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## Twentieth-Century Heritage at Risk and the Role of ICOMOS in its Conservation

It is a pleasure and an honor to be invited to join this distinguished conference to discuss the very particular conservation needs of the heritage of the twentieth century. It is a Heritage at Risk in Australia, as it is in Moscow. In the next few days we will share experiences which may benefit many.

I would like to congratulate the Russian Academy for Architecture and Building Sciences, Russia's UNESCO Commission, Russia's Ministry of Culture and Mass Communications, the Union of Architects of Russia, the Moscow Union of Architects, the Moscow committee of Architects and Town Planners, MAPS, the Schusev Architecture Museum for having the foresight to convene such an exchange, and particularly the World Monuments Fund for their generous and very timely support.

Institutions such as these have important roles to play in developing the stakeholder debate about identifying what constitutes Russia's twentieth century heritage resource and how it will be conserved, used and managed – or indeed lost.

Organisations such as ICOMOS, Docomomo and UIA are critical amongst professional institutions which must lead the way for a very vulnerable heritage at risk – the places of twentieth-century heritage significance.

I am speaking to you today in my role as a co-President of the Twentieth-Century Heritage Scientific Committee of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).

I will address four issues:

- the relative absence of twentieth-century heritage places from the World Heritage List and
- the role & initiatives of ICOMOS in promoting twentieth-century heritage identification and conservation.
- I will include a brief discussion of current activities in Australia to develop an awareness and appreciation of the heritage resources of the twentieth century on a national basis
- and conclude with a look at what may become the heritage of the twentieth century and how we might manage that resource for future generations – where to from here?

When I speak about twentieth-century heritage resources, I include buildings, cultural landscapes, relics, industrial and archaeological sites and groups – places which em-

body tangible and intangible values to diverse stakeholders: experts, communities, owners and developers.

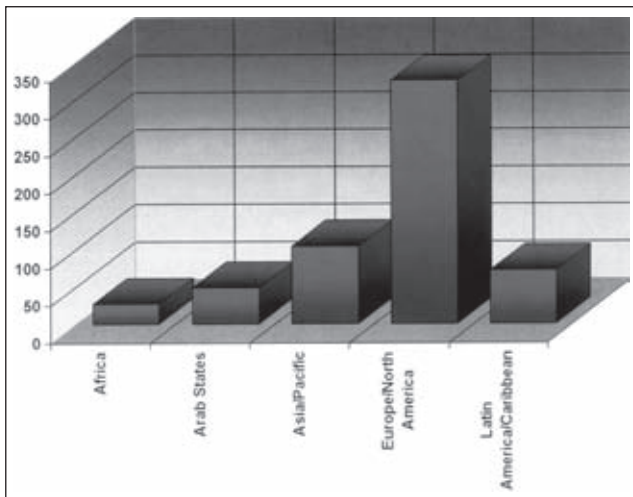
These places are evidence of the global exchange of ideas and values that characterize the twentieth century, which we see embodied in:

- the commercial architecture of the Bund, Shanghai,
- the city plan and cultural landscape of Australia's National Capital, Canberra,
- the hydro-electricity industrial plants of Norway,
- the workers clubs of Konstantin Melnikov in Moscow,
- the campus design and buildings of the University of Caracas in Venezuela,
- a diversity of residential architecture such as the houses of Horta in Brussels, of Frank Lloyd Wright in USA, of Harry Seidler in Australia,
- many less well known places, places of local and national value throughout the world.

Let us first look at the context of twentieth century heritage resources and the World Heritage List on page 16:



*Academy of Science, Canberra (1959)*



ICOMOS, *The World Heritage List – Filling the Gaps, regional distribution of listed sites*

## 1. The World Heritage List: Filling the Gaps – an Action Plan for the Future

After almost 25 years of operation of the World Heritage Convention, the increasing geographic and thematic imbalance of the sites which were being listed was a cause of concern to the World Heritage Committee. To improve the “balance” of the list, from 1996 a global strategy was developed to create a credible, representative World Heritage List. ICOMOS undertook a major analysis of the sites already inscribed on the World Heritage List, and the sites which would in future be proposed for listing from national tentative lists.

