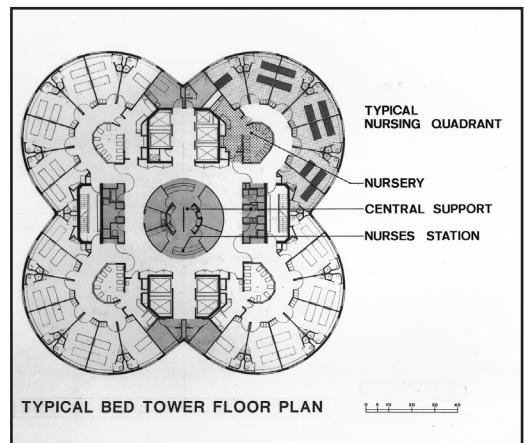
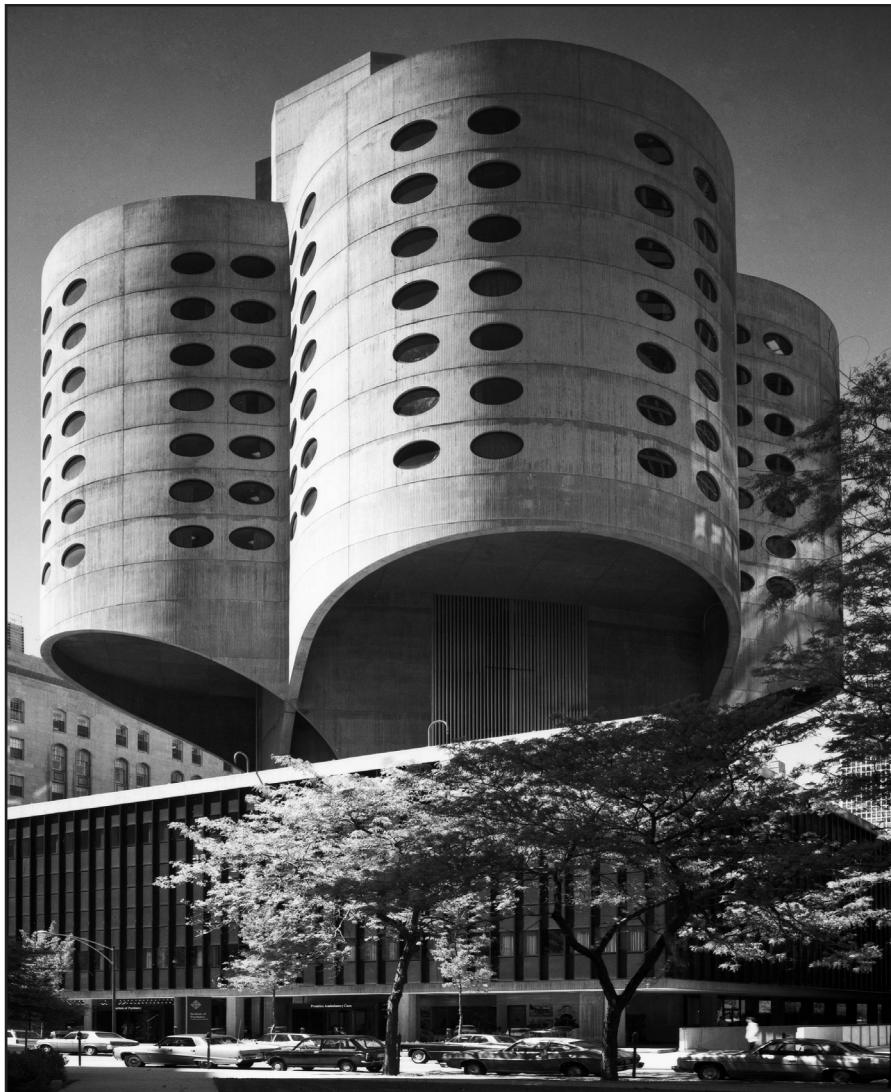


Prentice Hospital



Overview:

Prentice Women's Hospital, designed by Chicago architect Bertrand Goldberg and completed in 1975, was groundbreaking for its cutting edge cantilevered concrete design, advanced engineering and its progressive plan for the organization of medical departments and services. Now, merely 35 years old, this amazing masterwork is threatened with demolition by Northwestern University. Goldberg trained at Harvard and studied, for a time, at the German Bauhaus under the direction of architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. When Goldberg returned to Chicago in 1933, he shaped the Miesian philosophy he had acquired there to suit his own principles, resulting in a uniquely original design philosophy. Rather than steel and glass, he adopted concrete as his medium; its plasticity the ideal material to realize his vision. Goldberg opined that there were no right angles in nature and strove to create a more organic architecture, thus gravitating to more circular forms. The pinnacle of that philosophy was achieved at Prentice Women's Hospital.

