Vikingeskibshallen (The Viking Ship Hall) is a masterwork of modern Danish architecture. It is a unique structure that creatively integrates museum, setting and archaeology in a way that transcends historic definitions. The Viking Ship Hall was built in 1967-68 and was the first late modern building to be listed for protection in Denmark in 1998.

Following dramatic floods in 2013 and a subsequent escalation of structural decay issues, the Viking Ship Hall became the subject of unusual political and public debate. It was used to prompt a significant change in the Danish heritage law that weakens the protection of listed modern buildings.

On 30th August 2018, the Danish Minister of Culture, Mette Bock, against the advice of her own experts and the advice of the department of culture, decided to delist the building.
As a consequence, the Roskilde Viking Ship Museum, which owns the building but not the ships, has sent a letter to the Cultural Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament officially stating that the museum now intends to demolish the building and build a new one.

ISC20C and all Danish heritage organisations consider this an alarming and unnecessary loss of one of the most internationally significant modern buildings in Denmark.

ISC20C appeals for the preservation of the Viking Ship Hall, stressing that the structural issues and the climate conditions of the building site are not unique and can be addressed. The investment and the effort to preserve architectural masterpieces in concrete are widely supported and achieved in many places around the world.

ISC20C appeals for immediate action to preserve the Viking Ship Hall as an internationally outstanding architectural ensemble that has significant future large socio-economic potential.

The north facade ca. 1970, photo: Keld Helmer-Petersen ©
The north west corner, photo: Keld Helmer-Petersen ©

The Viking Ship Hall ca. 1970, before the ships were in place and the hall was still functioning as a workspace as well as an exhibition hall. photo: Keld Helmer-Petersen ©

The Viking Ship Museum, 2018. interior photo: Elise Stoklund
1-0 Identity of Building/Artefact/Object/Place

1-1 Current name and original name: Vikingeskibshallen

1-2 Location Town, Country, Street: Vindeboer 12, 4000 Roskilde, Denmark

1-3 Classification/ Type of place: Museum Building

1-4 Current Heritage Protection Status: No protection
Listed national 1997 (29 year after construction)
Proposal to Minister of Culture to delist the building in 2016 denied.
Delisted by Minister of Culture September 2018

2-0 Statement of Significance and History

2-1 Statement of Significance:

The original national listing document states that the museum "represents, in its entirety and landscaping, the excellent architectural values that can justify the listing of a building under the age of 100’ years.”

The Viking Ship Hall was the first late-modern building to be listed in Denmark.

ICOMOS DK considers that the Viking Ship Hall is a unique structure that integrates museum building, setting and archaeological exhibits in a way that transcends historic definitions. The building, ships and landscape interact with the narratives of ancient and modern building technology, art, and mythology.

2-2 History of place:

1957-62: The Skuldelev ships, five shipwrecks dated to 1050-60 the late part of the Viking period (850-1050), were excavated and recovered from the waterway of Peberrenden at Skuldelev, c. 20 km north of their present location of the museum.
1963: Invited architectural competition won by architect Erik Christian Sørensen
1967-68 Construction
1969. The Danish (architectural) Wood Award “Træprisen”.
1989-90. Concrete paint applied to the exterior of the building (renovation)
1995-98: National listing. The process lasted 3 years because the museum and City Council expressed concern at the time that the listing of the surroundings of the building would prevent planned expansion of the museum and development of the area.
2013: Storm and flooding, threatened to break through the north façade and to cause structural damages.
2015. Minor restoration
2016. Museum administration, first application for de-listing.
2017: Museum administration, re-applied for de-listing.
2017: SLKS (the Agency for Culture and Palaces) rejected delisting
2018: Museum administration complained. SLKS decision referred to the Minister of Culture
2018, Aug. 30th: The Minister of Culture announces delisting.

