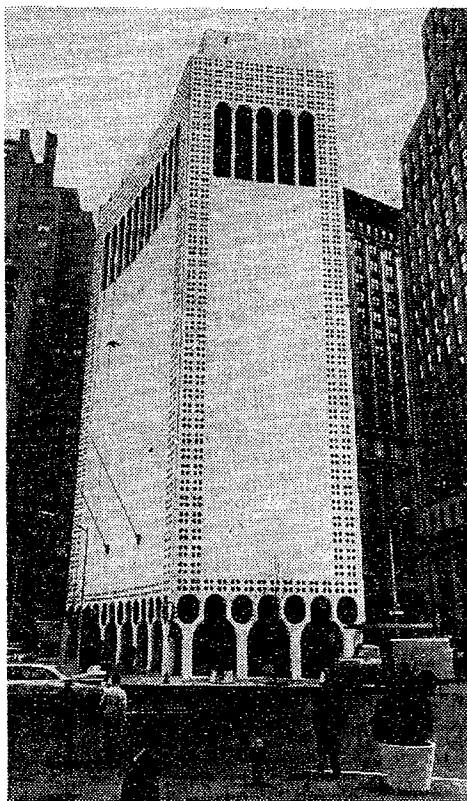


# Architecture: Huntington Hartford's Palatial Midtown Museum



The Gallery of Modern Art, on the edge of Columbus Circle

## Columbus Circle Gallery Will Open in Mid-March

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

On Columbus Circle, which some people have long remembered as a sordid and dismembered open space on West 59th Street watched over by Christopher Columbus on a column, a small white palace is approaching completion.

Columbus now points a hortatory finger at a 10-story arched and screened marble building that is, causing more talk and speculation among New Yorkers than anything since the Guggenheim Museum.

The new Gallery of Modern Art, including the collection of Huntington Hartford, will open in mid-March. Its costs are undisclosed, but good guesses put it at \$7 million, including land. This month, a steady stream of curious and privileged visitors has been entering its bronze-framed glass doors to be confronted with a discreetly chiseled quotation from Kipling on the marble elevator wall:

But each for the joy of the working,  
And each in his separate star,  
Shall draw the thing as he sees it  
For the God of things as they are.

### 'Out' Becomes 'In'

Kipling has been out of style in cultural circles for some time. So has the exclusively realistic and representational art of the Hartford collection, for which this is the teaser.

But with that curious reversal of chic in which the chic

New York world specializes, where "out" becomes "in" for the avant-garde, the Huntington Hartford gallery promises to make the unfashionable extremely fashionable from now on. By purely fortuitous timing, the professionals are "rediscovering" the neglected work of the 19th and early 20th century that Mr. Hartford has loved tenaciously all along.

In spite of its name, the Gallery of Modern Art is primarily a museum for a collector who does not admire modern art, if modern art is understood as including a hard core of progressive, experimental abstraction.

The building is by Edward Durell Stone, an architect who rejects the provocative, puzzling, and sometimes brutal aspects of today's architecture in much the same way. No traditionalist, he simply prefers a less controversial idiom, avoids the more provoking and stimulating experiments, smooths off the rugged edges, and pads well with wall-to-wall luxury.

Outside, the new museum resembles a die-cut Venetian palazzo on lollypops. It begs for a canal or garden setting, rather than the dusty disorder of a New York traffic circle. Its effect, which now borders on poetic grotesquerie, will be vastly improved if the architect's sympathetic redesign of the circle is carried out by the city.

Inside the new museum there,



Members of the museum staff hanging a work by Monet. At the left is a head of Paul Robeson by Sir Jacob Epstein.



In fifth floor foyer, there hang "Battle of Tetuan," at left, and "Discovery of America" by Christopher Columbus," both by Dahl. Areas like this are a feature of the museum.

is much more than meets the passing eye. The irregular-shaped building is only about 96 feet on its longest side, but its plan is an accomplished demonstration of one of the basic principles of architectural design—the expert manipulation of space by an expert hand.

### Galleries at Half Levels

Fire stairs and tower required by the building code, plus public stairs and elevators, made the small structure virtually all service core and no galleries. The architect solved the problem by putting the main galleries at the front of the building, wrapping smaller galleries around the service core and widening the stair landings to provide high-ceilinged supplementary galleries at half levels between floors. On alternate floors the main galleries are entered from these side stairs.

The theme is dignity and

formality, rather than the exhilarating spatial fireworks.

This interior planning is the building's conspicuous success, an achievement to command considerable admiration. What will be admired by the public, however, are the building's cosmetics—many running feet of rich macassar ebony, walnut, bronze, grasscloth, thick red and gold carpets, parquet floors, the celebrated Stone grilles—all applied with lavish generosity and occasionally smothering overtones of domestic luxury. Mr. Stone believes that art should be shown in an atmosphere suggesting the visitor's own home, or a club.

The Hartford Gallery will provide a sybaritic setting for some interesting, offbeat shows that New York might otherwise not see. The building works well, poses no challenges, asks no hard questions and gives no controversial answers. (The questions raised by the collection are considerably tougher.)

There will be Polynesian luau

lunches in the ninth-floor penthouse, an espresso bar in the eighth-floor lounge, and the soothing strains of a 23½-foot-high Aeolian-Skinner organ accommodated between the second and third floors.

A small auditorium in the basement seats 154 persons. Four floors will be devoted to exhibitions. It is a costly, comfortable building that breaks no architectural frontiers, but seems perfectly suited to its functions, purposes and patron.

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