United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only receive AY 2 7 1982 date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Nam	ie	ubic sco	tions			
historic The	Marine Air Ter	minal,	La Guar	dia Airpo	rt	
and/or common						
2. Loca	ation					
street & number	La Guardia	Airport				not for publication
city, town Que	eens		v	icinity of	congressional district	10
state New	York	code	036	county	Queens	code 081
3. Clas	sification	1				
Category district _X_ building(s) structure site object	Ownership  X public  private  both  Public Acquisition  in process  being conside	on	Accessib	cupied in progress ole	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park private residence religious scientific transportation other:
street & number	1 World Trade					
City, town	lew York	ogol		icinity of	state	New York 10048
5. Loca	ation of L			Register		
courthouse, regis	stry of deeds, etc.			Register	s office	
street & number	90-27 Sutp	nin Bou	ilevard			
city, town	Queens				state	New York
6. Rep	resentati	on ir	1 Exi	sting	Surveys	
AiAla	Designation R	eports,		has this pro	operty been determined e	elegible?yes _x no
date Nov.	25, 1980				federal sta	ate county X local
depository for su	rvey records N.	Y.C. La	ındmarks	Preserva	tion Commission, 20	) Vesey Street
city, town New	York				state	New York 10007

### 7. Description

Condition excellent good	deteriorated	Check one unaltered altered	X         original site           moved         date	NA
fair	unexposed			

#### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The nominated site is a rectangular plot encompassing the terminal and its surrounding walks and driveways. It is part of the much larger La Guardia Airport (most of which dates from post-World War II). The site of the terminal serves as a reminder of its original use as a seaplane airport. Located close to the water's edge, the building was planned for the convenience of both passengers and crew. The Clippers (Boeing seaplanes) taxied in from Long Island Sound, pulled by small motor boats, and docked just outside the terminal. For maintenance purposes they were hauled out of the water and moved along special railroad tracks into a nearby hangar.

The terminal is comprised of a central circular core of two stories with an attic from which a rectangular entrance pavilion and two symmetrically opposed onestory wings project. The walls are painted a light beige with brown detailing, creating a contrast similar to that of the original buff and black brick.

The circular main portion of the building is tiered in a "wedding cake" configuration. The first and second stories have tripartite windows enframed by dark brick and separated by faceted brick panels. Originally these windows were louvered (like those remaining in place on the rear one-story wings). The windows with their enframements form a continuous register encircling the building. Above a simple projecting stainless steel cornice at the first story is a smooth parapet wall, behind which is the roof-top observation deck and promenade. At the second story is a terracotta frieze of flying fish which adds a polychromatic note to the otherwise subdued color scheme of the building. Golden yellow fish fly through the air against a background of wave patterns in two shades of blue. The attic story is sheathed in stainless steel panels, as is the original control tower at the rear of this story.

The entrance pavilion is composed of a three-story rectangular center section, with lower flanking wings, creating the effect of one tall rectangular mass interlocking with a lower broader one. At the center of the pavilion is a bank of four stainless steel doors with grilles in the form of two stylized winged globes set in the transoms. The entrance is sheltered by a broad semicircular canopy rimmed and paneled in stainless steel, which echoes the curve of the terminal as a whole. Above the canopy is a large two-story window of the same breadth as the doorway directly beneath.

The projecting rear wings of the building continue the design of the first tier. These were originally the entrance (west) and exit (east) for debarking and embarking passengers.

The interior's large two-story circular room is crowned by a graduated stepped ceiling and skylight. The walls of the room are paneled with dark green marble and contain counters for ticketing and related activities within each of fourteen bays. Stainless steel doors lead to the rear wings. The floor is paved in light gray marble with a geometrically patterned circle at the center. The original wooden benches with stainless steel propeller blade motifs inlaid in the end panels have recently been returned to the room.

A mural is located just below the lowest ceiling tier. This mural entitled "Flight," is approximately 12 feet high and 237 feet long. It is painted on Belgian linen with shades of red and green predominating and was completed by James Brooks in 1940. It depicts the history of man's involvement with flight using mythological, historical and typological figures.

