



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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September 30, 2002

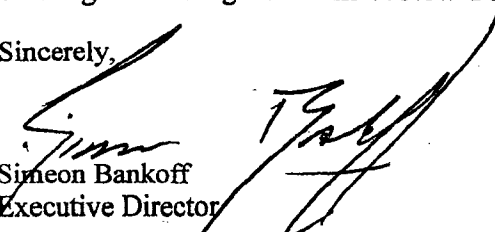
Hon. Bernadette Castro, Commissioner
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Agency Building #1, Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12238

Dear Commissioner Castro,

It seems like only yesterday that HDC requested the former Gallery of Modern Art aka the Huntington Hartford Building at 2 Columbus Circle be placed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Going through my records however, it seems to have been almost two years ago, and slightly less than that when you responded with your very kind letter (enclosed). At the time, you reminded me that buildings under 50 years old must be judged to be of exceptional significance to be placed on the Register. Also at the time, the City of New York was looking for a developer for the then-vacant building. As of today, the developer – the well-respected American Craft Museum – has been chosen and the building is now 38 years old, edging ever-closer to the magic mid-century mark. Unfortunately, there has been some loose talk in the press that would seem to indicate that this building might not make it to 50 without some incredibly unfortunate and unnecessary cosmetic surgery.

There is a wide-spread consensus that this building is exemplary – exactly what it is an example of is the source of even wider-spread discussion and argument. Love it or hate it, this building is a definite landmark in the truest sense – a structure of undeniable significance that serves to define its immediate area. Its fate is of particular importance now, as Columbus Circle is undergoing much-needed redesign and an awesome new neighbor is emerging in the form of the AOL Tower. 2 Columbus Circle serves as a keystone to the circle, and helps define this important urban space. Thoughtless modification or demolition would have potentially catastrophic repercussions for this area. Because the chosen developer is a non-profit institution, there is a strong likelihood that the Historic Preservation Office would be in a position to help affect the redevelopment of the building. HDC has been proud to work closely with your staff on projects like the Queens Museum of Art – currently undergoing a Section 106 review. We have been impressed by their leadership and strong advocacy on behalf of historic properties. We would welcome your voice in helping to preserve this important building for future generations of New Yorkers to argue about.

Sincerely,



Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director

cc: Landmark West!, Municipal Art Society, Margot Gayle, Committee on Economically Sound Development, Tri-Board Task Force, elected officials

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