



The Association for Preservation Technology International  
Association pour la préservation et ses techniques

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### **The *APT Bulletin*: Special Issue on Modernism**

The newest issue of the *APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preservation Technology* focuses on the past, present, and future of the mid-century modern buildings that comprise much of the existing building stock in North America. As these buildings age, the preservation community must assume the responsibility of caring for these structures and of finding new ways to treat them. Guest editors David Fixler and Kyle Normandin correctly state that the “reality of dealing with such a large inventory of resources from this era is challenging and has prompted historic-preservation professionals to reevaluate numerous aspects of conservation orthodoxy.” The papers in this issue cover philosophical, historical, and technical topics and a wide range of building and construction types dating from the 1920s through the 1970s.

This issue also contains a draft of APT’s Principles for Practice on Renewing Modernism. Ultimately, the principles will be employed to complement existing international conservation standards and charters and to provide enhanced guidance toward solutions within a framework of best practice. David Fixler, a contributing author to the principles, states that “this guidance includes an emphasis on sustainability, balanced

conservation approaches, and resiliency, addressing the full panoply of available modern resources.”

In an article entitled “Changing World, Evolving Value: Historic Preservation Toward 2050,” Carl Elefante, president-elect of the American Institute of Architects, addresses the importance of caring for mid-century modern structures in a world plagued by climate change. Elefante argues that conserving rather than replacing these buildings is critical, as the production of new construction materials only exacerbates the global crisis.

This special issue features several case studies involving modern-era buildings with varied needs. “Mitigating the Flooding Threat at Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois” by Jenna Cellini Bresler outlines a possible engineering solution to the floodwaters that have long plagued the property. Mies had designed the building to sit well above ground because of its proximity to a river that flooded regularly. However, as climate change had accelerated and floodwaters increased, the threat to the building has worsened. Bresler discusses plans for a new hydraulic system that would raise the house during a flood without compromising the building’s historic integrity.

“Architect O’Neil Ford’s Exploration of the Solar House in Texas” by Lauren Weiss Bricker discusses the popularity of solar houses in the post-World War II era. Programs like Libbey-Owens-Ford’s passive solar-house design contests inspired architects throughout the country to design solar houses. Ford is especially well known for his San Antonio solar houses, notably one designed for the McNeel family in 1945. Bricker also underscores the importance of regionalism in the development of modernism in the United States.

Mike Jackson's article, "Modernism on Main Street: The Dilemma of the Half-modern Building," examines the use of "architectural slipcovers" to renovate art-deco and art-moderne storefronts of the late 1920s and the 1930s. This overcladding helped give rise to the "half-modern building," in which the first-floor facade was renovated, but the upper floors remained as originally constructed. This type of building presents its own set of preservation challenges, due to the varied vintage of its elements and its encapsulated original facade; in his article, Jackson outlines some potential solutions to these challenges.

"Testing Vitrolite Adhesion: Structural Evaluation of Reattachment Methods for Historic Glass Panels" by Jordan C. Dick and Matthew B. Bronski analyzes replacement adhesives for pigmented glass panels. In this case study, the original asphaltic mastic adhesives were no longer viable because they could not withstand the weathering and harsh conditions of the Northeast. This article outlines testing procedures and reattachment methods for the panels, as well as the process that led to the selection of the adhesive.

John H. Cluver's article, "The Lightest Touch: Repairing Custom Mid-century Windows with a Limited Budget," examines conditions at the Noyes House at Vassar College, designed by Eero Saarinen. The building's chevron-shaped aluminum windows suffered from chronic leaking, and the college's budget did not allow for their complete replacement. Cluver discusses the repairs and conservation approach that were ultimately undertaken in this project, as well as how the tight budget was accommodated.

In "Rehabilitation of the Envelope of the Art and Architecture Building at the University of Illinois at Chicago," Scott Utter and Kelsey Shipton examine the preservation needs of a 1970s brutalist building designed by Walter Netsch. The authors discuss Netsch's use of field theory in planning the building, as well as the approaches

undertaken to repair the skylights. The building's lack of natural interior light, common in many modern-era buildings, is a serious problem that will require attention in the future.

In "Conservation of Interiors from the 1950s–1970s in Montréal, Québec," Claudine Déom discusses the rehabilitation of modern buildings from the often-competing priorities of maintenance of historic integrity and contemporary utility. In many instances, the author explains, modern buildings must be rehabilitated due to their frailty and lack of natural light. The author provides several case studies in which historic elements were preserved as the utility of a building was enhanced, thereby maintaining its relevance, often with a new purpose in mind.

Finally, a case study by Cesar Bargues, William Whitaker, and Frank G. Matero, entitled "George Nakashima's Arts Building and Cloister: A Conservation and Management Plan," considers a complex that Nakashima designed in New Hope, Pennsylvania. The multi-building complex required extensive repairs, particularly to the roof of the main building, and conservation efforts have proved quite complicated due to the fragility, spirituality, and integrity of the complex. Nakashima, known worldwide for his designs in wood, was heavily invested aesthetically in the materials used both outside and within his buildings, so preservation efforts have been focused especially on the maintenance of original building fabric to as great an extent as possible.

The book reviews for this issue were provided by book review co-editors Frances Gale and Lesley Gilmore. *English Heritage, Practical Building Conservation, Metals* by Sophie Godfraind, Robyn Pender, and Bill Martin is reviewed by Richard Pieper. *3D Recording, Documentation and Management of Cultural Heritage*, edited by Efstratios Stylianidis and Fabio Remondiono, is reviewed by Christopher Gray.

The Association for Preservation Technology is the only international organization dedicated solely to promoting the best technology for conserving historic structures and their settings. Founded in 1968 in Québec as a joint venture between Canadian and U.S. preservationists, APT provides members with benefits that include publications, networking opportunities, conferences, training courses, and student scholarships. As a benefit of membership, APT members can, at no cost, search, browse, download, and print full-text PDF versions of past *Bulletin* articles on JSTOR, an international online digital archive. Visit <http://www.apti.org> for more information.

The *APT Bulletin*, a peer-reviewed, scholarly journal, is a valued source for state-of-the-art information on preservation technology. Published three times a year by APT, the *Bulletin* examines all aspects of preservation technology in feature articles and book reviews, keeping readers at the leading edge of the field.

Mount Ida Press, which edits and produces the *APT Bulletin*, specializes in high-quality publications on history, architecture, and building technology. For further information about the *APT Bulletin*, please contact the editorial office in Albany, New York, at 518.426.5935 or at [info@mountidapress.com](mailto:info@mountidapress.com).

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