

WORLD MONUMENTS FUND/KNOLL

MODERNISM PRIZE

2021

AWARDED TO JOHN PUTTICK ASSOCIATES FOR
THE CONSERVATION OF PRESTON BUS STATION
IN PRESTON, UNITED KINGDOM



JURY CITATION

The 2021 World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize is awarded to John Puttick Associates for the conservation of Preston Bus Station in Preston, United Kingdom.

Designed in 1968 by Keith Ingham and Charles Wilson of Building Design Partnership, with the engineering firm Ove Arup and Partners, Preston Bus Station is one of the most impressive engineering achievements of a heroic moment in British modernist architecture. Drawing on the then current brutalist ethos, which was at once a reaction to modernism of the 1920s and 30s and a continuation of the fundamental commitment to an architecture expressive of modernist technique and life, Preston Bus Station is one of the great under sung achievements of that movement. Its assertion of a sculptural expression for reinforced concrete, while creating richness for a fundamental public space, provides an efficient, functional facility while elevating a quotidian aspect of community life.

However, by the 1990s the station suffered from neglect and inappropriate alterations. The building also suffered from considerable structural damage over time. Advertising, signage, retailers, and artificial lighting had also contributed to a dreary, disconnected experience for passengers who often felt unsafe in the space.

The complex's respectful restoration exemplifies not only an appreciation of the modernist commitment to creating dignified monuments for basic civic functions, but also the twenty-first century's need to adopt sustainable rehabilitation of inherited structures. It is at once an achievement for Lancashire and an exemplar for other cities.

Preston Bus Station is the largest project honored by the World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize and the first at the scale of regional infrastructure. The prize jury valued the detailed and extensive efforts of this project to preserve the full spectrum of historic significance of the station, from its original materials and aesthetic to the building's essential role as a civic center of transit and urban connectivity. We congratulate John Puttick Associates for this remarkable accomplishment.

Barry Bergdoll
Jury Chairman

The newly built Preston Bus Station,
October 1969. © Historic England Archive.
John Laing Photographic Collection.





More than a decade ago, WMF launched the biennial World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize, with founding sponsor Knoll, to raise awareness of the urgent threats to modern architecture. Since its inception, the prize has sought to recognize and support the individuals and organizations that preserve this period's built heritage. Previously honored projects include the Vyborg Library in Leningrad, Russia; Hizuchi Elementary School in Yawatahama City, Japan; and the Karl Marx School in the Paris suburb of Villejuif.

This year's award focuses on sustainable and community-centered approaches to rehabilitating modern buildings. By doing so, we celebrate the power of preservation as a positive force in society. The restoration of Preston Bus Station has enhanced both the social and public benefit of the station, which counts over 10,000 bus departures every week and contributes to minimizing the significant carbon footprint of commuting. We are thrilled to recognize the outstanding achievements of John Puttick Associates with this year's prize.

Bénédicte de Montlaur
President and CEO, WMF

Knoll

Knoll's commitment to modern design as a means to connect people to their work, their lives, and their world is stronger than ever. We are especially proud of our continuous support of World Monuments Fund's Modernism at Risk Initiative, and we congratulate John Puttick Associates for their thoughtful and detailed conservation of the modernist Preston Bus Station. The World Monuments Fund/Knoll Modernism Prize reflects Knoll's dedication to modern, sustainable design, and to workplace and residential furnishings that inspire, evolve, and endure. While many modern sites are being demolished, neglected, or abandoned, the sensitivity with which the restoration team at John Puttick Associates approached sustainable and community-centered approaches to this project can serve as a model for the role that architects and designers can play in the preservation of our architectural legacy. I would like to thank all those who submitted nominations for the 2021 prize and salute everyone associated with Preston Bus Station for their exemplary work.

Alana Stevens
President, Knoll

Stair after restoration.



THE WINNING TEAM

John Puttick Associates

John Puttick Associates was founded in 2014. The following year the practice was appointed to refurbish the iconic Grade II listed Preston Bus Station through a competition-winning design. The brutalist landmark reopened to the public in 2018 with the wider masterplan completed in 2019. It was selected by both the BBC and *The Observer* as one of the architectural highlights of the year. The project has also won National and Regional RIBA awards.

