

## CONSERVATION AND MEMORY

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### Abstract

Rather than to be isolated, a monument is related to all the system of its surrounding. And this relation connects it beyond the past – but also to the future witnesses of the past, forwarding a message from the past across the present to the future. Puristic restoration of a segment of its existence omitting the others is not feasible. Already in 1931 at the Athens Conference it was stated that historical and artistic works of the past should be respected, and also in 1964, §11 of the Charta of Venice specified that 'uniform style' is not aimed at in restoring. A monument authentically transmits the message of the past if it is conserved in the historical continuity of its development.

'Notre temps est l'ensemble du temps  
historique que nous connaissons'  
Josef Frank (1930)

How really to conserve? Alas, or rather fortunately, every case is specific and has therefore its own solution. However some axioms permit us to hold a not uncertain guiding line. The word monument, derived from the Latin 'monere' which means to remember a souvenir. A monument has a content and a form, it participates in the surrounding network, it defines a frame of life. Also when we look at a monument we should no longer think of an isolated building, but of every relation, that gives birth to this more or less directly with the built entity; in one word, it should be considered as a part of a detailed system.

This relationship is not fixed in the past, but it has a wider extension to the future, towards a new environment which keeps traces, witnesses.

The restorer will have the duty to realize this 'development' not by a defecation, like Violet-le-Duc did in the Notre Dame in Paris, but essentially by taking into account the authenticity of the monument. Authenticity means scientific researches guided by a concern to reveal the monument in all its clearness, and a judgment of values by accentuating the different phases that have made its life.

That is also the reason why we should avoid purist tendencies which aim is to restore a certain period of the monument at the cost of others, recent or older; because a monument is a cell which develops, it has to undergo more there is, what we call, a continuing development.

The monument has to evoke a complete process — past, present and future — in total it has to be a living element which carries an authentic message from the past to the future. It should not be the expression of the 'object' of a certain period, but on the contrary of a historical continuity; it has to be a complex ensemble inscribed in a homogeneous frame, in other words, it has to be differentiated, regarding time, but also maintain a general unity.

Our study has to be methodical, it has to appear on the basis of certain values which are judged by an aesthetic or artistic point of view, by history and usage, sometimes view, but it is recommended to stay objective in ones approach.

The conversation, which consists of maintaining the building in good condition, which means repaired but at the state in which we find it, should not be the final phase of our intervention; it is also needed to restore the building, to revitalize it, to give it a new life, but all this by respecting the integrity of the building. this modification or mutation is more important when the way of life changes, like the function changes, it leads to a new functional affectation, but that does not mean that the monument ceases to be a witness of the history for us; its past is present as well as its beauty.

The changes are in general constituted by additions or by, what we call, the architectural completion; this new entity integrated in the ancient has to be well distinct, in no way it can be a copy (mimicry), because every form of falsification would destroy the historical process which is the original function of the monument.

Already at the Conference of Athens in 1931 it is said: 'To respect the historical and artistic work of the past, without banning the style of any period' and even later in 1964 the article 11 of Charter of Venice is announced: '... unity of style is not the aim of a restoration.'

As a matter of fact, is it possible to fade away the development of the monument just to be able to show the most glorious side? A monument has a life and the line of life is not straight, generally it is a sinuous curve, it is composed of successes and failures ... ; from the moment we begin to show only one view, one aspect that we have chosen for, we make a selection which unfortunately cannot contain the entity of the life of the monument; we do not find any more the necessary transparency, but we dive in the form of purism mentioned above.

The transparency reflects the identity of the monument, this identity cannot only be significant when it is the carrier of the dimension of time

in all its universality. The 'worthy' contributions of all periods have to be respected.

Our intervention has to be meticulous, we have the task to reveal the monument, to put it in its temporal dimension and to give it life again.

Memory is a form of message, the monument has to carry it to stimulate in us the feeling of not only being the conservator, but also of being the 'reanimator'; we have to 'reanimate' by clearly distinguishing our contribution to the existing; we can only speak of authenticity, when the original part stays well distinct of what is added (Art. 12 Charter of Venice).

A monument is not a mummy, it participates in everyday life through transmissions of the past and also the ability to develop itself for the future.

The notion of 'reversibility' has to be examined very well, reversibility in not curable, because when we destroy a part of the building or even the whole, we make, what is called, a 'non-reversible' action; we would never have torn some pages of our 'unique and famous Book of History'.

In such an approach we should suppose that the total destruction is to be excluded, moreover it is very distressing to think of changing a composition into a new 'coincidentally' organization; it is strongly recommended to avoid every intervention which is not well considered, because this can only lead to the falsification of the historical continuation of the monument. A valuable part, a valuable wall ... totally destructed cannot be risen from the death, disappears to never find back its old place.

The meaning of a monument can be extended to different points; let us always keep in mind that it transmits for us an amount of knowledge, in that sense, that it makes our vision of 'how was it in former days?' more sensitive; it has a function of moral signification, it surpasses the function of usage to succeed in carrying an image, a perception, and that ensemble of parameters anchors in us a notion of visual comfort fixed to the memory.