

NEWS  
CLOSEUP

## IMMORTAL MOMENT

## Documenting an Icon of Sacrifice in the City of Monuments

“Uncommon valor was a common virtue.” These words, inscribed on the base of the U.S. Marine Corps Memorial, capture something essential about the war years. The statue depicting the raising of the flag at Iwo Jima conveys the mettle of those who found themselves in the midst of the greatest conflict the world had ever known. Dedicated by President Eisenhower in 1954, the statue was inspired by the Pulitzer Prize-winning photo taken by Joe Rosenthal. Though the flag raising was a quickly staged event, the image electrified the nation, coming to symbolize the struggle in its entirety.

As a memorial to Marines who have given their lives in the nation’s wars, the 78-foot-high bronze is the centerpiece of a landscaped park on the Virginia side of the Potomac, near Arlington National Cemetery. Described at the time as an “earnest and uncomplicated piece of popular art,” it has become nothing less than a national icon. Set aside in a quiet green sanctuary apart from the monumental city but within view of its symbols, the memorial is a contemplative shrine, well-suited for a place dedicated to the staggering sacrifices made by ordinary citizens at a time when the world was coming apart.

Since the memorial was designed long before the Americans with Disabilities Act, the project included making the site accessible, a particular concern for elderly and wounded veterans. Workers relaid the

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**NOTHING LESS THAN A NATIONAL ICON. SET ASIDE IN A QUIET GREEN SANCTUARY APART FROM THE MONUMENTAL CITY BUT WITHIN VIEW OF ITS SYMBOLS, THE MEMORIAL IS A CONTEMPLATIVE SHRINE, WELL-SUITED FOR A PLACE DEDICATED TO THE STAGGERING SACRIFICES MADE BY ORDINARY CITIZENS AT A TIME WHEN THE WORLD WAS COMING APART.**

Sculptor Felix de Weldon was commissioned to create the statue. A Viennese immigrant working as an artist for the U.S. Navy at the time, de Weldon was profoundly effected by Rosenthal’s photograph. After seeing it, he is said to have worked nonstop for 48 hours to produce the original model in plaster. Larger versions were displayed around the country. A 36-foot-tall replica was displayed in Times Square for a 1945 war bond drive. It also made appearances during the war at Chicago’s Soldier Field and other stops around the country, accompanied by the three surviving members of the group that raised the flag.

When de Weldon made the actual statue, it was cast in bronze over a three-year process. It arrived at the Arlington site in about a dozen pieces, which were then welded and bolted together.

With time, age and the elements took their toll. While the effects were not evident in the memorial’s dramatic visual focus—the statue itself—its associated components were dated and wearing out. The pavers around the memorial were cracking, water was seeping into parts of the sculpture, lighting was inadequate, and there were problems with settlement. In addition, the Marine Corps Memorial has never been documented as a piece of history itself.

