

# Research Paper :The Lipstick Building

## Introduction

The lipstick is a celebration of today most significant Super structures. It is the tallest building located at 885 Third Avenue, between East 53rd street and 54th street, across from the Citigroup Center in Manhattan, New York. With his 34 floors and his 138 meters tall, the building construction starts in 1983 and was completed in 1986. It was design by Philip Johnson and John Burgee. The building has three level where the wall set back in response to Manhattan's zoning regulation, which allows more light at street level and more space for pedestrian. The building looks like it could retract on itself, the floor plates are tangential to one another from the rear view and the party wall. The shape, which is Avant-Garde in comparison to a round building, uses less space at bottom than regular skyscraper. It's a postmodern style building standing on columns with a vast beautiful large postmodern hall facing the entrance. The exterior of the building is a continuous wall of red imperial granite and stainless steel. The ribbon windows are surrounded by gray frames, and between floors is a thin band going through all the building. The curvatures and the choice of materials really contribute in calling the building (lipstick building).



## General Context

Post modernism is a concept, idea, or practice also can be related to simplicity. It's a movement started in 1960's as a response to formality and lack of variety of modern architecture. Rosalind Krauss, defined postmodernism as a break with the aesthetic field of modernism and a new concept of space and time. (source 3) It began as an international style, the first examples started in the 1950's and become more significant in the 1970's and continues to influence present-day architecture. "The functional and formalized shapes and spaces of the modernist style are replaced by diverse aesthetics: styles collide, form is adopted for its own sake, and new ways of viewing familiar styles and space abound. Perhaps most obviously, architects rediscovered the expressive and symbolic value of architectural elements and forms that had evolved through centuries of building which had been abandoned by the modern style. Influential early large-scale examples of postmodern architecture are Michael Graves' Portland Building in Portland, Oregon and Philip Johnson's Sony Building (originally AT&T Building) in New York City, which borrows elements and references from the past and reintroduces color and symbolism to architecture."(source 4)

It can also be described as neo-electric because it brings back ornament to some design replacing the aggressively bland modern style. From what read it seems to be a conflict between Modernist and Postmodern architect For example modernist architect find post-modern building Vulgar and sharing the design elements of shopping malls, cluttered with "gew-gaws", and postmodern architects find modern building soulless and bland, overly simplistic and abstract. Personally I think that both side has goals they tried to exposed to the public and other style, where modernism is the true use of material without ornament, while postmodernism is simply the rejection of strict rules that binds modernist style and seeks a different meaning, and expression or articulation in the use of building concept and forms.

The appearance of skyscrapers in the late nineteenth century really shape the public's perception of architecture. Since the dawn of civilization people were always skeptic of the arrival of something new. somehow they manage to embrace the unknown and the new. After the second world war, Skyscrapers have change the face of most cities worldwide. Economicly it was an issue for their construction, but skyscrapers have also long been associated with dreams and utopias that have lead them to aspire to new heights. "Like the progress in air travel and space exploration in the twentieth century, the evolution of the skyscraper has led to huge advances in technology and engineering, but has also opened up new hitherto unforeseen risks. As in the case of all man-made structures, the greatest danger is, and always has been, the possibility of collapse due to structural defects or natural causes, particularly earthquakes. Our fear of such events goes back a long way. In the Old Testament, the story of the failed Tower of Babel warned against the human hubris of building high into the sky and ignoring the heavenly boundary. For many years, as construction methods and calculations grew ever more precise, the danger of an actual collapse seemed to be an irrational, purely theoretical premise."(source 1)

The development of the skyscraper was influenced by two independent factors. The first one was the free standing building and the second was the iron skeleton, which was later replaced by even stronger steel frame. At first The self-supporting iron frame, already developed in England in the mid 19th century, and was further advanced in France after 1850, by the French engineer Gustave Eiffel.

“His groundbreaking invention of a riveted iron construction reached the United States in 1885 with his design for the internal support structure for the Statue of Liberty. And news of his plans for a 984-foot (300-meter) tower for the 1889 World Exhibition in Paris was seen as a direct challenge by American engineers.” (Source1)



Napoleon LeBrun & Sons, Metropolitan Life Insurance Tower, New York, 1907-09



Ernest Graham, Equitable Building, New York, 1912-15



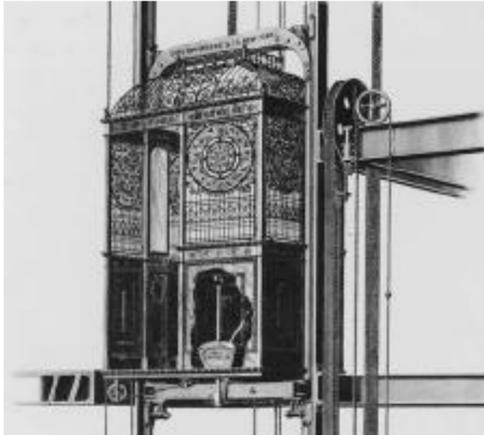
Burnham and Root, Masonic Temple, Chicago, 1891-92, demolished 1939



