

**last updated July 16 at 12:11P**

**Entry #1, Witold Rybczynski:** 06/16/03, 2:12pm

Paul has asked what we think the building stands for. One way of looking at 2 Columbus Circle is through the lens of style, which is something that Stone was clearly interested in, and which set him apart from other early Modernists. It strikes me that since 1900 there have been three more or less equally important influences in the US with regard to historical styles: French, English, and Italian, that is the Louis styles, Georgia, and Roman classicism. Paul characterizes 2 Columbus Circle as Islamic, but I think it could also be described as a sort of Venetian hybrid: the scalloped arches, the use of multicolored veneer, the pragmatic combination of stylistic motifs--and Venice always had a penchant for Byzantine glitz that is not unlike some of Stone's excesses. Another feature of Venetian architecture is that it places less emphasis on theory and more on theatricality (Palladio excepted, of course, but then he was never that popular among Venetians.) Now Venetian-Gothic is one strain of Italian that seems never to have found a strong following among American architects. One of very few "Venetian" buildings in the US is Isabella Stewart Gardner's Fenway Court in Boston, and it strikes me that the response of architecture critics to that building (Mumford disliked it, so did Hitchcock) is not dissimilar to the low regard for Stone. Is it that Puritanical Americans are somehow made uncomfortable by an architecture that appeals chiefly to the senses, rather than to the intellect? I'm suggesting that Stone's building represents a persistent, though admittedly not very popular, undercurrent of American taste.

**Entry #2, Paul Goldberger (Moderator):** 06/16/03, 3:12pm

Witold, thanks very much for beginning the dialogue. I hardly meant to suggest that there was anything literally "Islamic" about the building, any more than there is anything literally Venetian. There is no question that late Stone, like late Yamasaki, was infuriating to doctrinaire modernists because of these architects' determination to make of modern architecture something soft and even sensuous, in precise opposition to what orthodox modernism had represented. It is intriguing that Stone felt he had to turn in some vague way to the East as he searched for something that (in his view, at least) the Western modernist tradition could not provide. But for me the real issue is not historical style, or the cultural divide between east and west. It is a different cultural divide, and one that you touched on toward the end of your comments, which is the fact that the Stone building was perceived as vulgar for so long, and still is seen that way by many people. I don't think the vulgarity (or the perceived vulgarity) comes from the Eastern associations, even though for a long time people had a lot of fun with the Persian whorehouse metaphor for this building. Now, that insult is an old story, and it packs much less ammunition than it did 30 years ago. We have been living with this building for a long time, and it is a familiar presence, and by virtue of that fact alone, much more benign, no matter what your architectural preferences may be. Finally, let me repeat my welcome to the panel, and urge all of you to join in the discussion. If you don't have time to compose and post an extended comment, so much the better -- short (75-150-word) responses to recent postings will make the proceedings livelier, and give it more of the air of a live conversation. So please feel free to join in at any length, at any time.

**Entry #3, Witold Rybczynski:** 06/16/03, 3:27pm

Of course, familiarity is an important issue, but I hope that we don't lose sight of the distinctly odd style of the building, a style that I would argue represents a small American tradition of an aesthete's approach to architecture. I'm not arguing that this is necessarily a valuable part of the overall tradition--it's probably more like a dead end. Or at least it seems that way to us. But then I always thought that Scharoun (whose symphony hall I admire) also represented a dead-end. Today, after Gehry, obviously not.

**Entry #4, Paul Goldberger (Moderator):** 06/16/03, 3:58pm

Yes. And that's a wonderful point about Scharoun; I feel very much the same way. It is impossible to look at Disney Hall and not see how influential Scharoun was for Gehry. Yet Witold's comment brings us, I think, toward those difficult waters in which we have to navigate between the odd building that is truly important, such as Scharoun, and the merely eccentric. For all my affection for the Stone building, nothing would convince me it is important in quite the same way that Scharoun's Berlin Philharmonic is. And here we cannot fall back on the passage of time as a factor in allowing us to make these distinctions more easily, since the Stone building on Columbus Circle and the Scharoun building in Berlin are roughly contemporary. What I think the Stone building really forces us to do is confront the distinction between affection and admiration.

**Entry #5, Karrie Jacobs:** 06/16/03, 4:23pm

While I'm well aware that Stone's building was initially greeted with derision -- some of which was surely spillover from the art world's attitude toward Huntington Hartford -- I never really looked at it as architecture until the late 1980s when post-modernism was in full flower. From the perspective of an architectural moment dominated by Graves' Humana building or Johnson's AT&T headquarters, 2 Columbus Circle looked quite restrained. Having missed out on the loathing, I can't quite work up to the adulation. That said, I think it's a endearing goofball of a building, something that there are altogether too few of. But going beyond the decorative qualities of the facade, I think there's something valuable about the building's scale and footprint. One of the many problems with Columbus Circle is that no one in New York City -- not planners, or architects, or motorists, or pedestrians -- quite knows how to relate to a circle. Stone succeeded in designing a odd little tower that actually sits comfortably on its curved site. This may be a lost art.

**Entry #6, Terence Riley:**06/16/03, 4:52pm

I, too, missed out on the loathing - both in terms of Stone's building and the World Trade Center towers. For whatever reason, I came to like the towers very much but have never developed any interest in Columbus Circle. One of the Abstract Expressionists (Ad Reinhardt?) said the only thing wrong with Stone's building was that it had a door.

**Entry #7, Witold Rybczynski:**06/16/03, 5:31pm

The time lag in these panels is strange. Makes me feel a bit like a student waving his hand in an exceptionally large class, who when called upon finds that the conversation has long since passed him by. Like the rest of you, I don't have any great affection for Stone's building, but "goofball" is not quite good enough. Stone, for better or worse, was a serious architect, whose Modernist credentials in the 1940s were such that he was called upon by MoMA (after George Howe, I think--Terence would know this). So even if he was misguided, or whatever one would call his stylistic volte-face of the 1960s, that too is worthy of interest. It is not as if he was a maverick; with commissions like the Kennedy Center and all those embassies, he was actually mainstream. So, to some extent, he is us, to paraphrase Pogo.

**Entry #8, Terence Riley:** 06/16/03, 6:06pm

Thus far, no one has expressed any real ardor for the building. I agree with Wytold that the building 'is us', but then, again, which buildings aren't? My reason for this line of thinking (rambling) is that I find it strange that so many people who have half-hearted feelings for the building seem to acquiesce as to whether it should be landmarked (no reference to anyone on line - I don't know your positions). After all, landmarking is a serious intervention which is generally supported when used wisely. Preserving Stone's folly doesn't make up for losing Penn Station, nor is it an intelligent use of the ultimately finite resources of the preservation movement. PS: I believe Howe and Lescaze's scheme for the 1939 MoMA building was unsolicited.

**Entry #9, Terence Riley:** 06/16/03, 6:08pm

*Aside: Sorry, Witold, for adding a 'y' to your surname.*

**Entry #10, John Kaliski:** 06/17/03, 3:32am

First of all, thank you for including me in this forum. I look forward to participating and seeing how it works. I feel that the issue of landmarking just raised, in all of its public complexities, in relationship to our need to understand this building aesthetically (or reject this building), is one source for much of the ambiguity and discomfort that marks many recent conversations about 2 Columbus Circle(some of which are available through this web site). Landmarking has evolved significantly over the past thirty years. The criteria of judgment, as promulgated by the Federal government and local landmarking entities, have expanded. In fact it is possible, and has been possible for a long time, to landmark a building with no aesthetic value - thus the uncomfortable and ironic realization that the more we talk about this building, or the more we acknowledge that this building inspires discourse, or the more we acknowledge its eccentricity, the more likely it becomes a candidate for preservation - regardless of its design merit in relationship to an architectural canon (that is ever-shifting). What strikes me as critical in the conversation about what we feel with regard to the experience of 2 Columbus, and others have noted it, is the power of this structure, since its inception, to inspire conversations of this type. This is a unique quality that separates this building from most others. Its forms, its position, its whiteness, its blankness, its thinness, its protothis and protothat, etc., etc., etc., inspires conversation and always has. Unlike the designers and developers of say Madison Square Garden, we are more powerfully forced now, literally by law and practice, to have this conversation with this building and the publics that are for and against this building. In essence, unlike projects in similar situations thirty years ago, design and development control is now more dispersed. I do not think this is bad, just complex and difficult as it should be. Still I sense that there is an underlying frustration with the state of affairs that this building

represents - in essence the process is as frustrating as the building - it frustrates our knowledge of the nuances of design and forces us to be political.

**Entry #11, Witold Rybczynski:** 06/17/03, 7:48am

To Terrence: I guess I'm not yet talking about landmarking. Two points. Not ALL buildings are "us" in the sense I meant. There are many eccentric buildings (by Goff, say, or Prince), that may have value on their own merits but are not important because they are representative. I would say that 2 Columbus Circle is representative. And on a point that Paul raised earlier. I quite agree that Scharoun's Berlin concert hall is an important building, and 2 Columbus Circle isn't, but my argument was that while it's not important now, it may become important in the future. I used to think that Fritz Kreisler's house design, I think it was called the endless house, was simply an oddity, but in the light of recent work it now seems prophetic. I still don't much like it, but I look at it differently. I guess I'm arguing for broader preservation criteria than simply whether a building is judged "good" or "bad."

**Entry #12, Karrie Jacobs:** 06/17/03, 8:32am

Two things: Witold: Clearly, from your perspective "goofball" is not enough. Coming from me, however, it is high praise, an expression of my admiration for an architect's occasional ability to wiggle free of his profession's constraints. In the case of 2 Columbus Circle, Stone did the wiggle a full generation ahead of the profession. And John, while 2 Columbus was much discussed when it was new, it was only after the city put out an RFP on it in 1999 (I could be wrong about the date) that it has, once again, become an engine of debate.

Any threatened building in this city automatically becomes a cherished symbol. When, for example, NYU's entirely undistinguished Loeb student center was slated for demolition, it suddenly became a modernist masterpiece, when the real issue was the utter badness of the building that NYU was erecting in its place. The truth is that I like 2 Columbus Circle a lot. What's interesting to me about the building and the current situation is that it's somewhat ambiguous. I'm not sure the virtues of the old building outweigh the value of having one really good new building on Columbus Circle.