History:

Unlike his other previous projects, Goldberg was finally able to jettison all exterior supports, creating a hospital tower that was fully cantilevered 45 feet over its base. The base of Prentice is a conventional box consisting of traditional

Prentice Hospital

333 E. Superior

Architect: Bertrand Goldberg

Date: 1974-75

Style: Modern

Prentice Hospital Continued

steel post and beam construction. However, atop this structure sits the seven-story quatrefoil, or four-lobed, bed tower. The central core of the tower pierces through the horizontal base. This concrete core supports these upper stories of cantilevered hospital rooms, allowing the entire bed tower to be column free. This also allows the lower structure to remain completely free of interior columns and was intended to facilitate the concept of universal space.

According to Geoffrey Goldberg, architect and son of Bertrand Goldberg “you will not find the structural solution to Prentice, which is an exterior shell cantilevered off a core, anywhere else in the world and Prentice was the only one in which this was achieved.”

Ironically, Goldberg even envisioned that Prentice would become obsolete and anticipated that day by designing a space that was as flexible as possible to adapt to a different use, which would therefore preserve the building. The tower that cantilevers above the base was achieved by the employment of massive arches, which transfer the load diagonally back to the central core, rather than vertically down to the ground. Moreover, the exterior concrete shell is load bearing, in direct contrast to the typical glass curtain wall that was virtually mandated by the modernist idiom at mid-century.

For Prentice, Goldberg’s unique quatrefoil plan was intended to provide a much higher standard of care by creating small floor plates that facilitated interaction between the staff and patients. Each floor was laid out with a central nursing station between four circular patient wings or “lobes.” Each maternity floor also featured nurseries, bringing mothers closer to their babies. Centralizing services for the medical needs for women, obstetrics and gynecology was representative of a new approach for women’s health.

Threat:

The primary tenant, Prentice Women’s Hospital, relocated to a new facility in 2007, leaving the bed tower portion of the building empty. When the last remaining tenant, The Stone Psychiatric Institute (located in the building’s base), relocates to a new facility in the summer of 2011, control of the property will revert from Northwestern Hospital to Northwestern University. University officials have made it known that they plan to demolish the building for the construction of a new research/laboratory facility. Prentice has no local landmark protection. Since the building was built post 1940 (the end date of Chicago’s Historic Resources Survey), it will not be subject to the city’s demolition delay process. Demolition is a “matter of right” for the university at this time. While the primary threat is the desire of the owner to demolish Prentice, there is also a lack of recognition of Prentice as a great work of architecture. At just 35 years old, Prentice has yet to be properly evaluated within Chicago’s larger historical and architectural context.

Take Action!

- Contact or write: Alderman Brendan Reilly, 42nd Ward, 325 W. Huron Street, Suite 510, Chicago, IL 60654
phone: 312-642-4242 or email: office@ward42chicago.com.
- Watch the Prentice video and then send to a friend: www.preservationchicago.org
- Visit Landmarks Illinois at: www.landmarks.org

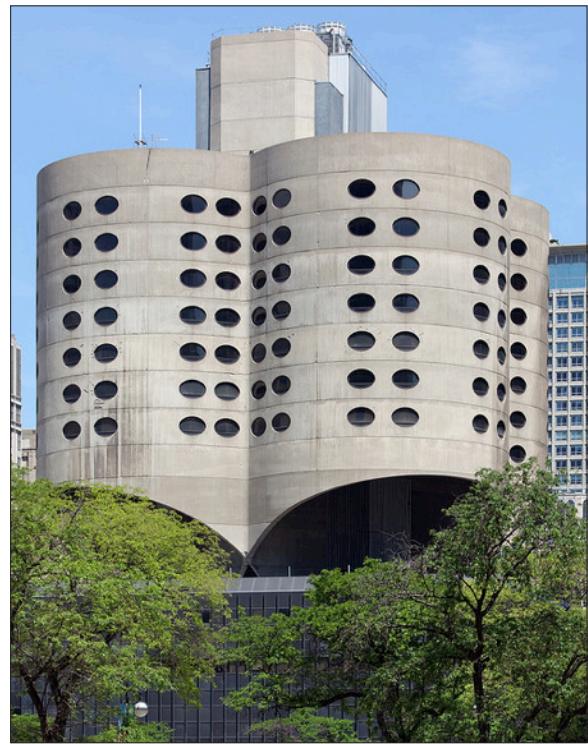


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