NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)  

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM  

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property  

---------------------------------------------------------------  
historic name Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters  
other names/site number N/A  

2. Location  

---------------------------------------------------------------  
street & number 100 Independence Mall West  
city or town Philadelphia  
state Pennsylvania code PA  

---------------------------------------------------------------  

3. State/Federal Agency Certification  

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination _X_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _X_ meets _X_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _X_ nationally _X_ statewide _X_ locally. (_ See continuation sheet for additional comments._)  

Signature of certifying official ___________________________ Date December 20, 2006  

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission  

State or Federal agency and bureau  

In my opinion, the property _X_ meets _X_ does not meet the National Register criteria. (_ See continuation sheet for additional Comments._)  

Signature of commenting or other official ___________________________ Date  

State or Federal agency and bureau
4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
  - determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
  - determined not eligible for the National Register
  - removed from the National Register
  - other (explain): ______________

Signature of Keeper: ____________________
Date of Action: __________

5. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Property</th>
<th>Category of Property</th>
<th>Number of Resources within Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Check as many boxes as apply)</td>
<td>(Check only one box)</td>
<td>(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x private</td>
<td>x building(s)</td>
<td>Contributing Noncontributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ public-local</td>
<td>___ district</td>
<td>1 buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ public-State</td>
<td>___ site</td>
<td>0 sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ public-Federal</td>
<td>___ structure</td>
<td>0 structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ object</td>
<td>0 objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.): ________________
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Functions</th>
<th>Current Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Enter categories from instructions)</td>
<td>(Enter categories from instructions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMERCE/TRADE / business</td>
<td>COMMERCE/TRADE / business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7. Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architectural Classification</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Enter categories from instructions)</td>
<td>(Enter categories from instructions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODERN MOVEMENT</td>
<td>foundation <strong>reinforced concrete</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>walls <strong>reinforced concrete / aluminum</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Plexiglas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>roof <strong>synthetic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicable National Register Criteria</th>
<th>Areas of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Mark &quot;x&quot; in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)</td>
<td>(Enter categories from instructions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ A</td>
<td>ARCHITECTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ B</td>
<td>Period of Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.</td>
<td>1963-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>x</strong> C</td>
<td>Significant Dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.</td>
<td>1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ D</td>
<td>Significant Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.</td>
<td>(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ A owned by a religious institution or used for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

| ____ A owned by a religious institution or used for |
Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters
Name of Property

religious purposes.

____ B removed from its original location.

____ C a birthplace or a grave.

____ D a cemetery.

____ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

____ F a commemorative property.

____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Belluschi, Pietro

George M. Ewing Company

Kepes, Gyorgy

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation Sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

--- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

--- previously listed in the National Register

--- previously determined eligible by the National Register

--- designated a National Historic Landmark

--- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #

--- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data

--- State Historic Preservation Office

--- Other State agency

--- Federal agency

--- Local government

--- University

--- Other

Name of repositories: 1) Syracuse University Archives

2) Rohm and Haas Company Archives

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.51 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 18 487073 4422037 Zone Easting Northing

2 18 487073 4422037 Zone Easting Northing

3 18 487073 4422037 Zone Easting Northing

4 18 487073 4422037 Zone Easting Northing

--- See continuation sheet.
Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

==================================================================================================
11. Form Prepared By
==================================================================================================

name/title ___________________________ Cynthia Rose Hamilton
organization ___________________________ Heritage Consulting Group
street & number _______________________ Bethlehem Pike, Suite 200
city or town ___________________________ Philadelphia
state ________________________________ PA
date _________________________________ March 28, 2006 (Revised August 7, 2006)
telephone ____________________________ 215-248-1260

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Additional Documentation
==================================================================================================
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property’s location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

==================================================================================================

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name ____________________________

street & number ____________________ telephone __________________

city or town ________________________ state _____ zip code _______

==================================================================================================

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per
response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters building is located on the western boundary of Independence Mall in Center City Philadelphia. The building was designed by architect Pietro Belluschi in the Modern Movement style of architecture and was constructed between 1963-65. Embodying the central principles of the Modern Movement, the building is characterized by: straightforward expression of structure, simplicity, restraint, absence of ornamentation, muted color palette, and innovative use of modern materials. Rising nine stories above a full basement, the building's reinforced concrete structure is fully expressed on the exterior, in the first story colonnade of massive prismatic columns and also in the floors above in the form of projecting balcony-like slabs which emphasize the horizontality of the composition. Bronze-colored anodized aluminum framed windows set above bronze-hued plexiglass spandrels provide the fenestration. A lattice of bronze-colored anodized aluminum serves as the support for corrugated bronze-hued plexiglass sunshades. In the interior, the first floor is divided into two pavilions; one containing the main lobby for Rohm and Haas and the other containing a multi-purpose space for Rohm and Haas (originally designed for a bank tenant). Above the first floor are the office floors which are organized around a center core containing elevators, stairs, mechanical closets and restrooms. A corridor formed by metal demountable partition walls borders the core to the east and west. The offices surrounding the core are demised by a similar metal demountable partitioning system. Alterations have been primarily limited to the upgrading of floor treatments and wall coverings in the 1980s. On the office floors, the length of the corridors has been altered and doors have been randomly inserted within the demountable partition corridor walls, reflecting changing circulation patterns within the offices. The layout of the office spaces has continually evolved, as was originally intended, with partitions added, relocated and removed as needed. The building maintains the overall form, characteristics and details of a modern movement commercial building and has been minimally altered and retains integrity.

Setting: The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters building is positioned on the southwest corner of Independence Mall West (the western boundary of Independence National Historic Park) and Market Street (the city's main commercial thoroughfare). The building occupies the eastern half of the city block bounded by S. Independence Mall West (a.k.a. S. 6th Street), Market Street, S. 7th Street and Ranstead Street.

The blocks immediately surrounding the building contain a combination of commercial and retail development. The buildings generally range from three to ten stories in height, reflecting the
evolving development patterns of the east center city area with architecture ranging from the Colonial era to the late-20th century.

To the immediate east of the building, across Independence Mall West, is the recently constructed Liberty Bell Center in Independence National Historic Park. To the immediate west of Rohm and Haas, and on the same city block, is an unrelated late 20th century parking garage/commercial building and the Atwater Kent museum designed in 1825-27 by noted architect John Haviland. To the south, across Ranstead Street, is a late 20th century parking garage/commercial building. Across Market Street, to the north, is the James A. Byrne United States Federal Courthouse, a late 20th century high-rise federal government building.

Property/Landscape: The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters is sited on a flat, rectangular shaped parcel with 298 feet of frontage along Independence Mall West and a depth of 223 feet, comprising a total of 66,454 square feet. The building is situated on a podium that is raised approximately three feet above street grade. Broad granite steps lead from 6th Street to a 60-foot wide passage through the center of the building known as the galleria. The galleria continues through the center of the first story, effectively separating the first floor into two distinct pavilions. Open landscaped plazas, which were part of the original design, serve to buffer the building from the streets to the north, east and south and the neighboring buildings to the west. The center four bays of the galleria are floored in smooth brown pavers, believed to be original. The outer bays of the galleria and the open plazas are surfaced in darker brown textured brick pavers that were installed in the late 1980s. Granite walls, also part of the original design, line the property's perimeter, forming the border of the plazas. A sculptured fountain ("Milkwed Pod"), designed for this site by Clark B. Fitz-Gerald, is located on the west plaza. Broad granite steps lead from the west plaza to Market Street. Traditional urban sidewalks surround the building on the north, east and south perimeters. Beneath the west plaza is an underground loading area with access provided by a long driveway that slopes down from Ranstead Street.

Structural Organization: The Rohm and Haas building is a nine-story, reinforced concrete building with a full basement. The building footprint measures 270 feet in width and 150 feet in depth and rises 157 feet in height. The building is built on a 9 x 5 regular grid of concrete support columns that are positioned thirty feet apart. The first floor is organized into two equal 3
x 4 bay pavilions separated by the 2-bay wide open courtyard. The floor to floor height is twenty-two feet at the first floor and thirteen feet at the upper floors.

Exterior: A colonnade of prismatic reinforced concrete columns capped by inverted truncated pyramids defines the monumental first story. The columns are recessed fifteen feet from the wall line of the upper stories. Large ten-light anodized aluminum window systems in a hexagonal shape with a center raised peak are set between the columns. The openness of the design gives the first story a transparent quality when viewed from the street.

The north pavilion, which serves as the primary entrance and lobby for Rohm and Haas employees and visitors, is entered through the bay at the east end of the south wall, within the galleria. That entrance contains two anodized aluminum glazed revolving doors flanking a double-leaf anodized aluminum glazed door. A backlit sign bearing the words “Rohm and Haas” is located above this entrance. Near the west end of that wall is another entrance with three single-leaf anodized aluminum glazed doors. One single-leaf anodized aluminum glazed door is located on the north elevation and leads to the north plaza.

Four entrances access the south pavilion, which is currently vacant. Directly opposite the main Rohm and Haas entrance within the galleria is the main entrance to the south lobby with one revolving door and one double-leaf glazed door, both in anodized aluminum. Centrally-located on that wall is another entrance with two single-leaf anodized aluminum glazed doors. At the western end of the galleria is another entrance to the south pavilion, containing a revolving door and a double-leaf glazed door, both in anodized aluminum. An additional entrance to the south pavilion is provided through an anodized aluminum revolving door located at the eastern end of the south elevation.

Above the first story, the eight stories of offices are uniform in their exterior treatment. The exterior is defined vertically by reinforced concrete columns and horizontally by the ends of the concrete floor slabs, which form balcony-like projections. In the spirit of the modern movement, the balcony-like projections were conceived as functional elements; serving to shield the offices from direct sunlight. Bands of single-light anodized aluminum windows with bronze-tinted glazing span six across between the concrete columns. Above and below each window is a flat, opaque, bronze-colored Plexiglas spandrel panel. Corrugated translucent Plexiglas sunshades in
a bronze hue span continuously beneath the balcony-like shelf around the perimeter on the east, south and west elevations. Thin vertical anodized aluminum piers extend from the second floor to the roof and are spaced every fifteen feet apart, framing three windows per bay. These piers provide support for the sunshades and for a thin anodized aluminum rail that continues around the perimeter.

