Eero Saarinen Wall Text

Beginnings in Collaboration

Eero Saarinen was born in Finland in 1910 and emigrated to the United States with his family in 1923. Eero's career began in collaboration with his remarkably gifted family: his father, Eliel (1873–1950), the architect of Helsinki's main train station and many other prominent buildings; his mother, Louise, or "Loja" (1879–1968), a textile designer and sculptor; and his sister, Eva-Lisa, or "Pipsan" (1905– 1979), a designer and interior decorator.

Eliel's design for the Cranbrook campus in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, outside Detroit, which the entire family worked on, would remain an important touchstone throughout Eero's career. It served as a model of artistic collaboration and the conviction that architecture must encompass the "total environment", from landscapes to buildings to furnishings and decorative objects.

Equally influential on Eero's later efforts to enrich modern design were his sculpture classes in Paris (1929–1930), his architectural education at Yale University (1931–1934), and his subsequent travels in Europe, Egypt, and Mexico to see some of the great monuments of architectural history.

Making modern mainstream

During the 1930s and 1940s Eero Saarinen helped introduce modern architecture to the mainstream of American practice through his buildings and competition schemes, many of them done in partnership with his father, Eliel, and his Cranbrook colleagues.

This collaboration between father and son proved highly fruitful, offering the younger Saarinen opportunities to explore his ideas and gain renown as a modern architect. The Saarinens' most prominent success was the 1939 winning submission for the prestigious Smithsonian Gallery of Art to be built on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Saarinen's output in the 1940s included wartime housing projects in collaboration with his father and brother-in-law, J. Robert F. Swanson (1900–1981).

At the same time, working independently or with partners such as Charles Eames (1907–1978) and Ralph Rapson (1914 -2008), Saarinen created winning designs for furniture and housing competitions.

A "Person of Culture"

With Eliel Saarinen's death in 1950, Eero officially launched his career as an independent architect. Throughout the decade, heading the office of Eero Saarinen and Associates, he kept up an intense professional and social schedule, including numerous trips to foreign countries.

In 1953 Eero was divorced from Lilian Swann Saarinen (1913–95), a sculptor who had contributed to the Crow Island School, and the following year married Aline B.

Louchheim (1914 –72), an associate art critic for the New York Times, who often examined the relationship between art and society. Assisting him and his office on press relations, she helped Saarinen meet his goal of becoming not only an architect “who contributes to culture,” but also a “person of culture.”

Although Eero’s career was cut short by his death in 1961, leaving nine major buildings uncompleted, no clients severed their ties with the firm, and many of Saarinen’s greatest achievements were realized posthumously.

Envisioning Modern Life

Although not well known for his domestic architecture, Eero Saarinen produced important residential designs that underscored his ability to advance the modernist ideals of the free plan, continuity between inside and out, and the use of industrial building materials and methods.

In 1937 he designed A Combined Living-Dining Room-Study project for Architectural Forum and during World War II participated in competitions and initiatives that sought to develop housing prototypes for returning veterans and their families.

Saarinen’s explorations of modern domestic architecture culminated in 1957 with the completion of the Miller House which, because of its ample budget, allowed Saarinen to work on a grand scale with rich materials. The house is a brilliant exemplar of Saarinen’s search for a total environment, involving numerous collaborators and synthesizing architecture, landscape, and interior design.

Furnishing the 20th Century

Eero Saarinen designed furniture throughout his entire career, applying the same keen interest in exploring new materials, innovative construction techniques, and sculptural forms that he demonstrated in his buildings. While still in his teens, Saarinen designed furnishings for buildings at Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

His breakthrough, however, came in 1940, when he and Charles Eames (1907– 78) won first prizes in the Museum of Modern Art’s Organic Design in Home Furnishings competition. Although their molded-plywood chairs for the competition were not mass-produced, their designs laid the groundwork for Saarinen’s postwar furniture for Knoll Associates.

His designs, from the Womb chair to the Pedestal series of sculptural chairs and tables, have become icons of postwar design, representing what Playboy magazine called the “exuberance, finesse, and high imagination” of American furniture design at mid-century.

Forging Community

Eero Saarinen sought to forge a sense of community and common identity in his designs for college campuses, churches, and theaters. Saarinen's influential religious and cultural buildings adopted open or centralized plans and iconic forms that unified clergy and congregation, performer and audience.

In his master plans and buildings for such colleges and universities as Vassar, Concordia, and Yale, his alma mater, Saarinen aimed to balance student comfort and privacy with amenities that encouraged social interaction. Expanding in response to the postwar boom in higher education and the increasing enrollment of women, college campuses offered Saarinen the best opportunities to achieve a total environment, largely inspired by his father's Cranbrook campus.

Seeking to relate his new buildings to these campuses' historic fabric, Saarinen showed an interest in context that not only anticipated architectural concerns of the 1960s and 1970s, but refuted the criticism that he produced only signature buildings without regard to local circumstances.

Creating Corporate Style

Eero Saarinen demonstrated a deep understanding of architecture's value in creating a company's image, often using new building technologies to help brand forward-thinking corporations. For his business clients, Saarinen and his office made the earliest architectural use of self-rusting Cor-Ten steel and designed the first mirror glass curtain wall and the world's thinnest exterior wall panel.

Saarinen also pioneered, and ultimately mastered, the development of a new office typology: the corporate campus. Occupying pristine rural settings, these business complexes reinvented the traditional country estate and the American college campus in terms of modern corporate programs, similarly evoking power and authority. The 25-building, $100-million General Motors Technical Center in suburban Detroit, completed in 1956, was Saarinen's first realized example of this new type.

It earned him tremendous publicity, including the cover of Time magazine, and established the design and public relations strategies for future corporate commissions, from IBM to Bell Laboratories and John Deere and Company.

