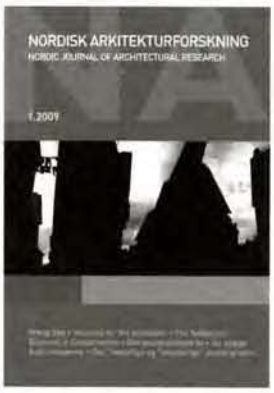
NORDISK ARKITEKTURFORSKNING

NORDIC JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH

1.2009

Wang Shu • Housing for the homeless • The Subjective Element in Conservation • Den postplanlagte by • De stygge kulturminnene • Om "tenkelige" og "utenkelige" doktorgrader



Innhold: Vol. 21, No 1.2009

NORDISK ARKITEKTURFORSKNING - NORDIC JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH

VITENSKAPELIGE ARTIKLER

4 THORSTEN BOTZ-BORNSTEIN — WANG Shu and the Possibilities of Architectural Regionalism in China

18 ÅSHILD LAPPEGARD HAUGE, ELI STØA — "Here you get a little push": The meaning of architectural quality in housing for the formerly homeless - a case study of Veiskillet in Trondheim, Norway

32 JORGE OTERO-PAILOS — The Subjective Element in Conservation

49 MARIE BRUUN YDE — Den postplanlagte by Forskydning og (re)vitalisering af den modernistiske urbanisme

60 MARIE LOUISE ANKER — De stygge kulturminnene Vurderinger og begrunnelse for bevaring av kontroversielle kulturminner og kulturmiljøer, sett i lys av verneteoretiske perspektiver

FORUMARTIKKEL

72 HALINA DUNIN-WOYSETH — Om "tenkelige" og "utenkelige" doktorgrader. Tre synsvinkler på doktorgradsrelatert akademisk utvikling i arkitektur

BOKANMELDELSER

88 STEN BROMARK — Inge Mette Kirkeby: Skolrummets danande atmosfär - mellan disiplinerande underkastelse och förlösande befrielse.

93 OLA NYLANDER — Judith Thomsen: Student Housing - Student Homes? Aspects of Student Housing Satisfaction

95 TORE SAGER — Antarin Chakrabarty: Communicative planning and democratic decentralisation in India Case of Kolkata City

97 LESLIE K. NORFORD — Igor Sartori: Modelling energy demand in the Norwegian building stock Issues related to case studies and scenario analysis

The Subjective Element in Conservation

Jorge Otero-Pailos

Nordic Journal of Architectural Research
Volume 21, No 1, 2009, 17 pages
Nordic Association for Architectural Research
Jorge Otero-Pailos
Columbia Universtity, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, New York City, USA

Abstract:
This article sets out two contrasting conservation theories and their historical context in Western attitudes to the past. The first is exemplified by restoration practices seen in Europe from the late eighteenth century. This is the period of an aesthetic discourse known as neoclassicism. The guiding philosophy directed that classical antiquities should be restored 'back' to the ancient classical models of art, which were thought to represent the most perfect expression of human achievement: emulation by later societies was therefore a means of perfecting themselves. This gave restoration a social purpose and recognition as a public good. The tension between the need to remain faithful to ancient forms and personal artistic expression has remained a subject of debate until the present day.
By contrast early twenty-first century conservation philosophy has been more recently shaped by some key projects executed during the 1970s. The work of the architectural firm Venturi and Rauch is representative of the wider rejection of 'total restoration' in the post-modern period, and of the search to strike a new balance between fidelity to a lost original and personal expression. Instead of trying to restore ruins by completing them, many post-modernists attempted to present them as incomplete wholes, expressing the missing parts as absences. Personal interpretation became a means not only to participate in the contingent completion of historic objects through story telling, but also a way for people to edify themselves through contact with historic objects in a critical, rather than passive, way.

Keywords:
Conservation, architecture, theory, restoration, reconstruction, poetics, aesthetics, subjectivity, expression, postmodernism, neoclassicism, Bertel Thorvaldsen (1768-1844), Robert Charles Venturi (b. 1925), James Marston Fitch (1909-2000).

Neoclassical Approaches to Restoration

In 1811, two architects and archeologists, the Bavarian Baron Carl Freiherr von Haller (1774-1817) and the British architect Charles Robert Cockerell (1788-1863) led an archeological expedition to the island of Aegina during which they unearthed fragments of the ancient sculptures that once graced the pediment of the Doric temple of Aphaia (5th C. BC).[1] Haller convinced his patron (then Prince) Ludwig of Bavaria (1786–1868), an avid collector of ancient Greek art, to purchase the stones for 150,000 francs.[2] Faced with the difficulty of grasping the relationship of the numerous fragments to one another, Prince Ludwig hired the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1768-1844) to study and restore the fragments.

Why did Prince Ludwig hire an artist to carry out this "scientific" endeavor? A similar job today would be awarded to a team (not an individual) including archeologists, art historians and stone conservators among many other professionals. Archaeology gained scientific authority as it developed scientific methods to study the remains of the past. Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) is considered to be the forefather of scientific archeology for developing the first systematic method for observing ancient artifacts, which allowed him to distinguish between Greek artifacts and Roman copies. As Archeology developed, it helped to redefine the understanding of ancient art and architecture, showing it to be more regionally inflected than previously thought, and to have undergone various historical developments. These findings began to put into question Winckelmann's neoplatonic understanding of art and architecture as something based on a single universal ideal. Nevertheless, his notion that the ancients (especially the Greeks) had come closest to that ideal, and that the only way to achieve great art was to imitate the ancients, continued to hold sway.

Artists and architects had been recognized for their restorations of ancient objects since the Renaissance. Restorations, like that of the Laocoön sculpture unearthed in 1506, and then restored several times thereafter, were hotly debated and could make or break the career of artists and architects. By the 18th century,

Model of the Temple of Aphaia, Aegina Island. Glyptothek, Munich.
Photograph by Renate Kühling, Staatliche Antiikensammlungen und Glyptothek Museum

restoration was considered habitual work for sculptors, and the question of the restorer's competency and creativity came under greater public scrutiny. The basis for judging a restorer's competency continued to follow Winkelmann's theory that it had to measure up to the ancients, conceived as an absolute measure of artistic perfection. Late eighteenth century restorers therefore believed that it was their responsibility not just to patch up broken statues but to express the aesthetic perfection of the antique ideal. Pitted against the ancients, the late eighteenth century restorers did not confine themselves to imitation, but proceeded to emulate their predecessors, calling attention to and challenging comparisons with the ancients.

As David Lowenthal has noted, late 18th and early 19th century restorers thought that the advancement of restoration knowledge rested on individual genius, not in the collaborative action of a discipline. Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), French archeologist and editor of the *Dictionnaire d'Architecture*, distinguished between the relative perfectibility in the sciences and the fine arts. He thought that whereas in science "generations transmit the result of these works to the following ones," in art and architecture: "Progress, or what one may call the steps made by predecessors, leaves no traces, no terms that successors could use as a starting point."[3] The identification of the individual restorer as an agent in the advancement of artistic knowledge meant first, that the decision to restore an ancient work or not was subordinate to finding an artist capable of doing the work, and second, that the work of restoration had an educational purpose: the restored artwork had to demonstrate the restorer's superior understanding of it, and thus improve the general public's knowledge of that artwork in particular, and of ancient art in general. Once Prince Ludwig became the new owner of the Aegina sculptures, he began looking for the only individual who could work like the ancients. Thorvaldsen was considered the logical choice, as one of the greatest sculptors of his time. Quatremère judged that Thorvaldsen had mastered perfectly the Aegina style: " we will owe to the restoration of the pediments of the Temple of Aegina our better understanding of how they were, of the taste in the composition of pedimental sculpture, and of the style of this ancient school."[4] The public admiration for Thorvaldsen served in a sense to authorize the restoration.

Some of Thorvaldsen's contemporaries had different views about restoration. When the renowned sculptor Antonio Canova (1757-1822) visited London in 1815, he was asked *who* should restore the Elgin marbles. Judging that there was no artist technically capable and knowledgeable enough to match the work of Phidias, who was thought to be the original sculptor, Canova asked that the marbles not be touched.[5]

The latter half of the 19th century was characterized by intense debates in defense of both artistic restoration and minimal approaches to conservation. By 1849, John Ruskin (1819-1900) had made his case in favor of conservation and against the likes of James Wyatt and Scott. Later William Morris (1834-1896) and his Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings would also enter the debates on the side of conservation.