### 8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C  archeology-prehistoric agricultureX architectureX art commerce communications	community plans conservation economics education engineering		e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater x transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1939-1940	Builder/Architect	William Delano of Dela	no & Aldrich

#### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Hardly more than a decade after Charles Lindbergh's historic solo flight from New York to Paris, the world's first transatlantic passenger flights were regularly departing from La Guardia Airport's Marine Air Terminal. Designed in 1939 by Willaim Delano of the prestigious firm of Delano & Aldrich, the building is an exceptionally fine example of the Art Deco style, and also contains a major example of the artwork sponsored by the Works Progress Administration, a mural, "Flight" by James Brooks. The terminal is the only surviving American airport terminal dating from the "Golden Age of the Flying Boat" I when transoceanic passenger flights were made aboard giant Pan American Clipper ships, which vied with ocean liners in providing luxury service. Although these great seaplanes have long since been retired, the terminal has remained in continous and efficient use. The main interior space, a two-story circular room is among the most noteworthy Art Deco X interiors in New York City. Its pure geometry, marble paneling, and fine proportions, serve as a magnificent setting for the huge mural by Brooks, which has been restored and is again the focal point of an exceptionally fine design. By the early 1930's, two events had occurred which fostered the development of commercial airlines and airports; the Federal government was using private contractors for postal

By the early 1930's, two events had occurred which fostered the development of commercial airlines and airports; the Federal government was using private contractors for postal transport, and Lindbergh's transatlantic flight had not only captured the imagination of Americans, but inspired faith among potential passengers. By 1934, when Fiorello H. La Guardia became Mayor of New York it was clear that New York needed a new airport terminal. La Guardia, as one aspect of a vast municipal transportation improvement campaign, initiated studies of the possibility of constructing a new airport. These studies resulted in the selection of a site at North Beach, Queens, where Glenn Curtiss' private airport had been constructed in 1929. The Depression had forced the closing of this airport, and the site had been acquired by the city. Like La Guardia's other transportation projects, the airport was to be federally sponsored and funded through the Works Progress Administration. On September 3, 1937, plans for a New York City Municipal Airport were approved by President Roosevelt. Only six days later the Mayor presided over ground breaking ceremonies.

Construction at North Beach proceeded rapidly. A 558-acre airport with nearly miles of runways emerged. At a cost of \$40,000,000 the airport was not only the four largest in the world, it was also the most costly --"the greatest single undertaking of the W.P.A." The airport was opened on Oct. 15, 1939. Among the 150 airplanes which took part in the festivities were three which circled overhead as the Mayor made his address, skywriting "Name it La Guardia." This inaugurated a campaign to christen the airport in honor of the mayor, and on Nov. 2, the Board of Estimate and City Council officially agreed upon "New York City Municipal Airport--La Guardia Field." In March 1940, the Marine Air Terminal was dedicated. At this ceremony two of the new Pan American Clipper Ships were on display. These were the great seaplanes which the Marine Air Terminal and its accompanying hangar had been designed to accommodate. Clipper ships represented both the culmination of the development of seaplanes and the inauguration of a new era in commercial flying. The first flight from the Marine Air Terminal by a Clipper departed on March 31, 1940, carrying a crew of ten, nine passengers, and over 5000 pounds of mail. It landed in Lisbon 18 hours and 35 minutes later. The Clippers caused a genuine sensation. They had a wing span of 152 feet, were capable of carrying 74 passengers, and had a cruising speed of 200mph. They were described

9.	Major	<b>Bibliographical</b>	References
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Angelucci, E. Airplanes from the Dawn of Flight to the Present Day. New York: McGraw Hill 1973 Arend, G. Air World's Great Airports: La Guardia 1939-1979. New York: Air Cargo News Inc., 1979 "New York Municipal Airport--A detailed description of the Great Air Terminal constructed by the W.P.A." New York: W.P.A., 1939.