Erich Kettelhut, scenery for the film *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang, 1927



Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Building of the Tower of Babel*, 1563, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



Passenger elevator by Otis Brothers & Co., New York, around 1900

## Theoretical Context

Many architects help shape the postmodernism period for example Philip Johnson and John Burgee. The lipstick building officially named "53rd at third" is New York's most distinctive architecture; its shape and color are impossible to confuse with any other skyscraper. The developer, Gerald D. Hines, asked for a shape that would stand out and make every office a corner office. Hines incidentally, was also the developer of curvilinear one Jackson on square and flare-topped 425 Lexington Avenue. "Architect Philip Johnson likely didn't need much encouragement he designed the Sony Building (originally AT&T headquarters), nicknamed the "Chippendale Building" for its massive split pediment roofline. The rationale for such a dramatic and expensive building (polished red granite doesn't come cheap) was to attract high-rent tenants to the then (1986) less-desirable neighborhood. Apparently that strategy didn't quite work: the building's owners went bankrupt in 2010. Although the so-called Lipstick Building is best known for its 34-story elliptical telescoping shaft, there's a nine-story box behind the shaft that is also part of the site."(source 5)

Glass was really important to Philip Johnson's design and also to other architects in that period of time. His projects and many collaborations with other architects shows that staying in an area surrounding by glass can be beautiful and also can change the way of life. "Glass, the early German modernists believed, would launch a cultural revolution. Glass walls would not only change the look of buildings. They would transform the lives of those who lived inside them. Stripped of the opaque, protective cover afforded by old-fashioned masonry buildings, civilization would advance toward a light-filled realm of freedom and candor. Philip Johnson lives in two glass houses. One is the landmark residence in New Canaan, Conn., he designed for himself in 1949. The other is the fishbowl of fame that he has inhabited most of his life. And in Johnson's case, at least, it turns out that the early modernists may have had a point. Even those who detest Johnson and his architecture will grant his disarming candor. Always quicker than his critics to concede his faults, Johnson long ago perfected the art of self-deprecation as a shield against attacks by others."(source 6)

Philip Johnson had a long life and long career, but the time where he was dominating American architecture with his way of designing was short. It began in 1974 with the death of Louis Kahn who was an icon of his time and ended 15 years later with the growing recognition that American architecture had been operating for quite some time without a social contract. But he didn't let the turn of decade to have any negative effect on him, instead he demonstrated yet again at the age of 86 the extraordinary powers of regeneration that have marked his career for six decades. We can say he was a true definition of what evolution should be. Aside the firm he had formed in 1972 with John Burgee, his partner in the boom years, he moved to a smaller quarters upstairs in his lipstick building and formed a little firm for recessionary times. While Burgee slipped into bankruptcy, he forged ahead, not only professionally but esthetically. Some recent projects joyfully plundering from the fragmented architecture of Frank Gehry and the folded volumes of Peter Eisenman. The firm was a symbol of Philip Johnson's adaptability and was also a sign that the 80's didn't want to go that easy. " It is not surprising that Johnson emerged as a figurehead in that time, since his work has long embodied the subjective principle. His designs might be good, or they might be terrible, but who could say? Embracing movements and styles one minute only to drop them with a thud the next, Johnson seems to have made it his mission in life to keep American architecture in a more or less permanent crisis of evaluation. His singular gift has been to undermine the very idea that there can be objective criteria for judging buildings. Taste, willfulness and what Vincent Scully once called Johnson's "admirably unsentimental wit" these aspects of the cultivated sensibility have been Johnson's stock in trade. And even if Johnson were to blow away tomorrow, the issues raised by his work would remain to haunt us. Slight though much of the work may be, it nonetheless challenges us to rethink the prospects for architecture as a social art."(source 6)

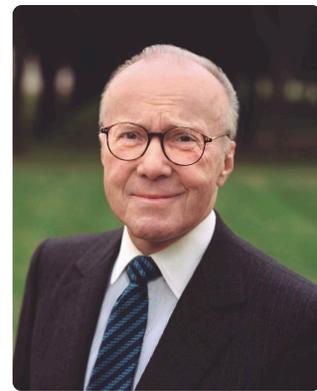
In theory, the expressive diversity of postmodernism was socially knowledgeable because it showed that architects were compliant to serve popular taste. Those postmodern building really solved the problem posed by modern architecture design with uniform glass boxes. They also raised new question about forms, principles and idealistic design.



