



## FRIENDS OF TERRA COTTA

February 24, 2009

Robert B. Tierney, Chair  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
100 Centre Street, 9<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairman Tierney,

*Friends of Terra Cotta* urges the Landmarks Preservation Commission to calendar the 1904 IRT Powerhouse at 59<sup>th</sup> Street and 11<sup>th</sup> avenue for a designation hearing. The significance of this remarkable structure goes beyond its superb terra cotta and brick exterior. This was the site where coal was used to generate all the electricity needed to run New York's original subway line. A number of the original stations and several kiosks have been landmarked and it is highly appropriate that the source of the power that made the system work be considered for designation as well.

Stanford White of McKim, Mead and White was responsible for the richness of texture and plasticity in ornamentation. The National Trust publication, *Master Builders* comments on this architectural firm stating: "Working within the conventions of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century idealist formalism with its allusions to the architecture of the past, McKim, Mead and White represented the most generous realization of the triad of commodious planning, sound construction and visual delight first propounded by the Roman writer on architecture Vitruvius in the first century B.C."

The structure is surprisingly intact for its age and the smokestacks (six originally and now two, one of which is original) are the most obvious change to the building. We understand that Con Edison is the current owner and with their very poor record of building stewardship (they have been tearing down structures in a number of boroughs) the future of the Powerhouse is a great concern to the community and to residents throughout the city. It was with great frustration (and broken promises from Con Edison about saving important architectural elements) that New Yorkers watched the destruction of the East Side Con Edison Power Plants during the last year.

Please take this matter under serious consideration before another very significant part of our architectural heritage becomes rubble.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Tunick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Tunick  
President

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