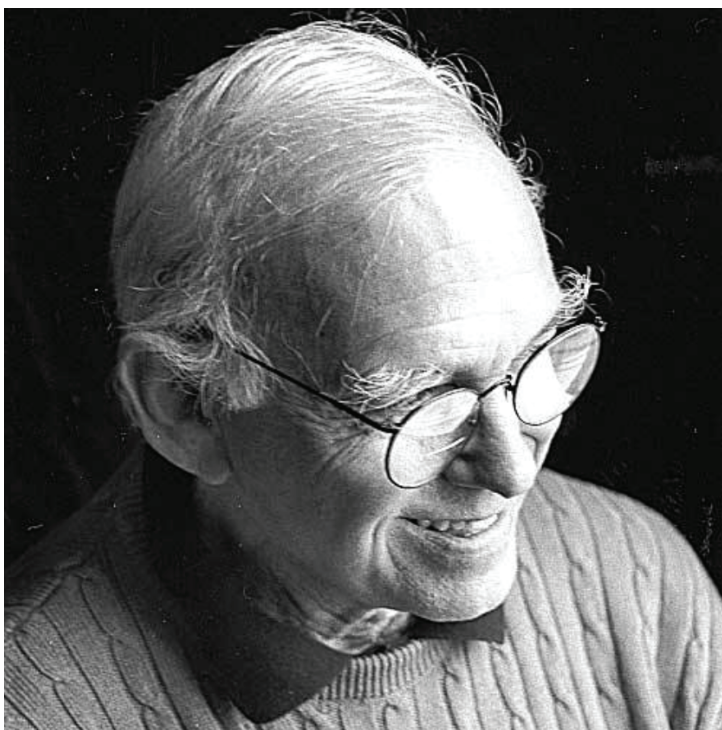


IN HONOR OF DEAN EMERITUS
JAMES STEWART POLSHEK



GS APP
+
ennead

Wednesday, January 25

6:00–9:00pm

*Faculty House
Columbia University*

SPEAKERS

Dean Andrés Jaque
Kenneth Frampton
Sharon Egretta Sutton '73 *M.Arch*
Paula Scher
Billie Tsien
Jenny Polshek
Joseph Fleischer
Richard Olcott

Buffet dinner to follow

Columbia GSAPP & Ennead Architects proudly announce the endowment of the James Stewart Polshek Scholarship. The scholarship is to be awarded to a Master of Architecture student entering their final year at Columbia GSAPP whose studies and work demonstrate design excellence with a commitment to enduring positive social impact.

With gratitude to our generous supporters:

**Ennead Architects
Columbia GSAPP
Jenny Polshek
Peter Polshek**

**Nina Hofer
Carol A. Clark and Kyle R. Johnson
Catherine Chermayeff
Joseph Fleischer
Jane Friesen
Angela Giral
Ruth Kavesh
Anthony Knerr
William Jack Phillips and Lesley N. Morgado
Susan T. Rodriguez and Charles Lowrey
Janet C. Ross
Alix Kates Shulman
Jackie Snyder
Robert A.M. Stern
Audrey Yett**

List as of January 22, 2023

Lorna Bieber

Friend

The first time I met Jim was in his and Ellyn's Paris apartment. He was on the phone diplomatically explaining to the Clinton White House that he couldn't meet with the President because he was spending the weekend with his family. Then he hung up and greeted me with a sunny smile and a hug.

"Who is this man," I wondered, "with these values I love?!"

I quickly found out, as my time with Jim and Ellyn grew into a friendship full of fun and informality.

We went to museums and plays and lectures, but mostly we just hung out and laughed and did inconsequential things that created deeply happy moments that I'll always remember.

Jim patiently taught me — an awful cook — how to make delicious pork chops dredged in matzoh meal! He read aloud stories and magazine articles to me and Ellyn as we lay spread out on the living room couches in his beautiful extension to their country house. While there, Ellyn often bullied him into stopping at yard sales on my behalf. It always made me grin to hear him grumble, but then acquiesce.

And we talked. And talked, talked, talked... about civil rights, contemporary art, our midwestern roots, our Jewish families. It was a constant delight to be with them.