The flat roof is covered with an EPDM rubber membrane roofing system. A one-story 19,000 square foot pre-cast concrete mechanical penthouse tops the building and is recessed from each elevation, assuming the rectangular footprint of the building. The setback of the penthouse renders the feature visible only from a great distance. The penthouse is unfenestrated. A “Rohm and Haas” sign in anodized aluminum lettering is located at the northeast corner of the penthouse, facing the Mall.

Interior: The building continues to serve as the headquarters for Rohm and Haas, and to that end, houses offices for over 1,100 employees.

The basement contains the company’s mail room, loading dock, cafeteria, and other building services spaces. The elevator lobby on this floor contains an aluminum mail collection box. The mail room, loading dock, and building services spaces are utilitarian in design and finish. The cafeteria was renovated around 1987 and contains features and finishes representative of that era of construction with a ceramic tile floor, drywall and glass block walls, and an acoustical tile ceiling.

In the north pavilion, the first story is divided into two areas: the main public lobby for Rohm and Haas employees and visitors and the building management offices. The main public lobby is open in plan with a granite reception counter dating from the 1980s. The floor in the main public lobby is finished in brown pavers (identical to the four center bays in the galleria) laid in distinct sections, defined by granite bands. Sections of the floor are covered with carpeting. The perimeter walls are comprised of the large anodized aluminum-framed windows set between the massive concrete columns. Portions of the walls (representing the central core of the building) are faced in teak, constructed of narrow vertical strips that emphasize the twenty-two foot ceiling height of the lobby. The ceilings are exposed reinforced concrete. The concrete throughout remains in its natural state and the precision with which it was constructed is evidenced by its
remarkably smooth, consistent surface with no traces of the formwork. Massive acrylic plastic (Plexiglas) light sculptures, designed by Gyorgy Kepes, in a cruciform shape hang from the center of each bay at the juncture of the flared columns. Each sculpture is comprised of thousands of Plexiglas rods, the length of which varies. The teak walls are lit by anodized aluminum wall sconces.

The building's main elevator bank is located within the main lobby of the north pavilion. The elevator lobby walls are clad in smooth teak panels and the ceiling is comprised of a teak grid constructed in a diamond pattern. A building directory is incorporated within the wood walls. The elevator doors are flush aluminum. An aluminum and Plexiglas mail chute is located on the north wall. The floor in the elevator lobby is carpeted. The elevator cabs were renovated with new wall panels and new carpeting in the 1980s, but the original Plexiglas ceilings and Plexiglas indicators survive.

The building management offices, located along the north wall of the north pavilion, are similar in terms of features and finishes to the main public lobby. The floors are carpeted, the perimeter walls are large anodized aluminum windows set between the concrete piers, and the ceilings are exposed concrete. The monumentality of the space is somewhat diminished by a series of individual offices located within the space that are formed by flush wood partition walls and lowered acoustic tile ceilings.

A stair facilitates circulation from the basement to the first floor north lobby and is positioned against the east wall. That stair contains granite treads and risers, a brass handrail, flush wood paneled walls, and plaster ceiling. Alterations to the stair, most notably the addition of the side walls, were made in the 1980s.

The first story of the south pavilion housed a bank from the time of construction until the 1980s. Since that time, the space has been used as a multi-purpose space for Rohm and Haas. The floor throughout is entirely carpeted. Like the north pavilion, the perimeter walls are comprised of the large anodized aluminum framed windows set between the concrete piers. Portions of the walls in this pavilion are also faced in teak. The ceilings are exposed concrete with the Keyes' Plexiglas light fixtures. The teak walls are lit by anodized aluminum wall sconces. Alterations
undertaken around 1980 by the former bank include: carpeted floor, a freestanding bank vault, and a painted metal vestibule which is located at the northeast corner.

Floors two through nine contain the offices and associated support spaces. A central 6 x 1 bay (north-south orientation) core on each floor contains the elevator lobby, conference rooms, stairwells and toilet rooms. A five foot wide corridor (core corridor) borders the core to the east and west. Surrounding the core, the remainder of the floor plate is comprised of individual offices.

The elevator lobbies are rectangular in shape with two opposing banks of three cabs. Finishes in the elevator lobbies consist of black marble floor tiles with a center carpeted section. The existing carpeting dates to the 1980s renovations and it is not clear whether the original design incorporated carpeting. At the east and west ends of each elevator lobby are rectangular insets in brown marble tile surrounded by a band of white marble tile. At the second floor this detail does not exist. The walls and ceilings in the elevator lobby are plaster. Vinyl wall covering covers the walls. The elevator doors are aluminum with a narrow rectangular Plexiglas indicator that lights red for down and white for up. An aluminum and Plexiglas mail chute is located on the north wall of each lobby.

At each floor, the five foot wide core corridor is formed by an inner wall of plaster and outer wall that is floor-to-ceiling demountable flush steel partitioning (manufactured by E.F. Hauserman Co. and installed in 1965). Both the plaster and Hauserman walls are covered with vinyl wall covering. The length of the corridors have been altered over the years and door openings have been randomly inserted in the demountable partitioning, reflecting changing office layouts. The floors in the corridors are carpeted and the ceilings are plaster.

The individual offices, conference rooms and support spaces are created by floor to ceiling demountable modular partitioning (manufactured by Mills Co. and installed in 1967) that was designed to be flexible in nature, and accordingly, the partitions have been continuously repositioned as needed over the years. The Mills partitions are steel with some sections containing glass windows, some incorporating office doors, and some being flush metal identical in appearance to the Hauserman partitions. The Mills partitions are five feet in length and are set into metal tracks on the floor and ceiling. Acoustic tiles are laid between the metal tracks on the
ceiling and bands of fluorescent lights are centered within the acoustic tiles. The building is arranged on a five foot grid. By and large, most offices are 10 feet x 10 feet or 15 feet x 15 feet with some variations. Original precut holes are located through the concrete floors on a five-foot grid, which allows for wires to be easily fed throughout the building. The five foot grid continues on the perimeter walls, with windows measuring five feet in width, allowing the partition walls to align with the window mullions. The windows contain a simple aluminum sill and frame with no applied trimwork. Induction boxes and built-in bookcases line the perimeter walls beneath the windows. Throughout the office areas, the floors are carpeted and the perimeter walls are plaster with vinyl wall covering. The existing carpeting and wall coverings were installed during the 1980s interior upgrades.

Finishes in the conference rooms include carpeted floors, plaster walls covered in vinyl wall covering, and acoustic tile ceilings set in the metal grids. The existing carpeting and vinyl wall coverings were installed during the 1980s interior upgrades.

The restrooms were renovated in the 1980s and contain features and finishes representative of that era. In some instances, original Plexiglas privacy screens remain.

Circulation from floor to floor is facilitated by three stairwells: a double stair that is located at the south end of the core and two adjacent stairs, separated by a firewall, at the north end of the core. All stairs contain concrete treads and risers with a simple aluminum pipe railing and painted concrete walls and ceilings.

Sections of the fourth floor are leased by Rohm and Haas to a private company and are not accessible to the public. A large portion of the fifth floor holds the company’s main data center and is also not accessible. The floors in these spaces are generally covered in carpet and vinyl tile. The walls include Mills and drywall partitions. The ceilings are acoustic tile.

The ninth floor is the executive floor and contains the company’s main boardroom, which is centrally located near the east wall. Finishes in the board room include: carpeted floor, travertine walls, and plaster or drywall ceilings. In the passageway that leads to the boardroom the walls are clad in wood paneling. The carpeting was installed during the 1980s renovations, but the majority of the features on the ninth floor date from the original period of construction.
Integrity: National Register Bulletin 15 details seven aspects of integrity: Location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feelings and association. All of the seven aspects are fulfilled. Alterations have been limited to interior upgrades undertaken in the 1980s which concentrated on surface finishes and had no effect on integrity. Original character-defining features such as exterior balcony-like projections, anodized aluminum piers, bronze-tinted windows, Plexiglas sunshades and Plexiglas interior features remain. The massive colonnade with hexagonal anodized aluminum windows at the first story also remains. The building has been little altered from the original period and continues to express its origins as an example of the Modern Movement style of architecture and thus retains integrity.
Summary Statement

The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters, completed in 1965 in downtown Philadelphia, is significant under National Register Criterion C as an important example of the modern movement style of architecture in the City of Philadelphia. Commonly defined as the period between 1920 and 1970, the modern movement was an era marked by scientific and technological advances, an expanding economy, a rising standard of living, developing urban pressures, and a new awareness amongst architects of the social purpose of architecture. Architects of the modern movement adopted a pragmatic approach; their buildings demonstrated straightforward expression, a newfound awareness of the environment, structural honesty and functional integrity. As a discipline, architecture remained rooted in the fundamental concerns of the interrelation of light, space and texture, but with a new awareness of the architect’s role in shaping the physical environment. The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters embodies the distinctive characteristics of the style including: departure from historical precedent, straightforward structural expression, absence of ornamentation, innovative use of modern materials and technologies, environmental awareness, truth in materials, and simplicity and restraint in execution. In its siting and horizontal massing, the building directly corresponds to the adjacent Independence Mall. In its exterior treatment, every element represented on the elevations is born of function, with nothing applied for sake of ornamentation. Among the most notable technological innovations conceived for this building were the pioneering system developed for the poured-in-place concrete and the innovative applications for Plexiglas, the principal product produced by Rohm and Haas Company at that time. The muted color palette, also characteristic of the modern movement, exemplified the notion of restraint. The building is also noteworthy as one of only two examples in the City of Philadelphia of the work of an important modernist architect, Pietro Belluschi. The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters meets Criterion Consideration G for its exceptional importance in the area of architecture as one of Philadelphia’s premier examples of the modern movement style of architecture and the work of a nationally significant architect. The period of significance represents the construction period, 1963-1965.

Rohm and Haas Company - Early History
The Rohm and Haas Company traces its founding to 1907 when two young German entrepreneurs, chemist Otto Rohm and businessman Otto Haas, entered into a partnership to produce a chemical product for the leather tanning industry.¹ Success was realized early and in 1909 Haas established a United States office in Philadelphia. Rohm and Haas operated under three guiding principles: 1) offer a sophisticated, technically advanced chemical product; 2) use technically trained sales representatives; and 3) work with customers to help them exploit the products to the maximum advantage.² When the nation entered World War I, the United States government exerted pressure on the company to sever its ties with its German parent and the American firm of Rohm and Haas was born, solely led by Otto Haas.