The analysis was undertaken on a regional, chronological, geographic and thematic basis\* of the 730 properties then listed. Not surprisingly, the review demonstrated a bias towards European sites that would traditionally be seen as classical monuments and sites. It also showed the under-represented categories of World Heritage, for example notably absent were places of the modern era. Looking ahead, the survey showed the likely trends in the short to medium term which might be predicted as tentative list places were eventually nominated. The imbalance was not going to improve unless action was taken.

The reasons for the geographic “gaps” were (by and large) threefold –

- the history of the acceptance of the Convention,
- the structural processes of preparing WH nominations and
- the related lack of capacity/experience in drafting nominations and management planning of sites.

The reasons for thematic gaps are related, but more complex.

The World Heritage Committee has resolved to take a number of steps to close these gaps through training, education and the development of identification and management tools. In particular, ICOMOS decided to seize the

initiative and determined to increase its efforts to support the identification and conservation of twentieth-century heritage places. The formation of the International Scientific Committee on Twentieth century Heritage which I co-chair with Ms Christiane Schmuckle-Mollard of France is a vital part of this process, to which I will return later.

Let us look now very briefly at some selected results from the ICOMOS World Heritage Gap report: The first table illustrates very clearly the geographic imbalance of the World Heritage List by UNESCO regions in 2002 – most listings are in Europe, where the experience in developing nominations and managing sites is also strong. Asia Pacific is next in prominence, though listings are very unevenly distributed amongst nations and site types in our region.

In particular, it was clear from the ICOMOS analysis that despite the fact the buildings and places of the twentieth century literally dominate the world; identified heritage places of the modern era are very under-represented on the World Heritage List. You will see from the top line of the figure on page 17 that only 12 properties of the 730 then listed (2002) were of the modern era.

It seems likely that the under-representation of twentieth-century heritage listings at World Heritage level might also be apparent in local and state listings. To create a credible and balanced list of twentieth-century places of potential World Heritage value, an active programme of identification and promotion at national and local levels will also be needed to sustain a truly credible and balanced representation of sites, particularly given the increasing rate of loss of modern heritage places and the diversity of stakeholders involved.

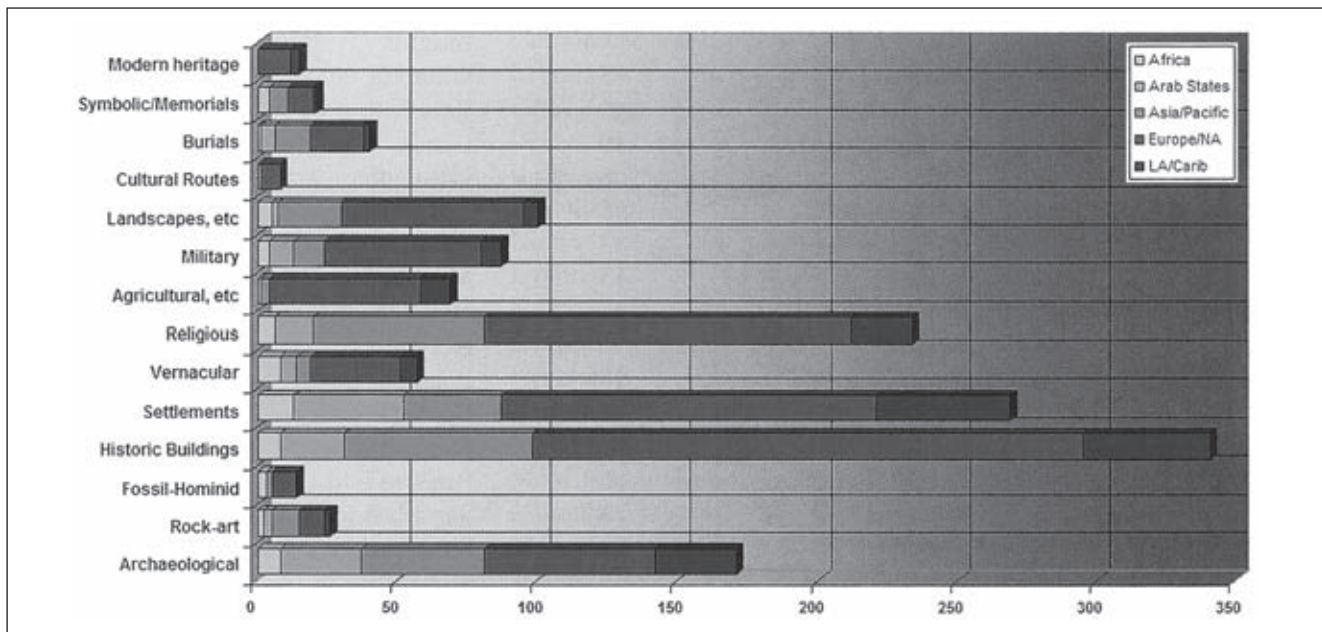
If we imagine this triangle as representing places of recognised cultural heritage value, the places of outstanding universal value will only ever be a very small proportion of the whole – the tip of the triangle – with most places protected and managed at a local/community or national/regional level.

