

Gulf & Western Gives New York A Culture Center
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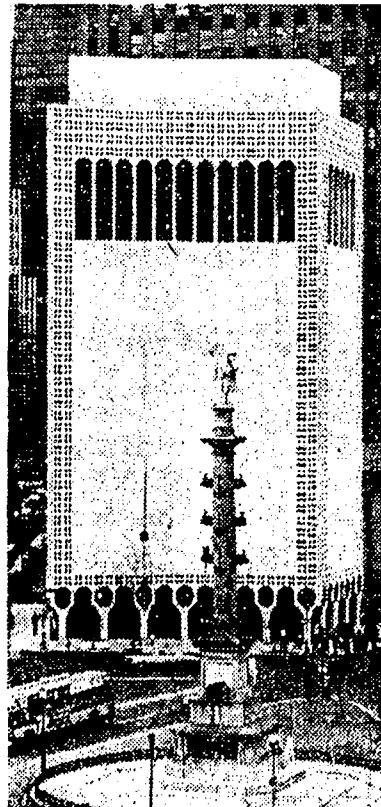
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The New York Cultural Center of Columbus Circle, empty since fiscal troubles closed it in September 1975, has been bought by Gulf & Western Industries as a gift to New York City. It will serve as headquarters for the new Department of Cultural Affairs and as an exhibition and tourist center.

In announcing the gift at a City Hall news conference yesterday, Mayor Beame cited it as "still another expression of faith which Gulf & Western has made in the future of the city." And he praised the conglomerate, which says that its combined annual payroll in New York totals \$87 million, for "its ongoing commitment to the well-being of eight million New Yorkers."

The corporation is purchasing the nine-story white marble building, erected in 1964 as the Gallery of Modern

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The New York Cultural Center building on Columbus Circle. Columbus statue is in foreground.

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Gulf & Western Buying, for City, Columbus Circle Cultural Center

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Art by Huntington Hartford the A. & P. heir, under a \$2.5 million program set up by the Gulf & Western Foundation. The money covers not only the purchase price, estimated by other sources as slightly over \$1 million, but also renovation costs, the costs of furnishings and equipment, and building maintenance and utilities charges for two years.

Asked yesterday whether maintenance costs for the building would have to be borne by the city after the two years were up, Martin E. Segal, chairman of the Mayor's Commission on Cultural Affairs, said that "a number of possibilities for ongoing support" would be explored, particularly among corporations and organizations with an interest in tourist affairs.

Besides its use as headquarters for the Department of Cultural Affairs and for the Commission on Cultural Affairs, the building is being studied as a possible home for the New York Convention and Visitors Bureau. A proposal to this effect will be presented to the bureau's executive committee next Monday, according to Preston Robert Tisch, the bureau's chairman.

It is also hoped that the city's museums and performing arts organizations will help in arranging "small cameo exhibitions of the treasures available in our five boroughs," Mr. Segal said. And he noted that the building's theater, which seats 160 people, would be used for conferences of an educational and cultural nature as well as those relating to tourism.

Cost \$7.4 Million

The building, erected by Mr. Hartford at a cost of \$7.4 million, was taken over by Fairleigh Dickinson University as an exhibition center in 1969. In 1975 the university announced that it was phasing out its funding of the center because of rising operational costs and an "inadequate base of public support."

The center's independent board placed the building on the market in March 1975 at a price of \$6 million, but it was subsequently offered to various organizations at much lower prices. Recently St. Vincent's Hospital considered—and rejected—its purchase for use as a school of nursing, at a price slightly over \$1 million.

The board has filed for dissolution and distribution of the center's assets—the building—with the New York State Supreme Court. This would mean conveyance of the building to the Phoe-

nix Mutual Insurance Company, which holds a first mortgage of \$1 million. Presumably, Gulf & Western will acquire the building from Phoenix Mutual for satisfaction of the \$1 million mortgage.

The property will be acquired and deeded to the city, according to Gulf & Western, as soon as all legal approvals have been received and all necessary documents have been executed—a matter of about 60 days.

Tax Advantage the Same

The tax advantage to Gulf & Western for its gift to the city would be no different from that for any other contribution, according to Samuel Silberman, president of the Gulf & Western Foundation, who was present at yesterday's news conference. The \$2.5 million would be phased out over a 10-year period, he said, increasing the corporation's annual \$1.5 million in donations by between 10 and 15 percent a year.

Costs of adapting the building for use by city agencies are expected to amount to about \$300,000, Mr. Silberman said, with maintenance estimated at \$200,000 a year. Fairleigh Dickinson put its annual operating costs for the building at \$700,000 a year.

Discussing the corporation's decision to make the donation, Charles G. Bluhdorn, chairman of Gulf & Western, said at the news conference that he saw New York as "the gateway to America," and stressed that the corporation, whose divisions include Simon & Schuster, Paramount Pictures Corporation and Consolidated Cigar, intended to remain here.

"More than ever, this is the time for confidence and credibility in our country and our city," he said. And, turning to the Mayor, he added, "If corporations would think more of what to do for the city instead of how to move out of it, they could accomplish what needs to be done to help this city remain the great mecca it is and deserves to be."

Mr. Bluhdorn also pointed out that the corporation's headquarters were on Columbus Circle, facing the Cultural Center, and acknowledged that the corporation viewed its donation as "enlightened self-interest," to encourage the city to think of the Circle's development.

Asked if the board of the Cultural Center felt relieved at the disposition of the building, Allen Russell, its chairman, said, "We're pleased that such good use will be made of it."