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SPRING 2008

Welcome to the eighth edition of the newsletter of the New York Preservation Archive Project. The mission of the New York Preservation Archive Project is to document, preserve and celebrate the history of preservation in New York. Through public programs, outreach, and the creation of public access to information, the Archive Project hopes to bring these stories to light.

Preserving New York – Then and Now Symposium held at the Museum of the City of New York

The media, the civic sector, development, and advocacy were some of the topics that the distinguished roll of speakers and panelists addressed at the *Preserving New York – Then and Now* symposium held on February 23, 2008 at the Museum of the City of New York. The sold-out event, with over 250 in attendance, began with a welcome by MCNY Director Susan Henshaw Jones, and introductions by author Anthony M. Tung and Lisa Ackerman, Executive Vice President and COO of World Monuments Fund. In the keynote “The Past is Not Dead, It is Not Even Past,” Anthony C. Wood challenged the audience to question whether we are still losing buildings because of changing societal dynamics that preservation has failed to recognize and respond to. He also asked whether we’ve become too dependent on one tool—the landmarks law.

The first panel featured Manhattan Borough Historian, Mike Miscione, Architectural Historian Andrew Dolkart, and cultural preservationist Ned Kaufman and addressed the question “Where Did the ‘History’ Go in Historic Preservation?” Mr. Miscione used Hamilton Grange and Grant’s Tomb to argue that historic preservationists have focused too much on architectural preservation and have not been effective in protecting places of mainly historic importance. Mr. Dolkart argued against Miscione’s point, countering with the example of the preservation of the Tenement Museum, a place of importance chiefly for public history. Mr. Dolkart compared Landmarks Preservation designation reports from the early years of the LPC to recent designations to argue that preservationists now take a more integrative approach, seeking to highlight places’ historical, architectural, and cultural values. Ned Kaufman offered examples from Australia and Buenos Aires for preserving places that hold intangible or associative cultural value, such as Bohemian Hall in Queens. New York State Council on the Humanities Senior Program Officer Jane McNamera moderated discussion following the presentations.

The second panel featured Suzanne Stephens, Deputy Editor of *Architectural Record* representing traditional media, Jonathan Butler, Founder and Editor of *Brownstoner.com*, representing the blogosphere, and Alan G. Brake, Associate Editor of *The Architect’s Newspaper*, a five-year old periodical that has a strong commitment to the web, representing the middle ground. Moderator Francis Morrone, architectural critic and journalist, facilitated the conversation on the historic and contemporary roles of the media in preservation. Ms. Stephens addressed the architectural criticism at *The New York Times*



Moderator Francis Morrone, Alan G. Brake, Jonathan Butler and Suzanne Stephens discuss the media’s role in preservation.

during Ada Louise Huxtable’s tenure as compared to the writings of her successors. Mr. Butler spoke about the immediacy and interactive nature offered through blogs and the ability of this media to concentrate the focus on preservation and development issues within a community, as with the case of 70 Lefferts Place in Clinton Hill. Mr. Brake spoke about the ability of *The Architects Newspaper* to be a forum to discuss timely issues in a traditional print format. While there is a void left by traditional media sources, new media and innovative applications of conventional publishing methods have created a necessary forum for preservation issues.

Following lunch, Mary Schmidt Campbell, Chair of the New York State Council on the Arts introduced the session *Preservation and Progress*, a dialogue between architect and Dean of the Yale School of Architecture, Robert A.M. Stern and renowned historian Kenneth T. Jackson, moderated by Anne Van Ingen, NYSCA Director of Architecture, Planning, and Design.



Mary Schmidt Campbell, NYSCA Chair introduces the "Preservation and Progress" discussion between Kenneth T. Jackson and Robert A.M. Stern.

Stern discussed preservation's role in growth and development of SoHo, following the neighborhood's journey from reclamation by artists beginning in the 1960s to its current state, presenting a positive view of preservation's role in the City's development. Mr. Jackson took an opposing view, purposefully, he said, overstating his case that what makes New York City a world class city is not its architecture, but its cultural richness and constantly changing nature and that preservation impedes this progress.

