

# The Seagram Building and the Bomb: Architecture, Atomic Anxiety, and the Cold War in the United States

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## Introduction

This paper explores the influence of the Cold War on the design and reception of one of the seminal office buildings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Seagram Building. Using material collected from the archives of the Seagram Company as well as the papers of the Bronfman family, I explore how the technology, wealth, and power necessary to construct the Seagram Building was linked in the late 1950s and early 1960s to the social and political milieu of the Cold War, in particular the bomb.

Completed in 1958, the Seagram Building cost a small fortune to build.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, *Architectural Forum* claimed that, at \$45 per square foot, it was the most expensive office tower ever built “in Manhattan or anywhere else.”<sup>2</sup> In addition, the building occupies only about half of its site, sacrificing valuable (and obviously rentable) square footage. Mies van der Rohe had already secured a reputation as a modern architect who embraced sumptuous materials and the Seagram Building proved beyond doubt that Miesian minimalism could take on an extremely luxurious form. It’s worth noting at the outset that the building was not mortgaged, but rather paid for in cash from the company coffers. With I-beams and spandrels made of bronze, marble shear walls and elevator cores, furnished with designs by Hans Wegner, Charles and Ray Eames, Florence Knoll, and Eero Saarinen (among others), appointed with works of modern art in numbers great enough to fill a small museum, and with its dramatic setback and plaza located

on very expensive Manhattan real estate, the Seagram Building re-defined the image of corporate wealth in the late-1950s (Figure 1). What program was this luxury designed to serve? What motives fueled this expenditure?

An examination of corporate records and the cavalcade of voices that greeted the building when it opened reveal the wide variety of ends to which the Seagram Building’s construction was seen as a means. While the classical geometry of Mies’ design is often called timeless, contemporary responses to the building without doubt highlight the social, political, and cultural tensions prevalent in the United States in the 1950s. For some the Seagram Building was an index to the rising prosperity of the nation and the strength of American capitalist democracy. Others mixed their appreciation of the building’s appearance and appointments with the atomic anxieties of the era, leading one magazine to comment that the building can “boast of more superlatives than the H-bomb.” Indeed such anxieties are evident in the plans (later abandoned) to construct an atomic blast shelter in the basement, a move some executives thought would advertise Seagram’s good corporate citizenship. Finally, many regarded the building as an advertisement for the whiskey (and other liquors) the Seagram Company sold and took to calling it the “big, bronze, booze building,” and the “world’s tallest high-ball.” Here I explore the motivations behind the Seagram Company’s construction of their corporate headquarters as well as the popular and critical responses to it

in order to better understand the influence of the Cold War on postwar modern corporate architecture.<sup>3</sup>

Located in the city that epitomizes the restless activity of the American marketplace, it seems inevitable that Seagram Building should materialize the particular mode of capitalist organization of its time, and do so in a laudatory fashion. The Seagram Building, built in an era when, as Lary May notes, “politicians and businessmen spoke with one voice in praise of the modern corporation,” explicitly identified itself with just such a large, modern corporation.<sup>4</sup> In addition, while earlier skyscrapers such as the Empire State Building were symbols of an era rooted in the values of an older producer economy—and its attendant definitions of Americanism—the Seagram Building emerged from an expanding consumer culture amidst the tensions of the Cold War. Furthermore, this particular economic and geopolitical context (aligned with the increasing importance of marketing and public relations in corporate America) meant the Seagram Building was engaged in the construction of both a business entity and a particular way of life. In the popular press and architecture journals of the time the skyscraper symbolized not just material power but national identity.<sup>5</sup>

When the Seagram Building first opened, critics generally focused on its abstract, timeless, and classical elegance. Roger Montgomery cited the Seagram Building approvingly as an example of a building that “transcends the meaningless idea of taste and the equally meaningless fetishism of technique for its own sake.”<sup>6</sup> *Progressive Architecture* praised “its arrangement of space” and was “tremendously moved by the suave beauty of the shaft.”<sup>7</sup> The *New York Herald Tribune* editorial page claimed it was one of the few new buildings to “breathe whole new shapes into our lives... [it] creates around itself a feeling of space and light that is rare in Manhattan.”<sup>8</sup> The *Wall Street Journal*, mingling aesthetic and economic assessments, found the “bronze-sheathed tower with a plaza” made “extravagant use of land.”<sup>9</sup> Lewis Mumford wrote:

“this seems to me the best skyscraper New York has seen since Hood’s Daily News Building; in classic execution it towers above the doubled height of the

Empire State Building, while its nearest later rival, Lever House, more package than Pyramid, looks curiously transitory and ephemeral when one turns from one to the other.” He concluded “Somber, unsmiling, yet not grim, 375 is a muted masterpiece – but a masterpiece.”<sup>10</sup>

If critics and the public were sensitive to the details of the design, they were also taken by the expense of the venture. When the Seagram Building opened the *Wall Street Journal* was quick to point out its luxurious appointments and use of land meant that it cost “about double what it would take to erect a building of comparable size.”<sup>11</sup> While setbacks in front of large New York buildings are commonplace today and arouse little passion, in the late 1950s the Seagram Building’s plaza, with its innovations that melted snow off the granite and kept the fountains from freezing, and with its 180 foot long Vertgard marble benches weighing in at half a million pounds, was the epitome of material and technological luxury. A few years after it opened, *Time* magazine, reviewing recent developments in New York City, noted that “the rich, understated dignity of Mies van der Rohe’s bronze Seagram Building set the style for a lavish squandering of space for plazas and fountains.”<sup>12</sup> Clearly the corporation that built in such a manner was affluent and willing to pay for prestige.

However, in the case of the Seagram Building, the office tower was expected to communicate other virtues as well, namely respectability and power. The building must be understood as an extension of Seagram’s chief executive, Samuel Bronfman, a man with little interest in architecture, but deeply concerned with social status. Seagram, in the 1950s, was one of the largest manufacturers and distributor of spirits in the world. Whatever associations the liquor industry has today, in the 1950s it was still popularly associated with bootlegging, organized crime, and corruption. These were often associated with the Bronfmans as well, as their mammoth empire (worth tens of billions of dollars before it was sold in the 1990s) had its start as a supplier for smuggling operations along the Canadian border during Prohibition era.<sup>13</sup> Samuel Bronfman always insisted that his company never did anything illegal, but his son accedes that “from the beginning of their experience in the beverage-

alcohol business until the end of American Prohibition, the Bronfmans dealt with bootleggers.”<sup>14</sup> This wasn’t a small operation, and the profits it accumulated weren’t either. According to some estimates, nearly half of all the liquor that made its way into the United States during Prohibition had its origins with the Bronfmans.<sup>15</sup> By the mid-1950s the Bronfman’s retained their market dominance; one out of every three beverage-alcohol drinks sold in the U.S. was marketed by Seagram.<sup>16</sup>

Paradoxically, the trade that provided Samuel Bronfman great wealth also denied him the measure of respectability accorded other titans of industry. The association with bootlegging was one Sam Bronfman struggled for decades to shrug off, asking in his later years: “How long do you think it’ll be before they stop calling me a goddamn bootlegger?”<sup>17</sup> Within the context of the Cold War American democracy was inexorably linked to capitalism. In earlier periods in American history, the free market, and its tendency to monopolize economic and political power in the hands of an elite few was understood to be in conflict with the spirit of a democratic republic. During the Cold War, however, politicians and business leaders agreed that the inventiveness, capacity for growth, and power of the capitalist marketplace would aid democracy’s defeat of communism. For that reason, big business both defined itself in terms of corporate good citizenship and was expected to operate as such by government and the mainstream press.

### Early Plans

Internal corporate documents describe why Seagram chose to consolidate operations and build its headquarters in New York in the first place, and what expectations the company had for the building in terms of size, cost, style, use, and potential for generating publicity. The earliest document relating to the Seagram Building is a memorandum from July 1951 that details company concerns about a possible new building and establishes a timeline for its consideration and construction. It raises a number of issues, most of them concerned with finances rather than design. In particular, the memo asked:

Will a building occupied by our companies alone be practical – economic – distinctive – arouse public

interest – give the proper impression to shareholders, trade, public – will it have advertising value? Should the building be modern or traditional? If traditional, will it soon be outmoded – just another office building.