by the W.P.A." New York: W.P.A., 1939.	andreas post-copt
10. Geographical Data	na 1 der (-0)71
Acreage of nominated property <u>under 1 acre</u> Quadrangle name <u>Central Park</u> , N.YN.J.  UMT References	Quadrangle scale 1:24,000
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C	
Verbal boundary description and justification The property occupies Borough of Queens, Tax Map approximately 130' x 130' as outlined on the att	
List all states and counties for properties overlapping state	or county boundaries
state code county	code
state code county	code
street & number 20 Vesey Street  City or town New York	telephone 2/2-566-7577  state New York 10007
12. State Historic Preservatio	10001
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:  _x_ national state local	pineidad over ground bristing girens Construction at North Keach placeder thereo adles of remarks marget. At
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National 665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Regaccording to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Cor	ister and certify that it has been evaluated
State Historic Preservation Officer signature	fellm
title Commissioner	date 5/12/82
For HCRS use only  I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Rec	
for he Dry of	nister 222. da il and angunad a sada ang
	gister 224.4 W mail. Amplianad 2.58.4 am?
Keeper of the National Register	
Keeper of the National Register  Attest:	

### **United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

## **National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only received date entered

Continuation sheet Marine Air Terminal

Item number

8

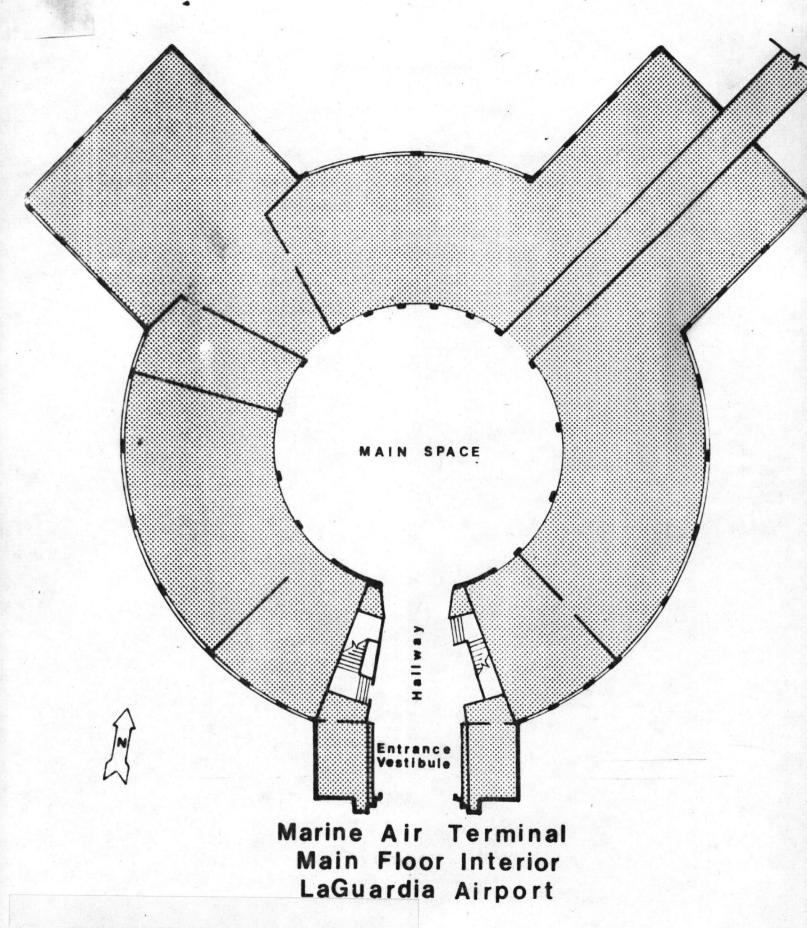
**Page** 

in the New York Herald Tribune as "breathtaking" in size 3 and in a Life magazine article by Claire Booth Luce, with the following prediction, "Fifty years from now, people will look back on a Clipper flight of today as the most romantic voyage of history"4 The accommodations aboard these planes were indeed luxurious by today's standards. The two-deck interior featured dining rooms, private compartments and sleeping sections. But this glamorous era was brought to a premature and abrupt half by World War II, and by the end of the war, technological advances in land plane design had made the Clippers obsolete. The Marine Air Terminal was successfully converted to a land plane terminal and at the present time is occupied by Butler Aviation and Air New England.

