



# Tomorrow's World: The New York World's Fairs and Flushing Meadows Corona Park

The Arsenal Gallery  
June 26 – August 27, 2014





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Organized by Jonathan Kuhn and Jennifer Lantzas

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This year marks the 50th and 75th anniversaries of the New York World's Fairs of 1939-40 and 1964-65, cultural milestones that celebrated our civilization's advancement, and whose visions of the future are now remembered with nostalgia. The Fairs were also a mechanism for transforming a vast industrial dump atop a wetland into the city's fourth largest urban park.

World's Fairs have existed since the time of the ancient Persian ruler Xerxes. But the first New York World's Fair was held in 1853 at the Crystal Palace in Bryant Park. In 1883 various commissions reviewed potential World's Fairs at Central Park, Riverside Park, Inwood Hill Park and Pelham Bay Park, yet none came to pass. The anticipated Washington Bicentennial of 1932 set in motion plans for a World's Fair at Brooklyn's Marine Park, but these too were shelved.

According to Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, in the mid-1930s an obscure Belgian engineer, Joseph Shagden, and a Colonel Edward Roosevelt (cousin to the president) cooked up the concept of a World's Fair at Flushing Meadow. It was Moses who eventually pitched the idea to Mayor LaGuardia. With the Mayor's blessing construction began June 15, 1936. The Fair opened on April 30, 1939, coinciding with the 150th anniversary of George Washington's presidential inauguration. Its theme was "The World of Tomorrow."

The Fair was designed with long-range civic improvement in mind. A Flushing Improvement newsletter trumpeted: "From the embryo of the World's Fair will rise a great park," described as

the "Versailles of America." Within one year 10,000 trees were planted, the Grand Central Parkway connection to the Triborough Bridge was completed and the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge well underway. Michael Rapuano's landscape design created radiating pathways to the north influenced by St. Peter's piazza in the Vatican, and also included naturalized areas and recreational fields to the south and west.

The fair was divided into seven great zones from Amusement to Transportation, and 60 countries and 33 states or territories paraded their wares. Though the Fair planners aimed at high culture, they left plenty of room for honky-tonk delights, noting that "A is for amusement; and in the interests of many of the millions of Fair visitors, amusement comes first."

If the New York World's Fair of 1939-40 belonged to New Dealers, then the Fair in 1964-65 was for the baby boomers. Five months before the Fair opened, President Kennedy, who had said, "I hope to be with you at the ribbon cutting," was slain. By opening day, April 22, 1964, the Fair had to strain to convey a mood of optimism. An era of computers, space travel, DNA, and nuclear threat led to a cautious yet benevolent theme: "Peace Through Understanding."

This time more than 80 countries and 24 states were represented, but multinational industries like General Motors and Coca-Cola may have left the greater mark. Some critics missed the consistently high design standards of the earlier Fair. In response, Fair President and "power broker" Robert Moses, ever the pragmatist, commented on the general tendency at the Fair: "We have aimed not at the grand plan which would influence all architecture for generations, but at the freedom of choice, clash of ideas and competition of tastes, individual and corporate."

In 1967 the fairgrounds were returned to the City for further improvement. Flushing Meadows Corona Park, an early example of "brownfield" reclamation, was a precursor to the many new parks arising in post-industrial areas of the city. The park is still a work in progress. But today it serves a remarkably diverse population of international residents, and may in the end be achieving both Fairs' objectives—furthering the cause of peace through understanding, while ushering in tomorrow's world.





**“Mount Corona”  
Ash Dump,  
Flushing Meadow**  
May 16, 1934

*New York City Parks  
Photo Archive*

The largest of the industrial dumps was a massive mound, nearly 90 feet in height at its peak, dubbed “Mount Corona,” that makes an appearance in a famous passage from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*: “This is a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke, and finally with a transcendent effort, of ash-gray men, who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air.” In the first four months of Fair site preparation, an estimated 400,000 fully loaded dump trucks carted soil. The around-the-clock operation paused only once—for a hurricane.



**Grand Central  
Parkway and  
Flushing River**  
November 3, 1934

*New York City Parks  
Photo Archive*

The convoluted Flushing River (described in *The Great Gatsby* as “a small foul river”) snakes its way through a wetland and empties into the tidal estuary of Flushing Bay. Native Americans and early European settlers once fished there, but by the early 20th century the marshland was severely compromised by industrial dumping. The Grand Central Parkway extension, completed in July 1936, is under construction below the swamp. At right is the Corona Park Golf & Country Club, opened in 1931, which featured a 6,480-yard course that Flushing Improvement progress report noted had been “compared favorably by the press of the day with the better courses of Long Island.” This short-term endeavor, phased out in 1934, was an effort by the ash dumping company to mitigate complaints. Its neo-Colonial two-story clubhouse had a lounge, shop, caddie room and 300 lockers. The City purchased the Corona property, ending 26 years of dumping in the swampland. The golf course’s irrigation and drainage systems were salvaged and some piping reused at the new Central Park Zoo. The clubhouse served for a time as an ad hoc construction field headquarters.





## **New Asphalt Plant** September 8, 1937

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

## **Construction Progress Bird's-Eye View, Flushing Meadow Park** July 1936

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

The prospect of the first World's Fair at Flushing Meadow presented an opportunity to convert an eyesore into parkland. Massive private investment in the Fair enabled procurement of the site long in the grip of "Fishhooks" McCarthy, head of the Brooklyn Ash Removal Company. Contractors managing the grading and filling operation kept "an average of 450 men on the job, working three shifts. Eight steam shovels and four dragline derricks [kept] 100 trucks going day and night," moving one cubic yard of fill every two seconds. A temporary five-mile macadam road was built to facilitate the massive operation. Work commenced in June 1936, and by October more than two million cubic yards of ash had been leveled from the dumps and distributed in low-lying areas. The new asphalt plant (seen in the top photo) was situated on 5½ acres on state barge canal property at the mouth of the Flushing River between Willets Point and Harper Street. Opened in early 1937, the plant could produce up to 1,000 tons of asphalt a day.





**View East Along Flushing Bay,  
Progress, Flushing Meadow**

December 15, 1936

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

A solitary figure is dwarfed by the vast expanse of derelict land being reclaimed for the park use. The south shore of Flushing Bay was stabilized with “bulk heading and rip rapping” (stabilizing piles and rocks), landscaped, included a permanent boat basin (marina) and promenade. An early park construction progress report noted: “The park development of the shorefront will enhance values and protect for all time the parkway and the Northern Boulevard approach to the park.”





## Aerial View, New York World's Fair, Flushing Meadow Circa 1939-40

*Fairchild Aerial Service /  
New York City Parks Photo Archive*

This view northeast shows the shimmering fairgrounds pavilions forming a cohesive assemblage of streamlined, modernist architecture well suited to the cultural, design, and technological advancements promoted at the Fair. In all there were about 375 structures, including 100 major exhibit buildings—about a third done directly by Fair Corporation Board of Design, which even dictated a radiating palette of exterior color gradations (the Tryon and Perisphere being pure white, and the next tier of buildings off-white, etc.). The theme of the “World of Tomorrow” was embraced by leading designers such as Norman Bell Geddes, Raymond Loewy and Walter Dorwin Teague. To finance construction the Fair Corporation sold 27 million in bonds. The City spent about \$26.7 million for land reclamation and the New York City Building, and the State expended about \$6.2 million on the Amphitheatre that housed the Aquacade. Foreign nations contributed between \$30 and \$40 million, and additional corporate investment and private donations brought total sponsorship to around \$160 million.







