U.S. Embassies: America’s Face Abroad

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The Architecture of Diplomacy

The National Building Museum
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U.S. Embassy, Lima, Peru, Arquitectonica (1996)
U.S. Embassy, Prague (former Schoenborn Palace) (purchased 1925)
The U.S. builds its first embassies

Top: Tirana (Wyeth & Sullivan, 1929); Ottawa (Cass Gilbert, 1928)
Below: Paris (Delano & Aldrich, 1932); Helsinki (Lindeberg, 1938)
Lever House, New York City (1952)
U.S. Consulate General, Frankfurt (1952-55)
Gordon Bunshaft/ Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
United Nations Secretariat Building, NYC
U.S. Embassy, Rio de Janeiro (right)
Harrison & Abramovitz (1952)
U.S. Embassy, Copenhagen (1951-54)
architects: Ralph Rapson and John van der Meulen
INTERNATIONAL STYLE MODERN
U.S. Embassy Copenhagen (Rapson and van der Meulen, 1954) and
Danish Embassy in D.C. (Lauritzen, 1960) (right)
Staying with the Modern Style
U.S. Embassies in the 1950s

Vatican Embassy, DC
(Murphy, 1939)

U.S. Embassy, London (top center) (Saarinen, 1956-59)

U.S. Embassy, Dublin (right) (Johansen, 1957-64)

U.S. Consulate General, Tangier (bottom) (Stubbins, 1956-59)
U.S. Embassy, New Delhi (1954-59)
architect: Edward Durell Stone
1954-64: “Heyday” of the FBO building program when U.S. embassies featured glass walls, screens, and *pilotis* and local themes

architect: Eero Saarinen

Unlike many other embassy designs, this featured load-bearing walls. Like many others this had multiple public entrances: one on either side and one in the front—consular, chancery business, and USIS (see library at left).

Local critics had little good to say about this or new embassies in The Hague and Dublin when they were new. They labeled the eagle as “xenophobic.”
U.S. Embassy, The Hague
architect: Marcel Breuer (1956-59)

U.S. Embassy, Dublin (1957-64)
architect: John Johansen
Early security changes
U.S. Embassy, Brasilia (1971)
architects: Henningson, Durham & Richardson (top left)

architects: Hartman/Cox (above)

U.S. Embassy, Nairobi (1971)
architects: A. Epstein & Sons
“Inman” architecture (late 1980s-early 1990s):
U.S. embassies in Sanaa, Singapore (top), Santiago and Lima (below)
“Inman” exception: U.S. Embassy, Ottawa (1994-99)  
architect: David Childs/SOM

[After Beirut (1983) and Oklahoma City (1995)…but before Nairobi (1998)]
Escalating attacks on U.S. embassies 1994-99

Beirut (1983)

Jakarta (1994)

Nairobi and Dar es Salaam (1998)
Nairobi shown here (above)

Beijing (1999)

Damascus (1998)
U.S. Embassy, Kampala, Uganda (2001)
architect: RTKL
prototype that led to “Standard Embassy Design”
52 new embassy compounds built to “Standard Embassy Design” specifications since 2001; 34 more in design or under construction now.

U.S. Embassy
Conakry, Guinea
2006
Architect: Integrus

U.S. Embassy
Bamako, Mali
2006
Architect: Integrus
SED in Managua, Nicaragua (2007)
architect: Page-Southerland-Page
architect: SOM
U.S. Embassy, Panama City (2007)
architect: Einhorn Yaffee Prescott
architect: Moore Ruble Yudell

Across from the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe; near the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag (shown above). Entrance (far left) is adjacent to Gehry’s DZ Bank.
U.S. Embassy, Beijing (2008)
architects: Craig Hartman/Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SF)
sculpture: “Tulips” by Jeff Koons, ART in Embassies Program
U.S. Embassy, London: old and new

architect: KieranTimberlake
From Copenhagen (in 1954 & 2000)…

…to Quito in 2008