### **Greetings, Neighbor...**

LANDMARK WEST! celebrates its 15th Anniversary this millennium year, and we look forward to the challenges to come.

One of our major challenges will be the Lincoln Center area: the arts complex itself, which is now more than 30 years old – the minimum for landmarking protection consideration; the traffic-choked, pedestrian-unfriendly maze fronting Lincoln Center; the unprotected 63-64 Street "missing finger" from the Upper West Side/CPW Historic District (including 1926 Broadway – formerly the Goelet Garage, now the home of the Saloon and World Gym).

So, in this anniversary issue, we set the stage: see front cover and below (neighbor Arnold Newman's historic photo); the Lincoln Center story on pages 3-4; the reminder that government <u>can</u> work (Council Member Ronnie Eldridge, Preservation Profile, p. 8-9).

But we don't wear single-issue blinders, and the Upper West Side is a lot more than Lincoln Center. Read Christopher Gray's Manhattan Valley piece, p. 10, and Walter Cain's article on St. Michael's Tiffany stained glass windows, p. 2, for tantalizing looks at some lesser-known treasures. On p. 11, catch up on a couple of past stories – the good, the bad and the interesting.

Meanwhile, bask in the pleasurable glow from West 72nd Street's holiday season snowflake lights, back cover; and plan your lectures, walking tours, and summer reading (p. 5).

Take a deep breath, and let's march on.

Preservationally Yours,

Arlene Simon, President

## **Arnold Newman:** What They Were *Thinking*



Arnold Newman, who has maintained his studio on West 67th Street since 1948, is one of the most widely exhibited, collected, and honored photographers working today. Newman recalled the 1959 photo-shoot: "Towards the end of the photo session in the

basement of Rockefeller Center, I asked the assemblage about the impact of the project on traffic – since I lived around the corner, I had my doubts. Gordon Bunshaft said that he was glad I asked the question, but didn't answer it. My impression was that the others couldn't give a damn."

The cover photo celebrating Lincoln Center's architects dates from 1959. From left to right, Edward Matthews (SOM), Philip Johnson, Joseph Mielziner, Wallace Harrison (standing), John D. Rockefeller III, Eero Saarinen, Gordon Bunshaft, Max Abramovitz, Pietro Belluschi.

St. Michael's Church: Restoring the Tiffany Windows by Walter M. Cain

One of the world's most important collections of Tiffany stained glass and mosaics resides at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, located at 225 West 99th Street at Amsterdam Avenue. Central to Tiffany's design for St. Michael's are seven huge stained glass windows, several now in danger of collapsing. The church is currently raising \$500,000, primarily to reinforce and restore the windows.

St. Michael's Church is the oldest continuing institution on the Upper West Side, founded in 1807 to serve summer residents with country houses on the Hudson River. In the late 1800s, in response to its rapid growth, St. Michael's hired Robert W. Gibson to design a new church, completed in 1891. Gibson's Romanesque structure of Indiana limestone is now on the State and National Register of Historic Places.

In 1895, St. Michael's commissioned Tiffany Glass Studios to carry out the church's first interior project: decorating the semi-circular apse. This was one of the earliest and most important commissions for Tiffany's studio. Tiffany placed seven large, intensely colored stained glass windows depicting "St. Michael's Victory in Heaven" at the focal point of the apse. St. Michael carries his flag of victory in the center window, surrounded by legions of angels carrying musical instruments. The massive windows, each measuring five feet wide and 22 feet tall, are typical of Tiffany's work from this period, utilizing a wide array of brilliant colors, patterns and textures to depict figures. Tiffany used as many as four layers of glass in some places to achieve his effects, and molded certain pieces to depict folds of drapery. Unlike most stained glass, only the faces and hands are painted.

Tiffany executed several more projects at St. Michael's in subsequent years, including the massive marble and mosaic pulpit, the "Dove Window," and two windows and a wall mosaic in the side chapel. While St. Michael's does not have a complete "Tiffany interior," since the works of other artists are represented, its collection spanning 25 years is one of the finest and largest examples of Tiffany's designs still intact in its original setting.

Last year, it became apparent that the apse windows were sagging in their frames, and the church's conservator discovered that several windows were in imminent danger of collapse, although the church had cleaned and repaired these windows only 10 years ago. Tiffany's own design had incorporated inadequate structural supports, and an improperly-vented protective glazing system had created a greenhouse effect, accelerating their decline. These problems are being addressed by removing the windows, restoring the wooden frames, adding structural supports, and installing a more sophisticated protection system. The window at greatest risk has now been restored and reinstalled, and the rest will be completed as funds allow. Contact the church for a tour: (212) 222-2700. Web site: www.saintmichaelschurch.org

Walter M. Cain is Co-Chair of the church's Restoration Committee.