My last visits with Jim were different: quiet and profound.

When I walked in the room, he wasn't able to stand up to greet me, but what a smile! Enormous and glowing.

And when I sat down next to him, he would tightly grasp my hand and not let go. As sad as I felt in these moments, I also felt grateful to experience this unexpected connection with him.

Ellyn often told me that when Jim heard me open the door of their New York apartment, he would turn to her and say, "Here comes laughter!"

Now, as I sit and write this, here comes tears. But with them, joy, too, at remembering my dear friend Jim.





REFLECTIONS

Aleks Dawson

Former Employee, Ennead Architects

Jim's firm, and the talent he and Joe gathered and cultivated within it, is the reason I was able to remain and make a life here in these United States. He was always kind, supportive and considered in his approach with me.

I sat next door to him as he worked on "Build, Memory," during which time I was privy to many funny stories, anecdotes and frustrations as he pieced together (folded up?) his Nabokovian magic carpet of a memoir.

After I left the firm we continued to write to each other about interesting art or design in the news or larger, more existential topics.

The last such exchange I had with Jim was when I visited his seminal 1971 New York State Bar Association building in Albany. Writing in the *New York Times* at its opening, Ada Louise Huxtable declared it "one of the neatest architectural achievements in the country" and "an object lesson in how to build intelligently, sensitively and well."

I wanted to see it for myself and so dragged my husband there one

long weekend. I wrote to Jim my impressions and sent him some photos.

Jim responded: "*It still looks pretty good (except for a few stray wires)*" and signed off with "*I think we're getting near the end of this adventure.*" I will always love Jim and be forever grateful for the impact he and those he nurtured had on my own life and understanding of design and humanism. RIP JSP.

Joseph Fleischer

Partner Emeritus, Ennead Architects

I met Jim in 1966, when I interviewed for a job in his "one-man" studio. After some "tough negotiations" over salary, he hired me as his 1st full-time employee, for the extraordinary salary of \$3.00/hr. At the time, his beautiful (in every way) wife Ellyn (Mrs. May) was his receptionist, secretary and bookkeeper.

To me, in every meaningful way, this was the chance of my lifetime. Jim took a chance on me, by hiring a poor, 22-year-old, kid from Brooklyn, who had recently graduated from a fledgling architectural program at the City College of New York, and had just completed his active-duty obligations in the US Naval Air Reserve. I had

expected to stay for 3 years, to complete my apprenticeship, and move on with my life. Instead, I stayed with Jim for my professional lifetime.

Jim was my boss (after I questioned some design move he made early on, he told me *“that’s why I’m the Architect, and you work for me”*), my colleague, my Partner and my friend for over 56 years. I continued learning from him, through all those years. He is a man I loved and respected. Rest in Peace my friend.

Lawrence P. Goldman

Client at Carnegie Hall

He was a “client’s architect,” especially if the client was a non-profit institution. No architect in my experience ever spoke about architecture more articulately than Jim. He promised not to “yuppify” Carnegie Hall...and he kept his word. And, he was a lot of fun to just be around.

Frances Halsband '68 MArch

Kliment Halsband Architects, a Studio of Perkins Eastman

Thank you, Jim. James Stewart Polshek did many great things in the world of architecture. He did two things that changed my world and set me on my lifelong path:

In 1975 he hired me to teach at the school, at a time when there were very few women anywhere in the academy or the profession. I taught with Klaus Herdeg in the First Year Design Studio, then with Bob Stern in Undergraduate Architecture, and I have been teaching ever since.

He changed the rule for how Columbia University hired architects. When he arrived, architecture faculty were not permitted to design buildings for the University. He managed to change that rule to allow faculty to be considered. Thanks to that change, Robert Kliment and I won our first University project, renovating the St Luke’s Nursing Home to become Hogan Hall Graduate Students Dormitory and Offices of the Controller. That project set us on a professional path of university work that continues to this day. For both of these acts, I am forever grateful.

