

GOOD CONSERVATION AND RESTAURATION PRACTICE FICHE

Composed by working party of:

Docomomo Serbia

**Name of building/ group of buildings/ urban scheme/ landscape/ garden
& picture of before and after**

Before conservation/ restauration	After conservation/ restauration
Central Tower of Old Fairground Belgrade 	Memorial Center „Old Fairground“ Belgrade 

Depicted item: Before and After pictures of Old Fairground Central Tower
Sources: Institute for the Protection of Cultural Property Belgrade
Dates: 2021 - 2024

0.1 accessibility

opening hours/ viewing arrangements: Identity of building/ group of buildings/ group of buildings/ landscape/ garden

Currently only the free standing building known as the Central Tower of Old Fairground is presentable as a reconstructed cultural property. It is open to public, yet only by appointment. Write to poseta@memorijalnicentar.rs

Data for identification

current name: Memorial Center "Old Fairground" Belgrade

former/original/variant name: Central Tower of Old Fairground Belgrade

address/ number(s) and name(s) of street(s): Sajmište 1

town: Belgrade

province/ state: Serbia

post code: 11070

country: Serbia

geographic GPS coordinates:

[44.812745°N 20.442246°E / 44.812745, 20.442246](#)

current typology: Public ADM, REC-museum, FNR-memorial center

former/original/variant typology: Public COM / commerce

comments on typology: has been changed three times since the time of construction. Originally built as the fairground with numerous national pavilions and the Central Tower as the focal point in the late 1930s, very soon after it was converted into a concentration camp run by Nazis. After World War II it was turned into social housing project for artists gradually becoming a neglected slum. The memory of victims of the concentration camp remained vibrant - commemorated by a few plaques and a massive monument. Only recently the most prominent building of Old Fairground was turned into typology to more thoughtfully speak about the horrors from the 1940s.

Status of protection

protected by: Republic of Serbia

grade: national importance

date: 1987

valid for: assigned area

remarks: the cultural property was listed under the name the Old Fairground – Gestapo's Concentration Camp

1. History of building(s)

Chronology

Commission/ competition date: 1936

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design period (s): 1936-38
start of site work: 1937
completion/inauguration: 1938

Relevant persons/organizations: Belgrade Municipality, Society for Fairs and Expositions

original owner(s)/patron(s): Belgrade Municipality
architect(s):
landscape/garden designer(s): Rajko Tatić, Milivoje Tričković, Djordje Lukić
other designer(s): Petar Zarić
consulting engineer(s):
building contractor(s):

Other persons or events associated with the building(s)/site

name(s): Gestapo
association: German Reich
event(s): mass killing in the concentration camp
period: 1941-44

Summary of important changes after completion

type of change: conversion until the recent reconstruction and adoptive reuse
date(s): 1941, 1951, 2022
circumstances/reasons for change: the occupation by Nazi's in 1941; the belief of post-WWII establishment that the Old Fairground did not fit into the grand urban vision for New Belgrade during the 1950s.
effect of changes: devastation and neglect
persons/organisations involved: Gestapo and after-WWII urban planners.

Summary of important changes after restoration

type of change: Although the Old Fairground has been protected as complex with more than one building, only the Central Tower has been treated during the recent restoration.
date(s): 2022-24
circumstances/reasons for change: The structure was devastated to the level of being unrecognizable. Its architectural importance was invisible not only to general public but also to the professionals.
effect of changes: It exposed one of the most important historical spots of Belgrade and revived original shapes and forms of a quite peculiar piece of Modernist architecture and urban design from the 1930s.
persons/organisations involved: Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage - Belgrade, KOTO-Doo (Company for construction, reconstruction and renovation)

2. Description of building(s)

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Site/building character

Summarize main character and give notes on surviving site/building(s)/part(s) of area.

If a site: principle features and zones of influence; main elements in spatial composition.

If a building, main features, construction and materials.