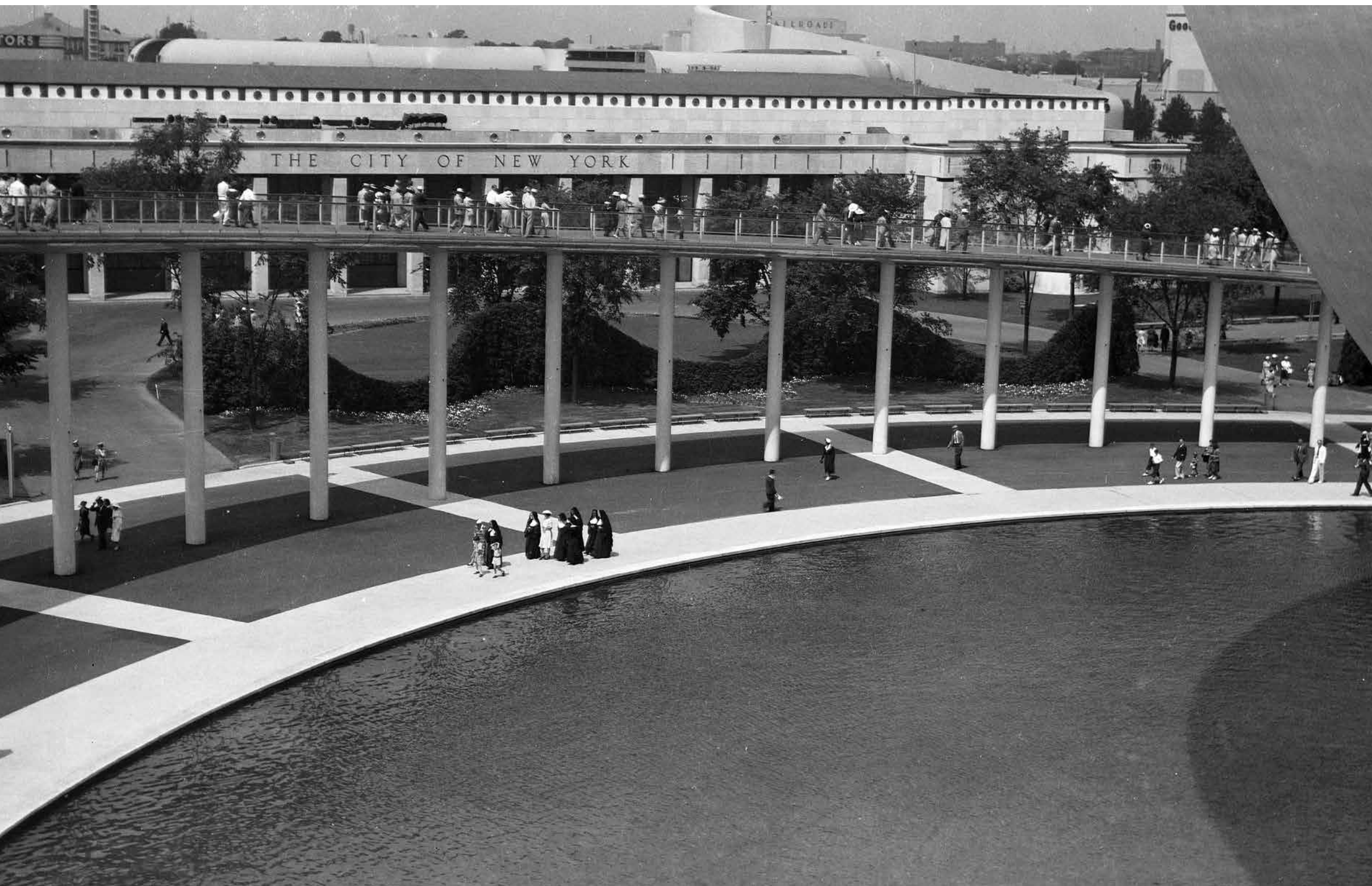
## Erecting Westinghouse Time Capsule

1939

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

Commissioned by the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Corporation, a torpedo-shaped time capsule made of Cupaloy (a copper alloy) containing articles of common use (an electric razor, Mickey Mouse child's cup, Elizabeth Arden make-up kit, etc.), a RKO newsreel, and more than 22,000 pages of content on microfilm intended to represent modern-day civilization were buried 50 feet below the ground. The capsule was inserted at the precise moment of the autumnal equinox on September 23, 1938. Here workers erect an aboveground granite cylinder that at one time marked the site. Ten feet to the north, on October 16, 1965, another time capsule, encased in a stainless steel called "Kromarc," was submerged by Westinghouse, and the large granite cylinder was replaced by a more low-profile marker referencing both era's time capsules in a circular plaza near today's Queens Museum. The capsules are meant to be unearthed 5,000 years after burial.





**Helicline Ramp, Perisphere  
(partial view) New York City  
Building, New York World's Fair,  
Flushing Meadow  
1940**

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

Designed by Wallace Harrison and J. Andre Fouilhoux, the modernist “theme center” of the World’s Fair of 1939-40 was known as the Tryon and Perisphere, a 610-foot high tapered spire hitched to a sphere 180 feet in diameter. This slender and rotund pair became ubiquitous symbols in fair promotional materials and merchandise. Visitors could enter the sphere and experience the “Democracity” diorama, representing an urban utopia. They left by descending a 950-foot long curved ramp known as the Helicline. Here a group of nuns on an outing can be seen beneath the Helicline, and the New York City Building, now the Queens Museum, stands in the background.



**Empire State  
Bridge Entrance,  
New York  
World's Fair  
Circa 1939-40**

*Gift of Bernard Watts /  
New York City Parks  
Photo Archive*

Crowds throng the Empire State Bridge, which spanned Horace Harding Boulevard (now the Long Island Expressway), connecting the Production and Distribution Zone with the popular Amusement Zone to the south by today's Meadow Lake. Joseph Renier's idealized sculptures of The Stone Cutter and The Runner flanked the bridge, and symbolized early forms of communication. Broadway impresario Billy Rose's Aquacade at the New York State Amphitheater (later the Gertrude Ederle Pool, no longer extant) was a featured attraction in the Amusement Zone, though here a group of visitors has gathered at a horoscope booth at lower left in the picture. It seems that the compulsion to foresee the future permeated highbrow and lowbrow entertainments.







**Visitor Trolley,  
New York World's Fair  
1939**

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

Weary fairgoers could avail themselves of Greyhound's "trackless train" conveyance, in which three or four canopied cars seating up to 12 people were pulled by a lead Mack 67 HP six-cylinder engine, set within a modified 1938 Mack truck body with chrome grille. A one-way ride cost 25 cents for adults and 15 cents for children under 12, a fairly pricey trip, considering admission to the fair itself was 75 cents. Arcade Toy Manufacturing produced die-cast souvenir miniatures of the tram.



