



April 17, 2000

Ronda Wist  
Executive Director  
N.Y.C. Landmarks Preservation Commission  
100 Old Slip  
New York, New York 10005

Re: 2 Columbus Circle

Dear Ronda:

Thank you for your letter of April 12 regarding 2 Columbus Circle.

I received it last Friday, after returning from the site where I participated in a rally and press conference to call upon the Landmarks Preservation Commission to hold a public hearing on the merits of designating this endangered modern building as a landmark. The Landmarks Conservancy co-sponsored the event, along with the Historic Districts Council and the Municipal Art Society. The three groups are united in our resolve to see this City-owned building have its "day in court" and we intend to keep pressing our case on all fronts.

It was disappointing to learn from your letter that the Designation Committee has not re-visited this matter in nearly four years. Especially because our collective understanding and appreciation of modern architecture is rapidly evolving. We are on the eve of a national conference, "Preserving the Recent Past," where well over a thousand professionals in the field will gather to hear papers on a topic that is moving to center stage.

We know that the Commission's staff is sincere in its belief that the building does not merit further consideration. And, with or without new information, we know that it's hard for them to reconsider a judgement once made. But no less a figure than Ada Louise Huxtable has done just that, reconsidering her initial disparaging remarks about the building and changing her mind. She told me recently that she supports designation. Surely, in light of this example, couldn't your staff give this a fresh look?

[Continued]

Stuart N. Siegel, *Chairman*  
Peg Breen, *President*

**Board of Directors**  
John Belle, FAIA, RIBA  
William L. Bernhard  
Kathryn McGraw Berry  
Simon Breines, FAIA  
Robert W. Burnett  
Paul S. Byard, FAIA  
Joan O. Camins  
Pamela Rubin Carter  
Anne Coffin  
Henry P. Davison II  
Michael K. De Chiara  
Douglas Durst  
Stuart P. Feld  
John M. Forelle  
Robert C. Graham, Jr.  
Clark P. Halstead  
Holly Hotchner  
John J. Kerr, Jr.

Stephen Kirschenbaum  
Stephen S. Lash  
Sarah Tomerlin Lee  
Mimi Levitt  
Joan B. Maynard  
John Morning  
The Honorable  
Daniel Patrick Moynihan  
Donald Oresman  
Frederic S. Papert  
Allison Simmons Prouty  
Robert C. Quinlan  
Frances Scaife  
Marc P. Schappell  
Joanne M. Stern  
Donald G. Tober  
John E. Zuccotti

**Advisory Council**  
Michael L. Anslie  
Laurie Beckelman  
Farran Tozer Brown  
Frankie M. Cadwell  
Aubria Corbitt  
Peter Duchin  
Norton Garfinkle  
Paul K. Herzan  
Ada Louise Huxtable  
Susan Henshaw Jones  
Ronald S. Lauder  
Marjorie Flannigan MacLachlan  
Burt Manning  
John D. Mashek, Jr.  
Liz Smith  
Elizabeth F. Stribling  
The Reverend Canon  
Frederick B. Williams

141 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York 10010  
Tel: 212 995-5260  
Fax: 212 995-5268  
nylandmarks@nylandmarks.org  
www.nylandmarks.org

**Letter to Ronda Wist re: 2 Columbus Circle**

April 17, 2000

Page 2

Many knowledgeable people are of the opinion that the building marks an important point in the evolution of the Modern Movement in America. It was designed by a prominent architect, it was at the center of a controversial cultural debate, and it has been included in countless architectural reviews and critiques of modern American architecture. Based on these considerations alone, we believe it deserves a hearing. May we know what opinions and facts were considered by the staff and Designation Committee in 1996? If you can help us to understand the information on hand at the time and the rationale for this decision, then perhaps we can furnish new information for a reconsideration.

The fate of this building has sparked widespread public interest in landmark designation on the part of many who were previously unfamiliar with the process. It is difficult to explain to them that a decision made years ago, in committee attended only by a few Commissioners and staff, is the final word on the fate of this prominent structure. Over the past several years, we have all seen a growing emphasis on open government and open meetings. The public expects to be able to see and hear how government agencies make important decisions. The Landmarks Commission has an otherwise excellent record in this regard but the designation committee process is an exception. People simply find it unfair and unacceptable that worthy buildings can be demolished without any opportunity for the public to be heard and without any action on the part of the full Commission.

Failure to hold a public hearing and render a verdict on this controversial preservation issue may undermine public confidence in the administration of the Landmarks Law. That is why, on behalf of all three groups, I appeal to the Commission to reconsider the position set forth in your letter.

Sincerely,



Peg Breen  
President

cc: Frank Sanchis  
Vicki Weiner

Via Mail