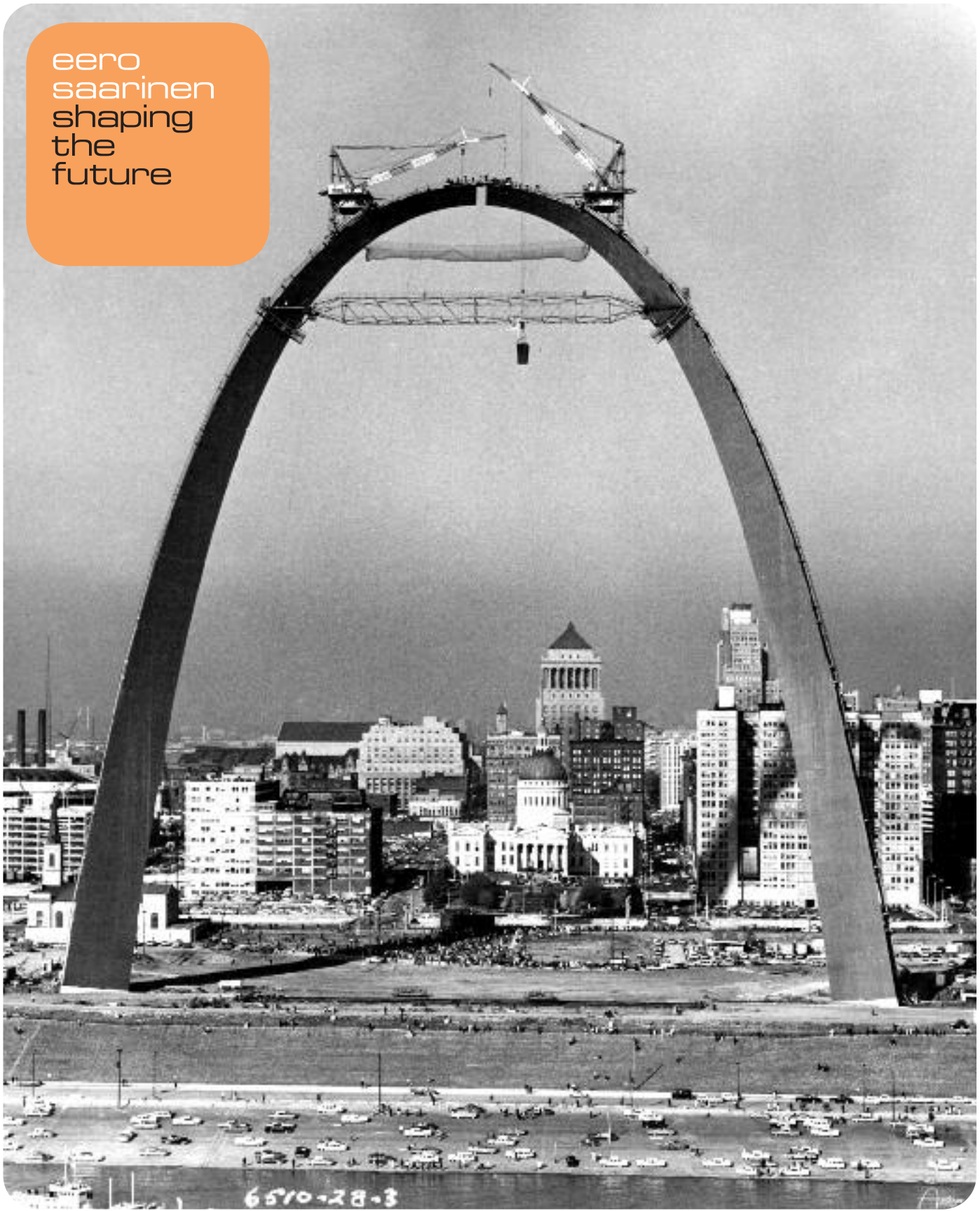


connections guide

eero
saarinen
shaping
the
future



January 30 - April 27, 2009

MILDRED LANE KEMPER ART MUSEUM

about this guide

This guide is designed as a companion to the special exhibition *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*. Its primary aim is to facilitate a sense of open discovery, encouraging visitors to explore the architecture, design, and creative process of Eero Saarinen as well as the connections among his projects presented throughout this exhibition. The themes, topics, and exploration questions in this guide are provided as a starting point for such discovery, facilitating the process of looking at and making meaning of selected works throughout Saarinen's celebrated career.

This guide was prepared by Michael Murawski, coordinator of education and public programs at the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum. The content of this guide is heavily indebted to the published catalog that accompanies this exhibition and other scholarly sources (as noted), as well as the interpretive texts prepared for the exhibition by the Finnish Cultural Institute in New York, Museum of Finnish Architecture, and National Building Museum. Special thanks also go to Hannah Fullgraf, school and community programs assistant at the Kemper Art Museum, and Kyla Hygysician, graduate student in the School of Architecture at Washington University.

