

Cover Stories: The Utility of Architectural Heroes to the Corporate Elite

WESLEY R. JANZ
Ball State University

INTRODUCTION

Fourteen architects appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine between 1926 and 1979 (Kliment). In 1963 and 1964, William Pereira, Minoru Yamasaki, Edmund Bacon and R. Buckminster Fuller were featured in *Time* cover stories. Consider that: four architects in two years! This paper studies the utility of this long forgotten assemblage to the corporate elite that directed the magazine's production, including its founder and editor Henry Luce.

Unlike architectural publications, each with a limited circulation, popular magazines reach the public-at-large. For example, in the late 1950s Time Inc. circulated nearly ten million magazines into individual homes, newsstands, reception rooms, and corporate offices every week (Donovan 127-8). Not canonical works in the traditional sense, popular magazines are prime sites of what Jane Tompkins terms "cultural work": they reveal the efforts of magazine founders, editors, writers, art directors, advertising agencies, and corporations to influence the public-at-large (xv). Similar to the novels studied by Tompkins, magazines "offer powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for problems that shape a particular moment" (xi). Magazine editors, like novelists, "have designs upon their audiences, in the sense of wanting to make people think and act in a particular way" (xi).

A GALLERY OF ARCHITECTURAL HEROES

Time knew the power of covers and cover stories. In fact, *Time* invented the cover story. Between 20 August 1945 and 28 September 1963, individuals graced 93.8 percent of all *Time* covers. "Names make news," [Time founder and editor Henry] Luce wrote... "People are interested in People" (Baughman 171).

Three architects—Ralph Adams Cram, William Adams Delano, and Frank Lloyd Wright—appeared on *Time*'s cover before World War II. The architectural elite studied in this article appeared on post-World War II covers. This included Richard Neutra and architect-designed houses in 1949, Wallace Harrison and the United Nations Headquarters in

1952, Eero Saarinen and the General Motors Technical Center in 1956, and Edward Durell Stone in 1958.

1949: RICHARD NEUTRA

Time covers in mid-August of 1949 clustered J. Edgar Hoover, Elizabeth Taylor, and Richard Neutra on consecutive covers! Neutra's masterwork, the Lovell "Health House" (1929), combined the architect's interests in machine age production with the relaxed life-style of his affluent, South California clients. According to Kenneth Frampton, the design established "the ideal correlation between the modern space-form [and a] healthier mode of living" (48).

The Neutra cover, with its shining sun, house blueprint, and portrait, publicized the architect and architect-designed houses. The "New Shells" story warned of "speculative merchant-builders" that built whole towns "of almost identical \$7,990 bungalows" (58). *Time* offered an alternative approach: "For a fee ranging from 5% to 15% of the total cost of the house, the architects will . . . help choose a site, help plan the house (or plan it altogether), make drawings so that the prospective owner can see what his house will look like, help choose and deal with the contractor, and supervise the actual construction" (58). Seventeen houses were featured, all located in the U.S. and all by prominent architects including Belluschi, Breuer, Goff, Stone, TAC, Wright, and Wurster.

A profile of Neutra (1892-1970) activated this elitist how-to guide. One couple had to sell their Neutra-designed house; truth be told, and it was, they "couldn't live up to it" (62). However, the "B." family was an ideal client. They were receptive to the architect's ideas and their Neutra design "liberated" the "modern" family from its "traditional" shackles (58).

The issue's full-page advertisements echoed the architectural hero refrain. One theme, that can be termed "Building the Suburbs," included ads for The American Iron and Steel Institute with a headline that read, "For my money, *that's* a home!"; Alcoa ("Aluminum Nails! What on earth. . ."), and The National Paint, Varnish and Lacquer Association.

Firestone, Ford, General Motors, Sinclair Oil, Studebaker, and others addressed a second theme; "Reaching the Suburbs." A third theme, "Settling the Suburbs," offered positive reinforcement: in a Miller High Life beer ad a multi-generational family celebrated "the high life" of suburbia. These were different opportunities than those presented by the August 1, 1949 Time cover that featured General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, the Commander-in-Chief of western Europe's land forces, and advertisers moved to occupy the consumeristic terrain.

Time encouraged the residential expansion of America as it focused upon architects, home-building, marital roles, infrastructure construction, economic expansion, automobile production, and national identity. The architect, modern suburban house, and suburb were now legendary figures. The "Health House"—one of America's fifty proudest architectural achievements of 1776-1976 as voted by practitioners, critics, and historians assembled by the AIA *Journal*—was not introduced to the public-at-large; it did not support the magazine's mass market message (Nominated Works).

1952: WALLACE HARRISON

With these domestic and domesticating issues addressed, Time positioned America in the pantheon of the world's great civilizations. The sharp tools of this 1952 construction were the architect Wallace Harrison, European modernism and modernists, and the United Nations building.

