

**SOCIETY OF
ARCHITECTURAL
HISTORIANS**

1 July 2024

Ms. Sarah Carroll, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor, North
New York, NY 10007

Re: Whitney Museum of American Art Public Interior Spaces, 945 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10025

Dear Ms. Carroll,

The Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) joins Docomomo US/NY Tri-State, Docomomo US, and other preservation organizations in expressing strong support for the prompt calendaring and designation of the public interior spaces of the former Whitney Museum of American Art at 945 Madison Avenue in Manhattan by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). The interior public spaces, designed by Marcel Breuer and his partner Hamilton Smith, were completed in 1966. These interiors, an essential part of the overall design, were carefully restored in 2016 under the supervision of Beyer Blinder Belle.

SAH is the principal scholarly organization for architectural historians in North America. It does not regularly become involved in local preservation issues and speaks only to issues of national and international importance. We evaluate threats to nationally and internationally significant architectural resources thoroughly, and do not take positions on them lightly.

The building is expected to be sold to Sotheby's later this year, and planned interventions include a rooftop addition. Because the Whitney is located within New York City's Upper East Side Historic District, those changes would be reviewed by the LPC. Alterations to the interior, however, would not. Therefore, we request that New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission calendar and approve the Request for Evaluation (RFE) submitted by Docomomo US/New York Tri State and Docomomo US on 21 December 2023 which supports the designation of the public interior spaces of the Whitney Museum of American Art as an Interior Landmark.

The Whitney Museum of American Art, designed by Marcel Breuer and Hamilton P. Smith, with consulting architect Michael H. Irving, was constructed between 1964 and 1966. The building is rightly recognized as a landmark of American architecture. It is located within New York City's Upper East Side Historic District (1981) and is a contributing resource to that district. We believe that Breuer's design is of international significance, and the listing of these remaining spaces would ensure the preservation of interiors universally recognized as among the most noteworthy modern interiors produced in the United States. We strongly recommend the listing of the public interior spaces of the Whitney.

In encouraging the retention and preservation of the public interior spaces at the Whitney, the Society of Architectural Historians joins with such supporting organizations as Docomomo US/NY Tri-State, Docomomo US, Preservation League of New York State, The Historic Districts Council, the Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, and other significant organizations and individuals. The Whitney is an architectural landmark of national and international distinction and is well deserving of this protection. We urge the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission to designate these interior spaces to ensure that future generations are

able to experience and enjoy both the interior and exterior of this monument of American architecture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B_C_G" with a horizontal line extending from the end of the "G".

Bryan Clark Green, Ph.D., LEED AP BD+C
Preservation Officer and Chair,
Society of Architectural Historians Heritage Conservation Committee

cc:

Kenneth Breisch, Ph.D.; Anthony Cohn, AIA; Pushpita Eshika, Ph.D.; Yannick Etoundi; David Fixler, FAIA;
Mohammad Gharipour, Ph.D.; Suha Hasan, Ph.D.; Priya Jain, AIA; Basak Kalfa; Theodore H. Prudon, Ph.D.,
FAIA; Deborah Slaton; Ben Thomas, Ph.D.; Members, SAH Heritage Conservation Committee; John Arbuckle
President, Docomomo US/New York Tri-State; Liz Waytkus, Executive Director, Docomomo US; Sean Khorsandi,
Executive Director, Landmark West!