles and St. Louis, have sponsored tours, surveys or designation of their mid-century commercial resources. Surveys can lead to designation, and designation can lead to tax incentives inspiring sensitive renovations. The Flying Saucer in St. Louis was saved from demolition by enthusiastic public support, listed on the National Register and renovated utilizing historic tax credits.

Commercial buildings of the mid-century are symbols of a period of American optimism, economic prosperity, and growth. They represent post-war America's unwavering belief in new technology and materials, and showcase dramatic changes in relationships between consumers and products. It is to be hoped that efforts to recognize and retain these structures will continue to grow.

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LOW, LIGHT AND LIVABLE: FROM MODERN TO RANCH IN ARKANSAS 1945-1970

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Abstract

This paper examines the advent of mid-century modernism and how it resulted in the iconic ranch form in Arkansas during the period from 1945 to 1970. I outline the convergence of Modernism and the popular Ranch form by examining the bureaucratic, social, cultural and economic factors that contributed to significant transformations in domestic architecture. The context looks at the historic international and national architectural foundations of mid-century structures and sociological reasons, such as the Progressive movement, for the widespread acceptance of a dramatically altered house form. I use a mix of books, government documents and mid-century newspaper and magazine articles and advertisements to analyze the human forces behind Modernism and the Ranch. In particular, I follow the contributions of women to the design of the mid-century home through gradual changes in family dynamics and popular culture. Evidence of the impact of women on the house form is gathered from their participation in movements like Better Homes, Inc., Women's Congress and Congress on Better Living. Such movements threw light on the fact that women were influential on house design without actually drawing up plans or being given credit until the 1950s. The solicitation of ideas from the sector of society who spent the most time in the home was key to groundbreaking mid-century architectural and neighborhood planning transformations.

Compatible Styles

The home is where the heart is—and the rumpus room, the carport for the Pontiac Strato Streak, the garden court, the work center and the master bath. Amenities like these marked a mid-century transition in residential design, family dynamics and neighborhood planning. Mid-century homes were more than just a slavish rehash of the tried and true; they were the malleable statement of the post-World War II family.

The metamorphosis to Modern and Ranch-type homes from Craftsman Bungalows (disregard bungalow capitalization) or historic revival styles was groundbreaking. Beginning with the Modernist movement, the styles dramatically impacted architecture from the period just be-

fore World War I and up to three decades after World War II. Several factors influenced the increasing use of modern as a residential style by the mid-1940s. Women entering the workforce or becoming heads of households with fewer children changed the family structure.¹ Other dynamics such as wartime shortages of building materials (which subsequently led to the invention of innovative construction materials), new building techniques, open interior arrangements and popular culture added to a growing acceptance of Modern homes.

Ranch architecture was extolled as the home of choice in 1950s subdivisions as suburban shifts became more frequent for young families. Modern and Ranch co-existed but large-scale developers could see that the Ranch form lent itself more readily to prefabrication and quick construction in large numbers. Government agencies were hesitant to finance Modern houses in the beginning because they were outside the norm. As a result, the Ranch became a prevalent style that was reproduced in many sizes and forms in subdivisions across Arkansas for decades. The Ranch shared architectural characteristics as well as the attitude of Modern architecture and it could be said to have evolved from that style as it quickly overshadowed it. (disregard)

Progressive Space

Precedence for the minimalistic trends of mid-century Modern and Ranch surfaced at the close of the 19th century. The fussiness of the Victorian era was abandoned for simplicity and balance in exterior and interior treatments of homes. Central to this was the comfort of the middle-class family. Previously, the familiar domestic unit adhered to prescribed behavior. The stay-at-home mother under the authority of a hands-off father would serve as supervisor of the children and the house. By 1910, technology and economic growth allowed for a shift in women's roles. Women were exploring new life purposes outside the home. This trend led to the popularity of straightforward architecture with less furniture, fewer rooms and reduced maintenance.

Fresh interior arrangements deleted warrens of rooms with traditional uses and opened the house by eliminating walls. This was progressive space that could be enjoyed by every member of the family without worrying about bric-a-brac and florid furniture. Simplification of

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