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## Vaults of Heaven

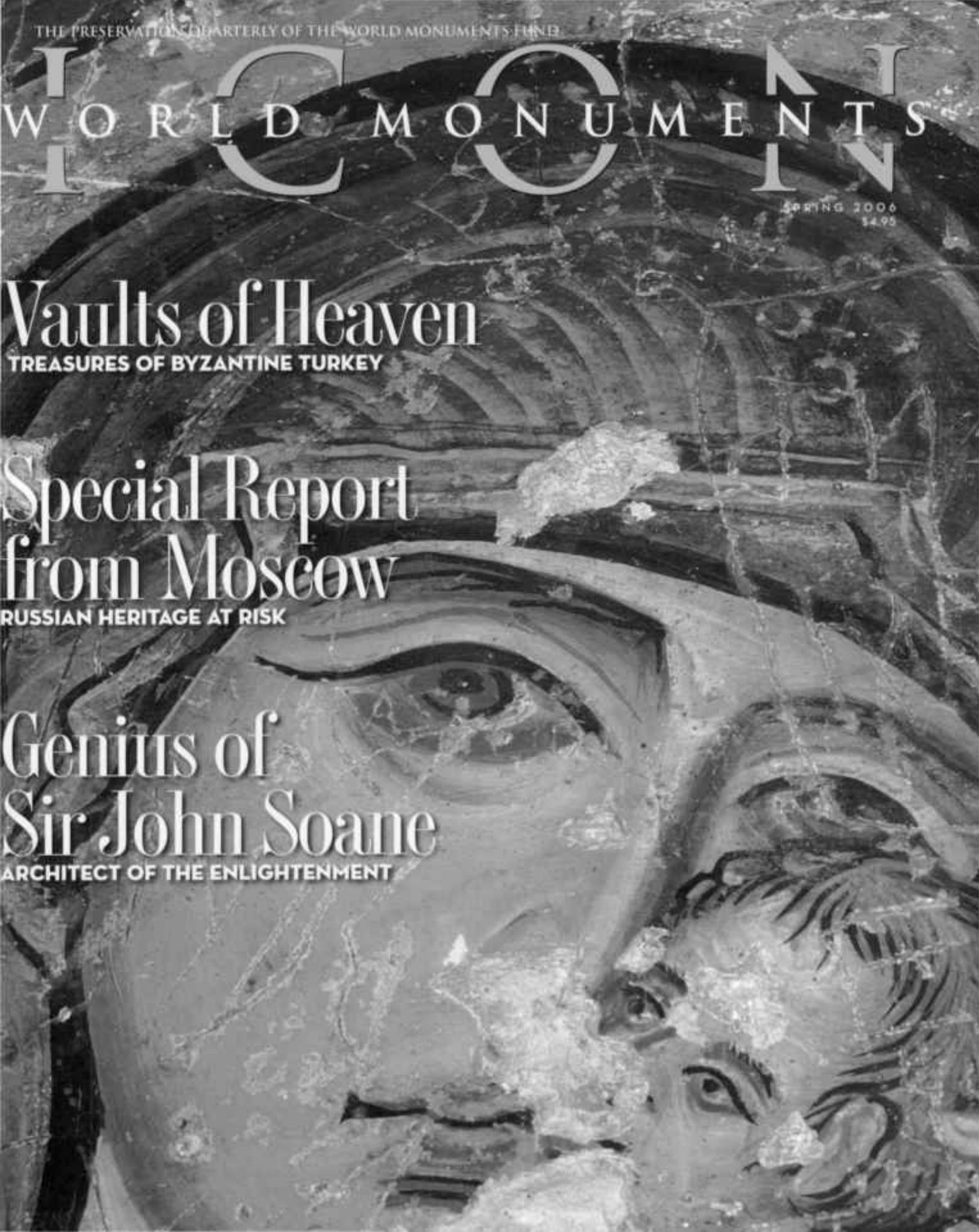
TREASURES OF BYZANTINE TURKEY

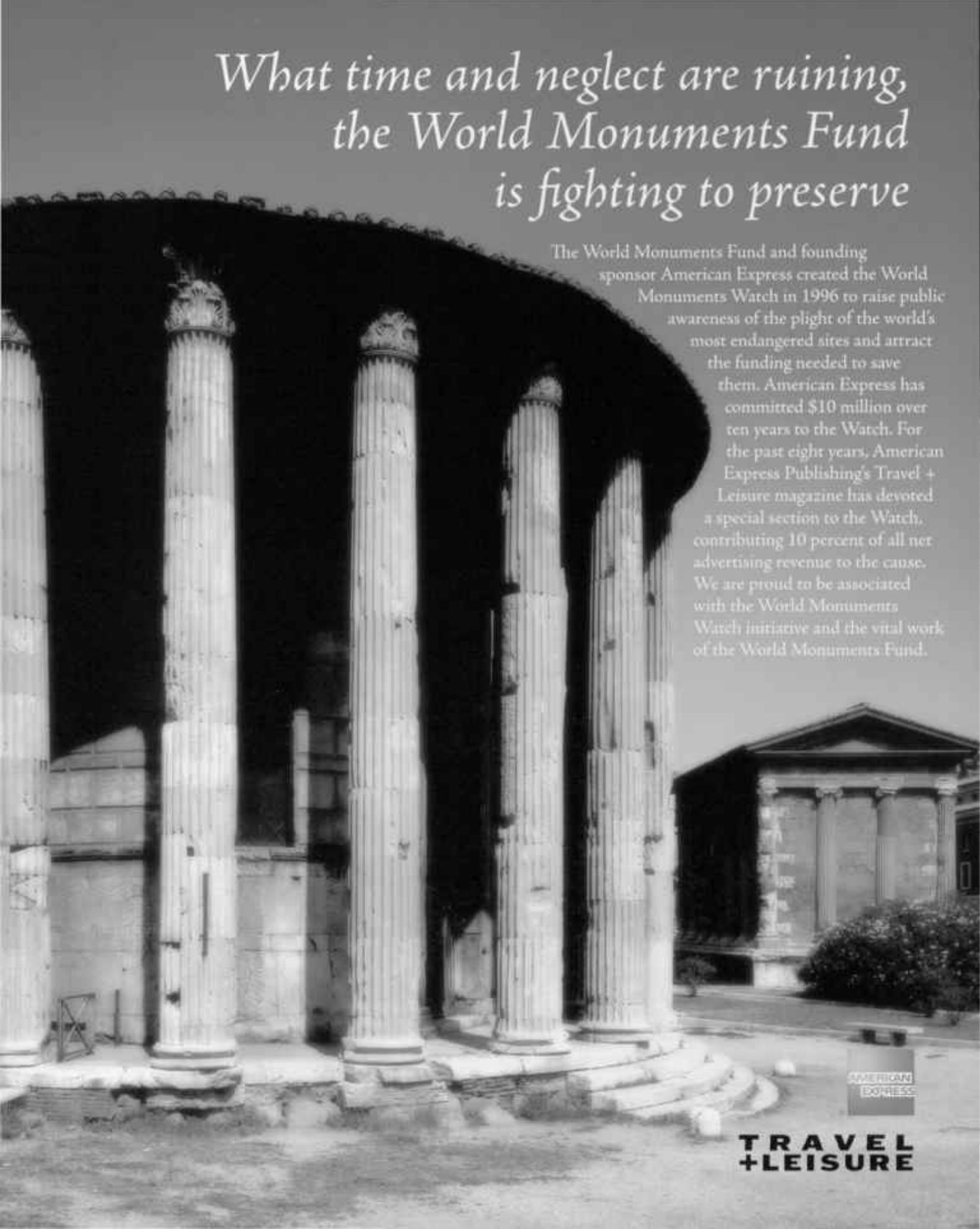
## Special Report from Moscow

RUSSIAN HERITAGE AT RISK

## Genius of Sir John Soane

ARCHITECT OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT





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## WORLD MONUMENTS

Founded in 1965, the World Monuments Fund is dedicated to the preservation of imperiled works of art and architecture worldwide through fieldwork, advocacy, grantmaking, education, and training. A New York-based organization, WMF has affiliates and offices in France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

ICON is funded in part through the generosity of the Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, the Paul Mellon Education Fund, and Paul Beirne

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A mid-tenth-century detail of the "Virgin of Tenderness" graces the interior of the New Church of Tokali in Cappadocia, Turkey.  
© Ahmet Ertug



THE INTERIOR OF ARCHITECT KONSTANTINE MELNIKOV'S MOSCOW HOUSE AND STUDIO

# Historic Moment for Preservation

**WMF AND BEIJING'S FORBIDDEN CITY EMBARK ON A DECADE-LONG RESTORATION PROJECT**

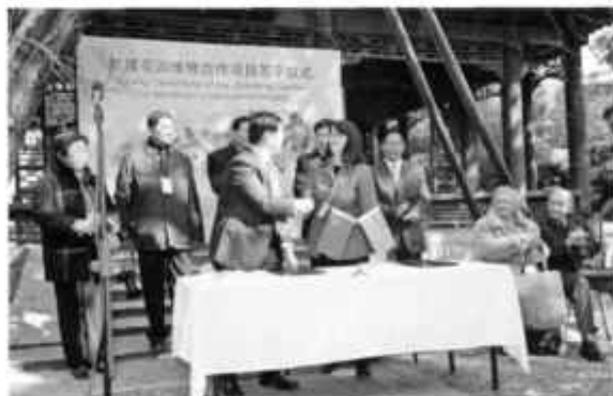
The air was chilly and gloriously clear on the morning of March 1, reminding us that Beijing's Forbidden City was built as an imperial winter palace. Yet we left our coats behind in honor of the day's celebration—the signing of a ten-year, \$15 million accord between the Palace Museum, China's foremost cultural institution, and WMF to restore the Qianlong Garden, a rarely seen treasure commissioned by the eighteenth-century emperor in the northeast quadrant of the Forbidden City. It was an historic moment as our partnership agreement was the first of its kind, forged between the Chinese institution and a foreign partner. To mark the occasion, a plaque was unveiled at the entrance to the garden, acknowledging generous financial support from the Freeman Foundation and other WMF donors.

Born in China more than 80 years ago, foundation chairman Houghton Freeman—who was present along with his wife Doreen—told the assembled officials and journalists that he had spent many hours discovering the Forbidden City without ever seeing the Qianlong Garden, with its exquisite, intimate pavilions devoted to such pleasurable abstractions as Bamboo Fragrances, Peaceful Longevity, and Extended Delight. Each room has rich decorative features found nowhere else and each garden contains rockeries, mementos of the sovereign's earlier years of travel throughout the realm. As the emperor's intention was to create an ensemble for retired sovereigns—of which he was the only one in Chinese history—the Qianlong Garden was seldom used and rarely seen.

Invitees to the ceremony were tantalized, as they moved carefully about in the tiny rooms, by the witty play between exquisite Chinese objects and trompe l'oeil evocations of the same that were inspired by the work of European artists and are a reflection of the emperor's own dialogue with the Italian painter Giuseppe Castiglione, a Jesuit missionary who became an esteemed court artist. By the time of Castiglione's death in 1766, more than a decade before the completion of the Qianlong Garden, his Chinese followers had learned their lessons well.

Although the last commission of Qianlong's extended and prolific reign remains intact, ravages of time are apparent particularly within the pavilions—in peeling wallpaper, water stains, and dust—which, more than two centuries after their creation, are now poised for restoration. One of the key issues will be the presentation and interpretation of these delicate spaces to a wider public than the audience of one for whom they were intended. Western museum experts will be sharing their knowledge about how to educate the public and introduce visitors without damaging fragile materials or compromising the unique sense of place.

When WMF began its partnership with the Forbidden City four years ago we pledged to assemble the funds and expertise that would be needed to restore the Lodge of Retirement, the centerpiece of the Qianlong Garden. This expansion of the relationship, involving a financial and professional commitment on both sides, is indicative of a growing trust, but also of a recognition that the most extraordinary places are worthy of extraordinary efforts. For this awareness, and the commitment of the resources necessary to deliver it, we are indebted to the vision of the Freemans who saw, through the layers of dust and dereliction, an opportunity to learn about history from this magical place.



**LI JI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PALACE MUSEUM AND WMF PRESIDENT BONNIE BURNHAM SHAKE HANDS FOLLOWING THE SIGNING OF AN AGREEMENT LAUNCHING A JOINT CAMPAIGN TO RESTORE THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY QIANLONG GARDEN IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY. WMF DONORS DOREEN AND HOUGHTON FREEMAN ARE SEATED AT RIGHT.**

*Bonnie Burnham*

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COMPLETED IN 1930, MOISEI GINZBURG'S HARKOMFIN BUILDING, LONG ADMIRER BY LE CORBUSIER, IS TODAY IN A SORRY STATE OF REPAIR.

## A Mutability of Fortune

**W**ith an architectural legacy that spans nearly a millennium, Moscow is a virtual primer on the history of Russian architecture—its streets lined with buildings representing all ages and methods of construction. Yet, like so many cities witnessing urban renewal after years of decline, Moscow is at a crossroads—forced to decide what of its historic fabric will stay, what is to go, and what of its past can find new life. Preservation decisions made to date, however,

have been less than encouraging, the city having lost some 2,000 historically important buildings to unbridled development in the past decade alone. Perhaps more disturbing, this trend continues despite the fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin recently called for significant investment in historic preservation, having drawn up a list of 80,000 structures entitled to government protection. For organizations such as WMF, Moscow presents one of the great preservation dilemmas. But the organization has never been one to shy away from a challenge, responding to it by taking on a host of restoration projects in and around the city in hopes that by example others will follow. This issue, we focus on preserving Moscow (see page 18), presenting WMF's portfolio of work in the region and exploring the challenges that lay ahead.

Also in this issue, ICON caught up with Turkish photographer Ahmet Ertuğ, whose images of ancient sanctuaries will make their North American debut this April in WMF's New York City Gallery at the Prince George (see page 32). We also enter the extraordinary world of Sir John Soane, one of England's most famous architects and a Renaissance man in every respect (see page 38). His stripped-down classicism, so prized in the eighteenth century, is experiencing a revival, due in no small part to the recent restoration of some of his most famed works, including the estate of Mogerhanger and the Gothic Library at Stowe.

Shortly before press time, WMF President Bonnie Burnham and Executive Vice President Henry Ng traveled to Beijing to attend a ceremony marking the launch of a decade-long campaign to restore the eighteenth-century Qianlong Garden in the Forbidden City, carried out in partnership with the Palace Museum (see page 12) and a story we will be following in future issues.

Angela M.H. Schuster  
EDITOR

## Contributors

**CLEMENTINE CECIL**, until recently a Moscow correspondent for *The Times* (UK), is co-founder of the Moscow Architecture Preservation Society (MAPS), a not-for-profit advocacy group working to stem the loss of that city's extraordinary architectural heritage.

**CAROLINE MCGHIE** is an award-winning journalist who writes regularly for the *Sunday Telegraph*, *The Times*, and *The Financial Times* in London.

**EDMUND HARRIS**, a Moscow-based journalist with the *Moscow Times*, writes on Russian architecture and, as a member of the Moscow Architectural Preservation Society, has worked to save historic buildings in the city.

**VICTOR BUCHLI**, managing editor of *Home Cultures: The Journal of Architecture, Design and Domestic Space*, is the author of *The Material Culture Reader*, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, and, with Gavin Lucas, *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*.

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# INSIDE WMF

## WMF SUPPORTED SITES RECOGNIZED

### New York Landmarks Conservancy Awardees Announced

The grand ballroom of the Prince George Hotel, an early twentieth-century Beaux Arts building, and 90 West Street, designed by Cass Gilbert, will receive the Lucy C. Moses award from the New York Landmarks Conservancy in recognition of the excellence of their recent restorations.

Considered one of the city's finest hotels after its construction, the Prince George had become a notorious welfare hotel by the time it closed for renovation in 1996, at which time it was acquired by Common Ground, a non-profit organization that restores great buildings to provide housing for the homeless. While the renovation was managed by Common Ground and Beyer Blinder Belle, work was carried out by students from Preservation High, interns from Parsons School of Design, and workers from YouthBuild USA and the Alpha Workshop, which assists people with HIV/AIDS. In the process, a total of 416 affordable housing units were created. WMF supported the restoration of the ballroom as well as an adjacent exhibition space, now home to the WMF Gallery.