The site of Old Fairground, still includes a few pavilions from the 1930s which haven't been use adequately. They are either fully abandoned and dilapidated or transformed into some unrecognizable structures. The original urban design and landscaping is hardly recognizable, except for fact that the Central Tower was the focal point of urban design from which the walking paths were radially spread out, leading to the other pavilions. The reconstructed Central Tower, shows off a specific regional characteristics of International Style. The architectural composition of the Tower consisted of four geometric elements: a single-story base with a circular foundation, four trapezoidal annexes on the ground floor at terrain level—positioned symmetrically relative to the center of the base—and two shape-distinct segments of the tower, conceived as the tower's pedestal and the tower itself. The structure of the building is a skeleton system. The clear height of the ground floor is 4.50 m, while the first floor is 3.00 m. According to literature sources, the total height of the building was 40.00 m. The ground floor level is raised by approximately 1.05 m relative to the terrain, while the trapezoidal annexes are positioned at ground level. In the central part of the ground floor, there is a square-shaped core measuring 5.80 m x 5.80 m, which houses a concrete staircase. The central core of the structure consists of a spatial reinforced concrete (RC) lattice with its own foundation slab and counter-beams, independent of the peripheral polygonal masonry part of the building that extends to the level of the "star-shaped terrace" at the top of the tower's base. Inside the aforementioned spatial RC lattice, which defines the footprint of the tower base, an additional, narrower spatial lattice is formed, supported via massive horizontal RC beams on the elements of the outer lattice. This inner lattice independently forms the structure of the tower above the "star-shaped terrace" level. On the first floor, the role of the core is taken over by columns at the corners of the square, interconnected by diagonals. This same construction is repeated in all three levels of the tower base. Four concrete columns with a cross-section of 0.50 m x 0.50 m extend through the center of the ground and first floors; their connection forms a square rotated by 45 degrees relative to the core base. These columns functioned to support the loads from the glazed facade surfaces that run along the entire height of the tower base. The existing mezzanine floor structure above the ground floor was constructed as a ribbed RC slab with radially oriented ribs and a transverse polygonal stiffening rib at mid-span. The ceiling above the first floor was formed by radially arranged wooden beams—"tavanjače" (hewn logs)—with timber boarding on the upper side, above which was a gently sloping wooden roof structure forming a shallow, radial mono-pitched roof.

Current use

of whole building/site: the Central Tower is the administrative and research center of the memorial site – the Concentration Camp Old Fairground.

of principal components (if applicable):

comments:

Present condition

of whole building/site: Meticulously reconstructed and adopted to a new use.

of principal components (if applicable):

of other elements (if applicable):

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of surrounding area (if applicable): The surrounding area and the rest of the buildings within the protected zone are still neglected, yet a subject of numerous discussions and debates between the planners, politicians and preservationists.
comments:

3. Evaluation of restoration/conservation

Give the scientific reasons for selection for docomomo documentation.

Intrinsic value

Technical evaluation: The project envisioned the reconstruction of the authentic floor area and volume, a faithful appearance of the facades, the preservation of original architectural forms and composition, original materialization, and the restoration of facade openings to their former positions and sizes. It also includes the remediation of all damage and adaptation for an administration building and newly established institutions. The reconstruction of the facades plans to re-establish the layout of structural openings in their original size and shape. All subsequent additions are slated for removal, while the original materialization is to be retained through conservation and restoration. In the interior of the building, the dismantling of all partitions constructed to date is planned. Through reconstruction, restoration, and adaptation, the goal was the maximum preservation of original materials; where replacement was necessary, identical or closely matching materials were applied. Given the exceptionally poor condition of the facades, the project envisioned their total replacement, while exploring possibilities for thermal insulation of walls and ceilings or the application of specialized mortars—all in accordance with conservation requirements. A complete replacement of the exterior joinery (windows and doors) was planned. The type of new joinery was intended to ensure authenticity in design, while utilizing materials that provide maximum energy efficiency and better, more durable maintenance, considering the inaccessibility of certain parts of the tower base and the tower itself.

Social evaluation: The key social value of the reconstructed structure lies in its new program – the adoptive reuse. Almost eighty years after the concentration camp was terminated, the memory and serious historical research about the victims and terrors held in the camp were still vague and poorly documented; invisible to the general audience as a warning sign of the darkest years in human history.