**Crowd Entering Ice and Roller  
Rinks, New York City Building,  
Flushing Meadow Park  
February 24, 1941**

*Rodney McCay Morgan /  
New York City Parks Photo Archive*

Following the Fair, the ice and roller rinks in the New York City Building were the first attractions to be opened to the public. Immediately after the Fair's closing on October 27, 1940, City departments removed their exhibits, and a contract was issued to remove temporary construction and build a roller rink 150 feet long and 116 feet wide. A pre-existing ice skating facility measuring 178 by 116 feet was built as part of the building when it was constructed in 1938. The two rinks were formally opened for public use in ceremonies held on January 12, 1941. Charges per session were 20 cents, with a 50-cent skate rental fee. Children under 14 could skate free on Saturday mornings. The rinks proved an instant hit with 16,537 people using it in their first week of operation. Here eager crowds line up to be a part of the action.





## New York City Building Construction, Grand Central Parkway, Flushing Meadow

January 29, 1938 (top)

June 21, 1938 (center)

June 2, 1939 (bottom)

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

This sequence of three photos demonstrates the rapid construction of the New York City Building, designed by Parks' Chief Consulting Architect Aymar Embury II, and the landscaping of the Grand Central Parkway. In the first, only the structural steel framing is in place, and by the last the World's Fair is in progress. A football field in length, this Greek temple-like structure was Embury's largest building.

The New York City Building featured 63 departmental exhibits grouped in a fashion intended (said the Flushing Meadow Improvement report of July 1938) to "insure the visitor's getting a clear, connected picture of the activities of City government rather than a jumble of unrelated exhibits." It was one of the few fully air-conditioned buildings at the Fair—a good thing as Mayor Fiorello La Guardia made the building his "summer office" that year, headquartering senior staff there, and conducting city business from this satellite command post. WNYC radio occupied the balcony level (see transmission tower in the third picture in the sequence). Though opened to vehicles (especially it seems luxury ones) the Grand Central Parkway is still being landscaped with new trees in this picture.

Following the Fair the modern yet classically styled building accommodated ice and roller rinks, served as the first home of the United Nations between 1946 and 1950, and since 1972 has been home to the Queens Museum (formerly known as the Queens Center for Art and Culture). The museum, redesigned and expanded in 2013, features contemporary art displays, World's Fair memorabilia, and the New York City Panorama—a massive three-dimensional model of the cityscape.





**Washington Statue,  
Trylon and Perisphere,  
Constitution Mall Fountains,  
New York World's Fair,  
Flushing Meadow  
1939**

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

The 65-foot-tall statue of George Washington by James Earle Fraser gazed out from the Theme Center upon the Constitution Mall fountains, forming a dramatic composition by day and night. The fair opened on April 30, 1939, marking the 150th anniversary to the day of Washington's inauguration as first president in New York City, and the foresight of our founding father was linked to the forward-looking themes of the Fair. Fraser, an accomplished sculptor with many public commissions, had been invited by the Fair's Board of Design to represent the "character of Washington" and asked that his realization be "colonial in character" to complement the planned Washington Square commons around it.





**United States Steel Building in Construction, New York World's Fair, Flushing Meadow September 23, 1938**

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

One of the few exhibitors whose hall was made largely of its own product, the U.S. Steel Subsidiaries Building was one of a constellation of pavilions featuring key industries located in the Production and Distribution Zone. Architects York & Sawyer's semi-spherical pavilion was built with a stainless-steel frame armature covered with gypsum board, wire lath and stucco, with a contemporary design and construction method typical of the buildings conceived under the direction of the Fair Corporation's Board of Design. Structural exterior members were painted blue. The central interior space featured an unbroken floor of 15,000 square feet that soared to 65 feet. York & Sawyer were also responsible for the central portion of the New York Historical Society (1908), Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital (1921) and Bowery Savings Bank (1923). Walter Dorwin Teague and G. F. Harrell exhibit designs featured a "Hall of the Future" and state-of-the art steel production.



**Food Exhibitors Hall, New York World's Fair, Flushing Meadow Circa 1939**

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

This egg-shaped feature is part of the larger Food Building, South No. 3, a focal point of the Food Zone. The multi-part structure was designed by a consortium of notable architects: Philip L. Goodwin and Edwin Durrell Stone (the two responsible for the original Museum of Modern Art), Eric Keibbon and Morris Ketchum, Jr. Inside extensive exhibits featured the evolution of food cultivation and preparation since 1789. Several food production companies such as Planters Nut and Sunshine Biscuits had a presence there, and the second year of the fair the pavilion was converted to the Coca-Cola Building. The photographer captures a tranquil, unpopulated nighttime view in the reflecting pool that contrasts with the hubbub of the Fair by day.





**Gas Industries Hall  
in Construction,  
New York World's Fair,  
Flushing Meadow  
Circa 1938-39**

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

The Gas Industries Hall was located in the Community Interests Zone. Visitors entered this zone through a long overpass from the IRT and BMT subway stations opening into a circular plaza known as Bowling Green. Other exposition halls in the zone included Home Building Center, the Textiles or Hall of Fashion Building, the Home Furnishings Building, and Contemporary Art Center. In all 169 gas industry companies were represented, as well as 22 gas appliance manufacturers, including Johns Manville (the makers of asbestos) and American Radiator. The Gas Industries Hall was designed in a stark geometric style by Skidmore, Owens and John Moss, its main exterior featuring the circular "Court of Flame" with four large pylons forming a cross. At night gas flames colored blue and yellow shot from the four towers into the air to dramatic effect.



**Electric Utilities  
Building, New York  
World's Fair,  
Flushing Meadow  
Circa 1939**

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

A dramatic waterfall wall (cascading 16,000 gallons a minute) and a semi-enclosed walkway immersed visitors to the Harrison & Fouilhoux's Electric Utilities Building within a design environment that evoked industrial design while reinforcing the theme of power generation.





**Aquacade,  
Flushing Meadow Park  
Circa 1946**

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

The New York State Amphitheatre, designed by Sloan and Robertson, consisted of a large pool, Roman-styled curtain wall and stadium seating, and was home at the World's Fair to Broadway impresario Billy Rose's Aquacade, a water pageant that included actress Eleanor Holm, swimmer Johnny Weissmuller (of Tarzan movies fame) and Buster Crabbe (aka Flash Gordon). After the Fair the site became a public swimming facility, and also hosted events such as opera concerts. In the year of this photo the citywide competitive swimming meet finals were held here. At the 1964-65 World's Fair the facility was home to the Florida Pavilion featuring a water-skiing extravaganza. The amphitheater was later named for English Channel crosser Gertrude Ederle in 1975, but it fell into disrepair, and was demolished in 1996. The edge of Meadow Lake was naturalized. Some decorative elements from the amphitheater were salvaged and incorporated into a new park house nearby.





