

1-1-1989

Madison Square Garden Site Redevelopment

Thomas Phifer

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/oz>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Recommended Citation

Phifer, Thomas (1989) "Madison Square Garden Site Redevelopment," *Oz*: Vol. 11. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2378-5853.1181>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Oz* by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

Madison Square Garden Site Redevelopment

Thomas Phifer, AIA
Richard Meier & Partners, Architects

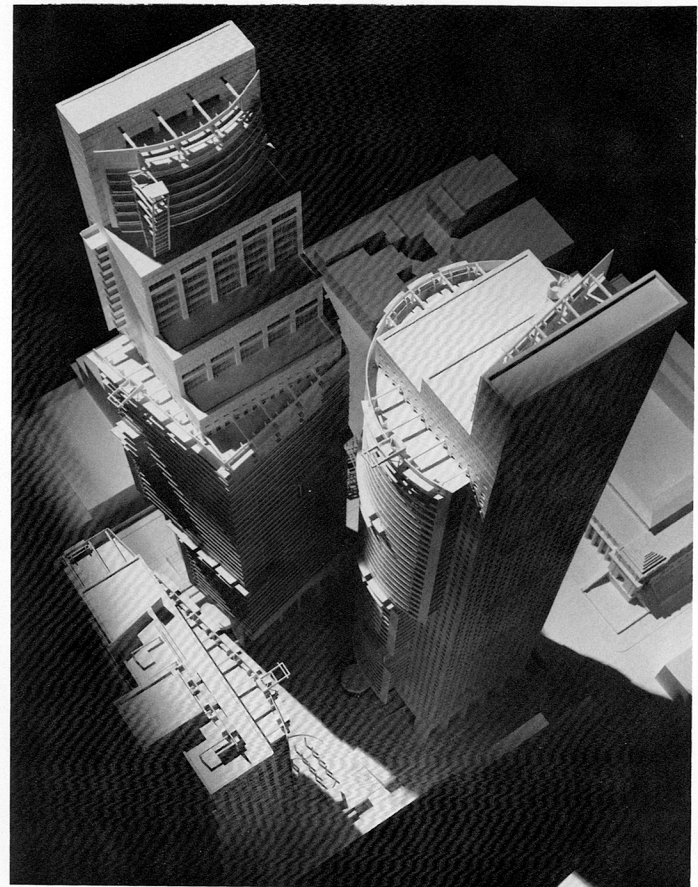
These are the urban towers of the future. What you see is what you get. No historical references, no illusions, no tricks, no attempt to look like the past, no symbolism, no rhetorical jokes, no applique of decorative elements, no Classical, Neo-Classical, Georgian, Edwardian, Victorian, Art Deco, Art Nouveau, or Surrealistic implications. They are what they are. A direct, honest, forthright, sincere expression of faith in an architecture of the future. An architecture which is a collective assemblage of forms that enclose and define space, both interior space and exterior space. Space which makes living and working in the city meaningful, exciting and changing. These city spires express an architecture which is open, transparent, reflective, comprehensible, complex and different. They express an architecture which is challenging, multifaceted and dynamic in that it speaks to us of our dreams and aspirations, not about what has been but about what might be.

One could say that the grouping of these three buildings on this particular site in the city is in some way mindful of a family relationship in which three brothers are individual yet having their own internal and external physical components, people onto themselves, yet part of a family, a structure, a larger domain which has roots, history, meaning and importance.

The functional organization of the three buildings grows from below ground level up. Placed above the train and subway

tracks, but still below ground, are the trading floors for the north and south towers. The trading floors, then, create a podium on which the buildings are placed. This raised plaza is lined along its perimeter with shops and restaurants. Access onto the site is provided on all four sides: ramps and stairs onto the plaza are located on the north, south and east while the major east-west access is accommodated with a sloping grade to Eighth Avenue. The subway entrance is incorporated at the corner of Eighth Avenue and 33rd Street and a new glazed entrance to the Pennsylvania Railroad Station is placed on the corner of Eighth Avenue and 31st Street. This new entry to the station is clearly defined with a large cubic form identifying it for all.

