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Authenticity and Communication

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Authenticity and Communication

Authenticity is not an absolute and constant quality inherent in an object or an experience; it is constructed in the process of research. Actors inscribe and attribute it to both material objects and subjective processes like communication and consumption. This article from the research group seeks on the one hand to reflect on the historical scope of action and action patterns among actors from various disciplines between the conflicting priorities of authentication and communication, and on the other to find ways to visualize and operationalize attribution processes through joint reflection. When we look at both history and the discussions fifty years after the Venice Charter, its idea to hand on historic monuments "in the full richness of their authenticity" has turned into an abundance of vibrant action and decision-making.

Authenticity; communication; actors; visualization; archaeological heritage; conservation; museum.

Archaeologists, architectural historians, and conservator-restorers uncover ruins, extract individual phases, and provide new images of ancient spaces through documentation, restoration, and reconstruction. Authors use descriptions and travelogues to comprehend and conceptualize images of ancient spaces. These may be based on ancient sources, but they open up new perspectives on the sites of ancient ruins at the same time. Concepts from ancient architecture are also created in museums, from small models to large-scale replicas, or conveyed as digital animations. Common to all these forms of 'formation and transformation' or 'perception and representation' of ancient spaces is that they generate a specific knowledge about ancient spaces and communicate this knowledge in certain contexts – in and ex situ – in a way that is influenced by its medium and time. These translations using various media then influence our perception and treatment of ancient spaces.

Starting with these general observations, the Topoi research group C-3, *Fragments, Ruins and Space* developed a joint research agenda: reflecting on existing concepts and developing new ones in reference to how ancient ruins and archaeological objects have historically been handled and visualized. During their investigations, the researchers repeatedly encountered an area of conflict that can be described by the dual concept of authenticity and communication. This paper summarizes the discussions, which were triggered in part by the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Venice Charter.

1   The Ship of Theseus as an example case

In 1964, the preamble to the Venice Charter established the preservation of authenticity of monuments (buildings) as the norm: "It is our duty to hand them [the historic monuments] on in the full richness of their authenticity."[1] This initiated a debate over the

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1   http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf (visited 04/05/2016).

concept of authenticity, at first mainly dominated by Europeans, which intensified and globalized with the Nara Conference of 1994 and continues to this day.[2] The core of the problem is fittingly illustrated in an ancient exemplum from the mythical early years of Athens that also stands out in the Nara context.[3] The imperial Roman author Plutarch wrote in his *Life of Theseus*:

> The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned from Crete had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus [the end of the 4th century BC], for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same.[4]

If the Athenians had followed the Venice Charter and had not replaced the planks of the ship but instead had maintained its original material, they would have preserved the ship as testimony of Theseus's act. Over time, however, the ship would have ceased to be a carrier of meaning and remembrance, since only a pile of rotting wood would have remained. With the ship as the central element, then, Theseus's act would only have been communicable as myth, and the Athenians would have had to resort to other media, such as a pictorial representation or a model, to convey the relationship between the rotting woodpile and the history. According to Plutarch, however, they decided differently. By successively replacing the planks of the ship, they ended up with a monument that vividly and tangibly communicated Theseus's act, but at some point it was no longer his ship and became a replicated model of the original. In both cases, therefore, the ship of Theseus would eventually have ceased to be an 'authentic' monument.

This example discussed in ancient philosophy is well suited to describing the scope and difficulties of decision-making for modern actors dealing with ancient monuments and objects. And it is precisely these actors who will be discussed below, beginning with an evaluation of the concept of authenticity, fifty years after Venice.

2   "In the full richness of their authenticity" – On the concept of authenticity in the institutionalized discourse on monument preservation[5]

Fifty years ago, in May 1964, the Venice Charter laid the foundation for internationally recognized guidelines on the preservation of monuments. Adopted at the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, this charter enshrined core values and procedures for the conservation and restoration of monuments. The preamble states, in part:

> People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity.[6]

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2   Larsen 1995; Cameron 2008; Falser 2008; Falser 2011.
3   See Larsen 1992.
4   Plutarch, quoted in Dryden 2009 (http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/theseus.html – visited on 04/05/2016).
5   The subsequent paragraphs draw on research undertaken within the project *Archaeotopia* (C-3-5) by Claudia Näser.
6   http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf (visited on 04/05/2016).

The establishment of the International Committee on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) followed a year later, in 1965, and adopted the Venice Charter as a founding document, giving it significance beyond Europe.[7] UNESCO, in turn, designated ICOMOS as the authority for evaluating nominations for World Heritage Sites as part of the introduction of its World Heritage Convention. Although the concept of authenticity does not appear in the UNESCO Convention itself,[8] it was defined in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, first formulated in 1977, as a key evaluation criterion for the inclusion of cultural heritage sites in the UNESCO World Heritage List, together with "outstanding universal value" (OUV).[9] The Operational Guidelines require the following:

> The property should meet the test of authenticity in design, materials, workmanship and setting; authenticity does not limit consideration to original form and structure but includes all subsequent modifications and additions, over the course of time, which in themselves possess artistic or historical values.[10]

In the early nineties, the World Heritage Committee and ICOMOS decided that the time had come to revise the criterion of authenticity, addressing changing perspectives in the identification and preservation of cultural heritage and a growing uneasiness about the essentialist, monument-oriented definition of 'authenticity' as phrased in the Venice Charter. The 1994 Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention was intended to tackle these issues and develop more integrative approaches to cultural heritage. The Nara Document on Authenticity developed at this conference calls for more respect for cultural diversity and the sociocultural values of all societies (Fig. 1).[11] Even in the Nara Document, however, authenticity is still the chief criterion in determining global cultural heritage, although the document distances itself from a dogmatic, Eurocentric application of fixed definitions, in favor of regional values. Nara also significantly expands the survey parameters of the 'authenticity test' from UNESCO's Operational Guidelines.[12] As Michael Falser states, the Nara Document shows "im Spiegel postkolonialer und postmoderner Kritik [die] plurale Anwendbarkeit und damit aber auch gleichzeitig [die] ganze globale Widersprüchlichkeit und [die] östlich *wie* westlich essentialistische Instrumentalisierbarkeit" of the concept of authenticity.[13]

It is noteworthy that other national and international heritage conventions refrain completely from using the term authenticity. The Australian Burra Charter replaces "authenticity" and "outstanding universal value" with the concept of "cultural significance".[14] Nor can the term 'authenticity' be found in the 1992 European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, known as the Malta Convention, which is legally binding on its European Union signatory countries.[15] Documents like these are aimed at protecting endangered cultural heritage, not classifying its value. This contrast underlines the fact that in the rhetoric of international charters, the concept of authenticity is used

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7   Falser 2010, 116–117, 130.
8   http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/ (visited on 04/05/2016).
9   Cameron 2008; Falser 2010, 117, 130.
10   http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide77b.pdf (visited on 04/05/2016).
11   http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/events/documents/event-833-3.pdf (visited on 04/05/2016).
12   See the articles in Larsen 1995; Cameron 2008; Falser 2008; Falser 2011.
13   "As reflected in postcolonial and postmodern critique, [the Nara Document] shows the pluralistic applicability and at the same time [the] complete global inconsistency and [the] possibility in east and west to instrumentalize [the concept of authenticity] in an essentialistic way." Falser 2011, introductory chapter, emphasis in original.
14   http://australia.icomos.org/publications/charters/ (visited on 04/05/2016).
15   http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=143&CM=1&CL=GER (visited on 04/05/2016).
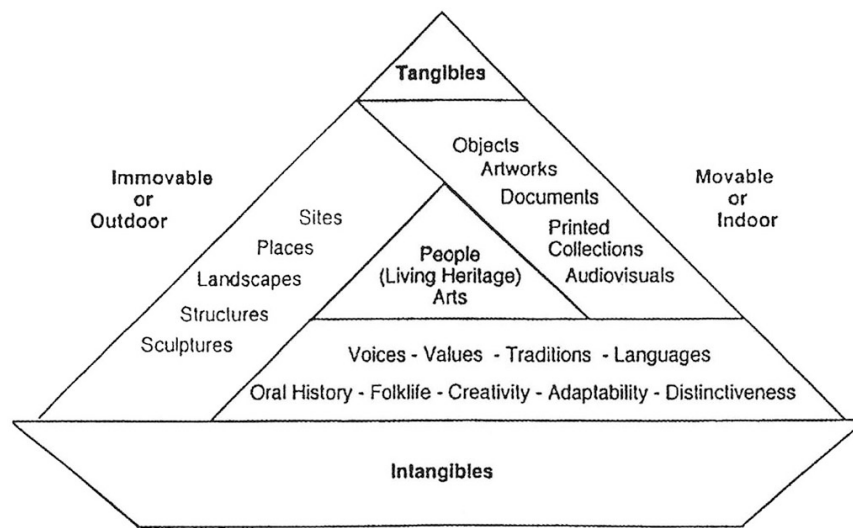
Fig. 1 | A holistic representation of cultural heritage resources.

as an eligibility requirement[16] – a selection criterion to assess value and access to certain 'rights' – and therefore ultimately as an argument for exclusion, part of a discourse driven by special interests.