Eero Saarinen and Associates

Eero Saarinen and Associates achieved international acclaim while working out of a surprisingly modest office in the Detroit suburb of Bloomfield Hills. An intense and immersive environment, it was up and running almost 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

To create innovative architectural work for an impressive roster of clients, Saarinen and his colleagues developed compelling tools of exploration and persuasion, most notably

large-scale models. These models encouraged collaboration within the office, becoming instruments, as noted by the office's senior designer Kevin Roche, "for keeping people involved." Models also reassured wary clients when they were photographed with convincing verisimilitude using mirrors, dramatic lighting, and even smoke.

After Eliel Saarinen's death in 1950, Eero's fame surpassed his father's, and he attracted and nurtured the best young talents from around the world, many of whom went on to have significant practices of their own.

Shaping an American Identity

With his designs for airport terminals, embassies, and national memorials, Eero Saarinen helped create potent expressions of American identity. His designs for the American chancelleries in London and Oslo sought to portray the United States as both powerful and a good neighbor by showcasing modern technologies while adapting to local conditions in siting and materials.

In America Saarinen's United States Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, better known as the Gateway Arch, celebrated the country's westward expansion, his memorial in Milwaukee honored the city's war dead, and his airports in New York and Washington, D.C., thrilled people to the glamour of international travel, serving as gateways to the country's business and political capitals.

These buildings used dynamic forms and structural innovations to capture the optimism of mid-20th-century America, while their variety came to represent a national ideal of unbounded choice.

Smithsonian Gallery of Art Competition

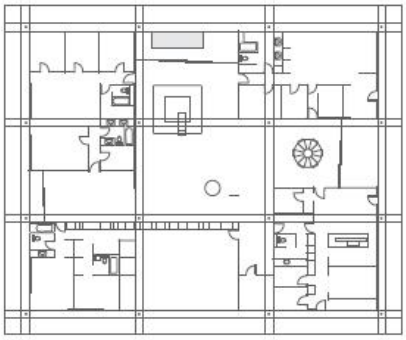
Smithsonian Gallery of Art competition Washington, D.C., 1939, unbuilt

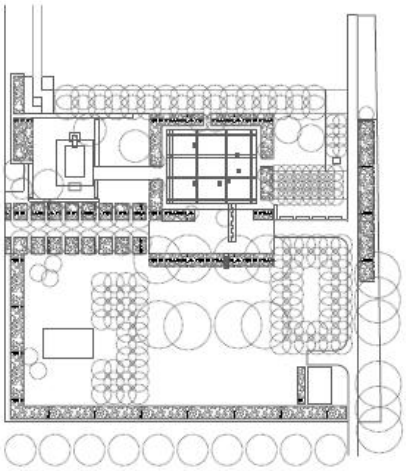
Eero Saarinen, assisted by a team of Cranbrook artists that included Charles Eames and Ralph Rapson, took the lead in designing Saarinen, Swanson, and Saarinen's entry in a competition for a building on the Mall sponsored by the Smithsonian Gallery of Art Commission.

The firm won first place with a scheme calling for an asymmetrical composition of one-to-four-story volumes clad in marble with metal trim. The main entrance was reached from the Mall by a walkway along a sunken court with a curving patio and a reflecting pool.

As depicted in the model, the building featured railings and window muntins by Harry Bertoia, a fountain portraying Pegasus by Carl Milles, and tiny paintings by Benjamin Baldwin placed on the gallery walls, which could be viewed when the model's roof was removed.

Miller House, Columbus





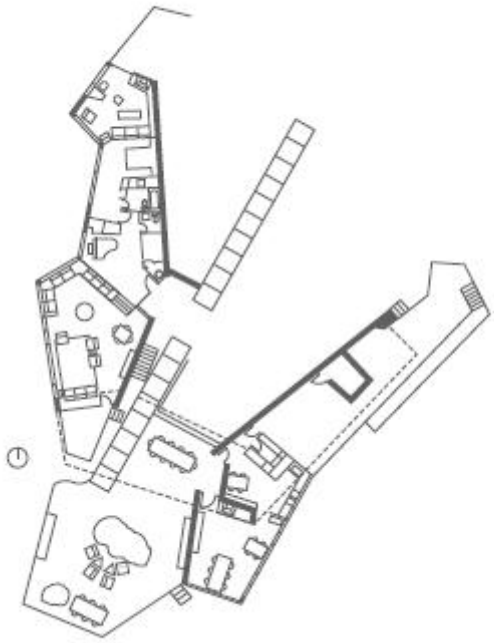
Miller House Columbus, Indiana, 1953–57

Site plan and floor plan, Miller House, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

The Saarinen office designed this one-story residence on a generously scaled site for businessman J. Irwin 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 to form terraces and a parking court. Its rear garden facade overlooks a plateau above a river flood plain.

The structure is supported on exposed cruciform steel columns painted white. The plan is functionally zoned, with each zone devoted to spaces for the parents, children, guests, and service facilities, respectively. At the center of the house is a skylit living space with a freestanding fireplace suspended from the ceiling, a long storage wall, and a sunken conversation pit.

Miller Cottage, Ontario



Miller Cottage Muskoka District, Ontario, Canada 1950–52

Site plan, Miller Cottage, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

Saarinen designed this lakeside summer cottage for the family of J. Irwin and Xenia Miller. Set on a long, rocky peninsula, the house consists of two one-story units separated by a stone-paved terrace that is partially roofed by the house's second-floor volume.

The ground floor of one unit contains a two-level, open-plan living room, with a built-in sofa and freestanding fireplace, and a master bedroom suite. The ground floor of the second unit houses a dining room and a kitchen with an eat-in area. The second floor contains five bedrooms and two bathrooms. The uninsulated house features exterior and interior walls of wood and stone.