Do modern concepts of building fit in with our ideas of background, age, stability?<sup>18</sup>

Would modern architecture communicate the impression of age and stability Samuel Bronfman pursued throughout his life for the “House of Seagram?” How would Seagram’s different business constituencies – “shareholders, trade, public” – view the building; would it leave them with “the proper impression?”

### “Gangland’s Grip on Business”

This seemingly innocuous phrase, “the proper impression,” needs to be understood as something other than a standard business generality; in the context of the time its obliqueness speaks volumes. A 1950-1951 Senate investigation into the presence of organized crime in corporate America had generated a great deal of negative publicity for the liquor trade. Much of that negative publicity accrued to Seagram, and in addition resurrected stories of the company’s origin as a supplier for bootleggers. Even worse now, though, were accusations raised by the Senate investigation that Seagram and other distillers served as fronts for the mob. An article in *Business Week* about the hearings titled “Gangland’s Grip on Business” leveled the following accusation: “The top-notch companies, such as Schenley and Seagram, grant exclusive area franchises to the country’s top-notch hoodlums.”<sup>19</sup> Hearings were at points broadcast on television, with 25 to 30 percent of televisions in the New York area tuning in to the broadcasts carried by the local New York station WPIX.<sup>20</sup> This publicity ran counter to expectations that the modern corporation (whether making cars or selling liquor) would support the spread of economic opportunity and adhere to the values of society at large.

The Senate investigation was headed by Estes Kefauver, a Democrat from Tennessee. In the fifteen months of its existence, the committee held hearings in Washington, DC, New York,

Miami, Tampa, St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, New Orleans, San Francisco, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Detroit. In city after city public officials and reputed mobsters testified about the presence of organized crime in American business and its relationship to municipal corruption. Called before the committee figures such as Paul (The Waiter) Ricca and Jacob (Greasy Thumb) Guzik pleaded the fifth, while Meyer Lansky and Frank Costello were questioned about the criminal organization Murder Incorporated. Testifying along with this rogues gallery was Victor Fischel, president of the House of Seagram (Figure 1), who was asked, as the press put it, about "how extensively gangsters may have muscled into liquor distribution."<sup>21</sup> Testimony by others in front of the committee dealt with Samuel Bronfman and his brothers' past as bootleggers and allegations that the Bronfman family hotels in Canada were actually brothels, or as one witness put it, places where "people sleep very fast, they rent them [rooms] quite a few times during the night."<sup>22</sup>



Fig.1. Victor Fischel (seated, far left), testimony in front of the Kefauver Crime Committee, 1950

The publicity clearly was a problem for the company, and the Seagram's public relations department, headed by Harry Bulow, scrambled to address the revelations coming out of the hearings. In response to the article in *Business Week*, Harry Bulow wrote the editor of the magazine a letter explaining:

In "Business Week" for May 12, on page 22 in your article dealing with gangland's grip on business, you note that Seagram's has granted exclusive

area franchises to this country's top-notch hoodlums. You based this apparently on the Kefauver Report early in May.

This is in error. Seagram's has never granted any exclusive area franchises to any top-notch hoodlum.<sup>23</sup>

It was amidst concerns about its corporate citizenship that Seagram decided what type of headquarters to build. If a traditional design at first seemed more appropriate for a business still in pursuit of legitimacy, would such a design, as an early memo asked, "soon be outmoded?" In their Canadian offices, Seagram had pursued such legitimacy by building a baronial castle rather than a contemporary office building. In the United States, however, and in light of the allegations about bootlegging and of criminal activity in the liquor business, the company chose a design whose exterior made no reference at all to the history (either storied or sullied) of the business it housed. The Seagram Building employed bronze, marble, and dark glass as a shield of elegance, one with hauteur impervious to potentially degrading associations with bootleggers or "top-notch hoodlums." Edgar Bronfman would years later recall that he tried to convince his sister Phyllis Lambert to accept anodized aluminum instead of bronze for the building's exterior, but that fortunately, she was not interested in his cost-cutting measures.<sup>24</sup>

Spending in this fashion led to accolades not only for Seagram, but also for Samuel Bronfman. His use of architecture to achieve status and respectability paid off grandly. As one newspaper put it: "Samuel Bronfman, Canadian philanthropist and community leader, head of Seagram's, is the inspiration for the world's first bronze skyscraper now being erected at 375 Park Avenue." The paper went on to treat the building as an index of the economic future of the United States, as a symbol of hope: "Designed by Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, it reflects Mr. Bronfman's desire that the building serve as a symbol of confidence in the strength of the industrial and business future of America."<sup>25</sup>

