



GRAMERCY PARK BLOCK ASSOCIATION, INC.

23 Gramercy Park South, New York, NY 10003 Phone: 212-260-3875 Fax: 212-529-8355

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August 24, 2004

Dear GPBA Member:

Alarming architectural and structural conditions at the National Arts Club, caused largely by insufficient maintenance of its glorious Victorian Gothic facade for almost 20 years, are a serious concern to the Gramercy Park Block Association and many others who cherish this storied building, a National Historic Landmark and an individual New York City Landmark within the designated Gramercy Park Historic District.

Through in-depth research and documentation, provided by recognized architects and engineers who specialize in historic-preservation projects, and from "paper trails" proving that the National Arts Club administration has turned back offers of help to restore its famous facade, the GPBA has launched a campaign to alert preservation organizations throughout the city and state to the building's rapid deterioration into "demolition by neglect."

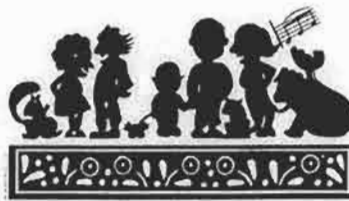
On a higher level, we have nominated the National Arts Club to the 2004 list of the "Seven to Save Endangered Properties Program" of the Preservation League of New York State, a not-for-profit organization headquartered in Albany that monitors the state's architectural and cultural heritage.

These efforts are a part of the GPBA's continuing support for those special qualities that make the Gramercy Park area unique in livability and ambiance.

Sincerely,

Arlene S. Harrison
President

Jack Taylor
Advisory Board and
Historic Preservation
Committee



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January 20, 2004

National Trust for Historic Preservation
Office of Communications/ 11 Most Endangered
1785 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Sir or Madam:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this application. We would like to nominate the National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South, New York, NY 10003, to be considered for your "America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places".

The site is described in the "Guide to New York City Landmarks" (a publication of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission) as architect Calvert Vaux's "masterful Victorian Gothic façade". It is a primary façade whose preservation has been compromised by lack of maintenance for nearly twenty years. Our view is that only the kind of disclosure provided by your "11 Most Endangered" program will encourage the Club's administration to begin the restoration of this architectural treasure.

We wish to emphasize that the significance of the National Arts Club is vouched for by its status as an individual New York City landmark; by its inclusion in the designated Gramercy Park Historic District; by its designation as a National Historic Landmark; and by its listing in the National and State Registers of Historic Places.

No property with such credentials should be permitted to deteriorate so alarmingly. Your consideration is eagerly solicited.

For the Gramercy Park Block Association, Inc.:

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Member, GPBA, Inc.
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Jack Taylor
Chair, Historic Preservation Committee
Gramercy Park Block Assn., Inc.
157 East 18th Street #3H
New York, New York 10003
212-475-2850

Cc: Ms. Marilyn Fenollosa, National Trust's Northeast Office
Encls.



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

232 East 11th Street New York NY 10003

tel 212-614-9107 fax 212-614-9127 e-mail hdc@hdc.org

January 26, 2004

National Trust for Historic Preservation
Office of Communications/II Most Endangered
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

Re: The National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park South, New York City

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to express support for the nomination of the National Arts Club (15 Gramercy Park South, New York City) to the National Trust's "America's II Most Endangered Historic Places" list. The Gramercy Park Block Association, Inc., is sponsoring the nomination, and the Historic Districts Council is pleased to offer our support.

The Historic Districts Council is the citywide advocate for New York City's designated historic districts and for neighborhoods meriting preservation. HDC is dedicated to upholding the New York City Landmarks Law, and to furthering the preservation ethic. Our mission is accomplished through ongoing programs of hands-on assistance to more than 100 local community and neighborhood preservation groups and through public-policy initiatives, publications, educational outreach, and sponsorship of community events. HDC is proud to be a Local Partner of the National Trust.

The origins of the National Arts Club building date back to 1845, when 15 Gramercy Park South was constructed. In 1863, New York governor and future presidential candidate Samuel J. Tilden purchased the building as his residence and hired architect Griffith Thomas to remodel the house. Eighteen years later, Tilden enlisted famed architect Calvert Vaux to combine his house with the adjacent structure at 14 Gramercy Park South. Vaux designed the façade of this larger Tilden Residence in the Victorian Gothic Revival style, with wonderful bas-relief sculptures in sandstone depicting such notables as Michelangelo, Dante, Goethe, and Benjamin Franklin. On the interior, Vaux retained some of Thomas's exquisite Renaissance Revival rooms, but reconfigured the entire parlor floor of 14 Gramercy Park South as a magnificent library in the Aesthetic style. Tilden died in 1886, just two years after the completion of his mansion. In 1906, the National Arts Club purchased the building, and they continue to occupy it.

Today, the National Arts Club owns one of New York City's most-intact houses from the mid-Victorian period. Designated a New York City individual landmark in 1966, the building was one of the first the

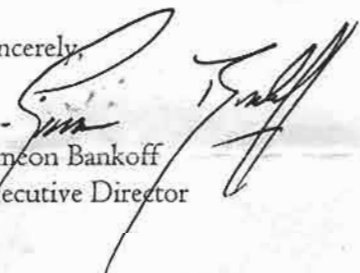
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission designated after its creation. The building is also a significant part of the Gramercy Park Historic District and is a National Historic Landmark. Despite these protections, it is severely deteriorating and in danger of being further damaged almost to the point of demolition by neglect.

Unfortunately, the National Arts Club has not been a good steward of this landmark in recent years. In fact, during the past two decades, the maintenance of the building has declined. After years of inadequate oversight, the building's infrastructure is now in danger of failing. The electrical and plumbing systems are outdated, and the façade is sliding. In 1998, a fire in the parlor charred the interior's walls, and the National Arts Club has yet to repair much of this damage.

Five years ago, the architecture firm of Ehrenkrantz, Eckstut & Kuhn and the respected engineering firm of Robert Silman Associates conducted conditions surveys of the building and recommended that immediate action be taken for its stabilization. Since that study, nothing has been done to remedy or even mitigate the increasing damage. In February 1998, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation awarded \$250,000 in historic preservation funding from the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act to the National Arts Club. However, in November 2002, the Club returned the funding to the state, stating that the board was not prepared to move forward with the building restoration at that time. In meantime, as you may know, the Manhattan District Attorney's office has investigated the Club for tax fraud, and in November the Club agreed to pay \$150,000 in back taxes.

The National Arts Club is an incredibly important building, not only to New York City, but to America as a whole. It is in grave danger of deteriorating beyond repair because the Club is unable, or unwilling, to make the needed investments in this piece of our heritage. Being listed as one of the Trust's II Most Endangered would spark broad interest in this deteriorating building and help convince the National Arts Club to be a proper steward of this National Historic Landmark. We hope, moreover, that the National Trust's involvement will help the National Arts Club mend their strained relationship with the Gramercy Park community. For these reasons, the Historic Districts Council urges you to include the National Arts Club in your 2004 "America's II Most Endangered Historic Places" list.

Sincerely,



Simeon Bankoff
Executive Director

cc: Gramercy Park Block Association, Inc.