Horace Ginsbern was one of the most prolific apartment house architects in New York City for the better part of the twentieth century. He initially made a name for himself in the Bronx, where he can be said to have most strongly influenced the look and character of the area around the Grand Concourse; later, he expanded his practice to Manhattan, where his buildings span several time periods and architectural styles. Although Ginsbern’s career runs from the early 1920s through the 1960s, he was most active in the years between the two world wars. The greatest collection of his buildings can be readily seen in the West Bronx and in Upper Manhattan, where his Art Deco and Art Moderne apartment houses constitute a significant proportion – for a single architect – of the built fabric of both neighborhoods.

Despite his large body of work, Horace Ginsbern remains an obscure figure in the history of New York City architecture. He has largely been perceived as a “second-tier” immigrant architect, whose commissions revolved around the “second-tier” work of speculative apartment house design, executed in the seemingly “second-tier” Art Deco and Moderne styles. As a result, Ginsbern’s work has been largely neglected, and his status as an important figure in the development of New York City has been vastly overlooked.

This thesis will explore the Art Deco and Moderne periods of Ginsbern’s work, as this was his most productive period, and it is these buildings for which he is best known. The goal of this thesis is three-fold: to shed light on Ginsbern’s long and prolific career as an architect in New York City, to make a case for the significance of Ginsbern’s work, particularly that constructed in the interwar years, and to ultimately further the recognition of Ginsbern as an important architect in New York City’s history.