



May 19, 2015

Honorable Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th floor
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Certificate of Appropriateness
375 Park Avenue - Four Seasons Restaurant**

DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State is a local chapter of an international organization working in 59 countries to identify, document and protect buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement. The Four Seasons restaurant is one of the finest works of the architect Philip Johnson and one of the most significant International Style interiors not only in New York City but arguably in the entire world. No expense was spared in its creation. Johnson and his talented team of collaborators meticulously considered and resolved every aspect of the design. Until now, it has remained remarkably well preserved.

Any restoration to this famous and iconic masterpiece should be undertaken with the utmost care and any designated elevations and architectural features must be protected and kept in tact according to the original design. DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State is extremely concerned that some of the alterations currently being proposed would severely compromise the integrity and atmosphere of the Four Seasons.

The building owner RFR Holding proposes to alter the existing fixed upper tier of French walnut paneling separating the Pool Room from the adjoining mezzanine-level private dining room so that they would become operable, allowing the spaces to be more fully joined. That would fundamentally alter and compromise the original spatial relationship. Another proposed alteration, which we also oppose, is the removal of the cracked glass and bronze partition in the Grill Room, designed by Johnson in 1983. Rather than trying to recreate an earlier design that proved unsuccessful, this distinctive element should be preserved.

The original lighting scheme created by Richard Kelly, one of the most influential lighting designers of the postwar era, is a critical aspect of the original design. We recognize the value of introducing energy efficient LED fixtures. However, Kelly's original lighting design should be respected and replicated as closely as possible.

We regret that the restaurant's important furnishings, accessories and custom designed table settings are not protected by the interior designation and encourage RFR Holding to retain and preserve them as well.

RFR knew full well that their purchase of a cherished designated landmark would come to them as a bundle of rights and with responsibilities to maintain it for a higher public purpose, not for their own highest and best use and not with rights to alter landmarked features with their own discretionary taste. We at DOCOMOMO, along with so many other New Yorkers, expect this important landmark to be safely protected by the landmarks laws and various commissions empowered over time to uphold it. We respectfully request that your commission vote to refuse this set of applications and to ask the applicant to re-apply at a later date, with a proposal that does not visibly alter the architecture or the basic lighting scheme and its concepts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John S. Arbuckle".

John Shreve Arbuckle
President
DOCOMOMO US New York/Tri-State
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