

An exhibition exploring the role designers and architects play in saving endangered Modern buildings, with case studies that include works by Marcel Breuer, Paul Rudolph, the Bauhaus, Warren Platner, and Edward Durell Stone, and featuring photographs by Andrew L. Moore.

Modernism at

Risk

Modern Solutions
for Saving
Modern Landmarks



Knoll

Exhibition organized by World Monuments Fund
and sponsored by Knoll, Inc.

Despite Modernism's influential place in our architectural heritage, many significant Modernist and other recent buildings are endangered because of neglect, perceived obsolescence, or inappropriate renovation, and some are even in imminent danger of demolition. In response to these threats, in 2006, the World Monuments Fund launched its Modernism at Risk Initiative.

This exhibition was conceived as part of WMF's effort to demonstrate that Modern buildings can remain sustainable structures with vital futures. Along with the WMF/Knoll Modernism Prize, which is awarded biennially to recognize innovative architectural and design solutions that preserve or enhance Modern landmarks, the exhibition highlights the special challenges and the promising opportunities of conserving Modern architecture.

BONNIE BURNHAM
PRESIDENT, WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

For over 70 years, Knoll has used modern design to connect people with their work, their lives, and their world. Our founders, Hans and Florence Knoll, embraced the creative genius of the Cranbrook Academy of Art and the Bauhaus School to create new types of furniture for the workplace and home. Their approach, where craftsmanship joined with technology through the use of design, anchors our perspective and shapes the values we endeavor to live by today.

As part of our effort to contribute to the communities where we do business, we are proud to be the sponsor of "Modernism at Risk: Modern Solutions for Modern Landmarks." We recognize that Modernist masterpieces—cornerstones of our cultural landscape—are routinely being demolished, disfigured, or abandoned, and we hope this exhibition will contribute to raising awareness among students and design professionals about the role architects and designers can play in the preservation of this important part of our architectural legacy.

ANDREW COGAN
CEO, KNOLL, INC.



ADGB Trade Union School



Kent Memorial Library

Modernism at Risk

Modernism is the defining movement of 20th-century architecture, and Modern buildings help enrich a community's sense of place by providing continuity between history and the present.

But every day, important works of Modern architecture are dismissed as insignificant and destroyed or inappropriately altered. They are threatened by physical deterioration, perceived functional or economic obsolescence, or public apathy. In addition, the very features that often help define them as significant achievements in the history of architecture—innovative and sometimes experimental design elements, materials, and technologies—are themselves challenges to their preservation.

In recent years, architects and designers have emerged as some of the most ardent and effective advocates for the preservation of Modern buildings. With a shift in focus from material authenticity to respecting original architectural intent, design professionals and students have taken the lead in assessing and understanding the values—architectural and otherwise—embodied by these buildings. Designers and architects are increasingly the driving force behind sensitive, economically viable interventions that demonstrate and recapture the relevance of these endangered structures within their communities.

The five case studies presented in the *Modernism at Risk: Modern Solutions for Saving Modern Landmarks* exhibition span three decades. These examples represent the rise of Modernism from its early development during the interwar years in Europe (1930 ADGB Trade Union School, Bernau, Germany, by Hannes Meyer and Hans Wittwer) to its appearance in the United States and other countries (1939 A. Conger Goodyear House, Old Westbury, New York, by Edward Durell Stone) to its proliferation during America's postwar boom and later, often in the form of everyday civic buildings (1954 Grosse Pointe Public Library, Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, by Marcel Breuer; 1958 Riverview High School, Sarasota, Florida, by Paul Rudolph; and 1972 Kent Memorial Library, Suffield, Connecticut, by Warren Platner).





All five buildings adhere to core principles of Modernism, including a departure from traditional building types, functionally derived plans, the integration of the arts and design disciplines, and the use of industrial materials and new technologies. Although individual in expression, these sites also share many physical attributes commonly associated with Modern design. Each employs simple, geometric forms, machine-made and prefabricated components, and new expressions of space, such as the extensive use of glass to achieve a high level of transparency between interior and exterior.

Most importantly, each of these Modern landmarks received the attention of architects and designers intent on preventing their destruction. From a blog created to connect architects and spur them to action to a studio project encouraging students to explore adaptive-use possibilities to the rediscovery and rebirth of a forgotten Bauhaus masterpiece, these case studies reveal the many ways the design community is working to sustain the legacy of Modern architecture—one endangered building at a time.