Cover: United States Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, St. Louis, Missouri, under construction, 1965. Photographer: Bob Arteaga. © Arteaga Photos Ltd. From the Collections of Arteaga Photos Ltd.

exhibition overview

EERO SAARINEN (1910–1961) was one of the most prolific, unorthodox, and controversial architects of the twentieth century. Son of internationally famous architect Eiel Saarinen, Eero has been widely acknowledged as a leader of the second generation of modernist architects who rose to prominence after World War II. By exploring Saarinen's entire output of more than fifty built and proposed projects—including St. Louis's iconic Gateway Arch—*Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future* provides a unique opportunity to understand the architect's collective work in the larger context of postwar modern architecture, through full-scale mock-ups and a selection of drawings, models, photographs, films, and other materials.

The exhibition offers an in-depth look at Saarinen's greatest designs, which ranged from furniture and private residences to corporate headquarters, airports, and university campuses. While many critics accused Saarinen of inventing a new style for every job, his diverse designs attracted powerful clients who played pivotal roles in trends that transformed the culture of the time, from the promotion of automobiles, air travel, television, and computers, to the expansion of major corporations and institutions of higher education. Although Saarinen died in 1961 at the age of 51, he left a remarkable body of work, as well as a strong legacy of innovation, collaboration, and media savvy that continues to inform architectural practice today.

organizers and sponsors

Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future is organized by the Finnish Cultural Institute, New York; the Museum of Finnish Architecture, Helsinki; and the National Building Museum, Washington D.C., with the support of the Yale University School of Architecture. The exhibition is curated by Donald Albrecht in conjunction with an international consortium of Finnish and American scholars.

exhibition support

The global sponsor for *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future* is ASSA ABLOY. Additional support is provided by Autodesk, Florence Knoll Bassett, Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Art, Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, Elise Jaffe and Jeffrey Brown, Jeffrey Klein, Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, Earle I. Mack, the Ministry of Education, Finland, Marvin Suomi, and anonymous donors.

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ASSA ABLOY



CANNON DESIGN



MACKEY MITCHELL ARCHITECTS

Knoll



exhibition map



using this map

This map is designed to help you connect the information provided in this guide with selected projects on display in the exhibition. Each numbered icon corresponds to a section of this guide found on the following pages:

- 1 Eero Saarinen p. 3
- 2 Miller House p. 5
- 3 Furnishing the Modern Home p. 6
- 4 Ingalls Hockey Rink p. 7
- 5 Kresge Chapel & Auditorium p. 8
- 6 Watson Research Center, IBM p. 9
- 7 Deere & Co. Administrative Center p. 10
- 8 TWA Terminal p. 11
- 9 Dulles International Airport p. 12
- 10 Gateway Arch p. 13

Born in Finland in 1910, Eero Saarinen emigrated to the United States with his family in 1923. He began his career at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan, where he worked along with his entire family on his father Eliel Saarinen's design for the campus in Bloomfield Hills, outside of Detroit. These early years were significant for Eero, serving as a model for artistic collaboration as well as inspiring the conviction that architecture must encompass the "total environment"—from landscapes to buildings to furnishings and decorative objects. After finishing his studies in the School of Architecture at Yale University in 1934, Eero returned to teach at Cranbrook with his father.

Although Eero Saarinen was Finnish by birth, he has been commonly regarded as a quintessentially American architect forging a quintessentially American modernism.¹ Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, Eero helped introduce modern architecture to the mainstream of American practice through his buildings and competition schemes, many of them done in partnership with Eliel. Working independently from his father, Eero also partnered with designers such as Charles Eames to create award-winning designs for furniture and housing competitions that embraced new technologies, new materials, and a new postwar American culture.

After Eliel's death in 1950, Eero headed the office of Saarinen and Associates and quickly began to surpass his father's fame. The firm created some of the most innovative architectural work of the period, with commissions from an impressive roster of clients, including General Motors, IBM, Yale University, and CBS. Collaboration remained one of the key aspects of Saarinen's creative process as he teamed up with emerging talents as well as some of the most noteworthy designers at midcentury. In 1953, the *New York Times* dubbed Saarinen "the most widely known and respected architect of his generation," and three years later he appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine.

Saarinen's untimely death in 1961 came before many of his building projects were completed, including the impressive Gateway Arch in St. Louis. Through the formal, technical, and experiential dimensions of his life's work, Eero Saarinen has shown how architecture can help shape not only the culture of its time but also the culture of future generations.²

"Unlike painting and sculpture, where the individual works entirely alone, architecture involves many people. It is true that it all has to be siphoned through one mind, but there is always teamwork."