In Australia, for example, we find that increasingly the things we want to conserve as the heritage of our nation are being identified by and managed at the grassroots by communities, with or without expert advice.

## 2. The Role of ICOMOS in Twentieth-Century Heritage Conservation\*

ICOMOS is an acronym for the International Council on Monuments and Sites. It is a Non-Governmental Organisation of professionals formed in 1965 with its headquarters in Paris. Its members participate in its activities in a voluntary capacity – I am here today as part of my annual holidays, from my busy Sydney-based heritage consultancy practice.

\* *World Heritage Committee 24<sup>th</sup> Session, Cairns 2000.*



ICOMOS, *The World Heritage List – Filling the Gaps, site type distribution of listed sites*

ICOMOS is interested in the philosophy, methodologies and techniques of cultural heritage conservation, as practiced by communities world wide. It has 8,500 members world-wide, who belong to 120+ national committees (13 in South East Asia) and 28 international scientific committees (focussing on topics such as Stone, Cultural Tourism, Archaeological Management, etc).

ICOMOS operates as a forum, and a partner and as an advocate for good heritage conservation practice world-wide. ICOMOS is closely linked with UNESCO, particularly through its role under the World Heritage Convention 1972 as UNESCO's principal heritage adviser on cultural heritage matters. In this role it

- assesses nominations,
- monitors the state of conservation of properties,
- develops policy advice,
- runs conferences and
- commissions research.

The annual review of NOMINATIONS for World Heritage Listing, between 30 and 60 each year is undertaken by ICOMOS each January. Recent twentieth century nominations reviewed have included the White City of Tel Aviv (1930–1950), Caracas University, the Rietveld Schroeder House in Utrecht (1924), the city of Le Havre in France and the Varberg Radio Station (1922–24) in Sweden.

Another major aspect of ICOMOS's Advisory role to UNESCO is the review of the management of World Heritage sites. Early this year I was part of a joint monitoring mission with IUCN and ICCROM to Robben Island in South Africa, an important site of outstanding universal value for the twentieth century. The outstanding universal value of Robben Island is as a symbol of the triumph of human spirit over adversity – it was the place

of incarceration of many South African political leaders in the apartheid era. It's World Heritage values rest not so much in the fabric of the place, though that is of course vital, but in the presentation and interpretation of its political symbolism. Therefore the mission examined the site's management and administration, and provided advice on integrating visitor management and interpretation. Up to thirty such missions are carried out each year by ICOMOS representatives.

In relation to sustaining twentieth-century heritage resources, ICOMOS has undertaken a range of specific initiatives, meetings and conferences. To raise international awareness, ICOMOS focussed World Heritage Day in 2000 on the theme of twentieth-century heritage issues – published a series of reports and undertaken a range of cross-disciplinary partnership projects.

