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Art Deco Society of New York Launches Campaign to Save Historic McGraw-Hill Lobby from Destruction

(Manhattan, NY) — The Art Deco Society of New York (ADSNY) has launched a campaign to protect the irreplaceable lobby of the McGraw-Hill Building, a New York **Art Deco treasure that is now under threat of destruction** from its owner, Deco Tower Associates, LLC. ADSNY's online petition urging the LPC to act quickly to calendar and grant Landmark designation to the exquisite lobby of the McGraw-Hill Building, garnered **support from over 1,400 concerned individuals from around the world within its first 48 hours**. MdeAS Architects, consultants working on the McGraw-Hill conversion, posted preliminary design renderings for the proposed lobby renovation on their website that illustrate the destruction of one of New York's most significant and unique Art Deco interiors. These renderings have been removed from the MdeAS website.

The McGraw-Hill Building is a globally recognized monument of early Modernism *inside and out*, but only the exterior is an official New York City Landmark. As noted in its exterior Landmarks designation report, the building's design is "the product of the gradual shift in architectural taste from the machine-age abstract decorativeness of the Moderne, or Art Deco style, to the corporate-age utility of the International Style, and of the constantly innovative and growing architectural genius of Raymond Hood."

When the LPC Landmarked the building's façade in 1979, a design feature noted in the designation report is the alternating blue-green steel bands separated by silver and gold colored metal tubes that adorn the ground floor façade. Similarly, the 1989 nomination for the building to the National Register of Historic Places describes the building's most notable feature as "the polychromatic streamlined ground floor on West 42nd Street." This distinctive ornamentation, that epitomizes the Streamline Moderne style, curves into the main entrance of the building and is seamlessly carried into the vestibule and lobby, where the alternating bands are complemented by blue-green enameled steel walls. The lobby is so clearly a continuation of the building's façade that if the LPC and the National Register of Historic Places deem the exterior is worthy of Landmark designation, the lobby must also carry the same level of importance.

Preservationist Theodore Grunewald describes the lobby as, "an astonishing polychromatic Emerald City extravaganza," and went on to quote a 1978 article from *New York Magazine* in which Fred Papert, of the Municipal Art Society, said, "If Fred Astaire had worked in an office building, this would have been the one." Even the LPC's Commissioners have weighed in on the importance of this lobby with five out of eleven commissioners saying, unprompted, that the historic lobby is worthy of preservation and protection. Commissioner Michael Goldblum said the "lobby is remarkably intact, and I think that it certainly is of the level that would merit designation," adding, "I hope and pray that they do preserve the historic interior so that it can be landmarked either before their work, during it or after." Commissioner Anne Holford-Smith encouraged the owner and architects "to preserve as much of the interior as possible," and went on to describe the lobby as, "an incredible space, a one-of-a-kind space."

In a 1943 interview with the *New York World*, Ayn Rand described the McGraw-Hill Building as, "the most beautiful building in New York City." The Art Deco Society of New York and fellow preservationists are simply trying to keep it that way.

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