

Opening Address by Dr Andrea H. Schuler, Europa Nostra Executive President;
Europa Nostra Forum; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 7 June 2007

Your Royal Highness,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In their manifesto on Futurist architecture, the Italians Antonio Sant' Elia and Filippo Marinetti in 1914 identified modern architecture as *transitory and quick*. Modern architecture should not be built for eternity, not even for next generations. - This would imply that modern architecture would never be considered a subject for conservation.

Modern architecture was also never considered as part of a historic continuity, where one architectural style develops from the previous one, or one even further back in history. In The Netherlands and in Germany, important countries in the early development of modern architecture, it was referred to as *das neue Bauen*: the new way of building, to mean: A new architecture independent from the past.

As the Pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage, Europa Nostra is, among other goals, dedicated to the tangible witnesses of the past and their influence on and benefits for our days. Looking to the ideas of the 1910s and 20s, modern architecture and Europa Nostra seem to be sitting on opposite banks of an unbridgeable river.

Already in 1932, the American architects Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson presented modern architecture as the next step in architectural design and even called it a style. Modern architecture became Modernist architecture and is nowadays considered an essential part of our architectural and intellectual heritage.

Why then does **Europa Nostra** want to organise a Forum to present Modernist architecture as part of Europe's cultural heritage?

Sometimes it seems that the European cultural heritage and conservation movement traditionally focussed on buildings that are unique and one-of-a-kind, in function as well as in aesthetics.

The scale of Modernist architecture however, both the number and the size of projects, does not fit that uniqueness. Modernist architecture and architecture inspired by the Modern Movement are omnipresent in our day-to-day life and therefore may not be considered of any special value.

Because of the sheer number of examples - its omnipresence - Modernist architecture seems not to be visible.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's 'Less is more' became the battle cry of the Modern Movement. Perhaps, had there been fewer examples or **less** Modernist architecture, there would have been **more** appreciation for it.

Since Modernist architecture is young architecture, it is difficult for the conservation and heritage movement to appreciate it as cultural heritage. Also, Modernist architecture is sometimes associated with certain totalitarian regimes, of both left-wing and right-wing ideologies. This, in combination with the fact that Modernist architecture is relatively recent architecture, imposes the thread of ideological and political criteria for 'conservation' or 'non-conservation' instead of architectural and art-historical ones.

A complex combination of architectural, cultural, social and political factors threatens the safeguard of Modernist architectural heritage. For no other era is the description of a monument, coined by Siegfried Giedion, José Luis Sert and Fernand Léger in their 1943 *Neun Punkte über Monumentalität* (or to translate *Nine Remarks on Monumentality*) more appropriate: "Monuments are human landmarks which men

have created as symbols for their ideals, for their aims, and for their actions. They are intended to outline the period which originated them, and constitute a heritage for future generations."

Why does Europa Nostra as a **European** federation of heritage NGOs organise a Forum on Modernist architecture?

Modernist architecture is an essentially - or at least an originally - European architecture. But architects influenced each other at international conferences; their writings were published widely, and architects travelled all over Europe to design and erect their buildings. In addition, the Second World War and its build-up caused a diaspora of Modernist architects, within and outside Europe. Although Modernist architecture has often been adapted to local construction principles, local materials and local functional programmes, it had an essentially European or even International, non-national character.

This cross-border character of Modernist architecture poses a problem in its appreciation as cultural heritage, and therefore a problem for the conservation of its buildings.

First of all, let me remind you that Modernist architecture would not have been possible without new and experimental building materials and construction methodologies. These new materials and construction principles were used all over Europe, and only slightly adapted to the local situation. But in different climates, the same building material behaves in different ways. To conserve Modernist architecture, one needs to experiment and develop conservation methods that suit the local conditions.

A second point to keep in mind is that cultural heritage is usually seen, at least in the first instance, as national cultural heritage. Even essentially European architectural

styles were subject to what we might call 'nationalisation'. For example, Gothic architecture is considered by France, Germany and England to be their national architecture. Yet, Modernist heritage has rarely been adopted specifically by one or the other European country as forming part of its national heritage.

