



## WORLD MONUMENTS FUND ANNOUNCES SPRING 2021 PUBLIC EVENTS

### *Digital Offerings Unpack Issues in the Heritage Field Today and Transport Audiences to Extraordinary Cultural Sites*

February 24, 2021, New York, NY – World Monuments Fund (WMF) today announced a roster of public events in spring 2021 that will convene leading thinkers to spark new dialogues on contemporary challenges and opportunities in the global preservation field. From behind-the-scenes experiences of iconic sites to in-depth explorations of cultural heritage in today’s headlines, the new slate of digital programs will provide audiences insight into worldwide efforts to safeguard places of profound importance. Highlights include a reflection on cultural heritage in Afghanistan 20 years after 9/11, an immersive tour of the grandiose temples of Angkor Archaeological Park in Cambodia, a conversation on transforming disused rail lines at Bennerley Viaduct in the UK, among other topics that explore the many dimensions of preservation today. Events are free and open to the public with additional opportunities available for WMF members to engage with experts in the field. For membership information, please visit [wmf.org/friends](http://wmf.org/friends).

“With active preservation projects in 40 countries, World Monuments Fund has a unique perspective on the different pressures and innovative developments within the global heritage field,” said Bénédicte de Montlaur, President and CEO of WMF. “WMF events allow us to peel back the curtain on our work, sharing with audiences what motivates, inspires, and galvanizes our dedicated staff to do more for the protection of cultural heritage wherever it exists.”

The spring 2021 lineup features three distinct series:

- **Heritage Now** unites top thought leaders, activists, artists, journalists, and politicians for conversations at the nexus of cultural heritage and current global issues.
- **On My Watch** invites architects, urban planners, preservationists, local stakeholders, and WMF experts to explore the political, cultural, and technical issues around the preservation of cultural heritage sites on the World Monuments Watch, WMF’s biannual program spotlighting 25 places under threat with the potential for contemporary social impact.
- **Heritage from Home** brings viewers behind the scenes to some of WMF’s most iconic sites around the globe guided by WMF experts. Subscribers to this series of virtual site visits will receive a new video in their inbox once a month. WMF members will have the added opportunity of attending a live virtual presentation and post-video discussion with WMF staff for select events based on availability.

### **Spring 2021 Public Events**

For more information and to register, please visit [wmf.org/events](http://wmf.org/events). Information on summer and fall 2021 public events will be released later this spring.

## Heritage Now

### **When Will We Return to Venice and Should We?**

**March 25 at 12:00 noon EST / 4:00 pm GMT**

Venice is living on borrowed time. In 2020, COVID-19 brought tourism in Venice to a halt, damaging the economy while giving the city a respite from the regular onslaught of tourists. The pandemic highlighted the precarity of the city's position, dependent on a tourist economy that has rendered the city uninhabitable for many and has caused continuous damage to the built environment. At the same time, rising sea levels pose an existential threat, necessitating fundamental changes to Venice's architectural and infrastructural fabric.

There are numerous proposed responses to the challenges facing Venice, from the sea wall to strategies for sustainable tourism. But will these solutions be enough? In the face of mass tourism and climate change, the question is not how to preserve Venice, but rather, how will it change? And, what needs to happen now to curb its impending loss? These questions will be explored in an in-depth discussion featuring respected scholar and architect of a five-point plan to save Venice, David Landau; contemporary artist Tomás Saraceno, whose work explores sustainable ways of inhabiting the environment; and Jane da Mosto, Executive Director of We Are Here Venice (WahV), a nonprofit association that addresses Venice's challenges as a living city and advocates evidence-based approaches to policy making. The conversation will be moderated by WMF President and CEO Bénédicte de Montlaur.

### **2021 Paul Mellon Lecture**

#### **20 Years After 9/11: Cultural Heritage in Afghanistan**

**May 6 at 12:00 noon EST / 4:00 pm GMT**

Throughout 2021, WMF will be reflecting on the state of cultural heritage in the Middle East 20 years after 9/11. This year's annual Paul Mellon Lecture will commemorate the anniversary with an examination of cultural heritage in Afghanistan today. Guests will hear from British diplomat, author, explorer, and politician Rory Stewart, whose 2002 journey walking solo across Afghanistan is recounted in *The New York Times* bestseller *The Places In Between*. He'll be joined by his wife and CEO of Turquoise Mountain Shoshana Stewart, among other special guests, to discuss restoring the old city of Kabul, Murad Khani, and reviving its historic craft traditions. Spotlighting Murad Khani on the 2008 World Monuments Watch, WMF partnered with Turquoise Mountain to bring awareness and greater protections to one of the few surviving historic commercial and residential areas in the old city of Kabul.

Inaugurated in 2003, the Paul Mellon Lecture is supported by WMF's Paul Mellon Education Fund and enables WMF to invite audiences to hear about a critical issue in the field. Past speakers include Kent Weeks explaining the challenges of tourism management in the Valley of the Kings, Egypt, Charles Dempsey on the history of the Carracci Gallery in the Farnese Palace in Rome, Anna Somers Cox on the impact of ever-increasing tourist numbers in Venice, and Iwan Baan offering the audience a glimpse into the intricacies of his photographic process, capturing culture in intimate detail and profound emotion.

