

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY HERBERGER CENTER FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE



COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN



The Dilemma of Intervention Symposium

27–28 February 1998

**College of Architecture
and Environmental Design**

**Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona**

Published by
Herberger Center for Design Excellence
College of Architecture and Environmental Design
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona

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One part of the agenda of this symposium is to ask us to be more thoughtful about how we intervene—specifically, how we intervene when we take action in the context of the built environment. By “take action” we include the decision *not* to take action and various forms of conservation, as well as new construction that may entail destruction of an existing environment.

The “dilemma” posed in the title of our symposium is real. I would simply invoke a few instances from Germany in recent years.

In the haste to build a new unified capital fated to dwell upon, yet seeking not to dwell on, a century of horrors and division, the Berlin Wall is all but gone. The thoroughness of this intervention of the present decade is lamented by thoughtful people: the memory and, for that matter, the formative experience of nearly forty years of the division of Germany and of Berlin should not be so relentlessly undermined.

In contrast, I offer the report of a friend who lives in the area of the former East Germany. He speaks of the current situation of Chemnitz, the birthplace of Marx (and thus named Karl-Marx-Stadt in the years of the DDR). Heavily destroyed in World War II, Karl-Marx-Stadt was rebuilt in the characteristic Soviet/DDR manner with panel buildings of poor construction and even more diminished urban sensibility. Now, it is again known as Chemnitz in a unified Germany, and my friend is angered by government policy that gives extensive preservation protection to the work of the DDR

period, severely constraining new initiatives.

My final example is to adduce the contentiousness of our “dilemma.” In Berlin, there is a strenuous ongoing debate about whether to destroy the most significantly sited DDR building, the People’s Palace, and to rebuild the historic building of that site, the palace of the Hohenzollern dynasty. It is hardly surprising that this debate, comic in its own way, is so heated; the meaning and the memory of Berlin are radically contested in this confrontation.

As a second preamble, let me happily concede that conservation, even restoration, is not always a matter of contention.

Some works perform like time machines, transporting us into the setting and perceptions of another time so compellingly and with such enlightenment that we readily concede their special status: Ephesus, even in ruins; the Pantheon; Hagia Sophia; San Zeno in Verona; the pilgrimage church of Ste.-Foye in Conques; Chartres Cathedral; the Ste.-Chapelle; Ledoux’s Salt Works; the Soane Museum in London; and the Bibliotheque Ste.-Généviève in Paris, to name a few.

Or so it seems; the conviction we feel in the experience of these works is both a matter of our interpretation and of environmental stimuli not all of which were inevitable in the moment of their origin.

But let us concede that there are a number of works that have come to have such centrality in our cultural constructions that they deserve special consideration:

such works as those already mentioned, but also other canonic works: the pyramids of Giza, the Parthenon, St. Peters, the Zwinger in Dresden, Macchu Picchu, Borobudur, the Buddhist temples of Kyoto, the Taj Mahal, and even some less prominent icons.

To be less safe, allow me to add one more example that for some may flirt with our “dilemma.” In my home city of Boston, the district known as Back Bay is, I would argue, far too beautiful, far too fine a record of a period of great city-building, far too amenable as an urban place today, to be abandoned to unfettered market forces. Indeed few would contest the desirability of the preservation protection provided by the Back Bay Historic District. There are, however, other areas of Boston with similar claims on our attention that receive less or no protection and where controversy would arise over projected regulation.

To come to the point of my presentation: If we concede the existence of monuments that deserve conservation, we nevertheless must ask a more general question as to what motivates preservation today and tomorrow in a modernized and rapidly changing world?

Among the questions posed by this symposium is this: How will the discipline of history affect architecture and preservation? Further, this question came with the cautionary comment: Remember that the historical context is itself a construct. By a triangulation of issues in historiography, architecture, and conservation, this paper considers modes of conservation and the question of when preservation yields to new design. We first take up these issues in the period of high modern architecture, the fifteen or twenty years prior to World War II.