The World Monuments Fund Modernism at Risk Initiative was launched in 2006 with the support of founding sponsor Knoll, Inc. to bring international attention and resources to address the key threats and challenges facing many Modern building only decades after their design and construction: demolition, inappropriate alteration, perceived obsolescence, and public apathy, as well as the technical problems associated with conserving innovative materials and design features.

Grosse Pointe Public Library (1954)

Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan

Architect Marcel Breuer (1902-1981)

Even if [Grosse Pointe Public Library is] doomed we can at least have a spirited debate about what's worth saving, in the Grosse Pointes and elsewhere. That could be Breuer's legacy to us.

—Modern Architectural Protection Agency

The Grosse Pointe Library was one of Marcel Breuer's first major public commissions in the United States. Breuer is recognized as one of the pivotal leaders of the Modern architectural movement in Europe in the 1920s and early 1930s. Breuer studied and taught at the Bauhaus, helping shape the institution's functionally driven, industrial-based aesthetic with the goal of democratizing society through design. With the outbreak of World War II, Breuer immigrated to England and then to the United States in 1937 to assist Walter Gropius in introducing the Bauhaus philosophy at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design.

Designed soon after Breuer established his own firm, Grosse Pointe Library signified an important shift in 20th-century architecture. Modernism was promoted by architects and chosen by clients to represent the progress and optimism that would come to define the era that Time and Life publisher Henry Luce famously asserted as "America's first century as a dominant power in the world."

In a 1954 public lecture, W. Hawkins Ferry, whose family commissioned and donated the library, described the intended community role of the building as follows:





“The ideas and planning of many people went into the realization of this building, but its final form as we see it today is the creation of the architect Marcel Breuer. He visualized the building not as a mere repository of books but as a social, cultural, and civic crystallization point.”

Over the next five decades, the library, modestly scaled and clad in red brick to reflect its context, served the residents of the Grosse Pointe with minor alterations and upgrades. By 2005, however, changes in public programs, lack of computer stations, and inadequate administrative space prompted the board of trustees of the Grosse Pointe Library system to move to replace the building.

Twelve young designers, users of the website Archinect, organized as the Modern Architecture Protection Agency (mapa) and spearheaded an advocacy campaign, including the nomination of the building to the 2008 World Monuments Watch as part of the Main Street Modern serial listing and the launch of a design charette that helped start a public dialogue about the fate of the building.

Boston-based designLAB Architects was chosen to develop a new library design. The firm conducted archival research and developed an adaptive reuse that demonstrated the viability of saving the building’s most significant features— an effort supported in part by the World Monuments Fund Modernism At Risk Initiative. This “design advocacy” worked, and the library trustees chose to retain and expand the Breuer-designed building rather than demolish it.

Riverview High School (1958, demolished 2009)

Sarasota, Florida

Architect Paul Rudolph (1918–1997)

The Riverview High School Rehabilitation project not only provided a means to study postwar modern architecture but also allowed us, as students, to truly understand the importance of preservation. In studying the site, analyzing the design, and allowing the building to reveal Paul Rudolph's intentions, we have come to a conclusion that preserving Modern architectural gems is vital to the education of the community and to upcoming designers. As we became more aware of how form and function meet through Paul Rudolph's work, our team became inspired to continue to develop and expose what Rudolph did in our own renovation of this building.

—Sereen El-fakhri, Senior Interior Design Student,
University of Florida

Riverview High School in Sarasota, Florida, was an iconic example of Modern design by Paul Rudolph. Rudolph (who later became dean of the Yale School of Architecture) was a leading figure of the Sarasota School of Architecture— a regional design movement that adapted Modernism to the subtropical climate and social context of southern Florida's Gulf Coast.

Like the residential architecture that first brought attention to the Sarasota School and Rudolph, Riverview High School was designed with passive means of cooling and lighting the building. These innovations included suspended concrete sunshades that maximized and controlled natural daylight and sliding glass walls, transom windows, and open roof monitors that helped passively cool interiors. These are features that are valued as part of today's sustainability movement.

Riverview High School was demolished in June 2009, having been deemed obsolete and inadequate for the needs of a contemporary public school. The building will be replaced by a parking lot serving a larger school constructed next to the original.

The razing of Riverview ended a two-year campaign to save the building. Organized as SAVE Riverview, a committee of the Sarasota Architec-



tural Foundation, a group of local architects rallied the international design community, inspiring various means to attempt to save the school.

