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*Previously proposed
design by Cloepfil
(Spring 2003)*

Reinventing a Landmark: Museum of Arts & Design by Allied Works Architecture

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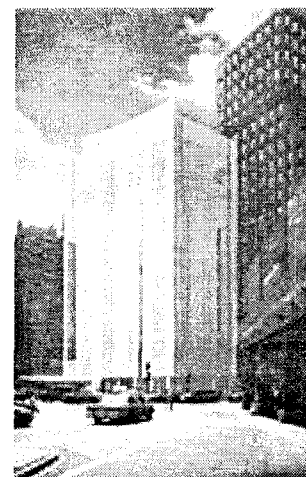
New York City: Adored and reviled, misused and unused for years, 2 Columbus Circle is about to get a new lease on life - and an entirely new look. Is it the birth or death of a landmark?

by **Kristen Richards**
April 7, 2003

Two Columbus Circle, designed by Edward Durell Stone in 1964, has not led a very charmed life. It served its original purpose – as home to the Huntington Hartford Gallery of Contemporary Art – for only five years. Between 1969 and 1998, it didn't fare much better as Fairleigh Dickinson University's New York Cultural Center or as a visitor center and headquarters for the New York City Cultural Affairs Department. In it's final incarnation (before fences went up) the "lollipop"-columned arcade was as an unofficial homeless shelter.

In June 2002, the Museum of Arts & Design (formerly American Craft Museum) won out over other development proposals for the site. The museum held a design competition that resulted in Portland, Oregon-based Allied Works Architecture being named the winner (the shortlist included Zaha Hadid, Toshiko Mori Architect, and Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects).

Then the debate about the building's fate really started to heat up: Is Stone's "folly" on the edge of Central Park an architectural treasure worthy of preservation, or is it an eyesore – a windowless white elephant wasting valuable space? (Ada Louise Huxtable called it "a die-cut Venetian palazzo on lollipops.") In February, more than 300 people attended a spirited roundtable discussion among



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Museum of Arts & Design
at 2 Columbus Circle



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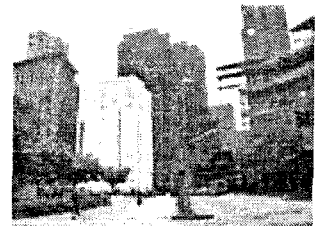
Night view

knowledgeable champions from both camps: Kurt Andersen, novelist and host of Studio 360; Reed Kroloff, architecture critic and former Editor-in-Chief, *Architecture* magazine; Theodore HM Prudon, FAIA, architect and President, DOCOMOMO US; and Billie Tsien, AIA, Principal, Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects. Robert A.M. Stern, who was also scheduled to be on the panel, but was unable to attend, sent a statement that included: "It's unabashedly decorative, whimsical – one might even say zany. Nonetheless it is very important and it is important that we save it." To read the (unedited) transcript of the very lively dialogue, the Q&A that followed, and Stern's complete statement, click [At the Crossroads: 2 Columbus Circle. Landmark West!](#) (which is continuing its efforts to preserve the building), the Center for Architecture, and the AIA New York Chapter sponsored the event.

The debate seems to be moot at this point. The building's looks – and luck – are in for big changes over the next few years. Last week, the Museum of Arts & Design (MAD) announced two major private gifts totaling \$22 million that brings the project past the halfway mark in a \$50 million Capital Campaign for the new building program. At the same time, the museum released renderings of Allied Architects' design for the crescent-shaped structure that borders Manhattan's only traffic circle. Construction is expected to be underway by spring/summer 2004.

The museum's new home is more than three times the size of its current location on West 53 Street – and will increase exhibition space fourfold. The Columbus Circle facility will accommodate a new Arts & Education Center, a full-service education facility with classrooms and studios for Master Classes, Artists in Residence, and Open Studio programs. Programming will also include a greater range of lectures, seminars, decorative arts and design history courses, and workshops.