Tim Hartung

Partner Emeritus, Ennead Architects

I remember back in the early 80’s when we were hired to do a Master Plan and subsequent projects at Stroh River Place in Detroit, Michigan. Coleman Young was the mayor at the time. At the ground breaking ceremony Jim preceded the Mayor, who was running for re-election at the time. After Jim’s opening comments the Mayor began by saying, *“I sure am glad Mr. Polshek is not running for mayor!”*

Jim was the ultimate politician, architect, educator, mentor and friend. He had an extraordinary impact on my life as well as many others and will be missed dearly.

Duncan Hazard '77 M.Arch

Partner Emeritus, Ennead Architects

Jim was a great human being who built a great office. He will be greatly missed.

Kaki Hockersmith

Interior Designer

I recommended James Polshek & Polshek Partnership to President Clinton during his diligent search for an architect to design his Presidential library. After reviewing some of their project materials I provided him, the President called me to ask that I invite Polshek to meet with him at The White House about the Library.

I called Jim in Paris to extend the invitation which he cheerfully accepted. Soon after, I greeted Jim, Richard Olcott and Kevin McClurkan at The White House and escorted them to the Oval Office to make the formal introductions.

That initial meeting led to the selection of Polshek Partnership as the architectural firm to design the Clinton Presidential Center and Library.

Subsequent to that first exciting encounter, my husband Max and I developed a close friendship with Jim and his lovely wife Ellyn. We enjoyed a number of good times together both in New York and in our Little Rock home.

Jim and Ellyn were such delightful people to be with; always humble and gracious, and never letting their talents

and successes override their humility. Jim's infectious smile, quick wit and arresting charm added such a positive balance to his professional brilliance.

James Polshek's buildings are a treasure as was he!

Steven Holl

*Professor, Columbia GSAPP
Principal, Steven Holl Architects*

Due to my daughter's 7th birthday January 25, I am sorry not to be present at this important tribute to the architect.

James Polshek was a transformational force in my life. As a young struggling architect in New York, he believed in my work and my teaching and led the successful argument for my tenure as a professor at Columbia GSAPP. He was a strong and thoughtful Dean who brought Professor Kenneth Frampton to Columbia from Princeton and mastered the transition to Dean Bernard Tschumi who moved Columbia even further forward.

Polshek deeply understood architecture education and hired teachers who also practitioners as part of his transformation of Columbia's architecture school.

To the end, James Polshek cared about architecture design quality. The last email I received from him was a message of praise for our recently completed building at Franklin & Marshall College.

The last time I saw him was at the American Academy of Arts & Letters lunch in March 2020. After the meeting, he offered to give Peter Eisenman (90) and me a ride down to the West Village. I asked him a question from the back seat and his jolly reply was: *"I am 90, I can see but I can't hear."*

A giant in New York architecture will be missed.

Michael A. Manfredi and Marion Weiss

*Professors, U Penn and Harvard
Partners, Weiss/Manfredi*

Jim was a mentor, wise advisor, friend, and source of inspiration. He inhabited the world of architecture and academia with generous leadership, mentoring so many along the way.

We knew Jim in the context of academic and professional design reviews and though his participation

on a number of boards. When we began our collaboration and were trying to establish our voice as young architects, the example he set as an architect committed to the intersection of good design and social engagement resonated profoundly.

Indeed, his generosity with advice and support as we matured was instrumental in the trajectory of our practice. Our world is larger because of Jim and we will miss him.

Kevin McClurkan

Partner, Ennead Architects

When I think of Jim, I come back over and over to the very simple values of duty, honor, service, and empathy. They have fallen out of the public discourse these days, but never with Jim. He lived and led every day with the humanism embodied in these values. What greater tribute to Jim than to know that the collective character of this practice and all of us who have ever passed through it over the years will remain dedicated steadfastly to the humanism he lived and shared with us by example. You live on in all of us. Thank you, Jim!

Molly McGowan '97 M.Arch

Partner, Ennead Architects

As a young architect it was very important to me that I join a firm committed to building projects with social impact that strengthen our communities. Jim did that and more. He recognized to be truly successful at this we have to support and celebrate every voice of a community. Thank you, Jim for your legacy.

Wm. Jack T. Phillips '93 M.Arch

Bergen Street Studio for Architecture P.C.

