The Values-Based Approach to Cultural-Heritage Preservation

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Cultural-heritage preservation using the values-based approach has evolved from Australia ICOMOS's Burra Charter to a new paradigm with application in a variety of countries.

Recognition of cultural heritage has traditionally been the territory of academics and cultural-heritage experts. These professionals identify what properties should be considered culturally significant and worthy of preservation and then prescribe treatments. At the same time, preservationists have looked to the public for support in persuading politicians and municipalities in conservation efforts and when seeking public funding. Preservation professionals have spent decades convincing the public and officials that preserving cultural properties is for the greater public good and enhances the quality of life. As preservationists, we perform research and evaluate the impacts and benefits of heritage (economic, social, etc.). Yet when it comes to empowering the public to make decisions identifying what properties are culturally significant and how to manage them, we are reluctant to give up our authority.

Fig. 1. The interior of the 135th Street Gatehouse prior to adaptive reuse. Photograph by John Bartelstone.

Susan Macdonald (formerly director of the New South Wales Heritage Office and currently head of The Getty Conservation Institute's field projects), Marta de la Torre (previously head of heritage-values research at The Getty Conservation Institute and presently a heritage consultant), Kate Clark (formerly deputy director of policy and research at the Heritage Lottery Fund in the UK and currently principal policy advisor for the Office of Environment and Heritage, New South Wales Department of Premier and Cabinet of the Australian Heritage Council), and I decided to form a small scientific committee to explore how values-based cultural-heritage preservation has influenced thinking and practice in our profession. We debated the topic over several months and felt that the values-based approach, which is well understood in Australia, could use wider dissemination among the North American professional audience. In order to accomplish this, we invited select authors to produce papers reflecting on different aspects of the values-based approach for this special issue of the *APT Bulletin*.

Emergence of the Values-Based Approach to Preservation

From the 1960s onwards, several factors empowered new groups to participate in all aspects of society, including the identification and conservation of cultural heritage. These areas include acknowledgement of Indigenous and civil rights, the spread of democracy and the relinquishment of control by colonial powers, and access to better education.

Fig. 2. The gatehouse before restoration. Photograph by John Bartelstone.

During the 1960s the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites was also drafted.[1] It is the doctrine that still guides preservationists internationally. The Venice Charter is a Western-based document that identifies cultural significance with monumentality. This approach works well in places where historic and archaeological sites are constructed of stone or fired brick, but it is less attuned to sites that never had architectural remains, let alone monumental ones. Such sites often have spiritual significance for Indigenous groups.

Recognizing that significance is dependent on the culture identifying it, Australia ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) set out to rectify this imbalance. Significance assessment is not new, but until recently it was performed solely by professionals. Over the course of the past 15-plus years, there has been a growing awareness that engaging communities in the process of significance assessment brought with it the added benefit of buy-in from the community. It also exposed additional social values and, sometimes, spiritual values that might not otherwise have been revealed. In this scenario significance is determined from the values held by the various stakeholders and from the importance of the place in comparison to other similar sites. Naturally, there is a distinction between the values used to designate and those needed to understand how to manage and intervene in a site.

Consequently, a new paradigm has gradually been gaining recognition among preservation professionals.[2] That paradigm is referred to as values-based management. This approach has been significantly shaped by the Australians, who memorialized it with the drafting of the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, better known as the Burra Charter, first issued in 1979. Since then, the Burra Charter has undergone a number of revisions, the latest version dating to 2013.[3] The Australian Heritage Council had endorsed the Burra Charter by 2004. It is now regularly used as best practice in Australia.

Australia, like the U.S. and Canada, was colonized by the British and other Western Europeans. Like the U.S. and Canada, those colonists encountered an Indigenous population. The Aborigines had lived in Australia for 40,000 years prior to European colonization. They had and continue to have cultural beliefs that do not necessarily correlate to those of Western European origin. However, until the Burra Charter took hold, identification of cultural significance and its management was governed by the dominant colonial society.

