

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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## MODELS OF NEW STATE DEPARTMENT BUILDINGS ABROAD

### AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Models and enlarged photographs of nine postwar U. S. State Department buildings designed by leading American architects for sites from Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro to Stockholm will be on view in an exhibition ARCHITECTURE FOR THE STATE DEPARTMENT at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from October 7 through November 22.

The buildings, acclaimed by the Museum as "one of the most convincing demonstrations of the vitality of American culture," are the result of the State Department's Foreign Buildings Operations Program, directed by Leland W. King. This agency is responsible for providing office space and staff housing for the United States Foreign Service, now located in 272 cities in 72 countries throughout the world. The rapid increase in Foreign Service personnel after World War II and the acute building shortage in almost every country in the world made an extensive building program imperative.

The exhibition has been organized by Arthur Drexler, Curator of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design. The show offers a cross section of the various types of building projects demanded by the Foreign Buildings Operations program. Embassy office buildings have to provide flexible office space separated from special departments open to the public as well as certain staff and community facilities such as auditoriums and cafeterias. Two of the three new embassies already completed under the program are shown in the exhibition: the Havana Embassy incorporates two enclosed patios in a one-story unit accessible to the public but has private offices in a separate office tower. The large Rio de Janeiro Embassy, by the same architects, is somewhat similar but includes a small library pavillion. The Athens Embassy, one of five now in the planning stage, centers around a single large courtyard and is closely related to the atmosphere and traditions of the city it is planned for.

Also included in the exhibition is a model of the Consulate in Bremen, Germany, designed by Gordon Bundshaft of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, the firm which designed Lever House on Park Avenue in New York. This consulate is the first of seven similar projects planned for Western Germany. One of the United States Information Center buildings, called "America Houses," designed by this firm too is also in the exhibition. Five similar centers are being planned for other German cities.

Embassy buildings in Stockholm, Copenhagen and Athens, designed by Ralph Rapson and John van der Meulen and staff apartments in Boulogne by the same firm are shown in enlarged photographs and drawings. Embassies in Rio de Janeiro and Havana designed by the New York firm of Harrison and Abramovitz will be shown as well as staff apartments in Tokyo designed by the firm of Raymond and Rado.

Financing for this building program has been met largely by utilizing foreign currency credits from Lend-Lease, Surplus Property and the Marshall Plan. This method has enabled our allies to discharge some of their financial obligations without touching their limited hard-currency reserves, while at the same time the State Department has been able to reduce its office rentals and quarters allowances to Foreign Service personnel. Five and a half million dollars in rentals alone are being saved annually under the program.

The Bremen Consulate has a steel frame with panel walls of glass or travertine. The public areas are in a long low building on stilts. This arrangement gives greater security protection to the offices and also provides a pleasant landscaped garden under the building for passers-by to enjoy. The Cologne "America House," characteristic of the five others planned for Germany, has an auditorium housed in a solid brick unit while the library, offices and exhibition space are contained in a glass and steel wing. The concrete apartment houses in Boulogne in the exhibition have sliding glass walls opening on an outdoor living area for each apartment. In the apartment houses in Tokyo sliding glass walls open on a balcony and a sliding wall between living room and master bedroom help to make the apartments seem spacious despite small rooms imposed by the restricted budget.