**New York State Pavilion Observation Deck, New York World's Fair, Flushing Meadows Corona Park**

July 30, 1964

*Ben Cohen / New York City Parks Photo Archive*

Now on the National Registry of Historic Places, the New York State Pavilion was designed by the celebrated architect Philip Johnson and engineered by Lev Zetlin. The complex consisted of the "Tent of Tomorrow"—16 100-foot columns supporting an elliptical circular suspended roof of multi-colored fiberglass panels—and three towers of slip-cast concrete, 65, 175 and 221 feet tall. The lower tower housed a food concession and gift shop, while the upper two were used as observation decks. The tallest, shown here, was the highest point of any structure at the Fair. Fair visitors ascended the towers in the "Sky Streak" capsule elevators. The adjacent Theaterama, film and art exhibition space is today's Queens Theatre in the Park. A terrazzo map of the State of New York sponsored by Texaco was used as the flooring for the tent structure.





**Unisphere and Flags  
Allee, New York World's  
Fair, Flushing Meadows  
Corona Park**  
Circa 1964-65

*Pierre Montiel Collection*

The Unisphere, viewed north here along the “Court of Nations,” was the centerpiece and symbol of the New York World’s Fair of 1964-65, whose primary theme was “Peace Through Understanding.” It was designed by Gilmore Clarke, chief consulting landscape architect to the Parks Department for decades, who along with Michael Rapuano was responsible for much of the axial plan of both Fairs and general layout of the park. The 350-ton, 120-foot-diameter globe features representations of the continents and major mountain ranges in relief, and is encircled by three giant orbital rings that represent the tracks of early satellites. Engineering the immense structure involved solving hundreds of simultaneous equations, facilitated by computers used to design atomic submarines. Building the Unisphere was not only a gesture of global unity, but a demonstration of American technical savvy and corporate might. The American Bridge Division of US Steel did the work for free in exchange for having its name and logo appear on all Fair marketing material. Flags of an international array of countries lined the Court of Nations.



**Bird's-Eye View of  
Rocket Thrower,  
Fountain of the  
Planets, etc., New York  
World's Fair, Flushing  
Meadows Corona Park**  
Circa 1964-65

*Pierre Montiel Collection*

The Rocket Thrower is a 43-foot-high bronze nude male figure hurtling a rocket flare heavenward while reaching with his left hand to a constellation of gilded stars. Crafted by Donald De Lue (1897-1988) and Italian foundry artisans, it was created as part of the art program of the World’s Fair Corporation’s Committee on Sculpture. The sculpture committee sought to select sculptors whose work ranged “from contemporary conservative to the more conservative avant-garde.” Their short list of 10 recommended modernist sculptors displeased Fair president Robert Moses and his chief designer Gilmore Clarke, whose tastes were more traditional. Ultimately, five sculptors were commissioned to create pieces which would outlast the Fair: Paul Manship, Marshall Fredericks, Theodore Roszak, Jose de Rivera, and De Lue. The Rocket Thrower was in keeping with one of the fair’s central themes—space exploration—and it complemented several other significant nearby features, the Fountain of the Planets (seen here) the Court of Astronauts, Space Park and the Unisphere. In 2013 it was conserved through the Municipal Art Society’s “Adopt-A-Monument Program,” in partnership with NYC Parks.





**Sinclair Dinoland,  
New York State  
Pavilion Observation  
Towers, US Royal  
Rubber, Flushing  
Meadows Corona Park,  
New York World's Fair  
1964-65**

*Pierre Montiel Collection*

Located in the Fair's transportation section, one of the most popular and memorable exhibits was "Dinoland," sponsored by the Sinclair Petroleum Company (its energy source of course derived from fossils). Life-sized fiberglass dinosaur replicas by artist Louis Paul Jonas recreated a paleontological setting that existed 165 million years ago. The Tyrannosaurus Rex shown here was displayed in proximity to a Triceratops. Inside the building were dioramas and a simulation of an erupting volcano, as well as exhibits on the use of petroleum. Visitors could take away a plastic keepsake of the company's dinosaur logo molded on the spot. They could also get their thrills where the rubber met the road on a vertical gondola that soared 80 feet on a nearby giant whitewall tire.



**Kodak Pavilion,  
New York World's Fair,  
Flushing Meadows  
Corona Park  
Circa 1964-65**

*Pierre Montiel Collection*

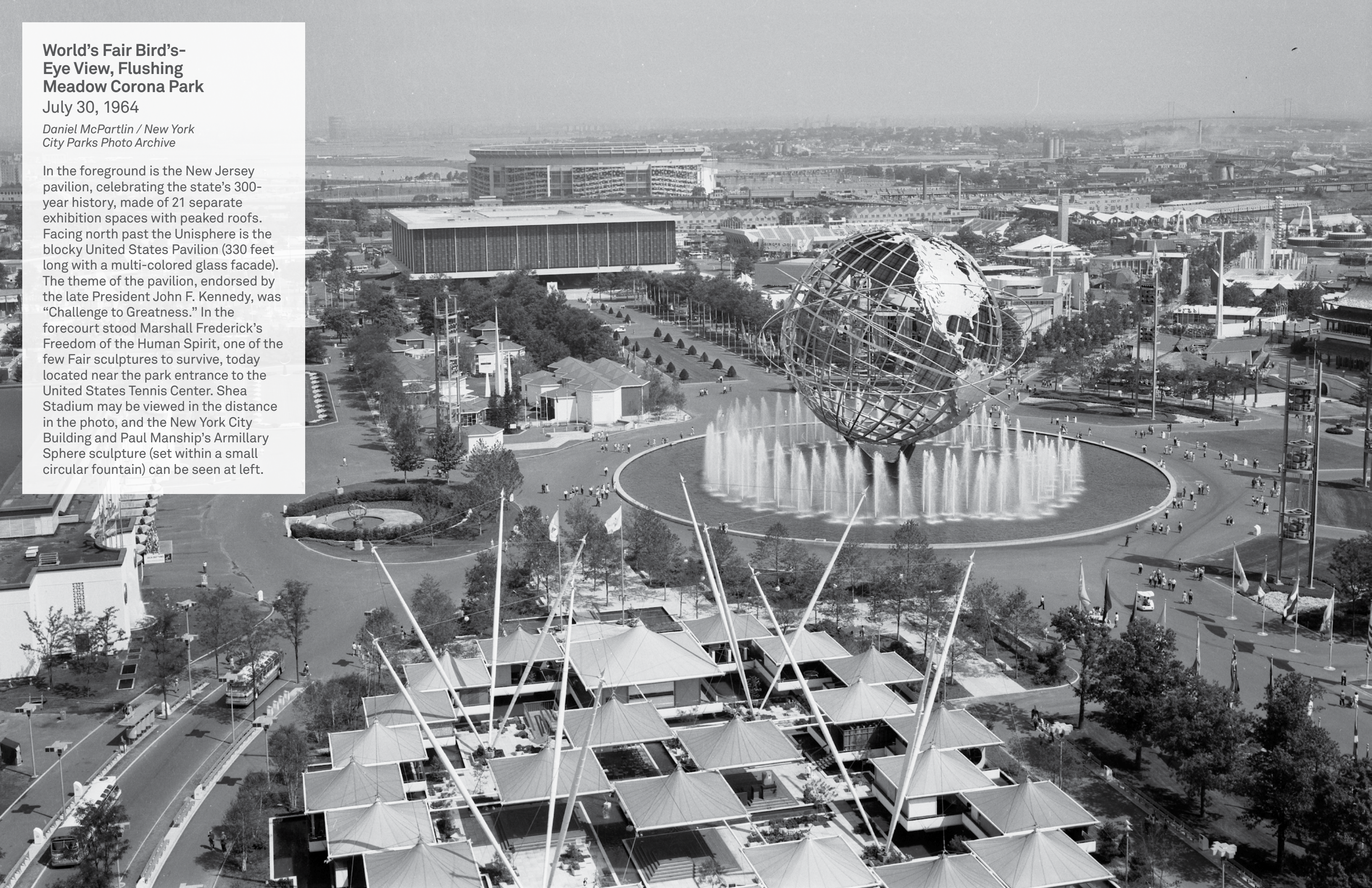
The Eastman Kodak Pavilion accommodated 15 exhibition sections, and was notable for its undulating roof with "sloping walkways, sculptured fountains, pools containing exotic flowers" and a tower featuring rotating displays of photos printed at massive size (each measuring 30' high by 36' wide, reputedly the "world's largest outdoor photographic prints in color"). Inside, a 15-minute film, "The Searching Eye" by Saul Bass, focused on a child's view of commonplace wonders. The hall was staffed with specialists to advise professional and amateur photographers. Exhibits included "Adventures in Photography," "the Science Area," "Prizewinning Photographs," "X-Ray Uses" and "Movie Techniques."



