

The Modulightor Building

246 East 58th Street, Manhattan
Tax Map Block 1331, Lot 128
BIN 1038621

Built: 1989-93, 2018

Architect: Paul Rudolph

Style: Late Modern | Neo-Constructivist

Proposed Action: Propose for Calendar October 3, 2023



Modulightor Building, *The New York Times*, courtesy of the Paul Rudolph Institute for Modern Architecture

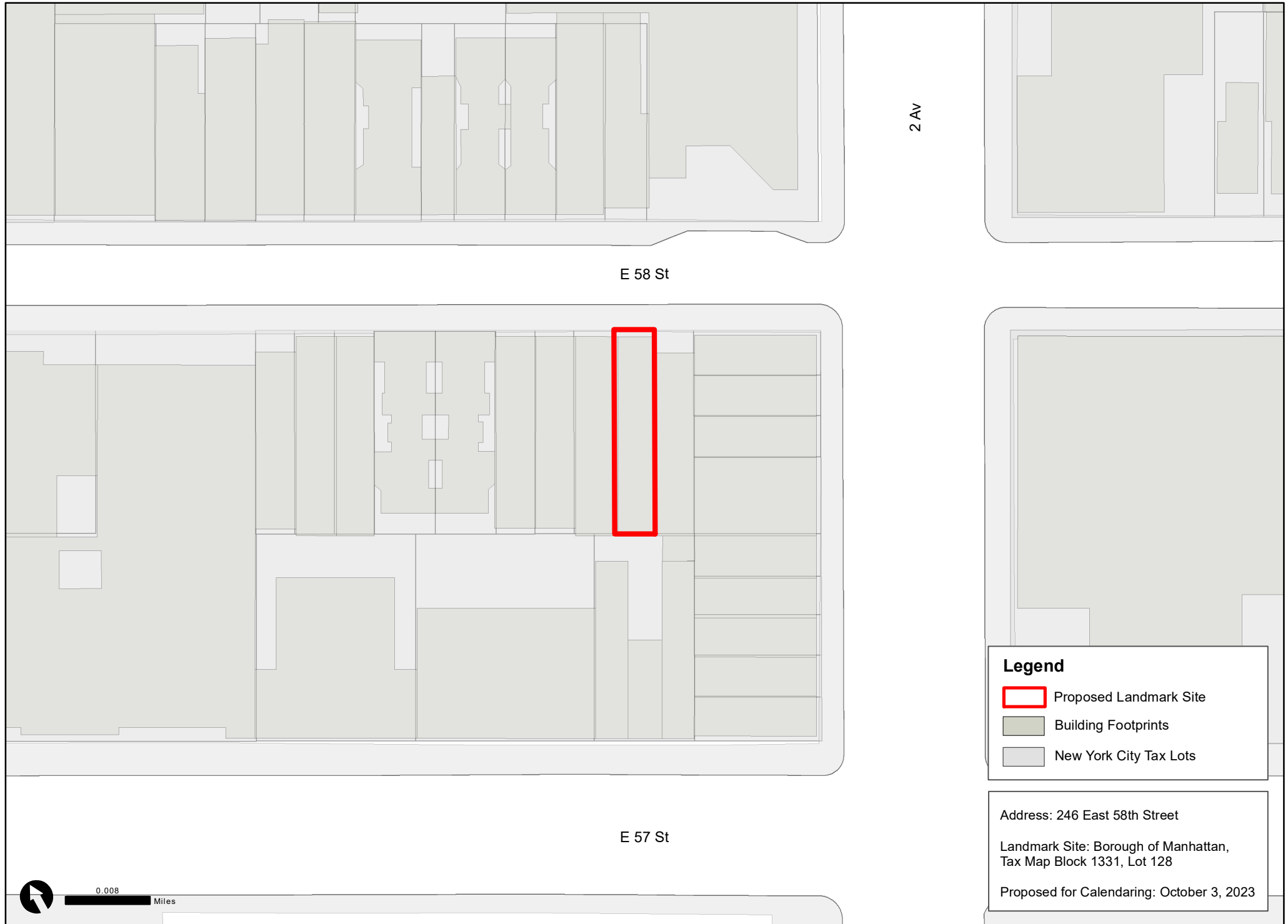
The Modulightor Building, located at 246 East 58th Street near Second Avenue in Manhattan, is a highly significant work by the innovative American architect Paul Rudolph (1918-1997). Designed in 1989 and constructed in two phases, the lower floors were completed in 1993, four years before the architect's death.

Built on a standard 20-foot-wide lot, the Modulightor Building replaced an 1860s row house that had been substantially remodeled by the early 1960s. Paul Rudolph and Ernst Wagner purchased the property in early 1989. During the initial phase of construction, Rudolph moved his office to the building, acting as his own contractor, while Wagner opened a showroom on the lower floors, featuring customizable light fixtures and systems inspired by Rudolph. Under architect Mark Squeo, who was part of architect's office during the early 1990s, the second phase of construction was completed in 2018. Inspired by Rudolph's original design, this phase included the addition of the fifth and sixth floors.




The Modulightor Building's remarkable front and rear elevations are composed of intersecting and overlapping horizontal and vertical rectangles of varying projection and size. Painted white, the steel I-beams form jigsaw-like screens that recall the De Stijl movement, Russian Constructivism, and Mies van der Rohe, as well as Rudolph's celebrated Milam Residence of 1959-61. Other noteworthy architectural features include a multi-level roof terrace and three cantilevered steel balconies that face a rear patio.

Rudolph was a leading and sometimes controversial figure in American architecture during the latter half of the 20th century. Born in Kentucky, he attended Auburn University and the Harvard Graduate School of Design (1947), where he developed a modern sculptural aesthetic that often relied on industrial materials like concrete and steel. Rudolph moved his thriving architectural practice to Manhattan at the height of his career, in the mid-1960s, when he was Dean of the Yale School of Architecture (1958-65). Though many of the architect's projects in the metropolitan area were unrealized, two of his Manhattan buildings are New York City Landmarks: The Paul Rudolph Penthouse & Apartments at 23 Beekman Place, and the so-called "Halston House" at 101 East 63rd Street, which is part of the Upper East Side Historic District.

Named for the architectural lighting company Rudolph founded in 1976, the Modulightor Building contains a ground floor commercial space, as well as an expanded duplex apartment, which is owned and occupied by the Paul Rudolph Institute for Modern Architecture. Founded in 2015, this organization welcomes visitors to monthly events.



Legend

-  Proposed Landmark Site
-  Building Footprints
-  New York City Tax Lots

Address: 246 East 58th Street

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan,
Tax Map Block 1331, Lot 128

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