

## **GAIL FENSKE**

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Professor Emerita, Architecture, Art and Architectural History, Cummings School of Architecture  
Roger Williams University  
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### **ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS**

#### **Roger Williams University, School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation**

Professor Emerita, 2025-present.

Professor, 1995-present (rank and tenure system adopted in 1995); Faculty (full-time), 1990-95.

Director, Program in Art & Architectural History, 2016-19, 2022-25.

#### **Wellesley College, Department of Art**

Visiting Professor (full-time), spring 2005.

#### **Massachusetts Institute of Technology, School of Architecture and Planning**

Visiting Professor (half-time), spring 2003.

Visiting Professor (half-time), spring 1999.

#### **Cornell University, Department of Architecture, Art, and Planning**

Visiting Assistant Professor (full-time), 1988-89.

### **EDUCATION**

#### **Massachusetts Institute of Technology, School of Architecture and Planning**

Ph.D., 1988. Architecture, Art, and Environmental Studies. Program in History, Theory & Criticism.

Master of Science in Architecture Studies, 1982. Program in History, Theory & Criticism.

#### **Arizona State University, College of Architecture**

B. Arch. *with high honors*, 1977. Outstanding Graduate Award. AIA Henry Adams Certificate. Studies in art history and the liberal arts, 1972-74.

### **SELECTED GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARDS**

New York State Council on the Arts and New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Research Grants (as exhibition co-curator), 2013.

J. M. Kaplan Fund, Furthermore Program, Publication Grant, 2006.

Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Fellowship, 2006.

Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Fellowship (as a co-editor), 2001.

New York State Council on the Arts, Research Grant (as a contributing author), 1997.

Winterthur and Hagley Museums, Arts & Industries Fellowship, 1989.

National Endowment for the Humanities, Travel to Collections Grant, 1989.

### **PUBLICATIONS**

#### **Books**

*Aalto and America*, co-edited with Stanford Anderson and David Fixler. London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012. 309 pages.

*The Skyscraper and the City: The Woolworth Building and the Making of Modern New York* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, 2010 (second printing). 379 pages.

New York City Book Award, 2008 Book of the Year, New York Society Library, New York, 2009.

Honorable Mention, PROSE Award, Architecture and Urban Planning, Association of American Publishers, 2009.

*Skyscrapers: Landmarks in American Cities* (in preparation for the Library of Congress).

#### **Chapters in Edited Books (Peer-Reviewed)**

“Medievalism, Mysticism, and Modernity in Early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century New York: Cass Gilbert’s ‘Skyscraper Gothic.’” In *Skyscraper Gothic*, edited by Kevin Murphy and Lisa Reilly, 55-87. Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2017.

- Aalto, W. W. Wurster, and Modern Architecture's 'New Humanism.'" In *Aalto and America*, edited by Stanford Anderson, Gail Fenske, and David Fixler, 112-35. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012.
- "The Beaux-Arts Architect and the Skyscraper: Cass Gilbert, the Professional Engineer, and the Rationalization of Construction in Chicago and New York." In *The American Skyscraper: Cultural Histories*, edited by Roberta Moudry, 19-37. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- "Lewis Mumford, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style." In *The Education of the Architect: Historiography, Urbanism, and the Growth of Architectural Knowledge*, edited by Martha Pollak, 37-85. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1997.
- "Corporate Identity and the New York Office Building, 1895-1915." Co-authored with Deryck Holdsworth. In *The Landscape of Modernity: Essays on New York's Built Environment*, edited by David Ward and Olivier Zunz, 129-59. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1992; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 (paperback edition).