—Eero Saarinen³



Eero Saarinen and Florence Knoll (later Florence Knoll Bassett) with Pedestal furniture series base, 1957. Photographer: Scott Hyde. Courtesy Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

some things to think about when looking at

This section is intended to provide visitors with a few basic elements to consider when examining the various works by Saarinen in this exhibition, as well as when looking at and moving through any work of architecture. The numbers refer to projects identified on the preceding exhibition map and described in these pages.

site

Think about the physical location and shape of the building. In what ways does the design respond to the existing landscape, topography, geology, or history of the site? For many of Saarinen's projects—such as his Watson Research Center for IBM **6**—aspects of the site were integral to the final design, and he would sometimes drastically alter his plans after frequent site visits.

materials

Consider the materials used in the design. How might these materials be responding to the client, the site, or the intended symbolism and meaning of the project? Saarinen developed new materials and construction techniques for several of his designs, applying concrete, steel, or aluminum to meet the demands of a particular project, such as his use of Cor-Ten steel at the Deere and Company headquarters **7**.

form / shape

Examine the lines, composition, and geometry of the design. In what ways might these forms relate to the other aspects of the building, such as its function, materials, or structure? Saarinen experimented with both rectangular and curvilinear forms during his career. In his design for the TWA Terminal at New York's international airport, **8** swooping curves were intended to align with passengers' movement and the dramatic experience of jet travel.



“When I approach an architectural problem, I try to think out the real significance of the problem. What is the essence of the problem and how can the total structure capture that essence? How can the whole building convey emotionally the purpose and meaning of the building?”

—Eero Saarinen⁴

Eero Saarinen with *A Combined Living-Dining-Room-Study* project model, created for *Architectural Forum* magazine, circa 1937. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

architecture

space

Think about the building's space as defined from the interior and exterior. How might the spaces throughout the design be related or connected? How much are these spaces defined by the project's site or location? In Saarinen's design for the Gateway Arch ¹⁰, the height of the arch along with the surrounding park draw visitors' attention to the expansive sky, the river, and adjacent urban space, in addition to the monument itself.

function

Consider how the building is used and what function it serves. In what ways might the design be responding to its users—its inhabitants, employees, passengers, or visitors? Through intensive research, Saarinen worked to design buildings that considered their users in new ways. In his design for Dulles Airport ⁹, Saarinen aimed to minimize the distance traveled by passengers inside the terminal by developing mobile lounges.

experience

Think carefully about how one would actively experience the space—other than simply using it. How would we approach and move through the building? What would it be like to encounter this space for the first time? Such ideas are connected to Saarinen's expressive designs for the Ingalls Hockey Rink at Yale ⁴ or the Kresge Chapel at MIT ⁵, where the visitor's aesthetic experience seems to be central to each project.

design for modern living

Domestic architecture was not a major focus for Eero Saarinen, but he collaborated on several important residential designs that underscored his ability to advance modernist ideals. While it has long been thought that Saarinen only designed one house, new research has revealed that he participated in the design of at least eighteen houses or housing projects.⁵ These not only include his well-known Miller House, but also two collaborations with Charles and Ray Eames for *Arts and Architecture* magazine's Case Study House program. Furthermore, Saarinen paid as much attention to the interior design of his housing projects as he did to their exterior structures, seeing the two as inextricably linked.



Floor plan, Miller House, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006.
© Finnish Cultural Institute in New York, Museum of Finnish Architecture, and National Building Museum.

“When an interior is really successful, the compensations for all the effort are tremendous. The clarity and serenity of a good interior give an absolutely marvelous feeling of strength with which to face our complicated and confused world.”

—Eero Saarinen⁶

miller house (1953-57) columbus, indiana

2

To create a one-story residence for American industrialist J. Irwin Miller, Saarinen designed a house to reflect the lifestyle of Miller and his family. Clad in glass and panels of blue-gray slate and white marble, the house sits on a paved plinth that extends beyond its exterior walls. The general plan of the Miller House was subdivided into nine parts, which creates a regular grid for room size and placement of windows, doors, and skylights.

The Miller House is best known from the February 1959 issue of *Home and Garden*, in which the home was depicted on the magazine's cover as the “Hallmark House.” The photographs of the house showed a rich visual display from the materials used by Saarinen, as well as the interior design by Alexander Girard. In the image shown here, we see three custom elements highlighted for the public: a white plaster fireplace that drops down from the ceiling, a central conversation pit area, and a rosewood storage wall. With its luscious red fabric and silk cushions, the conversation pit further accentuates the open center of the living area.

As curator Christopher Monkhouse states, the Miller House is “literally and figuratively the ultimate Saarinen house” through its somewhat modest design.⁷ Yet, in this project, as in all of his commissions, Saarinen worked with his client to deliver a distinctive structure. In the case of a global business executive such as Miller, this meant not only a comfortable and inconspicuous home, but also an elegant and glamorous modernist hideaway befitting the town's leading citizen.