### *On My Watch*

#### **Bennerley Viaduct: Building Community Well-being Through Restoration**

**April 22 at 1:00 pm EST / 6:00 pm BST**

Built in 1877 to carry an important railway line across Erewash Valley in Nottinghamshire, Bennerley Viaduct is one of the two last remaining wrought-iron viaducts in England. Although the structure has been out of use since 1968, efforts to demolish it have failed due to local resistance. Today, a group of local volunteers, supported by the site owners, are aiming to reconnect the communities on either side of the Erewash River. Included on the 2020 World Monuments Watch, the Bennerley Viaduct is being revitalized as part of a UK-wide and global movement to transform disused railway routes into trails for walking and cycling with the aim of strengthening social ties, health, and well-being.

This virtual discussion will examine plans to preserve Bennerley Viaduct and transform it into a recreational venue that encourages outdoor exercise and community gathering, putting heritage at the heart of health and well-being. The conversation will feature Kieran Lee, Community Engagement Officer from the Friends of Bennerley Viaduct, and Tim Dunn, railway architecture historian, author, and broadcaster/TV presenter. The event will be hosted by WMF Britain Executive Director John Darlington.

### *Heritage From Home*

#### **Angkor Archaeological Park, Cambodia**

**Video release date: February 26**

The ancient seat of the powerful Khmer Empire in Siem Reap, Cambodia, Angkor Archaeological Park is one of the most iconic and inspiring sites in the world. The park is home to dozens of stunning Hindu and Buddhist temple complexes, some half-hidden by the overgrown vegetation of a creeping jungle. A powerful symbol of recovery in Cambodia following the fall of the Khmer Rouge, Angkor is a national emblem that appears at the center of the Cambodian flag.

WMF Regional Representative for Southeast Asia Dr. Ginevra Boatto will lead a virtual tour of the legendary Angkor, from Phnom Bakheng's panoramic views and the imposing carved stone *garudas* (bird-like mythological creatures) of Preah Khan, to the smaller scale Ta Som temple and the 160 ft. (49 m) of intricately sculpted bas-relief of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk Gallery.

WMF members will be invited to attend a live virtual screening and post-video discussion at 9:00 am EST on February 26 with special guests Dr. Boatto, Project Architect Bunwat Hun, and Administrator and Accountant Vathana Keo.

#### **Mughal Gardens of Agra, India**

**Video release date: March 25**

Recently restored with new plantings and reactivated water features, the Mughal Gardens of Agra provide a glimpse of the landscape of sixteenth-century Agra. The tranquility of the gardens, offset by the bustling city nearby, present a world where urban centers coexist with green oases.

WMF India Executive Director Amita Baig will guide viewers on a virtual tour of the lush gardens along the banks of the Yamuna River, and discover graceful and imposing pavilions reminiscent of the legendary Taj Mahal. This visit will bring guests behind the scenes of *Mehtab Bagh*, or the “Moonlight Garden,” north of the Taj, and introduce them to the Tomb of I’timad-ud-Daulah. With an analysis of the surrounding urban context and an overview of the gardens’ potential for community and sustainable development, Amita Baig will highlight WMF’s five-year project to ensure the preservation of the Mughal Gardens of Agra goes hand in hand with a wider strategy for urban planning and social equity.

### **Chankillo, Peru**

**Video release date: April 29**

The ancient observatory of Chankillo, with its 13 towers and two observation platforms spanning the entire annual rising and setting arc of the sun, once allowed its inhabitants to determine the date with an accuracy of two or three days. Built over 2,300 years ago in the coastal desert of Peru, Chankillo is truly a wonder of the world.

WMF Peru Vice President Martha Zegarra and Chankillo Program Director Dr. Iván Ghezzi will lead a tour of this site where WMF has been active for more than ten years, battling the effects of a rough desert climate, earthquakes, and time. In this intimate experience, viewers will learn about this history and uncover what the future holds for Chankillo’s elaborate towers and platforms

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### **Erbil Citadel, Iraq**

**Video release date: May 27**

Over 6,000 years old, Erbil Citadel is thought to be one of the longest continuously inhabited sites on Earth. Near the site of Alexander the Great’s famed victory in 331 BCE over Persian king Darius III, the home of intellectuals, poets, and artists along the centuries, and one of the administrative and cultural centers of the Ottoman Empire, Erbil Citadel is an impressive architectural feat located on an archaeological tell rising around 98 ft. (30 m) above the surrounding plains.

In a virtual tour of the World Heritage site, WMF Regional Director Alessandra Peruzzetto will uncover the threats the Erbil Citadel continues to face after decades of civil unrest in the region. This inside look at one of Iraq’s ancient wonders will reveal its unique history and illuminate ongoing efforts to recover the country’s economy and vibrant cultural life.

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### **About World Monuments Fund**

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world’s significant cultural 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. [wmf.org](http://wmf.org)

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