**Entry #13, Paul Goldberger (Moderator):** 06/17/03, 11:55am

If Witold finds this format a bit disconcerting as a participant, I have to say it is can be the more so for the moderator, since (and I am appropriating his metaphor in Entry #7) the teacher has far less of an excuse than the students for letting the conversation pass him by. But since I don't think I should jump in constantly, and since I can't literally interrupt you in this format even if I wanted to, I will have to make a few comments that reach back to earlier postings. Although I don't know that I would use Karrie's word "goofball," I certainly like her reference to the building as "endearing," and I suppose calling it goofball is not really any different from a point I have made frequently in conversation (although I have never dared to say it in print) which is that the building feels to me like a valued but slightly dimwitted friend who you feel a desire to protect. I have been pondering how this sense of the building as a kindly, not-very-bright creature that we instinctively want to take care of relates to the issue Witold has raised, which is to remind us that one generation's silly indulgence may well turn out to be another generation's important building. He's right on Kreisler's Endless House, which is astonishingly prescient of blob architecture, but I would also say that for every amiable and silly indulgence that history comes eventually to regard as important, there are probably a hundred more that fifty years later are still just amiable and silly indulgences -- or have been forgotten entirely. John and Terry bring up a very significant point in quite opposite ways in Entry #8 (Terry) and Entry #10 (John) -- in effect, Terry is saying that no one has demonstrated more than "half-hearted feelings" for the building, which hardly qualify as earning the "serious intervention" of landmark status, while John is saying that the intensity of feeling and discussion in itself can be seen as confirming a level of importance that can justify landmark status. I would enjoy hearing other panelists comment on this point.

And Karrie has gone to the crux of the matter in her last posting (Entry #12), observing that the Loeb student center at NYU, once it was threatened by an immense and undistinguished new building by Kevin Roche, suddenly became a cherished object, and comparing that situation to Columbus Circle. Of course, if 2 Columbus Circle isn't Scharoun's Berlin Philharmonic, it isn't the Loeb Student Center either -- it's much better. What we will be discussing soon enough (but not quite yet, I hope) is the question implicit in Karrie's final sentence -- whether the virtues of the Stone building outweigh the value of a potentially very good contemporary building on Columbus Circle.

**Entry #14, Terence Riley:** 06/17/03, 1:23pm

Despite the evolution and, I imagine, the strengthening of late in the landmark movement, I think it is important to remember that these considerable powers are not inherent in our free market economy, especially under the current administration's world view. Rather, they are extended by the public based on the common good. How long will the public and local governments extend this power if, indeed, buildings that are judged as 'neither good or bad', as having 'no aesthetic merit', as being 'endearing' or 'goofball' (take your pick), etc., are given protected status? When the next Penn Station fight comes up, will the movement find it has spent its political capital on a sideshow?

**Entry #15, John Kaliski:** 06/17/03, 2:52pm

Of course it does ultimately matter how the building is collectively evaluated, whether it is perceived in aggregate as good, better, or not good enough. And it also matters if the building or renovation that is replacing 2 Columbus is better or brighter or more inspiring than that which is being replaced. The crux for me is that the conversation about design attributes and design history now takes place in public and that our contribution to it as "experts" is one small part of a larger debate that we contribute to but do not control.

**Entry #16, Terence Riley:** 06/17/03, 4:55pm

John: You seem to be alluding to some sort of common wisdom that I am not sure exists. Last Sunday, I spent some time at the new waterfront park that has been codged together from parcels of available land and the remains of the former industrial piers on the West Side. It is a huge amenity to be sure and was packed with people. It is also a mere shadow of the riverfront parklands that had been envisioned in the Westway proposal, which was, of course, defeated by a coalition of civic groups.

**Entry #17, Witold Rybczynski:** 06/17/03, 5:14pm

If Terry is saying that the public is often wrong, then I must agree. What's interesting about 2 Columbus Circle, is that it seems to be a subject chiefly of debate among professionals. I'm not sure that the public has strong feelings about the building either way. Perhaps they're even a bit mystified by calls to preserve it. But here I think the public is wrong, too, or at least short-sighted. We need this dopey friend--in Paul's wonderful image--if only to remind us of a who we were, of a certain sort of Modernism manque. Not necessarily, because its a good building, or a great building.

**Entry #18, Diane Lewis:** 06/17/03, 6:53pm

The opening comments from Paul Goldberger ask us to begin with what the building stands for and what might be thought of it now...Any debate I have read as conducted in the press or in the February panel discussion on the future of the Huntington Hartford Museum has been directed to judgment on the quality of the building in terms of visibility, style, functionalism, or its previous success or failure as an institution. Style, appearance, category or era of design, have been the terms of the evaluation. The other arena of criticism applied to the issue of the building's future is preservation and the repercussions to the policies of preservation.

My interest in the debate is directed to other areas of examination. "Let us in a flight of imagination suppose that the city is not solely a human habitation, but instead a psychic entity with a similarly long and copious past to that of an individual, in which nothing that has ever come to exist may perish. And that all of the city's incarnations are simultaneously present, from the most profoundly buried to the most contemporary..." -Sigmund Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*

This issue of "unbehagen," a discomfort, or displacement in the culture is evident in the debate about the future of the Huntington Hartford museum. The institution exists in the memory of the city and embodies a memory of a particular era. My interest in the building and its site lies in. 1. An appreciation of the building as a text within the psyche of the city: AN ARCHITECTURAL PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY WITH AN EXISTENTIAL APPROACH.

2. An innovative approach to create 21stC combinations of civic buildings and new civic programs: THE POTENTIAL OF AN INVENTIVE AND INNOVATIVE REMATCH OF INSTITUTION, PROGRAM AND PUBLIC SPACE; AN ARCHITECTURALLY INSPIRED URBANISM. The examination of the building as an isolated object of design is not the key to an understanding of what the transformation or preservation of the building means to the psyche of New York. TEXT, INTERTEXT, CONTEXT: A TEXTUAL MODEL OF THE HUNTINGTON HARTFORD MUSEUM IN THE URBAN PSYCHE: The building can be read as Venice in New York; Can be read as the Ca D'Oro with Central park as the Lagoon and Central Park West as the Grand Canal. The Program of the museum can be read as: A late 20th Century response to the Frick as the collection of a singular individual within the city.

Reading H. Hartford's interviews, one can understand that the museum is clearly the legacy of a man determined to critically position his building in many urban contexts: 1. The Conceptual act of positioning this type of institution on Columbus Circle: A site selected to position his view on art in society during a turbulent political era. Hartford wrote a book entitled *Art and Anarchy*; Tom Wolf wrote about him in *The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test*; He was interviewed and spoke about the effect of his museum on the students of the sixties and their understanding of democracy; Site Intertext: Columbus Circle as an historical site of demonstration and debate during the World Wars.

2. The Strategic Placement of the Building and its Physical Character: A stone and concrete facade inscribed with text within the physical continuum of the masonry urban wall that bounds the great civic space of Manhattan, Central Park. Intertext: Civic Philanthropy, a museum at the Southwest end of Central Park South. A Civic gathering place as punctuation for the wall of domestic buildings; and a witness /gate to the park; A MUSEUM ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE PARK; The east and west of the Park had civic institutions as Olmstead had desired...

3. The Historical positioning of the Museum building: Conscious selection of the Architect, ED Stone, previous author of the earlier Museum of Modern Art...the attempt to provide an evolved view of the spectrum of 20th century art; He planned to exhibit full size photographs of the great works of painting integral to architecture throughout the world such as *The Sistine Ceiling at Full Scale*, *Diego Rivera Murals at Full Scale*, *PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF PAINTING: THE HISTORIC SEEN THROUGH THE CONTEMPORARY*. Intertext: *A Critique of the modern as defined by MoMA*; Each decision for the building; placement within the urban landscape; the architect, solidity, imagery, program, contents, attempted to address a select and specific text of urban memory.

All of these decisions have engaged the urban psyche of Manhattan: A manifestation of the sixties New York, when it was still possible for an individual philanthropist to act upon the collective urban text in an updated version of the 19th century tradition.

"Well the original reason was that I became so incensed at one point at the crap that was exhibited as good art that I wanted to have an exhibition out in California...showing representative examples of good public taste. And I don't think it should just be the general public, but something that represented the more intelligent level of the general public versus the critics...originally I wanted to do it out in LA, but it fell through. Then I finally decided that the only place to do anything like that was in New York City." -Huntington Hartford quote from 1970 interview. Why did he think NY was the only place to do this in 1965? Legacies and mentalities of New York language, oral tradition and critique: Damon Runyon, Brooks Atkinson, Dorothy Parker; Ken Tynan; the tradition of straight, unpretentious, anti-academic, but not populist understanding of art within the life of the city...In the interviews he is very concerned with affecting the spirit of the time; he discusses TS Eliot, Woodstock, Vietnam and the student movement. Again in his motive for the museum; Hartford states: "My concern I think has always been society itself rather than the arts. I've always felt that there is some kind of tie-in between morality and the arts, which is not always a very popular opinion today...I felt that the arts must be more than a mirror. They must be a leader...They lead, they change the action and the course of events. Or ideally they should and they could."

Yes the future of the building is an issue "At the Crossroads" of the relation of the individual to the collective forces. Research on the relationship of the Gulf and Western ownership to the process of civic determination for what institution should be housed in this particular work of architecture is essential to the critique and the understanding the current alternatives...Isn't the process of proposing a program for the building the first issue of critique in terms of the urban psyche? The process by which the transformation of this building to another program is important to the current issues of downtown: Can there be plebiscites or referendums on civic building and their programs and placements? What I am interested in examining is how the current proposal locates itself in regard to the complexity of the text of the original project...How the new design can be evaluated in regard to the original complexity of the text of the building as set forth?

How does a craft museum program enrich the life at Columbus Circle? What is the importance of that program to the original imagery and position of the building? How can the new design be evaluated in regard to the original complexity of the text of the building as set forth? Any programmatic innovation in the definition of museum? How it will engage and address the public space it inhabits as a refinement of the original building's site relationships? Will the transformation of the building contribute to an urban architecture within a larger address, Columbus Circle, 58th Street, the Park?

**Entry #19, Michael Sorkin:** 06/17/03, 7:19pm

Hi All. This is my third attempt at sending something, the first two having disappeared into the e-ether. I will try to reconstruct once again but my energy for prose is waning. This debate strikes me as less on the order of Penn Station than of Tilted Arc. That work suffered from a kind of displacement. As the tractable object in a miserable space, it bore the heat from the larger horror of the awful architecture that defined its setting. It was removed both to pay for its own crimes and as a scape-goat for the larger set of errors that produced its immediate environment. Something similar is happening at Columbus Circle. Because the Huntington Hartford is the last remaining tractable object in the space, it must now carry a heavy burden and this discussion becomes an effort to shut the barn door after the herd has wandered off. Too late to do anything about gross gold glazing and mini-globe of the Gulf and Western building, too late to alter the horrendous AOL towers, too late to influence the vapid design for the renovation of the circle, and uninterested in the more pressing issue of the fetid and confusing subway station, we are distracted by an argument that responds to the familiar rarefactions of art criticism. Its the same thing that's happening at Ground Zero in which the debate about "architecture" becomes a surrogate for more vital questions of program and commemoration.

