

The logo for The New York Landmarks Conservancy features a red double-line border at the top, followed by a dotted line. Below this, the text "THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY" is written in a red, serif, all-caps font.

THE NEW YORK
LANDMARKS
CONSERVANCY

January 28, 2025

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR 945 MADISON AVENUE IN THE UPPER EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICT AND PROPOSED FOR INDIVIDUAL AND INTERIOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

The Breuer Building is an icon of Brutalist architecture. A 2017 restoration that focused on the interior received the Conservancy's Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award. Signature attributes such as concrete walls, bluestone floors, bronze fixtures, and wood handrails were all restored. It was clear that each element is significant, but the true impact of the Breuer's design is as an ensemble. The modifications proposed today each have the potential to enhance or disrupt this unity.

We understand the need for the installation of a new elevator. The bulkhead will be a minimal size, and will not be excessively visible from the street. The use of board-formed concrete will help it to blend into the roofline. We are concerned that the elevator will impact historic gallery space. Although this area is not part of the proposed interior designation, we urge the project team to ensure minimal changes to Breuer's design.

We understand that Sotheby's would like to reinforce its branding with signage at the entry, but wonder why a sign is being added to a sign? The proposed signage alters the well-defined balance of the vitrine's composition. Perhaps the Sotheby's lettering could be installed within the glass case.

We oppose installation of a reflective metal panel at the canopy. The concrete canopy is a character-defining feature, and the light reflective panel will severely diminish it. The existing cantilevered entrance is imposing and a little dark, and signals Breuer's intentions. There is a dramatic transition from the busy, cluttered New York streetscape into the still, encompassing Brutalist building. A bright and shiny panel will detract from that experience. Perhaps cleaning the underside of the canopy would address concerns of the owners while maintaining the expression of the concrete.

We appreciate that the Commission has taken steps to designate the Breuer Building as an individual and interior landmark, and are hopeful that the new owners recognize that they are stewards of a masterpiece. Thank you for the opportunity to express the Conservancy's views.

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