2-3 Date of project/ Date of construction/ Finishing of work:

1967-1968

2-4 Architect/Designers:

Architect, professor Erik Christian Sørensen 1922-2011
Civil engineer Christen Ostenfeld (1900-1976) and Wriborg Jønson (1907-1980)

2-5 Architect/Designers still living? Residence, country of birth, contact details:

Erik Christian Sørensen dead 2011
Civil engineering company COWI, a leading international consulting group, specializing in engineering, environmental science and economics: Parallelvej 2, 2800 Kgs. Lyngby, Denmark, t: +45 56 40 00 00.
2-6 Original and current use of building/place:
Original: Museum and archaeological exhibition hall (the shipwrecks were gradually
reconstructed and assembled as part of the exhibition) and cafeteria.
Today: Museum, museum shop, meeting space

2-7 Changes, additions
None in immediate vicinity or to the Hall itself (the nearby surroundings were
included in the listing)
Museum administration building nearby but detached from the hall.
Museum Island and Harbour nearby but detached from the hall.

2-8 Current condition and use:

**Condition:**
Problems arise when water levels rise within Roskilde fjord during severe storms
and flooding from Northwest. The condition of the building, and by association the
reconstructed ships, is threatened when the fjord is flooding.

According to the delisting letter, the latest technical report lists following technical
issues:

“2.1 The building membrane must be sealed/renewed, and the building must be
secured against water pressure/ingress from below and against waves/waterlevels
to the north facade over +2.4 to +3.7.
2.2 Damage to the construction following flooding (glass, concrete and
construction).
2.3 The building must be secured against water pressure to the east, south and
west façade and against ingress through building openings”

The technical report also states that the building lacks maintenance, and that it
needs repair, restoration and specialised intervention to secure its structural
concrete and reinforcement (Technical report, p. 11).

According to the museum, restoration must be done within max. 6 – 8 years
(Museum application for delisting, p. 1)

Estimated costs of restoration: DKK. 25 mill. – 75 mill.
Estimated maintenance cost after restoration: DKK. 600.000/year (Museum
application for delisting, p. 12)

**Use:**
The building is in continuous use as museum exhibition hall for the five Viking ships.
The National Museum of Denmark, which owns the ships insists that the ships must
be removed to temporary exhibition hall during any restoration works to the structure
(p. 10)

According to the museum application for delisting, 2016, p. 8: the building is
functionally out of date:
- The building does not meet the legal requirements for universal access.
- The building does not meet current energy standards.
- The building's cloakroom and toilet facilities (restrooms) do not meet the
  standards expected of a three-star Michelin attraction.
- The building limits the potential for the development of modern museum display
  and presentation of the five ships.

2-9 Original design intent and use:
Museum, the design is exquisitely suited to its setting and to its function as an
exhibition space, where the archaeology of the reconstructed ships and their
singular beauty of form, is perceived in total harmony with the space, landscape,
construction and architecture.
The museum was to be seen as “a worthy counterpart to the Viking Ship Museum at Bygdøy in Oslo and the The Vasa Shipyard in Stockholm”. (Ingeniørens Ugeblad, 1964, Dec. 19, p. 20).

3-0 Description (history and technology)

3-1 Physical description

3-2 Construction system used:
Reinforced exposed concrete

3-3 Physical context/setting:
On the shoreline of the inner Roskilde Fjord, in the city of Roskilde The northern façade is situated directly at the waterfront, exposed to the sea. Entrance at the south west corner faces a grassed park area a visual connection to Roskilde Cathedral (a World Heritage site) within walking distance.

3-4 Social and cultural context and value:
The museum is the first late modern building to be listed in Denmark in 1998. It is an architectural masterpiece and a celebrated reference to Danish Architecture from the 1960’s.
The museum building is not trying at least to look like a building from the Viking Period. The exhibition hall seeks to transcend time and connect past and present in an intellectual as well as a sensual way.
The current situation offers a unique possibility to address and find solutions to commonly experienced international problems like climate change, the shared challenges of preserving concrete as the material most used in 20th century architecture and enhance public understanding/perception of history-heritage-modern culture

3-5 Materials/fabric/form/function:
Reinforced concrete. Large glass facade with precast concrete support components towards the sea. Some brick wall sections.

3-6 Aesthetic value:
Transparent display of building construction and creative and successful dialogue with the ship exhibits. Pedagogic well-organized space for exhibition (e.g. the integration of ships and museum in the visual context of Roskilde fjord, where the shipwrecks were found.)