### The H-Bomb and Slenderella in the Sky

Such reassurances were welcome in the face of concerns about the future of the United States during the years of rising anxiety in the late 1950s. Connections were clearly being drawn between modern architecture and the Cold War in the early years of the Seagram Building. These connections were materialized in a variety of forms, often appearing in an unexpected fashion. In 1958 a magazine published by the Central Mutual Insurance Company put the Seagram Building on the cover of its August issue (Figure 2). *The Centralizer* generally dealt with issues relevant to the insurance industry, so the Seagram Building's appearance at first seems out of line, but a blurb on the inside cover explained: "This outstanding example of Tomorrow-Minded architecture can boast more superlatives than the H-bomb."<sup>26</sup> In the face of the threat of nuclear war, the Seagram Building was a welcome example of the technical prowess of American engineering and design, a "bold step into the future."<sup>27</sup>

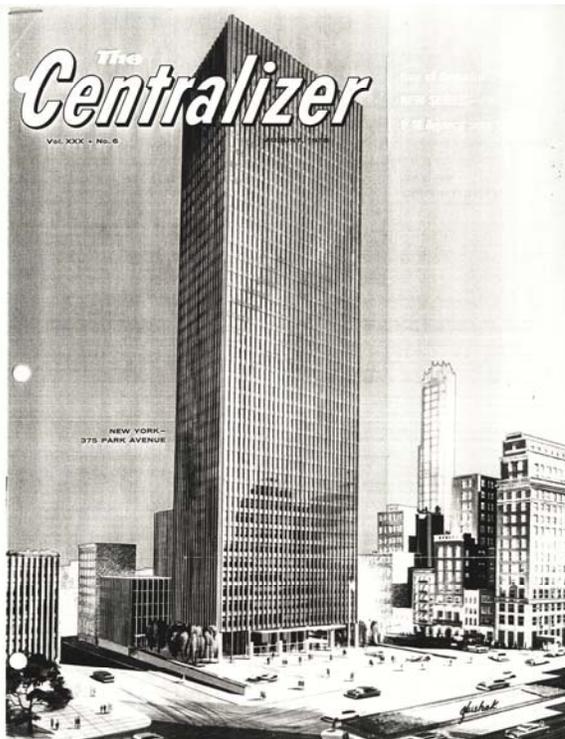


Fig. 2. Cover of *The Centralizer*, August 1958

The wealth and advanced technology necessary to construct the Seagram Building were cast as the forces that would serve the

United States on the geopolitical stage. Furthermore, these were the same forces that would preserve the vitality of American business, culture, and society. The antipathy between politics and big business that had been such a dominant feature of the American past was fading. That the comparison with a hydrogen bomb served as a compliment only further illustrates the peculiar mix taking place between the worlds of corporate capitalism and nuclear anxiety.

Such an intersection – between the bomb, the military, and big business – was made even more apparent in 1962 when on Armed Forces Week a full-scale model of a Polaris missile was placed in the Seagram Building plaza (Figure 3). Accompanied by five "Miss Armed Forces" (beauty queens chosen from each branch of the military) the missile was on view for the first time in New York City.<sup>28</sup> That it went on display at the Seagram Building, and not in front of some government or civic structure is critical in assessing the relationship between corporate America and the expanding military-industrial complex during the Cold War.