Miller House, Columbus, Indiana, circa 1957. Photographer: Ezra Stoller. © Ezra Stoller/Esto.

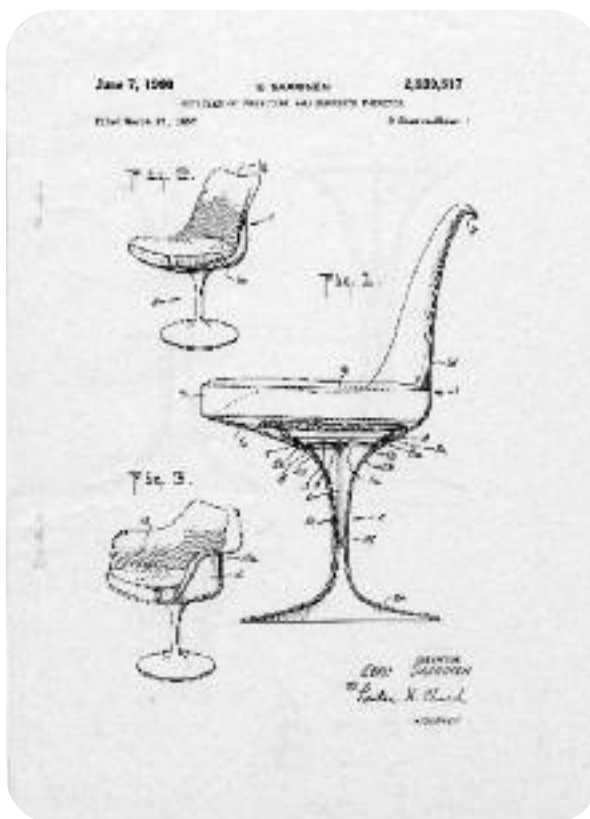
furnishing the modern home

During his long association with Knoll furniture company, Saarinen designed many important pieces of furniture, including the Womb chair and ottoman (1948) and his most famous Tulip or Pedestal group (1956), which was featured in the dining room of the Miller House. In addition to his Tulip collection, Saarinen's Womb chair and ottoman have remained in production to this day and are considered icons of postwar design.

Saarinen's original conception for his Tulip design was a chair with a single leg made from a single material, to "make the chair all one thing again," as he later stated.⁸ While the newly available polyester resin material allowed him to develop molded sculptural forms that were easily mass-produced at a low cost, it was not strong enough to support a chair on one leg. Given his interest in aesthetic concerns, Saarinen chose to make the single-leg base of the chair from metal; since the two components are the same color, the end result of the Tulip chair still appears as a single, unified form.



Knoll Associates poster for Pedestal furniture series. Courtesy Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.



Patent drawing for Pedestal chairs, June 7, 1960. Courtesy Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

expanding the college campus

Following World War II, the GI Bill of Rights launched a major expansion of the higher education system in the United States. Not only were large numbers of returning veterans enrolling in colleges and universities, but enrollments for women during the 1950s also dramatically increased. These shifts sparked a wave of new campus construction and expansion, providing countless opportunities for architects like Saarinen to compete for exciting commissions.

College campuses offered Saarinen the best opportunities to achieve a “total environment”. In his plans and buildings for Vassar, Concordia, Yale, and MIT, Saarinen sought to relate his new buildings to these campuses’ historic fabric; at the same time, he understood the potential for creating a new identity for the American landscape of higher learning. Working with patrons such as A. Whitney Griswold at Yale and William Wurster at MIT, Saarinen was able to advance concepts of collegiate campus planning that still impact design and planning decisions today.

“I like the story of the boy on the Yale team who said when he looked up at the concrete arch, it made him feel ‘Go, go, go!’”
—Eero Saarinen⁹



Sketch of David S. Ingalls Hockey Rink, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, circa 1953. Courtesy Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

david s. ingalls hockey rink (1956-58)

yale university, new haven, connecticut

4

The president of Yale University during the 1950s, A. Whitney Griswold, envisioned reshaping Yale’s campus plan to reflect the university’s academic goals. In 1956, a formal proposal was sent to President Griswold regarding the need for an ice rink to be built on the campus for the freshman and varsity hockey teams. Griswold chose Eero Saarinen to be the architect for this project due to his commitment to his clients and to a modernist vision.

Saarinen began working on creating a dynamic yet functional hockey rink, shaped like an oval in response to the general requirements for the space. The building was made larger than standard hockey rinks due to the request to have flexibility with the seating so the university could host other events in that space. Supported by cables attached to a massive, sweeping, “spine-like” concrete arch, the dramatic tent-like suspended roof is the most striking element of the hockey rink’s design. Conventional hockey rinks have the roof spanned in the short direction to create a barrel vault, which does not support great acoustics. Instead, the arch spans the rink in the long dimension, creating a more expensive yet beautiful solution to the problem.¹⁰

In stark contrast to the Gothic and Colonial Revival styles of most buildings found on Yale’s campus, the hockey rink’s structure was a unique addition for the university. It is an expressive architectural form that was published widely during its opening year in 1958. In the end, the design inspired students and the rest of campus, along with future designs created by Saarinen that employed sculptural, curved shapes for both technical and expressive effect.