Historical Determinism

There were, even within what we would readily acknowledge as modern architecture, many architectonic positions and many relations to history. A few prominent historians, however, constructed a quite monolithic account that had considerable, and I would say unwarranted, success. A relatively few buildings representing a narrow band of the available spectrum were selected and then canonized as the representatives of the historical necessity of the moment.

“For the time its art; for art its freedom” was the slogan of the Vienna Secession at the beginning of the century. A few architects adhered to such historical determinist

slogans, seeking to fulfill the demand of representing the Zeitgeist (I note that being compelled to discover and represent the Zeitgeist is a curious notion of “freedom”). But to a much greater extent than the architects, it was such notable historians as Sigfried Giedion and especially Nikolaus Pevsner who propagandized this position, dragooned the work of even unsuspecting architects into the rule, and excluded many more from consideration at all.

The historiography of modern architecture as conceived in that period was, then, significantly marked by theories of historical determinism. Totalizing theories of modernity were conceived and, by careful selection, a set of modern buildings were selected and interpreted to be the necessary fulfillment of the course of history.

For Nikolaus Pevsner, the emergent modern world was cold and depersonalized and necessitated the same qualities in architecture and the environment. His famous and influential *Pioneers of modern design* was written in the mid-1930s, but it ended with a consideration of Gropius’ early works, from the period just preceding World War I. By the thirties Pevsner was no doubt thinking of recent works still more illustrative of his thesis, but he interpreted even these early, quite unthreatening works of Gropius accordingly.

Contrasting Gropius’ work (especially Cologne 1914 and Fagus) with Gothic cathedrals (a comparison which itself reveals how much this historiography relies on identifying the canonic representative buildings of an era), Pevsner concludes his book:

. . . the glass walls are now clear and without mystery, the steel frame is hard, and its expression discourages all other-worldly speculation. It is the creative energy of this world in which we live and work and which we want to master, a world of science and technique, of speed and danger, of hard struggles and no personal security, that is glorified in Gropius’ architecture.

Such positions severely limit the selection and interpretation of the canon. At best, they encourage interpretation of works according to the moment of their creation and as monuments of that moment. Rather than seeing complexity in their beginnings and the possibilities of alternative or changing interpretations, a positivistic history is used to provide an interpretation solely of the moment of origination of the work—and that

from a selective view. Does this historiography have significance for our discussions?

It would seem that such a position ought to stimulate the conservation of a series of monuments to record this march of history—and solely of such a series of monuments. Yet, curiously, the architectural theory and pedagogy of this and the ensuing post–World War II period, not least with Gropius himself, were dismissive of both history and conservation. By a further irony, the preservation movement, which would have every reason to adopt a more inclusive attitude, often supports its causes by reference to a line of monuments representing a historical course.

The ideology of historical determinism has its unattractive aspects and it did not command the entire field even in the high modernist moment of the interwar years (and less, I think, among architects than among historians). Historical determinism places individual action and decision-making under the compulsion of a vague, unconstituted force, the *Zeitgeist*. If this is not sufficiently implausible on the face of it, the different constructions of various interpreters should convince us that no such narrow canonization and linear development is adequate to the body of new works—let alone the situation of those works within a much more complex cultural field.

For the same reason, historical determinism is an inadequate guide to issues of preservation: canonizing some works for inadequate reasons while neglecting other works simply for their irrelevance to a preferred, but limited story.

A generation later, a student of Pevsner, Reyner Banham, challenged Pevsner's historiography and especially his theory of modernity and architecture. Concerning what he considered a more general misuse of the term "functionalism" for the works of the International Style, Banham wrote:

The true aim of the style had clearly been, to quote Gropius's words about the Bauhaus and its relation to the world of the Machine Age . . . to invent and create forms symbolizing that world. And it is in respect of such symbolic forms that its historical justification must lie. (321)

Banham is then eloquent in describing the success of these architects within this asserted search for symbolic form. His extended analyses are of Mies' Barcelona Pavilion and Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye. But this affirming

analysis is done only to dismiss the International Style (he accepts this limiting term) all the more decisively—for it is Banham's position that symbolism was not the mission of modernity. To quote him again:

But because of this undoubted success [the symbolism of the two buildings], we are entitled to enquire, at the very highest level, whether the aims of the International Style were worth entertaining, and whether its estimate of a Machine Age was a viable one. Something like a flat rebuttal of both aims and estimate can be found in the writings of Buckminster Fuller. (325)

Continuing the quotation from Banham:

[the Dymaxion House] would have rendered [the Villa Savoye], for instance, technically obsolete before design had even begun. The Dymaxion concept was entirely radical. (326)

Banham endorses technology: continuous and accelerating change—including obsolescence ["scrapping"]. He can rightly be criticized for endorsing a technical imperative of his own construction:

In the upshot, a historian must find that they [the architects of the International Style] produced a Machine Age architecture only in the sense that its monuments were built in a Machine Age, and expressed an attitude to machinery. . . . It may well be that what we have hitherto understood as architecture, and what we are beginning to understand of technology are incompatible disciplines. The architect who proposes to run with technology knows now that he will be in fast company, and that, in order to keep up, he may have to emulate the Futurists and discard his whole cultural load. . . . (329–330)

Thus Pevsner's student, in the book that inaugurated his career, discredited the claims of modernity precisely for the heroes of the Modern Movement as seen by Pevsner and Giedion. According to Banham, the canonic works of Gropius, Mies, and Le Corbusier were *retarditaire* in that they were conceived to *symbolize* modernity rather than to achieve a truly new architecture through full and direct engagement of the material and organizational conditions of modernity. Buckminster Fuller became the epitome of the modern shaper of the environment.

One of the peculiarities of the Banham argument is that he adopted, though for quite opposite reasons, the

emphasis on style in the Modern Movement as had Hitchcock and Johnson. This interpretation of the Modern Movement had been viewed as typically American and inadequate for its failure to recognize the social and material conditions embodied in European modernism. Banham's historiography, then, did little to go beyond the rather shallow conflict between the European and American interpretations of the canonic modern works. It was, nonetheless, in the nature of Banham's argument that he had to recognize competing positions within the Modern Movement. He drew attention to figures and works outside the earlier canon. While Banham's position has an authoritarian sense for what is right within the array of possibilities and flirts with its own historical, now technical, determinism, I think his historiographical ground can be contrasted to that of Pevsner.

To a considerable extent, Banham reverses Pevsner's method. Banham was more inclined to select the works that he took to manifest the new social, and especially material and productive, conditions of modernity and thence to give his alternative canon full opportunity to enter into the discourse about the interpretation of modernity. So, later, for example, he devoted attention to the evolution of reinforced concrete construction and mechanical systems. He is more open and empirical, less Spenglerian in his selection of materials and also in the broader implications that he draws from that material.

Banham, like Pevsner and Giedion, could give importance to nineteenth century engineering constructions, but these works aligned more fully with his argument. More importantly, Banham selected differently among twentieth century works prior to his book, and can be recognized to have given impetus to later work, especially in Britain: Cedric Price, Archigram, High Tech.

Banham's more complex historiography would also encourage a more diverse program for preservation of modern works. But he does not go as far as he might have—constrained, I think, by both the limited interpretation of the earlier canonic works and what was still a highly selective theory—his technological imperative—for the acceptance of alternative works.

Even in modernism, there were other historiographical and architectural theories. Some of these represent, I would suggest, continuities with the concerns of the "amateurs" of earlier centuries. That we incline to such a negative impression of the "amateur" is a phenomenon

related to the rise of the "professional." In the eighteenth century this distinction hardly existed: there were amateurs who knew a field like architecture very well, even if they limited their activity to interpretation and patronage. But many of those who built were also amateurs—not that different from the non-building amateur either in interests or association.