As the nation’s economy expanded in the 1920s, so did specialty chemicals company Rohm and Haas, producing such products as synthetic resins for varnishes and synthetic organic insecticides. Otto Haas’ shrewd management led the company successfully through the turbulent Depression. Meanwhile, in Germany and elsewhere, innovations in the field of acrylic chemistry provided opportunities for revolutionary new products which ultimately would transform Rohm and Haas into a global company.

In June 1935, Rohm and Haas developed sheets of solid transparent resinous material for use as a glass substitute. Cast polymethyl methacrylate, the most significant of the acrylic products, was trademarked by Rohm and Haas on September 8, 1936 as “Plexiglas.”³ Plexiglas was initially used in military aircraft, where its optical clarity, light weight, and shatter-resistant qualities made it an optimal replacement for glass in canopies, gun turrets and windshields.⁴ Plexiglas and the company’s other acrylic products were instrumental in the war effort and as a result Rohm and Haas experienced exponential growth during World War II.⁵

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³ United States Trademark No.: 0338539, Registered on September 8, 1936, United States Patent and Trademark Office.
⁵ Other products developed by Rohm and Haas during World War II included: the first synthetic organic fungicide (Dithane) and an ion exchange resin which was widely used in water purification (Amberlite). Rohm and Haas, “Company Overview.” Retrieved March 1, 2006 from the World Wide Web: http://www.rohmhaas.com/company/history.html.
In the post-war period, Haas redirected research efforts on identifying civilian applications for acrylic products, seeking to continue the growth of the company. Among the long list of products unleashed in the years following the war included: signage, automotive tail lights, skylights, room dividers, and safety glazing.⁶ It was also during this period that Rohm and Haas introduced the first acrylic emulsions for use as paint binders. Acrylic paints revolutionized the paint industry, with benefits that included rapid-drying and soap-and-water clean-up. Acrylic binders soon found applications in inks, industrial finishes, floor polishes, mastics and adhesives.

Presented with enormous demand for their products in the post war years, Rohm and Haas opened new manufacturing plants in the United States and Europe. In 1960, Otto Haas died and was succeeded by his oldest son, Dr. Fritz Otto Haas (known as F. Otto Haas). F. Otto Haas sought to diversify the company’s product line and more fully develop the foreign operations, investing more heavily in new research and development facilities. It was under F. Otto Haas’ leadership that the company decided to move its headquarters from a collection of buildings on Philadelphia’s Washington Square to an efficient new building on Independence Mall.

**History of the Building**

Rohm and Haas initially engaged the firm of George M. Ewing Company in 1959 to expand and renovate their corporate headquarters on Washington Square.⁷ The company’s focus during that period was on the expansion of research and manufacturing facilities and there was great hesitancy to expend dollars on a new office building.⁸ During the early stages of the project, and in the course of the transition in leadership from Otto Haas to his son F. Otto Haas, it became clear that the existing site could not satisfy the anticipated future growth and programmatic needs of the company. Rohm and Haas directed George M. Ewing Company to proceed with the

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planning of a new building. In keeping with the company’s reputation for financial prudence, their message to George M. Ewing Company was “keep it simple and economical.”

Alexander Ewing, partner-in-charge, at George M. Ewing Company suggested that Rohm and Haas enter into discussions with the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, which was anxious to see redevelopment in the area around Independence Hall and had urban renewal funds at their disposal.

In May 1945, four years before the passage of the federal Housing Act of 1949 which launched Urban Renewal, the progressive Pennsylvania state legislature enacted the “Urban Redevelopment Law” which authorized communities within the Commonwealth to create local Redevelopment Authorities. Later that year, the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia (known as the RDA) was born. By acquiring and clearing property through condemnation, the RDA was responsible for much of the post-war development of Philadelphia. Philadelphia boasted one of the most active urban renewal programs in the nation, and was widely recognized for their ability to effectively join public and private interests.

At Alexander Ewing’s suggestion, Rohm and Haas approached the RDA with the idea of relocating to Independence Mall. The idea was fully embraced by the city and Mayor Richardson Dilworth, G. Holmes Perkins (Dean of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania) and Edmund Bacon (Executive Director of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission) led the charge in securing the deal with Rohm and Haas. The Rohm and Haas company’s move to Independence Mall was the premier example of the RDAs ability to join public and private initiatives to encourage corporations to commit to the city’s renaissance at a time when many corporations were fleeing to the suburbs.

Since the site was located in a designated “redevelopment area,” the design of the building was subject to rigorous reviews by the City Planning Commission and the City Art Commission, both advisors to the RDA. From the onset, the city agencies insisted that the building be of modern

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10 A full discussion is contained in Mackenzie S. Carlson, “Come to Where the Knowledge Is: A History of the University City Science Center,” September 1999. Retrieved March 6, 2006 from the World Wide Web:
11 Rohm and Haas arranged a trade of their property on Washington Square for the 6th and Market Street site.
design, intended to contrast with Independence Hall. This was viewed as a great advantage to Rohm and Haas since it afforded greater flexibility.\textsuperscript{12}

At the onset of the project, Rohm and Haas laid out their intent: they did not wish to have a luxurious building, but rather, they sought a building of excellent quality, with long-lasting sustainable materials and low maintenance costs, which would be comfortable for the company’s personnel.\textsuperscript{13} One mandate, set forth by Rohm and Haas, was the innovative incorporation of the company’s products, which they hoped would result in increased use in construction throughout the country.

George M. Ewing Company’s initial design was not favorably received by the various city reviewing agencies. William McClintock, Treasurer of Rohm and Haas, who assumed an active role in the project, suggested that Ewing bring on a consulting architect, someone who was innovative, persuasive, and widely recognized. Stanley Cole, who was at that time the in-house architect for Rohm and Haas, suggested Pietro Belluschi for the role. Cole believed that Belluschi could effectively communicate with company executives in straight-forward language and offered a refreshing approach to design.\textsuperscript{14}

In early June 1962, McClintock, Richard Lindabury (Planning Director of the new building for Rohm and Haas), and Alexander Ewing met with Belluschi in Cambridge to persuade him to join the project team.\textsuperscript{15} Belluschi eagerly accepted the commission; he considered Independence Mall to be “one of the best civic developments in the country” and was particularly enthused about the opportunity to develop new applications for the company’s principal products.\textsuperscript{16}

George M. Ewing Company’s initial scheme called for the siting of the building on the immediate corner of 6th and Ranstead Street in an effort intended to “contain the Mall with the

\textsuperscript{12}F.O. Haas – Comments on New Office Building, Meeting of Stockholders – April 20, 1965. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.

\textsuperscript{13}F.O. Haas – Comments on New Office Building, Meeting of Stockholders – April 20, 1965. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.

\textsuperscript{14}Telephone interview with Andrew Jarvis, AIA, Partner at Ewing Cole, March 6, 2006 and Memorandum dated March 8, 2006 from Stanley M. Cole, Ewing Cole to Andy Jarvis, Ewing Cole. Personal collection of author.

\textsuperscript{15}Correspondence dated May 31, 1962 from W. T. McClintock, Treasurer, Rohm and Haas to Dean Pietro Belluschi. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.

\textsuperscript{16}Meeting Minutes dated August 3, 1962. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
building." Belluschi expressed concern for the notion of trying to contain the Mall, believing that the "element of the street was too important to be ignored" and that it would be better to orient the building parallel to 6th Street."17 George M. Ewing Company's plan had called for a taller structure with a strong vertical orientation. Belluschi believed that a horizontal form would better relate to the adjacent Independence Mall.

Project meeting minutes intimate that Belluschi solely conceived of the exterior design, dwelling on each detail including the specific shades of colors for the various materials. Belluschi also drove the idea of using exposed reinforced concrete for the structure and the importance of having the material fully expressed on the exterior. Others on the team favored brick, in keeping with the neighborhood aesthetic, but Belluschi held firm citing the virtue of integrity. Throughout design and construction, Belluschi closely monitored all developments, working closely with George M. Ewing Company, whose charge it was to successfully carry out Belluschi's vision.

Within just a few weeks, Belluschi conceived of the basic building design and presented preliminary drawings of the site and elevations to the project team.18 George M. Ewing Company then erected models of the proposed building for presentation to the city agencies. Belluschi's design was favorably received in preliminary meetings with the Planning Commission, Art Commission and RDA.19 Through the summer of 1962, design details were more fully developed, detailed studies were produced, full size mock-ups were prepared, interior layouts were evaluated and cost estimates were secured. Final decisions were made on the color of the concrete, exterior aluminum, glass and Plexiglas. The project was formally unveiled at a joint meeting of the, Planning Commission and Art Commission and RDA on September 18, 1962.20

17 Meeting Minutes dated June 12, 1962, Meeting with Dean Pietro Belluschi and representatives of the George M. Ewing Co. at MIT. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
18 Meeting Minutes dated July 18, 1962. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
19 Correspondence dated September 24, 1962 from C. Van R. Bogert Jr., George M. Ewing Co. to Mr. Dan Kiley, Dan Kiley Associates. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
20 Meeting Minutes dated September 13, 1962. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
With the full approval of the various agencies, the project team began to prepare the construction documents. In early October, plans were submitted to Licenses and Inspections for preliminary approval. The official project team included:

Pietro Belluschi, Consulting Architect  
George M. Ewing Company, Architect of Record  
Saphier, Lerner, Schindler, Inc., Interior Design  
Dan Kiley, Landscape Architect  
Rohm and Haas, General Contractor  
Turner Construction Company, Construction Management

Project meetings were held every two weeks to review and discuss the details of the project. While Belluschi did not attend all meetings, he was provided with copies of the minutes and project correspondence confirms that his council was sought on all significant decisions and changes. At all critical junctures, Belluschi’s attendance at project meetings was requested and on numerous occasions, representatives from Rohm and Haas and George M. Ewing Company traveled to Cambridge to meet in person with Belluschi to address important details. Regular correspondence between Belluschi and George M. Ewing Company attest to Belluschi’s key role in all details of design and construction in a true collaborative spirit. At the urging of Rohm and Haas, Belluschi attended all city agency meetings and his presence was generally well received and his persuasiveness yielded successful results.

