

Press Kit



A Survey of Past, Present and Future
Brutalist Architecture in the Nation's Capital

BRUTAL DC



Humphrey Building

Brutal DC Installation Images
Southern Utah Museum of Art
Courtesy of Ty Cole



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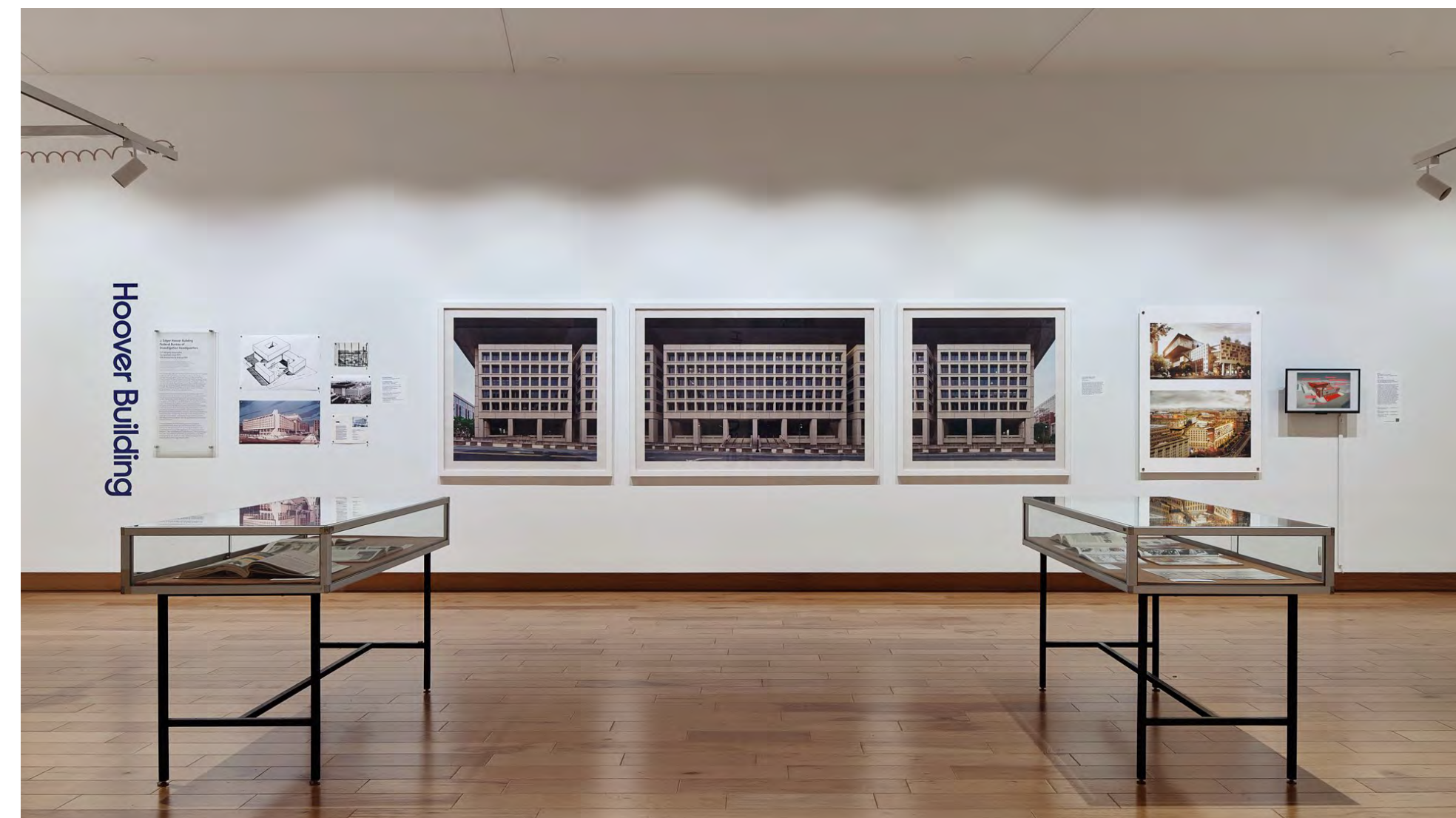
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EXHIBITION EXPLORES PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE OF BRUTALIST ARCHITECTURE IN NATION'S CAPITAL