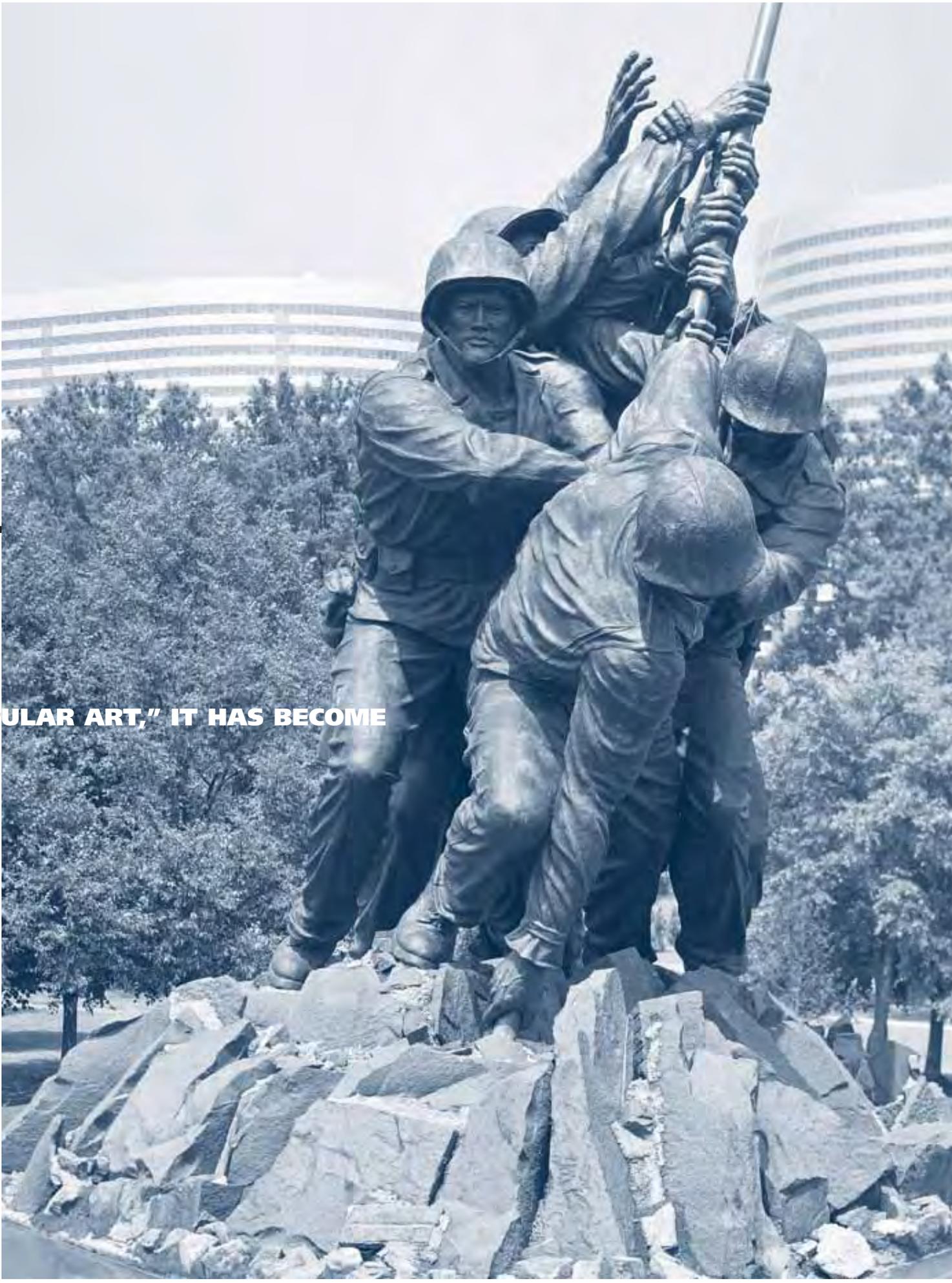
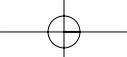
An extensive rehabilitation was planned. “This was an ideal opportunity to address a number of issues, mainly safety and deterioration,” says Paul Dolinsky, chief of the National Park Service Historic American Landscapes Survey. It was also an opportune time for his group to record the site for posterity, the photographs shown here a part of that effort.

**Above: View of the Marine Corps Memorial at night with the lights of Arlington, Virginia, in the background. Right: Sculptor Felix de Weldon’s rendering in bronze of the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima.**

pavers around the plaza, improved drainage, and updated the lighting.

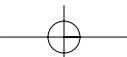
HALS is working on a number of projects for national parks and other historic places as they grapple with how to manage the sites in their care. One of these is the White House, where specialists are producing a record of the executive mansion grounds believed to be the first of its kind, critical to preserving what Dolinsky describes as “probably the most managed 20 acres in the world.”

For information on the Historic American Landscapes Survey, visit <http://www.nps.gov/hdp/hals/index.htm>.



OF POPULAR ART," IT HAS BECOME

LEFT AND RIGHT JET LOWENSPHALS



## NEWS CROSEUP

# Migrating Expertise

Afghan Preservationists Bring It Back Home After Tour of Southwest Parks

**IN MARCH 2001, WHEN THE TALIBAN BLASTED APART AFGHANISTAN'S 1,300-year-old Bamiyan Buddhas, ancient statues painstakingly carved out of sandstone cliffs by 6th century Buddhists, cries of protest were heard around the world—"an act of barbarism," "a tragic disaster," declared foreign officials. Today the statues, one once 175 feet high, lie in a sad heap, but Afghans want to restore them along with hundreds of other historical sites desecrated by warfare since 1979. And recently, they got a helping hand thanks to a project sponsored by**

With its thousands of sites, some dating to 2000 BC, Afghanistan "has been an important cultural center and crossroads for millennia," says Michelle Berenfeld, an archeologist with the World Monuments Fund, which has placed several sites on its watch list.