The architect of the terminal, William Delano (1874-1960), had formed a partnership in 1903 with Chester H. Aldrich (1871-1940). The firm's work reveals, for the most part, a traditional approach to design. The architects favored the neo-Renaissance and neo-Federal styles, and were best known for their residential designs for wealthy clients. In 1935, Aldrich took a leave of absence from the firm to serve as the head of the American Academy in Rome, a post he held until his death in 1940, and thus the Marine Air Terminal design should be credited to Delano alone. The use of the Art Deco style represents a dramatic departure from his usual approach, no doubt the result of recognizing that a modern building type required a modern style. Although the terminal possesses the essential characteristics of the Art Deco style, it should not be categorized among the more flamboyant manifestations of the style. The terminal relies for its impact primarily upon the crisp geometry of its massing and the symmetry and precision of its design, which are hallmarks of Delano & Aldrich's work, rather than upon vivid polychromy or emphatic "streamlining." Delano, even when he employed a twentieth-century, non-revivalistic style, did not stray from the prinicples of Beaux-Arts composition. Thus, the terminal is symmetrically and axially disposed both in plan and elevation, places strong emphasis on the entrance and on ease of circulation, and displays a very clear relationship between the exterior and interior. Yet, within these self-imposed boundaries, Delano masterfully interpreted the Art Deco style. Ornament, although used sparingly, is highly expressive of the terminal's function; the frieze of flying fish is a primary example.

The magnificent circular room of the terminal derives its power from the geometric purity of its form, the richness of its materials, and the grand scale of its vibrantly colored mural. This forceful composition is stylistically akin to the Socialist Realism popular in the 1930's and often associated with W.P.A. projects, but it also includes abstract elements which prefigure the artist's (James Brooks) later shift to Abstract Expressionism. The Marine Air Terminal is today the only active airport terminal dating from the first generation of passenger travel in the United States. That it has continued in effective operation testifies to the quality of its design. It remains an exceptional example of the Art Deco style, a building type unique to the twentieth century, and a landmark associated with a major event in the history of flight.

- 1. E. Angelucci, Airplanes from the Dawn of Flight to the Present Day (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1973) p.71.
- 2. Fortune, Fiorello's 'Windflower' August, 1940. p.41.
- 3. As quoted in E. Lowe, "The Story of the Clipper Flying Boats" Air World (Jan 1978) p.12.
  4. As quoted in G. Arend, Air World 's Great Airports: La Guardia, 1939 1979 (New York:
- Air Cargo News Inc., 1979) p.56.



MARINE AIR TERMINAL Queens County, New York Landmarks Preservation Commission plan, 1980

