



# 5 Case Studies

**MODERNISM AT RISK**

World Monuments Fund



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**Kent Memorial Library**  
Suffield, Connecticut

# FOREWORD

Despite modernism's influential place in our architectural heritage, many significant Modernist and other recent buildings are endangered because of neglect, perceived obsolescence, or inappropriate renovation, and some are even in imminent danger of demolition. In response to these threats, in 2006, the World Monuments Fund launched its Modernism at Risk initiative.

The exhibition that accompanies this book was conceived as part of WMF's effort to demonstrate that modern buildings can remain sustainable structures with vital futures. Along with the WMF/Knoll Modernism Prize, which is awarded biennially to recognize innovative architectural and design solutions that preserve or enhance modern landmarks, the exhibition highlights the special challenges and the promising opportunities of conserving modern architecture.

**Bonnie Burnham**

*President, World Monuments Fund*

# SPONSOR STATEMENT

For over 70 years, Knoll has used modern design to connect people with their work, their lives, and their world. Our founders, Hans and Florence Knoll, embraced the creative genius of the Cranbrook Academy of Art and the Bauhaus School to create new types of furniture for the workplace and home. Their approach, where craftsmanship joined with technology through the use of design, anchors our perspective and shapes the values we endeavor to live by today.

As part of our effort to contribute to the communities where we do business, we are proud to be the sponsor of *Modernism at Risk: Modern Solutions for Modern Landmarks*. We recognize that Modernist masterpieces—cornerstones of our cultural landscape—are routinely being demolished, disfigured, or abandoned, and we hope this book and exhibition will contribute to raising awareness among students and design professionals about the role architects and designers can play in the preservation of this important part of our architectural legacy.

**Andrew B. Cogan**

*CEO, Knoll, Inc.*

# THE CASE AGAINST MODERNISM

**Henry Tzu Ng**, *Executive Vice President, World Monuments Fund*

**T**he case against modernism? It's what we come up against whenever we try to save a modern landmark from being demolished or severely diminished. That "case" often presents itself in three broad arguments, each with distinctive traits that threaten modern sites: public apathy, technical obstacles, and functional obsolescence. If our goal is not to lose another modern building, it is essential to understand these threats in order to develop effective preservation strategies.

Modern sites face many of the same threats that other historic sites face, including age, deterioration, and neglect. Threats to modern buildings, however, are increasing, and are considered distinctive and severe enough that the World Monuments Fund (WMF) launched a special initiative—Modernism at Risk—to address these challenges more forcefully and develop strategies that can also serve as models for preserving modern sites facing similar challenges.

Why this sense of urgency? Chief among these growing threats to modern buildings are demolition and inappropriate renovations, where the consequences are immediate and devastating. Four out of the five sites presented in the *Modernism at Risk* exhibition and discussed in this publication faced immediate demolition. One has been lost, and the futures of two others have yet to be fully secured in the long term. Once a building disappears, as with Paul Rudolph's Riverview High School (1958–2009), there is no second chance. Much is at stake.

Despite extraordinary efforts to save this important structure, Riverview High School in Sarasota, Florida, was razed in June 2009.



## Public Apathy

In many preservation battles, one can make the case that a building is worth saving because it is beautiful and historic. Those two factors have less currency in the fight for modern buildings because many citizens simply do not like modern buildings, and often deem them downright ugly. Further, by definition, many modern buildings are too recent to be “historic” in the traditional sense and many have no legal protection because they are too “young” to qualify for landmark status or other designations.

For far too long, cities and towns across America have routinely demolished their postwar modern buildings. Deemed unsightly or outdated, they have been bulldozed only to be replaced by new structures that essentially serve the same purpose—without giving the original buildings a second chance, or a second thought.

Thus, we are hard pressed to find the right “emotional” reason for people to care about modern buildings. It is often difficult for those living with modern buildings to evaluate or accept their significance as part of the larger history of architecture. Yet—as Professor Hylton writes in his essay, *Design Advocacy*—modernism is a seminal chapter in the history of architecture and the defining aesthetic of our own time. Although preservationists and scholars may hold the virtues of modern architecture to be self-evident, the public may feel alienated from the theories and intellectual concepts that lie behind Modernist buildings and it sometimes takes time and distance to see how these buildings fit into the continuum of a longer history of architectural creativity and innovation.

When the community of Old Westbury, New York, deemed the A. Conger Goodyear House (1939) unworthy of landmark designation, WMF worked to have the building recognized by the State and National Registers of Historic Places. This was not intended to be an act of disrespect for the community. Rather, because the building could not be protected by a local ordinance—the usual method to safeguard a historic building—obtaining state and national recognition was key to creating a preservation easement that would, in effect, serve as a private form of landmark protection. This helped save the building and will safeguard it in the future—but it was the second-best way. It is always preferable to have a community embrace and protect its own architectural history.

The battle to save Kent Memorial Library (in Suffield, Connecticut) is rich with the kinds of discussion that give preservationists hope. Citizens increasingly recognized that even a modern building in a picturesque, traditional New England town has a place among the Colonial- and Victorian-era gems. Citizens wrote publically about the continuum of architectural history represented by its historic Main Street on which Warren Platner’s 1970s building sits, and the importance of having “buildings of their own time” as part of their community. Similarly, Grosse Pointe Library was originally slated to be demolished. Eventually, however, the community es-



tablished a special preservation fund to save and restore the building as part of its new library expansion plans.

The long-term security of our modern heritage will ultimately depend on the kind of thinking that emerged in Suffield and Grosse Pointe. It is one of the goals of *Modernism at Risk* to encourage this larger community understanding and appreciation of our modern heritage and engage the public's interest and support.

### **Technical Challenges**

Architectural preservation often addresses the bricks-and-mortar challenges of preventing old buildings from falling down; however, modern buildings face additional threats, which are directly related to their age—or youth.

These additional obstacles stem from the innovative technologies and systems and often ephemeral materials that might have been used in a modern building's original construction. While these technologies are often the very attributes that define buildings as landmarks of modern architecture, they can also present challenges to preservation by requiring the development of new or unusual technical solutions. These can be time-consuming and costly to implement. In addition, the failure of original components such as steel and glass windows often results in the wholesale replacement of character-defining features, which impacts authenticity, a determining factor when a site is considered for designation and protection as a landmark. Architects, designers, and engineers play critical roles in helping owners navigate the many options, but scholars are also increasingly in dialogue about preserving the design integrity or intent when original building fabric must be replaced or renovated.

For instance, the innovative passive cooling system and other environmental controls at Riverview High School may have been deemed by the school board to be too costly or troublesome to accommodate in a modern high school. This can be a common sentiment held by owners of other innovative modern buildings—it would be simpler to build a new building than to rehabilitate one from an earlier generation. It is the architect's challenge to revitalize buildings like Riverview to help meet a community's new needs—a worthy undertaking from which much could have been learned had the building been spared.

Similarly, the huge amounts of glass with minimal connective elements at Kent Memorial Library bring in natural light, but they also leak. The owner may be tempted to discard or replace this original fenestration approach; however, a sensitive restoration of the building will require a solution that respects the original design intent but corrects its technical deficiencies.

On the other hand, it would have been prohibitively expensive and an architectural compromise to replace, wholesale, the large steel-case windows—common to many modern facades—that define the exterior of the A. Conger Goodyear House. The eventual solution of in

situ repair made the restoration of the building financially and architecturally acceptable both to the owner and preservationists.

Similarly, the symbiotic relationship between the client and architect was key to defining the scope and goal of the restoration and to the eventual success of the ADGB project. The ADGB building was built on functional design principles, and the thorough research into the origins of the building by the preservation architects fully informed their expert restoration. Bringing back all the building's unique design elements and efficiencies and integrating them with the building's modern operations were key components of the restoration program. When the cost of doing the restoration escalated, the architects worked with the client to delay the schedule in order to help them raise the additional funds so the work could be done properly.

### **Functional Obsolescence**

WMF has been involved in the preservation of many types and ages of building sites around the globe for over 45 years. Many—perhaps due to their antiquity or provenance—may be regarded as “monuments.” This does not necessarily imply scale, but identifies buildings that are deemed worthy of saving even if they no longer have their original or a current utilitarian function—they should be saved somehow, be it as a monument, museum, or heritage site.

In contrast, many modern buildings are the structures of everyday life—homes, schools, work spaces, and places of worship or governance. While this is a virtue in their purpose, most modern buildings—with the exception of a small number of global icons—are not given the luxury of being preserved as heritage sites. Their survival often depends on their ability to meet a much higher standard of serving a utilitarian function, very often the original one for which it was created.

Grosse Pointe and Kent Memorial libraries were slated to be demolished as outdated and to be replaced by newer versions, the Goodyear House was to be demolished so a new, larger residence could be built on the site, and Riverview high school was replaced by a new facility.

Adaptive reuse applies to some situations, but in the case of many modern buildings facing demolition, it is often the challenge of continued use. Arguments for replacing Modernist structures often cite that they are difficult to adapt given the programmatic specificity—having been built under the dictum of “form follows function.” The challenge is often how to adapt modern buildings to support original, continued uses. Architects and designers have been key in helping make the case for the continued vitality of many modern buildings at risk, as the firm designLAB did successfully for the Grosse Pointe Library.

## Defending Modernism

The case against modernism can be formidable. It is why the Modernism at Risk initiative was launched. Although this publication and the accompanying exhibition focus on the role that architects and designers can play in helping protect our modern heritage, the goal of the initiative is to expand the overall arsenal of tools we can use to save modern buildings at risk. This can be achieved with public outreach and education, with exhibitions and publications, through public or private legal mechanisms, and by building partnerships with others such as scholars, educators, preservationists, and architects and designers to assist in this fight.

There is no single systemic solution, and saving every modern building at risk is impossible. We have to be satisfied now to save those we can, even if it is one building at a time. But we hope to build a larger community—and develop more effective approaches—each time we work to save a modern building.

**The A. Conger Goodyear House in Old Westbury, New York, was saved from demolition by WMF.**





**The University of Florida interior design department offered reuse proposals for Riverview High School in Sarasota, Florida.**

## DESIGN ADVOCACY: The Role of Architects and Designers in Preserving Modern Architecture

**Morris H. Hylton III**, *Assistant Professor of Interior Design, University of Florida*

**M**odernism defined 20th-century architecture. Coalescing in Europe following the devastation of the First World War, designers proposed to improve society through a new architecture. While scholarship has focused increasingly on the diversity of modernism, most buildings deemed modern were based on certain core tenets. These include a departure from traditional building types, functionally derived plans, the integration of the design and art disciplines, and the use of efficient, industrial materials and innovative technologies. Modern buildings are often characterized by geometric or sculptural forms, absence of applied ornament, machine-made components, and new expressions of space, such as loosely defined, free-flowing rooms and high levels of transparency achieved through the extensive use of glass. From its avant-garde beginnings, modernism became the accepted design idiom following the Second World War. In the United States, for example, federal agencies like the Government Services Administration (GSA) and the National Park Service adopted policies and commissioned modern buildings based on, among other considerations, economy of construction. Postwar modern buildings now make up a large percentage of America's built environment.