**THE AFGHANS, AFTER A STOP IN DC, VISITED SEVERAL PARKS IN THE SOUTHWEST** because of the landscape's similarity to their own. "They have a lot of the same earthen architecture and sandstone masonry that we have," says Rebecca Carr, an archeologist at Casa Grande Ruins National

**WITH ITS THOUSANDS OF SITES, SOME DATING TO 2000 BC, AFGHANISTAN CENTER AND CROSSROADS FOR MILLENNIA," SAYS MICHELLE BERENFELD, AN ARCHEOLOGIST WITH THE WORLD MONUMENTS FUND, WHICH HAS PLACED SEVERAL SITES ON ITS WATCH LIST.**



**Above left: The 12th-century Western Mausoleum, near Chisht-e-Sharif in Herat Province; its sister structure, the Eastern Mausoleum, has largely collapsed. Above right: A void once home to a 6th-century Buddha statue. Right: Phil Wilson of Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument explains mapping techniques to Aiamuddin Ajmal, crouching center; Nasir Modaber, standing right; and Mohammad Mohammadi, crouching right, with translator Hameed Noori at far left.**

the Department of State Cultural Heritage Center, the National Park Service, and the George Wright Society.

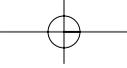
**THREE AFGHAN PRESERVATIONISTS, CHOSEN BY THE COUNTRY'S MINISTRY OF** Information, Culture and Tourism, spent April and May learning restoration techniques from dozens of Park Service archeologists, interpreters, and other staff, with the goal of using that knowledge back home. Nasir Modaber, the director of historical monuments in Bamiyan, is supervising the reconstruction of the Buddha statues; Aiamuddin Ajmal is the director of historical monuments in Herat, home to the 800-year-old Friday Mosque and several medieval minarets; Mohammad Mohammadi is the director at the office of historical monuments in Balkh, where he works to rehabilitate the monuments of Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan's fourth largest city.

Monument, where the men spent a week. Though inexperienced with digital technology, they were quite skilled with traditional techniques. "We learned a lot from them about the more hands-on analysis," says Carr. The men also spent nearly a month each at both Tumacacori National Historical Park and Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument.

Terry Childs of the National Park Service archeology program, which planned much of the training, says that Afghanistan's lack of infrastructure will be the biggest challenge in using the new skills. Basics such as transportation to sites are often grossly insufficient. An even bigger challenge may be educating their fellow Afghans. With survival such a struggle, preservation is often a foreign concept; many loot sites or use them for shelter. The visitors especially enjoyed seeing children take an interest in preservation, "something they had never seen in action," says Childs.

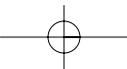
The State Department and the Park Service plan more training, including an internship, to continue to share the knowledge. "We're the world's leading preservation agency, so it's good that we can reach out to other cultures," says Phil Wilson, Salinas' chief of resource and facility management.

For more information, contact Terry Childs, National Park Service Archeology Program, email [terry\\_childs@nps.gov](mailto:terry_childs@nps.gov).



**"HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT CULTURAL**

RICHARD PIRES/TELEGRAPH



# SHAPE OF THE FUTURE

SAVING A SAARINEN MASTERWORK MAY PORTEND A BUMPY RIDE FOR HISTORIC AIRPORTS. It's hard to believe its alleged inspiration is a hollowed-out grapefruit rind, but wherever Eero Saarinen got the idea, it worked. Terminal 5 at JFK Airport, once home to TWA, is probably the architect's most famous building, but since 1999 when the airline went out of business, it's also been his most threatened. So when the city landmark finally reopens next year, preservationists will heave a collective sigh of relief. It will be the day they've long awaited, ever since TWA's bankruptcy spawned fears that the building would be demolished and replaced.



**Left and right: While the terminal is now seen as one of Eero Saarinen's greatest works, when it first opened the critics, who disliked most of his designs, did not embrace it. "Cruelly inhuman and trivial," is how Vincent Scully described Saarinen's creations, likening his Gateway Arch in St. Louis to a pipe cleaner.**

INSTEAD, THE STRUCTURE—LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC Places two years ago—will be incorporated into a new terminal for New York City-based JetBlue Airways, as part of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey's \$9.4 billion redevelopment program to update the airport. JetBlue, which currently operates a terminal next door, says the move will be a good one. "We are going from a 28-acre terminal to a 72-acre terminal," says Richard Smyth, vice president of redevelopment. The discount airline is spending \$80 million on the reconstruction project, with the Port Authority contributing the rest towards an \$875 million price tag. "We saw this as both an opportunity to grow and to also build a state of the art terminal," Smyth says.