The Burra Charter arose from Australians' desire to include the participation and values of their Aboriginal population in the heritage process. Values-based preservation is not expert-driven; rather, it involves consultation with stakeholders, who may have conflicting values. The Burra Charter has become the best-known guideline for values-based management. Its methodology emphasizes a collaborative process by providing a well-defined sequence of steps to determine value. An in-depth knowledge of the heritage place is required. This knowledge is acquired through research and consultation with stakeholders. This background information includes the physical integrity of the site, management context, the values attributed to it by various groups, and the threats to the site.

However, managing community engagement is a complicated process, and at some point, decisions have to be made about how to utilize the values that emerge, typically by the professionals leading the process. How prevalent do these values become and how do they fit in, in terms of the overall values of a place? Who ranks values, using what criteria? Do professionals give preference to professional values over social values? Where does significance end and local interests begin?

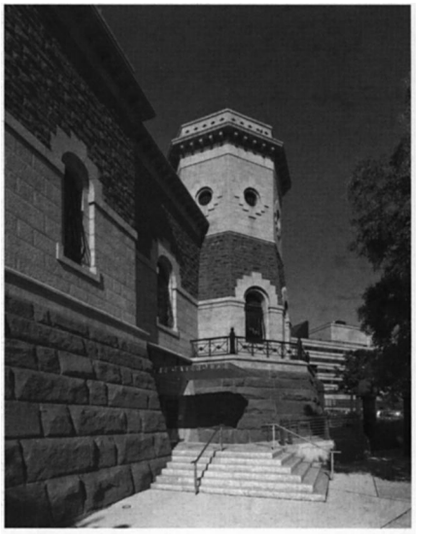

Fig. 3. The new entrance to the Harlem Stage Gatehouse reoriented the building. Photograph by John Bartelstone.

Furthermore, since values are identified and assigned, they are attributed rather than intrinsic. Therefore, values can change over time depending on stakeholders' viewpoints. The Burra Charter identifies five values by which cultural significance can be identified: historic, scientific, aesthetic, social, and spiritual. Management and intervention decisions for sites are based on revealing and enhancing identified cultural values.

To explore these concepts, this issue of *APT Bulletin* begins with a historical overview of the challenges that led to the development of the Burra Charter by one of the original drafters of the charter, Meredith Walker. Marta de la Torre then summarizes The Getty Conservation Institute's initiative in exploring the role of the values-based approach. Barbara Little follows with a paper on its application within the U.S. National Park Service. Following that, Susan Macdonald and Sheridan Burke, the latter an adjunct professor at the University of Canberra and principal in the Sydney-based heritage-consulting firm Godden Mackay Logan, tackle the management of significance at the World Heritage site of the Sydney Opera House. Then, Chris Johnston, who wrote the seminal text on social value,

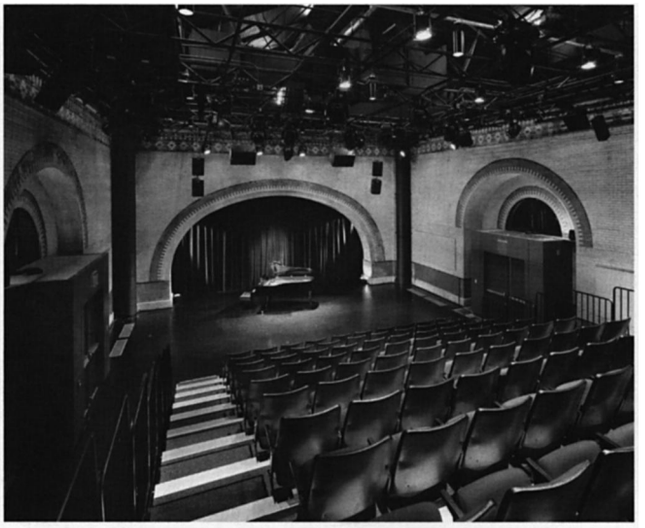

Fig. 4. The adaptation of the interior of the gatehouse reused an existing arch as the proscenium. Photograph by John Bartelstone.