The success of the project has led to work on a number of other civic and community buildings, including a museum remodelling in Hertfordshire, the refurbishment and extension of a Grade II* listed Charles Barry-designed church in Brighton, and a series of new build youth centers across the UK for a charity specializing in providing gathering places for young people. The first of these opened in South London in 2019.

In addition to working on projects in the UK, John Puttick Associates has also designed buildings overseas. The firm's first completed project was a gallery for emerging artists in Beijing and they have since designed a series of residential and interiors projects in the United States.

As well as RIBA awards, the firm's work has won awards from the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Institute for Historic Building Conservation. John Puttick Associates is a RIBA Chartered Practice.



THE JURY

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SUSAN MACDONALD

Head, Buildings and Sites, The Getty Conservation Institute

THEO PRUDON

President, Docomomo US and Adjunct Professor of Historic Preservation, Columbia University and Pratt Institute

Detail of restored
wooden bench.

View showing stances at
Preston Bus Station, October 1969.
© Historic England Archive.
John Laing Photographic Collection.



SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SITE

Preston Bus Station is a site of significance due to its architectural interest. The building represents an important moment in the development of modernist architecture in Britain and established a public space that is enjoyed by its community. Designed by the newly formed BDP and opened in 1969, the station is a fine example of brutalist architecture and transport planning of the period.

The original brief requested a single bus station to replace the four separate buildings operating in Preston in the early 1960s. The eventual design intended to bring some of the glamour of air travel to a bus station. Additional elements were added including a car park for 1,100 vehicles. The building opened in October 1969 and was, at that time, Europe's largest bus station. The station plays an important role in the lives of those who use it, with the generosity of spaces creating an important destination for many different sectors of the community.

Central to the value of the station to Preston's cityscape is its monumental presence when viewed across the western apron. Gently curving concrete parapets give a powerful horizontal image to the building. Around the main station there are a number of related structures including the taxi rank to the south and curved car park ramps. These structures have their own massing and tectonic characteristics that relate to the main building.

View of parked buses with cranes constructing Preston Bus Station in the background. © Historic England Archive. John Laing Photographic Collection.





LAING

E.E. FRANCIS

RIBBLE

RCK 999

“ Despite the threat of demolition hanging over Preston Bus Station for many years, community interest and sustained advocacy eventually triumphed, reaffirming this monumental civic building to its place of pride at the core of the Lancashire town of Preston.

Susan Macdonald
Jury Member



Typical facade bay,
before restoration.



