

Foster + Partners Bests Zaha Hadid and OMA in Competition to Build Park Avenue Office Tower

BY KELLY CHAN | OCTOBER 3, 2012 | BLOUIN ART INFO

We were just getting used to the idea of seeing a sensuous Zaha Hadid building on the corporate-modernist boulevard that is Manhattan's Park Avenue, but looks like we'll have to keep dreaming. An invited competition to design a new Park Avenue office building for L&L Holdings and Lemen Brothers Holdings pitted starchitect against starchitect (with a shortlist including Hadid and Rem Koolhaas's firm OMA). In the end, Lord Norman Foster came out victorious.

"Our aim is to create an exceptional building, both of its time and timeless, as well as being respectful of this context," said Norman Foster in a statement, according to *The Architects' Newspaper*. Foster described the building as "for the city and for the people that will work in it, setting a new standard for office design and providing an enduring landmark that befits its world-famous location."

The winning design (pictured left) is a three-tiered, 625,000-square-foot tower. With sky-high landscaped terraces, flexible floor plates, a sheltered street-level plaza, and LEED certification, the building does seem to reiterate some of the same principles seen in the Lever House and Seagram Building, Park Avenue's current office tower icons, but with markedly updated standards. Only time will tell if Foster's building can achieve the same timelessness as its mid-century predecessors, a feat that challenged a slew of architects as Park Avenue cultivated its corporate identity in the 1950s and 60s.

Foster seems to have some idea of the task ahead, speaking of New York as "a source of inspiration since my time at Yale, when the new towers on Park Avenue and its neighborhoods were a magnet for every young architect. Seeing first-hand the works of Mies van der Rohe, Gordon Bunshaft, Eero Saarinen, and Philip Johnson was tremendously exciting then," he said in a press release. "I am delighted to have this very special opportunity to design a contemporary tower to stand alongside them."

Conceptual designs from the other finalists, including Zaha Hadid, OMA, and Richard Rogers, will be on display at the Municipal Art Society's Annual Symposium in October.