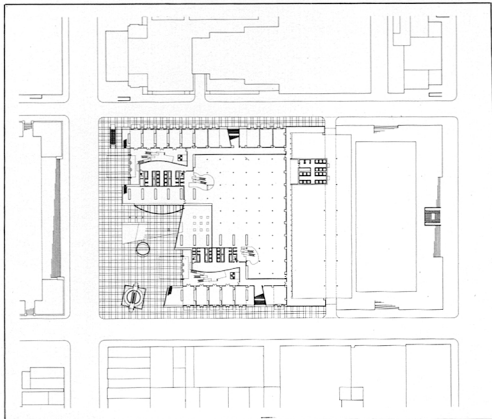
The physical form of the urban environment is given for the Architect. It is the shape of the frame in which a not-quite blank canvas is placed. The form, the relationship, the placement, the scale, the disposition of the new buildings respond to and reinforce the multifarious external pressures working on this site. The influences on the site are the implied and real future growth of this part of the city which will occur to the west past the Post Office with its low height and full block dimension. The physical location of One Penn Plaza, the proximity of Two Penn Plaza and the way in which people move under and through that building to our site, and finally, the grid pattern of Manhattan are all important factors in the siting of the Madison Square Gardens Site Redevelopment Project by the form and



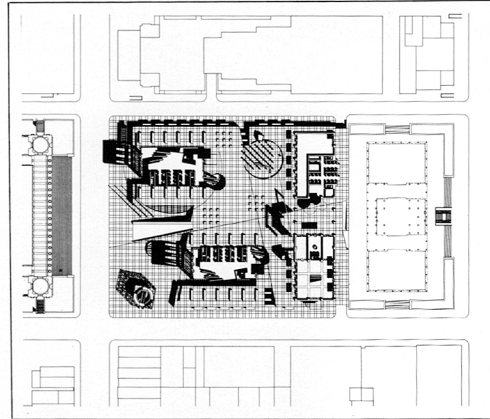
placement of the towers at the edge of the site we are reinforcing the city's grid condition. This attitude about the rectilinear forms of the buildings relating to the organizational grid of the city is for us a given condition. The major entry to all the buildings on the site is through and into the plaza from Eighth Avenue. The disposition of the south tower, placed slightly in from Eighth Avenue provides

a preferred southern exposure for it as well as for the north tower and the plaza. The east tower relates in its size to the somewhat random low scale nature of the surrounding buildings.

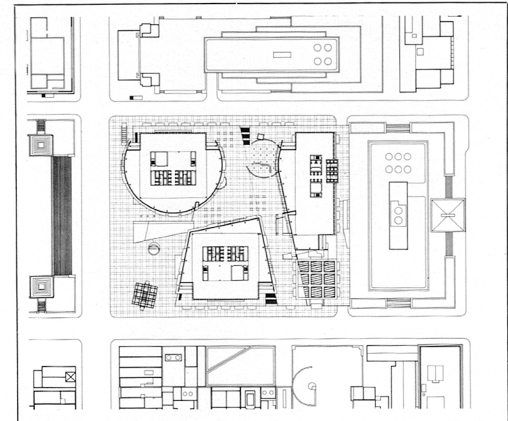
Access into the trading floors occurs through glass enclosed wells entered from the main lobbies of the north and south towers. The trading floors are further pro-



