



THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Central Park
April 22, 2025**

LANDMARK WEST! is a not-for-profit community organization committed to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side.

The Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to comment on 1000 Fifth Avenue, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Beaux-Arts and Roman style museum building designed by Vaux and Mould, R.M. Hunt, and McKim, Mead and White, and built in 1864-1965, with later additions built between 1975-1990 and designed by Roche-Dinkeloo, within an English Romantic style public park, Central Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux and built in 1857-58

The Landmark West Certificate of Appropriateness Committee would like to acknowledge the time the Met spent explaining the project to us in great detail. We appreciate that an institution such as the Met is upholding standards in community engagement for a project of this magnitude.

Designing additions to landmarks often poses a special challenge. Museums around the world address the issue regularly with many solutions and varied degrees of success. In New York alone, the Frick and New-York Historical Society chose to continue their eclectic, classical designs. The American Museum of Natural History built a startlingly contrasting addition to a building that, within its completed facades, had previously favored Romanesque and Beaux-Arts styles. MOMA applies new modern schemes with each iteration, as is appropriate (and amending zoning to boot, which may be less so). The Whitney, after a few tries, gave up altogether and moved downtown.

The Met, the largest and arguably most prestigious of our museums, faces special challenges with its location in the nation's most important park. Its original Vaux & Mould building, conceived as a jewel in the park and facing inward, has been completely subsumed by additions, especially the Hunt/McKim Mead & White entrance on Fifth Avenue. When faced with the prospect of several new additions in the 1960s, the Museum wisely commissioned the

1971 Master Plan to ensure each iteration related to the next. The Roche-Dinkeloo plan addresses the need for modern gallery space while working to minimize the impact on its host, the park. The use of multi-pane reflective glass, reminiscent of the skylights of the older museums, is a very clever response to the challenge. The angled surfaces further reduce the buildings' impact. All of the modern facades, with the exception of two walls on the south and north facades at the west end of each, adhere.

Once again, the Museum is faced with a need for expansion, which is only to be expected of such a great institution. It is not for us to comment on alternatives such as satellite sites in addition to the Cloisters, except to the extent that the Commission should note this is a viable alternative to expansion on-site.

Here the proposed addition abandons principal devices of the Master Plan; symmetry, sequence, and skylights, and adopts an admittedly innovative façade design for the proposed addition. Appealing as this would be at an independent building on a different site, the scheme does nothing to emulate the goals of the Pritzker Prize-winning architect. Instead, the proposal is boxy, imposing, very white, and very, very large.

Is it possible to minimize the effect of this new bulk, directly attached to an Individual Landmark, on the Park, itself a Scenic Landmark? Perhaps, but with this design, we certainly see none of that goal explored, and until it is, we will not know.

Is this proposal acceptable as presented? No, for its incongruity with the clever elements of the Master Plan, for its lack of attempts at minimizing the effect of its bulk, and lastly for the unmitigated bulk itself.

The Landmark West! Certificate of Appropriateness Committee believes these clever architects should be sent back to the drawing board with a revised program; we look forward to seeing what they can do!

Thank You.