



SOM: Architecture of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1950-1962

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Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, founded in 1936, is one of the largest and most influential architecture firms in the world. SOM has long been known for innovation, experimentation, design excellence, and technical mastery, for an abiding interest in the contributions that buildings can make to the life of cities, and for a collaborative approach that extends to all aspects of the design and construction processes. This volume, which presents work from the 1950's and early 1960's, reproduces a monograph first published in 1962.

In an age dominated by a few great architect-designers noted for their intensely personal art, the firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill for twenty-five years has been a unique force in the building of the modern city. This book is the first study of SOM's unified but far-flung operations, of the architecture created by its remarkable complex of designers and engineers working in all corners of the world. Containing photographs, site and building plans, elevation drawings, and accompanying explanatory text, it shows clearly the integrated and pioneering work of a great American firm.

From Lever House to the Chase Manhattan Bank, from Oak Ridge to the Inland Steel Headquarters, from a school for the deaf to a rare-book library at Yale, SOM has achieved a high perfection in standards of structural design, continually refined excellence of finish, and vitality and elegance of experimentation. But it has done more than that. Eschewing convenient routine solutions, SOM has demonstrated that a large organization need not be uniform, conservative, or schematized. In every aspect of the building process, in every detail of design and execution, it has shown imaginative and experimental brilliance. The curtain walls of Lever House, the exposed reinforced concrete ribs of other skyscrapers, the spatial organization and lighting in their offices, the steel tetrahedrons of the Air Force Academy Chapel: these technological innovations have virtually opened up a new esthetic and technique of modern architectural design.

SOM architects are not, however, only interested in the individual building. Persuading its clients of responsibilities beyond the mere maintenance of structures they will occupy and use, SOM is itself dedicated to solving the major architectural problem of our day: the re-creation of old, and creation of new, cities – well planned, imaginative, and of innate and lasting distinction. The substance of this book illuminates the manner in which Skidmore, Owings & Merrill has achieved that goal.

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