Pedestal Furniture Series

Pedestal Furniture Series, 1954–57
Knoll Associates

Eero Saarinen's Pedestal series for Knoll Associates consisted of chairs and tables characterized by one-piece, cast-aluminum bases that tapered then flared as they rose to support molded-fiberglass chair shells and tabletops. Saarinen's stated goal was to eliminate the typical room's "slum of legs."

He originally intended the chair seats and legs to be constructed of the same plastic material, but this proved to be technically impossible at the time. Instead, the chairs' metal bases and the fiberglass seats were the same color and unified by continuous curving lines, appearing to be monolithic.

Sophisticated designs for reception invitations, posters, and advertisements promoted the series.

Brandeis University

Brandeis University Waltham, Massachusetts, 1949–52

Soon after Brandeis was established in 1948 as the nation's first Jewish-sponsored, nonsectarian university, Eero Saarinen and Associates was commissioned to devise a master plan for a ninety-acre campus of rolling hills and wetlands outside Boston.

The plan, expected to be realized over 10 years, was developed by Saarinen and architect Matthew Nowicki and consisted of a central open area bordered on two sides by low buildings housing academic departments and on a third side by a student center and library. The university's program also included groupings of dormitories, a gymnasium, and a nonsectarian chapel.

Although the plan was adopted, only seven structures were completed by Saarinen: the five-building Ridgewood Quadrangle, which housed faculty and married students, and two buildings in the Hamilton Quadrangle, the Sherman Student Center, and Shapiro Hall.

Drake University

Drake University Des Moines, Iowa, 1945–57

In 1945 Saarinen, Swanson, and Saarinen prepared a master plan for Drake University and designed a women's dormitory complex and buildings for the departments of science and pharmacy. Over the next decade or so, Eero continued to develop the campus plan and designed additional buildings including a bible school and prayer chapel.

The women's residential complex, linked by multilevel pedestrian bridges and elevated walkways, was designed to maintain many of its hilly site's existing natural features. A freestanding dining hall contains a mural by Stuart Davis.

The bible school features exterior walls of glass and aluminum panels, contrasting with the connecting prayer chapel, a windowless brick drum containing a wood-paneled chapel with a circular altar placed directly below an oculus.

Emma Hartman Noyes House, Vassar College

Emma Hartman Noyes House Vassar College Poughkeepsie, New York, 1954–58

The curving footprint of this four-story women's dormitory is shaped around the circular open area it faces. Saarinen's original design called for two connected buildings that together bordered half of the circle; as built, Noyes House represents only a quarter of the intended project.

The building consists of poured-in-place, reinforced-concrete roof and floor slabs and precast, tilt-up, load-bearing concrete exterior panels faced in rough-surfaced brick set in black mortar. The facade features bay windows in aluminum frames extending above the roofline to terminate in triangular, finial-like forms, visually connecting the dormitory to the neo-Gothic buildings on campus. At each entry an oval-shaped canopy is supported by a single column.

Inside, a ground-floor student lounge contains a "conversation pit" — a space recessed into the floor with built-in seating.

Concordia Senior College

Concordia Senior College Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1953–58

Hired by the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod to design a campus for its new college where students would prepare for the ministry, Saarinen developed a plan that comprised 40 structures on a site overlooking the St. Joseph River. The principal academic buildings border a plaza dominated by an A-frame chapel and three ranges of dormitories radiating outward along diagonal axes.

All buildings incorporate gray tile roofs pitched at the same angle as the relationship of the Earth's axis to the sun. Inspired by the gabled silhouettes of Northern European villages, the roof ridges are oriented east–west; long buildings running north–south feature series of gable roofs.

The chapel, located at the site's highest point and over-looking a man-made lake, is illuminated by natural light.

Yale University Master Plan and Physics Building

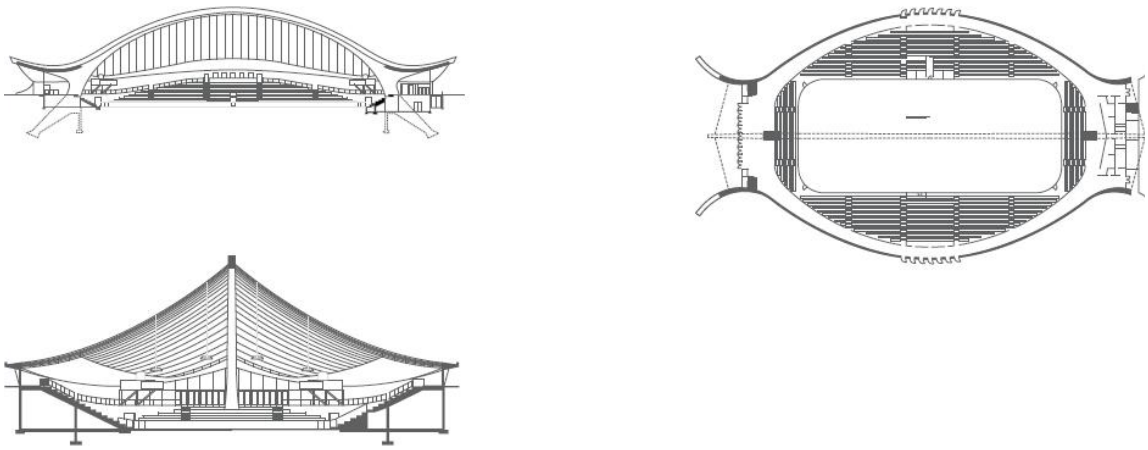
Yale University Master Plan and Physics Building New Haven, Connecticut, 1949-53, unbuilt

Eero Saarinen launched his professional involvement with Yale when he was asked to assist in expanding its campus. Saarinen and his associate, Douglas Orr, worked on three areas.