"Bombay Sapphire Martini with Olives Please"

I treasured the times I spent with Jim. Whether sipping martinis, traveling to project meetings, getting together to discuss our work and how we might advance a particular idea, having breakfast/lunch/dinner or just simply enjoy time together our visits were always lively and at times random musings of all things in our lives.

I am reminded of the last time I saw Jim (and Ellyn). It was during the fall

of 2020 (pandemic time) and we had just started a small modernist house renovation/addition up near Stone Ridge, NY and I realized Ellyn and Jim's place was somewhere close.

I reached out and sure enough, Ellyn and Jim were enjoying the country living; as Jim put it “*chasing chipmunks out of our house.*” I delicately proposed a visit to their country home (with masks and distance) and of course Jim graciously said please come by for a visit. We had a wonderful time talking about all kinds of things, the least of which was Architecture as it was a beautiful fall day and the summer heat had finally lifted. While not knowing this would be the last time I would see Jim, the most memorable of the visit was the way Jim was with Ellyn: warm, loving, caring, and attentive as always.

I miss my professor, boss, Mentor, collaborator, and dearly respected friend.

Thank you, Ellyn, for sharing Jim with Lesley, Theo and me.

Richard Olcott

Partner, Ennead Architects

Jim was passionate, articulate, charming, relentless, a teacher, an advocate, a rabble-rouser, a 'disrupter' before anyone knew what that was. He was ahead of his time, always. While his peers were pre-occupied with the many “isms” of form-making, Jim did not care about trends. From the start, he was interested in architecture as a social construct, a “healing art” as he called it. Preservation, sensitivity to context, social responsibility, community engagement, respect for the environment—these were his touchstones when no one else was talking about them; now everyone is.

Jim remains an agent of change and a leader, having educated and shaped generations of architects, all out in the world working to make a difference because of what he practiced and taught. That, beyond any one building, is what I am sure he would regard as his greatest achievement.

Gina Pollara

Architect, Author, and Urban Designer

I never worked for Jim Polshek nor had him as a professor, but I certainly knew about him and his work – both professional and academic. It was pretty clear he was a powerhouse, but it wasn't until he became part of the advisory committee to the Louis Kahn-designed FDR Memorial project that I had a front row seat to his masterful command of imperceptibly bending a room to his desired outcome. That was truly something to see.

Jim had been a student of Kahn's at the University of Pennsylvania, an experience he told me profoundly impacted how he thought about architecture. He shared with Kahn the deep conviction that architecture could fundamentally change the world for the better.

As the executive director of the effort to build what is now officially called the Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms State Park, Jim saved me from making a few grievous missteps. I will forever be grateful for his guiding hand.

Susan T. Rodriguez '85 MSAAD

*Founder, Susan T Rodriguez / Architecture · Design
Partner, James Stewart Polshek and Partners / Ennead Architects (1998-2017)*

Jim left an indelible mark as a leader and a friend with a unique perspective that sought to communicate values and meaning through architecture. He was a master of bringing people together to effect change—in the academy, in the studio, and beyond. He led with a smile, a sense of humor, and a keen intellect, yet was radical and ahead of his time in so many ways. Fueled by a passion for doing what is right, he taught us all that being an architect is both an art and a responsibility.

His approach to design didn't let the making of his personal mark interfere with what really mattered--instilling lasting meaning and memory in the spaces, experiences, and forms that we were making. His influence on the public realm was vast in projecting an attitude about design as a force for making our cities and communities more open and accessible, something that reflected his own character.

Jim dedicated his life to architecture. He made it personal and brought so many of us into his world by giving us

opportunities that we never could have imagined. He spoke up and raised the bar by heightening our awareness of the power of architecture to strengthen the infrastructure of our built environment, improve the quality of life for all, and enhance the cultural and educational institutions that we hold so dear. We will miss the sparkle in his eye and his uncanny ability to communicate what is possible. His legacy will carry on in all of us he has inspired.

Tomas Rossant

Partner, Ennead Architects

Jim was an uncannily affable and generous soul. With a stubborn and courageous heart, he always held on to the social mission of architecture. When his peers were seeking highly personalized and muscular formalism, Jim was asking 'how can architecture heal the city, society, and the planet.' While the field has broadly returned to seeing architecture as a force to improve humanity and ecology, these values were foundational to him from the start, and he never abandoned them over 60 years of practice. This is his great legacy, and he is a standard-bearer for us all.