I like the little building and say save it. For the charms of its weeny aedicular verve. For the loopy lollipop arcade. For the glimpse of gleaming white marble from up Broadway. For the concision with which it summarizes the official optimism of the early sixties (think of Pat Moynihan in Stone's Delhi embassy chatting with Jackie). For the lightless plush of its Victorian interiors. For the Ruskinian/Venetian styling of its upper windows. For its goofball (good category!) charm. For having avoided the orphanage of old forms this long. For its utter familiarity, for being an old (however retarded) friend. For being a crucial hinge in Stone's career.

We don't need to burden our every landmark with greatness. There is a largeness of meaning embodied in this place, a fold in the civic memory. Why would anyone deface such a building?

**Entry #20, Witold Rybczynski:** 06/17/03, 7:42pm

Diane has convinced me that HH was a rather pompous rich guy. But so what. I agree with Michael. Save the damn thing. And save us its stylish, stainless steel, meshed, chic, tectonic, plated, replacement.

**Entry #21, John Kaliski:** 06/18/03, 2:00am

A quick thoughts regarding a thread from long ago. With regard to the public being wrong, in this case I think that some of the pressure to reconsider the status of 2 Columbus is coming from publics. There is also a difference between the public and a mob. Mobs are often wrong. Publics disagree.

**Entry #22, Diane Lewis:** 06/18/03, 8:49am

Witold I think you missed the point on what I was revealing. And please don't credit any advocacy of removing the building to my respectful and affectionate analysis of what the structure means to the psyche of New York. Were you in New York in the sixties?

**Entry #23, Karrie Jacobs:** 06/18/03, 9:17am

I think Witold just revealed the underpinnings of the debate over 2 Columbus Circle. It's the same debate that occurs time and time again, any time something old is about to be replaced by something new. The assumption is that the replacement will always be worse than what it replaces. It's a good assumption most of the time. But not always.

Next door, the AOL Time Warner behemoth has the distinct advantage of replacing a building for which no one could muster a lick of affection. Photos from the 1930s show a very appealing cluster of buildings on the site, smaller buildings that reinforce the contours of the circle. But no one really remembers those buildings anymore. So AOL TW, having replaced the always hideous Coliseum will be judged on its own merits, such as they are. (Oddly, I find myself feeling a bit nostalgic for the Moshe Safdie tower that was never built.)

But 2 Columbus Circle is a uniquely lovely building that is about to be transformed into a different uniquely lovely building. And I find it sad that the knee-jerk response is that the new, by virtue of being new, must be bad. (Back to the goofball thing for a

moment: I keep asking myself whether there's a way for contemporary architects to be goofballs, that doesn't involve Vegas or Disney.)

**Entry #24, Diane Lewis:** 06/18/03, 10:16am

I agree with Sorkin on the parallel with tilted arc. As with the Serra turmoil, because the work is a critical and unique work, accomplished by recognizable individuals, some of the attention it has gotten is psychologically directed at the issue of the individuated thing in the collective domain. The point here is that the Huntington Hartford Museum is a specific work with a text directed at the architectural and institutional memory of New York. It is the work of an individual philanthropist in conception, and an individual work in the oeuvre of a recognizable auteur architect. This gives it a definitive place within the legacy of the city. That critique is not a design critique. It is an historical placement. It does not mean that Architecture cannot be altered or transformed, but it does mean that the transformation should address the critical level and characteristics of the original work. There is a difference between the transformation of an anonymous vernacular work and that of a singular thinker. That's the beauty of Roman urbanism; one singular author adds, transforms, critiques the act of a predecessor with great style. It now stands in confrontation with a great deal of corporate architecture as differentiated from its original surroundings; subtle New York modernity and the Park.

**Entry #25, Terence Riley,** 06/18/03, 4:17pm

Diane:

Are you saying that 2 Columbus Circle needs to physically remain as a building to fit into Freud's vision of how the city retains memory? My reading of the quote would indicate that he believed that this memory compensated for the inevitability of change.

I still am not convinced that the building's quirkiness is enough to pull it into some protected status. The previous Grand Central Terminal (the second, I believe, of three) and the old basilica of St. Peter's were both quirky, but I like the replacements better. I believe that our best architecture is ahead of us. Not all of it, but whatever progress is going to be made architecturally is either going to be realized on existing building sites.

**Entry #26, Thomas Mellins:** 06/18/03, 5:42pm

In reference to Witold's earlier comment that Frederick Kiesler's "Endless House" once seemed to be "simply an oddity," but now seems "prophetic," I am struck with what I believe is the importance of taking the longest view possible in matters of preservation. Is it relevant that many architecture students and young practitioners seem to be intrigued by 2 Columbus Circle? Might the debate over this building's future (regardless of what ultimately happens) motivate the preservation community to make a fundamental shift from being reactive to being proactive, perhaps seeking to anticipate what could, in the future, best contribute to our understanding of the city's architectural evolution?

**Entry #27, Witold Rybczynski:** 06/18/03, 7:30pm

I wasn't objecting to everything new, just to the sort of fashionable design that passes for the avant-garde in our impoverished times. My words were carefully chosen--I'm getting tired of layers of mesh, bland stainless steel detailing, stretched cable balustrades. I like the idea of a sympathetic alteration to 2 Columbus Circle, but my impression--admittedly superficial--was that this is not what was being proposed. Rather than "saving" Stone's building, can one imagine a sympathetic alteration? Maybe. The problem is that it's hard to think of any contemporary architects (or, indeed, earlier architects) who are/were in synch with Stone's taste.

**Entry #28, John Kaliski:** 06/18/03, 9:23pm

I think the issue is not a question of taste, i.e. can an architect be found that is sympathetic to Stone's taste. I am confident that a lot of architects, particularly in Florida and in California south of San Clemente, exist that would be happy to literally work with (and in) Stone.

I think Diane is correct to try to establish a frame (... "the transformation should address the critical level and characteristics of the original work in the context of a critical question"... ) and then measure the architectural response in relationship to the critical frame. I believe that this is what the preservationist as well as the architect who is interested in this type of reading and work should do when presented with a challenge like 2 Columbus, from a procedural (use of the Secretary of Interiors Standards, etc. would suggest this type of approach), intellectual, and instinctual basis. Certainly in a different context and a different time Carlo Scarpa was able to approach reuse of older buildings in a way that was both respectful, innovative, and challenging to the user

and memory was preserved even as futures were anticipated. To badly paraphrase Ortega y Gasset from "History as a System", the only factor that separates us from the rest of the species out there is the fact that we have a memory. From my point of view, all the rest is amnesia and amnesia scares me.

**Entry #29, Paul Goldberger (Moderator):** 06/18/03, 9:41pm

With another two weeks ahead of us, during which I very much hope we can sustain the impressive level of energy and engagement with which this forum has begun, I am going to exercise a moderator's right here, and ask that we hold off speaking explicitly about the proposed design for 2 Columbus Circle for a little while. I don't mean to put a damper on Witold, but merely to give us the chance to continue to explore some of the issues that have come up in the last couple of days; I fear that if we move too fast into the specifics of this proposed design, everything else will fall away, and it is much too soon for that. There is plenty of time for us in the two weeks remaining to take on the actual design.

In the meantime, a couple of observations (moving backwards, another moderator's prerogative): I am glad Thomas Mellins (in Entry #26) has put before the group the issue of "the longest view possible" in preservation, and no one could dispute the value of being pro-active rather than merely reactive. But I am concerned that a fundamentally anticipatory definition of preservation, as he suggests, is really no definition at all, since almost anything could be described as possibly in some way being thought by some future generation to have value. At the end of the day we have to come down a little more firmly in favor of the architectural values that mean something to us, right here and now. They are broader values than previous generations have held, and we are the better for that. But they cannot and should not be so inclusive as to render landmark designation an act based on the anticipation of some possible future belief in value, if the value is not shared by us now.

I notice that Diane Lewis has consistently referred to 2 Columbus Circle as the "Huntington Hartford Museum," which is both welcome and slightly off-putting. It is welcome because it helps all of us remember that the building's form is not merely the result of Edward Durell Stone's whimsy but has clear connections to an exotic and bizarre figure in New York's social and cultural history, and hence that this architectural discussion cannot proceed in a formalist vacuum, but has to acknowledge the relationship between the building's form and its history. At the same time I find it mildly off-putting, and only partly because my editor's instinct makes me want to point out that the H.H. Museum was never its official name, even during Hartford's brief period of ownership (a petty point to make, I know), but also because it may slant the discussion too much toward the past, and toward the notion of this controversy as being only about the value of retaining the memory of Hartford's vision. However, given how little any of us have thought about that vision at all -- and how easily we could have let this discussion proceed without thinking hard about what it meant for 1960's New York -- I have to say that, on balance, I am glad she has shifted the discussion in this direction.

That said, the 60's didn't mark the end of individual philanthropists "acting upon the collective urban text in an updated version of the 19th-century tradition." Though it hardly parallels Hartford's eccentricity, surely Ronald Lauder's Neue Gallery falls into that category; perhaps so does Peter Lewis's failed attempt to build a Gehry Guggenheim in Manhattan.

This entry is already too long, and I do not want to make it longer by responding specifically to other postings, but I would like to see if we can get back to the question that continues to hover, and has been articulated so clearly by so many of you, which is what constitutes the criteria for preservation. "We don't need to burden our every landmark with greatness," Michael Sorkin says (Entry #19) but Terry Riley argues for precisely that, and is concerned (Entry #16) that we have passed up opportunities to do great things precisely because we wallow too much in the preservation of the ordinary. Can we pursue that issue a bit further?

**Entry #30, Karrie Jacobs:** 06/19/03, 1:07pm

I've been thinking about Michael's Tilted Arc analogy. It's intriguing, but I'm not sure that I entirely buy it. I'm not sure that Serra's sculpture would have fared better on a nicer plaza surrounded by less odious buildings. It's possible that the badness of the setting is what allowed Tilted Arc to go up in the first place. Who would have imagined that anyone would fight for the integrity of that piece of urban moonscape?

