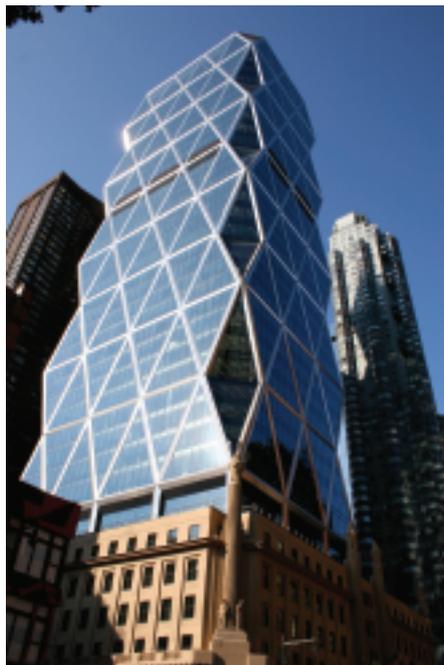


A Phoenix in Midtown

The Hearst Tower in New York City is an odd piece of architecture. The new glass and stainless steel tower rises up from the remains of the company's old limestone headquarters built back in 1928 to house Hearst's 12 magazines.

The building might remind you of the legendary phoenix, which at the end of its life builds a pyre of cinnamon twigs for itself that it ignites, only to arise in a new form out of its own ashes. The diamond-shaped glass panels, reflecting the sky, soar 46 stories, but when you look down at the base, there's the squat, stone façade of the original six-story headquarters of Hearst—the old print publishing empire that hails back to 1888—both source of and support for today's digital and entertainment empire.

We've never created much of a body of myth here in the U.S. In fact, we're more like myth-averse pragmatics. But despite our own hard-headedness, sometimes there are some curious parallels. Take our tendency to abandon whatever is old for whatever is next. Economists call it *creative destruction*, an inclination that encourages impatience with anything described as legacy. Now if architecture, as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe claimed, "is the will of an epoch translated into space," then the Hearst Tower is an apt metaphor for Hearst then/Hearst now—a phoenix frozen mid-change.



In 1926, the original designers, Joseph Urban and George P. Post, wanted a building to “house industries whose purpose is to exert influence on the thought and education of the reading public.” And that was what they designed—a square container that looks like a school or factory.

In 2003, Hearst officials decided to use “the original 1928 building as a pedestal,” and “the tower above had to incorporate the latest technology and innovation.” And it does. Wireless access is available

throughout. The engineers installed a two-way radio system for Hearst and EMS (emergency services) and a wireless system for Verizon Wireless, AT&T, and T-Mobile. They also embedded antennas into the center of the floors, level by level, for a ubiquitous WiFi network. The tower is “green,” with glass walls maximizing daylight as internal smart systems sense and balance exterior and interior lighting. And the roof catches rainwater, directing it to interior cooling systems and irrigation systems that water plant displays in the building.

In fact, one contractor described the tower as the product of a “future-proof mentality.” But just how future-proof can a creative destructionist be? Take a closer look at the four corners of the tower. Each features four structural elements the architects call birds-mouth glass. All 16 look like they're already calling out. ■