

# David N. Fixler

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## Biography

David Fixler is an architect specializing in heritage conservation and adaptive re-use, with particular focus on modern properties. His past projects include Alvar Aalto's Baker House and Eero Saarinen's Kresge Auditorium and Chapel – all at MIT, Louis Kahn's Richards Laboratories at the University of Pennsylvania and the United Nations Headquarters in New York. David has taught and lectured around the world, his work and writings have been published internationally, and he has helped organize and lead numerous conferences on a wide-range of topics. A Peer Review Architect for the United States General Services Administration, he serves in a leadership capacity in organizations such as APTI, the Society of Architectural Historians, and both Docomomo International and Docomomo-US.

## Concrete Metaphysics

Why the Concrete Surface? Adrian Forty remarks at the beginning of his brilliant lecture on the Metaphysics of Concrete that next to water, concrete is the most abundant substance consumed by humankind on earth. Given its ubiquity, our interaction with concrete is pervasive, and given its solidity and density, that relationship is primarily accomplished through visual and haptic interaction with the color, texture, pattern, temperature and humidity of the concrete surface. Despite all that may then be said about what makes concrete 'what it is,' the metaphysical interface of the material with human perception is the surface. Bearing this in mind, our understanding of concrete metaphysics becomes a particularly important field of inquiry when considering that concrete by and large is not a material appreciated for its qualities as a substance that invites human interaction, and that finding ways to improve and better sustain the qualities of the concrete surface can only help in fostering a better and broader understanding of the material's value and potential. This talk will focus on how the concrete surface has evolved since the early 20th century, on the physical and metaphysical



*Boston City Hall. Photo credit: David Fixler*

benefits and pitfalls of weathering and how this has impacted conservation strategies, and finally on how the conservation community today might address these impacts in support of fostering contemporary and future efforts in material conservation, the continuing evolution of the design and technology of the concrete surface, and promoting understanding of the importance of these issues.