Brutal DC

October 14, 2023 - March 2, 2024

Southern Utah Museum of Art

CEDAR CITY, Utah, October 14, 2023—The Southern Utah Museum of Art (SUMA), in partnership with the National Building Museum, presents the largest-ever survey of Brutalist architecture in Washington, DC. On view at SUMA from October 14, 2023 through March 2, 2024, *Brutal DC* is a design exhibition comprising archival documents, contemporary photography, and speculative designs by leading firms to consider the historical underpinnings, current state, and future possibilities of key Brutalist buildings in Washington, DC. This exhibition asks: *Might we find a way to love these polarizing places and to live with them into the future?*

Brutal DC introduces visitors to the history of Brutalism and traces its story in the American capital by examining the past, present, and future of seven exemplary Brutalist buildings and the Metro in DC. Archival documents, architectural drawings, and construction photographs illustrate how the Brutalist phenomenon and these structures first emerged in the US capital city during the Cold War. Contemporary, fine art photographs of these iconic buildings and Metro stations highlight the current state of Brutalism. Reimaginings created by leading architecture firms, including Brooks+Scarpa, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Gensler, and BLDUS, as well as students from the School of Architecture at UNLV, illustrate potential futures for five of the buildings.



Brutal DC Installation Image
Southern Utah Museum of Art
Courtesy of Ty Cole

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Past.

Many high-profile public buildings in Washington, DC, were designed and constructed in the Brutalist style. Brutalism offered a less expensive, relatively speedy means of constructing large public works in the 1960s and 1970s. During this time, the federal government incentivized mid-century urban renewal efforts, which displaced hundreds of thousands of people. In Southwest D.C. alone, urban renewal displaced approximately 1,500 businesses and 23,000 residents, comprising primarily African American and immigrant families. Brutalist buildings like Marcel Breuer's Weaver Building and I.M. Pei's L'Enfant Plaza, as well as Interstate 395, emerged in their wake. *Brutal DC* documents this complex period by drawing on the collections of the U.S. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, the Marcel Breuer Papers at Syracuse University Libraries, the Booth Family Center for Special Collections at Georgetown University, the Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archive at the Art Institute of Chicago, and others. Scale models created by the University of Arizona bring the buildings to life.



Robert C. Weaver Federal Building

Marcel Breuer & Associates and Nolen-Swinburne & Associates Architects

Weaver Building, Under Construction, c. 1967-1968

Archival photograph

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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Present.

Despite the multi-million dollar budgets and post-war optimism that supported these buildings' construction, their occupants and the public at large have often voiced pronounced aversion to these structures. In 2023, an international survey by *Buildworld* identified the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building in D.C. as the ugliest building in the U.S. and the second ugliest building in the world. In recent years, the cultural significance of D.C.'s extensive collection of Brutalist architecture has enjoyed rising popularity in mass media. For example, a 2021 *Washington Post* headline trumpeted: "Brutalist buildings aren't unlovable. You're looking at them wrong." These tensions—love them or hate them—have led to preservation battles, as was the case with the Third Church of Christ, Scientist building, which was torn down in 2014 despite being listed as a D.C. historic landmark. Los Angeles-based architectural photographer Ty Cole finds the sculptural qualities of Brutalist architecture endearing. In his photographs, Cole documents the beautiful qualities of these buildings that often goes unnoticed.



Robert C. Weaver Federal Building

Ty Cole (United States, b. 1979)

Courtesy of the artist

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Future.

Dozens of Brutalist buildings were built 40–60 years ago in D.C. The time has come for building owners to decide whether to invest millions or, as in the case of the FBI Building, billions updating these buildings or to raze them and start over. Updating Brutalist buildings is no small feat. In many ways, Brutalist buildings resist renovations—concrete is not easily altered, their environmental systems can be difficult to access, and their floor plans are relatively rigid. But, the most sustainable building is one that already exists, and many of the Brutalist buildings in D.C. represent a significant moment in architectural history. Central to *Brutal DC* is a collection of “re-imaginings” of these buildings created especially for the exhibition, including Brooks + Scarpa’s re-imagining of the Weaver Building as a dynamic, mixed-use structure, BLDUS’s reimagining of the Humphrey Building as a Temple of Play, and UNLV students’ re-imagining of Lauinger Library as a place that encourages social justice, simple living, spirituality, and community. Also included are Gensler’s “hackable building” concept as applied to the Hoover Building and Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s design for a seasonal inflatable “Bubble” for the Hirshhorn Museum. More information about these re-imaginings is included below.



