

Where are they now? An in depth look at the Philadelphia AIA Gold Medal Winners since 1947

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore the long-term effect of architectural design recognition and its influence (or not) on the reception of the projects and their architects today. I argue that the conferral of the AIA Philadelphia Medal was not an indication of architectural excellence. Rather, the medal was a benchmark for the popularity of certain trends in style and building development, many of which have not stood the test of time. Particularly, the period from 1949 to 1972 saw a number of awardees in both the gold and silver medal categories whose works either have not remained well-regarded within the field of architecture or among the public, whose works were questionable at the time they were built, or who have been demolished over time. There were also quite a few notable snubs during this period. The trends here seem scattered at best and sparse at worse. In analyzing the scope, reach, and longevity of the Philadelphia AIA Medals, I briefly explore the history of the Philadelphia AIA chapter and the awards system, note some “oddities” among the awardees during the period, and some hurdles to enter into the contest and publication issues with the Yearbook. In synthesizing my findings, I discuss the role of the awards in shaping public reception of “Philadelphia modernism” and discuss where the awards may have missed the mark. I also discuss the awarded buildings as a way to showcase then new technology and innovation amid burgeoning social trends and failure in the prediction of success for some designers. In conclusion, the Philadelphia AIA Chapter’s awards were reflective of the trends of the time in which the awards were granted, including societal building needs, architectural styles, and the subjective group of potential winners. Given the high entry bar for buildings to be considered for the awards, it would be difficult to argue that the awards indicated architectural prowess. However, they did indicate priorities for the Philadelphia AIA at the time, especially in terms of modernist forward developments in style, material, and building use.



Figure 1. Pender Labs, Moore School of Engineering, University of Pennsylvania. (Source: Photo Credit: Athenaeum of Philadelphia, Lawrence Williams Inc. Collection, Local ID#:77133-A). Demolished.

Year	Architect	Award	Location	Name	Type	Status
1948	None	None	None	None	None	None
1949	Vincent G. Kling	Silver	Mantooking, N.J.	Amos J. Peaslee Residence	Residence	Unknown
1950	Louis I. Kahn	Gold	Norristown, PA	Weiss Residence	Residence	Unknown
1951	Nolen and Swinburne	Gold	Tempe University	Presidents Hall, Tyler Art School	Higher Education	Good
1951	Norman N. Rice	Silver	Elkins Park, PA	Berenstain Residence	Residence	Unknown
1952	None	None	None	None	None	None
1953	Vincent G. Kling	Gold	Phoenixville, PA	Phoenixville Hospital	Hospital	Unknown
1954	Sydney E. Martin, Stewart and Noble	Gold	1021 Chestnut St	Mercantile Library	Library	Vacant
1955	Vincent G. Kling	Gold	11th and Walnut, Philadelphia, PA	Jefferson Hospital Foerderer Pavilion	Hospital	Good
1955	Kenneth Day	Silver	741 S Ithan Ave, Bryn Mawr, PA	Peter Dechert Residence	Residence	Good
1956	Vincent G. Kling	Gold	Pottstown, PA	Pottstown Hospital	Hospital	Unknown
1956	Eshbach, Glass and Kale	Silver	Gladwyne, PA	Holland Residence	Residence	Unknown
1957	None	None	None	None	None	None
1958	Geddes Brecher Qualls and Cunningham	Gold	University of Pennsylvania	Pender Labs Moore School of Electrical Engineering	Higher Education	Demolished
1959	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
1960	None	None	None	None	None	None
1961	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
1962	Vincent G. Kling	Gold	1 Geoffrey Way, Wayne, NJ	The American Cyanamid Co. Headquarters Building	Civic	Good
1963	Geddes Brecher Qualls and Cunningham	Gold	Center City	Police Headquarters, Philadelphia	Civic	Vacant
1963	Stonorov and Haws	Silver	Philadelphia	Hopkinson House Apartments	Apartment Building	Good
1964	Mitchell/Giurgola Associates	Gold	University of Pennsylvania	Parking Garage	Misc.	Good
1964	Geddes Brecher Qualls and Cunningham	Silver	Philadelphia	Northeast Regional Library	Library	Good
1965	Vincent G. Kling	Gold	Philadelphia	Municipal Services Building	Civic	Good
1965	Vincent G. Kling	Silver	Swarthmore	Sharples Dining Hall, Swarthmore College	Cafeteria	Good
1966	Harbeson Hough Livingston & Larson Arch	Gold	Independence Hall State Park, Philadelphia	Independence Hall State Park	Misc.	Good
1966	Stonorov and Haws	Silver	Philadelphia	Casa Fermi	Apartment Building	Good
1967	Bower and Fradley	Gold	3701-15 CHESTNUT STREET, Philadelphia	International House	Apartment Building	Good
1967	Herman Hassinger	Silver	Moorestown, NJ	A Tree House	Residence	Good
1968	Geddes Brecher Qualls and Cunningham	Gold	200 South 33rd St, University of Pennsylvania	Levine North	Higher Education	Good
1969	Vincent G. Kling	Gold	St Louis, MO	The Monsanto Company Cafeteria	Cafeteria	Good
1969	Bower and Fradley	Silver	Philadelphia	Eastwick High School and George Pepper Middle School	Higher Education	Slated for Demolition
1970	Nolen, Swinburne and Associates	Gold	Philadelphia	St Joseph's Preparatory School	Higher Education	Unknown
1970	Geddes Brecher Qualls and Cunningham	Silver	Birmingham, Alabama	Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center	Civic	Good
1971	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
1972	Mitchell/Giurgola Associates	Gold	3260 South Street, University of Pennsylvania	University Museum Academic Wing	Misc.	Good
1972	Venturi and Rauch	Gold	Purchase, NY	Humanities Classroom Building, College at Purchase	Higher Education	Good
1972	Bower and Fradley	Silver	Fairmount Park, Philadelphia	Milles Sculpture Group	Misc.	Good

Figure 2. Data collection from the papers. (Source: Author).