Harrison (1895-1981) ascended into the corporate elite without a high school degree or Social Register status; instead, he worked hard, experienced good fortune, and married into the Rockefeller family. Unique among architects, Harrison had placed himself deep into the dense New York interlocking directorate. This gave him direct access to national and international leaders from the political, economic, and military realms.

Time's Harrison story was about labor; architect and architecture were nation-builders, architectural workers, design process participants, and influential individuals. Exaggerated building perspectives evidenced a great civilization in ascendance as the "Cheops' Architect" story aligned New York and America with the Egypt, Greece, and Rome of antiquity. The cover story two weeks prior, which featured Major General Mohammad Naguib of Egypt, further revealed the editors' fascination with Egypt. The United Nations building represented an elite effort in "making a monument." Like the pyramids, the U.N. included "unbroken, windowless walls," multiple contractors, an extended construction duration, and "an array of 2,500 workers and experts" (81). Harrison was the "boss architect" tapping the imported geniuses Le Corbusier of France, Niemeyer of Brazil, Nowicki of Poland, Markelius of Sweden, and Liang of China.

Like Neutra, Harrison was an architectural worker. As the cover's T-square and triangle framed his well-worn face, so too did the article praise his work ethic: "Harrison is strictly

a working architect. He has written no books on what he has done or what architecture might or should do. When he is not tramping around an excavation or arguing with contractors, he can usually be found hard at work in his office. . . . He has very little time for play. . ." (81). The architect was further legitimized by his family. Harrison "had saved up enough money to support a wife. . . Ellen Hunt Milton, whose brother had married John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s daughter Abbey" (82), was "among the architects chosen by Rockefeller to work [on Rockefeller Center], the most ambitious project of the century" (82), and during World War II "served as deputy to Nelson Rockefeller in the Office of the Coordination of Inter-American Affairs" (84).

Advertising centered on "BIG things; the big world, big corporations, the big nation, and big buildings. This was a theme, and a magazine, intent on world domination. Included were ads from Statler Hotels ("Announcing the Great New Hotel Statler in Los Angeles"), Koppers Engineering and Construction Company ("How to build a blast furnace without ruining your nerves"), and the Worthington Corporation, manufacturers and installers of steam condensers. Eight full-page automobile and tire advertisements re-visited a "Reaching the Suburbs" theme. Similarly, a number of "Settling the Suburbs" ads, including one from Procter & Gamble that asked "Can She Cook?" sensitized and desensitized Time readers to the personal perils that lurked within middle class America.

Three years after Neutra, modern houses, the "B.s.," and a nail advertisement, Time's America, circa 1952, "was cooking" and Harrison, the U.N., the Rockefellers, and a blast furnace evidenced a great civilization at work.

1956: EERO SAARINEN

With New York enshrined as the political capital of the world, Time's editors moved on. America's technological expertise was the next architectural public relations event: Eero Saarinen and the General Motors Technical Center were center stage.

Saarinen (1910-1961) worked within a constellation of elite influences; he did or would obtain commissions from corporate leaders General Motors, IBM, TWA, Bell Telephone, and CBS, and from big-name experts MIT, the Universities of Chicago, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, and Yale University. Media experts Blake, Entenza, Haskell, and Temko promoted the architect, as did the cultural workers Alfred Barr of the Museum of Modern Art, philanthropist Vivian Beaumont Allen, and businessperson-humanist Walter Paepke of the Container Corporation of America and the Aspen Institute.

Again, like Neutra, Saarinen was bracketed by other heroes, all presidential material, including President of the United States Dwight Eisenhower, World Bank President Eugene Black, United Steelworkers of America president David Dubinsky, and presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson. Building size and program were not the issues: "BIG was

out, maturity was in. Time's America, circa 1956, had nearly completed its natural growth and development. This advanced state was given form by a "modern" architectural style and its practitioners. According to Time, the United States had "a virtual monopoly on the best creative architectural talent of this century" (50). Like the Neutra and Harrison stories before, this article publicized Saarinen and a larger group, "The 20th Century Form Givers" Wright, Le Corbusier, Gropius, Mies, Breuer, Neutra, Harrison, Bunshaft, Johnson, Yamasaki, Pei, Rudolph, Fuller, and Catalano. Saarinen was a good cover story selection: he was a rising star, a Finnish immigrant, and the architect of major corporate work.

The abstract artwork of Saarinen's 1956 Time cover (few could have recognized the GM Tech Center partial site plan), the architect's affable look, and "The Maturing Modern" title expressed Time's confidence in modern architects and architecture: "U.S. pre-eminence in modern architecture is . . . a tribute to the triumphant breakthroughs by U.S. industrialists and engineers whose work . . . has made U.S. resources, machine craftsmanship and technical brilliance the envy of the world" (50).