### **Chapters in Edited Books (Invited Contributor)**

- "The 'First Skyscraper' in the History of Modern Architecture." In *First Skyscrapers/Skyscraper Firsts*, edited by Lee Gray, Daniel Safarik, and Antony Wood. Chicago: The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, 2020.
- "A Brief History of the Twentieth-Century Skyscraper." In *The Tall Buildings Reference Book*, edited by Dave Parker and Antony Wood, 13-31. London, New York, and Chicago: Routledge and The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, 2012.
- "Cass Gilbert's Skyscrapers in New York: The Twentieth-Century City and the Urban Picturesque." In *Inventing the Skyline: The Architecture of Cass Gilbert*, edited by Margaret Heilbrun, 229-88. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000; 2004 (paperback edition).
- "The Image of the City: The Woolworth Building and the Creation of the New York Skyline." In *Cass Gilbert, Life and Work: Architect of the Public Domain*, edited by Barbara Christen and Steven Flanders, 137-98. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2001.

### **Selected Criticism**

- "American Gothic: The Woolworth Building," in "Masterpiece." *The Wall Street Journal*, December 28-29, 2013, C13.

### **Bibliographies**

- "Cass Gilbert." In *Oxford Bibliographies in Architecture, Planning, and Preservation*, eds. Kevin Murphy and Chris Hill, 15 pages. New York: Oxford University Press, 2025. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/>
- "Skyscrapers." In *Oxford Bibliographies in Architecture, Planning, and Preservation*, eds. Kevin Murphy and Adam Frese, 35 pages. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/>

### **Exhibition Reviews**

- Review of "Kevin Roche: Architecture as Environment." Yale School of Architecture, February 7—May 6, 2011, and Museum of the City of New York, September 27, 2011—February 25, 2012. In *The Society of Architectural Historians Journal* 72 (June 2013), 263-65.

### **Book Review Essay**

- "Architect Engineer, and Builder." Review of *The Architects and the City*, by Robert Brueggemann; *Constructing a Bridge*, by Eda Kranakis; *Building the Nineteenth Century*, by Tom F. Peters; *Engineers of Dreams*, by Henry Petroski; *Invention by Design*, by Henry Petroski; and *Architect and Engineer*, by Andrew Saint. *Journal of Urban History* 42:4 (July 2016), 811-21.

## **Selected Book Reviews**

Review of *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth-Century America*, by Mary N. Woods. *Journal of American History* 80 (March 2002): 1517-18.

Review of *The Empire State Building: The Creation of a Landmark*, by John Tauranac. *Society of Architectural Historians Journal* LX (December 1996): 462-64.

Review of *The History of History in American Schools of Architecture*, edited by Gwendolyn Wright and Janet Parks, *Winterthur Portfolio* XXVI (Winter 1991): 292-94.

## **PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE IN ARCHITECTURE**

Independent practice, 1986-present.

Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson & Abbott (SBRA), Boston, Massachusetts, 1981-82, 1985-86.

The Architect's Collaborative (TAC), Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980.

Einhorn Yaffee Prescott (EYP), Albany, New York, 1977-79.

Registered Architect, Massachusetts, 1982-present.

## **SELECTED RECENT LECTURES AND CONFERENCE PAPERS**

### **Endowed, Keynote, and Plenary Session Lectures**

"New Perceptual Experiences: Architects, Artists, and the Skyscrapers of New York." Norman L. and Roselea J. Goldberg Lecture in Art History, Department of History of Art and Architecture, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, March 2024.

"Architects, Artists, and the Making of Cities: The Skyscraper and Urban Identity in the 1920s." Keynote lecture for the conference "Regenerative Cities." College of Architecture, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, November 2022.

"Architects and the City: Landmark Skyscrapers in New York." Keynote lecture for opening ceremony of the conference, "Going High: The Pros and Cons of City Verticalization." Tirana Architecture Weeks 2022, Polis University, Tirana, Albania, September 2022.

"The Woolworth Building: The Making of a New York Landmark." Keynote lecture for Woolworth Building Centennial (a week-long event), sponsored by the New York Chapter, American Institute of Architects, the Skyscraper Museum, and the Cass Gilbert Society. AIA New York Center for Architecture, New York City, April 2013.

"What is Happening to Modern Architecture?" Lecture for plenary session of the conference, "Architecture and Virtuality," School of Architecture of Barcelona, Polytècnica de Catalunya, Spain, June 2009.

