

Abendvortrag 15. März 2017, 18.15 Uhr

Prof. Dr. Carol H. Krinsky
(New York University)

The Rockefeller Center – «A City Within a City»



Ort: Universität Bern, Hauptgebäude,
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The Rockefeller Center – «A City Within a City»

Rockefeller Center in what is now the heart of Manhattan, is widely considered to be the best designed and most popular urban complex in the western hemisphere. With open space, an annual Christmas tree of enormous size, amusing spectacles in its gigantic theater, works of art outside and inside its buildings, it is often thought of as a public amenity and even a cultural institution or, to use a cliché, a “City Within a City.”

Nevertheless, it is an entirely commercial project, conceived and built during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Its initially accidental and then carefully calculated design, and an account of its over seventy years of existence make clear the benefits of erecting palatable rather than avant-garde buildings, of judicious cost calculation, and of meticulous stewardship. While successors have tried to borrow ideas from it, Rockefeller Center has not provided a template for other builders who sought equally profitable results. The Depression years, customary practices of the time, and rules specific to building in New York combined to produce an inimitable result.

In her lecture, Prof. Krinsky will address questions such as : How did the center happen to be built during the Great Depression and how has it maintained its position as a prestigious address since the principal part was finished in 1939, almost 80 years ago? Although it looks generally similar to the way it did originally, what has changed around it and within it, and why? Have the City and the new owners been good stewards of this commercial complex that many people see as a civic complex and an urban icon?