Interior showing structural concrete spine, David S. Ingalls Hockey Rink, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, circa 1958. Photographer: Ezra Stoller. © Ezra Stoller/Esto.

kresge chapel & kresge auditorium (1950-55)

5

massachusetts institute of technology (mit)
cambridge, massachusetts

Two of Saarinen's best-known campus projects are the Kresge Auditorium and Kresge Chapel at MIT. The Kresge Auditorium was the nation's first large-scale, concrete-shell structure. Rising to a height of fifty feet in the interior hall, the thin shell touches the ground at only three points. The large main auditorium space accommodates 1,238 people, and every seat has an unobstructed view since there are no interior supports for the overarching dome. Saarinen filled the spaces between the roof and the ground with large glass walls that allow views into the space as well as views of the surrounding campus architecture from inside the hall.

Saarinen's adjacent Kresge Chapel is a simple, windowless brick cylinder from the outside. Inside, however, it is a remarkably intimate space, stunning in its immediate visual impact to visitors as they walk into the central chamber. Saarinen designed the undulating, windowless brick interior walls to focus attention on the natural light that descends from a central skylight. A floor-to-ceiling sculpture by Harry Bertioia culminates the experience as small metal rectangles catch the descending light in ever-changing patterns. According to Saarinen, the chapel's windowless cylinder "implied the self-contained, inward-feeling which was desirable" for a place of worship.¹¹



Interior, Kresge Chapel (1950–55), MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
Photographer: Kathia Shieh, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 License.



View of Kresge Chapel from Kresge Auditorium. Photographer: H.R. Oakman. Courtesy Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

creating a corporate style

The 1950s brought to the United States a period of extraordinary prosperity that sparked new developments in business and industry. The rise of automobile culture, air travel, television, telecommunications, and information technology spurred the growth of several major international corporations based in the U.S., including General Motors, IBM, *Time* magazine, and CBS.

Working to design research facilities and corporate headquarters for these clients, Eero Saarinen demonstrated a deep understanding of architecture's value in creating a company's image, often using new building technologies to help brand these forward-thinking corporations. In addition to employing new materials, Saarinen developed a completely new office typology: the corporate campus. As companies established facilities in more rural or suburban settings, Saarinen designed plans that incorporated the landscape of the site and responded to the surrounding community, paralleling the needs of his clients.

As scholar Alexandra Lange writes, "It was not enough to be imposing . . . , nor was it enough to be up to date. . . . Saarinen's [corporate] headquarters added narrative, both to the everyday approach, passing from highway to pastorage, and to the national profile, changing companies from generic names to symbolic places."¹²



Exterior of IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research Center in Yorktown Heights, New York. Photographer: Simon Greig, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 License.

thomas j. watson research center (1957-61) international business machines (ibm) yorktown heights, new york

6

In his second job for IBM, Saarinen strived to elevate the company's image with a design for the most efficient and flexible of twentieth-century research centers. IBM was at the forefront of a major postwar development—computers—and was also a highly prestigious global corporation that valued modern architecture as a way to communicate its prestige.¹³

As in several of his other corporate commissions, Saarinen's early concept for the Watson Research Center began with a conglomeration of masonry-and-glass boxes separated by courtyards, only to be drastically modified following the firm's extensive research. They studied the work habits of the building's eventual employees, and noticed that the researchers sat with their backs to the windows with the blinds drawn. This discovery led to a new design for windowless offices offset from a long, outer corridor with floor-to-ceiling views of the exterior landscape.¹⁴ Along this curving corridor, Saarinen also placed communal areas—furnished with his own Pedestal tables and chairs—where employees could gather and converse.

Located about forty miles north of New York City, the center was built along the ridge of a rolling hill, and its structure echoed the arc of the land. Saarinen paid considerable attention to connecting the structure to the surrounding landscape and its materials, adding local Westchester fieldstone to elements throughout the building. "Nestled into the top of the site's crescent-shaped hill," notes curator Donald Albrecht, "IBM Yorktown was a commanding presence in the landscape that advanced a new postwar typology of corporate estates erected by companies moving from central cities to the suburbs."¹⁵



Interior, Thomas J. Watson Research Center, IBM, Yorktown Heights, New York, circa 1958. Photographer: Ezra Stoller. © Ezra Stoller/Esto.