One of the newest ICOMOS International Scientific Committees is the Twentieth-Century Heritage Committee, founded in 2005 to focus on the conservation, management and interpretation issues confronting the heritage places of the twentieth century. In partnership with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and Docomomo, ICOMOS participated in a joint program for the identification, documentation and promotion of built heritage of the modern era. Following a series of establishment meetings in Paris, ICOMOS actively participated in regional expert meetings in Monterey, Asmara, Chandigarh and Moscow contributing its network of professional contacts and regional expertise to the debates. This project addressed the causes for the poor representation of Modern Era monuments and sites on the World Heritage List, and developed recommendations for pro-active measures to redress the imbalance.

In 2000 ICOMOS had also begun the Montreal Action Plan – a global survey to examine how protection, man-



agement and presentation of twentieth-century heritage were being undertaken. National ICOMOS committees were asked to nominate the 20 most important sites of the twentieth century – engineering works, monuments, sites, neighbourhoods, and places with intangible values, cultural landscapes and industrial sites. Amongst the questions asked in the survey were:

Are there specific listing criteria for twentieth-century heritage?

*ANS: NO, but many nations limited listings to “older than 50 years”*

Are there specific conservation regulations operating for twentieth century heritage?

*ANS: No, use same regulations for all cultural heritage*

What are most recent listings?

*ANS: 1996 Radio Free Europe, Czech republic; 1999 Cueta airport, Spain*

What % of places heritage listed is modern?

*ANS: Various answers- but in Australia, 2% of heritage places listed are from the twentieth century.*

The Australia ICOMOS nominations for the most significant twentieth-century places included the Snowy River Hydro Electricity Scheme, Parkes Radio Telescope, Mission stations, a Wool scour, an Agricultural College as well as houses, schools, hospitals and offices, and the Sydney Opera House. These sites evidenced the way in which the nation has developed – a wide range of sites of first indigenous contact, agricultural production, commemoration and nation-building by Australia’s diverse communities.

The ICOMOS survey was an interesting contrast to a similar survey done a few years earlier by expert group Docomomo in 1999, which focussed on architectural heritage. In Australia, the survey included hospitals and schools and the Sydney Opera House – a more traditional technical response to representing “monuments and sites” of the twentieth century.

I would like to turn now to briefly share with you a number of initiatives underway in Australian communities to promote, present and conserve our twentieth-century heritage resources. I believe that such programmes are needed in most countries to stimulate interest and research in twentieth-century heritage and to recognise its contribution to human development.

### 3. Current activities in Australia to develop an awareness of 20th century heritage

Australia ICOMOS was formed in 1979, and now has about 350 members. In recent years Australia has lost a number of significant twentieth-century heritage places, chiefly to the pressure for redevelopment in city centres but also victim to material failures and the experimental nature of some designs, especially those of the immediate post-World War II period.

To promote and support the identification of twentieth-century heritage in Australia, major national conferences such as Fibro House to Opera House were organised (1998) and these have reached a wide audience of interested communities and decision-makers, and initiated a range of collaborative research, exhibitions and publications.

For example, in Sydney, monthly talks by modernist architects have been organised and we will publish these oral histories. The Institute of Architects has begun compiling a twentieth-century heritage register. But promotion amongst interested practitioners is not enough. We continue to lose important twentieth-century heritage local or national places, usually because their importance as heritage places has not been recognised in time.

Two projects are underway presently in Australia to bring to public attention the importance of certain types of heritage and which can support emergency action to conserve heritage places in danger: In 1998 the National Trust in Australia, a community group, established its Endangered Places Program. Annual nominations are invited from the public and media attention is focussed on the plight of the individual sites. 30–40 places are listed as endangered annually, and a report card on what has happened to the previous year’s nominees is presented. The publicity and promotion value has been outstanding. The program results are accessible on the National Trust website [www.austnatrust.co.au](http://www.austnatrust.co.au).

