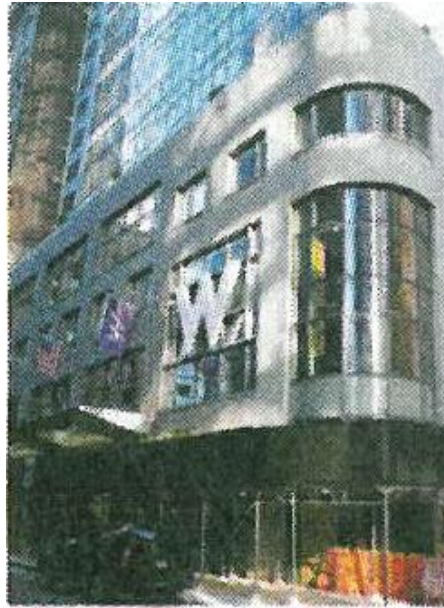


THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



Downtown, The New Kid Stands Out

The gleaming, ultra-modern W New York Downtown Hotel & Residences is anything but deferential to the historical grey-stone architecture of Manhattan's financial district over which it towers.

But as one of the last projects of late modernist architect Charles Gwathmey—whose devotion to high modernism was rivaled only by the controversy his works sometimes had the power of evoking—the juxtaposition seems almost fitting.

The historic vista looking northwest up narrow Wall Street is now imposed with the flashy tower flanking the left shoulder of the gothic Trinity Church—the new 623-foot-tall structure looking every bit the new kid on the block, with deep pockets but a pinch of insecurity.

But Robert Siegel of Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects—who co-designed the tower—says the plan was to make it “striking” and a “counterpoint” to other buildings.

“We were trying to make a building that was going to be iconic and special from the perspective of the New York skyline and the context of the city,” says Mr. Siegel. “To see it over the church, I think that is very positive because it is helping this building stand out—it’s something that people see and recognize and that is a good thing.”

Partly known for designing homes for celebrities like Jerry Seinfeld and Steven Spielberg, Mr. Gwathmey, who died last year at the age of 71, was one of the so-called New York Five architects who caused a dust-up in the late 1960s and early 1970s for their support of pure modernism.

His 1992 design of the renovation and expansion of the Guggenheim Museum was controversial, although many critics felt that the final product was a huge improvement over the plan that was first proposed. Mr. Gwathmey also got mixed reviews for his curvy, green-glass condominium at Astor Place in the East Village finished in 2005.

Other more recent projects by Gwathmey Siegel, which employs 25 architects, include the 22-story United States Mission to the United Nations; the Setai Fifth Avenue, which is opening next month; and a multistory residential project, Soho Mews.