deere and
company
administrative
center (1957-63)
moline, illinois

7

With his design for the new administrative headquarters located outside of downtown Moline, Illinois, Saarinen was able to successfully link the John Deere Company's status as a major multinational corporation to the material at the core of its success—steel. The selection of Cor-Ten steel, used here for the first time in an architectural application, was intended to evoke the ruggedness of farm machinery. The particular alloys used in Cor-Ten steel allow it to form a stable rust-like patina when exposed to the weather. For Saarinen, this dark oxidized surface gave the Deere building an earthy character, later described by Saarinen's colleague Paul Kennon as "absolutely sympathetic with the trees."¹⁶

As at the IBM facility in Yorktown, the shape of the landscape served as a dominant organizing principle for the Deere headquarters structure. The seven-story central administrative building was sunken into the contour of the land, connected to a public display pavilion by a glass-enclosed bridge that spanned a ravine. The buildings in this corporate complex seem to manage the site's lake and hills, as Alexandra Lange suggests, "with the ease of a Deere-engineered product."¹⁷ Through such explicit symbolism, Saarinen was frequently able to fuse the function of the corporation with the larger goals of revising and modernizing its corporate identity.

"Deere & Co. is a secure, well-established, successful farm machinery company proud of its Midwestern farm-belt location. Farm machinery is not slick, shiny metal but forged iron and steel in big, forceful, functional shapes. The proper character for its headquarters' architecture should likewise not be a slick, precise, glittering glass and spindly metal building, but a building which is bold and direct using metal in a strong, basic way"

—Eero Saarinen¹⁸



Deere and Company Administrative Center, Moline, Illinois, circa 1963. Photographer: Harold Corsini. Courtesy Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

building for the jet age

The nature and volume of air travel changed dramatically following World War II, with the increased demands for transcontinental flights paired with the technological innovation of the jet engine. Saarinen's revolutionary airport terminals responded to new problems arising from these shifts with an aesthetic expression appropriate to the dawning jet age.

For each of his airport designs, Saarinen incorporated technologies and planning ideas that were derived from his office's research on existing airports and passenger movement.¹⁹ Even though Saarinen never saw any of his airport designs to completion, these airports continue to stand as a testament to his innovative designs and visions for the future.



Exterior, TWA Terminal, New York International (now John F. Kennedy International) Airport, New York, circa 1962. Photographer: Ezra Stoller. © Ezra Stoller/Esto.

“[What] Eero did understand—had always understood—was American space, America’s vacant space, and he understood the airport, which best serves it. Two of Eero’s greatest designs clearly come out of that understanding of America’s continental scale....”

—Vincent Scully, architectural historian²³

8

trans world airlines terminal (1956-62)

new york (now jfk) international airport
new york, new york

Saarinen's TWA Terminal is a large, curving concrete building with a distinct identity—intended to be a “building in which the architecture would express the drama and specialness and excitement of travel,” as Saarinen stated in 1959.²⁰ Through their design and research for this project, Saarinen and his associates conducted a study on foot traffic in which they discovered that people do not travel along straight lines as they walk from the sidewalk to the ticket counter to baggage check-in to their departure gate. Instead, people walked along curved paths. In response to this finding and the site itself, Saarinen began to design a curved pseudo-triangular plan for the new terminal.²¹

Experimenting with new uses for concrete, Saarinen developed a complicated central structure made from four rounded concrete shells. Large-scale models built in Saarinen's office helped to facilitate the visualization of such complex forms during the design process and allowed the architect to arrive at a complete unity of form. Inside the shell, Saarinen designed everything to establish such a total environment—from the curving balconies, bridges, and platforms that surround the central waiting lounge, to the furniture and even ashtrays.

Each swooping curve and lifting archway in the TWA Terminal's design had to do with creating dramatic effects of movement and space that paralleled the activity and emotion of jet travel. As one New York cabdriver put it colloquially: “That's not just a building, Mac. It's a feeling. You get inside and you feel like you're floating.”²²



TWA Terminal, New York International (now John F. Kennedy International) Airport, New York, circa 1962. Photographer: Balthazar Korab. © Balthazar Korab Ltd.

dulles international airport (1958-63)

chantilly, virginia

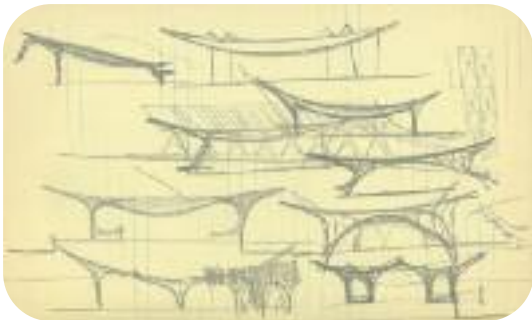
9

The first civilian airport built specifically for jets, Dulles International Airport was Saarinen's second airport project. The main terminal was set to be the nation's largest, at 600 feet-long by 150 feet wide, and the massive sweeping roof appears to hover over the landscape as one approaches the impressive structure from access roads. To represent the United States as the leading democratic, economic, political, and military power during the Cold War era, the design for the airport drew from the federal architecture of Washington, D.C. Saarinen updated the standard neoclassical façade—common in the monuments and federal buildings of the nation's capital—leaning each streamlined column outwards to support the expansive roof structure.²⁴