Editor's note: St. Michael's Church is not a New York City Landmark.

HENRY F.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARNOLD NEWMAN

LANDMARK WEST! 45 W. 67 ST, NYC 10023 TEL (212) 496-8110 FAX (212) 875-0209

#### **Modern Icon: Lincoln Center**

by Kathleen Randall

incoln Center for the Performing Arts (1955-1969) marked the first gathering of major performing arts institutions of an American metropolis into a centralized location. As cultural historians have pointed out, the optimism and prosperity of the postwar period brought new emphasis to the importance of the arts in everyday life. From its conception, the nation's first "cultural center" was promoted as a source of benefits that went well beyond providing new performance spaces for ballet, opera, symphony and drama. Commentary surrounding the project documents how the Center's visionaries instilled it with a mission so large it

included slowing popular culture's assault on the traditional arts, promoting cultural exchange throughout the world, democratizing the arts and even rescuing the middle-class American from a dangerous abundance of leisure time.

These goals demanded visibility and monumentality, which were achieved by clustering the arts institutions on a super block site and by an architecture wholly different from the surrounding Upper West Side neighborhood. The site was made possible through Robert Moses' Lincoln Square urban renewal project — a massive undertaking that

originally included a skyscraper hotel, commercial theaters and a fashion center along with a new opera house. In the end, land was provided for Lincoln Center, Fordham University and several large apartment towers. The project displaced thousands of residents and businesses, generating a swift and organized opposition that had little chance in an era when "slum clearance" was the strategy of choice for saving cities.

The first major announcement of Lincoln Center in *The New York Times* reported that the Center would feature "an architectural style defined as Monumental Modern." What monumental modern might be was anyone's guess. Six American architects were awarded commissions: Wallace Harrison, opera house; Max Abramovitz, philharmonic hall; Philip Johnson, state theater; Eero Saarinen, repertory theater; Gordon Bunshaft, library; and Pietro Belluschi, Julliard School. Working with Harrison as coordinating architect, the architects agreed on a set of "unifying elements" before setting out on an architectural adventure that would span more than eight years.

Referencing Lincoln Center, Philip Johnson noted the similarity of backgrounds among the selected architects. "We all came up through the Modern movement together and we were all looking away from the puritanism of the International Style toward enriched forms." Expressionism, Brutalism and Formalism were some of the architectural challenges of the

day to the "puritanism" Johnson noted. Architects for Lincoln Center's threeplaza buildings settled on Formalism as their interpretation of "Monumental Modern". Formalism, simplified to its basics, is architecture that emphasizes form over pure functionalism or structural expression. Formalism allowed historicized elements to be applied to modern steel and glass buildings, creating an instant, easily readable monumentality considered essential to the Center's success. The stylized, temple-front columns, exterior porticos, matching cornice heights, raised podium and plaza paving pattern are all elements more historical than modern—elements that differentiated Lincoln Center's buildings from the corporate modern architecture of the day and celebrated the traditional aesthetics associated with arts institutions.

Lincoln Center succeeded as a midcentury experiment in making a selective group of performing arts institutions visible in an urban environment. In doing so, it launched an entirely new concept in American performing arts presentation that would be studied and cloned across the country. Before the Metropolitan Opera house was even completed, over 60 cities had cultural arts centers underway or in the planning stages. Architecturally, there is very little like Lincoln Center in the city; as for sheer urban spectacle, nothing beats the plaza, or a house balcony, at intermission on a performance night.

Kathleen Randall is a graduate of Columbia University's Historic Preservation Program.

Editor's note: Lincoln Center is not a New York City Landmark *yet*.



# **Lincoln Center's Front Yard: Pedestrian Terror and Traffic Chaos**

When Broadway slices across Manhattan's classic street grid, it creates confusion, pocket-sized "bowtie" parks, and opportunities (Madison Park, Herald Square, Times Square – and Lincoln Square).

Currently, Tucker Park (66th Street) and Dante Park (63rd Street) are islands (one overrun, one

underutilized) in the midst of chaos. Council Member Ronnie Eldridge and LANDMARK WEST! (the dynamic duo of West 72nd Street's rejuvenation) are spearheading a new design initiative.

After an inclusive review of proposals by several major architects and their project teams (dealing with traffic, landscape, graphics, gardening and lighting), the architecture firm of Beyer Blinder Belle was selected to develop a schematic design incorporating urban design, programmatic, and maintenance considerations for the parks and the adjacent streetscape. *Stay tuned*.

