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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Hoffmann Architects + Engineers receives Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award from New York Landmarks Conservancy

*Facade restoration of Masonic Hall NYC awarded the Conservancy’s highest honor*

**New York NY— 15 February 2024** — Hoffmann Architects + Engineers, a design firm specializing in the rehabilitation of building exteriors, announces that the historic facade restoration at Masonic Hall NYC has been selected for the Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award, the New York Landmarks Conservancy’s prestigious recognition for outstanding preservation efforts.

The Moses Award represents the Conservancy’s highest honors for excellence in preservation. The coveted awards are named for Lucy G. Moses, a dedicated New Yorker whose generosity has benefited the City for decades. The awards are made possible through the ongoing support of the Henry and Lucy Moses Fund.

THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY  
**Lucy G. Moses Preservation Awards**

“The masonry exteriors of Masonic Hall not only express the character of the building, but also speak of the history of New York construction and, even more broadly, of Freemasonry,” said Richard W. Off, AIA, Senior Architect with Hoffmann, who led the design team. “This project’s thorough and detailed efforts to address structural safety concerns and moisture infiltration issues while preserving the diverse decorative elements that reflect the legacy of Masonic craftsmanship make it an exemplary candidate for the Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award.”

The Conservancy will present the Moses Awards at a gala event on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 6:00pm at The Plaza in Manhattan.

### A Landmark with a Storied History

Headquarters of the Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York, Masonic Hall NYC consists of two wings designed by Harry P. Knowles (1871-1923), who served as head draftsman for Manhattan’s iconic MetLife Tower and was, himself, a Master Mason. Constructed in the early 1900s, both the ornate Beaux-Arts style north wing and the more restrained Neo-Renaissance south wing are clad with ashlar limestone masonry at the lower floors, with expanses of rough-textured brick inlaid with a decorative corbelled diaper pattern. The showpiece of the building is its extensive cream-colored glazed terra cotta ornamentation, including a grand Juliet balcony and rich sculptural details.



Beyond its impressive architectural character, Masonic Hall NYC serves as an anchor of the Ladies Mile Historic District, recognized by the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission. As the oldest and largest organization of Freemasons in New York, it also hosted prominent members, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt, operated a serviceman center during World War II, and housed cultural touchstones such as the General Film Company, a major player in the early film industry.



### Signs of Distress

As part of New York City's Facade Inspection and Safety Program (FISP), Hoffmann Architects + Engineers conducted an investigation of the exterior walls at Masonic Hall NYC. The design team traced observed cracks, spalls, displacement, and open joints not only to age and exposure, but also to the construction style of the facade assemblies. With transitional architecture somewhere between the load-bearing mass walls of early masonry buildings and the freestanding metal skeletons of later high-rises, Masonic Hall NYC has a steel-framed structure with heavy, thick walls that reinforce and fireproof the frame. Corrosion of concealed steel caused the metal to expand, jack, and crack adjacent masonry, with integrity of the steel itself also a concern.

Moreover, the facades contained no provision for expansion and movement beyond mortar joints. Pressure from years of moisture-driven expansion caused masonry cracking and drove fine networks of cracks ("crazing") to develop in the terra cotta glazing. As more cracks formed, more moisture found its way into the enclosure, accelerating the cycle of deterioration. Unsightly and damaging biological growth was another result of the perpetual presence of moisture.

Terra cotta distress poses a particular concern to safety. Unlike brick and ashlar limestone, terra cotta units are hollow shells with internal ribbing, so, when a crack forms, it often penetrates through the entire thickness of the shell. The danger of falling terra cotta merits special mention in the FISP guidelines and requires immediate stabilization.



### Multi-Year, Multi-Phase, Comprehensive Rehabilitation

One of the foremost project considerations was how to develop lasting solutions that mitigate underlying causes of deterioration and not just provide superficial corrections. At this architectural and cultural landmark, preserving as much



of the historic fabric as possible was paramount. A two-part strategy provided structural stability while restoring original features: replace where required by surface or substrate conditions, and repair where masonry was salvageable and service life could be extended.

The work included repair of corroded structural steel, as well as replacing and augmenting steel components as necessary. To reduce moisture intrusion, the project sought to close breaches in the building enclosure, especially at the roof level. Where existing damaged masonry and decorative units could be salvaged, they were patched, pinned, cleaned, and recoated.

The most significant portion of the project was replacement of severely damaged and insecure ornamental terra cotta. These pieces were removed, then painstakingly surveyed and cataloged for fabrication, using meticulous color, texture, and profile matching, along with mockups, to verify exacting

reproduction. Select areas of highly damaged brick and limestone were also replaced, using similarly rigorous matching strategies. While most terra cotta was replaced in-kind, concerns about the ability of the aging framing to support replacement terra cotta, plus new steel anchorage and substructure, drove the decision to make isolated replacements with more lightweight substitute materials.

Too often, failing ornamental elements are simply removed to rectify safety concerns. At Masonic Hall NYC, the project team's innovative approach, blending traditional building with modern engineering, allowed for a standout restoration that protects and preserves the exquisite ornamentation on this landmark facade. Recognizing this achievement of preservation, the New York Landmarks Conservancy has awarded the project its highest honor.

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### **About Hoffmann Architects + Engineers**

Founded in 1977, Hoffmann Architects + Engineers specializes in the rehabilitation of building enclosures. The firm's work focuses on the exteriors of existing structures, diagnosing and resolving deterioration within facades, roofing systems, windows, waterproofing materials, plazas/terraces, parking garages, and historic and landmark structures. We provide consulting services for new construction, as well as litigation and claim support. Our technical professionals investigate and correct damage resulting from time and weather, substandard or improper construction, design defects, material failures, poor workmanship, structural movement, and stress. To learn more, visit [hoffarch.com](http://hoffarch.com).

### **About the New York Landmarks Conservancy**

From the smallest buildings, to the most extraordinary landmarks, to our diverse neighborhoods, the New York Landmarks Conservancy preserves and protects the unique architectural heritage of the City we love. We are on the frontlines, giving New York's preservation needs a voice, advocating for sensible development, providing financial assistance and technical expertise—all to ensure that the character of our city continues to enrich the quality of life for all New Yorkers. For more information, visit [nylandmarks.org](http://nylandmarks.org).