Yet, as the introduction of this publication describes, significant works of modern architecture are increasingly threatened by physical deterioration, perceived functional or economic obsolescence, and perhaps most pervasively, public apathy. Safeguarding the legacy of Modernist architecture is motivating a generation of activists from outside the traditional cultural heritage preservation community.

Architects and designers have become some of the most ardent supporters of preserving modern buildings. Practitioners, educators, and students—many with no prior experience in preservation advocacy—are increasingly organizing and leading efforts to save endangered modern landmarks. Their willingness to get involved stems in part from their familiarity and appreciation of the work of early and postwar Modernists—the architects and buildings frequently studied and emulated in design schools.

The five case studies presented in the *Modernism at Risk: Modern Solutions for Saving Modern Landmarks* exhibition and this accompanying publication demonstrate that design practitioners and students, armed with their knowledge of 20th-century architecture and their critical thinking and problem-solving skills and supported by organizations like the World Monuments Fund, are helping devise multifaceted solutions—including advocacy efforts, technical plans, and otherwise—that address the distinct challenges to preserving modern architecture. These efforts can be described as design advocacy.

The buildings presented in the *Modernism at Risk* exhibition and the following studies represent the rise of modernism from its early development during the interwar years in Europe (1930 ADGB Trade Union School, Bernau, Germany, by Hannes Meyer and Hans Wittwer) to its appearance in the United States and other countries (1939 A. Conger Goodyear House, Old Westbury, New York by Edward Durell Stone) to its proliferation during America's postwar boom and later, often in the form of everyday civic buildings (1954 Grosse Pointe Public Library, Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, by Marcel Breuer; 1958 Riverview High School, Riverview, Florida, by Paul Rudolph; and 1972 Kent Memorial Library, Suffield, Connecticut, by Warren Platner.)



# ADGB TRADE UNION SCHOOL

Bernau, Germany, 1930

Hannes Meyer (1889–1954) with Hans Wittwer (1894–1952)

In 2008, Brenne Gesellschaft von Architekten mbH, the Berlin-based architectural firm headed by Winfried Brenne and Franz Jaschke, was awarded the first World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize for their restoration of the ADGB Trade Union School, located in Bernau on the outskirts Berlin, Germany. Awarded biennially, the prize recognizes innovative architectural and design solutions that preserve or enhance modern landmarks and that advance recognition of the special challenges of conserving them. The ADGB Trade Union School was one of the most significant commissions of the Bauhaus and its controversial second director, Hannes Meyer. The complex was substantially altered during the Second World War and the Communist occupation of East Berlin that followed. After the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the regional government of Brandenburg—in collaboration with a new occupant, the Handwerkskammer (Chamber of Crafts) Berlin—committed to restoring the educational and training facility. Chosen through a competition, the conservation program developed by Brenne and Jaschke relied on archival research and physical investigation to reinstate the building's original design intent including, in some instances, the reconstruction of inventive architectural features and finishes. The reconstituted building has offered new insight into the designs of the Bauhaus when it was under the leadership of its lesser-known director. The ADGB Trade Union School project demonstrates how the work of architects and designers, in collaboration with a supportive community, can revive a forgotten landmark as a viable building while substantially contributing to modern architectural scholarship.

## Significance

The Federal School of the General German Trade Unions Federation (Bundesschule des Allgemeinen Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes), or ADGB, was an umbrella organization that encompassed some 80 percent of all the country's trade unions in the first two decades of the 20th century.<sup>1</sup> In the late 1920s, the ADGB commissioned the Bauhaus—to then the leading school for Modernist design—to create a training facility in Bernau, Germany, where members would take continuing education courses lasting one to two months.<sup>2</sup>



**The complex, shortly after its completion in 1930.**


The ADGB project was led by architect Hannes Meyer (1889–1954), who was appointed the second director of the Bauhaus in 1928 after one year as head of the school's newly created architecture department. Meyer was initially assisted by Hans Wittwer (1894–1952), with whom he collaborated on a submission to the Chicago Herald Tribune competition, and whom he hired to teach architecture at the Bauhaus.<sup>3</sup> Wittwer resigned from the commission and from his faculty appointment before the ADGB project was completed.

Meyer's philosophical belief about design, like many of his counterparts in Germany and Europe, was shaped by the physical and social devastation and reconstruction that followed World War I. An ardent Communist, Meyer disavowed aesthetic and stylistic considerations in design in favor of a functionally driven and socially responsible architecture dedicated to the proletariat, rather than the "ruling class of human society."<sup>4</sup> In asserting his position of the architect as social activist, Meyer promoted what he believed to be the superiority of Marxist over capitalist design:

*The Leninist architect is not an aesthetic lackey, and, unlike his colleague in the West, not a lawyer and custodian of the interest of the Capitalist ruling class there...For him architecture is not an aesthetic stimulus but a keen-edged weapon in the class struggle.<sup>5</sup>*



To achieve the social agenda of architecture, Meyer promoted and employed a purely functional approach to design, eschewing all conventional artistic and aesthetic considerations. He described this approach as follows:



*We examine the daily routine of everyone who lives in the house and this gives us the functional diagram—the functional diagram and the economic program are the determining principles of the building project.* <sup>6</sup>

For the functional diagram of the ADGB Trade Union School, Meyer used a linear arrangement to organize the various uses of the complex into three distinct yet interconnected components. The first building supported public functions, and included the main entrance, administrative offices, auditorium, refectory, and a winter-garden dining hall. This public area connected to a residential zone comprising four identical, three-story dormitory units. The linear diagram terminated at a two-story school building with a monumental staircase connecting a ground-floor gymnasium and upper-story classrooms. A long steel-and-glass corridor served as an interior passage linking the complex's three primary components. The steel of this interior passage, along with that of the winter garden and the gymnasium staircase, was painted red. Contrasting sharply with the exposed gray concrete structure and buff brick that made up the exterior walls of all buildings, the vibrant red signified the complex's principal circulation path. It is one of the building's most prominent public spaces and exterior features, and emphasized the underlying functional diagram. Each of the dormitories has a unique color scheme. As originally built, the complex also included a faculty housing wing connected to the entry and administrative area.

In describing the application of his architectural theories at ADGB, Meyer stated that “the building organization is merely a plastic translation [plastische Übersetzung] of the socio-pedagogic functions and a direct transcription [Übertragung] of the functional diagram.”<sup>8</sup> In addition to the architecture, faculty and students contributed to the design of the buildings' interiors, furnishings, and fixtures. The ADGB Trade Union School was second only in importance to the institution's own Dessau campus that was designed by Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and others as a realized vision of the Bauhaus faculty's belief in architecture as the unifying goal of all arts, crafts, and design, or *gesamtkunstwerk*.<sup>9</sup>

Although the Bauhaus made its first profits under his leadership through commissions such as ADGB and five apartment buildings (Erweiterung der Siedlung Dessau-Törten) in Dessau, Germany, Meyer's politicization of the school led to his forced resignation and replacement by Mies van der Rohe in 1930. Meyer went on to live and work in the Soviet Union, Mexico, and Switzerland, but would never complete a public commission to rival the success of the ADGB Trade Union School. According to architectural historian and Columbia University pro-

fessor Kenneth Frampton, “Hannes Meyer built very little, and the ADGB is Meyer’s greatest achievement and an important architectural monument from a critical moment in the evolution of modern architecture.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Design Advocacy**

The Nazi party confiscated the ADGB Trade Union School only three years after it opened and converted it to an SS training facility. The East German Trade Union Federation (FDGB) occupied and expanded the site as a training facility for its members following the Second World War. During the occupation by the East German government, the integrity of the original design concept was compromised as architectural features were concealed or removed due to a lack of financial resources and access to proper repair and replacement materials. For example, unable to secure suitable glass, the FDGB constructed a low-cost wood enclosure with aluminum windows that encased the original steel-and-glass corridor connecting the different components of the complex. The ADGB buildings were eventually abandoned. The site remained vacant, slowly deteriorating from benign neglect before it was “rediscovered” following the reunification of Germany beginning in 1989. According to architect Franz Jaschke, who would work with partner Winfried Brenne to oversee the restoration of the complex, “We know colleagues that went there and said they didn’t find it, because it was so hidden under the changes they hadn’t even imagined.”<sup>11</sup>

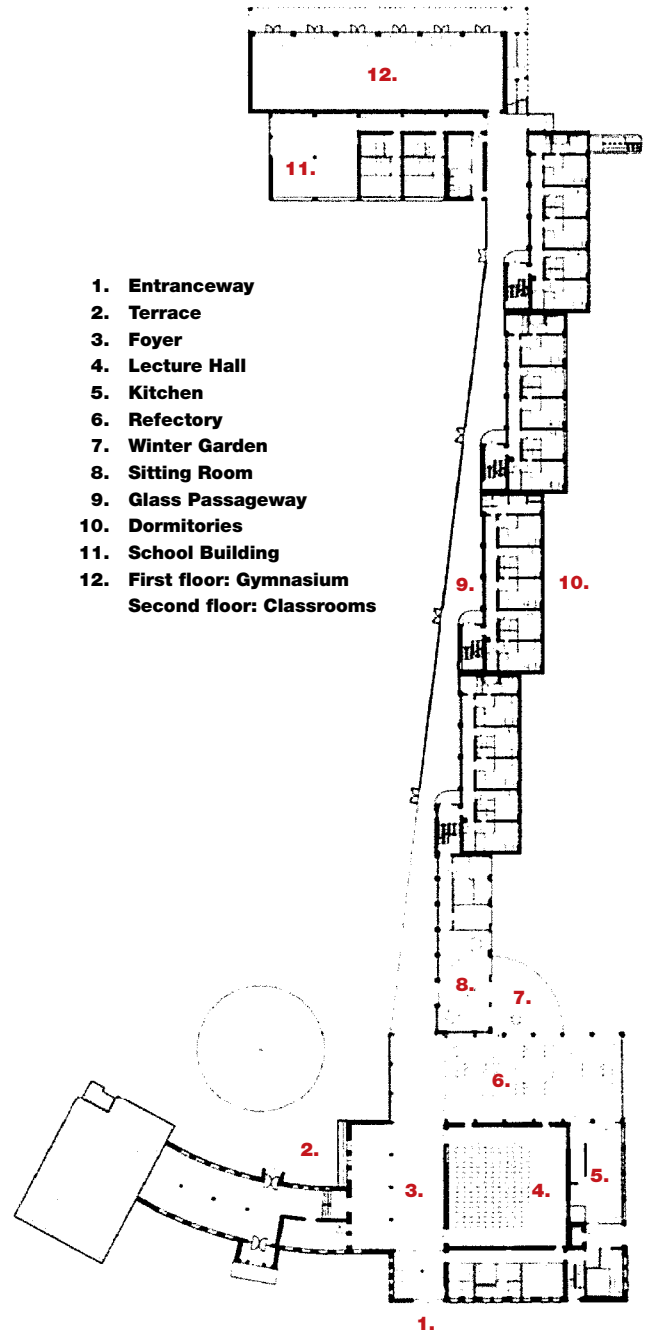
Brenne Gesellschaft von Architekten mbH won a 2001 competition sponsored by the regional government of Brandenburg in partnership with a new occupant, the Handwerkskammer (Chamber of Crafts) Berlin, to restore the ADGB Trade Union complex. The firm conducted extensive archival research and physical investigations and used the information to reverse decades of haphazard repairs and additions, reconstruct missing features, and ultimately reinstate the originality and innovation of the Bauhaus design. When the cost of this high quality of work began to exceed the original budget, the architects worked with the client to adjust the construction schedule in order to give the client additional time to raise more funds. The refurbishment of this seminal but mostly forgotten masterpiece has substantially contributed to the scholarship on early modernism. “The resurrection of the ADGB,” according to New York University architectural history professor John-Louis Cohen, “demonstrates that good restoration and conservation can’t be limited to a set of technical solutions, but is based on and contributes to solid architectural scholarship.”<sup>12</sup>

The identification of the original color palette and how it was used to reinforce the building’s functional diagram was among the more significant discoveries made during the restoration of the school. Helping challenge the notion that early Modernist architecture had a limited or mostly neutral palette, the interiors of the original ADGB complex displayed a remarkable range

of colors. The four three-story residential buildings are one example. Upon completion, the four dormitories were assigned a specific color—green, yellow, blue, or red—and the three corridors of each unit were painted a shade of that color. A subtle gradation from light to dark occurred moving from the first to third levels. This application of color was similar to the use of the red to distinguish the steel-and-glass-enclosed passageway that served as the complex’s main circulation route. Color coding of the various components of the building’s program helped emphasize the underlying functional diagram that Meyer believed to be the principle element of architectural design.