Fig. 5. The restored exterior of the gatehouse. Photograph by John Bartelstone.

provides examples of its application. Suzanne Scheld, Dana Taplin, and Setha Low, American anthropologists, urban planners, and collaborators, review the use of the values-based approach at public parks. Gareth Maeer, head of research at the UK Heritage Lottery Fund, looks at the values and benefits of heritage from an economic perspective. Kate Clark wraps up this special issue with new thoughts about values-based heritage management that are emerging from the UK.

Application of the Values-Based Approach in Two Case Studies

The following two adaptive-reuse interventions explain how the values-based approach impacts the decision-making process in practice, both philosophically and from a technical standpoint. The work was carried out by Wank Adams Slavin Associates LLP (WASA/Studio A), an architecture and engineering firm based in New York City.

The 135th Street Gatehouse, located in Harlem on the corner of Convent Avenue and 135th Street, was designed by Frederick S. Cook and completed in 1890 as part of the New Croton Aqueduct system. With the completion of the original Croton Aqueduct in 1842, the city first provided potable water, accommodating its explosive growth. However, the city's expansion soon outstripped its capability to provide safe water, and the New Croton Aqueduct was the response. The 135th Street Gatehouse was described as "the most impressive architectural feature of the New Croton Aqueduct constructed within the city."[4] Its Romanesque exterior was symbolic of the city's desire for world-class status. The structure paid tribute to one of nineteenth-century America's greatest engineering feats, while also protecting the city from the spread of disease and fire. The gatehouse resembled a medieval church or a temple to the sacred element of water. Visitors were uplifted by the sound of rushing water viewed through the grilles over the subsurface chambers (Fig. 1). For these reasons, the building has always had great social value.

The gatehouse was designated a New York City landmark in 1981 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. However, in 1989 the city's Department of Environmental Protection decommissioned the building. Although recognized as a landmark, without a use the structure languished for approximately 15 years, contributing to what had become a blighted landscape in the neighborhood (Fig. 2). Fortunately, under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and with input from the surrounding community, the building was reinvented as the Harlem Stage Gatehouse. Working for the New York City Department of Design and Construction from 2002 through 2006, WASA/Studio A, in joint venture with Olhausen Dubois Architects, developed plans for reusing the building.[5] The goal was to convert this celebrated-but-defunct engineering marvel, sandwiched between the north and south campuses of City College in an urban dead zone, into a catalyst for the revitalization of the neighborhood, thereby reestablishing its social value.

The programmatic changes to the building were the greatest challenge. Inserting a 196-seat theater at the upper level, along with the main entrance, box office, and public restrooms at the intermediate level and administrative-support spaces at the lower level, had to be carefully balanced with the integrity of the historic fabric and cultural significance of the structure's original function. However, the alternative was to allow the building to continue to deteriorate in its abandoned state; therefore, compromises were made for the sake of preserving and revitalizing the gatehouse. The first step was a thorough documentation of the existing conditions, since the interior sluice gates, chambers, and water-distribution functions were to be removed in order to accommodate the theater.

One of the main interventions was to reorient the building to serve its new function. This entailed providing a new entrance on Convent Avenue, which had to be cut out of the original elevation fabric (Fig. 3). The original Romanesque

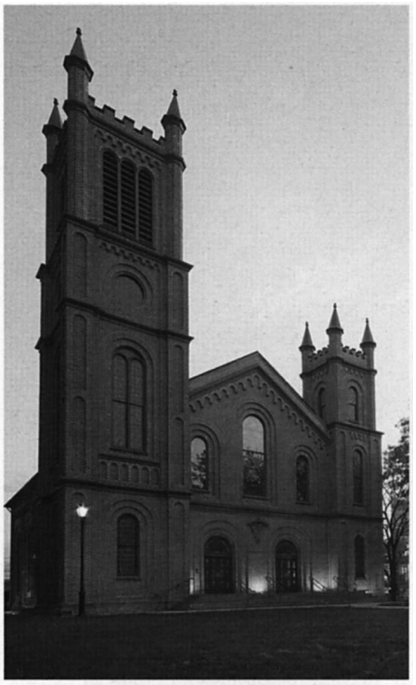

Fig. 6. The restored exterior of the Jamaica Performing Arts Center. Photograph by Jim Brown.

arch at the upper level became the proscenium for the stage (Fig. 4). With its new function, the building continues to play a pivotal role in its urban context, albeit one entirely different from its original function. It now links the north and south campuses of City College seamlessly. Its reincarnation has reinforced the community's pride of place. It has also enhanced the neighborhood's engagement with the city at large, by creating a destination focal point for culture. Although the gatehouse's scientific value was sacrificed as a result of its adaptive reuse, its aesthetic and historic values remain, while its social value has been reinstated (Fig. 5).

