

A L L I A N C E f o r T H E A R T S

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April 9, 2009

Hon Robert B. Tierney
Chairman
Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street, 9th floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Bob:

I am very pleased to add my name and that of the Alliance for the Arts to the growing list of citizens and civic and cultural organizations supporting the formal designation as a New York City Landmark of The IRT Powerhouse.

You and your fellow Commission members and the staff of the Landmarks Commission are well aware of this signature building and its architectural uniqueness. Others more qualified than I to speak of its architectural merit have already indicated their support for granting it landmark status. I will speak of it primarily as a cultural asset of New York City, and also as a fixture of the West Side, of which I am a proud resident.

Like the Eiffel Tower or the Taj Mahal or the White House, there are buildings which gain a centrality and cultural importance through their sheer beauty and grand place in the cityscape. Like those three disparate examples—all quite different to The Powerhouse—it was not built for the public to enter. But it was most emphatically and gloriously built for the public to see and appreciate, and, as is the case with many New Yorkers, to come to love as a popular landmark.

But it can be compared to another building: the Banksidè Power Station in London. This great pile anchored the south side of the Thames for decades, even after it ceased to be used as a power station. Then, in 2000, it was converted by the Tate Museum into one of the greatest cultural spaces in the world, an attraction for nearly five million visitors and Britons each year and the standard-bearer for a new generation of cultural vitality and global relevance for London.

It is not for me to say what the best future use of The Powerhouse is, but only to propose that by recognizing its distinction and helping to insure its survival intact, it becomes possible for the most creative people in our city to imagine new uses for it.

The Alliance has continuously reminded New Yorkers of the economic dimension of cultural life in our city through research that has documented the creation of 160,000 jobs and \$21 billion in economic activity. As the Mayor has recognized in many ways, this home industry, so central to our identity and way of life, must stay strong. And to stay strong it must change and grow; the plans for growth can perhaps best be made in a time of economic stagnation.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission can contribute to this forward thinking indirectly if it chooses to bestow the status of New York City Landmark to The Powerhouse, which it so richly deserves.

Sincerely yours,



Randall Bourscheidt
President