In addition to rediscovering and reinstating color, a number of inventive window and glass features were also restored. A series of trapezoidal windows were repaired along the enclosed staircase that wraps the school and gymnasium wing. The individual windows, hinged at their centers, tilt simultaneously in and out to create a cascading effect. The original glass-block-inlay ceiling of the refectory was re-created to once again illuminate the interior with diffuse natural light. Delicate steel and glass windows matching the originals were installed in the refectory after later wood ones installed by the East German Trade Union were removed. This helped recapture the high degree of transparency and view of the surrounding woods, and reinstated one of the complex’s most important features.


The architectural firm of Brenne Gesellschaft, in reclaiming the Bauhaus vision, also successfully addressed the challenges of upgrading the complex to meet new energy and code requirements. For example, recent technological advances were





used to introduce double-pane, insulated glass into the replacement window systems without compromising the slender profiles of the original steel casements and mullions. In the main public entryway, the exposed buff brick, too damaged to restore and no longer adhering to fire-safety ratings, was stabilized in place and covered with cement panels. The rows of panels were separated by thin strips of color recalling the palette of the dormitories.


## Outcome



*The inaugural 2008 Prize is awarded to Brenne Gesellschaft von Architekten mbH, led by the extraordinary team of Winfried Brenne and Franz Jaschke, for its superb resurrection of a highly significant, but little known Bauhaus-designed landmark, the former ADGB Trade Union School in Bernau, Germany. We hope the story of this building, and its survival and dramatic rescue by a highly talented architectural team working with the ardent support of the owner and community, will inspire the preservation and restoration of other great modern buildings.*<sup>13</sup>

—Bonnie Burnham, *President,*  
*World Monuments Fund*

In recognizing the firm and project, the jurors who selected the first Modernism at Risk Prize described the restoration of the ADGB as “a heroic achievement that overcame the challenges presented by a complex site: neglect, political turmoil, early modern building technologies, and limited financial resources.”<sup>14</sup> Jury chairperson Barry Bergdoll, the Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture & Design at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, recognized the project as an important model for preserving modern architecture when he stated:



*The restored ADGB illustrates the influential role that modern architecture continues to play in our architectural heritage, and vividly demonstrates the importance and feasibility of preserving modern buildings as sustainable structures with vital futures.*<sup>14</sup>



# A. CONGER GOODYEAR HOUSE

Old Westbury, New York, 1939

Edward Durell Stone (1902–1978)

In *The New Yorker* in 2002, architectural historian and critic Paul Goldberger proclaimed the A. Conger Goodyear “one of the most important houses built in the United States between the two world wars.”<sup>1</sup> Edward Durell Stone, one of the first American-born and -trained architects to practice International Style modernism, designed the house for the first president of the board of trustees of the Museum of Modern Art, Anson Conger Goodyear. The house, located in Old Westbury, New York, was Goodyear’s country retreat where he entertained his guests among an impressive collection of European avant-garde art, including paintings by Degas, Matisse, Picasso, and Gauguin. By the time Goldberger wrote his article in November 2002, the house had just narrowly been saved from demolition after being placed on the World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites.

To rescue the largely forgotten modern icon, World Monuments Fund purchased the property and launched a restoration with financial support from renowned artist Frank Stella, and the Barnett and Annalee Newman Foundation. The goal was to repair the house and to take measures to ensure its long-term preservation as a private residence. To help reach this goal, a historic preservation easement, or protective covenant, was created. It identified original, architecturally significant features of the house’s exterior and interior that cannot be altered, while pinpointing those elements that could be re-created and/or modified to meet contemporary modes of living. For example, a new garage and home-office building was commissioned based on an original structure demolished in the 1970s. A garage was considered essential to attracting a buyer for the house. The house sold in 2005, and the current owner has adhered to the historic preservation easement while finishing the restoration work begun by WMF. The successful preservation of the A. Conger Goodyear House, like many other modern homes in private ownership, required a design-centric, multifaceted approach. The program devised by WMF addressed the technical and functional deficiencies that needed immediate attention while simultaneously creating a legal mechanism to protect the house under subsequent owners. By managing both the anticipated and unforeseen changes, the easement helps ensure



**The living room in 1939**

that this Modernist masterpiece will not only be preserved, but that it will remain viable as a residence—both now and in the future.

### **Significance**

Anson Conger Goodyear (1877–1964) was a wealthy industrialist who, as director of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, gained a reputation as a discriminating collector and champion of modern art. In 1929, Goodyear relocated from Buffalo, New York, to Manhattan, where he joined Lillie P. Bliss, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, and Mary Sullivan in launching the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). As the institution's first president, Goodyear was influential in hiring director Alfred H. Barr, Jr., with whom he worked to quickly expand the museum's holdings. In 1937, a project was launched to construct a permanent home for MoMA along the mid-block of 53rd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues.<sup>2</sup> Goodyear, who also served as chairman of MoMA's Finance and Building Committees, asked fellow trustee and architect Phillip Goodwin (1885–1958) to work with the 36-year-old architect Edward Durell Stone (1902–1978) on the design of a permanent, modern home for the museum.<sup>3</sup> Stone was one of the first architects practicing International Style modernism on the East Coast of America prior to World War II, and some



of the International Style residences he designed, such as the Richard Mandel House (1934) in Bedford Hills, New York, were widely published in 1930s architectural and public press.

Stone first encountered and embraced modern design as a student exploring Europe on a Rotch Traveling scholarship. Recalling his time spent in Europe, he wrote:

*Changes in architecture were gathering momentum. Le Corbusier's first books were being published and in nearby Dessau the Bauhaus was founded, all heralding the arrival of the new machine age. Those ideas were contagious and we students spent our time redesigning the United States on marble-topped café tables.<sup>5</sup>*

While visiting the International Exposition in Barcelona, Spain, Stone was particularly influenced by Mies van der Rohe's German—more commonly referred to as the Barcelona—Pavilion during the single year (1929–1930) that the future Modernist icon stood. Aspects of the pavilion, particularly the blending of industrial elements like the cruciform shape, chrome columns, and rich natural materials like travertine and other marbles, would resurface many times in Stone's own work beginning with the A. Conger Goodyear House.

During the construction of the MoMA building in 1937, Goodyear commissioned Stone to design a house in Old Westbury, Long Island. Old Westbury at that time was known for late-19th- and early-20th-century mansions, such as the Phipps family estate, now Old Westbury Gardens, in the Neo-Georgian and other traditional styles. In contrast, Goodyear wanted a modestly scaled home. He outlined a simple building program with just a few requirements: “a long gallery in which to hang pictures, a large living room with steps leading down to it, a circular dining room, and a swimming pool.”<sup>6</sup>

Stone, in his autobiography *The Evolution of an Architect*, described Goodyear's vision for his country retreat as follows:

*That he was a wise man was amply demonstrated when he asked for only two master bedrooms; all of his neighbors were saddled with forty-room relics of a former era—and no household help. He became the envy of the community.<sup>7</sup>*

Goodyear chose a 102-acre parcel with a hill that was one of the highest points on relatively flat Long Island as the building site, where Stone oriented and detailed the house to take advantage of views and control daylight. The principal rooms, including a sunken living room, small study, circular dining room, and two bedroom suites, faced south with floor-to-ceiling steel-framed windows that were protected by deep overhangs, and provided a view of the

property and countryside, all connected by a long corridor where Goodyear could display his art collection. Stone described the orientation and layout of the house in his autobiography:

*The site, a barren hilltop, demanded the low horizontal lines of a one-story house. Mr. Goodyear had a fine collection of modern paintings, and I decided to have a gallery serve as a “spinal column” from which all the rooms, with an expansive view to the south, opened. I employed glass walls from floor to ceiling, the ceilings continuing beyond the walls to form wide sheltering eaves. As the house faces south, the eaves were adjusted in depth so that the glass areas were shaded during the summer months, and when the sun was low during the winter months, its welcoming rays penetrated the house through the glass walls.*<sup>8</sup>

The design of the approach, arrival, and entry sequence to the house was carefully controlled by Stone. A long, winding driveway led across the treeless property, affording a view of the house’s main or south elevation. A serpentine brick wall extending north from the house and a straight wooden fence connecting to a garage structure formed an entry to a partially enclosed area with an automobile turnaround. A portion of the house’s roof cantilevered out over the turnaround to provide a sheltered drop-off and pick-up area. A set of steps led from this arrival point to a courtyard and the house’s entrance. Stone described this facet of the design as follows:

*This house also represented an effort to solve the approach by automobile. The entrance was provided through a portico overlooking a walled garden so that automobiles and services were removed from the house proper, thus giving both sides of the house an attractive outlook.*<sup>9</sup>


The house’s architecture melded aspects of the International Style that Stone encountered while in Europe with a more American sensibility. Stone merged the open plan and abstract forms of Mies van der Rohe, as well as his blending of industrial materials with refined finishes and fixtures, with the central chimney, pin-wheel plan, and overhangs of Frank Lloyd Wright, to create his own distinct brand of modernism.

Some ten years after the completion of the house, Goodyear retained Stone once again to enlarge the house. The 1950 addition, opposite the master bedroom, contained a third bedroom and bathroom with dressing area for Goodyear’s second wife, Sadie Bliss. The west wall of the addition, designed without windows and clad in brick, replaced a wooden fence that en-

closed the entry courtyard garden. Years later in a 1957 letter, Stone wrote to Goodyear, “Your house is my best work to date.”<sup>10</sup> The A. Conger Goodyear House is recognized by many as Stone’s masterpiece of residential architecture.

