Heritage at Risk – Special 2006

The Soviet Heritage and European Modernism

This new issue of the ICOMOS World Report on Monuments and Sites in Danger (Heritage at Risk) focuses on a special topic. Whereas the earlier annual or bi-annual reports which have come out since the year 2000 have had a global approach in that they discussed monuments world-wide and from all periods of time, this volume is concentrating on the architectural heritage of the 20th century, especially in Russia and the former Soviet Republics. For the most part the articles and case studies are based on papers presented at the Moscow conference "Heritage at Risk. Preservation of 20th-Century Architecture and World Heritage". This conference took place in Moscow in April 2006 on the occasion of the International Day for Monuments and Sites and was co-organised by ICOMOS.

A focal point of the documentation is to show the international correlation between architecture and urban planning in the young Soviet Union, while also putting an emphasis on the intensive German-Russian professional contacts between the two World Wars and immediately after the Second World War. This Heritage at Risk edition also presents preliminary results of the current research project The Architecture of Russian Constructivism (Moscow 1920–1934, Building Materials, Building Construction and Preservation of Buildings, currently being carried out under Dr. Anke Zalivako’s guidance at the Technical University of Berlin and sponsored by the German Research Community (DFG).

Comparative and background material about 20th-century World Heritage sites and World Heritage candidates complete this publication. With its inscribed World Heritage sites Völklingen Ironworks and Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex as examples of industrial heritage as well as with the Bauhaus sites in Dessau und Weimar as heritage of Modernism and the World Heritage site Rammelsberg the Federal Republic of Germany has profound experience in the management of World Heritage sites of the 20th century. In addition there are proposals for monuments of the 20th century on the German Tentative List (housing estates of the Berlin modern style, the Corbusier house in Stuttgart, the Faguswerke in Alfeld by Gropius, the Chilehaus and the Speicherstadt in Hamburg), which prove that Germany was a cradle of European Modernism and that today it is a region of competence in the field of conservation and restoration of buildings of the 20th century.

The publication documents the threatened heritage of the 20th century in the former Soviet Union, especially world-famous examples of avant-garde architecture in Moscow and St. Petersburg. In addition, this documentation offers a survey of encouraging best practice projects started successfully by state-aided or non-governmental initiatives to save threatened monuments of 20th-century architecture in Russia, including international initiatives and networks. The inclusion of years of conservation and restoration experience in looking after World Heritage sites of the 20th century provides manifold information, suggestions and assistance; hopefully it is also a motivation for increased conservation efforts to save internationally renowned architectural witnesses in the former Soviet Union.

38 contributions by distinguished Authors in English, Russian und German, 192 pages, 117 black/white- and 47 coloured photos, 21 x 29,7 cm, Softcover, 39,— euros
ISBN 978-3-930388-50-9

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