

For centuries reconstructions have proved their worth - for all sorts of reasons

The Romans used the term 'fanum' to describe a holy place that was separated from the 'profanum' situated in front of it. Separating out holy areas for gods, miracle workers and saints from the everyday world is a fundamental principle for generating sacred significance and is part and parcel of almost every religion and culture.

Reconstruction in holy locations - religious and architectural continuity

When and why a place is ascribed this importance can be based on a variety of different reasons. Places where 'miracles' or 'apparitions' occurred have, for instance, been ranked as being sacred, as have the places where saints or founders of religions were born, worked or died. Holy mountains, copses, springs and caves, the holy River Ganges, the burning bush of the Old Testament and whole towns such as Jerusalem and Mecca became places bearing sacred meaning.

Holy locations developed in many cases into places of pilgrimage and thus also into significant economic factors. For centuries, whenever sacred buildings in a holy location have been damaged or destroyed they have been restored or rebuilt in exactly the same spot. In many cases this continuity related to the design of the building as well. Destroyed Greek temples were rebuilt in their old forms, as were the domes and minarets of Muslim mosques or the vaults and towers of Christian churches. When the church of San Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome, built over the grave of the Apostle Paul, burnt down in 1823, Pope Leo XII immediately ordered that the building be reconstructed not only in the same place but also 'in pristinum', in its old style, as faith, he said, had become intertwined with its form over the centuries.

This approach also determined the countless reconstructions of religious buildings after the Second World War. While bitter debate often raged about how the cities were to be rebuilt, many destroyed churches were reproduced without discussion in - outwardly at least - their old form.

Reconstruction for national political and dynastic reasons

Buildings reach into the present day as a testimony to bygone times and are therefore particularly well suited to directing people's memories back into history way beyond the lifetime of any individual. John Ruskin



Warsaw's Royal Palace after reconstruction (top) and in 1945 after being blown up (below)

even maintained that people could not remember at all without the help of architecture. As buildings firmly link the public's historic consciousness with places of significance to the history of nation and state, they create a common past and thus a strong bond for the feeling of national togetherness and identity.

Architecture can also be used to demonstrate national, political or dynastic claims to power. Monuments and historic buildings therefore play a special role in political calculations and in the 19th century their preservation became a task for the state. 'Les longs souvenirs font des grands peuples' (Long memories create great peoples) was a saying of Charles de Montalembert, one of the fathers of French heritage preservation. It accompanied the country's efforts to preserve, restore and reconstruct historic buildings and monuments. Following the devastating destruction in Poland, Jan Zachwatow-

icz declared in 1945: "The Germans, who wanted to annihilate us as a nation, also destroyed our architectural heritage."

The nation and our historic buildings are, however, as one and it is therefore positively our duty to rebuild them precisely as they were, as by doing so the nation and its heritage gets passed on to future generations."

The link between architectural heritage and national memory also determined the reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg in the USA and 'French' Quebec, as it did too the many reconstructions of national historical sites following the two World Wars and the collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe. In order to satisfy claims of national identity, the respective notions of national expression were often 'given a helping hand' both on restorations and reconstructions. Traditions and national symbols and im-

agery are in many cases 'inventions' and this is reflected too in a nation's historic structures.

Reconstructing the symbols and images of a city

The memory of individuals and of society is limited in duration to the human lifespan. Via symbolic media such as architecture and literature, however, a 'cultural memory' (Jan and Aleida Assmann) is created with a reach that is no longer limited to the memory of individuals, but matches instead the longevity of the fixed, physical symbols. Buildings are therefore able to convey concepts over long periods of time that give people and groups a cultural identity. A city's architecture is an essential part of the cultural memory, on which its residents base their consciousness of unity and character.

The image and history of a city are often condensed into a few buildings that stand in to represent the whole. In the same way that the Colosseum, the Eiffel Tower and the Brandenburg Gate represent Rome, Paris and Berlin, most people associate their hometown with specific buildings, roads or squares. As important elements of cultural memory, such civic symbols are so integral to the residents' identity and concept of who they are that in the event of these being lost there is generally a demand for their reconstruction. After the First World War, the most important buildings and squares of the destroyed cities in Belgium, northern France and East Prussia were therefore rebuilt in their original appearance with practically no discussion at all. Following the huge scale of de-

struction in the Second World War this did not happen in many cities, even though the majority of the public wanted such squares and buildings rebuilt. Even then Herbert von Einem was already warning: "What's use is preservation to us if the natural cohesion that used to connect us with the testimony to former times can no longer be experienced." Since the final third of the 20th century, with the emergence of a new generation the need has intensified in the midst of inhospitable urban spaces for the reconstruction of symbols of civic identity. The reconstructions in Hildesheim, Dresden, Frankfurt and Riga are an expression of the wish of a majority of the residents for public spaces to be designed as a means of preserving an area's cultural memory.

