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TOM WOLFE'S QUIET SUGGESTION

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November 26, 2004 -- Commenting on whether or not architect Edward Durrell Stone's building at 2 Columbus Circle should be preserved ("Westside War," Opinion, Nov. 22), Post real estate "writer" Steve Cuzzo says, "Stone's noisiest defender, Tom Wolfe, celebrates it as a 'pot of paint flung in the face of the high Modernist (sic) establishment.' That sounds less like a work of art than a tantrum. We don't need to put up with tantrums by self-appointed preservationists."

Small problem: It wasn't Tom Wolfe who said it. In fact, it was Robert A.M. Stern, dean of architecture at Yale and by far the most distinguished historian of 20th century New York City architecture (and a prominent architect himself) — and Stern wasn't having a "tantrum." He was providing a wholly accurate description of how Stone's building struck Modernist architects when it was completed 40 years ago.

The tantrum-crazed "zealots" real-estate "writer" Cuzzo refers to include Dean Stern, Columbia art history department chairman Barry Bergdoll, New York Times' architecture critics Herbert Muschamp and Nicolai Ouroussoff, the famous urbanist scholar Witold Rybczynski, as well as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Preservation League of New York State, the Municipal Arts Society, the New York Landmarks Conservancy and more than a thousand citizens from all over the city who have lent their names to the campaign to save Stone's masterpiece.

I subscribe to The Post. I never miss an issue, and I know the premium you place upon accuracy. So may I make the quietest — not "noisiest" — of suggestions? Have a little talk with your real-estate "writer." While you're at it, you might tell the "writer" that the "ist" in Modernist is spelled with an "i."

Tom Wolfe
Manhattan

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