

Preservation by Design: Safeguarding the World's Cultural Heritage
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culture

Safeguarding World's Most Endangered Sites
 Ancient cities may be glamorous but protecting them often isn't, as seen in "Preservation by Design." **PAGE 48**

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PRESERVE & PROTECT

"Preservation by Design: Safeguarding the World's Cultural Heritage" at the Meridian International Center captures the painstaking work of preserving the planet's most endangered sites, from ancient Chinese cities to Indian shrines to centuries-old Turkish citadels, pictured. **PAGE 48**



No-Fly Zone

Spend a month traveling the world for next to nothing, without the hassle of airline delays or even passports. Sound impossible? Thanks to Cultural Tourism DC, the journey comes home to you. **PAGE 51**

DIPLOMATIC SPOUSES

Bountiful Barnes >

There are no bounds to the ambition of Liberia's Dawn Cooper Barnes, a former television and film producer, professional dancer and mother of six, including an autistic son. **PAGE 49**

THEATER

Eloquent 'Liar' Exposes Truth

Broadway playwright David Ives translates ancient stanza into accessible verse to create a linguistically masterful "Liar." **PAGE 52**



DINING

For Masa 14, two titans of the local restaurant scene have teamed up for their take on fusion cuisine. **PAGE 58**



FILM REVIEWS

"The Good, the Bad, the Weird" pays homage to classic spaghetti westerns. **PAGE 60**

[photography]

Cherished Heritage

Meridian Showcases Mission to Safeguard World's Endangered Sites

by Heather Mueller

Stop by the Meridian International Center this month, and the first thing to grab at you is bound to be the image of a tattered yet ornately carved doorway looking onto a colorful courtyard.

The captivating, oversized photograph was taken last year in the ancient Chinese city of Pingyao, where 4,000 courtyard buildings date to the Ming and Qing dynasties. Less than a tenth of the ancient structures are still intact, and among those many are in disrepair. Yet here, captured on the wall of Meridian's White-Meyer House, is a scene so enchanting that it's easy to envision the original splendor of this ancient city and wish for a magic transport to see it firsthand.

The photo is a compelling introduction to "Preservation by Design: Safeguarding the World's Cultural Heritage," a tribute to the California-based Global Heritage Fund's preservation projects around the world. The organization works to save what it deems the world's most endangered, significant historical sites, most of which are located in developing regions.

The exhibit features nearly 80 images from seven Heritage Fund sites in Cambodia, China, Colombia, India, Libya, Peru and Turkey. Some photographs were taken by field staff, but many are from artists who live nearby. None of the images has ever been seen by the general public.

Yet not all of the dozens of photos on display are magical, and one can easily guess which ones came from amateur photographers. Several simply capture the daily grind of painstaking preservation: volunteers muddy from weeding, snapshots of excavating workers doing nothing more than staring at conservation plans.

There are also plenty of journalistic shots: centuries-old Turkish citadels atop desert mountains, a shrine towering over busy, modern streets in India, and the stone-lined paths of a lost city in Colombia dating to 200 A.D.

It's these images that make it easy to get behind the work of the Global Heritage Fund, which is currently engaged in 12 projects in 10 countries.

Among them is Pingyao, one of the last remaining examples of traditional Qing Dynasty architecture. Although the city is one of only two in China that holds UNESCO's World Heritage Site status for exceptional preservation, tens of thousands of low-income residents living within its walls means the city faces unprecedented pressures and deterioration. Ergo the Global Heritage Fund, which stepped in to conserve the area's most endangered structures and develop a plan for sustainable tourism.

More than a dozen of the 77 photos feature various angles of Pingyao. None are quite as enrapturing as the image situated in the lobby, but the mix of subjects gives a true sense of place — the kind that will enthrall any globetrotter looking for an exotic new travel destination.

Other sites featured here include a 13th-century temple in India, the 12th-century Kingdom of Cambodia, and Africa's largest ancient Greek site, located in Libya, where temples, tombs, a gymnasium and a theater have stories going back to 631 B.C.



A visual highlight of the exhibit "Preservation by Design: Safeguarding the World's Cultural Heritage" are photographs of the ancient Chinese city of Pingyao, above, where 4,000 courtyard buildings date to the Ming and Qing dynasties.



**Preservation by Design:
Safeguarding the World's
Cultural Heritage**

through May 16

Meridian International Center
1624 Crescent Place, NW

For more information, please call
(202) 667-6800 or visit www.meridian.org.



The Meridian International Center documents the work of the California-based Global Heritage Fund, which has preservation projects at seven endangered sites around the world in countries as far-flung as Cambodia, above right, Peru, above left, Colombia, left, and Libya, far left.

This isn't an exhibit for art lovers, but that's to be expected. The criteria used in selecting the images included whether they depicted people-to-people interactions, the tangible benefits of conservation work, and the ways in which problems endemic to each locale were being addressed through the efforts of Global Heritage Fund.

Viewed through this lens, the show is both educating and enlightening, sparking an appreciation for these living testaments to history and culture — which deserve not only our appreciation, but our attention to preserve them for future generations.

Heather Mueller is a contributing writer for The Washington Diplomat.