

CRAIN'S

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Architect breathes new life into the city's aging buildings



Dan Shannon, by Buck Ennis

Even though he went to college in Indiana, Dan Shannon took great delight when thousands of Knicks fans congregated outside Madison Square Garden during the NBA playoffs to watch the team take on the Pacers. Shannon had designed the gathering space.

“It was the best,” he said, “because it had never been a public space before.”

Shannon is an architect whose specialty is freshening up places that have become a little worn around the edges. Sometimes that means changing the look of familiar open spaces, such as the new plaza near Madison Square Garden. Other times it means giving older buildings a facelift by installing a new glass facade around the old one. His revival projects include 1 Wall St., Penn 2 and 3 Bryant Park.

Harry Macklowe, developer of the first supertall tower to hover over Central Park, said he's hired Shannon to reposition at least 25 properties in the past 30 years, including the GM Building and 340 Madison Ave.

"Architecture is a form of expression, and we speak the same language," Macklowe said. "Dan's always listening, which is good for anybody and especially an architect."

Shannon, a graduate of the University of Notre Dame, got his start about 40 years ago at Skidmore Owings Merrill, which designed scores of modernist skyscrapers, including Lever House on Park Avenue and the John Hancock Center in Chicago. Instead of dreaming up new towers, he saw opportunities to reposition existing ones and started his own firm, MdeAS, with two SOM veterans. Most buildings are designed for a 30-year lifespan, he said, yet 70% of the city's towers were built at least 60 years ago.

"Rain, sun, freezing, it all affects a building's life," he said.

Shannon got his big break around 1999, when Macklowe hired him to revamp 540 Madison Ave. He moved the entrance to East 54th Street and built a new white base around the black building. He helped design the glass cube atop the Apple store underneath the GM Building's plaza. Soon Vornado Realty Trust and other big developers were calling.

"My tree branched out," Shannon said.

Now his firm employs 40 workers and makes about \$10 million in revenue per year. Based in New York, the firm does work globally, and Shannon serves as managing partner.

In 2002 he freshened up a tired 1950s-era Park Avenue office building by overcladding it with glass. Since then dozens of buildings have gotten the same treatment, including 3 Bryant Park, formerly a Verizon switching station at 1095 Sixth Ave. Shannon said he's designed four new buildings and reckons he's redeveloped dozens more.

"When you walk into a place you've been to before and think it's new, I've done my job," he said.

<https://www.crainsnewyork.com/gotham-gigs/architect-dan-shannon-makes-older-buildings-seem-new>

DOSSIER

RESIDES Midtown East

RAISED Louisville, Kentucky

EDUCATION Bachelor's in architecture, University of Notre Dame; master's in advanced architecture, Columbia University

NEXT UP He's wrapping work freshening up the tower at 51 W. 52nd St. known as Blackrock. "We're going to bring the original planters back to the sunken public plaza," he said.

'DELIGHTFUL' WORK His 2007 work at the GM Building's plaza was praised by the AIA Guide to New York City, which described the crystal cube atop the Apple store as a "delightful urban presence shimmering by day, glistening by night." Apple remodeled the area after the 2011 death of Steve Jobs, who was closely involved in the project with his architect, Peter Bohlin. "I was crying over the change," Shannon said.

GOD'S LOBBY Shannon also renovated the imposing white marble lobby of the GM Building, adding a white desk and white terrazzo flooring. His father, a former GM executive, visited and said, "This is where you go to meet God."