### **Design Advocacy**

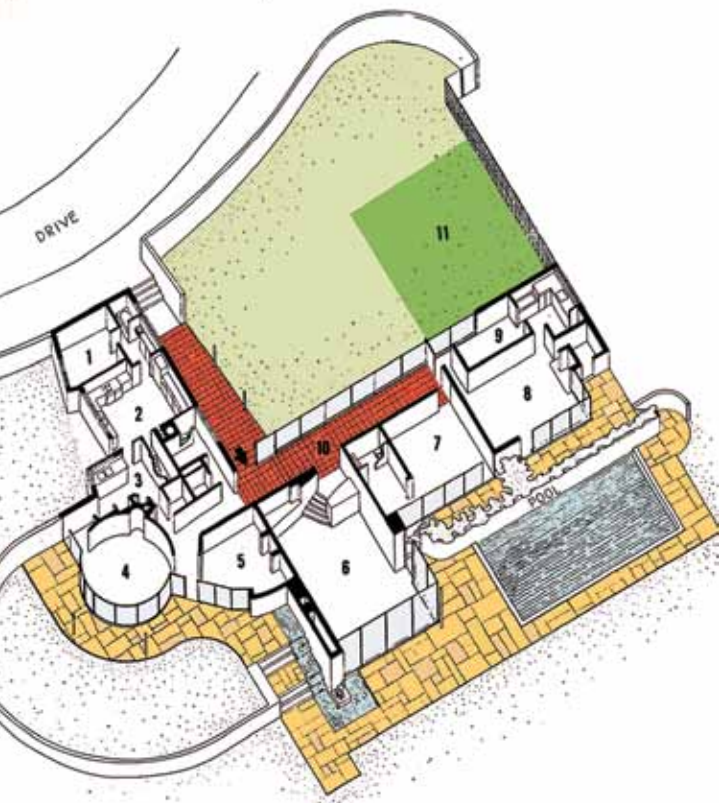
In the late 1980s, the Long Island Institute of Technology, having acquired the estate after the death of Conger Goodyear and his second wife, sold the house and some 100 acres to Wheatley Construction Co., a real estate development firm. The developer planned to demolish the then forgotten modern masterpiece, subdivide the property, and build approximately 20 large houses on five-acre lots. Following a nomination from the Society of the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities (SPLIA), authored by architectural historian Caroline Zaleski, the site was placed on the 2002 World Monuments Watch of 100 Most Endangered Sites. An October 15, 2001 *New York Times* article announcing the List highlighted the changed context and plight of the Goodyear House:



*At the top of a long drive flanked by imposing red brick houses sprouting Norman turrets, Federal arches and Colonial pediments, sometimes all at once, a lean, low modern structure hovers in an overgrown wood as if it had just landed...It took a moment to appreciate that the historic-style manses are spanking new, while the modern building, known as the Conger Goodyear house, is 63 years old...does not have landmark protection, and that at the time of application to demolish, it was considered unworthy of landmark status. <sup>11</sup>*

Reacting to the Watch listing and publicity, the developer quickly obtained a permit and mobilized to raze the house. A temporary “stay of demolition” was obtained by WMF and SPLIA, however, allowing time to explore alternatives. Frank Stella, the famed abstract painter and a trustee of the Barnett and Annalee Newman Foundation, read about efforts to save the house, and his office contacted WMF to offer assistance. The result was an interest-free loan to purchase and repair the house and seek a sympathetic new owner. As part of the agreement, SPLIA would hold title to the house while WMF raised the necessary funds to stabilize the house and sell it with protective measures ensuring long-term preservation.

Work began almost immediately to stabilize and refurbish the house, which had, after sitting vacant for many years, been damaged during its use as a construction field office. One of the greatest challenges to restoring the Goodyear House—as with many modern buildings—was the windows. The original single-pane plate glass was held in place by thin steel frames and



- 1. Servants' Quarters**
- 2. Kitchen**
- 3. Butler's Pantry**
- 4. Dining Room**
- 5. Library**
- 6. Living Room**
- 7. Guest Bedroom**
- 8. Master Bedroom**
- 9. Dressing Room**
- 10. Corridor/Gallery**
- 11. 1950 Bedroom Addition**

did not comply with current building and energy efficiency codes. The large expanses of glass and the transparency they afforded, however, are the house's most significant character-defining feature. Wholesale replacement would have compromised the building's integrity, and prevented it from meeting a key criterion for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, contemporary windows, both aluminum-frame and new steel ones, typically have wider profiles and muntins. Given the large amount of glass on the building's façade, these types of new windows would have substantially altered the appearance of the house; replacing the original glass simply was not an option. Instead, the rust from the steel frames was removed, and they were primed and repainted in situ. This prevented the loss of original glass that would have inevitably occurred if the units had been removed and repaired off-site. Eventually, a clear, reversible film was identified that would address safety and energy issues without diminishing the transparency or reflectivity of the original glass. This provided a creative solution that would preserve the transparency integral to the original design concept, without any compromise.

As part of the restoration process, WMF worked with SPLIA to research the house's history. Original construction drawings were discovered among the multitude of materials of the Edward Durell Stone archives that were still waiting to be accessioned to the University of Arkansas's special collections. The drawings revealed, among other things, that Stone scaled back the design from 1938 to 1939, presumably for budgetary reasons. The original house, as represented by the 1938 drawings, included a longer corridor for displaying artwork, a third bedroom, and a greenhouse where the addition for Goodyear's second wife would be built in 1950.<sup>12</sup>

Using documentation and physical investigations, WMF took several steps to record existing conditions. WMF collaborated with a team of practicing architects and students who volunteered their time to measure the house and produce Historic American Building Survey (HABS) drawings. Inclusion in the HABS program would ensure that the drawings would be made available to scholars, students, and other interested parties through an online database. As part of the documentation program, architectural conservators analyzed materials to determine original finishes. Though the walls were presumed to have always been a white backdrop for the artwork, paint samples revealed that the interior walls, and even ceilings, were originally painted ranges of pale yellow, green, and other pastel colors, and that some of the brick walls were whitewashed.<sup>13</sup>

Supported by the findings from the research and documentation projects, the house was successfully nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an individual landmark based on its association with A. Conger Goodyear and Edward Durell Stone (Criterion B for listing) and its International Style architecture (Criterion C for listing).<sup>14</sup> Although inclusion on the National Register validated the house's provenance and significance, it afforded no protection because it was to remain a private residence. Ordinances regulating changes to significant properties typically occur on the local level and then only govern the exterior of buildings.<sup>15</sup> Restricting changes solely on the exterior is not, however, often effective with modern landmarks because their high degree of transparency makes it difficult to delineate between exterior and interior features. The Goodyear House interiors are highly visible from outside; this meant that a mechanism for preserving the entire house was necessary.

WMF collaborated with legal counsel to create a historic preservation easement. Similar to other easements that protect natural areas such as wetlands, this document restricted the demolition of the house and the construction of any additions. To preserve the context, new structures or major site alterations were prohibited within 50 feet of the house. Major "public" interior spaces, such as the living and dining rooms, and salient architectural features, fixtures, and finishes were identified for retention and restoration. Acknowledging that future modifications would need to occur to guarantee the continuing use and preservation of the house, the kitchen and bathrooms were exempt from the easement. The document stipulated, however, that any materials removed as part of future renovations would be retained and stored in a designated location. The process by which owners would obtain permission from WMF to make alterations was also delineated in the easement. Registered with the Town of Old Westbury and attached to the deed, the easement is intended to preserve the house in perpetuity. Subsequent owners are obligated to abide by the regulations established by the easement as part of purchasing the property.

Once a framework to protect the house was in place, WMF, in consultation with real estate

experts and potential buyers, determined that the reconstruction of a garage structure would be required in order to attract a buyer. This would be essential if the house were to continue to function as a private residence. Jim Dixon Architects of New York City and Chatham, New York, designed a new building based on the original design that respected the scale and proportions of the original, but met new requirements. These included widened bays for today's larger cars and a home office/studio apartment in lieu of servants' quarters. Although shifted slightly from the original footprint due to current zoning regulations, the new garage design reinstated the automobile entry sequence—a critical aspect of the original design.

### **Outcome**

The Goodyear House sold in 2005 and again in 2007. Both owners appreciated the historical and architectural value of the property and willingly accepted the restrictions imposed by the historic preservation easement. As aptly stated by the current owner, who has returned art to the house, "I'm getting my true glass house by one of the foremost architects in the world, so I feel very privileged, but I'm merely a custodian for the future."<sup>15</sup>

The lessons learned from the efforts to save and preserve the Goodyear House, particularly the various role design and designers played—from helping fashion the historic preservation easement to designing a new garage and automobile entry court—helped inform the creation of the World Monuments Fund Modernism at Risk program. The program aims, among other objectives, to engage design practitioners and students as part of a new generation of advocates for preserving the legacy of modern architecture.







# GROSSE POINTE LIBRARY

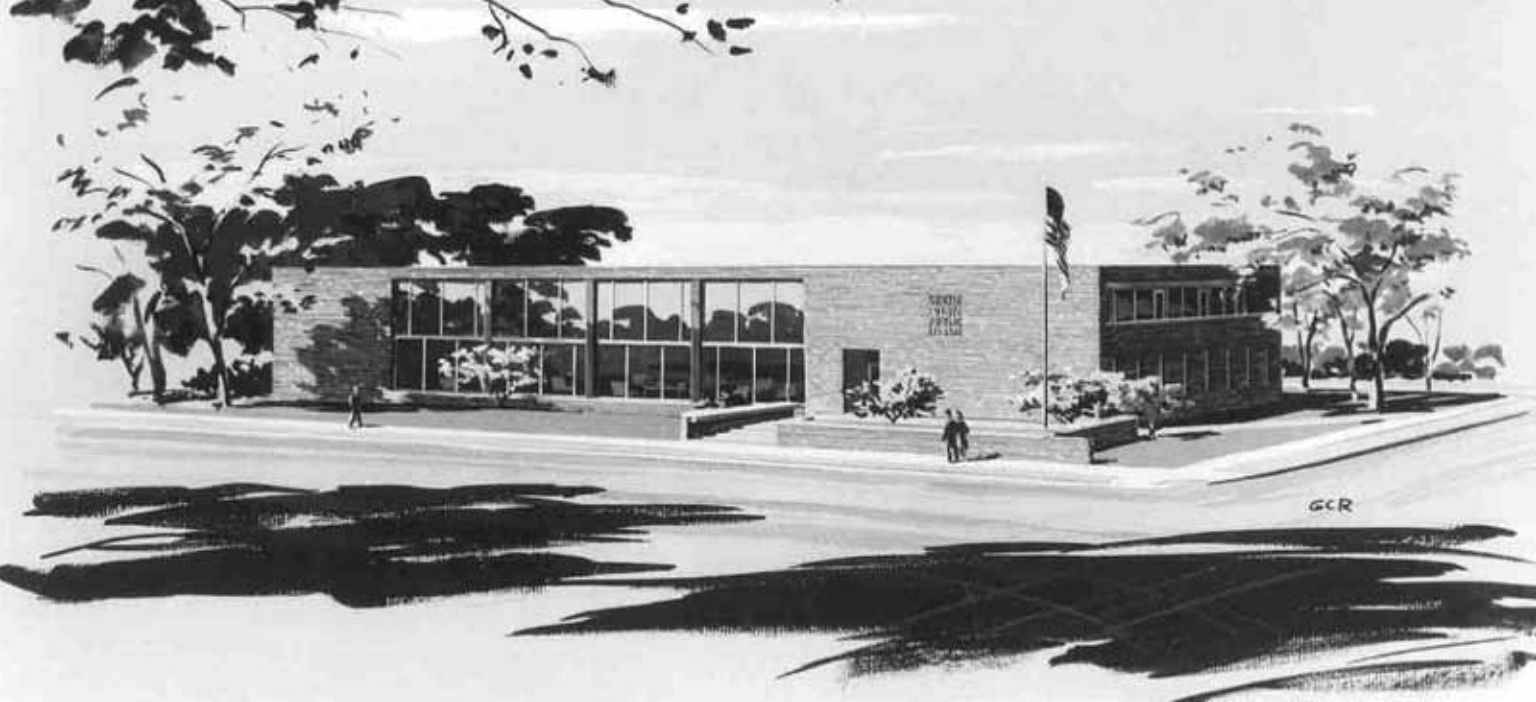
Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, 1953

