From the vantage-point of the early twenty-first century, the iconic status of Gordon Bunshaft's works, both urban and suburban, are unquestioned in architectural circles. His adaptation of modernist principles to the needs of business stands today a style in its own right. Buildings such as Lever House and Connecticut General are, in many respects, visual texts by which we can read the collective motivations of post-war corporate America. The extent to which SOM and corporate America became complementary sides of the same phenomenon in American culture accounts for the proliferation of these forms on many, some would say, debased levels. Like the industrially-produced materials taking the form of the curtain wall modules, variations on this corporate type have been endlessly reproduced.

Half a century later, preservationists are faced with assessing the significance not merely of the value of the prototypes, but of the type that it spawned, the anonymous corporate office. The very principles Bunshaft advanced—universal application, adaptability, and replication—mean that the model is at its most successful when these works continue to evolve to commercial needs. This is at once corporate modernism's lasting legacy and agent for erasing the record of its evolutionary phases.

Nowhere is this dynamic more at work than in the interiors of the corporate office. While expansion, particularly of the suburban example, may take the form of an addition, a more pervasive and cyclical type of change occurs at the level of interior space planning, reconfiguration, and adaptation to technology. For more traditional architecture, the inevitability of interior change is an anticipated factor in the preservation of a building that rarely impacts demonstrably on the exterior. For this type, priority for preservation of the interior rests on elements that display the creator's craft, permitting adaptation of building fabric less tied to those qualities.

For modern works, particularly the curtain-wall corporate type, interior change inconsistent with the original architectural intent can dramatically impact the building's expression. Their integrity is bound up in the degree of transparency of the envelope and the readability of its generating module penetrating the interior. Bunshaft in particular, developed the building's language from the module, subtly manipulating it through solid and void at various scales to create a surprisingly diverse combination of spaces.

The first component of the thesis is a written analysis of the preservation issue, post-war architectural developments, and rise of contract interior design. The second component is a visual catalog and design solution. The analysis builds through graphic conventions that organize analysis of two case studies, Lever House and Connecticut General, at four progressive levels of inquiry: Building, Plan, Volume and Detail. Section I is an analysis and comparison of the original architectural intent for Lever House as an urban corporate headquarters and Connecticut General as a suburban corporate campus. Section II is a comparison of ownership patterns between Lever House as it was originally commissioned and its current incarnation as a tenanted building, divided by floor. Guidelines for the urban type and a proposal for a single floor of Lever House follow as an alternative to current tenant examples. Section III advances two design proposals for hypothetical programs using Connecticut General as a tenanted conversion.