The issue also had utility for the corporate leaders, big-name experts, and media. Research-based advertisers included Esso Research ("Esso Research works wonders with oil: remarkable new adhesives that oil made better"), Chance Vought Aircraft Inc. ("Carrier Strike . . . with Guided Missiles"), and Union Carbide ("Looks like water but . . . it's really an amazing chemical"). In this new world of consumer marketplace expansion and hydrogen bomb testing all was not good news. There were new enemies within; in 1956, one needed to be told what was water and what was not. There were strong enemies without as well.

1958: EDWARD DURELL STONE

The launching of Sputnik on October 5, 1957 shifted the utility of architectural heroes. Edward Durell Stone was moved into position. Stone (1902-1978) worked for Harrison on Rockefeller Center and on the recommendation of Nelson Rockefeller and Harrison, was the architect for the Museum of Modern Art building (1936-1939) which assured his fame.

The Stone cover of 1958, in contrast to the tight 1949 Neutra cover, showed a brooding architect with slouching posture set against an ill-defined background. Unlike the Neutra, Harrison, and Saarinen articles, this cover story was the first dedicated to one architect alone. It established Stone as one of America's best architects responsible for prominent American-based buildings and U.S. Department of State-sponsored buildings in other countries. The Stone profile cast architectural heroes as cold war warriors. His U.S. Pavilion design for the 1958 Brussels World's Fair cost "less than a fourth of the estimated \$50-\$60 million the Soviets are spending to impress the world at the fair" and "Stone's pavilion has given the U.S. a commanding lead over the Soviet's frosted-glass monolithic rectangle, which the Bel-

gians are already referring to as 'The Refrigerator'" (61).

Additional confrontations were realized in stories about "the Soviet dictatorship" (18), an election in Okinawa watched with "alarm" because of a surprising Communist vote (20-21), an Indonesian civil war between U.S.- and Soviet-backed forces (21), "the most influential Communist in the Western Hemisphere," Brazil's Luis Carlos Prestes (22), "Russians . . . looking for drugs . . . that will make them supermen" (30), Bob Hope's "Road to Moscow" tour in which the comedian said he had seen "lots of TV aeriels in Moscow but no sets" (40), the possibility of Russia launching hydrogen warheads from the moon towards Earth (52), a "17-year-old girl [who] calculated the orbit of Sputnik I" (53), a two-page ad by Lockheed for the Polaris ballistic missile (72-3), and a full-page "Bulletin from Boeing" that profiled Bomarc IM-99 long-range missiles, KC-135 jet transport tankers, and the B-52 "global jet bomber" (87). Two weeks after Stone's cover appearance, John Gunther, the author of six books about the U.S.S.R., was on Time's cover.

Editorial angst was expressed in ways that marked a dramatic shift from the Saarinen, Harrison, and Neutra covers. The launching of Sputnik galvanized the U.S.-U.S.S.R. relationship and shifted the editorial direction of Time: America was at world's fairs and on the brink of world war. The self-congratulatory tone of the Saarinen-GM Tech Center issue was forgotten. In its place, Time cast new architectural heroes as rhetorical warheads for the world to see and fear.

Within three years of the Stone cover, Saarinen was dead, at age 51, following surgery on a brain tumor, with the Gateway Arch, the Deere & Company Administrative Center, the Dulles Airport Terminal, and the CBS Building underway. Neutra did not rediscover his pre-Time influence and died in 1970. Stone remained busy, though little respected by his peers; only one text was written about the architect and that was an autobiography. Just three years after Stone's Time cover, Scully described him as one of the "better architects" who "chose to concentrate upon . . . superficial decoration and embellishment" (36). Stone died in 1978. Harrison culminated his "boss architect" career as the architect-in-charge of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and the Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza in Albany, New York. He died in 1981, three years after the death of his great patron. By then, Time had featured its last architectural heroes.

1979: PHILIP JOHNSON

The last architect to appear on a Time cover was Philip Johnson in 1979. America and nation-building had grown more complicated. Many of Time's architectural champions were out of touch with the problems that beset the nation and its citizens. Through a review of Charles Jencks' *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, the writer Robert Hughes criticized Time cover alums Owings, Yamasaki, Wright, and Le Corbusier, and described Harrison, Pereira,

and, by extension Saarinen, as the architects of "original malaise . . . acres of white marble that somehow always ended up looking like plastic laminate" (57).

Johnson stood defiantly against this storm on the January 8, 1979 Time cover. Again, he kept good company; his appearance was bracketed by President Jimmy Carter, Vice Premier of China Teng Hsiao-p'ing, the Prime Minister of Israel, Menachem Begin, and Leonid Brezhnev, Soviet Party Chief. On the cover, the architectural statesman held a model of the AT&T architectural anti-hero. Under the headline "U.S. Architects: Doing Their Own Thing," the cover story trumpeted the "younger architects" Gehry, Gwathmey, Hardy, Meier, Moore, Pelli, Stem, and Tigerman, and Post-Modernism as the successors to modernists and Modernism.

