

New Formalism—1950s to 1970s



New Formalism developed in the mid-1950s and continued into the early 1970s. It was a reaction against the rigid formulae of the American version of the International Style. Its three main architects - Edward Durrell Stone, Philip Johnson, and Minoru Yamasaki - had all achieved prominence working within the International Style but wanted to try new styles and materials. New Formalism architecture combines decorative elements and established design concepts of classicism with the new materials and technologies incorporated in the International style. Edward Durrell Stone's New Delhi American Embassy (1954), which blended

the architecture of the east with modern western concepts, is considered the start of the New Formalism style.

The New Formalism style was used primarily for high profile cultural, institutional and civic buildings, including the Los Angeles Music Center and the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, and the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena. Within the Southern California region, the style was applied mainly to museums, auditoriums, and college campuses. The University of Southern California, the California Institute of Technology, and Harvey Mudd College in Claremont (pictured right) all have significant buildings of the New Formalism style, designed by different architectural firms. Other local examples of New Formalism include the Ahmanson Center in Los Angeles and the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena (pictured top left).



Common Features

- Use of traditionally rich materials, such as travertine, marble, and granite or man-made materials that mimic their luxurious qualities
- Use of arches, columns, and other classical elements
- Buildings usually set on a podium
- Designed to achieve modern monumentality
- Embraces classical precedents, such as arches, colonnades, classical columns and entablatures
- Smooth wall surfaces
- Delicacy of details
- Formal landscape design, such as pools, fountains, and/or sculptures within a central plaza

Windows

Windows were typically fixed single-paned with metal frames.

Doors

Doors were typically simple metal doors, sometimes with glass panels.

Colors

Buildings were typically painted in a light or neutral color, also stone or other materials were left exposed. Accent colors were typically dark, rich colors.