**World's Fair Bird's-  
Eye View, Flushing  
Meadow Corona Park**  
July 30, 1964

*Daniel McPartlin / New York  
City Parks Photo Archive*

In the foreground is the New Jersey pavilion, celebrating the state's 300-year history, made of 21 separate exhibition spaces with peaked roofs. Facing north past the Unisphere is the blocky United States Pavilion (330 feet long with a multi-colored glass facade). The theme of the pavilion, endorsed by the late President John F. Kennedy, was "Challenge to Greatness." In the forecourt stood Marshall Frederick's Freedom of the Human Spirit, one of the few Fair sculptures to survive, today located near the park entrance to the United States Tennis Center. Shea Stadium may be viewed in the distance in the photo, and the New York City Building and Paul Manship's Armillary Sphere sculpture (set within a small circular fountain) can be seen at left.



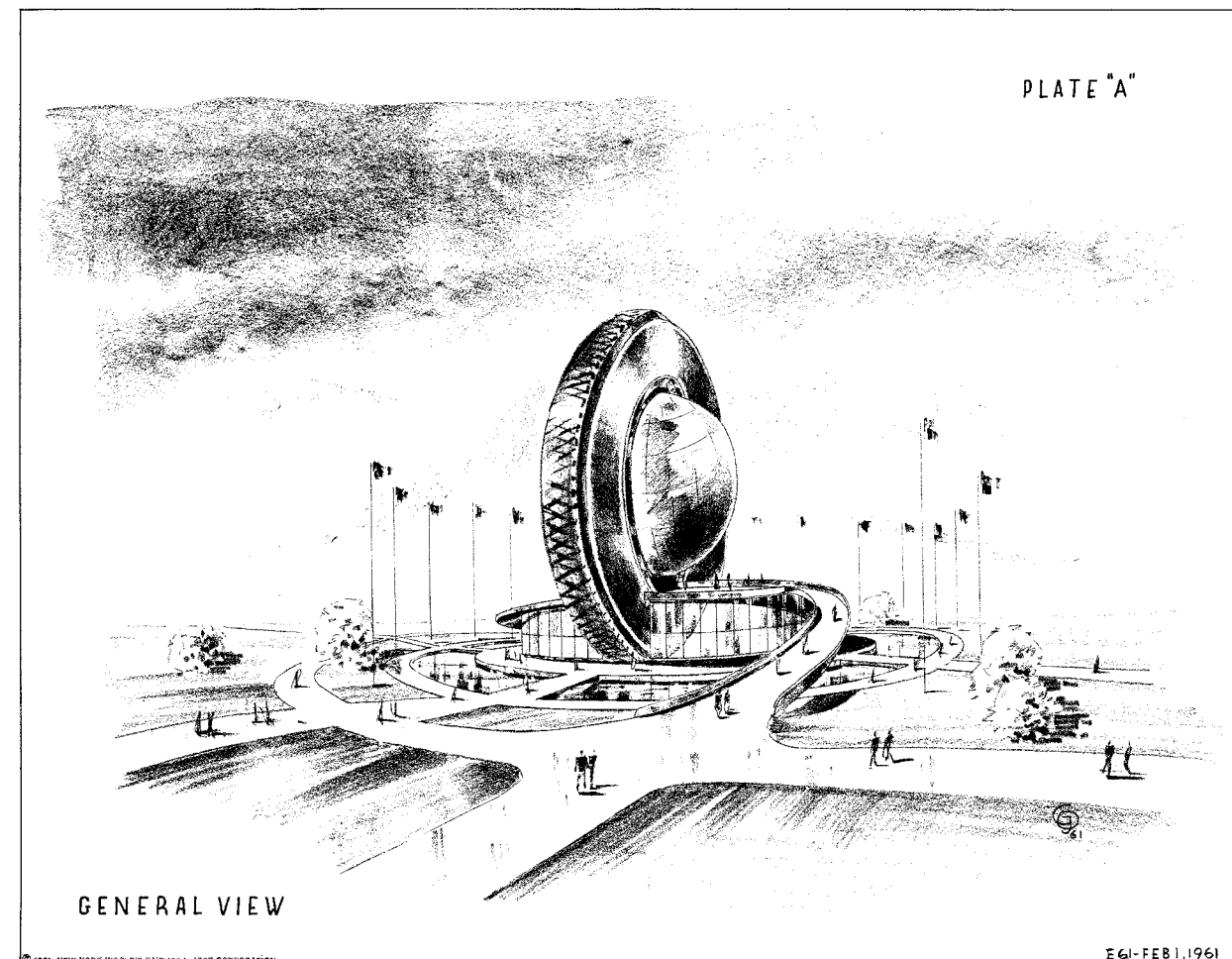




**World's Fair Bird's-Eye View,  
Transportation Area,  
Flushing Meadow Corona Park  
July 30, 1964**

*Daniel McPartlin / New York City Parks  
Photo Archive*

This aerial view west across the Grand Central Parkway features several notable exposition halls within the congested Transportation Zone. In the foreground at left is the two-story Transportation and Travel pavilion, which featured pioneers of travel, a live drama called "Underwater Sea Hunt," films, maps, models and equipment related to advances in travel and the 96-foot-high Moon Dome that housed a moon relief map and movie theater. US Royal Tire and the Chrysler pavilion are beyond that and in the background a helicopter lands on the Port Authority Building, today a restaurant and catering hall known as Terrace on the Park. Fairgoers of certain means could take a five-to-nine-minute ride there by helicopter from the Wall Street Heliport or three regional airports. There were 30 flights daily between 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 p.m. at a cost of \$8 a person.