The aforementioned texts do not explain what 'authenticity' itself represents. The first Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, from 1977, merely set out that

> the property should meet the test of authenticity in design, materials, workman- ship and setting; authenticity does not limit consideration to original form and structure but includes all subsequent modifications and additions, over the course of time, which in themselves possess artistic or historical values.[17]

In this wording, 'authenticity' is understood as an objective quality inherent in the monument. Both the Venice Charter and the Nara Document go beyond that, however, attributing a witness-like quality to 'authenticity': "Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses of their age-old traditions" and "the essential contribution made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity."[18] Both statements establish a connection between the 'authenticity' of an object, its 'value', and its expressiveness regarding the past.[19]

3   Wider spheres of authenticity

While the discourses and practices of cultural heritage preservation continue to develop along the lines of the authenticity concept described in the paragraph above, a different

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16   For an exegesis of the 'qualifying conditions' in the UNESCO Operational Guidelines, see Stovel 2007.
17   http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide77b.pdf (visited on 04/05/2016).
18   http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf (visited on 04/05/2016);
     http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/events/documents/event-833-3.pdf (visited on 04/05/2016).
19   This conceptualization reflects the notion of the 'historical value' of a monument, first systematized by Riegl 1903, or its "informational value", to use the wording of Lipe 1984, 6–7.

approach to the concept has emerged in the social sciences and humanities since the 1970s. Based on Lionel Trilling's influential *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972), this tradition sees 'authenticity' and the discourses that describe or demand it as attributes of modernity, whose development is closely connected to the opposition of self and society – "[t]he concept of authenticity is one way of articulating this experience."[20] Erik Cohen describes the search for authenticity as "a quest for that unity between the self and societal institutions, which endowed pre-modern existence with 'reality'."[21] This existential perspective became particularly popular in tourism research with Dean MacCannell's seductive definition of tourism as "a quest for authenticity".[22] MacCannell argues that the modern individual develops a desire for authenticity from experiencing alienation in everyday life, a yearning that a person will attempt to satisfy by searching for authentic experiences in other places. Authenticity of this kind is therefore socially constructed and negotiable. Ning Wang has tried to systematize the different conceptualizations of authenticity in the debate over this tradition of the term. He distinguishes between the authenticity of visited objects as "objective authenticity", a "constructivist authenticity" – which he also calls "symbolic authenticity" – and an "existential authenticity" that describes a state of being in the sense of the existentialist experience of modernity derived from Trilling.[23]

Even though these discussions and considerations have contributed to outlining the vague notion of authenticity in its multiple uses and to illustrating the dimensions of the presence of authenticity in the various areas of practice and research, they still contain a number of problems.[24] Constructivists have pointed out that 'authenticity' is always a discursively assigned attribute and not an absolute and static quality inherent in the object. According to Kjell Olsen, authenticity is "a cultural value constantly created and reinvented in social processes."[25] Even 'objective' authenticity always and necessarily refers to an origin or original state which, in its derivation, can only ever be a historical (re)construction and interpretation. Similarly, subjective experiences of existential authenticity are not spontaneous and sudden, but conditioned by cultural and social knowledge. They too require a concept of authenticity that is upheld and negotiated by society. Experiences of existential authenticity are "motivated by and created in social processes, and they make it necessary to pay attention to the actual contexts where such processes are at work", as Olsen has emphasized.[26]

Edward Bruner has pointed out that all conceptualizations of authenticity – including those from constructivism – "retain an essentialist vocabulary of origins and reproductions" and, for this reason, "a built-in judgmental bias that regards one side of the dichotomy as better so that the other side becomes denigrated."[27] The "quest for authenticity" charted by MacCannell implies the existence of an

> original pure state, an authentic culture in the third sense, like the ethnographic present, before contact, [...] before alienation, located elsewhere, around the bend, beneath or behind the touristic or the historic site.[28]

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20 Berger 1973, 88; cf. Lethen 1996 and Assmann 2012.
21 Cohen 1988, 374.
22 MacCannell 1973; MacCannell 1976.
23 Wang 1999.
24 For discussions of the dimensions of the concept of 'authenticity' in neighboring disciplines and fields of practice see, e.g., Duerr 1987 (anthropology); Knaller 2007; as well as several contributions in Rössner and Uhl 2012 (literature and fine arts).
25 Olsen 2002, 163.
26 Olsen 2002, 160.
27 Bruner 1994, 398, 409; also Lethen 1996, 228–229.
28 Bruner 1994, 408–409.

As a result, "the past, the other or another place becomes the counterconcept to modernity and is inscribed with the authenticity for which tourists search."[29] Taylor sees "the continuing legacy of colonialism" in authenticity discourses of this kind, "in tourism's preoccupation with the notion of authenticity, […] the creation and recreation of myths, stereotypes, and fantasies, shaping the West's view of Others."[30]

4 Authentication and actors as an issue

More and more researchers are using analytical approaches to discourse and practice to look for a way out of this conceptional and analytical dilemma. As early as 1994, Bruner was advising readers to

> understand the different meanings of *authenticity* as employed in social practice rather than to accept at face value the usually unexamined dichotomy between what is and what is not authentic.[31]

Other authors have emphasized the role of social interaction and the performative factor in constructing authenticity, as well as the dialectical role of objects and places in these processes.[32] Knudsen and Waade have noted "that places are something we authenticate through our emotional/affective/sensuous relatedness to them."[33] Zhu stresses "the dynamic process of becoming" in opposition to Wang's "state of being" of existential authenticity.[34] As a consequence, the current discussion is focusing more and more strongly on the perception of authenticity by the individual (the actor-based perspective); the new category of "perceived authenticity" testifies to this as well.[35]

At the same time, the process of 'authenticating' and the identity and role of 'instances for authenticating or authorizing authenticity' are also being given increasing priority. In the introduction of his epochal edited volume, *The Social Life of Things*, Arjun Appadurai stated almost thirty years ago that "authenticity today is becoming a matter of the politics of connoisseurship, of the political economy of taste, and of status discrimination."[36] In other words, power and authority play an important role in the social processes of assigning and negotiating authority.[37] Helmuth Lethen has written on the subject of *Museum Authority* that

> things are made out to be authentic and, provided the authority is undisputed, they are also taken for authentic by a public that accepts this authority. Things, attitudes, and works of art are taken for authentic as long as the authority of their *social staging* seems unproblematic.[38]

To sum up these introductory considerations, authenticity denotes both the experience of genuineness and the genuineness of experience. Both notions of authenticity, however, are not absolute qualities essentially inherent in an object or in an experience, but are "created in the present in the continuous process of constructing culture."[39] From this

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29   Olsen 2002, 162.
30   Taylor 2001, 25.
31   Bruner 1994, 401. Emphasis added.
32   Taylor 2001; Knudsen, Waade, and Robinson 2010; Zhu 2012; Rickly-Boyd 2013.
33   Knudsen, Waade, and Robinson 2010, 12–13.
34   Zhu 2012, passim.
35   Waitt 2000; Kolar and Zabkar 2010; Krösbacher and Mazanec 2010.
36   Bruner 1994, 408 about Appadurai 1986.
37   Bruner 1994; Zhu 2012.
38   Lethen 1996, 228. Emphasis in the German original.
39   Olsen 2002, 163.

point of view, both the assigning of authenticity and the experience of authenticity are projections of socially conditioned expectations. The shift from an essentialist approach to an understanding of authenticity as a construction allows the processes of its creation, communication, and consumption to become important analytical categories.

5 Actors I: Excavation, conservation, restoration

5.1 Researching and communicating: The 'authentic' artificial ruin

The international guidelines and recommendations for preserving monuments encountered a world of monuments and objects already in existence, with a long history of decisions regarding the research, maintenance, and presentation of artifacts in find contexts and museums. In the history of the excavation and restoration of ancient Mediterranean ruins, seldom have actors' norm-setting decisions and actions, and the conscious reflection upon them, been comprehended as clearly as at the temple of Didyma, in modern-day Turkey; usually only their result is tangible.[40]

The temple was expanded and repurposed several times during the more than two thousand years following the start of its construction in the sixth century BCE, but it remained uncompleted. In late antiquity, two basilicas were built into the sanctuary, which had archaic, Hellenistic, and Roman building phases. It then underwent further reconstruction for defensive and residential ends. An account by the traveler Cyriacus of Ancona (1391–1455) gives a rough sketch of the monumental structure. A strong earthquake around 1500 left behind a mountain of rubble, with three columns protruding from it symbolically for four hundred years. A windmill crowned the pile until its demolition in 1906, evidence of the Greek colonization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and another landmark on the site (Fig. 2).

When the temple became an object of research, it was a complex monument, submerged under starkly contrasting layers of construction and destruction. The goals and norm-setting had already become apparent with the first extensive activity at the site: the archaeologists were most concerned with investigating the building phases of the *classical* sanctuary. The first steps of the uncovering (Rayet, Thomas beginning in 1873; Pontremoli, Haussoullier in 1895–1896) produced few results given the huge amount of material.[41] The involvement of the Berlin museums started in 1905, under the direction of archaeologist Theodor Wiegand (1864–1936). The purchase of properties and houses on the temple grounds and the demolition of younger buildings was followed by many years of work uncovering, systematizing, and documenting the building phases of the object.

Decisions on which layers to uncover were based on the research interests of classical archaeology around 1900. What Wiegand regarded as "monuments in terms of archaeology" were primarily Greek and Roman places of worship and representative secular buildings that had been preserved through continuous use, "brought back to light [through] excavations" or "restored through the demolition of modern medieval additions and installations".[42]

At the same time, Wiegand was familiar with the developments in the European preservation of monuments: he declared that conserving monuments was "in the public

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40 For the large excavations in the Mediterranean world, little investigation has been done to date into the history of these decisions, negotiating mechanisms, and authentications. The research group C-3-3 is using the example of Turkey to look into these processes in relation to the development of international conventions and national standards.