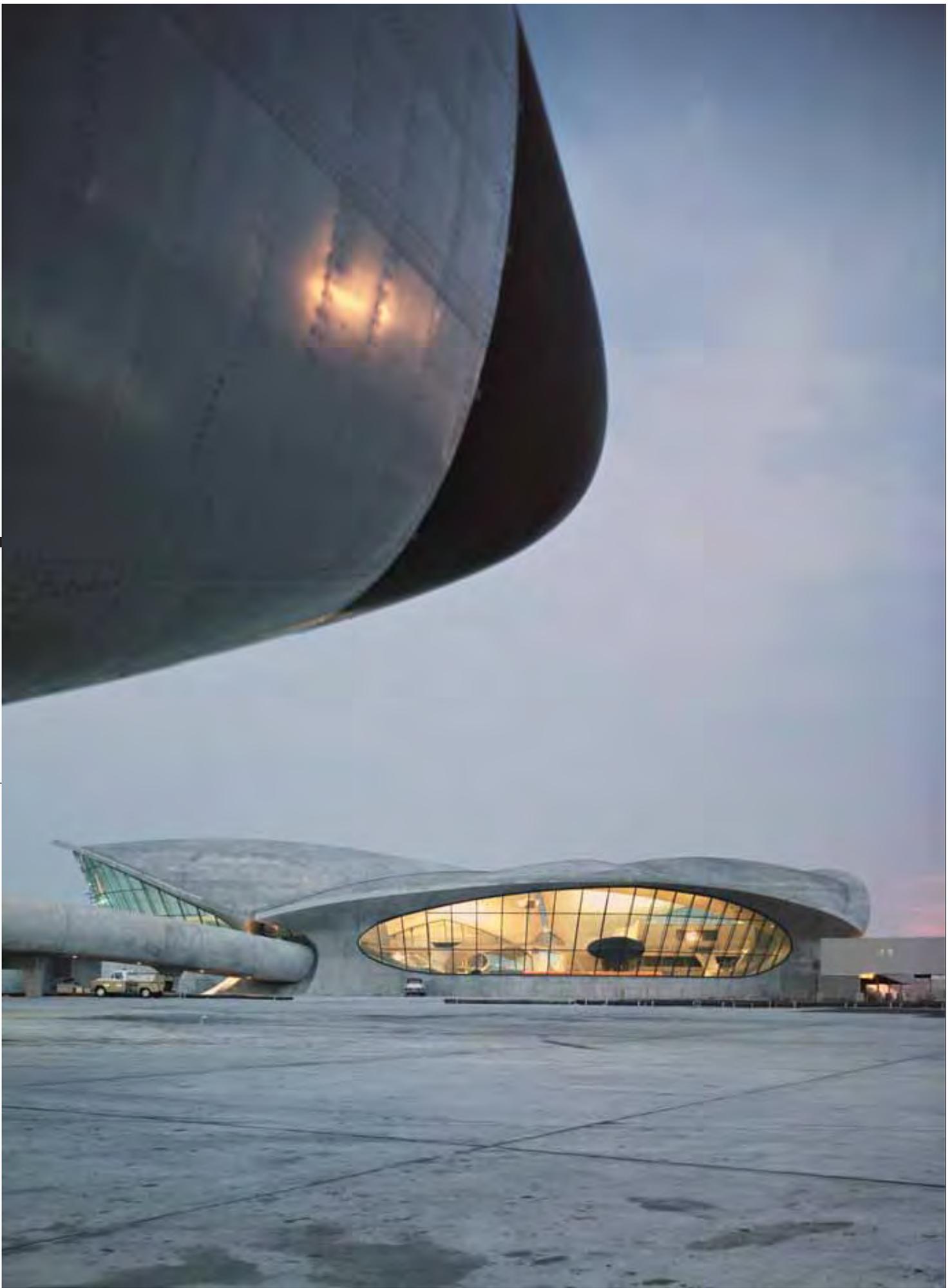
Despite the outcome, the bumpy ride to get there may portend much the same for the nation's historic airports. That the Port Authority decided not to bulldoze was good news, but the initial plan was not. And today, the fate of what was saved—as part of a compromise—is still unresolved.