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#### **Books in Brief**



Grand Central: Gateway to a Million Lives

by John Belle and Maxinne Rhea Leighton, W.W. Norton & Company, 1999, 192 pages, \$39.95.

A chronicle of the story of Grand Central Terminal in New York City – "a remarkable and beautiful building whose birth, survival, and restoration reflect not only the changes that have taken place in our country's history, culture and social consciousness but also the critical role architecture plays in the expansion of our cities." The history centers on the struggle to save Grand Central in the wake of the destruction of Penn Station

and in the face of economic forces in the real estate industry that were intent on its demise. Along with 192 pages of rich text, 50 color plates and 100 black-and-white illustrations provide a fascinating firsthand account of the recent \$400 million restoration.

See our book offer p. 6

## **Upcoming Events: Lecture & Tours**

Lecture and Walking Tour

Join architectural historian Andrew S.

Dolkart for a lecture and discussion on his 1998 award-winning book Morningside Heights: A History of its Architecture and Development (see offer, p.6). Autographed books will be available for purchase at the lecture. Following the lecture, join Mr. Dolkart for a walk through Morningside Heights. The tour will explore the rich architecture and history of the area, including the unfinished Cathedral of St. John the Divine, St. Luke's Hospital, and the Columbia University campus, as well as the buildings that form New York's earliest middle-class apartment house community.

Lecture: Tuesday, June 13, 6-8 pm Walking Tour: Tuesday, June 20, 6-8 pm

Walking Tour Back by popular demand is Andrew S. Dolkart's tour of West 72nd Street from Central Park to Riverside Park, a fascinating boulevard of rowhouses, great apartment buildings, and shops. This tour will discuss development and change on West 72nd Street, the impact of the elevated railroad and the subway, and the restoration work on the block between Broadway/Amsterdam and Columbus avenues recently undertaken under the direction of LW!

Walking Tour: Thursday, July 6, 6-8 pm

The cost of each event is \$10. For reservations and meeting locations call LW!, 496-8110. Space is limited.

Extra! Extra! LW! is to receive an award from the NY Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, honoring us for our advocacy in support of the many Victorian-era structures on the Upper West Side. The award will be presented June 5th at the Great Hall of Cooper Union. The Victorian Society in America fosters public appreciation and understanding of the artistic expression of the 19th century.

Fall 2000 Upcoming Event Celebrate our second awards ceremony, highlighting the revitalization of West 72 Street, and mark the 15th Anniversary of LANDMARK WEST!



Support LW! – we need your help as we celebrate our 15th Anniversary in 2000. Please return this form with your tax-deductible contribution.

4	A special offer: Contribute \$150 or more, and receive a gift of either A Clearing in the
^	A special offer. Contribute \$150 of more, and receive a girt of entire A cicaring in the
	Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century by Witold
	Rybczynski; Grand Central: Gateway to a Million Lives by John Belle and Maxinne Rhea
	Leighton; Morningside Heights: A History of Its Architecture and Development by Andrew
	Scott Dolkart; or another book from our collection.

1 \$250

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Design Helena Tammearu • Printer AGW Lithographers, Inc.
Contributing Editor Rachel Holzman

Accountant Goldstein Golub Kessler & Comp., P.C. • Logo design Milton Glaser

#### About LANDMARK WEST!

LANDMARK WEST! is a non-profit award-winning community group working to preserve the best of the Upper West Side's architectural heritage from 59 to 110 Street between Central Park West and Riverside Drive. Since 1985 it has worked to achieve landmark status for individual buildings and historic districts. Today, LANDMARK WEST! is the proud curator of the area's 2,605 designated landmarks (up from only 337 in 1985), and continues to promote awareness of these architectural treasures and the urgent need to protect them against insensitive change and demolition.

Board Members

THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE 45 WEST 67 STREET NEW YORK NY 10023 (212) 496-8110





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#### **Preservation Profile:**

## **Council Member Ronnie Eldridge**

by Bruce Simon

It had to look like a set-up. We were having a breakfast sit-down at the Elite. A box of brown sugar for my oatmeal and Ronnie's Diet Coke on our tiny table for two left no room for my yellow legal pad. Anyhow, this guy comes over and starts telling Ronnie how wonderful West 72nd Street has become, what a difference it has made to shopkeepers and shoppers, and profusely thanks the Council Member for her work on the revitalization project.



Ronnie beams and gracefully says that others worked hard, too. At that point, I had the "hook" for this piece that I'd been groping for government can work, in a direct, observable, appreciable way; but it takes someone like Ronnie to make it work.