Not Drawn to Scale

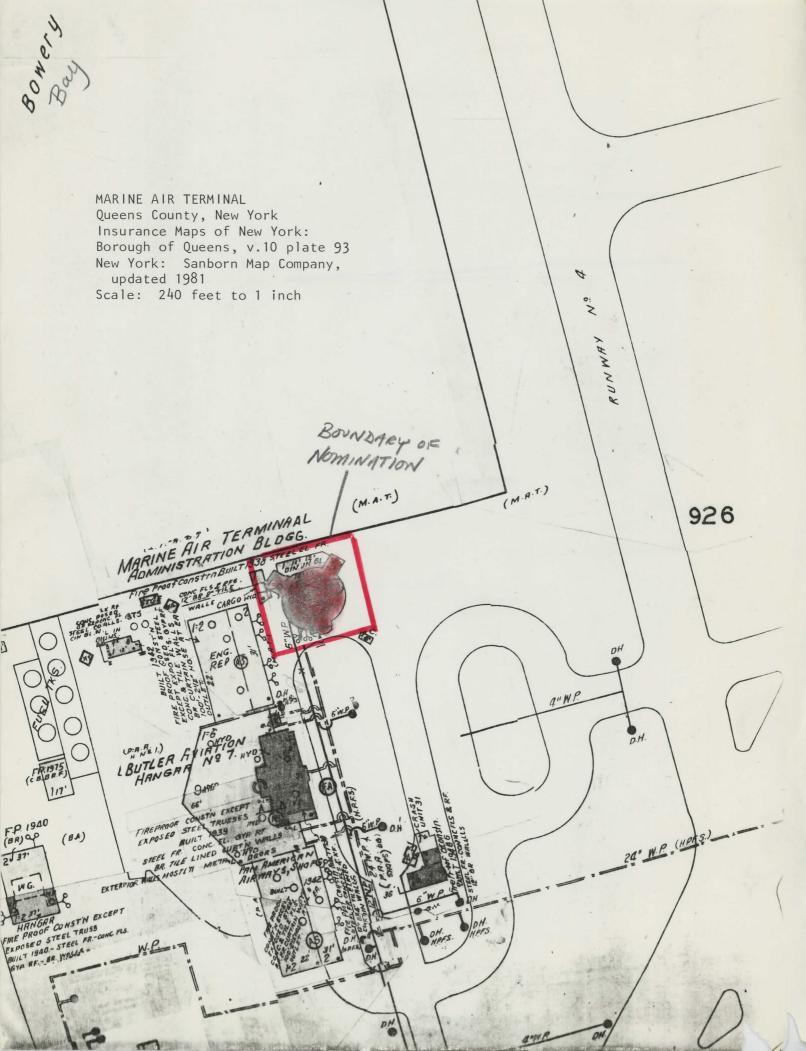




Photo: C. 1940 Courtesy, G. Arend

Marine Air Terminal La Guardia Airport Built 1939-1940

Queens County, N.Y.

Architects: Delano d'Aldrich

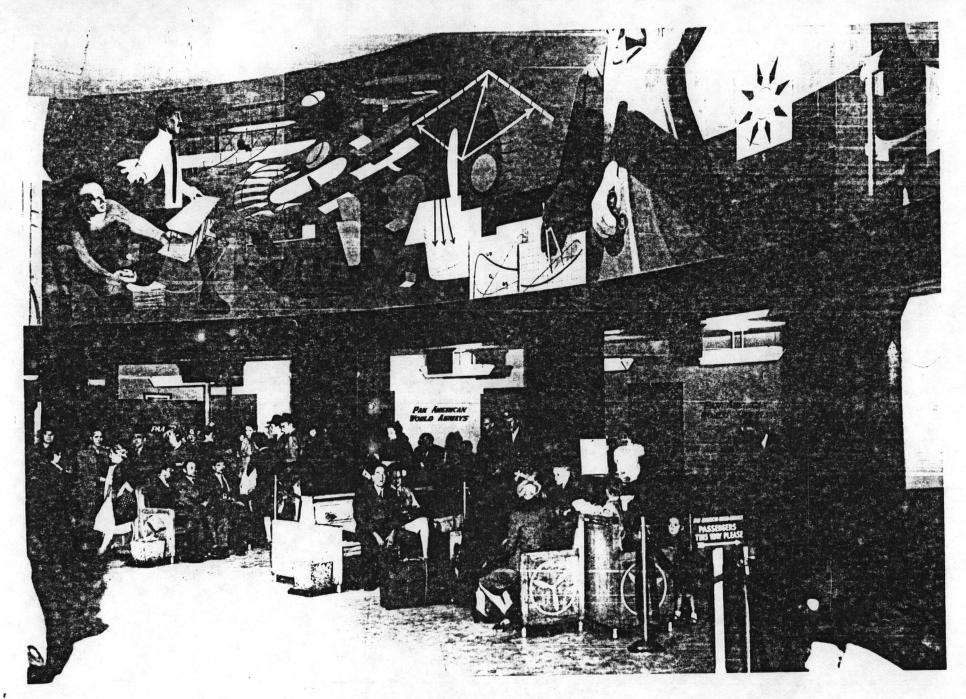


Photo: C. 1940 Courtesy, A. Arend

Marine Air Terminal Interior La Guardia Airport Built 1939-1940

Queens County, N.Y.