Project correspondence also indicates the level of Belluschi’s involvement in construction details such as the process and methodology for arriving at the remarkably smooth and consistent concrete surfaces. Belluschi developed thorough specifications for the concrete to ensure uniformity of color and finish. Brown Pennsylvania cement was used in conjunction with Delaware River sand, reflecting Belluschi’s preference for native materials to evoke contextual familiarity. Contractors were required to prepare eight test panels for evaluation and review, evidence of Belluschi’s uncompromising standards. At Belluschi’s direction, full sized mock-ups of the columns and capitals were also prepared. Great care was taken to maintain uniformity of materials and slump in every batch of concrete with regular inspection at the plant and on the site. Innovative techniques were developed to obtain the finest possible finish on the exposed concrete surfaces. The forms were fabricated in plywood with a special plastic treatment. Joints were tongued and grooved and bonded with epoxy cement to eliminate leakage. In addition to
the typical vibration of the concrete mix during the pour, the form itself was vibrated as pouring progressed. A separate form was required for each column and capital. The forms were kept in place as a method of production until all heavy construction in the area was completed. A light sandblasting was then conducted to remove the parting agent residue. To achieve truth in material, the concrete was left in its natural state with no sealant or finish applied. The Rohm and Haas Building was reportedly the first to use employ forms of this type in a major construction project.

Perhaps no other aspect of the Rohm and Haas project provides greater insight into Belluschi’s design process than his incorporation of Plexiglas. The notion of using Plexiglas as a building material was an idea that was conceived by Rohm and Haas. Early in the design stage, Rohm and Haas asked that Belluschi study the exterior curtain wall system employed at the Rohm and Haas Company office in Chicago. That building featured single-pane windows topped by Plexiglas louvers, with flush opaque Plexiglas spandrels at the base and roofline. Belluschi was intrigued by the application, and indicated to the project team that he would like the sunshades for the Philadelphia building “to be formed somewhat similarly.” While novel in concept, the Chicago building was relatively uninspired in execution, but clearly served as inspiration for the Philadelphia headquarters building.

The challenge of introducing Plexiglas as a building material and the orchestration of the Plexiglas with the glass, metal and concrete, was an important factor in Belluschi’s acceptance of the Rohm and Haas commission. “At present I am fascinated by the problem of using plastics and am in the process of drawing up a few ideas, some of which may prove technically impractical but worth discussing nevertheless” he wrote to Alexander Ewing. Adhering to the principle of integrity, or truth in material, Belluschi emphasized that Plexiglas should be used “in a manner which is expressive of the inherent qualities of the plastic and not to duplicate other building materials.”

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21 Memorandum #90, R.N. Lindabury, Rohm and Haas, August 17, 1962. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
22 Correspondence dated July 5, 1962 from Dean Pietro Belluschi to Alexander Ewing. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
23 Meeting Minutes dated June 12, 1962, Meeting with Dean Pietro Belluschi and representatives of the George M. Ewing Co. at MIT. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
Early in design development Belluschi requested samples of translucent Plexiglas sheeting in a beige color so that he could begin to study and better understand the nature of the material.\textsuperscript{24} Relying on his background in engineering, Belluschi studied all aspects of the material, seeking to gain a complete understanding of its potential and limitations. Belluschi held the samples up to daylight and artificial light, noted the interplay of highlights and shadows, the refraction of the light, and the potential for dramatic effect. Solar diagrams were prepared so that the project team could better envision the appearance during different seasons and at various times during the day. The precise color and translucency of the sunshade was another aspect of the project that was carefully deliberated to achieve a desired result that would give adequate sunlight control and still have a satisfactory color when viewed from the outside of the building. Prototypes of the sunshades were produced by the Rohm and Haas Plastics Engineering Laboratory and Rohm and Haas engineers approved all details related to the installation of the Plexiglas.

One of the greatest obstacles proved to be reconciling code issues for the novel material. As early as mid-1961, representatives of the company met with Leo Goldstein, Chief Engineer of the Department of Licenses and Inspections, to discuss the matter.\textsuperscript{25} Hoping to expedite the review, the project team explained that the four-foot projecting concrete slabs would effectively serve as a horizontal fire stop at each floor, thus rendering the combustibility of the Plexiglas irrelevant.\textsuperscript{26} Satisfied that the slabs would prevent fire from hopping from floor to floor, Goldstein approved the exterior application of Plexiglas with full knowledge that Plexiglas is ordinarily a combustible material.\textsuperscript{27} The Fire Commissioner and the Fire Marshal concurred with Goldstein’s decision. Perhaps not by coincidence, at that same time, Rohm and Haas was preparing the proposed plastics chapter for the Philadelphia Building Code and explicitly provided for the use of plastics, such as Plexiglas, as facing materials and for spandrel panels.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} Correspondence dated August 6, 1962 from R.N. Lindabury, Rohm and Haas to Dr. Pietro Belluschi. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
\textsuperscript{25} Memorandum dated July 13, 1962 from F.J. Rarig, Secretary, Rohm and Haas. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
\textsuperscript{26} Meeting Minutes dated August 3, 1962. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
\textsuperscript{27} Memorandum dated July 13, 1962 from F.J. Rarig, Secretary, Rohm and Haas. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
\textsuperscript{28} Memorandum dated July 13, 1962 from F.J. Rarig, Secretary, Rohm and Haas. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
Project meeting minutes provide important insight into the process by which the interior was designed and finished. As with the exterior, Belluschi established the overall design concepts and George M. Ewing Company oversaw the project on a day-to-day basis, ensuring that Belluschi’s vision was carried out while meeting the time and budget established by Rohm and Haas.

Great consideration was given to the design for the first floor lobbies. For the ceiling, Belluschi proposed the inverted pyramid design and provided a detailed comparative analyses of cost estimates for pyramidal versus conventional construction. The analysis estimated that the pyramidal system would be nearly 70% more expensive to construct. Belluschi persuasively argued that the pyramidal system provided a true expression of the structure of the building. Another important element in the design of the first floor lobbies was the lighting. It was Belluschi who first proposed that Rohm and Haas engineers experiment with long, thin rods and tubes “which would hang like the prisms on the old crystal chandeliers.” Belluschi proposed the commissioning of fellow MIT professor, Gyorgy Kepes for their design. As was customary on this project, there was extensive input from Rohm and Haas and from George M. Ewing Company on proposed designs and full scale prototypes were developed for approval. Extensive correspondence demonstrates that all matters of design, cost, weight, level of illumination and future maintenance were given great consideration. At one point, Keyes wrote to Rohm and Haas indicating that his design “took months and months of intense work, making model after model, test after test, to create a solution which finally had the quality I hoped for.”

At the project’s inception, Rohm and Haas issued the directive that the office floors must yield 80% net usable floor area in the tower floors, an arrangement that Belluschi believed would be difficult to reach in the “usual office building design.” It was George M. Ewing Company that conceived of the general layout, with a central core containing the building services, surrounded by open office areas. The resulting arrangement produced an interior designed for maximum efficiency. All building services including the stairs, elevators, rest rooms, electric and telephone

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29 The cost for a standard concrete system was estimated to be $443,986 versus $747,240 for a pyramidal system. “Comparative Structural Cost Estimate for Pyramidal vs. Conventional Construction,” dated August 23, 1962. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.

30 Memorandum stamped April 26, 1963. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.

31 Correspondence dated March 16, 1965 from Gyorgy Keyes to R.N. Lindabury, Rohm and Haas. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
cables, plumbing and ducts were contained in a central core around which the office space was arranged. This layout successfully met the 80% objective of Rohm and Haas, providing the greatest usable area in relation to total floor space.

The layout was based on a five-foot module. All offices were formed by movable steel partitions that were designed to fit the five-foot modular dimension on which all interior construction was based. Office dimensions were generally either 10-feet by 10-feet or 15-feet by 15-feet, depending on the partition arrangement. The partitions hung on metal tracks in the ceiling which also supported acoustic ceiling tiles. The window placement also adhered to the five foot grid so that the office partitions would always intersect with mullions.

Belluschi worked closely with interior designers, Saphier, Lerner, Schindler, Inc., of New York to develop a “simple, unpretentious design” for the interior. As with every aspect of the project, Belluschi was involved in all major decisions on color schemes, fixtures and furnishings. Belluschi frequently ordered changes to Saphier’s plans: lightening carpet colors, brightening wall colors, selecting upholstery with greater texture, and occasionally overriding Saphier’s recommendations on furnishings.  

The process by which the interior color schemes and furnishings were selected provides considerable insight into the design development process employed on this project and demonstrates the remarkable similarities between architect and client. For Belluschi, Rohm and Haas represented the ideal client; scientists who approached the design of the building as an experiment, one that required research, experimentation, trials and testing, before conclusions could be drawn. Saphier was asked to set up a 5,000 square foot floor in a vacant building to show various options for furniture, ceilings, lighting, partitioning, doors and carpeting. Prototypes of typical office units and groupings of actual furniture were then arranged. Executives and employees at Rohm and Haas were invited for a full day presentation and were asked to make selections from the various groupings. For the partitions, special emphasis was given to gauging vibration levels when doors were opened or shut. Mock-ups were installed showing the installations in various color schemes from vibrant to subdued and then employees’ opinions were solicited. Testing of all materials, furnishings and fixtures was a standard aspect

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of the project, intended to instill pride and enthusiasm in the employees and ensure that the building would be comfortable and efficient.

The imaginative use of acrylic plastics in the interior of the building was the aspect of the project that most satisfied Rohm and Haas. Among the many uses were: refractors for fluorescent lights, coat rack enclosures in offices, door knobs, push plates and kick plates, and modesty panels at rest room entrances. Numerous applications that were not visible were also mentioned such as: an acrylic emulsion paint that was used on all painted masonry surfaces, wetting agents used in the concrete blocks, acrylic resins used in the leather upholstery, acrylic emulsions used in the caulking compounds, upholstery and paints, plasticizers used in the vinyl wall covering, and resins used in the baked coatings of metal furniture. In total, the building contained 73,000 square feet or 1-2/3 acres of Plexiglas in the spandrels and sunshades, making it the largest installation of its kind ever built at the time of construction.

Another remarkable aspect of the project was the commitment evident in the incorporation of art into the building. The Redevelopment Authority required that the company spend a substantial amount of money on "art" and Rohm and Haas saw great opportunity in new applications for their acrylic plastic in sculpture. Rohm and Haas formed a company Art Committee, which spent two years reviewing and studying major works of art for the building. Models were reviewed in conjunction with Belluschi and George M. Ewing Company and were approved by the Redevelopment Authority prior to execution by the artist. Rohm and Haas commissioned one outdoor sculpture, two Plexiglas murals, and one acrylic sculpture. Ground breaking was held on April 15, 1963 and construction continued for two years. In mid-June 1965, Rohm and Haas moved from the grouping of fourteen buildings that they occupied on Washington Square into the newly constructed Rohm and Haas building.

