

Preston Bus Station, British Brutalist Building, Wins 2021 World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize

Award Celebrates Sustainable, Community-centered Approaches to Adapting Modern Buildings



November 18, 2021, New York, NY – World Monuments Fund (WMF) today announced John Puttick Associates has been awarded the 2021 World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize, recognizing their thoughtful and detailed conservation on the Preston Bus Station, located in Preston, UK, a civic monument of central importance that serves as a hub for mass transit.

The biennial prize, which recognizes architects, designers, and preservationists who have demonstrated innovative solutions to preserve or save threatened modern architecture, will be presented during a ceremony at AIA New York, Center for Architecture in New York City, on December 14, 2021.

Preston Bus Station was designed in 1968 by Keith Ingham and Charles Wilson of the Building Design Partnership (BPD) and the engineering firm Ove Arup. The station was designed to become the hub and municipal transit center for Central Lancashire New Town, demonstrating the scale and interconnectivity of local planning innovation. When it opened to the public in October 1969, it was Europe's largest bus station.

The Bus Station is representative of Brutalist architecture and transport planning of the post-war era because of its exposed reinforced concrete structure housing an integrated car parking, bus, and taxi facility. Preston Bus Station translated functional civic infrastructure into a transportation monument featured within the urban landscape that serves as a gathering place for citizens from all walks of life.

“The prize focused specifically this year on sustainable and community-centered approaches to adapting modern buildings. By doing so, we celebrate the power of preservation as a positive force in society. The restoration of Preston Bus Station has enhanced both the social and public benefit of the station, which counts over 10,000 bus departures every week and contributes to minimizing the significant carbon footprint of commuting in the face of climate change,” said Bénédicte de Montlaur, President and CEO of WMF. “We are thrilled to recognize the outstanding achievements of John Puttick Associates with this year’s prize.”

"The WMF Modernism Award honors the lasting impact modernist design can have on a community and the environment. The Preston Bus Station exemplifies that, having brought people together, celebrating movement and space in a beautiful and highly functional way for more than 50 years," said Alana Stevens, President of Knoll.

The building's design exhibits a clarity of expression both inside and outside: the generous scale of the interior spaces is accompanied by a reflection of the building functions on the exterior façades; structural elements are exposed; and distinctive functional elements are integrated into the building, such as the curve of the car park balconies that prevent cars from hitting the wall.

In 2012, Preston Bus Station was included in the World Monuments Watch as a response to the threat of demolition and to raise awareness about the significance of Brutalist architecture in the UK. In 2015, after years of neglect, a design competition was held leading to the appointment of John Puttick Associates to restore the station. Updating key infrastructure, while honoring the form, materials, and design intent of the original building was key to the restoration. The careful approach resulted not only in the meticulous restoration of the site, but also in renewing the expression of civic pride that the Preston Bus Station represented in its early days.

"Despite the threat of demolition hanging over the Preston Bus Station for many years, community interest and sustained advocacy eventually triumphed, reaffirming this monumental civic building to its pride of place at the core of the Lancashire town of Preston," said Susan Macdonald, member of the jury of the 2021 World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize. "Large-scale transport infrastructure can be challenging to conserve in ways that meet cotemporary demands whilst retaining their material character and quality – this project achieves both."

The rigorous intervention included the improvement of connectivity between the station and the rest of the city by prioritizing pedestrian accessibility and rearranging the waiting areas to face the new square. This was combined with a thorough restoration of the original materials, such as the rubber flooring and the color palette in the interior spaces, including the "spine" of services that run through the center of the building.

Jury Selection Process

The World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize winner is selected by an independent jury chaired by Barry Bergdoll, Meyer Schapiro Professor of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University. The jury is composed of architectural scholars, conservators, and professionals in related fields including Courtney J. Martin, Director of the Yale Center for British Art; Dietrich Neumann, Professor of the History of Modern Architecture and Director, Urban Studies, Department of the History of Art and Architecture at Brown University; 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; Karen Stein, Critic, Architectural Advisor, and Executive Director of the George Nelson Foundation; Mabel O. Wilson, Nancy and George Rupp Professor of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, a Professor in African American and African Diasporic Studies, and the Director of the Institute for Research in African American Studies (IRAAS) at Columbia University; Susan Macdonald, Head, Buildings and Sites, The Getty Conservation Institute; and Theo Prudon, President, Docomomo US and Adjunct Professor of Historic Preservation, Columbia University and Pratt Institute.

The jury valued the detailed and extensive efforts of this project to preserve the full spectrum of historic significance of the Preston Bus Station: from its original materials and aesthetic to the building's essential role as a civic center of transit and urban connectivity. The project is a commendable example of successful conservation and adaptation of large-scale infrastructure from the post-war era that marked an advance in civic ambitions. The thoughtful detail of the project at multiple scales particularly resonated with the jury, including the attention to the restoration of the original flooring and the enhancement of the exterior space to prioritize pedestrian circulation.

To learn more, please visit wmf.org/modernismprize.

About World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund (WMF) is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world's most treasured places to enrich people's lives and build mutual understanding across cultures and communities. The organization is headquartered in New York City with offices and affiliates in Cambodia, India, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and the UK. Since 1965, our global team of experts has preserved the world's diverse cultural heritage using the highest international standards at more than 700 sites in 112 countries. Partnering with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF draws on heritage to address some of today's most pressing challenges: climate change, underrepresentation, imbalanced tourism, and post-crisis recovery. With a commitment to the people who bring places to life, WMF embraces the potential of the past to create a more resilient and inclusive society.

About Knoll

Knoll is a globally recognized leader in modern design and the founding sponsor of the World Monuments Fund Modernism at Risk program. The company's constellation of design-driven people creates high-performance workplaces, work from home settings and luxury residential interiors. A recipient of the National Design Award for Corporate and Institutional Achievement from the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Knoll is aligned with the U.S. Green Building Council and the Canadian Green Building Council and can help organizations achieve the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) workplace certification. Knoll also helps clients comply with the International Living Future Institute to achieve Living Building Challenge Certification, and with the International WELL Building Institute to attain WELL Building Certification.

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