In 2000, when the Port Authority announced its intent to demolish part of the complex and erect a new terminal behind the old one, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Preservation League of New York State put the place on their lists of threatened sites. Several other groups joined negotiations to craft an alternate plan.

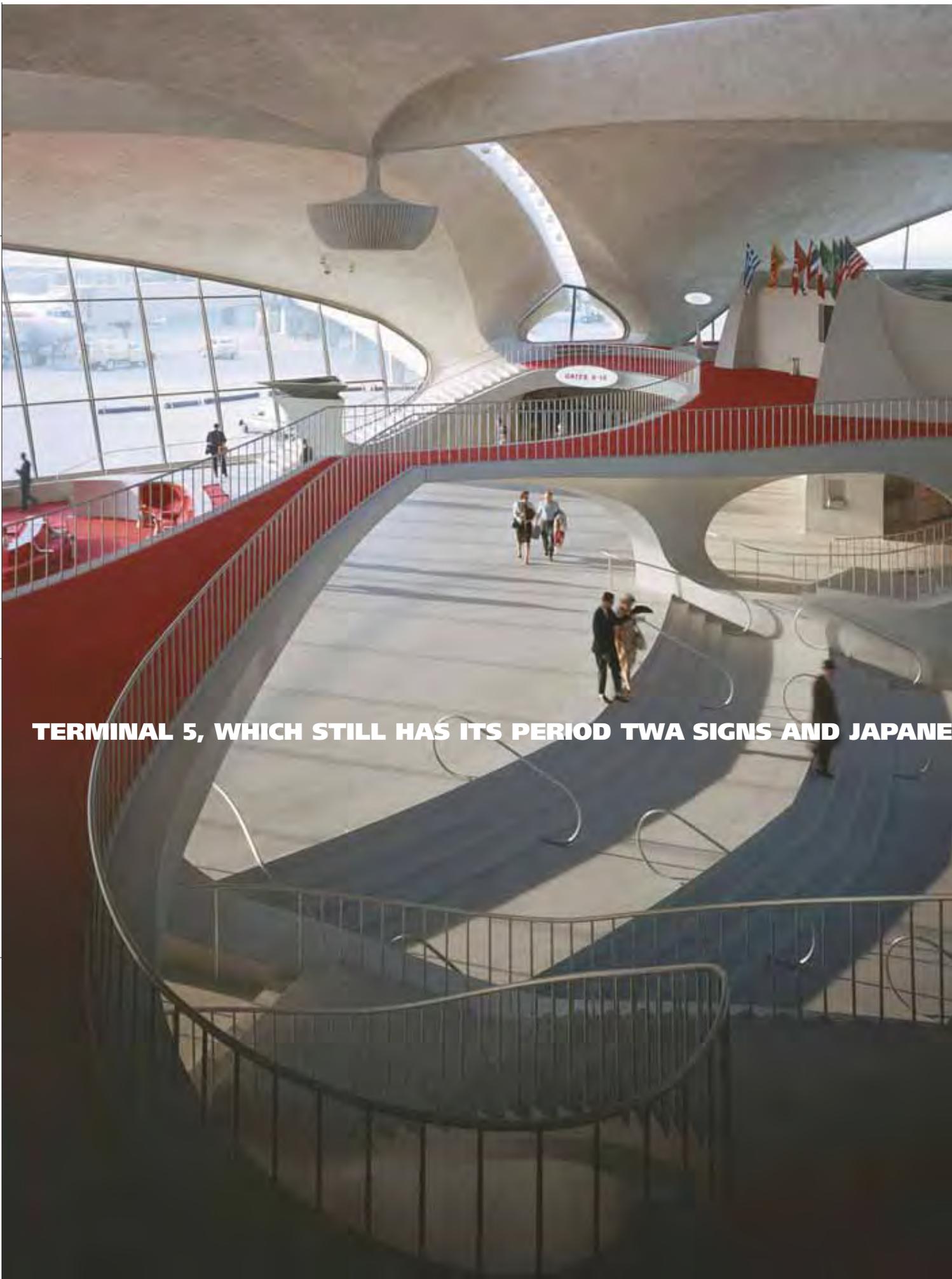
When two wings were torn down in 2006, a year after construction started, a small section of one, called the trumpet, was saved (the other wing was not part of the original design). The new terminal—first envisioned as a glass donut encircling the old one—was redesigned with a lower profile. "It's being built in a very sensitive way, almost as a background element to the original," says Alex Herrera, director of technical services for the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

STILL, EXPERIENCING SAARINEN'S BIRD-LIKE EDIFICE, CURRENTLY HALFWAY through renovation, won't be the same as in its heyday. Flyers used to check in amidst sweeping stairways and walls of windows looking out at the planes on the tarmac. Now they will simply pass through the space, and the windows won't offer the same view. "Saarinen wanted travelers to walk up stairs toward a vast window that symbolized an open future," says Mark Stevens, art critic for *New York* magazine. "Now they'll just see another building instead of the sky." Plus, since the new terminal will have its own entrance, flyers can skip the old one altogether.

