Abstract: Few buildings have had the impact on the New York City skyline and the hearts of New Yorkers that the Chrysler Building has had. This is a 20 minute talk looking at the history and design of the William Van Alen’s masterpiece in relation to Aesthetic Realism, the education founded by the great American poet and philosopher, Eli Siegel, who stated, “The resolution of conflict in self is like the making one of opposites in art.”

The Chrysler Building puts together grace and seriousness, liveliness and sobriety. Where else could you find brickwork designed to look like automobiles, and the employment of actual hubcaps from 1929 Chrysler cars bolted into the brickwork? William Van Alen became known as the “Ziegfeld” of his profession because of this spectacular design. Yet, along with its graceful mischief, and what Lewis Mumford called “voluptuousness,” Van Alen’s design also has great meaning and seriousness. This talk studies the structure of the tower, and the development of the crown and spire from earlier, more stodgy structures to its final beautiful design. The reposeful curves of that spire are completed by the lively triangular windows. The relation of liveliness and depth, energy and repose in this building is what people are looking for in their lives, and that is why the Chrysler Building is loved, not only by New Yorkers, but by people throughout the world.