For Cross Campus they proposed a square, freestanding administrative tower on a plaza surrounded by four new low-rise buildings. For Hewitt Quadrangle they proposed a rectangular, seven-story administrative building opposite Woodbridge Hall, which housed the president's offices.

Saarinen and Orr also proposed a new Physics Building for a site at the top of Science Hill. A six-story structure with long glazed facades, this building was to sit on a plaza bounded by a two-story wing built into the hill.

David S. Ingalls Hockey Rink, Yale University



David S. Ingalls Hockey Rink Yale University New Haven, Connecticut, 1956–58

Plan, longitudinal and cross sections, David S. Ingalls Hockey Rink, Yale University, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

The program for this building called for a 2,800-seat hockey rink that could expand to accommodate 5,000 people for other functions such as graduations. The dominant feature

of the building is a roof suspended on cables from a spinelike, reinforced-concrete arch, which provides a column-free area underneath. Featuring upward-curved cantilevers at each end, the arch is braced laterally by steel cables on each side, anchored to the exterior concrete walls which, in plan, follow the curves of the arch's profile.

The outdoor parking areas and lawns also follow this curvature. The roof is constructed of exposed tongue-and groove wood planks supported by transverse steel cables. To reduce the overall height of the building to fit the residential context, the rink was sunk 15 feet below the entrance level.

Samuel F. B. Morse and Ezra Stiles Colleges Yale University

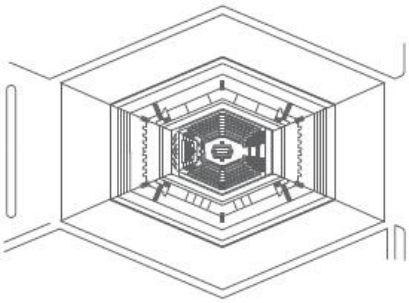
Samuel F. B. Morse and Ezra Stiles Colleges Yale University New Haven, Connecticut, 1958–62

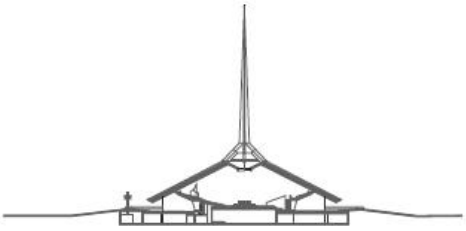
To accommodate 500 students in two new residential colleges for Yale University, Saarinen designed courtyards defined by low-rise polygonal buildings punctuated by two high-rise towers. The colleges are separated by a pedestrian walk leading to the massive neo-Gothic gymnasium, which forms one edge of a large plaza with the new colleges.

Due to the prohibitive cost of traditional masonry, Saarinen pioneered a method of concrete construction to produce "masonry walls made without masons." Abstract freestanding and relief sculptures by Constantine Nicola were placed throughout the complex. Pedestrian pathways weaving through the colleges incorporate grade changes and offered varied vistas.

Inside, the buildings' complex footprints result in irregularly shaped rooms that Saarinen hoped would be "as individual as possible, as random as those in an old inn."

North Christian Church





North Christian Church Columbus, Indiana, 1959–64

Plan and section, North Christian Church, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

Commissioned by its congregants, this two-story building houses the main sanctuary and a smaller chapel on the upper level and an auditorium and classrooms on the lower level. The elongated hexagon's short sides hold glass doors; on the long sides, landscaped berms create moatlike light wells, bringing natural illumination into the lower level.

Copper-clad steel supports rise to frame the slate roof, topped by a spire and a gold cross. This massive roof appears to hover above the ground, an illusion created by the deeply recessed glass walls beneath it.

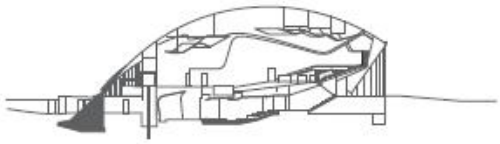
Inside, the bowl-shaped main sanctuary is centered on a communion table. Natural light enters the sanctuary through a central oculus and the ambulatory's windows.

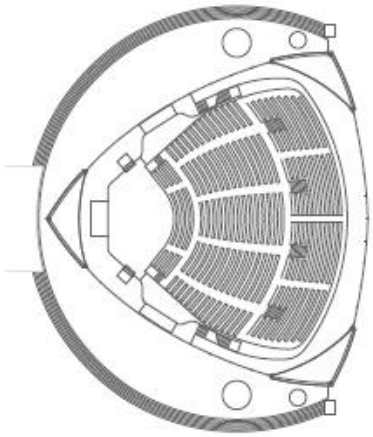
The church's boldly abstract form proved especially influential in the 1960s and 1970s.

Kresge Auditorium Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

Kresge Auditorium Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1950–55

Plan and section, Kresge Auditorium, MIT, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006



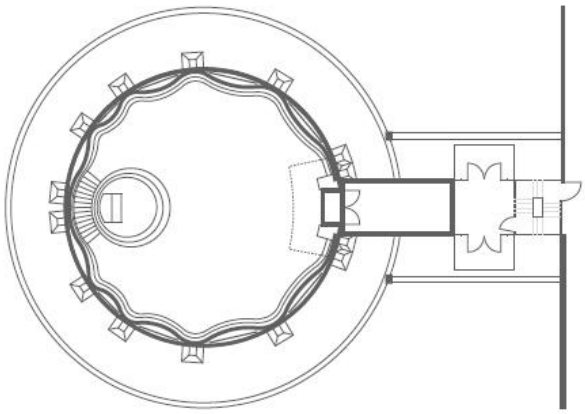


The dean of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's School of Architecture and Planning invited Eero Saarinen and Associates to design an auditorium, a non-denominational chapel, a student union, and a plaza connecting the three buildings on a flat site across from the institute's domed classical building complex. (The student union and plaza were never constructed.)

