Project profiles for 2002 UNESCO Heritage Award winners

**Award of Excellence**

**Project name:** Ahhichatragarh Fort  
**Location:** Rajasthan, India

The ambitious large-scale restoration of the Ahhichatragarh Fort complex in Rajasthan has checked its advanced dilapidation through a comprehensive, multi-faceted and standard setting conservation programme. Neglect had led to widespread structural instability of the buildings and grounds. The minimalist restoration resulted in varying levels of intervention which responded to the range of damage. The conservation combined the application of modern scientific techniques with the revival of traditional crafts and materials. Removing unsympathetic additions and introducing new infrastructural services allow the complex to accommodate modern use while preserving the sense of place in the exquisite architecture and landscaping. The site’s historic evolution has been captured by respecting its various periods during conservation. The ongoing work has created a live research laboratory, valuable for field education of conservation professionals and students. The preservation returns the largest open grounds in the region to the local public, as a venue for festivals, cultural performances and religious events, thereby allowing for the continuity of the fort’s rich history.
Award of Distinction

Project name: Australian Hall
Location: Sydney, Australia

The Aboriginal community recognizes Australian Hall, the venue of the 1938 “Day of Mourning” conference, as the only “European” building of significance to Aboriginal heritage. The conservation of the building to its state at the time of the conference has taken an innovative and standard-setting approach in restoring a building to a significant historical event. Detailed survey of the building and archival evidence allowed for a restoration which permits the reading of various historic layers of the building. With careful craftsmanship, the historic building fabric was restored, in conjunction with necessary infrastructure upgrades and structural consolidation. Today, the Hall serves as an Aboriginal community centre and living memorial to the Civil Rights movement. The technically-sophisticated restoration project has saved a social and architectural landmark from commercial redevelopment, thereby securing and preserving an important landmark in the history of the Australian Aboriginal community.

Project name: Sethna Buildings
Location: Mumbai, India

The restoration of four 300-year old wooden mosques in Pakistan’s Hunza Valley has successfully revitalized the village “chataq”, the traditional public heart of the Ganish historic settlement. Initiated and undertaken by the villagers, with professional guidance, the project has rebuilt community spirit in a rural village which has undergone major socio-economic change and natural disasters over the years. The restrained conservation approach has stabilized the buildings which were in danger of collapse, while retaining the rich historic patina and showcasing the intricate detailing of the structures. Modern materials were selectively incorporated alongside the use of traditional materials and techniques. The preservation of the surrounding buildings and infrastructural improvements were sensitively executed, consequently strengthening the traditional town fabric while upgrading the quality of life of residents. The project presents an outstanding example of a community-led initiative strategically facilitated by outside support.
Award of Merit

Project name: Cheng Hoon Teng Main Temple
Location: Melaka, Malaysia

The restoration of the seventeenth-century temple, the oldest edifice of formal worship for the Chinese immigrant community of the Malay peninsula, demonstrates high standards of technical execution and sets a worthy precedent for other conservation work in Malaysia and the region. The detailed documentation of the historic building and the restoration process is commendable, resulting in a clear understanding of the project’s sound methodology and best conservation practices. The project successfully illustrates faithful use of original materials and integrity of artisan techniques, and has revived the historic building for the community as a centre of worship.

Project name: Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus
Location: 30 Victoria Street, Singapore

The adaptive reuse of a historic convent as a lifestyle and recreational complex represents an innovative and laudable effort in urban conservation. By choosing to retain the existing structures, the project makes a major contribution to the public life of urban Singapore by opening up valuable downtown space, while respecting the historic continuity of the physical site. The overall conservation work resolves complex architectural and planning issues with sophistication, and the level of technical execution is high. The success of the project as a lively urban hub underscores the valuable potential from both a commercial and heritage point of view in revitalizing, rather than abandoning or replacing, historic buildings.
Project name: Polsheer House  
Location: Isfahan, Iran

The restoration of the 300-year-old traditional Iranian courtyard house demonstrates an exemplary conservation approach by remaining faithful to the original building. The project adhered to all aspects of best conservation practice, with the result that the existing historic building fabric is scrupulously maintained while the exquisite jewel-like interiors are restored to their original vibrancy. By choosing to adapt an old building for modern use, the project team is to be highly commended as their efforts set a technical benchmark for conservation and give momentum to private-sector conservation in Iran.

