

LANDMARK WEST!

From: "LANDMARK WEST!" <landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 08, 2005 8:04 PM
Attach: arch_logo_current.gif; 6_green.jpg; spacer.gif
Subject: Bard Wanted 2 Columbus Circle

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BARD WANTED 2 COLUMBUS CIRCLE!

Eavesdrop has obtained stunning new information that further underscores the tragic handling of 2 Columbus Circle. At press time, the city had just closed its sale of the 1964 structure, designed by Edward Durell Stone, to the Museum of Arts & Design (MAD), which was prepared to begin radical alterations immediately. In countering preservationists, proponents of that plan long insisted that (1) the building had no architectural merit and (2) it was unusable as it was and would simply languish otherwise. The first argument was always shaky. As asserted in a September 20 letter to **Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg** from artist **Chuck Close**—with co-signers **Robert A. M. Stern, Agnes Gund, Milton Glaser, Mark Wigley** and dozens of others—the building “has for too long been mischaracterized and underappreciated for the important work of art that it is.”

And now, we can say with confidence that the MAD clan’s second point is also bunk. Eavesdrop has gotten exclusive access to a July 26 letter from **Susan Soros** in which the Bard Graduate Center director and ex-wife of billionaire **George Soros** offers to save the beleaguered structure. Addressed to the mayor, the message states clearly that “the Bard Graduate Center would be most interested in taking the building over and restoring and preserving it” [emphasis added]. But according to our sources, her proposal—which followed similar efforts by the Dahesh Museum in the past—received no response. How come? Soros had no comment and the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission did not respond by deadline. But it’s important to remember a series of e-mails, uncovered through the Freedom of Information Act and previously reported here and elsewhere, in

which Landmarks Commission chair **Robert Tierney** betrayed the impartiality of his position by offering a little too much help to MAD representative **Laurie Beckelman**. Indeed, Tierney refused to even hold a hearing to discuss landmarking the building—which is all that preservationists, led by Landmark West, were asking for. Alas, it seems plenty of things need changing—but 2 Columbus Circle is not one of them.

ARCHITECTS: “GROSS” AND “UN-AMERICAN”

Gather 1,300 architects who are downing champagne faster than they eat up outdated theory and discipline breaks down. That’s what happened last month at the AIA New York chapter’s Heritage Ball dinner at Chelsea Piers, honoring **J. Max Bond, Jr., Amanda Burden, Frank Sciame, and Bette Midler’s** New York Restoration Project. “Sit down! SIT DOWN!” AIA president **Susan Chin** kept admonishing from the dais, trying to put a lid on the gabfest that was drowning out the evening’s speakers. “EXCUSE ME!” was the indignant phrase invoked by Urban Assembly founder **Richard Kahan** as he tried to introduce Burden. Indeed, things got so bad (though we were too busy chatting to notice) that **Jeanne-Claude**, the Fraggie-haired counterpart to wrap artist Christo, took it upon herself to storm the podium. “You gross people! Be quiet!” she berated in her French accent. “[Your behavior] is not only gross, but impolite and—I dare not say—un-American.” Later, however, Midler hilariously got everyone’s attention. “I do look good,” she announced, with eyelids and cheekbones stretched out to Hoboken. “I am a restoration project.”

LET SLIP:achen@archpaper.com