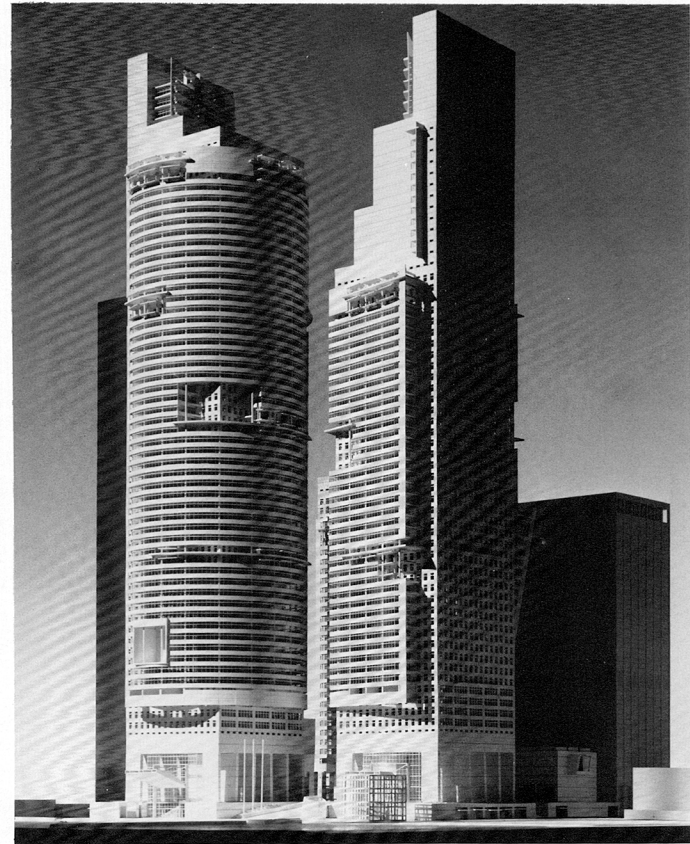
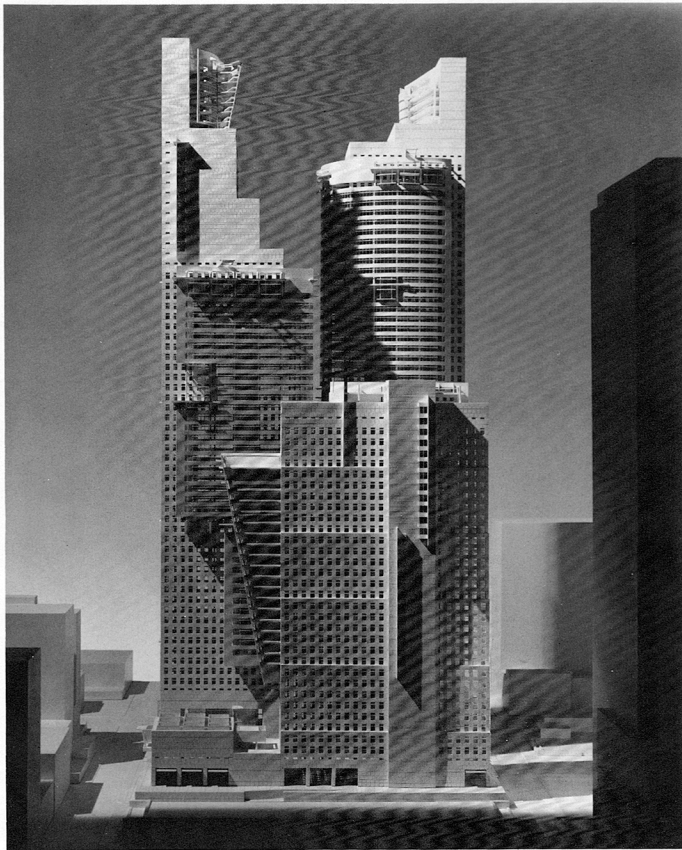
Trading floor



Plaza Level



Upper level



vided with a diffused natural light by skylights which are placed about the plaza. Although not shown on the drawings or models at the moment, the elevated automatic peoplemover along 31st Street is accommodated with its Waiting Station on the southeast corner of the site.

The cladding of Madison Square Garden project has the same philosophical base as the planning organization. It is not simply a wrapping or a historical pastiche but it is a definition of materials which express the complex attitude about the development of the site. Metal panels with punched windows are used on the rectilinear edges of the building expressing the core and structure, while glass and a

glass material panel banding is used to articulate the more freely expressive sides of the buildings. These are not three buildings in repetitive form but three buildings which are individual yet responding to and respecting one another.

At night these towers of Madison Square Garden will be radiant and be seen from

all corners of the Tri-State area. The setbacks provide for an incredible display of illumination which begins when the sun disappears in the west. Their colorful silhouettes will signal to all the importance of this development as a part of the changing skyline of Manhattan and will add significantly to the vibrant and exciting character of New York as it is seen at night.