Marcel Breuer (1902–1981)

**B**eginning with the efforts of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association in the 1890s to save the home of George Washington, the historic preservation movement in the United States has relied on dedicated individuals coming together to prevent the loss of revered sites within their communities. The successful campaign to prevent the demolition and replacement of Marcel Breuer's Grosse Pointe Public Library (1953) in Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, was no different; however, the organizing group in this instance was not physically tied to the community where the library exists. This advocacy group, which eventually became the Modern Architecture Protection Agency, was first organized by 12 users of the website Archinect. They came together for one common cause—to save this important, threatened example of modern architecture. This community of virtual activists includes architects and designers worldwide. Like most members of the design community today, they have both studied and emulated the work of their modern predecessors. With limited advocacy experience and knowledge of conventional preservation standards and guidelines, this new breed of architectural preservationist uses the design process itself to fashion alternative solutions to demolition or insensitive alteration. Their efforts help to raise public awareness, and convince decision makers to reconsider their choices to demolish modern landmarks. With assistance from the World Monuments Fund, members of the Modern Architectural Protection Agency helped convince the citizens of Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, to reconsider the fate of their local modern masterpiece.

## **Significance**

The future members of the Modern Architectural Protection Agency—mapa—initially worked towards saving the Grosse Pointe Library simply because of the historical importance of its designer, Marcel Breuer (1902–1981). Along with Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier, Breuer is one of the pivotal leaders of modern architecture, specifically as it originated in Europe in the 1920s and early 1930s and then proliferated after World War II. Breuer studied



**Original rendering**

and taught at the Bauhaus. He helped shape the institution's function-driven, industrial-based aesthetic with the stated goal of democratizing society through design. Among his accomplishments during his Bauhaus tenure, Breuer designed the interiors of the Dessau facilities and created revolutionary, now classic, modern furnishings like the tubular-steel, sling-type Wassily chair.<sup>1</sup> Breuer moved to England following the outbreak of World War II, and later immigrated to the United States in 1937, where he assisted Walter Gropius in introducing the Bauhaus pedagogy at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design (GSD). In addition to their teaching, Breuer and Gropius partnered on several projects, including both of their houses in Lincoln, Massachusetts. Breuer established his own practice in 1946, and over the next three decades he would fortify his status as a leader of modern architecture by designing highly visible public buildings. These included the Housing and Urban Development Headquarters in Washington, D.C., and, perhaps his best-known work, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.<sup>2</sup>


The Grosse Pointe Library was one of Breuer's first major public commissions in the United States. "Getting Breuer to design the library was considered a coup," according to *Detroit Free Press* writer, John Gallagher, who first brought attention to the plans to replace the building. The individual responsible for that coup was W. Hawkins Ferry.<sup>3</sup> After graduating from the Cranbrook School for Boys, Ferry attended Harvard, where he was first introduced to the concepts of modern architecture by Breuer and Gropius. At the urging of Hawkins, the Ferry family, prominent founders and supporters of the Detroit Institute of Arts, commissioned Breuer

to design the library. The family then donated and dedicated the building to the residents of Grosse Pointe.<sup>4</sup>

Located some 12 miles outside Detroit proper, the cities of Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe Park, Grosse Pointe Woods, Grosse Pointe Shores, and Grosse Pointe Farms were prewar commuter neighborhoods comprising traditional and Revival-style residences and government buildings. The styles ranged from English Tudor to Italianate to Colonial.<sup>5</sup> Built in the Modernist idiom, the Grosse Pointe Public Library signified an important shift in 20th century architecture mirrored throughout the suburban landscape following the Second World War. Modernism was promoted by architects and chosen by clients to represent the progress and optimism that would come to define the era *Time* and *Life* publisher Henry Luce famously asserted as “America’s first century as a dominant power in the world.”<sup>6</sup>

With one distinction, the library adheres to many of the International Style tenets initially developed by Breuer and his European colleagues between the World Wars. A simple, two-story rectangular box, the building’s understated elegance derives in part from the architect’s focus on geometric proportions and solid-void relationships. For example, at the entry or north elevation a large, double-height window wall penetrates the building’s mass and provides the reading room and its cubicles with daylight while allowing views in and out of the main public space. Selected in deference to the architectural context of the Grosse Pointes and the adjacent historic buildings, the library’s red brick cladding is the only aspect of the building that deviates from the modernism then taught and practiced by Breuer. This softening of the Bauhaus’s industrial aesthetic, along with the sensitive choice to match the scale of the surrounding buildings, helped make the library a visually cohesive part of the built environment of Grosse Pointe Farms.

The library’s functionally driven plan and form also embodied the social agenda of modernism. As explained during a 1954 public lecture by W. Hawkins Ferry:




*The ideas and planning of many people went into the realization of this building, but its final form as we see it today is the creation of the architect Marcel Breuer. He visualized the building not as a mere repository of books but as a social, cultural, and civic crystallization point. Literature and art were to be made more accessible in an inviting home-like atmosphere...In addition to designing the building, Breuer also furnished it and laid out a plan for embellishing it with works of art.<sup>7</sup>*

This integrated approach to design, referred to in German as *gesamtkunstwerk* or “total work of art,” was a hallmark of the Bauhaus and later the Harvard architecture program. It was also

of particular interest to W. Hawkins Ferry. To help realize the vision of the library as a center of culture, specific pieces of art were chosen as integral to the design of the main space that functioned not only as a reading room, but also as a public art gallery.

According to Ferry, the art within the Grosse Pointe Library would "...assume its rightful position in the pattern of our everyday lives."<sup>8</sup> An Alexander Calder mobile and Kandinsky tapestry were chosen for display in the main reading room. A Herbert Matter photomontage, *History of Writing*, adorns a full wall in a reading room. The importance of the artwork was described by Ferry:



*The "Mobile" in this Library adds color and motion to the airy heights of the Main Reading Room; while the tapestry adds richness of color and design on the wall surface...The photo-mural which Herbert Matter has designed for the Adult Reading Room is a photomontage which will consist of enlargements of various examples of ancient scripts...what could be more appropriate for decoration of a library than early examples of communication by the written word...*<sup>9</sup>

Ferry went on to relay how the library's Modernist architecture, particularly the concept of transparency, enhanced public access and enjoyment. The art could be viewed "...not only inside the building but also from the outside of the building through the large glass window areas."<sup>10</sup>

### **Design Advocacy**

Over the next five decades, the library, a relatively modest 17,000 square feet, continued to serve the residents of the Grosse Pointes with minor alterations and upgrades. By 2005, more space was desperately needed to support changes in public programs, especially those for children. A lack of computer stations and inadequate administrative space prompted the Board of Trustees of the Grosse Pointe Library system to engage an architectural firm and library planning consultant to assess existing conditions and to identify current and future needs. In a report summarizing their findings, the consultants stated that overcrowding was hampering "...the library's ability to meet the community's demands for quality library service."<sup>11</sup> The report concluded with a new building program that estimated 53,000 square feet and additional parking were needed to properly house library functions and activities and accommodate increased visitation. Acting on the information provided by the consultants, the library board voted to demolish the building and replace it with a larger one on the same site. With the goal of having a design and budget ready in time for a tax assessment vote by the November 2007 elections, the board began to develop a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to release to architectural firms.

The decision to demolish the building was first made public in a January 20, 2007, *Detroit Free Press* article that succinctly highlighted the larger challenge of preserving modern buildings:

*Unlike most endangered landmarks, the [Grosse Pointe] Central Library isn't a neo-classical or Romanesque edifice from the 1800s, but a Modernist work built in 1953. Nor is it vacant and dilapidated, as are many landmarks in danger of demolition...What this case highlights is the fragile status of so much modern architecture.*<sup>12</sup>

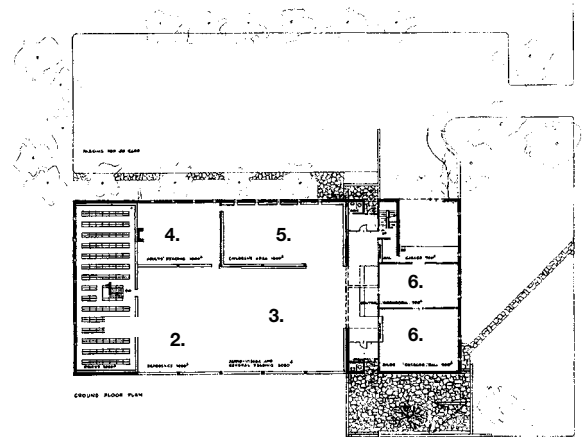
Having read the article, a designer from Ann Arbor, Michigan posted a message on Archinect that read:

*For those of you interested in the work of Marcel Breuer I just found out that Gross [sic] Pointe is considering the demolition of his modest & unpretentiously modern central library building...if any of you have an extra 60 seconds and care about buildings likes this then I'd encourage [you] to send a short email to the library board."*

Archinect, with this example, fulfilled its mission to make "...architecture more connected and open-minded, and bring together designers from the around the world to introduce new ideas from all disciplines."<sup>13</sup>

Within weeks, the Modern Architecture Protection Agency (mapa) was created and a design charette launched.

