

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The impending destruction of the Novartis - Sandoz headquarters, located 14 Boulevard Richelieu, in Rueil-Malmaison, West of Paris, will deprive us of a remarkable element of the architecture and landscape of the twentieth century. Built in 1968, it is barely 45 years old, and displays a stylish modernity remarkably designed and implemented by the architects Martin Burckhardt & Bernard Zehrfuss, assisted by the ingenious constructive thinking of Jean Prouvé (1901-1984). Conceived in order to respect the harmony of the wooded landscape and the pond, the extreme unweighting of the structure and the façade panels is a witness of the latest –and patented- improvements by Jean Prouvé in the implementation of curtain walls in aluminum and glass products.

Two 4-storey parallelepipeds offices and laboratories and a polygonal restaurant (interiors by Charlotte Perriand) were gently inserted into the remains of the old castle of Richelieu (17<sup>th</sup> century), rebuilt in the 19th century, in a landscape lightly remodeled by Vilmorin including a large pond involved in the supply of the river Seine.

This significant complex is an example of the creative genius of post-war boom French and Swiss architectural engineering and it justifies the dissemination of an international Heritage Alert. The Alert must be an instrument to ask the building owners, national and local authorities to do whatever is needed to save this complex of high architectural value and representative of the 1960's.

A new project, designed by architect Patrick Berger is proposed to start on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2013. It is motivated on the grounds of the obsolescence of the existing buildings. Alternative proposals to enable the conservation and adaptive re-use of the complex which would retain its significance need to be investigated further.

ICOMOS France supports the request of Docomomo France for an international Heritage Alert aimed at safeguarding this outstanding site of universal value.

The following national and international organisations support this action: Docomomo international, Docomomo France, la Société pour la Protection des Paysages et de l'Esthétique de la France, Vieilles Maisons Françaises, Paris Historique, ICOMOS France.



Site overview with pond.

*DR (droits réservés). Fonds Zehrfuss. Académie d'architecture/Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle*

## 1.0 Identity of Building/Artifact/Object/Place

### 1.1 Current Name and Original Name.

Building's original name: Sandoz Headquarters and laboratories (Siège de la société Sandoz)

Current Name: Novartis France Office complex

### 1.2 Address/Location, Town, Country, Street

14 boulevard de Richelieu

92500 Rueil-Malmaison

France

### 1.3 Classification/ Type of Place

Office building, office restaurant, park

### 1.4 Current Heritage Protection Status

Located within a classified area in the field of Malmaison, this property was built in the former area of Richelieu Park, listed in the Inventory of Historical Sites (August 2, 1946).

A statement on "Novartis Garden Address: 14 Boulevard Richelieu. Type: General Inventory of Cultural Heritage (prior documentation).

Period: 2nd quarter of the 17th century & 20th century. Year of construction: 1633." Appears on the list of historic "jardins remarquables" - monuments and protected buildings in the city of Rueil. None of the buildings owned by Novartis can be altered or demolished without prior advice of the Architect of the Buildings in France.

## 2.0 Statement of Significance and History

### 2.1 Statement of Significance

#### 1 - Technical assessment

Summary of expertise of manufacturers and Zehrfuss Burckhardt in processing information, thinking about the frames of office buildings and structural options and landscape.

Zehrfuss wanted on the facade elements standardized enamelled sheet implemented according to a new industrial technology. This is the first building designed with metal facades without mastic seals. The panes are held by the lips of rubber and neoprene seals, according to a principle developed by Jean Prouvé with the metal joinery company CIMT, used for railway wagons. Prouvé had joined the department "building" in 1957. Werner Stutz indicated that the fronts had been designed under the supervision of Swiss companies already developing technologies very close and Martin Burckhardt adds: "The intervention of Mr. Prouvé was very impressive. After inspecting our proposals for metal facade, he took me aside to tell me that with regard to his person, there was nothing to add. I was very pleased, especially since the proposals were developed by specialists in Switzerland."

#### 2- Social appreciation

"Practical and functional , to offer staff a pleasant working environment and to facilitate relations between business and government," according to the expectations of the sponsor, this complex shows the Tertiary evolution of life at the office in the late 1960s in relation to the definition of a new framework for what was considered modern and comfortable. The building opening coincides with the Grenelle Agreements that mark a change in working conditions.

#### 3- Artistic and aesthetic appreciation

- This project demonstrates technical knowledge perfectly assimilated, while developing an aesthetic discourse on architecture and contextual notion of "invisible architecture" (theme from Zehrfuss with the building of patios of UNESCO or the museum Lyon. In 1962, when he signed his contract with Sandoz, the second building of UNESCO (1962-1965) was under construction. Soon after the delivery of Sandoz, he began studies of Gallo- Roman Lyon in the Fourvière, framing the Roman Odeon). Fruit of the shared thoughts of Zehrfuss and Burckhardt, this project is designed with facades by Jean Prouvé and, the interior is a synthesis of the talents and skills of a team of famous designers.

#### 4 - Arguments for the canonic status (local, national, international)

This is the joint work of two architects of international stature. Bernard Zehrfuss (Premier Grand Prix de Rome and architects civilian buildings and the National Palace) is one of the architects of the CNIT and UNESCO. Parallel to the headquarters of Sandoz, he performs the extensions of the headquarters of UNESCO and of head offices and office buildings adapted to changing business and the world of work, a subject of Zehrfuss's research. Shortly before working on the headquarters of Sandoz, he realized the building patios IV of UNESCO and the allegiance due to

landscape architectural design. His colleague Martin Burckhardt, co-founder of a large Swiss architecture firm, for its part, designed a number of industrial and tertiary buildings. In addition to their culture of rationalist architecture, they share other aesthetic values, which probably also adds to the respect they have for each other. Zehrfuss was Vice President of Space Group with Fernand Léger, Burckhardt Commissioner Art Basel.

-At a time when the tertiary and industrial architecture was a challenge, emphasised by the international architectural magazines, this site is representative of the architectural policy of Sandoz. Before applying to Burckhardt and Zehrfuss, the company had already entrusted the design of other buildings the architect Jean Tschumi. Attached to aesthetic values, the Sandoz family was also involved in the arts. In 1964, Marcel - Edouard Sandoz, sculptor and painter, son of the founder, created the Foundation and Edouard Marcel Sandoz.

Rueil is a remarkable example which combines international style architecture and rationalism in one area, in a subtle balance between the constraints and programmatic and urban development of a long abandoned historic site. More than a set piece, it is the creation of a place in a constrained site which through landscape intervention contributes more than a contemporary copy. The two architects removed an old fence to open the site to full view of passersby.

In a game of transparencies and reflections, the facades by Jean Prouvé play their role when the main building articulates the landscape axis and transverses to the pond and the restaurant with the functional axis parallel to the boulevard to the laboratories. The shaded façades punctuate the long glass and enameled iron, drawing vertical abstraction among the reeds.

This is an example of very subtle integration of contemporary architecture on a rare site with high heritage and landscape values, which is even more relevant as it also meets the constraints of height and location so determined by the urban regulations. The challenges of the site have really been captured by the two architects. This is the Domaine de Richelieu, with its ponds within an area classified at Malmaison in conjunction with the cascade of ponds that once fed the laundries of Versailles.

The horticulturist - geneticist Roger de Vilmorin was responsible for the park, a composition of low buildings left free by marrying the boulevard access. The pond dictates the fragmentation of the program into three entities (administrative building, laboratories and restaurant) and the three buildings are in tension in their relationship to the environment, being very meditative. As such they are not only a testimony of their time, but also a lesson in architecture for the creators of today (a good example in France of the successful transplantation of contemporary architecture in historically sensitive sites).

. Pierced by a plane, under the canopy entrance to the prospect of the restaurant. With its dining rooms over the pond, it is a small piece of architecture in its own right that blends into the environment with trees. It makes sense in its relationship with the main building and incorporates in its interior interventions by Charlotte Perriand.

Because of its architectural and landscape qualities, but also its modernity, this site has provided the framework for many films of François Truffaut such as *Domicile Conjugal*. Beyond the symbolic image of a head office for an innovative and dynamic company, we note that in this film by François Truffaut - who himself would have loved to be an architect - addresses the issue of

aesthetic links between tradition and modernity, a concept appears to be a substantial value of the headquarters of Sandoz.

On a strictly local level, we measure also the ambition of achieving this without leaving Rueil-Malmaison, when compared to that of Ciba Geiegy site, built nearby at the same time, with a similar budget and a comparable area. Ciba - which merged with Sandoz in 1996 - then with its main competitor, too, is headquartered in Basel. Between 1961 and 1963, Ciba had asked the Swiss architect Denis Honegger (1907-1985) for its French headquarters, the Quai d'Orsay in the Seventh Arrondissement. As part of a turnkey operation, the company had acquired a property in Rueil built by Jean de Mailly. Strictly functional, these offices represent a form of standardization, which contrast with the talent and Zehrfuss and Burckhardt in the image of the complex of Sandoz.

## 2.2 History of Place

When building the new French headquarters of Sandoz, a Basel-based pharmaceutical company of international renown- it was decided, that management expected a tertiary architecture at the forefront of modernity to echo the image of a prestigious company on a site that was a historically protected landscape.

This set of buildings responded to a request for 12,000 m<sup>2</sup> of offices, laboratories, meeting rooms, a restaurant and a cafeteria. The selected site is the former estate of the Richelieu park. (Before choosing the Versailles area, dating from the early seventeenth century, it was the place where Louis XIVth aka Le Roi Soleil" decided to build his residence. Richelieu began to erect a castle with cellars, triumphal arches and ponds. When Sandoz bought the property, there were only a few ponds left as well as remains of the more recent past, such as the artisan workshop where Georges Claude invented liquid air in 1902. His property had been confiscated after the Liberation and the property was then sold to Sandoz.) In order to respect height constraints and preserve the harmony of the wooded area, a rather low building (R + 3) was installed around a large pond, and built upon a two level basement partially submerged. So were a restaurant and an auditorium. The site chosen in the cascade of ponds that fed the laundries of Versailles required that the pond be drained and temporary pipes installed during the time of the construction.

Being cramped in their Paris headquarters, located the Rue de Metz, Sandoz, a pharmaceutical company of international repute, decided to build new headquarters. As the head of a cutting edge company, and very careful about its image, the Sandoz family believed that modern architecture would best serve the project. Jean Tschumi (1904-1962) had designed the Sandoz laboratories in Orleans (1949-1953). As for Martin Burckhardt, he had achieved the Basel headquarters before he worked in Rueil.

When Jean Tschumi died in 1962, M. Landolt, President of the French branch of Sandoz and stepson of the founder, launched the idea of new headquarters in the Paris region. As the former headquarters responded poorly to flourishing economic perspectives of the time, he wanted new "prestigious, easy, practical and functional headquarters, both to provide staff with a pleasant working environment and to facilitate the relations between the company and administration. "Easily accessible, the western suburb was selected for the virtues of this land in a deserted park of four hectares close to the Mount-Valerian.

André Geysler, Chief Financial Officer assisted by his young assistant, Jean-Bertrand Drummen, held the responsibility for project management. In 1961, Sandoz bought back the shares of SCI Domain Richelieu despite the known constraints of a listed land: the land was reputed to be unsuitable for any construction. "Management has agreed yet to obtain all necessary approvals, knowing that they also had to convince the Development Committee of the Paris region and Datar who wanted the company to leave Paris and go to the province," said Jean-Bertrand Drummen during an interview in December 2002. On the basis of a program written by an organizational consultant, Sandoz engaged the services of two architects at a very early stage. This time, Martin Burckhardt would be associated with Zehrfuss because the company wanted the intervention of "a first class architect, able to make this operation a prestigious project and facilitate the administrative permit process." Zehrfuss was also a Chief Architect of Civilian Buildings and National Palaces could only make things easier, and it is true that it turned out Marcel Pourtou, the Mayor of Rueil, did not raise any objection to the project. While a wall used to circle the old property, the idea of open, transparent, fence-less headquarters designed by the two architects came through, and opening the view over the park proved very successful.

The contract signed on 1 October 1962 described how the different tasks were allocated:

- Burckhardt was in charge of the draft of the project, of the final version of the project, of the implementation plans, the general direction of implementation, verification and collaboration in monitoring the progress made;

- Zehrfuss was to assist him in the preparation of the project, specifications (film processing and testing), he was in charge of the quotations (measurements, control), the conduct and supervision of works (including the preparation of proposals for payments to contractors and settlement of accounts) as well as assistance to André Geysler regarding administrative issues.

According to this logic, Burckhardt's fees amounted to 4.7% and Zehrfuss's 2%.

The two architects did not know each other, but, as confirmed by Martin Burckhardt himself, Jean-Bertrand Drummen and Werner Stutz, they would work in perfect harmony. Highly complementary, they shared the same poetic vision. Burckhardt also added an artistic touch and an Helvetic approach to the environment; Zehrfuss was known for his sensitivity and a great taste for innovation.

Being more senior, and also the second to be called upon, Zehrfuss complemented the work of the Swiss architect rather than interfering with totally different ideas. He played this difficult role in a very elegant manner, worthy of a gentleman and at the same time, he was an architect of high class, "says Martin Burckhardt.

Bernard Zehrfuss rigorously selected companies including Thinet, general contractor, to be responsible for structural work. A joint office was installed on site. Most of the plans were under the responsibility of the Burckhardt agency, where Claude Bourgain a former employee of Zehrfuss, coordinated the project. "Very attentive and very open, Zehrfuss was a charming man and conveyed a great humanity, recalls Werner Stutz today. We used to meet during site meetings because I was involved in studying laboratories buildings myself. Zehrfuss showed a strong presence on the project, he always brought ideas to enrich the concept and the architectural consistency of the project. "He would also work on developing technical solutions, and Marcel Faure, head of his agency, would control the facades lot with Jean Prouvé.

Jean-Bertrand Drummen provides further insight and recalls Zehrfuss as a "very distinguished" man, "calm, refined, but with a lot of charisma!". "He had his vision and knew how to share it, sometimes drawing on a piece of tracing paper an element which would give a decisive turn to the project, just like when he designed the porch roof on the front entrance or on the restaurant. This restaurant was a key element as we decided to locate it off of other functions to avoid any smell of food in the commercial premises."

As any architect keen to innovate, Zehrfuss took very seriously his role of client advisor. He would invite sponsors to visit modern headquarters, such as Bouygues' Decaux's, showing his taste for this type of programmes "The important thing for us was to have nice offices, we were glad to make the visits with him, adds Jean-Bertrand Drummen. At the time, the first plan offices appeared but we did not make this choice, except for the accounting department, because we preferred air-conditioned cellular offices. Rare at the time, the air conditioning was necessary here because of the glass and metal enamel of the facades." This option also enabled architects to locate the archive department and the meeting rooms at the heart of the building, in rooms without windows but artificially ventilated, contributing to making the most of space.

It is in perfect harmony that the two architects of international stature worked together between 1965 and 1968 to meet the constraints of the site punctuated by ponds, to set up a composition of low buildings leaving the park open by following the access boulevard. The main pond dictated the fragmentation of the program into three entities. In a game of transparencies and reflections, the main building articulated the axis towards the restaurant landscape and a functional axis towards the laboratories. We must now admit that these very constraints due to the location of the project in a rare site, are at the origin of the remarkable series we admire today.

### 2.3 Date of Original Project/ Date of Competition

Project launching: 1962 Studies and production: 1965-1968

### 2.4 Architect/ Designers

Architects: Martin Burckhardt, Bernard-Henri Zehrfuss,

Other architects involved: Charlotte Perriand contributed to the interior of the restaurant and the auditorium.

Decurtins was the representative of the Basel-based architects Burckhardt agency on the site of Rueil and Bourgain, the project manager was a former colleague of Zehrfuss', and Werner Stutz, was a young assistant to Burckhardt. Marcel Faure, head of the agency worked on the finalisation of the project, along with Jean Prouvé and finally Maria Deroche worked on the interior offices.

Engineers:

Jean Prouvé (façades/ curtain walls). Zehrfuss who had worked with Jean Prouvé in the past, asked him to work on the facades of the office building and laboratories. These façades illustrated an innovative industrial technology for metal facades without mastic seals. This was their first architectural implementation after Prouvé earlier developed this technique for the National Railway Company (SNCF).

Spillmann, Gregory (engineer B.A.)

Horticulturist and landscape: Roger de Vilmorin

## **2.5 If Architect Designers are Still Living Provide Address, Country of Birth, and Contact Information**

No

## **2.6 Original and Current Use of Building/Place**

Original use: Office building.  
Still used as such today.

## **2.7 Changes, Additions**

Regularly serviced and well maintained, this complex has been extended carefully by Werner Stutz, who had been an architect of the team during the initial Burckhardt design era. The administrative building and the restaurant so representative of twentieth century architecture, and in perfect agreement with the site context, therefore deserve to be protected as historical monuments: the relationship between the administration building and the restaurant is essential as well as the views from outside the site.

## **2.8 Current Condition**

Buildings' condition: regularly serviced and well maintained, the three buildings are in good condition and still actively in business. The Prouvé facades, the spiral staircase and the entrance canopy drilled by a plane tree is completely preserved along with the spirit of the original developments in the main building.

There are little remaining signs of Charlotte Perriand's intervention in the restaurant and the auditorium buildings.

## **2.9 Original Design Intent**

The original intent was to create a global work in which the built fabric and the landscape would merge, and which would be a pleasant working environment. The site included laboratories, offices and a restaurant. It was also intended to experiment with new technologies in architecture, as one of Jean Prouvé's last patterns was used on this building.

## **3.0 Description (History and Technology)**

### **3.1 Physical Description**

Located in the center of Rueil-Malmaison in the classified area in the field of Malmaison and the former estate of Richelieu park, listed in the Inventory of Historical Monuments, these buildings were designed to host an administrative department, a laboratory and social facilities including a restaurant. The 12,000 m<sup>2</sup> premises were split into three buildings facing the boulevard de Richelieu, the adjacent street and the park. In this park of 37,500 m<sup>2</sup>, the choices made then were dictated by the need to incorporate the volumes of the buildings while keeping a maximum existing plantations and ponds. Respecting the constraints of height and harmony of the wooded area, a low (R + 3) building was built around a large pond, on two floors of basement partially immersed,



as well as an auditorium. This resulted in three buildings differentiated by their architectural design and implementation.

The architects worked with all the constraints attached to the ground to provide a successful illustration for the inclusion of contemporary architecture in a historically protected site.

Combining steel, enameled metal and glass, the main building offered four floors of offices (425 people) in two basements (control local, garage and service station). The transparency of its lobby highlighted the framing values towards the park and the pond. Longitudinally shaped, it was designed to allow the office space to be sub divisible with movable partitions and still enjoy natural light. This building is connected to the laboratory on the ground floor and basement premises partially lit by atriums. Characterized by its facades almost blind, the laboratory building is along the street perpendicular to the boulevard. On the other side of the water, the "social facilities" building is a small piece of architecture in its own right that blends among the trees in the park with its concrete trunks. In the basement, the building hosted an auditorium, a conference room and a kitchen. In connection with the lobby there was the cafeteria, and, on the first floor, two dining rooms (for the staff and the management) and another kitchen room.

From the outset, the topography around the pond suggested to the architects the breakdown of the program into three separate structures. Housing the lobby and administrative functions, the main building, limited in height, stretches to the east on the boulevard. Under the vegetation, an underground link connects perpendicularly to the building of laboratories. With their glass and metal facades and repetitive frames, these two buildings grow their relationship in contrast to the restaurant- a puzzle of hexagons in glass and concrete - which formally stands out. At the edge of pond, the two dining rooms for staff and management and a conference room combine. This in itself is a small piece of architecture that redirects the composition and changes the direction of the project. Connected to the main building with a crawl space under water, this organic component seeks transparency in the trees. The tension between these two architectures highlights the landscape of the park, where the presence of a small bridge Romantic "in Giverny" could incite pastiche if the designers were less sophisticated. As to evoke the memory of a historic site mutilated and long neglected, it was necessary for completing the project architects aware of all these issues.

The fragmentation of the program across interconnected multiple volumes contributes to the landscape dimension and architectural harmony.. The main building articulates both directions of an overall composition. The first landscape is focused on the restaurant, the second most functional in relation to the laboratories. Upon entry, an awning drilled by a plane directs the eye to the park across the hall, located at the bottom of the perspective of restaurant and dining room overhanging on the pond. Ground treatment emphasizes that sequence. A washed concrete pavement, complete with a pool, the lobby extends the terrace before descending gently toward the water, while covering the underground car park to the edge of the field. The simple lines, the balance of volumes and materials accompanying the leisure promenade. The administration building facing the boulevard is a link to the city.



Restaurant

*DR (droits réservés). Fonds Zehrfuss. Académie d'architecture/Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle*

Perpendicular to the landscape, the functional axis develops opposite the boulevard Richelieu and the pond. The sunscreens along the long facades of glass and enameled sheet draw vertical abstraction among the reeds, and are reflected in the water.

The north wing is a little inclined to conform to the topography. The building is designed on a 7.20 m metal frame with steel concrete composite floors. The supporting pillars are formed of steel profiles. With the shading of the facades, their slats and gear-cutting, vibrates in the light.

The structure of the restaurant consists of nine 'mushrooms' of concrete, supporting six hexagonal tiles juxtaposed on one level around a central area that houses large bays and narrow surrounding frames. Bare concrete elements, zinc, transom windows and radiator band all contribute to the ambiance of a place for which Charlotte Perriand had been given an order for furniture.

### 3.2 Construction System Used

The building is designed on a 7.20 m metal frame with steel concrete composite floors. The supporting pillars are formed of steel profiles. With the shading of the facades, their slats and gear-cutting, it vibrates in the light.

This is the first building designed with metal facades without mastic seals. The panes are held by the lips of rubber and neoprene seals, according to a principle developed by Prouvé with the metal joinery company CIMT used for railway wagons.

Conceived in order to respect the harmony of the wooded landscape and the pond, the extreme unweighting of the structure and the façade panels is a witness of the latest –and patented– improvements by Jean Prouvé in the implementation of curtain walls in aluminum and glass products.

### 3.3 Context/Setting



*DR (droits réservés). Fonds Zehrfuss. Académie d'architecture/Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle*

Located in the center of Rueil-Malmaison in the classified area in the field of Malmaison and the former estate of Richelieu park, listed in the Inventory of Historical Monuments, these buildings were designed to host an administrative department, a laboratory and social facilities including a restaurant. The 12,000 m<sup>2</sup> premises were split into three buildings facing the boulevard de Richelieu, the adjacent street and the park. In this park of 37,500 m<sup>2</sup>, the choices made then were dictated by the need to incorporate the volumes of the buildings while keeping a maximum existing plantations and ponds. Respecting the constraints of height and harmony of the wooded area, a low (R + 3) building was built around a large pond, on two floors of basement partially immersed, as well as an auditorium. This resulted in three buildings differentiated by their architectural design and implementation.

### 3.4 Social and Cultural Context

"Practical and functional, to offer staff a pleasant working environment and to facilitate relations between business and government," according to the expectations of the sponsor, this complex shows the Tertiary evolution of life at the office late 60s in relation to the definition of a new

framework for modern and comfortable. The opening coincides with the Grenelle Agreements on labour law that mark a change in working conditions.

### 3.5 Materials/Fabric/Form/Function

Respecting the constraints of height and harmony of the wooded area, a low (R + 3) building was built around a large pond, on two floors of basement partially underground, as well as an auditorium. This resulted in three buildings differentiated by their architectural design and implementation.

Combining steel, enameled metal and glass, the main building offered four floors of offices (425 people) in two basements (control local, garage and service station).

### 3.6 Aesthetic Value



Entrance lobby

*DR (droits réservés). Fonds Zehrfuss. Académie d'architecture/Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle*

This ensemble involves perfectly assimilated technical knowledge, while developing an aesthetic discourse on architecture and contextual notion of "invisible architecture" (a theme from Zehrfuss also displayed in the UNESCO building patios or the Gallo-Roman museum in Lyon).

In a game of transparencies and reflections, the facades studied by Jean Prouvé play their role when the main building articulates the landscape axis that transverse to the pond and the restaurant and the functional axis parallel to the boulevard to the laboratories. The shading façades

punctuate the long glass and enameled iron, drawing vertical abstract among the reeds and thus turning the pond into a natural mirror.

This is an example of a very subtle integration of contemporary architecture in a rare site with high heritage and landscape value. Such examples careful integration of contemporary architecture into sensitive sites are actually lacking today among current architects.

#### 4.0 Source of Alert

This case was engaged by Docomomo France (Agnès Cailliau) who asked for the support of ICOMOS France to build an international alert through the ICOMOS ISC20 Heritage Alert process.

#### 4.1 References, Contacts

##### Contact persons:

Christiane Schmuckle-Mollard, ICOMOS France board, ISC20C voting member for France (csmollar@gmail.com)

Agnès Cailliau, President of Docomomo France ([agnes.cailliau@wanadoo.fr](mailto:agnes.cailliau@wanadoo.fr))

Laurence Dronne, Docomomo France Secretary General ([laurence-dronne@wanadoo.fr](mailto:laurence-dronne@wanadoo.fr))

Christine Desmoulins, Architecture critic (bcd.desmoulin@wanadoo.fr)

##### References and sources for documentation:

-Pictures, photos and work site plans. Réception PC / Fund Zehrfuss Architecture Academy / CAPA Archives of the twentieth century. Boxes 55 / 68 and 74.

- October 1, 1962 contract between the real estate company of Domaine de Richelieu, represented by Mr. Y. Dunant and A. Geysler, attorneys, and architects Burckhardt Architects SIA, Oberer Heuberg 16 in Basel, and Bernard Zehrfuss, architect - 9, rue Arsene Houssaye, in Paris. Zehrfuss Fund. AA/CAPA/Archives/B2.

Bernard-autobiographical manuscript Zehrfuss, Fund Zehrfuss Academy of Architecture / CAPA Archives of the twentieth century

-Some documents are available to the agency headed by Werner Stutz 17 rue Félicien David 75016 PARIS.

Tel: 01 45 24 40 83. While working on this project, he gave Novartis original documents, notably the

façades plans of Prouvé. He stayed in touch with Mr. Geysler, Chief Financial Officer of Sandoz France at the time of construction of the original buildings. His deputy at the time was Jean-Bertrand Drummen.

- Apparently, other archives are still available at the City House of Rueil Malmaison.

-It is possible that other archives are not necessarily inventoried in the fund Burckhardt in Switzerland.

#### 4.2 Groups Supporting Alert and/or Nomination, Contacts

The following organisations support the initiative:

Docomomo international (docomomo@miesbcn.com), Docomomo France (agnes.cailliau@wanadoo.fr)

la Société pour la Protection des Paysages et de l'Esthétique de la France (SPPEF) ([contact@sppef.org](mailto:contact@sppef.org)),

Vieilles Maisons Françaises ([contact@vmfpatrimoine.org](mailto:contact@vmfpatrimoine.org)/ +33 1 40 62 61 71), Paris Historique ([contact@paris-historique.org](mailto:contact@paris-historique.org)),

ICOMOS France ([i.palmi@icomosfrance.fr](mailto:i.palmi@icomosfrance.fr)),

ICOMOS international ([gaia.jungeblodt@icomos.org](mailto:gaia.jungeblodt@icomos.org))

#### 4.3 Groups Potentially Against Alert Action

The City Council and Mayor of Rueil-Malmaison (Patrick Ollier), and the Novartis company (Joseph Jimenez, Novartis CEO, Patrice Zagame, Novartis France Country Head), which are advocating for the demolition of the current building, may be against alert action as they support the demolition of the current building in order to build a new one.

The City wants the company to keep its headquarters in the city. If a compromise solution, including conservation of the current building can be found, chances are it would support an alternative design for conservation.

#### 4.4 Local, Regional, International Significance Citations

*« il s'agit d'un édifice remarquable, et dont l'intégration au site fut, fait rare à l'époque, très soignée par les concepteurs, ce dont témoigne de manière frappante l'auvent du hall qui est traversé par un arbre ancien. »*

*(it is a remarkable building, the integration of which to the site was taken much care by its designers – something rare at that time. The integration of an old tree into the lobby awning is testimony to this.)*

Alexandre Gady, Art Historian, President of the Society for Protection of France's Landscapes and Aesthetics

#### 4.5 Letters of Support, Newspaper Articles, etc.

Support letter by Adrien Fainsilber, Architect, Grand Prix National d'Architecture 1986

Support letter by Wessel de Jonge, Founder of DOCOMOMO signed by (among others):

- Rudy Ricciotti, Architect, Grand Prix National d'Architecture 2006
- Marc Barani, Architect, Grand Prix National d'Architecture 2012
- Anne Lacaton, Lacaton & Vassal, Grand Prix National d'Architecture 2008

*La SPPEF se bat pour défendre le siège de Sanofi-Avantis à Rueil-Malmaison (92)*, Alexandre Gady, President of the Society for Protection of France's Landscapes and Aesthetics, September 2012 <http://www.sppef.fr/tag/novartis/>

*L'immeuble Sandoz menacé de démolition*, CAILLE Jean-François in AMC-Le Moniteur Architecture, Mars 2011, N°205, p.16

*Soldes d'été du Patrimoine architectural du XXe siècle !*, Agnès Cailliau et Tatiana Kiseleva, in d'Architectures, 22 July 2012

#### 4.6 Publications that describe the Work/Place, Bibliography, etc.

- In "Rueil-Malmaison, Sandoz," Techniques and Architectures 6, 31st series, March 1970, p. 34-40.
- In "Life as an architect," typescript autobiographical Bernard Zehrfuss. C. Archives Desmoulins, p. 124. And AA / CAPA. Archives Architecture of the twentieth century.
- Christine Desmoulins, Zehrfuss Bernard, co-published in Folio / Publishing Heritage Christine al. "Books architects," 2008, p. 192
- Desmoulins, Zehrfuss Bernard, a French architect (1911-1996). A figure of War boom, Ph.D., eds. François Loyer, Specialty: History of Architecture Laboratory: LADRHAUS, Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Versailles, 2008.
  - BLASI Ivan, *Sandoz Headquarters - Office Complex Novartis, Rueil-Malmaison, 1962-1968.*- DOCOMOMO Journal

#### Other sources:

- This building was mentioned on several occasions by Zehrfuss during radio shows, which have been kept amongst the archives of the INA or the Maison de la Radio.
- As it illustrated perfectly the modern iconic headquarters of prestigious companies, this complex was used as a framework for several films of François Truffaut, Domicile Conjugal and Le Distrait (video showing the inside of the main building (hall, stairs, corridors and office spaces -visible on the Internet:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onofi\\_-tCT4&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onofi_-tCT4&feature=related))
- Also referenced in Italian and Swiss journals

#### 4.7 Time Constraints for Advocacy (immediate action/delayed action)

The threats on the building require immediate and urgent action as the demolition permit has been validated and the building is planned to be demolished on June 10<sup>th</sup> 2013. All advocacy initiative should be taken as quickly as possible and directed primarily to Novartis CEO.

#### 5.0 Recommended action

The International Scientific Committee for Twentieth Century Heritage of ICOMOS, Docomomo and Docomomo France, ICOMOS and ICOMOS France urgently ask the French Authorities and Novartis France, owner of the site, to take the significance of the building as a 20th century emblematic work into consideration.

We ask the French Ministry of Culture and communication for:

- . Immediate adjournment of the demolition permit. This will leave time to proceed to an assessment of heritage values.
- . Initiation of the process to list the construction of Zehrfuss and Buckhardt as a Historic Monument based on the aforementioned assessment. The park is already listed in the Inventory of Historical Sites.
- We ask the owner, Novartis France to:
  - . Assess all viable solutions to expand its activity: first conserving the existing buildings;
  - second to extend the building with a new construction on the site.

## 5.1 Heritage Alert: International/National Distribution via ICOMOS?

Yes

## 5.2 Letter (s) to? (Provide Names and Full Contact Information)

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Deputy-Mayor of Rueil-Malmaison:  
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Conseiller en charge du patrimoine (advisor for heritage)  
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ICOMOS ISC on Twentieth Century Heritage. Heritage Alert.  
Novartis France Office complex, Rueil-Malmaison, France July 2013



### **5.3 ICOMOS National or Scientific Committee, or International Website Upload?**

The Heritage Alert should be published on ICOMOS France, ICOMOS international, and ICOMOS ISC20C websites.

### **5.4 Affiliated Distribution? (such as UIA/Docomomo/TICCIH)**

Docomomo has already published an alert report ([http://www.docomomo.com/pdfs/events/heritage/063111\\_FICHE%20NOVARTIS.pdf](http://www.docomomo.com/pdfs/events/heritage/063111_FICHE%20NOVARTIS.pdf)).

## **6.0 Desired Outcomes\***

### **6.1 Impose Legal Protection or Improve Legal Protection?**

The building should be legally protected for its values and in order to prevent demolition Today only the park is listed in the Inventory of Historical Sites.

### **6.2 Stop Work that Will Alter the Heritage?**

Yes.

### **6.3 Stop Permits that Would Result in Irretrievable Loss of the Heritage?**

The demolition permit of such significant building should be immediately stopped.

### **6.4 Impose Minimum Maintenance to Stop Further Decay Pending Conservation Work?**

The site is well maintained and in good conditions. Maintenance is not a problem.

### **6.5 Modify the Project to Make it More Respectful of the Values for Which the Building or Site Received Legal Protection?**

The Novartis project should halt demolition as of now. It should provide concrete specifications regarding their current needs and the evolution of their activity. This assessment will reveal how the current buildings can be adapted to these needs while conserving the existing structures.

### **6.6 Stop Demolition?**

Yes, demolition is imminent and all initiatives should be taken to prevent it from happening.

### **6.7 Other? (Please Specify)**

We ask the owner company to conduct heritage and environmental impact assessment to compare the demolition/construction project to the rehabilitation/extension of the current buildings.