33 F.O. Haas – Comments on New Office Building, Meeting of Stockholders – April 20, 1965. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
34 F.O. Haas – Comments on New Office Building, Meeting of Stockholders – April 20, 1965. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
36 Correspondence dated March 27, 1963 from W.T. McClintock, Treasurer, Rohm and Haas to Dean Pietro Belluschi. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
In early fall 1965, F. Otto Haas sent the following letter to Belluschi, expressing his deep appreciation for his work:

"On behalf of Rohm and Haas Company, I want to confirm how delighted we are with the beautiful building you designed for us. I am sure that you have heard a few of the many favorable comments from our employees. We are proud not only of the appearance of our building but also its sound construction, efficient operation and the pleasant working conditions which we have. The City officials, our neighbors on the Mall, and the general public have been universal in their approval of our building. I hope that you share our pleasure in the success of this project the key to which was your design."\(^{38}\)

A formal dedication ceremony and luncheon were held at the new Rohm and Haas building on October 26, 1965.\(^{39}\) The final cost of construction, exclusive of sitework and furnishings was reported to be $10 million.

**Coverage of the Building in Industry Journals**

Rohm and Haas began planning for the publication of their building in architectural journals as early as February 1965. Reportedly, the company had close ties with *Architectural Record* and accordingly, they gave that journal exclusive publishing rights.\(^{40}\) As with every detail of the project, Belluschi was much involved in the preparation of materials for publication, personally selecting Ezra Stoller as the photographer, believing him to be the “best of his kind” with an “architectural eye” able to provide the very best quality photographs.

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37 Thirteen of the fourteen buildings were at Washington Square. The remaining was at 17th and Walnut Streets. F.O. Haas – Comments on New Office Building, Meeting of Stockholders – April 20, 1965. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.

38 Correspondence dated September 9, 1965 from F.O. Haas to Dr. Pietro Belluschi. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.

39 Invitation for formal dedication in is the Syracuse University Archives.

40 Correspondence dated February 15, 1965 from C. Van R. Bogert, Jr. to Pietro Belluschi. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
Architectural Record published “Private Building Respects Public Site” in the January 1966 issue of the journal. On the subject of siting, the article noted, “The Rohm and Haas Company, the first private investor to build on the Mall, has acknowledged the public character of the new setting, and the company’s responsibility to all citizens, by erecting a building of dignity and restraint, which should establish a standard for this redevelopment sector.”41 Numerous aspects of the commission were discussed including the monochromatic exterior (with reference made to the similarity to the Seagram Building) and the innovative use of acrylic plastics throughout the building. The collaborative process employed for the selection of all colors, materials, furnishings and finishes and the extensive testing conducted by Rohm and Haas was also discussed as key to the project’s success.

An article, entitled, “Elegance on the Mall: The Rohm and Haas Building in Philadelphia,” appeared several months later in the journal Charette. Author and noted architectural historian, James D. Van Trump, weighed in on the subjects of scale and siting: “Not only is the nine story and penthouse building very pleasant to behold, it is very justly scaled to the great void of the Mall. In no way obtrusive, it is an elegant addition to the historical area in which it stands.” “It is one of the best designed structures erected recently in Pennsylvania.” “All in all, the Rohm and Haas Building is a supremely civilized structure, and it should serve as an inspiration to future builders in the Mall area.”42

The commercial interior design and architectural journal, Contract, addressed issues pertaining to the design of the building’s interior in their article, “Rohm and Haas: Extensive Planning and Testing in Advance of Construction Yield an Unusually Livable Single-Occupancy Building in Philadelphia.”43 As the article’s title implies, extensive details on the process implemented to select interior fixtures and furnishings was much addressed. The success of the building’s design can be attributed to the extent of the designer’s technical involvement in the project, the article asserted. “Extensive planning and testing in advance of construction yield an unusually livable

single-occupancy building in Philadelphia...The building itself is not only uncompromisingly modern but atypical in appearance and construction,” the article continued. 44

**Significance – Criterion C**

The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters building is of exceptional architectural significance as an important example of the modern movement style of architecture in the City of Philadelphia. This building represents the true spirit of the modern movement, a style born of advancements in science and aesthetic departure: new materials and technologies fostered a novel design and the architects produced a building that was free of historical references. The building is one of only two buildings in Philadelphia designed by the twentieth century modernist architect, Pietro Belluschi.

**Evolution of the Modern Movement**

The Modern movement is generally defined as the period between 1920 and 1970. The style embodied the twentieth century notion that architecture must look toward the future, eliminating references to historical precedent.

The origins of the Modern Movement can be traced to the late nineteenth century and the development of the Chicago School of Architecture. During the 1880s, a number of high-rise buildings were erected in downtown Chicago. Each had an individual identity, but a shared framework had evolved which became known as the Chicago School. The Chicago School refers to a group of architects active in Chicago in the late 19th century that promoted the incorporation of new technologies in commercial buildings. Among the distinguishing features of the Chicago School buildings were: steel frame skeleton with masonry cladding, the dominance of the window and the development of the “Chicago window,” and the limited application of ornamentation. Chicago style skyscrapers generally assume a columnar organization with the first story serving as a base, the middle stories forming the shaft, and the upper stories forming the capital – typically embellished and crowned by a projecting cornice. While the steel frame skeleton allowed for the application of any style, most commonly, Chicago School buildings incorporated neoclassical elements in their exterior designs. The decade between 1883 and 1893

marked the most significant period of development of the Chicago School. Architect and
engineer, William Le Baron Jenney, is credited with founding the Chicago School, and first
established the new direction with his Home Insurance Company commission which was
constructed in 1884-1885. Other Jenney commissions notable for their contribution to the
development of the Chicago School included: the Leiter Building (1889), Manhattan Building
(1891) and the Fair Building (1891). Other architects associated with the Chicago School were:
William Holabird, Martin Roche, Daniel Burnham, John Root, Dankmar Adler, and Louis
Sullivan.

In Europe, parallel developments in the field of architecture had evolved, resulting in what
became known as European Modernism. In the late 1890s, the impulse for new movements in
architecture initially from Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos in Austria and later from Peter Behrens
and Walter Gropius of Germany. Germany, a leader in the industrial age, became the center for
European modernism. The Deutscher Werkbund (German Work Federation) was a German
association of architects and designers founded in 1907 in Munich. The Werkbund was a state-
sponsored effort to integrate traditional crafts and mass-production techniques. Among the most
notable of the architects that comprised the Werkbund was Peter Behrens. Behrens employed a
new approach to factory design, seeking to make the factory a more dignified workplace. In his
design for the Berlin Turbine Factory, Behrens employed such new materials as steel and glass to
create a new solution for industrial architecture.

Inspired by Behrens’ Turbine Factory, Walter Gropius’ design of the Fagus Works (shoe-last
factory completed in 1911) expressed a new architecture born of honesty and integrity. In the
Fagus Works, the glass and iron walls were cleanly joined at the corners, without the intervention
of piers. The piers were set behind the façade so that the curtain wall was fully realized. The
role of the exterior wall had become a mere screen, stretched between the structural framework.
Gropius had recognized the new potential of iron, glass and concrete, and in his manipulation of
those basic elements had created an “organic illumination of the interior.”

Gropius founded the Bauhaus, the common term for the Staatliches Bauhaus, an art and architecture school in Germany that operated between 1919 and 1933. The Bauhaus became one of the most influential currents in Modernist architecture. The Bauhaus operated under three architect-directors (Walter Gropius 1919-1928, Hannes Meyer 1928-1930, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe 1930-1933). Seeking to create a new architectural style to reflect the new modern age, the Bauhaus led architecture in a new direction; one that united art, craft and technology and emphasized function and mass production while embracing the aesthetic.

The Bauhaus fostered the International Style of architecture, which became the predominant trend in architecture in the 1920s and 1930s. Common characteristics of the style included: simplification of form, cubic forms, honest expression of structure, absence of ornament, incorporation of glass, steel and concrete as the predominant materials, horizontal bands of windows, use of mass-production techniques, machine aesthetic, and acceptance of the automobile. After World War II, the International Style matured into the modern movement, and embraced the new economic, social and political aspects of the mid-twentieth century.

The Modern Movement in the City of Philadelphia

By mid-century, Philadelphia had emerged as a center for new architecture and architectural thought and the city fully embraced the modern movement. With a dynamic and comprehensive city plan, driven the City Planning Commission Director Ed Bacon and his allied architects at the University of Pennsylvania, the city's environment fostered a new interdisciplinary approach to architecture and urban planning.

The 1950s and 1960s marked one of Philadelphia's most turbulent political periods. In 1951, Democrats succeeded in unseating the established Republican machine by electing Joseph Clark as mayor and Richardson Dilworth as District Attorney. Within just a few years, Clark was elected to United States Senate and Dilworth became mayor. One of Dilworth's central accomplishments was his record of convincing business leaders to commit to Philadelphia's renaissance. Dilworth, along with Ed Bacon of the City Planning Commission and G. Holmes Perkins of the University of Pennsylvania, were instrumental in shaping modern Philadelphia. Dilworth, Perkins and Bacon were the driving force behind urban renewal and, Perkins and Bacon in particular were staunch proponents of the modern movement. Dilworth,
Perkins and Bacon were the central figures responsible for brokering the deal with Rohm and Haas for the construction of their building on Independence Mall.

Ed Bacon served as head of the Planning Commission during the construction of the Rohm and Haas building and was a planning visionary who was instrumental in leading Philadelphia into the modern movement. Bacon’s vision for Philadelphia called for removal of the urban density to create modern high-rise buildings and open plazas, ideas that were widely challenged by architects, urbanists and planners later in the 20th century. Bacon’s plan for the city conceived of Independence Mall as a terminus for Market Street, which was to become a renewed retail corridor. Bacon advocated for the condemnation and demolition of the dense development north of Independence Hall, in favor of an open, formal symmetrical arrangement of arcades and allees. Project correspondence indicates that Bacon was particularly involved in discussions regarding the siting of the Rohm and Haas building.

