

New Book Details One M&T Plaza as a Mid-Century Modern Landmark of Buffalo

BUFFALO, N.Y. —Minoru Yamasaki's modern design, One M&T Plaza, was celebrated by then New York Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller as a building block for urban redevelopment when the office tower opened in downtown Buffalo in 1967.

Almost 45 years later, the building is featured in a new book and as a tour stop for the National Preservation Conference in Buffalo Oct. 19-22.

"M&T Bank," authored by University at Buffalo architecture professor Brian Carter, is being released to coincide with the National Preservation Conference. The building is a tour stop on the "Buffalo Modern" tour, presented by Trust Modern and Columbia University, Thursday evening, October 20.

M&T Bank is donating 250 copies of the book to Preservation Buffalo Niagara, which are available for sale with all proceeds to benefit Preservation Buffalo Niagara.

"The M&T headquarters is simple and elegant. The building's emphatic whiteness makes it a stark contrast to its surroundings ... It effectively combines a mix of uses and, while the new banking hall is a remarkably elegant and serene space which recalls the grandeur of former banks, it does not resort to the use of literal imagery from fortress or palazzo," Carter writes in the book's introduction.

Yamasaki's credits included dozens of modern office designs, including the historic World Trade Center towers of New York City. One M&T Plaza included several features making the building an iconic business address in Upstate New York.

The structural steel, produced by Bethlehem Steel, was erected as part of the building's exterior, allowing for expansive, open work spaces with no interior columns. The steel was wrapped with white marble, giving the 21-story tower a clean, pure look for an industrial "rust belt" city.

The building also features a 75-by-225 foot exterior plaza which Yamasaki envisioned as a space for the bank's employees and customers to "sit in the sun." M&T Bank has pursued a civic use of the plaza since 1969 by hosting the M&T Plaza Event Series, free concerts running during the lunch hour each business day every summer.

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