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23 November, 2003

To the board of The Preservation League of New York State:

Some of the richest areas of New York are those in which many various periods of architecture are represented contiguously, maintaining a living treasure of history and design diversity. We would like to lend our support in petitioning for protected landmark status for Edward Durell Stone's building at 2 Columbus Circle. The building eminently and obviously should enjoy the privilege and protection of a landmark, as its architecture is both wonderfully site-specific and also a unique time capsule of 1960s aesthetics. As it is, it already provides welcome visual relief from the enormous new AOL building. Into the future, it will give extant historical perspective to the Circle. We hope that the Preservation League will succeed in obtaining preservation for 2 Columbus Circle.

Yours sincerely,

April Gornik and Eric Fischl

Documentation and Conservation
of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the
Modern Movement

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United States
New York/Tri-State

November 14, 2003

Preservation League of New York State
44 Central Avenue
Albany, NY 12206

Dear Board of Trustees:

E.D. Stone's 2 Columbus Circle is without question a structure of architectural and cultural significance—an historic resource. It is an extremely distinctive building of fine materials that works beautifully with its site and has become iconic to the city of New York. DOCCOMOMO New York/Tri-State commends the League for including E.D. Stone's 2 Columbus Circle on its forthcoming Seven to Save list.

Modern architecture is a broad and diverse body of work that cannot be defined by easy and obvious examples alone—the Lever Houses and the Guggenheims. To be complete, the record must include buildings and works by architects like E.D. Stone who sometimes sailed against the prevailing winds of taste and custom. 2 Columbus Circle's overriding contribution to New York and the country's cultural and architectural history is that it represents the distinctive characteristics of a period. If the preservation community judged all buildings by their conformity to conventional standards of beauty and propriety we would have a sadly limited record of our society's creative will.

Again, we applaud the inclusion of 2 Columbus Circle on the Seven to Save list and will continue to work with the League and other preservation organizations to see that the building is not destroyed or harmfully altered.

Sincerely,

N. Rappaport
N.R.

Kathleen Randall

Nina Rappaport
Co-Chair
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TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS

November 11, 2003

Board of Trustees
Preservation League of New York State
44 Central Avenue
Albany, NY 12206

Dear Board of Trustees:

Thank you very much for your efforts to include 2 Columbus Circle on your list of endangered buildings for 2003. This is an extraordinary building with so much architectural character and social history.

Personally, I am extremely fond of 2 Columbus Circle and as an artist find it unique. I often attended events there, especially during the 1970's, when this strange building was very much an epicenter of New York life. I always had the feeling that I was inside of something very special.

It's really a cool building. One can't say that about most. We certainly don't want to lose this one.

Again, thanks for your efforts to preserve 2 Columbus Circle. Let me know if I can be of any help.

Cheers,





THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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The Historic Districts Council is the citywide advocate for New York's historic neighborhoods. HDC has been interested in the Central Park South corridor and Columbus Circle since 1996 when we proposed it as a historic district. Columbus Circle has long been a space on the verge of success. It is the convergence of three major thoroughfares and view corridors. Over the past half-century however, the only successful anchor-point to the circle – in terms of visual intelligence and urban design, has been Edward Durrell Stone's Two Columbus Circle.

This building is the only structure on the circle that addresses the shape of the circle both in form and in scale. Moreover, the solid façade of the Columbus Circle frontage is one that the eye can capture; its subtle articulation is welcoming, and kept to the human scale. The details of the façade were intentionally meant to echo a residence, in order to better reinforce the human scale of the circle, and to be more inviting to visitors. Contrast this building to the former Gulf & Western Building across the street, set away from the circle, on a pedestal with no articulation to catch the eye. Instead it sends a viewer staring up into the heavens. By contrast, Two Columbus Circle, even in its current disheveled state, looks positively homey.

Furthermore, it is the work of an acknowledged master of Modern architecture for an important client, and the building itself played an important role in the cultural life of our city during an incredibly exciting time for the arts and New York. That the building, so thoughtlessly abandoned by the City five years ago, should find new life as a cultural institution is an incredibly exciting thing that should be applauded – make no mistake.

However, in the City's rush to do the right thing and bring an appropriate use to this building, we risk throwing the baby out with the bathwater. For political reasons, the Landmarks Preservation Commission's Designation Committee has refused to recommend the property to the full Commission for consideration as a potential individual landmark. These deliberations were made outside the public purview, and with no mandated avenue for public input on a property that was gifted to the people of New York. It is HDC's very strong conviction that this building is an indisputable landmark (with a small ell). Because of the circumstance of its municipal ownership, New York City holds the chief deciding vote in this landmark's fate.