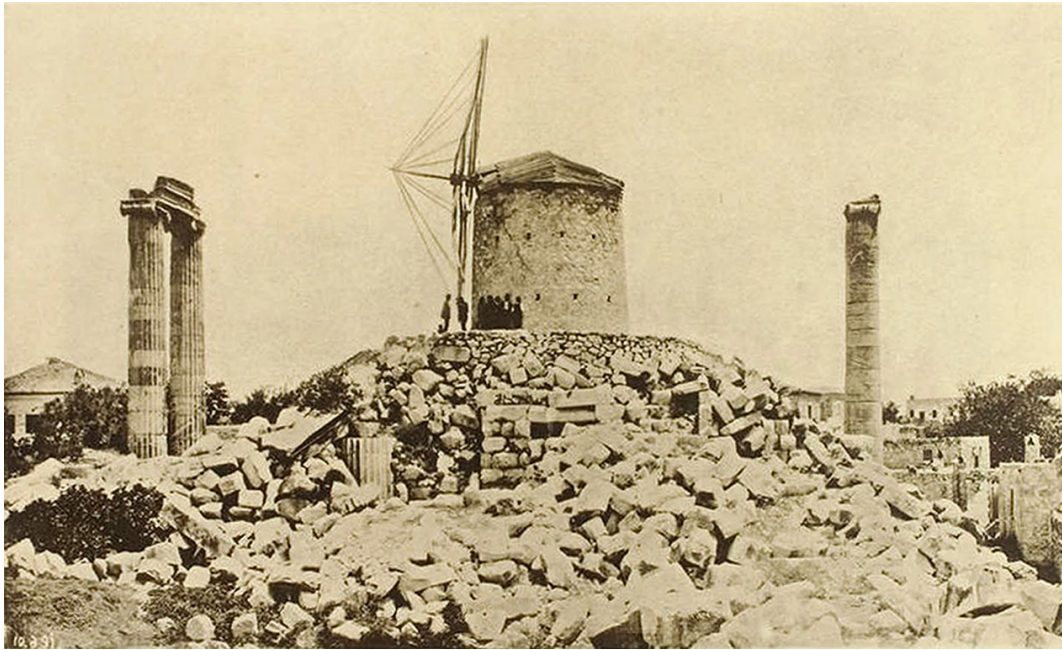41 Tuchelt 1992, 5.

42 Wiegand 1939, 71–72.

Fig. 2 | Didyma, temple columns and mill on the mountain of rubble covering the Apollo Temple (around 1900).

interest; in the case of the most magnificent ones, even in the interest of the entire world."[43] After the purifications of the nineteenth century, a new appreciation of the complexity of monuments and of their historicity in addition to their aesthetic value had emerged at the turn of the century with the writings of Georg Dehio, Alois Riegl and Max Dvořak. As an archaeologist, Wiegand had been focused on classical layers and had accepted the losses of post-classical building phases, but his reflections demonstrate his acquired sensitivity to preserving historical matter:

> It may happen that one must remove a more recent wall, e.g., Byzantine or Parthian, so as to be able to penetrate into a deeper, more important layer. The order to remove it may only be given after a detailed documentation of its condition has taken place.[44]

In the case of Didyma, architectural historian Hubert Knackfuß (1866–1948) documented the more recent but nonetheless important layers. These included the built-in basilicas with their architectural elements and wall paintings which had remained in situ. Thanks to the comprehensive documentation in texts, drawings, and photography, however, the material complexity that has been lost can still be understood.[45]

There is access not only to the reflections on the more recent layers of the classical building in Didyma, but also to the actors' conceptual approach to the site: Wiegand and Knackfuß were aware that uncovering the site would prevent it from being traced back to a concrete classical state. Wiegand emphasized that "a careful preservation of the monuments […] [should] go hand in hand with the excavation."[46] Preserving the classical material was an issue in Didyma from the start, but the concept went beyond conservation measures to include partial rebuilding, additions, auxiliary buildings, 'museum-quality'

43   Wiegand 1939, 71.
44   Wiegand 1939, 102.
45   See Wiegand and Knackfuß 1941.
46   Wiegand 1939, 106.

rebuilding, and the presentation of architectural sculptures on the temple grounds. An enclosing wall was erected in 1906 that initially served to delimit and protect the temple area[47] but has also comprised an important design element ever since. Another component of the interpretive composition of the site that continues into the present day is the 'stone garden' for the systematic storage of the temple finds (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3 | Didyma, stone garden of the Apollo Temple, view across the Mandra wall and the neighboring development towards the southeast and the new community of Didim on the Turkish Aegean.

The recovered structural components were put back into their original position by anastylosis or partial rebuilding whenever possible. In one example, Wiegand mentions the *cella* of the Didymaion, where

> the German expedition returned the stretchers and headers of the walls to their original positions as best as possible, such that the wall height was established up to a height of 10 meters.[48]

A decision was taken in the early twentieth century in favor of leaving the three standing columns as the emblem of the site and opposing the complete anastylosis of more columns; nevertheless, the numerous partially rebuilt stumps of columns give a sense of the structure of the space. Where statically necessary, unstable columns and wall panels were given easy-to-read additions made from small-scale *poros* limestone that had been

47   Wiegand was involved in the resolution by the first International Congress of Archaeology in Athens that demanded the guarding and preservation of sites by antiquity authorities and governments, cf. Wiegand 1939, 105.
48   Wiegand 1939, 106.

used alongside marble in the classical construction; column shafts were stabilized with iron rings – a visually undesirable but reversible measure.

The handling of fallen architectural elements is remarkable. Knackfuß left some objects in their find contexts in order to preserve parts of the incomplete classical building. For example, whereas the peripheral colonnade of the western *pteron* was moved in classical times, fallen non-fluted column drums from the interior colonnade were reinforced in 1924/1925. They testify to the force of the earthquake, the traces of which would have been eradicated if the column drums had been erected (Fig. 4).[49]

Fig. 4 | Didyma, Apollo Temple, unfinished column in fallen position, preserved 1924/1925.

The actions by Wiegand and Knackfuß – who felt obligated to maintain the substance of the site and a 'museum-quality' communication that transcended their research interests – led to the emergence of a deliberately designed *artificial ruin* authenticated by the actors, the result of decisions and interventions specific to their era. Today, the temple is 'authentic' in monument preservation terms because of both its classical elements and the implementation of intellectual and conceptual contexts[50] from the early twentieth century. The actors reduced the complexity of the heritage buried under the rubble, using anastylosis, restoration, and 'museumization' to produce an image of the ruin and attribute cultural significance to it then and now. In this respect, the Temple of Apollo at Didyma is comparable to other 'artificial' ruins like the Acropolis of Athens and the Roman Imperial Fora.

49   Tuchelt 1994, 12.
50   After Abel 2010.

5.2   Conservator-restorers as trustees of museum objects

As the aforementioned charters and guidelines on the preservation of monuments emerged, documents with specific instructions for conservation and restoration developed that formulated ethical objectives for these at the same time.[51] Indeed, the preamble of the 2013 Articles of Association of the German Association of Conservator-Restorers (VDR) directly refers to the Venice Charter.[52] The concept of 'cultural property' used in the charters, however, is primarily directed toward (immovable) monuments. Archaeological finds, as the 'original' and 'authentic' sources of monuments, are usually better protected from changes in a museum context, rather than on archaeological sites. The handling of this *movable* cultural property is also addressed in the 1978 UNESCO Recommendation for the Protection of Movable Cultural Property.

With this in mind, we must ask whether the finds are equivalent to the on-site monuments: what role does the authenticity of these objects, however it is described, play in the overall context? Should it be evaluated differently than the authenticity of the monument site, with its more or less immovable relics, buildings, and architectural fragments?

In the conservation and restoration of movable objects, the conservator-restorer as an actor generally faces a long history of interventions and decisions; the conservator-restorer's future, moreover, will see complex processes of negotiation between the conflicting priorities of authenticity and museumized communication. Like immovable cultural property, movable finds have often gone through multiple transformations before they are discovered. With their decontextualization and the often decades-long museum storage and use that follows, they are subject to further changes, regardless of their condition. New layers of this carrier of meaning, now rediscovered and transformed into cultural property, are added to the bundle of layers of the object's history: the vestiges and strata of its formation (idea, creation) and use, as well as its decay and deposition.[53] The object's biography requires that the conservator-restorer record and document each (found) object in its materiality, with all layers, transformations, and traces, before further handling. What's more, the object must be inspected and interrogated as something that is historically and culturally conditioned.[54] Disciplines specialized in other sources affecting the object must join the project in order to ascertain those aspects and facts that are not immediately apparent.[55]

Originality and authenticity are essential categories when considering an object critically on the basis of sources; such categories need to be defined so that they are not understood as biased or one-dimensional.[56] In his *Contemporary Theory of Conservation,*

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51   Cf. http://restauratoren.de/wir-ueber-uns/der-verband/grundlagentexte.html (visited on 04/05/2016) and, among others, the *Murray Pease Report* (1964), revised form as the *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice*, American Institute for Conservation (AIC); at the European level: *E.C.C.O. Code of Ethics* of the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations, Brussels 1993.

52   "As the physical fabric of our cultural heritage, cultural assets provide us with a living insight into the past. [...]. With their work, conservator-restorers assume a special responsibility for cultural assets vis-à-vis society at large and posterity. Their job is to protect, conserve and restore these assets in a manner that pays respect to the *vast wealth that their authenticity lends* [emphasis added, cf. "the full richness of their authenticity" in the Venice Charter], while maintaining their integrity at the same time. The high ethical standards that conservator-restorers have to adhere to are set out in the Codes of Ethics of Conservator-Restorers." Official English translation dated 23 Nov. 2013 from http://www.restauratoren.de/fileadmin/red/pdf/2014-09-04_Satzung_Stand_23_11_2013_Englisch.pdf. For the German original, see http://restauratoren.de/fileadmin/red/pdf/2012-07-05_VDR-Satzung_Stand_22_10_2011_Korrektur.pdf (visited on 04/05/2016).