Project name: Sydney Conservatorium of Music  
Location: Sydney, Australia

The ambitious conservation and adaptive reuse of the landmark nineteenth-century Gothic complex provides a new focal point for downtown Sydney while raising the standards for conservation in the region. The excellent documentation of the historic structures has been translated with great clarity in the conservation process, resulting in the rigorous restoration of the historic building fabric, the removal of unsympathetic additions and the careful distinction between the new and the old. The conservation project has negotiated the considerable technical and structural challenges posed by 150 years of changes to the buildings with high technical accomplishment and great sensitivity, particularly in terms of material treatment. The project balances attention to detail with urban-scale flair, showcasing archaeological finds on the one hand, while smoothly integrating the restored structures and contemporary buildings into the Botanic Gardens on the other.
The outstanding restoration of the 1832 ordination hall of Wat Sratong demonstrates the high standard of conservation work which can be achieved through a grassroots approach. With the guidance of the community conservation training programme at Khon Kaen University and the partial sponsorship of the Thai Fine Arts Department, the local villagers of Ban Bua undertook all aspects of restoring the historic building after in situ technical training. In keeping with the Buddhist tradition of merit-making, the villagers donated their labour and materials to return the abandoned ordination hall to its central role in the monastery and the community. Well-considered conservation decisions were made to retain as much of the original building fabric as possible. The cooperative approach taken by the project sets a model of local conservation initiative which is worthy of emulation throughout the region.
Honourable Mention

Project name: No. 125 Huajue Alley
Location: Xi’an, China

The sound conservation approach and techniques undertaken in the restoration of No. 125 Huajue Alley serve as a model for local residents to follow in carrying out future work in Xi’an’s Drum-Tower Muslim district and in urban neighbourhoods all around China. The restoration of this traditional Qing Dynasty vernacular house placed a priority on preserving as much of the original materials as possible, while addressing modern living demands. Carefully rooted in the surrounding context, the project also contributes to an understanding of the local urban fabric. The project presents a noteworthy example for cooperation between an outside technical adviser and local residents, while setting a technical benchmark for conservation work in China.

Project name: Broken Hill Heritage and Cultural Tourism Programme
Location: New South Wales, Australia

The integrated approach of conserving significant heritage buildings and revitalizing the public streetscapes of a historic mining town establishes an exemplary conceptual framework that can be adapted by other communities in Australia and throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The initiative of the local government in setting up associated programmes to conserve and manage the city’s built heritage is not only noteworthy, but also demonstrates how municipalities can play an effective role in stimulating the conservation process. Innovative plans that were implemented by the municipality included a free heritage advisory service, heritage assistance funding, residential paint assistance schemes and the verandah restoration programme. The cooperative efforts between local government and the community have led to shared knowledge between the stakeholders, and a renewed sense of pride in the community, reviving the local economy based on sustainable cultural heritage tourism.
The elegant and restrained restoration of two Buddhist monastery buildings to house the recently-established Centre for Khmer Studies sets an encouraging example for the preservation of non-monumental heritage in Cambodia and makes a persuasive case for the involvement of private-sector institutions in conservation activities. The conversion of the French colonial-era buildings competently addressed a number of technical issues and accommodated modern service necessities without compromising the integrity of the buildings. The preservation of these heritage buildings and the ongoing cooperation with the monastery and local community ably serves the mission of the Centre to strengthen the field of Cambodian studies while promoting cooperation between Cambodian institutions and foreign ones.

The first phase of the streetscape revitalization project in the historic fort city of Jaisalmer represents an exemplary holistic approach to conserving the living public realm. Starting with the basic gesture of harmoniously integrating infrastructural amenities, such as drainage systems, into the traditional streetscape, the project seeks to address a complete range of conservation issues, including façade restoration and the provision of hygienic facilities. The integrated conservation effort will establish a mechanism for educating local property owners and upgrading the entire fort in terms of modern functioning, while maintaining Jaisalmer’s unique urban character and prevailing traditional ways of life. The project has the potential to create the momentum to drive a larger conservation project, serving as a best practice case study for other communities to learn from.
The restored Kow Plains Homestead is a testament to the resilience of the small Mallee community and serves as a physical reminder of Australia’s pioneering settlements. A rigorous approach of reinstating both the form and fabric of the building as faithfully as possible to the existing physical and documentary evidence was practised consistently throughout the project. Through revitalizing abandoned building techniques and careful attention to material authenticity, the project clearly demonstrated solid understanding of conservation guidelines set forth by the ICOMOS Burra Charter. The community’s initiation and ownership of the project deserves praise for the collective efforts at conservation. This project clearly exemplifies how the cooperation between individuals, community and all tiers of government can contribute towards a common goal: the protection of local heritage.