

Gunny Harboe

FAIA, Fellow US/ICOMOS

Biography

Gunny Harboe, FAIA, Fellow US/ICOMOS, is a registered architect with nearly 30 years of experience and has his own small firm based in Chicago. His award winning work has included many iconic modern masterpieces by Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright. He received his M. Arch. from M.I.T., (including study in Copenhagen, Denmark); a M.Sc. in Historic Preservation from Columbia University; an A.B. in History from Brown University, and he attended the ICCROM ARC course in Rome, Italy. Gunny was a founding member and is current President of the ICOMOS ISC20C, and was a founding member of Docomomo_US. He is also a board member of the FLW Building Conservancy and an Adjunct Professor at IIT.

Restoring the Concrete of Unity Temple

Unity Temple is one of Frank Lloyd Wright's most important works. It was truly revolutionary and changed the way architects thought about space forever. With its expressive exposed cast in place concrete exterior, it could perhaps also be seen as one of the first "Brutalist" buildings. Early photographs show the horizontal way lines created from the series of lifts required to cast the walls. The decorative columns were precast in molds and then assembled in place on the building. Its early date meant that there was a limited understanding of how such a monolithic concrete structure would perform over time. Unfortunately, the lack of control or expansion joints meant the building would make its own, and it did. By the 1970s the building was in an advanced state of deterioration and in dire need of attention.



Unity Temple in the Fall.

The remedy was to completely resurface the cast in place material with shotcrete that closely matched the color and texture of the original. Although this treatment erased the original expression of how the building was made, it unquestionably extended its life considerably.

Forty more years of weather and movement however, had again taken a toll.

The recently completed \$25M restoration of Unity Temple once again addressed the concrete exterior. This time the goal was to restore the exterior's 1970s appearance. Through a rigorous preconstruction phase of mock ups and an ongoing collaborative effort during construction by the design team and the contractors, the exterior of Unity Temple is once again sound and beautiful. This presentation will describe the processes, challenges and outcomes of the restoration.