Widely-regarded as Cass Gilbert's



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT, A NEWLY REFINISHED 90 WEST STREET, THE BALLROOM OF THE PRINCE GEORGE, AND WMF'S GALLERY SPACE WITHIN THE RESTORED LANDMARK HOTEL



"dress rehearsal" for the Woolworth Building, completed in 1913, the Gothic-inspired 90 West Street in Lower Manhattan, built in 1907, was heavily damaged on 9/11. Initially, many believed the building would have to be razed.

Yet, its frame proved sound. Following restoration, the landmark has reopened as 410-unit residential building. Historic Lower Manhattan was the 101st site on WMF's 2002 list of 100 Most Endangered Sites.



## WMF WORLD MONUMENTS: *Touchstones of Past and Present*

Great monuments endure because they embody the quintessential political, cultural, and historical fabric of their times. In this series, presented by WMF in cooperation with The Metropolitan Museum of Art, experts will discuss the meaning of these iconic touchstones within the context of the cultural moment that created them, and the efforts today to ensure their survival.

TUESDAY, MAY 30

### Taj Mahal, Agra, India

*Navina Haidar Haykel is Associate Curator, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Ebba Koch is Professor of Asian Art at the Institute of Art History, University of Vienna*

Tickets: \$25. To order, call (212) 570-3949.

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## GLOBAL BRIEFING

Highlights of WMF's work around the world

compiled by Norma Barbacci & Holly MacCammon



### ST. GEORGE'S BLOOMSBURY

Prince Michael of Kent, patron of WMF in Britain, participated in a "topping out" ceremony, marking the re-installation of the fanciful lions and unicorns atop the steep of St. George's, Bloomsbury. Designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor, the 1730 London church is undergoing a multi-million dollar restoration slated for completion this fall.

**ANGKOR** WMF's long-running campaign to preserve the millennium-old remains of the ancient Khmer capital of Angkor in Cambodia will be featured in *Churning the Sea of Time*, a film by award-winning producer Les Guthman, which debuts April 10 at the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center in New York, and which will air on the Travel Channel. For information on the film and its broadcast dates visit [wmf.org](http://wmf.org).



### MOUNT LEBANON SHAKER VILLAGE

in upstate New York, which appeared on WMF's 2004 and 2005 lists of 100 Most Endangered Sites, will host a Traditional Building/Historic Preservation Field School this summer. A project-based learning initiative, the field school, which will be held June 8-August 11, will bring together apprentices and master craftsmen to carry out restoration work at the nineteenth-century site. For information, contact Debbie Pastrana-Rodriguez, University of Florida, School of Architecture, College of Design, Construction, and Planning, [debbier@dcp.ufl](mailto:debbier@dcp.ufl)

**PARADESI SYNAGOGUE** A decade after being identified as one of ten top priority projects by WMF's Jewish Heritage Grant Program, Paradesi Synagogue in Cochin, India, is celebrating the completion of the restoration of its clocktower, the most emblematic part of the complex, which was built in 1568 by descendants of European Jews and is still in use. The wood timbers of the cupola have been restored along with the decorative wooden windows, grilles, and exterior stucco surfaces, while missing clockworks have been replaced and the three wooden clock faces have been conserved thanks to the generosity of the Yad Hanadiv Foundation and other WMF donors.



#### HISTORIC IRAQI SITES DESTROYED Mosque Bombing Ignites Wave of Violence

On the morning of February 22, 2006, a group of men—some disguised as Iraqi police officers—entered the al-Askariya mosque in Samarra, 60 km north of Baghdad, where they placed powerful explosives that were later detonated, causing serious damage to the structure; its famous golden dome completely destroyed. This attack on one of the most important Shiite shrines in Iraq marks a dangerous turn of events in the war-torn country. Although other historic mosques have been damaged, most have suffered “collateral damage,” the monuments not being primary targets of the attacks.

One of the most important Shiite shrines in Iraq, the al-Askari mosque is the mausoleum of the tenth and eleventh Imams, Imam Ali al-Hadi and his son Imam Hasan al-Askari; nearby is a memorial to the twelfth Imam, Muhammed al-Mahdi, whom the Shiites believe went into hiding in A.D. 940 and will return to establish Islam as the only religion on Earth.

The mosque, which was renovated a number of times, was founded in the tenth century, however, the earliest surviving elements of the building date to the twelfth century. Most of the structure,

including the golden dome, was built in the late nineteenth century.

Reprisal attacks have left scores of people dead, many other historic and religious buildings damaged, and a country

desperately trying, through its political and religious leaders, to avoid falling into civil war. Reports of dozens, if not hundreds of attacks on mosques are at the moment unverified—among them another important Shiite shrine, the mausoleum of Salman al-Farsi (one of the four companions of Prophet Muhammad) in Ctesiphon (Madain), which is purported to have been hit in rocket attacks. Although surveys of the damage cannot be conducted on the ground at this time, some preliminary assessments have been carried out with the aid of unmanned drones in areas where attacks on mosques or other religious buildings have been reported.

These tragic events confirm once more that cultural heritage sites are at risk during non-conventional conflicts such as the present situation in Iraq. Unfortunately, international conventions such as the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict have proven insufficient in protecting these sites. The entire nation of Iraq is included on WMF’s 2006 list of 100 Most Endangered Sites (see [www.wmf.org](http://www.wmf.org)).

—GAETANO PALUMBO

#### HERITAGE LOSS Czarist Palace Gutted by Fire

The Farmer’s Palace, a small building located on the sprawling czarist summer estate of Peterhof, or Petrodvorets, on the outskirts of St. Petersburg, was completely destroyed by fire on the night of December 22, 2005. According to Mosnews and Associated Press reports the entire building was engulfed in flames by the time firefighters arrived on the scene.

Originally built as a one-story Neo-Gothic-style pavilion in 1830, the Farmer’s Palace was expanded in 1859, becoming a favorite residence of Crown Prince Alexander, the son of Nicholas I, who later ruled as Czar Alexander II.



Although the palace had been seriously damaged during World War II, it was undergoing a major restoration when the fire broke out. According to AP, city officials are not clear what caused the blaze.

Located on the Gulf of Finland, the State Museum-Reserve Peterhof, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, receives more than two million visitors annually.

## MONUMENTAL MAKEOVER

### Richard Meier's Ara Pacis Museum opens in Rome

The Ara Pacis, or Altar of Peace, tucked between the ruins of the emperor Augustus' mausoleum and some of the trendiest Renaissance apartment blocks in the city of Rome, is a monument of mixed appeal for most Italians. Erected 2,000 years ago by Caesar Augustus to commemorate peace in the Roman empire, it was once a symbol of Roman civic life. Scholars disagree on the authenticity of the altar. Some believe that which stands today is a reconstruction built by the emperor Tiberius after Augustus' death. But the real controversy over who built the altar pales in comparison to its modern history as a symbol of fascism. Benito Mussolini embraced the Ara Pacis and for decades it stood as a symbol of his misguided regime. Mussolini, who, it's said, intended to be buried alongside Augustus in his mausoleum, reconstructed the entire square surrounding the great emperor's shrine and ordered the restoration and physical protection of the Ara Pacis as its central point. When Mussolini's government fell, the altar, like many other symbols of that painful era, was largely forgotten.

For decades, the only visitors to the site were foreign tourists and historians keen to view the bas relief, which features symbols of Aeneas, the Earth, Italy, and Rome. But before the Jubilee 2000, Rome city officials restored the forgotten monument and decided to turn it back into a symbol of strength and unity. Richard Meier, no stranger to the architectural challenges of the eternal city, took on the project and succeeded in turning a once-questionable monument into a respectable museum complex, where the altar is not so much a focal point as a point of reference. Local residents quickly nicknamed Meier's modern structure of glass and travertine "the box" when the first glimpses of the structure were seen from behind the scaffolding, but most residents



have since embraced this touch of modern flair in the old city center. Opened for a sneak preview to a select few in September 2005, the newly revamped Ara Pacis promises to be one of the city center's premier modern exhibition spaces when it opens to the public this April. It also serves as a vital first step in a masterplan to turn the area around Augustus' mausoleum into

a central square for this section of the historic district, giving visitors and local residents a much-needed focal point. At the preview in September, Meier told the crowds, "This is the first modern building in Rome's historic center since Mussolini, and it says Rome is moving into the twenty-first century, which means this is not simply a historic city." —BARBIE LATZA NADÉAU



## RESCUE EXCAVATIONS TO BE CARRIED OUT Sivand Dam Project Delayed

On March 2, Iranian MP Amirreza Khadem, a member of the Majlis Cultural Committee, announced that plans to fill a reservoir behind the Sivand Dam in Fars Province will be put on hold until archaeological excavations in the area

are completed, according to the Mehr News Agency and IRNA, the Persian new service.

When dam construction began more than a decade ago, many feared the loss of more than 100 important sites when an eight-kilometer-long stretch of the Tang-e-Bolaghi Gorge is flooded to create the reservoir (see *ICON* Winter 2004/2005).

An international team of archaeologists has been assigned to carry out rescue excavations at 129 ancient sites, including a suite of Paleolithic caves, rock-cut

tombs of the Elamite period (2700-640 B.C.), Parthian period (247 B.C.-A.D. 228) walls, and the sixth-century Achaemenid capital of Pasargadae. Funds to carry out the work, however, are meager at best, according to Khadem.

1996 WATCH SITE

# Water, Water Everywhere

## NERO'S DOMUS AUREA FACES A BLEAK FUTURE

ROME—They should have seen it coming. When the ruins of Nero's nearly 2,000-year-old Domus Aurea reopened in 1999 after two decades of restoration, the tell-tale signs of water trouble were evident almost immediately. Destructive algae grew on the frescoes; the floors were eternally slippery from the leaky ceiling, and the smell of damp mildew was often overwhelming. Similar water problems were to blame when the site was originally closed back in 1978, though much of those restoration efforts went to conserving the frescoes—which had been obscured by salts, calcium deposits, pollutants, and biological growth—rather than fortifying the saturated retaining walls. This

time, after unusual precipitation in Rome during the autumn, the city's superintendent of archaeology Angelo Bottini warned, "We can't guarantee public safety" and closed the site on December 13 for what seems like an optimistic two years.

The latest structural compromise should be no surprise. After all, the Domus Aurea, which was included on WMF's inaugural list of 100 Most Endangered Sites in 1996, is a lot like a damp basement. The structure sits below the man-made Opplian Hill, formed after Nero committed suicide in A.D. 68, at which time celebrating Romans quickly buried his opulent palace. The original walls were never constructed to hold the weight of the hill above, which is now covered with leafy parks and roads. In fact, in the 1980s, microbiologists from the University of Pavia urged the Comune di Roma to clear the hill, and not reopen the site to mass tourism since the exposure would surely compromise the fragile shell. And they were right. In 2003, four years after it opened, climatologists from the University of Rome offered significant proof that the heat from tourists' bodies was indeed affecting the physical structure of the frescoed walls, mostly by creating a warm environment for destructive algae to grow, which has weakened the walls.

Still, the site was a lucrative draw for the city of Rome with 1,000 visitors a day strolling through the cavernous rooms. In Rome, proceeds from tickets pay for the upkeep of each individual cultural venue, and the excess goes to help other sites. The Domus Aurea's popularity made it possible to offer free entrance to the Roman Forum nearby which will



THE OCTAGONAL ROOM AT THE HEART OF NERO'S DOMUS AUREA IS MADE OF CONCRETE, BUT IS EXTREMELY FRAGILE. THE PALACE HAS BEEN CLOSED FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS WHILE EXTENSIVE WATER DAMAGE IS REPAIRED.



FRESCOES IN THE ROOM OF HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE, BELOW, ARE WEAKENED BY ALGAE; THE PALACE'S CAVERNOUS ROOMS, RIGHT, HAVE NO DRAINAGE SYSTEM, A LIABILITY DURING AN UNUSUALLY WET YEAR.





now sadly end this summer in an attempt to recoup losses from the Domus Aurea closing.

Few in Rome's cultural community believe the site will ever open again to mass tourism and certainly not in two years. Culture minister Rocco Buttiglione said that it would take €5 million to perform emergency measures to save the site and shore up the walls just so the restoration experts could start their work on the latest damage. He said another €60 million over ten years would be required to make it safe on a long-term basis. In the 2006 cultural budget, art preservation was

actually cut by 40 percent, and so far no new money has been allocated to the Domus Aurea restoration from outside sources, according to the Cultural Ministry. To make matters worse, the city of Rome has no plans on the books to implement a drainage system on the Oppian Hill, which means that even if the site does open again, another rainy season could have a similarly devastating impact. Buttiglione has all but conceded defeat: "It's a political question. Italy must decide if it wants to look after its cultural heritage." So far, there seems to be little evidence that's happening.

—BARBIE LATZA NADEAU

# Restoring an Intimate Splendor

**WMF AND BEIJING'S PALACE MUSEUM EMBARK ON A TEN-YEAR PLAN TO CONSERVE THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY QIANLONG GARDEN IN THE FORBIDDEN CITY**



For the past four years, the Palace Museum in Beijing and the World Monuments Fund (WMF) have partnered in the restoration of the Forbidden City's Lodge of Retirement (see *Qianlong's Private World*, ICON, Winter 2003/2004). The two-story lodge has the most exquisite interior of the elaborate eighteenth-century Qianlong Garden, a two-acre private retreat nestled in the northeast corner of the Forbidden City.

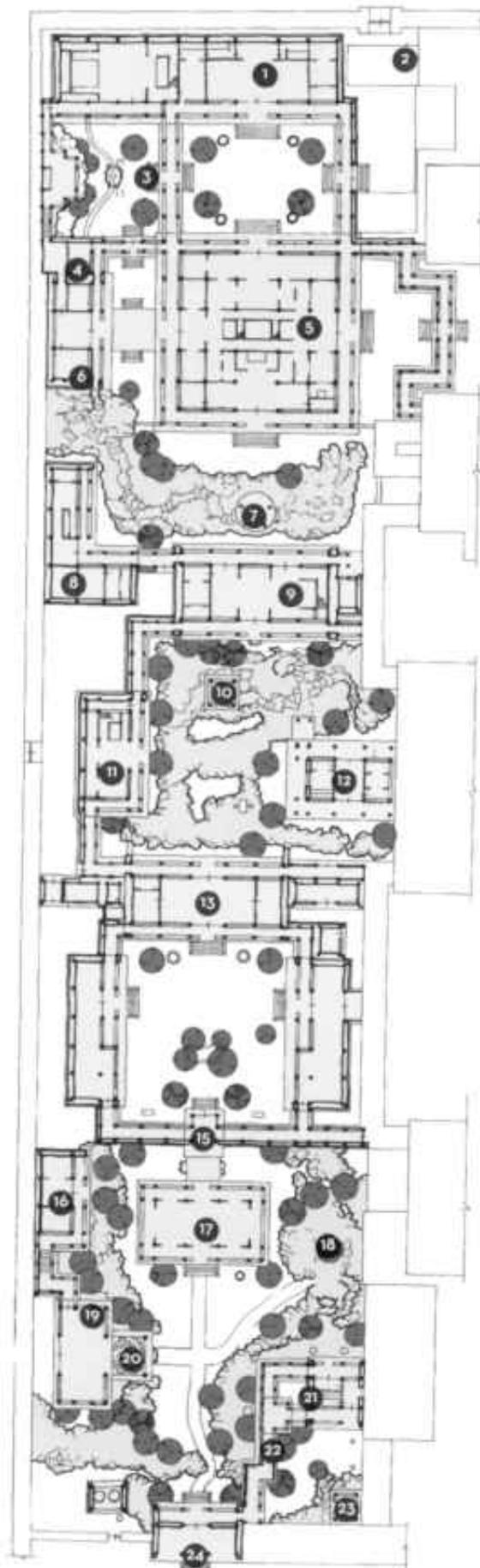
Built for Emperor Qianlong between 1771 and 1776, the garden has remained virtually unchanged since its initial construction, thanks in no small measure to Qianlong's decree that the site not be altered by future generations, the eighteenth-century equivalent of a landmarks preservation law. In more recent years, lack of funds and the formidable conservation challenges posed by the garden's interiors have meant that the site has been left untouched, even as much of the Forbidden City has undergone restoration.

Now the Palace Museum and WMF are launching an ambitious program aimed at restoring the entire Qianlong Garden, including all its pavilions, interiors, and spectacular rockeries. The project, slated to last ten years and cost up to \$18 million, is perhaps the most comprehensive program in the history of WMF and the largest project ever carried out by the Palace Museum dealing with historic interiors.

