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## Buzludzha Monument and Keeping It Modern

In 2019, the German National Committee of ICOMOS helped set in motion a process to safeguard the future of Buzludzha Monument with a Getty Foundation grant that supported a conservation management plan for the site. The following year, Getty provided an additional smaller grant to stabilize the monument's interior mosaics. Both grants were part of our international Keeping It Modern initiative, launched in 2014 to support the conservation of significant 20th-century architectural heritage around the world.

Modern architecture emerged at a global scale in the decades after the First World War, based largely on the *rational* use of modern materials, the principles of functionalist planning, and the rejection of historical precedent and ornament. The new architecture soon became synonymous with technical, political, and social progress; its open floor plans, greater transparency, and innovative design were regarded as symbols of a new era of modern living. However, the experimental materials and novel engineering techniques used in many of the most innovative buildings have not always performed well over time. Today they present significant conservation challenges.

The Getty Foundation believes that comprehensive research and planning is at the heart of conservation best practices and that it is imperative to understand underlying causes of deterioration before making repairs. Keeping It Modern grants, therefore, predominantly support the creation of conservation management plans to guide long-term maintenance and policy; the thorough investigation of building conditions; the testing and analysis of modern materials; and the development of research-based conservation proto-

cols. In the case of the Buzludzha Monument, preservation specialists and local experts produced both a conservation management plan and a digital *Building Information Model (BIM)* — a robust online platform that incorporates laser scans, archival materials, and more. Together these products create a shared knowledge resource for decision-making about the monument and its future care.

The Buzludzha Monument reflects the Brutalist style that was popular in Western Europe in the mid- to late-20th century. Bulgarian architect Georgi Stoilov designed the monument as an expansive, discus-shaped body, with a free-standing steel roof and dramatic tower. It is a distinctly Bulgarian structure that on the outside makes a conscious connection with the West, while on the inside encapsulates Soviet ideals of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Looking ahead, the successful preservation of the landmark will largely depend on plans for its adaptive reuse, which must respect the building's embodied meaning and original fabric. The project team has led a brilliant public awareness campaign to demonstrate that this national heritage monument is a masterpiece of architectural engineering, an integral part of Bulgarian history, and a civic site with great potential for continued enjoyment if given a new function.

This meeting and the work it presents to preserve the Buzludzha Monument and share learnings with the heritage field is the result of strong collaboration and commitment. I extend special thanks and congratulations to ICOMOS Bulgaria and Germany, in particular to Gabriela Semova-Koleva and Jörg Haspel, as well as to Dora Ivanova, Director of the Buzludzha Project Foundation, who has been a tireless advocate for preserving the monument.

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