Another scheme to support endangered places started in NSW in 1992. This programme is run by the NSW government through the Historic Houses Trust, and it began with the purchase of a small house in Sydney designed in 1923 by the man who also designed Australia’s national capital Canberra, Walter Burley Griffin. Griffin and his wife Marion Mahoney had worked with Frank Lloyd Wright in Chicago in the early 1900s. I was the first curator for this scheme, the concept of which is to

- purchase a house which is under threat of destruction,
- prepare a conservation plan to guide its restoration,
- undertake needed works and



*The annual Fifties Fair at the Rose Seidler House (1948), Sydney*

- sell (or rent) the property back into private ownership, with protective covenants on its title.

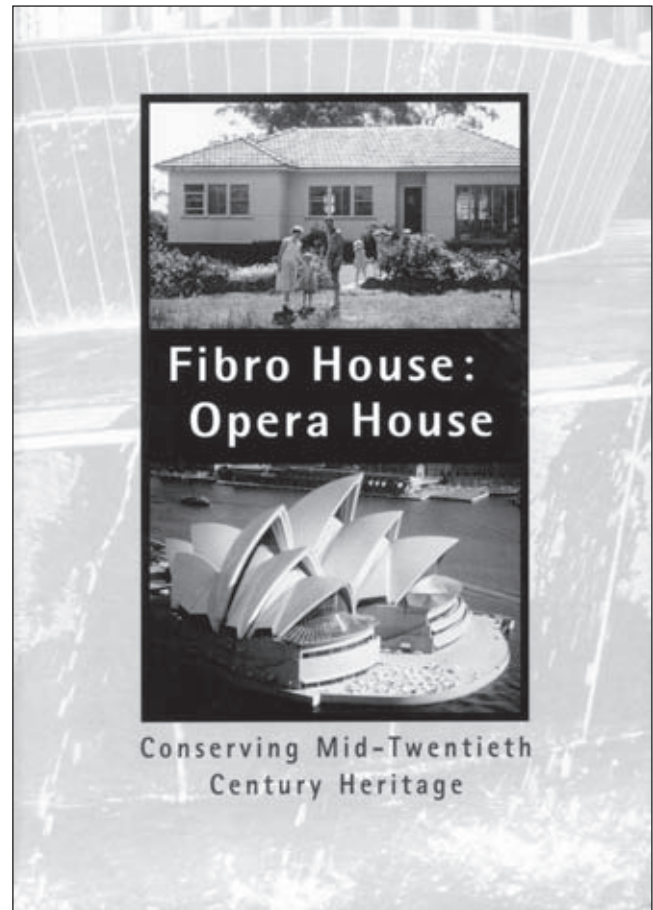
The first project was successfully completed in 1995 and a charitable foundation has recently been established to raise money from corporate sponsors for the continuation of the scheme.

A quite different approach has been used to promote and support the architectural oeuvre of one of Australia's best known architects of the post-war era, Harry Seidler, who passed away earlier this year. Mr Seidler was born in Vienna, interned in the UK and Canada during the war and arrived in Australia as an émigré in 1948, initially to build a house for his mother. His position was always that of an avowed modernist, and his career covered major redevelopment schemes, office buildings and houses throughout the world. His legacy of work is of outstanding value within Australia, and in 2002, a national survey and assessment of his career was initiated to select the 20 most representative buildings of his career and to protect them through state heritage listing, as several have recently been threatened with demolition. The first group of 20 Seidler buildings are presently being assessed for protection by the state Heritage Office.