**Entry #31. Terence Riley:** 06/19/03, 1:30pm

I think Paul's last comment really points out a problem in some of the arguments here. If we take the attitude 'let's just save it' in case some future generations find it important, we are deferring judgment on a critical piece of the city to another time, which by the logic of the argument, is no better qualified than us to make such a decision. Furthermore, if we don't believe we have the perspective to judge the value of 2 Columbus Circle as it is, how do we have the perspective to judge the proposed alterations?

**Entry #32, Witold Rybczynski:** 06/19/03, 2:54pm

Terry, I don't think the issue is whether a future generation is better able to judge, but rather what a (particular) future generation might see in a work. Whether you agree or not will depend on whether you believe in absolute aesthetic judgments. I don't. I'm old enough now to know that my own values have changed, not because I know more or am more experienced, but because the values themselves have changed. Lutyens had nothing to teach me as a student, and he does now. So, I don't believe in the "timeless" work of art. I know that the logic of this argument drives one to preserving everything, which I am not proposing. But I am suggesting that one can keep the future in mind as a sort of constituency.

**Entry #33, Michael Sorkin:** 06/19/03, 5:57pm

A few comments before leaving for Cleveland: This recurring idea that preservation is an affront to the new troubles me. New York is not simply in a perpetual delirium of recreation. There are forms that reach their own state perfection and it seems completely legitimate to recognize this and conserve them, especially in a place that's been working out the elements of its genius loci for over 300 years. The idea that preservation might preclude some other development *in that particular place* does not trouble me. It's a big city, after all. More, what's swell about democracy is that its agreements have legs: the compacts we make about things have a life. That a landmark represents a form of consent is one of the things that makes it valuable. The argument that we should judge the past severely because it might be an impediment to progress is to suggest both that we simply cease learning from it and that our loyalties are meaningless. Like dumping your spouse of many years for a date with Nicole or Tom. Not everything need be promiscuous and fleeting. I never bought Serra's claim of site-specificity: his big steel work looks all the same to me (arrrrgh, what a Philistine I am...). The arc might actually look lovely at Storm King, all rustiness in the grass. My point was about scapegoating which means misdirection.

**Entry #34, Terence Riley:** 06/19/03, 11:35pm

Witold and Michael: A few late night thoughts. First, I believe the most difficult thing to do in a post-modern world is exercise critical judgment. There is SO much incentive not to do so. But what possible usefulness is a critic who is unwilling to be a critic? To say that perspectives change is nothing more than saying it's dark at night and light during the day. To say that it is sometimes dark and sometimes light is absolutely correct but of no use to anyone. The greatest risk a critic can take is being wrong but that is more acceptable than being a functionary of non-action. By this, I mean to rebut the assertion that delay is the higher ground. Delay does nothing more than add historical patina to a decision not taken. And, Michael, your assertion that Columbus Circle is just a little piece of the city: we are not (most of us) in Cleveland! This is an island with finite boundaries, unless you consider land-fill (the coward's urbanism) as an alternative.

**Entry #35, John Kaliski:** 06/20/03, 3:41am

Notwithstanding Michael Sorkin's previous comments that I agree with, I find that much of our discussion of preservation thus far implies that the preserved is fixed in time, form, and place. I suggest that this is a peculiarly American practice based upon a notion that the public and authorities too easily accept - that the preserved building is best embalmed or brought back to some lifeless state that reflects its original condition now stripped of time and use. Technically, there is nothing either philosophical nor legal that requires this approach. In practice there are plenty of examples where older buildings have been given new uses while utilizing aggressive architectural programs and designs. The key for me at least is whether the intervention and reuse manages in some way to create an ability for the individual that experiences it to understand parallel narratives of old and new and present and past. Part of the issue with regard to this case is that Preservation, as typically and I believe incorrectly practiced, forces the public, the institution, and the architect to make black and white value judgments with regard to merit that are ultimately simplistic. I do not think 2 Columbus is a simple case and I would therefore look for a preservation and design approach that manages multiple narratives.

**Entry #36, Paul Goldberger (Moderator):** 06/20/03, 10:20am

I never thought the day would come when I would see Michael Sorkin taken to task for not expressing a strong enough critical opinion, but I suppose we can take this as a reminder that in this forum, all kinds of exciting and unexpected things happen.

With all due respect to Terry (Entry #34), however, I think the point Michael was trying to make in Entry #19 was to admit that at least part of the purpose of preservation is to make the city feel comfortable, and familiar, and to allow us to hang on to remnants of the past that, even if they do not represent the highest and the best a time was capable of, nonetheless provide a kind of nurturing role that we have to admit is at least part of the obligation of a civilized urban environment. Other than the admirable (and too often overlooked) Albert Mayer apartment building at 240 Central Park South, Two Columbus Circle is surely the only thing in that wretched mess of Columbus Circle that can be called familiar, and while there is so small degree of irony to the notion that it might now be thought comforting to many people, that does tell us a lot about what time does to perception, doesn't it?

I think John is getting to an equally important point in Entry #35, however, which is the annoyingly, and often cloyingly, Williamsburg-y nature of so much of the preservation culture in the United States. In Italy, where they pretty much invented the notion of historic preservation, they think very little of making extensive changes to old buildings, particularly on the interior but often enough on the exterior as well. What is Milanese design but a sleek intervention in a Renaissance palazzo, after all? Yet we approach our historic buildings timidly, as if they were so fragile that doing much of anything to them would cause them to break. I do think that we are a little better on this count than we were a generation ago, and more willing to understand that to continue living, a building often must accommodate change, and that change well-designed and well-managed can strengthen a good older building, not destroy it.

As to whether the proposed changes to 2 Columbus Circle fall into this category of benign and energizing adaptive re-use, however -- well, let's discuss that once we all agree that we are ready to shift the focus of this forum somewhat away from the general points we've been debating. I still think we haven't exhausted the issues of Tilted Arc (a wonderful metaphor for 2 Columbus Circle; thank you for it, Michael) and the comparisons between Columbus Circle and Cleveland, Florida, California and everywhere else.

**Entry #37, Witold Rybczynski:** 06/20/03, 1:16pm

I write from Washington, D.C., trying to catch up with the discussion. Paul has just made the point that was rambling around in my head. that is--pace Terry--one can be critical and conserve, if one assumes different degrees of conservation. To pick an example close to home, it seems to me that MoMA's wonderful garden is worth conserving in toto, to preserve the totality of the experience. On the other hand, Stone and Godwin's (or is it Goodwin?) original building is in a different category. Not a masterpiece, but worth treating with some degree of circumspection. But when the skin of the Pelli tower comes due for refurbishment, I see no need to worry about how it is replaced. 2 Columbus Circle is definitely not a masterpiece, but it seems to me, at least, a building worthy of some regard. So let it be changed, but carefully.

**Entry #38, Terence Riley:** 06/22/03, 5:05pm

Despite appearing to being implacably opposed to the 'conservation' of 2 Columbus Circle, I am completely in agreement with Witold's last point and I also think that John's last comment was also very well made. Maybe we should discuss what is of value in the Stone building and what is less so.

**Entry #39, Karrie Jacobs:** 06/23/03, 7:56am

It's occurred to me, as I've been commenting and reading the comments of my fellow panelists, that I couldn't honestly remember what the city's criteria are for landmarking a building. So I took a quick look at the Landmarks and Preservation website. The part about "at least 30 years old" is clear. But the rest of the language given on the Landmarks and Preservation website is beguilingly vague. A landmark must possess "a special character or special historical aesthetic, interest or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city, state, or nation." Special. Special is a maddeningly low bar. It suggests that almost anything of a certain vintage can be landmarked. Even if 2 Columbus Circle is not a great building, it is most certainly a special one.

I've been told, and I don't know if this is true, that Landmarks simply declined to take up the matter of 2 Columbus Circle. I don't know if this is politics -- the city has been anxious to unload the building -- or the inability to recognize "special" qualities in architecture at the youngest end of the landmarkable spectrum. The problem here is our inability to see and evaluate architecture that is too close to us in time. Do we have it in us to objectively evaluate the worth of a 1964 building or it's 2004 makeover. Which is more special? Obviously we can't defer all decisions on younger candidates for landmarking, although there

is something appealing about the idea of a 20-year evaluation period (after the initial 30 years are up). But I don't think that will fly. And so we wind up going with our biases, the power of familiarity versus the intrigue of the unknown.

**Entry #40, Karrie Jacobs:** 06/23/03, 8:08am

One more thing: I find myself wondering what Ada Louise Huxtable thinks of 2 Columbus Circle today. Has she, in 40 years time, changed her opinion of it?

**Entry #41, Diane Lewis:** 06/23/03, 8:14pm

Terry, I interpret the architectural work to be that which definitively encapsulates or references memorable or even lost elements of the city. As you know, when Freud "reads" the Moses by Michelangelo, he ascertains the exact moment of the biblical text portrayed by the details and posture of the figure, and then reflects on what significance that text had to the historical context in which it was created. This reading of a work to consider its "Address" is what I understand to be the responsibility of those who wish the city to remain a rich intertext of the acts of various artists, architects, citizens, thinkers. The debate is thus a philosophical approach to the transformation of the existing condition; this means more than the building, it means the site and the site memory. I've got an amazing photo of a demonstration in Columbus Circle, a wedge of hundreds listening to a soap box speaker...seems that that corner of the park was a gathering forum. There was a civic program at the street.

The critical framework to any proposal is that which can expand the address of the existing condition, a work that transforms both the interior and the civic architectural landscape, one that will contribute to the condition of memory; a programmatic enrichment, some innovation beyond using the structure as a vehicle for simply updated material contemporaneity. The Roman model of urbanity, a collision of conditions; a civic function that develops the roots of a site or shows the progress or institutionalization of an ad hoc activity. The confrontation of the ideal with the existing, the weathered with the new; a new layer, a new element, a removal, the intimate with the long span, the continuous with the interrupted. collaged conditions adopted across time, author upon author, reading carefully...

**Entry #42, Diane Lewis:** 06/23/03, 8:52pm

Thanks Paul, for being happy for the discomfort, (das unbehagen) that I've shifted into on issues of programmatic authenticity and attribution to client or architect as a criteria in to be included in this architectural debate. I am reading a book on Edward Murrow, noting that he was infamous for ordering scrambled eggs for lunch at Le Pavillon, the grand restaurant that sat on the corner of 57th and Park where a new age bookstore now resides. When President Kennedy oft went to lunch at Le Pavillon, they always closed Park and a piece of 57th street for a big motorcade to interrupt the everyday rhythm. The city had a convertibility; many scales. In the same vein, the museum we are talking about had a nighttime presence of events and visits that lit up the edge of the Park and led the way on the necklace of the ambiance of the public space of Lincoln center.

