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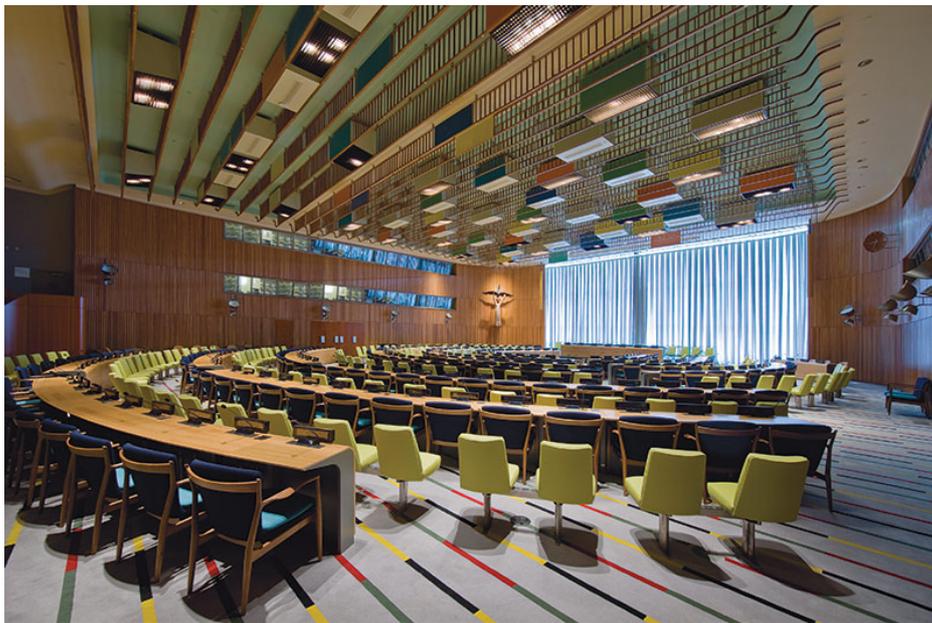


06.13.2013

INTERIORS> UN TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL CHAMBER RESTORED

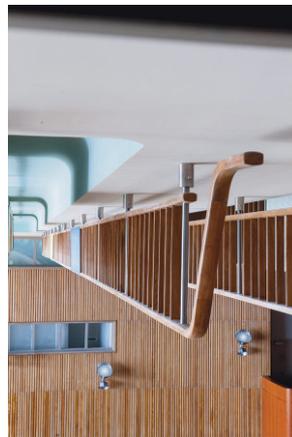
Designed by Finn Juhl in 1952, with contemporary interventions by Kasper Salto and Thomas Sigsgaard.

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HANS OLE MADSEN

The United Nations complex on the bank of the East River in Manhattan feels like a world unto itself. Amid the scruffy commercial realities of New York, the UN reflects an idealistic vision of shared decision-making, global partnership, and conflict resolution through diplomatic debate and compromise. The complex's design speaks to these aspirations. While the exterior blends American corporate modernism with a dash of Brasilia-style formal exuberance, the less well-known interior is highly varied, including a recently restored space designed by the renowned Danish designer Finn Juhl.



Originally funded by the Danish government, the UN Trusteeship Council Chamber opened in 1952. The chamber was devoted to resolving issues of decolonialization. The council was formally dissolved in 1994 and the room now serves as a multipurpose meeting space. Central to Juhl's

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democratic vision were the room's large, curved conference tables arranged in a horseshoe shape, which positioned all the speakers on equal footing. The tables were removed in an earlier renovation, which undermined Juhl's design. The contemporary Danish furniture designers Kasper Salto and Thomas Sigsgaard were selected through a competition to create new tables as well as to modify Juhl's FJ51 chairs. The designers took inspiration from Juhl's original drawings, which are archived by the Designmuseum Danmark. (The governments of Sweden and Norway also sponsored major chambers in the Secretariat building, which have also been meticulously restored as a part of the overall renovation of the UN complex, which began in 2007.)



The chamber is wrapped in bands of warm wood. Large abacus-like lighting fixtures—colored boxes staggered across the ceiling plane within a grid of wooden rods—animate the ceiling. Delicate, wall-mounted, brass light fixtures point up at the ceiling and down at the floor, providing further illumination. A teak sculpture by Henrik Starke depicts a woman releasing a bird, symbolizing the liberation of the colonies. Dashes of bright color and rich craftsmanship give the chamber its Scandinavian charm, reflecting the accessible, humanist qualities of Danish modernism.



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Nothing like Danish design to inspire peace talks. Bravo to Kasper Salto and Thomas Sigsgaard for thoughtful responses to Finn Juhl's original work.

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