Teams of students from the University of Florida's Interior Design department documented the building, produced Historic American Building Survey (HABS) drawings, and prepared and presented adaptive-use schemes to the community to demonstrate how the site could be rehabilitated and repurposed.

After Riverview was placed on the 2008 World Monuments Watch as part of the Main Street Modern listing, World Monuments Fund supported an international design and development competition. The winning entry proposed to relocate and consolidate many of Sarasota's celebrated music programs at a Music Quadrangle in a repurposed Riverview. The Sarasota School Board rejected the plan, voting 3 to 2 to raze the Modern icon.

In reaction to the loss of Riverview, the Sarasota Architectural Foundation and other groups have increased their efforts to protect the city's Modern architectural legacy. Rudolph's addition to Sarasota High School, completed just one year after Riverview, has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The school board has agreed to rehabilitate, rather than replace, this other landmark school by Rudolph. The heightened awareness resulting from the loss of Riverview may help prevent the further destruction of Modern sites in Sarasota and elsewhere.

ADGB Trade Union School (1930)

Bernau, Germany

Architect Hannes Meyer (1889–1954)

with Hans Wittwer (1894–1952)

The resurrection of the ADGB demonstrates that good restoration and conservation can't be limited to a set of technical solutions, but is based on and contributes to solid architectural scholarship.

—Jean-Louis Cohen, Professor of Architectural History, New York University, and WMF/Knoll Modernism Prize Juror

Located in the former East Germany and rediscovered after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the ADGB Trade Union School in Bernau is one of the most important extant examples of Bauhaus design. Germany's ADGB (Bundesschule des Allgemeinen Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes)—an umbrella organization that encompassed some 80 percent of the country's trade unions by the end of the 1920s—engaged the Bauhaus to design an education and training facility.

Hannes Meyer, the Bauhaus's second director, worked in collaboration with instructor Hans Wittwer and used the opportunity afforded by a large-scale, public commission to advance his functionalist design philosophy. An ardent supporter of Communism, Meyer eschewed all artistic and aesthetic considerations, which he described in the following way:

"We examine the daily routine of everyone who lives in the house and this gives us the functional diagram—the functional diagram and the economic program are the determining principles of the building project."

Meyer and Wittwer separated the various spaces of the ADGB Trade Union School into three formally distinct components: a main entrance pavilion with administrative offices, auditorium, refectory, and winter-garden dining hall; four contiguous dormitory units; and a classroom and recreation wing. A long, steel-and-glass corridor served as an interior "street" linking all the spaces. While many people think white was the dominant color of early Modernist buildings, the exposed steel structure of the glass-enclosed dining facility and corridor was bright red, while the hallways of

each dormitory boasted gradations of red, yellow, blue, and green.

In 2001, more than a decade after the Berlin Wall fell, the regional government created a partnership with a new occupant of the school, the Berlin Chamber of Crafts, and together they sponsored a competition for proposals to restore the ADGB Trade Union complex. The architecture firm Brenne Gesellschaft von Architekten, a renowned restorer of early Modern buildings, won the commission.

The firm conducted extensive archival research and physical documentation to reverse decades of haphazard repairs and additions, reconstruct missing features, and restore the novelty and innovation of the original design. The resurrection of this seminal but mostly forgotten masterpiece has contributed significantly to the scholarship of early Modernism. The firm was consequently awarded the first biennial World Monuments Fund/ Knoll Modernism Prize in 2008. As described by jury chairman Barry Bergdoll, Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design, Museum of Modern Art:

“The restored ADGB illustrates the influential role that Modern architecture continues to play in our architectural heritage, and vividly demonstrates the importance and feasibility of preserving Modern buildings as sustainable structures with vital futures.”



A. Conger Goodyear House (1939)

Old Westbury, New York

Architect Edward Durell Stone (1902–1978)

On Long Island, a coalition of forces has apparently saved the Conger Goodyear House, a 1938 gem by Edward Durell Stone for Goodyear, the first president of the Museum of Modern Art. In that more fortunate case, the World Monuments Fund, which had listed the Old Westbury, Long Island, house among its 2002 list of the “100 Most Endangered Sites,” pulled together a funding group including the Barnett & Annalee Newman Foundation, which purchased the house; the Monument Fund’s own capital, which will finance necessary repair work; and the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities of Cold Spring Harbor, which will hold title to the property until a permanent buyer can be found. International, national, and local resources—all three—were required.