Though largely unknown to the public and off the beaten tourist track, the garden deserves this unprecedented level of commitment. Even in a site as architecturally rich as the Forbidden City, the Qianlong Garden stands out as unique. The garden's four courtyards and 24 buildings are a remarkable contrast to the huge monumental spaces just outside. "When you go back to the Qianlong Garden, the scale of it immediately strikes you," says Henry Tzu Ng, Executive Vice President of WMF. "Some of the spaces are almost as intimate as a Cape Cod house. You can picture the emperor being by himself—some of the walkways and rooms are big enough for just one person."

The scale of the garden may be intimate, but it is no less impressive than the rest of the



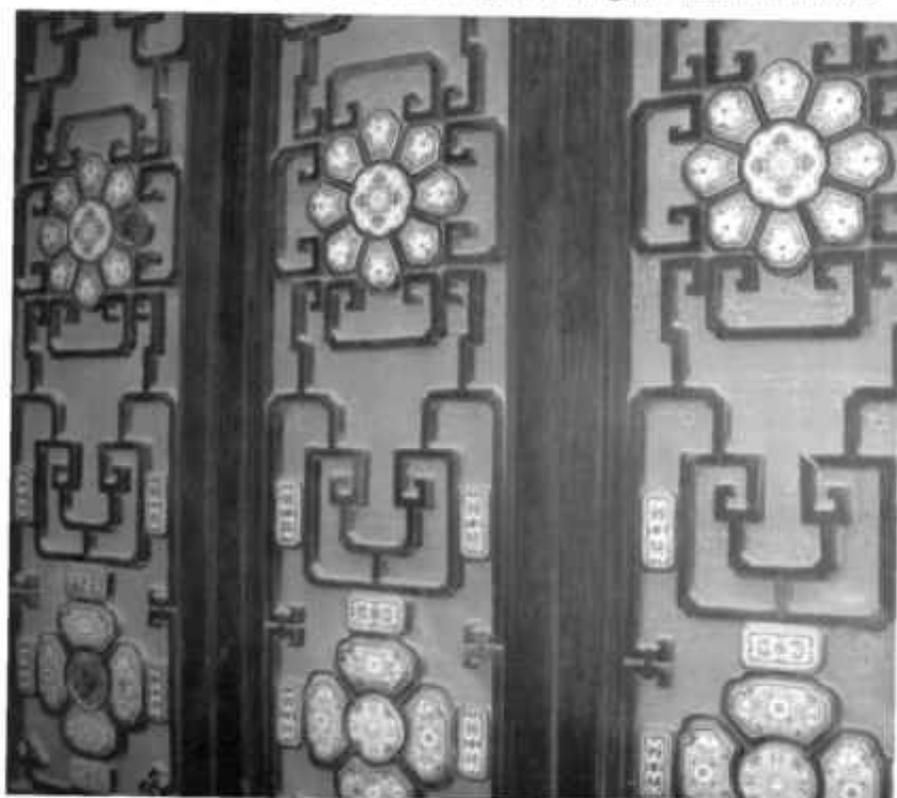


- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. LODGE OF RETIREMENT                    | 13. HALL OF FULFILLMENT OF ORIGINAL WISHES |
| 2. GATE OF TRUTH AND COMPLIANCE           | 14. EXHIBITION AND TOURIST SERVICES        |
| 3. ROOM OF BAMBOO FRAGRANCE               | 15. FLORAL PENDANT GATE                    |
| 4. CHAMBER HEART PARTITION                | 16. HALL OF GLORIOUS DAWN                  |
| 5. BUILDING OF WISH AND REALITY           | 17. PAVILION OF ANCIENT FLOWERS            |
| 6. PAVILION OF JADE PURITY                | 18. TERRACE OF COLLECTING MORNING DEW      |
| 7. PAVILION OF THE GREEN-JADE CONCH SHELL | 19. PAVILION OF CEREMONY OF PURIFICATION   |
| 8. BUILDING OF CLOUD LIGHT                | 20. CUP FLOATING STREAM                    |
| 9. PAVILION OF APPRECIATING LUSH SCENERY  | 21. PAVILION OF PRACTICING INNER RESTRAINT |
| 10. PAVILION OF LOFTY BEAUTY              | 22. SQUARE PAVILION                        |
| 11. PAVILION OF EXTENDED DELIGHT          | 23. PAVILION OF PICKING FRAGRANCES         |
| 12. PAVILION OF THE THREE FRIENDS         | 24. GATE OF SPREADING HAPPINESS            |

Forbidden City. As the ruler of the world's wealthiest empire at the time, Emperor Qianlong made certain that his artisans used the highest quality materials as they created some of the most elegant spaces at a time widely considered to be the pinnacle of Chinese interior design. Many of the most important elements were made in the southern provinces in the rich Han style, including exotic wood screens with inlays of jade, porcelain, camel bone, and ebony thread. Preceding emperors of the Qing Dynasty emphasized simple interiors in keeping with their nomadic Manchu heritage, but Qianlong embraced the more lavish Han traditions that found their highest expression in southern China. The search for modern-day craftspeople capable of working in this tradition has led to the provinces south of Shanghai (see *In Search of Lost Arts*, ICON, Spring, 2005).

Exquisite attention to detail is also on display in the architectural features of the garden: in both the layout of the buildings and gardens among the four courtyards, and especially the widespread and unusual use of rockery gardens. The third courtyard boasts a particularly fine example of the intricately planned rock gardens. "There are these mountains of rockeries and caves there where you could get lost," says Ng. "When you walk in them it's hard to imagine that you're still in the Forbidden City, that you're still in Beijing. You could be on a mountainside in southern China."

Restoration efforts at the Qianlong Garden are being shaped by a masterplan developed by WMF consultant Liu Chang of Tsinghua University and Wang Shiwei, Deputy Director and Senior Engineer of the Historical Architecture Department of the Palace Museum. Their comprehensive review of the garden begun in 2004 was the first thorough documentation of the site, and together with a Geographical Information System (GIS) survey of the garden, will guide the effort, which is





divided into four phases, with each phase focusing on one courtyard. Restoration of the architectural and physical integrity of the garden, its buildings, interiors, garden rockeries, and plantings, will go hand in hand with an effort to modernize its infrastructure. And while most of the buildings are sound, some of the sumptuous interiors will require a good deal of work. Time is of the essence, however, as some of the most elaborate features, including bamboo marquetry, white jade cartouches, and double-sided embroidered silk, continue to disintegrate.

The project will begin with work on the fourth courtyard, where the Lodge of Retirement is situated, and will last from 2007 to 2010. The courtyard was designed in the style of the Jianfu Garden, Qianlong's favorite in the Forbidden City, and one which he commissioned early in his reign. In the center of the courtyard is the pyramidal-roofed *Fu wang ge*, the Building of Wish and Reality, the single largest structure in the Qianlong Garden. The three-story building has spacious and elaborate interiors, but it is quite derelict, and the budget for restoring it accounts for about 20 percent of the entire project.

The restoration of the third courtyard, the second phase of the project, will begin once work on the fourth is finished, and is scheduled to last until 2013. Its compact rockeries are the most remarkable in the Qianlong Garden, and are overlooked by *Songxiu Ting*, the Pavilion of Lofty Beauty, which sits atop a hill that overlooks the entire courtyard and is linked to other buildings by caves, stone steps, and verandas. *San'you xuan*, the Pavilion of Three Friends, is particularly elegant, and is outfitted

**ABOVE: A VIEW OF THE FOURTH COURTYARD FROM THE LODGE OF RETIREMENT. OPPOSITE PAGE: DELICATELY PAINTED PORCELAIN MEDALLIONS ADORN THE WALLS OF THE PAVILION OF EXTENDED DELIGHT.**

with screens and furniture adorned with pine, bamboo, and plum blossom motifs, all metaphors for the virtues of friendship.

The second and first courtyards will be restored during the third and final phases of the project, which will last between 2014 and 2016. The second courtyard was designed in a plain, residential style, decorated by small rockery works. The main hall of the courtyard, *Suichu'tang*, the Hall of Fulfilment of Original Wishes, represents Qianlong's well-known pledge to retire after a 60-year reign to honor his much-beloved grandfather Kang'xi, China's longest-reigning monarch.

The garden's elaborate first courtyard is entered by a gate where a rockery work ingeniously screens the interior. A small winding path leads to the main pavilion, *Guhuo'xuan*, the Pavilion of Ancient Flowers, named after a 300+-year-old Chinese catalpa tree around which the courtyard was designed. To the southwest, facing the courtyard's rockeries, is *Xishangting*, the Pavilion of the Floating Cup, which features a mini canal where wine cups once floated on flowing water. The canal also bore the poems the emperor's guests wrote, such as that as recorded in the famous ancient calligrapher Wang Zizhi's masterpiece *Lan'ling'xu*, or *Prelude for the poem Pavilion of Cymbidium*.

All four phases of the project will bring experts from abroad to the garden to help in the restoration, and perhaps just as important, to provide training and technical assistance. Visiting conservators, architects, and craftsmen will help turn the Qianlong

A WALL-SIZE MURAL IN THE PAVILION OF JADE  
PURITY DEPICTS FAMILY LIFE IN THE ROYAL COURT





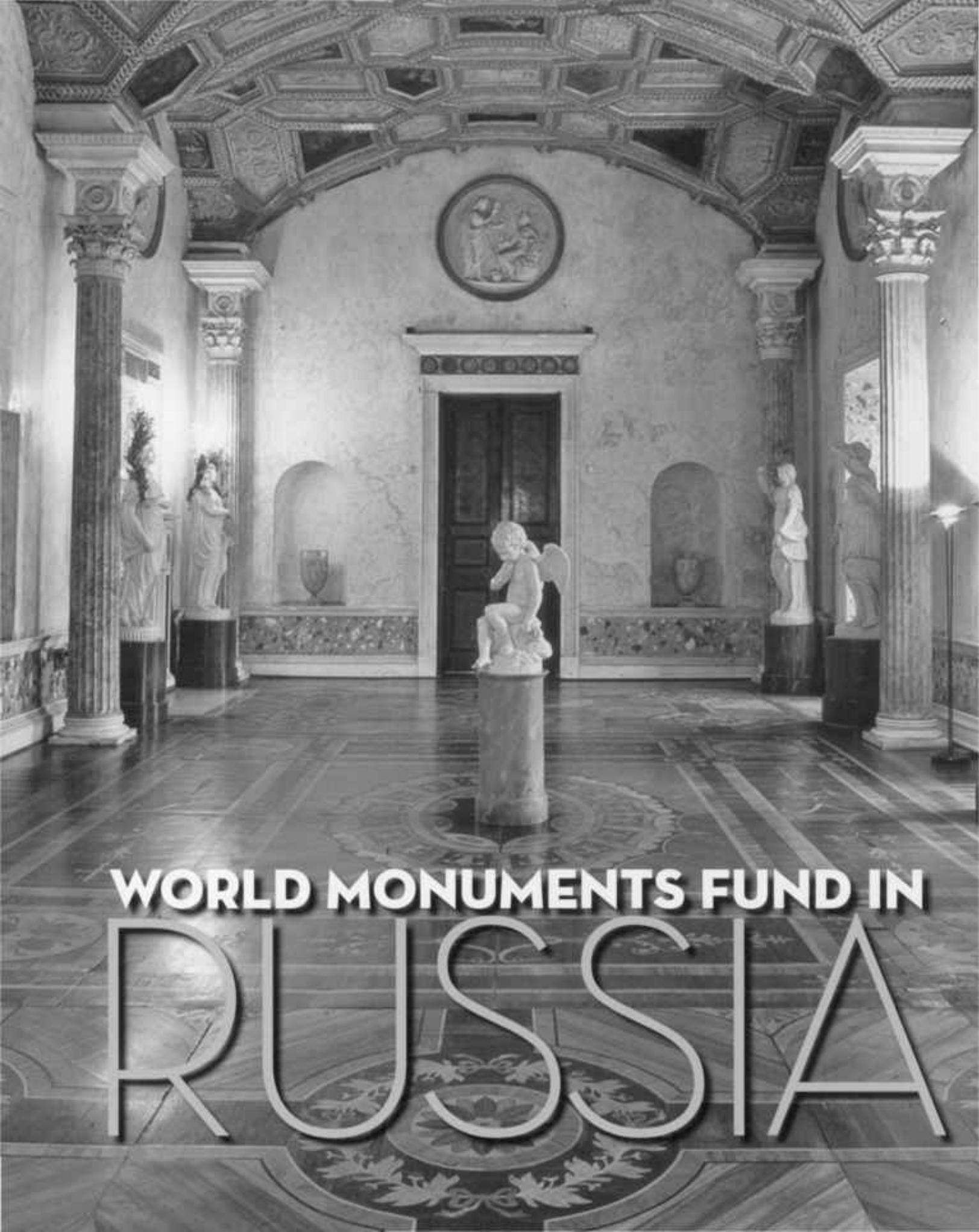
LEFT: THE PAVILION OF LOFTY BEAUTY VIEWED FROM THE THIRD COURTYARD; A DAY BED AND OTHER ANTIQUES GATHER DUST IN UNRESTORED PAVILIONS. ABOVE: INTRICATE CARVING AND SILKWORK IN THE PAVILION OF THREE FRIENDS

Garden into a teaching laboratory for conservation planning, and site interpretation in other areas of the Forbidden City, and perhaps eventually other sites in China. It is hoped the educational and interpretive potential of the project will have just as deep and long-lasting an impact as the actual restoration itself.

By 2016, the masterplan envisions the entire Qianlong Garden accessible to the public for the first time and presented as a single site through which visitors will be able to explore the vast majority of the buildings and gardens. New educational and interpretive centers will give both Chinese and international visitors a chance to learn more about a key period in China's architectural and imperial history. The site's intimate scale will pose a particular challenge to public interpretation of the site, since it can only accommodate a few visitors at a time. Going from the vast scale of the rest of the Forbidden City to the intimacy of the Qianlong Garden, visitors will have a chance to experience a profoundly personal encounter with one of China's architectural marvels.

"The third courtyard is full of these tall rock mountains," says Ng. "And if you're going through, you can't help but linger. You could be in a rush, but you always pause and stop on these rockeries. You can envision the emperor standing there enjoying the view. People embrace that moment. It's very striking and it's extremely calming." Once restoration of the garden is complete, visitors to the Forbidden City will have a chance to experience the same sense of inner calm that Emperor Qianlong sought here more than two centuries ago. ■





**WORLD MONUMENTS FUND IN**

**RUSSIA**

**R**ussia holds an enduring fascination for architectural conservationists. The periods of *perestroika* and *glasnost* have revealed a country that has fought, often on limited resources, to preserve its vast architectural heritage. In the aftermath of the Second World War, if those in the West saw a razed area as an opportunity to build something modern, in the East it was often viewed as a chance to re-create something that was lost. Just outside St. Petersburg, the destroyed Pavlosk Palace and the Catherine Palace in Tsarskoye Selo, and the even grander Peterhof Palace were painstakingly re-constructed at a time when the country had no means to do so.

When the World Monuments Fund embarked on its first Russian projects in 1996, it made sense to start in St. Petersburg, Peter the Great's city, a vast drawing board for European architects from Domenico Trezzini to Carlo Rossi. A paucity of compromising development makes the city a museum of architecture. This legacy is due in part to the city state inspectorate, the St. Petersburg Committee for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments (KGIOP), with whom WMF has worked closely over the past decade. Last year though, KGIOP, and Mikhail Piotrovsky, Di-



THE ELABORATE AGATE PAVILION AT RUSSIA'S CATHERINE PALACE, OPPOSITE PAGE, WAS PLACED ON THE WMF 1998 WATCH LIST. WMF HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN RUSSIA, WITH PROJECTS AT THE YEGALIN ISLAND FLAG PAVILION, LEFT, AND THE CHINESE PALACE AT OREHIENBAUH, BELOW LEFT, BOTH OUTSIDE ST. PETERSBURG. OTHER PROJECTS INCLUDE RESTORATION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM MONASTERY, ABOVE, NEAR MOSCOW AND ASSUMPTION CHURCH, BELOW, IN THE PROVINCE OF KARELIA.





