

# Preserving Mid-Century Modern: A Panel Discussion

Introduction by  
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*Keeping the northwest region embraced in  
preservation and technology for our built heritage*



**RICHAVEN Architecture & Historic Preservation**

SUSTAINABLE PRESERVATION ARCHITECTURE & CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

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# Introduction



Figure \_\_: The Bacardi Building in Miami, FL. by Cuban architect Enrique Gutierrez in 1963 Credit: Wikimedia

# Introduction

Modern design and construction brought us innovative...

- Design philosophies and methods
- Building materials
- Construction techniques



Figure \_\_: The Bacardi Building in Miami, FL. by Cuban architect Enrique Gutierrez in 1963 Credit: Wikimedia

## Value in Modern Design



Figure \_\_: The Cleveland Greyhound Station exhibits the Art Moderne style of modern architecture. Credit: Colin Rose - Wikimedia

## Value in Modern Design

“Modern buildings acquire their interest through their style and innovation.”

– Sir Bernard Feilden

Celebrate the “abstract intellectual achievement of modern buildings, and not focus on tangible steel and glass, concrete or plastic...”

- Alan Baxter

But what if it's the materials themselves which are the innovation....



Figure \_\_: The Cleveland Greyhound Station exhibits the Art Moderne style of modern architecture. Credit: Colin Rose - Wikimedia

# Prudon's Dichotomies

- 1. Building Use:**  
Single Use vs. Adaptability
- 2. Building Materials:**  
Traditional smaller units vs. assembled parts  
Craftsmanship vs. machine-made precision
- 3. Design intent**  
Material deterioration vs. authenticity
- 4. Visual Continuity:**  
Transparency & continuity vs. opaque walls
- 5. Evidence of Aging:**  
Patina vs. newness value

# Authenticity vs. Reconstruction



Figure \_\_: Left: The Barcelona Pavilion – is reconstruction considered historic preservation? Credit: wikimedia.

Figure \_\_: Right: the Parthenon in Nashville TN – is a copy of a copy of the original considered historic preservation? Credit: wikimedia.

# Modern design and construction brought us:



L-R clockwise; Eames Rocker designed by Charles and Ray Eames, Omni Wall System designed by George Nelson, Knoll Cato designed by Florence Knoll, Wassily chair designed by Marcel Breuer, Tulip table designed by Eero Saarinen, Noguchi table designed by Isamu Noguchi



## David Fixler - Einhorn Yaffee Prescott

- Account for the values that shaped modern buildings
- Aging of materials must be acknowledged
- Some modern materials gain age-value – others not
- Arguments for replacement of modern materials:
  - Newness value
  - Economics of repair vs. replacement
  - Philosophical argument
- Sustainable design strategies may be appropriate for modern buildings



# Susan MacDonald – GCI Colloquium on Modern Heritage

- Time lag between a building's creation and its protection and conservation
- Recognition that in some cases repair is not possible
- Shifting focus from the materiality dilemma to obsolescence and use
- Conservation is about managing change – not preventing it
  
- Do the fundamental tenets of modernism conflict with conservation practice?
  - Traditional practitioners: existing approaches worked when tempered to challenges at hand vs. a new approach specific to demands of modern heritage
  
- Application of value-based conservation practices
  - Understanding what is important about preservation and degrees of significance



CONTINUUM OF PRACTICE OR NEW PARADIGM ?

# The Madrid Document by ICOMOS, 2011

Aim of the Document: "...to guide the appropriate and respectful handling of mid-century modern architecture...."

Applies not just to modern architectural heritage, but other types of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Heritage

9 Articles of the Madrid Document:

Article 1: Identify and assess cultural significance.

Article 2: Apply appropriate conservation planning methodology.

Article 3: Research the technical aspects of twentieth-century architectural heritage.

Article 4: Acknowledge and manage pressures for change, which are constant.

Article 5: Manage change sensitively.

Article 6: Ensure a respectful approach to additions and interventions.

Article 7: Respect the authenticity and integrity of the heritage site.

Article 8: Give consideration to environmental sustainability.

Article 9: Promote and celebrate twentieth-century architectural heritage with the wider community.

# Angel Ayon – Guggenheim Museum Renovations

Choices that were inconsistent and contradictory were made in the recent renovation of the museum – and that's OK.



## Allee Berger – On the Preservation of Principles

Significance “should depend ‘upon the progress of the development of the historical consciousness and the culture of the people involved.’ (Phillipot) Values are not fixed, rather, they are subjected to variation between individuals, and to change through time as theories evolve.”

“biases surrounding age and rarity must be severed for resources of the recent past... traditional theories... are inadequate” and the “result of the field’s fixation on the regulatory process and material conservation.”

Selected principles proposed by Berger:

- *Authenticity should be maintained by celebrating the original design intent.*
- *Deteriorating materials “may be replaced with a newer, better material that has a similar visual aesthetic as the original.”*
- *Additions and new construction are encouraged so long as they emulate the spirit in which the resource was designed, and should promote a dynamic environment and site.*
- *For MEP systems, modifications and alterations are encouraged as long as such changes emulate the spirit in which the building was designed and built.*

## Panel Questions:

### Question 1:

Of those discussed here, who suits your approach best? David Fixler, Susan MacDonald, or Allee Berger? Or someone else?

## Panel Questions:

### Question 2:

Do we need a whole new system of preservation for Modern Architecture, especially Mid-Century Modern?

End

Thanks!

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**Reinforcing maintains integrity in event of failure.**

Photo Credit: [www.expcep.com](http://www.expcep.com)

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**Location of Seattle fault**

Photo Credit- USGS

# CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE!

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# Prudon's Dichotomies