

Debating Tall: Are the Twin Towers Missed?

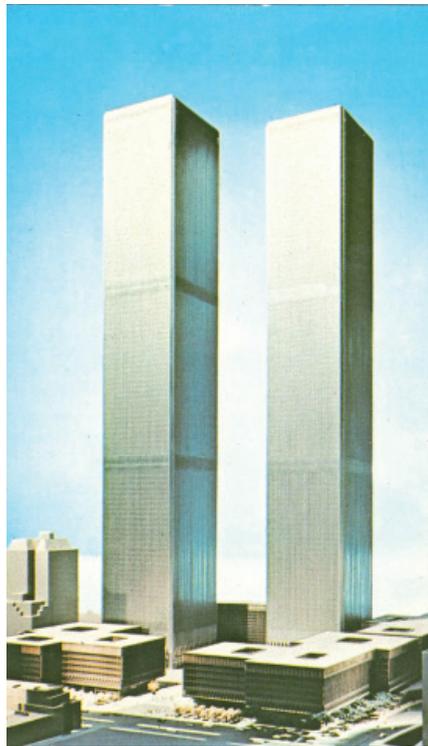
A recent poll on the popular SkyscraperCity Web forum asked its members if they missed the Twin Towers of the former World Trade Center. Out of exactly 600 respondents, 473 people voted that they indeed did. The comments revealed that most people missed them most for the impressive effect the towers had on the New York skyline. While this poll invited all skyscraper enthusiasts around the world, we wonder how two New York professionals would respond if we ask them the same question.

YES

Timothy Johnson

NBBJ Partner and CTBUH Board of Trustee Member

What I miss about the World Trade Center is everything that I loved and hated about the complex. The sheer scale (times two) was a powerful icon for lower Manhattan and the city of New York. It represented a great achievement by humankind. The simplicity at a macro scale and up close was quite ingenious. This was a project where you could read the concept of the project at all scales. I can't count how many times I gazed at it waiting in the TKTs line buying discount theater tickets for guests in for the weekend. I remember getting lost in the below ground concourse trying to find the subway or just simply a way out. On my first visit to NYC as a young architecture student from the Midwest, I was totally enamored by the "double decker" elevator and the "sky lobby." Even though the plaza was not only wind swept, but seemed to have little to do with the scale and needs of us humans, it sure gave you a sense of late modern America. As is typical of this country – we are always striving forward. Although the vision and physicality of the former World Trade Center is now part of our history, that space in the city will forever represent the optimism, commitment, and advancement of people that is ever present in this great society.



Twin Towers, New York postcard © CTBUH Ramsey Collection

NO

Paul Goldberger

Architecture Critic for The New Yorker and Joseph Urban Professor of Design at Parsons

It is impossible not to feel overwhelming sadness at the absence of the former World Trade Center, given all that its loss signifies. But do I miss it? Not really, since these buildings were never truly great works of architecture. When they were present they loomed larger as symbols than real buildings, and they do all the more so now, as symbols of modernity and of freedom, and as reminders of the human lives lost. But now, with a decade having passed since 9/11, it is important also to remember that the towers represented a kind of simplistic, arrogant urban design at its worst. They were abstract objects, as indifferent to the city at their base as to the skyline into which they intruded. These were not pleasant buildings to be in, and unless you happened to see them from far away at just the moment that the rising or setting sun was glimmering on their metal façades, they were not pleasant buildings to look at. While I have had many issues with the rebuilding project at Ground Zero, one of the unquestionably positive things about it has been the commitment to restoring many of the streets of the original grid that were obliterated in the original trade center plan. We are trying to heal the city, and to learn from the mistakes of the 1960s.

What's on the CTBUH Web?

Visit www.ctbuh.org for more on the global tall building industry and the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat



New Chinese-Language Resources

The Council has launched its monthly tall building newsletter and other resources in Chinese, as part of its push to better support the industry in China.

<http://chineseresources.ctbuh.org>



Hancock: 100 Tall Stories

Antony Wood, CTBUH Executive Director is featured in the newly launched initiative of the Chicago Architecture Foundation – *One Nation, Under Construction*.

Antony discusses the Hancock and how spires and antennae can make or break the title of the world's tallest.



CTBUH InfoArchive Publication

The Council is pleased to announce the release of the inaugural edition of a new publication: the *CTBUH InfoArchive*. This publication is a collection of previously-published articles on tall buildings and is intended to create an important historical archive of such material in any given year.