THE BAROQUE CHINESE PALACE AT ORANIENBAUM, ABOVE, WAS CONSTRUCTED IN 1762 AND SERVED AS CATHERINE THE GREAT'S PRIVATE SUMMER DACHA. WMF HAS FUNDED WORK TO REPAIR THE PALACE'S ROOF AND UPGRADE ITS DRAINAGE SYSTEM. WMF ALSO RAISED FUNDS FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE NEOCLASSICAL ALEXANDER PALACE AT TSARSKOYE SELO, BELOW, OUTSIDE ST. PETERSBURG.

rector of the Hermitage, were prompted for the first time to compile a list of recent unsympathetic modern buildings suitable for demolition. This is timely. St. Petersburg is currently facing some dilemmas over some major construction projects; notably the Maryinsky 2 project by French architect Dominique Perrault—an extension of the Maryinsky Theater, home of the world famous Kirov Ballet, among others. WMF has worked on some high-profile sites in and around the city starting with the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoye Selo, the Boat House at Yelagin Palace on Yelagin Island, and Catherine the Great's Chinese Palace at Oranienbaum overlooking the Bay of Finland. While initial support for these restorations has come primarily from American donors, European benefactors have begun to step forward, seeing the value in preserving such important architectural masterpieces. In some cases WMF's contribution to these projects, all of which have been monitored and approved by KGIOP, has leveraged state funding for their restoration.

While St. Petersburg has worked diligently to maintain its extraordinary architectural legacy, the same cannot be said for that of Moscow, which spans the twelfth century to the twentieth. The city has witnessed the destruction of more than 2,000 significant historic buildings to make way for redevelopment in the past ten years, a process fueled by the city's booming economy, which has hastened new construction "like mushrooms after rain," according to locals. Buildings that have been spared, have been subjected to inappropriate restoration, or have been left to languish to hasten their dereliction and razing. This phenomenon is particularly disturbing in light of the fact that just last year Russian President Vladimir Putin drew up a list of 80,000 historical monuments throughout the country that are entitled to government protection—only 35 percent of which are in a stable condition—calling for far more private investment in preservation.

With the world's largest country currently preoccupied with negotiating the price of stability over democracy, a dialogue over a shared heritage and a basis for common understanding seems as pertinent as ever. To this end, WMF New York, along with its European office in Paris, and its energetic affiliate WMF in Britain, has developed a portfolio of projects in Moscow, ranging from the seventeenth-century New Jerusalem Monastery at Istra, which reproduces the topography and edifices of the Holy Land to powerful and intriguing effect to Konstantin Melnikov's House and Studio, a symbol of the 1920s





WMF SUPPORTS RESTORATION OF WOODEN STRUCTURES SUCH AS, FROM LEFT CLOCKWISE, THE CHURCH OF KIZHI POGOST AND THE KARELIAN VILLAGE OF PAANAJÄRVI, AS WELL AS SUCH MASTERPIECES OF SOVIET MODERNISM AS ALVAR AALTO'S VIIPURI LIBRARY, AND KOMSTANTIN MELNIKOV'S RUSSAKOV CLUB.

Constructivist Movement (see page 32). This follows WMF's financial support of work on a new roof for another Melnikov landmark, the Russakov Club, in 1998. In addition, WMF has supported a number restoration projects, including those of the Gonzaga Theater at Arkhangelskoye, an eighteenth-century estate built by French architects for the Golitsyn and subsequently Yusupov families. It is hoped that recent successful fundraising for Ostankino Palace, the remarkably well-preserved Cheremetiev estate, located north of Moscow (see page 28), will start the long process of its proper restoration in 2007.

Beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg, WMF has supported the launch of restoration work at the magnificent onion-domed wooden churches at Kondopoga and Kizhi—the latter a seventeenth-century 22-domed church built using mortise-and-tenon joinery—as well as a spectacular array of vernacular wooden houses and domed ecclesiastical structures in the village of Rostov Veliky, located on Russia's famed Golden Ring of medieval monasteries. The organization has also supported exterior restoration work at Alvar Aalto's Viipuri Library in Karelia.

Since WMF's first Watch list was issued in 1996, the organization has campaigned for the preservation of Russian masterpieces of functionalist architecture from the 1920s and 1930s. Ironically, the architecture of this period has proven to be the most vulnerable of all. In answer to calls for help on this front, WMF is supporting a major conference this April at the Moscow Architecture Museum that addresses the threats to that city's twentieth-century architecture. From our experience, it is clear that Russia does not want for technical expertise, but advocacy, encouragement, and financial assistance. State architectural conservation bodies in that country are often pessimistic about their ability to effect change as they watch their power being eroded by commerce. By continuing its involvement in Russia at this critical time, an international organization like WMF can help their Russian colleagues by championing their cause.

—WILL BLACK, BERTRAND DU VIGNAUD, & JOHN H. STUBBS FOR WMF



# RESCUING A RUSSIAN TREASURE

by BERTRAND DU VIGNAUD

*Built in the late eighteenth century on the what were then the outskirts of Moscow, the neoclassical estate of Ostankino is poised for restoration.*

Commissioned by Count Nicholas Petrovitch Cheremetiev (1751-1809) at the close of the eighteenth century, Ostankino palace ranks among the most important surviving estates in the Russian Federation. The neoclassical building is composed of a central pavilion, which is flanked by an Egyptian hall and an Italian hall along with a series of formal apartments and passageways. A man of the Enlightenment, Cheremetiev envisioned Ostankino as a "palace dedicated to the arts," created by an extraordinary team of architects, artists, and craftsmen—many of whom were serfs of his estate. The result was an extraordinary neoclassical residence renowned for its concerts, receptions, and other lavish events.

The first part of the palace to be completed, the theater, designed by the architects Alexei Mironov and Grigori Dikouchine—both serfs of the count—and built between 1790 and 1792, survives as a rare and striking example of eighteenth-century theater architecture. Although private, the theater, which had a crew of more than 160 and state-of-the-art equipment, was run as a professional enterprise, entertaining audiences with performances of works by some of the leading playwrights and composers of the day.

We know that an opera by Andre Ernest Modeste Grétry was performed during the state visit of Czar Paul I just prior to his coronation in Moscow in 1797. Cheremetiev's passion for the theater carried over into his personal life. The count was in love with one of his serfs, an actress named Praskovia Kovaliova whom he had tutored in music and the dramatic arts since the age of 7 and who performed in his theater under the stage name "the Pearl." He eventually married the actress, having granted her freedom.

Ostankino's richly decorated Egyptian and Italian halls are the work of Francesco Camporesi, Pavel Argounov, and Vincenzo Brenna. Although executed in relatively inexpensive materials—wallpaper, stucco, wood, faux marble, and papier-mâché—the interior elements within the halls are extraordinary nonetheless, inspired largely by ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman designs. Among the other grand rooms of note at Ostankino is the Picture Gallery, which boasts a ceiling painted in 1797 by an unknown Italian artist. Although the painting has been damaged over the years by water leaks, it remains an extraordinary work of art.

While much of the original fabric that graced the interior has been lost, the original wallpapers have survived, particularly in the Italian Hall. Complementing the interiors are numerous lighting fixtures—chandeliers, wall sconces, brackets—as well as giltwood works created by craftsmen at the estate.

As it is so often the case in Russia, the palace, which was appropriated as a state museum following the Revolution, has suffered over the years from inappropriate repairs, damage wrought by war, pillage, and neglect. Groundwater has infiltrated its foundation, damaging the lower portions of its walls and various structural elements. Although the palace contains an impressive collection of neoclassically styled stoves, it has not been heated since 1917. At present, interior temperatures vary from ca -15° C in the winter to more than 25° C during the summer. Although measures were taken recently to reduce water saturation and stop the decay process as well as to remove intrusive vegetation—lichens, mosses—a lack of funds has made it impossible to carry out emergency repairs and has slowed the development of a master plan for the conservation of the site.

In an effort to call attention to the plight of Ostankino and raise funds for its restoration, WMF Europe held a benefit this past September in the Great Palace of Czar Nicholas I at the Kremlin in Moscow. The event, which coincided with the Moscow World Fine Arts Fair, was attended by some 500 guests from throughout Europe, who were treated to music provided by Yuri Baschmet and the Moscow Soloists and a private viewing of the newly restored Coronation, St. Andrew, and Malachite halls within the palace. Proceeds from the evening, which will be matched by the World Monuments Fund through its Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage, will underwrite efforts to control moisture problems in the palace, perform structural stabilization work, and restore the Picture Gallery and its wallpapers. ■



A FUNDRAISING EVENT, ATTENDED BY MORE THAN 500 PEOPLE AND HELD AT THE KREMLIN LAST SEPTEMBER, HIGHLIGHTED THE PLIGHT OF OSTANKINO. THE ITALIAN HALL, FACING PAGE, IS AMONG THE BEST PRESERVED ROOMS IN THE PALACE. THE PICTURE ROOM, BELOW, WILL SOON BE RESTORED BY WMF.





# HISTORIC MOSCOW UNDER SEIGE

*Despite its rich architectural legacy, Moscow is losing much of its historic fabric to development.*

by EDMUND HARRIS

It ought to be inconceivable that a city with as rich an architectural legacy as Moscow could continue to lose so many of its historic buildings, having already lost so much of its cultural heritage during the twentieth century. Yet that is precisely what is happening—photographs taken of streets and buildings in the center of town as recently as last summer are already historic views.

Much of the destruction can be attributed to the city's robust economy, which has spawned a boom in the real estate market on an unprecedented scale. With property values on the rise, it seems that any piece of land suitable for development is up for grabs, including many properties listed as historic sites. Although legislation protecting historic buildings is, on paper, very good, it is often ignored by those issuing development permits. Moreover, there also has been an inability to recognize that preserving the character of an historic streetscape is just as important as conserving its individual buildings. This is an especially important issue in Moscow, which, unlike most Russian cities, has retained its irregular medieval radial street plan that emanates from the Kremlin. As the areas nearest the city center are the most desirable, available real estate there commands a premium, putting its historic structures in the greatest jeopardy.

Clearly, the best-known landmarks such as the Kremlin and St. Basil's Cathedral are not at risk. Seen with the other surviving architectural landmarks of the city, they are also testament to an age when Moscow was a coherent whole, exhibiting a unique blend of indigenous Russian styles and Byzantine and Classical influences. Around the turn of the twentieth century, a large number of luxury apartment buildings were erected in Moscow, which coincided with the flourishing of the Russian Art Nouveau and a brief neoclassical revival. Together with architectural treasures of earlier ages, they represent a distinctive and very important part of the city's architectural heritage. Yet today, many of these buildings face an uncertain future—having fallen into decay and now threatened with demolition or inappropriate restoration.

Following the Revolution of 1917, Moscow went from being the second city of the Russian Empire to being the capital of the Soviet Union and, with the exception of the Great Fire of 1812, underwent major architectural changes for the first time since the seventeenth century. In order to give the city an appearance commensurate with its new status and new ideology, a comprehensive program of demolition and reconstruction began. For those historic buildings that were spared, the changes were hardly less traumatic. At that time, all existing real estate was nationalized and residential

property was reorganized to ease an acute housing shortage. Much of Moscow's pre-Revolutionary housing stock was communalized—several families would be accommodated in a single apartment or house, one to a room with shared facilities. Subsequent residential construction generally consisted of building anew with minimal maintenance carried out on pre-existing housing.

Today, many of these communalized buildings are now in poor condition. Those that have been “decommunalized” in recent years are for the most part in private hands such as Ulitsa Pokrovka 29, a complex of apartment buildings built in 1897 by Lev Kekushev, a leading architect of Moscow Art Nouveau. Yet private ownership does not necessarily guarantee preservation. When an investor showed interest in redeveloping Ulitsa Pokrovka 29, residents of the building mounted a legal challenge. Although demolition has thus far been avoided, such cases are all too common.

Where historic buildings have been spared, conservation work is often carried out with little regard to authenticity. Such has been the case with Catherine the Great's palace at Tsaritsyno, construction of which was begun by Vasily Bazhenov in 1775 and continued a decade later by Matvei Kazakov. Work stopped in 1793, however, before the building could be completed. Sometime later, the roof either collapsed or was dismantled, and the palace was left to decay until last year, at which time the Russian authorities decided to finish the building for use as a museum. Although a consultation of archive materials would have made it possible to undertake an authentic reconstruction of the palace, a metal substructure of the roof, already visible, attests a radical departure from traditional building methods. Work at Tsaritsyno is reminiscent of that recently carried out at the Manezh—a covered riding school and later an exhibition hall—built in a neoclassical style between 1817 and 1825 and gutted by fire in March 2004. Here too reconstruction work was done using modern techniques and with substantial modifications to the original design so that it could resume life as an exhibition venue.

Only a fraction of the 800 or so churches and chapels built in the pre-Revolutionary city were allowed to function during the Soviet era. Those that survived were secularized and often disfigured



THE LATE BAROQUE CHURCH OF ST. CLEMENT, BUILT BETWEEN 1756 AND 1769, IS OCCUPIED IN LARGE PART BY THE RESERVE BOOK STACKS OF THE STATE LENIN LIBRARY, WHICH HAVE PUT EXCESS STRAIN ON THE VAULTS OF THE UNDERCROFT AND CAUSED STRUCTURAL DAMAGE. WORK STOPPED ON CATHERINE THE GREAT'S PALACE AT TSARITSYNO, FACING PAGE, IN 1793, BEFORE IT COULD BE COMPLETED. THE PALACE IS NOW BEING “FINISHED” USING MODERN CONSTRUCTION METHODS FOR USE AS AN ART GALLERY.



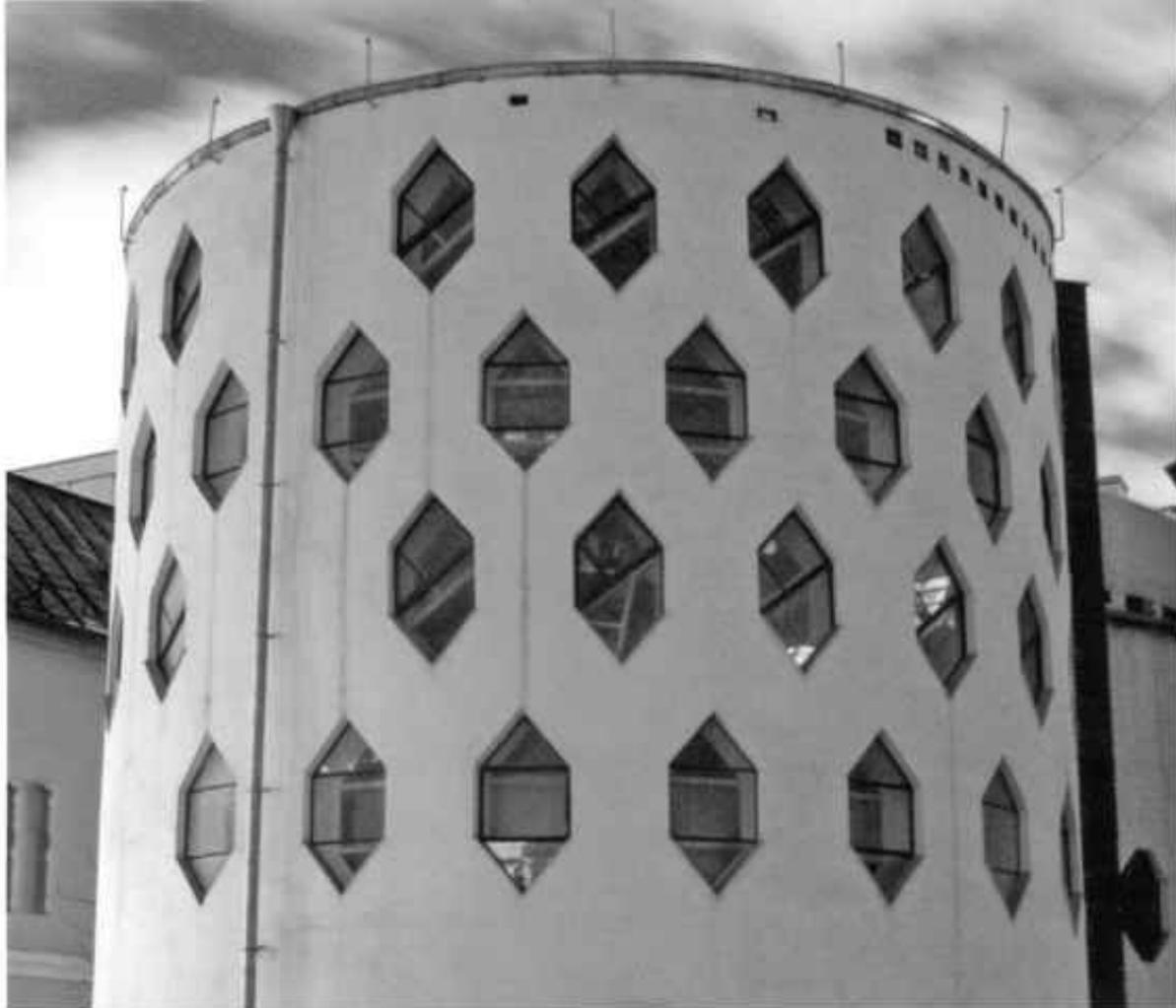
by the addition of extra floors and the dismantlement of domes and bell towers. Fortunately, some of these sanctuaries may see a brighter future with the recent restitution of religious properties to the Russian Orthodox Church, which has embarked on an ambitious restoration program. Already, several badly disfigured churches have been superbly resurrected. Yet rescuing these buildings is an expensive proposition, often beyond the means of the congregations that support them.

