



NYC
Landmarks Preservation
Commission

Backlog Initiative: Addressing 95 Properties
Manhattan B Group 1 Items

Edgar J. Kaufman Conference Rooms, Lecture
Hall and Elevator Lobby

809 United Nations Plaza, Manhattan
Manhattan Block: 01338 Lot: 7503

Manhattan Community Board 6
Public Hearing Date(s): 11/20/2001, 09/10/2002



Photos: (left) undated research images (right) 2005

Special Public Hearings

The Landmarks Preservation Commission will hold a public hearing on the backlog of buildings in the Borough of Manhattan on **November 12, 2015** and encourages interested parties to submit written testimony in advance of that hearing. Each speaker will be given three minutes total to speak, and in that time may address all of the items within Manhattan B Group 1, just particular items, or add comments to support written testimony. In order to conduct efficient hearings, we ask speakers to register in advance, and submit their written statements and materials that will be read at the hearing by **November 5, 2015** to backlog95@lpc.nyc.gov. If you are unable to attend the hearing, your written submissions will be entered into the record and distributed to the Commissioners.

If you have questions about this property or the hearing process please contact backlog95@lpc.nyc.gov or call (212) 669-7817. If you would like more information about this property, please see the research file summary (over) and go to our website (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/html/backlog95>) and click on the link for this building's research file.



**Landmarks Preservation
Commission**

**Edgar J. Kaufman Conference Rooms, Lecture
Hall and Elevator Lobby Description**

Landmark Type: Interior

Built: 1964 -1965

Architect: Alvar Aalto, Elissa Aalto

Style: Not Available

Research Staff Hearing Statement (2002)

EDGAR J. KAUFMANN, JR. CONFERENCE ROOMS, LECTURE HALL AND ELEVATOR LOBBY, 809
United Nations Plaza, Manhattan.

Designed in 1963 and constructed in 1964-65, the Edgar J. Kaufmann, Jr. Conference Rooms are the only surviving work in New York City by the noted Finnish architect Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) and the designer Elissa Aalto (1923-1994). Located on the twelfth floor of the former Institute for International Education, these light-infused interiors are typical of Aalto's organic and highly personal approach to modern design. The proposed landmark consists of a cobalt-blue porcelain tiled elevator lobby, two conference rooms divided by folding ash partitions, and a spacious fan-shaped lecture hall, seating up to three hundred persons. Fabricated under Aalto's direct supervision in Finland during 1964, the lecture hall features an undulating white plaster ceiling that gently rises toward the east, curving walls paneled to picture-rail height in ash with spaghetti battens continuing to the ceiling, and a twenty-two foot high aluminum frame window wall partially screened by a grid of ash louvers. At the southeast corner is the room's focal point, a birch sculpture consisting of a series of ceiling-height laminated rods, shaped and arranged by Aalto to suggest a stylized forest. Aalto also designed the elegant lighting, including the ceiling pendants, louvered wall sconces, and tiered gold-plated hanging fixtures. The project's entire cost was underwritten by Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., former curator of design at the Museum of Modern Art, whose family commissioned such architectural masterpieces as Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater (1937) in Bear Run, Pennsylvania, and Richard Neutra's Kaufman House (1947) in Palm Springs, California. Writing in 1965, the architecture critic for the *New York Times*, Ada Louise Huxtable, praised the project as the "most beautiful and distinguished interior New York has seen in many years."