The Kresge Auditorium, designed with Anderson and Beckwith, was the nation's first large-scale, concrete-shell building. The structure constitutes one-eighth of a sphere, configured triangularly and placed on a red-brick podium, with glass walls infilling the arc-shaped spaces between the roof and the ground.

The half-acre interior space, 50 feet high at the center, contains a column-free, oak-paneled main auditorium that can accommodate 1,238 people, with another 200-seat theater below grade.

Kresge Chapel, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)



Kresge Chapel Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1950–55

Plan, Kresge Chapel, MIT, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

Eero Saarinen's design for Kresge Chapel, in collaboration with Anderson and Beckwith, comprises a windowless, flat-roofed cylinder clad in rough-surfaced brick and supported on brick arches springing from a water-filled moat. Sculptor Theodore Roszak's spire with a bell rises from the chapel's roof. Entered through a glazed passage that bridges the moat, the chapel interior was formed by an undulating brick wall and a low wood wall.

The chapel is illuminated by light reflected from the moat through a glazed panel between the two walls. Light also enters the chapel through an oculus directly above the stone altar, producing ever-changing patterns on a curved screen designed by Harry Bertoia, made of many small metal rectangles attached to floor-to-ceiling wires.

Time Inc. Headquarters Project
Time Inc. Headquarters project Rye, New York, 1952, 1954, unbuilt

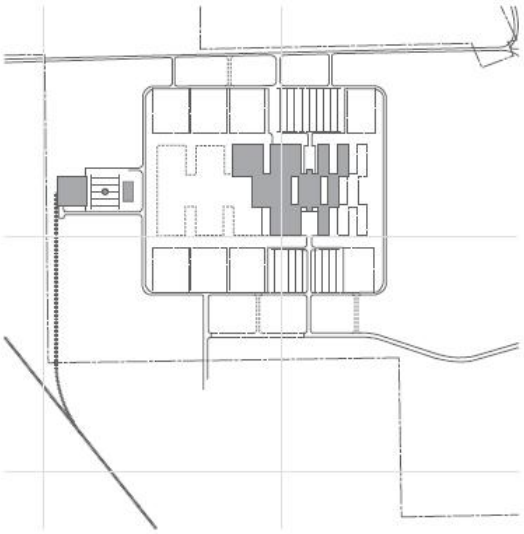
After publication of the General Motors Technical Center, Time Inc. hired Eero Saarinen to design a suburban headquarters for its magazines' editorial offices. Basing his plans on the company's organizational structure, Saarinen created a series of schemes with a campus-like arrangement of buildings.

In one scheme, low buildings were placed in an ell across a bluff, with a reflecting pool in the crux of the ell. The executive offices were the centerpiece, raised on an open,

arched base. In another scheme, low pinwheel-shaped buildings were joined at the center and separated from each other by courtyards with reflecting pools. A third scheme comprised staggered rows of rectangular modules.

Time's employees refused to leave the city, however, and the company instead built a skyscraper in Manhattan designed by another architect.

International Business Machines (IBM) Manufacturing and Training Facility



International Business Machines (IBM) Manufacturing and Training Facility Rochester, Minnesota 1956–58, continuously expanded

Site plan, IBM Manufacturing and Training Facility, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

Located on a flat rural site, the original sprawling 100,000square-foot building comprised a series of one-and two-story volumes surrounding two enclosed courtyards and two entrance courts that faced parking lots encircled by lawns.

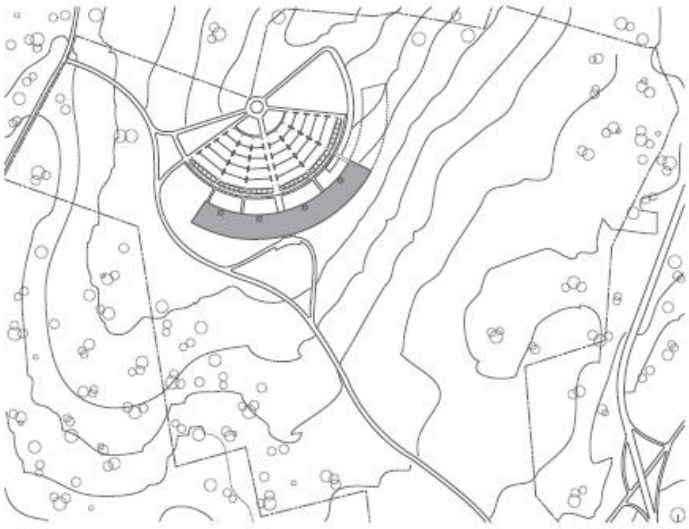
The one-story volume located at the core of the facility contained a cafeteria and employee lounges. The other one-story volumes contained manufacturing facilities, while the two-story blocks housed offices.

The building is clad in porcelain-enameled aluminum panels developed by Saarinen's partner, John Dinkeloo. Striped in two tones of blue, these mass-produced panels,

incorporating insulating asbestos-cement cores, were stabilized laterally by aluminum mullions and sealed with neoprene gaskets.

Saarinen's modular plan anticipated the corporation's growth and could be expanded without changing its basic spatial and programmatic organization.