Although examples of quality restoration do exist in Moscow, they are few and far between. Two important Art Nouveau buildings in central Moscow by Fyodor Shekhtel—the Utro Rossii newspaper printing house of 1909 and the Levenson printing works of 1900—for example have recently been restored and successfully converted into a restaurant-cum-entertainment complex and conference center respectively.

The Moscow city government is beginning to realize that tourists might wish to linger in the center to enjoy a streetscape of historic buildings. It recently launched the so-called Zolotoye Koltso Moskvy (Golden Ring of Moscow) project, which calls for the streets encircling the Kremlin to be pedestrianized. However, the seriousness of the lack of effective heritage protection cannot be overlooked. Moscow still has enough historic buildings to be worthy of calling itself an historic city, but unless the brakes can be put on unbridled development, that reserve is ever closer to being exhausted. ■



A NINETEENTH-CENTURY HOUSE, ABOVE LEFT, WAS CAREFULLY RESTORED, WHILE THE MANEZH, WHICH BURNED IN 2004, WAS QUICKLY REBUILT AS AN EXHIBITION HALL.



# THE BELL TOLLS FOR MOSCOW'S MODERNIST MASTERWORKS

by CLEMENTINE CECIL

Moscow's Modernist legacy is one of the finest in the world, but also one of the most neglected. Built in the feverish early years of the revolution, the buildings are experimental in form and materials and presented Moscow with dramatic silhouettes to mark the new era of socialism. However, despite their aesthetic power and historical importance, more than 70 years of poor maintenance and ill-use have deformed many of these buildings and led others to near collapse. An indication of the critical nature of the situation are the inclusion of two of Moscow's Modernist landmarks on WMF's 2006 list of 100 Most Endangered Sites and an international conference in Moscow, *Heritage at Risk*, which will be held this April.

Architecture fans visiting Moscow are often surprised to find that the majority of the city's Modernist buildings have either fallen into ruin or have been disfigured by inappropriate use and insensitive rehabilitations. Visitors to Paris who want to see Le Corbusier's work can visit the Fondation where they will receive information about his buildings, which they will find pristine and well maintained. Significant Soviet architects such as Konstantin Melnikov, or Moisei Ginzburg, have no such representation in Moscow. Indeed, visitors will be hard-pressed to even find their buildings, so crowded are they by new developments of the last 15 years, and in conditions which are anything but their intended pristine appearance.

The present state of the Narkomfin building, which has been included on WMF's Watch list three times—in 2002, 2004, and 2006—is the most graphic example of the result of these problems. Built between 1928 and 1930 by Moisei Ginzburg and Ignatii Milinis for employees of the National Finance Ministry, the Narkomfin is a seminal document in the history of architecture, having served as the model for Le Corbusier's *Unité D'Habitation* (see page 30). Designed according to Le Corbusier's principles—house on pillar supports, supporting frame, wall-screens, horizontal windows, open planning, flat functional roofs—the building

predates Le Corbusier's vertical city. According to some, the young French architect asked Ginzburg for copies of the layouts of the duplex apartments, which he took back to Paris and from them developed his revolutionary designs.

Despite its importance, the building is in desperate need of restoration. Its ceiling is leaking and the walls are at the point of falling away due to water damage. Set slightly back from the Garden Ring Road in central Moscow, Narkomfin, which is wedged between the American embassy and a new shopping center, stands in melancholy abandonment. Vegetation grows out of its walls and roof, and cardboard replaces glass in its horizontal windows. Despite these poor conditions, half of its 56 apartments are still inhabited.

Moisei Ginzburg's grandson, architect Alexei Ginzburg, has drawn up a restoration plan for the building, which ensures that the original layout is retained. He suggests that the building becomes

an apartment-hotel, or continues to be an apartment block. The expense of any restoration project here is vastly increased by the necessity of rehousing the some 26 families who still live there. The building is owned by the city authorities and listed on a local level. Periodically a company buys the rights to restore the building, but drops out when they realize the complications. While the fate of this seminal building is debated, it continues to deteriorate.

Modernism fell out of favor with the ascent of Stalin, who sought a more opulent, classical architectural style to reflect the relative economic stability of his rule, following the shortages of the twenties. Buildings like Narkomfin were reminiscent of the instability of the early years of revolution; the style was officially rejected and the buildings were modified. For example, Narkomfin was originally on pillar supports, but under Stalin the ground floor was filled in and offices installed in these new spaces. Experimental materials were no longer deemed necessary, as there was money to spend on construction, one of Stalin's favorite activities.

Many architects easily slipped into the new style, especially the older ones who had classical training before the revolution. But not all were willing to do so, such as Konstantin Melnikov, who achieved international fame with his Soviet pavilion at the 1925 Paris Exhibition, which won the Grand Prix.

Melnikov's building contracts dried up in the early thirties and he was forbidden to travel abroad, and so unable to attend the Milan Triennale in 1933 where his work was exhibited along with the great architects of the day. Instead, Melnikov retreated into the house-studio he built for himself in central Moscow. This building (1927-1929) was one of few private houses built under Communism and is one of the great international icons of Modernism. Like Narkomfin, this building is on the



**MOSCOW'S MODERNIST LEGACY INCLUDES KONSTANTIN MELNIKOV'S HOUSE-STUDIO, FACING PAGE, THE NARKOMFIN BUILDING, BELOW, AND THE MOSCOW PLANETARIUM, RIGHT. ALL ARE THREATENED BY DEVELOPMENT.**

WMF's 2006 Watch list. New development in the area has affected ground water conditions, leading to the undermining of the building's foundations. As a result cracks are seen in the walls and roof. An inappropriate restoration in the nineties has also led to further defects. Viktor Melnikov, the architect's son, created an informal house-museum to his father after his death in 1974: the candles and some dried flowers from his parents wedding still stand before the icon in the downstairs parlor; his father's paints and brushes are scattered across a desk in the upstairs studio.

Viktor Melnikov died February 5 this year, leaving his half of the house to the Russian state with the stipulation that it should be kept as a house-museum. The Schusev State Architecture Museum had already begun work on cataloging the Melnikov archive before Viktor's death. A court case on March 16th resolved a long-running family dispute over ownership. The other half of the house has been bought by Russian Senator Sergey Gordeev, a former property developer. He has said that he wants to help the Russian state create a museum in the building and is aware of the need for restoration. The appearance of an individual with a passion for the avant garde who is willing to invest in restoration, could secure a brighter future for these buildings. The Moscow Architecture Preservation Society (MAPS) is monitoring the situation.

Although radical in appearance, and reminiscent of American grain silos, peasant construction techniques were employed in the building of the house. Melnikov himself was from a peasant family and therefore familiar with such methods. Large internal, light-filled spaces were possible thanks to innovative building techniques introduced by the architect such as self-reinforcing concrete floors built in a waffle-like grid. According to Russian peasant traditions, the Melnikov family slept together in one room on the first floor, divided by slender partitions.

Melnikov was also the architect of several Workers' Clubs in Moscow;



# THE HOUSE THAT KONSTANTIN BUILT

For more than three decades, Viktor Melnikov, son of architect Konstantin Melnikov, curated his father's extraordinary house-studio, regaling visitors with stories of his father's life and infusing the house with a powerful atmosphere of twentieth-century Moscow in all its tragedy and poetry. ICON contributor Clementine Cecil, head of the Moscow Architectural Preservation Society (MAPS), caught up with Melnikov this past winter, only weeks before he died on February 5, 2006 at the age of 91. It would be his last interview.

*ICON: How long have you lived here?*

*VM: I have lived here since autumn 1929, two years after construction began—we moved in November. So now it's 76 years. Papa passed away in 1974 and for 31 years I have maintained the building for the state, for the motherland, for Russia, on my pension.*

*ICON: Do you get many visitors?*

*VM: Constantly. People come to visit the house from all over the world. Every week I get a phone call or a ring on the front gate. There are Spaniards, Dutch, Italians, Germans, English, and Americans. I don't let large groups in but sometimes I have to two or three people at a time.*

*ICON: Has the area changed since the house was built?*

*VM: Under the present mayor, huge houses have gone up all round the house, which is awful—before the sky was visible through most of the windows and the house was full of light. Now we see brick walls. I sleep down here on the ground floor, but the new Russians around here don't let me sleep—they are always working on their homes. They have no conscience. Above the bed, the plaster has fallen away from the ceiling. One night I thought I had left the cabbage on the stove in the kitchen so I went in to look and as soon as I left the room the plaster fell all over the bed. I haven't slept in the bedroom [upstairs] since 1941. I don't go out much. I only go to the shop when it is absolutely necessary. I don't see well and I'm frightened of falling over.*

*ICON: Tell us about your father.*

*VM: He dreamt about building this house since his childhood. It is his last piece of work. He never received any favors from the corridors of political power. As a 13-year-old-boy he came to earn money in Moscow and was taken in by an aristocratic family. Now the aristocratic class no longer exists. The aristocrat, a major engineer, made him part of the family when he noticed that the boy was very sensitive and loved to draw. He sat him down to draw and he drew for six hours. And then he was sat down at the table with the grownups, to receive, so to speak his prize—lunch. But he didn't know where to put his hands, how to behave himself, because he had gone from one level of society to another. So he learnt aristocratic ways. Vladimir Chaplin was an important engineer. He noted papa's talent and enrolled a teacher to prepare him for the art and architecture school. And Papa drew diametrical forms for two years in order to get into the school. It was a Moscow school where the most talented were enrolled in the painting department. Papa got in. He constantly sketched geometric figures on paper—spheres, cones etc and he did this with great intensity, using perspective so these bodies came out from the paper at angles and disappeared into corners. At the age of 16, as one of 11 chosen from 270 competitors, he began to study classical drawing. He studied painting for four years and in the second year he met Mama and married in 1912. In 1913 my sister*





VIKTOR MELNIKOV LIVED IN HIS FATHER'S HOUSE-STUDIO HIS ENTIRE LIFE, MAINTAINING IT AS A MUSEUM UNTIL HIS DEATH IN FEBRUARY.

appeared and 1914 when he finished in the painting department, I appeared... Naturally Chaplin was concerned that the family lived comfortably and he made papa give his word that he would become an architect. He had received brilliant marks in the painting department and passed into the architecture department with no difficulty. When he became an architect he understood that from art, sculpture and architecture, architecture is the most important of the arts. It is not hidden on walls but is drawn in an expanse, in the open air... in the world. All this is written in his diary.

**ICON:** How was it that until 1933 such an individualist and religious man, creating such progressive buildings, was permitted to work?

**VM:** During revolutionary times, papa, a Russian Orthodox, managed to provide the confirmation that the revolution was looking for—art is, after all, a sort of confirmation and he won all the contests. But all the same, people would have criticized him if he hadn't built Lenin's sarcophagus. Lenin died and Schusev built a structure, a mausoleum and a competition was held for the sarcophagus. Papa made several variations and one of them he created—as he was a Russian Orthodox, so chose to see Lenin as sleeping beauty in the crystal coffin. Lenin's head and feet were outside the central crystal body of the sarcophagus, which made him look very big. When the war started the sarcophagus was evacuated and it was never returned. Nevertheless, Lenin was in his sarcophagus 22 years, so they didn't touch papa. Also, at a certain moment, when Lenin died, he was winning all the competitions. The first competition he won, for 'workers' houses,' he gave all the workers units their own entrances, so that each person didn't lose his individuality. He considered individuality to be the main source of purity. He built 26 buildings in the first nine years of his career.

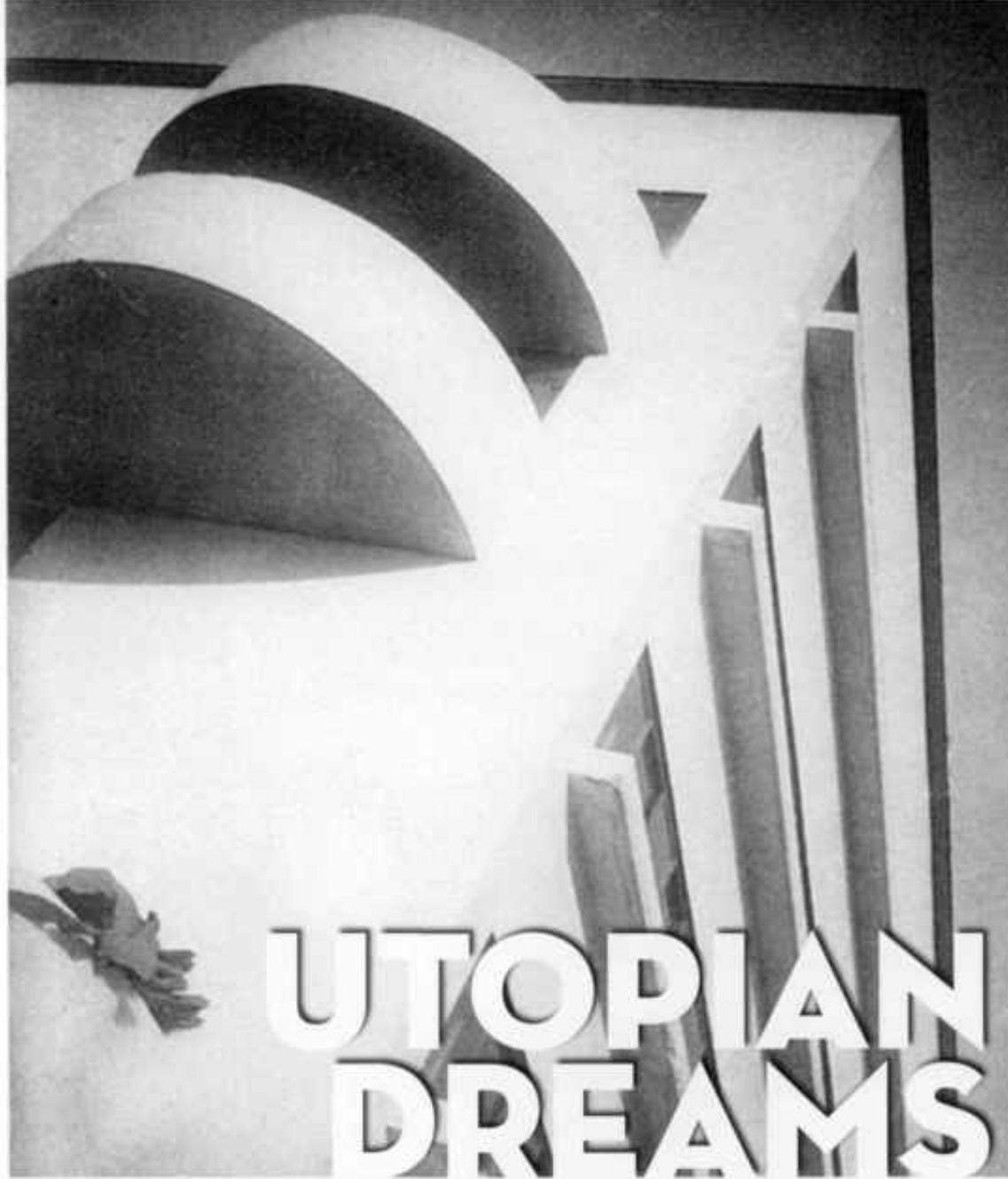
community centers that were to serve as gathering places. These are masterpieces of the avant garde have suffered from the economic upheavals in Russia since the fall of Communism.