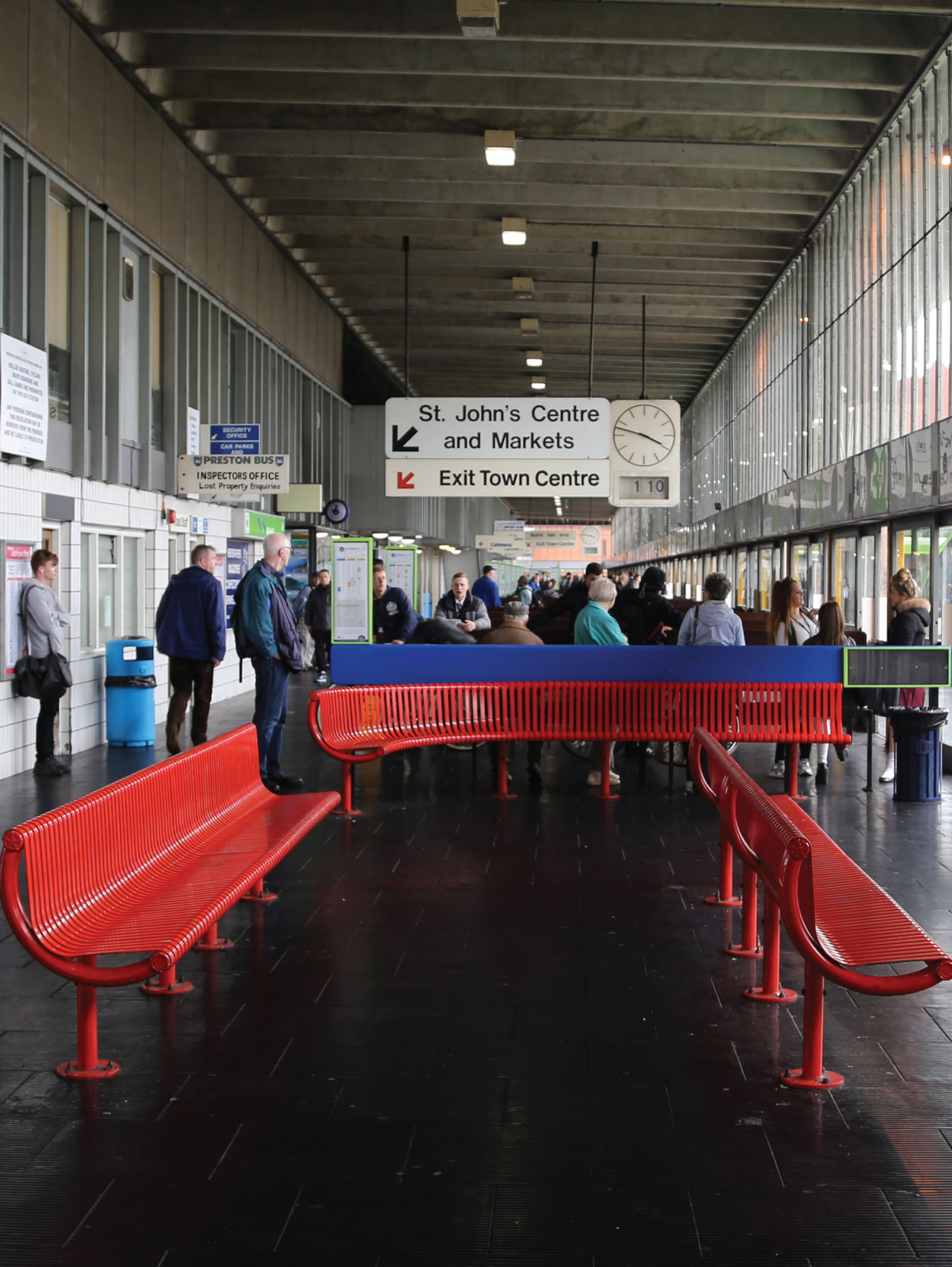
THREATS TO CONTINUED VIABILITY OF THE SITE BEFORE PRESERVATION

For many years there had been a consistent effort to prevent the building from being demolished. In fact, it was threatened with demolition on a number of occasions, beginning with the Tithebarn Street Regeneration Scheme. A number of actors—including local people and organizations such as the Twentieth Century Society—took part in the campaign to have the building *listed* (the UK designation for a protected building of special interest). English Heritage also recommended the building for listing on a number of occasions but was refused by government ministers.

In 2011 the regeneration project for the site collapsed due to unfavorable economic conditions and the withdrawal of the anchor retail tenant. Fortunately, international attention was drawn to the building with its inclusion on the 2012 World Monuments Watch. In December 2012, a new application was submitted which finally achieved the listing of the building, removing the threat of demolition.

A design competition was held in 2015 by Lancashire County Council to select an architect to rehabilitate the site, leading to the appointment of John Puttick Associates. At the time, while the building remained operational, it had been neglected and was in a poor state of repair. The use of below-ground subways to access the building had failed and the site was surrounded by fencing that attempted to separate the public from moving buses.

Crowded interior
before restoration.





Damaged exterior facade, before restoration.

The building's facade had suffered considerable damage over time as well. The aluminum brackets had degraded, leading to failure in some cases—most dramatically when a section of the facade collapsed in high winds in late 2015. Little of the glazing was safety-glass, causing a danger to the public. The sliding doors which made up the lower section of the facade were too heavy to use, leading them to being either permanently open or closed—again presenting a hazard in failing to separate pedestrians from maneuvering buses. Visually, many of the original materials and colors had been over-painted and much of the original signage had deteriorated.

Internally, a number of additions cluttered the space. Lighting, signage, and advertising had accumulated in piecemeal fashion, detracting from the original design. The color of the upper part of the central spine had been changed, and the recent artificial lighting scheme created both unwonted surface fixtures and a dreary atmosphere—leading the building to feel unsafe in the evening. In some locations, freestanding retail units had been added interrupting areas which would otherwise have more generous space and views between the east and west concourse. Minor items also contributed to the sense of clutter. Netting had been installed to prevent birds from landing, original signage had been lost or clumsily adapted, and roller shutters and wiring had been installed in an ad-hoc manner. Inappropriate seating had been installed on the west concourse and the restrooms entirely renovated with no trace of the original interiors remaining.