Cultural and aesthetic evaluation: The reconstruction of the Central Tower is hopefully the beginning of broader revitalization a rare examples of large-scale Modernistic urban ensemble from the period between two world wars. Its original architectural and urban qualities reflects the cross-section between the broadly spread International style and its regional reinterpretations. The original construction of Old Fairground and a series of international events held there before the occupation of Serbia by Nazis in WWII, shows the level of cultural, educational and technological position of the nation within the European community of nations which has been interrupted by the WWII but also jeopardized by the political turnovers during the second half of the twentieth century, which has continued until the present day. Any attempt at continuing the reconstruction of the Old Fairground would be a sign of reconciliation with the pre WWII civil society and its cultural achievements.

4. Documentation

Archives/written records/correspondence etc: (state location/ address)

1. Family archive of Petar Zarić, the enterer designer of the Central Tower – for more information contact the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Belgrade
2. Postcard archive of Miloš Jurišić - for more information contact the Museum of Science and Technology in Belgrade
3. Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Belgrade, documentation dossier “Old Fairground – Gestapo’s Concentration Camp”
4. The Museum of the City of Belgrade, collection Urbanism and Architecture

Principal publications:

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Благојевић, ЛЈ. (2014), Архитектура Београда у веку Југославије, у: Историја уметности у Србији XX век, трећи том, ур. Шувковић М., Београд: 323-350

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Вукотић-Лазар, М. (2004), Старо београдско сајмиште, Годишњак града Београда LI, (Београд): 143-168

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Кадијевић, А. (2023) Југословенска архитектура између два светска рата (1918-1941): контексти тумачења, Београд: Универзитет у Београду - Филозофски факултет, 160-163

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Кољанин, М. (1992), *Немачки логор на Београдском сајмишту 1941–1944*, Београд: Институт за савремену историју: 447, 450

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Старо сајмиште 3+1: сајмиште, стратиште, уточиште, будућност (2008), ур. Татић Д., Београд

Visual material (state location/ address)

original visual records/drawings/photographs/others: Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Belgrade

Post restoration photographs and survey drawings: Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Belgrade, Memorial Center Old Fairground

film/video/other sources: Memorial Center Old Fairground

List documents included in supplementary dossier

Photos including the original complex and its architecture, layout of the Central Tower, renderings from the project of reconstruction and the final outcome - the reconstructed Central Tower

5. Fiche report

rapporteur: Tanja Conley

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date of report: January 29, 2026

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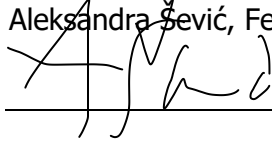
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Examination by DOCOMOMO national/regional section

approval by working party co-ordinator/registers correspondent (name):

sign and date:

Aleksandra Šević, February 12, 2026



examination by DOCOMOMO ISC/R

type of ISC Registers/Urbanism/Landscape/Gardens:

name of ISC member in charge of the evaluation:

comment(s):

ISC approval:

Sign and date:

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Working party/ID n°:

