



The Seagram Building in New York City.

Landmark Seagram Building Celebrates 50 Years

One of New York City's biggest celebrities—38 stories tall and a city block wide—is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

The Seagram Building, looking every bit as elegant as the day it opened in 1958, remains the embodiment of its architect's famous observation that "less is more." Also known for its supporting roles in major movies and television shows over the last half-century, this svelte, bronze beauty ranks at the top of Manhattan's architectural Pantheon along with the Empire State Building, Flatiron Building and Chrysler Building.

Designed by German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in collaboration with Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Philip Johnson, the structure's sleek design and classic, understated elegance brought a European influence to the United States and forever changed the landscape of architecture.

At the time it was built, the Seagram Building was the world's most costly skyscraper due to its use of expensive materials and lavish interior decorations, which included bronze, travertine, and marble throughout. It cost \$36 million to build and used 3.2 million pounds of bronze in its construction.

"The Seagram Building was the first modern building in a major metropolitan city to have a bronze curtain-wall," Frank Farella, the building's property manager, said during an interview recently. "Many architects have tried to duplicate it, but no building can compare to it."

(For details on the Seagram curtain wall, visit the Architectural Design Handbook of the

Copper Development Association at: www.copper.org/applications/architecture/arch_dhb/wall_cladding/curtainwall.html).

Recognized as one of the purest manifestations of the International Style of architecture, the office tower's façade consists of alternating bands of bronze plating and amber-tinted glass windows, which are separated by bronze-toned I-beams running vertically like mullions to the building's apex. Crowned "Building of the Millennium" by *The New York Times*, it was the first bronze-clad skyscraper—and perhaps the last of its kind.

"You look at any modern skyscraper today and you won't find bronze extruding from the façade," Farella says. "There isn't a manufacturing plant big enough to produce all that copper, and it would cost billions of dollars to build."

Formal landmark status was bestowed on the Seagram Building in 2006 when it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The building has won numerous architectural awards, including the coveted BOMA/NY Pinnacle Award, the real estate industry's highest honor.

"After all these years, the Seagram Building remains one of the classic architectural icons of our time," says architect Wayne Seale, western regional manager for the Copper Development Association. "The bronze exterior has aged beautifully—you wouldn't know it was built a half-century ago. We should all look so good when we're 50."

Besides its architectural contributions to history, the Seagram Building has been featured on the big screen, making cameos in movies like *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *The Best of Everything* and *Birth*.

"I get at least two or three phone calls a week from location scouts," Farella says. "This building is constantly being earmarked for movies. I'm not just the building manager – I'm also the location scout coordinator!" **HP**