53   Cf. Götz 2004, 7; Thompson 1979, 80.

54   Philippot 1976.

55   Götz 2004, 101–102.

56   See Abel 2010.

Salvador Muñoz-Viñas criticizes the fact that so-called classical theories of conservation consider conservation a "'truth-enforcement' operation", the goal of which is to "reveal and preserve an object's true nature or true condition."[57] The definition of truth can vary greatly, for instance in the "history of the object" (after Camillo Boito; Gustavo Giovannoni), which means that "the object's Truth may then be in the traces of its evolution, in the object's original shape, or even in the (presumed) producer's intention (after Eugène Viollet-Le-Duc)." Muñoz-Viñas lists additional factors including its "artistry" (after Cesare Brandi), its "material components" (after John Ruskin), its "documentary efficiency" (after Josep Ballart; Suzanne Keene) and its "material function" (after Antoni Gonzalez).[58] The still widely held opinion

> that the preferred condition of an object is its *authentic* condition, that some change performed upon a real object can actually make it *more real*, is an important flaw in classical theories in conservation.[59]

It is not a matter of one sole origin and one sole meaning and perception of an object, but a complex history of that object in its specific context. This generates multilayered results that can be understood as multiple authenticities. The understanding of authenticity that is sought or desired substantially depends on the attribution and subject-specific negotiation of the meaning of the finds and their contexts. First and foremost, the conservator-restorer functions as a seeker and reader of traces, regardless of the interpretation of the finds and archaeological evidence. The traces have to be identified, analyzed, and documented, to be integrated into the process of the object's history with respect to their importance and the relative and absolute chronology.

Old finds demand special attention and competence from the conservator. As palimpsests on which earlier generations have 'inscribed' themselves through their actions, these finds often prompt renewed interventions. Should the objects be 'derestored', or must they be? Does this have to be done physically, or is a virtual derestoration sufficient? Here the question of preserving the integrity of the object becomes especially urgent. What kind of material losses would be expected (and could be tolerated) from renewed interventions? Will an intervention wipe out historical traces? How significant are such traces? How can interventions be minimized, or carried out in a way that is largely reversible?

In the decision process about how objects should be treated, the entire search for traces (including how it is documented) must lead participants to balance the pros and cons of which interventions and measures are reasonable. They should consider which of these are conducive to the object's message and communication. This is a subject-specific as well as a social negotiation process; it is not dictated per se by 'better' knowledge, expert or otherwise, or supposedly objective criteria. Such a process requires close cooperation and direct participation from very different disciplines in order to find a solution compatible with the object, as will be illustrated using the example of the stuccos from Ctesiphon.[60]

The city layout of Ctesiphon in what is now Iraq was examined in two excavation campaigns, one in 1928/29 by the Museum für Islamische Kunst (E. Reuther) and one in 1931/32 as a joint effort with the Metropolitan Museum of Art (E. Kühnel). The excavation collection in Berlin comprises more than 14 000 objects and fragments (pottery, glass,

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57 Muñoz-Viñas 2005, 91.
58 Muñoz-Viñas 2002, 34.
59 Muñoz-Viñas 2005, 95. Emphasis in original.
60 The interdisciplinary project of Research Group C-3-1 includes conservation- and building research-related examinations of stucco objects from Ctesiphon owned by the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin. The project also includes both the visualizations of reconstruction hypotheses and finds and the concept and realization of the museum presentation and its evaluation.

stone artifacts, stucco décor, and architecture fragments). In the reception history of Ctesiphon, which was inhabited from Parthian to early Islamic times, the palace ruins with their large *iwan* (Taq-i Kisra/Arch of Ctesiphon) have become particularly lodged in the collective memory (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 | Ctesiphon, the Sasanian palace ruins Taq-e Kesra with the great *iwan* (in 1932).

Many of the stucco finds from Ctesiphon were conserved and reconstructed for exhibition purposes immediately following the excavations of 1929 and 1933, as pictures in the museum's archives indicate. These measures were implemented by Willi Struck, a sculptor commissioned by the museum, but he is mentioned only in passing in Kühnel's paper on the excavation.[61] Struck made careful additions, neatly reproduced symmetrical or recurring motifs of analogous objects, and completed individual panels in accordance with their former dimensions. Not all stuccos were convincingly completed, however; some were even dealt with demonstrably wrongly, either regarding their relation to one another or by seemingly random completions of motifs, turning the objects into subjective constructions. These restoration measures, rooted in the spirit of the time, were meant to make the objects less unsightly and more comprehensible, but in practice created a kind of artificial authenticity. As in the case of the temple of Didyma, conditions, views, and images emerged that had never existed in history; yet, from the moment of their creation, they permanently took hold in literature and the general perception. Extensive additions often superimposed on the original material, such as those of the Ctesiphon stuccos, would hardly ever be carried out today, on the one hand because there are often few scientifically comprehensible hypotheses behind them, and on the other because they

61   Kühnel and Wachtsmuth 1933, IV.

Fig. 6 | Sasanian mural relief panel with two ibices.

can communicate to the observer a misleading completeness that obscures their actual fragmentary character.

The stuccos, having been reworked several times by various actors into the present day, do not provide a uniform picture of the measures they have suffered. Divergent restoration methods engendered by the division of the Berlin collection during World War II[62] has led to sometimes marked differences in the stuccos' appearance, even when they are of the same type.

How the extensive measures influence the scientific interpretation becomes apparent when looking at the example of the ibex panel (Fig. 6 and 7) that was examined and restored in 2014 in preparation for an exhibition.

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62 Objects evacuated on account of the war were divided among the Allied occupation forces; this led to a division of the Berlin collection after World War II. One part remained in the Islamisches Museum in the Pergamonmuseum, while the other was kept in the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Dahlem, West Berlin, until 2010.

Fig. 7 | Sasanian mural relief panel with two ibices (left) after restoration and (right) in a UV picture in which additions and old restorations can be seen.

Without visible ornamental painting, the panel had previously been labeled as unpainted on the corresponding record card. In an earlier restoration, both the original material and the additions had been completely covered with a fine clay or silt slurry in order to simulate a uniform surface. Once this was removed, the commissioned conservator-restorer found the preserved remains of the color version.

How should an older restoration of this kind be handled today? Is 'derestoration' a reasonable solution in this day and age? The removal of old additions would inevitably pose a high risk to the stuccos, since such interventions can hardly be accomplished without losing or damaging the original material, if at all. Moreover, a part of the object's historicity and therefore authenticity would be eradicated – because the only 'authentic' condition of the object is that of this moment. Attempts to restore objects to an assumed condition that is considered to be better, then, are first and foremost a question of which course of action to choose. This process is particularly influenced by the actor's cultural background, as well as other factors.[63] With this in mind, one specific approach to solving the Ctesiphon stuccos problem would be a virtual derestoration aided by modern computing technology, allowing finds and additions to be represented in a distinguishable and diverse way within the context of an exhibition.

6   Actors II: Visualization

The history of communication through visualizations in various media proves to be a history of grappling with the concept of authenticity. Since the beginning of the scientification of archaeology, the spectrum has ranged from rendering monuments in the most objective, 'authentic' way possible, to creating reconstructed, idealized, and reductive representations.

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63   Besides the cultural background of the actor, Muñoz-Viñas 2005, 4 also mentions politics, gender, and ethnicity as relevant factors.

6.1   Illustrators and photographers between authentic representation and interpretation[64]

The visual rendering of monuments is crucially influenced by the respective creator's knowledge and familiarity with the ancient world. As early as 1764, Winckelmann (1717–1768) explicitly pointed out the inaccuracy of engravings in his *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (History of Ancient Art),[65] writing that they represented an interpretation by the respective illustrators and engravers. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as the scientific discipline of archaeology gradually became more institutionally and academically rigid and claimed to use objective and authentic images to communicate findings, Winckelmann's realization became a subject of discussion. The debate continues to this day, continually replenished in the context of changing media and new inventions like photography, film, and digitization. The example of Eduard Gerhard (1795–1867), the driving force of the foundation of the Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica in Rome, shows that the concept of authenticity and objectivity underlying illustrations is mutable: Gerhard initially demanded careful and absolute visual fidelity in drawings, strictly supervising the rendering of every object with his own eyes and providing painstaking instructions to the artist. He approved of the line drawings that abstracted three-dimensional forms, calling them a technically useful method, and demanded that damages and additions to the ancient objects also be faithfully rendered at consistent scale, rather than beautified and distorted images being fabricated.[66] This position changed, however, when the Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica started operations in 1829 and the primary duties of the institution grew to include the publishing and collecting of artifacts, in addition to debating them. Gerhard's credo, "Monumentorum artis qui unum vidit, nullum vidit; qui milia vidit, unum vidit"[67], signified that comparison is an essential element of archaeological research, and that there is an ideal behind the monuments and works of art that only crystallizes from a collection of several objects. In documentation, however, comparison also causes individual characteristics and variations to be repressed in favor of typical characteristics. Gerhard considered both documentation approaches authentic – the mechanical documentary rendering of one object, and the representation of an ideal or idea behind several objects.

This example emphasizes that illustrations do not reflect timeless statements but the time-bound ideas of a collective, in this case the still-recent scientific discipline of classics. The discipline can change, not least because of novel documentation practices and the change in scientific questions that these bring. But illustrations of this kind also reflect ways of seeing that are common to society as a whole, in a much broader sense, as we will see in the case of the reconstruction drawings that are used mainly in research on classical buildings.

Reconstruction drawings are among the most influential of the media that classical architectural historians have at their disposal to communicate their research results. Not only do these drawings have a high information density, but they also enjoy broad comprehensibility and suggestive power. Reconstruction drawings provide vivid atmospheric images that have a lasting effect on our mental picture of the constructed environment of the ancient world.

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64   Ortwin Dally and Moritz Taschner study media in archaeology as part of the Topoi research group C-3-3. Dally's research focus is on photography, while Taschner specializes in reconstruction drawings.
65   Winckelmann 1764, XIX.
66   Gerhard 1827–1837; Gerhard and Panofka 1828; cf. Jahn 1868, 65–66.
67   Gerhard 1831 (front page): "He who has seen only one of art's monuments has seen nothing; he who has seen one thousand has seen one."