"The Skyscraper and the City." University-wide lecture, Distinguished Art Historian Lecture Series, State University of New York, New Paltz, November 2008.

"Aalto and America: W. W. Wurster and Modern Architecture's 'New Humanism.'" Lecture for plenary session for the symposium, "Interpreting Aalto: Baker House and MIT," Massachusetts Institute of Technology, October 1999.

### **Invited Lectures and Conference Papers**

"New York in the 1920s: Art, Architecture, and the City." Public lecture for the exhibition, "Paul Manship: Ancient Made Modern." Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, May 2021.

"The 'First Skyscraper' in the History of Modern Architecture." Public Lecture for the Symposium, "First Skyscrapers/Skyscraper Firsts." Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, Chicago, 2019.

"Cass Gilbert, Paul Cret, and the City Beautiful." Public lecture for "Paul Cret and Modern Classicism," presented by the Athenaeum of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, May 2018.

"The Woolworth Building: A Beaux-Arts Skyscraper." Public lecture for the Institute for Classical Architecture and Art, New York, June 2013.

"The Woolworth Building: Highest in the World." Public lecture for the Skyscraper Museum, New York, May 2013.

- “What Makes a Great Building? The Industrial Trust Building: Skyscrapers and Skylines in Providence and New York.” Public Lecture for the Providence Preservation Society, Providence, March 2012.
- “The Skyscraper and the City.” Public and university-wide lecture for the Sciamé Fall Lecture Series, “New York, New York: Place, Culture, and Urbanity,” Spitzer School of Architecture, City College of New York, September 2010.
- “The Skyscraper and the Modern City: New York and Chicago.” Public lecture with Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, Chicago Architecture Foundation and the Graham Foundation, Chicago, February 2010.
- “New York 1900: The Skyscraper and the City.” Paper presented at the symposium, “New Perspectives on American Architecture of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era,” City University of New York, Graduate Center, October 2009.
- “Skyscraper Tourism: The Woolworth Building in New York.” Conference paper for the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Cultural and Historic Preservation: “Leisure, Tourism, and the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Resort,” Salve Regina University, Newport, Rhode Island, October 2007.
- “Alvar Aalto, William Wilson Wurster, and Modern Architecture’s ‘New Humanism.’” School-wide lecture, Historic Preservation “Inquiry” Series, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, Columbia University, April 2006.
- “Alvar Aalto and the United States.” Public lecture for the Embassy of Finland and the School of Architecture, Catholic University, Washington, D.C., November 2002.
- “Cass Gilbert’s Skyscrapers in New York: The Twentieth-Century City and the Urban Picturesque.” Paper presented at the symposium, “Cass Gilbert: Inventing the Skyline,” held at the New-York Historical Society, October 2000.
- “The Skyscraper and the City.” Lecture for the Ph.D. Forum, History, Theory & Criticism Program, Department of Architecture, MIT, April 2000.
- “The Skyscraper and the City: The Woolworth Building in New York.” School-wide lecture, Department of Art and Art History, Wesleyan University, December 1998.
- “The Image of the City: The Woolworth Building and the Creation of the New York Skyline.” Paper presented at the symposium “Cass Gilbert, Life and Work: From Regional to National Architect,” Gustav Heye Center, Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, November 1998.

## **RECENT SYMPOSIA, CONFERENCE SESSIONS, AND PANELS**

- Session Chair, “Coastal Trade, World Trade: The Port Cities of Narragansett Bay,” Society of Architectural Historians Annual Conference, Providence, 2019.
- Symposium Respondent, “Woolworth Building: Medieval or Modern? Questions and Dialogues on Architecture and Modernity on the Occasion of the Woolworth Building’s Centennial.” Papers presented by Kevin Murphy, Mary Beth Betts, Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, Suzanne Stephens, Mary Woods, and Dietrich Neumann. Skyscraper Museum (held at the Woolworth Building), June 2013.
- Discussant, “Regional Identity,” at the Symposium “Icon and Anonymity: What is Californian Architectural History?” University of California, Santa Barbara, May 2012.
- Session Chair and Moderator, “A Conversation with Leo Marx: On ‘The Emergence of Technology as Hazardous Concept,’” Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, “Digital Aptitudes,” Boston, March 2012.
- Session Chair, “The Home and Its Neighborhood,” 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Cultural and Historic Preservation, Salve Regina University, October 2008: “Creating and Preserving the American Home.”
- Session Chair, “Architects’ Architectural Histories: Invocations and Imaginaries,” Society of Architectural Historians, Annual Meeting, Savannah, Georgia, 2006.

