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Saving 2 Columbus

Landmark has right stuff, author Tom Wolfe says

COLUMBUS CIRCLE Preservationists continue their campaign to save 2 Columbus Circle, a marble-faced building with a street-level arcade often likened to a row of lollipops that has been controversial since its opening in 1964.

The building's supporters testified yesterday at a City Council special oversight hearing regarding the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The activists charge the Commission with shirking its public duty since no public hearing had ever been convened to determine the building's fate.

Renovation prevention

Author Tom Wolfe and Dean of Yale University's School of Architecture Robert A.M. Stern have joined the non-profit Landmark West! in trying to prevent the building's new tenant, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD), from a dramatic renovation.

Wolfe said New York created the Landmarks Preservation Commission after the demolition of Penn Station to prevent such a fate for

other historic structures. Wolfe called the LPC "one of the great municipal mysteries of New York."

"This decision to stifle public debate and squash legitimate inquiry will be remembered as one of the low points in the agency's history," said Stern. "While reasonable people can disagree over the merits of designation," he said, "the reluctance of the Commission to simply hold hearings in the face of sustained, vocal, widespread, and indeed unprecedented demand, is,

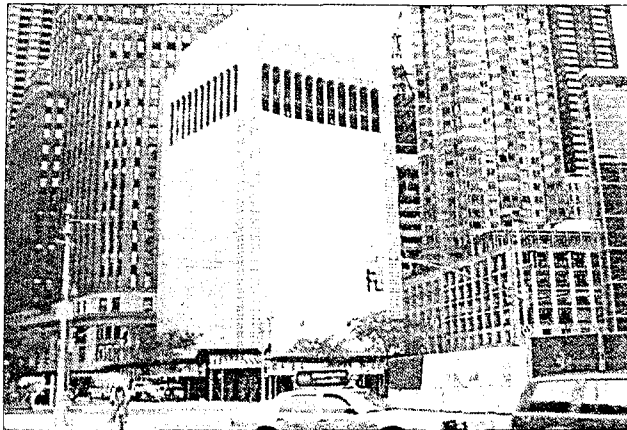
frankly, inexplicable."

Most endangered list

The building has been named one of America's "11 Most Endangered Historic Places" by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The MAD restoration would replace the windowless façade with terra cotta glass and would revamp the interior, as well. According to MAD spokesperson Patrick Keefe, the building is in terrible disrepair.

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ACTIVISTS RALLIED at City Hall yesterday to preserve 2 Columbus Circle, seen here.