

Carter H. Manny Jr. (1918–2017)

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Carter Hugh Manny was not an architectural historian, critic, or curator, but in his long career as a prominent Chicago architect, director of the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, and active participant in Chicago's architectural world, he had an impact on the direction of architectural history that reached far beyond Chicago. His outsize influence on our field was due in great part to the fact that he was also a gentleman of the old school, a man of considerable tact and charm, with a sense of duty and a personal modesty that allowed him to take a careful, measured, and wide embrace of architectural history.

Carter was born in 1918 to a middle-class family in Michigan City, Indiana, a town at the southern tip of Lake Michigan about fifty miles east of Chicago. His family had deep ties in Michigan City, and Carter, like his businessman father, continued to call that city home throughout his career in Chicago. He attended public schools in Michigan City, graduating from high school in 1937. When he entered Harvard that fall, he started with courses useful for a business career, but a survey course in fine arts taught by Wilhelm Köhler changed his mind, and he turned to architecture. At the time, the Harvard School of Design was headed by Walter Gropius, whom Carter got to know well because of the small student body, but there were still many faculty members who had come up through the Beaux-Arts system. By the end of his undergraduate days, Carter had become a convinced modernist whose heroes were European avant-gardists like Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier,



Carter H. Manny Jr. (photo courtesy of the Graham Foundation).

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yet he was also interested in the work of many other architects, especially Frank Lloyd Wright, who was not at all in favor then at Harvard.

At least as important to his later career were fellow students, including John Holabird of the well-known Chicago

architectural family, Joseph Passonneau, who would have an important career as architect and educator at Washington University in St. Louis, and, above all, Philip Johnson. Johnson was twelve years older and had already made a name for himself as a curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and coauthor, with Henry-Russell Hitchcock, of the landmark 1932 volume *The International Style*. Brilliant and elegant but also occasionally biting and erratic, Johnson had a wide circle of friends and an encyclopedic knowledge of cultural history. He would become a friend and mentor to Carter and have a powerful influence on him for many years thereafter. It seems likely that Johnson's extraordinary curiosity and capacity to absorb influences of all kinds played a role in Carter's own wide-ranging interests in design, historic as well as contemporary.

Carter received his AB in 1941 and planned to go to graduate school in architecture, but war was looming and with it the possibility of his being drafted. He learned about a special twelve-month degree program in industrial administration in Harvard's business school and entered that instead. During World War II, he worked for the War Production Board at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio.

Following the war, Carter convinced Frank Lloyd Wright to take him on briefly as an apprentice at Taliesin West. Then, instead of returning to Harvard, he enrolled at the Illinois Institute of Technology, where he came into contact with the expatriate Europeans on the faculty, including Mies, Ludwig Hilberseimer, and Walter Peterhans, as well as the Americans Alfred Caldwell and George Danforth.

In 1948 Carter finished at IIT and found a job with the Chicago firm of Naess & Murphy. That office had been founded in 1946, but it could trace its origins back to Burnham & Root in the late nineteenth century. Carter's entire professional life from this point onward was tightly connected with that firm, which would become C. F. Murphy in 1961, Murphy/Jahn in 1980, and JAHN in 2012. During his first years at Naess & Murphy the office designed several conspicuous buildings (for example, Chicago's Prudential Building) that owed something to the moderne work of the 1930s on the one hand and, on the other, to the new, ahistorical style that came to dominate corporate architecture in postwar America. Carter later reported that he was embarrassed by the Prudential and other work of the firm from these years because it seemed only half modern.

In 1957, at age thirty-nine, Carter got his big break when he was put in charge of work at Chicago's new O'Hare Airport. Although this airfield had opened in 1955, it was slow to supersede the older Midway Airport until the arrival of jet airliners, which needed longer runways than Midway could accommodate. The major expansion at O'Hare that started in 1957 was one of the largest and most conspicuous architectural commissions in the world in those years, and the

design of O'Hare, with its glassy pavilions lining a ring road, would have a major influence on airport design for years to come. Carter's role was key. As head of the architectural team he was involved in all aspects of the work, from design (which was largely done by Stan Gladych) to scheduling, contracts, public relations, and negotiations with the city, the airlines, and the contractors. He was rewarded with a partnership at Naess & Murphy in 1958.

Carter played a similar role in the 1960s with the massive, concrete FBI Building (now the J. Edgar Hoover Building) on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. (also designed by Gladych). He went on to oversee several important commissions that the Murphy firm worked on in joint ventures with other architects, notably the muscular Chicago Civic (later Daley) Center and the tapering First National Bank of Chicago (currently Chase Tower). These two buildings would join the Federal Center in their incorporation of dramatic plazas functioning as urban oases along Dearborn Street in the heart of Chicago's Loop. Carter was central to bringing artwork to all three plazas, including the monumental untitled Picasso sculpture at the Chicago Civic Center, the Chagall mural *The Four Seasons* at the First National Bank, and the Alexander Calder stabile *Flamingo* at the Federal Center.

