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THE MUNICIPAL ART SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

June 30, 2003

Hon. Robert Tierney, Chairman
New York City Landmarks Preservation Committee
One Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairman Tierney,

The Municipal Art Society's Preservation Committee met recently with architect Brad Cloepfil and Museum of Art and Design representatives to review the museum's plan for 2 Columbus Circle.

The presentation led to a Committee discussion about the building, its long history as a controversial work of architecture, and its significance. What emerged was a sense that the complex issues surrounding 2 Columbus Circle are not just about whether one likes or admires the building's design. More relevant to the discussion is what the building means to New York City.

During the past several years, as the City has moved forward with plans to sell 2 Columbus Circle and threats to the building have intensified, a number of architectural historians and scholars have looked critically at where this building sits in the canon of Modern architecture. Professional organizations such as the Society of Architectural Historians and the Association of Preservation Technology are currently examining many of the "late Modern" buildings of the 1960s and 1970s and reassessing, with a greater perspective that can only come from time, their importance in the continuum of architectural history. This building, beloved by some and hated by others, is a prime example of the "late Modernism" now under study (as are Saarinen's TWA Terminal building and Lincoln Center, to name two prominent examples). Put in a larger context, even people who dislike the building are realizing that it represents a significant moment in the history of Modernism and styles that followed it.

This new understanding of the building's significance in the history of 20th century architecture in America has inspired the Society's Preservation Committee to re-examine its long-held position. The Committee determined last week that the building is not only deserving of a landmark designation hearing; it is the opinion of the Committee that the building should be designated a New York City landmark.

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Therefore, I am writing you now in support of designation for 2 Columbus Circle. The Society very much hopes you will see fit to calendar the building for a hearing. And, after listening to the testimony of the many individuals and groups who are sure to attend such a hearing, we hope the Commission will move to designate and protect 2 Columbus Circle for the benefit of future generations of New Yorkers.

Thank you for your consideration of the Society's views.

Sincerely,

Charles A. Platt (VW)

Charles A. Platt
Chairman, Preservation Committee

cc: The Honorable Michael Bloomberg
Chairman Andrew Alper, Economic Development Corporation
Chair Amanda Burden, City Planning Commission
Laurie Beckelman, Museum of Arts and Design
Landmark West!