

# 2018 World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize Awarded to Karl Marx School

*Preservation of Karl Marx School wins 2018 World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize.*

New York, NY – World Monuments Fund (WMF) today announced Agence Christiane Schmuckle-Mollard has been awarded the 2018 WMF/Knoll Modernism Prize for their outstanding preservation of the Karl Marx School in Villejuif, France. For the first time in the prize's ten-year history, a special mention was also awarded to Harboe Architects, PC for their preservation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois. The biennial prize, which recognizes architects or designers who have demonstrated innovative solutions to preserve or save threatened modern architecture, will be presented during a ceremony that is open to the public at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, on December 4th.

The Karl Marx School was designed and constructed by French architect André Lurçat according to functionalist principles that emphasized the logic and simplicity of the forms. It was described as "the most beautiful school in France" upon its inauguration in 1933 in the communist Paris suburb of Villejuif. By the 1990s, though continuously occupied since opening, the poorly maintained complex was in danger of being lost. In 1996, the Karl Marx School was listed as a National Historical Monument in France, bringing new resources to undertake a restoration that would preserve the integrity of the structures while adapting them to new regulations.

The project that followed involved seven years of research and three years of physical restoration, including addressing exterior wall cracks, conserving interior ceramic sandstone tiles, and resealing the structures' windows. It also required design and construction of a new wing to accommodate the demands of the present-day school.

"The Karl Marx School in Villejuif is one of the landmark school designs of the twentieth century," said Barry Bergdoll, jury chair of the 2018 WMF/Knoll Modernism Prize. "Restoration under the guidance of Agence Christiane Schmuckle-Mollard not only took on the challenges of recovering the interconnected interior and exterior spaces in the context of changing educational practices and standards but recovered the lost color scheme of the building as well. It resonates today with the idealism and optimism of its original creators, the municipality and the architect through this sensitive and erudite restoration."

"Together, the Karl Marx School and the five previous WMF/Knoll Modernism Prize winners—selected from a total of nearly 180 submissions over the past decade, including different building typologies from 40 countries—represent some of the most advanced conservation approaches and thoughtful adaptive re-use ideas ever to be applied to the preservation of outstanding modern buildings," said Lisa Ackerman, Interim Chief Executive Officer, World Monuments Fund. "We are thrilled to recognize the outstanding achievements Agence Christiane Schmuckle-Mollard with this year's prize."

"The 2018 WMF/Knoll Modernism Prize coincides with the 80th anniversary of Knoll. Both milestones embody the vision of our founders, Hans and Florence Knoll, to bring the beauty and benefits of modern design to the way we live and work," said Andrew Cogan, Chairman and CEO, Knoll, Inc. "The restoration of the Karl Marx School in Villejuif, France is emblematic of this vision."

Originally completed in 1908, Unity Temple is one of Frank Lloyd Wright's greatest works and one of the most important early works of modern architecture anywhere in the world. As with many religious structures, the building suffered from decades of deferred maintenance.

Following previous but partial restoration projects in the 1970s and 1990s, a major preservation effort began at the site in 2013. Harboe Architects, PC spent nearly a year conducting in-depth research, and two years physically restoring and modernizing the structure. Work included extensive structural concrete repairs, installation of new roof systems, including two large new skylights, and restoration of all interior plaster, paint, wood finishes, art glass windows, and light fixtures.

“The significance of this gesture resides not only in the fact that this is the oldest work to be acknowledged by the prize to date, but also that it is the first North American work to be so recognized,” Kenneth Frampton, member of the jury of the 2018 WMF/Knoll Modernism Prize, said of Unity Temple’s special mention. “One should not overlook the seminal role that this singular work played in the development of modern architecture as a whole—not only in Europe and the US, but also in the world at large.”

An independent jury comprised of architectural scholars, conservators, and professionals selected the 2018 prize winner and special mention. The 2018 jury included: chair Barry Bergdoll, Meyer Schapiro Professor of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University and Curator of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art; Jean-Louis Cohen, Sheldon H. Solow Professor in the History of Architecture, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University; Kenneth Frampton, Ware Professor of Architecture, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Columbia University; Dietrich Neumann, Professor of the History of Modern Architecture and Director, Urban Studies Department of the History of Art and Architecture, Brown University; Susan Macdonald, Head, Buildings and Sites, The Getty Conservation Institute; Theo Prudon, President, Docomomo US, and Adjunct Professor of Historic Preservation, Columbia University and Pratt Institute; and Karen Stein, Executive Director of the George Nelson Foundation.

Projects that were eligible for the 2018 prize were completed in the last five years and faced threats that affected the site before preservation. Projects that enhanced a site’s architectural, functional, economic, and environmental sustainability while also benefiting the community were encouraged. There were no geographic restrictions.

The first WMF/Knoll Modernism Prize was awarded to Brenne Gesellschaft von Architekten mbH for its restoration of the ADGB Trade Union School in Bernau, Germany (1930). Designed by Hannes Meyer, second director of the Bauhaus, and Hans Wittwer of the Bauhaus architecture department, the ADGB School is a seminal modern building whose survival was unknown to Western architectural historians for decades. Other winning projects have included the Zonnestraal Sanatorium in the Netherlands, the Architectural Consortium for Hizuchi Elementary School in Japan, the Viipuri Library in Russia, and the Justus van Effen complex in the Netherlands.

World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize is part of WMF’s broader programming to address the challenges faced by modern sites through advocacy, education, and conservation, which today includes the World Monuments Watch and Modern Century. The prize originated from WMF’s Modernism at Risk initiative, which was created in response to increasing threats to modern buildings, including neglect, perceived obsolescence, inappropriate alterations, and demolition.

To learn more, visit [wmf.org/modernism-prize](http://wmf.org/modernism-prize).

## **About World Monuments Fund**

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world’s treasured places. For more than 50 years, working in over 100 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 partnerships 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](http://www.wmf.org) for more information, or connect with us on [www.facebook.com/worldmonuments](https://www.facebook.com/worldmonuments), [www.twitter.com/worldmonuments](https://www.twitter.com/worldmonuments), and [instagram.com/worldmonumentsfund](https://www.instagram.com/worldmonumentsfund).

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## **Contact**

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