Working online from locations worldwide, mapa members announced the design charette on a web page generously hosted by Archinect and opened an email account to field inquiries and facilitate communication. Using a computer net-



- 1. Stacks**
- 2. Reference**
- 3. Audio-visual and General Seating**
- 4. Adult Reading Room**
- 5. Children's Area**
- 6. Work Rooms**
- 7. Catalog Room**

work server in an architecture office in California, one member of mapa set up an FTP site to store background materials such as building programs and requirements, high-resolution photographs, and scans of the original Breuer drawings. A participant in Ecuador managed the development and editing of drawings from a wiki-based page. In recounting the events that led up to the charette, mapa members aptly labeled their efforts “virtual activism.”<sup>14</sup>

Although focused on the Grosse Pointe Public Library, the members of mapa recognized the larger need to generate a public discussion about preserving modern architecture. “Even if it’s doomed,” according to one member of mapa, characterizing the group’s efforts to save Grosse Pointe Public Library, “we can at least have spirited debate about what’s worth saving, in the Grosse Pointes and elsewhere. That could be Breuer’s legacy to us.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Outcome**

Ultimately, 15 schemes offering alternatives to demolition were submitted by designers from eight states and three countries. By the time the submissions were presented at an open meeting on February 26, 2007, the library board had received a multitude of letters against the destruction of the Modernist library. Collectively, the show of support and creative approaches of the charette entries spurred a dialogue among the board members and those in attendance. Many believed more civic discussion was needed before determining the fate of the library. The charette designs were put on public display as the board contemplated whether to move forward with demolition and replacement or to revise the RFQ to consider retaining and expanding the library.


In April 2007, World Monuments Fund, alerted by representatives from Knoll, Inc., contacted members of mapa to determine if assistance could be offered through the newly formed Modernism at Risk initiative. The resulting strategy was twofold. First, mapa nominated Grosse Pointe Library to the 2008 World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites, WMF’s signature advocacy program. The site was included as part of the “Main Street Modern” serial listing intended to call attention to the Modernist buildings that characterize the civic architecture of postwar America.<sup>16</sup> Second, WMF offered a grant to research and document the Breuer building, and to use the information to retain and sensitively adapt and expand the original building rather than demolish it. Responding in part to the incentive offered by WMF, the library board solicited proposals both for replacing, and for renovating and expanding the Breuer structure.

The library board selected the architectural firm designLAB of Boston, Massachusetts, who proposed a sensitive scheme that would more than double the size of the library without destroying or detracting from the original design. Taking advantage of a parking lot in the rear of the building, designLAB proposed a U-shaped addition with a central, enclosed courtyard—a

gesture Breuer employed in some of his residential commissions. Parking would be accommodated in an underground garage.

After revealing the planned rehabilitation and expansion project, the library board received a pledge of \$1 million from a local couple. This gift will support the preservation of the Grosse Pointe Central Library and the integration of new technology.<sup>17</sup> To help secure the remaining funds needed to implement the project, the Board of Trustees has embraced the library as a cultural landmark. It has initiated “a campaign for the restoration and expansion of Central Library” known as the “Marcel Breuer Library Preservation Fund.”<sup>18</sup>

When asked to reflect on the reason for the success of the campaign to save Grosse Pointe Public Library, one mapa member responded:



*There were many reasons for the success we had in Grosse Pointe, but one of the strongest ones is that we were able to gain support from non-architects and non-designers of the community. Even people who publicly admitted they did not care for the modern design of the Breuer [building] began to realize that it was a place of memories for their families as well as other families. They began to understand that even if they personally disagreed with it [the modern architecture of Grosse Pointe Public Library], the building did embody values of the community and that was something that should be discussed, explored, maybe even celebrated...rather than quickly dismissed.<sup>19</sup>*

The mapa members are currently considering establishing their group as a nonprofit organization dedicated to employing design strategies to advocate for the preservation of modern buildings.





# RIVERVIEW HIGH SCHOOL

Sarasota, Florida, 1958–2009

Paul Rudolph (1918–1997)

**R**iverview High School was demolished in June 2009. This seminal postwar school, one of the first public commissions of influential Modernist architect Paul Rudolph, was replaced by a parking lot to service a new, larger school adjacent to the site. The razing of Riverview ended a two-year campaign to save the building that was launched by a group of local architects organized as the SAVE Riverview committee. This campaign had local, national, and international dimensions. Internationally renowned architects such as Norman Foster and Charles Gwathmey—both students of Rudolph at Yale University—and Robert A.M. Stern voiced their protests as part of a letter-writing campaign. Architects from Sarasota and other parts of Florida participated in a design charette, organized by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which helped secure a one-year reprieve from the school district to identify an alternative to demolition. The building was placed on the World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites in 2008. Teams of designers and developers responded to an international competition to find an economically viable solution for saving the school and adapting it to a new use. The competition was mounted by the SAVE Riverview committee in conjunction with the Sarasota Architectural Foundation, and sponsored, in part, by the World Monuments Fund Modernism at Risk initiative. In addition, students from the University of Florida's Interior Design Department assisted advocacy efforts by documenting the building, producing Historic American Building Survey (HABS) drawings, and preparing adaptive-use schemes to demonstrate how the building could be rehabilitated and repurposed. Despite the loss of this postwar Modernist icon, the Riverview High School case demonstrates the potential of using design as an advocacy tool. Approaches to solving design problems—including charettes, competitions, and student studio projects—are effective means of raising awareness about the significance of an endangered modern landmark, demonstrating options for its preservation and continued use, and generating public dialogue about its fate.

**Riverview High School  
in 1959**



### **Significance**

Riverview High School was an iconic example of postwar school design by influential late-modern architect Paul Rudolph (1918–1997). Rudolph, before becoming Dean of the Yale School of Architecture and establishing a Boston- and New York City–based practice, was a leading proponent of the Sarasota School of Architecture (1941–1966). This was a regional design movement distinguished by the adaptation of modernism to the subtropical climate and cultural context of southern Florida’s Gulf Coast. Like many of the residential commissions that first brought attention to the Sarasota School and to Rudolph, Riverview High School was designed with a passive cooling system in lieu of air conditioning. Shades and other features controlled, yet maximized, the region’s strong sunlight.<sup>1</sup> These forward-thinking ideas have found renewed interest today as both the design community and general public search for ways to create a more sustainably built environment.

A courtyard was the organizing element for Riverview High School. Three separate buildings—a two-story classroom wing; a one-story cafeteria, library and art studio structure; and a gymnasium and music structure with additional classrooms—enclosed three sides of the courtyard. The fourth side was marked by an open, steel canopy structure with suspended concrete sunshades that provided shelter from the intense southern Florida sun and frequent late-summer showers when students boarded or exited buses. Two small, one-story pavilions—one for the principal’s office and the other for faculty meetings—were placed along the back edge of the courtyard. This campus-type arrangement, with separate buildings connected by walkways and canopies throughout the subtropical landscape, was typical of a series of schools built in Sarasota around the same time.

Riverview was one of ten elementary, middle, and high schools constructed as part of the internationally recognized Sarasota Public School Program (1953–1966). This program helped establish a new set of design principles that redefined the physical environment of education in America following the Second World War. Sarasota, like many other communities across the United States in the 1950s, experienced a severe classroom shortage as student enrollment surged following the postwar baby boom. The expansion of Sarasota’s public schools was largely the vision of Philip Hanson Hiss (1910–1988), who was elected to the county’s Board of Public Instruction in 1953 and served as chairman from 1955 to 1959.<sup>2</sup> Influenced perhaps by his own disappointing educational experience, Hiss brought together leading educational theorists and innovative modern architects to remake how and where students in Sarasota were taught. The physical environment of education, for Hiss, was paramount to learning; he strongly believed pedagogy and architecture should not only complement and inform one another, but that they were inseparable, equal parts of a student’s education. As he described in the cover letter of a survey of the heads of state educational systems in the United States that he personally undertook in 1963:

*My contention is that it is foolish to spend millions on salaries which will attract the very best teachers if we then put them into buildings which inhibit the educational process...good design per se costs nothing and is worth far more than is generally realized, as a positive tool for education: the building itself teaches.*<sup>3</sup>

The public educational facilities created in Sarasota during this period were recognized by the design and educational communities as models of school architecture. As described in the February 1959 special school building issue of *Architectural Record*:

*Seldom does one run across a community school building program of such consistent interest as the one now underway in Sarasota County, Florida. Under the guidance of a very enlightened school board, with Philip H. Hiss as chairman, the four-year-old program has demanded a balance of quality and economy, good environment and good function, reasonable first costs, and reasonable long-range costs. To date, the program has produced eight completed schools or additions...They are all worth studying; as a group they are fairly remarkable.*<sup>4</sup>

Abandoning the traditional two-story, double-loaded corridor building of the previous genera-

tion, the Sarasota schools incorporated the following: flexible plans that allowed educators to adapt classrooms to accommodate different teaching methods and activities; industrially fabricated materials and building components that kept costs low and construction schedules short; and interior spaces with natural light, color, and scale designed to promote learning.

Residents of Sarasota supported and, in many instances, embraced the school construction program fashioned by Hiss. A progressive community that included many writers and artists, Sarasota already had at least one example of an alternative school, the Out-of-Door Academy. A private institution established in 1924, the Academy promoted a holistic approach to education that combined academic, athletic, artistic, extracurricular, and community-service experiences.<sup>5</sup> Experiential learning was a cornerstone of the program that, as the name implies, took advantage of the mild climate to use the outdoors as a classroom.

Not only was the Sarasota public accustomed to progressive educational ideas, but the fact that these new schools were constructed within or even under budget initially made it easy for the community to view the Hiss-led school building campaign in a positive light. Completed one year after Riverview in 1959, the addition to Sarasota High School, also by Paul Rudolph, was the first construction project to exceed budget, changing this positive view of the projects. Local press chronicled public dissatisfaction at what was perceived as fiduciary mismanagement; complaints by faculty and students of poor acoustics that plagued the classrooms in the new addition negatively impacted public perception.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, Hiss resigned his position as head of the Board of Public Instruction and turned his attention to higher education, helping establish and serve on the board of New College, a publicly funded liberal arts college in Sarasota. Despite the issues with the Sarasota High School addition, innovative architecture and pedagogy were merged with the Sarasota Public School Program to advance the ideal of progress that would come to define the era.

### **Design Advocacy**

From its opening in 1959 through the 1990s, Riverview High School was expanded to accommodate increasing student enrollments as the population of Sarasota County continued to grow.<sup>7</sup> The additions to the building and the campus, for the most part, respected the scale and design of the original. During this time, however, many of the school's innovative architectural features, such as transom windows and roof monitors for passively ventilating interiors, were concealed by insensitive installations, including a low-cost, metal gable roof over the original flat roof and the retrofitting of pipes and ducts for air conditioning. Concerns over security led to the mounting of roll-down safety gates and other measures that further comprised the original design intent. Despite these unsympathetic alterations and inconsistent maintenance, however, the architecture of Riverview High School remained remarkably intact.

Citing the poor condition of the facility and the difficulty in adapting it to support new technologies and educational practices, the Sarasota County School Board announced in 2006 that Riverview High School would be demolished and replaced with a new complex. As recounted in an article that appeared in *Sarasota Magazine* on September 13, 2006, a number of factors were reported as contributing to the decision to demolish:

*The School Board contends the existing campus is too difficult to secure, to retrofit for technology needs like internet wiring, and to adapt to current state and federal codes for class size and hurricane resistance. They also say the building constrains current pedagogical methods and will be too expensive to remodel.*<sup>8</sup>

Local architects, assisted by a former mayor of Sarasota, formed the SAVE Riverview committee shortly thereafter and quickly began rallying the architecture and design communities. The goal was to raise awareness about the school's architectural and social significance in an effort to demonstrate that the Modernist landmark could be rehabilitated and adapted to a new use.


