

February 1, 2011

Honorable Robert Tierney, Chair
New York Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th floor
New York, NY 10007

**Testimony regarding landmark designation of
Manufacturers Trust Company Building (1st/2nd floor interiors)**

DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State is the local chapter of an international organization working in over 50 countries to identify, document and protect buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement.

I, Kyle Johnson, am a member of the Board of that New York/Tri-State chapter, which strongly supports the proposed landmark designation of the interior of the Manufacturers Trust Company Building at 510 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan.

The visibility of this structure's distinctive interior through its transparent curtain walls has been a salient feature of this landmark since its construction in 1954. And today the spaces, surfaces, and other distinctive interior elements seen behind its clear glass envelope remain essential to its architectural identity.

The exposure of interiors through glass curtain walls was one of the ideal design objectives of the Modern Movement, and this building was one of the first in the world actually to attain this goal. Its architectural distinction depends on preserving the view deeply into its interiors from the street. It is particularly essential to maintain the integrity of the second-floor banking hall. This unique hall, with its floor plane floating free of the exterior envelope and its luminous ceiling 30 feet above, offers an exhilarating spatial experience that can be appreciated even by those passing by outside. The bank's vault door, custom designed by Henry Dreyfus, is exposed to view close to the sidewalk, providing a modern symbol of security to replace the traditional symbolism of massive stone walls.

Manufacturers Trust is recognized throughout the world as a key landmark of Modern architecture. But its design preeminence is more than a few inches deep. Unless its interior is preserved in substantially original form, the qualities that have made the building a globally recognized landmark of 20th-Century architecture will be no more than treasured memories.

The New York Tri-State chapter of DOCOMOMO enthusiastically backs the proposed landmark designation of this interior.

Sincerely,
Advocacy Committee
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