

Brad Cloepfil (1956-)

Brad Cloepfil, the founding principal of Allied Works Architecture in Portland, gained international renown for his building designs, beginning in the late 1990s. Born in Tigard in 1956, Cloepfil earned his bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Oregon in 1980. His professors included Thomas Hacker, who had studied under legendary American architect Louis Kahn and preached a brand of soulful modernism—clean-lined but warm and inviting, with an emphasis on natural materials.

After college, Cloepfil worked in the office of Swiss architect Mario Botta before returning to the United States to earn a master's degree in architecture from Columbia University in 1985. These influences, as well as the work of minimalist artists such as Donald Judd and Richard Serra, pointed Cloepfil toward a modernist style rather than the postmodernism that was flourishing during the 1970s and 1980s. Although the work of minimalist sculptors helped form Cloepfil's style, he has said that the greatest influence on his work is the beauty and diversity of the Oregon landscape.

In 1994, Cloepfil formed Allied Works, which soon gained national attention for projects such as the Maryhill Overlook (1999) sculpture in Washington, a flat ribbon of undulating concrete that evokes the rises and falls of the Columbia River Gorge, and Saucebox, a restaurant-bar in Portland owned by restaurateur Bruce Carey.

The design for the headquarters of Portland advertising agency Wieden + Kennedy brought Cloepfil international acclaim in 2000. A conversion of a circa 1908 cold storage warehouse in Portland's Pearl District, the building's centerpiece is an atrium with a massive skylight that bathes a series of catwalks and offices in natural light. "I remember that I took an Episcopalian priest through Wieden + Kennedy when it first opened," Cloepfil said in a 2008 interview, "and he told me it was the most spiritual space that he had ever been in."

Throughout the 2000s, Allied Works designed art museums and public buildings. The firm won a design competition for the St. Louis Contemporary Art Museum, which is adjacent to the Pulitzer Foundation, a museum designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando. "Brad got a very good handle on what our essence was," recalled Terry Good, president of the museum's board of directors, "and that the two buildings could have a conversation," referring to how aspects of the buildings' orientation, forms, and materials seek congruency with one another.

Allied Works won the commission for the Museum of Arts & Design in New York City in 2003. Cloepfil's design renovated and significantly altered the building at 2 Columbus Circle, which had been designed by Edward Durell Stone and was referred to as the Lollipop Building for its marble-clad Venetian motifs. The National Trust for Historic Preservation had listed the building as one of America's "11 Most Endangered Historic Places," and among those calling for it to be saved from alteration were writer Tom Wolfe, artist Chuck Close, and architect Robert A.M. Stern. Many people supported the project, however. "I simply do not buy the argument that this little building was a bellwether of the postmodern movement," wrote Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Ada Louise Huxtable, "or that its architect, Ed Stone, was a prophet." The building was altered enough that its historic designation was removed.

Completed in 2007, the Seattle Art Museum's 450,000-square-foot expansion comprised the first four floors of a sixteen-story stainless steel and glass building on First Avenue overlooking Elliott Bay, intended as a corporate headquarters for the now-defunct Washington Mutual Bank. The addition bears little resemblance to the museum's original sand-colored limestone building next door, which was designed in a postmodern style by Robert Venturi. Rather than seeking congruency between the two buildings' architectural styles, Cloepfil created a clear distinction between them with a simple, clean-lined building in his modernist idiom.

The Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing & Visual Arts One, completed in 2008, is a 200,000-square-foot expansion of the institution's original 1922 structure. In 2009, Allied Works completed the University of Michigan Museum of Art, which also involved renovating a historic original building, Alumni Memorial Hall, and adding a new facility next door. That same year, Allied Works won an international design competition for the National Music Centre of Canada in Calgary, Alberta. The Clyfford Still Museum opened in Denver in the fall of 2011, a 28,000-square-foot facility devoted to that twentieth-century painter.

Cloepfil also has designed numerous houses, including a glass-ensconced Dutchess County residence in New York's Hudson River Valley; a residence in Sun Valley, Idaho, with intersecting concrete planes; a residence on the Oregon

coast at Neskowin; a home overlooking Blue Lake in central Oregon; and a cedar-clad Portland Heights residence in the architect's hometown.

Written by [Brian Libby](#)

Further Reading:

Isenstadt, Sandy and Kenneth Frampton. *Brad Cloepfil/Allied Works Architecture*. New York: Gregory R. Miller & Co., 2011.

Jahn, Jeff and Arcy Douglass. "Art and Architecture: An Interview with Brad Cloepfil." *PORT*, October 7, 2008
http://www.portlandart.net/archives/2008/08/art_and_archite.html

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