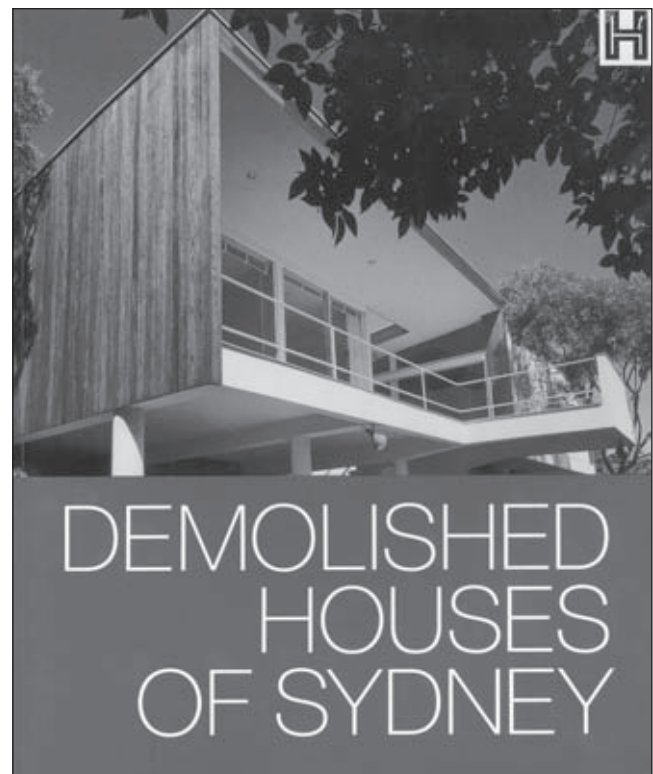
Mr. Seidler's first commission – the house for his mother which he designed in 1948 was gifted to the state as a house museum in 1988, and it is now the site of a range of popular activities – exhibitions, talks, tours and an annual fair which focuses on the heritage of the post war era, and in part nostalgia for the 1950s. The annual Fifties Fair which you see page 18 left is an immensely popular event which familiarises people with Seidler's work, and the heritage of the post-World War II era. Visitors enjoy the resource and value the experience of just being there.

Here in Moscow the avant-garde architects impacted on international architectural thought as well as the city structure and skyline, bringing modern architecture to the city through the twenties and thirties. All contributed to the fabric of the city with landmark buildings likely to be worthy of heritage recognition and conservation by the city of Moscow and by Russia. Already there are books and tours by groups such as MAPS that demonstrate the local interest in these places. This very conference demonstrates the international interest and concern.

The modernist work of Russian engineers and architects of the 1920s and 1930s seems to warrant comprehensive identification, assessment and conservation. Konstantin Melnikov (1890–1974), trained in Moscow, was an experimental, controversial and much debated figure influential in his time, with recognition throughout the world. As the pace of change in Moscow ever quickens, action to identify, interpret and conserve his remaining buildings seems to be needed soon, for through identification comes appreciation, then understanding and valuing (the virtuous circle promoted by English Heritage). I hope that ICOMOS Russia colleagues will contribute perspectives