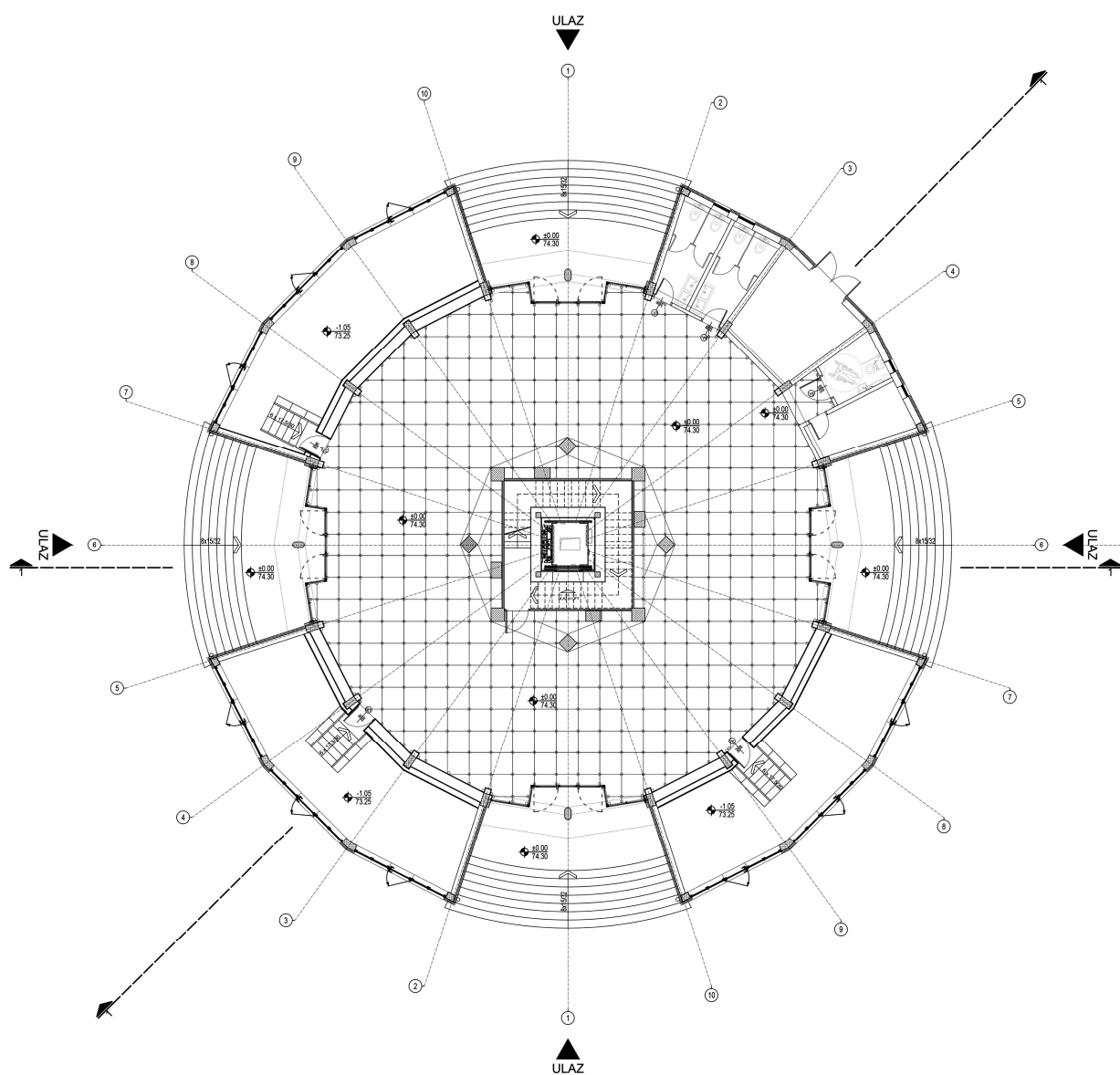
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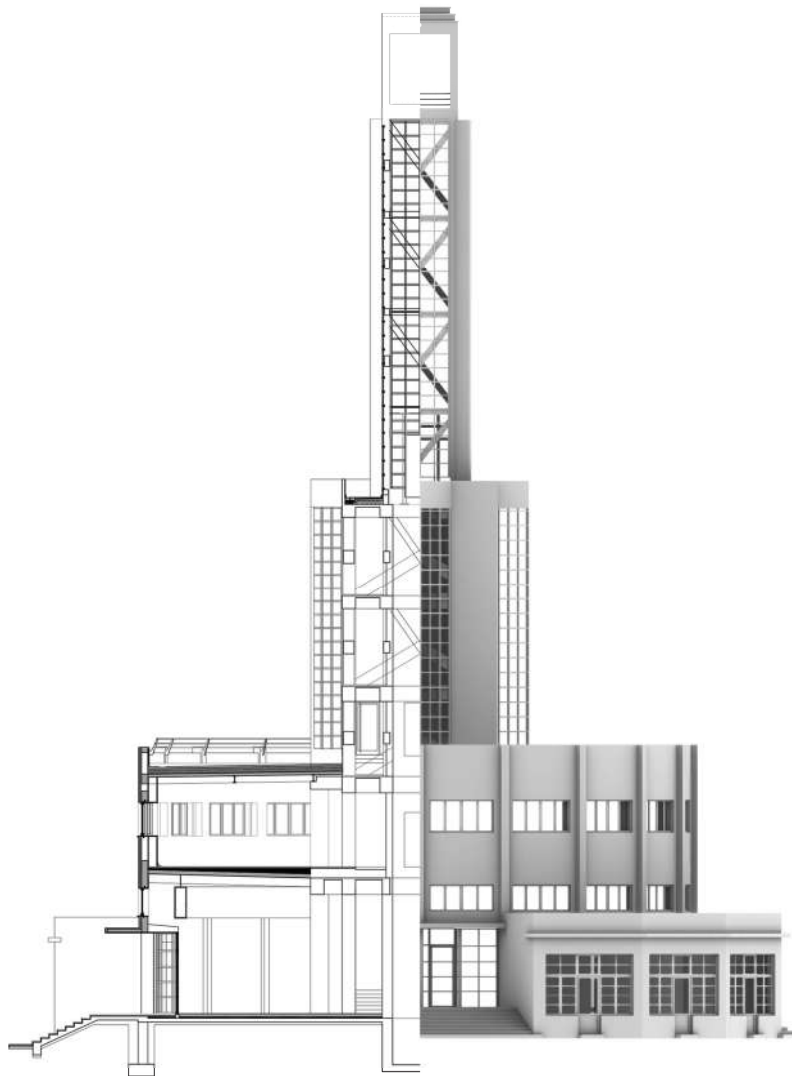