4-0 Source of Alert

4-1 Proposer(s) of Heritage Alert, contact details:

- Gunny Harboe, ICOMOS ISC20C
  Gunn@harboearch.com
  Tlf. +1 (312) 218 418 101

- Søren Vadstrup, ICOMOS DK
  Soren.Vadstrup@kadk.dk
  Tlf. +45 41 70 17 70

4-2 Groups supporting Heritage Alert and/or nomination, with contact details:

Docomomo Denmark
Ola Wedebrunn, olawedebrunn@gmail.com

ICOMOS Denmark
Camilla Løntoft Nybye, icomos@ra.dk
4-3 Groups potentially resisting Heritage Alert action:

Minister of Culture, Mette Bock, who executed the de-listing Aug. 30th, 2018.

Member of Parliament Alex Ahrendtsen representing Dansk Folkeparti (DF) as spokesperson for cultural affairs, exerts political pressure to demolish the museum building. (There are several articles and interviews to be found in the newspapers, e.g. the first announcement in Politiken, Dec. 26th, 2016. DF vil rive Vikingeskibsmuseet ned og opføre et nyt i vikingestil (DF wants to tear down the Viking Ship Museum to build a new in Vikingstyle).

The Museum: Up to the point of delisting, the museum seemed open to the potential for preservation and repair/restoration. However, in a letter of thanks to the Cultural Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament Sept. 13th, 2018, the museum officially stated that it now plans to demolish the existing building in favour of a new building.

The Mayor of Roskilde and president of the museum board, Joy Mogensen

Roskilde Museum (SLKS hearing 2016)

The Public Opinion, examples:

- Sven Scharling (private person, SLKS hearing 2016)
- Comments to article at Ingeniøren.dk https://ing.dk/artikel/ombygning-skal-redde-vikingeskibsmuseet-192635

4-4 Local, Regional, International significance citations about the place:

The Viking Ship Museum website, 2018: “The Viking Ship Hall is beautifully placed on Roskilde Harbour. A giant window and sweeping views over the fjord create a background, that are connecting the ships to the water, once again. The experience is undisturbed and gives room for immersion and fantasy.”


Christiansen, Jørgen Hegner, 2018. Dansk beton arkitektur. pp. 49. "the Viking Ship Hall is probably the most expressive brutalist plant structure in Denmark"

"Vikingeskibshallen er nok det mest udtryksfulde brutalistiske anlæg i Danmark."

Vikingeskibsmuseet, the application letter for delisting, Sept. 27th, 2016, p. 3 and 6. “The museum board fully recognizes the importance of the Viking Ship Hall as a unique architectural masterpiece - and as an example of an architectural style and construction that relate to a special time. The foundation of the museum’s values is “read” out in the building’s architecture; The values of the building thus permeate the entire Viking Ship Museum. The board will seek to retain these values with a de-listing ....

Today, the Viking Ship Museum does not have as a parallel anywhere in the world. Its location, architecture and intellectual and expressive profile are unique. The interaction between the five Viking ships, so spectacularly exhibited within the Viking Ship Hall, together with the living environment around the Museum harbor and the scenery over the fjord, create a unique context for the museum experience. …
Museets bestyrelsen anerkender til fuld Vikingeskibshallens betydning som et enestående arkitektonisk mesterværk – og som eksempel på en arkitektonisk stilart og byggeomåde, der knytter sig til en særlig tid. Museets værdigrundlag er "læste’ ud af hallens arkitektur; bygningens værdier gennemsyrer således hele Vikingeskibsmuseet, og ved en affredning vil bestyrelsen arbejde for, at de centrale værdier videreføres. …

Vikingeskibsmuseet er I dag – i kraft af sin beliggenhed, sin arkitettur og sin faglige og formidlingsmæssige profil – et enestående museum, der ikke har sin parallel noget sted i verden. Samspillet mellem de fem vikingeskibe, der så spektakulært er udstillet i Vikingeskibshallen, det levende miljø omkring Museumshavnen og sceneriet over fjorden skaber en enestående baggrund for museumsoplevelsen.”