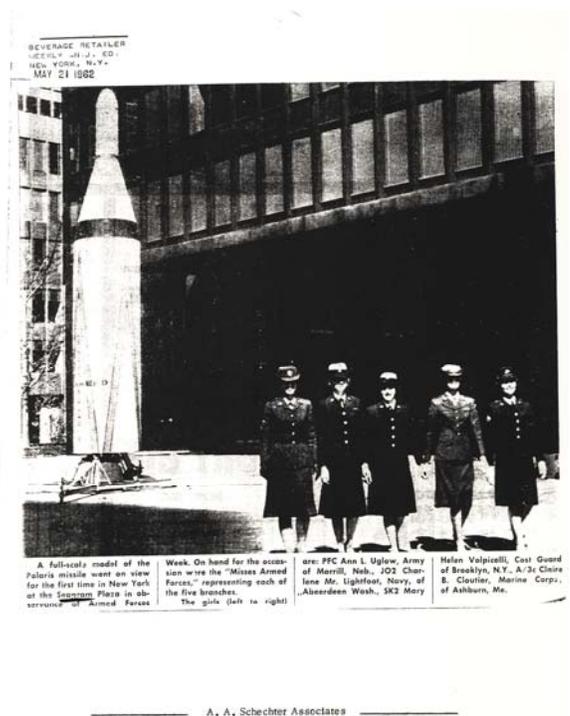


Fig. 3. Polaris missile and five Miss Armed Forces on display in front of the Seagram Building, 1962

Just as the Polaris missile epitomized the technological power of the military, the Seagram Building was an example of the innovative forces, both technological and imaginative, driving American capitalism. It was a heady mix of sex and power in the form of beauty queens and bombs set on the stage of a skyscraper with all its own peculiar phallic metaphor. It was not the only time in the early years of the building that its strong right angle architecture was linked with sex. A short piece in *Playboy* magazine from 1958 titled "Slenderella in the Sky," featured a photograph of a typically stern Mies (Figure 4). If calling the building "Slenderella" implied a feminine association, however, the copy that accompanied the piece curiously begins: "One of the latest giants to thrust its head into New York's skyline is a stern but startling 38-story edifice sheathed in stunning bronze."<sup>29</sup> Other advertisements cast the tower as female, calling it "shapely" and adorning it with women's sunglasses, but—whether Slenderella or a thrusting giant, host to Miss Armed Forces or a missile—sex, the bomb, and modern architecture offered an irresistible mix.<sup>30</sup>



Fig. 4. Mies featured in *Playboy*, August, 1958

The promotional interests that motivated parading a missile in front of the Seagram Building also dictated an effort to build a bomb shelter beneath it. As early as 1955 a series of Seagram documents record discussions that were underway about whether or not the Seagram Building would have a shelter built into it capable of withstanding an atomic blast. The apparent incongruity of such an idea disappears when one considers that at the time it was understood that a vibrant and expanding capitalist economy, one dependant on corporations for continued growth, would be

our defense against the threat and appeal of Marxism. It follows then that the corporations whose economic power would save us from the Reds would construct buildings that would save us from the bomb. The more abstract security provided by the economic power of corporations was thus replaced (or at least buttressed) by the far more concrete security of the corporate bomb shelter. Indeed, the very profit motive that animated corporate behavior in general was assumed to be the one that would motivate their public service. As one official in the City of New York's Office of Civil Defense, commenting on the possibility of Seagram constructing a bomb shelter in their new building, put it:

Should favorable consideration be given this project, I would like to mention that the House of Seagrams [sic] would have the distinction of being pioneers in this area of public service, since it would be the first building in the City of New York to provide such a facility and, perhaps in major respects, in the Nation. The well-established and well-known prestige of Seagrams [sic], I am sure, would be measurably enhanced.<sup>31</sup>

Presumably the "measurably enhanced" prestige of Seagram would lead to measurably enhanced sales of Seagram's various products.

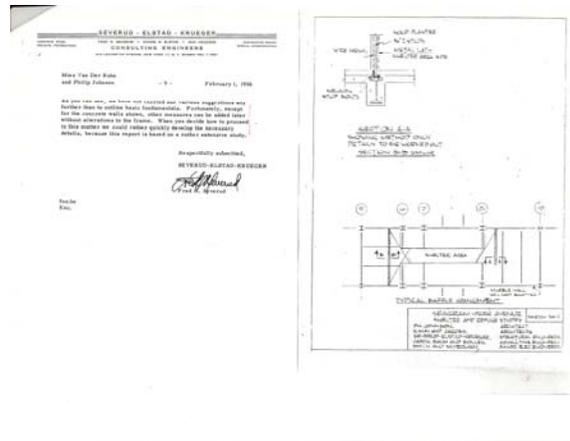


Fig. 5. Excerpt, report to Mies and Philip Johnson concerning possible construction of bomb shelter in the Seagram Building, 1956

Seagram executives agreed that a bomb shelter would garner good publicity for the company. In a 1955 office memo, one

executive noted that “considerable favorable publicity could be given the building” as its provision of a civil defense shelter would make it unique among buildings in New York.<sup>32</sup> By February of 1956, the engineering firm of Severud, Elstad and Krueger (consulting engineers for the Seagram Building) had produced a report on “how Civil Defence considerations would affect the structure and its inhabitants,” which it sent to Mies and Philip Johnson (Figure 5).