The most important creation for Dulles was the concept of new transport vehicles called mobile lounges. This revolutionary approach allowed for passengers to be transported to their planes without exposure to the weather or airfield hazards. The concept of the mobile lounge was described through a film called *The Expanding Airport*, created by Saarinen's friends Charles and Ray Eames to sell the rationale for the lounges to the Federal Aviation Administration.²⁵

“[In] the twenty-first century, when most people no longer consider air travel a glamorous adventure and instead find it more of an inconvenience, cruising around Dulles in a mobile lounge offers a taste of the thrill that was once associated with postwar aviation. Passengers still marvel at the architecture of TWA and Dulles, architecture that expresses the past drama of a now commonplace activity.”

**—Susanna Santala,
architectural historian²⁶**



Preliminary design sketches of Dulles International Airport Terminal by Eero Saarinen and Associates, Chantilly, Virginia, circa 1958. Pencil on ruled paper, 8 1/2 in x 14 in (21.5 cm x 35.5 cm). Courtesy Eero Saarinen Collection, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.



Dulles International Airport, Chantilly, Virginia, 1956-63. Photographer: Balthazar Korab. © Balthazar Korab Ltd.

connecting with saarinen's gateway arch

united states jefferson national expansion memorial (1947-65) st. louis, missouri

10

Eero Saarinen's winning design for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in 1947-48 represents a significant moment in the start of his career as an independent architect. The central feature of the memorial is Saarinen's 630-foot-tall stainless steel Gateway Arch. This striking monument embraced modernity and technology along with the project's goals to commemorate Thomas Jefferson and the role St. Louis played in the settlement of the American West. The Gateway Arch has since become an integral part of the urban landscape of St. Louis as well as a visual icon of the city—appearing in advertisements, company logos, and the backdrop for almost all local weather reports.

The history of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial dates back as far as 1933, when local businessman Luther Ely Smith formed a group of civic leaders to procure a federally financed memorial on the riverfront. Smith worked to change public perception about the riverfront area, then in serious decline after the city's mercantile district shifted further west. A major riverfront memorial provided an opportunity to redevelop the area and weave St. Louis into an historic narrative of progress and manifest destiny by memorializing America's westward expansion.²⁷

The 37-block site was cleared beginning in 1939, and a national design competition took place in 1947-48 for the memorial. The 172 entries were narrowed down to five finalists, and Eero Saarinen's second-stage design was selected as the winner in 1948. His final plan included the monumental arch, an underground museum, and a surrounding park. As he stated in 1959, "The major concern here was to create a monument which would have lasting significance and would be a landmark of our time."²⁸ The Arch was not completed until 1965, several years after Saarinen's death.

While the Arch uniquely frames Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase and passage through St. Louis to the West, it is also simply stunning in its presence. "Indeed," as scholar Jayne Merkel writes, "when you visit the Arch, you are absorbed by it."²⁹ Upon encountering Saarinen's towering steel structure, visitors are confronted with the space and place of his total composition—drawn not only to the Arch itself, but also to the space contained within it and beyond it.



experiencing the arch



“Within the city the experience of discovering and rediscovering the Arch is varied considerably by one’s location . . . The unexpectedness of these far-and-near glimpses is the most exciting part of the viewing experience for those who live with the Arch and can savor its endless variety from day to day.”

—George McCue, 1978³⁰

“I was surprised by my reaction to the Arch. Just because of this elegant structure and its surrounding park, I was predisposed to love the entire city. It presented a place of beauty, a vast open area that extends its reach into the sky. Subconsciously or not, I was convinced that this must be a great city, because it initiated, built, and celebrated something of such grace.”

—Wendy Richmond, 2003³¹



“I look at [the Arch] every day as I drive to work and from my office window. It has moods. It is different at every hour, in every season and in every kind of weather. I never tire of it. For the last few years I have photographed it over and over, trying to avoid postcard clichés. Each time I carry my camera to its feet I look for something new.”

