

COMMITTEE FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND DEVELOPMENT INC.

Columbus Circle Update

May 1999

10 Columbus Circle and the Coliseum

We now have two lawsuits challenging the sale of 10 Columbus Center and the Coliseum. The present plan of the MTA and City of New York to demolish this relatively new structure and replace it with a 750-foot (75-story) behemoth, is an environmental disaster, a financial disaster and an aesthetic disaster. Our attorney in State Supreme Court is Jack Lester. The grounds for litigation are an inadequate Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and failure to submit the EIS for Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP). Our first hearing was on April 9 before Judge Paula Omansky.

In Federal Court we are continuing under the Clean Air Act to appeal Judge Shirley Wohl Kram's decision as imposing on herself too many restrictions, among other grounds. While the EIS did not mention or monitor intersections with excessive traffic and levels of pollution; that does not mean these areas do not exist. It defies the purpose of the law if the MTA in preparing an EIS can pick and choose which data and which intersections they wish to disclose. The motivation for a developer when he prepares an EIS is to make sure that no troublesome data or instances of environmental degradation are exposed. In 1991 the EIS for the Coliseum took into account the effect increased cross-town traffic would have on the Eastside. The intersection with the worst traffic congestion on 11th Avenue is not monitored for air quality in the current EIS. The United States Environmental Protection Agency considers New York City a non-attainment area for carbon-monoxide, ozone and particulates. These are the facts that must be taken into consideration when deciding if violations exist under the Clean Air Act. James Periconi is our attorney before the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

Financial benefits of replacing the existing structure are dubious. The Pei Group's proposal for use of the existing buildings estimates \$90 million tax benefit annually for the City and the State. Why torture the thousands of existing residents for a one time sale of \$340 million when the City is running a \$2.1 billion surplus. Further, since the details of the proposed sale have never been disclosed, we do not know the extent of the tax abatements and mortgage guarantees. However, we do know that the developer will receive from the City millions of dollars for the Jazz Center, which was never evaluated in the EIS. If the developer is so eager to invest in New York City real estate let him find areas that need improvement like the Brooklyn Navy Yard. 10 Columbus Circle is a fine office building. The Coliseum with its long horizontal beams is a treasure sought after by exhibitors. Most important, the residents of the area and the citizens of this City want the present structure to remain, not to be replaced by the proposed megastructure.

If the exterior of the Coliseum appears plain, the small bricks on the façade could be replaced with white marble similar to that used in Lincoln Center. That would make it more aesthetically pleasing. The basic structure is relatively new and profoundly sound.

2 Columbus Circle

Our latest effort to save 2 Columbus Circle is on page 1 of the newsletter. This full-page ad was placed in the Spirit and Our Town. We would like to extend coverage in more widely read newspapers. All inquires concerning the status of this site go answered. We can only urge more readers to write to the Mayor. There must be some point at which the sentiment of the residents of New York affects public policy. Knowing the keen interest this organization has in preserving the Huntington Hartford Museum and its acquisition by the Dahesh; the Director, David Farmer, sent us a list of individuals and organizations that have written to the Mayor. The list includes Elected Officials, Cultural Organizations, New York City Museum Directors and Professionals, American Museum Professionals, International Museum Professional, American Scholars, Collectors, Architects, Artists and Art Professionals, Educators, Prominent New Yorkers. What does it take to be listened to or even to be heard?

(There will be an exhibit June 8 to August 28, at the Dahesh; 'Revealing the Holylands: Photographic Exploration of Palestine 1850-1890')

Since the Dahesh Museum announced its bid for 2 Columbus Circle, the following have provided letters of support for the Museum's acquisition and preservation of the building [as of April 9, 1999]:

Elected Officials

The following signed a letter urging preservation of the building and cultural use, noting that the Dahesh Museum had submitted just such a proposal :

Assembly Member Richard Gottfried

Assembly Member Scott Stringer

State Senator Franz Leichter

State Senator Catherine Abate

U.S. Representative Jerrold Nadler

U.S. Representative Carolyn Maloney

Council Member Ronnie Eldridge

Council Member Thomas Duane sent his own letter

Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields has urged cultural use of the site

Organizations

Municipal Art Society. Brendan Sexton, President, in a letter on September 9, 1998, to the EDC. Preservation Committee in a resolution in January 1999.

College Art Association of America

Historic Districts Council

New York City Museum Directors and Professionals

Dr. Maxwell Anderson, Director, Whitney Museum of American Art

Dr. Annette Blaugrund, Director, National Academy Museum, New York

Dr. James David Draper, Henry R. Kravis Curator, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Betsy Gotbaum, President, New-York Historical Society

Gerard C. Wertkin, Director, Museum of American Folk Art

Susan Weber Soros, Founder/Director, Bard College Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts

Thomas Krens, Director, Guggenheim Museum

American Museum Professionals

J. Carter Brown, Director Emeritus, National Gallery of Art

Dr. William Otton, Director, Art Museum of South Texas

Dr. Eric Zafran, Curator of European Paintings, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, former Deputy Director, Jewish Museum, New York

DeCourcy E. McIntosh, Executive Director, Frick Art Museum, Pittsburgh

Serena Rattazzi, Director, American Federation of Art
William R. Johnston, Associate Director, Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore
Joseph J. Rishel, Curator of European Art, Philadelphia Museum
Richard V. West, Director, Frye Art Museum, Seattle
Budd Harris Bishop, Director Emeritus, Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida
Michael Milkovich, Director, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida
Dr. Stephen C. McGough, Director, Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento
Dr. Diane Lesko, Director, Telfair Academy, Savannah, Georgia
Dr. Carmen T. Ruiz-Fischler, Director, Museo de Arte de Ponce, PR
Steven H. Miller, Director, Bennington Museum, VT