Reconstructing buildings to remember people and events

The most heated argument about reconstruction in Germany raged shortly after the Second World War over the question of rebuilding the fully destroyed house of Goethe's birth in Frankfurt am Main. Modern architects and preservationists had almost made up their minds not to reconstruct it, but those in favour won the day and the reconstructed building was officially opened in 1951. Hundreds of thousands of people from all over the globe have since visited the house and the reconstruction has taken on the function of a memorial. The fact that it is a reproduction largely without any original elements is well known and any talk of it being a 'fraud' would be absurd.

The human memory is 'topological', i.e. structured by place. Architecture is therefore particularly able to help us recall the past. If a building is lost, its reproduction too is able to take on this task of preserving memories of people or events. A new building in a modern design and using 'contemporary' materials would, on the other hand, not have been able - even in the same location - to convey any real idea of the house in which Goethe was born and spent his formative years to the generations to come.

In order to remember people it has been customary since ancient times for the houses in which they were born, lived, worked and died to be preserved, restored and, where necessary, reconstructed. Millions make the pilgrimage to the house of Shakespeare's birth in Stratford-upon-Avon, to Luther's house in Eisleben, to Rubens' house in Antwerp, to Abra-



The Royal Palace of Lithuania (Lower Castle) in Vilnius, reconstructed in 2008

ham Lincoln's log cabin in Illinois, to the house of Jeanne d'Arc in Orléans, to Robert Schumann's house in Zwickau and to Henry Thoreau's cabin on Walden Pond. For most visitors the fact that they are reconstructions does not matter. Historic forms can take us back into history even if they are not original. Reconstructions make it possible to get closer via architecture to people, their deeds and to historic events and they thus fulfil many general human needs and desires.

Archaeological reconstructions

It is part of an archaeologist's work to put structures that have fallen into ruin back together again. If required for the construction, any missing elements get added in such a way that it is possible to distinguish the new parts from the historic. This approach, known as anastilosis, needs to be differentiated from 'archaeological reconstructions'. These are not copies or reproductions – for example, based on drawings or pictures – of buildings that no longer exist, but 'inventions' by the archaeologists based on their current knowledge. Usually the superstructures have to be designed hypothetically from the remnants of the foundations through comparison, analogy or the transfer of other findings. Even more than other forms of restoration archaeological reconstructions therefore reflect both the current status of relevant research and general artistic, historic and scientific views of the period in which they are undertaken. Every form of reconstruction – including restoration – is a product of its time. It is a construct of history that can be dated again by future generations. By looking at the history of the reconstruction of early structures like pile dwellings and Stone Age settle-



Frankfurt/Main before World War II, Römerberg



Frankfurt/Main 1947 and 2002, Römerberg



ments and also of Roman castles and fortifications, such as limes, the projection of contemporary ideas into

archaeological reconstructions can be clearly traced. The way in which reproductions were identified as a

reconstruction can also be retrospectively dated.

While reconstructions in the 19th century, such as the Saalburg Roman fort, were still very much guided by educational interests, archaeological reproductions are increasingly developing into leisure parks aimed at tourists, serving commercial interests and visitors' supposed wishes through dramatisations of every kind. One newer special form is 'experimental archaeology', where individuals using historic tools and in appropriate dress perform the reconstructions in front of an audience. The production of 'living history' is frequently becoming a part of marketing strategies in the media for history and leisure.