By the mid-1960s Carter was involved both in architecture and in many of the most important civic ventures in the city, including abortive schemes for the Crosstown Expressway, the subway expansion that would have replaced the Loop's elevated lines, and the world's fair that was supposed to open in 1993. In all these efforts and throughout his later career Carter worked with all of Chicago's major civic leaders and architectural figures, including designers like Harry Weese, Bruce Graham, and Walter Netsch, the latter two at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Murphy's great rival in postwar Chicago. In some ways more important than the designers were the partners in charge of orchestrating the major work—men like William Hartmann at SOM, William Brubaker at Perkins & Will, and Carter himself at Murphy. Given the enormous egos of many of these men and the intense rivalries among them, it is a testament to Carter's character that he was able to work amicably with almost all of them and build lasting personal friendships with many.

Where many postwar modernist architects were indifferent to architectural history, Carter, from a very early date, was fascinated by it. His most direct influence on the practice of architectural history came through his work at the Graham Foundation. The foundation was established by Ernest R. Graham, who had been Daniel Burnham's right-hand man at Burnham & Root. After Burnham's death in 1912, Graham reorganized the firm as Graham, Burnham & Company; in another reorganization in 1918, it became Graham, Anderson, Probst & White. By investing his money carefully, particularly in Chicago real estate, Graham became wealthy. When he

died in 1936, his will called for the creation of a tuition-free school of “painting, sculpture and architecture, and the arts germane thereto.” The will specified that the school must be up and running within twenty years.

Unfortunately, by the mid-1930s the Great Depression had dramatically reduced the value of Graham’s investments, and there was little movement to create the school he envisioned until the 1950s. The executor of Graham’s will was Charles F. Murphy Sr., who had been Graham’s longtime assistant. And this is where Carter came in. Murphy was a partner in a new architectural office organized by employees of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White. Beginning as Shaw, Naess and Murphy, the new firm had become Naess & Murphy by the time Carter joined in 1946. Given Murphy’s dual role as executor and head of Naess & Murphy, it is not surprising that the firm and the foundation were closely linked. By 1955, when Murphy realized that the new school had to be activated quickly or it would risk losing the Graham funds, he asked Carter—along with Charles Murphy Jr. and Charles Rummel, all three members of the Murphy firm—to be a trustee of the newly organized, Graham-funded American School of Fine Arts. However, because that name was already in use, the trustees had to find another. Also, the amount of money available did not seem sufficient to start a real school, and there was already a prominent local art school at the Art Institute of Chicago. The trustees went to the courts to argue for a name change to the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and a scheme to create fellowships that would bring in artists and architects who would hold seminars together, in that way fulfilling the educational goals of the bequest.

William Hartmann was appointed the first director, but because he still had his job at SOM, the directorship was a part-time position. The first awards were announced in 1956. Hartmann was succeeded as director by John Entenza, the former publisher of *Arts & Architecture* magazine in Los Angeles. A man with little formal education but a refined sense of taste, Entenza became the Graham Foundation’s first full-time director and created the template for the future operation of the foundation. During his tenure, grants were awarded to Robert Venturi for help in publishing *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), to Gyorgy Kepes at MIT to help start the Center for Visual Studies, and to the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York. Under Entenza, the foundation bought the splendid Prairie Style Madlener House and brought in architect Daniel Brenner, who did a minimal but highly effective job of repurposing the mansion’s handsome spaces for the foundation’s offices. By the time Entenza retired in 1971, the Graham Foundation was widely considered the most important private source of funding for architectural research in the United States.

Through its early years, the foundation remained an adjunct of the Murphy firm, with most of its board consisting of members of the firm or close business associates. According to Carter’s later recollections, Charles Murphy Jr., who succeeded his father in heading the foundation, was apparently under the assumption that giving away money was easy and could be done by a part-time director. For this reason, it was not at all surprising that Murphy looked within the firm and asked Carter, who was already busy with firm business and the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Architects, to step in as acting director after Entenza’s departure. Carter continued the programs started by Entenza but with an additional emphasis on history. His success led in 1974 to his appointment as the permanent full-time director. He was given a salary, and he resigned as a trustee because of the stipulation that trustees could not be compensated by the foundation.

Over the next nineteen years Carter oversaw hundreds of grants to architects, architectural historians, critics, and journalists. Although in most cases the awards were relatively small, they were often enormously important to their recipients, both because of the money and because the imprimatur of the Graham Foundation carried great weight. Much of the credit for this reputation was due to Carter, who in his early years at the foundation continued the practice of having the director alone make most decisions about how funds would be spent. What is striking about the hundreds of grants given by the foundation in Carter’s years is how diverse they were. Carter was willing to give money to architects working on the latest developments in high-rise construction, but also to architectural historians working on topics as diverse as medieval European pilgrimage churches and indigenous dwellings in Asia. In particular, a substantial percentage of the grants for graduate student theses and dissertations went to young architectural historians.