For a number of reasons, however, the strong effect of this medium is not without its complications. One obvious and frequently encountered problem is that only a fraction of the reconstructions are based on scientific results. Even when these are missing, though, the more or less free additions create an overall picture that is convincing nonetheless. The fewer the actual findings, the more freedom the illustrator has and the more the final work resembles a creative sketch. In extreme cases, the visualizations provide more information on their authors' subjective images of antiquity than on the represented buildings themselves.[68]

The proportion of additions is the most striking indicator that illustrated reconstructions are not able to deliver 'objective' images of a historical reality. Even in the less obvious components of a drawing, however, one can observe how much the result is determined by the illustrator's individual horizon of experience, as well as the time-bound approaches and reflections rooted in the collective. The following example makes clear that even the choice of the perspective and the level of image detail can be a product of the time.

A monograph on ancient council houses (bouleuteria) published in 1941 contains a reconstruction drawing by the architectural historian Fritz Krischen (1881–1949).[69] The caption, *Miletus: Cityscape with council house in the Roman era*, clarifies the illustrator's intention: to communicate to the observer an idea of the urban space and its configuration, with the council house as a reference point (Fig. 8).
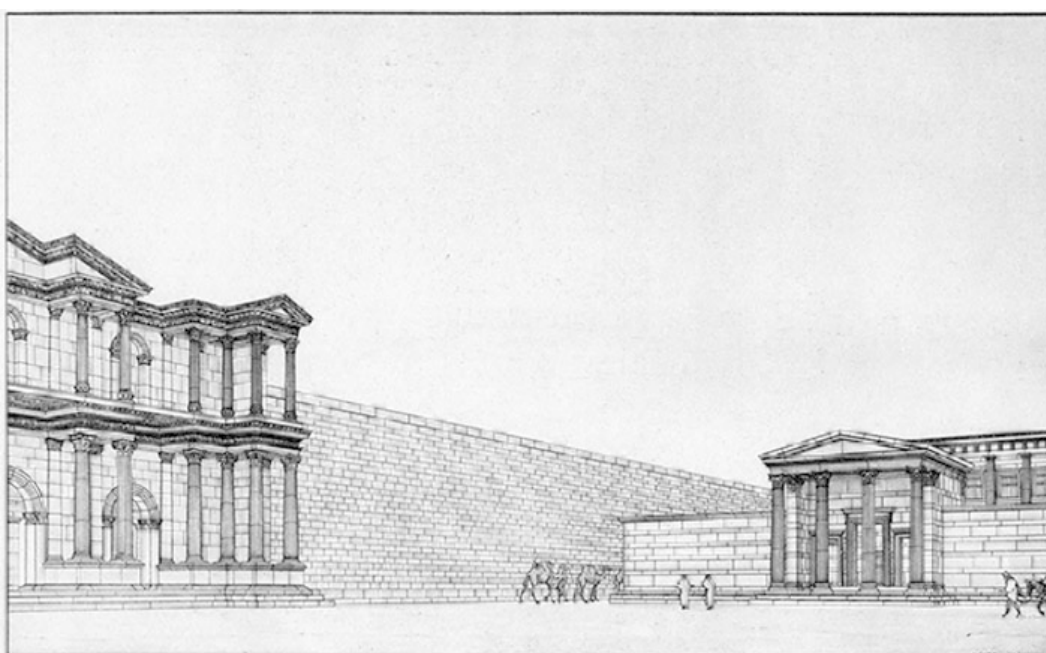

Fig. 8 | Miletus: Cityscape with council house in the Roman era.

Instead of resorting to a bird's-eye view, an established representation pattern for such purposes, the illustrator chooses the line of vision of a real observer and combines it with

68   Kockel 2012, 211–212.
69   Krischen 1941, plate 2. The drawing is part of a series of reconstruction drawings made under the direction of Fritz Krischen at the Technische Hochschule Danzig in the late 1920s. The drawings became popular with a wider audience after being published in a guide to the Pergamonmuseum in 1932. See von Massow 1932.

unconventional image detail: there is almost no relevant information to discover in the center of the picture, where one would traditionally expect to find the most important elements. The important objects in the representation, especially the council house, have been moved to the sides of the image and massively cropped by its margins. These mutilations cause a considerable amount of turmoil in the representation. They create an urge in the observer to capture the buildings completely and to broaden the image detail on both sides. This continually pulls the viewer's gaze to the margins of the picture, rather than allowing it to rest at the center of the picture.

This is not the only point where this drawing breaks the rules of classical picture composition, but it is with precisely this putative 'unstaging' that a telling effect sets in. In its apparent lack of any artificial arrangement, the drawing suggests that it is capturing an almost arbitrary moment of seeing. The representation therefore approximates a real and vivid situation and becomes more convincing.

Even if the rules of 'classical' picture composition are negated and the conception of this reconstruction drawing can be considered original in its genre, the style of the image is not without precedent: it exhibits close parallels to the medium of photography, and even more to the medium of film. The image detail in particular recalls single frames from film sequences created by a horizontal camera pan. The stylistic device of the pan shot, in which the film camera is mounted in a fixed position and turned horizontally on its vertical axis, informs viewers about the environment and helps to orient them. This kind of camera work was used especially widely when documenting urban spaces in the early film recordings of the 1930s and 1940s. It is therefore quite obvious that the illustrator of this reconstruction allowed the viewing experience acquired from the medium of film to influence his work. The illustrated cityscape of Miletus has the appearance of a 'modern', putatively objective film still, suggesting to the viewer that the representation possesses the same level of documentary objectivity as a recorded film.

Such time-bound ways of seeing can also be understood when looking at the debate over the 'right' way to take pictures of the archaic Korai of the Acropolis of Athens: archaeologist Ernst Langlotz (1895–1978) criticized the established practice of taking pictures of Greek sculptures in front of a dark background. Since the representation blocked out the environment in which the sculptures had originally existed, it was more appropriate for "a cadaver in anatomy class", than the "almost breathing physicality of a Greek sculpture which, when hit by the sun, lights up from within" (Fig. 9).[70]

Langlotz also considered drawings to have a fundamental advantage compared to standardized photography, especially for showing the vividness of the sculptures. He inferred from this that archaic sculptures at the Acropolis should be pictured casting shadows in sunlight, because then they would be depicted "as the Greeks would have seen them."[71] Langlotz established this maxim when presenting the archaic Korai of the Acropolis of Athens in the 1920s and 1930s.[72] Langlotz's position, influenced by the *Third Humanism* and showing a dramatically idealizing view of Greek art, would not go unchallenged. Only shortly after the publication of his work on the Acropolis (1939/41),[73] the reviewer Gerhart Rodenwaldt (1886–1945) praised the high quality of the photographs, emphasizing their high attractiveness to amateurs because of their vividness and play of light and shadow, but he contested the scientific value of the outdoor shots. As early as 1935, when Walter Hege had taken new photographs at Olympia, Rodenwaldt had emphasized that photographic pictures were time-bound: "A good picture – and only those will be mentioned here – is far from being an objective rendering. It signifies the

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70   Langlotz 1979, 4–5.
71   Cfr. Geominy 1995, 15.
72   Schrader 1939; Langlotz 1941.
73   Schrader 1939; Langlotz 1941.

Fig. 9 | E. Langlotz taking an outdoor photograph of the Acropolis, 1936.

opinion of an artist or the interpretation of a scholar."[74] Langlotz's approach is time-bound. But this is no less true of Rodenwaldt's position; he himself worked closely with the photographer Walter Hege, whose experiments with light helped to publicize a heroic image of the Greeks that was very popular in the 1930s and 1940s. Langlotz's formal descriptions and empathy allowed him to objectify the artist's point of view when creating a work of art and to capture it in photography.[75]

6.2   Architects of virtual modeling[76]

At first sight, the problem of the virtual modeling and reconstruction of ancient architecture seems to correspond to that of reconstructions by illustrators. In both cases, only a fraction of the reconstructions and designs of a whole picture of the architecture are based on actual findings. The virtual world, however, adds a new dimension. Virtual modeling facilitates the creation of reality, down to the textures of surfaces and the distribution of light. But with each step toward visualizing a more realistic impression, this reality diverges further and further from the confirmed evidence and becomes hypothetical if not

74 Rodenwaldt 1935, 356.
75 Harder 2003.
76 The chair of visualization at BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg has been developing virtual 3-D representations as a part of the research group C-3-1 that are based on the 'visualization of uncertainty' for the exhibition on Ctesiphon at the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin.

fictional,[77] whereas the traditional media of architectural reconstruction – constructed models or drawings – have an inherent distance from the object they represent.

The challenge of three-dimensional virtual modeling of architecture, then, is to clarify the discrepancy between the authentic architectural finding and the reconstruction, i.e., to visualize the uncertainty in the knowledge of its original appearance. A virtual model of the Pergamon was used to develop methods and conventions for the 'visualization of uncertainty'. Unlike a reconstruction, these visualize hypotheses but also communicate an overall impression of an ancient site.[78] A hypothetical visualization of this kind is especially not meant to pretend that a complete reconstruction is possible, but rather to show clearly that every reconstruction is always also hypothetical.