Brooks + Scarpa

Reimagining the Robert C. Weaver Federal Building, 2023

Unbuilt project

Courtesy of Brooks + Scarpa; Project contributors include Lawrence Scarpa, Ryan Clement, Iliya Muzychuk, Kiki Guo, Zongli Li, Ahmad Chehab, Matthew Hunt, Calder Scarpa, Karen Lopez, and Joseph Kim

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About the Re-Imaginings

Brooks + Scarpa, Re-Imagining the Weaver Building, 2023

In light of a growing housing crisis and a dramatic decline in the office building market in the DC area, award-winning architecture firm Brooks + Scarpa reimagines the Weaver Building as a dynamic, mixed-use structure. By repurposing the structure, instead of demolishing it and rebuilding, carbon is kept out of the atmosphere and construction waste is kept out of landfills. Their design converts approximately 45 percent of the existing building into over 300 units of affordable housing. The original, Breuer-designed structure would be beautifully preserved for future generations to enjoy while adapting to future lifestyles and the needs of our changing cities. [Learn more](#)

BLDUS, Re-Imagining the Humphrey Building, 2023

DC-based architecture firm BLDUS, led by Andrew Linn and Jack Becker, reimagines the Humphrey Building as the “Temple of Play.” In doing so, BLDUS asks what might be possible if the United States were to create a new executive department—the Department of Play—with the stated purpose of “fundamentally reorienting the perspectives of Americans toward play and happiness.” The new Temple of Play would be the cornerstone of the proposed department. To create the largest playground in the world, BLDUS proposes an addition of several pyramidal stories to create even more space for slides, climbing facilities, affordable dining, and other amenities, all with the goal of improving the mental and physical health of people from across the U.S.

UNLV Students, Re-Imagining Lauinger Library, 2023

In Spring 2023, 33 fourth-year architecture students at UNLV worked in 11 teams to reimagine Lauinger Library. *Brutal DC* features the Ignation Library reimagining by Dane Cobb, Cameron Reese, and Devan Rendon. Georgetown University, where Lauinger is located, was founded by Jesuit priests. Thus, Cobb, Reese, and Devan’s Ignation Library reimagining is inspired by Jesuit values, including social justice, simple living, spirituality, and community. The students’ Ignation Library brings new life to the building by activating corridors through Lauinger’s main axes and creating new additions that speak to the rich values held by the university. Their proposal seeks to maintain the expressive, monumental, and raw character of the structure.

Gensler, Re-Imagining the Hoover Building, 2012

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, global design firm Gensler took note of rising office space vacancies. The firm reimagined the Hoover Building by applying their “hackable building” philosophy to counteract increasing vacancies and changing work styles, which includes the adoption of mobile workplace technologies. According to Gensler, a hackable building is “an existing structure that has been updated beyond recognition and that incorporates a diverse mix of uses within the building.” The Gensler team felt the Hoover Building was hackable because of its two million square feet, large floor plates, and location. They proposed a completely new program for the building, including a rooftop soccer field and garden, big-box retail, hotel rooms, outdoor areas, and additional vertical building access. [Learn more](#)

Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Re-Imagining the Hirshhorn Museum, 2009

In 2009, the Hirshhorn Museum—part of the Smithsonian Institution complex—hired pacesetter architecture firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro (DSR) to design an additional 11,000 square feet of event space for the museum. In response, DSR developed the “Bubble,” a seasonal inflatable space that “oozes” out the top and from underneath the relatively petite, hollow-core building. DSR anticipated that it would take approximately one week to install the Bubble’s structural elements and only 30 minutes to inflate, allowing the Bubble to be quickly installed and serve the museum for two months each year. After years of striving to bring the Bubble to fruition, the project was canceled in 2013 due to cost concerns. It remains a bold example of how Brutalist buildings may be adapted while respecting the original architecture. [Learn more](#)

About the Curators

This project is a curatorial partnership between award-winning scholar Dr. Angela Person and noted professional photographer Ty Cole. Dr. Person is an associate professor of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma, where her research and teaching engage architectural history and behavioral and emotional outcomes of the built environment. Cole's work has been published in *Dwell*, *Architectural Digest*, *Metropolis*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, and more. They produced Brutal DC in consultation with Dr. Becky Bloom, assistant director of curatorial affairs at the Southern Utah Museum of Art, and Deane Madsen, a DC-based architectural writer and Brutalism preservation advocate. The graphic identity was created by London-based graphic designer Richard Hooker.

About SUMA

Southern Utah Museum of Art, on the campus of Southern Utah University in Cedar City, features the artwork of regional artists known for their landscapes such as Maynard Dixon, Edith Hamlin, and Jimmie F. Jones, as well as emerging and distinguished artists from around the country and the world. Within SUMA's holdings is an especially robust collection of prints that includes well-known artists such as Marc Chagall, James McNeill Whistler, Kawase Hasui, Thomas Hart Benton, and Käthe Kollwitz, among others. Named the best-designed museum in Utah by *Architectural Digest*, SUMA's building, designed by Brooks + Scarpa and inspired by the region's famed slot canyons, is an artwork in and of itself.

