

Dahesh Museum Bids to Preserve 2 Columbus Circle



On October 22, the Dahesh Museum submitted a bid to purchase the former Gallery of Modern Art at 2 Columbus Circle. Commissioned by Huntington Hartford, heir to the A & P fortune, the building was designed by Edward Durrell Stone and completed in 1964. Stone's work ranged from important early International Style structures—he co-designed the original Museum of Modern Art on 55th Street in 1939—to later richly appointed buildings that prefigure Post-Modernism, such as the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the PepsiCo headquarters in Purchase, and the American Embassy in New Delhi. Although 2 Columbus Circle was designed as a fine art museum, for the past 20 years it has served as office

exhibitions, expansion of art education initiatives, and more public programs for larger audiences. The Museum has been looking for a new space for some time, and 2 Columbus Circle is the ideal match. It was purposely built as a fine art museum—in fact, one that also featured academic art—with elegant galleries and intimate scale.

Gathering support has not been difficult. In fact, it has been rewarding to see that many people understand the significance of the Dahesh bid. Scholars and museum professionals, such as Robert Rosenblum, art historian and Curator of 20th Century Art at the Guggenheim Museum, have strongly supported the Museum's bid. From abroad, the Musée d'Orsay, London's Royal Academy, and other museums in England, France and Spain have written their support. Other strong advocates of the Museum's proposal include architect Hugh Hardy, Huntington Hartford's former wife Diane and their daughter Juliet, New York architect Hicks Stone, Edward Durrell Stone's son, and many architectural preservationists. ²

to 1958, Edward Durrell Stone wrote: "Compared with the current historic content of much of our architecture, this building may be considered a radical departure, with its rational use of its materials. We live in an age of architectural transition, and the more modern forms are finding their way to new positions that were once the province of classical architecture."

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Upcoming Exhibitions

June 24 - September 30, 1997

The Dahesh Museum Salon will recreate the regional salons of 19th-century art through the traditional installation of exquisite, rarely viewed paintings and sculptures from private and museum collections. This fresh, summertime treat harkens back to the viewing of art in private homes or personal museums. ²

What Do You Think?

While waiting for a decision on its bid for 2 Columbus Circle, the Museum would like to know what our readers think about this important building as the location for a bigger, better Dahesh Museum. Please send us your thoughts to Dahesh Muse, Dahesh Museum, 601 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

space for New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs and the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

According to Robert A. M. Stern, the noted architect and architectural historian, the building is a landmark and deserves preservation. Stern was quoted last April in the *New York Times* as saying, "We've got to struggle to get above taste. It is just about when a building is thirty years old that a new generation comes along to discover it. Landmarking is not to select what is pretty, it is to select what is significant." He has strongly supported the Museum in its drive to save this elegant museum building and return it to its original use as a fine art museum.

The City's Economic Development Corporation is reviewing all bids for the 2 Columbus Circle site and has stated it would make a decision at the end of January. The EDC has not revealed the names of other bidders, but it is known that they include developers who would either demolish the building or convert it to other uses.

With a current exhibition space that measures only 1,800 feet, the Museum is eager to relocate to larger quarters that will accommodate its rapid growth. Additional space will permit the creation of a long-term chronological and thematic installation of academic art, larger special

Holidays with Punch and Judy



Fred Georganos provided a very popular holiday respite for children and adults. In addition to his no-wisecracks Punch and Judy performance, Mr. Georganos presented an historic overview and a close look at his puppets.