



WORLD MONUMENTS FUND AND VILLA ALBERTINE LAUNCH PUBLIC SERIES ON PRESERVING AT-RISK CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES

Spring Heritage Speaks events spotlight Nunalleq, Alaska; Notre-Dame of Paris, France as the focus of WMF's annual Paul Mellon Lecture; and Angkor Wat, Cambodia, with more expert talks coming later in the year

New York, NY - February 27, 2024 – [World Monuments Fund \(WMF\)](#) and [Villa Albertine](#) today announced the collaborative launch of [Heritage Speaks](#), a public discussion series exploring the diverse threats facing cultural heritage across the globe. From the impacts of climate change to armed conflict and over-tourism, this set of talks will unpack the challenges facing historic places and the best preservation solutions emerging among experts and local communities. Scheduled throughout the year, the talks will be open to the public and provide attendees with an expansive forum to learn how we approach global heritage in changing times.

The monthly series will begin on **March 27** at the Villa Albertine headquarters (972 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY) with an in-depth look at the rapid climate-induced erosion destroying the Nunalleq archaeological site in Alaska, a crucially important site for the Indigenous Yup'ik community. The panel will include Villa Albertine resident **Claire Houmard**, Director of the French archaeological mission in Alaska, Université de Franche-Comté and Villa Albertine Resident; **Rick Knecht**, Lead Archaeologist, Nunalleq Archaeological Project, University of Aberdeen; **Jonathan Bell**, Vice President of Programs at WMF; and **Ann Cuss**, Regional Director, North America at WMF. While Knecht and Houmard have worked on the Nunalleq site together for the past decade alongside local teams, Houmard's recent excavations, first launched in 2022, are sponsored by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by Villa Albertine, with further support from ENGIE. Cuss will bring several perspectives from sites in North America facing similar issues, such as at [Bears Ears National Monument, Utah](#), where WMF is supporting initiatives undertaken by Indigenous communities to enhance site management and promote respectful visitation.

WMF's annual Paul Mellon Lecture will take place on **April 18** as part of the Heritage Speaks series. This year's focus is on the five-year reconstruction of [Notre-Dame of Paris](#), widely considered the biggest restoration project of the twenty-first century. Inaugurated in 2003, the Paul Mellon Lecture is supported by the Paul Mellon Education Fund and enables audiences to learn about the critical issues in the field of cultural heritage. The April 18 panel will bring together art historians, firefighters, and craftsmen to reflect on methodologies developed during the process and the advancement of fire protection for similar cultural heritage sites.

The event on **May 21** will spotlight [Cambodia's Angkor Archaeological Park](#) and the cutting-edge efforts undertaken to preserve and restore this iconic UNESCO World Heritage site. Art historians, curators, and archaeologists will illuminate issues the site faces, including natural

erosion, looting, and the challenges of creating a balanced tourism system. Since 1989, WMF has been involved at the site, partnering with the Cambodian government to help build local technical capacity to aid restoration efforts throughout the park.

“There is so much to learn in each of these case studies. This series is designed to bring forward groundbreaking, multidisciplinary, and in many cases international solutions to the challenges facing our cultural heritage today. We are delighted to partner with World Monuments Fund on this series, which is greatly enriched by their hands-on leadership in this field for decades,” said Mohamed Bouabdallah, cultural counselor of France in the U.S. and director of Villa Albertine.

“Educating the public on the global issues cultural sites face is one of our missions at World Monuments Fund,” said Bénédicte de Montlaur, President and CEO of WMF. “Through this exciting partnership with Villa Albertine, we are thrilled to establish more learning spaces highlighting the groundbreaking research heritage professionals are finding. As this series continues throughout the year, there will be plenty of opportunities for the public to explore a wide range of topics related to art, history, and culture.”

This fall, the series will raise awareness of several more challenges and success stories in cultural heritage preservation, focusing on heritage issues in conflict areas. These talks will spotlight the efforts and interventions at the [Mosul Cultural Museum](#), Iraq, facilitated by the International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas ([ALIPH](#)), a foundation launched on the initiative of France and the United Arab Emirates in 2019 to protect heritage sites in danger.

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About World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world’s most treasured places to enrich lives and build mutual understanding. For more than 55 years, working at more than 700 sites in 112 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to the preservation of important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through the World Monuments Watch—a biennial, nomination-based program—WMF uses cultural heritage conservation to empower communities and improve human well-being. In partnership with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF seeks to inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York City, the organization has offices and affiliates worldwide.

Visit www.wmf.org for more information, or connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).



About Villa Albertine

Villa Albertine is a cultural institution that supports exchanges in arts and ideas between the United States, France, and beyond. With outposts in 10 US cities—Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Washington, DC—Villa Albertine presents innovative programming nationwide including 50+ customized residencies for international artists, thinkers, and cultural leaders across disciplines each year; a series of cross-cultural dialogues and events; a magazine and podcast; and grants, resources, and incubator programs for professionals in the cultural sphere.

Villa Albertine is an institution of the Embassy of France in the United States.

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