

For Immediate Release

Elegance in the Sky: The Architecture of Rosario Candela at the Museum of the City of New York



Samuel H. Gottscho, "960 Fifth Avenue. Dining room," 1930. Museum of the City of New York, Gottscho-Schleisner Collection, 88.1.1.1012

***Exhibition Explores Renowned Architect Who Played a Major Role in Defining
Luxury Living in Early 20th Century Manhattan***

On View: Thursday, May 17–Sunday, October 28, 2018

(New York, NY) On Thursday, May 17, 2018, the **Museum of the City of New York** will open [*Elegance in the Sky: The Architecture of Rosario Candela*](#), an exhibition exploring the legacy of renowned architect Rosario Candela (1890–1953), who played a major role in transforming and shaping luxury living of 20th century Manhattan with the design of the distinctive “prewar” apartment buildings that define the cityscapes of iconic streets such as Park and Fifth Avenues and Sutton Place. Candela’s elegant yet understated high-rises, including 960 Fifth Avenue, 740 Park Avenue, and One Sutton Place South, featured set-back terraces and neo-Georgian and Art Deco ornament that created the look of New York urbanism between the World Wars. The exhibition is designed by Peter Pennoyer Architects. Graphic design is by Tsang Seymour.

Elegance in the Sky tells the remarkable story of how Rosario Candela, an immigrant architect, made a permanent name for himself by becoming an influential force in transforming the way the wealthiest in New York City lived. Through photographs, ephemera, graphics, furnishings, and digital animation, the exhibition displays how Candela and his colleagues inspired some of the most prominent New Yorkers to move from their private homes to “luxury mansions in the sky,” thus changing the landscape of the city.

Much of our vision of “prewar” elegance is based on Candela’s architectural creations that have become status symbols for the city with a long-lasting economic impact and history.

“Rosario Candela transformed early 20th century Manhattan in ways that still have great influence on the city today,” said Whitney Donhauser, *Ronay Menschel* Director, Museum of the City of New York. “*Elegance in the Sky* tells the story of an architect who was truly gifted but it also tells a story about the ‘American Dream’ - about an immigrant who came to the epicenter of a new country to become a successful and influential entrepreneur.”

Rosario Candela came of age professionally in an era when the city’s 19th century mansions and townhouses were being torn down and their residents adapting to apartment living. Working within a community of fellow architects, real estate developers, builders, and interior designers, Candela met that demand by creating residential buildings that mixed single-story, duplex, and triplex units, all with spacious and graceful plans. Some apartments even offered private, multi-story “maisonettes” at street level. Promoted with alluring marketing schemes, these structures established new standards of chic urban living for some of New York’s wealthiest citizens. Even today, almost a century after they were built, Candela’s buildings rank among the most prized in the city, and the phrase “designed by Rosario Candela” remains a real estate magnet.

“*Elegance in the Sky* tells the biographical story of an Italian-American immigrant architect who made a permanent name for himself, and shaped New York City as we know it today,” said Donald Albrecht, Curator of Architecture and Design. “A key theme of the exhibition focuses on the economic history and ingenious marketing campaigns that convinced the wealthy to give up their private homes and move into apartments designed by Candela, which are still highly desirable today.”

Born in Palermo, Sicily, in 1890 (where his father was a plasterer), Rosario Candela immigrated to the United States around 1910. Although he had only a rudimentary grasp of English, he graduated from Columbia University with a degree in architecture in 1915. He set up his own practice by 1920 and was soon receiving commissions from developers, many of them Italian immigrants like himself, with whom he realized some of his most famous designs.

Working primarily in Manhattan, Candela designed or co-designed about 75 apartment buildings, hitting his peak both in quality and quantity at the height of the Jazz Age in the late 1920s. The stock market crash of 1929, however, derailed Candela’s architectural career. He soon turned his attention to a new endeavor – cryptography. He is credited with developing an unbreakable encryption method, wrote two books on the subject, and, starting in 1941, taught a course on cryptanalytics at Hunter College.

Elegance in the Sky focuses on three districts that Candela helped transform: Fifth Avenue, Park Avenue, and Sutton Place. The exhibition showcases both vintage and contemporary photographs highlighting the exteriors and interiors of Candela buildings. The exhibition also features a digital animation of 960 Fifth Avenue, which demonstrates the stunning range of the architect’s interior designs which are hidden to the public because of the relatively similar exteriors of Candela’s buildings.

“Rosario Candela established New York as the originator of the luxury apartment,” noted Peter Pennoyer, Architect and Exhibition Designer. “Harnessing the energy of collaboration, he was the leader in the typically dynamic New York sphere where ambitious real estate developers work with teams of architects and designers to transform marginal neighborhoods into newly-minted districts for a

fashionable clientele. This exhibition shows the potential of architectural imagination to unleash underutilized New York real estate."

Accompanying the exhibition is a self-guided walking tour of Rosario Candela's Upper East Side buildings, powered by the Urban Archive app. Urban Archive is a free iOS app mapping the historical image collections of New York City's museums, available for free in the app store. Use Urban Archive to experience Candela's work and discover thousands of historical images from the Museum of the City of New York's collections as you move around the city. Download the app [here](#).

Museum public events related to the exhibition include the Museum of the City of New York's annual Spring Symposium and Luncheon on June 4 which will honor architect Elizabeth Graziolo, a partner at Peter Penoyer Architects, with the "City of Design Award" (ticket information at www.mcny.org/SSL); and "The Candela Allure," a talk on June 7 moderated by architecture critic Paul Goldberger (ticket information at www.mcny.org/candela).

Elegance in the Sky: The Architecture of Rosario Candela is made possible by Todd DeGarmo/STUDIOS Architecture; Robert A.M. Stern Architects, LLP; Alice and Tom Tisch; Joseph A. Tuana and Marianne Verbuyt; Lumion; The New York Landmarks Preservation Foundation; Daryl and Steven Roth; Gil Schafer III; Simon Baron Development; Amabel and Hamilton James; J & AR Foundation; Lico Contracting, Inc.; Roy J. Zuckerberg Family Foundation; William T. Georgis; Clark Construction Corporation; Ferguson & Shamamian Architects; and Lynne B. Sagalyn and Gary Hack.

About the Museum of the City of New York

Founded in 1923 as a private, nonprofit corporation, the Museum of the City of New York celebrates and interprets the city, educating the public about its distinctive character, especially its heritage of diversity, opportunity, and perpetual transformation. The Museum connects the past, present, and future of New York City, and serves the people of the city as well as visitors from around the world through exhibitions, school and public programs, publications, and collections. To connect with the Museum on social media, follow us on Instagram and Twitter at @MuseumofCityNY and visit our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY](https://www.facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY). For more information please visit www.mcny.org.

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