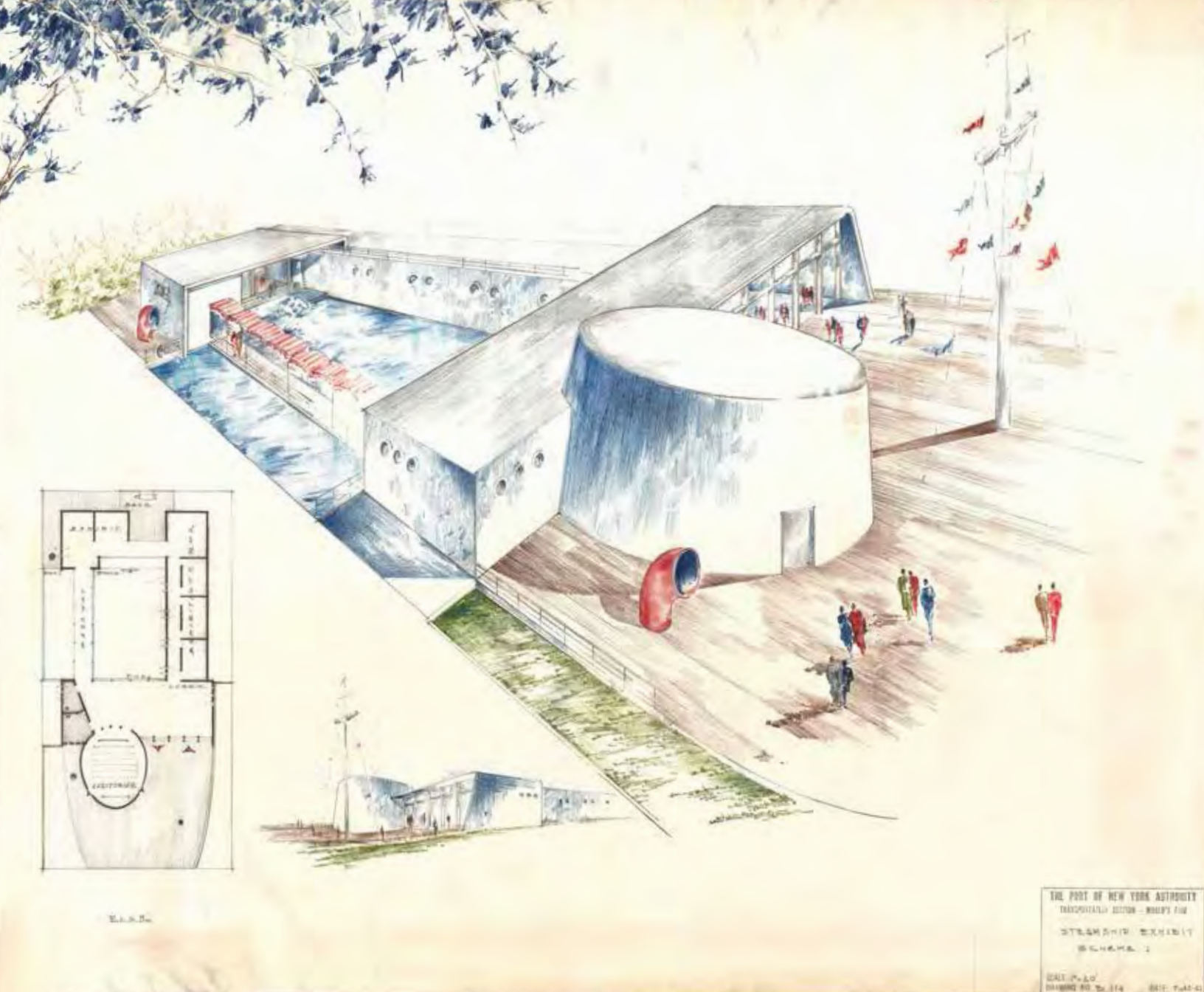


**Space Panorama  
Rendering, Transportation  
Section View, New York  
World's Fair  
February 1, 1961**

*Port Authority Collection /  
NYC Parks Map File*

This graceful organic structure was a speculative rendering for a pavilion in the Transportation section, and one of a series of such drawings commissioned by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, a public authority that oversees much of the region's transportation infrastructure. Here a Saturn-like unidentified planet is used as an entryway. This component bears some resemblance to the specific corporate presence of US Royal Tire that was actually built in the Transportation Zone.





**Steamship Exhibit Rendering, Transportation Section, New York World's Fair, Flushing Meadows Corona Park 1961**

*Port Authority Collection / NYC Parks Map File*

This drawing was an artist's concept commissioned by the Port Authority, one of the principal sponsors of the Transportation section of the Fair. It is one of a series of renderings that were used to market the Fair to potential corporate sponsors. Though it was never realized, the design is notable for its adaptation of a streamlined modernist aesthetic to celebrate a transformative invention of the early 19th-century—Robert Fulton's steamship. Both the 1939 and 1964 World's Fairs highlighted the historical continuum of technological advancement from prehistory to the computer age.



**New York State Pavilion with Roy Lichtenstein Mural, New York World's Fair, Flushing Meadows Corona Park Circa 1964**

*Pierre Montiel Collection*

One of the dominant features of Philip Johnson's New York State Pavilion was its "Tent of Tomorrow" measuring 350 feet by 250 feet. At the base of this building was a United States map, measuring 9,000 square feet and sponsored by Texaco, consisting of 567 terrazzo mosaic panels, each weighing 400 pounds. Next door was "Theaterama," which screened a 360-degree film about the wonders of New York State, from Jones Beach to Niagara Falls. Pop art works by the likes of Andy Warhol, James Rosenquist, and Roy Lichtenstein (shown here), were displayed on the exterior of the pavilion and the subject of considerable controversy. Warhol's mural of the 13 most wanted men was covered over and whitewashed at the outset of the Fair. After the fair, the space under the tent was used as a roller skating rink and as a performance space in the late 1960s and early 1970s by the Council for International Recreation, Culture, and Lifelong Education. Leading rock groups, such as Led Zeppelin and Santana performed there. By 1976, the roof above the map became unstable and the panels were removed, exposing the map of New York State to the ravages of weather. In 1972 the space was converted to the Queens Playhouse (now known as Queens Theatre in the Park).





**Space Park, Hall of Science, Spiral Fountain, New York World's Fair, Flushing Meadows Corona Park**

Circa 1964

*Department of Defense and NASA / New York City Parks Photo Archive*

At the beginning of the decade President John F. Kennedy committed the United States to “landing a man on the Moon by the end of [the 1960s], and returning him safely to Earth.” A few years earlier, at the height of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, President Eisenhower had established the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and at the time of the World's Fair, NASA's program of space exploration was at full tilt. Space Park, organized by NASA and the US Department of Defense, embodied this ambitious mission. Surrounding the Hall of Science (today an active cultural institution) were Project Mercury, Gemini and Apollo space craft, as well as the Saturn V Moon Rocket and a full-scale X-15 powered research plane. Today funds are sought to restore Theodore Roszak's nearby Forms in Transit sculpture of a rocket reentering the atmosphere—one of the few surviving artworks from the Fair.





