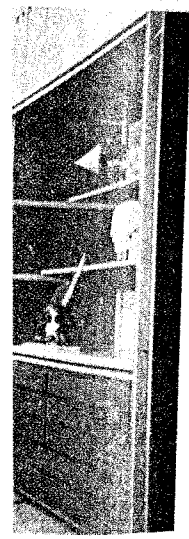


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Photo: Arnold Eagle

Richness of detailing and furnishings in typical gallery area creates an environment for viewing art that is intended to make the museum visitor "aspire to original works of art in his home." The circular windows in the building (there are 1,472 of them) will allow visitors to play peek-a-boo with the view.

## STONE'S NEW GALLERY OF ART OPENS

NEW YORK, N.Y. Edward Durrell Stone's first major building here in 25 years is the new Huntington Hartford Gallery—full name: "The Gallery of Modern Art (Including the Huntington Hartford Collection)."

The purpose of the Gallery, as Hartford puts it, is to show "a different aesthetic point of view from the vulgar commercialism on the one hand and the 'ivory tower' intellectualism on the other" that is prevalent in American art circles today. His own collection seeks to emphasize "certain relatively neglected phases of 19th- and 20th-Century art" and has been called everything from independent and personal to unfashionable, uneven, and unmemorable. In addition to housing this basic and growing collection, the gallery will also serve as a "metropolitan showcase" for special exhibitions. Its inaugural show is a retrospective of works by the late Pavel Tchelitchev.

The building Stone has created is a bijou of poured concrete sheathed in white Vermont marble in the setting that is Columbus Circle. The tiny site is an island, 97 ft in its greatest dimension, with no two sides the same. Compounding the problem of fitting the building to the small site were building code requirements for elevators, mechanical services, and other utilitarian necessities which, according to Stone, "would have served a building many, many times the square foot area involved." He was, he continues, "in effect putting a watch

together—and a miracle was needed to get an orderly, spacious gallery area."

Stone describes the 158-ft-high building as a grand staircase, with the galleries serving as landings. The structure consists of nine floors, plus a basement housing an auditorium. Four floors are used as exhibition areas, with each floor divided into three separate galleries. Special exhibitions are housed on the second and third floors; the fourth and fifth floors contain paintings from Huntington Hartford's permanent collection. The eighth and ninth floors offer museumgoers the choice between a drink or a full meal: there is a cocktail-espresso lounge on the eighth floor, accommodating 60; and, on the ninth, a restaurant (The Gauguin Room) seating 52, with an arcade and balcony providing a magnificent view of Central Park. Additional floor space is devoted to administration and storage facilities.

The architect's approach to the galleries themselves was to design and furnish them in such a way as to create for the visitor the feeling of paintings enjoyed in a private home, and to avoid any sense of the museum as a mere storage or learning place. To achieve the appropriate sense of warmth and intimacy, rich materials were used: parquet wood floors, fabric and wood-paneled walls, and carpeting of red and gold. This sense of opulence is carried to the two top floors: the cocktail lounge contains walls of Massassar ebony, sofas covered in Danish wool, an ebony-topped bar, and a col-

lection of Oceanic art. The restaurant contains custom-designed tables and service plates, as well as tapestries that reproduce original Gauguin works. One rather unique installation is a 3500-pipe Aeolian-Skinner organ in a midfloor gallery.

Lighting is by Abe Feder, whose theater experience has helped him achieve some striking effects, as when he "targets" a painting and the subjects attain stereopticon reality.

One of the Museum's star attractions is expected to be Salvador Dali's enormous painting, "The Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus," hung in a special high-ceilinged room. We wonder what Columbus himself would think of his Columbus Circle these days. He would certainly find certain aspects of this Venetian palazzo familiar, but might be a bit confused by New York's Coliseum, a far cry from the one of Imperial Rome. And he would certainly bat an eye, some months hence, to see fragments of the old Baths of Caracalla here. If Ed Stone's full hopes are realized, the columns from the doomed Penn Station will be placed in a colonnade around the traffic circle.

Ed Stone has remarked that he can walk through any city and date its buildings—by decade and even by year—because architects are so attentive to the clichés of the moment. Though he says he hasn't used a grille in five years, there is no doubt that this gallery is Stone-work—from what might be called the Middle Stone Age.—E.P.

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