Western facade, before restoration.

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS

As well as being an important example of brutalist architecture, Preston Bus Station is the UK's largest building of its kind and the second biggest bus station in Europe. It is an extremely busy public building and one of the centers of life in the city. The key challenges of the project were how to connect the building to the city center and reorganize it to be suitable to the demands of a twenty-first century transport hub, all while restoring and celebrating its original architecture.

Previously isolated from the city center by a sea of bus parking, the refurbishment reorients the building by prioritizing pedestrians over vehicles. Bus arrivals are now consolidated to the east and a major new public square has been created to the west connected to the city center. Members of the public can now approach the building safely at ground level and spend time in the new public space before embarking on their journey. The square also improves the setting of the building, allowing uninterrupted long-views of the impressive western facade.

Internally, the building has been rearranged so that generous new waiting areas face the square. New benches have been made by repurposing the original Iroko barriers. While the majority of the original fabric of the building has been retained, later interventions have been removed and the below-ground subways filled in to better connect the two sides of the building. The eastern side continues to house the bus gates and beyond restoration work and adjustments to improve fire escape it largely remains as the original 1960s design. An information hall has been established to provide a place for orientation and a 24-hour dedicated coach station created with its own support facilities.



Interior waiting area,
before restoration.



Interior waiting area,
after restoration.



Taxi rank,
before restoration.



Taxi rank,
after restoration.



Coach station entrance, after restoration.

The failing double-height concourse facade has been replaced with glazing and mullions matching the original profile. Care has been taken to match the original detailing and colors while addressing the technical issues that led to decay. The original three-dimensional signage scheme has been reinstated but now reflects the new organization of the building. Inside, the facade is animated by a back-lit band and signage guiding visitors to their destination. A package of concrete repairs has also been carried out throughout the building.

Reinstating the powerful 1960s design, the interiors have been pared down and the original materials restored. The black rubber flooring has been restored and the spine of accommodations that runs through the middle of the building brought back to its original colors. A new lighting scheme has been introduced that carries out the original intent to predominantly use light reflecting off the concrete soffit, improving the feeling of safety. New interventions—such as the reception—have been carefully detailed to complement the original architecture while being clearly of the present. The entire project's focus has been to rejuvenate this significant public building as a twenty-first century transport hub for the benefit of the community.

Interior waiting area, after restoration.







Interior bus gates, after restoration.



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Über Schindler
als ein Unternehmen

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Über Schindler
als ein Unternehmen