International Museum Professionals

Dr. Simon Olding, Director of Heritage Policy, Heritage Lottery Fund, UK, and former Director, Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth, UK
Mark Bills, Visual Arts Officer, Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth
MaryAnne Stevens, Chief Curator, Royal Academy of Arts, London
David Fraser Jenkins, Curator, Tate Gallery, London
Hans Nieuwdorp, Director, Museum Meyer van den Bergh, Antwerp, Belgium
Eduard Carbonell i Esteller, Director, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain
Francis Ribemont, Director, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux
Hélène Lafont-Couturier, Director, Goupil Museum, Bordeaux
Emmanuel Schwartz, Curator, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris
Dr. Françoise Heilbrun, Chief Curator, Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Dominique Lobstein, Documentaliste, Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Dr. Sarwat Okasha, scholar and preservationist, Cairo
Dr. Martina Sitt, Curator, Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf

American Scholars

Dr. Gerald Ackerman, Professor Emeritus, Pomona College, Pomona, CA
Dr. William Gerdtz, Professor of Art History, CUNY
Dr. Patricia Mainardi, Broeklundian Professor of Art History, CUNY
Dr. Flora Kaplan, Professor of Anthropology and Director of Museum Studies Program, NYU
Dr. Robert Rosenblum, Professor of Art History, NYU, and Curator of 20th-Century Art, the Guggenheim Museum
Dr. Diana Gisolfi, Chair and Professor, Art History Department, Pratt Institute

Collectors

Frederick and Sherry Ross
Christopher Forbes, Vice President, Forbes Magazine
John Morrin
Dr. Edward T. Wilson, Chevy Chase, MD

International Supporters

Baron Alexis de Redé, Paris

Taki Theodoropoulos, writer

H.I.R.R. Francesca von Habsburg, Archduchess of Austria

H.S.H. Prince Rainier III of Monaco

Erivan Haub, Major Shareholder, Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, Mühlheim
a.d. Ruhr, Germany

The Hon. Robert Hanson (son of Lord James Hanson), London

H.R.H. Crown Princess Paulos of Greece (née Marie-Chantal Miller)

Olivier Fanica, scholar, Montigny-sur-Loing, France

Christian Ehlinger, Chevalier des Arts et Lettres, Membre de l'Académie d'Alsace

Richard Green, gallery owner, London

Maggie Kuomi, Editor, Hello Limited, London

Guy Naccache, Montréal

Architects

Hugh Hardy, Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer, NY

Peter Coombs and Jane Siris, NY

Robert A. M. Stern, NY, architect and Dean of the School of Architecture, Yale
University

Thomas T. K. Zung, Buckminster Fuller, Sadao and Zung, Cleveland

Warren James, NY

Giorgio Cavaglieri, NY

Artists and Art Professionals

Leon Golub, artist

Susan Ball, Executive Director, for the College Art Association of America

C. Hugh Hildesley, Executive Vice President, Sotheby's

Polly J. Sartori, Senior Director, 19th Century Paintings, Christie's

Nicholas Maclean, Head of Department, 19th Century Paintings, Christie's

Marion Roller, artist

Paul T. Nagano, artist

Richard Lippold, artist

Dr. Joyce Geismar, archaeologist

Gerard Stora, Wildenstein Gallery

Dr. Gregory Hedberg, Director, European Art, Hirschl and Adler Galleries, Inc.

Dr. Constance Lowenthal, former Director, International Foundation for Art
Research

Jo Basiste, artist, Santa Fe

Educators

Dr. Thomas Sobol, Christian A. Johnson Professor, Teachers College, Columbia U.,
and former NYS Commissioner of Education

Dr. Gibran Majdalany, Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University

Charlene Jordan, Principal, Coalition School for Social Change
Mark Freeman, Superintendent, Shaker Heights (OH) City School District
Dr. Kenneth M. Bird, Superintendent, Wtside Community Schools, Omaha, NE
Dr. Michael E. Hickey, Superintendent, Howard County Public Schools, Ellicott City,
MD
Dr. Matthew W. Gibson, Superintendent, School District of Elmwood, Brookfield, WI
Dr. Bernard Hamilton, Jr., Superintendent, West Point (MS) School District
Dr. Spike Jorgensen, Harold Webb Assoc., Tok, AK
Diane Fini, Clay, NY
Dr. Lawrence Pereira, Superintendent, Webster (NY) Central School District
Marcia Schwarz, Superintendent, Altmar-Paris-Williamstown (NY) School District
Dr. Diane Siri, Superintendent, Santa Cruz County (CA) Schools
Dr. Harry A. Galinsky, Paramus, NJ
Dr. Judy Lookabill, Palo Alto, CA
Dr. Hollyce Sherry Giles, Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University
David Bloomfield, Esq., Teachers College
Dr. Craig Richards, Professor, Teachers College
Dr. Lambros Comitas, Gardner Cowles Professor of Anthropology and Education,
Teachers College
Dr. Pearl Rock Kane, Professor, Teachers College
Christie C. Salomon, Administrative manager, Christie's Education

New Yorkers

Brooke Astor
Ambassador Francis Kellogg, Managing Director, UNICEF
Tony Randall, actor
Letitia Sherrer
Samantha Kluge
Diane Hartford
Juliet Hartford
Dr. Alvin and Eleanor Donnenfeld
Margot Gayle, architectural historian and preservationist
Riad A. Gemayel
Diana Schneider, CTC
Yvette Pinsker
Maryann Ondovcsik
Charles Matyas
Mary Knapp
Barry Gosin
Donald A. Bandman
Norman Belmonte
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Katharine De Michiel