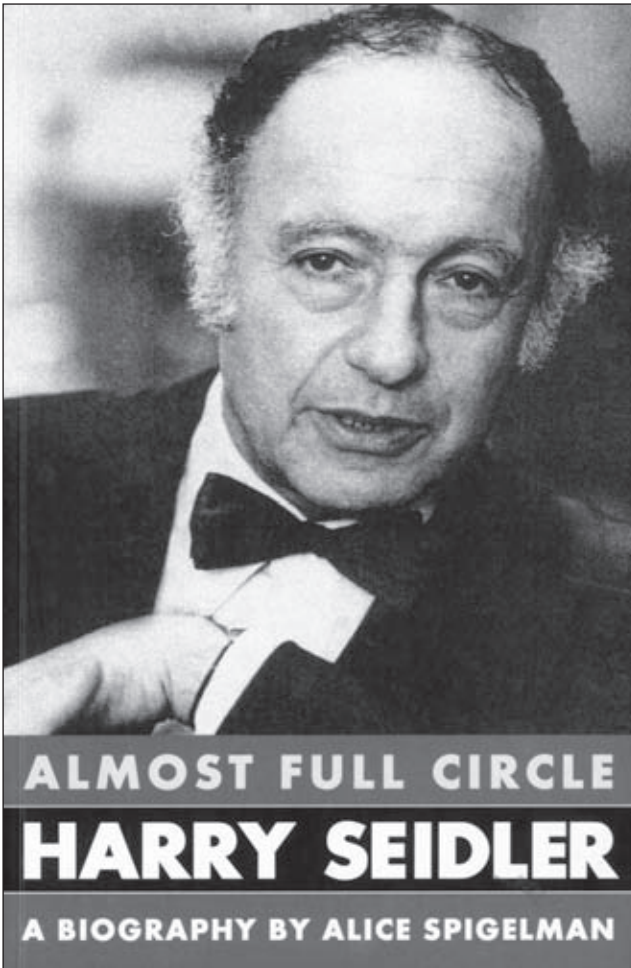


*Opera House to Fibro House, Conserving Mid-Twentieth Century Heritage, conference proceedings, published by the Historic Houses Trust, 2000*



*Demolished Houses, exhibition and book prepared by the Historic Houses Trust of NSW*





**ALMOST FULL CIRCLE**

**HARRY SEIDLER**

**A BIOGRAPHY BY ALICE SPIGELMAN**

*Almost Full Circle, the biography of Harry Seidler*

from Russia to the work of the new ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on twentieth-century heritage.

Gathered here in Moscow to discuss the plight of the city's extraordinary modernist and avant-garde architecture, we as international experts will no doubt emphasise the critical importance to the world and the parlous state of important projects by architectural luminaries including Le Corbusier, Ginzburg, and Melnikov. Together with our visits to modernist icons such as the Narkomfin House, the Zuev and Rusakov Clubs and Dushkin's metro, we will obtain a privileged insight into the threats and possible solutions.

Before we depart to our sometimes distant homes, we will look at a conference resolution or declaration, calling upon Russian authorities to take concerted action for the conservation of Modernist heritage. I would like to also propose a formal Resolution emphasising the real and present risks to the work of Konstantin Melnikov, particularly his own house and collection, presently the subject of ownership disputes. Visiting the house, to meet with his relatives to plan future conservation action one snowy morning this week was an extraordinary experience and highlight for me of being here in Moscow.

Later in the week, it is proposed that a group of representatives of ICOMOS (Michael Petzet, Dinu Bumbaru,

Sheridan Burke and Christiane Schmuckle Mollard), Docomomo (Maristella Casciato) and UIA (Louise Cox), will meet with the Mayor of Moscow, about such issues and principles.

On an international level, to publicise the risks to heritage worldwide, since 2000, ICOMOS has been publishing annual Heritage at Risk reports. Each year the threats to twentieth-century heritage places are mentioned by many nations. The H@R annual reports provide an excellent basis for identifying the types of issues and problems that twentieth-century heritage places are facing around the world, and demonstrating through solutions and shared experience the scope of action that ICOMOS might consider.

Let us look now at the proposed role of this new ICOMOS Scientific Committee concerned with twentieth-century heritage. As I mentioned earlier, it was established in 2005, after consideration of the three years results of the Montreal Action Plan's global survey and the experience of various regional and international partnership initiatives.

The committee considers that twentieth-century heritage includes buildings, structures, urban ensembles and plans, cultural landscapes, industrial and historic archaeology incorporating all forms of heritage, tangible and intangible. The new committee is multi-disciplinary by its very nature, whilst recognizing the diversity of regional and cultural expression of twentieth-century heritage places. The membership is open to ICOMOS members with established expertise in the fields of twentieth-century heritage, and young professionals will be specifically encouraged to participate in this committee.

The 20C Committee will aim to:

- promote the value and conservation of heritage of the twentieth century and its creators; and
- to develop activities to support the active conservation of twentieth-century heritage (this may include a Charter, guidelines, criteria, further twentieth-century Heritage at Risk reports etc).