Sponsorship

This exhibition is co-organized by the Southern Utah Museum of Art (Cedar City, UT) and the National Building Museum (Washington, DC) and is made possible with generous funding from the Utah Division of Arts and Museums, MHTN Architects, and the University of Oklahoma Gibbs College of Architecture.

Press Contacts

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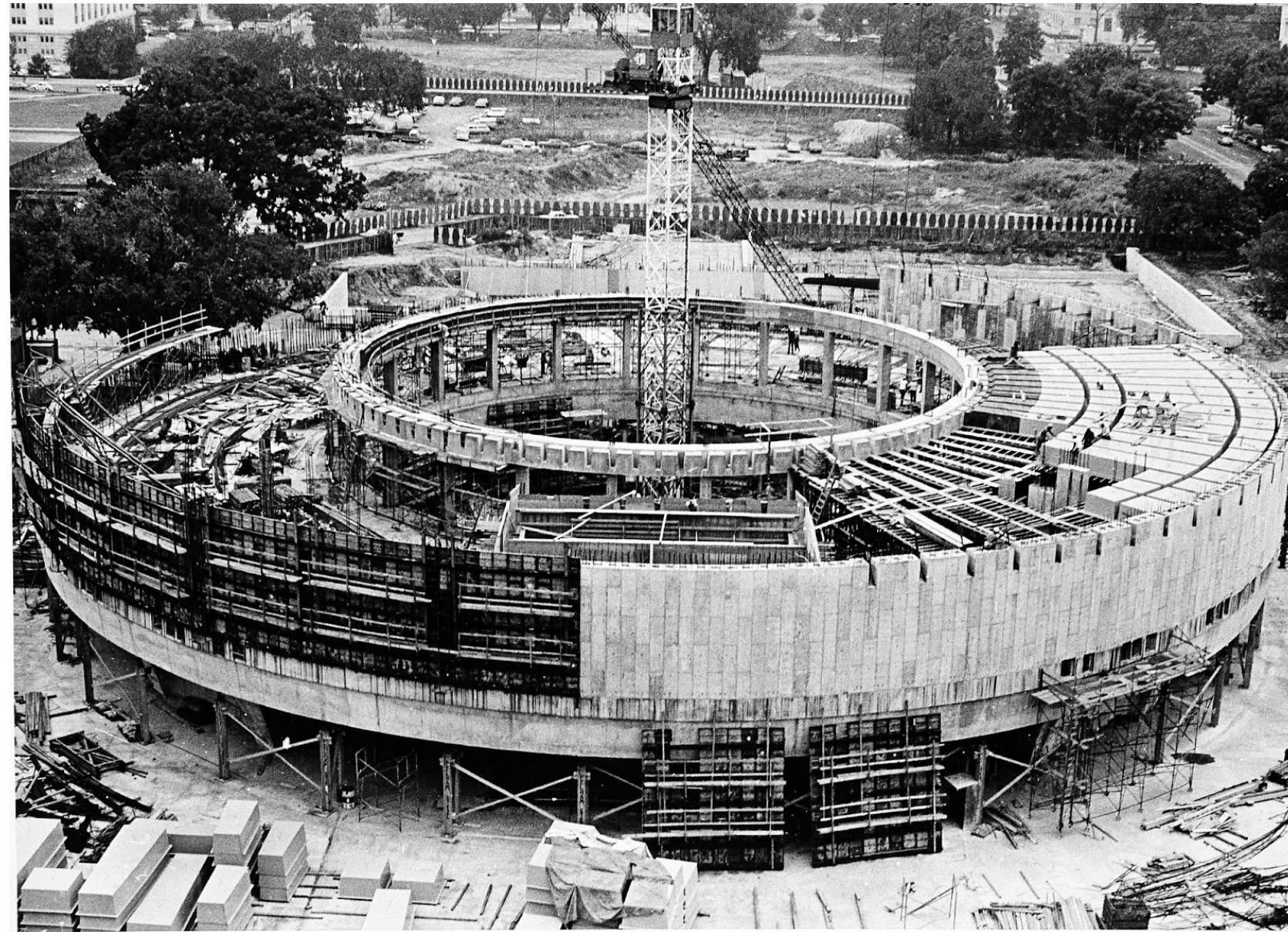
Featured Content