Poetic Order as Mediating Aesthetic

Thorvaldsen was seen, along with Antonio Canova, as one of the leaders responsible for instituting a new style of art, which we now call neoclassical. Although we often think of neoclassicism as a change of style, a revisiting of ancient Greek and Roman architecture informed by the new archaeological approaches, it was underpinned by a new way of thinking about art. Just as in the realm of practice conservation did not suddenly replace restoration, in the realm of theory romantic ideas did not abruptly break with neoclassical thought. The terms in which the restorer's competency to restore was explained and understood began to change in the early 19th century. Thorvaldsen is interesting precisely because although he was very much practicing within the stylistic canon of neoclassicism, the way he and his commentators thought about restoration was already proto-romantic: they placed a great emphasis on individual genius; and they re-conceptualized restoration as the installation of a "poetic order," or mediating aesthetic, between the material form of the artifact and its intellectual and aesthetic content, or in other words, between practice and theory. Neoclassical restoration practices were a reaction to the division between "ideal" theory and "human" practice, motivated in part by the importance that Enlightenment thinkers placed on the power of the individual. Neoclassical restorers invented an entirely new method for relating their art to the past, which purported to be more "exact" than the simple application of classical theori-

es of composition, such as the rules of proportion. By acquiring a thorough knowledge of the principles of antique art, a truly imaginative artist could put himself or herself into the shoes of the original artist and use his or her creative powers to 'recreate' the work, including any missing or damaged parts. Thus, theory and knowledge might be combined with creative genius to create a 'poetic order'.

Quatremère offered some of the most insightful writings on the neoclassical understanding of poetic order in his *Dictionnaire*, as well as in his famous letters to Canova regarding the Elgin marbles. For Quatremère, the question of how to restore was intimately bound up in the problem of progress in the arts; that is, how to remain faithful to the ancient works while allowing for the evolution of contemporary practice. He thought there were two ways of restoring ancient works, and of designing in general: "The first, improperly called imitation, consists in reproducing only the appearance through copies. The second consists, on the part of the imitator, in appropriating the principles of the antique and consequently its genius or its causes, along with its consequences."[6] He strongly favored the second. The act of restoration was, for Quateremère, at once an act of documenting particulars, of assimilating and learning the universal principles latent within those particulars, and finally, of translating those invariable principles into contemporary particulars by creating something new. Significantly, the act of restoration had to be done by one individual, preferably a genius with great intuition: "Indeed, it is important, in order to succeed at such *restitutions*, that the same man be at once the translator and the artist. When the double operation of translating and drawing combines within the activity of one intelligence, then, the translation and the drawing exchange reciprocal influences."[7] The word choice of "restitution" is important. Quatremère chose it to distinguish his thinking from the old way of understanding "restoration" as simply copying the old. "Cold plagiarists" copied, geniuses practiced restitution. What the genius restorer was supposed to reinstate to the ancient work was its poetic order, not just its missing parts.

Quatremère proposed that it was in principle possible to free restoration from servile copying. This opened the floodgates of creative personal expression in restoration, something Quatremère was worried about. The notion of poetic order was a way to establish limits on expression. Neoclassical restorers had to find the ordering logic of their aesthetic in the process of making itself. The restorer had to install a poetic order on the work, his chisel had to remake the work so that it showed both the material conditions of its making, as well as the intellectual principles on which it was based. Poetic order was the demonstration of a new synthesis of (variable) practice and (invariable) theory.

Restoration introduced the restorer's creative intentions into the new look of the restored work. Conceptually, the process of restoration was not unlike that of creating an entirely new work of art. Every work of art was seen as evidence of a process, the realization of intention in material form, the result of a series of lived artistic moments, or self-contained time frames. With this understanding, neoclassical restoration aimed to *restore the lost time frame* that belonged to the artwork. In 1866, Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-Le-Duc committed to words that new understanding of restoration as "to reinstate it [the building] in a condition of completeness which could never have existed at any given time."[8]

In order to be able to look at all the Aegina fragments together, evaluate the relationship of the parts to the whole, and recompose the pediment, Thorvaldsen rented a large studio in Rome's Corso. He also purchased marble blocks carefully selected to match the exact color and grain of the original Parian marble. He wanted the new and the old to be indistinguishable. When visitors to his studio asked him to identify the restored parts he would retort: "I cannot say, I neglected to mark them, and I no longer remember. Find them out for yourself, if you can."[9]

As material searches for poetic order, neoclassical restoration practices were inseparable from the specificity of techniques used to work on the material itself. Their scientific authority came from the mastery of ancient techniques by the restorer. It seemed inevitable that the best marble sculptures of the ancient world should be restored by the best marble sculptor of the present.

In like fashion, only the best neoclassical architects appeared suited to restore old buildings. Take for instance the British architect James Wyatt (1746-1813), who was noted for his work in the neoclassical style (a little earlier than the now more famous Robert Adam). Wyatt's prestigious appointment, in 1776, as Surveyor

to the Fabric of Westminster Abbey brought him commissions to restore some of Britain's best "ancient" buildings, medieval Gothic cathedrals such as Lichfield , Hereford, Salisbury , and Durham . We need to distinguish neoclassical *restoration* practices from the neoclassical *style* in art and architecture. When Wyatt 'restored' Gothic cathedrals, all the new elements he introduced were in the Gothic style, albeit an unabashedly personal interpretation of Gothic. This is how it is possible for us to distinguish easily today between medieval Gothic details and Wyatt's designs: they are not simply copies of existing historic work. I emphasize this only to press the point that restoration did not require exact imitation, but the faithful pursuit of a poetic order which was meant to restore the material and aesthetic integrity of the ancient building. Thus Wyatt took what today might seem as great creative license when restoring cathedrals, but to him appeared as a necessity. At Salisbury, for instance, he moved funerary monuments to places between the piers so that they would appear more orderly. Wyatt's 'tidying up' of cathedral surroundings separated them from their urban surroundings with landscaped closes, making their siting approximate that of Georgian houses on lawns.

Wyatt's neoclassical notion of restoring the poetic order of ancient buildings also anticipated the writings of Viollet-le-Duc, who claimed to be able to "adopt" the "means of execution"[10] of ancient master builders on the basis of his knowledge of construction techniques. The "science" and facts of architectural restoration was only verifiable by the practical architect who, like him, "has seen stonework hewn and built by the hand of man, who knows how it is worked, and how it is laid in place."[11]