—Bob Crowe, 2008³²



notes

1. See Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen and Donald Albrecht, “Introduction,” in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, ed. Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen and Donald Albrecht (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 3.
2. *Ibid.*, 8.
3. Cited in “Selected Writings,” edited by Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 346.
4. *Ibid.*, 350.
5. See Alexandra Lange and Sean Khorsandi, “Houses and Housing: At Home with Saarinen,” in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 259.
6. Cited in *Eero Saarinen on His Work*, ed. Aline B. Saarinen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 12.
7. Christopher Monkhouse, “The Miller House: A Private Residence in the Public Realm,” in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 240.
8. Cited in Brian Lutz, “Furniture: Form and Innovation,” in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 255.
9. Cited in *Eero Saarinen on His Work*, 54.
10. See Michael Rey, “The David S. Ingalls Hockey Rink: Eero Saarinen and A. Whitney Griswold at Yale,” in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 244.
11. Cited in MIT Institute Archives & Special Collections, <http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/exhibits/saarinen>, retrieved on December 31, 2008.
12. Lange, “Corporate Headquarters: Saarinen in Suburbia,” in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 284.
13. See Donald Albrecht, “The Clients and Their Architect,” in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 47.
14. *Ibid.*, 52.
15. Albrecht, *ibid.*, 54.
16. Reinhold Martin, “What Is Materials?,” in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 70.
17. Lange, “Corporate Headquarters,” 284.
18. Cited in *Eero Saarinen on His Work*, 76.
19. See Susanna Santala, “Airports: Building for the Jet Age,” in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 301-3.
20. Cited in *Eero Saarinen on His Work*, 92.
21. See Antonio Román, *Eero Saarinen: An Architecture of Multiplicity* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), 43.
22. Cited in Sandy Isenstadt, “Eero Saarinen’s Theater of Form,” in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 107.
23. Vincent Scully, “Rethinking Saarinen,” in *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, 24.
24. See Santala, “Airports,” 303.
25. *Ibid.*, 304.
26. *Ibid.*, 306.
27. See Mary Reid Brunstrom, interpretive texts for *On the Riverfront: St. Louis and the Gateway Arch*, on exhibit in Steinberg Hall Architecture Gallery, Washington University in St. Louis.
28. Cited in *Eero Saarinen on His Work*, 18.
29. Jayne Merkel, *Eero Saarinen* (London: Phaidon, 2005), 200.
30. George McCue, cited in Hélène Lipstadt, “Learning from St. Louis: The Arch, the Canon, and Bourdieu,” *Harvard Design Magazine* (Summer 2001): 5.
31. Wendy Richmond, “What’s in an Arch?,” *Communication Arts Magazine* (December 2003): 188.
32. Bob Crowe, Gateway Arch Photo Blog, gatewayarch.blogspot.com, retrieved on January 3, 2009.

eero saarinen shaping the future events & public programs

January 30, 7-9 pm

Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future **Exhibition Opening & Public Reception**

Kemper Art Museum

January 31, 9 am - 5 pm

Symposium: "On the Riverfront: St. Louis and The Gateway Arch"

Steinberg Hall Auditorium

This day-long symposium will bring together distinguished practitioners, critics, and urban designers for a discussion of Saarinen's Gateway Arch, its impact on the St. Louis region, and its future as a catalyst for ongoing civic design. Presented with the Graduate School of Architecture & Urban Design.

February 12, 5-8 pm

The Arch Grounds and the Riverfront

Kemper Art Museum & Steinberg Hall Auditorium

Join us for exhibition tours and a panel discussion with community leaders, focusing on issues pertaining to the Arch grounds, downtown revitalization, and the city's riverfront. Exhibition tours begin in the Kemper Art Museum at 5 pm, followed by a reception and panel discussion in Steinberg Hall.

Presented in cooperation with Meet the Leaders, a program of The Woman's Club of Washington University

April 18, 4 pm

Public Screening: 1,000 Arches Project

Steinberg Hall Auditorium

Join us to enjoy select video entries from the 1,000 Arches project. A reception at the Kemper Art Museum will follow the screening.

on the riverfront: st. louis and the gateway arch steinberg hall architecture gallery

Organized in conjunction with the St. Louis showing of *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, this exhibition presents a selection of drawings, models, and photographs related to the history of the 1947-48 architectural competition for the riverfront that results in the selection of Eero Saarinen's Arch design.

Organized by Peter MacKeith, Eric Mumford, and Mary Reid Brunstrom.

1,000 arches share your unique perspective on the gateway arch!

In conjunction with *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*, the Kemper Art Museum is hosting **1,000 Arches**, a special opportunity for school groups and community members to create videos inspired by the Gateway Arch. The goal of this project is to provide a unique opportunity for residents of the St. Louis area and beyond to rethink their relationship with this familiar monument, creatively expressing their reflections, experiences, and voices through a short video.

Learn more at: kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/1000arches.html

education resources online

Visit the Museum's education webpage, kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/education.html to access a downloadable PDF file of this Connections Guide, as well as links to related websites and more information about the exhibition *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*.

schedule a free tour

To schedule a FREE tour for your group, organization, class, or even friends and family, please contact Michael Murawski, coordinator of education and public programs, at murawski@wustl.edu or 314.935.7918.

general information

The Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum is always free and open to the public.

HOURS:

Mon, Wed, & Thu: 11-6

Fri: 11-8

Sat & Sun: 11-6

Closed Tue and University holidays

Tel: 314.935.4523

Email: kemperartmuseum@wustl.edu

Website: kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu

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