



FRIENDS OF TERRA COTTA

June 25, 2006

Robert Tierney, Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building, One Centre Street, 9th Fl. North
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Tierney,

The Friends of Terra Cotta would like to offer strong support for the designation of the former Horn & Hardart automat at 2710-14 Broadway (at 104th Street). This 1930 building is ornamented with green, blue, and tan glazed terra cotta and is highlighted with gold lustered glaze. We are aware of only three other buildings in New York which still survive and use gold lustered glaze. The fanciful Art Deco ornament on the automat is delicately scaled and in keeping with the modest size of the structure. (One of the few remaining low-scale buildings on this stretch of Broadway.)

F. P. Platt Brothers, the architects of this building, used terra cotta on a variety of their structures. Records show that during the years 1914-1928, F. P. Platt Brothers used at least three East Coast terra cotta manufacturers: the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company, the South Amboy Terra Cotta Company and the Atlantic Terra Cotta Company. Further research is needed to identify the manufacturer for this particular automat building.

The LPC has designated very few small structures which served varied commercial purposes. At one time the city was dotted with food shops, restaurants, and other commercial establishments that represented interesting periods of architecture and recalled cultural rituals of importance to New Yorkers.

In recent years however, opportunities have been lost - especially when the Bickford's at 45th Street and Lexington Avenue was stripped of its polychrome deco facade and covered with a revolting contemporary cladding. The Horn & Hardart building at West 104th Street provides an excellent chance to help rectify this situation.

Several years ago I learned that a wonderful example of this type of building - a Bowles Lunch building in Ottawa - was being fully restored and adapted to a new use. It was built in 1916 by Kelly & McAlinden. H. L. Bowles of Springfield, MA was president of this popular chain restaurant. I think NYC, which has been a leader in protecting its architectural heritage, could benefit from following this Canadian example. Other Bowles Lunch buildings in Toronto have been featured in a publication by the Toronto Regional Architectural Conservancy called *Terra Cotta -- Artful Deceivers*.

One additional building shown and discussed in this book is a Childs restaurant located at 279-283 Yonge Street in Toronto (1918, J. C. Westervelt). Clearly, chain restaurants, even those which are U.S. owned, are recognized for their architectural importance in Canada.

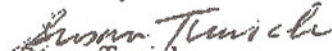
FROM :

FAX NO. : 2126620768

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We hope the LPC will decide to designate this Horn & Hardart and we are delighted that the Childs in Coney Island was designated as a New York City landmark. Although extinct, the automat remains very much alive today through nostalgic books, old movies, websites and even cookbooks. The architectural, historical and cultural importance of this building would make it a significant addition to the fine roster of New York City landmarks. Thanks for your interest in this building.

Sincerely,


Susan Tunick
President