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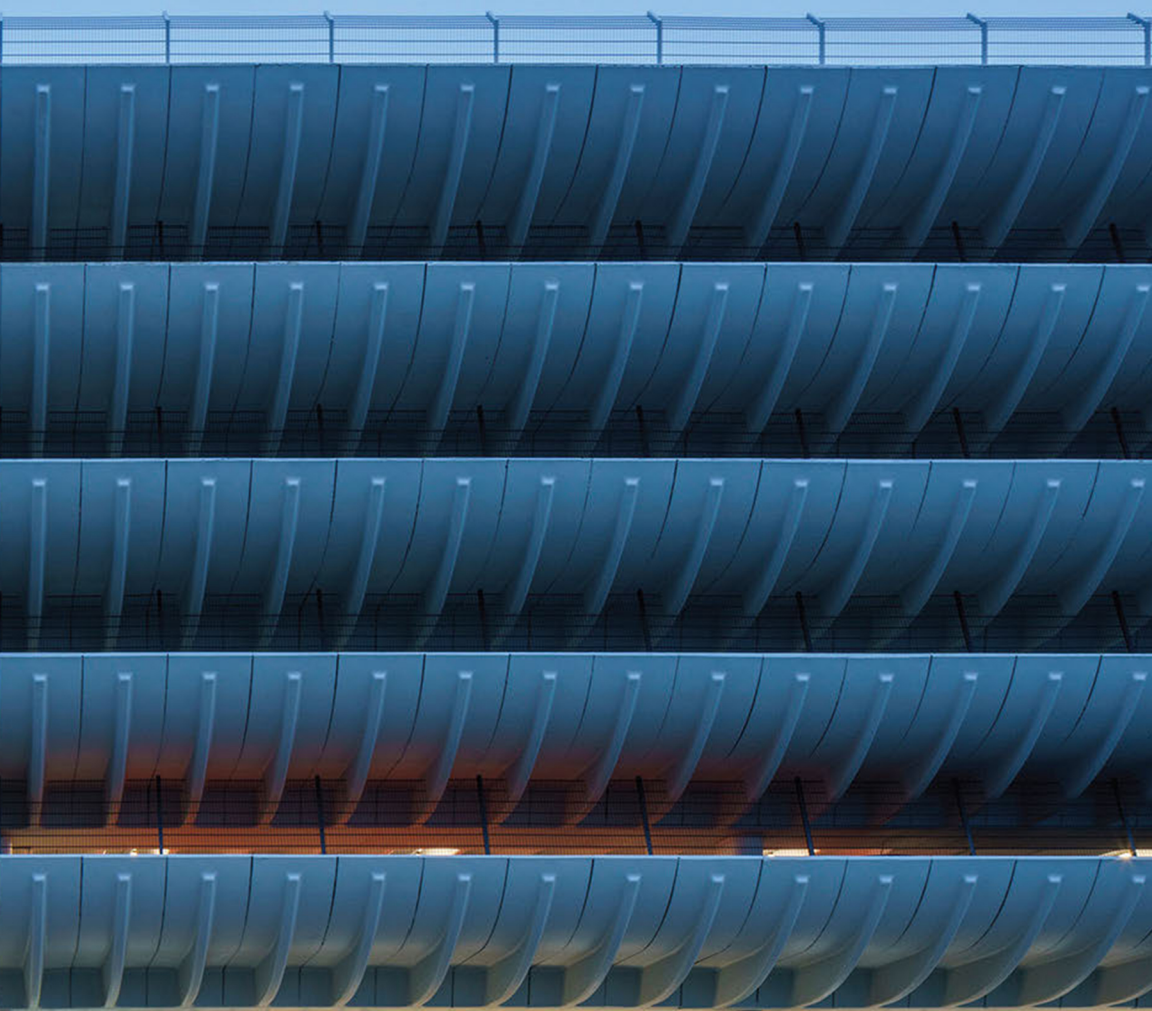
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“ Large-scale transport infrastructure can be challenging to conserve in ways that meet contemporary demands whilst retaining their material character and quality. This project achieves both.

Susan Macdonald
Jury Member





About World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund (WMF) is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world's most treasured places to enrich people's lives and build mutual understanding across cultures and communities. The organization is headquartered in New York City with offices and affiliates in Cambodia, India, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and the UK. Since 1965, our global team of experts has preserved the world's diverse cultural heritage using the highest international standards at more than 700 sites in 112 countries. Partnering with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF draws on heritage to address some of today's most pressing challenges: climate change, underrepresentation, imbalanced tourism, and post-crisis recovery. With a commitment to the people who bring places to life, WMF embraces the potential of the past to create a more resilient and inclusive society.

About Knoll

Knoll is a globally recognized leader in modern design and the founding sponsor of the World Monuments Fund Modernism at Risk program. The company's constellation of design-driven people creates high-performance workplaces, work from home settings and luxury residential interiors. A recipient of the National Design Award for Corporate and Institutional Achievement from the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Knoll is aligned with the U.S. Green Building Council and the Canadian Green Building Council and can help organizations achieve the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) workplace certification. Knoll also helps clients comply with the International Living Future Institute to achieve Living Building Challenge Certification, and with the International WELL Building Institute to attain WELL Building Certification.

About MillerKnoll

MillerKnoll is a collective of dynamic brands that comes together to design the world we live in. MillerKnoll includes Herman Miller and Knoll, plus Colebrook Bosson Saunders, DatesWeiser, Design Within Reach, Edelman Leather, Fully, Geiger, HAY, Holly Hunt, Maars Living Walls, Maharam, Muuto, naughtone, and Spinneybeck|FilzFelt. MillerKnoll is an unparalleled platform that redefines modern for the 21st century by building a more sustainable, equitable, and beautiful future for everyone.



Preston Bus Station under construction,
June 1969. © Historic England Archive.
John Laing Photographic Collection.

*All photos before restoration
are courtesy John Puttick Associates.*

All photos after restoration
taken by Gareth Gardner.