Responding to the publicity generated by the committee, the Southern Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation helped organize a design charette that brought together representatives of the Sarasota School District and Board with members of the SAVE Riverview committee and concerned citizens, both those advocating and opposing demolition.<sup>9</sup> Based on the outcome of the charette, the School Board granted a one-year stay of demolition in March 2008 that would allow the committee, now affiliated with the nonprofit advocacy group known as the Sarasota Architectural Foundation (SAF), to explore alternatives for rehabilitating and reusing the building. Riverview was then placed on the 2008 World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites as part of the "Main Street Modern" serial nomination recognizing the threats to post-World War II modern sites in the United States.<sup>10</sup> Around the time of the Watch listing, the SAVE Riverview committee and SAF made the decision to hold an international competition.

While the competition was being developed, the University of Florida Interior Design Department in Gainesville collaborated with the SAF on a service-learning project that gave students the opportunity to study Riverview High School firsthand by documenting and assessing the building over a three-day period. During their visit to Sarasota and the building, students interacted with members of the Save Riverview committee and building users to gain a more informed understanding of the community's needs and the potential for retaining and reappropriating Riverview for another use. After completing documentation and analysis, students, working in teams of four, developed design solutions for reprogramming and adaptive reuse,

including residential, office, and cultural functions. Students were required to analyze and retain any remaining, significant features and incorporate them into the new designs.


The student projects demonstrated the feasibility of integrating new uses into the complex that would address local needs and respect the original design intent. Among the project outcomes, the existing conditions documentation and drawings produced by the students were used to prepare a Historic American Building Survey (HABS) record. This record would be made accessible to scholars and interested parties and distributed to the SAF competition entrants for use in preparing design solutions. The students' final projects were well received at a public presentation and forum in October 2007 in the auditorium of the *Sarasota Herald Tribune*.

The most important result, however, of the University of Florida project was the students' heightened awareness of their capacity to apply their design skills to help advocate for the preservation of modern buildings. As described by one interior design undergraduate:



*The Riverview High School renovation project not only provided a means to study postwar modern architecture but also allowed us, as students, to truly understand the importance of preservation. In studying the site, analyzing the design, and allowing the building to reveal Paul Rudolph's intentions, we have come to a conclusion that preserving architectural gems is vital to the education of the community and to upcoming designers. As we became more aware of how form and function meet through Paul Rudolph's work, our team became inspired to continue to develop and expose what Rudolph did in our own renovation of this building.*<sup>11</sup>

Another interior design student echoed her classmate's sentiments on the motivations for preserving modern architecture, particularly a building like Riverview High School that still provides relevant lessons for today:



*The project design team quickly realized the importance of modern architecture and the carefully crafted nature of the architectural decisions. Paul Rudolph utilized shading, lighting, and ventilation techniques that limit energy use before "sustainability" was a household term. His building related directly to the surrounding environment and Florida climate, and we were amazed at Rudolph's attention to making Riverview High School functional and aesthetically pleasing.*<sup>12</sup>


While the University of Florida students worked on their projects, four pairings of architects and developers responded to the international competition by submitting proposals for how to reuse the original school and pay for the costs of rehabilitation and other associated expenses. A jury of internationally and nationally recognized architects, such as Charles Gwathmey, and local representatives, including the Vice Superintendent of the Sarasota County School District, ranked the four entries. The jury, in consultation with the School Board, then chose a scheme for further development. The winning entry was “The Riverview Music Quadrangle” by RMJM with Diane Lewis Architects and Beckelman + Capalino, LLC, in association with Seibert Architects. As described by *Metropolis* magazine editor-in-chief Susan S. Szenacy:

*During her extensive research, Lewis [lead architect for the winning entry] discovered that Riverview High School is known for its comprehensive music program and is a Music Demonstration School for the state of Florida. So she proposes to create a Music Quadrangle, where local students can commingle with their fellow and professional musicians from around the world, creating a learning and performance center that promises to be an enormously valuable cultural resource for both the city and state.*<sup>13</sup>

This positive response to the proposed scheme was echoed by local press, including the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* article titled, “Restoration will preserve brilliance of Rudolph’s Riverview High”:



- 1. Classrooms**
- 2. Gymnasium**
- 3. Auditorium**
- 4. Administration**
- 5. Music Room**
- 6. Cafeteria**



*The transformed Riverview Music Quadrangle would be a companion to but separate entity from the new Riverview High School. Together, these two buildings on a single campus would transform Riverview from state recognition of its exceptional music program to national prominence as a place for the training of new generations of musician.* <sup>14</sup>

### **Outcome**

In June 2008, after some seven months of developing the Music Quadrangle design further and exploring the potential of raising the estimated \$40 million to complete the project, the Sarasota County School Board voted three to two to raze Riverview. The decision was based largely on concerns over the ability to raise project funds privately, as the School Board refused to contribute public funds toward the effort. On June 13, 2009, without prior public notification, demolition of Riverview High School began. Within two weeks, all remnants of the building were removed from the site.

Although the building was lost, the documentation produced by the University of Florida Interior Design students has helped ensure that the lessons afforded by the design of Riverview High School will be made available to interested parties through the HABS database. But more than the archival record, the public debate—first spurred by the architects who formed the SAVE Riverview committee and launched an international competition—continues. One contributor to the “Saunders Blog” on the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* website reflected on the impact of the building’s destruction for future generations, “It will be a sad irony when graduates of the new Riverview, who go on to study architecture in college, learn that their alma mater’s original structure—now a revered genre of American architecture—is nothing more than a picture in a textbook.”<sup>15</sup>







Picture Books

SUMMER EVENTS

BOOKS ARE BRAIN FOOD!

Art Gallery +  
Auditorium

# KENT MEMORIAL LIBRARY

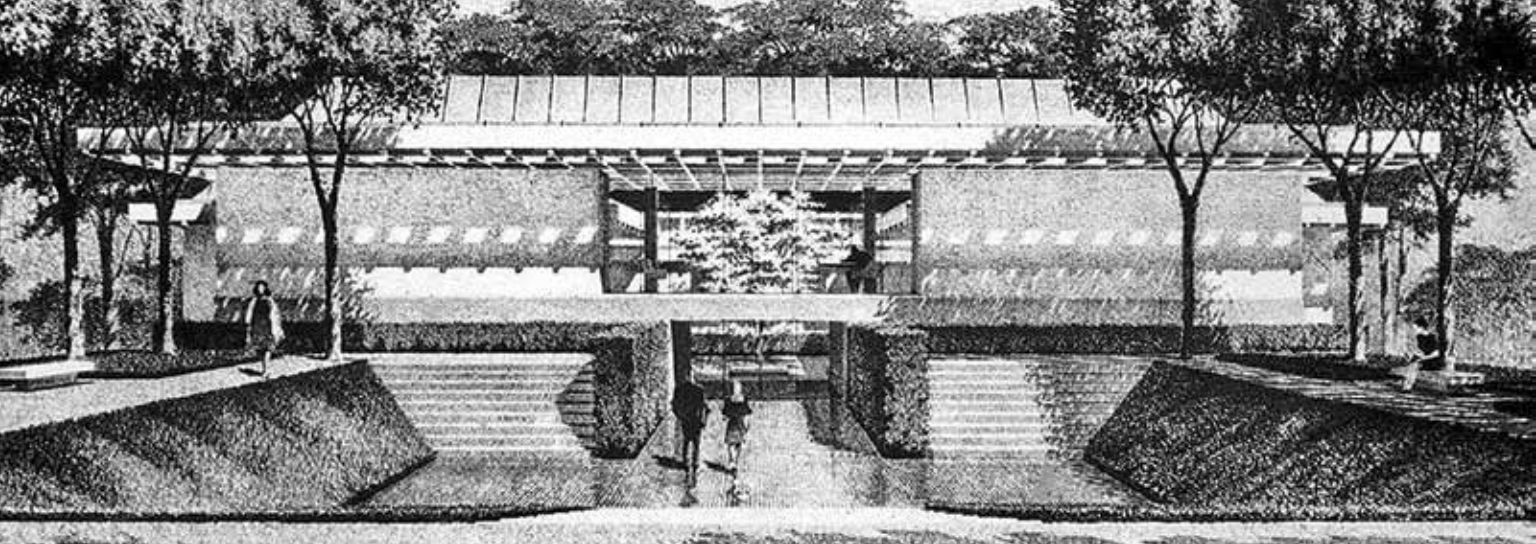
Suffield, Connecticut, 1972

Joseph Warren Platner (1919–2005)

In July 2008, the residents of Suffield, Connecticut, voted against a referendum to fund the demolition and replacement of the Kent Memorial Library. Though spared for the moment, its long-term future is not assured, but the battle over its fate encapsulated many of the philosophical and practical issues faced by Main Street Modern buildings at risk—the schools, civic buildings, libraries, and houses of worship that anchor communities across the U.S. The building, which opened in 1972, was designed in the modernist idiom by architect and designer Joseph Warren Platner, best known for his sumptuously appointed interiors for the Windows on the World restaurant at the World Trade Center in New York City and his now-iconic collection of sculptural furniture still in production. The Kent Memorial Library Commission, responding to a need for additional space, had originally proposed to raze the facility and replace it with a larger one on the same site. Though many factors contributed to the community’s rejection of the plan, two in particular surfaced many times during the contentious public debates that took place on internet blogs and in letters and editorials published by the *Hartford Courant*. The first—and perhaps most important—factor was economics. It is often less costly to retain, adapt, and expand an existing building than to demolish and replace it. This proved to be the case as demonstrated by a plan developed by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation to sensitively rehabilitate the existing library. The second point made by community advocates for preservation was the idea that modern buildings, including those erected during our own lifetime, are just as significant as those from past eras. Like structures from the Colonial or Victorian periods, modern landmarks encapsulate the values and aspirations of their time. By preserving their modern heritage, communities like Suffield, Connecticut, wanted to engender a respect for their recent history and maintain an important link between their past and the present.

## **Significance**

The Kent Memorial Library is the only freestanding building by Platner (1919–2005). A graduate of Cornell University and a Rome Prize recipient, Platner became known primarily for his



**Original rendering** elegant modern interiors and furniture designs often made of rich materials and finishes. He began his career in 1945 working for the industrial designer Raymond Lowey and architect I.M. Pei. Later he joined Eero Saarinen's firm, where he assisted with the interior design of Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C., and the Repertory Theater at Lincoln Center, New York City. Platner was promoted to head of interior design when Saarinen died and his firm became Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo Associates. Roche, who had been Saarinen's principal design associate, collaborated with Platner on one of the firm's first and best-known projects, the Ford Foundation Building (1967) in New York City. It was during his tenure at the Roche and Dinkeloo firm that Platner began to hone his distinctive approach to commercial interior design. As described in the *New York Times* obituary for Platner:

*As the head of interior design at Mr. Roche's firm, Mr. Platner created office spaces that were flexible, understated, and efficient. He chose a rich, quiet color scheme to create a warm environment and installed custom-made furniture designed to eliminate unnecessary effort. Ergonomic desks included built-in telephones and special compartments for files and office machines.<sup>1</sup>*


This attention to functional, human-scaled spaces would continue to define Platner's work. He launched his own firm, Warren Platner and Associates, in 1965 while continuing work on the Ford Foundation Building. He went on to complete a number of high-profile projects such as the 1968 showroom for Georg Jensen, the designer of high-end Scandinavian furniture, fixtures, and luxury objects. In 1976 he completed his best-known solo commission, the original Windows on the World restaurant.