Architects: Delano & Aldrich

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES **National Park Service** 82003399 EVALUATION / RETURN SHEET Property: MARINE Air TERMINA! Working No. 5-27-82-1709 State, County: NY- QUEERS Fed. Reg. Date: 2.1. TO THE SAN SAN 191 Date Due: 6-25-82 Federal Agency: \_ - ACCEPT\_ Action: resubmission RETURN \_\_\_ nomination by person or local government REJECT \_\_\_\_ owner objection photos \_\_ \_\_\_ appeal maps \_\_\_ Substantive Review: \_\_ sample \_\_\_ request \_\_\_ appeal \_\_\_ NR decision Reviewer's comments: THE BUILDING APPEARS TO BE ELIGIBLE BOTH AS A TANGIBLE REMINDER OF THE CLIPPER SHIPERA OF AIR TRANSPORTATION AND AS AN EXAMPLE OF DET DECO ARCHITECTURE. THE BUILDING IS PARTICULARLY Recom. / Criteria ACCEPT A+C INTERIOR Reviewer Mr nodes IMPORTANT FOR 115 DESIGN .-- ONE OF THE MOST Discipline Ancet . HIST Date \_\_\_\_7-9-82 NOTE WORTHY IN THE CITY. see continuation sheet Nomination returned for: - technical corrections cited below substantive reasons discussed below 1. Name 2. Location 3. Classification 4. Owner of Property 5. Location of Legal Description 6. Representation in Existing Surveys 7. Description to the present and original (If known) physical app X summary paragraph toons in 2ND \$ ∠ completeness v clarity alterations/integrity-INTEGRITY IS NOT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSED BUT ELEMENTS WHICH WERE MODIFIED OVER TIME WERE REFERENCEDAND THE PHOTO'S SHOW ∠ dates IT to BE VIRTUALLY INTACT. boundary selection

United States Department of the Interior

8. Significance				MAN W	
Period Areas of Significance	- Check and justify below			A STATE OF THE STA	
Specific dates . *s*	Bullder/Architect				
Statement of Significance (in one po	regreph)				
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Justification of checked					
relating signifi	cance to				
context (could	BE BETTER FOR AMOUNT	TELTURE)			
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BIBLIOGRAPHY DOES	S NOT INDICATE S	SCHOLARLY EVALUATION	outside of cit	CONTENT.	
9. Major Bibliogra	phical Referen	nces			
40 Convention	Data .				
10. Geographical	Data				
Acresge of nominated property					
UNIT References					
Verbal boundary description and just	tification				
11. Form Prepared	d By				
12. State Historic	Preservation	Officer Certifica	ition		
The evaluated significance of this propert					
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State Historic Preservation Officer signal					
13. Other					American State of the State of
Maps Photographs					
Other					
Questions concerning	g this nomina	tion may be dire	cted to		
Signed		<b>D</b> -1-		Phone: 202	272 - 250
Signed		Date		Phone: 202	212-3504



1. Marine Air Terminal, La Guardia Airport Queens County: New York

Photo by: Carl Foster, 1981

Neg. at: New York City Landmarks
Preservation Commission

View from the southwest



2. Marine Air Terminal, La Guardia Airport Queens County: New York

Photo by:

Carl Foster, 1981

Neg. at:

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

Interior



Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

the National or State reservations shown on this map

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er 23, 19

New York N.Y. 10048

Peter C Goldmark, Jr. Executive Director

One World Trade Center

(212) 466-7271

RECEIVED

OCT 27 1981

COMMISSIONER )