In the nineties many factories were finding it impossible to survive the new economic climate. The Kauchuk factory (1927-1929) was forced to sublet its workers' club built by Konstantin Melnikov. Today, an expensive Chinese restaurant with a garish entrance has destroyed part of the façade and interior. Thick metal glazing bars have replaced the original wooden glazing bars, which were slender in simulation of metal, a material hard to obtain at the time. Original glazing has also been replaced with mirror glass, which detracts from its appearance. Original detail is only to be found on the top floor of the theater, where visitors never venture. Here are traces of original banisters, wooden flooring, and paint color. Elsewhere, modern floor tiles and metal banisters prevail. According to the law, these changes are illegal but widespread ignorance of the importance of authentic restoration work as well as a lack of personal commitment among employees of state preservation institutions means the law often goes unobserved.

The Moscow Planetarium (1928-1929), the work of M.O. Barsch and M.I. Siniavskii, has suffered a different fate having been all but destroyed by insensitive improvements. When built it was a potent symbol of the scientific advancement of the Soviet state. The dome is a lightweight steel frame and until recently it boasted external stairs of Corbusian simplicity and geometry. Recently the external staircase was destroyed during a renovation, when the dome was lifted 16 centimeters.

Other buildings of the period are facing the wrecking ball. Parts of the experimental Constructivist complex, Hostels of the Red Professor Institute (1929-1932) by D.P. Osipov and A.M. Rukhlyadev, are slated for demolition. These seven elegant buildings were constructed to house military teachers in training. They are in a desirable part of south Moscow and a large Moscow construction company has its eye on the spot. Osipov is a well-known Moscow architect of the period and the complex was under consideration for listing until early 2005. With administrative efforts to protect the site now in abeyance, the future of this complex is highly uncertain.

The next few years will be critical for Moscow's Modernist legacy. The authorities and community leaders need to understand that Soviet-era buildings have an important place in Russian history. Decisions over the future of Melnikov's House-Studio must be taken at the highest levels and in consultation with local and international experts. Heritage protection campaigns need to better promote Russia's Modernist among the population in general. Criteria for listing and conservation intervention of these non-traditional architectural forms must be developed, disseminated and adhered to. Fortunately, the champions of this cause in Russia are many, and range from professors of architectural history to cutting edge young architects and designers. Where Moscow treads, Russia follows, and many wonderful Modernist buildings in other Russian cities are also receiving rough treatment. It is important to set a precedent with a high quality restoration of the Melnikov House and Narkomfin in order to show how relevant, inspirational, and elegant these buildings still are. Those who have not yet visited Moscow to see her architectural wonders are advised to do so before any more buildings perish. ■



## MOISEI GINZBURG'S NARKOMFIN DOM KOMMUNA

**B**ehind the Narkomfin Dom Kommuna's austere bands of double-height windows unfolds a six-story blueprint for communal living that is as ingenious as it is humane. Built between 1928 and 1930 by a team of architects and engineers led by Moisei Ginzburg, a member of the post-revolutionary Union of Contemporary Architects, the building, erected to house employees of the Ministry of Finance, consists not only of private quarters with built-in furniture but communal facilities—an open terrace on the second floor, and a garden and solarium atop the roof. A four-story annex housed a fitness center, kitchen, public restaurant, library, recreation room, and a nursery. Close by, a two-story provided laundry and repair services. These facilities made the building a successful house-commune intended to dissolve social barriers through the division of household chores between inhabitants while preserving privacy. With its innovative approach to living, the structure was seen as an important step in the transformation of Soviet society for revolutionary housing types that were to be adopted by the entire Russian Republic.

A Constructivist masterpiece, the Narkomfin building realized an important goal of European Modernist architecture, that of achieving the most minimal and rational support of modern life, the existenz minimum, and in the process fomenting social reform through architecture. Nowhere is this more evident than in the building's F-units with their innovative Frankfurt style kitchens, which influenced Le Corbusier's design for his iconic Unite d'Habitation in Marseilles.

Early drawings of the Narkomfin Dom Kommuna show it as a fragment of the idealized linear cities of avant-garde planners. Like a traditional romantic folly, which looked back toward Arcadia, the building was intended as a Communist utopia where, in the words of Ginzburg himself, "the peasant can listen to the songs of larks" and where "the combines of habitation, dense and compact, permit the inhabitants to enjoy gardens, expanses of greenery and the collective spaces of sport and relaxation."

The park in which the Narkomfin Dom Kommuna was placed was an attempt in miniature to realize the Constructivists' utopian vision of urban landscape that blurred the divisions between city and countryside. In developing the site, Ginzburg scrupulously recorded all the pre-existing trees so that he could insert his buildings with surgical precision while the columns upon which the building was raised would be painted to echo the black tree trunks of the old neoclassical park. Ginzburg's site plan of 1929 shows straight driveways leading up to the elevated forms of the complex at acute angles, highlighting its perspective, while behind the main building, curving paths are drawn with benches, which recall the earlier neoclassical pleasure park.

Despite its extraordinary impact on the development of twentieth-century avant-garde thought in architecture, Ginzburg's Utopia, was not to last. Following Stalin's rise to power in the late 1920s, rapid changes in Soviet society began to leave their mark on the site. Where Ginzburg had envisioned a plaza, an asphalted road was laid that went right up to the building without the exciting original diagonal per-

spectives. The architect's Constructivist landscaping was replaced with new planting—formal and geometric in keeping with Stalinist sensibilities. The meandering Arcadian paths and dynamic approaches by car fell by the wayside. Following Stalin's dissolution of the Ministry of Finance in the 1930s, administration of the Narkomfin Dom Kommuna was transferred to the Council of Peoples Commissars. Many of the inhabitants of the complex were arrested and imprisoned. At one point the records for the occupants of the Narkomfin Dom Kommuna surged with large numbers of women living for short periods of time—evidently the fleeing wives of arrested bureaucrats from there and other locations devastated by the purges. As families were being broken apart, so too were the apartments and spaces of the Narkomfin Dom Kommuna.

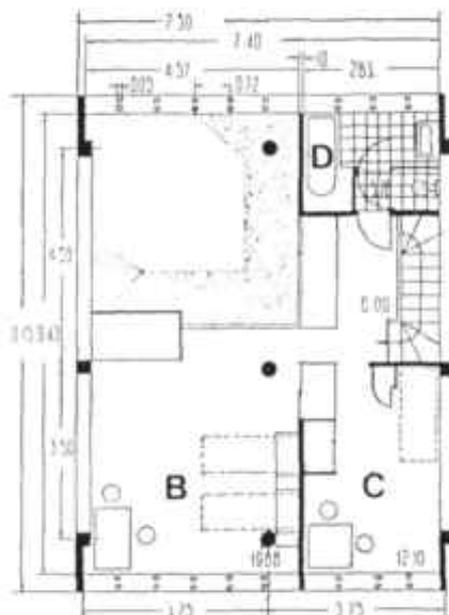
The rows of columns upon which the building was raised were filled in to create apartments for a swelling Moscow population. As elsewhere, many of the original apartments were subdivided into communal apartments or *kommunalki*. Where only a minimal dwelling for one family was envisioned, three would now be quartered. The bridge connecting the apartments to the communal dining facility was converted into a dormitory, while the dining facility itself was gradually turned over to other uses such as a print shop by the Council of People's Commissariats and later into offices for the local fire brigade.

Surprisingly the laundry facility remained in full operation well into the 1950s. In the early 1960s the apartment house itself was handed over to the local housing administration along with the laundry facility, while the communal block stayed with the Soviet of Ministers. At that time, large numbers of homeless people began squatting in the building, occupying leftover spaces in corridors and the dark recesses

of its basement. In the decades that followed, during the tenures of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, several attempts were made to return the building to its inhabitants so that they could reinstate its social program with sporting and communal dining facilities, all of which failed, leaving the building and its tenants to fall into further decline. The construction of the neighboring United States Embassy in 1981 further damaged the site. Construction vehicles destroyed the last remnants of the old park. Families moved from the decaying structure so that at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union only half the units were occupied, the rest were emptied and left in decaying squalor.

Under current law it would be possible for the inhabitants to privatize the building and maintain it themselves. But there are too few of them to do so given the prohibitive costs of simply renovating the structure, let alone restoring the high conservation standards it deserves. Numerous proposals have been made to restore the structure yet, at present, the fate of this languishing masterpiece of twentieth century architecture is extremely precarious, despite its having been on the WMF's list of 100 Most Endangered Sites twice. ■

OPPOSITE: THE NARKOMFIN DOM KOMMUNA SHORTLY AFTER ITS COMPLETION IN 1930. A PLAN FOR THE BUILDING'S "K-UNITS," RIGHT. TODAY, THE BUILDING, BELOW, LANGUISHES IN A STATE OF NEGLECT AND DISREPAIR.



This spring, the World Monuments Fund will be featuring the work of renowned Turkish architect and photographer Ahmet Ertuğ in a new exhibition—*Vaults of Heaven: Sanctuaries of Byzantium*—on view at its Manhattan gallery. Prior to the exhibition's New York debut, gallery curator and ICON contributor Martha Flach caught up with Ertuğ to discuss his work at Hagia Sophia, the Church of Chora, and medieval sanctuaries of Cappadocia—fragile treasures that WMF is helping to save.

*ICON: What drew you to photography?*

*AE:* I studied at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London. My eyes and observational abilities were trained to see unusual details in our surroundings, especially in historic buildings. While a student, I started using photography as a tool to record the architecture and street life of London. The AA is rather well-known for the visual presentation styles of its students. It was probably from breathing this atmosphere that I got involved in photography.

*ICON: How does your training as an architect affect your photography?*

*AE:* A photographic vision is an extension of a photographer's intellectual capacity. By studying architecture, one especially develops a strong sense of understanding the volumetric and aesthetic features of a building or a historic site. We are trained to analyze and record the outstanding aspects of a building and assess its qualities. This naturally developed my photographic vision so that I can identify the assets of a building instinctively.



# Vaults of Heaven

**TURKISH PHOTOGRAPHER AHMET ERTUĞ ON CAPTURING  
THE GLORY OF BYZANTIUM**

*ICON: What drives your selection of subjects?*

*AE:* I am strongly committed to the conservation of historic buildings and an important aim of my photography is to increase public awareness of heritage sites. In addition, there must also be an "energy exchange," if you will, between the subject and the intellect.

*ICON: What do you aim to capture and communicate?*

*AE:* My aim is to capture what is not normally noticed. Or to show hidden qualities under changing light conditions. When I'm going to photograph a monument, I first study the various aspects of the building and put myself in the position of its architect, trying to grasp the structure through his eyes and vision. It's a kind of meditation, I suppose. I seem to instinctively position myself in precisely the locations where the most compelling views of the building can be captured. It's very rare that I have to move left or right after I've set my tripod down. The adjustments are on the order of, say, an inch with the settings of my camera.

*ICON: You're clearly drawn to sacred sites. Why?*

*AE:* I live in Istanbul where sacred sites from the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires simultaneously exist and are sometimes juxtaposed and even layered atop one another. I also lived in Japan for a time, as a Japan Foundation fellow, where I developed an affection for Buddhist sacred sites. When I look at sacred sites behind the ground glass of my camera, I feel their purity and aura, but it's a contemplative connection rather than a religious emotion.

*ICON: Do you find more commonalities or differences in sacred architecture from different cultures?*

*AE:* When I photograph sacred sites, I try and place myself in the role or position of their designers. In all these different places I feel the same excitement and emotion, be it Buddhist temples, Islamic mosques, or Byzantine churches. When you have a sincere attitude, you realize there are no real barriers separating them.





OPENING SPREAD: TURKISH PHOTOGRAPHER AND ARCHITECT AHMET ERTUĞ, FACING PAGE, BUILT AS A BYZANTINE CHURCH IN 537, HAGIA SOPHIA WAS LATER CONVERTED TO A MOSQUE. WMF INCLUDED THE BUILDING, NOW A SECULAR MUSEUM, ON ITS 1996 WATCH LIST AND FUNDED ROOF REPAIRS TO PROTECT THE EXQUISITE INTERIORS.

HITTITE, PHRYGIAN, PERSIAN, HELLENISTIC, ROMAN, AND BYZANTINE STRUCTURES HAVE BEEN CARVED OUT IN VOLCANIC TUFF FORMATIONS THAT DOT THE CAPPADOCIA LANDSCAPE. FACING PAGE, CHRIST THE PANTOKRATOR ("RULER OF ALL") IS PICTURED IN THE CUPOLA WHILE ARCHANGELS AND PROPHETS ADMORN ARCHES WITHIN THE MID ELEVENTH-CENTURY KARANLIK KILISE (DARK CHURCH), IN GÖREME, CAPPADOCIA.

*ICON: Is there one particular historic period you're most drawn to?*

*AE:* If I had to pick just one it would be sixteenth-century Ottoman architecture (and of course art), but especially the architecture of Sinan. It's so pure and aesthetically amazing. Despite the passage of the centuries, there's still so much to be discovered in it.

*ICON: What was it like shooting in Hagia Sophia?*

*AE:* I spent about a year at Hagia Sophia taking photographs for my book *Hagia Sophia: A Vision for Empires*. I photographed one mosaic panel with my own lights and wasn't so happy with the results. One day, I happened to catch sight of a beam of light entering through the small windows by the image of Christ in the deesis. It was a magical moment as the beam of the light came in at what must have been the same angle of light and shadow that the original artist saw. The light lingered for only ten minutes, giving me just enough time to hurriedly photograph the image. This was one of the most thrilling experiences I have ever had as a photographer.

*ICON: How much research do you do before you shoot a site?*

*AE:* I read about the history of the site and make my own visual assessment by walking around it at different times of the day without the camera, observing the effects of light on the different aspects of the site or building. Only when I feel confident of my assessment do I take my camera to the spots I have discovered; I take only one photograph from each position.

*ICON: What photographers have influenced you?*

*AE:* I'm more influenced by music, especially when listening to Maria Callas, Renee Fleming, and Lisa Gerrard. I work like someone composing music; photographs harmoniously add to one another to form the pages of a book. Visually, the cinematography of Ron Fricke in *Baraka* is a great source of inspiration for me. In my photographic vision, I try to create and capture a meditative atmosphere with a timeless, colossal, and silent space.







**ICON:** Do you prefer natural or artificial light?

**AE:** I use natural light when I am photographing exterior views. I generally photograph in spring and in autumn, preferably in early and late afternoon sun. I watch the effects of changing light continuously in Istanbul. When I am photographing interiors or sculptures, I use the kinds of lights used in the cinema industry. If the place has lost its original light values, I try to re-create illumination that will best represent the authentic ambience. I never attempt to "show everything." I like deep shadows and mood. Quite often I break the rules of illumination, even my own.

**ICON:** What kind of camera and film do you use?

**AE:** I use an 8x10-inch view camera, a Sinar p2, and Kodak Ektachrome 50 or 64 ASA slide film. The camera, lenses, and tripod weigh about 60 pounds. Most of the time it means I have a large van full of equipment. For remote sites where I cannot reach a lab easily, I use a very sophisticated Sinar digital camera that allows me to capture an amazing amount of detail. I used digital equipment last year on location in Cappadocia. It was great to make use of such state-of-the-art equipment in such a rugged setting. But I also had to carry around a 30-inch Apple monitor in order to see the images with the necessary degree of clarity. I believe no digital camera has yet reached a level of perfection sufficient to provide the deep volumetric features of an image that has been photographed on fine-grain film by a large-format camera.

**ICON:** How many photos are typically taken and how long does it take?

**AE:** I can take about a dozen images on a good working day; you can't flit around with this huge camera. The photography for a publication may take six to twelve months depending on the season, light conditions, and of course the nature of the project. ■

For more on Ahmet Ertuğ's work, visit [www.ahmetertug.com](http://www.ahmetertug.com)

THE EAST BAY AND APSE OF A SIDE CHAPEL IN THE CHURCH OF ST. SAVIOR IN CHORA, FACING PAGE, ARE ADORNED WITH IMAGES OF THE RESURRECTION, A SCENE IN WHICH CHRIST IS DEPICTED RAISING ADAM AND EVE FROM THEIR TOMBS. A MID-TENTH-CENTURY DETAIL OF THE VIRGIN OF TENDERNESS IN THE NEW CHURCH OF TOKALI IN CAPPADOCIA, ABOVE, REPRESENTS AN EARLY EXAMPLE OF THIS ICONIC FORM.