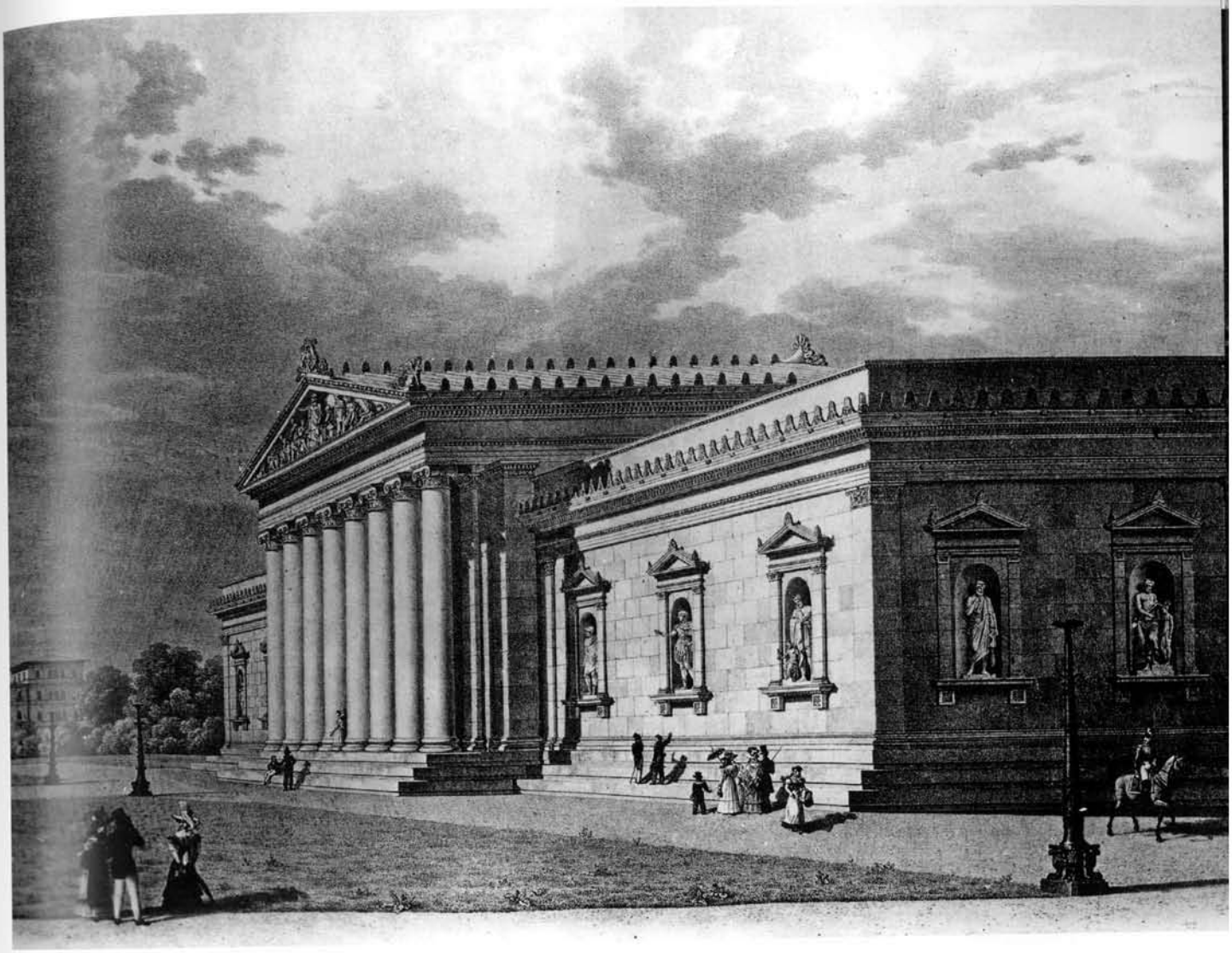
Restorers positioned themselves as returning life to the past. But life can only be here and now. For an architect, to give life to the past meant creating in the manner of the ancients. Through its poetics of ancient or medieval making, neoclassical restoration practices cleared the way for the Romantic identification of art and life. For neoclassical restorers, the life of the ancients was the guide to contemporary life.

Ethics

The task of restoration poetics to bring contemporary life to the past was thought to be meaningless unless there was an objective need guiding the process. Since ancient Greece towered above all other periods, the decision to restore ancient works according to an eighteenth-century model of ancient aesthetics was guided and directed towards the goal of social utility. Restoration aesthetics was for the first time justified on ethical grounds: all citizens would become better people by exposure to the very finest art.

Prince Ludwig claimed the ethical ground of social utility when he commissioned Thorvaldsen to restore the Aegina marbles. The marbles were part of a larger plan by Prince Ludwig to build symbols of Bavarian national identity. He asked architect Leo Ritter von Klenze (1784-1864) to design Munich's Königsplatz in the spirit of ancient Greece, a great civic space whose north side was filled by the new museum for classical sculptures, the Glyptothek. The buildings were also to be the perfect architectural setting for political rallies. Ludwig, crowned King in 1825, used the Königsplatz to celebrate his dynastic "incorporation" of Greece through his son Otto, who was crowned first King of Greece in 1832. Klenze's design marked a departure in the history of museums.[12] It was the first building to be devoted entirely to the display of antique sculpture. Thorvaldsen's Aegina marbles became the centerpieces of the display. Klenze wanted to create the perfect architectural setting for neoclassical restorations: the building was supposed to enhance Thorvaldsen's intention to hinder the viewer's ability to tell the old fragments from the old. Klenze decorated the room in the manner of ancient Greek architecture to distract the viewer, "to make him oblivious of the dreary condition in which they [the ancient sculptures] have come down to us, often after centuries of barbarism and destruction; this is better achieved by providing the walls, against which these antique sculptures are exhibited, with a certain degree of splendour, and even emphasizing it."[13]

The history of conservation attests to the fact that modern Western society has always invested itself unevenly in the past. That is to say, for every generation one period of the past has seemed to tower above all others as an emblem of wholesomeness and perfection. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu called this investment the *illusio* or belief that holds fields of cultural production together: "The smooth running of all social mechanisms, whether in the literary field or in the field of power, depends on the existence of the *illusio*, the interest, the



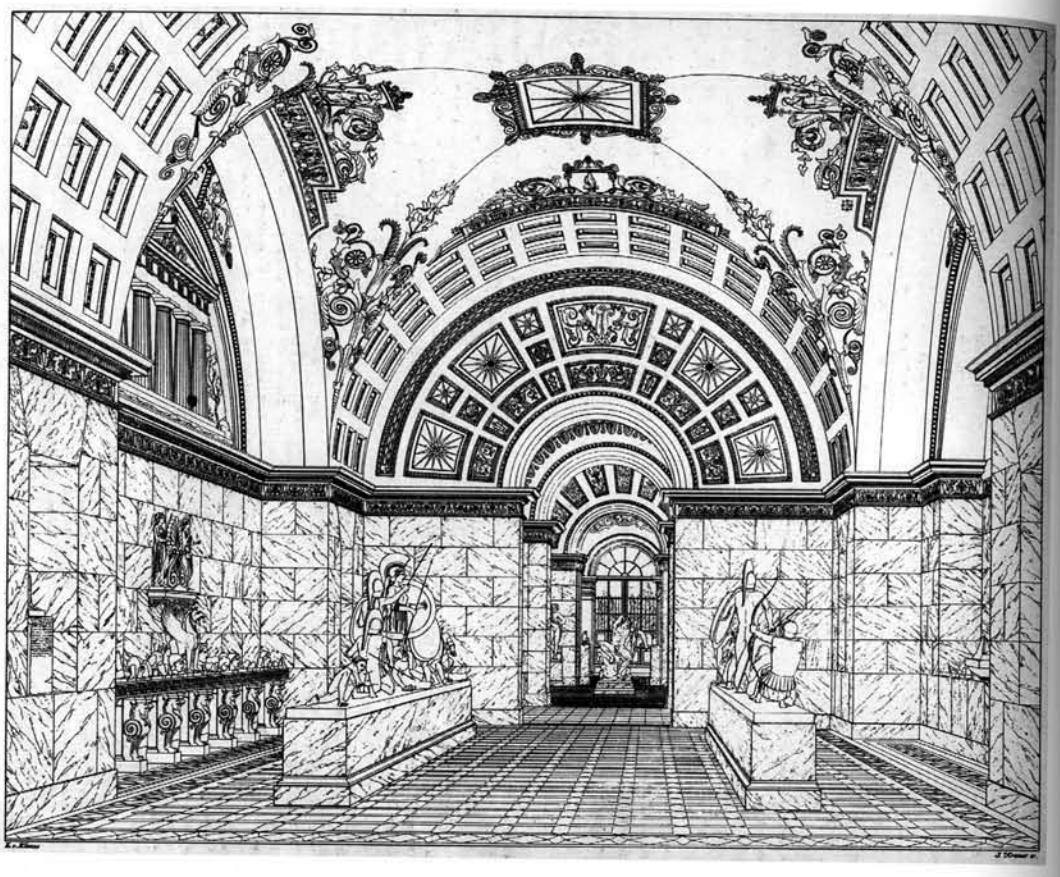
Unknown engraver, Glyptothek auf dem Königsplatz, München, c.1850, steel plate engraving. Photo: © akg-images

investment, in both economic and psychological sense (this investment is called *Besetzung* in German and 'cathexis' in English)."[14] The *illusio* of conservation consists primarily in the investment in an aesthetic ideal derived from the past, and in the romantic belief that its poetics can reconnect contemporary life with a more wholesome former way of life. It is this social investment that has guaranteed the proper functioning of conservation and determined its changing aesthetics over the past two centuries.

De-Restoration Politics

I now want to shift gears and look at changing philosophies about how we connect with the past made during a period closer to the present: the 1970s. The jump is not random. During the 1970s, the neoclassical period became the object of great popular and scholarly interest, especially in Germany in the context of de-Nazification, and in the United States where the date of 1776 burned in everyone's minds as preparations were underway for the country's bi-centennial celebration. During the 1970s there was also a return to the neoclassical notion of conservation as a poetic process in reaction to archeology. Uncannily, the Aegina marbles were again at the center of this debate.

