



STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESERVATION OF 2 COLUMBUS CIRCLE
Preservation Committee
January, 1999

The Society's Preservation Committee has discussed the matter of 2 Columbus Circle at length and has voted on it upon two separate occasions. It is the Committee's considered belief that this building merits preservation, and the Committee therefore urges the City of New York to use its powers to preserve it.

Aesthetically, 2 Columbus Circle is a controversial building. In the Committee's opinion, however, the key argument for preserving it turns upon a simple question: what will be the interest of the future in this building? The Committee is convinced that future generations will want to have 2 Columbus Circle; that this building will only rise in value; and that future generations will regret our blindness or lack of resolve if we fail to preserve it. We have learned from experience that negative judgments on the architecture of the recent past are repeatedly and predictably overruled by history. We must therefore try to ground our judgment as preservationists not in our own tastes but in the judgment of the future. One way to do so is to put personal preferences aside in favor of a reasoned and objective assessment of significance. According to this measure 2 Columbus Circle is a building of considerable importance.

2 Columbus Circle was a major work by one of America's leading architects at the peak of his fame and powers. It was carried out for a prominent client at a significant site. It was also a daring building that broke with the architectural orthodoxy of the time and led the way in new directions of great importance for American architecture, and for New York. While critics enjoy debating the aesthetic appeal of 2 Columbus Circle, few if any would debate this factual appraisal, which provides a firm basis for a judgment in favor of preservation.

The Society's Preservation Committee believes 2 Columbus Circle fully merits designation as a city landmark and hopes the Landmarks Commission will move to make it one. More urgent is to award the building to a bidder who will preserve its exterior, restore its interior spaces, and return it to an appropriate civic and public use. The City of New York owns the building. The Dahesh Museum is such a bidder. The Committee urges the Mayor and the City of New York to end the long uncertainty over the building's future by awarding it to a new owner who will cherish and preserve it for the future.