## Vaults of Heaven Sanctuaries of Byzantium

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THE NEWLY-RESTORED ENTRANCE HALL AT HOGGERHANGER, COMPLETED THIS APRIL. MUCH OF THE ORIGINAL TROMPE L'OEIL WOODGRAINING HAD SURVIVED UNDER LAYERS OF LATER PAINT. FACING PAGE: A SELECTION OF DETAILS FROM THE HOUSE—A RECESSED FLOWER IN THE EATING ROOM; A VEINED MARBLE CHIMNEY PIECE IN THE LIBRARY, CARVED BY CORIN JOHNSON BASED ON SOANE'S DRAWINGS; AN ARTICULATED CEILING IN THE EATING ROOM; AND AN EXTERNAL ENTABLATURE—AND A PORTRAIT OF SIR JOHN SOANE BY THOMAS LAWRENCE, 1828.

It is ironic in this age of quick fixes that many are seeking solace in the intense, imaginative world of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century architect Sir John Soane, whose stripped-down classicism, loved for so long by purists, has witnessed an extraordinary revival in recent years. Of course this would have delighted the man himself. He rose meteorically on the wings of his talent, cutting through the social fabric of Georgian England—beginning as the son of a bricklayer, knighted by the King in 1831, and awarded the gold medal for architecture in 1835. He established the Sir John Soane Museum at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields by private act of parliament in 1833, precisely to keep his name in the history books but also to pass on to future generations his ideas about perspective, proportion, ornament, light, and beauty.

"The idea was that we all learn from our mistakes so that in the end, over the years, we get perfection of architecture," says Stephen Astley, curator of Soane's drawing collection. "This is very much a didactic museum, here to educate the wider public. The house works on so many levels. It doesn't only showcase his remarkable collection, but it also marketed his architecture. It was a test bed for his ideas, it



# THE GENIUS OF Sir John Soane

**RESTORING THE WORK OF ONE OF ENGLAND'S MOST-BELOVED ARCHITECTS**

by CAROLINE MCGHIE

showed people how to draw, it was his office, it was a family home." So, although Soane might not have achieved all he wanted in his lifetime, he made sure he cast his shadow forwards. "He won in the long term," says Astley. "Around the world, architects name Soane as an influence."

The resurgence of interest in Soane was stimulated partly by an exhibition at the Royal Academy in London in 1999 called *Sir John Soane, Master of Space and Light*, which toured Canada, France, Spain, and other parts of the world for two years. But there has also been a flowering of books, including Gillian Darley's biography, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*, and Ptolomy Dean's *Sir John Soane and the Country Estate*, both of which appeared in 1999. A new biography of his tragic but brilliant perspective painter *Joseph Gandy: An Architectural Visionary in Georgian England* by Brian Lukacher has just been released to accompany an exhibition, *Soane's Magician*, on view at the Soane Museum through August 12.

But it is the completeness of his museum house, containing all his thoughts, his collections, his lists, his correspondence, that makes it such a potent time capsule. Soane's was a colorful age, and he operated close to the center of it, associating with the flamboyant and often dissolute celebrities of his day—politicians and prominent members of the aristocracy—against the backdrop of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the end of the American War of Independence, the rise of Britain's youngest ever prime minister, William Pitt, and the reigns of George III and IV. This, quite apart from the essence of his ideas, makes his life a point of fascination.

Though we stand in awe of him, his life was punctuated by tragedy and failure. By





THE NEWLY RESTORED NORTH FACADE OF MOGGERHANGER, ABOVE, AND THE EATING ROOM, BELOW, AS IT APPEARED BEFORE AND AFTER WORK WAS COMPLETED THIS SPRING.



the end he had become almost estranged from his surviving sons who had bitterly disappointed him. His relationship with his wife was under strain and he wrote that he appeared to have "raised a nest of wasps about him sufficient to sting the strongest man to death." Many of his architectural dreams were never fulfilled—a Senate House, a Thames bridge, a processional route through Westminster—and he would have loved to have designed the new Houses of Parliament.

In Soane's museum to himself with its oddly named parts, we see the extraordinary mind at work—obsessive, imaginative, perfectionist, breaking new ground. One walks through Monument Court, taking in the gallery of ancient architectural fragments—Italian marble vases, Egyptian alabaster, and Chinese porcelain. His tiny study is adorned with pieces of the Roman Empire. The Corridor is crowded with statues and fragments, a sarcophagus, casts of Roman and Greek temples; the Picture Room has extra walls created by hinged panels to soak up a collection that includes J.M.W. Turner, William Hogarth, and Giovanni Antonio Canaletto. The Monk's Cell is just that, imported with ruined cloister and tomb; in the Sepulchral Chamber in the crypt is the sarcophagus of Seti I with more fragments, statues, vases, and friezes. The house is extraordinary—an entire Grand Tour in miniature.

His other surviving work, much of which had been neglected and forgotten, is now cherished. Of the houses, Pell Well Hall in Shropshire has been saved; so have Tiringham in Buckinghamshire and Pitshanger in Ealing. Moggerhanger in Bedfordshire has undergone a restoration like no other before it. It became an exquisite labor of love, particularly for the architect Peter Inskip who masterminded the work.

Like so many other English country houses beached on social change in the twentieth century, Moggerhanger found itself being turned into a hospital, crusted with prefabs and ugly additions, then sold to a developer who wanted to turn it into apartments. Finally, still in a perilous condition, it was bought by a Christian organization which was persuaded by Soane enthusiasts to allow it to be restored while they continued to use it. The Moggerhanger Preservation Trust was formed for the purpose, the Heritage Lottery Fund stepped in with £3.5m, and many other trusts and foundations made large donations too, among them the World Monuments Fund, which has supported the restoration through its Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve our Heritage. The vision expanded with the budget—at the latest tally the cost was fast approaching £7m.

Soane worked here in two phases. In 1791 he was invited to convert what had

A WATERCOLOR BY JOSEPH H GANDY, PAINTED IN 1825, SHOWS THE ANTIQUITY FILLED DOME AREA OF SIR JOHN'S HOME AT NO. 13 LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

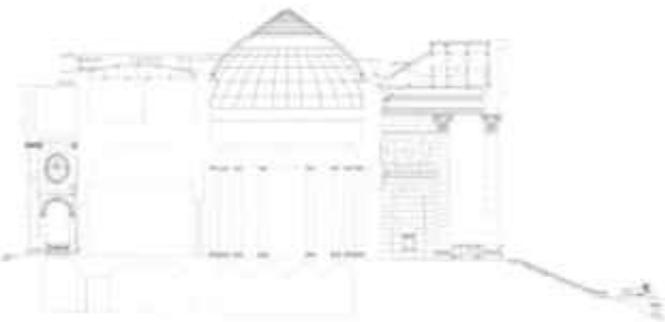
been a small farmhouse into a hunting lodge for Godfrey Thornton, later Governor of the Bank of England, which occupied one of Soane's greatest buildings in the City. Thornton's son Stephen invited Soane back in 1812 to transform Moggerhanger into a proper country house. "When we found it, the house had been written off as if it wasn't important," says Peter Inskip. "It is actually the most recorded house in all the Soane archives. In the records you could see a tremendous friendship develop between the architect and the client, for whom he worked on and off for 40 years, father and son together. This allowed Soane to experiment, so there are things here that tell us about aspects of some of the buildings that were lost. Through the depth of research and unpicking we have revealed a great work of art which has been ignored for 100 years. In my opinion Soane is up there with the great British architects—Inigo Jones, Sir Christopher Wren, and Nicholas Hawksmoor."

On the Preservation Trust were the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Sir Sam Whitbread, and the Countess of Erroll, who had been aware of the house all her life and lives nearby at Woodbury Hall. Her grandfather-in-law was the Lord Erroll who famously formed a love triangle with Diana Broughton and Sir Jock Delves-Broughton in Kenya's Happy Valley. His murder by shooting in 1941 was the subject of the film *White Mischief*, starring Charles Dance. Through a cat's cradle of family connections involving the Astell and the Thornton families, Lady Erroll had direct ties to Moggerhanger, and has childhood memories of it being talked about in concerned tones.

She is now chair of the Trust's furniture committee, desperately trying to find suitable pieces to put into the house. "We keep finding new, wonderful things that cost money to restore," she says. "We have had to make sacrifices, which is why the car park hasn't been done yet, the Repton grounds haven't been restored, and we have no furniture. Unlike a house passed down through a family or held by the National Trust, this came without any contents at all. I am a perfectionist so I want to see it as it should be."



MANY OF ENGLAND'S MOST FAMOUS ARCHITECTS WORKED AT STOWE, INCLUDING SIR JOHN VANBRUGH, JAMES GIBBS, WILLIAM KENT, ROBERT ADAM, THOMAS PITT, AND SIR JOHN SOANE. NORTH FRONT OF STOWE HOUSE FOLLOWING RESTORATION, BELOW.



The restoration of a seminal Grade I listed house, so fragile, so hand-made, has been a long haul. The roof was leaking, dry rot raged, and pre-fabs had mushroomed in the grounds. As time went on, the original doorknobs were found beneath the floorboards; columns for the eating room, which had been put in an outbuilding by the hospital, were recovered; and false ceilings were peeled away to reveal a barrel-vaulted kitchen. Concealed within what was a matron's flat was among the most significant discoveries—an oculus embedded in the floor of the first-floor landing, which carried light from a lantern in the roof to the ground floor below. The first floor above the eating room, which had sagged under the weight of X-ray machines, was safely propped up.

The greatest find was Mrs. Thornton's dressing room, an oval first-floor chamber decorated and colored like a cameo brooch, where she kept her bottles and potions and received guests. It has curved walls, gilded cupboards with black beading, and a blue ceiling decorated in ribbons and garlands of roses, edged with hundreds of gilded balls. "We took away and analyzed the paint and the layers of rosettes were revealed," says Emma Wishart, one of a team of experts working under the guidance of the paint pathologist Catherine Hassall. "And we took away the little gold balls, recast and regilded them." This is a room that may be used in future for weddings.

Now that it is complete, Lady Erroll walks around the exterior with a kind of wonder and pride. There is none of the English country house meringue and stucco look. It is almost funereal in its austerity, painted in a solemn ochre limewash, and with a veranda made of thin trellised timber pillars. The external paintwork on the windows—the glass drops from ceiling to floor—is as black as a clergyman's cassock. The front door is a color that hovers somewhere between crushed plums and offal. "You could think you were in Italy," says Lady Erroll. "It is so un-English."

Step inside Moggerhanger and you find yourself walking through the compartments





**THE LIBRARY AT STOWE, SOANE'S ONLY MAJOR ATTEMPT AT THE GOTHIC IDIOM, LIES BURIED IN THE CENTER OF THE HOUSE ON THE GROUND FLOOR**

of Soane's mind. Exquisitely tooled rooms lead off each other, with windows arranged in matching patterns. Archways and doors play bat and ball, and an extraordinary floating staircase levitates upwards, decorated only by the thinnest swan-necked balusters stacked like black eyelashes.

The colors are a journey in themselves. The central drawing room has been restored using original techniques, with lath and plaster made of lime and horsehair, and the curved walls painted lavender so that the whole room appears to float. The library is lined and awaiting the reprinting of the original wallpaper, fragments of which were found on site. "I put my hand inside a hidden door in the library and found little pieces of the original shimmering silver wallpaper," says Lady Erroll. "It was the most thrilling moment. We are looking for sponsors to help us re-create it. Soane was an architect before his time. His use of light, it was all very, very modern."

Other important pieces of Soane's work are hidden within houses by other renowned architects. He designed the dining room of Number Eleven Downing Street. He also designed the little-known Gothic Library at Stowe, the palatial seat of the Temple and Grenville families who shaped British politics throughout much of the eighteenth century, and a building described by one critic as "the largest and most completely realized private neoclassical building in the world." It is somehow fitting that Soane's hand should be in evidence here, along with a roll



## RESTORING STOWE'S MARBLE HALL

DESIGNED BY THE ITALIAN ARCHITECT GIOVANNI BATTISTA BARTOLI AND BUILT BETWEEN 1775 AND 1770, THE MARBLE HALL AT STOWE RANKS AMONG BRITAIN'S GRANDEST INTERIORS. YET UNTIL RECENTLY, THE ROOM, INSPIRED BY THE PANTHEON IN ROME, HAD FALLEN INTO DISREPAIR. TODAY, HOWEVER, THE HALL IS ONCE AGAIN GLEAMING. FOLLOWING A TWO-YEAR RESTORATION UNDERWRITTEN BY WHF THROUGH ITS ROBERT W. WILSON CHALLENGE TO CONSERVE OUR HERITAGE, RESTORATION OF THE MARBLE HALL IS PART OF A LARGER SIX-PHASE PROJECT, BEGUN WHEN THE ENTIRE HOUSE WAS PLACED ON WHF'S 2002 LIST OF 100 MOST ENDANGERED SITES.



call of great architectural names including Sir John Vanbrugh, William Kent, and James Gibbs. Famed landscape architect Lancelot "Capability" Brown, who had a hand in shaping the gardens, learned his craft at Stowe.

One cannot but catch one's breath as you approach Stowe. Perched on a Buckinghamshire ridge at the end of sweeping driveways and parkland, it is now occupied by Stowe public school. The great north front is designed to look like a veritable palace, built to enfold what one commentator of the time called "the finest rooms in Europe." Arriving here, you follow in the footsteps not just of Soane but of every king and queen who stayed there during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The entrance is designed to inspire awe. The central pillared portico, flanked by long colonnades, gives way to the imposing North Hall with a William Kent ceiling depicting the Roman days of the week and Mars, God of War, handing Viscount Cobham a sword.

The state rooms play like a kind of architectural concerto on the piano nobile, with views to the lake and pavilions. There is the Blue Room with its Bacchanalian ceiling in blue and gold, the Library with its vast mahogany bookcases and ornate ceiling, and the Music Room built around 1780, with painted panels by Vincenzo Valdre, decorated niches, Corinthian columns of scagliola, and a Valdre ceiling adapted from a Guido Reni composition in the Villa Borghese in Rome. The Drawing Room was Queen Victoria's favorite and painted for her by Joseph Nash.

Nothing, however, quite matches the most spectacular room of all, the Marble Hall. An elliptical hall of Carrara marble with 15 scagliola columns, inspired by the Pantheon in Rome, it flowers into a huge dome, sculpted in ornate plasterwork with 160 coffers of tapering size, with a frieze of 300 figures depicting a Roman triumphal procession. This whole fantasy of orgy and restraint has just been restored with substantial support from WMF through its Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve our Heritage. The Stowe House Preservation Trust is in the middle of an extensive rolling program of repairs with four more phases to come, estimated to cost £42m at 2002 prices.

So it is extraordinary, in this great flamboyant monument to classicism and to excess, that one finds, buried in the center of the house on the ground floor, the Gothic Library by Soane. It is a surprise because it is Soane's only major attempt at the Gothic idiom, many of the details being directly copied from King Henry VII's Chapel in Westminster Abbey. It is also a surprise because it is used as the headmaster's study and thus carries heavy psychological baggage. The film star David Niven, for example, remembered being beaten in this room—a memory that must have seemed more like a Gothic nightmare than the Gothic fantasy that Soane intended.

The room is a remarkable period piece with a low ceiling of such complicated plaster fan vaulting, enriched with Gothic canopies at either end over mirrored panels, decorated with hundreds of flowers, that would have been fitting for any Tudor monarch. It apparently took eight plasterers 210 weeks to complete. The walls are lined with floor-to-ceiling Gothic carved wooden bookcases designed to display the outstanding collection of Saxon manuscripts of Thomas Aste, Keeper of the Records at the Tower of London, who had left them to the Marquis in gratitude for favours.

According to Michael McCarthy, who authored a treatise on Soane and the Gothic library, this room represents "the culmination of a trend in architectural design that originated with Horace Walpole" and is "among the more neglected monuments of the history of art." It is now hugely enjoyed by the current headmaster of Stowe, Anthony Wallersteiner, who studied history of art and loves to sit here. "The whole idea was that Stowe should nod to the Gothic," he says. "In the heart of the house there would be a reminder that there is an indigenous architectural style which celebrates Saxon freedom and Saxon creativity. It is to King Alfred that we owe the creation of the Withan, the first parliament, and a national army, and it was a Whig conceit that there had been an unbroken tradition since then."

While Soane here executed the Gothic style perfectly, and toyed with it in the Monk's Cell in his own house, it wasn't a style that spoke from his heart. One of the great sadnesses of his life was when the Houses of Parliament burned down in 1834; the architectural brief stipulated that the new buildings must be either Gothic or Tudor, effectively putting him out of the frame. We can only imagine what he might have given us if he'd had the chance. As it was he had what he considered his greatest work engraved on his tomb. Sir John Soane, Architect of the Bank of England. ■



PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BUILDINGS BY SOANE ARE DEPICTED IN AN ILLUSTRATION BY ONE OF THE ARCHITECT'S PUPILS JOSEPH M. GANDY, 1815.