Much of the program of the uptown, avenue, park edge, began to embody an urban program as continuum of a radical chic civic 60's quality, which had this reverse snobbism of New York. A well-worn hard working environment which could transform to provide culture and pomp, and even debate and ceremony, with a brush off of the shoulders. This everyday/ turn elegant, austere masonry formality has succumbed to a landscape of new age commercial franchise. It can be considered a strange social counterpart or almost suburbanizing counterpoint to the egalitarian grandeur of which the building we are examining might be considered a "remains". You may remember that in Altmans film, "Pret a Porter", the punch line is that there is no couture because there is no one to wear the clothes and no place to wear them. The social change in the city is an important issue to be discussed in the genetics of the program proposal before design can even be considered. The questions that interest me here are: What exactly is the programmatic lineage here? Did the city determine who the tenant should be? What was the process of selecting "le program juste?" I am interested in reinstating the tradition that the architects have a voice in the positioning of civic buildings and the programs enriching to the urban landscape.

**Entry #43, Michael Sorkin:** 06/24/03, 11:40am

Back from Cleveland. Part of me wants to suggest we stop this conversation or exclude the Huntington Hartford from further discussion. Seems to me it's being overburdened with a series of near metaphysical duties to which it is not up. The utility of

the vague language of landmarking is precisely its imprecision which recognizes that the quality of being "special" cannot be argued without reference to the question of special to whom. This idea that there is a plural idea of the concept of landmark is particular to our kind of culture in which we elect to remember and conserve not simply the highest achievements of our Pharaohs and Popes but all sorts of places with particular resonance for more marginal, eccentric, or otherwise limited constituencies.

The only difficulty with this approach (it has, in common with more aestheticized notions of landmarking, all the problems associated with questions of taste) is an economic one. This ramifies in two ways. First, the obvious matter of who pays for either conservation or for the difference in value that development might bring. But there's a second economy that allows us to loosen up on this whole thing. That is simply the fact that we are not being overwhelmed by a surfeit of propositions for conservation. Because the number of landmarks is - relatively speaking - so few, we are relieved of the pressure to make judgments of arcane precision that seek to lay all matters of value to rest. The argument, "a lot of people like it, let's save it" is answered one of two ways. First, "A lot of people don't like it, let's trash it. Second, "Sure, there's a constituency but we can't really afford to save it." Neither of these arguments seem to have much weight in this instance (for me, at any rate). I like the building and therefore answer the first argument to my satisfaction and will continue to urge preservation because the building is to my taste. The second argument is mooted by the fact that the conversion retains the original use and envelope of the building and thereby loses most of its urgency (I do understand there are day lighting issues...).

A problem with the process of landmarking, though, is that it is predicated on the presumption that replacement is generally the highest and best use of a piece of property. The impetus to destroy structures is not, for the most part, motivated by the wish to redress artistic crimes but by the wish to extract additional capital from a site. This means that the burden of proof in landmarking matters always falls to the preservation side. Perhaps the law could be restructured to oblige any party that wishes to remove a building to demonstrate that it falls below some (equally vague - let's not make it easy) standard of common value (has meaning to a community, has unique qualities, is beautiful, etc., etc.) Such a presumption of innocence seems to accord with our styles of jurisprudence...

**Entry #44, Witold Rybczynski: 06/25/03, 1:50pm**

Diane/Freud's metaphor of memory is an interesting one, since it reminds me that memory is fragmentary at best. My memories of places consist of bits and pieces--including smells, tastes, sounds, and so on--rarely the entirety. Which brings me to my hobby horse: attempting to preserve buildings in their totality is not necessary except in truly outstanding cases. Just as I don't really remember the past perfectly, but am content with bits and pieces, even shifting bits and pieces, I would be content to have parts of the built past. But I definitely don't want the urban slate wiped clean.

And, to pursue this slippery metaphor, I don't retain fragments only of happy memories. What is need, I think, is a mixture. So, not just the greats. To answer Terry's good question. I would want, at the very least, some of the lollipop columns, and a nice big chunk of marble facing. Maybe also the curve, since as someone pointed out earlier, it's actually a nice urban design gesture. That would be enough for me.

**Entry #45, Paul Goldberger (Moderator): 06/26/03, 12:33am**

Greetings from Washington, where I am reminded that the worst things we might possibly think to say about 2 Columbus Circle still reflect far more favorably on Edward Durell Stone than the Kennedy Center does. A lot of things have been said in the last couple of days that are worth commenting on, but I want to start by following up on Karrie's question about Ada Louise Huxtable's views. I haven't spoken to Ada Louise lately on this, but I did talk to someone the other day who did, and I don't think I'm violating any confidences by saying that the report is that Ada Louise thinks as little of the building now as she ever did. I do not think that preservationists can look to her as a convert to the new religion of sixties revival here.

Perhaps more to the point now, I am intrigued by Michael's observation that we may be putting on this poor building more weight -- intellectual, emotional, maybe even metaphysical -- than it can bear. I have always thought of it as one of New York's great works of innocent architecture, and its value comes as much from the rarity of such innocence in the architecture, not to

mention every aspect of the culture, of our time. I continue to believe that we should not confuse innocence with greatness, but neither should we cast innocence to the winds; it nurtures us in a certain way, and it is deserving of protection.

That said, I don't know if I share Michael's view that the preservation is inevitably a way of blocking an attempt to "extract additional capital" from a site. Most of the time, yes, of course that's true. We have all known but never want to admit the deep, dark secret of landmarks preservation, which is that it exists not to protect the good, but to prevent the bad -- that it is motivated as much by fear of what will be built as by any true love of what is there now.

But that isn't always the case. I think we owe it to ourselves to remember that an apartment house by Henry Hardenbergh (architect of the Plaza and the Dakota) stood at 375 Park Avenue and was torn down to make way for the Seagram Building -- would that have happened in our current age of landmarking? And just a couple of blocks north of Columbus Circle, one of the great buildings of turn-of-the-century New York, Carrere & Hastings' Century Theater, was torn down for a nearly-as-good building, the wonderful Century Apartments. That, too, would never have happened today, I suspect.

Sometimes we just have to allow change, and believe in the future. It doesn't always get better, and the record of the last fifty years suggests that more often than not, things get worse. But sometimes they do get better, and there is something to be said for putting our money on the belief that we are capable of building better things, and of letting go of some things that we love and cherish because that is the way in which we allow the life of the city, and the belief that architecture must be an ongoing, constantly regenerating thing, to continue to flourish. And with that -- which I truly mean to be a statement of principle, not an endorsement of the specific design that has been proposed -- I invite the members of the forum to comment more specifically on the Museum of Arts and Design plan for 2 Columbus Circle by Brad Cloepfil in the final days of this online dialogue, which will continue until July 2nd.

**Entry #46, John Kaliski: 06/26/03, 3:04am**

If Stone's design was perceived as outside of the mainstream, indeed "quirky" both when it was done and today, for me at least, Allied Works' design is competently normative. Every move seems distilled from a set of attitudes that inform much of architecture at this moment (or at least that moment as defined in 1999, before the millennium, before September 11th). Ephemerality (layering of materials and the use of scrims to create a moire of the intellect if not the visual senses), voyeurism (let's look in the window at the people looking at the displays or shopping in the museum shop), transparency (allow the public to see the objects and exhibits from the sidewalk and participate in the vibe of the event by simply walking by - do not stop too long), branding (the image of the building is the identity / strategy of the museum), etc. are each deployed quite literally across the facade and bravely - given the heroic diminutiveness of this structure - relate more to the culture and design of the AOL/Time Warner behemoth than to any other memory or building adjacent to the site or surrounds.

It is all done quite well but, at least in the context of our critical dialogue that has raised so many issue areas, this design seems to me a bit too smooth and cool if not overly slick and forgetful (Stone is remembered indeed by the retention of the overall mass and form but his acts of "design" as opposed to diagram are erased). For me it is precisely this normative design aspect, this sense of lack of struggle with the existing design, this sense that I have seen it done before, the lack of any roughness or contrast with its surrounds, the sense that it will successfully blend in and relate to a pretty standard corporate destination - this makes me doubtful that the Allied Works project is "better" than that which it replaces.

The Seagram building when completed was startling in its contrast to its surrounding. I would guess that the same could be said of St. Peter's and many of the other monuments that have been mentioned in this dialogue. What is the sensational aspect of the new 2 Columbus? How are its deep strategies and logics truly different than the tricks across the street at AOL with its jazz club, and heculite retail that will be visible from the sidewalk? Perhaps it is unfair to expect that Allied Works should be burdened with this demand for invention, pushing the envelope, and creating a singular architecture for a singular site. Nevertheless that is exactly what Stone innocently or otherwise managed to do at this site. I at least would want Allied Works or any other architect to prove that they could in some way push away from the architecture ideology of this moment and make me uncomfortable and make me see and reassess the world all over again before I would let go of the Stone design. I can not see

where this new design puts me on edge, and it is precisely my sense of comfort - oh yes this looks like a museum - oh yes it is across the street from Trump Place - that makes me sense that I am not being challenged so much as manipulated in the same way that an advertisement manipulates.

I am sure that much of our conversation has been couched in terms and concepts and methodologies, such as memory, psychogeography, history, modernism, preservation, etc. that are signs of our own limited moment in formative learning. I know that my own references to the conservation strategies of Scarpa etc. strike me in retrospect as quaint. I could not seriously imagine anybody taking on an historic building in this way now. Still I am confident that more questions need to be asked in the production of this building on this important site. This is what preservation should demand before demolition occurs or is even considered. What I see when I look at this design are standard design strategies in singular and competent service to an institution (and this is hard to do) as opposed to the invention of an architecture on an important site that is at one with but at the same time separate from the institution that sponsors it (this is even harder to do). Please as always excuse my spelling.

**Entry #47, Karrie Jacobs:** 06/27/03, 9:42am

To borrow Sorkin's Law: I like the Allied Works/ Brad Cloepfil design and believe, therefore, that it should be built. Witold argues for the preservation of some token fragment of Stone's façade. I believe that the proposed renovation preserves one of the most significant aspects of the existing 2 Columbus Circle, its human scale and its eccentric footprint. The building will still be wider at one end than the other. It will still meet the circle with a gentle curve. And it will still be diminutive and charming.