International Business Machines (IBM) Thomas J. Watson Research Center



International Business Machines (IBM) Thomas J. Watson Research Center Yorktown Heights, New York, 1957–61

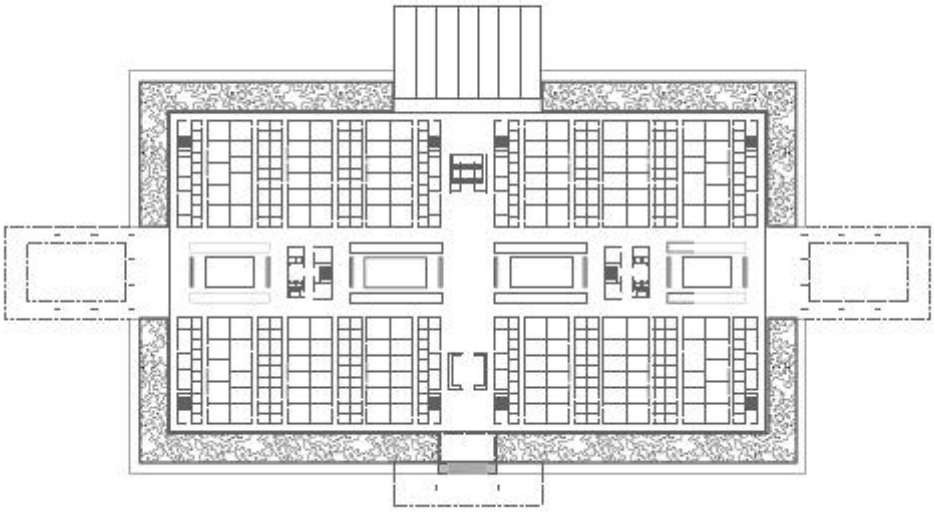
Site plan, IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Center, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

The Thomas J. Watson Research Center, Saarinen's second IBM commission, is located on a suburban site north of New York City. Approached by a long, curving road, the building describes a 1,090-foot arc along a ridge, its front façade glazed in reflective glass and its entrance marked by a cantilevered concrete canopy and Seymour Lipton's abstract sculptures.

The rear of the building is faced in local stone, which continues inside. Concrete bridges span a Japanese-inspired garden and connect the building to its raised parking lot.

The interior has three stories of double-loaded corridors with labs on one side and offices on the other — all windowless — which fanned out along the curve. Views are reserved for the front hall, which extends the length of the entire arc like a promenade.

Bell Telephone Corporate Laboratories



Bell Telephone Corporate Laboratories Holmdel, New Jersey, 1957–62

Plan, Bell Telephone Corporate Laboratories, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

Located on a gently rolling suburban site, this campus for Bell Telephone Corporate Laboratories includes a six-acre artificial lake that serves both aesthetic and practical purposes, such as firefighting and absorption of water vapor from the building's air-conditioning system.

The 715,000-square-foot building comprises four discrete rectangular structures, each with the same plan of perimeter corridors surrounding windowless offices and labs organized on a modular grid. Appearing not to touch the ground, the structure is slightly cantilevered over a base set within a shallow recess.

The building is clad in mirrored glass, a material developed for the project and which allows 25 percent of the sunlight to pass through while blocking 70 percent of the sun's heat. A glass-covered steel space frame encloses the spaces between the blocks to create a dramatic atrium.

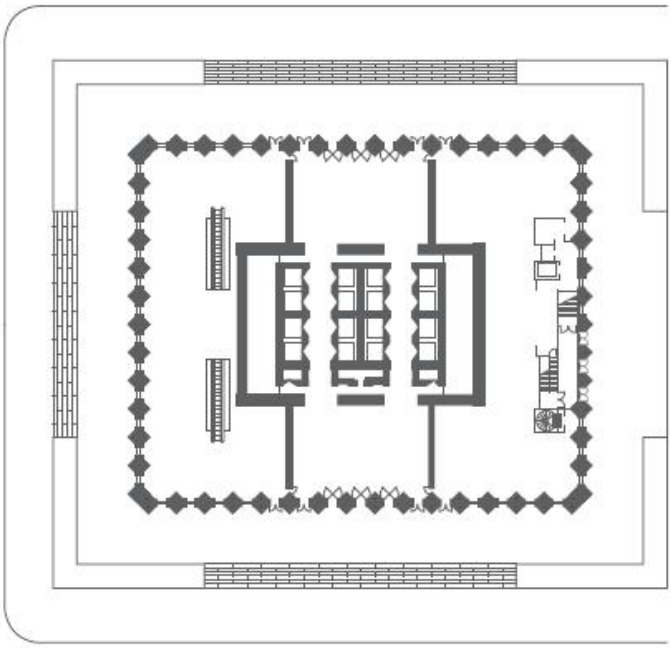
Deere and Company Administrative Center

Deere and Company Administrative Center Moline, Illinois, 1957–63

Occupying a large, hilly site outside downtown Moline, this 350,000-square-foot headquarters for a manufacturer of farm, construction, and lawn equipment features a double-height display pavilion that showcases a mural by Alexander Girard incorporating 2,000 Deere artifacts. A glass-enclosed bridge connects this pavilion to the main administration building, which spans a ravine with man-made lakes.

Cor-Ten steel, used here for the first time in an architectural application, was intended to evoke the ruggedness of farm machinery and was used for columns, beams, sunscreens, and railings. A lower floor, partially below the level of the lake, contains an executive dining room with water-level views. Furniture designed by the Saarinen office is used throughout the interiors.

Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc. (CBS) Building



Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc. (CBS) Building New York, New York, 1960–65

Lobby plan, CBS Building, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

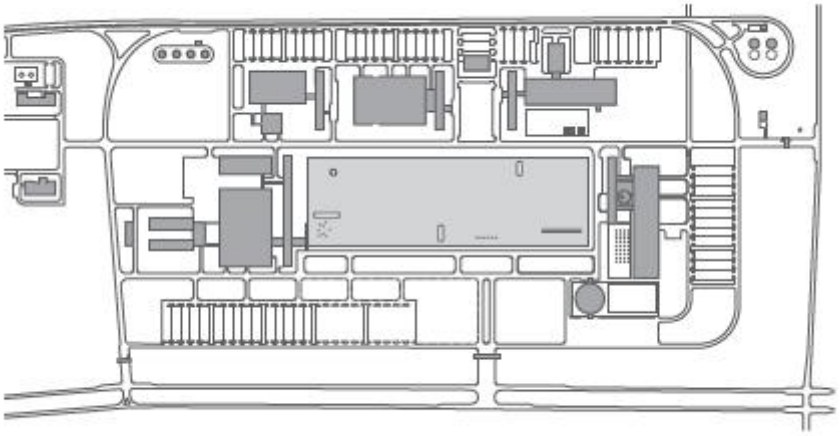
The Columbia Broadcasting System hired Saarinen to design this headquarters for a block-long site in midtown Manhattan. Saarinen’s design for his only completed tall building anticipated changes to New York City’s zoning laws that encouraged sheer towers rising from plazas rather than traditional setback buildings that filled their sites.