**Matchbook Covers,  
1964-65 New York  
World's Fair and  
1940 New York  
World's Fair**

*J. Kuhn Collection*



**Plan for  
Permanent World  
Capital at Flushing  
Meadow, Hugh  
Ferriss Rendering  
September 1946**

*Courtesy NYC Parks*



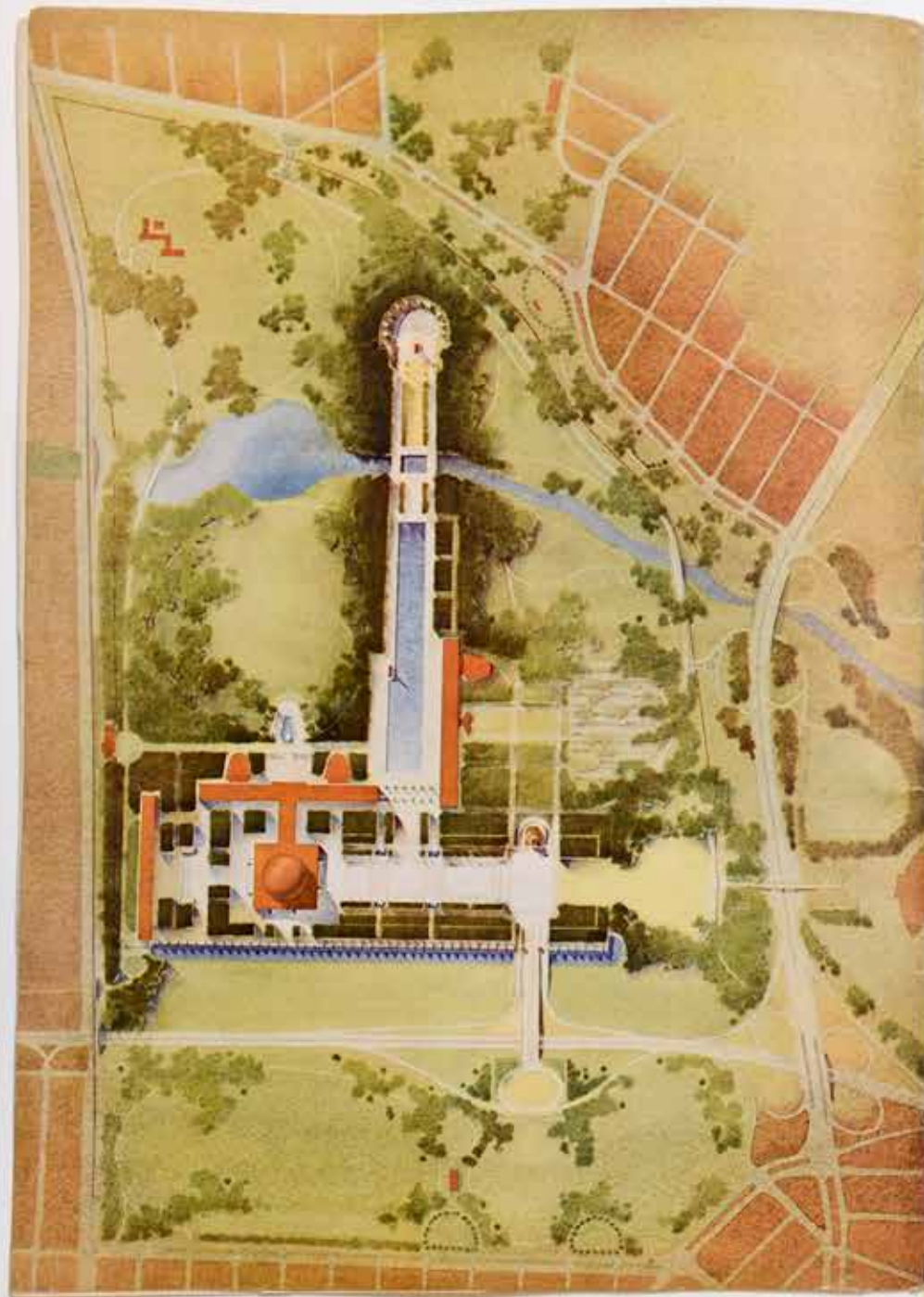
**Municipal  
Stadium,  
Shea Stadium  
Dedication  
Programs  
1964**

*Courtesy NYC Parks*

**Clockwise from left: 1939 NY World's Fair Commemorative Spoon (J. Kuhn Collection); The Flushing Meadow Improvement, Volume 1, No. 1, October 1936; New York World's Fair, 1964-65, Builders of the Fair Cover, September 26, 1963; Flushing Meadow Improvement Cover, July 1938; Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Program Cover, June 3, 1967.**

*Courtesy NYC Parks*





CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK 7, N. Y.

### A. WELCOME

The following report has been prepared at my request and is an invitation to the United Nations to make New York City its permanent home.

It is my firm conviction that the hope of world peace is in the hands of this group of nations. I have seen the courage and money of the last war and I believe that the effort to be spent to avoid a repetition of it. New York City will do its part to build up the only agency which can guarantee international friendship and world law.

I believe that we have in Flushing Meadow Park at Queens a very accessible site in every way suited to the present and future requirements of the United Nations for working space for the World Capital in surroundings which insure protection from all undesirable influences. The City will, I am sure, donate the site with all of the present improvements, and will round it out to its proper limits and provide complete accommodations without cost to the United Nations. It is an area free from problems of relaxation of zoning and commercial enterprises. There will be no question of partial or full payment of real estate and related taxes.

The United Nations is heartily and unreservedly welcome in New York City. I speak not only for myself but for my associates on the governing bodies of the City and for the overwhelming majority of our people when I say that we shall be honored to have the body with us.

I hope that those officials of the United Nations charged with the final responsibility for selecting the permanent site of the World Capital give full and serious consideration to Flushing Meadow Park. If they do, I believe that they will find nothing else comparable to it.

*William O'Dwyer*  
Mayor

## Plan for a Permanent World Capital, Flushing Meadow 1946

Courtesy NYC Parks

This Mayoral Plan and Scope for a World Capital at Flushing Meadow called for the designation of the park's central 350 acres to house the nascent United Nations. A park-like setting with multiple modes of transit access from rail to two neighboring airports were trumpeted as compelling arguments for locating the UN here. The plan was put together by a board of design consisting of leading architects, landscape architects and engineers of the day, including W. Earle Andrews, Louis Skidmore, Wallace K. Harrison, Aymar Embury II, John P. Hogan and Gilmore Clarke. The report, dated 1946, was illustrated with perspective drawings by visionary architect and draftsman Hugh Ferriss, and is opened here to the frontispiece plan view and welcoming letter from Mayor O'Dwyer. Though the plan did not come to pass, the United Nations general assembly did convene in the park at the converted New York City Building from 1946 to 1950, and it was here that it passed the resolution establishing the state of Israel.