"Making everyone happy was quite the challenge," says spokesman Pasquale DiFulco of the Port Authority, which tried to find a balance between preserving the structure and meeting the needs of JetBlue. "We recognize what an iconic status the terminal holds," he says, point-



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**TERMINAL 5, WHICH STILL HAS ITS PERIOD TWA SIGNS AND JAPANESE I**

ing out that it “won’t be beyond security, so if any architecture buffs want to take a drive out to the airport to look at it, they can do so.”

**THE FINNISH-BORN SAARINEN, LONG CONSIDERED A GENIUS, DESIGNED THE terminal in 1956, although it was not finished until 1962, the same year as his only other airport, Virginia’s Dulles International. The architect died of a brain tumor in 1961 and never saw either finished.**

The gull-shaped edifice is one of his best-known works in part because it gives a sense of “the magic of travel” in the ’50s and ’60s, says Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, assistant professor of architecture at Yale and the co-editor of *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*. But he built the structure for the wrong era—it was not big enough to handle the passenger loads of the jets fast supplanting prop planes. “Jets got too big, quickly,” says Frank Sanchis, senior vice president of New York’s Municipal Arts Society. Recalls Herrera: “It was always very crowded. People would have to wait outside, and extra ramps were needed to accommodate luggage. The TWA employees couldn’t stand it.” And that was before September 11th security

line, but that’s not in the cards. “Since this building was so particularly and brilliantly designed for air travel, we feel adaptive reuse is not appropriate,” says Sanchis, whose group’s consultants offered ideas on how the space could be at least partially reused.

The Port Authority is reviewing proposals. The possibilities include turning the terminal into a conference center, exhibit space, or area for restaurants and shops.

**MEANTIME, THE RENOVATION AIMS TO RETURN THE STEEL-FRAMED STRUCTURE to its jet age roots, just as it looked in Steven Spielberg’s 2002 film “Catch Me If You Can.” Terminal 5, which still has its period TWA signs and Japanese mosaic tiles, will be freed of additions like extra ticket counters, baggage handling systems, and taxi stands. “We really want to return the building to its original design,” DiFulco says.**

Some hope to see it recognized at an even higher level. “Saarinen revolutionized air terminal design,” says Ruth Pierpont, deputy historic preservation officer for New York State, calling the edifice “a distinctive and highly acclaimed work of expressionistic architecture.”

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**Left: Critics slighted Saarinen for lacking a signature style. He said a work’s look arose from collaboration with clients, whom he called “co-creators.” Saarinen was on the cover of *Time*—“one of the first media architects,” says Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, co-editor of *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future*.**

measures, when the terminal, in temporary use by United Airlines, was shut down completely.

“The building is a remarkable architectural accomplishment, but there was a whole series of issues when it came to using it,” DiFulco says, one that it was not ADA-compliant. He says the new 635,000-square-foot terminal with its 26 gates will be better equipped to handle JetBlue’s 12 million annual passengers.

Still, that leaves uncertainty. The Municipal Arts Society prefers to see the structure as Saarinen intended, a “front door” for the air-



**Above: Pictures don’t do the place justice, says Pelkonen. “It has a really wonderful interior spatial landscape. You feel like you are in a cloud.” Renewed fascination with the architect’s work is evidenced by the traveling exhibit “Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future,” based on the book of the same name.**

Sanchis says that the struggle to save the structure should serve as a lesson for preservationists, as more like places become obsolete due to changing technology. “Airport terminals aren’t quite like old train stations which are usually located in the city center,” he says. “And they aren’t easy to use for purposes other than the original one.”

For details about the renovation, contact the Port Authority at (212) 435-7000 or go to [www.panynj.gov](http://www.panynj.gov). For more information about Eero Saarinen, contact the Finnish Cultural Institute in New York at (212) 674-5570 or visit [www.eerosaarinen.net](http://www.eerosaarinen.net).