

2012 World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize Awarded

Architectural Consortium Awarded for Restoration of Hizuchi Elementary School

Bonnie Burnham, president of World Monuments Fund (WMF), today announced that WMF has awarded the 2012 World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize to the Architectural Consortium for Hizuchi Elementary School, for its impeccable restoration of Hizuchi Elementary School in Hizuchi, Yawatahama City, Ehime Prefecture, on Shikoku Island, Japan. Following serious damage from a 2004 typhoon, the school had been the center of a two-year debate over whether to demolish or preserve the structure.

The WMF/Knoll Modernism Prize is the only award to acknowledge threats facing modern buildings, and to recognize the architects and designers who help ensure their rejuvenation and survival.

The biennial award will be presented at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, on November 13, 2012, by Ms. Burnham; Barry Bergdoll, MoMA's Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture & Design 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 Architectural Consortium.

Ms. Burnham stated, "The international community is becoming increasingly aware of the importance of modernism in the architectural record, and this year we had more nominations for the WMF/Knoll prize than ever before. The award-winning project—a humble, functional building in a small Japanese city—and the story of people coming together for its preservation—is emblematic of the important role that modern architecture can play in communities around the world."

Mr. Bergdoll added, "In its review of the nominations, the jury was delighted to discover an exemplary building in the history of post-war modernist architecture in Japan as yet little known outside the country. It can now be recognized internationally as both an extremely fine building and an absolutely impeccable restoration project."

Mr. Cogan said, "Knoll is pleased to maintain its leadership role in the World Monuments Fund Modernism at Risk initiative. The prize reflects our unwavering seventy-five-year commitment to modern design, and we are especially pleased with the number and variety of nominations from around the world and the jury's recognition of such an inspiring project."

To determine the winner of the prize, the jury reviewed some forty nominations from twenty countries, including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, the Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Peru, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

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; Theo Prudon, president of DCOMOMO/US, architect at Prudon & Partners LLC, 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.

Hizuchi Elementary School

Hizuchi Elementary School has been long admired by the Japanese architectural community for its distinctively functionalist modern design, created by the once little-known but now esteemed Japanese municipal architect Masatsune Matsumura (1913—1993) and completed between 1956 and 1958. Matsumura trained under Tsuchiura Kameki, who, as a student, worked with Frank Lloyd Wright on the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo in 1921, and studied and worked in Los Angeles and at Taliesin from 1922 to 1925.

The School is an important example of cluster-style architecture with a strong modern character, most notably in its apparent lightness. It is an unusual hybrid, being a modern structure constructed primarily of wood, Japan's traditional building material. Its notable architectural characteristics include dual-façade fenestration, which allowed natural light into classrooms throughout the day when post-war energy was in short supply. A

long, glass exterior hallway runs the length of the school, connecting building functions that are separated by interior garden light-wells. Its rational spatial designs take advantage of its dramatic river-front site, including a suspended outdoor reading balcony off the school library and a dramatic floating staircase that protrudes over the Kiki River.

In 1999, DOCOMOMO identified Hizuchi Elementary School as one of the twenty most representative modern buildings in Japan. However, despite this recognition, the building did not meet modern seismic protection or child-safety standards. Also, due to the advanced deterioration of the structure over its fifty-year life, Hizuchi had suffered from rain-leakage and broken windows.

The extended debate over these matters was finally resolved when a consortium of experts, working closely with the local parents group and board of education, developed a plan that would restore the structure while adapting it to meet modern safety and educational requirements.

The Restoration

Over the next three years, Hizuchi Elementary School was meticulously restored, with ongoing input from the community. Original elements were re-used wherever possible (459 of 462 original pillars and over 90 percent of the architectural fittings were restored). However, original glass, much of which had been destroyed in the 2004 typhoon, was replaced with safety glass; paint colors were re-created through trace research; and damaged tiles were replaced with reproductions from original molds. The building became the first post-war wooden school building in Japan to be seismically retrofitted. A new wing, the West Building, was constructed to meet modern classroom needs, but designed in keeping with the original wooden architecture. Classrooms were restored, and some were designed as flexible spaces, anticipating a future decline in the student population.

As a result of the above, the Hizuchi Elementary School project is believed to be the first case of an architecturally significant modern wooden building restoration in Japan, for which it won the 2012 Annual Award of the Architectural Institute of Japan. The School's wooden construction is a reminder of the dialogue between tradition and modernity in the history of the modern movement, and is representative of the importance of the survival of certain building traditions in the postwar period. The exemplary restoration has given the structure renewed life, which can now be appreciated by national and international communities, and will hopefully raise awareness about the importance of everyday modern architecture in Japan and globally.

Architectural Consortium for Hizuchi Elementary School

The Consortium was formed in 2005, after Yawatahama City established a planning committee for Hizuchi Elementary School's renovation. Six experts—architects and professors—then came together to work on the project with City officials. In addition to the City, the individual members of the consortium are Hiroyuki Suzuki, professor at Aoyama Gakuin University; Kiyotada Magata, professor at Ehime University; Yoshiaki Hanada, professor at Kobe Design University; Kouichi Wada, president of Wada Architectural Design Atelier; Kazutomi Takechi, CEO of Atelier A&A Ltd.; and Mikio Koshihara, professor at the University of Tokyo.

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, in Romania, and the 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 included more than twenty modern buildings. Among these have been the Rusakov Club, Moscow, Russia (Konstantin Melnikov); the Viipuri Library, Vyborg, Russia (Alvar Aalto); the 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); the Grosse Pointe Memorial Library, Michigan (Marcel Breuer); and the Orange County Government Center, Goshen, New York (Paul Rudolph).

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 advocacy, conservation, and public education. World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured

places. Since 1965, working in more than ninety countries, its highly skilled experts have applied effective techniques to preserve important architectural- and cultural-heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF inspires an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide. wmf.org, twitter.com/worldmonuments, and facebook.com/worldmonuments.

About Knoll

Knoll is the recipient of the 2011 National Design Award for Corporate and Institutional Achievement from the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum. Since 1938, Knoll has been recognized internationally for creating workplace and residential furnishings that inspire, evolve, and endure. Today, its commitment to modern design, understanding of the workplace, and dedication to sustainable design have yielded a unique portfolio of products that respond and adapt to changing needs. Knoll is aligned with the U.S. Green Building Council and the Canadian Green Building Council and can help companies achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design LEED workplace certification. Knoll is the founding sponsor of the World Monuments Fund Modernism at Risk initiative. knoll.com.

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