The 20C Committee will:

- collaborate with and contribute to the work of other ISCs' communities and partners in relation to twentieth-century heritage and
- aim to actively contribute to the archive of twentieth-century heritage (e.g. oral history, video interviews with professionals etc),
- facilitate international collaboration and the sharing of experiences by providing a forum for organisations with interests in twentieth-century heritage to collaborate (such as Docomomo, UIA, TICCIH etc) and
- organise at least one annual international meeting with other interested bodies to disseminate knowledge and stimulate debate.

In these ways the 20C Committee can work to support and sustain ICOMOS actions involving the identification, evaluation, safeguarding, teaching and promoting the value and conservation of the heritage of the twentieth century resources, establishing guidelines as/if needed.

An important role for the ISC will be the provision of advice to ICOMOS on matters relating to twentieth-century heritage and the World Heritage Convention. As an advisory body to UNESCO on cultural heritage, ICOMOS is constantly engaged with the assessment of World Heritage nominations for monuments and sites of the twentieth century and responding to state of conservation reports.

As I mentioned at the start of my talk today, I have just returned from a mission to Robben Island in South Africa. It is presently a World Heritage site increasingly “at risk”. Since its inscription on the World Heritage list in 1999, for its symbolic association with the new South Africa, it is being inundated by tourists, which are close to 500,000 p. a. – which is an unsustainable level in the absence of comprehensive tourism planning. The problem is now being addressed, but it also an issue which is shared by some Chinese World Heritage sites, too.

Let me now conclude with some thoughts about

#### **4. What places may become the heritage of the twentieth century?**

It seems to me that we are at a critical point in deciding how the values and heritage places of the twentieth century will be identified or represented. Which places will be conserved, which will indeed be swept away and lost?

I have stressed today that World Heritage listing is only the small tip of the heritage resource of each nation to be kept for cultural sustainability. As nations we make development decisions which impact upon national and local heritage places. Which buildings will be conserved, which industries will be adapted and re-used, which will be removed? Which cultural landscapes will be kept as living entities, which will be changed and developed?

The decisions about heritage listing can have benefits and costs beyond the obvious. Heritage listing frames the identity of each nation – how we want to be seen and remembered by others and by ourselves. The impacts of World Heritage listing were very recently the subject of an issue of Newsweek magazine, which discussed the economic and social impacts of listing and the urgent need to educate and manage visitation to minimize adverse impacts and maximize benefits to host communities.

ICOMOS has recently collaborated on an important study with the World Tourism Organisation to produce guidelines for managing tourism congestion at natural and cultural Sites, to assist in forward planning in such cases. This is a critical issue as world-wide tourism continues to expand and impact on cultural sites.

The Newsweek article went on to speculate about the new wonders of the world – though without any reference to the criteria which are so firmly established in the World Heritage Convention and its operational guidelines, Newsweek proposed its own view of Seven New Wonders of the World:

- The Akashi Kaikyo bridge in Japan,
- The Lakewood Church in Houston USA,
- The World’s tallest building in Taipei,
- Romania’s Palace of the Parliament,
- The international Space Station,
- A shopping mall in South China, and
- The Sydney Opera House.

We would all no doubt hold different views about this selection of places as potential World Heritage sites – do these places have outstanding universal value? They certainly demonstrate the diverse type of property which might be identified (perhaps only in the west?) as encapsulating the world’s current and future heritage. They show the exchange of ideas and values across the world that quickened so much at the close of the twentieth century.

In the Sydney Opera House we have a building designed by creative genius – a Danish architect and foreign engineers, set on an Australian harbour, now a cultural home which has come to almost symbolise a nation.

The Newsweek article contributes to the debate about what constitutes our heritage, and stimulates us all to review the history of our nation’s last century, to identify the places that demonstrate our heritage and plan for its management and conservation now – quickly, before it disappears! Or before it is “created” for us by the media! The city of Moscow and the federal government of Russia have a critical role to play in this discussion. ICOMOS will be playing an active role in promoting and supporting the conservation and management of twentieth-century heritage.

In particular I look forward to the collaboration of Russian colleagues who are now defining how Russia’s twentieth-century heritage will be identified and conserved.