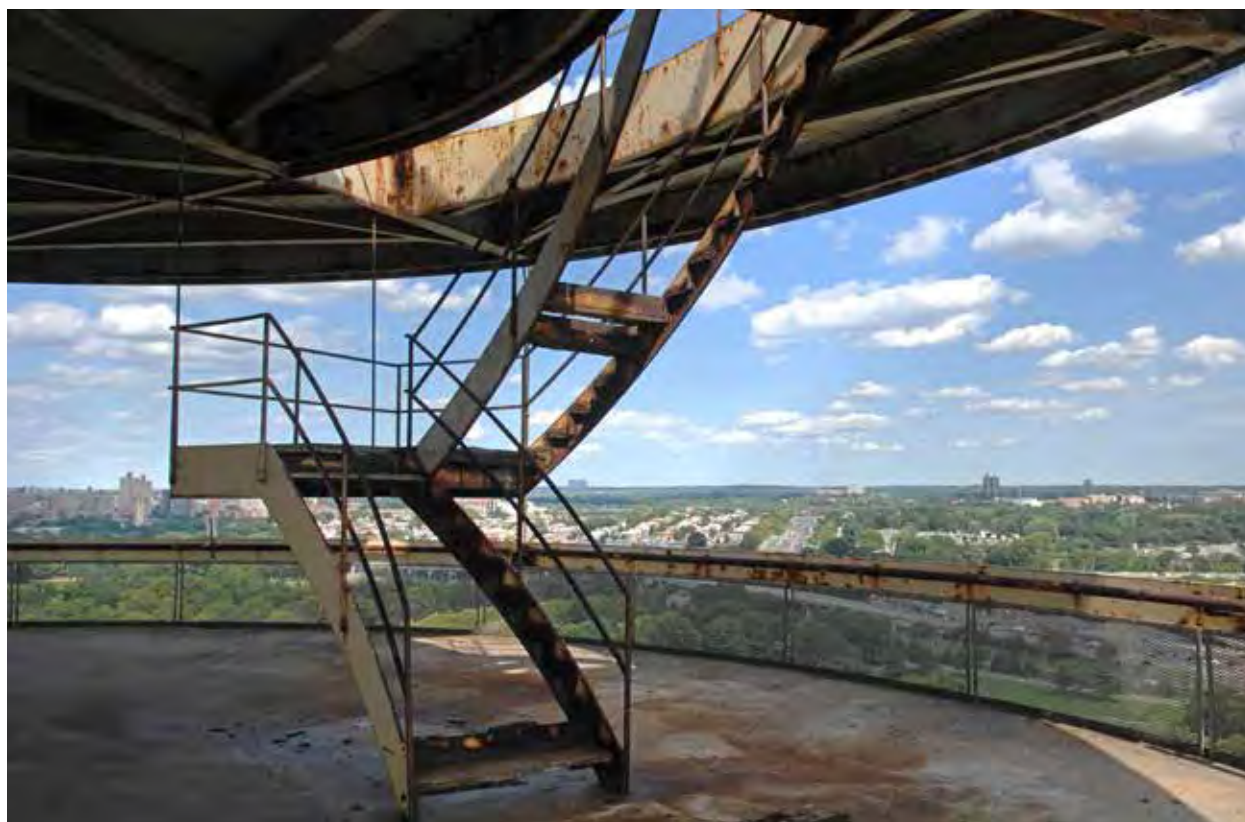


## Aerial View of Flushing Meadow Park August 2, 1951

*New York City Parks Photo Archive*

This aerial view over Flushing Meadows illustrates the Park taking shape a decade after the first World's Fair. The central northern precinct was laid in axial arrangement following Michael Rapuano's design, with broad boulevard-like pathways and tree-lined allees radiating out from the central core east of the New York City Building. After serving as interim headquarters for the United Nations, the building was slated to become an ice rink. Baseball fields had taken the place of the Fair's Transportation Zone, and a botanical garden was planted on the footprint of the fair exhibit "Gardens on Parade." (A polo ground and model yacht pond from a 1937 plan were evidently eliminated). The Aquacade may be seen on Meadow Lake's shore, reused as the Florida Pavilion at the second fair. Permanent improvements to the site were projected at \$59,000,000, and more than half the park was in active public use, a use described in 1951 by Commissioner Moses as "rapidly increasing, and such increase will be accelerated as new residential neighborhoods are occupied."





**New York State Pavilion  
Observation Deck,  
Flushing Meadows  
Corona Park**  
August 7, 2009

*NYC Parks / Photo by Daniel Avila*

Today abandoned, a modernist relic from the Fair, the New York State Pavilion (designed by Philip Johnson and engineered by Lev Zetlin) is the object of renewed interest. This view was taken from the tallest of three observation towers. The adjacent elliptical “Tent of Tomorrow” was a colored canopy over Texaco Company’s map of New York State. The map was designed with 567 terrazzo mosaic panels, each weighing 400 pounds. Rand McNally & Company assisted in constructing the \$1,000,000 map, which featured the 50,000 square miles of New York State in meticulous detail. The cities, towns, highways, roads, and Texaco stations were accurately mapped in the 9,000-square-foot design. After the fair, the space under the tent was used as a roller skating rink and as a performance space. In 1976 the unstable fiberglass roofing was removed though the tensile cables remain. Exposure to the weathering caused the demise of the tile flooring. Parks has commissioned engineering studies, and the City is in dialogue with local public officials, preservationists, and a concerned public on the feasibility of stabilizing or repurposing the edifice.



**Master Plan Waterbodies  
Connection**

*NYC Parks*

This image is taken from a 2007 master plan for Flushing Meadows Corona Park, prepared by Quennell Rothschild & Partners and Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects (an earlier master plan was prepared by Bernard Tschumi and Skidmore, Owens and Merrill in 1988). This strategic framework for the future of the park considered three basic principles: “Re-envision the World’s Fair Core,” “Reconfigure and Restore the Lakes,” and “Reconnect the Park to the Neighborhood and the City.” Through a historical analysis, direct observation, and interviews and questionnaires with park stakeholders from users to Parks staff, the team developed broad guidelines and objectives to sustain and advance the park from its ecology to recreational opportunities. To view the complete plan visit [www.nyc.gov/parks](http://www.nyc.gov/parks).





**Aquatic Center Opening**  
February 29, 2008

*NYC Parks / Photo by Daniel Avila*

**Soccer**  
Circa 2004

*Photo by Spencer T. Tucker*

**Hong Kong DragonBoat Festival**

August 13, 2011

*NYC Parks / Photo by Malcolm Pinckney*

Since the 1980s the City has invested tens of millions of capital dollars into the restoration and improvement of the park, in particular in the area of that occupied the “core” of the World’s Fairs. Reflecting an ever more diverse borough constituency, and honoring the “global village” promoted by the World’s Fairs, the park hosts Cinco DeMayo Festival in the spring, Ecuadorian Independence Day Festival in the summer and a Korean Harvest Festival in the fall. It is also a hotbed for international participants in a myriad of soccer and cricket matches.

**THE ARSENAL GALLERY**

Located in the historic Arsenal Building in Central Park, the Arsenal Gallery is dedicated to examining themes of nature, urban space, New York City parks and park history through a diverse schedule of art and history exhibitions. The gallery is committed to providing unaffiliated artists, independent curators, and non-profit organizations with an accessible exhibition venue.

**The Arsenal Gallery, Central Park**

830 Fifth Avenue at 64th Street, Third floor

Gallery Hours:

Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Closed holidays

**Exhibition Credits:**

Jonathan Kuhn and Jennifer Lantzas  
Curators

Text by Jonathan Kuhn,  
Director of Art & Antiquities, NYC Parks

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