Central Tower – Plan (Footprint)

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Central Tower – Cross-section

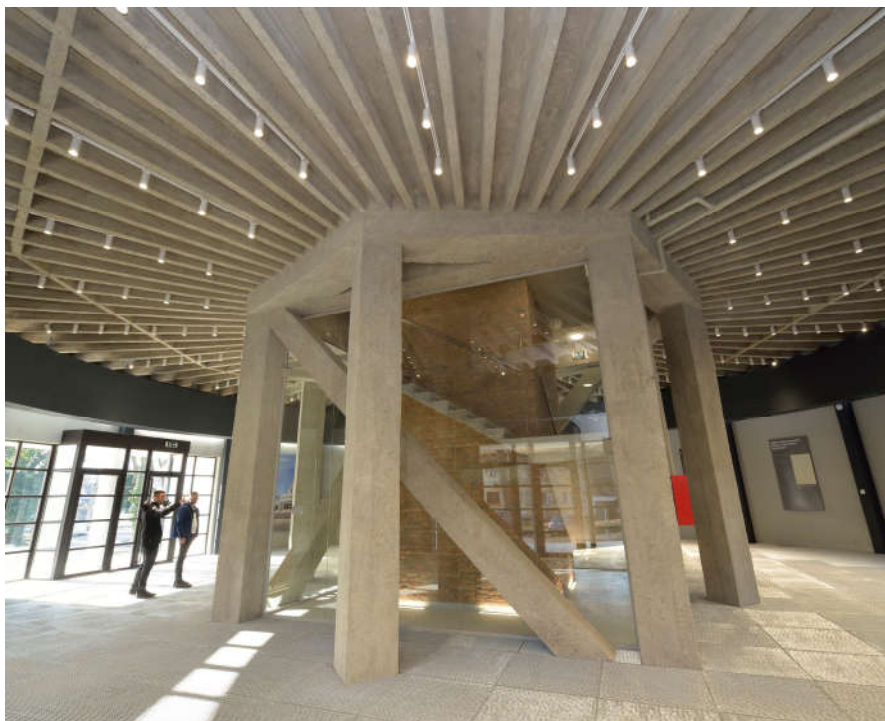
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Structural Core – Before Reconstruction



Structural Core – After Reconstruction