The 'visualization of uncertainty' in virtual modeling uses traditional elements and processes from architectural reconstruction and architectural representation. Modeling and picture composition seek to emulate the traditions of archaeological perspective drawing, architectural photography, and architectural design models (Fig. 10).[79]
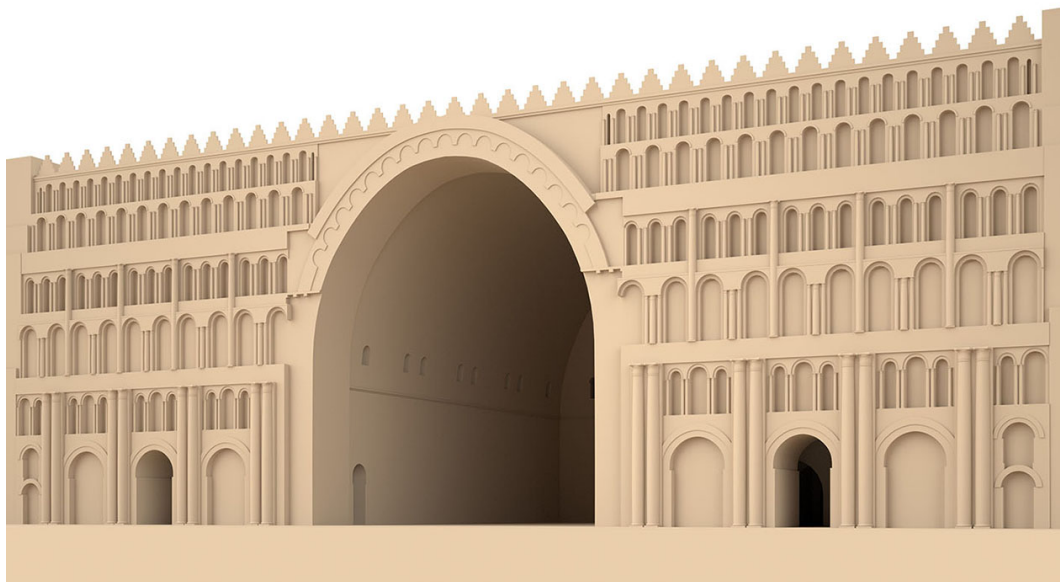

Fig. 10 | Ctesiphon, the Taq-e Kesra palace, 3D model.

The form chosen to visualize uncertainty is basically composed of two interlocking elements, namely a virtual three-dimensional model and its representation. A design process is then allocated to each element: the geometric abstraction of the three-dimensional model as a three-dimensional design, and the virtual photography, so named because it explicitly seeks to emulate real photography. Traditional methods of representation are combined so that the reconstructed architecture can be perceived as natural.

Since a drawing allows for a lot of flexibility in interpretation, it is read correctly in its vagueness. In the same way in which drawing can mask uncertainties, the architectural design model deliberately leaves decisions open. In order to make use of the viewing habits

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77   The discrepancy between academia and illusion is especially pronounced in Hollywood's film industry, for example in Wolfgang Petersen's 2004 film Troy.

78   See Laufer et al. 2011, 82–86. Cooperation in the exhibition and publication *Pergamon: Panorama of an Ancient Metropolis* of the Staatliche Museen Berlin as part of Topoi I in 2011/12.

79   Lengyel and Toulouse 2011, 182–186.

of the design model, the visual appearance of the virtual model follows the traditional architectural plaster model. One way uncertainty is achieved at the level of the model is by using varying degrees of detail. While finds are represented by detailed models, they are complemented by different abstract geometries according to the level of certainty. This clearly communicates to the observer that it is a representation to be interpreted. Highlighting the original evidence can also emphasize the find and visually offset it from the hypothesis. Contradictory hypotheses are shown alongside one another or one after the other, with the multiple representations corresponding to the multiple interpretations (Figs. 11).
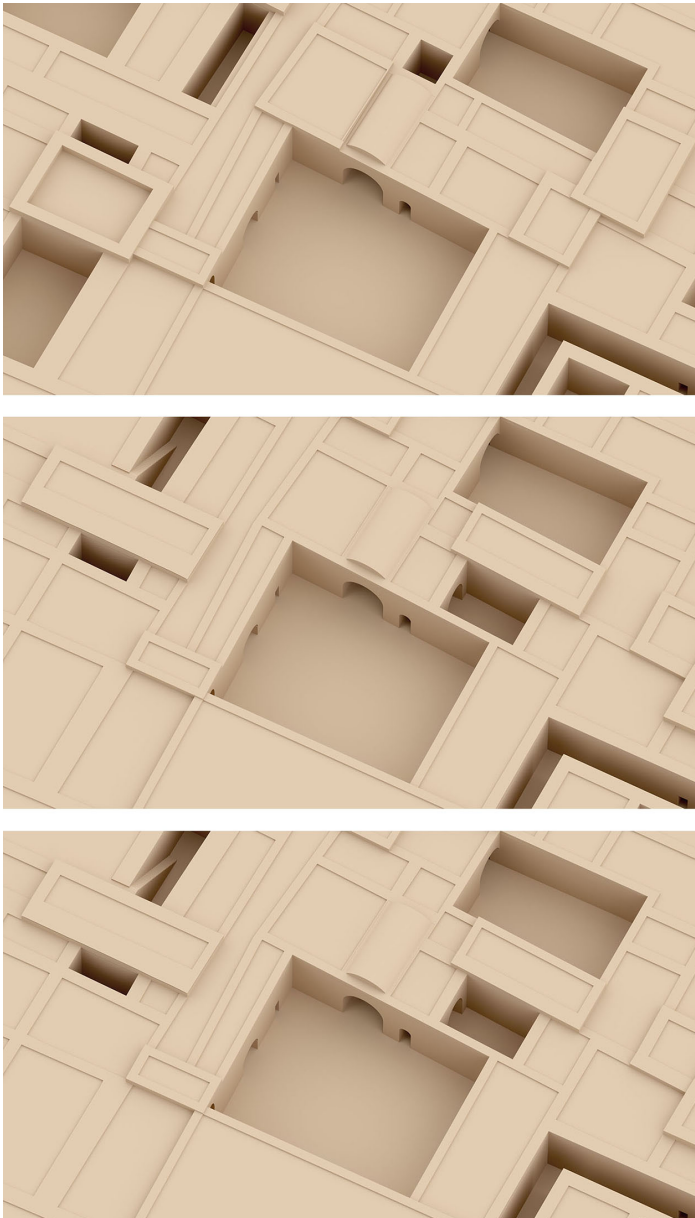

Fig. 11 | Ctesiphon, three possible options of roofscapes of the residential house Umm az-Za'atir.

The buildings' vertical lines – because the eye always sees buildings' vertical lines as vertical – and the choice of eye level have been borrowed from traditional architectural photography. Viewers need to be certain of when they are and are not at the level a pedestrian would be. If a virtual model is to be believable, it is necessary that the representation is
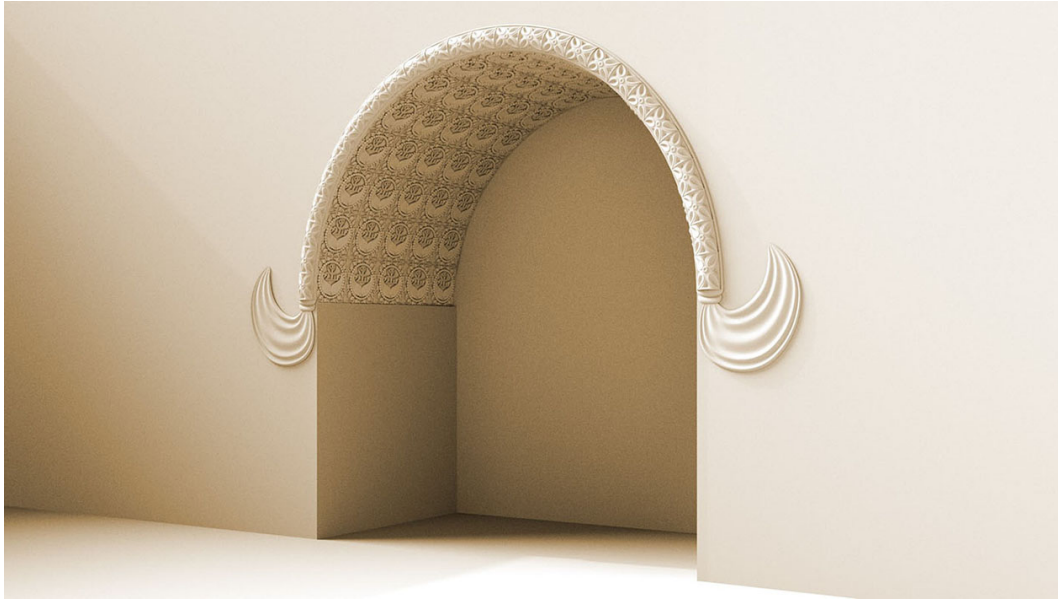
Fig. 12 | Ctesiphon, reconstruction of the western iwan of the residential house Umm az-Za'atir.

clearly from either an aerial view or the perspective of natural eye level (Fig. 12). So as not to add another dimension to the degree of uncertainty, the virtual models are kept monochrome for as long as possible, in the style of black-and-white photography, thus concentrating on the form.

The form selected for virtually modeling the 'visualization of uncertainty' thus draws on basic methods and conventions that are visually familiar from architects' design processes.[80] Architectural design therefore contributes to the archaeological discussion, for example through its involvement with order, practicability, and statics.[81] Above all, however, the 'visualization of uncertainty' attributes an active role to observers, since only through their own interpretation and their own imagination does an image of architecture emerge.

7   Actors III: Museums

The conflict between authenticity and communication is also found at the moment when the objects and media-translated knowledge of ancient monuments are communicated to the public by the museum as an institution. Here the discourse on authenticity and authentification takes on its own particular form yet again, as curators, designers, and specialists in education and interpretation become involved.

7.1   On representation

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) defines a museum as

> a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and

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80   On image science, see also Lengyel and Toulouse 2013, 335–336.
81   Schock-Werner 2011, 71–73 explains this using the example of Cologne Cathedral.

exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.[82]

Archaeological museums claim to represent interpretations of history based on sound science, and they communicate these as part of exhibitions and educational programs. No two museums are alike: they differ tremendously with respect to the composition of their collections, the size of their exhibition spaces, the social and geographical context into which they are embedded, and the history of their origins, as well as their guiding principles and the resulting variations in management practices, collections acquisition, conservation and restoration practices, and museum communication.

