

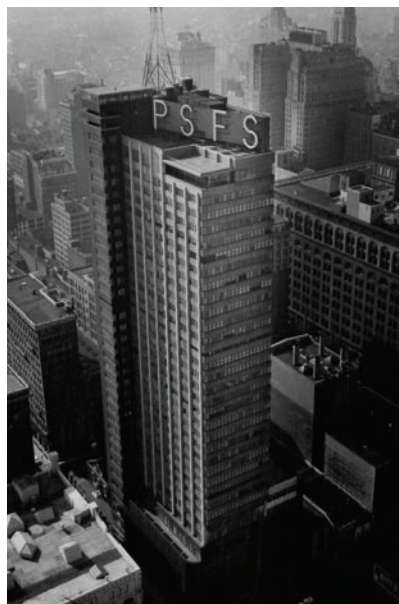


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## Architecture, Design and Corporate Modernism



How have business strategies, modern architecture and urban conditions helped shape American corporations' ambitious branding goals? **Grace Ong Yan, PhD**, assistant professor of interior design, addresses that question in her book *Building Brands: Corporations and Modern Architecture*.



Ong Yan is an architectural historian who explores modernism and how media and the built environment intersect. Earlier in her career, she practiced interior design and architecture with Renzo Piano Building Workshop; Pei, Cobb, Freed and Partners and the Gensler New York branding studio. Her book unites her scholarship and design expertise to consider the role of architectural branding in the design of corporate modernism.

"Between the stock market crash of 1929 and the Vietnam War, American corporations

were responsible for the construction of thousands of headquarters across the United States," Dr. Ong Yan explains. "Over this time, the design of corporate headquarters evolved from Beaux-Arts façades to bold Modernist expressions. These choices emerged from collaborative efforts by clients, architects and designers to craft buildings that reflected a company's brand while considering consumers' perception and their emotions toward architecture and the messages it communicated."

The book focuses on four American corporate headquarters: the PSFS Building by George Howe and William Lescaze, the Johnson Wax Administration Building by Frank Lloyd Wright, Lever House by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and the Röhm & Haas Building by Pietro Belluschi. Through them, it shows how design devices of sign, fame, form and material brought company messages to the public. Drawing on original material from corporations' archives, *Building Brands* brings new insights to corporate modernism by examining how company leaders—working with architects—conceived of their headquarters both as workplaces and architectural mediums to communicate company identities and brands. ■