In that report Fred Severud laid out the various effects an atomic blast would have on the Seagram Building. His assessments are particularly interesting as he had recently authored a book on atomic blast survival techniques.<sup>33</sup> In his report Severud noted that the impact of an atomic blast was akin to a massive wave slamming into one side of the building and then “hugging” the whole building as the impact wrapped around it. According to Severud, the Seagram Building was better equipped than most to handle such forces as “special means have been taken (due to other considerations), both to stiffen the building and to give it mass.” In fact, Severud continued, the good news was that “Experience during the Nagasaki and Hiroshima attacks has shown that the human body has a really remarkable resistance against hugging forces of short duration.” This meant that if “a tenant is sitting at his desk when the blast hits, he may survive the hugging action of the blast at a surprisingly small distance from ground zero.” The bad news, however, was that “he will most certainly not survive the machine-gun fire of flying glass” produced by the shattering of windows that would accompany any “atomic hug.”<sup>34</sup>

Protection for inhabitants of the building could be provided on each floor, Severud noted, but averred that it “would be very costly and space consuming.” Instead he proposed using the sub-basement as a refuge in case of an atomic attack, and closed his report with the following: “we have not carried out our various suggestions...When you decide how to proceed in this matter we could rather quickly develop the necessary details.”<sup>35</sup> It appears that in the end few if any changes were made in the design to accommodate civil defense concerns. A letter sent from the office of Philip Johnson to Fred Kramer in 1956 states that after consultation with “Mrs. Lambert, Mr. Severud, and myself” and “due to the fact that building the floor baffles, as discussed by Mr.

Severud, restrict the planning and utilization of the tower floor areas,” that the decision was made that “shielding wall could be built when an emergency arises.” Furthermore, the parties involved thought “a successful attack would not initially be launched in the vicinity of the New York area, or, more particularly, to strike close enough to damage the Seagram Building.” In the event of an attack, “the materials and labor...would be on hand when required” to construct the necessary sheltering additions to the building.<sup>36</sup>

### Conclusion

Reinvigorating our relationship with the Seagram Building through an examination of its history allows us to understand it as a culturally and politically complex production. As we enter an new era seemingly defined for us by a war on terror predicted to last longer than the Cold War, I hope we will find it useful to examine how conflicts in the past have shaped responses to some of our most familiar landmarks.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The total cost of the Seagram Building is difficult to pin down with precision, in part due to the absence of a mortgage. The corporate documents tracking the building expenses associated with the project, a series of handwritten entries in an accounting ledger, are inconclusive. No mention is found of total building cost in the operating expense summaries for the fiscal years that followed (the only fixed charges listed are taxes and insurance). Corporate records elsewhere show variations in cost assessment as high as 10 percent. An internal memo from 1957 lists the total cost of the building as \$40,000,000, with construction accounting for \$32,000,000, land another \$5,000,000, and machinery and equipment \$3,000,000, see “Memorandum to H. Fieldsteel, 6.18.57,” Record Series 2126, Box 195, File Correspondence, SC/BF Collection, HML. A memo from September 1958, however, states that Price Waterhouse, who served as accountants for the corporation, had determined that the “revised estimated cost of the new building at 375 Park Avenue, New York, is \$44,000,000,” see “Memorandum from H. Fieldsteel to W. Frauenthal,” Record Series 2126, Box 844, Vertical File Accounting, 1955-1958, Seagram Company LTD./Bronfman Family Collection, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE (hereafter SC/BF Collection, HML). An article in *Time* magazine from 1958 listed the cost of construction as \$35,000,000, a price repeated in other new sources at the time and more recently, see “Monument in Bronze,” *Time* (3 March 1958), 52, and Charles Bagli, “On Park

Avenue, Another Trophy Changes Hands," *New York Times* (12 October 2000), B1. Adjusted for inflation, \$35,000,000 in 1958 would be the equivalent of nearly \$235,000,000 at the end of 2005; 44,000,000 1958 dollars would come to a staggering \$296,000,000.