The purpose, therefore, of this Europa Nostra Forum is to present **Modernist architecture as part of Europe's cultural heritage.**

Modernist architecture is already considered of value to mankind. 9 Modernist buildings and sites have been declared UNESCO World Heritage.¹ Apart from iconic architecture, like the *Bauhaus and its sites* in Weimar and Dessau in Germany or the *Rietveld-Schröder Villa* in Utrecht in The Netherlands, the examples also include rebuilt *Le Havre* in France and the *Woodland Cemetery*, here in Stockholm.

The fact that Modernist architecture is gradually gaining appreciation, may beautifully be illustrated with the history of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards. Over the past ten years, every year one or two Modernist buildings have won an award.² Tomorrow, at the European Heritage Awards Ceremony, Europa Nostra will be recognising and awarding 4 Modernist projects in Denmark, Finland, Hungary and Sweden for outstanding achievements in the conservation of architectural heritage.

¹ Brazil, Brasilia, 1987: BRASILIA; Czech Republic, Brno, 2001: TUGENDHAT VILLA; France, Le Havre, 2005: THE CITY REBUILT BY AUGUSTE PERRET; Germany, Weimar and Dessau, 1996: BAUHAUS AND ITS SITES IN WEIMAR AND DESSAU; Israel, Tel Aviv, 2003: WHITE CITY OF TEL AVIV - THE MODERN MOVEMENT; Netherlands, Utrecht, 2000: RIETVELD-SCHRÖDER HUIS; Poland, Wrocław, 2006: CENTENNIAL HALL IN WROCLAW; Sweden, Stockholm, 1994: SKOGSKYRKOGÅRDEN; Venezuela, Caracas, 2000: CIUDAD UNIVERSITARIA DE CARACAS

² Sir Owen Williams D 10 Building, Boots Site, Nottingham, United Kingdom, 1995; Hilversum City Hall, Netherlands, 1997; Luma Tower, Glasgow, United Kingdom, 1998; Villa Müller, Prague, Czech Republic, 2000; Villa Tammekann, Tartu, Estonia, 2001; Endless Column by Brancusi, Targu-Jiu, Rumania, 2001; Copenhagen Airport, Vilhelm Lauritzen Terminal, Kastrup, Denmark, 2002; Gyttorps Centrum, Nora, Sweden, 2002; 'Bellevue Teatret', Klampenborg, Denmark, 2003; La maison de Verre, Brussels, Belgium, 2004

Europa Nostra has also organised this Forum on Modernist architecture to push or pull the European conservation and heritage movement towards - or right into - the 21st century, to show that the heritage movement is not afraid of the 20th century.

Highlighting the value of Modernist architecture and the challenges of its conservation, opens a gateway for the more traditional European Heritage Movement into more recent times, and a way to attract the interest of wider groups of civil society for the value of heritage and the high importance of heritage conservation.

These wider groups might, it is to be hoped, include today's architects. A large part of the architectural profession still holds, quite to my surprise, the idea that it needs not acknowledging being part of a continuous history of architecture, or that its history does not go beyond Modernist architecture, creating a false glass wall between architects and the heritage and conservation movement.

We want this Forum to be a starting point for tearing down superfluous walls and for bringing together contemporary architecture and the heritage movements throughout Europe.

We are grateful to have had, and to still have this afternoon, the valuable support of DOCOMOMO, the international working party for documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement, and the support of the Swedish Association of Architects.

When preparing an annual congress, Europa Nostra always asks the host country to come up with a theme for the Forum that is of particular relevance to the host country as well as to the whole of Europe. We would like to thank very warmly Europa Nostra Sweden, our country representation in Sweden, for having chosen Modernist Architecture and its conservation as the theme of the Europa Nostra Forum 2007.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to Mr. Pehr-Mikael Sällström for organising and chairing this Forum, and to all the speakers for putting so much effort, experience and commitment in preparing their contributions to the Forum. Thank you, thank you very much, indeed!

Considering the wide range of examples presented this afternoon, I would like to quote the American Robert Venturi to change Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's adage 'Less is more' into an optimistic: 'More is not less'.

I wish you all a challenging, inspiring and fruitful afternoon!