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**HEADLINE:** 'Lollipop' Building Set to Be Revamped

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### **BODY:**

Scaffolding is expected to start going up late this week at 2 Columbus Circle, opening the way for a controversial transformation of Edward Durell Stone's building into a new home for the Museum of Arts and Design.

"We are remaking a building," Brad Cloepfil, the project's architect, said yesterday. "Restructuring it, recladding it, letting the light in."

Nonetheless, **Landmark West**, the group that has led the effort to preserve the building, filed yet another lawsuit yesterday -- its eighth -- in an attempt to block the makeover. In its current action, **Landmark West** is appealing an appellate court judge's dismissal of its motion to have Robert B. Tierney, chairman of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, excluded from any decision on whether to hold a hearing on the building's status.

"This has been the focus of one of the most important preservation battles in history," Kate Wood, the executive director of **Landmark West**, said yesterday, "and could well become the Penn Station of Modernism."

She was referring to the razing of McKim, Mead & White's classic Beaux-Arts Penn Station in 1963, a loss that helped inspire the birth of the city's architectural preservation movement.

Under Mr. Cloepfil's redesign, horizontal and vertical openings would slice into the exterior of 2 Columbus Circle, allowing views from the galleries onto Central Park and more light in from the building's four different directions. He said the "ribbon of light" created by these slits would foster "a continuous experience of light through the building."

An exhibition of the design -- on which Mr. Cloepfil of Allied Works Architecture collaborated with Gary Edward Handel & Associates -- is to go on display on Thursday at the Center for Architecture in Lower Manhattan.

The start of construction would seem to bring to a close a fractious chapter of local preservation history; for a decade, advocates have fought to save the 1964 structure or to at least have the commission schedule a hearing on potential landmark designation.

In an interview yesterday, Holly Hotchner, the director of the Museum of Arts and Design, said there was "nothing legally preventing work from starting" on the \$60 million construction project, given the failure of previous legal challenges.

Advocates have argued that Stone's porthole-studded building, with its "lollipop"-style arcade, represents a turning point in modern architecture, when architects began to incorporate historicist motifs.

But Ms. Hotchner and Mr. Cloepfil said yesterday that the building had always been inhospitable, describing it as dark and claustrophobic.

"It's a concrete bunker," Ms. Hotchner said. "I'm not talking about taste. I'm talking about the experience of being in the building."

Mr. Cloepfil similarly described the building as "a big, closed concrete box," adding that "as a building, it doesn't function."

Of his design, he said: "It's like unzipping the building at the seams. It really unfolds the space."

The building opened as Huntington Hartford's Gallery of Modern Art; that museum closed in 1969 and then reopened as the New York Cultural Center. Gulf and Western Industries purchased the building in 1975 and presented it to the city in 1980, which installed the Department of Cultural Affairs there and the city's visitors' bureau. Both moved out in 1998, and in 2002 the city designated the Museum of Arts and Design as the site's developer.

The renovation, to be completed by early 2008, will give the museum 16,000 square feet of exhibition space, compared with its current 7,000 at 40 West 53rd Street. This extra room will allow the institution, formerly the American Craft Museum, to display much of its permanent collection, Ms. Hotchner said. She said she hoped to weave the collection -- including furniture, architectural installations and jewelry -- through four exhibition floors.

The first level of the building will have 13 feet of glass around the base, whereas the current arches top off at eight feet. There will be a larger lobby, a museum store and a restored auditorium. A restaurant will be returned to its former location on the ninth floor -- with three sides of windows instead of one -- and systems will be installed to regulate temperature and humidity.

Because the Museum of Arts and Design emphasizes materials and artistic technique, three or four demonstration studios will also be open to the public, Ms. Hotchner said. She said she wanted the building's material to highlight the museum's program inside; as a contemporary art museum, ceramic and glass are among its primary media.

By cladding the building in terra cotta and using different kinds of glass in different places -- clear, fritted and translucent -- Mr. Cloepfil said, the project will make the surface somewhat opalescent, reflecting different colors depending on the time of day. He said he was essentially preserving the lollipop motif -- which will be visible inside the lobby -- because it serves a structural load-bearing purpose.

The museum now has an annual operating budget of \$5 million and yearly attendance of 225,000. In the new building, these are expected to increase to \$8 million and 450,000, respectively.

Mr. Cloepfil said that one of the overarching goal was to bring life to Columbus Circle. "We really want to revitalize Columbus Circle," Mr. Cloepfil said, "to take a building which has been private and make it public."

The new museum would complete the circle's recent makeover, which has included the Time Warner Center -- including Jazz at Lincoln Center -- and a renewed fountain sitting area.

"The architectural goal is transforming a building that's an image into a complete architectural experience," Mr. Cloepfil added.

At the same time, he said, he was trying "to carry forward some kind of memory of what's happened there for the last 40 years."

"I think you can do both," he said.

**URL:** <http://www.nytimes.com>

**GRAPHIC:** Photos: How the exterior of the new museum at 2 Columbus Circle will look.

A model of the third-floor gallery as it will be redesigned in the Museum of Arts and Design. (Photographs by Allied Works Architecture Inc.)(pg. E7)

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