Reconstruction as an adaptation of antiquity – from drawing to animation

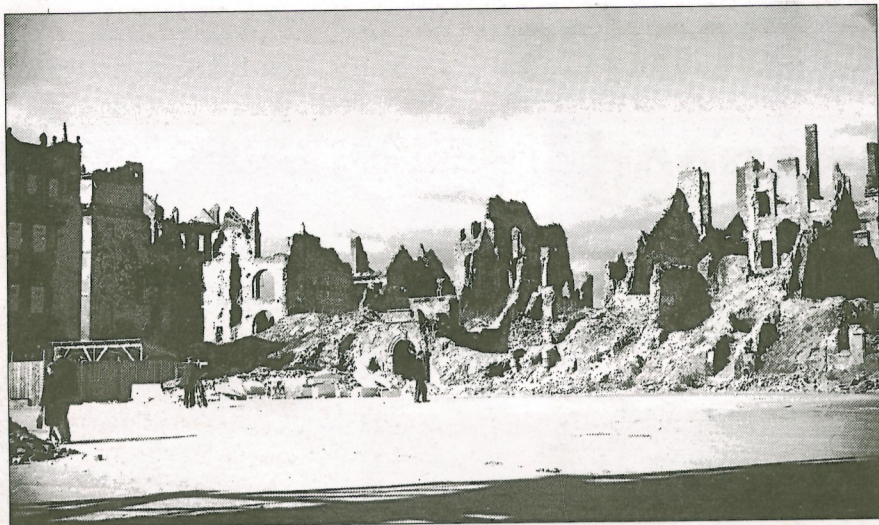
As interest in classical antiquity grew ever greater through the course of the 15th century, the period's architectural remains also gained increasingly in importance. The topography and monuments of ancient Rome in particular were not only the subject of literary research by the Humanists, but the remains of buildings also served as a means of studying the ancient architecture, its structure, design and proportions. From the middle of the 15th century drawings were produced based on Roman ruins. These were not only often excavated and precisely measured, but also reconstructed in drawn form. The architects of the time thought that studying the historic buildings would help them to unscramble the rules of ancient architecture and thus open up the possibility not only of restoring the buildings but also of making practical use of this knowledge in a new form of 'all'antica' architecture. Alberti was already rec-

ommending in his architectural treatise of 1451 that historic buildings be drawn in plan and front view without any foreshortening through perspective in order to be able to record the works better and thus to utilise them for new designs. In a letter to Pope Leo X in 1519, Raphael proposed making an inventory of as many of Rome's historic buildings as possible with the aim of restoring those "of which sufficient is still retained that they can be restored without doubt in the way that they must have been."

Over the course of subsequent centuries, there developed in dealings with the historical buildings of classical antiquity on the one hand an ever better knowledge of the structures and on the other an increasingly 'more realistic' form of presenting reconstructions. Based on scientific research and investigation of a building's architectural history, painters and architects, whose training included reconstructing buildings in drawn form, produced clear plans, perspective views and paintings. Historical paintings and panoramas already seemed to provide a direct insight into classical antiquity and with the possibilities of film and most recently with computer simulation and animation the virtually reconstructed world of ancient times is becoming something that can be directly experienced.

Reconstructing to restore the unity of an ensemble or to regain a unique space

During the Renaissance, Leon Battista Alberti defined beauty as a state to which no changes could be made and nothing added. The notion that all parts should merge to form a harmonious whole applied in many eras to architecture and urban construction as well. Whenever a section of building within an ensemble de-

WIEDERAUFBAU
BERLINER SCHLOSS

Warsaw's Old Town after being blown up by the SS (left) and rebuilt immediately after the Second World War (right)

signed as an entity or historically mature was destroyed, such areas down the ages were frequently restored. The most famous example is the reconstruction of the Campanile on St. Mark's Square in Venice, which collapsed in 1902, and without which the whole square and surrounding area would have totally lost its look. In opposition to this restoration of continuity and conformity there were, however, repeated demands to place new buildings directly next to the old to form a contrast. As up until the end of the 19th century styles of architecture - even across relatively long periods - were interrelated and building methods, dimensions and materials remained relatively constant, this, nevertheless, rarely created such fractures as caused by modern architecture, which distanced itself from historic styles and sought a totally new form of expression with new materials and designs. In the post-1945 concept of 'Neues Bauen in alter Umgebung' (A new style of building in old surroundings) it is autonomy, originality and contrast that dominate, not unity and continuity. However, even within the Modernist movement there is a lot of evidence in the works of the likes of Álvaro Siza, Luigi Snozzi, Carlo Scarpa and Giorgio Grassi of architects integrating their designs into an ensemble and that to them restoring a historic situation is more important than creating a dramatic break with history.

Where important interiors have been lost, especially in the case of theatre buildings, these were frequently reconstructed in order to regain proven spatial qualities or a much-loved atmosphere. Although most modern architects have a mindset opposed to reconstructions, there was seldom any discussion about the many copies of works by the classic exponents of Modernism. The regaining of exemplary models of one's own genre is often judged differently to the reproduction of historical buildings.