Before we return to the marbles, we should also note the rapid formalization of the processes for conservation after World War II. In particular, the adoption of the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (Venice Charter) in 1965 represented a key stage in this process. The Venice Charter set out general principles for intervening in historic structures and objects, and article 12 declared:
"Replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same



Leo Von Klenze, Interior of the Glyptothek showing the Aegina Marbles.

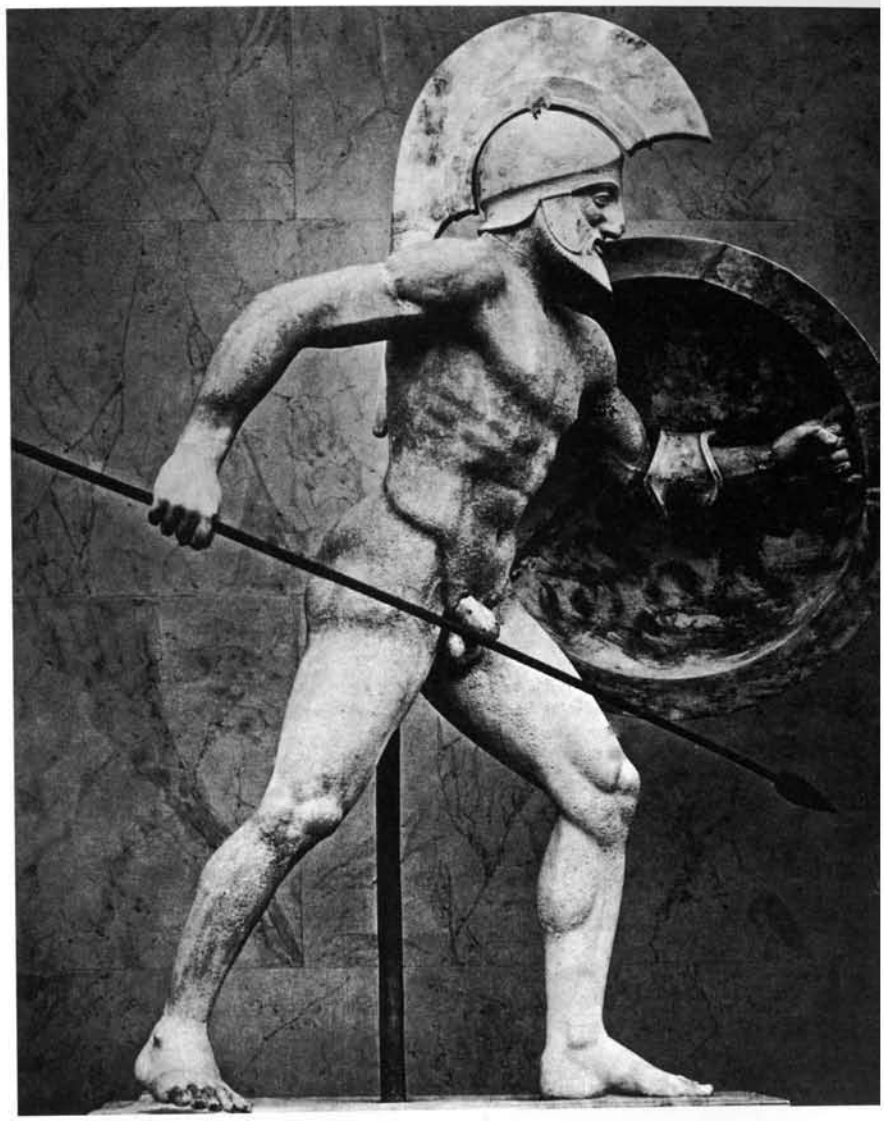
time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence". In other words, the Western nations formally recognized the distinction between the 'archaeological' survival of original features as authentic and the deliberate reinstatement of features as inauthentic but acceptable if capable of being understood as such by the viewer (and fake, if masquerading as original). For example, decorated pottery fragments might be reassembled but missing pieces represented in new clay coloured to tone in but not to 'disappear' into the original whole. The conservator would not add their artistic interpretation of the integrity of the original work. So how would curators respond to the many works in their collections that had earlier 'restorations' from very different philosophical understandings?

In 1972, after a decade of work, Dieter Ohly, Director of Munich's Glyptothek, unveiled the much anticipated "de-restoration" of the sculptures from the temple of Aphaia at Aegina. The significance of this event would have normally been restricted to the limited world of museum conservators, but the work involved a major artist's, Thorvaldsen's, previous neoclassical restoration. This happened to be the time when Postmodern architects were rediscovering neoclassicism, and they were quick to come to the defense of neoclassical works. Giulio Carlo Argan (1909-1992), an art historian with a breadth and clarity of vision that earned him a wide readership among architects and preservationists, sounded the alarm and directed their attention towards the Glyptothek. What was shocking was what they did not see. Ohly had entirely destroyed the work of Thorvaldsen. Hiding behind the mask of a "scientific" restoration method, Ohly had destroyed a great work of neoclassicism with impunity.

Later scholarship has demonstrated what contemporary viewers could only hypothesize: that this eradication of neoclassicism was as ideological as scientific. It was part of a particular cultural moment when Germany attempted to overcome its Nazi past by destroying the cultural heritage that the Nazis had previously appropriated as their "authentic" roots.[15] Thorvaldsen's sculptures of ancient warriors had been hailed by Nazis like Hans W. Fisher as models for the new German athlete. As literal fusions of ancient Greek and neoclassical sculpture, they also served as symbolic anchors of the imperialist desire to make Munich what Hitler called the "Acropolis Germaniae." Indeed, the Konigsplatz was used for Nazi mass rallies and further classical buildings were added to the ensemble.

Ohly's de-restoration seemed justified as a scientific correction. If Thorvaldsen's original restoration was an expression of scientific knowledge about the ancient sculptures combined with creative interpretation, then new scientific discoveries, with their concomitant expansion of existing knowledge, demanded that the restoration be "improved." Evidence from new excavations had exposed Thorvaldsen'spoetic license in restoring the sculptures. For instance, he had restored a warrior from the east pediment as lying down when he should have been standing. Since Thorvaldsen was not "just" a conservator but also a famous sculptor, the question became whether his restoration should be considered scientific or artistic: ultimately, was his work evidence of poetic intention or scientific rationality? The answer would determine if it was permissible to "correct" it. Ohly viewed Thorvaldsen's restoration as scientific, and therefore flawed, outdated, and in need of urgent updating. Ohly's decision was also a judgment that the discipline of conservation was an "objective" science, which permitted no room for poetic self-expression.