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Gordon Bunshaft, SOM

Completed in 1974

Independence Avenue SW & 7th Street SW



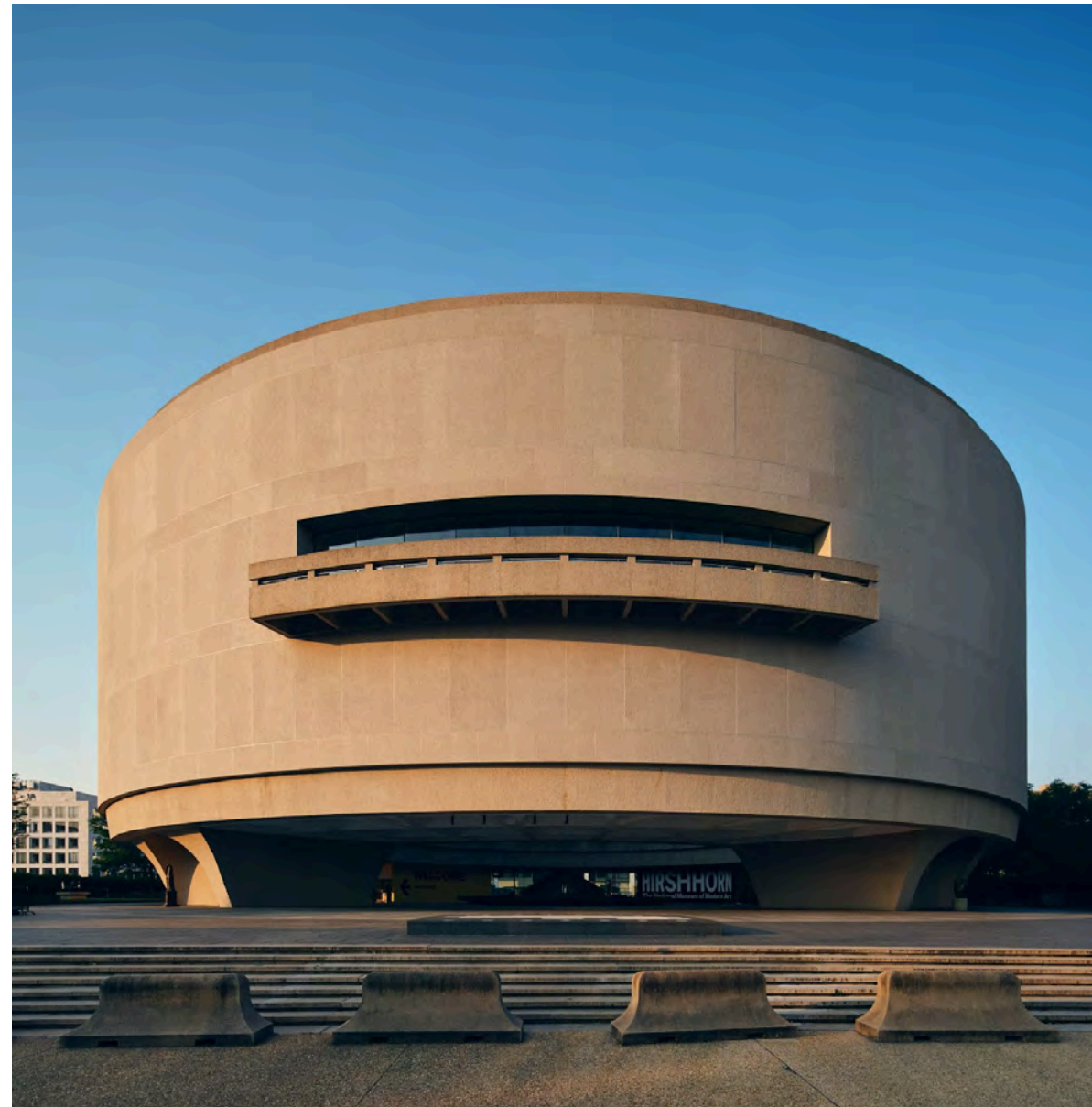
Gordon Bunshaft, SOM

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Under Construction, August 1972

Archival photograph, photographer unknown

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Image No. SIA2011-1450

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Ty Cole (United States, b. 1979)

Hirshhorn Museum II, 2023

Courtesy of the artist

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Diller Scofidio + Renfro

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden: Seasonal Inflatable "Bubble," 2009

Unbuilt project

Courtesy of Diller Scofidio + Renfro; Project contributors include Elizabeth Diller, David Allin, Dustin Tobias, William Arbizu, James Brucz, Michael Etzel, Felipe Ferrer, Matthew Ostrow, and Haruka Saito

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Hubert H. Humphrey Building
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Marcel Breuer & Associates and Nolen-Swinburne & Associates Architects
Completed in 1977
200 Independence Avenue SW