The thing is, you need a hook for Ronnie. Otherwise, her sheer effervescence, the hop-scotchedy nature of her focus, can leave you bathed in a warm glow, and convinced, but not always sure of what. That's not a criticism – in politics, that's a fair description of an artist.

Readers of this Newsletter – and recipients of LW's various communications - know how the Columbus-Broadway block of West 72nd Street has been transformed from a tacky and deteriorating downscale retail strip to a visually handsome and commercially appealing West Side destination. And how an unusual partnership of building owners, shopkeepers, and city agencies, fostered and nurtured by the joint leadership of LANDMARK WEST! and Eldridge, made the difference.

Ronnie's role, of course, was more than that of coordinator - she was the source of the unique commodity that makes miracles happen in this town - money. \$400,000 of City Capital Budget funds to do the heavy end of 72nd Street's restoration: paving, sidewalks, curbs, street lights, trees.

Now the tricky question: How did Council Member Eldridge, a renowned maverick and ultra-liberal voice in a basically conservative (though Democratic) City Council, who is used to being by-passed by the Council leadership as a result of her outspoken refusal to "go along with the program," pull this off?

That question prompted a breakneck review of her life and career. Born and stayed on the West Side. P.S. 166. Joan of Arc Junior High. High School of Music and Art. Barnard College. Stickball on 89th Street. Father managed the Ansonia hotel in the Thirties. Watched Lincoln Center being built while pushing baby strollers. Major roles in Lindsay administration; RFK campaign; Public TV producer; Channel 13 Director of Communications. Ronnie and her second husband, Jimmy Breslin (a landmark writer) share nine children and eight grandchildren from their first marriages – both ended by the early death of their partners. MARY ENGEL

With that demonstration of real life West Side bona fides on the table, Ronnie described the constant and conscious "balancing" necessary to

preserve one's integrity, but get things done. Stand up for what you believe: oppose what you don't. That's not being a "mayerick:" that's being honest. Cooperate with the leadership, be constructive, be responsible on budget issues. That's not co-optation, that's the art of politics. Ronnie muses: "You have to realize that the New York City Council is in many respects a suburban legislature." To many Council Members, Manhattan is still "the City". To them, the Central Business District, not a series of residential neighborhoods, is the basic image. Its expansion northward to Lincoln Square, for example, is seen by many Council members as manifest destiny. Council Member Eldridge works relentlessly to portray her district (roughly - W. 55th to 96th Streets, with jagged eastwest boundaries) to her Council colleagues as a community, not a fringe around a business and cultural behemoth.

Ronnie will be term-limited out of her seat in November 2001. In the landuse/landmarking context. I asked which of her current projects she hopes most to advance before she leaves. No hesitation:

The area in front of Lincoln Center. The so-called "Bow-Tie" parks, Tucker and Dante. This huge public space constituting the "front yard" of Lincoln Center is terribly important and terribly neglected. The cultural heart of the City has been beating in the physical context of a permanent traffic jam. irresponsibly unresponsive to pedestrians, with no concern for any common. let alone esthetic. sense.

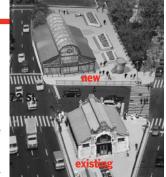
Recently, Council Member Eldridge and LW!, working with a coalition of public and private partners (aided by a city planning grant), have begun to work on a plan to redesign Lincoln Center's "front yard" in a manner worthy of its great significance (see p. 4).

The oatmeal was cold and lumpy. The Diet Coke was flat. The gladhander a GRUZEN SAMTON/RICHARD DATTNER – ASSOCIATED ARCHITECTS, WILLIAMS 3DMEDIA – RENDERER fading memory. Ronnie was off to a meeting where she could take another stab at making government work. The whole town is a set-up.

Bruce Simon is a LANDMARK WEST! Board Member.

## 2003 "Virtual" Projection: W. 71 - 73 Sts. & Broadway

The long awaited rehabilitation of the W. 72 St. IRT Station has begun. The project by Gruzen Samton / Richard Dattner -Associated Architects is designed to alleviate crowding and facilitate access to the station. It includes the design of a new Control Building in the northbound lanes of Broadway



from 72-73 Sts., station rehabilitation, platform extensions, and the rehabilitation by Cowley & Prudon Architects of the existing landmark Control Building. The new Control Building features four new stairs, an elevator to each platform, an exposed steel structure, masonry base, and skylight, which incorporates a glass mosaic artwork by Robert Hickman. The northbound lanes of Broadway, 72-73 Sts. will be closed to traffic to create a new landscaped public plaza and extension of Verdi Park. Completion date is set for 2003.

