



Prentice Women's Hospital and the Works of Bertrand Goldberg

Address:	Prentice Hospital:	333 East Superior Street
	Other works:	Throughout Chicagoland, and beyond
Date:	Prentice Hospital:	1974-1975.
	Other works:	1935-1985
Architect:	Bertrand Goldberg (Bertrand Goldberg and Associates)	
Style:	Modern	
CHRS Rating:	None	

Threat:

Prentice Hospital is owned by Northwestern Memorial Hospital. A larger replacement hospital is under construction presently. The Hospital has indicated that the property will be given to Northwestern University at the time of its closing, after which the building's final fate will be determined.

History sets a foreboding precedent. Northwestern's Medical district has witnessed astounding levels of demolition in recent years: Prentice's next door neighbors, the Wesley and Pasavant Pavilions, have both been demolished. Also, the nearby Veteran's Administration Lakeside hospital too is slated for demolition.

Sadly, many other works of Bertrand Goldberg await similar fates. The architect's daring designs are often misunderstood and mishandled.

Fulfillment of Landmark Criteria:

Prentice Hospital and many Other Works of Bertrand Goldberg meet a required number of the criteria established by the Chicago Landmarks Commission for preliminary landmark status.

Integrity: Prentice Hospital remains remarkably intact. Other works of Goldberg's maintain different states of integrity.

- 1. Significant Architect:** Bertrand Goldberg is one of Chicago's most iconic, and iconoclastic, modern architects. Best known for his world-famous Marina City complex, many Chicagoans know little of the man behind the great "corncocks," of the guiding principles of his work, or of his life-long devotion to Chicago and to making better the lives of its residents. Today, many of Goldberg's surviving works remain at best misunderstood, and worst threatened with irreparable alterations or outright demolition.

Goldberg trained at Harvard, later spending time at the German Bauhaus under the direct tutelage of master architect – and later-day Chicagoan – Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Returning to Chicago, Goldberg set out not to copy the style of Mies (as have so many others), but rather to apply Miesian technique and principles to his own designs, studies, and theories. The results of this rigorous method are wholly individual buildings that are nonetheless steeped in Miesian sensibility and sensitivity.

- 2. Significant Architecture:** Insisting that the Miesian box is not the ideal solution to all architectural problems, and particularly those centered around human community, Goldberg developed a series of complex curvilinear geometries for his buildings. These were designed to allow intelligent and efficient space planning, to provide a sense of individuality within each unit, and to foster a sense of community within the building. Meanwhile, Goldberg retained the traditional Miesian form in his designs when he thought it was most ideal: for flexible space, efficient office planning, and large, open volumes.

Chicago's Prentice Hospital is perhaps the ultimate manifestation of these design objectives. Configured as two distinct volumes for two separate, but interdependent uses, the hospital contains a large, flexible, and adaptable Miesian space at its base, and a highly specialized tower above, intended for maternity functions. In a remarkable step forward from previous designs, Goldberg here balances the entire curvilinear tower above the base volume, its floors cantilevering daringly above. This drama allows the two forms to coexist harmoniously, without the oddly spaced columns of the bed tower intruding upon the regular space below.

Goldberg's other works, each highly varied, show the same originality and thoughtfulness exhibited at Prentice Hospital. Each challenges us to rethink our definitions of architecture, in the pursuit of a more balanced, diverse, and healthy society.