

LANDMARK WEST!

From: "LANDMARK WEST!" <landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org>
Sent: Monday, January 09, 2006 7:09 PM
Subject: 2 Columbus Circle: The Secret History and Historical Censorship

Fight Historical Censorship! If you have something to say about 2 Columbus Circle, say it now. It's not too late to save Edward Durell Stone's 1964 façade, which behind the scaffolding remains largely intact. Go to the end of this message for action steps. But first...

New inspiration comes from **Herbert Muschamp's not-to-be-missed 3-page (yes, 3 pages!) piece on 2 Columbus Circle in Sunday's New York Times** ("The Secret History of 2 Columbus Circle," NYT 1/8/06, Arts & Leisure pp. 1, 34-35). The full article is available at

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/08/arts/design/08musc.html?ex=1137474000&en=f0da2e2563a3acc2&ei=5070>
 Below is a recap (or a sneak preview, in case you laid the story aside to savor later)...

And on the heels of Muschamp's story is one by **New York Times architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff** in today's paper (Arts Section, page 1). Both critics tackle the timely issue of **historical censorship**. Writing about the young activists vying to preserve the endangered 1970s Palace of the Republic in Berlin, Ouroussoff writes, "Like the preservationists struggling to save 2 Columbus Circle in New York or late-Soviet landmarks in Moscow, they are fighting those who insist on pitting history against modernity, **people who would seek to smooth over historical contradictions in favor of a more simplistic narrative.**" Full article available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/09/arts/design/09pala.html>.

Excerpts from "The Secret History of 2 Columbus Circle" by Herbert Muschamp:

"The city may not know what to make of 2 Columbus Circle, but a **generation of gay New Yorkers** always did. And our verdict is the one that matters."

"Henry Geldzahler, lacy underwear, swanky taste, Singapore slings. These are a few of the **memories that didn't get to be recollected at the public hearings that weren't held** to debate the value of 2 Columbus Circle..."

"Two Columbus Circle has been called a queer building many times over the years....**No other building more fully embodied the emerging value of queerness in the New York of its day.** If the Landmarks Commission could miss this significance, then it is reasonable to conclude that many dots in that chapter of the city's social history have yet to be connected."

"A building does not have to be an important work of architecture to become a first-rate landmark. Landmarks are not created by architects. They are fashioned by those who encounter them after they are built. **The essential feature of a landmark is not its design, but the place it holds in a city's memory.**"

"The gay audience, excluded by society, has an organic relationship to artifacts that have been rejected by society's tastemakers."

"[The Landmarks Commission] has refused to expand the definition of history to include the lives and times of living people, especially still-suspect ones....**An agency established to enlarge our awareness of history was now in the business of condoning its erasure.**"

"Though it's often overlooked, artists like Piero della Francesca, Botticelli and Vermeer were lost and forgotten before they were rediscovered as the immortals they are usually taken for today. **Their example gives me hope that one day New Yorkers will rediscover the Landmarks Preservation Commission and bring it back from the inconsequence to which the politicians have consigned it.**"

Fight Historical Censorship! Make your voice heard today! (And please make sure to send copies to landmarkwest@landmarkwest.org.)

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