Philip Johnson



John Burgee



Gerald d. Hines



Louis Khan



Frank Gehry



Peter Eisenman

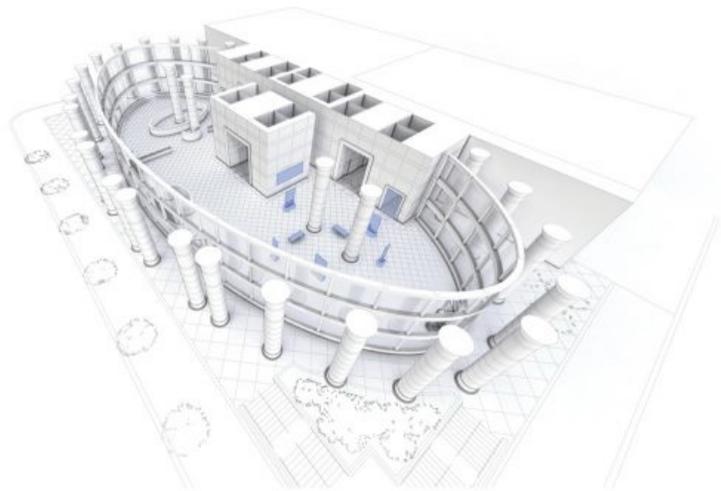
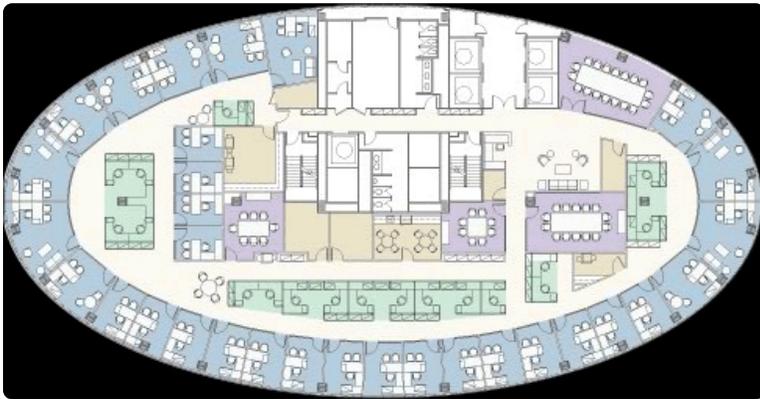
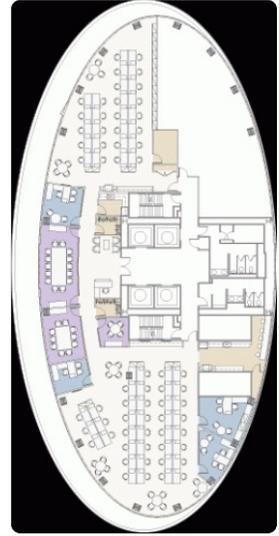
## **Building Analysis**

The lipstick building is a graceful elliptical shape completely different from its surroundings. The building is the second post-modern contribution of the architect Philip Johnson on the Manhattan skyline, after the AT&T building he built two years earlier. At that time the unusual shape, which helped name the building, was a request of the owner to make the building appear tilted out, compensating for the less fashionable position on Third Avenue. That oval form also means that all the offices located in the perimeter of the plan are corner offices. The 138 meters high building consists of three oval cylinders placed on top of each other, from the top to the bottom creating a spiral movement as it rises. Its elliptical shape takes less surface area at the base than a normal skyscraper with a quadrilateral footprint. According to Philip Johnson the continuous columns going all around the perimeter of the building is a reminder of the Baroque period which makes the form very fashionable. Its shape along with the fact that the building's floor decreases as it gains height and the red tone granite that covers it have made the start of the name lipstick.

Inside the building there's a large lobby of 9 meters high which appeared really hollow for an open space with a lot of setbacks. The reason why was because the elevators and emergency stairs are located at the bottom of the building and not in the typical central position. Other than that the lobby as a huge post-modern hall, a series of kiosks and a cafeteria that has adopted the official name of lipstick Café. The rest of the building is used entirely to house offices of different companies.

Most post-modern building uses steel structure to support the loads and transmit them to the foundation. The lipstick building use also the steel structure not only because of the height but also because of its unique shape. Standing between blocks of rectangular building its oval outline rises in three parts, like an open lipstick tube. The building Seats on a series of oval columns lined in red granite following the shape with some arranged in pairs. The base of the building is made a little smaller than the others leaving a free space between the façade at the foot of the street ,and the columns that deliver the building to the ground creating a space as a perimeter gallery ceded to pedestrians.





## **Research**

1. Andres Lepik, skyscrapers
- 2 .Architecture and Postmodernism, Again Reinhold Martin (book)
3. Post Modern Architecture theory and Practice, Khaled Dewidar
- 4 .Postmodern architecture ;Salar academy
- 5 .NewYorkKiture
- 6 .NewYork time Architecture view; A Man who lives in two Glass Houses Oct 17 1993