G. Holmes Perkins served as Dean of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania from 1951 to 1971. Perkins is credited with transforming the program from a Beaux Arts architecture school into a modern, scientific, interdisciplinary institution with a focus on urban renewal. Perkins was an effective dean who brought dramatic change to the School of Fine Arts. He involved influential local and national leaders and emphasized the need for collaboration and an interdisciplinary approach to architecture, city planning and landscape architecture. Perkins assembled an impressive faculty, including Louis Kahn, and established a new curriculum that departed from the Beaux Arts system that had been in place at the University of Pennsylvania for decades. During his deanship, Philadelphia produced a generation of young visionaries and designers who helped lead the nation in the modern movement. Correspondence related to the


project attests to Perkins’ involvement in the review of preliminary designs for the Rohm and Haas building.

Among Philadelphia’s most notable modern movement architects of the 1950s and 1960s were: Louis Kahn, Vincent G. Kling and Associates, Venturi and Rauch, Mitchell/Giurgola, and Stonorov and Haws. Of the group, Kahn, Venturi, Mitchell and Giurgola served under Perkins on the faculty of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania, and inspired a generation of modernist architects.

Modern Movement Influences on Belluschi’s Design for Rohm and Haas

In the United States, the 1950s and 1960s marked the pinnacle of the modern movement and represented a turning point in the style, spurred by the controversy that swirled around the pressures of commercial real estate. Concern grew among urban planners that skyscraper development was solely based on independent ownership of individual lots and often ran counter to neighborhood plans. Three of the most significant contemporary modernist works: SOM’s Lever House (1951-52), Mies van der Rohe’s Seagram Building (1954-58) and Gropius, Belluschi and Roth’s Pan Am Building (1958-63), challenged the established streetscapes of Manhattan’s beloved Park Avenue. During the fall of 1961, the Architectural League of New York and MOMA sponsored a series of forums entitled, “The Building Boom – Architecture in Decline.” The first forum was dedicated to the commercial transformation of Park Avenue. Vincent Scully’s talk “The Death of the Street” was highly critical of the commercial forces behind the transformation. He defended Park Avenue’s eclectic mix of architecture and argued that the axial focus provided a “civil framework for urban life.” In Scully’s view, the modernist skyscraper was eroding the street fabric.

In response, architects began to rethink issues of siting, massing and context. For Belluschi, Rohm and Haas, which came on the heels of Pan Am, was his opportunity for redemption; a prospect that would afford him a chance to address these issues and design a modernist tower that would fit comfortably in the established urban landscape. In his usual methodical approach,

52 The names of the various firms evolved over time. The names listed generally represent the names under which the firms operated during the modern movement.
Belluschi studied contemporary modernist buildings, seeking aspects that he could incorporate into his design and recognizing opportunities to improve upon them where possible.

Project correspondence points to the Seagram Building in New York as the direct precedent for Belluschi’s design for Rohm and Haas. Designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in 1958, much of the success of the Seagram Building has been attributed to the siting of the building, with its generous setbacks, its elegant proportions, and the unique treatment of the exterior with tinted glass and bronze I-beams and spandrels (the Seagram Building was the first bronze colored skyscraper).

Belluschi’s siting of Rohm and Haas, which incorporated open plazas and the central open galleria, offer a sense of refuge and civility. Similarities between the buildings are more apparent in terms of exterior treatments. Direct references to the Seagram Building are found in numerous instances in the project correspondence. Belluschi first referenced the Seagram building in the initial project team meeting in June 1962, when he expressed his personal dislike for pronounced colors and cited the Seagram Building as an example of “a serene yet somewhat articulated design.” Belluschi again referenced the Seagram Building, although this time seeking to improve upon its design, during the design of the first floor windows. Belluschi’s preference was for three pieces of glass within each opening with no horizontal members. Discussions ensued over cost, feasibility and safety. Project engineers confirmed the need for horizontal members and Belluschi responded, “We are close to having a great piece of design: we will lose much in nobility if we reduce the size of the panes (have them look at the sizes of the Manufacturer Trust’s windows on Fifth Avenue, N.Y., or at Seagram’s and they will know what we mean).” Later came another reference as the design of the windows on the upper floors was being finalized. Belluschi stated that he had “hoped to use brown plate glass similar to the No. 52-25 used in the Seagram Building (manufactured by the Franklin Glass Corporation in Butler, Pennsylvania).” Belluschi believed that the use of subdued colors in a narrow range of bronze to brown would give a timeless appearance that would not become unfashionable.

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54 Meeting Minutes dated June 12, 1962, Meeting with Dean Pietro Belluschi and representatives of the George M. Ewing Co. at MIT. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
55 Correspondence dated March 9, 1963 from Pietro Belluschi to C. Van R. Bogert, Jr., George M. Ewing Co. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
56 Correspondence dated August 17, 1962 from Pietro Belluschi to Richard N. Lindabury, Rohm and Haas. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
Another direct precedent was I.M. Pei’s Earth Sciences Building on the campus of MIT. Completed in 1964, the Earth Sciences Building is a monolithic concrete tower. Belluschi suggested to the project team that the color of the concrete for Rohm and Haas be similar to that of Pei’s Earth Sciences Building, which was at that point under construction. Belluschi sought Pei’s guidance for the concrete work, specifically requesting a copy of the concrete specifications used for the Earth Science Building.⁵⁷ In customary form, Belluschi drew heavily on Pei’s specifications and then improved upon them.

While no written record exists of the influence of the Lever House, the first story configuration of Rohm and Haas clearly recalls that of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill’s 1952 Lever House. Lever House contains a raised mezzanine level supported by columns around the perimeter that provides a public pedestrian area under the building. The columns are set back from the wall plane and clear plate glass creates the illusion of transparency at the first story. At the upper stories, bands of single pane windows above bluish-green glass spandrels are divided by thin aluminum vertical supports.

**Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters as an Example of the Modern Movement**

The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters building is an important example of the modern movement in Philadelphia. The building expresses the central principals of the modern movement including: interrelationship of proportion and structure, awareness of setting, horizontal emphasis, simplicity and restraint, innovative use of modern materials, truth in materials, and expression derived from structure rather than ornament.

In the exterior design, awareness of setting is evident in the sensitive positioning of the building with its generous setbacks from the streets to preserve the vista along 6th Street from Market Street to Independence Hall. The horizontal massing of the building directly corresponds to the adjacent Independence Mall. The building’s proportions are clearly dictated by structure. Structural elements are fully expressed reflecting the notion of truth in materials. Every element of the exterior serves a function - form follows function - and there is a complete absence of applied ornamentation. The unified and muted color palette best exemplifies the notion of

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⁵⁷ Correspondence dated December 6, 1962 from Secretary to Dean Pietro Belluschi to I.M. Pei. Belluschi Collection, Syracuse University Archives.
restraint and simplicity. Finally, the innovative applications for modern materials such as Plexiglas and concrete express the basic fundamentals of the modern movement.

The elements of the buildings’ exterior that best represent the modern movement style include:

- Straightforward expression of structure and materials as demonstrated by the exposed concrete columns with hyperbolic paraboloid caps at the first story and the exposed concrete structure on the upper floors.
- Innovative use of materials including: Plexiglas, tinted window glass, Duranodic finished aluminum, and a pioneering system for poured-in-place concrete.
- Concern for energy efficiency as demonstrated by the projecting concrete slabs and sunshades.
- Absence of ornamentation – every feature on the exterior serves a function.
- Warm muted color palette which exemplifies restraint.

Elements of the interior that best represent the modern movement include:

- Expression of structure in the use of exposed concrete columns and ceilings in the first floor lobbies.
- Concern for the aesthetic as demonstrated by the focus on incorporating artistic elements into the building.
- Recognition of the social purpose of architecture as demonstrated by the focus on providing a flexible interior layout and the extensive decision-making process relative to interior colors, fixtures and furnishings.
- Incorporation of modern materials into the interior, most notably in the innovative applications of Plexiglas.

Comparative Analysis

Perhaps the most significant example of modern architecture in Philadelphia is the PSFS Building at 12th and Market Streets. While completed in 1932, more than thirty years before the Rohm and Haas building, Howe and Lescaze’s PSFS Building was undoubtedly seen by Belluschi, during his trip to the city in 1929 and again during the Rohm and Haas project. PSFS is often regarded as the finest modern building in the city and one of the most important examples of the International style in the country. Reflecting modern movement principals, the
exterior form is an expression of the interior functions. To further emphasize the different
functions, different materials were applied to the exterior to denote the separate functions. The
base contains a retail use with a banking room above. Bank offices are located in the office
tower which is set back from the building's base. At the rear of the building is a core containing
the stairs, elevators and other building services. The idea of the core may have influenced the
design conceived for the Rohm and Haas building.

Another widely acclaimed example of the modern movement style in Philadelphia is the
Richards Medical Research Laboratory (37th Street and Hamilton Walk on the University of
Pennsylvania Campus) designed by Louis Kahn and completed in 1961. Like PSFS, the
Richards Medical Center is considered by architectural critics to be one of the most significant
buildings in modern American architecture. Richards Medical Center was a pivotal project in
the career of Louis Kahn and brought him international recognition. In his design of the
building, Kahn divided the building into served and servant spaces, giving each its own form and
expression. The core tower is poured-in-place concrete and contains the building services such
as elevators and utilities, again similar to the Rohm and Haas building. The laboratories at
Richards Medical Center are located in three eight-story towers which are connected to the core.
Each of the towers in turn is served by smaller brick shafts containing additional services. The
laboratories are open spaces made possible by the placement of the structural system on the
periphery of the building.
There are several relevant examples of the modern movement style of architecture in
Philadelphia that were conceived as urban renewal initiatives undertaken during the era of Rohm
and Hass. Most notably are: Municipal Services Building (15th and John F. Kennedy Boulevard),
Police Administration Building (Race Street between 7th and 8th), and the Society Hill Towers
(2nd and Locust Streets).