"The scale, massing, and textured façade of the building are important qualitative elements that contribute to its humane character," notes Brad Cloepfil, Principal of Allied Works Architecture. "In this pivotal location, it is essential that 2 Columbus Circle engage its surroundings, the Park, the neighborhood, and the street life that gives New York its character – therefore the building is permeable, fostering a dialogue between the interior of the museum and its urban environment." Pivotal location is right. The museum's new neighborhood includes the soaring AOL/Time Warner Center currently under construction, the 52-story, bronze glass-clad Trump International Hotel & Tower, and a grand entrance to Central Park.



((c) Allied Works Architecture)
View from the north,
AOL/Time Warner Center
at right



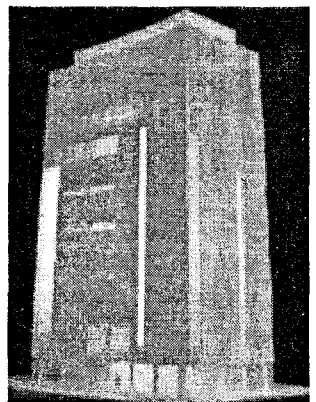
((c) Allied Works Architecture)
The glass-enclosed
ground floor



((c) Allied Works Architecture)
Ground floor lobby



((c) Allied Works Architecture)
Gallery



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"Night" view of model

The design features a series of glass columns that will run through the 10-story, 54,000-square-foot building, providing dramatic spaces to present art work from the museum's collections and allowing natural light to filter into the galleries. The art-bearing columns will connect the floors and programmatic areas both physically and conceptually. Art will be visible at the street level and become part of public life in Columbus Circle, inviting people inside to view MAD's notable permanent collection and special exhibitions. In several places, the transparent columns are aligned with the building's exterior, so the art objects on display will also become an integral part of the building's façade.

The façade will feature a combination of windows and lightly colored, 40-inch-by-15-inch terracotta panels that read as a solid, sculptural, "woven" elements from a distance, yet are permeable. They will glow from within at night and filter natural light into the building during the day. The interplay of alternating solids and voids will transform the exterior into an abstract geometric pattern that will subtly change appearance with the sweep of the sun throughout the day.

The entire ground floor will be encircled in glass, erasing the boundary between interior and exterior – the building will seem to float in space. A restaurant and lounge on the ninth floor will offer dramatic views of the city and Central Park. A vertical window running along a staircase between the first and sixth floors in the northeast corner, along with other openings in different areas of the façade, will also provide changing vistas of the cityscape.

An existing 155-seat auditorium and theater will be renovated and used for cultural events in collaboration with some of New York City's leading performing and visual arts organizations. Plans also include an International Center for the Study of Arts & Design that will link electronic media and information technologies and three-dimensional hand made objects. An expanded museum store on the ground floor will be stocked with interesting and unusual handcrafted objects from over 1,400 artists.

"Because of the idiosyncratic design of the building and interior gallery spaces, 2 Columbus Circle hasn't worked successfully as a welcoming, accessible museum in which to view art," says Laurie Beckelman, Director of the Museum's New Building Program and former Commissioner and Chair of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. "It is time to bring this building back into use for the community, creatively recast the interior galleries, and open the building physically and visually to the city and Central

Park. With the development of the AOL/Time Warner Center, next to other dark, glass-clad high rise buildings in the area, it is now more important than ever to create a living counterpoint to these soaring giants.”

Based in Portland, Oregon, Allied Works Architecture was founded by Brad Cloepfil in 1994. The firm has completed a number of important cultural and educational projects throughout the United States, as well as numerous private residences. The redevelopment of 2 Columbus Circle will be Cloepfil's first institutional commission in New York City.

The firm received critical acclaim for its design of the new Contemporary Art Museum in St. Louis, slated to open in the fall of 2003 and located on a site adjacent to Tadao Ando's new Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, and the Wieden + Kennedy Agency headquarters in Portland, OR, which also houses the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art. Cloepfil's team is working on the design for the expansion of the Seattle Art Museum, a building by Venturi Scott Brown & Associates located in downtown Seattle. In addition, pre-design has commenced on the \$40 million Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas next to a building by Renzo Piano.

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