The third panel of the day sought to address "Preservation Advocacy Over the Decades." In his slide presentation, Randall Mason, Associate Professor in the Graduate Program in Historic

Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania, asked not to be called a preservationist, arguing that "ist" implied a radical, fundamentalist stance that sometimes hurts preservation advocates' cases. Melissa Baldock, Director of Preservation and Research at the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation offered a comparison of the advocacy campaigns in Greenwich Village today with those of the nascent preservation movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

In the final panel, "The Preservation Civic Sector in Times of Change" the audience heard from Executive Director of GVSHP, Andrew Berman, Director of the Building Movement Project, Frances Kunreuther, and Architect and Co-founder of the Douglaston & Little Neck Historical Society, Kevin Wolfe. Both Mr. Berman and Mr. Wolfe offered thoughts on the civic



Kenneth T. Jackson and Robert A.M. Stern debate on "Preservation and Progress," moderated by Anne Van Ingen of NYSCA.



Anthony Tung and Tony Hiss.

sector's role in preservation from the perspectives of place-specific civic groups. Ms. Kunreuther stressed the importance of alliance building among civic groups in order to achieve preservation objectives.

Author and Visiting Scholar at NYU's Wagner School of Public Service, Tony Hiss, had the challenging task of

serving as the Rapporteur summarizing and digesting the day's proceedings and lessons. With humor and eloquence, Mr. Hiss recounted the day and offered some thoughts for the future.

Throughout the day, the energy of the sold-out crowd was undeniable. It is clear that the questions raised by presentations, panel discussions, and the audience are ones that lovers of NYC will have to work together to answer in planning for the future. As Mr. Hiss stated, "Preservationists have been thought to be concerned with the bone—the bricks and mortar of a place—than the heart and soul, but their true underlying passion and commitment has been to the hearts and souls and to the lifeblood of the City of New York." "How can we let this area grow and not lose its soul?" More images of the day are available on www.nypap.org. Transcripts will also be available soon.

New Oral History Project Teaches Preservation Students Valuable Skills and Expands NYPAP's Holdings

In the 2007 Fall semester the New York Preservation Archive Project launched an oral history project in partnership with Pratt Institute's graduate program in Historic Preservation. The endeavor supports a major element of NYPAP's mission—documenting and studying preservation's history to strengthen the field today. NYPAP Chair, Anthony C. Wood, and Administrator Vanessa Norton worked with students in the Public History class taught by Marci Reaven and Jeanne Houck to develop questions, schedule interviews, and record conversations between preservation students and preservation veterans. The series of 6 interviews focuses on the theme of grassroots preservation of the 1980s. Students Merrill Branch-McTiernan, Portia Dyrenforth, Shannon Haltiwanger, Keenan Hughes, Karen Mathiasen, Katie Nolan, and participated in the class. Those preservationists interviewed were Hal Bromm, on the TriBeCa historic district designation and the early days of HDC; Joe Rosenberg on the early days of HDC and the fight to protect historic Broadway theatres; Robert Kornfeld, Sr. on achieving historic district designation for Riverdale in the Bronx; publicist Joyce Matz on a variety of preservation campaigns including the City and Suburban Houses and St. Bart's; Jack Taylor, on the subjects of the Drive to Protect the Ladies' Mile Historic District, Luchow's restaurant, and the Dvorak House; and Lorna Nowve, a former staff member of the Municipal Art Society and the Historic Districts' Council on the early years of the HDC. The interviews were transcribed and, after being edited, will be made available on NYPAP's website. NYPAP is seeking support to continue this program in the Fall 2008 Semester.

NYPAP and Co-sponsoring Organizations Host Preserving New York Book Launch and Book Programs

On November 5, 2007, NYPAP and The Museum of the City of New York were joined by over 200 friends and members of co-sponsoring organizations to celebrate the launch of *Preserving New York: Winning the Right to Protect a City's Landmarks* (Routledge 2007) by NYPAP Founder and Chair Anthony C. Wood. The kick-off event at MCNY included a short program with special guests Museum Director Susan Henshaw Jones, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Adele Chatfield Taylor, Joan K. Davidson, and Anthony Wood. A reception and author book-signing followed the program.



MCNY Director Susan Hensaw Jones welcomes guests to the Preserving New York book launch in October. Also pictured are speakers Roberta Brandes Gratz and Joan K. Davidson.

Preserving New York was also featured at a number of book talks, panel discussions, and slideshows held by NYPAP and co-sponsoring organizations in the last part of 2007. In January the book received a positive review in the *Wall Street Journal*. Copies of *Preserving New York* are available for purchase through NYPAP.