# EX LIBRIS

SELECTIONS FROM THE WMF BOOKSHELF

## WHO OWNS THE PAST? Cultural Policy, Cultural Property, and the Law

EDITED BY KATE FITZ GIBBON • RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS  
& AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL POLICY

362 PP. • \$34.95

There aren't many collections of articles dealing with a divisive subject which consistently contain first-rate pieces. Happily, *Who Owns the Past?* does just that. Many issues of art law are contentious. None, more so—and certainly today—than the question of what material should be retained in a country of origin. This in turn raises other issues: which material can be imported from one jurisdiction to another without fear of legal sanction, which material is to be considered "stolen," and which institutions deserve the right to exhibit and claim ownership of objects which concededly came from another venue. *Who Owns the Past?* is a finely edited collection of the various positions advanced over these issues.

The major points of contention between the retentionists and the internationalists are forcefully argued by those who have been on the forefront of the issues. On the one side is Clemency Chase Coggins, a professor of archaeology and art history, arguing with passion for the retentionist view. On the other are three art dealers (André Emmerich, Michael Ward, and James Lally) who, with equal emotion and from extensive personal experience, argue for the liberal movement of art from country to country. Other views, recognizing various practical obstacles to changes in governmental policies suggest more limited approaches. James Cuno, director of the Art Institute of Chicago, argues that national policies and laws should en-



courage a "licit trade in antiquities and cultural property." Similarly, art critic Andrew Solomon, recognizing the right of various countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan to preserve their cultural treasures, maintains: "At the same time we should resist the increasingly militant demands from stable foreign nations—such as Italy—to give back cultural property that has been in museum collections in the United States and elsewhere for decades."

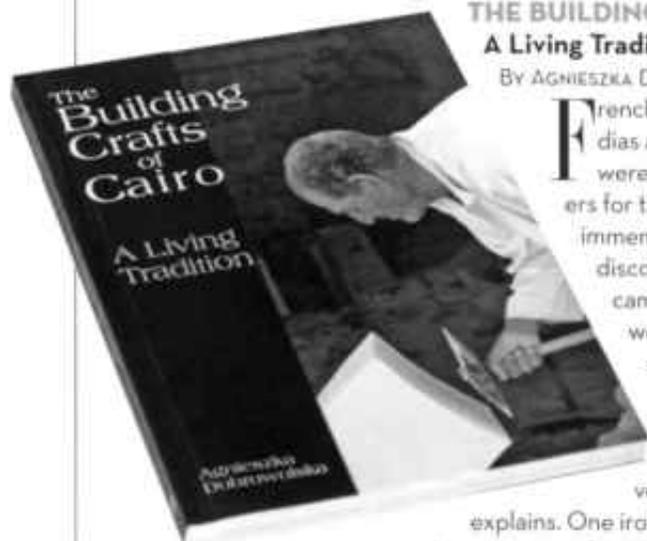
In reading the various materials, one may reflect that a position which many in the United States have taken for granted may not be a wise policy. The 1972 UNESCO Convention and the reservations that Congress had in enacting its implementing legislation 13 years later, suggest that perhaps the U.S. and other signatories should resist the claims of other demanding countries where traditional theft is not involved. Emmerich points out that "[I]t is ironic that so many archaeologically well-endowed regions are populated today by the descendants of the invaders who destroyed the very cultures whose remnants their modern governments claim as exclusively their own." It further seems incongruous for the U.S., which essentially has no laws prohibiting the export of its "art" enforcing the "laws" of other countries who have unilaterally determined that "art" created within its borders (regardless of the nationality of the creator) belongs to them.

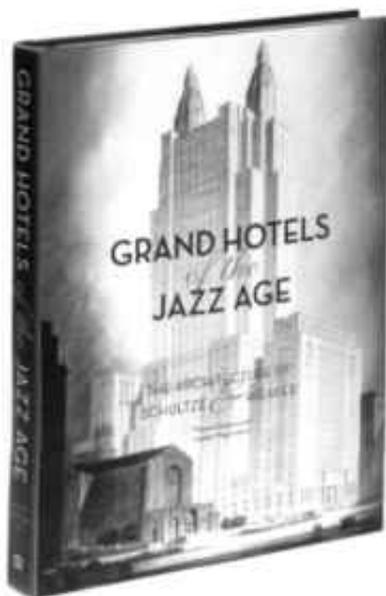
Aside from an error in one article (Hawkins, Church)—namely, the incorrect statement that the Art Loss Register is not a not-for-profit organization—the book is a splendid addition to the literature on this controversial subject. —FRANKLIN FELDMAN

## THE BUILDING CRAFTS OF CAIRO: A Living Tradition

BY AGNIESZKA DOBROWOLSKA • THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO PRESS • 128 PP. • \$24.95

French scholars who followed Napoleon's troops into Egypt in 1798 soon published encyclopedias about every aspect of Egyptian life, from the antiquities to the cafés. In-depth volumes were devoted to craftsmen, and the French academics especially admired Egyptian builders for their "extraordinary dexterity and competence" applying methods "followed since time immemorial." Agnieszka Dobrowolska, a Cairo-based conservation architect, has set out to discover how much construction standards and techniques have changed since Napoleon's campaign. She interviewed and photographed specialists working in stone, brick, metal, wood, gypsum, and glass. They all still favor hand tools and natural materials. They use sharpened nails to inscribe Arabic into marble plaques and slice fragments of Red Sea mother-of-pearl for window screen inlays. They mix Nile silt into mortar and burn wood scraps to fuel kilns for windowpanes. Most of them apprenticed as children, and they find at least camaraderie if not quite delight in the most tedious tasks. Only a few venerable, labor-intensive practices have been abandoned over the years, Dobrowolska explains. One ironworker laments that his clients like "fashionable designs based on European Baroque decoration, preferably gilded." But hardly anyone wants to order anymore from his grandfather's 1908 hand-drawn catalog of Cairo's Art Nouveau balustrades and grilles. —EVE M. KAHN





## GRAND HOTELS OF THE JAZZ AGE: The Architecture of Schultze & Weaver

EDITED BY MARIANNE LAMONACA AND JONATHAN MOGUL • PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS • 248 PP. • \$60

Resort developers in the 1920s aiming to attract crowds would hire the Manhattan architecture firm, Schultze & Weaver. Both partners were well-connected bluebloods: S. Fullerton Weaver, a developer, socialized with Vanderbilts, and Leonard Schultze, before partnering with Weaver in 1921, had spent two decades at Warren & Wetmore, the architects of Grand Central Terminal. Schultze & Weaver mastered any style the client preferred: moderne Georgian for Park Avenue, Tudor for the Hamptons, Mediterranean Revival for Miami or Cuba. The hotels' underlying engineering was sophisticated; elevators were sprinkled around lobbies, and mazes of dumbwaiters and conveyor belts coursed behind the scenes. Florida International University's Wolfsonian museum acquired the office archive in the mid-1990s and has organized a Schultze & Weaver exhibit, complete with sample furniture and dining-room menus (through May 28, [www.wolfsonian.org](http://www.wolfsonian.org)). In this accompanying volume, Wolfsonian staffers Marianne Lamonaca and Jonathan Mogul focus on 14 hotels. Eight of them—including the Waldorf-Astoria and the Pierre in Manhattan and the Breakers in Palm Beach—still have relatively intact décor, while the others have been razed or converted into offices or condos.

## THE PAINTED FAÇADES OF FLORENCE: From the Fifteenth to the Twentieth Century

BY ELEONORA PECCHIOLI • CENTRO DI • 253 PP. • \$70

Much of the liveliest Florentine architecture is trompe l'oeil, two dimensional, frescoed, or sgraffitoed (scratched) around cornices, doors, and windows. For 600 years, artists have used the city's façades as giant canvases for mythological scenes, family insignia, or bestiaries. A not atypical ornament medley on a single building, according to Eleonora Pecchioli, a Florentine art conservator: "harpies, caryatids, satyrs and rams' heads which can be seen suspending knobs of fruit and wind-swept ribbons" plus "laurel festoons surmounted by an eagle." For this sumptuous and exhaustive book, she's scrutinized 29 palazzi and explains how they epitomize the trends of different centuries. Uptight faux moldings in the 1400s segued into tableaus of gods in the 1500s, all of which provided fodder for 1800s historical revivals and then the dreamy reinterpretations of Art Nouveau. Pecchioli's found a few masterful façades are now "gradually disappearing" or "liable to crumble at the slightest touch," while more fortunate surfaces have been brought back to their appearance in the original renderings. In some cases, the re-created areas have been given slightly grainier textures than the stabilized survivors, so that new and old are discernible to the informed eye.



## KATSURA IMPERIAL VILLA

EDITED BY VIRGINIA PONCIROLI • ELECTA • 397 PP. • \$79.95

Two princes, a father and son team, built a family retreat with dozens of buildings on a Kyoto hillside sometime between 1615 and 1663. The luxurious imperial compound contained a flower-appreciation pavilion and a moon-viewing platform, and so many rooms that there were ones just for hand-washing or sword storage. The façades, clad in shoji screen and bamboo lattice, look austere and proto-modernist, but the almost kitschy interiors are lively with floral wallpaper and murals of birds and forests. There were a few traces of practicality, too, such as gravel drainage ditches along the flagstone paths and a sink with sloped sides that kept hand-washers from accidentally wetting the sleeves of their kimonos. Influential twentieth-century architects made pilgrimages to the site, named Katsura (after a red-bud-like Asian tree species that, legend has it, grows on the moon). "So beautiful it moves you to tears," raved Bruno Taut in 1933, and after a 1954 visit Walter Gropius called it "an elating spot of peace." This volume—illustrated with recent photos, exacting architectural drawings, and Taut's enraptured sketches—is especially welcome because so little has been published in English about Katsura, which the Emperor still owns and occasionally allows in the public.

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Commissions on books purchased through our website support WMF field projects.

# EXPEDITION MOROCCO

**F**ez, Morocco, is one of the few places in the world that I visit time and again and always experience something new. During the past six years, I have journeyed to Morocco many times, at first as co-director of the University College London-Institut National des Sciences de l'Archéologie et du Patrimoine joint project at Volubilis, a Roman and Early Islamic archaeological site 60 kilometers west of Fez, and then as project supervisor for WMF, which has supported work at that site for the past four years.

The ancient medina in Fez, still surrounded by walls, is a maze of alleys and small streets too narrow to allow the passage of vehicles, yet bustling with activity. There, artisans produce beautifully crafted objects from the root of the thuya tree and mosaic tiles in an incredible array of shapes and colors, still used to decorate public and religious buildings, and the mansions of rich Moroccans. At open-air tanneries, leather is treated in the traditional way, cured in large vats of animal urine.

To the casual visitor, the city may seem little changed over the centuries. Yet, in reality, this venerable crossroads is a historic city in need of attention. With a burgeoning population of more than 60,000, Fez must upgrade its infrastructure if it is to guarantee a better life for its inhabitants. This is difficult to do, as most of its buildings are centuries old, and require substantial intervention if they are to survive. Once such building is the ancient synagogue of Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Danan—Fez had a large Jewish community until 50 years ago—the restoration of which was supported by WMF following its Watch listing in 1996.

Today, I have returned to the city in the company of Bonnie Kaplan and Abderrahman Chorfi to announce WMF's support of a project to restore two fourteenth-century madrassas (Koranic schools) that appeared on WMF's 2004 list of 100 Most Endangered Sites. Located near the ancient Andalus mosque, the Sahrîj, or "basin" in Arabic, takes its name from a prominent feature in the main courtyard of the building, while the Sbayin, meaning "seven" in Arabic, is a reference to the *qira'at sabah*, the seven styles in which the Quran can be read. The aim of the project, which will be carried out by ICOMOS Morocco and which has been underwritten in part by a \$75,000 grant from American Express, is to document the structures, assess their conditions, and develop a plan for their conservation and rehabilitation not only as monuments representing a high point in Moroccan cultural heritage, but as buildings to be used by the local community.

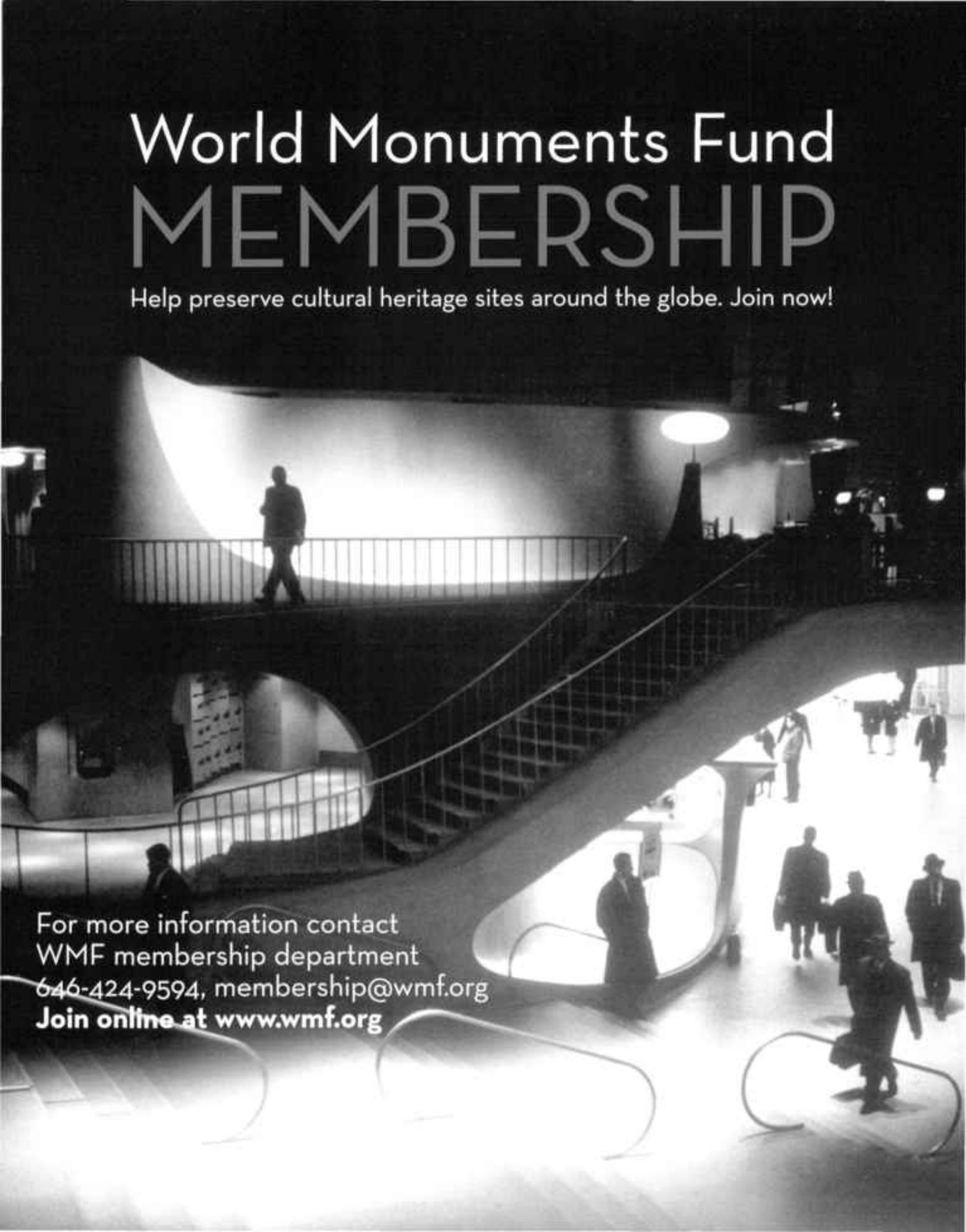
—GAETANO PALUMBO



THE COURTYARD OF THE SAHRÏJ MADRASSA IN FEZ. A PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THIS ARCHITECTURAL JEWEL, WHICH WAS INCLUDED ON WMF'S 2004 LIST OF 100 MOST ENDANGERED SITES, IS BEING PREPARED BY ICOMOS MOROCCO WITH THE SUPPORT OF WMF THROUGH AN AMERICAN EXPRESS GRANT.

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