The 38-story CBS Building is recessed 25 feet behind the building line on the site's 3 street frontages and sunk 2 feet below sidewalk grade.

The first reinforced-concrete skyscraper in New York City, the building's structure includes V-shaped perimeter columns clad in black granite with expanses of grey-tinted glass between them. (The building's overall dark and solid appearance garnered the nickname "Black Rock.")

On the interior, only the lobby, which has travertine walls, was designed by the Saarinen office.

General Motors Technical Center



General Motors Technical Center Warren, Michigan, 1948–56

Site plan, General Motors Technical Center, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006,

This 320-acre campus outside Detroit originally contained 25 buildings arranged around a rectangular pool in 5 building groups: Engineering, Research, Service, Process Development, and Styling. Each group includes a long, narrow, three-story structure housing administrative offices, laboratories, and libraries, flanked by lower, bulkier research structures.

Arranged parallel to each other and perpendicular to the axis of the pool, the administrative buildings have long north- and south-facing facades of glass and steel that contrast with short east- and west-facing facades of colored glazed brick. Developed for this project, the curtain walls use a neoprene gasket similar to ones employed for automobile windshields.

The Styling Dome encloses a column-free space used to display cars. The site is ornamented with thousands of trees and several reflecting pools.

Eero Saarinen worked on the General Motors Technical Center from 1945 until its completion in 1956, officially taking on the project after his father's death in 1950.

Although the project received considerable publicity throughout its construction, its official opening in May 1956 was accompanied by huge fanfare. General Motors heralded the center as a "Technopolis" where "today meets tomorrow," while Life magazine called it "a Versailles of Industry," connecting General Motorsto royal patrons of an earlier age.

General Motors' public relations department originally planned to have President Eisenhower launch an atomic bomb as part of the event, but the scheme was cancelled.

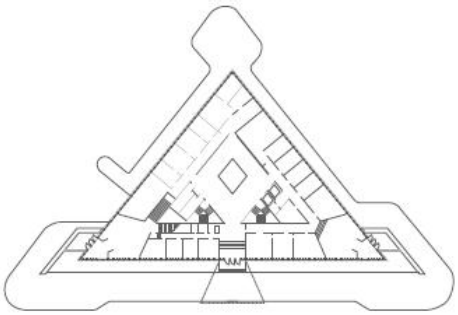
Irwin Union Trust Company
Columbus, Indiana, 1950–54

The first of three buildings in Columbus designed by Eero Saarinen for the J. Irwin Miller family, this square, one-story glass pavilion is set back from its property line on three sides, with the fourth side bordering a parking lot and a driveway featuring an early drive-through banking window.

The bank's flat roof features a grid of nine thin-shell concrete domes, which motivated some observers to dub the bank "the brassiere factory." Inside the high-ceilinged main banking hall, the textured acoustic-plaster surfaces of the domes, illuminated by custom-designed uplights, contrast with the smooth plaster ceiling punctuated by a grid of recessed downlights.

Saarinen cited the Great Mosque in Cordoba, Spain, and San Marco in Venice, Italy, as design sources.

United States Chancellery Building Oslo



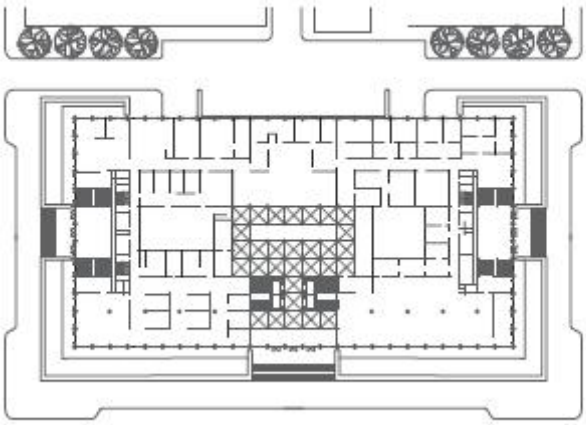
United States Chancellery Building Oslo, Norway, 1955–59

Plan, United States Chancellery Building, Oslo, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

Located on a triangular site in the center of Oslo, opposite Slottsparken (Royal Palace Park), the U.S. Chancellery Building fills the lot to the surrounding streets. The facades are constructed of precast-concrete panels containing Norwegian emerald pearl granite aggregate, punctuated by teak-framed windows. The main façade has a central entrance marked by a cantilevered trapezoidal canopy with a flagpole.

Inside, offices wrap around a four-story, skylit, diamond-shaped atrium flanked by triangular staircases and centered on a pool. Two of its walls contain two-story-high screens made of honey-colored teak louvers with metal spacers; the other two walls are light-toned brick grilles.