Lisa Ackerman, NYPAP Secretary, Honored at HDC Landmark Lion Award Dinner

On October 23rd colleagues and friends of Lisa Ackerman, Executive Vice President & COO of World Monuments Fund, gathered at the Prince George Ballroom to honor Ms. Ackerman's invaluable contributions to the field of preservation as she accepted the Historic District Council's prestigious Landmarks Lion Award.

2007 Bard Birthday Breakfast Benefit Features Talk on New York City's Art Commission

New York City's Art Commission, its extensive archive and its significance to historic preservation were the subjects of Michele H. Bogart's talk at the 4th Annual Bard Birthday Breakfast Benefit on December 19th at the Harvard Club. The Bard Breakfast provides a chance for NYPAP to celebrate the legacy of Albert S. Bard's civic leadership and to recall the contributions made to New York City, aesthetic regulation, and the preservation movement by organizations such as the New York City Art Commission. Michele H. Bogart's exploration of the Art Commission's historical and contemporary importance to preservation reflects continuing concern for this type of civic improvement and NYPAP was pleased to highlight such an important topic at the 2007 program.

Ms. Bogart also signed copies of her recent book, *The Politics of Urban Beauty: New York and Its Art Commission* (University of Chicago, 2006).



John C. Fontaine, 2007 Landmark Lion Lisa Ackerman, Adrian Benepe, Simeon Bankoff, Anthony Wood, and Paul Graziano. Photo by Virgil Stephens.

Save the Date - June 10th "Making the Best Better: An Anniversary and Celebration of the 1973 Amendments to New York City's Landmarks Law"

The 1973 amendments to New York City's landmarks law dramatically transformed the strongest landmarks law in the nation by broadening its powers and improving its operations. The amendments established interior landmarks, scenic landmarks, and continuous hearings and designations, ending the mandated moratorium limiting designations to a 6-month period every three years. These amendments fundamentally strengthened the ability of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to protect New York City's valuable historic resources.

"Making the Best Better" will celebrate the 35th Anniversary of these amendments. Please join us for a panel discussion examining the origins of the 1973 amendments, the contribution they have made to preservation in New York City, and the implications of those changes for the powers and duties of present and future Landmarks Preservation Commissions. Following the panel, NYPAP will hold a fundraiser cocktail reception celebrating the 35th Anniversary of the Amendments and honoring those who played a role in their passage. A list of honorees is in formation. If you were involved in the efforts leading to the passage of the Amendments and have not already been contacted by NYPAP, please contact us. Invitations will be mailed in May. Please visit www.nypap.org for updates.

Preservation Vision Project

Preservation Vision: Planning for the Future of Preservation in New York City is a year-long initiative to engage those interested in preservation in a conversation about their aspirations for preservation in the New York City of 2030 and the actions

needed to make those hopes a reality. Please participate in these efforts by completing the online survey at <http://www.preservationvision-nyc.org>.

NYPAP News

NYPAP received an Institutional Development Grant from the New York State Council on the Arts Architecture, Planning, and Design Program for the 2007-2008 Fiscal Year. NYSCA's grant provides support for general operations and increasing capacity of developing organizations such as NYPAP. Our thanks go to NYSCA for this vote of confidence in

our work. Please support NYPAP today and help us match this grant with your contribution.

NYPAP granted a fall 2007 internship to Erica Powell, an undergraduate History major at NYU and is joined this spring semester by Gabby Goldberg, a candidate for an M.A. in Archives and Public History from NYU. Ms. Goldberg is completing a practicum and will work to research and write entries for NYPAP's web-based Archive.

The Archive Project thanks the following co-sponsoring organizations for their collaboration in 2007:

Brooklyn Heights Association
 Brooklyn Historical Society
 Citizens Emergency Committee to Preserve Preservation
 The Gotham Center for New York History
 Historic Districts Council
 Historic House Trust
 Landmark West!
 The Municipal Art Society
 The Museum of the City of New York
 The National Arts Club
 National Trust for Historic Preservation
 The New York Landmarks Conservancy
 Preservation League of New York State

The Archive Project thanks the following for generous contributions in 2007:

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Supporting the Archive Project

The New York Preservation Archive Project is a not-for-profit organization and we depend upon contributions to continue our work. Now you can donate online at www.nypap.org. Please give generously to support the celebration of the history of preservation in New York! As always, NYPAP welcomes thoughts, comments and suggestions from our supporters. Please feel free to contact Administrator Vanessa Norton with any remarks at vnorton@nypap.org or 212-861-4993 x 246.