The second project also involved the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. From 2001 to 2008 the New York City Department of Design and Construction retained WASA/Studio A to design the adaptive reuse of the First Reformed Church of Jamaica, dating from 1858-1859, in Queens, New York (Fig. 6). Master carpenter Sydney J. Young designed the original building. The rear portion, where the apse is located, is an addition dating to 1902, which was designed by Cuyler B. Tuthill of the firm Tuthill and Higgins.[6] The surrounding area was gradually transformed from residential to commercial usage, and in 1973 New York City acquired the church as part of an urban-renewal plan.[7] The congregation moved to a new location on 90th Avenue but still had a sentimental attachment to the building.[8] The building was scheduled to be demolished in 1975, but the community fought to retain it. As a result, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designated it a landmark in 1979, but the New York City Board of Estimate reversed the designation. The urban-renewal plan was never executed, and with community support, the Landmarks Commission redesignated the church in 1996.[9] It is also listed on the State and National registers.

Archival research revealed that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) existed between the Department of Design and Construction and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.[10] The MOU clearly stated that certain features, such as the pews and the organ, were to be preserved (Fig. 7). However, the building had long since ceased to have spiritual value for the community. Its proposed reuse, which would serve three local groups — Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, Cultural Collaborative of Jamaica, and Black Spectrum Theater — was to convert the church into a flexible space that could be used for performances or banquet facilities. Retaining the pews in place would not have accommodated retractable platforms and removable seating, and the organ would hamper backstage needs. After preliminary discussions with the client and the end-user groups, it became apparent that the client needed to choose between saving the pews and organ in situ or the building itself. The MOU was renegotiated, and the pews were removed and stored by the Department of Design and Construction, while the organ was sold to another church.

The Jamaica Performing Arts Center, as it is currently known, was reconfigured to accommodate a state-of-the-art performance space featuring seating for 325 at the main level and an additional 75 seats at the balcony (Fig. 8). The entire length of the church was structurally underpinned in order to develop a full basement, accommodating restrooms, dressing rooms, kitchen warming facilities, mechanical and electrical rooms, and storage for props and scenery.[11] A stage lift was inserted into an existing one-story addition. A conference room for community use was provided at the third floor with a direct line of sight to the stage.

The building's brick-and-brownstone facades and windows were restored, including three stained-glass windows facing Jamaica Avenue, while other deteriorated stained-glass panels were salvaged and donated to the original congregation. The remaining windows were returned to their former design — a clear glass, diamond pattern outlined by slender lead cames. New slate and flat-seam copper roofs were installed to replace the original deteriorated ones. The brownstone entrance stairs were redesigned to create monumental stairs that double as casual outdoor seating. The church's restoration enhanced its aesthetic and historic values, while providing it with a new social value by making it relevant again.

What these two case studies have in common is that the original use value of the sites had ceased to exist. In the one case, this involved an infrastructural use, and in the other, a spiritual use. However, the social needs of the surrounding communities provided a path for a reimagining of both buildings by giving them a new function. Those new functions required that the intact interiors, which had great integrity, be completely remodeled. The historic and aesthetic values of the exterior envelope and the structures themselves, as opposed to their original function or their interior contents, took precedence. Because the buildings were recognized as significant at the national and local levels, and in the case of the church at the state level as well, the interventions were considered appropriate reuse of what would have otherwise remained abandoned and derelict buildings.

