

Frank Matero, Historic Preservation

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DEATHS

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Frank Matero

Frank Matero, the Gonick Family Professor in the department of historic preservation and a professor of architecture in the Weitzman School of Design, died on December 19, 2025, after a battle with cancer. He was 72.

Mr. Matero joined Penn's faculty in 1990, when the historic preservation program was just six years old. As an associate professor (and, beginning in 2004, a full professor), he taught courses and advised hundreds of students on their capstone projects. He organized sold-out conferences and founded and directed Penn's Center for Architectural Conservation, which has protected dozens of priceless cultural heritage sites, including Taliesin West, the

Guggenheim Museum, and the Ayyubid Wall in Cairo. He was particularly proud of his work in Mancos, Colorado, where he collaborated with local residents and colleagues to revitalize an

abandoned newspaper office and print shop as a community center. He also founded and edited *Change Over Time*, an international journal on conservation and the built environment published by Penn Press. He led the historic preservation program in its expansion into a department and later served two terms as department chair (1994-2009 and 2018-2025).

A prolific scholar and a sought-after educator and practitioner, Mr. Matero studied the historical and material investigation of architectural technology and its implications for the interpretation and conservation of built heritage. During his career, he authored over 100 publications on conservation history, building technology, ethics, and professional practice, and he was invited to speak at universities and professional forums around the world. In recent years, he focused on developing a framework for material and site risk and vulnerability related to climate change, and he was completing a book on the conservation of concrete architecture.

"In his dedication to students and colleagues, his advocacy for historic preservation—the original sustainability, he was fond of saying—and his commitment to professional reform, he was without peer," said Fritz Steiner, dean of the Weitzman School. Read more tributes to Mr. Matero from colleagues and former students here (<https://www.design.upenn.edu/post/remembering-frank-matero-1953-2025>).

The Weitzman School will hold a gathering for members of the school community in 2026. Students, faculty, staff and alums will receive details via email.