As for the proposed façade, to label it, as John has, "competently normative" is so condescending. Yes, translucence is part of the current architectural language. But that doesn't make it hackneyed or automatically bad. It just means that it is of this moment. And there is nothing inherently wrong with this moment (domestic and global politics aside). I think Cloepfil's design is true to the spirit of Stone's building. It's difficult to tell from the renderings I've seen, but the description of the building says the design features light permeable terracotta panels that will give the new façade it's own eccentric ornamentation. I'd like to believe that's true.

I do appreciate the original Stone building, but I feel very strongly that there have to be opportunities in this city for quality architecture that is very much of this moment. As opposed to buildings that defer to some other moment to sneak past landmarks and community boards. This is not some developer's boondoggle. This is a museum reusing a building that was built as a museum. It's a return to the structure's intended purpose. How can anyone insist that a building built specifically to expand the cannon of modern art be frozen in time? And how could anyone, in good conscience, allow the Time Warner AOL complex to stand unchallenged as the symbol of this architectural moment?

**Entry #48, Paul Goldberger (Moderator):** 06/27/03, 11:31am

Karrie, that is a wonderful observation about the effect of not building the Allied Works scheme being to let the AOL Time Warner building stand unchallenged as the symbol of this moment -- I'm not sure it entirely balances the preservation impulse here, but it is a powerful thought.

**Entry #49, John Kaliski:** 06/27/03, 12:54pm

Karrie is right to call attention to my misreading of the proposed facade design. I did not understand (until last night when I dug a bit deeper on the internet) the design intent of the exterior. Two factors in addition to Karrie's admonition are causing me to go back; 1) the use of a visually permeable terracotta panel on the exterior (not metal as I suggested), both a reference to Stone and a marked contrast to AOL Time Warner, 2) the use of glass to make columns. I am not sure whether the latter are purely vision glass or a wrapping of the columns or something else. Nevertheless, both suggest an introduction of detail and materials that could provide the contrast and difference that I was seeking in my words. Normative is the wrong word and this does cause me to reconsider my thoughts and negativity.

**Entry #50, Diane Lewis:** 06/29/03, 5:23pm

The most important issue of the project is the relation between the building and the proposed program. What qualities drew the Crafts Museum to want to inhabit that building? By what process was the site analyzed for proposed tenant/ civic institutions? My interest in this debate is in reestablishing the role of the architect in sitting public institutions within the fabric of the city.

Landmarking may have to extend into the programmatic. The issue of what is the important relationship between the current proposed program of a crafts museum and the museum that preceded it is interesting to the critique of the proposed imagery. The disposition of the program is a key issue in NY at this moment particularly in the midst of the LMDC program for the WTC site . We haven't had a referendum on what programs the citizens of New York think should be placed on that historic site. Again, as here, much design debate, but little or no debate on what civic functions or innovative 21C programs should be integrated into the plan. The downtown debate is just beginning to provoke acknowledgement, (like that of the RPA,) of the dangers of commercial density and transportation combined with retail being combined with a public space that is memorial. Issues of authenticity, the tone of Manhattan as opposed to that of Battery Park city, privacy, anti-commercialism, are not even whispered.

The same issues of appropriate program and its signification exist on this site. This panel has brought them forth. The decision making process that has led to the conflict that we are examining is the key to protecting and transforming the cultural resources in the civic domain; not only physically but in the psyche of the city . I understand only a bit of the causality here..? Paul, is it correct that Gulf and Western gave the building to the city to house a significant cultural program which was first designated as the Cultural Affairs Commission? Why did they leave?... and what programs could they have integrated into their tenancy to create a 21C version of a museum/cultural affairs commission building?

Paul, is the building owned by the Crafts museum? If it is, did they buy it in order to renovate it into something that is an "architecture of spectacle" to draw a larger group to the institution? Who founded them and what is their philosophy? What qualities drew them to want to inhabit that building? Or is only location? Do they have any special objectives or allied programs to support the importance of that location? Should the crafts museum integrate or initiate other programs into their site presence? I understand these issues to be part of the architectural debate. Such issues deal with the urban space as a civic domain, beyond real estate to the refinement of the program and its resultant ambiance, as felt on the street. If the city or Gulf and Western own the building, who has the decision on the transformation of the building?

A Landmark may have to be a programmatic presence not only a physical one. I am interested in the museum having some intrinsic relation to the narrative of the site; In an interview from the time of the opening of the museum, Hartford stated that he owned a full size photographic reproduction of the Sistine Ceiling and also mentioned his project to amass full scale photographs of many great painting masterpieces integral to architecture, (immovable.) An urban architectural committee on the history of program could research and innovate possible reformulations for public institutions and advocate certain programmatic conditions for the tenancy of sites.

**Entry #51, Paul Goldberger (Moderator): 06/29/03, 10:51pm**

Let me begin by thanking John for his rethinking (Entry #49) -- not so much because I have any interest in defending the proposed design as because it is pleasing to see evidence of this unusual online format working; i.e., John having been convinced by Karrie to reconsider a point he had made earlier.

End of moderator's commercial in favor of the forum format. On more substantive issues, Diane (Entry #50) asks some significant questions that should properly precede any consideration of the design, as all of them involve to some extent the issue of program and process at 2 Columbus Circle. Unfortunately, one could dispose of this whole issue by saying it is too late, since indeed it is -- the city, as the owner of the property, made a decision some years ago not to occupy it any longer but to find a way to profit from it instead, and thus offered it to potential owners in both the private and non-profit sectors for redevelopment. Concurrent with this was an understanding that the city government would not welcome landmark designation of 2 Columbus Circle -- an implicit message understood so clearly by the Landmarks Preservation Commission that it never even agreed to hold a hearing on the building, let alone designate it. The issues that Diane correctly observes are so critical

here -- first among which is what program is right for this historic site -- were never permitted to become part of the public dialogue.

So we are talking about how to lock the barn door, and meanwhile the horse got out long ago. The Museum of Arts and Design (I do wish it had kept its old name of the crafts museum, but that is another discussion for another time, I guess) made what the city considered the best proposal, although I do not know how proposals were evaluated, and particularly I do not know the extent to which the proposals received were evaluated solely on the basis of immediate economic return to the city versus other sort of benefits (i.e., cultural programming, etc.). I do know that the museum was not the only non-profit organization that had hoped to acquire the building, but could fairly be described as the most prominent one.

In answer to some of Diane's other questions, Gulf & Western (which became Paramount, then Viacom) gave up the building long ago, and I believe that the city now has turned over title to the museum, or will do so when the current transaction is complete, so that the city will no longer have the authority of a landlord here. The only authority the city government can have is as an overall planning authority, which it has (thus far) not chosen to exert in a significant way. My understanding is that the museum (and here I should interject that I am sorry that the museum declined to participate in this forum, since they might have been able to clarify some of these matters for us) has been operating on the assumption that the building is theirs, and that if for some reason this plan is derailed, than they will have to come up with a modified architectural plan -- not that they will no longer control or occupy the building.

This does not mean that we should not consider the issues that Diane raises, since of course the question of what program is right for this very unusual building on a very unusual site with a very unusual history is connected to everything we have been talking about. So, too, with the notion of urban space and the symbolism of this unusual location, and how it might affect an institution's obligation not just to the building but to the city at large. But we do have to acknowledge that at this point some of these discussions are academic, given where we now are in this overall process.

One final point. Diane says that "a landmark may have to be a programmatic presence not only a physical one." It is a thoughtful observation, and one that resonates deeply with questions of urban metaphysics, as it were, but it is also a notion that goes beyond the mandate of the landmarks law. I believe (please correct me if I am wrong) that the law does not permit designations to include programs, but only physical structures. While that may seem on the surface to be a restriction that suggests an excessive bias toward conferring meaning on physical form, I think it is actually quite wise, even necessary, since it is inherent in the process of urban evolution that programs change. If we landmarked programs as well as buildings, we would never have the Jefferson Market Library in the village (once a courthouse) or the Public Theater (once a social service building), or all kinds of churches that have been put to new uses, and on and on and on. Indeed, inherent in the very notion of adaptive re-use is the belief that programs change, and that part of the value of great physical structures is that they can accommodate changed programs that were not even envisioned when the buildings were built.

But I do think that Columbus Circle is a particularly troubled setting. The Gulf & Western Tower, prior to its Trump-over, was surrounded in perpetuity by sidewalk sheds so pedestrians wouldn't get beamed by the occasionally falling window. The closing of two blocks of 59th St. for the construction of the Coliseum didn't do much for the look or feel of the Circle. The AOL Time Warner building just makes the super-block seem all the more super. Columbus Circle is one of those rare spots in Manhattan that is downright inhospitable to pedestrians. In this context, 2 Columbus Circle seems more lovable and necessary than it would be in a more typical setting. Some of the building's approachability is simply a matter of scale. Something that won't change if it's re-skinned.

I do like Diane's idea that it's an auteur building, expressing a singular vision. And I've been wrestling with the question of whether idiosyncratic buildings are so rare in New York that they should automatically be given landmark status. Maybe Portzamparc's LVMH Tower and Abraham's Austrian Cultural Institute should be designated at once. But then, arguably, New York's most prolific auteur is Donald Trump.

**Entry #52, Witold Rybczynski:** 06/30/03, 4:14pm

Karrie, I'm not sure that "human scale" and an "eccentric footprint" are enough. I would like a more substantive memory of the building than that. Your comment reminds me of 1960s buildings that were supposed to be contextual because they used the same brick color, or cornice line. It was just too crude, and was never convincing. Wouldn't it be more accurate to say that AWA's taste simply precludes working with Stone's quirky design? The proposed solution seems elegant enough, but doesn't appear to me to address Stone's building in any distinct way. Of course, one rendering is not much to go by.

**Entry #53, Paul Goldberger (Moderator):** 06/30/03, 5:44pm

Witold, I do find that in the case of 2 Columbus Circle, the way in which Allied Works has kept the overall massing -- in particular the distinctive concave facade facing Columbus Circle -- and maintained a general sense of lightness, albeit with an entirely different vocabulary of materials than Stone used, does give me a sense of recall of the original building. I don't know that I would call that preservation, however. Neither do I think that the best argument for this design, if one does choose to defend it, is a preservation argument.

