

# Stanley Tigerman, pillar of Chicago architecture, dies at 88

Tigerman designed hundreds of structures around the world, including the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie.

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Stanley Tigerman pictured at the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in 2013. | Joe Cyganowski/For the Sun-Times

Stanley Tigerman, an outspoken giant of Chicago architecture, has died at age 88.

Citing Mr. Tigerman's widow and partner, the American Institute of Architects Journal reported that he succumbed to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease Monday at his Chicago home. His family could not be reached Monday night.

“Stanley taught us that architecture was something to be passionate about, something that was worthy of debate and worthy of consideration,” said architecture photography and former Chicago Sun-Times architecture critic Lee Bey.

The Chicago native designed more than 450 buildings and installations, including the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie, the Pacific Gardens homeless shelter in the South Loop and the modernist Boardwalk Apartments high-rise in Uptown.

Bey praised Mr. Tigerman’s decision to present the Holocaust Museum in a more industrial style, instead of in a more overtly positive tone.

“He takes this horrible period in world history and he doesn’t wrap it up in a friendly, petal-y building,” Bey said. “The pathway he takes you through from darkness to light, it’s genius. He wanted you to know that when you rolled up on this building that there was something serious going on in here.”

Bey also noted Mr. Tigerman’s dedication and compassion in making the former library for the blind building near Roosevelt and Blue Island before the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

“He has to make an accessible building and there’s no template for it quite yet and he nails it,” Bey said.

A graduate of Yale University, Mr. Tigerman worked for the firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill before starting his own firm in 1962, known now as Tigerman McCurry.

In the 1970s, Mr. Tigerman was a founding member of “The Chicago Seven,” a group of architects who came together to protest the Ludwig Mies van der Rohe-inspired style of modernist architecture that was popular at the time.

Mr. Tigerman also served as director of the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Architecture. He was also one of the founders of Archeworks, a self-described “design lab, educator and media outlet dedicated to using design as an agent of change in the public interest.”

In 2013, the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Architects gave Mr. Tigerman the group’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

Speaking with the Chicago Sun-Times after the award was announced, Mr. Tigerman said he was proud to have maintained his artistic integrity throughout his career.

“If I’ve had any success at all, it’s been keeping a small office,” he said. “Not growing the office. I never had great ambitions to do every building. To have a giant office. The way architects do business today is a problem. Because they have marketing directors. They’re interested in this [rubs fingers together]—they’re interested in money. They have to make a payroll. Getting big is the undoing of architects. Because then you have a bigger and bigger and bigger payroll. I think that marketing and branding are the undoing of architecture. They’re the commodification of architecture. I always thought it was an ethical pursuit and an aesthetic pursuit. I still do.”