With the suburbs settled, the monuments constructed, the technology developed, and the Soviets challenged, and, not coincidentally, with the nation encountering serious difficulties on domestic and international fronts, Time left this younger generation of independent, difficult architectural heroes to better concentrate on characters and issues of greater relevance to its readers, the corporation's leaders, and advertising revenues.

HENRY LUCE

This was a retreat that Henry Luce, the "Lord of the Press," could not have imagined in his postwar heyday (Baughman 87). The World War II commentator Quincy Howe considered Luce "the most influential editor in the United States. . . . If there is any single individual in newspaper, magazine, or radio who has a greater influence on American public opinion, I do not know his name" (Herzstein xii). William F. Buckley, Jr., a prominent conservative organizer and promoter, stated that, "During the late Thirties, the Forties, and Fifties [Time Inc.] decided more authoritatively than any other institution this side of the White House what would be the terms of national debate. . . . Time had the power, gleefully exercised, to make or break authors, artists, dramatists, and politicians. Luce could sometimes kindle, and always he could fan, movements that would then become national" (254). In the postwar era, one quarter of the nation saw or read Time Inc.'s magazines. Market research discussed changes in public opinion when all of Time Inc.'s media launched a sustained campaign on one issue (Herzstein 8).

Upon graduation from Yale University, Luce had found America not "as good as I knew she could be, as I believe she was intended to be" (Dossier). Equating a happy future for Americans with American hegemony, he set out to put the nation and world in order. In 1923, Luce and a partner invented the newsmagazine Time. They openly rejected objectivity as a journalistic ideal; instead Time emphasized "personality" (Baughman 5). In fact, investors were promised fair news treatment without objectivity (Kobler 45). Luce biographer Baughman states that the Time cover story followed this editorial policy; it featured "an individual as [a] metaphor for what was or should be happening" (5).

The son of Presbyterian missionaries, Luce brought a missionary's zeal to this quest; the 1941 essay entitled "The American Century" was his clarion call:

"Consider the 20th century. It is our century. It is ours not only in the sense that we happen to live in it but ours also because it is America's first century as a dominant power in the world. . . . The vision of America as the principal guarantor of the freedom of the seas, the vision of America as the dynamic leader of world trade, has within it the possibilities of such enormous human progress as to stagger the imagination. Let us not be staggered. Let us rise to the tremendous possibilities. . ."

It was Henry Luce, "with the hero worship approach that he had," who made the ultimate decisions regarding Time; the magazine represented his agenda, his vision for "America" (Johnson). This "master promoter" thought of himself as promoting America (Buckley 254).

Luce believed that architects and architecture should play a role in his nationalistic missions. Various ideas were considered. In one depressing Depression-era prototype, Skyline-The Weekly Newspaper for Architects, the president of the AIA warned out-of-town members to stay out of New York—there were no jobs. Another column queried, "We wonder if there ever will be any building again" (Elson 187). Obviously, with such endorsements, the newspaper did not survive. In 1932, Time Inc. purchased Architectural Forum. In 1935, when Luce wrote, "to influence architecture is to influence life," he had great plans (262). But Architectural Forum had only one profitable pre-war year and while Forum's 1932 circulation of 5,500 increased to 40,000 in 1941, this was dwarfed by other Luce press publications (Elson 194). After World War II, Luce rolled his most powerful soldier, Time magazine, along with the architectural heroes gallery, onto the nation-building battlefield.

Henry Luce was also a building-builder: the Time & Life Building at Rockefeller Center, which opened in 1959, is the city's tallest single shaft and contains the largest tower floors built in New York City since World War II (Stem 398). As he set the building's cornerstone, Luce cast the tower as a cultural work place: "[This building] is a workshop, one of the handsomest, we think, that ever was. . . . [This building] speaks most boldly and most confidently of the immense amount of work to be done in years to come. . ." (Elson 334).

THE IMMENSE AMOUNT OF WORK TO BE DONE

Even though little attention is given to Neutra, Harrison, Saarinen, and Stone today, Time profiled these architects and their architecture as among the preeminent cultural workers of the postwar period; remember J. Edgar Hoover, Elizabeth Taylor, and Richard Neutra in 1949; Major General Naguib of Egypt and "Cheops' Architect" Wallace Harrison in 1952; Eisenhower, Stevenson, and Saarinen in 1956; and LBJ and Stone in 1958. The architects and their buildings were

pictorial icons that inhabited a category of celebrity shaped by *Time* magazine, Luce, "The American Century," Time Inc., and corporate advertisers. These architectural heroes were covers, placed over elite ideologies produced for consumption by millions of cover viewers and story readers. That was the utility of architectural cover stories to the corporate elite.

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