

Mayor of Miyakonojo City
Mr.Takahisa Ikeda

It has been brought to the attention of ICOMOS, through our International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Cultural Heritage (ISr.C20C), that the Miyakonojo Civic Hall is under threat of demolition.

The Miyakonojo Civic Hall in Miyakonojo, Japan, was built in 1966 to the plans of one of the country's most eminent architects of the 20th century, Kiyonori Kikutake (1928–2011). With an impressive form and powerful presence like no other, this architectural icon of Miyakonojo is a valuable relic that conveys the optimistic and ambitious spirit of the 1960s, when Japan was in the midst of its rapid ascent to becoming an economic and technological power. It is also a rare and particularly exemplary specimen of a building realized true to the principles of the movement known as Metabolism, whose proponents sought to create structures that could be flexibly adapted to new demands and circumstances through continual modification.

Metabolism architecture is recognized by ICOMOS as maybe the most important Japanese contribution to post World War II architecture with deep meanings of progression and regeneration. It is characteristic, international in style and at the same time specifically Japanese in concept and realization. The Miyakonojo Civic Hall lucidly expresses the ideas of Metabolism. The bold form reflects the benevolent spirit of Japan's booming years, when architectural experimentation was welcomed by society.

Despite the current conservation issues the building seems to be in an overall good state of conservation and therefore the demolition is not acceptable. It is necessary to think about reuse, and not destruction, in order to promote sustainability and best practices of Heritage Management and conservation.

Though in need of some repair, the Miyakonojo Civic Hall continues to retain its architectural value today. Its destruction would not only be a loss for Japanese architectural heritage, but for the cultural heritage of the world. A demolition would be an injustice to a forward-looking, creative and sustainable spirit. Saving and renewing this inspired, innovative work will have greater meaning more than ever now in this age of sustainability.

The ISC20C urges the pertinent Japanese authorities to halt any plans of demolishing the Miyakonojo Civic Hall and to seek dialogue and advice from ICOMOS Japan and international expert bodies as to the way forward. In case of the contrary, ICOMOS and ISC20C will prepare a full-scale international Heritage Alert, because the Miyakonojo Civic Hall is not only a Japanese issue, but internationally asserted Cultural Heritage.

Gunny Harboe, FAIA, F.US/ICOMOS
President, ICOMOS ISC20C