



January 19, 2021

The Honorable Sarah Carroll, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
David N. Dinkins Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North
New York, NY 10007

Re: Certificate of Appropriateness
211 East 48th Street

DOCOMOMO US/New York Tri-State is a local chapter of an international organization working in over 65 countries around the world. Our mission is to increase public awareness and appreciation of Modern architecture, landscapes and urban design; to identify and document local examples; and to advocate for the protection of those determined most significant. Since 1996, the chapter has been advancing this mission in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Completed in 1934, the groundbreaking Lescaze House was the first International Style residence built in New York City, the first house in the city with central air conditioning, and the first building in New York City to employ structural glass block. It was designed by the architect William Lescaze, a key figure in the introduction of the Modern Movement in America, as his own home and studio. Two years before, with George Howe, he had completed the seminal PSFS Building in Philadelphia, the first International Style skyscraper built in the United States. Lescaze lived and practiced architecture in the house for three and a half decades, until his death in 1969. As both an innovative early example of Modernism and the longtime home and studio of a leading Modern architect, the Lescaze House is among the most important works of Modern architecture in New York and nationally significant. Almost exactly 45 years ago, on January 27, 1976, the Landmarks Preservation Commission recognized its exceptional significance by making it one of the very first works of Modern architecture in the city to be individually designated.

We are fortunate that today, while it has suffered from some deferred maintenance, the exterior of the Lescaze House remains largely original. Yet, now its integrity is threatened. The current application would dramatically change the building's exterior envelope by building a penthouse, extending existing chimneys, completely removing its entire original historic rear façade and attempting to replicate it six feet further north, and lowering the rear yard. DOCOMOMO US/New York Tri-State strongly opposes these unnecessary alterations to this well-preserved landmark and respectfully requests that the Commission reject these aspects of the present application.

The current proposal also includes a respectful restoration of the front façade, including preserving original historic materials where possible and replacing failed glass blocks with new custom fabricated glass blocks to match the existing. We applaud this portion of the application and hope that it will be completed.

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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