Forés, Jaime, 2015: “In this set of works analyzed, Erik Christian Sørensen moves through some of his most important achievements, such as the series of single-family houses or the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, illustrating the persistence of tradition and the modern plastic potential of concrete. (Forfatterens fremhævning.) Committed to modern architecture, the career of Erik Christian Sørensen combines Nordic constructive traditions with the precepts of modernity…”

Erik Christian Sørensen y el museo de naves vikingas en Roskilde
Erik Christian Sørensen and the viking ship museum in Roskilde

Official reassessment by SLKS, 2016: “... A human and easily understandable interpretation, where the soft curvatures of the ships are contrastingly enriched in pure building construction (form) 1000 years later - without decorations and swirls. embellishment. The clarity of the original concept, that the essence of the Viking Ship Hall, is that modern and ancient materials and narratives can be experienced together. It is a characteristic that has justified a conservation approach that bears testimony to the conservation values that are embodied in the building.

Danish Architecture, 2007. P. 292: “In Erik Christian Sørensen’s Viking Ship Hall in Roskilde, Danish brutalism reaches a pinnacle of in raw concrete structures, which are almost abstract configurations. There is still perfect tectonic clarity, but now the material is not wood, but concrete.”

"I Erik Christians Sørensens Vikingeskibshal i Roskilde når dansk brutalisme et højdepunkt med store betonkonstruktioner, der står som nærmest abstrakte konfigurationer. Der er stadig fuldkommen tekonisk klarhed, men nu er materialet ikke træ som i stolpehusene, men beton.”

Original listing. 1998: “In its overall character and setting in the landscape, Erik Chr. Sørensen’s Viking Ship Hall, constructed 1966-68, embodies outstanding architectonic values that justify the listing of a building that is less than 100 years old …”

“Bygningssynet finder, at Vikingeskibshallen, opført 1966-68 ved Erik Chr. Sørensen, er et bygningsanlæg der ved sin helhedskarakter og landskabelige placering, repræsenterer de fremragende arkitektoniske værdier, der kan begrunde en fredning a et bygningsanlæg, som endnu ikke er hundrede år gammelt.”

Træprisen, 1969 (Speech by Skriver, P.E. Published in Arkitekten 1969. p. 476) : “The architectural quality must be (present in) an optimal form that unites all of the above-mentioned requirements (functionality, technical and economic realism an outstanding solution to the technical issues) together with the requirements of an exhibition of quality that make the use of the building and circulation within it a pleasure.

With particular intuition about its location, the architect has allowed the fjord contribute to the building’s quality and at the same time give the building a beautiful facade toward the fjord.
The heavy concrete walls and the clean structural lines provide the best possible background for the ships' light material and fine curves. Many other virtues can be cited, including that the structure can be extended, if new findings make that desirable.

"Den højeste arkitektoniske kvalitet må være den optimale form, som forener alle de nævnte krav til en bygning ("funktionsduelighed og teknisk og økonomisk realism", forfatterens tilføjelse jf. teksten ovenover), og som dertil færger det udtryk, som giver os glæde ved at bruge bygningen, at færdes omkring den og i den. … det gælder i særlig grad Vikingeskibshallen, at han (Erik Chr. Sørensen, forfatterens tilføjelse) meget nær har nået dette optimum. Det glæder dens placering, hvor arkitekten med en eminent formemmelser for miljøet har fældet fjorden bidrage til hallens kvalitet, og samtidig har han givet byen en ny og smukkere front mod fjorden. De tunge betonvægge og de retlinede strukturer danner den bedst tænkelige baggrund for skibene lette materiale og fine kurver. Mange andre dyder ved dette hus kunne nævnes, bl.a. at det er forberede til at kunne vokse, hvis nye fund skulle gøre det ønskeligt."

Ingeniørens Ugeblad, 1964, Dec. 19, p. 20. The museum is to be seen as “a worthy counterpart to the Viking Ship Museum at Bygdøy in Oslo and the Vasa Shipyards in Stockholm”.

"Danmark og Roskilde vil være en vigtig og stor attraktion rigere, når museet står færdigt – en værdig modpol til Bygdømuseet i Oslo og Vasamuseet i Stockholm."

