

① Peter Dwyer
send to Kate Wood

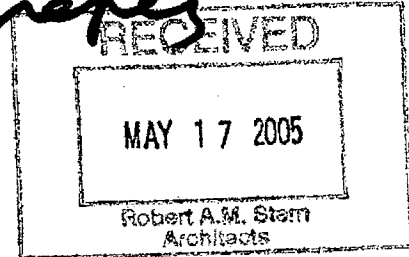
Buckminster Fuller, Sadao and Zung Architects

257 South Court St. Medina, Ohio 44256 • Tel. 330-721-8671 • Fax 330-725-8130

② return to RAMS h
replies

May 12, 2005

Mr. Robert A. M. Stern, FAIA
460 West 34th Street
New York, NY 10001



Re: Two Columbus Circle

Dear Mr. Stern:

You have my admiration and respect for the Number 2 Columbus Circle fray with the New York City Landmarks Preservations Commission. If he were here, Bucky Fuller would be writing to you directly, "integrity is the uncompromising courage of self determining whether or not to take initiatives, support and co-operate with others in accord with the 'truth and nothing but the truth' as it is conceived in the divine mind and always available to each individual".

Whether one likes or dislikes a piece of art/architecture is of rather little import compared more to the point, that a city like New York with an effected larger image cannot ignore citizen discourse. In discussing this building, an important parcel to Columbus Circle, Time Warner, and Lincoln Center, to paraphrase a Jane Jacobs, in a neighborhood, at the very least, good neighbors listen.

It is regrettable that Mr. Robert B. Tierney, the Landmarks Chairman has decided to hide behind a 1996-cloaked decision, and choosing such a path casts a Machiavellian cloud upon both himself and the Landmarks Commission, a fate perhaps not deserving this important arm of government.

Thank you Robert Stern, Hugh Hardy, and James Steward Polshek for making a discourse case; and hopefully we can reach an accommodation before some Howard Roark steps in. Best wishes to you all, and you may send this to the NYTimes if you think appropriate.

Respectfully and faithfully yours,

Thomas T. K. Zung

P.S. For the record, Bucky and Edward Durell Stone were friends, and I worked for EDS for eight years, including the building in question before joining Bucky. So I stay out of the ruckus unless specifically asked.

Robert Stern Two Columbus Circle

460 West 34th Street, New York, NY 10001 Tel 212 967 5100 Fax 212 967 5588

May 26, 2005

Thomas T.K. Zung
Buckminster Fuller, Sadao and Zung Architects
257 South Court Street
Medina, Ohio 44256

Robert A.M. Stern Architects

Dear Mr. Zung:

Thank you so much for the copy of your Fuller book with its kind inscription. And thank you as well for the lovely letter that accompanied it. I've sent a copy along to Kate Wood, who is coordinating the fight to save the Hartford Museum.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert A.M. Stern". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robert A.M. Stern

RAMS:pmd

cc: Kate Wood, Landmark West!

New York

Leslie E. Robertson
Saw-Teen See
45 East 89th Street, Apt. 25C
New York, NY 10128
22 July 2005

Mr. Robert A.M. Stern
460 West 34th Street
New York, NY 10001

Re: 2 Columbus Circle

Dear Bob:

Despite the best of intentions, we were no-shows at the People's Hearing for 2 Columbus Circle. Even so we hope to share with you our own views:

First, it seems to us that the building should be either razed or rehabilitated to its former self...that the proposed modifications are demeaning to the building and, in our view, are mere strivings to create something that cannot be created. Of course, where 2 Columbus Circle is preserved, in order to deal with disability access and the like, internal reconstruction will be required on the south side.

The 'slotting' of the walls and floors is said to not weaken the building. Perhaps so...perhaps there is enough 'extra' in the structural system to allow this frivolous carving. Even so, while we've not analyzed the structural systems, it seems clear to us that the short- and the long-term vertical deformations associated with the slotting of the walls, unless prevented, will likely result in serious issues associated with vertical offsets in the floors, with distress in the glazing and with other forms of excessive deformation.

This issue may be being solved through the introduction of deflection control devices. These devices, while not required for "strength", would end up carrying vertically much of the weight of the structure.

What are these devices? It is likely that they are some form of shimming in the void of the slots through the walls. Hidden behind metal work in the glazing, they may become nearly 'invisible'. Since they are not required for 'strength', an argument can be made for the omission of fireproofing materials...thus making them even smaller.

Without having them fire rated, commonly, we do use such devices to control the vibration of cantilevered floors and the like. We have never used them, as would seem to be the case with 2 Columbus Circle, to carry gravity loads downward through the building to supporting girders, columns or foundations. Would we do so? It would be a tough call...but, at the very least, we would argue forcefully against the use of long-term gravity-carrying members devoid of fire resistance.

In essence, in our view the slots are an artifice. Well, we are not against artifices...just against such shams being passed off as being somehow 'responsible' structure.

Again, our apologies are proffered for being no-shows. Our hearts were and are with you. Should there be something that we can do, please don't hesitate to call.

Best regards,

Cc: Richard Olcott, Nina Rappoport, Kari Pei

BROWN UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY OF ART & ARCHITECTURE

Monday, August 22, 2005

Robert A.M. Stern
Robert A.M. Stern Architects
460 West 34th Street
New York, New York 10001

Dear Dean Stern,

Many thanks for your note. I entirely share your unhappiness about the fact that the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission still has not held a public hearing about the future of Edward Durrell Stone's Two Columbus Circle.

First of all, as an architectural historian I have long held the conviction that cities can only thrive when representatives of all sections of its history, its different building types, its functions and even its dreams and aspirations are allowed to survive. Such readability of the urban fabric gives it its uniqueness, richness and character. As we have long learned, personal taste should be the least important of our criteria when judging historic architecture. Edward Durrell Stone's Two Columbus Circle was certainly not a widely beloved building for many years, but so were many Victorian houses or wildly decorated Beaux Art Apartment Towers. Opinions about buildings do change over time, and usually they improve with age. We have to allow this to happen in the case of Two Columbus Circle. New York is by no means rich in significant buildings from that period, and it is our obligation to save enough so that later generations have access to a better understanding of this part of our history.

Regarding the Landmarks Preservation Commission's refusal to hold a public hearing on this building since 1995 – I just simply don't understand it. Whenever has a frank and public exchange of opinions done any harm?

I very much hope that this issue can be resolved and a public hearing about Two Columbus Circle be held in the near future. What a fantastic opportunity for a serious debate about our cities and their role as guardians of our past!

With warm regards,

Dietrich Neumann
Professor for the History of Modern Architecture