

November 22, 2016

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF ONE UN NEW YORK, FIRST FLOOR INTERIORS, AMBASSADOR GRILL AND HOTEL LOBBY, 1 AND 2 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA, MANHATTAN, AS AN INTERIOR LANDMARK

Good morning Chair Srinivasan and Commissioners. I am Alex Herrera, speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy is pleased to support designation of the Ambassador Grill and Hotel Lobby as an Interior Landmark.

Designed by Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates, the dramatic Ambassador Grill opened in 1976 at a time when new, noteworthy construction was rare in New York City. Design innovations included the use of geometric volumes, patterns, mirrors, and false skylights that added great visual interest to what otherwise would be a standard hotel interior. Roche used mirrors to “double the reality” and to make an internal space with no windows seem light filled and inviting. The geometrically patterned floor is visually striking and reflects the geometric ceiling and skylights as well as the overall interplay of volumes. The result was described in the *New York Times* as a “brilliant, trompe l’oeil room that is a fantasy of reflection and illumination.”

The adjacent hotel lobby, which opened in 1983, compliments the Ambassador Grill with its use of mirrors, unusual classicized marble columns, and patterned marble floors, punctuated by the glass octagonal atria, which dramatically frames the glass towers above. An octagonal multi-faceted mirror is inset on axis as a terminal focal point of the main promenade.

Ada Louis Huxtable described the spaces as “rich, suave and beautiful. They break every rule of the hotel chain formula...They are uncompromising ‘good’ modern. They have real style—the style and conviction of their own times.” These public interiors are important milestones in the architectural development of New York City and deserve designation.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Conservancy's views.