There were also significant grants to organizations. Among the most important of these were funds to help defray costs for the Chicago-based magazine *Inland Architect*, to build an endowment for the Chicago Architecture Foundation, to create a preservation program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and to support student magazines at various schools of architecture. Graham Foundation funding was also key to establishing several centers housing important collections, including the Ernest R. Graham Center for Architectural Drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago’s Department of Architecture, the Charles Murphy, Sr., Architecture Center at the Chicago History Museum, and the Graham Resource Center in the basement of Crown Hall at IIT. In addition, there was funding for conferences at the foundation (e.g., daylong seminars featuring prominent historians such as Spiro Kostof, Neil Levine, Anthony Vidler, and John Onians) and elsewhere (e.g., a symposium on architectural treatises at the University of Delaware). Among the exhibitions that were

funded in part by the foundation were two influential shows at New York's Museum of Modern Art (one on the tensile structures of the German architect Frei Otto and the other on the architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts) and two dueling exhibitions in Chicago in 1976 (one celebrating the history of the city's modernist architecture, culminating in the work of Mies, and the other providing an alternative, broader history). There were book series, including one under the foundation's own logo with the MIT Press, and others at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and the Architectural History Foundation in New York. For the Society of Architectural Historians, the foundation supported the indexing of forty years of the society's journal (*JSAH*) and provided crucial funding for the important *Buildings of the United States* book series. These initiatives together had a substantial impact on the practice of architectural history not just in Chicago but much further afield, and they facilitated some of the most important architectural research done since that time.

Perhaps the most important thing that Carter did at the Graham Foundation was to save it from being closed or absorbed by another institution. Because it was initially run by members of the Murphy family, who had little familiarity with not-for-profit institutions, there were few checks on the organization's management. By the late 1970s, it became increasingly apparent to Carter that there were serious problems involving self-dealing by certain trustees, improper investments, and grants being made without his knowledge for purposes that were outside the foundation's scope. Although it would have been easier for him simply to resign, Carter's sense of duty led him to compile a sixty-page document outlining the abuses. He then became aware of an even larger problem. Although a judge had approved the foundation's change from a school to an organization that brought in fellows for seminars, there was no official approval for how the foundation had shifted, during the Entenza years, away from any pretense of being a school and into being an organization focused primarily on giving grants, mounting exhibitions, and sponsoring lectures.

These problems eventually came to the attention of the Illinois state's attorney general, and there was a real fear for the future of the foundation. At this juncture, some of Chicago's most prominent architects mounted a campaign to send letters to three hundred significant figures in the architectural world, asking for their support for the foundation. The response was overwhelming. The respondents made it clear that the Graham Foundation was known worldwide as one of the most important sources of funding for architectural research. Carter was vindicated. In the

end, the entire board was asked to resign, a new temporary board of civic leaders was named, and the foundation was allowed to continue. The temporary board was eventually replaced by one consisting of a mix of architects, civic leaders, and others, including the board's first architectural historian, Sally Chappell of DePaul University. The new board took on a greater role in managing the foundation and in setting up procedures for a more thorough review of grant applications. By the time Carter retired, the foundation had become the much more professional organization it is today.

Carter was always interested in architectural history, but once he was working full-time at the Graham Foundation he had more time to pursue his own historical interests. For example, he joined the board of the SAH for three years beginning in 1982. During that time, he made several attempts to get the society to move its offices from Philadelphia to the Madlener House in Chicago. He wrote a charming account of his early years and a short book on the Madlener House (in 1988). One of his most remarkable contributions to architectural history was the interview he did in 1995, shortly after his retirement from the Graham Foundation. Part of an important oral history program conducted by the Art Institute of Chicago, this interview is one of the crown jewels in the collection. The interviewer was Franz Schulze, who had himself played a major role in the city's architectural world during the same years that Carter was at the Murphy firm and the Graham Foundation. Franz provided a firm chronological framework and asked probing questions. The result is a 526-page document that contains not only a detailed chronicle of Carter's professional life but also a surprisingly exact and thorough account of many of the most important events in the development of postwar Chicago and the larger world of architecture. Carter's memory was prodigious, and his generous nature, personal modesty, and probity in a world of giant egos made him a splendid chronicler. This interview will provide generations of historians with raw material for further research. One of its most important contributions is to demonstrate how any history of architecture that concentrates solely on designers misses the enormous role of people like Carter, individuals who were not primarily designers but rather partners in charge, engineers, clients, contractors, or civic leaders, and who often played crucial roles in the development of buildings and the urban fabric.

Carter's interest in architectural history was recognized in 1996 with the establishment of the Carter Manny Award, given annually to outstanding doctoral students working on architectural topics. Many of the authors of important architectural histories written since 1996 have been recipients of this award.