THE STORY

The Farnsworth House, designed and built in the International Style by architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe for Dr. Edith Farnsworth from 1949-1951, is one of the world’s most widely recognized and studied structures constructed in the 20th century. The glass and steel house is set on a 60-acre parcel located along the Fox River and was intended as a place for Dr. Farnsworth to relax, entertain, and enjoy nature. The House stands as a metaphor for the fragile relationship between people, art, and nature: a balance of the controlled and uncontrollable and of the physical, intellectual and aesthetic.

Now a site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Farnsworth House sees over 11,000 visitors each year. Long a place of pilgrimage for architecture students and design professionals, today you’ll also find families on wildflower walks, stunning site-specific art installations, and programming celebrating Edith Farnsworth’s role in the creation of this modernist masterpiece.

For nearly 70 years, the iconic travertine marble at the Farnsworth House has endured – weathering droughts and floods, withstanding deep winter freezes and sweltering summer heat, and welcoming tens of thousands of visitors. Now it’s time for restoration.
THE NEED

The Lower Terrace Restoration Project is part of a multi-year, phased process to address critical Preservation Priorities at the Farnsworth House – projects that are crucial to the stewardship of the site and ensure it endures for future generations. This restoration will be a complex and expensive project which aligns with the National Trust’s other long-term plans for the site.

Feasibility and investigative tests for the restoration work were conducted in 2019/2020, with positive results. Components of the Lower Terrace Restoration Project are expected to include the design and engineering, the stairs, the drainage system and the steel and travertine conservation for a project budget over $250,000.

JOIN US

The innovative simplicity of Farnsworth House makes it one of the most compelling domestic structures in the world. It continues to influence artists and designers today and the National Trust is working to preserve not only the iconic building and its environment, but also the stories of the people associated with it. Please contribute to the future of this dynamic cultural property, inspire future generations, and celebrate the legacy of Farnsworth and the National Trust.

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