

Board 5 O.K.'s Facelift For 2 Columbus Circle's 'Lollipop Building'

Reviled by some and revered by others, 2 Columbus—known as the "Lollipop building" because of its quirky, candy-shaped columns—has just edged a bit closer to a major and controversial renovation.

On Wednesday, May 8, Community Board 5 voted to approve the disposition of the building from the city to the Museum of Arts and Design.

Architectural renderings for a facade renovation presented to the board by the museum's architect, Brad Cloppitt of Allied Works Architecture. The emotionally charged meeting was attended by many who were distraught over the planned renovation and nearly a dozen people testified during the public session to protest the plan, hoping to influence the board's vote.

Designed by Edward Durrell Stone and built in 1964 to house the Huntington Hartford Gallery of Modern Art, 2 Columbus Circle was immediately assailed for its unconventional design. Its stark, monolithic face, nearly windowless except for the loggia on the uppermost floors, eventually was declared an architectural asset because of its fierce statement of modernity and its mélange of different styles.

Commissioned by the Museum of Arts and Design (formerly the American Craft Museum), which plans on moving to the building from its West 53rd Street location in spring 2006, the new design will dramatically change the face of 2 Columbus Circle. The plan features several glass columns running from the top to the bottom of the 10-story building which, along with "woven terra cotta panels," will allow filtered sunlight into the building during the day and create a glowing effect at night.

While most opponents of the ren-

ovation are pleased that a cultural organization such as the Museum of Arts and Design will call the building its home, they remain uneasy that the museum insists on tearing down the distinctive facade, citing 2 Columbus Circle as an integral component of the city's architectural history. Columbus Circle resident Sue Mellon spoke of her attachment to the building and its powerful presence, saying that "the white stone and the windows of the

building are a design icon and another opponent of the renovation, referred to the building's distinctive design, saying, "Great art like this building makes people stop; it makes people think. New York is an encyclopedia of 20th-century architecture, and this building [as it stands today] belongs in it."

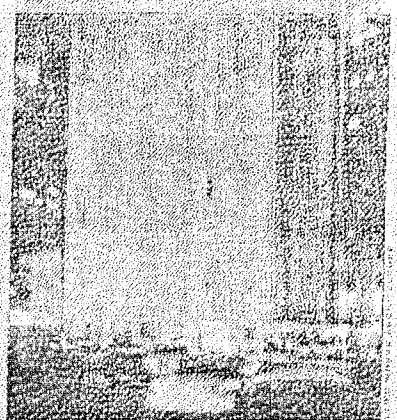
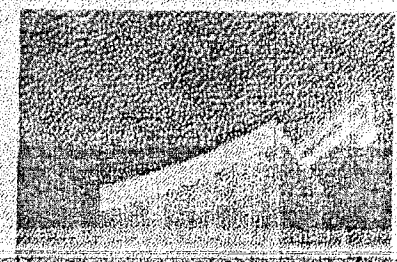
Also addressing the board was Olive Friend, vice president of the Committee for Environmentally

'Great art like this building makes people stop.'

—John Stuart Gordon, meeting attendee.

Sound Development, a West Side building-preservation and watchdog organization. "What is particularly heartbreaking in this circumstance," she said, "is that a museum whose mission is the appreciation, collection and display of art is the proponent of destroying what is probably the most precious object in their collection." Others were not so kind. Jeffrey Co-

borne, a design consultant who endorses the facade renovation, called the building's original architect a "Criminus fashionable gentleman architect," and expressed dismay that people were opposed to the new scheme.



Rendering of the redesign for 2 Columbus Circle, the future home of the Museum of Arts and Design.

Architect Bart Worsanger, who also supports the renovation, told the board that the current structure "is aesthetically wrong" and that the popularity of its current facade is a case of "the emperor's new clothes." Speaking to *The Observer*, Kate Wood, executive director of the landmark-conservancy organization Landmark West, called 2 Columbus Circle a "rare and courageous" building built in an expressive modern style that avoided the cold sterility of both corporate modernism and the fos-

ternational Style. She quoted a *New York Times* article published after the destruction of the old Penn Station ("We will probably be judged by the monuments we build to those we have destroyed") and she has implored the museum to maintain the building's current sign. When reached by *The Observer*, a spokesman for the Museum of Arts and Design declined to comment on criticism of the facade redesign.

The public hearing at times resembled an architectural-qua-commission considering the r-

dering the city's architectural landscape. After hearing the public testimony and having a heated discussion among its members, the board passed the resolution to approve the renovation with a vote of 18 to 8.

In order to proceed with its purchase of the building, the museum must now gain the approval of City Council. Community Board 5's vote, while nonbinding, has considerable influence with City Council.

Opponents of the redesign have stated that they will continue their campaign to save the stylistically unique facade, lobbying the Manhattan board president and the City Planning Commission, which are both scheduled to consider the issue before sending their recommendations to City Council.

—Matthew Ian Green

- May 21: Board 8, New York Blood Center, 319 East 67th Street, auditorium, 7 p.m., 212-758-4340
- May 22: Board 2, N.Y.U. Lee School, Vanderbilt Hall, 40 Washington Square South, Room 11, 6:30 p.m., 212-979-2372
- May 27: Board 3, P.S. 20, 166 Essex Street, 6:30 p.m., 212-533-5300
- Board 12, P.S./A.S. 176, 4862 Broadway, 7 p.m., 212-568-8500

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