<sup>2</sup> "Seagram's Bronze Tower," *Architectural Forum* 109 (July 1958), 67. The article states the total cost of the building as \$43,000,000.

<sup>3</sup> The organization of the various entities that made up the business known generally simply as Seagram was in the 1950s unnecessarily labyrinth and redundant. Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc. (which in some publications, confusingly, is also listed as the Seagram Company Ltd.), was the parent corporation of the House of Seagram, which in turn was divided into five brands: the major brands Seagram, Calvert, and Four Roses, and the smaller brands Kessler and General Wine and Spirits. In addition, another tier of brands (and companies), Browne Vintners, operated under the direction of Seagram. Here, when I refer to Seagram, I am referring to the corporate entity Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc.

<sup>4</sup> Lary May, ed., *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War* (Chicago, 1989), 5.

<sup>5</sup> I discuss this issue in greater detail in my dissertation "Constructing the Modern Skyscraper: The Politics and Power of Building New York City from the Great Depression through the Cold War." Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Roger Montgomery, "The Goal of Architecture: Why It Should Help Promote a Humane Environment," *St. Louis Dispatch* (5 April 1959), unpaginated clipping in Record Series 2173, Box 797, File Seagram Building Activities – Clips, 1959, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>7</sup> "Seagram House Re-Reassessed," *Progressive Architecture* (June 1959), 140-145, clipping in Record Series 2126, Box 845, Vertical File Publicity, 1956-1959, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>8</sup> "Design for a Museum," *New York Herald Tribune* (1 June 1959), 12, clipping in Record Series 2173, Box 797, File Seagram Building Activities – Articles, 1956-1986, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>9</sup> "Shrinking Skyscrapers: High Costs Keep New Ones Below '20s Peaks," *Wall Street Journal* (1 July 1959), unpaginated clipping in Record Series 2173, Box 797, File Seagram Building Activities – Articles, 1956-1986, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis Mumford, "The Skyline: The Lessons of the Master," *New Yorker* (13 September 1958): 141-152.

<sup>11</sup> "Shrinking Skyscrapers: High Costs Keep New Ones Below '20s Peaks," *Wall Street Journal* (1 July 1959), unpaginated clipping in Record Series 2173, Box 797, File Seagram Building Activities – Articles, 1956-1986, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>12</sup> "Modern Living: The City," *Time* (28 September 1962), 56, clipping in Record Series 2173, Box 797, File Seagram Building Activities – Articles, 1956-1986, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>13</sup> The beverage alcohol division of Seagram was sold to Pernod-Ricard by Edgar Bronfman, Jr., who has spent a great deal of money and effort to enter the movie and music industry, with mixed results. For an overview of the history of Seagram since the mid-1960s, through its entry into the business of movies and music, and its ill-fated merger with the now-bankrupt French conglomerate Vivendi, see Jo Johnson and Martine Orange, *The Man Who Tried to Buy the World: Jean-Marie Messier and Vivendi Universal* (New York, London, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Edgar M. Bronfman, *The Making of a Jew* (New York, 1996), 8.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Charles Newman, *Bronfman Dynasty: The Rothschilds of the New World* (Toronto, 1978), 64.

<sup>16</sup> Edgar M. Bronfman, *Good Spirits: The Making of a Businessman* (New York, 1998), 99.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> "Memorandum: Suggested Outline of Program for Development of Building to House the Seagram Companies, July 16, 1951," Record Series 2126, Box 844, File Ellis Slater, 1952-1954, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>19</sup> "Gangland's Grip on Business," *Business Week* (May 12, 1951), 22, clipping in Record Series 2167, Box 797, File Public Relations Department, Kefauver, 1951, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>20</sup> See Charles Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography* (Knoxville, 1980), 180-185; Estes Kefauver, *Crime in America* (Garden City, NY, 1951), 313; William Howard Moore, *The Kefauver Crime Committee and the Politics of Crime* (Columbia, MO, 1974), 184-185. According to James L. Baughman, local broadcasts of the hearings in New York were aired on WPIX, see "Television," in Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York* (New Haven, 1995), 1159.

