

Press Release

Future of ICC Berlin Uncertain

The discussion about the future of the International Congress Centre (ICC) Berlin has been going on for more than ten years. Demolition, renovation and conversion into a shopping mall (the latter would equal a demolition of the interior) have all been discussed. Since March 2014, the building complex has been vacant; new uses are being debated – despite the fact that since the closing of the ICC the city of Berlin has no alternative venues for holding large-scale conferences. Therefore, precious potential lies idle – architecturally and economically.

The monumental building, opened in April 1979 after only three and a half years of construction, is quite unique in its futuristic shape and design. It is a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), preserved largely intact and in its authentic state, including the interior. It is not easy to define the style of this building which is outstanding and unique in every respect. This is because nothing comparable was built before or after. Due to the building's technology-inspired appearance it is reminiscent of high-tech architecture – and therefore of such buildings as the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (Renzo Piano/Richard Rogers, 1971-77), Lloyds in London (Richard Rogers, 1978-86), and the clinical centre in Aachen (Wolfgang Weber/Peter Brand, 1971-85). The buildings in London and Aachen are listed, the Centre Pompidou is undisputed as a national cultural good.

The ICC Berlin is a landmark of former West Berlin. Its relevance has long been accepted by the scientific community in Germany. Important institutions (the Architectural Association of Berlin, the Bund Heimat und Umwelt in Deutschland, the Monument Council of Berlin, the Association of Conservationists in Germany) have argued publicly for the listing of the ICC. Based on these regional and national activities ICOMOS expressed the international appreciation by adopting a resolution at the General Assembly of ICOMOS in Florence in November 2014. The basis of this resolution was a 17-page ICOMOS Heritage Alert prepared by ICOMOS Germany. It consists of a detailed description that, similar to a justification for listing, addresses all major aspects of the building and its monument value: From its historic value as testimony to the Cold War to the largely authentic state of conservation, the Heritage Alert characterises the building's architectural-historical value and also names the organisations supporting the Alert. The resolution sums up the central points of the Alert. By referring to earlier initiatives to save heritage of the 20th century it emphasises the international relevance of the ICC. Furthermore, it calls for the listing of this building and its use as a cultural and conference centre. In a letter (to which the resolution is attached) sent to the Governing Mayor of Berlin in January 2015 the President of ICOMOS International offered “to support you in the safeguarding of this historic property of European significance”.

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