4-5 Letters of support for Heritage Alert action, newspaper articles, etc.:

Letters of support during the SLKS hearing 2016 from (according to SLKS decision letter Dec. 18th 2017)

Landsforeningen for Bygnings- og Landskabskultur
Foreningen for Bygnings- og Landekabkskultur i Roskilde
Docomomo DK
Docomomo International

Support published in Newpapers, Tv and radio, social media etc after Jan. 26th, 2016:

181006 Hyperfølsom brutalisme, (Hyper-sensitive brutalism) Andersen, Martin Erik, Chronisel, Berlingske
181003 Fingrene væk fra de fredede arealer i byen, (Fingers away from the protected areas of city), Jytte Hilden, Politiken byrum
180927 Vi er ramt af en epidemi, der truer vores bærende kulturinstitusjoner (We are affected by an epidemic that threatens our sustainable cultural institutions), Architect, Altinget.dk
180926 Bygningsfredningsloven 100-års fødselsdag og den nødvendige dialog (Building Maintenance Act 100th Birthday and the necessary dialogue), Anne Høi, Akademisk Arkitektforening
180907 Gustne overlæg (Rancid Thoughtlessness), Keiding, Martin, Berlingske
180903 Kritikere: affredning af Vikingeskibshallen er en glidebane (Critics: The Viking Ship Hall is a sliding runway), Ingeniøren.dk
180830 Ministeren offerer et hovedværk i dansk arkitekturhistorie på et politisk alter (Comment: The Minister sacrifice a masterpiece of Danish architectural history on a political alter), Iversen, Karsten R.S., Politiken.
180830 Nedrivning af museum vil smadre fredningssystem (Demolition of museum will smash the system for listed building), Jyllandsposten and BT
180805 Affredning af … er en underminering af fredningsredskabet (The depiction of the Viking Ship Hall is a undermining of the conservation an listing), Arkitektforeningen.
The Viking Ship Museum was the first late modern building to be listed in Denmark. It is one of the best known buildings and museums in Denmark and is frequently visited by Danish and foreign architects, although not much mentioned in foreign publications. There is a lot of documentation to be found in Danish publications, official acts and newspapers back to the time of the architectural competition and probably also non-published material from the architects etc. In spite of several technical reports on the construction and the official listing - and delisting process, information about the building is scattered and rather unfocused. There is no single book on the Viking Ship Hall, and no single biography of the architect Erik Christian Sørensen. Much of the information relates to the problems that the structure has experienced during its lifetime.

The site:
- Ingeniørens Ugeblad Dec. 19th, 1969
- Tidsskrift for ingeniører og Bygningsvæsen, May 16th, 1969
- historic photos of Keld Helmer-Petersen: http://kunstbib.dk/samlinger/arkitekturfotografier/arkitekturfotografier/00006
- 1896
• Some original drawings on this site: http://kunstbib.dk/samlinger/architekturtegninger/vaerker/000051603/17
• Roskilde Byggesagsarkiv/matr. 15-a Klostermarken (older documents available by contact to kommunen@roskilde.dk)
• Dansk Arktik, 2007, pp. 289-290 Published by Arkitekten Forlag. Also available in English.
• Listing case: https://www.kulturav.dk/fbb/sagvis/pub?sga=7396666 (it’s possible to get more documents if writing at https://slks.dk/om-slots-og-kulturstyrelsen/aebenhed-i-forvaltningen/personoplysninger/ )
• Forés, Jaime, 2015 Erik Christian Sørensen y el museo de naves vikingas en Roskilde (text in both Spanish and English)
• Vikingeskibsmuseet, the applications letter for delisting, Sept. 27th, 2016
• Christiansen, Jørgen Hegner. 2018. Dansk Betonarkitektur. (Published by Dansk Beton) Description and biography

The delisting process 2017 - 2018:
• Vikingeskibsmuseets website displays the official documents on the delisting process: https://www.vikingeskibsmuseet.dk/om-museet/vikingeskibshallen/affredning-af-vikingeskibshallen/
• https://www.ft.dk/samling/20121/almدل/KUU/bilag/226/1269373.pdf

The law-regulation process 2016:
• https://www.ft.dk/samling/20161/lovforslag/1148/index.htm

4-7 Time constraints for advocacy (immediate action/delayed action):
There is an immediate need for action.
On Sept. 13th, 2018 the museum sent a letter of thanks to the Cultural Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament for the decision to delist the building. The letter officially states that the museum now plans to demolish the existing building in favor of a new building. The Danish state has allocated DKK 10 million to prepare an architectural competition. In addition, money has been allocated to move the ships to a temporary exhibition building.

