Modernism Revisited – ETOM Milestone-Conference 2026 – *part of ECOC* Trenčín 2026

The three days international conference, part of the program of the European Capital of Culture in Trenčín, Slovakia, was the fifth annual conference in the course of the "ETOM NEB Lab" – the first Lab Project about the transnational genesis and heritage of Modernism initiated by the "ETOM – European Triennial of Modernism" within the "New European Bauhaus".

Following the title "Modernism Revisited: Typology – Topography – Strategy", between October 21–23, 2026 more than 150 visitors and 45 international speakers shared a common question which seems simple to ask but is fascinating and highly topical to discuss in its consequences: How to treat Modernism not as a closed chapter of history, but as a vital heritage, which now has to respond to current challenges like climate change, green transformation, demographic shifts, and new expectations for public buildings and housing.

In line with this question a late-modern building with a brutalist edge, the "ODA Garrison Club" in Trenčín, designed in the late 1970s and completed in 1985, became a place to think aloud and especially listen to four excellent keynotes and closing remarks by Beatriz Colomina, Henrieta Moravčíková, Wessel de Jonge and Mark Wigley.

The conference program was organized around three main topics: What can modern buildings become (Typology – Repurposed), how do they relate to landscape, infrastructure and community (Topography – Remodeled), and which strategies of protection, renewal and adaptation can carry them forward (Strategy – Reinvented). Across all three, one conclusion kept returning: the values of Modernism, its openness and its belief that architecture can make life healthier, are not obsolete. They may be more relevant today, than ever before.

Only a few buildings illustrate this better than the Machnáč Sanatorium in Trenčianske Teplice, which was designed by Jaromír Krejcar in 1929 and completed in 1932.
The building is an outstanding cultural treasure of Modernism and could be a true icon of international universal value – with a similar architectonic significance than the famous "Prellerhaus" façade of the Bauhaus building in Dessau, Germany, from 1926 – but slightly decaying over the past years. It brings together structural rationality, the hygienic ideals of the Modern Movement, and a striking openness to the surrounding landscape – while its present state shows how difficult it is to balance protecting architectural values with finding a new future for a historic building.
Machnáč is a reminder that such efforts take time, persistence and strong alliances. But it is a reminder, too, that it is worth it to fight for, like the Jaromír Krejcar Society, the organizer of this year's "ETOM Milestone-Conference".

That sense of dedication and forming alliances may be the conference's most lasting result. Historians, practicing architects, heritage professionals, students, and a furthermore did not simply present their research or activist work – they compared common problems, strategies, and shared best-practice solutions.

The future of modern heritage and its relevance in learning how to create a sustainable build environment today, will depend on people and transnational collaboration – for what the "ETOM NEB Lab" stands for.

Modernism Revisited: Typology – Topography – Strategy
21–23 October 2026 | ODA Trenčín
Organisers: Jaromír Krejcar Society, ETOM NEB Lab, DOCOMOMO Slovakia
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More information: modernismrevisited2026.com
ETOM NEB Lab: triennale-der-moderne.de/2025/etom-milestone-2026/
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