Vincent G. Kling and Associate's Municipal Services Building was completed the same year as
Rohm and Haas, 1965. Initiated by the same progressive city leaders, the Municipal Services
Building was designed with parameters that were remarkably similar to Rohm and Haas. The
Municipal Services Building was designed to serve as a backdrop to City Hall, much like Rohm
and Haas was the backdrop for Independence Mall. Like Rohm and Haas, large open plazas, a
concept driven by Ed Bacon, surround the building and provide a respite from the dense urban

environment. While considerably taller than Rohm and Haas, the overall organization of the composition is similar with the upper floors cantilevered over the lobby. As with Rohm and Haas, advanced energy saving features were also incorporated into the design such as double glazed windows and an innovative HVAC system.\(^59\)

Several blocks north of Rohm and Haas is another vestige of the city's Independence Park urban renewal effort, the Police Administration Building (Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham, 1963). This building marks the northern boundary of Independence Mall. In an effort to achieve efficient floor space, the building is unusual in its arrangement with two circular units linked by a center curved section. In the modernist strive to incorporate new materials and technologies, the architects employed an innovative pre-cast concrete panel system for the exterior. Like the sunshades of Rohm and Haas, the pre-cast panels serve an aesthetic and functional purpose, carrying the mechanical systems for the heating and cooling.\(^60\)

Another important example of the modern movement is the Society Hill Towers, which was constructed in 1964. The Society Hill Towers was conceived by the Redevelopment Authority as an impetus to reverse decline in the dilapidated neighborhood. I.M. Pei submitted the winning plan in the national competition for the design. Pei's design incorporated townhouse development and three residential towers. The towers are constructed of poured-in-place concrete, ubiquitous in New York and most other large cities, but unique in Philadelphia. Following modernist principles, the concrete serves both aesthetic and functional purposes as the structure and the façade. Society Hill Towers is surrounded by the open plazas favored by Bacon and other modernists, but unlike Rohm and Haas, the plazas at the Society Hill Towers are vast and form a strong visual and physical barrier between the old city and the new development.

In the context of the modern movement in Philadelphia, the Rohm and Haas building is one of the city's premier examples of the style. In terms of siting and integration into the historic urban landscape, it is also among the most successful. Its plazas are graciously scaled and proportioned, unlike the vast barren plazas that characterize other urban renewal initiatives, such as the Municipal Services Building and the Society Hill Towers. The translucent qualities achieved by the cantilevered arrangement and the use of Plexiglas minimize the scale and massing in deference to nearby Independence Hall. By contrast, the cast concrete exteriors of the


Municipal Services Building, Society Hill Towers and the Police Administration Building emphasize the massing and set the buildings apart from their historic surroundings. Kahn’s Richards Medical Center and Howe and Lescaze’s PSFS Building, may have influenced Belluschi as the notion of a center core and the straightforward expression of structure and interior function are reflected in the design of Rohm and Haas. The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters building achieves the successful balance of science and art, the force behind the modern movement. In the true spirit of modernism, the Rohm and Haas building represents the incorporation of innovative materials and technologies and the honest structural expression.

Evaluation of the Building’s Significance in the Modern Movement

Docomomo, the international organization dedicated to the study of significant works of Modern movement architecture, has defined the following six criteria which should be applied to evaluate the significance of modern buildings:⁴¹

1. Technological merit: Does the work employ innovative modern technology to solve structural, programmatic, or aesthetic challenges?
2. Social merit: Does the design reflect the changing social patterns of 20th century life? Did the designer attempt to improve either living or working conditions, or human behaviors through the work’s form or function?
3. Artistic and Aesthetic merit: Does the work exhibit skill at composition, handling of proportion, scale and material and detail?
4. Canoncic merit: Is the work and/or architect famous or influential? Is it exemplary work?
5. Referential Value: Did this work exert an influence on subsequent designers as a result of one or more of its attributes?
6. Integrity: Is the original design intent apparent? Have material changes been made which compromise the architectural integrity of the structure or site?

The Rohm and Haas building fulfills all six criteria:

1) The building employs innovative modern technology in the novel use of Plexiglas and the poured-in-place reinforced concrete.

2) F. Otto Haas attested to Belluschi’s success in designing a building that was both comfortable and efficient for the building’s employees.62

3) Contemporary critics cited the pleasing scale and proportions as one of building’s most successful aspects.

4) Belluschi is regarded by architectural historians as an influential figure in the modern movement.

5) The Rohm and Haas building was acclaimed for the respect it afforded its surroundings.

6) The building has been little altered and retains integrity.

**Pietro Belluschi, a Biographical Overview**

Pietro Belluschi was born on August 18, 1899 in Ancona, Italy, a major port on the Adriatic Sea.63 In his early years, Belluschi was schooled in Rome, a city steeped in rich architectural tradition. He opted to leave school in 1917 to assist in the war effort, serving as an officer in the Army. Belluschi was released from the Army in 1920 and enrolled at the University of Rome, graduating in December 1922, with the equivalent of an American bachelor’s degree in civil engineering.64

The following year, Belluschi was offered an exchange fellowship to study for one year at Cornell University. While at Cornell, Belluschi enrolled in an architecture studio class where he was first exposed to the Beaux Arts system and the art of rendering. After completing his studies at Cornell, Belluschi pursued engineering work and soon traveled west in hopes of seeking

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63 Meredith Clausen’s monograph on Belluschi contains a detailed account of his career, provides insightful and scholarly perspective on his commissions, and is the most comprehensive source for biographical material. Meredith L. Clausen, *Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), 5. Clausen reviewed this nomination and provided valuable insight on Belluschi and the Rohm and Haas commission.

64 Belluschi’s interest was in architecture, but he pursued engineering because at that time one had to be a civil engineer to practice architecture. Meredith L. Clausen, “Interview with Pietro Belluschi,” Portland, Oregon, August 22, 23 and September 4, 1983. Smithsonian Archives of American Art.
employment with an engineering firm on the west coast. Belluschi visited Portland, which at the time was experiencing tremendous growth and expansion, and despite his limited architectural training, found work as a designer in the architectural office of A.E. Doyle and Associates, one of the city’s most prestigious architecture firms. A.E. Doyle’s work leaned heavily toward a modern interpretation of the classical revival styles and Belluschi’s natural sense of proportions and materials appealed to the firm. Belluschi rose within the ranks of A.E. Doyle, assuming the position of head of the design department in 1927.

In 1929, Belluschi traveled to Europe and had a first hand opportunity to see the architecture being produced at that time in Italy, France and Germany. The following year, Belluschi traveled to the East Coast to study modern skyscraper designs in New York City and Philadelphia. Upon his return, he established a new design philosophy, one that emphasized simplicity. Belluschi later wrote: “The truth is that science having given us new materials, we found ourselves free to follow new ways of creating and composing masses...simplicity with mass is, or ought to be, the real expression of an age where waste is not tolerated.”

One important project that helped sustain the offices of A.E. Doyle during the Depression was the design of the Portland Art Museum. Belluschi devised numerous schemes for the exterior with an eye toward simplicity. Facing resistance from the Trustees of the Art Museum, who favored a traditional Georgian Revival design, Belluschi sought advice from Frank Lloyd Wright, who had recently lectured at the University of Oregon. Wright encouraged Belluschi to move in the direction of a “sensible, modern exterior” and following Wright’s suggestions Belluschi refined his design and produced a modern interpretation of the Georgian style, which was approved by the museum’s trustees. Belluschi’s red brick exterior recalled the materials and massing characteristic of the Georgian style, but with crisp lines, flush surfaces and restrained ornamentation that bespoke a clear modernism. Marking a significant departure for museum design, the interior contained spacious galleries that varied in size and dimension that were filled

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with natural light. Undoubtedly influenced by the notion "form follows function," Belluschi wrote,

"As to the exterior appearance of the building, having come to the conclusion that windows of a certain peculiar shape placed at a certain location were the most efficient from the lighting point of view, it was not tried to disguise, cut or change them in any way in order to conform to any rule of style, but they were given their proper place and made a part of that subtle relationship of masses and materials which constitutes, or rather ought to constitute, the bases of real architecture." 69

The Portland Art Museum building was prominently featured in Architectural Record, bringing national attention to Belluschi.

Soon after, Belluschi was commissioned for the design of the Chapel for the Finley Mortuary. His design, which was published in Architectural Forum, reflected a Scandinavian influence and was characterized by its bold form with a strong emphasis on horizontality. In 1938, the chapel and the Portland Art Museum were selected by a committee of the AIA as two of the one hundred most distinguished buildings built in the United States since World War I. 70 Belluschi had gained a national reputation as a leading modern architect, bringing a flurry of commissions to the office of A.E. Doyle.

Belluschi was retained for a number of residential designs during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Through those commissions, Belluschi established important themes including: successful blending of architecture into the landscape through the use of native materials, the alignment of the architecture with the natural contours of the landscape, clean lines, simple forms, horizontal massing, and a conscious attempt to capture important views and vistas in the landscape from within the house. Directly influenced by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Belluschi’s residential commissions from this period featured: covered loggias, built-in furniture, fireplace as a central element, and an undeniable Japanese influence. 71 With a growing demand for low-cost housing

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71 Belluschi indicated in the interview with Clausen that Wright was a strong influence in his career, particularly the Taliesin East project. Meredith L. Clausen, "Interview with Pietro Belluschi," Portland, Oregon, August 22, 23 and September 4, 1983.
in the 1940s, Belluschi developed plans for an affordable model house that was widely acclaimed and a series of commissions for such houses followed. Belluschi’s designs paralleled Wright’s Usonian houses – affordable homes that could be mass-produced for America’s middle class. Belluschi’s designs were tasteful and harmonious with nature and he contributed to the shaping of Pacific Northwest Regionalism.

During this period, Belluschi was also commissioned for a number of church buildings. His churches were characterized by their clean lines, flush exterior and interior walls, stripped down ornamentation, expression of function in organization of massing, unity with nature, horizontality in composition, and innovative and strategic methods of capturing light using both plate glass and directional glass. Belluschi believed that for churches, the architect must look at the basic elements of the great cathedrals: proportion, materials and quality of light, and translate those qualities to modern times. He would study a problem, such as lighting, and closely examine each aspect: the character, direction and the amount of light. As with his residential commissions, Belluschi sought simple, economical solutions for his church designs.

When America entered World War II, A.E. Doyle was commissioned for a number of war-related government-sponsored housing developments. Those commissions were widely acclaimed in national journals and later in a Museum of Modern Art exhibit. The war related commissions offered Belluschi his first opportunity at large scale planning and community development.

In 1943, Belluschi bought out the firm of A.E. Doyle, renaming the practice, Pietro Belluschi, Architect.


That same year, Howard Myers, editor of *Architectural Forum*, published a special issue entitled, “New Buildings for 194X.” Reflecting Belluschi’s stature as a leading national architect, Myers invited Belluschi and other renowned architects such as Mies van der Rohe, Holabird and Root, Stonorov and Kahn, and William Lescaze, to submit designs intended to steer architecture toward a new direction after the war. Belluschi’s innovative design incorporated aluminum, then a novel material, for both structural members and exterior cladding.