Down the Bottomless Wishing Well? A Manhattan Ave. Historic District (105 - 106 Sts.) was one of 7 worthy nominations on the "Wish List" LW! forwarded to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in May 1996 and again in May 1999. A silence has ensued. Maybe Christopher Gray's voice will be heard?

#### A Bostonian Air: 1880s Brick Row Houses

by Christopher Gray

The picturesque pocket of Victorian row houses on Manhattan Avenue from 104th to 106th Sts. has a calm Bostonian air that makes it seem a bit removed from city life.



Manhattan Avenue was not on the original street plan for New York City, but by 1868 it was mapped — as New Avenue running north from 100th Street between what are now Central Park West and Columbus Avenue. This was well before any real development in the area, but in the mid-1880s sales activities picked up, and the thoroughfare received its current name in 1884. High

land prices discouraged row house building on Central Park West, although in 1884 the New York Cancer Hospital – now abandoned – started its giant rounded building on Central Park West from 105th to 106th Streets.

The first building activity on Manhattan Avenue occurred in 1885, when Frederick Seitz put up the row houses on the west side of the street from 105th to 106th, designed by Joseph M. Dunn. The next year the developer John Brown built up the east side of the same block with houses designed by C.P.H. Gilbert, and in 1889 Joseph Turner had the architect Edward Angell design the houses on the west side of Manhattan Ave. from 104th to 105th.

Although other developers were still putting up traditional high-stoop brownstones elsewhere in Manhattan, all these buildings were brick, with stone and terra cotta trim and lower stoops; they were only three stories tall. costing between \$8,000 and \$12,000 to build. The houses designed by Gilbert are close to the Queen Anne style, with sunburst motifs in the gables, wavy linear ornament on the cornice, and multilight windows with stained glass. Those by Dunn are a little wilder, with widely varying arches and gables. The critic Montgomery Schuyler coined the phrase "reign of terror" style to describe them because of their startling and alarming appearance. The Angell houses are neo-Romanesque and more sophisticated, although still quite varied. All have unusual ornament — terra cotta panels with rivethead figuring, sunburst ironwork and subtly varying brickwork.

All this takes place in the shadow of the old New York Cancer Hospital, later a nursing home, designated a landmark in 1976 and vacant since. There have been various plans for redevelopment, but the building remains a majestic wreck. Some call it a blight, but it is also a peaceful interlude in the area, a sort of architectural preserve.

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Adapted from material in Christopher Gray's New York Times November 28, 1999 article.

**The Bad The 63rd St. "Y"** We win some and we lose some – but this one really hurts! We lost our appeal in the "Y" case, and there is nowhere else to go to block this outrageous intrusion in our already over-burdened neighborhood.

On November 23, the Appellate Division affirmed the ruling of the lower court, which had affirmed the ruling of the City's Board of Standards and Appeals – all of which permits the "Y" to exploit its "air rights" through the construction of a massive 41 story tower, cantilevered over its historic landmark structure. The ruling absurdly permits the developer to use an 11-year old building permit, without any review of all that's happened on the West Side in the past decade. In a ruling only a developer's lawyer could love, the Appellate Court adroitly avoided any conclusion that the lower court ruling – or the BSA ruling – was "correct;" only that it wasn't "arbitrary and capricious." The Court brushed off the language of the law relied upon by LW!, by calling it "not unambiguously clear".

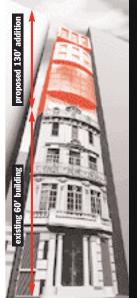
Of such nimble buck-passing is so much New York mischief made. LW! is disheartened but not chastened by the result. Win or lose, the good fight must be fought. In this case, noble effort, miserable result.

#### **The Interesting The Normandy Apartments**

Stealing a page from the developer's game book – the Normandy protects its flanks. One of many battles of the last decade was the effort to protect the architectural integrity of the landmarked Normandy Apartments (Riverside Dr. between 86 & 87 Sts.) from the construction of a 10-story addition atop its neighboring, un-landmarked, 5-story mansion, the House of Free Russia. After a see-saw battle in the court, with mixed results, the Normandy Co-op Board finally removed the cloud of imminent development by purchasing the air rights above the neighboring mansion for \$1.35 million.

The underlying message for preservationists – (whether motivated by concerns next door or community-wide) is that getting out ahead of the curve, pro-actively, is highly desirable; playing catch-up ball is more difficult, and expensive. Of course, it is easier said than done, requiring presence, wisdom, and resources.

#### What could have been...





THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE UPPER WEST SIDE