Hon. Orin Lehman
State Historic Preservation Officer
Attention: Historic Preservation
Field Services Bureau
New York State Office of Parks
and Recreation Agency
Building No. 1

Re: LA GUARDIA AIRPORT - MARINE AIR TERMINAL, QUEENS COUNTY, NEW YORK

Dear Commissioner Lehman:

Albany, New York 12238

In response to your letter of September 25, 1981, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey respectfully offers the following comments in opposition to the nomination to the National Register of the Marine Air Terminal, La Guardia Airport, Queens County, New York.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, in furtherance of the comprehensive plan adopted by the two States for the development of terminal and transportation facilities in the Port of New York District has been authorized and empowered to effectuate, acquire, construct, improve, maintain and operate air terminals within said District pursuant to bi-State legislation (65 Mc K. Unconsol. Laws of N. Y. Section 6631 et seq. and 32 N.J.S.A. Section 32: 1-35.1 et seq.)

Pursuant to such bi-State legislation and the Agreement with respect to Municipal Air Terminals dated April 17, 1947 as supplemented and amended with the City of New York, the Port Authority operates La Guardia Airport.

In view of the dynamic and ever-changing needs of the Aviation Industry which may require expansion or alteration of La Guardia Airport, it would appear prudent not to nominate the Marine Air Terminal to the National Register of Historic Places. In fact, the State of New York Division of the Budget by letter dated August 3, 1981 has advised me that the La Guardia Airport "Marine Air Terminal Site Rearrangement & Redevelopment of Bowery Bay with related canopies and Walkways" has been certified as not subject to the provisions of the New York State Historic Preservation Act.

As you may be aware, the Board of Estimate of the City of New York on January 29, 1981 approved the designation of the Marine Air Terminal Building and its interior as a New York City Landmark. Under Section 21 of the Municipal Air Terminal Agreement, the Port Authority, as a matter of policy, will conform to the enactments, resolutions, ordinances and regulations of the City in regard to the construction and maintenance of buildings to the extent that the Port Authority finds it practicable to do so without impairing or affecting, among other things, the efficiency and economy of its air terminal operations, but the determination of the Port Authority as to whether it is practicable to do so shall be controlling.



Hon. Orin Lehman State Historic Preservation Officer

October 23, 1981

Consequently, in any event, the Port Authority would consult with the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and take into account the Commission's comments and suggestions relating to the Marine Air Terminal. The Port Authority is mindful of the aesthetic value of the Marine Air Terminal as an example of art deco architecture, containing a mural entitled, "Flight" painted by artist James Brooks. In fact, the Port Authority itself has led an ongoing effort to restore this significant work of art.

In view of the foregoing, the Port Authority believes that it is not appropriate for the State to recommend inclusion of the Marine Air Terminal in the National Register of Historic Places.

Very truly yours,

Katy Mackay

Executive Assistant to the

Executive Director

### THE PORT AUTHORITY OF MY & MJ

December 17, 1981

One World Trade Center New York, N.Y./10048

Peler C. Goldmark, Jr. Executive Director

(212) 466-7271
(201) 622-6600 x7271

Hon. Ann Webster Smith
Deputy Commissioner for
Historic Preservation
New York State Office of
Parks and Recreation
Building No. 5
Empire State Plaza

Albany, N. Y. 12238

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DESIGNATION OF THE STORES OF T

Re: La Guardia Airport - Marine Air Terminal

Dear Ms. Smith:

Thank you for your letter of November 30, 1981, concerning the La Guardia Airport Marine Air Terminal. The Port Authority appreciates your bringing my letter to Commissioner Lehman dated October 23, 1981 to the attention of the Committee on the Register of the State Board for Historic Preservation in connection with the Committee's reconsideration of whether to nominate the Marine Air Terminal at La Guardia Airport to the National Register of Historic Places.

We believe my letter of October 23rd sets forth sound reasons why such Marine Air Terminal should not be nominated to the National Register.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,

Katy MacKay

Executive Assistant to the

Executive Director

V Marine Air Terminal