Influenced in part by the renewed interest in historic architectural precedents that helped define that period, Platner drew inspiration from different design styles to fashion the spaces of Windows on the World. The spirit of the restaurant was similar to a sumptuously decorated ocean liner, with a terraced main dining room that provided every table with a view. Platner, moving away from the minimalist underpinnings of early and postwar modernism, chose a palette of luxurious materials and finishes for the highly detailed restaurant, including brass railings, painted and photo murals, and mirror-covered walls and ceilings.<sup>2</sup>

Describing his design approach during this period, Platner said “I felt there was room for the kind of decorative, gentle, graceful design that appeared in a period style like Louis XV.”<sup>3</sup> Paul Goldberger, architecture critic for the *New York Times*, reviewed the Windows on the World project and described it as “sensuous modernism.”<sup>4</sup> Two significant projects undertaken in the late 1960s and early 1970s reveal the further development of Platner’s distinct take on Modernist design.

Collaborating with a production team from the Modernist design company Knoll, Inc., Platner created a collection of furniture that included sculptural chairs, ottomans, and tables constructed with curved, nickel-plated steel rods. Still in production, this line of furniture has become a classic, which Platner described as “something that every time you look at it, you accept it as it is and you see no way of improving it.”<sup>5</sup>


Toward the end of his collaboration with Knoll, Platner was commissioned by the town of Suffield, Connecticut, to design a new public library. The building was to be placed across the town green from the original 1897 structure donated by Sidney A. Kent, a Suffield native and Chicago businessman, to honor his parents.<sup>6</sup> Platner’s library, like the one it replaced, was located in the Main Street Historic District, locally designated in 1963 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. David Ramson, author of the National Register nomination, described the district, which is one of the largest in the State of Connecticut, as:



*...a remarkable display of American building styles from early 18th century to mid-20th century. Fine examples of architectural styles along the two-and-a-half mile length of the district include Colonial, Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Second Empire...These outstanding buildings, by their continued existence, largely free from damaging alterations and intrusions, constitute an architectural and historic resource of substantial significance.<sup>7</sup>*

Completed and rededicated in 1972, the Kent Memorial Library was symmetrically organized around a central garden court. Walls of seamless glass with vertical glass muntins visually con-

nected the building's interior. The building included a ramp from the ground level to the second floor and the landscaped garden court. The interiors of the library's main reading spaces were based in part on residential precedents. As described by architect Richard Munday, a principal of Herbert S. Newman and Partners Architects in New Haven, Connecticut, and an admirer of the building:



*Very few libraries treat the book or the reader with such honor and care, and with as much attention to the act of reading. Each of its public spaces was conceived as a room, like the library in a house, as a warm and intimate space that welcomes the individual.<sup>8</sup>*

The exterior of the Platner library contrasts with and complements the neighboring 18th- and 19th-century domestic and civic buildings that characterize the historic district in which it is located. While the abstract forms and details are modern, the building's scale and symmetry recall the many nearby Colonial-era structures. Despite its scale, however, the placement of the unabashedly modern library within the town's historic center would remain a controversial decision that may have contributed to the recent move to demolish and replace the building.

### **Design Advocacy**

By 2006, the Kent Memorial library, a modest 14,000 square feet, served three times as many patrons and housed 40,000 more books than when it opened. Recognizing the need for additional space to serve new activities and technologies, the Library Commission created an ad hoc Planning Committee with the endorsement of the Suffield Board of Selectmen. The Committee ultimately developed a proposal to raze the Platner-designed building and construct a new, larger facility on the same site. In a public presentation to the Board of Selectmen in June 2007, the Committee cited a number of reasons for constructing a new library. These included the limited size of the Platner building, its energy inefficiency, its antiquated building systems, and limited accessibility of some of its spaces. The Board of Selectmen approved the plans for demolition and replacement. According to First Selectman Scott R. Lingenfelter, demolishing the existing building and constructing a new one was "the most cost-efficient and beneficial for the town."<sup>9</sup>

Once the decision to replace the library was sanctioned by the town, the Library needed to organize a public referendum to obtain the approval of Suffield residents to appropriate \$13.6 million in local funding toward the project. It also needed to secure permission from the Suffield Historic District Commission to raze the library.

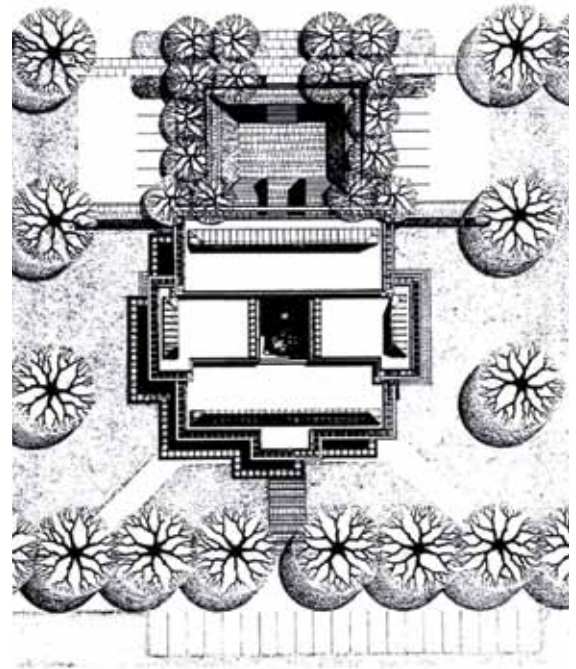
Newspaper articles quickly appeared both supporting and contesting the plan to replace

the Platner-designed library. Architect Richard Munday, in an article in the *Hartford Courant* advocating for the preservation of the library, challenged the Planning Committee's reasons for demolition as endorsed by the Suffield Board of Selectmen:

*These [reasons for demolition] are not the fault of the building; they are a function of the passage of time and could readily be corrected. The building has been well cared-for. It was built with stone, brick, concrete, and wood to last generations. As for energy efficiency, it could take generations of reduced energy costs in a new building to pay for the cost of demolition, the cost of replacement, and the loss of the embedded energy in the existing building.<sup>10</sup>*

In response to the plan to demolish the building, longtime Suffield resident Brendan Begley launched the Save Kent campaign to rally the community to save the existing, Modernist gem and vote against the referendum to replace the library. On the official Save Kent website, Begley said:

*What a terrible loss of a modern architectural gift to our town this would be. Why do we need to tear down this structure? We can have a better and bigger library, but we don't have to demolish this part of our heritage to accomplish that goal. The present Kent Memorial Library was a gift to the town in 1972. It was a generous donation by a wonderful group of citizens who commissioned Warren Platner to design and build a library that reflected a statement about their generation.<sup>11</sup>*




**Site Plan**

The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, a statewide advocacy group, bolstered local efforts by placing the Kent Memorial Library on its most endangered list. The Connecticut Trust then intervened and met with the Suffield Historic District Commission before the referendum and before an application for demolition was to be filed with the agency. During the meeting, the Connecticut Trust was given permission to develop and present an alternative design for rehabilitating and adding onto the existing building. This alternate scheme was created by architect and Connecticut Trust board member William Croskey, and demonstrated how the library could be expanded and made code-compliant without sacrificing Platner's original vision and architecture. In addition, the rehabilitation and expansion scheme, according to Croskey, would be half the cost a new building. The Connecticut Trust plan and presentation were instrumental in bolstering public debate and raising awareness. "This alternative," according to an item in the *Connecticut Preservation News*, "set off a round of strongly worded arguments in the media and around town."<sup>12</sup> Despite the heightened awareness, many feared the Historic District Commission would grant permission to demolish the library.<sup>13</sup> The fate of the building would be decided by the citizens of Suffield in the referendum.

In the months leading up to the public vote, which was scheduled for July 22, 2008, Begley and the Save Kent campaign utilized a variety of methods to raise awareness about the significance of the library and the public referendum. Their efforts to save the building included the creation of an online petition, yard signs, posters, and bumper stickers. A representative from the World Monuments Fund visited the library and met local preservation advocates. The Save Kent campaign was aligned with WMF's Modernism at Risk / Main Street Modern program. The tagline "Modernism at Risk" was included on the website.

Advocates for preserving the library posted comments on internet blogs and submitted letters to the *Hartford Courant*, including an editorial by WMF. A March 12, 2008 letter by an unknown author pointed out the inherent paradox of a community known for celebrating its history allowing the demolition of a significant civic building:




*The irony is that Suffield is a town that otherwise values its heritage and architecture. Its Main Street rivals any in beauty and history. Its stunning structures range from the Phelps-Hathaway House museum, built in three stages in the 1700s, to the 1871 Victorian mansion Spencer on Mains, a bed and breakfast that has been in the same family since it was built. The Kent [Memorial Library] represents its era as gracefully as they did theirs.<sup>14</sup>*

Connecticut resident Gerald Weiss, responding to an editorial titled "Don't Throw Away a Town Treasure" by Begley in the *Hartford Courant*, posted the following statement on the




website Topix, which underscored the importance of preserving heritage, including that of the recent past:



*Preserving heritage, culture, architecture, memories of an era, its people, its community, and individualism is vital to future generations and their understanding of history...This library should be preserved and restored. Enlargement should not affect the original structure, but complement it. This is a worthwhile pursuit...saving history.<sup>5</sup>*

## **Outcome**

An online article published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation reported the results of the referendum:



*The signs are gone now. The people have spoken. In a July 22 referendum, residents voted 2,556 to 1,525 against spending \$13.6 million on a new library to take the place of the Kent Memorial Library, designed by Warren Platner.<sup>16</sup>*

At an August 5, 2008, meeting of the Kent Memorial Library Commission, there was extended discussion about the reasons for the outcome. Some present believed the project cost and general economic condition were the deciding factor. The widely publicized, more cost-effective option of adapting and enlarging the existing building may have helped sway public opinion toward a fiscally conservative solution. At the same meeting, the decision was made to pursue grants to fund a consultant to determine the best library for Suffield. In the interim, the Commission agreed that steps should be taken to improve the conditions of the existing building.<sup>17</sup>

Although concern over the current economic situation contributed to the outcome, the heightened awareness of the architectural significance of their modern library generated by the Save Kent advocacy campaign, bolstered by the alternative design scheme prepared by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, was a major factor in securing the building's future, at least for now. The community's sense of stewardship of its formidable historical resources was also expanded to include those of the recent past.

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- 11 Quote by Serena El-fakhri taken from responses to questionnaire prepared by Morris Hylton III and distributed to representatives of the University of Florida Interior Design student teams, April 2008.
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### **Kent Memorial Library**

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