## **EXHIBITIONS**

- Exhibition Co-Curator with Carol Willis, “Woolworth at 100,” Skyscraper Museum, New York, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013-September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013.
- Winner, 2013 Exhibition Award from the Victorian Society New York, 2014.
- Exhibition Advisor, “Skyscraper: Achievement and Impact,” Liberty Science Center, Liberty State Park, New Jersey, 2001-08. Permanent exhibition funded by the National Science Foundation.

Exhibition Advisor, "The Woolworth Building," Committee on Cass Gilbert Projects, "Downtown Open House," September 1998-January 1999. Alliance for Downtown New York and the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, Committee on History and Commemorative Events.

## **PUBLIC TELEVISION AND RADIO**

Advised BBC World Service documentary featuring panel, "The Forum: The First

Skyscrapers: How America Reached for the Skies," broadcast and podcast, November 14, 2017.

Advised PBS documentary produced by WTTW11 Television, Chicago, "10 Buildings That Changed America," broadcast nationally on May 9, 2013.

Interviewed and appeared in "American Classics: Defining a Nation," A&E Television Networks, History Channel, broadcast nationally, 2001.

Interviewed and appeared in PBS documentary produced by WGBH Television, Boston, "Building Big: Skyscrapers," one in a series of international documentaries on large-scale works of structural engineering, for "NOVA," broadcast nationally on October 17, 2000.

## **SELECTED ACADEMIC SERVICE**

### **University Service**

Faculty Senate, 2006-08, 2010-11, 2017-19

Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee, 1990-92, 2017-19

General Education Curriculum Planning Committee, representing the School of Architecture, Art & Historic Preservation (elected by the University Faculty), 2014-18

Honors Advisory Council, representing the School of Architecture, Art & Historic Preservation (elected by the University Faculty), 2014-18

Vision Project, President's Steering Committee, 2014-15

Foundation to Promote Scholarship and Teaching, Panelist, 2007-2011

### **Society of Architectural Historians**

*Society of Architectural Historians Journal*, Book Review Editor, The Americas, 2019-23.

Society of Architectural Historians, Office of Secretary, 2010-13, 2013-16 (two terms).

Board of Directors, 2003-06

President, New England Chapter, 1999-2001

Board of Directors, New England Chapter, 1998-99

SAH Field Seminar: "Woolworth at 100," March 2013 (with Andrew Dolkart, Columbia University, 30 participants): "Woolworth at 100" exhibition at the Skyscraper Museum (with a gallery talk); Tour of the Financial District, Lower Manhattan, featuring Cass Gilbert's United States Custom House, West Street Building, Broadway Chambers Building, Woolworth Building, and major skyscrapers by Gilbert's New York contemporaries.

Co-Chair (with Dietrich Neumann, Brown University), SAH 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, Providence, Rhode Island, 2004

Chair and Moderator, New England Chapter, SAH, Annual Student Symposium (outstanding student research in the history of architecture), 1996, 1997, 1998

### **Global Architectural History Teaching Collaborative (Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and MIT)**

Founding Member, Board of Directors, 2012-20

## **SELECTED COURSES TAUGHT**

Lecture courses: History of Art and Architecture I, History of Modern Architecture, History of American Architecture, Urbanism, and Landscape

Seminars: The Skyscraper, Theoretical Origins of Modernism, Architecture of Boston, Forms and Settings of Architectural Practice in History and Today

Design Studios: Core Studio I, Core Studio II