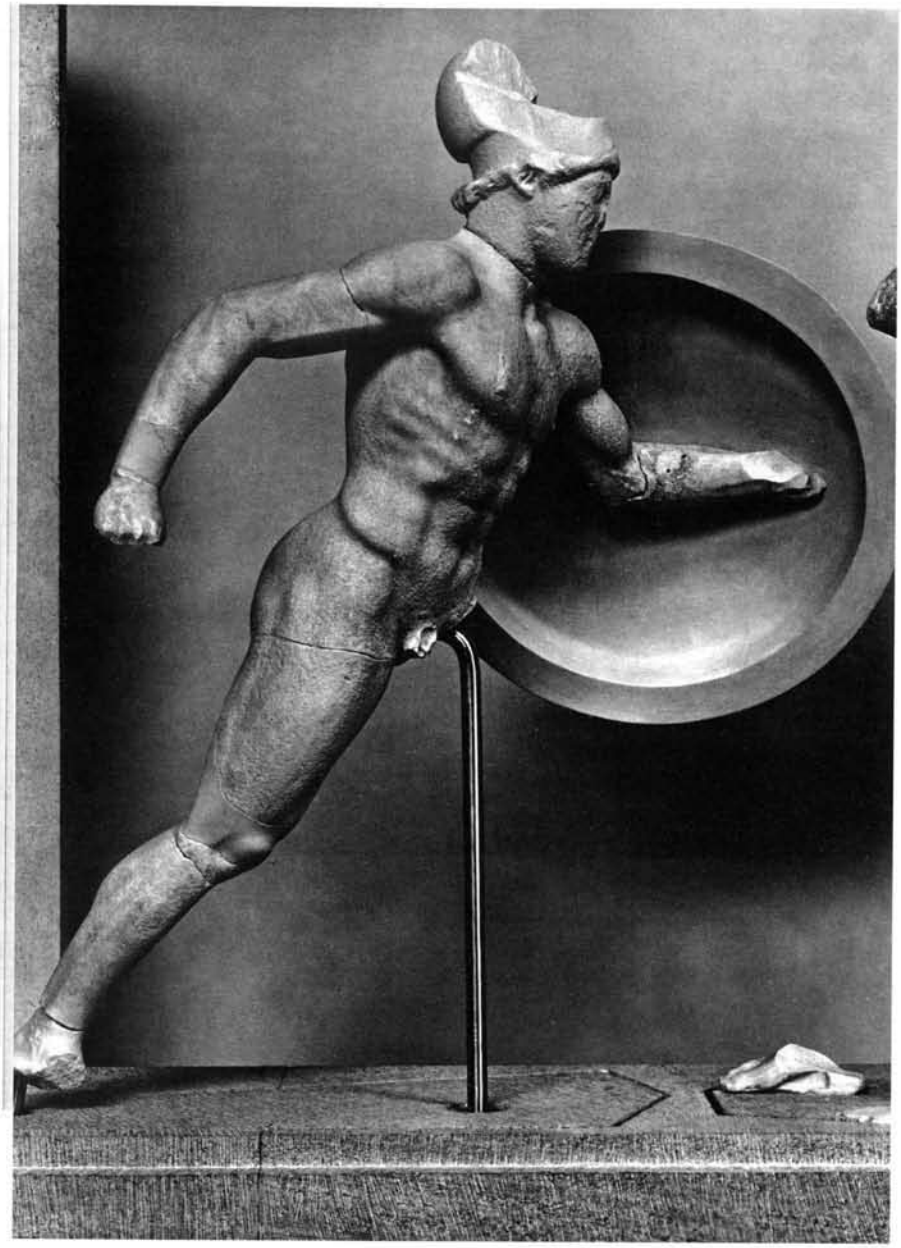
During these same years, Postmodern architects entered into the discussion. Their interest in connecting modern architecture with the styles of the past led them to raise theoretical questions which, as they quickly discovered, had already been asked towards the end of the 18th century, including how to link tradition and invention, how to express contemporary architecture in a historic style or, as postmodernists liked to say, in the "language" of the past. They did not wish to make copies of historic styles, but to use historic traditions creatively, even playfully. For instance, Philip Johnson designed a skyscraper office block, a key symbol of modernity, with an eighteenth-century style pediment and other references to classical architecture (the AT&T building, now the Sony Tower, New York, finished 1984). Architects who deliberately remade historic architectural styles into new, unprecedented, combinations in their buildings could be said to be making new meanings out of older traditions, perhaps something that Thorvaldsen would understand.



Warrior before derestoration. Glyptothek, Munich. Unknown photographer. Staatliche Antiikensammlungen und Glyptothek Museum

Lost Time

These conservation and architectural debates about what was the proper "language" in which to express contemporary work, and about the difference between scientific and artistic approaches to practice framed the institutionalization of conservation as an academic discipline. James Marston Fitch (1909-2000), founder of the first historic preservation program in the United States at Columbia University, conceived conservation (or historic preservation as it is termed in America) more as an art than as a science. He called it a "four dimensional" creative practice.[16] Conservation engaged the first and second dimensions through documentation, which required measuring linear distances, and drawing two dimensional plans and sections of the existing buildings. It encompassed the third dimension through interventions in the fabric of buildings. Fitch differentiated the three dimensional work of preservation from that of architecture. Unlike architecture which dealt mostly with the addition of new materials to a site to produced a new three dimensional building, preservation involved both additive and subtractive proces-



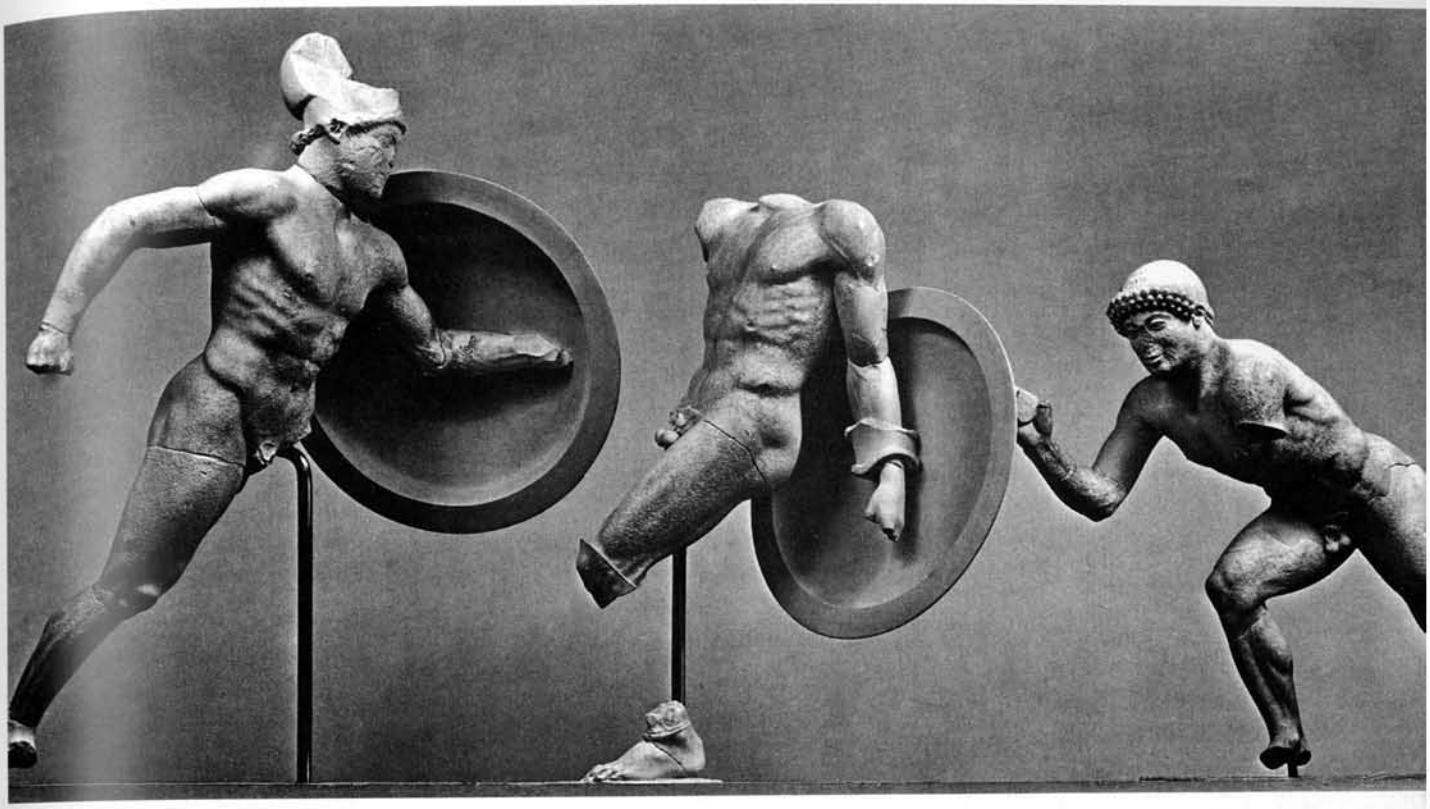
Warrior after derestoration. Glyptothek, Munich. Unknown photographer. Staatliche Antiikensammlungen und Glyptothek Museum

ses: in some cases it might require removing walls altogether to achieve the desired historical integrity. Conservation's first three dimensions were relatively straight forward geometric quantities. By contrast, the fourth dimension was less obvious. Fitch made it clear that what he called the fourth dimension was not simply time itself, but rather the particular manner in which conservation presented architecture as an object created and shaped through a temporal process.[17]

The fourth dimension, as the aesthetic expression of this temporal poetics was, in his words, an "unnatural interface between the viewer and the viewed,"[18] visitor and building. The key word was "unnatural." The fourth dimension was an aesthetic realm of artificiality, emerging paradoxically from the viewer's confrontation with the genuine building. "This," underscored Fitch, "is a totally different relationship from that which normally exists between user and used or owner and owned."[19] The time dimension of conservation negated the "normal" way of experiencing buildings as "useful" three dimensional objects of daily life. It created an "abnormal" relationship to buildings through which they appeared as something more than use objects: they appeared as poetic creations.