The Historic Districts Council is not opposed to the Museum of Art & Design, nor are we opposed to the reuse of this building. HDC's primary concern is that any renovations to this architectural masterpiece examined and judged to be appropriate by the acknowledged municipal experts in appropriate modifications to architectural masterpieces, the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Any other route of action appears to us to be a misguided negligence of already-possessed municipal resources. Rather than rely on the outside opinions of paid consultants, HDC strongly recommends full utilization of the LPC public hearing process to determine the fate of this unique city-owned resource.

This would be a win-win situation for all parties; even if the LPC designated this property as a big ell Landmark, the museum use – which is by far the most appropriate use for this building – could be implemented unchanged. The Museum of Art & Design could join the illustrious roster of other cultural institutions who are stewards of individual landmarks – the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Guggenheim, the Whitney, and the Jewish Museum to name just a few. These institutions all benefit from being stewards of historic buildings, why shouldn't the Museum of Art & Design?

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November 17, 2003

The Preservation League of New York State
44 Central Avenue
Albany, NY 12208

Dear Board of Trustees:

I commend the League for taking a protective stand on two Columbus Circle and applaud the call for a rational involvement of the public in an orderly review process for the adaptive re-use of this iconic building.

Aside from its historical significance as an alternative to more conventional style. Two Columbus Circle is highly visible and comprehensible because as it stands apart from its surround and it has a disproportionately grand sense of scale for its modest size. Much of this has to do with its idiosyncratic facade; its delicacy and patterning/ ornamentation. This is even truer now in counterpoint to the new AOL Time Warner building. The cityscape now begins to really work. It seems to me that there is great risk - much to lose and little to gain - in the proposal to completely alter the facade of the existing building.

Sincerely yours



Joel Shapiro

Statement of LANDMARK WEST!
2 Columbus Circle
Monday, November 24, 2003

LANDMARK WEST! is an award-winning, community-based organization committed to preserving the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side from 59th to 110th Street between Central Park and Riverside Park. Since 1985 it has worked to achieve landmark status for individual buildings and historic districts. Today, LANDMARK WEST! is the proud curator of the area's 2,606 designated landmarks (up from only 337 in 1985).

We are proud to stand here today, shoulder to shoulder with the leading preservation and civic organizations from across New York City, New York State, and America. LANDMARK WEST!, the Preservation League of New York State, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Historic Districts Council, Municipal Art Society, DOCOMOMO and the Modern Architecture Working Group—we are all united in the resolute conviction that 2 Columbus Circle is a rare, courageous building that deserves to be preserved and respectfully revitalized.

Edward Durell Stone's former Gallery of Modern Art at 2 Columbus Circle has been loved, loathed, and hotly debated since its opening in 1964. Still controversial after nearly 40 years, it is an undeniably significant part of New York's architectural heritage.

What more will it take? How many more voices must be raised before the City of New York accepts its responsibility to *at least hold a public hearing* to consider whether or not to preserve this vital historic resource for future generations of New Yorkers to enjoy and learn from?

In response to the demolition of Pennsylvania Station, that great *de facto* but undesignated "landmark," in October 1963 a *New York Times* editorial stated, "**We will probably be judged not by the monuments we build but by those we have destroyed.**" Two years later, New York City adopted its Landmarks Law to prevent such a desecration from ever occurring again. Forty years later, in 2003, it is nothing less than sad that the City should resist using this law (and that civic groups should have to file legal action) to ensure "due process" for a building that bears all of the hallmarks of a landmark: an important architect, a noble purpose, high-quality materials, and a unique, site-specific design for what should be one of New York's great public spaces, Columbus Circle.

We are especially grateful to the Preservation League of New York State for its recognition of 2 Columbus Circle as part of a lineage of groundbreaking Modern buildings that are the focus of their ongoing advocacy efforts, including E.D. Stone's A. Conger Goodyear House; Alvar Aalto's Edgar J. Kaufman Conference Rooms, and Eero Saarinen's TWA Terminal.

We look forward to working together with the Preservation League and other groups to ensure that 2 Columbus Circle is treated as the Landmark it is.

Robert A. M. Stern

I applaud the courageous and farsighted decision of the Preservation League of New York State to list Edward Durell Stone's Two Columbus Circle as one of its "Seven to Save," an important list of the most significant endangered properties in the entire state. We can only hope that this recognition will finally prod the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission to do the right thing and hold hearings on the building's designation. To not even debate the merits of designation seems a serious dereliction of the Landmarks Commission's duties. Fortunately, there is still time to make amends and begin a proper public debate over the future of this unquestionably important and, in my mind, landmark building.