Robert Lautman (United States, 1923-2009)

*Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Headquarters,
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, 1976*
Marcel Breuer Papers (1920-1986), Archives of American Art,
Smithsonian Institution, Record number (DSI-AAA)IO612

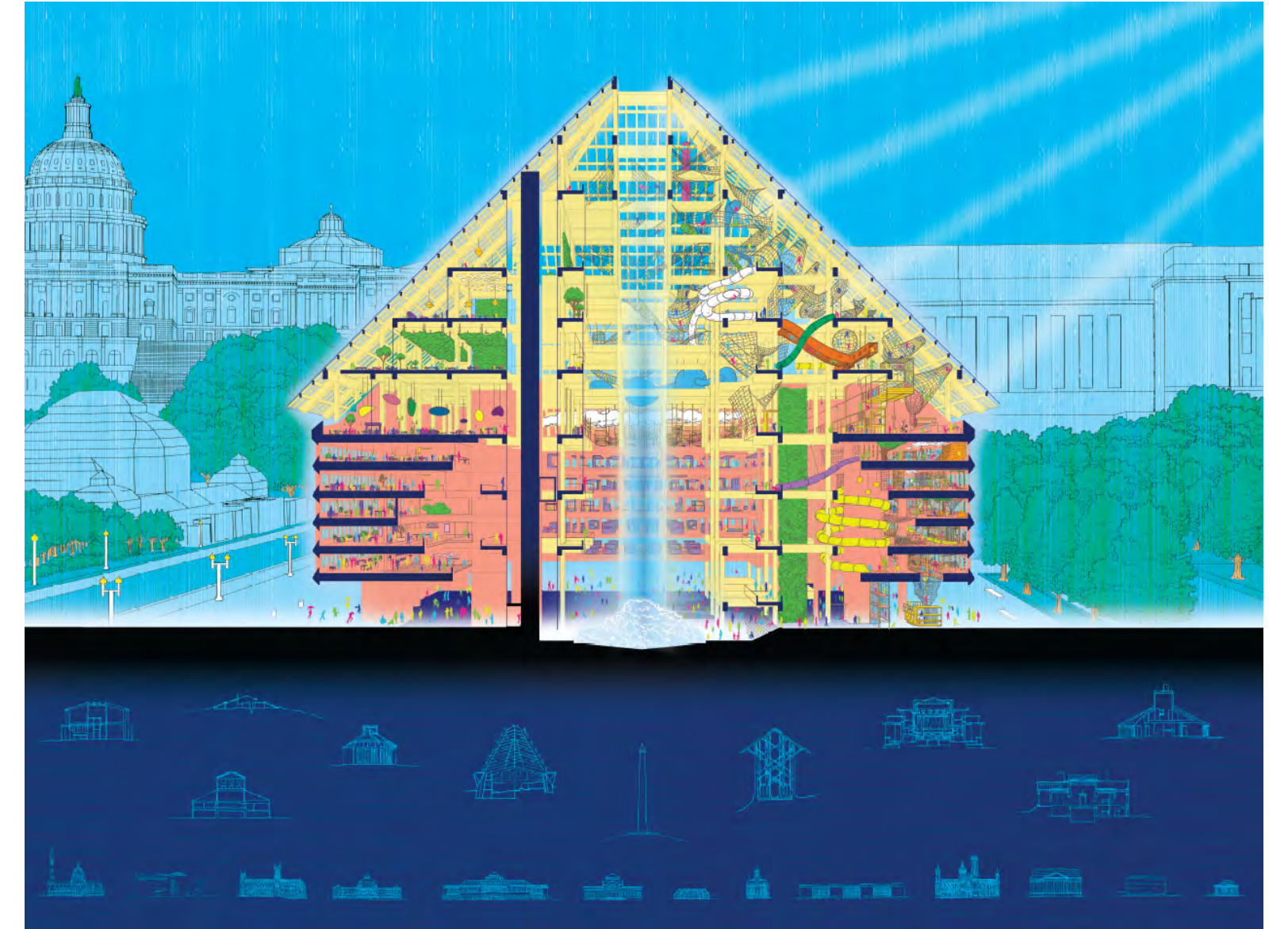
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Ty Cole (United States, b. 1979)

Humphrey Building, 2023
Courtesy of the artist

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BLDUS

Reimagining the Humphrey Building: The Temple of Play, 2023
Unbuilt project
Courtesy of BLDUS, the DC-based firm led by Andrew Linn and Jack Becker

