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# ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

## Preservation of 2 Columbus Circle Faces Further Setbacks

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March 16, 2005

Fans of Edward Durrell Stone's famed 2 Columbus Circle building faced further setbacks this February. The Appellate Division of New York's State Supreme court on February 24 upheld the dismissal of a lawsuit brought by preservation groups in 2003 to prevent the transfer of the city-owned structure to the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD). The Museum plans a renovation by Portland's Allied Works Architecture that would replace the existing white marble façade with glass and terra-cotta tiles.

2 Columbus Circle was designed by Stone in 1959 as Huntington Hartford's Gallery of Modern Art, intended as a counterpoint to the nearby MoMA, which Stone had worked on some thirty years earlier. It surprised traditional modernists with its convex-curved, monumentally blank, 10-story façade of white Vermont marble, which Allied Works' remodel would demolish and replace with a rectilinear zig-zag pattern of terra cotta tiles and ribbon windows.

Stone's signature arcade of "lollipop" Venetian columns at the base of the building would be placed behind glass as part of an expanded lobby, which would anchor a series of small atriums keyed to the new ribbon windows, accomodating vertical circulation and park views. A 159-seat basement auditorium would be preserved.

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Noting that the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission did not hold public hearings as part of a required environmental review, and asserting that the city's economic objectives "infected" the landmark process, the suit challenged the property's planned sale to the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC), which brokers such public property deals. The MAD plans to begin demolition by the fall of 2005, and to reopen in its new home in 2007. Laurie Beckelman, director of MAD's New Building Program, notes that the renovation will, "keep the same massing and curve on the original building," but emphasizes that the museum's primary interest is, "not the building but the site," adjacent to a transit hub and midtown foot traffic.

On February 14 the New York State Supreme Court dismissed a challenge by preservation group Landmarks West! to the Manhattan Borough Board's August 24 approval of the EDC sale. The suit asserted that the Board violated the city's Open Meetings Law by not giving public notice of its meetings on the subject. Landmarks West! Executive Director Kate Wood expects appeals on both February rulings, saying, "The courts are giving the city too much leniency; there's a pall over the public process."

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