5-0 Recommended action
5-1 Heritage Alert: international/national distribution via ICOMOS?
Yes

5-2 Letter (s) to? (Provide names and full contact details)

Vikingeskibsmuseet
att.: Museum Director, Tinna Damgård-Sørensen,
Vindeboder 12, DK - 4000 Roskilde
tds@vikingeskibsmuseet.dk

Vikingeskibsmuseet
att.: President of the board, Joy Mogensen
Vindeboder 12, DK - 4000 Roskilde
jm@vikingeskibsmuseet.dk

Roskilde Kommune, Byrådet
att.: Mayor of Roskilde, Joy Mogensen
Roskilde Kommune, Rådhusbuen 1, Postboks 100, DK - 4000 Roskilde
borgmester@roskilde.dk

Ministry of Culture,
att.: Minister for Culture Mette Bock
Nybrogade 2, DK - 1203 Copenhagen K
min@kum.dk
Heritage Alert Template
ver. 2010/06/30

the Cultural Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament
att.: President of the Committee, Flemming Møller Mortensen
flemming.m.mortensen@ft.dk

National Museum of Denmark
att.: Museumdirector Rane Willerslev
Frederiksholms Kanal 12, DK - 1220 Copenhagen K
Rane.Willerslev@natmus.dk

Agency for Culture and Palaces
att.: Lars Juel Thiis, architect maa
Chair of Ministry advisory board
Nybrogade 2, DK-1203 Copenhagen K
post@silks.dk

Agency for Culture and Palaces
att. Enhedschef Merete Lind Mikkelsen, Center for Kulturarv
Fejøgade 1, 2., DK - 4600 Nykøbing F.
post@silks.dk

5-3 ICOMOS National or Scientific Committee, or international Website upload?
ICOMOS international
ISC20C
ICOMOS DK

5-4 Affiliated organisation distribution?
Docomomo International (Awaiting confirmation)
Europa Nostra (Awaiting confirmation)
UIA (Awaiting confirmation)

ICOMOS DK
Docomomo DK

5-5 Other actions recommended
• Appeal for international letters of support, personal or institutional
• Appeal for professional photographic registration
• Raise money to new publication and international conference on the heritage
  significance of the Viking Ship Hall
• Contact to World Heritage Fond / Endangered heritage

6-0 Desired outcome

6-1 Legal protection or improved legal protection
• Reinstatement and Listed status
• Secure a local heritage plan for the site (‘bevarende lokalplan’)

6-2 Stopping of works that are will alter the heritage
Secure awareness, knowledge and respect of the original building and its heritage values
and significance in the future planning: e.g. an architectural competition, general
maintenance and site development. It should be noted that the site lacks a clear statement
of its architectural history and cultural significance on an international level.

6-3 Stopping of permits that would result in irretrievable loss of the heritage
Stopping demolition permits. Stopping planning that allow partial demolition.

6-4 Imposing minimum maintenance to stop further decay pending
conservation/restoration work
Yes

6-5 Modifying the project so that it becomes respectful of the values for which the
monument or site received legal protection
6-6 Stopping demolition
Halting demolition and ensuring repair and restoration of the building for its significant heritage value. Secure the building from future flood damage. Repair and secure the building structure that suffered damage due to flooding, as well as addressing on-going decay processes in respect of its heritage values.

6-7 Other, please specify
- Raise awareness of the site as a social-economic resource (not an expense)
- Support to raise public, national and international funding to
  - document and understand the building and its significance
  - repair, restore and secure the building from technical decay and the impacts of climate change
  - develop and expand the museum-site in respect of the existing Viking Ship Hall and its significance