In the postwar years, Belluschi’s firm was awarded several major commissions which garnered considerable attention, the most significant of which was the offices for the Equitable Savings and Loan Association in Portland. Having studied the potential applications for aluminum for his design for the special issue of *Architectural Forum*, and having used it to a limited extent on subsequent projects, Belluschi proposed its use on a large scale for the Equitable Building. Aluminum, the “metal of the future,” was first manufactured at a large scale during World War II. After the war, aluminum manufacturers sought new applications for their products and the building industry represented significant opportunities.

Completed in January 1948, the Equitable Building was the first major corporate tower in the country to be completed after the close of the war, and is generally considered the first curtain wall structure of glass built in the United States. Belluschi’s 12-story curtain wall Equitable Building featured an entirely flush exterior wall plane made possible by large plate glass windows set into thin rolled aluminum frames. The Equitable Building began a new era for glass and metal office towers and was prominently published in architectural journals and received a number of prestigious awards. With the completion of the Equitable, Belluschi was elected a fellow of the AIA.

Belluschi had become widely known in the profession and had become increasingly involved in shaping national policies related to the arts. In 1945, Belluschi was asked to serve as a member of the Architectural Advisory Committee of the Federal Public Housing Authority. Five years later, President Truman appointed Belluschi to the National Commission of Fine Arts, a

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committee that advised the President on matters concerning art and architecture in public works. Belluschi had become a much sought after juror, critic and lecturer.

By 1950, Belluschi was one of the country’s most acclaimed architects. During that year, Belluschi accepted the position of Dean of the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at MIT. The architecture program at MIT emphasized the technical aspects of the discipline and Belluschi’s engineering background made him a logical choice for the deanship.

While at MIT, Belluschi emphasized the need for a humanistic approach to architecture, encouraging students to take into account the emotional qualities and spiritual aspects of architecture. Belluschi did not initiate significant changes in the curriculum, as the architecture program had moved well beyond the Beaux Arts by this time, but rather, he concerned himself with writing, lecturing and serving on committees to address relevant issues. His lectures focused on the broad role of the architect and having headed a successful practice, he emphasized that the architect must be a businessman, as well as a planner, engineer, and visionary. In his 1953 Architectural Record article “The Spirit of New Architecture,” which was awarded an AIA award for best article of the year, Belluschi proclaimed that great architecture reflected a successful blending of art and practicality. He believed that great architects must be both artists and pragmatists.

While at MIT, Belluschi longed to involve himself in design and began to serve as a design consultant to established architectural firms, a concept that was quite novel at the time. Among the many projects that Belluschi undertook were: Mondawmin Shopping Center, Baltimore (1952-1956), Back Bay Center Project, Boston (1953-1955), Lincoln Center, New York City (1955-1970), Juilliard School for the Performing Arts, New York City (1963-1969), Bank of America, San Francisco (1964-1969) and large scale urban planning projects for Baltimore, San Francisco and Boston.

One of the most defining projects in Belluschi’s career came in 1958 when he became involved in the design of what was to be the largest corporate office tower in the world. New York

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developer, Erwin S. Wolfson, head of the Diesel Construction Company and leading developer of corporate towers in Manhattan, engaged Walter Gropius and Belluschi as design consultants for a proposed 59-story office building on Park Avenue in the air rights over the obsolete railroad lines of Grand Central Terminal. For years, the project had been mired in controversy, representing the struggle between public versus private interests. Critics argued that the area around Grand Central Terminal was already too developed and this building represented an intolerable increase in density. Concern also mounted over the interruption of an important vista down Park Avenue. Commissioning two distinguished architects was a strategy aimed at making the development more palatable to outspoken critics.

The project presented significant challenges for the architects, who at times had opposing visions. In an attempt to mitigate the criticism that the tower would block key views down Park Avenue, Belluschi suggested, that the tower be beveled to visually minimize the mass. Gropius, meanwhile, believed that the tower should stand as a new modern landmark and a symbol of vibrant corporate America in the post-war era. At his insistence, the orientation of the tower was shifted from north-south to east-west, so it would span Park Avenue rather than follow it.

Critics from around the country, including colleagues of Gropius and Belluschi loudly denounced the building. John Burchard of MIT believed it to be "disastrous...a monstrous denial of urbane urbanism." Wolf Von Eckardt described it as "conspicuous for its ugliness and arrogant disregard of its surroundings." Louise Huxtable, architecture critic of The New York Times, called it "gigantically second rate...a colossal collection of minimums." Perhaps the most significant blow came from Yale professor Vincent Scully, who responded with a disparaging article on the building, "The Death of the Street," which was published in Perspecta:

The Yale Architectural Journal. In that article, Scully recalled Le Corbusier’s 1929 prediction that with the advent of modern architecture, “the street as we know it will cease to exist.” To Scully, the Pan Am Building represented commercial architecture’s erosion of the street fabric and he referred to the building as a “fatal blow to the street.” Emerson Goble, editor of Architectural Record, was one of the building’s few supporters. Goble believed that adding office populations near transit points was sound planning, acknowledging, “The Pan Am Building is planned for pedestrians.” Ed Bacon, who was at the time working with Belluschi on Rohm and Haas, was another of the building’s defenders. Bacon declared it to be “remarkably successful in giving a visual background to the great historic vistas of Park Avenue.”

Belluschi left MIT in 1965, but remained in Boston until 1973 at which point he returned to Portland. In 1972, he was awarded the AIA Gold Medal, the highest honor in the profession. In 1991, he received the National Medal of Arts by President George Bush in a White House ceremony. With his return to Portland, Belluschi decided to continue to serve a consulting architect, rather than establishing a practice. Belluschi also served as a juror for some of the most important competitions in the latter half of the twentieth century including: Boston City Hall, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial, and the Vietnam War Memorial.

Pietro Belluschi died in Portland, Oregon, in February 1994 at the age of 94. Paul Goldberger’s obituary in the New York Times provided an insightful summation of his career. In discussing Belluschi’s work, Goldberger cited Belluschi’s “quiet restraint” as the defining characteristic of his work.

Belluschi’s Influences and Design Philosophy

Unlike, his contemporaries, the majority of who had entered the field by way of academic training in the Beaux Arts system which emphasized logical plans and monumentality in scale,
Belluschi had little formal architectural training and did not embrace the Beaux Arts, but rather, sought a modern interpretation of the historical forms. In his designs, Belluschi did not aim toward a particular style of architecture. His designs came about through the process of understanding the potential and limitations of each material. In his 1953 article, "The Spirit of New Architecture," Belluschi outlined what he believed were the three virtues of modern architecture: 1) Structure, he believed, should serve as a source of form, 2) the importance of the architect as artist and the recognition that great artists influence architecture and 3) the responsibility of the architect to "more deeply understand human nature and to provide forms which will satisfy man's physical and emotional demands."\(^{91}\) It was this last virtue, his humanistic view that set him apart from many of his contemporaries.

A decade later, while entrenched in the design of Rohm and Haas, Belluschi published another seminal article, "Eloquent Simplicity in Architecture," which appeared in *Architectural Record*.\(^{92}\) His emphasis still on simplicity, Belluschi explained the need for the architect to acquire humility, a sense of achieving balance with nature or "being of the earth." Belluschi set forth three guiding principles that he believed permeate good architecture: integrity, proportion and clarity.

Belluschi was influenced by a number of his contemporaries. He was particularly drawn to the work of Alvar Aalto and LeCorbusier, both of whom Belluschi believed to be artists as well as architects, a quality that he believed to be central to successful architecture. He was influenced by his rival, Philip Johnson, despite their fundamentally opposing views on the role of the architect. Johnson believed that "architecture was an art primarily and hardly anything else" whereas Belluschi believed architecture to be not a pure art, but a "social art."\(^{93}\) Undoubtedly, his greatest influence was Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, particularly his Barcelona Pavilion of 1928-1929 which, in the opinion of Belluschi, was straightforward and represented simplicity in design.\(^{94}\)

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\(^{91}\) Pietro Belluschi, "The Spirit of the New Architecture," *Architectural Record* (October 1953), 146


The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters Design within the Context of Belluschi’s Body of Work

In review of Belluschi’s own body of work, the significance of the Rohm and Haas commission is apparent. As much as any other of Belluschi’s projects, the Rohm and Haas building incorporates technologically progressive elements that serve both practical and aesthetic purposes. The Rohm and Haas commission marked a high point in Belluschi’s career; his recovery from the attack of critics on Pan Am; a demonstration that a modernist tower could be sensitively incorporated into the established urban landscape.

Of all of Belluschi’s projects, Rohm and Haas bears the greatest similarities to the Equitable Building. The design of both reflected one of Belluschi’s guiding principles: integrity or truth in material. On the Equitable Building, Belluschi’s material of choice was rolled aluminum, characterized by its sleekness and its 1/4” thickness; characteristics that were fully expressed on the exterior. On Rohm and Haas, Belluschi incorporated Plexiglas, exploiting its qualities of translucency and clarity, expressed in the most simplistic terms throughout the building. The Equitable commission also expressed Belluschi’s interest in fine arts and his belief in the “architect as artist.” Belluschi sought to incorporate art into the Equitable Building and commissioned Alexander Calder for a mobile for installation in the lobby. At an estimated cost of $10,000, Calder’s mobile was cut from the project. Not willing to forgo the incorporation of art as a focal point in the lobby, Belluschi himself designed a mural which was approved and executed.95 Rohm and Haas project correspondence suggests that at times throughout design development, Belluschi was consumed with the integration of art. His concept for the lobby lighting sculptures clearly demonstrates his notion that design must serve both pragmatic and aesthetic ends.

The Rohm and Haas Building is one of only two Belluschi designs in the City of Philadelphia. Belluschi’s only other commission was the design of the University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania. That commission, in association with Alexander Ewing & Associates, immediately followed the completion of Rohm and Haas. The University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation is a good example of Belluschi’s ecclesiastical work (characterized by clean lines, flush wall surfaces and manipulation of light), but that commission did not approach the stature or architectural success of Rohm and Haas.

Criterion G – Properties that have Achieved Significance within the Last Fifty Years

The Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters is an important example of the modern movement style of architecture in the City of Philadelphia. It is also one of only two examples of the work of modernist architect, Pietro Belluschi in the city. While completed within the past fifty years, the Rohm and Haas Corporate Headquarters meets National Register Criterion Consideration G for its exceptional architectural significance.