The "unnaturalness" of conservation's fourth dimension was also a function of the fact that it did not offer a sequential measure of time (like a clock), or even a narrative measure of it as a linear continuum "full" of events. Rather, according to Fitch, the fourth dimension was really a measure of "lost" time: an unbridgeable temporal gap that made the experience of the present object seem totally disconnected from the past. The notion of lost time was central to Fitch's understanding of modernity as the human condition of being alienated from one's own heritage. Conservation's fourth dimension, he wrote, "responds to the need for alienated peoples to reestablish some experiential contact with the material evidence of their own past."[20] The word choice here is important. The fourth dimension was a "response," not a solution.

The theme of lost time can be found in the work of other architectural conservation theorists, and became central in North American preservation debates during the 1970s and 1980s. Lost time was also a central concept in the European rethinking of architectural conservation, where it was spearheaded by art historians turned conservation theorists like Paul Philippot (b. 1925), who directed UNESCO's ICCROM during the critical years of 1971-77. Philippot also believed in the "unbridgeable gap that has formed, after historicism, between us and the past."[21] The missing link of lost time could not simply and naively be filled in without falling prey to the false consciousness of confusing self-projection with historical fact. If lost time was really "lost," then by definition one could not know what it was.



East pediment assemblage. Glyptothek, Munich. Unknown photographer. Staatliche Antiikensammlungen und Glyptothek Museum

For Fitch and Philippot, the most damning condemnation of a conservation project was to say that it was archeological. That was to say that it had failed to bring life to the past, and instead increased our distance from it by "freezing" it. For Philippot, the more alienated the preservationist was from the past, the more he or she would "turn to a scientific approach" to preservation and tend to transform the historic building "into a purely archaeological museum object."[22] These were damning words for his German colleague Ohly, whose reputation never recovered. By physically removing Thorvaldsen's restoration work, Ohly had both destroyed the creative contribution of the sculptor and also fixed the original fragments in a frozen moment of time.

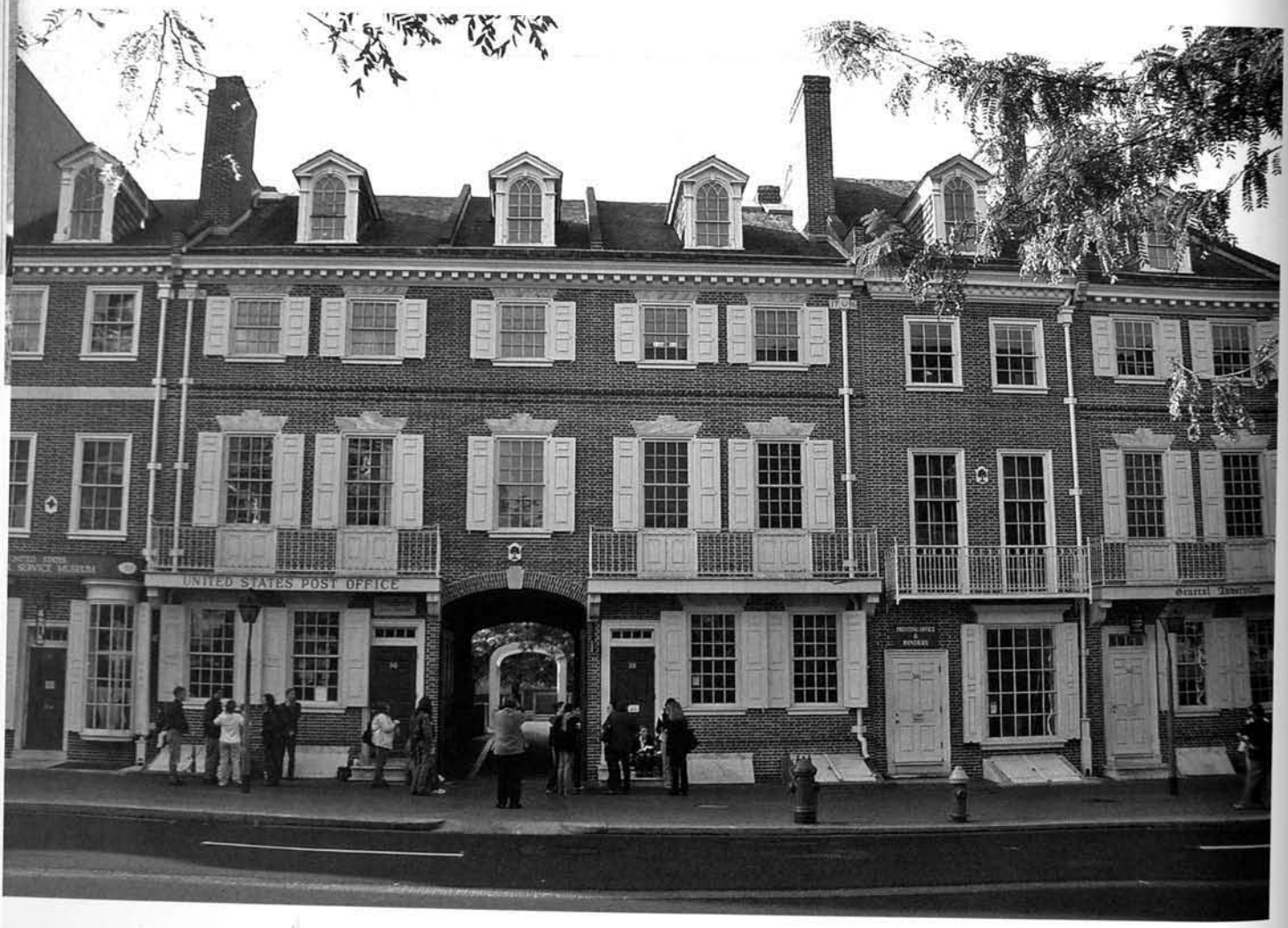
The "big failure" of archeological conservation, wrote Philippot, was that it could not "reestablish the continuity of lived history."[23] We can see an example of a large scale heritage project that attempts to achieve this 'lived history' experience at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia. The former capital town of the colony until 1780, it had fallen into quiet decay until its significance as part of the foundation story of modern America attracted physical restoration and investigation projects from the 1920s until today. It claims to be the world's largest living history museum, an eighteenth-century town staffed by costumed interpreters. Fitch attacked Colonial Williamsburg, the darling project of the conservation establishment, as the worst kind of archeological conservation. The entire town had been returned to 1776 through surgical demolitions and scientific reconstructions, then furnished and perpetually maintained in first-class condition. The archeological operations to "purify and telescope historic processes" presented visitors with a "simultaneity of well-being that would seldom if ever have occurred."[24] The experience distanced life from the past instead of bringing it closer. Better would have been a more natural mix of old and new, demonstrating the passage of time which separates the eighteenth century from the present day. Fitch's attacks on Colonial Williamsburg undermined the authority of the conventional conservation aesthetic of archeological reconstruction, which had reigned supreme in America since the 1920s.

Fitch proclaimed that conservation poetics had entered a new era in the late 1960s. The practice of total restoration seemed elitist to Fitch because only the preservationist actually performing the restoration could experience preservation as a creative poetic process. The rest of society was reduced to passive spectatorship

of the final aesthetic product. In addition, total restoration seemed to replicate high modern architecture's notion of design, as a process restricted to professionals. This seemed anachronistic at a time when Postmodern architects were critiquing the lonely figure of the architect-hero, and experimenting with more inclusive processes of "community design." We would recognize this now as a critique of the Authorised Heritage Discourse. It was time, thought Fitch, to democratize conservation and to engage visitors in the process of making preservation, in its poetics. What Fitch meant by democratizing conservation poetics was something far more subtle than simply handing over design decisions to the public. The new preservation poetic involved striving towards an aesthetic that made its own making visible.