The different attitudes about the reconstructability of history and the originality of objects are reflected in these practices, which Henrietta Lidchi has described as the result of negotiation processes that must be put up for discussion:

> Museums generate representations and attribute value and meaning in line with certain perspectives or classificatory schemes that are historically specific. They do not so much reflect the world through objects as use them to mobilize representations of the world past and present.[83]

The Museum für Islamische Kunst in the Pergamonmuseum of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin will be used as an example for the following reflections.[84] The sharp increase in the number of visits to the museum, up more than 80 percent over the last six years to almost 900 000 visits in 2013, demonstrates huge public interest. The objects in the collections are the basis for the museum communication:

> As a place of lifelong learning, the museum fulfills an educational mandate, of which its collections are the basis: *original* objects used to develop exhibitions on historical, cultural-historical [...] themes.[85]

Many museums of archaeology and art lay claim in their presentations to a sometimes-undefined authenticity of their exhibits, as 'originals', and to the authority of the scientifically investigated and communicated contents of these exhibits. Respect for the original is defined as part of the canon of cultural education and is reflected both in how that original is staged by curators and conservator-restorers and in the ritualized actions of its audience. The original is considered to be material evidence from a historical context; its authenticity is part of the claim to truth and therefore the authority of the museum.

Societies in which history has been communicated as a projection, without critical derivation from the primary sources, often place special emphasis on the idea connected with the object; historical stress marks and dents take the shine off. The object is a piece of evidence; its readability as an authentic source, as material evidence of the past, is secondary. For example, whereas in some Middle Eastern societies historical monuments are overrestored to brilliance, degrading the historical substance in the process,[86] societies

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82   Museums 1986/2001.

83   Lidchi 1997, 160.

84   As a research institution, the Museum für Islamische Kunst is part of the research group C-3-1 which concentrates on the communication of academic findings to the public at large based on the archaeological finds from Ctesiphon. One result of the project will be an exhibition in 2016 representing Ctesiphon's cultural-regional, historical, and topographic characteristics and show the importance of the site as a place of contact between the late ancient and early Islamic traditions. The exhibition will also look at the scientific problem of reconstructing the past from the viewpoint of various specialist disciplines.

85   Museumsbund and Museums Deutschland 2006 (Standards for Museums). Emphasis added.

86   Example cases include the restoration of extensive faience mosaics in Iran and Uzbekistan that were completely renewed at the cost of the historical material, as well as the uniform recladding of historical mosques in Syria with newly interpreted, historicizing facades. See Weber 2002, 186–188.
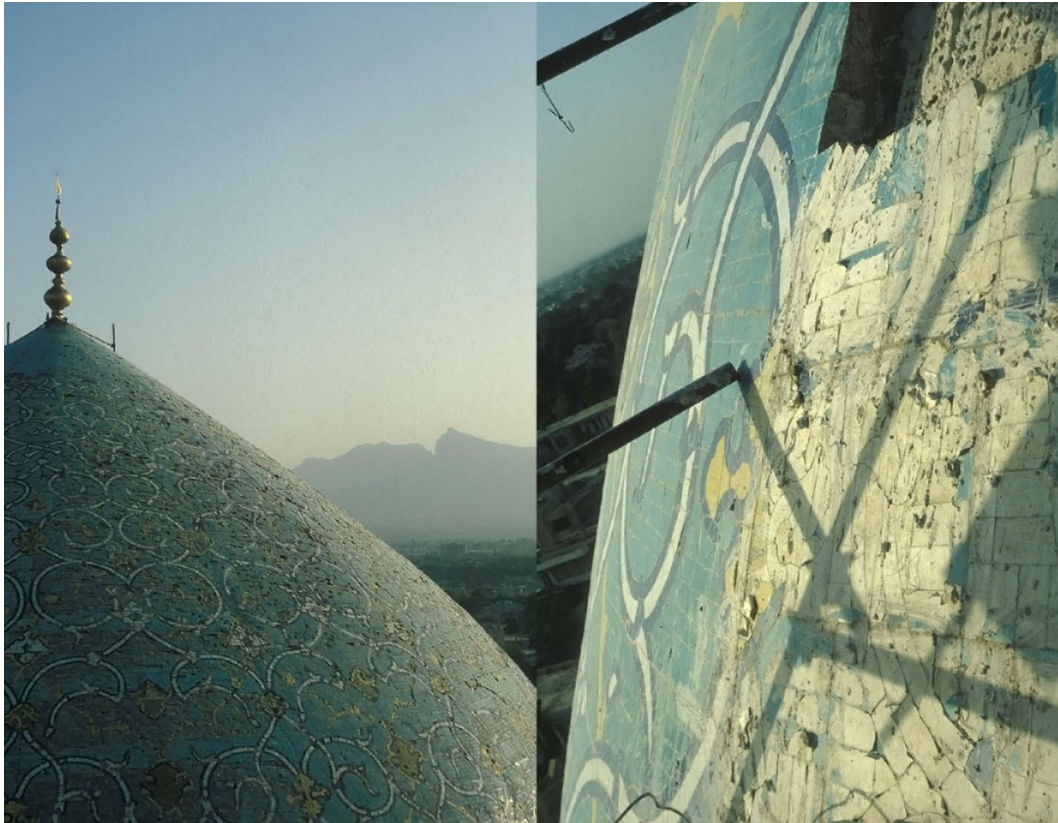
Fig. 13 | Masjed-e Shah in Isfahan (Iran), dome of the mosque. Left: the historical tile mosaic. Right: its skillful modern replacement.

in central European contexts often tend to the romantic idealization of ruins and an aesthetic of patina (Figs. 13–14).

But when is an object authentic, and why? Objects have different levels of meaning resulting from their material characteristics, their history of use and attributions. The section on conservators-restorers above makes mention of the object's biography, from the first user context to the material and nonmaterial deformations of the secondary contexts.[87] Many objects do not have a known provenance; they come straight from the art market to the museum, where researchers attach meaning to them. Besides being attributed to historical contexts, they are systematized and assessed as important or unimportant in their historical, material, technical, aesthetic, and collection-specific characteristics. Social anthropologists in art and material culture from Barthes to Gell[88] speak about the symbolic charging of objects with meaning, especially as elements of nonverbal speech in social interaction. Levels and attributions of meaning change considerably depending on the various user contexts, so each situation calls for a new evaluation of when an object is authentic for what and for whom. Let us remain in our context: the communication of archaeology in the museum and the Ctesiphon project.

87   See 6.2 Conservator-restorers as trustees of museum objects.
88   See Barthes 2005 and Gell 1998.

Fig. 14 | Hanabila Mosque in Damascus / al-Salihiyya (Syria), cladding of a historical mosque from the 12th c. in a free modern interpretation of a much later style, combined with the cleaning of all historical material inside the courtyard.

7.2   Design and staging

Putting artifacts on display in museums is simultaneously an act of mystification and demystification. First, because it involves elevating it to a rare object of art, in a scenography that follows a certain narrative imposed by the museum as an authority. The second, because it explains the object in a scientific way, based on evidence, proofs and analysis. The object itself being 'original' and thus declared authentic. So in fact there in this process, a tension between myth and reality arises. Authenticity turns out to be a means to prove myths are somehow 'real', or to elevate history into a myth.[89]

This polarity between the mystification and demystification of objects so aptly described by Barthes is countered by curators and designers in a variety of ways. These can be roughly assigned to three ideal types according to Kamel:[90] first, by choosing formal aesthetic presentation forms like the White Cube described by O'Doherty,[91] exhibition organizers present objects as decontextualized works of art, thereby ascribing a universally valid aesthetic to them that should be intelligible to all recipients, independent of their cultural,

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89   Barthes 2005, 233: 'Nous voguons sans cesse entre l'objet et sa démystification, impuissants à rendre sa totalité: car si nous pénétrons l'objet, nous le libérons mais nous le détruisons ; et si nous lui laissons son poids nous le respectons, mais nous le restituons encore mystifié.' "We constantly drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified."
90   Kamel 2004.
91   O'Doherty 1999.

Fig. 15 | Presenting the object as a monument: the famous Mamluk enameled glass flask of the Museum für Islamische Kunst in the 1910 exhibition catalogue.

social, or individual attributes. Second, scientifically legitimized levels of meaning of objects are communicated in contextualizing presentation forms, for example through the use of explanatory texts and pictures, leaving the interpretive sovereignty over the objects to the museum. Third, the decision in favor of constructivist presentation forms relates to the intention to demonstrate the diversity and contradictoriness of scientifically obtained findings and to admit additional levels of meaning that do not originate from the academic discourse. These different possibilities to present objects, and their associated allocations of meaning by observers, are an indication that in an exhibition, "objects never have a meaning of their own; rather, people construct meaning *for themselves*."[92]

The example of the collection from Ctesiphon shows that the tension between reconstruction (in the sense of constructing new objects from archaeological material) and the desire for authenticity in exhibitions was already generating discussions during the founding phase of the large European museums. The excavations in Ctesiphon took place during the construction period of the Pergamonmuseum (1910–1930/32). The museum had been setting new, controversial standards for presentations with its 1:1 scale reconstructions of large architectural pieces since the 1880s.[93] With his vision, Theodor

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92 Kamel 2004, 87.
93 See Karl Scheffler (1869–1951), who wrote on the centenary of the Berlin museums in 1930 of the Pergamonmuseum plans "that the success with the public will admittedly be great, but the quiet art lover will turn away from the theatre-like atmosphere with discomfiture"; and Adolf Behne (1885–1948) in 1930 in the weekly Weltbühne, among others; cf. Blauert 2009 and Bilsel 2011, 35. Museum concepts were the subject of the work of Cross Sectional Group IV in Topoi I, and were addressed at the Andrae-Wiegand

Fig. 16 | Top down: The first presentation of the Ctesiphon material at the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (now the Bode-Museum) at the special exhibition in 1930, the Ctesiphon Hall at the newly opened permanent exhibition of Islamic art in a general objective aesthetic presentation in 1933, and the Ctesiphon Hall at the permanent exhibition of Islamic art with a modernist exhibition aesthetic in 1956. Basic information is given for each object.

