

RECOMMISSIONING SAARINEN

RECONSIDERING THE FORMER US EMBASSY IN OSLO NORWAY



US EMBASSY OSLO NORWAY – NIGHT VIEW.

OVERVIEW

The United States Embassy in Oslo Norway was designed by Eero Saarinen (1910-1961) and completed in 1959. A black granite-clad triangular form, architecturally it is the older cousin of Saarinen's 1965 CBS Headquarters Building in New York (nicknamed "The Black Rock") as well as the limestone clad US Embassy in London, designed by Saarinen in 1960. Sited across from the Royal Palace in Oslo's central Vika District, its fortress-like quality was reinforced post-9/11 to include bollards, barricades and a 3-meter high perimeter fence.

As is the case with Saarinen's London Embassy, the Oslo Embassy is likewise being decommissioned, with a replacement Embassy being planned. The Oslo replacement Embassy is designed by EYP Architects and is to be located in the Huseby residential district. Ground was broken for this new building in May of 2012, with a completion expected in 2015. Meanwhile discussions have begun as to what is the most suitable new purpose for the existing Saarinen Embassy Building, with ideas ranging from a new Police Headquarters to a US Cultural Center.

The task of the Studio will be to propose alternative uses for the existing Saarinen Embassy that consider the multitude of issues that it exposes: the evolving role of US diplomatic presence, issues of security and surveillance, the projection of values that an architectural artifact embodies. For purposes of the Studio it will be assumed that the United States will maintain ownership of the building (although this is not the case in actuality). What is the new role of this building in the civic life of Oslo?

The Studio will travel to Oslo the third week of October, holding the MidTerm Review at the AHO School of Architecture in Oslo. The Studio will also visit Yale University's Saarinen Archive and attend lectures by Saarinen scholars on his Embassy Buildings and work.