We have lost something in our strenuous separation of the professional and the amateur—and we lose still more in the accompanying denigration of the amateur. One of the engaging aspects of preservation is that the separation of professional and amateur is not yet as great as in other areas of architectural activity. We should encourage the existence of amateurs—and of the spirit of the amateur in the profession.

I think the "amateur," whether of the eighteenth or the twentieth century, embraces at least two interests. There is a formal interest, pursuing that which might be called autonomous within architecture—searching for principles that operate within the discipline of architecture, selectively across time and space, and thus breaking linear historical narratives. In history, the amateur seeks insight into the several cultures that may be presented, but this is not done with the mechanical analysis of how that other culture is to be fitted into a linear development of historical exigencies. There is an empathy in the amateur's historical vision: the insight into the other is also an insight into one's self and one's own culture.

Enquiring into the autonomy of architecture, the amateur discovers formal systems that indeed have their autonomy within the discipline, but have also served in the conventions of one or more cultures—perhaps viable still, or again. But the amateur also observes the invention of formal systems, sometimes only made possible by new social organizations or material conditions. Once again autonomy within the discipline, but, in the end, I prefer to speak of quasi-autonomy, for these inventions and implementations constantly cross between the realm of invention and that of facilitating circumstance. In any case, there are the opportunities for both invention and conventionalization. Bringing autonomy and history to bear on his/her own concerns, the amateur:

- builds and/or relies on a multi-lineal history; and
- is concerned not only with monuments, but also context, and the work of others.

I turn to a third and final position in the interpretation of architecture and modernity, one that incorporates something of the realm of the amateur. Any theory implies a historiography, and so this third position offers both a different history and a different cut on preservation. Additionally, I think this position offers a more nuanced and helpful view on the confrontation of conservation and new construction. This third position is one on which I have considered on several earlier occasions—so I will be brief. It is an interpretation of the thought and work of Adolf Loos.

Consider Loos' famous Steiner interior. In the context of this symposium, I suggest that this interior can provide, in microcosm, a position on preservation—a position on preservation within a multi-lineal historiography such as I associated with the amateur.

The array of diverse objects in this room are not there as a group of trophies; each is an object with its own authenticity and provides opportunity for engagement. In the larger context of the house, Loos develops his position on the autonomy of architecture, seeking, as he said, to create the space within which a modern life could be lived. But he did not enforce, as Pevsner was to suggest, that a modern life must be cold and constrained.

Loos recognized, for example, that in a modern apartment building serviced by an elevator, unlike a classical palazzo, all floors are of equal accessibility and importance. Both the elevator and such apartment buildings were aspects of modernity and would indeed discourage the differences of section appropriate to the palazzo—but this constraint need not be reflected in the modern house, nor in a modern building of different purpose, nor be elevated to a general design principle.

Humble as it is, Loos' Egyptian stool in the Steiner interior still provides the kernel of his thought, at least as I see it addressing the themes of this symposium. Loos thought to preserve this stool, and the production of this stool, until such time as we could identify the need for a different stool (or different form of temporary seating) and had successfully designed for that altered need.

To paraphrase Loos: he was more congenial with an ancient truth than with a lie that accompanied him. The Egyptian stool, and this interior more generally, and the house of which they are parts, accept a complexity of time and events, and thus of historiography. Modernity finds its place within this complexity; indeed, this complexity of

time is part of modernity. Integral to this house is preservation and convention and innovation. It is multilineal.

We know that Pevsner was a historian of great range and that he was the intellectual force behind an extensive series of books, *The buildings of England*. He had profound respect for the received environment. But the modernist position of his *Pioneers* would offer no subtlety in the deterministic creation of a cold, depersonalized environment of modernity. Perhaps Banham's position would have no reason to destroy places in the fulfillment of a historical imperative, but any confrontation of the new with the existing might well be resolved quickly in favor of the modern as against what would be seen as the merely symbolic or even nostalgic. With Loos, there must be a deliberative answer. What are the claims of that which is received? Is there an imperative for change, for the pursuit of the new? The answer might well be "yes," but it would still need reasoned support and a weighing of competing claims.

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