Wiegand added a level of meaning that purists considered a distraction from the object as an authentic work of art: the overall impression, or "the view of the monumental whole."[94] This marked a decisive change in the semantic level of the work as a complete work of art: that reconstructions should communicate something of the 'authentic primary context.' Out of necessity, this change included specifying the original historical state. Gray areas or variants were not always clearly expressed. Even the obvious imperfections and additions to the Pergamon Altar do not prevent visitors from asking whether it is in its 'original' state.

Another innovation in object presentation came along at almost the same time. Influenced by the New Objectivity movement, art historians called for a focused view on the individual work of art, without the contextualizing hanging of objects or exhibition architecture, making Wilhelm von Bode's 'style rooms' (*Stilräume*) a thing of the past.[95] Friedrich Sarre (1865–1945) and Ernst Kühnel (1882–1964) developed objectified exhibition architecture for the 1910 exhibition of Islamic art in Munich and a comprehensive catalogue that celebrated the object as an individual monument (Fig. 15). Thus the 'view of the whole' focused on the object as such, enhancing the object's visual integrity and transferring the notion of the masterpiece to non-European art. While it is true that this approach – presenting a work of art with a concentration on its aesthetics as the most authentic quality of the object – constituted a systematic reduction to the exhibit itself, it also eschewed numerous other levels of meaning inherent in the object (Fig. 16).

In the midst of these developments, the Ctesiphon collection went directly into the museum's exhibition. Stucco décor, mostly surviving in fragments, was reconstructed and some of it 'composed' anew.[96] The reconstruction and presentation of the objects as art was important to the museum organizers, whereas the significance of the finds for the museum's narrative was not a priority in their communication, so contextualizing explanations for these unprecedented fragments were usually not given.[97] Neither did the curators communicate their own time-bound historico-cultural identity when they classified the art and culture of Islamicate countries into the global history of civilization. The current reconception of the Ctesiphon exhibition is an attempt to put this history into context. By examining the reconstruction process and highlighting imperfections in both the object and the knowledge of the interconnections, it seeks to communicate the change in meaning and attribution of meaning in the history of the object and its presentation in the museum.

One of the ideas for the reconceived Ctesiphon exhibition design is to mount the objects (which are stucco architectural elements of *iwans* from different houses in Ctesiphon) on a three-dimensional truss, floating in space in such a way that their assumed position in the *iwan* is visible from one particular point of view. A screen within the truss allows the visitor to roam through a digital reconstruction of *iwans* developed by the working group[98] that includes and highlights the original objects on the truss. The space left between the floating objects underlines the uncertainty or lack of evidence of the original situation. The reconstruction is suspended in space, open and reversible, creating a tension between the objects and their contextualization.

Colloquium, *Conceptions of Space in Museums*, in December 2009. Bénédicte Savoy is now continuing this work in the research group C-3-3.

94   Wiegand 1930, 20.
95   Klonk 2009, 120–125.
96   See 6.2 Conservator-restorers as trustees of museum objects, page 18–21.
97   On the objects of the excavation, see Kühnel and Wachtsmuth 1933.
98   See the article on architects of virtual modeling.

7.3 Communicating and experiencing

Recent years have seen discussion of questions of authenticity and authentification in the sense of a 'true' writing of history in exhibitions. With societies diversifying, issues of representation and the construction of historical narratives in museums and on sites have challenged how cultures and history are represented in museums. Influenced by critical theories, the new museologies advocate more audience-centered thinking in museological theory and practice, for museums to go from 'being about something' to 'being for someone'.[99]

This development has gone hand in hand with a shift in the way audiences are perceived and addressed in exhibitions and on sites. Transmission models of communication and behaviorist learning theories have been criticized as considering audiences to be passive receivers of singular information. Constructivist thought and learning theories conceptualize museum users' today as active meaning makers, whose approach to and interpretation of objects and exhibitions is influenced by their individual intellectual, social, and cultural background.[100] Users thus selectively interpret objects, sites, and exhibitions through multiple lenses. Moreover, as research has shown, people have a huge range of motivations for going to museums[101] and various learning experiences that they get from their visit,[102] with aesthetic experience or cognitive understanding as only two among many.

Against the background of the constructivist paradigm, an 'authentic experience' of the past seems obsolete, since "there is no such thing as an inauthentic experience because that experience happens inside of us."[103] According to Pine and Gilmore, one way to interpret the demand by some audiences to experience 'authentic' history is to consider it as the search for a memorable experience in an experience-oriented society.[104] Taken to the extreme, the nostalgic need for an immersion into bygone times might be a way to escape from reality and is thus a reflective and creative act by modern subjects, who begin to search for possibilities of self-localization after losing traditional structures.[105] Alternative learning environments like exhibitions become playgrounds for imagination and creativity, alternatives to the formalized learning environments where historical knowledge is presented in a systematized form.

The changing notions about the social responsibilites of institutions that produce and display historical evidence have an impact on interpretation practices at museums and on sites, as does the acknowledgment of museum and site users as active meaning makers. Rather than relying on only one strategy of communication, the experts in museums apply a bundle of different approaches to allow for multiple methods to make meaning and construct knowledge, including affirmative, reproductive, deconstructive, and transformative strategies.[106] Moreover, museums and sites are being conceptualized as informal learning contexts that allow for free-choice learning. Multiple perspectives are provided through participatory strategies that develop content to complement or challenge academic perspectives. For example, people from Islamicate countries might add layers of meaning to be attached to the famous Taq-i Kisra alongside the archaeological knowledge about the present site.

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99 Weil 1999.
100 Cf. Silverman 1995; Hooper-Greenhill 1999; Hein 1995.
101 See, e.g., Falk, Moussouri, and Coulson 1998, 38–43.
102 Hooper-Greenhill 2004.
103 Pine and Gilmore 2007, 78.
104 Pine and Gilmore 2007, 76.
105 See 3. Wider spheres of authenticity, page 3–5.
106 Mörsch 2014.

Museum communication and interpretation is considered an important aspect of the process of developing the Ctesiphon exhibition, in order to explore suitable approaches and new paths of museum practice. This team approach has been supplemented by regular workshops with the research group and evaluative supervision of the development of the exhibition, which fulfills a collaborative function according to Nina Simon.[107] The team also seeks to develop an framework of interpretation that allows people to not only cognitively engage with the exhibition, but to be entertained and encouraged to interact with their companions or use the exhibition to reflect on personal values.[108]

8   Authenticity: conclusion

As a guideline for the preservation and communication of cultural heritage, the Venice Charter has had a normative effect because of its demand to hand on historic monuments "in the full richness of their authenticity." This new standard generated a discussion that continues to this day. We have shown in this paper that authenticity is never an absolute and constant quality inherent in an object or an experience, whether in the preservation of cultural heritage or in a wider sphere, but that it is constructed in various processes of acquisition, including the process of research.

Examples from the history of research in archaeology, historical monument preservation, conservation, and museology have shown clearly that these constructions are not the specific result of present-day findings, but are always the time-bound products of decisions and attributions by actors. These decisions and attributions are connected to what these actors regarded as authentic at a certain time and to how they wanted to communicate this authenticity. This is as true of the archaeologists and architectural historians who uncovered and singled out individual layers of complex monuments as it is of the conservator-restorers who uncover layers and add new ones while making completions or applying layers of paint, forced to make decisions about older restoration measures. Photographers, illustrators, and architects have tried to communicate the authentic impression of a monument – their efforts, too, were the result of selections and definitions.

At the same time, authenticity has been and still is one of the central issues of museum communication, and continues to be subject to the attribution processes of meaning and history today. This is why actors have always assumed active roles of authentication, independent of the theoretical reflection and definition of "different meanings of authenticity as employed in social practice." Such cases have been described only anecdotally in the present article as far as their being both time-bound and conditioned by disciplines and institutions, but they have nonetheless established that focusing on the process of authentication and communication allows us to more clearly outline and describe the determining factors and intentions of actions in the present and the past.

Thinking beyond this reflection and its results, the focus on processes of authentication and communication also leads to another question: How does one operationalize these findings going forward and include them in future actions? The research group is pursuing two possible approaches: in the museum sphere, an approach has been chosen in which authentications are continually addressed and reflected in evaluations that occur as part of the process, to be filled out by research groups, representatives from visitor groups, and other external actors. One reason this is being done is to create concrete starting points for the communication in exhibitions. The second approach is the *Archaeotopia* project,

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107   Simon 2010.
108   For the empirical research from archaeological museums underlying this assumption, see Macdonald 2006 and Brida and Tokarchuk 2011.

which uses concrete fieldwork projects to focus on the scope of action and action patterns of manifold authentication practices, as well as their roles when archaeological sites are produced and appropriated by different stakeholder groups.

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1 Galla and Yu, in Larsen 1995, 318. **2** http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/wiegand1911/0077, © Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, CC-BY-SA 3.0 DE. **3** Photo: Katharina Steudtner (2013). **4** Photo: Katharina Steudtner (2013). **5** Ktesiphon-Archiv, Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB Berlin. **6** Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB Berlin, Inv.-Nr. I. 6197. Photo: Kathrin Boerger (2013). **7** Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB Berlin, Inv.-Nr. I. 6197. Photo: Kathrin Boerger (2013). **8** Krischen 1941, plate 2. **9** Photo published in Langlotz 1979, fig. 17. **10** Dominik Lengyel and Catherine Toulouse, Universität Cottbus. **11** Dominik Lengyel and Catherine Toulouse, Universität Cottbus. **12** Dominik Lengyel and Catherine Toulouse, Universität Cottbus, nach Kröger 1982, Abb. 39. **13** Photo: Stefan Weber (1992). **14** Weber 2002. **15** Sarre and Martin 1912, plate 167. **16** Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB Berlin (Archive): Ident.Nr. ZA 2.11./03292, © Photo: Zentralarchiv der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, CC-BY-NC-SA 3.0 DE.

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