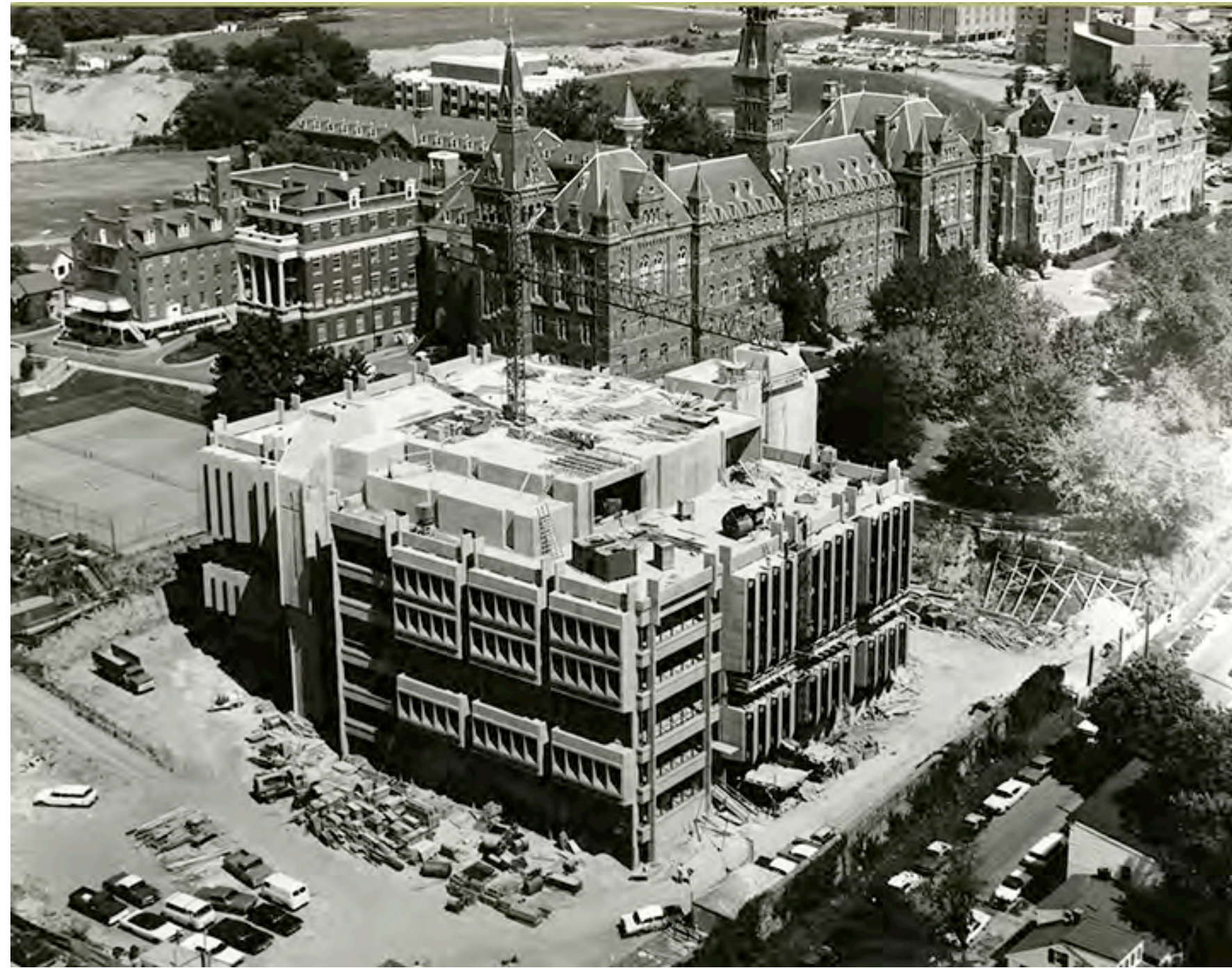
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Joseph Mark Lauinger Library
Georgetown University Campus Library