**Entry #54, Diane Lewis:** 06/30/03, 5:56pm

Landmarking program does mean preserving or petrifying original program but insuring that important civic and innovative program in positioned in a profound dialogue with a specific existing work of architecture and its site. Reinstating architects to the responsibility of positioning civic program in the city fabric and its specific works of interesting architecture would be the foundation for a new level of architectural urbanism in New York. Such a procedure would transform the often black and white opposition that even permeates our debate. The simplistic opposition that existed before Grand Central, was reduced to destroy or preserve, often demanding a formaldehyde type restoration in both physical and programmatic terms. Some of the press looking at the Columbus Circle proposal are reducing the problem to pure "preservation" in opposition to advocating a transformation that has no particular interest relative to the qualities of the original text of the structure. It's either the new and progressive ,or the old, a psychosexual gauge of our larger cultural concept of the body.

Cities of great political transformation from empire to monarchy , theocracy to democracy ,have a rich historical fabric where ancient baths become churches, palaces into museums, monasteries into libraries. New York has transformed from an industrial revolution philanthropic institution builder, to a post war corporate institution builder to :what will we call this epoch?

I think that the WTC site discussion and this site should be conceptualized to reflect the objectives of our civic programs for the twenty first century and where we want them to be strategically located to reintegrate areas and great objects of architectural worth. Certainly Sullivan, Burnham, Stanford White, Olmstead, Mies, and Kleihues, are architects that believed and demonstrated that the pairing of existing structure, community advocacy, public program and architectural invention could be developed in a direct modern democracy to mandate great civic projects, with proof of their effects in New York. My direction in this discussion has been to bring a conscious approach to formulating the social challenge embodied in the rehabilitation of this site so that even the program and any of the allied programs in the surroundings can generate an energy of advocacy for the redevelopment of the site. Paul thank you for responding with such refined information to my questions on the process by which we have arrived at the current choices. I am interested in working on those issues, the civic dimension of formulating and sitting public institutions in this century. We have a rich palette to work with in Manhattan.

**Entry #55, Witold Rybczynski:** 06/30/03, 6:25pm

Paul. I assume that the original building is not being demolished, only stripped and gutted, hence the overall (curved) shape remains. I don't see this as a sensitive (or otherwise) gesture on the part of the architects, merely a coincidental result. I want more. Diane. Absolutely, I agree that the current polarization between preserve and destroy is false. Architects should be given the discretionary power to interpret preservation, not a strait jacket of rules.

**Entry #56, Terence Riley:** 06/30/03, 10:11pm

Some thoughts on the more recent comments: In addition to the online material, there is a model of the Allied Works proposal in the current Museum of Arts and Design. Along with Karrie's remarks, I find it very convincing. I, like John, initially thought it was metal but I find it more interesting to be of terra cotta construction. It is also not just compositional, I was able to discern the

programmatically through it. This, in itself, is a big leap. The original design was entirely compositional, a kind of urban cipher that held its own place in Columbus Circle but did little else.

I must say I cannot understand Diane's comments about preserving program. If anything is true about contemporary architecture and contemporary culture is the mutability of program. Furthermore, cultural institutions should be leaders and innovators in setting their programs, provoking changes that are often resisted by the status quo. Recognizing that institutions might fail in this regard, we have and should have alternative spaces, but we should not tie the hands of institutions by 'preserving' programs. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London almost died trying to do this.

Regarding Witold's last remarks about the design, I find it interesting to analyze the dynamic between discussions of preservation and the designs they create. Ultimately, clients have a great influence on the design particularly if they direct the architect to try and anticipate preservationist concerns even as they imagine a new structure - kind of working out of both sides of the brain. Anxious about potential criticism of the outcome, they try to fix the game. Look at Bernard Tschumi's Lerner Hall: the 'bookends' on either side are for the preservationists, the middle is the building he really wanted to design. I prefer the building in the middle and wish that his clients hadn't been so pre-emptive about the public reaction. I think the Allied Works is more successful but there is also a tinge of the same thing. That is, the architect is required to anticipate the exact sort of discussion we are having here when, in fact, the new proposal is so much better.

**Entry #57, Karrie Jacobs:** 07/01/03, 9:17am

I don't exactly understand Witold's suggestion that the retention of a footprint that is every bit as eccentric and distinct as the building's ornamentation can be put in the same category as the addition of faux historic details to make a new building appear "contextual." I don't understand why the retention of ornament - the lollipops - is a worthy preservationist gesture, while the retention of the building's most essential formal quality is not. I'm not saying that Allied Works should be handed laurels by the landmarks committees for retaining the footprint. But the architects certainly could, in the redesign process, have tinkered with the shape of the building, expanding, padding, erasing irregularities. To me, the retention of the building's essential form is meaningful, more meaningful, perhaps, than the token preservation of ornament. I suppose this makes me a Modernist.

On top of that, I'm pleased by the restoration of the building's original purpose, as a museum. I think it's better "preserved" as a revamped building to which the public has regular access, than as an untouched original housing bureaucrats. Naturally the Arts & Design museum could have chosen a conventionally preservationist route in adapting 2 Columbus Circle to its needs, but I believe that it's the prerogative of a museum, a good museum, to use its building to make a statement about its goals and intentions. And, yes, I'm with Terry on the subject of defensive design, the way architects are forced, in New York's conservative architectural climate, to camouflage their intentions, hiding the new inside period costume. (I can't believe I actually got John Kaliski to change his mind about something. This is unprecedented and - I admit it - thrilling.)

**Entry #58, Paul Goldberger (Moderator):** 07/01/03, 10:52am

As a moderator in a live symposium is obligated to watch the clock, it falls to me, as moderator of this online discussion, to watch the calendar. Today is the 1st of July, and we officially conclude tomorrow, July 2nd. Let me now remind all the panelists that this is the time to make any final remarks they may wish to make -- new comments, old comments, revisiting of previous comments, whatever. We don't need sweeping, cosmic conclusions -- I don't think they are even possible given the complex and ambiguous role of this building and its role in the cultural, political and urbanistic context -- but feel free to offer them if you wish. Or just a word of farewell to remind us that you are still there. Just please remember that nothing can be posted after Wednesday. I look forward to our final round of comments.

**Entry #59, Diane Lewis:** 07/01/03, 11:59am

Terry, I must reiterate that my idea of the preservation of program is not literal, but the idea that it should be a necessity to retain a more updated and innovative civic program in a structure which previously held a civic program. The implication of my concept is that we would have more civic buildings built by architects in every generation and the existing works like this one would re-house a totally new program concept. In other words, it's a pity that the city isn't helping the crafts museum to build a new civic

building by these architects, a new invention for the current program of the institution since the proposal is not really dependent on the form of the already interesting work of architecture...Maybe this civic project should have been integrated into the corporate program of the Skidmore project in collaboration with these architects, more along the lines of the Lever House model of integrating civic space into a commercial entity, .

The Whitney and Guggenheim proposals of the 70s and 80s set some difficult precedents of architects offering critique of the unbuilt proposals of their colleagues. As a practicing architect I do not find it appropriate to directly critique the actual architectural design proposal of a colleague in a published public form before it is concretely accepted or constructed. I am sure the project at hand is an excellent one but if falls into the model of David Hockney redesigning Picasso's Parade sets for the Met. It was a great production but it didn't allow Hockney to completely take off integrating a musical work contemporary to his painting. Bergman on the other hand just did Ibsen/Strindberg adding an act or two of his own which was totally integral to the original text of both authors and the visual artists who originated the imagery.

**Entry #60, John Kaliski: 07/02/03, 3:20am**

I was hoping Paul would not intervene and remind us that we have to wrap our thoughts. I certainly had hoped to not be the first to follow his moderate and very fair tone. Some reactions. I am saddened that the landmarks process was somehow set aside, overlooked, thwarted, held behind closed doors, whatever (I am too distant from the process to have a good knowledge of this aspect). In some of my earlier comments I tried to argue that a process, a transparent process, that considered the pluses and minuses of landmarking, indeed an open and democratic process, was valuable in framing architectural concerns. I believe this for several reasons. I am confident that many innovative architects have worked and do work within the constraints of preservation. The argument that preservation causes uninteresting architecture, prevents innovation, is somehow dictated by preservation practice, etc., all seem to break down upon examination of many, many case studies and projects that have been completed. I do not think there is any reason why the craft museum's program, needs for identity and desire to speak in a contemporary voice dictate by definition a gutting of the Stone design. A public process would also establish a record, regardless of the outcome, that would prove invaluable for shaping debate about, preservation in general in the City and elsewhere, landmarking criteria, our evolving sense of the culture of place and frameworks of and for memory. I find the lack of this public conversation, or fear in having this type of conversation and debate to be that which is truly conservative in this sequence of events. Conservative in the sense that it serves best to narrow the parameters by which we construct civic memory. The building may go but should the record of the building end up being solely contained within the outline of a geometry or should there be more concrete reminders of the evolution of time, taste and culture? I may like the Allied Works design but I am troubled by the forced abstraction of the memories that it contains.

Though I know that the horse is out of the barn, I also want to address again (in a pedantic way) the question of what is a landmark and is it mutable? I went back and looked at landmark criteria from the National Park Service (1982) and a couple of things stand out. A landmark, according to this document embodies... "the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction." I know that there are many rich ways of interpreting the above criteria, but in thinking of them I find it hard not to consider the Stone building a landmark that meets in most cases National Register Criteria. The aspect of the loss of this building that is most present for me as an individual and a sometime expert is the fact that it is an important representative sample of a unique period in architectural design, that strange moment between international modernism, corporate modernism, brutalism and a nascent post-modernism that is little respected and rapidly disappearing from our streets. I think that one can make a fair argument, and again I stress that I am making this as an individual, that 2 Columbus, because of its location, because of its architect, and because of its design, is one of the more important examples of the dilemmas of this transitional moment, a moment that was wrestled with by Kahn, Johnson, Harrison, and many others, not always equally well. I personally like the thinness, the whiteness, the attempt to meld the modern with the classical, the structural brutalism of the lollipops. I do not think you can simply dismiss these aspects of the building as somehow architecturally misguided and embrace the massing as somehow more correct and therefore more worthy of retention.

Assuming the building is a landmark I think it is also useful to look at actual preservation criteria as opposed to assuming that landmark laws impose a design methodology. The Secretary's Standards do address use. They state that a "...property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships." The Standards also state that each "property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use." One could go on; what is critical about the standards is that they are performance based and open to interpretation. They do not dictate lack of imagination with regard to conservation, they simply suggest a path or approach that is up to the architect and project proponent to navigate - which brings me back to the public. I would prefer that the public, probably more accurately stated the public of the civic, be involved in wrestling with these issues rather than leave these decisions to experts alone. I do not think that we are the only arbiters of memory or taste or the canon of architecture. However, if we are to anticipate a day when the interpretation of landmarks law is more favorably inclined towards innovation, then architects, critics and institutions must be an active part of this landmark process that the public has instituted to protect civic memory in the face of devastating, rapid and sometimes mindless change. I think the real missed opportunity in this case is the chance for the museum and the architects to engage what are correctly perceived to be conservative notions that freeze history. They could have participated in a useful civic exercise that allows history and landmarks cases to evolve. I think their design is ambitious enough and almost good enough to accomplish this. I do not think architects as a profession can stand behind professional neutrality in this regard. I think you have to have an opinion of your fellow architect's work when asked even if you are embarrassed on occasion in the process of giving your opinion.

