



[About ICOMOS](#)
[Membership](#)
[Addresses of committees](#)
[Secretariat](#)
[FAQ](#)
[Contact us](#)
[Home](#)
[En français](#)

20th Century Heritage

"Dangerous liaisons. Preserving post-war modernism in city centers".
Conference, 15-17 February 2001, Helsinki, Finland

Architectural preservation through contextualism

Roy Eugene Graham, ICCROM/Director of the Graduate Program in Urban Conservation, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC

In the new world, especially in North America, the resilience of the term monument (as in International Council on Monuments and Sites, World Monuments Fund, etc.) is interpreted as something that is in memorial something dead like the remains of a war or an ancient civilization. In fact, the term "landmark," which is used as a point of reference to recall physical as well as sociological memory allows the freedom to explore endless possibilities. This engages people and their governments in thinking broadly about what should be preserved, how and by whom.

Breaking conventional barriers we then associate cultural heritage with living landmarks. The act gives these elements external reality and turns them into reference points. In the real world, if enough people took notice of their landmarks and tried to change the way we treat them, we would end up with a new class of world citizen, aware and caring. "Landmarking" could then mean noticing, valuing, remembering, taking ownership of, caring for and protecting--in other words, "marking" the special features of the ever changing modern movements as our societies develop and grow.

Modernism vastly extended the expressive reach of architects and stretched the apparent expressive distance between their works and the works of their predecessors. Although modernism enriched the expressive range of combined works and reaffirmed art the same time the measure for success and the process and principles which produced it, many examples of early and mid-twentieth century "monuments" of the modern period, do not engage themselves to the city fabric.

This paper suggest that there are no inherent or categorical limitations on the kinds of 21st Century expression that can successfully be put together to form a better partnership, aesthetically and functionally. A sample of 20th Century preservation cases can be used as examples by which to organize and measure the success of contemporary efforts to manage the impacts of new architecture on publicly valued buildings.

In these cases general appreciation of impact becomes a specific obligation to understand and particular protected expressive identity and the impact on it of a proposed design. The judgement involves not just seeing the way the protected expression is accommodated in the combination of a city fabric, ensuring that it enjoys in the combined expression the position to which it is entitled because of its acknowledged public worth.

The larger question of preservation of modern structures in today's cities concerns the larger question of combined works as a design paradigm. The examples illustrated in this presentation offer an opportunity to reflect on the impacts on old and modern buildings of current preoccupations of architects. We can savor some of the rewards, noting the difficulties, and avoiding the mistakes made in the collaboration of old and new in the modern, humanistic and integrated city.

Success is always a matter of the way something is done.

[\[Montreal Action Plan\]](#) [\[Letter by US/ICOMOS\]](#) [\[Helsinki 1995\]](#) [\[Mexico 1996\]](#)
[\["Dangerous liaisons"\]](#) [\[Makkaratalo\]](#)
[\[20th C. Heritage Index\]](#)

© ICOMOS
<http://www.international.icomos.org>
[secretariat\[at\]icomos.org](mailto:secretariat@icomos.org)

Dernière mise à jour: [February 24th 2005](#) - [Web map](#) - [Web design](#) - webmaster@icomos.org