John Carl Warnecke and Associates

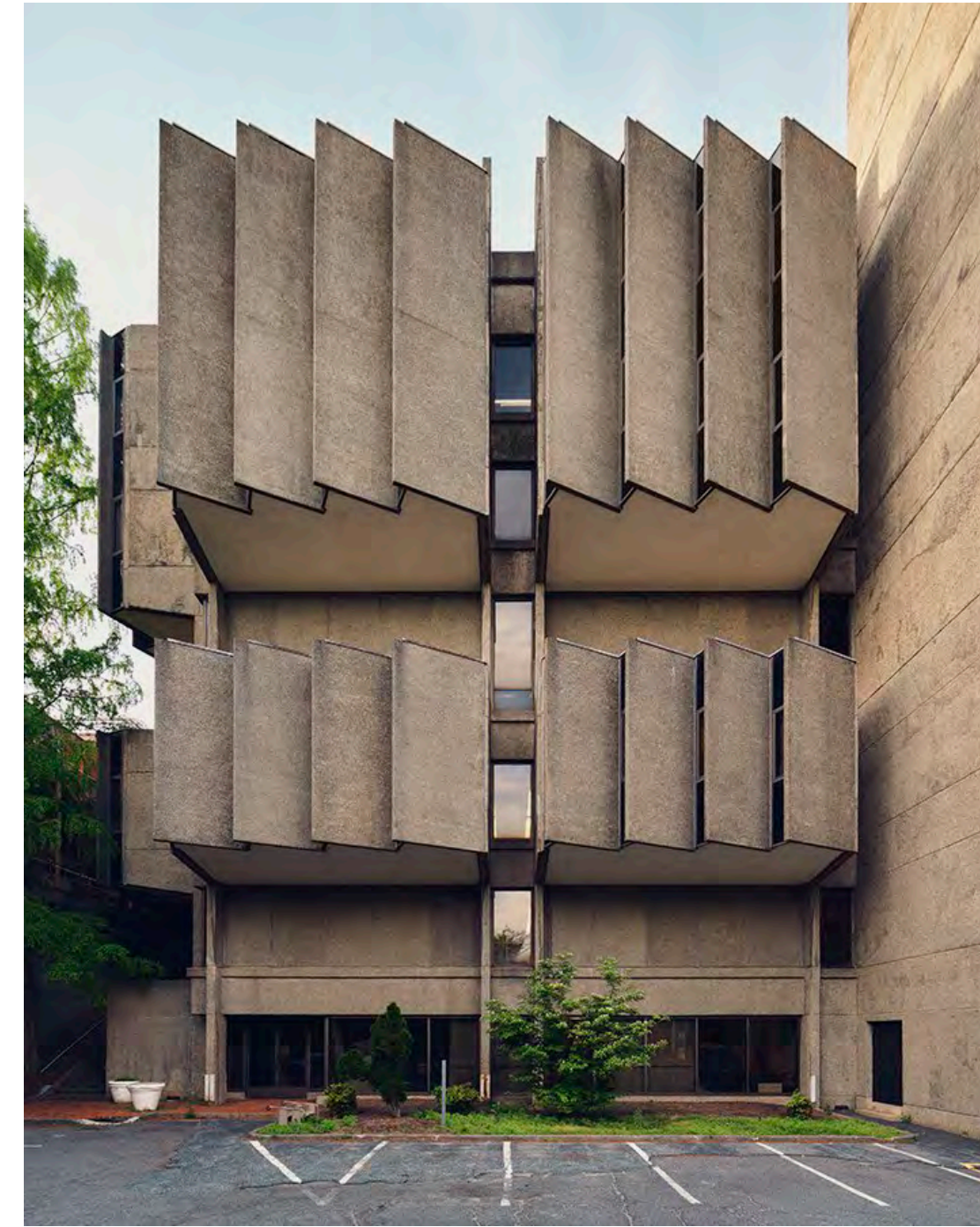
Completed in 1970

3700 O Street NW



Lauinger Library, Construction Site, May 1968
Archival photograph, photographer unknown
Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Georgetown University

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Ty Cole (United States, b. 1979)
Lauinger Library I, 2023
Courtesy of the artist

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Dane Cobb, Cameron Reese, and Devan Rendon
Reimagining Lauinger Library, 2023
Instructed by Professors Josh Vermillion and Eric Strain,
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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J. Edgar Hoover Building
Federal Bureau of Investigation Headquarters

Architects: C.F. Murphy Associates

Completed circa 1974

935 Pennsylvania Avenue NW



Under Construction, J. Edgar Hoover Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Headquarters
Ca. 1969
Federal Bureau of Investigation

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Ty Cole (United States, b. 1979)
Hoover Building, Triptych, 2023
Digital G-Prints
Courtesy of the artist

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Gensler
Reimagining the Hoover Building: Office Building of the Future - Hackable Buildings, 2012
Unbuilt project
Courtesy of Gensler
Project contributors include John Adams, Jeff Barber, Shawn Gehle, Rob Jernigan, Li Wen, Christine Barber, Jessica Griese, Heidi Konieczka, Duncan Lyons, Carrie Morrison, Chris Rhoads, Raffael Scasserra, James Schrader, Colette Smith, Ruben Smudde, Darcey Thomson, Tam Tran

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