Influence of the Burra Charter beyond Australia

As it becomes more widely disseminated, the Burra Charter has influenced several other doctrinal texts. New Zealanders followed suit in 1993 with the

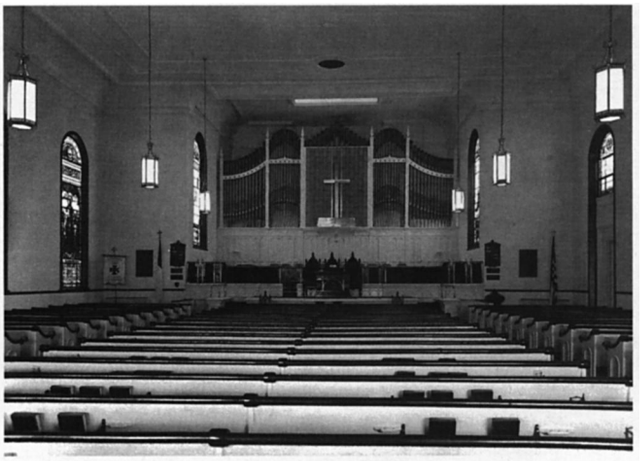

Fig. 7. The interior of the First Reformed Church of Jamaica prior to adaptive reuse. Courtesy of the Dept. of Design and Construction.

Fig. 8. The interior of the Jamaica Performing Arts Center. Photograph by Jim Brown.

ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value.[12] Over a ten-year period and with the assistance of The Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) and Australia ICOMOS, ICOMOS China issued the Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China in 2002.[13] English Heritage and Parks Canada have also taken notice. There are several National Park Service sites in the Southwest U.S., some of which are World Heritage sites, that use a values-based approach to management. Part of the reason for the Burra Charter's application outside of Australia is the influence of the GCI, which has collaborated on various projects.[14] The GCI has been particularly active in exploring the values-based approach as a methodology for site management, organizing a variety of workshops and publishing several research reports.[15]

As a new paradigm, values-based management brings up interesting questions in relationship to the World Heritage Convention, since the outstanding universal value (OUV) for which a site is inscribed must be protected and remain unchanged.[16] One of the issues that ICOMOS is wrestling with is how the values-based approach impacts the safeguarding of OUV. According to Meredith Walker, co-author of *The Illustrated Burra Charter*, significance does not change; however, additional values can be revealed, and as a result, emphasis on aspects of significance can shift over time.[17] Others believe that if values change over time, so does significance.

Needless to say, traditional preservationists do not necessarily agree with the values-based approach and believe that only experts should make decisions about what cultural heritage is and how to treat it.[18] But the new paradigm has arrived and is being gradually adopted, and since heritage has become politicized, deliberately targeted, etc., the general public has demanded more say in what is heritage and what is not, as well as how it gets treated.

Conclusion

How does values-based management relate to North American practitioners? What sites are using a values-based approach and why? Should stakeholders have more say in identification of heritage values and treatment of sites, or should cultural significance remain the domain of experts and academics? How does recognition of values impact our decision-making process when it comes to technical interventions? What is the difference between economic value and economic benefits? If the purpose of management/conservation is to protect and/or maintain significance, can all types of significance be protected with the same conservation practices/principles that have been established by professionals? The *APT Bulletin* devotes this special issue to the exploration of the doctrine and application of the values-based approach to cultural-heritage preservation.

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Notes

1. ICOMOS, The Venice Charter: International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (1964), http://www.icomos.org/venicecharter2004/index.html.

2. Gustavo Araoz, "Preserving Heritage Places under a New Paradigm," *Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development* 1, no. 1 (2011): 55-60.

3. Australia ICOMOS, The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (2013), http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Burra-Charter-2013-Adopted-31.10.2013.pdf.

4. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Designation List 141, L-1035* (March 23, 1981).

5. Robert Silman Associates were the structural engineers, and Harvey Marshall Berling Associates, the theater consultants.

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8. See www.nycago.org/Organs/Qns/html/FirstRefJamaica.html.

9. Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Designation List 270, LP-1939*, 4.

10. Wank Adams Slavin Associates LLP (2001), 1.

11. The structural engineer for the project was Robert Silman Associates.

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18. Michael Petzet, *International Principles of Preservation. Monuments and Sites XX* (Munich: ICOMOS, 2009), 7.

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