Todd Schliemann

Partner, Ennead Architects

Jim was an accomplished architect. But further, he was a man of conscience. His articulate frankness, his disarming sense of humor, his energy and quick step, his inspirational ability to see a clear road beyond immediate limitations, and his deeply personal concern and responsibility for all of humanity were the fuel for his architecture.



The label he chose for his work is telling – contextual and socially responsible – but architecture was only part of his story. It is the man that we all remember first.

Through his family, friends, colleagues, clients, and those that may have met him only once, his values, passion and incurable optimism remain with us. And of course, through its timeless influence on so many, his architecture still speaks to us of what we all hold dear – each other.

Peter Schubert '81 M.Arch

Partner, Ennead Architects

Jim was my graduate school dean at Columbia University GSAPP. As an educator, as well as a practitioner, he inspired all architects to pursue civic responsibility and truth in the built environment. His curiosity and commitment to excellence set the bar for generations to come.

Robert A.M. Stern

*Professor of Architecture at GSAPP,
1970-1998*

*Dean, Yale School of Architecture,
1998-2018*

In Honor of James Polshek.

In my brief remarks, I prefer to comment on Jim's time as Dean at Columbia rather than his excellent work in architectural practice. I was a very junior faculty member when Jim was appointed Dean. He electrified the place, bringing new energy and focus to a school that had lost its way amidst the chaos of late 1960s student protests and even before by virtue of the neglect of the central university administration, which held architecture in low regard as an academic discipline, not to mention as an art.

From the moment of his appointment the School seemed to burst with new energy such as it had not had since the heyday of the Beaux- Arts. Jim did not come to Morningside with a stylistic agenda. In fact, he held what we now call starchitects in some disdain. But he did have one great quality essential to a leader – he had the capacity to listen and to tolerate diversity, to tolerate different points of view not only within the exotic confines

of studio culture, but in the profession at large.

It cannot be emphasized enough that Jim broadened the narrow focus of the School on studio culture into a broad discipline that gave formal recognition to the historic preservation of buildings and to the social planning that was needed to frame the physical environment. I need not remind you that Jim's tenure began as the city, like the School, was at a low point.

Under Jim's direction, the School took on a public persona that more than complemented Columbia's ambitions to play a significant role in New York's life. As the city rebounded in the 1980s, Jim's leadership saw to it that the School would play a significant part.

On a personal note, I wish to conclude my very brief remarks, with an expression of appreciation to Jim for his personal support for me, as an educator and practitioner. When the opportunity came my way to lead a school I turned to Jim's time as Dean as a standard of excellence. His years at Columbia were a golden age.

Don Weinreich **'85 M.Arch**

Partner, Ennead Architects

Jim's passing signals the loss of a singular architect who practiced his discipline as a true humanist. The betterment of the world was at the heart of everything Jim did and stood for. He spoke truth to power and stayed true to his values. He opened the door to the profession to under-represented designers. He was approachable, engaging, brilliant, and incredibly funny. Farewell, teacher, mentor, friend.

Alicia West

Design Commission

I had the enormous privilege to work with and learn from Jim for eight years at the Public Design Commission. Jim's philosophy that architecture can be a force of social and political justice resonated deeply with me, and it's a principle that I strive to integrate into my work every day.

At the Commission, tasked with reviewing public works of architecture, Jim approached every project and design team with respect. He was a teacher at heart, and he wanted

everyone to succeed. I am so thankful to have known him.

Thomas J. Wong

Partner, Ennead Architects

Jim indeed had a magnificent life—one of major achievements, accolades, and lasting impacts on the world. These were all a celebratory part of who he was. But for those of us who had the great fortune to work closely with him daily, it was his deep personal conviction to improve the human condition and the devout belief in the power of architecture to do so which we all rallied behind. His vision helped to fuel our practices and our lives with purpose and fortitude. It is this foundational ethos that lives on today among his students, peers, partners, and all whose lives he touched.



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