



WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

2014 WORLD MONUMENTS FUND/KNOLL MODERNISM PRIZE

**AWARDED TO THE FINNISH COMMITTEE FOR THE RESTORATION OF VIIPURI LIBRARY
WITH THE CENTRAL CITY ALVAR AALTO LIBRARY, VYBORG**

For Immediate Release—New York, NY, October 30, 2014... **Bonnie Burnham, President of World Monuments Fund (WMF)**, announced today that the project to restore Alvar Aalto's seminal Viipuri Library in Vyborg, Russia, which took two challenging decades to complete, has been awarded the **2014 World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize**. The award will be made to **the Finnish Committee for the Restoration of Viipuri Library with the Central City Alvar Aalto Library, Vyborg, the Russian Federation**.

Designed by Alvar Aalto and constructed between 1927 and 1935 in what was then the Finnish city of Viipuri, the library reflects the emergence of Aalto's distinctive combination of organic form and materials with the principles of clear functionalist expression that was to become the hallmark of his architecture.

Despite early and widespread acclaim for the building, its survival was never assured. War, unstable political relations, and shifting international borders ultimately resulted in Viipuri becoming Vyborg, part of the expanded territory of the USSR. The library soon faced threats including, but not limited to, abandonment, inappropriate renovations, and unclear stewardship. During Soviet times, access to the library was limited, leaving the preservation state of the building uncertain. Until fairly recently, it essentially disappeared from worldview.

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 presented the opportunity to restore the library. The Finnish Committee for the Restoration of Viipuri Library, established in 1992, has led the restoration efforts and has carried out the project with the Central City Alvar Aalto Library, Vyborg. The committee members are Chairman Eric Adlercreutz, Tapani Mustonen, Maija Kairamo, Leif Englund, Maren Nielsen, Olli Helasvuo, Eero Pekkari, Heikki Pekonen, Ben-Roger Lindberg, Aki Schadewitz, and Mariel Pohlman. The library is represented by Tatiana Svetelnikova, Helen Rogozina, and Alexander Batalin.

Completed in 2013, the restoration project reflects cooperation between Finnish and Russian national and regional governments, and the support of conservation professionals and international funding. The project also reflects the highest standards of scholarship, authenticity,

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architecture, materials conservation, functionality, social impact, stewardship, and technical imagination.

The biennial award will be presented at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City on December 1, 2014, by Ms. Burnham; Barry Bergdoll, Meyer Schapiro Professor of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University, Curator of Architecture & Design at MoMA, and chairman of the prize jury; and Andrew B. Cogan, CEO of Knoll, Inc. This will be followed by a free public lecture by the members of the prize-winning team. The prize consists of a cash honorarium of \$10,000 and a limited edition Barcelona Chair from Knoll.

Ms. Burnham stated: “Viipuri Library is an iconic modern structure and we are delighted to witness its successful restoration through an international network of funders and professionals. It speaks to the fundamental mission of WMF, which was founded on the belief that international cooperation can play a catalytic role in saving important historic sites around the globe. Viipuri Library was listed on the World Monuments Watch in 2000 and 2002 and WMF made a grant of \$300,000 from its Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage to restore the 58 signature skylights over the reading room and lending library.”

Mr. Bergdoll added: “An icon of twentieth-century architecture—with its distinctive sky-lighted roof, undulating wood-slatted lecture hall ceiling, and glass façade-enclosed staircase—the library at Viipuri is one of Aalto’s most important buildings from the years in which he was adventurously exploring a new modernist vocabulary; indeed, photographs of the building soon made him known around the world. The restoration organized and executed an impressive international campaign that has ensured the survival and revival of Aalto’s masterpiece by restoring it to its original function as a vibrant municipal library.”

Mr. Cogan said “Knoll’s leadership role in the World Monuments Fund Modernism at Risk initiative reflects our unwavering 75-year commitment to modern design. We are especially pleased that the brilliantly executed restoration of Viipuri Library embodies the spirit of the World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize, which was established as the first award to acknowledge threats facing modern buildings and to recognize the heroic efforts of architects and designers who help ensure their rejuvenation and long-term survival.”

To determine the recipient of the prize, the jury reviewed 30 nominations from more than 15 countries, including Brazil, Cuba, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, Poland, South Africa, the United States, and Uruguay.

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In addition to Mr. Bergdoll, the jury included Jean-Louis Cohen, Sheldon H. Solow Professor in the History of Architecture at New York University; Kenneth Frampton, Ware Professor of Architecture at Columbia University; Dietrich Neumann, Royce Family Professor for the History of Modern Architecture and Urban Studies at Brown University; Susan Macdonald, Head of Field Projects at the Getty Conservation Institute; Theo Prudon, president of DOCOMOMO/US, architect at Prudon & Partners LLP, and adjunct associate professor of historic preservation at Columbia University; and Karen Stein, an architectural advisor, member of the faculty of the design criticism program at the School of Visual Arts, and executive director of the George Nelson Foundation.

Modernism at Risk

Despite a growing appreciation for twentieth-century architecture in recent years, great works continue to be lost to neglect, deterioration, and demolition only decades after their design and construction.

World Monuments Fund began preserving modern sites in the 1980s, when it helped restore seminal modern murals in and around Mexico City following a devastating earthquake. Later, it led the restoration of Brancusi's *Endless Column* ensemble, in Romania, and the successful battle to save Edward Durell Stone's A. Conger Goodyear House, on Long Island, in the United States.

In 1996, WMF launched its World Monuments Watch program, which over the years has brought attention and resources to more than 20 endangered modern buildings. Among these, in addition to Viipuri Library, have been the Rusakov Club, Moscow, Russia (Konstantin Melnikov); Villa Tugendhat, Brno, the Czech Republic (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe); the International Fairground, Tripoli, Lebanon (Oscar Niemeyer); Taliesin and Taliesin West, Spring Green, Wisconsin, and Scottsdale, Arizona, respectively (Frank Lloyd Wright); Kings Road House, West Hollywood, California (Rudolf Michael Schindler); Grosse Pointe Memorial Library, Michigan (Marcel Breuer); the Orange County Government Center, Goshen, New York (Paul Rudolph); and the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Missouri (Eero Saarinen).

In 2006, responding to growing threats to modern architecture, WMF launched its Modernism at Risk initiative with Knoll as founding sponsor. The initiative provides a framework for addressing the issues that endanger modern landmarks and supports architectural design advocacy, conservation, and public education.

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World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund's mission is to protect against the loss of the world's architectural heritage, including the built environment, the artistic elements that enhance it, and the cultural traditions that it sustains. WMF builds global partnerships to conserve key cultural sites in response to urgent threats, and broadens public understanding about the central importance of heritage in our lives. Our work makes historic places accessible and sustainable, builds and replenishes skills needed to care for our common heritage, and communicates the benefits of this work to the global public. wmf.org, twitter.com/worldmonuments, and facebook.com/worldmonuments.

Knoll

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