All this being said, I would personally on balance prefer an approach that more literally confronts Stone's design. I like the Allied Work's design (thank you Karrie) and do appreciate the use of terracotta and glass and the transparency that results and the thought that went into these design decisions. I am also burdened by the sensibility that liking it is not enough when memory is at stake. I still feel that something has been erased, that a public process might have forced a more complex challenge, that an even better design could still result, perhaps is even now being drawn. As a practicing architect I would love to participate in the grind of the design process that wrestled with these issues of civic taste, civic purpose and civic memory. In a silent way I think that is what Stone was anticipating when he designed 2 Columbus. He was speaking to his moment and other moments simultaneously. I would like to see Allied Works accept even more concretely this challenge for simultaneity as well as the ones they have already taken on. I would like to see them accept the landmark quality of this building in even more ways than they already have. I think Allied Works can proceed and design more even as I think landmark case process can be honored and evolve.

**Entry #61, Witold Rybczynski: 07/02/03, 7:33am**

This discussion has convinced me--if not my fellow panelists--of the value of a middle road between preservation and destruction. The various points raised have also revealed that it is unlikely that either preservationists or modernists will accept a compromise. As in so many issues, we end up at the extremes. Stone's building represents a taste which is out of fashion, but I shall miss it. I'm not sure that the proposed face-lift, however it is carried out, will make me feel good about that.

**Entry #62, Diane Lewis: 07/02/03, 11:52am**

Terry, the Lescaze Museum of Modern Art project was an interesting ghost that you brought into this discussion. Perhaps Stone's current vulnerability comes from the problem that the Huntington Hartford building is one of the most authentic visions of his architecture, as opposed to the building that he founded his career with in New York, the alternative to Lescaze's radical MOMA schemes. He definitely needed the ability to design his MOMA project with an abstraction that was competitive enough to usurp the epiphany that the Lescaze PSFS skyscraper had inspired in the vision of what New York would be when Lescaze and Howe built a museum of the modern. Lescaze and Howe were the origin point of a New York radical modern that we never got a direct example of in New York. The Lever House, which may be considered an equivalent with the level of detail and complexity of the PSFS took decades after that first free plan/ free section skyscraper in Philadelphia to arrive in Manhattan.

The architecture of "spectacle" that in certain cases an authentic form of our time has not arrived in New York in the form of a major civic building as authored by its inventor, as of yet. The debate around this proposed project has something to do with a "laboratory of opening" this city to new forms in dialogue with existing histories. The existing fabric of a city or the singular work

of any interesting architect would never be handled as an albatross. That is ultimately what the Freud quote I began with signifies. The history of both the individual and the collective must be lived, examined, and revealed, without denial in order to create and sustain a generative urban architecture. Let's all hope that any proposed design can be developed to deal with dialogue and revelation and not the albatross of historical denial or revisionism.

**Entry #63, Paul Goldberger (Moderator): 07/02/03, 8:39pm**

A word of apology to my fellow panelists: I have been out of town and have had some technical glitches that prevented me from getting online until now. I'm told that the 6 p.m. EST completion time of the forum is in fact a bit fungible, and so we'll continue for a short while more, as I try to pull together some wrap-up comments. Those of you who haven't made any kind of concluding comment and who still wish to -- the electronic floor remains open for another day or so. To those who have said all they want to say, I'm truly grateful to all of you for taking as much time, and as much care, as you have. More effusive thanks will follow.

**Entry #64 Paul Goldberger (Moderator) 07/08/03, 11:32am**

As I look back over the 63 postings -- 63! -- I am amazed at the generosity of spirit that shines through the entire exchange, mostly toward the 2 Columbus Circle building itself, but in no small way also toward Edward Durell Stone, Huntington Hartford, the preservationist impulse in the city and the overall cultural ambitions of New York, both in the nineteen-sixties and today. Those who are not fond of the building are at least respectful of the instincts and choices that caused it to take the form it did, and willing to recognize their historical importance. And those who are more inclined to take the building as a starting point, and argue for its preservation as is, seem to understand and be respectful of the programmatic and cultural issues, not to mention the architectural ambitions, that lay behind the current Allied Works proposal for reconstruction that is now before the city.

That said, I do not want to suggest that our last three weeks have been some kind of soft-headed lovefest. There are significant points of disagreement, and they have been argued, most of the time, with clarity and strength, and always with honesty. In the end, it pretty much comes down to the obvious question: is the tradeoff worth it? We have a quirky, eccentric, unusual, funny building that plays a notable, but hardly overwhelming, role in the city's cultural history, and a similar role in the city's architectural history, as a special footnote more than as a work of greatness. Probably the most successful role 2 Columbus Circle has played over the years is in the urbanistic landscape, as a significant marker of the southwest corner of Central Park and the culmination of the southward vista down Central Park West.

Of course, if pure, absolute greatness were the only standard for landmarking, then New York would have a couple of dozen landmarks, not several thousand. Landmarks are required to make a significant contribution to the city, not to be defining works in our culture. And it is fair to say that what I consider to be the most appealing quality of 2 Columbus Circle, its eccentricity, has been in fairly short supply in the architecture of New York in the last few years. What was the last modern building you could describe as amiably eccentric? Perhaps that alone might justify its preservation as is. And yet -- if I may point out something that makes this even more of a dilemma -- the area in which 2 Columbus Circle makes its most serious contribution, its urbanistic role, would not be diminished by the Allied Works redesign at all. Indeed, I think it could well be strengthened. It is possible that we could end up with a better termination of the view down CPW than we now have -- and, to boot, with a better symbol of the architecture of our time than a certain double-towered behemoth across Columbus Circle seems likely to be.

There is no easy answer. We gain something either way, and we lose something either way. For now, in the absence of answers, I would like to thank Landmarks West, and Western Architecture and Interiors, our two sponsors, and Collectors World, who provided what is, in effect, the electronic auditorium in which this forum has been held, for giving us the chance to ask the questions. And most of all, my thanks to Witold, Karrie, John, Michael, Tom, Diane and Terry for taking so much time, for writing with such passion and coherence, and for listening so carefully to each other.

**Entry #65 Michael Sorkin 07/14/03, 2:17pm**

An envoi by way of farewell. I did like the turn of the discussion towards the question of landmarking for "use." A last analogy. I have lived for many years in a tenement building in a good location in the village. A number of those living there are covered by the rent stabilization and control laws and have thus been in the building for a long time. The result is a diverse population of older and younger people and people who work in the kinds of places that do not pay high salaries. The profile of the building is very "village" - more gay, artistic, socially-engaged than the average. Were the rent laws to disappear, so would this diversity,

this character in use that is so emblematic of the neighborhood. In effect, the rent laws landmark individual tenancies. And the collection of people in a stable and loving relationship to the place is what makes the place. By removing use from the criteria for landmarking, we run the risk of losing fundamental qualities of place. Although, for example, the landmarking law allows districts to be created, the effect of saving the architecture is often to displace the people. While this is not the case on Columbus Circle, the rarefied criteria for preservation do preclude more sentimental "popular" forms of address. Landmarking privileges a certain language and the inability of the panel to agree on criteria reflects the cooptation of the idea of landmarking by a very particular discourse. Questions of metonymy, transparency, materiality, etc. are arcane criteria - not to architects and critics, perhaps, but certainly to the larger public of the city. Finding the building cute, memorable, reassuring, dinky, familiar, etc. are not enough, apparently. This is not to say that landmarking can be reduced to a statistical matter. It is however the way in which we institutionalize public memory. In a democracy, this means that many publics - and many ways of seeing - must be served. We would never tear down the house in which George Washington slept. There are lots of other uses - other experiences - that we don't want to forget. Some may be trivial. But if enough people have them, they rise to the level at which they deserve protection. Finally, how about a straw poll on Columbus circle? I vote to save the exterior of the building as is.

### **BREAKOUT SESSION**

**Entry #1, Kate Wood** 06/25/03, 7:30am Comment from **Hicks Stone**

I want to thank you all for your remarks about my father's building. I have heard my father's later work pilloried for decades. It always struck me that the criticisms were overly zealous and frequently shallow. It is gratifying to me as a son (and an architect) to hear that such distinguished critics are beginning to warm to his work. As an aside, it may be of interest for you to know that during the design phase of the Hartford Gallery, Dad rented Palladio's Villa Malcontenta just outside of Venice in Mestre where my mother and I lived for a year while my father traveled back and forth to the Middle East.

The design studies he sent back from Italy surprised many of his employees, because even for father, the work was explicitly and overtly decorative. The man who ultimately drew the elevations in the working drawing set told me that the draftsmen in the office felt that Dad was "really going out on a limb." While much of Dad's later work had a vaguely Middle Eastern quality to it, I think that the column detail at the base of the Huntington Hartford (Ada Louise Huxtable's "lollipops") is actually an abstracted version of the second story order of the Doge's Palace.

Dad had a tremendous affection for Venice, as a student (traveling on a Rotch Fellowship), he lived in a bell tower on the Piazza San Marco just to the north of the Cathedral. The time that he spent in Europe gave him an embryonic vocabulary to soften what he felt was the severity of Modernism. I wish that he had been able to take his extensive knowledge and use it in a more profound way, however.

**Entry #2, Kate Wood** 06/25/03, 7:31am Comment from **Steven Miller** (former Senior Curator, Museum of the City Of New York)

There is absolutely no reason to destroy the facade of Two Columbus Circle. The building served as a museum for years, and it did so quite nicely. I am especially shocked that a museum devoted to design would choose to deliberately destroy its largest and most obvious design artifact. I wonder how the staff treats other things in its collections? Do they break handles off of vases they don't like? Do they cut down legs on tables they think too high? Do they change the colors in paintings? The treatment of Edward Durrell Stone's building is an affront from a museum perspective. From a public perspective it is an insult. The building has been a landmark from the day it was finished, even if it was not designated a landmark by the City. In looking over the press materials contained on the Museum of Arts & Design's web site, there was no mention of wrecking the building's facade when the museum was lobbying to get No. Two. Has a bait and switch happened?