United States Chancellery Building London



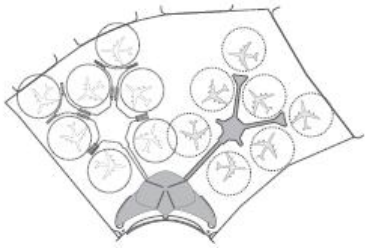
United States Chancellery Building London, England, 1955–60

Plan, United States Chancellery Building, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

Saarinen’s winning design in the Department of State’s competition for a new chancellery to be built in London responded to the neo-Georgian buildings that were planned for the three other sides of Grosvenor Square. The six-story, U-shaped chancellery is clad in Portland stone, glass, and gold-anodized aluminum trim and has a structural system of load-bearing exterior walls and stacked precast-concrete floors.

A gilded aluminum eagle by sculptor Theodore Roszak is mounted on the parapet, aligned with the central entry. Raised on a podium above the street, the entrance floor features a lobby, a consular section for foreigners’ visas, and an information area. Lower levels house an auditorium, a gallery, a cafeteria, and an underground parking garage.

Trans World Airlines (TWA) Terminal



Trans World Airlines (TWA) Terminal New York (now John F. Kennedy) International Airport New York, New York, 1956–62

Elevation and site plan, TWA Terminal, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

Saarinen's design for a new terminal building at New York International Airport was dominated by a vaulted central structure housing an entrance area, waiting rooms, and restaurants and flanked by two wings — one dedicated to check-in facilities and the other to baggage claim. The central structure is constructed of reinforced, lightweight-concrete shells supported by edge beams and massive Y-shaped piers, with canted glass walls infilling the arched spaces beneath each shell.

The interior of the complex is characterized by multilevel spaces, curving stairways, and bridges. Pod-like boarding areas, or "departure stations," separated from the main terminal by tubular passageways, represented a significant innovation in airport design, as their remote locations increased the terminal's perimeter and allowed 14 jets to dock simultaneously.

Milwaukee War Memorial Center
Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1952–57

This cruciform-shaped, reinforced concrete building originally contained an art gallery, community meeting rooms, and a memorial to the city's war dead, including Korean War veterans. The structure was built into a 40foot-high bluff that rises from the Lake Michigan shoreline to the city's streets above.

The courtyard contains a reflecting pool bordered by granite coping inscribed with the names of the war dead. Concrete wedges frame the courtyard and support wings cantilevered in three directions; concrete fin-like facades emphasize the wide overhangs of the wings.

The west-facing wing, supported on columns, functions as a canopy over the main entrance and is ornamented with a mosaic mural by Edwin Lewandowski that depicts in Roman numerals the first and last years of World War II and the Korean War.

United States Jefferson National Expansion Memorial

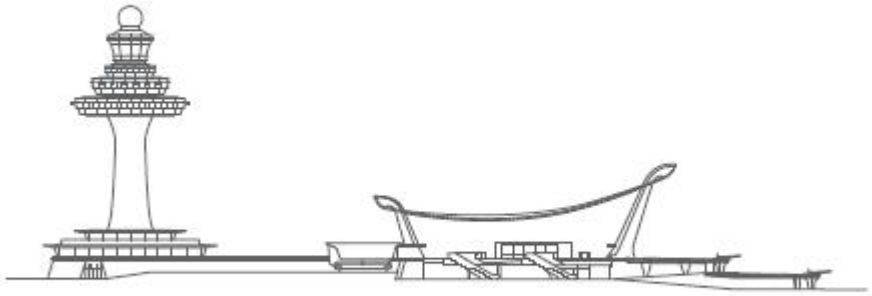
United States Jefferson National Expansion Memorial St. Louis, Missouri, 1947–65

In 1947–48 a nonprofit corporation sponsored an open national design competition for the United States Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, to be located on the banks of the Mississippi River in St. Louis. Saarinen and Associates won the competition, bringing Eero national renown and launching his career as an independent architect.

The main feature of Saarinen's design was the Gateway Arch, the name by which the project is best known today. Saarinen oversaw preparations for construction, which did not begin until 1963, two years after his death, and was completed in 1965.

The arch is a weighted, rather than a pure, catenary, constructed of concrete shells clad in stainless steel that form equilateral triangles in cross-section and taper from bottom to top. The fuselage-shaped Observation Platform is reached by two trams invented for the structure.

Dulles International Airport Terminal



Section, Dulles International Airport, redrawn by Janice Carapelucci, 2006

Dulles International Airport Terminal Chantilly, Virginia, 1958–63, expanded 1996

Eero Saarinen and Associates worked with Ammann and Whitney to design the terminal and control tower for the first civilian airport built specially for jets. Saarinen's design for the nation's largest airport terminal featured an upper-level, column-free interior space housing waiting rooms and ticket counters. The space is enclosed by a steel-cable,

tensioned roof suspended between rows of outward-curving concrete pylons that counteract the cable's pull. Set between the pylons are curving glass curtain walls.

In designing the terminal, Saarinen pioneered the concept of mobile lounges, which carried passengers from the concourse to their planes. On the landing-field side of the terminal, a wing containing a restaurant and observation deck leads to a 14-story control tower — a tapered concrete shaft topped by cantilevered control stations.

Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future

Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future KDN Films, 2006

This documentary film by Bill Ferehawk, Ed Moore, and Bill Kubota chronicles the life and work of Eero Saarinen, focusing not only on his buildings and their cultural context, but also on the collaborative, 24-hour-a-day process that produced them. New and exclusive interviews with more than a dozen people tell the Saarinen story and illuminate both his genius and his influential yet little-understood design process.

The documentary offers personal anecdotes and commentary by key figures in Saarinen's life, including intimate family friend Florence Knoll Bassett, historian Vincent Scully, and architects such as Kevin Roche, Cesar Pelli, Gunnar Birkerts, and the late Ralph Rapson, who worked in Saarinen's office before launching their own distinguished careers. Rare historic footage of Saarinen's buildings is also featured.

The film was commissioned especially for this exhibition by the Finnish Cultural Institute in New York, the Museum of Finnish Architecture, Helsinki, and the National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.