—Robert Ivy, Editor and Chief, Architectural Record

Anson Conger Goodyear, the first president of the Museum of Modern Art, commissioned Edward Durell Stone to design his weekend home in Old Westbury, New York, at the same time Stone was designing the International Style building that would become the museum’s first permanent home in Manhattan. Stone first encountered and embraced Modern design as a student while traveling in Europe in the late 1920s. As Stone explained:

Changes in architecture were gathering momentum. Le Corbusier’s first books were being published and in nearby Dessau the Bauhaus was founded, all heralding the arrival of the new machine age. Those ideas were contagious and we students spent our time redesigning the United States on marble-topped café tables.

Taking inspiration from structures he studied during this time, particularly Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona Pavilion, Stone designed the one-story Goodyear residence with a flat roof, open floor plan, abstract geometry, and high degree of transparency. A long corridor, or “spinal column” as Stone put it, connected the primary public spaces and served as a gallery for Goodyear’s substantial



Modern art collection.

Mr. Goodyear bequeathed the house to a local college, but in the 1970s the house and its 110 acres were sold to a developer. The developer intended to demolish and replace the house as part of a new subdivision. Following a nomination from the Society of the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, the site was placed on the 2002 World Monuments Watch.

World Monuments Fund then mounted a multi-faceted program that ultimately saved the house. The property was bought and stabilized with financial support from artist Frank Stella and the Barnett & Annalee Newman Foundation. WMF commissioned the design and construction of a new garage and office to replace an original structure, demolished in the 1970s, considered integral to Stone's design. Aided by research into Stone's architectural archives and preparation of detailed drawings by design practitioners and students, the house was placed on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places. A protective easement ensures long-term preservation: it identifies original, significant design features of the house—both exterior and interior—that must be retained and prescribes areas and elements that can be modified to meet contemporary needs. The house sold in 2005 and remains in private ownership under the care of a thoughtful steward.

Kent Memorial Library (1972)

Suffield, Connecticut

Architect Warren Platner (1919–2006)

What a terrible loss of a modern architectural gift to our town this would be. Why do we need to tear down this structure? We can have a better and bigger library, but we don't have to demolish this part of our heritage to accomplish that goal. The present Kent Memorial Library was a gift to the town in 1972. It was a generous donation by a wonderful group of citizens who commissioned Warren Platner to design and build a library that reflected a statement about their generation.

—Brendan Begley, founder of Save Kent

Completed in 1972, Kent Memorial Library in Suffield, Connecticut, both complements and contrasts with the neighboring 18th- and 19th-century buildings that make up the town's much-celebrated Main Street historic district. Though unabashedly Modern, the library's scale, symmetry, and hipped roofs recall the many nearby Colonial-era residential structures. The building's interiors also recall its New England village context. As described by architect Richard Munday, a principal of Newman Architects in New Haven, Connecticut, and an admirer of the building:

Very few libraries treat the book or the reader with such honor and care, and with as much attention to the act of reading. Each of its public spaces was conceived as a room, like the library in a house, as a warm and intimate space that welcomes the individual.





Kent Library is the only free-standing building by Warren Platner, who focused mainly on interior design in New York City. He designed the Ford Foundation offices and the original Windows on the World Restaurant in the World Trade Center. He is perhaps best known for his commercially successful 1960s furniture collection that remains in production today.

A building committee for the Town of Suffield recommended that the building be razed to make way for a new, larger structure adhering to contemporary regulations such as accessibility. In response, long-time Suffield resident Brendan Begley launched a campaign—using bumper stickers, posters, and a website—to rally the community to save the building. The campaign helped inspire spirited citizen activism and a public debate over the historical and architectural significance of the library. Ultimately, an architect and member of the Connecticut Trust obtained permission and presented a design solution that demonstrated how the existing library could be expanded and made code-compliant without sacrificing Platner's original vision and architecture.

In July 2008, residents of Suffield were asked to vote on the plans for building a new library, which would require public funds. The community solidly rejected the proposal. Economic concerns were a major consideration, but the heightened awareness of the library's significance generated by the advocacy campaign coupled with the alternative design was also a factor in securing the building's future, at least for now.

World Monuments Fund®

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For over 40 years, working in more than 90 countries, our highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, we inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide.

For additional information about Modernism at Risk, contact Henry Tzu Ng, Executive Vice President, World Monuments Fund, at hng@wmf.org



95 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10016
646-424-9594
www.wmf.org