Venturi and Rauch's 1976-78 reconstruction of Benjamin Franklin's 1780s home in Philadelphia was, for Fitch, the emblematic example of this new preservation poetic: "a new level of maturity in American preservation."[25] The U.S. National Park Service originally planned to reconstruct Franklin's home as a traditional house museum complex. Only the foundations of the original structures remained on the site. The market street rental houses were in fact reconstructed in the "typical" architectural language of the 1780s. Behind this new street wall, they also planned to reconstruct Franklin's print shop and house, but historians were unable to find sufficient historical documentation to determine the exact aesthetics of the original house. Venturi and Rauch proposed to acknowledge the limits of historical knowledge by proposing to reconstruct only those facts about the house and print shop that were archeologically and historically verifiable, and letting visitors imagine the rest. They built a white steel frame that outlined the volume of the two structures as dematerialized "ghosts."[26] On the ground, the diagram of the floor plan was "drawn" on the pavement with walls indicated in white marble against a dark field of bluestone. In the absence of the usual artifacts that would have cued

Market Street, Philadelphia, 2003. Photo: © Jorge Otero-Pailos



Franklin house structures, Philadelphia, 2003. Photo: © Jorge Otero-Pailos

visitors about whether they were standing in a kitchen or a bedroom, the three dimensional diagram was "labeled" with inscriptions on the bluestone slabs: "You are now in the first floor area which served as a book bindery." Other didactic aesthetic devices also served to organize the visitor's attention towards archeologically verifiable material "evidence" of history. Concrete "periscopes" punctured through the new floor to reveal the archeological remains of the cellar below the house. Fitch praised Venturi and Rauch for combining the "cognitive and the sensuously perceptible" and turning the architecture itself into a "brilliant interpretation of the morphological development of the site" that was more engaging than a simple reconstruction.[27]

This was indeed a significant shift in conservation theory. Venturi and Rauch's acceptance that an integral object could not be produced took apart the idea of restoration as the material restitution of the ideal, in direct contrast to some of the total rebuilds that form part of Colonial Williamsburg, for example. To reconstruct the Franklin House in the manner of the 1780s would be to employ an architectural language so general that it would reduce the particularities of what was to be expressed to an idealized stylistic model already given and known. Venturi and Rauch thought that a restoration would be a falsehood. Nevertheless, their response maintained the neoclassical notion that a work of conservation (restoration, reconstruction or restitution) should achieve a poetic order, an aesthetic that is expressive of the intellectual and material struggle between the restorer and the object being restored and expressive of the passage of time. Venturi and Rauch tried to express their subjectivity within the material and intellectual limits of the site: the steel frame was at once their subjective

Lobby interior, The Rookery, Chicago, 2007.
Photo: © Jorge Otero-Pailos

interpretation of Franklin's house, and also an objective marker of the limitations of the evidence. They reintroduced subjectivity to conservation poetics as an aesthetic synthesis that knows itself to be inconclusive, and expressed it in forms, like the "ghost" steel outline of Franklin's house, that are at once whole and incomplete.

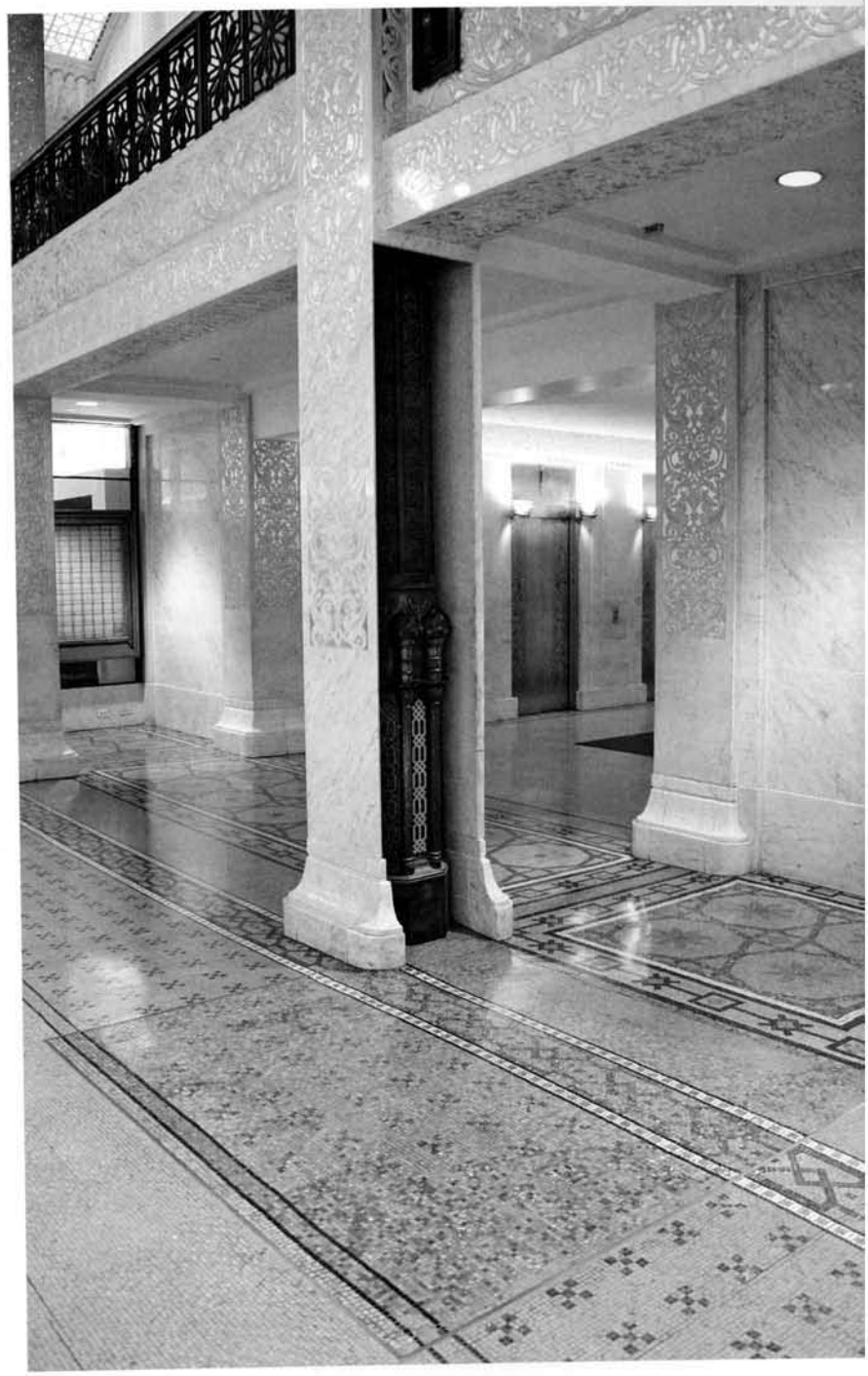
This case bears witness to the 1970s moment when subjective expression again appeared legitimate within conservation practice, so long as it remained guided by, or in the service of, a purpose other than itself, namely, the truthful (or so called objective) portrayal of material heritage.

The Poetics of Incompleteness

Fitch's notion of the 'fourth dimension' characterized a kind of conservation which seeks to prompt the imagination to consider what remains of the past while acknowledging what has been lost. It emphasizes the limits of knowledge and the impossibility of ever 'going back' to the past, while simultaneously challenging the viewer to make intellectual sense of the evidence and create his or her own creative interpretation of it. The discovery of the difference between conservation poetics and the object preserved paved the way for a more authentic relationship to the aesthetic products of conservation, as opposed to the old idea that any subjective expression in conservation is a form of falsification of the original. Recognizing that artificiality is not the same thing as falsification, preservationists began to openly pursue the expression of artificiality.