<sup>21</sup> Unpaginated clipping, Record Series 2126, Box 797, File Public Relations Dept., Kefauver Investigation, 1951, SC/BF Collection, HML. Details of the Lansky's exploits can be found in Robert Lacey, *Little Man: Meyer Lansky and the Gangster*

*Life* (Boston, 1991) and Hank Messick, *Lansky* (New York: , 1971); the life and career of Frank Costello is dealt with in George Walsh, *Public Enemies: The Mayor, the Mob, and the Crime that Was* (New York, 1991).

<sup>22</sup> *Hearings of the Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce, United States Senate*, (Washington, DC, 1951), 544.

<sup>23</sup> "Letter from Harry Bulow to Elliott Bell, Editor *Business Week*," Record Series 2126, Box 797, File Public Relations Department, Kefauver Investigation, 1951, SC/BF Collection, HML. Curiously, Bulow's denial begs the question whether Seagram instead granted non-exclusive franchises to second-rate hoodlums.

<sup>24</sup> Bronfman, *Good Spirits*, 80.

<sup>25</sup> *National Jewish Post* (May 17, 1957), unpaginated clipping in Record Series 2126, Box 797, File Seagram Building Activities-Clips, 1954-1988, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>26</sup> *The Centralizer* vol. XXX, No. 6 (August 1958), 2. Clipping in Record Series 2126, Box 797, File Seagram Building Activities – Ads, 1957-1964, SC/BF Collection, HML. For information on the history of the H-bomb, see Richard Rhodes, *Dark Sun: The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb* (New York, 1995) and Herbert York, *The Advisors: Oppenheimer, Teller, and the Superbomb* (Stanford, 1989).

<sup>27</sup> *The Centralizer* vol. XXX, No. 6 (August 1958), 2. Clipping in Record Series 2126, Box 797, File Seagram Building Activities – Ads, 1957-1964, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>28</sup> *Beverage Retailer Weekly* (May 21, 1962), clipping in Record Series 2126, Box 797, File Seagram Building Activities-Clips, 1960, SC/BF Collection, HML. Information on the Polaris missile, the first missile capable of launching a nuclear warhead from a submarine, can be found in James Baar, *Polaris!* (New York, 1960) and Harvey Sapolsky, *The Polaris System Development* (Cambridge, 1972).

<sup>29</sup> *Playboy* (August 1958), unpaginated clipping in Record Series 2126, Box 797, File Seagram Building Activities-Clips, 1958, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>30</sup> "Famous Park Avenue Beauty Enjoys Flexalum Light Control," *Architectural Forum* (February 1960), unpaginated clipping in Record Series 2126, Box 797, File Seagram Building Activities-Clips, 1960, SC/BF Collection, HML. A number of magazines in the late 1950s and early 1960s including *Town and Country*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and others used the Seagram Building as a location for fashion shoots as well. These generally employed the space on the ground floor and plaza for the shoots and the

accompanying text identified the Seagram Building by name, suggesting the building quickly attained a fashionable cache.

<sup>31</sup> "Letter from Major General Robert E. Condon to General Frank R. Schwengel, November 18, 1955," Record Series 2126, Box 844, Vertical File Civil Defense, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>32</sup> Memo from F.M. Kramer to Ellis Slater, November 21, 1955," Record Series 2126, Box 844, Vertical File Civil Defense, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>33</sup> Fred Severud, *The Bomb, Survival, and You: Protection for People, Buildings, and Equipment*, New York, 1954.

<sup>34</sup> "Report from Severud, Elstad and Krueger to Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, February 1, 1956," Record Series 2126, Box 844, Vertical File Civil Defense, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>35</sup> "Report from Severud, Elstad and Krueger to Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, February 1, 1956," Record Series 2126, Box 844, Vertical File Civil Defense, SC/BF Collection, HML.

<sup>36</sup> "Letter from Richard Foster to Fred Kramer, February 24, 1956," Record Series 2126, Box 844, Vertical File Civil Defense, SC/BF Collection, HML.

#### *Illustration Credits*

Figure 1. Photograph by Al Muto, 1950. International News.

Figure 2. *The Centralizer* (August 1958).

Figure 3. *Beverage Retailer Weekly* (21 May 1962).

Figure 4. *Playboy* (August 1958).

Figure 5. Seagram Company LTD./Bronfman Family Collection, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE.