

ICOMOS

international council on monuments and sites

18 April – International Day for Monuments and Sites 2014 Theme: The Heritage of Commemoration

At the heart of the work of ICOMOS lies the understanding, the protection and the conservation of those structures, sites and ensembles whose interest is linked to history and memory. The value of these elements of our cultural heritage is associated with the history of societies and peoples, as well as the arts and sciences they developed.

In this, these monuments and sites, including those more complex and diversified forms of heritage places such as living landscapes, are tangible carriers of the memory of a part of the human experience. Thus, through their authenticity and integrity, they contribute, in their way, to the commemoration and transmission of values which include history.

This discussion is not merely a contemporary one. The past President of ICOMOS, Michael Petzet, often quoted the Roman Cicero who defined a monument not by its shape or scale but for its capacity to remind us of something (*omnia monumenta sunt, quae faciunt alicuius rei recordationem*). Beyond this general observation on the close relationship between human history and the heritage with which ICOMOS and its members concern themselves, the theme for the 2014 International Day on Monuments and Sites – the Heritage of Commemoration – provides an opportunity to present those constructions that have been intentionally created with the purpose of commemorating an event, a person, an idea, etc.

This choice of theme is partly inspired by the centennial in 2014 of the beginning of the Great War of 1914-1918. Due to the unprecedented scale of destruction and its international reach, this great tragedy of the Modern Era led societies to adopt a new form of commemoration, more centred on the notion of sacrifice and the individual identity of the innumerable victims rather than events and heroic personalities. This led to the creation of a distinctive heritage of monuments and sites, created for the sole purpose of commemoration.

The heritage of commemoration takes a variety of forms: engraved inscriptions, mausoleums of exceptional architecture or works of monumental sculpture, more modest elements reflecting vernacular traditions or dedicated landscapes such as cemeteries or memorial gardens. This heritage also includes elements that were given a commemorative value; for example, ruins or industrial vestiges accompanied by dedication plaques, or public squares whose toponymy commemorates a historical event or individual. Many of the cultural sites on the World Heritage List have a commemorative purpose: the Taj Mahal in Agra, India; Hiroshima's Peace Memorial and Genbaku Dome in Japan, the Centennial Hall in Wroclaw, Poland; or the Statue of Liberty in New York, USA.

In proposing the Heritage of Commemoration theme for the 2014 International Day for Monuments and Sites, ICOMOS invites all its National and International Committees, its members and partners to highlight a form of heritage whose purpose reflects the deep need of human beings to remember and to transmit their memory to others. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the challenges of memory in our contemporary world, as well as the complexity of its conservation.

ICOMOS Committees are kindly invited to organise events related to this important date: conferences, lectures, press releases, round tables, visits to heritage properties, etc. in order to raise public awareness related to this specific type of heritage.

We kindly request ICOMOS Committees to inform the International Secretariat on planned events at the latest by Monday 31 March so that we can publish them on the ICOMOS website and share your activities among the members of the world-wide ICOMOS family.

[Visit the 18th April web page !](#)