

## **Oregon Firm to Design for Museum**

*Celestine Bohlen*. New York Times. (Late Edition (East Coast)). New York, N.Y.: Nov 5, 2002. pg. E.3

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The Museum of Contemporary Arts and Design, formerly known as the American Craft Museum, has chosen an architectural firm from Portland, Ore., to design its new quarters at 2 Columbus Circle, the site of an eccentric nine-story white marble slab of building that has been vacant since 1998.

Allied Works Architecture, headed by Brad Cloepfil, was chosen from four finalists for a \$30 million redesign of the building by the architect Edward Durell Stone and popularly known as the Huntington Hartford building. Other works by Stone include the Museum of Modern Art, the General Motors Building and the Kennedy Center in Washington. The design museum, now on West 53rd Street, hopes to move in after about three years.

Museum officials said Mr. Cloepfil, 46, who designed the new Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis, and is working on an expansion of the Seattle Art Museum, was chosen on the basis of his experience, not on a completed design, which is due in early 2003.

"He has done a number of urban projects that involve reuse and redesign as well as new construction, and they are all done enormously creatively," said **Holly Hotchner**, director of the museum. "We are redoing a site that has not worked very well, and he will hopefully come up with brilliant solutions, given the constrictions of the site and of our budget."

The redesign of the building, one of the few in New York to occupy its own block, is certain to stir protests among preservationists, who regard it as both an ugly duckling and something of a landmark. The city's Landmarks Preservation Commission has declined several times to put the building on its agenda. When it was first built, it was widely reviled as "a die-cut Venetian palazzo on lollipops," even a turkey. Still, it has since acquired a certain status.

"This is a building that has not had its day in court," said Frank Sanchis, executive director of the Municipal Arts Society. "It has always been a curiosity from the day it went up, and a building for which people have a love-hate relationship. And there is plenty of hate and plenty of love."

Bernard Tschumi, dean of Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, has argued against tampering with the building, particularly its most dominant feature, the lack of windows facing Central Park.

"Either keep the building as a testimony to that period and to that architect, or tear it down and start from scratch," said Mr. Tschumi, who said he declined to be on the panel

that selected the architect. "Don't fiddle with a building that has a lot of integrity. You have to make up your mind."

Museum officials said they were looking for changes both to the building's unusual facade, with its famous blank wall edged with portholes and topped by a Venetian-style loggia, and to its interior, which was once an art gallery for a collection assembled by Huntington Hartford, heir to the supermarket fortune.

The building was eventually turned over to the city, which used it as a visitor center and headquarters for the Cultural Affairs Department until four years ago. It was awarded to the Museum of Contemporary Arts and Design last summer.

"This building has never really worked as a great public building," said Laurie Beckelman, director of the museum's new building program. "What we are looking for is a building that is more friendly to the city and a great public museum."

But she said the redesign would necessarily be thorough. "We will use the steel," she said, "and there is a 154-seat theater downstairs that we will use, and we will see what else."

In a telephone interview from Portland, Mr. Cloepfil said he was aiming for a redesign reminiscent of the original. "I think that whether one considers it to be historic or not, it has become an icon for the city because of its location and because of its color," he said. "Respecting its role in the memory of the city is very important."

With the giant AOL Time-Warner building now under construction on the west side of Columbus Circle and the building at 240 Central Park South, across Broadway, recently named a city landmark, the museum on the southern rim is expected to be the next and last piece of the circle's redesign to fall into place.

As city-owned property, it must have an urban land review, which is expected to begin early next year and last up to a year, Ms. Beckelman said.

[Photograph]

The Huntington Hartford building will house the Museum of Contemporary Arts and Design, formerly known as the American Craft Museum. (Librado Romero/The New York Times)