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ARGENTINIAN AVANT-GARDE ICON THE CASA SOBRE EL ARROYO AWARDED 2024 WORLD MONUMENTS FUND/KNOLL MODERNISM PRIZE

The 1940s architectural marvel will receive the distinguished accolade following its restoration by the Ministerios de Cultura y de Obras Públicas de Argentina y Municipalidad de Mar del Plata

A recognition of the site and a tribute to the life of the late esteemed French architect Jean-Louis Cohen will take place during a discussion and Q&A event held at Black Rock

New York, NY – February 7, 2024 – [World Monuments Fund \(WMF\)](#) today announces the [Ministerios de Cultura y de Obras Públicas de Argentina y Municipalidad de Mar del Plata](#) (Ministries of Culture and Public Works of Argentina and the Municipality of Mar del Plata) as the winner of the 2024 World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize, recognizing the commission’s thoughtful and detailed conservation of la [Casa sobre el Arroyo](#) (the House on the Stream). The combined value of WMF’s commitment to the conservation of important cultural icons and Knoll’s ethos in using modern sustainable design to connect people in meaningful ways inspired the creation of this award. The biennial prize, which celebrates architects, designers, and preservationists who have demonstrated innovative solutions to preserve or restore threatened modern architecture, will be presented during a panel discussion dedicated to the impact of the Argentinian modernist movement on February 27, 2024.

“We are proud to share that the conservation mission at la Casa sobre el Arroyo has become the first South American modernist project to be awarded this prize,” said **President and CEO of World Monuments Fund Bénédicte de Montlaur**. “Argentinian modernism takes its roots from multiple schools, and la Casa sobre el Arroyo represents the lively nature of that style. Its importance as an architectural icon has made it a symbol of national pride for Argentina and the site’s conservation reestablishes the house as an integral part of Latin American heritage.”

The former home of famed musician and composer Alberto Williams, la Casa sobre el Arroyo has been heralded as an icon of modern architecture that pushed the boundaries of the avant-garde with its design. Conceptualized in 1943 by Alberto’s son, Amancio Williams, and Delfina Galvez Bunge de Williams, Amancio’s wife, the playful design transforms a house into a bridge over the Las Chacras stream. The resulting structure, finished in 1948, includes a series of bedrooms, a large living room, service areas, and a specially designed studio for Alberto to work in. Upon completion, the house quickly became the subject of praise and recognition from scholars and designers worldwide who considered it a paradigmatic component of twentieth-century architecture and the modern movement in Argentina and Latin America.

“As the iconic first building of Amancio Williams, la Casa sobre el Arroyo exemplified its creator’s reputation as one of the most tirelessly experimental architects of the modern movement,” said **Professor of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University and Chairman of the Jury Barry Bergdoll**. “It was as daring in its unadorned use of reinforced concrete for an elegant residence as it was practical in creating a sophisticated interior all on one floor suspended in the treetops and poetically bridging a stream. The interiors by Delfina Galvez Bunge de Williams, the architect’s wife, are essential to this total art of modernist living. Long celebrated as an early landmark of modernist design in Latin America, the house has been brought back from a lamentable state of abandon and vandalization to honor the collaboration between musician, architect, and interior designer.”

After Alberto Williams's death, the house was used as a local radio station. Ownership disputes eventually led to the site's abandonment after the station shut down. Subsequent vandalism and a damaging fire in 2004 destroyed half of the carpentry, siding, and wooden floors. Natural deterioration of the materials and various environmental challenges, including falling leaves, branches, and even entire trees, would continue to cause structural damage.

“La Casa sobre el Arroyo is an ambitious and relational work of architecture that captures the spirit we hold ourselves to at Knoll,” said **Jonathan Olivares, SVP of Design at Knoll**. “This important renovation and presence of this iconic casa underscores the values and commitment to the modernist dream that is so close to our hearts.

The Municipality of Mar del Plata assumed custodianship of the site in 2005, but the house remained in precarious condition. In 2012, la Casa Sobre el Arroyo was included in the World Monuments Watch due to the continuing degradation of the structure amid growing calls for refurbishment by residents of Mar del Plata, Argentine citizens, and national and international architecture specialists. After launching the planning phase in 2016, the Ministerios de Cultura y de Obras Públicas de Argentina y Municipalidad de Mar del Plata completely restored the building complex, with intact original components repaired and missing ones recreated using materials, technology, and methodology similar to the original construction based on archival sketches. The surrounding park was given the same treatment and designated as a historic garden. Crucially, the stream from which the house takes its name, which in the intervening years had stopped flowing, was replenished using water pumps, bringing new life to the natural setting.

“The project is a testament to how careful research-based conservation, attention to detail, and dedication to high-quality craftsmanship by its stewards can bring modern architecture back to life from a precarious state of decay,” said **Head of Buildings and Sites at the Getty Conservation Institute and Member of the Jury Susan Macdonald**.

The honorees for the World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize and the team responsible for the restoration project of la Casa sobre el Arroyo include: Lic. Teresa de Anchorena, Arq. Fabio Grementieri, Lic. Magalí Marazzo, Arq. José Ferrero, Arq. Guillermo Frontera, Arq. Fermín Labaqui, Ing. Carlos Ramírez, and Arq. Mariana Quiroga.

During the upcoming panel, the life of the renowned architect and historian Jean-Louis Cohen, who passed away in August 2023, will be honored. An expert contributor to understanding modernism and twentieth-century urbanism, Cohen played a significant role in raising awareness about the global conservation challenges facing modernist buildings and the innovative work being done to preserve them. Cohen was a strong supporter of the World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize since its inception and served on the jury every cycle until his passing. Throughout his time on the jury, Cohen sought to highlight architects and projects that implemented thoughtful and innovative conservation interventions. Cohen was a dear friend and colleague to all who knew him at WMF.

“Jean-Louis Cohen was a polyglot titan in architectural history,” said Bergdoll. “A prolific author, his influence outlives him in his seminal publications on twentieth-century and contemporary architecture, in the work of his many students trained in Paris and New York, and in his dedication to the preservation of modernism both as a wise advocate on this jury and in his work on projects by Le Corbusier, Eileen Gray, and other key figures.”

On February 27, 2024 at 6 PM, guests are invited to join us at the newly renovated Black Rock building to learn about the impact of Argentinian architecture on the larger design world during a panel discussion and Q&A. During the event, a member of the Ministerios de Cultura y de Obras Públicas de Argentina y Municipalidad de Mar del Plata will accept the World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize for the organization's work on la Casa Sobre el Arroyo. A brief informational video about the site will be shown and Jean-Louis Cohen will be honored in a touching tribute.

The event is free for all attendees. To register for the event and for more information, please [visit our website](#).

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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.

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