Take for instance the 1989 restoration of the lobby in Burnam and Root's Rookery Building in Chicago (1884-1886). When Gunny Harboe, a student of Fitch, took charge of the restoration team he was confronted with a building that had undergone a number of previous transformations, not least among which was the total redesign of the lobby by Frank Lloyd Wright, one of America's most celebrated twentieth-century architects.[28] Harboe decided to restore the lobby to Wright's design. Given the poor condition of much of the marble walls, floor mosaics, and plaster ceilings, Harboe had to

replace much of the original fabric. The short walk from the street through the double height stair lobby, through the low and deep corridor of the elevator bank, is an enveloping spatial composition that delivers the visitor to a glorious light filled central courtyard. Despite the inauthenticity of the materials, one has the strong impression of being in a work designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. But the immediacy of the experience is negated by one's confrontation with a small patch of authentic tesserae on the floor, which reveal the rest as being part of a later restoration. More troubling still, the column sitting on the "old" mosaic patch seems to be disintegrating, with part of its marble sheathing mysteriously missing. Emerging from the inside is a cast iron column suggesting Burnam and Root's lobby remains encased within. The endlessly receding experience of the "original" and the inversions in our perception of what is authentic, begin to create an aesthetic distance from the environment which makes us grasp its artificiality. It is at this precise moment that the space comes into focus as a work of conservation poetics. Artificiality here emerges as the result of an expressive technique that places one aesthetic synthesis (i.e. one period style) next to another without indicating which is subordinate, rendering both inconclusive. The result is a building that, having been touched by conservation, is unlike any other, in the sense that it does not present us with a single moment in history, or even with a sense of the continuity of time, but rather with an impossible, artificial, experience of time as something simultaneously discontinuous and co-present. Conservation introduces time as an alien quality in buildings, something to wonder about, not something given as their natural content.



Detail of the Rookery lobby, Chicago, 2007.
Photo: © Jorge Otero-Pailos

In Conclusion, Incompleteness

The type of conservation poetics of incompleteness, as I have called them in this essay, that were initiated in the 1970s have by now become the default mode of expression of most Western conservationists. The taste for presenting various phases of development alongside contemporary expressions is now dominant, and is often associated, rightly or wrongly, with a democratic open society capable of "accepting" its past and moving on with the present. Witness for instance the preservation of Berlin's Reichstag and its restoration into the new German Parliament by Sir. Norman Foster and Partners (1992-99). Nazi graffiti was uncovered and exposed to the public in one part of the building, while a contemporary glass dome replaced the historic roofing system. Indeed today restorations that have emphasized one period in an object's history at the expense of all the others are seen as elitist, undemocratic, and "top down." This is still the objection that many preservationists raise against Ohly's derestoration of the Aegina Marbles. Both cases raise the question of whether one can make a

strict correlation between a certain preservation aesthetic and a political program (democracy, tyranny, etc.). We should recall that both Ohly's and Foster's work were done under the same democratic German government. In thinking about this question, I would suggest that we distinguish between the production and the reception of preservation works. As historic preservationists, we tend to focus on how objects are received and interpreted by non-preservationists, and we often forget to critically examine our own creative process, and the intellectual histories, the "boxes" if you will, within which we operate.

AUTHOR

Jorge Otero-Pailos
Assistant Professor of Historic Preservation
Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
Columbia University, New York City, NY, USA
jo2050@columbia.edu

NOTES

The original version of this paper was presented under the title "The Disintegration of the Architectural Object" at the symposium "Fourth Dimension: Transformation and Innovation in Architecture," held at the DogA (Norsk Design og Arkitektursenter) in Oslo, on September 19, 2007. I would like to thank the conference organizers, especially Peter Butenschön, Mari Hvattum, and Thordis Arrehnius. I would also like to thank Tim Benton and Susie West of the Open University, Milton Keynes, for their insights on subsequent revisions.

[1] The expedition also included the British architect and archeologist John Foster (1787-1846), the Danish archeologist Peter Oluf Brøndsted (1780-1842), the German painter Jakob Linkh (1786-1841), the Estonian archeologist Count Otto Magnus Baron von Stackelberg (1786-1837), and the then Austrian consul in Greece George Christian Gropius. Eugène Plon, Thorvaldsen: His Life and Works, trans. Isaphene M. Luyster , (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874).

[2] "Haller von Hallerstein, Carl Freiherr," in Dictionary of Art Historians, http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/winckelmannj.htm, accessed March 10, 2008.

[3] Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, "Antique," in The True, the Fictive, and the Real: The Historical Dictionary of Architecture of Quatremère de Quincy, (London1999: Andreas Papadakis Publisher, 1999), 63, 64.

[4] Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, Lettres escrites de Londres à Rome et adressées à M. Canova sur les Marbres d'Elgin à Athènes, letter 4 (Paris : n.p., 1818), 82.

[5] Antonio D'Este, Memorie della Vita di Antonio Canova, (Florence: Felia le Monnier, 1864), 245 ff.

[6] Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, "Antique" in The True, the Fictive, and the Real: The Historical Dictionary of Architecture of Quatremère de Quincy, (London1999: Andreas Papadakis Publisher, 1999), 69.

[7] Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, "Restitution" in The True, the Fictive, and the Real: The Historical Dictionary of Architecture of Quatremère de Quincy, (London1999: Andreas Papadakis Publisher, 1999), 219.

[8] Eugene Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, On Restoration (1866), trans. Charles Wthered, (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1875), 9.

[9] Eugène Plon, Thorvaldsen: His Life and Works, trans. Isaphene M. Luyster , (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874), 58.

[10] Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, Lectures on Architecture: Volume I, trans. Benjamin Bucknall , (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1987), 126.

[11] Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, Lectures on Architecture: Volume I, trans. Benjamin Bucknall , (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1987), 214. Significantly, Viollet-le-Duc esteemed that this working knowledge of building techniques was necessary even to evaluate the truthfulness of photographs.

[12] Heiner Knell and Hanno-Walter Kruft , "Re-Opening of the Munich Glyptothek," in The Burlington Magazine, n. 831, v. 114 (June 1972), 426, 429-432, 435-436.

[13] Leo von Klenze and Ludwig Schorn, Beschreibung der Glyptothek Sr. Majestät des Königs Ludwig I. von Bayern, (München: In Commission der J.G. Cotta'schen lit. artist. Anstalt, 1830), 1ff.

[14] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Structure of Sentimental Education," in The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature, ed. Randal Johnson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 159.

[15] For an account of the de-restoration see William J. Diebold , "The Politics of Derestoration: The Aegina Pediments and the German Confrontation with the Past," in Art Journal, n. 2, v. 54 (Summer 1995), 60-66.

[16] Fitch introduced the concept in the chapter "The Fourth Dimension of Preservation" included in his book Historic Preservation (1982). The chapter's succinctness reads more as a conclusion than an opening salvo. Indeed, much of what Fitch had to say about preservation's fourth dimension is written in the preceding pages, which the chapter casts a retroactive light on.

[17] The question of defining time is as old as philosophy. Modern physics classifies time as a fundamental quantity that defines other quantities (e.g. velocity, force, energy), and therefore cannot be defined by them. Consequently, time can only be defined operationally by the process of measurement and the units chosen. This "operational" definition of time is close to Fitch's understanding of preservation's fourth dimension as a the aesthetic presentation of architecture as a temporal process.

[18] James Marston Fitch, Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 325.
[19] James Marston Fitch, Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 325.
[20] James Marston Fitch, Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 325.
[21] Paul Philippot, "Restoration from the Perspective of the Humanities," in Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage, ed. Nicholas Stanley Price, Mansfield Kirby Talley, Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro, (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, c1996), 225.
[22] Paul Philippot, "Restoration from the Perspective of the Humanities," in Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage, ed. Nicholas Stanley Price, Mansfield Kirby Talley, Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro, (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, c1996), 223.
[23] Paul Philippot, "Restoration from the Perspective of the Humanities," in Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage, ed. Nicholas Stanley Price, Mansfield Kirby Talley, Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro, (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, c1996), 224.
[24] James Marston Fitch, Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 99.
[25] James Marston Fitch, Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 303. Venturi and Rauch collaborated with architect John Miller and with exhibit design firm of de Martin-Marona and Associates on the preservation of Benjamin Franklin's house.
[26] Since the whole site above ground was "dematerialized," the spaces for traditional exhibits and film projections were buried out of sight.
[27] James Marston Fitch, Historic Preservation: Curatorial Management of the Built World, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 304.
[28] Harboe worked for the McClier Corporation, which was the architect of record. Hasbrouck Peterson Associates and Takayama & Associates were consultants on the restoration. The Broadacre Development Company of Chicago was a development consultant for the owners, a partnership between Thomas Baldwin and William Taki. See Cheryl Kent, "Restoration for the Rookery," The New York Times, (May 21, 1989), http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=950DE0D8173CF932A15756C0A96F948260, (accessed October 2, 2008).