

International

World Monuments Fund Unveils 100 Most Endangered Sites *Emergency measure makes Historic Lower Manhattan 101st on Watch list*



by Tracy F. Ostroff

Associate Editor

The World Monuments Fund (WMF) announced on October 11 its biennial Watch List of the top 100 imperiled historic, architectural, and cultural sites worldwide. As an emergency measure, WMF also added Historic Lower Manhattan as the 101st site on

the endangered list.

The authors of the report note that it is sobering that acts of destruction are not limited to the battlefield, but “at the cultural icons that bind and inspire communities around the world.” They continue, “Our landmarks—the Mostar Bridge, the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan, and the World Trade Center—have become the prized targets for terrorists because they are what defines the cultures, ideals, and achievements of people who created them, who use them, who live with them.”

Five continents and 50 countries

The list spans five continents and 50 countries. It includes sites with diverse geographic, cultural, and national origins. It features well-known landmarks, such as the Great Wall of China, and less well-known sites, such as Terezin Fortress, Czech Republic, and Pervomaisk Church, Belarus. U.S. sites include the



Chersonesos, Sevastapol, Ukraine, is called the “Ukrainian Pompeii” because the colony on the Black Sea, which was founded in the 5th century, offers such well-preserved examples of Roman and Hellenic remains. The site, which sits on the north coast of the Black Sea, is severely threatened by coastal erosion and an almost total lack of funding for preservation.



PHOTO BY MASSOOD KHAN.

The Uch Monument Complex, located in the Bahawalpur District, Pakistan, is the home of tile-bedecked mausoleums built in the 15th and 16th centuries. The tombs suffered severe damage in a 19th century flood, and attempts to repair them (with cement) further compromised their preservation.

A. Conger Goodyear House, Old Westbury, N.Y.; San Esteban del Rey Mission, Acoma Pueblo, N.M.; St. Ann and the Holy Trinity Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.; San Capistrano Mission Church, San Capistrano, Calif.; and Schindler Kings Road House and Studio, West Hollywood, Calif. A prior list included architect Richard Neutra’s Los Angeles home.

Site types include religious buildings, archaeological sites, townscapes, military structures, civic buildings, dwellings, cultural landscapes, palaces, engineering works, and industrial sites. They can be seen in the book, *Vanishing Histories: 100 Endangered Sites from the World Monuments Watch*, authored by Colin Amery, a former architectural correspondent for the *London Financial Times*, with Brian Curran Jr. of the WMF. It will be published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

The watch list is a call to action, and organizers say it is often the only hope for cultural monuments that are threatened by the calamities of “pollution, natural disasters, neglect, uncontrolled tourism, and wanton destruction.” Intervention has helped rescue some of the ailing properties: 73 percent of the 1998 sites are now off the endangered list and are improving. Since the beginning of the watch program, more than 226 grants to 128 sites in 60 countries have been awarded a total of \$12.6 million, in addition to millions more directly leveraged to the sites.

PHOTO BY JOSEPH CARTER

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A panel representing several international organizations selected the sites, which they culled from nominations submitted to WMF by governments, organizations, and people active in cultural preservation. Only sites that are nominated may be considered.

The WMF also promotes other initiatives, such as the Jewish Heritage Program, to identify and preserve historic Jewish sites abandoned during World War II, and the European Preservation Program, which focuses on assessing and repairing damage to cultural monuments in former Communist-bloc countries. ■



The World Monuments Watch has designated Historic Lower Manhattan as its 101st Most Endangered Site in the wake of the September 11 devastation. The area, which dates to 1625, contains more than 65 landmarks in six historic districts, and—from Trinity Church to the Woolworth Building—offers a history lesson of the evolution of American architecture. “Landmark quality buildings that are not officially listed as landmarks are particularly at risk in the reconstruction process,” the World Monuments Watch also reminds us. “It is important that historic preservation have a voice in the public dialogue regarding the restoration of New York, a critical step in the healing process as the city rebuilds its sense of place.”



PHOTO BY DENNIS PLAYDOON

San Esteban del Rey Mission, Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico, is part of a Native American community that has been continuously inhabited for 1,000 years, making it the oldest community in the U.S. The stone-and-adobe mission itself was built in the “Sky City” under the direction of Father Juan Ramirez by the Acoma people, who consider the spirits of their ancestors to be within the walls. Despite the serious preservation efforts by tribal members, the mission is threatened by ground-level erosion and severe roof deterioration, making it a prime candidate for a comprehensive preservation program.



PHOTO BY GLENN BOORMAZIAN FOR WMF

PHOTO BY ADAM GLASSER

Ohel Rachel Synagogue, Shanghai, China, one of the few remaining buildings bearing witness to the pre-1949 population of more than 25,000 Jews, is the only remaining synagogue (out of seven) in the city. Although confiscated by the Chinese government in 1952, the building has remained largely intact (in part due to landmark status achieved in 1993), and its again-growing Jewish community is spearheading the movement to return it to its 1920s condition and use as a house of worship and museum.