Reconstructing 'authentic spirit' and ritual replication

Western culture is defined by a linear perception of time. Time marches

inexorably on and is irreversible. Therefore only 'authentic' historic buildings can remind us of bygone days. Original buildings reach back into history and for this reason are highly valued.

In cultures with a notion of cyclical time, of a continual recurrence of the same within the rhythm of daily and seasonal life and of cosmic or ruling cycles authentic buildings, by contrast, mean little. Of greater importance there are the location's identity and the ability to preserve and pass on traditions within the cycle of events. While heritage preservation in the West is concerned with retaining original buildings as guarantors of memories of the past, the key factor for cultures with a cyclical view of time is passing on the 'authentic spirit' from one generation to the next. The physical structure can be lost, but ritual repetition is designed to guarantee eternal continuity. Location and ritual thus become the constant within the cycles of time.

Ritually demolishing and constructing a building anew or replicating it is a familiar practice in many cultures with a cyclical concept of time. Through these repetitions man, who continues the tradition and passes it on, becomes the living part of higher orders. How closely the new building is based on its predecessor

varies from culture to culture. In Japan, for example, the Isa Grand Shrine has for over 1,300 years been rebuilt with enormous effort every two decades based precisely on the example of the existing structure, which is then cleared away. The customary term for this process is 'fukugen', repetition of the original form. It is not the building that is alive, but the preservation and passing on of the authentic spirit. In many cultures of the Middle and Far East there are countless reconstructed and replicated buildings. Within this cultural context to ask about their age or 'originality' is relatively meaningless.

Reconstruction for the leisure and consumer world

A form of tourism based around historic buildings existed as far back as the 18th century, albeit then undertaken in the main by aristocrats visiting the sights on their 'grand tour'. As the educated classes began travelling in the 19th century, increasing numbers of people visited historic sites in order to see and experience great buildings of the past for themselves. This was accompanied by a systematic pepping up of the buildings in order to convey memorable, visual images to the visitors. The mass tourism of the 20th and 21st

centuries has seen the development not only of major, global tourist industries, but also of wholly new ways of marketing history.

In many cases tourism brought great attention and thus financial assistance to historic sites. However, it also brought an increasing burden on the original structures and pressure to impart history to a lay public in an easily understandable way. As history is now often becoming staged, increasing numbers of new attractions, such as theme parks, trips through time, experimental archaeology or spectacular historic shows, are being invented. Within this context reconstructions are also being created that are frequently part of the 'heritage crusade' (David Lowenthal), i.e. of commercialisation strategies aimed at the tourist market. Some of these reconstructions have, however, since been added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

In the maelstrom of purely commercial interests or tourism-based marketing reconstructions are reduced in many cases to superficial façades and become no more than tokenism. They then serve merely as a sales promotion element or are intended to distract attention from the fact that original historic buildings repeatedly get sacrificed to financial interests.

Reconstruction and the 'honesty' of Modernism

In parallel with the ever better understanding of the historical development of building styles and as a form of compensation for the serious loss of architectural heritage due to industrialisation, historic buildings were in many cases reconstructed in the 19th century largely based on the notion that it was possible to 'creatively' capture how buildings used to be and then recreate them. John Ruskin, and subsequently the representatives of an emerging, scientifically oriented form of heritage preservation, described this style of 'restoration' as a 'lie' or a 'falsification' compared to the established original.

As Modernist architecture developed in the late 1900s, all of the historicising architecture of the outgoing century was disparagingly viewed as eclectic and thus uncreative and the recourse to historic forms discredited as a disguise, a falsehood and an inability to design anything based on the present. The notion that architecture has to map and express function and design directly and that the architect must design in a 'contemporary' style and may not orient himself on history led to Modernism's ideology of 'honesty': if any intervention is to be made into a historic structure, this has to be identifiable as a contemporary modification. The implementation of such 'honesty' led to some brilliant designs, in which the layers of history are artistically displayed. However, it also led to totally bizarre demonstrations of a distancing from any historic form. This ideology also found its way into the 'Venice Charter' issued in 1964, in which the Western heritage preservation sector aligned itself with modern architects' concept of honesty.

The notions of 'truth' and 'honesty' that were formulated by Modernism as a response to the 'lies' of Historicism are based on a supposed knowledge of what is 'contemporary' and 'in keeping with the time'. However, the spectrum of contemporary architecture also includes reproductions, for reconstruction too is a part of present-day building activity.

