



Office of General Services

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PLAZA AT 50 SPEAKER SERIES FEATURES RENOWNED EXPERTS IN POLITICS, ARCHITECTURE, AND MODERN ART

New York State Office of General Services (OGS) Commissioner RoAnn Destito today announced a speaker series commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1965 cornerstone laying at the Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza will feature local and nationally recognized experts in New York politics, architecture and design, and modern art. This free Wednesday evening series at The Egg Center for the Performing Arts gets under way on September 16 at 6 p.m. with “Power, Politics and the Plaza: A Look at Rockefeller and Corning.”

“Governor Cuomo has described the Empire State Plaza as a place where visitors can learn about our state’s history and culture, and this series of speaking events has been designed for the Plaza’s 50th anniversary to enhance that everyday experience,” said Commissioner Destito. “Whether you’re a history buff, an art lover, or just live or work in downtown Albany, these speaker events are sure to be informative and entertaining.”

Speaker Series Schedule:

September 16 – Power, Politics and the Plaza: A Look at Rockefeller and Corning
6 p.m. Swyer Theatre, The Egg

Albany’s longest-serving mayor, Erastus Corning, 2nd, and New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller clashed over the state’s plan to take 98.5 acres in the heart of Albany to build the Empire State Plaza. What happened as these two powerful politicians faced off over the deal?

Join the discussion as Rockefeller biographer Richard Norton Smith and Corning biographer Paul Grondahl take the stage to discuss the historical events leading to the construction of the Plaza. Former Assemblyman and Albany County Historian John “Jack” McEneny will serve as the moderator.

This first of three speaker events is being held in conjunction with a Plaza at 50 Festival, which will run from noon to 8 p.m. and feature a full day of food and live entertainment, including a performance by the headliner, Shadows of the 60s Tribute to Motown Super Groups. The speaker event will end in time for people to see the fireworks at the conclusion of the festival.

September 23 – An International Capital: The Architecture and Construction of the Empire State Plaza

6 p.m. Hart Theatre Lounge, The Egg

The Empire State Plaza was intended to dominate the Albany skyline and make a statement about New York State's political and cultural importance. As the pre-eminent style for modern institutional construction, discover the origins of International Style architecture and how it manifests in the design of the Plaza.

The panel will include Jon Lott, principal of PARA Project and a design critic in architecture at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design; Price Jepsen, vice president of STV Architects; John Mesick of Mesick Cohen Wilson Baker Architects, Albany; and Edmund Meade, PE, director of historic preservation, principal, Robert Silman Associates Structural Engineers. Recently retired New York State Capitol Architect and OGS Preservation Officer Jim Jamieson will moderate.

September 30 – A Vision for Public Art: The Empire State Plaza Art Collection

6 p.m. Swyer Theatre, The Egg

The Empire State Plaza Art Collection has been heralded as the greatest collection of modern American art in any single public site that is not a museum. The collection was assembled during the construction of the Plaza under the direction of Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller who believed it was vital to have the work of artists living and working in New York placed in the capital city. Learn what makes the Plaza's collection unique and how it fulfills Rockefeller's vision of art for the people.

David Novros, an artist whose untitled work is a part of the Plaza Art Collection and whose art is also included in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; along with Dennis Anderson, curatorial consultant and director/curator of the Plaza Art Collection from 1988 to 2012; and Matthew Levy, an associate professor of art history at Penn State Behrend who specializes in modern and contemporary art with a focus on American art of the 1960s will make up the panel. Ian Berry, director of the Frances Young Tang Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College will moderate.

The 50th anniversary commemoration also includes a special exhibit at the New York State Museum. Running through January 17, 2016 the exhibit tells the story of the Plaza's construction and evolution. Located in the main lobby and west corridor of the museum, it includes art, photographs, digital displays, original sketches by architects,

and examples of the architectural elements that make up the Plaza and where they came from. Visitors to the exhibit will discover how such a massive complex is heated in the winter and cooled in the summer, what the “Rule of 30” is and how it was incorporated into the design of the Plaza, and hear the stories of those who worked on the project.

Free parking for the speaker series will be available after 5 p.m. in the East Garage on the corners of Madison Avenue, Eagle Street, and Philip Street. Parking is also available for \$5 at the visitor or V lot underneath the plaza.

Visit [The Empire State Plaza at 50](#) webpage or follow us on Twitter @ESPat50, EmpireStatePlaza50 on Facebook, and empirestateplaza50 on Instagram for event updates.

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