

# **DAAD Summer School**

*“Dialogue on Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis”*

## **HISTORY AND THEORY OF RESTORATION**

**FROM RUSKIN TO CAMILLO BOITO (WITHOUT NEGLECTING VIOLETTE-LE-DUC)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This brief study is aimed at analyzing the history and the development of several theories about restoration and conservation of ancient monuments, especially of historical buildings, focusing overall on a European context. It will be possible to see how the various schools of thought have evolved since the origins of the interest in this matter, during the Renaissance, until such time of their biggest diffusion and change, thanks to some of the major philosophers of restoration: Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, John Ruskin e Camillo Boito. All three strongly promoted and supported their theories, sometimes drawing inspiration from the other ones, sometimes discrediting them, influencing themselves each other and influencing also many European countries and their legislations on the safeguard of national cultural heritage. The results of this investigation can illustrate how this development has conditioned international collaboration in the protection and conservation of ancient monuments, works of art and historic buildings, preserved as memorials of the mankind past, and how it has formed the principal concepts and approach to conservation and restoration in today's multi-cultural society.

**Keywords:** (restoration, conservation, authenticity, memory, cultural heritage)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The issue about the importance of protecting the cultural heritage has been one of the most discussed ever since mankind has become aware that the witnesses of its past could represent a step forward, a basis for its future and its present life, as the memory is the main key to create its own identity. Ancient objects, buildings, monuments and works of art have been conserved and restored adopting different and developing strategies, but always in order to preserve them as memorials of the past.

Overtime, the treatment and the management of monuments and works of art of the past could be seen as the evolution of three different main approaches<sup>1</sup>. One is the traditional preservation, which has been probably carried out since the society took shape: historic buildings are conserved so long as they continue to have use values, most of the time because there is not any specific reason to destroy them; they can be modified and subject to new constructions, but often over a long period of time. Some structures could be preserved because they represent a particular “memorial” value, but more commonly a possible conservation was linked with the purpose that the building served or the memory of its original builder. Consequently, the aim of restoration works was directed to keep intact the function of the monument, sometimes through renovation and renewal, even by improvement. Otherwise, the second attitude towards historical monuments is typical of the Italian Renaissance and it could be defined as “romantic restoration”. In a miserable situation of destruction and abuse against ancient works of art, Petrarch and the Italian humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries started to recognize them as nostalgic remains of the past, which could provide documentary evidences of the greatness of Rome, as the capital of an ancient empire and civilization, but also as the capital of Christianity. This dichotomy became the fundament of the political approach to the treatment of old monuments: they represented a model to be learnt from and to be imitated, but also to be surpassed; therefore, also because of the Church’s desire to show its superiority over paganism, ancient sculptures and buildings were protected, as well as restored and completed in order to give them new actuality, new function and new life within the present society. This period seemed to be characterized by a more general respect for the achievement of past generations, even for medieval structures, which at the beginning were condemned as the medieval art and architecture. Overall thanks to the development of nationalism and romanticism in Europe, monuments were strongly protected and restored as concrete evidence of a nation’s history; moreover, they were completed and recreated according to the original plans or to the most significant period, using historical research and analogy with references of other buildings of the same style. For this reason, the worth of a building was seen as related exclusively to a particular moment or period in history, the most representative for it. The last approach, clearly present in the Renaissance too - thanks especially to Raphaël -, could be considered analogous to the previous one but completely different concerning the purposes. The only target was to conserve and re-evaluate the authentic objects, preserving the whole historical stratification and avoiding any falsification, giving more importance to the substance rather than the form. These concepts were further developed in many theories during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and also the famous art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann insisted on a distinction between the original and the restored parts, in order not to falsify the intrinsic artistic values of antique works of art. An outcome of this attitude could be seen in practice particularly in the treatment of classical monuments in Rome, France and Greece, thanks to the acceptance of the practice of “*anastylosis*”, the reconstruction using existing original elements.

Over time, many European countries have conceived various theories in order to cope with the requirement to preserve their own past: it is clearly possible to see how their concepts about restoration and conservation were influenced by different histories of cultural, social and economic development. Even more if we consider that these two main approaches to the treatment of antiquities, “restoration” and “conservation”, had so much in common although different in some fundamental aspects, entailing therefore a certain level of ambiguity in these fields. For instance, during the nineteenth century in England an “anti-restoration movement” gradually developed after years of strong criticism against the renovation of mediaeval churches:

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<sup>1</sup> According to Prof. Jukka Jokilehto , a member of numerous advisory missions on behalf of UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS: Jokilehto J., “*A History of architectural conservation*”; York, 1986.

the treatment defined by Scott as a “faithful restoration” was based just on an apparent respect for the historical stratifications, while often it was actually complying with the fashion of the time. For this reason, the English writer John Ruskin tried with William Morris to focus the attention on the problem of historic time and authenticity related to the original object and to underline the impossibility to reproduce an object with the same significance in another historical-cultural context. According to him, the quality of workmanship during particular historic periods was unique and thus it was impossible to reproduce this and the values connected with it at any other time. He emphasized the necessity to conserve the authentic object in its material consistency, refusing any reconstruction and recommending additions – if requested - just in contemporary form: even the “*faithful restoration*”, if it meant reproduction of original features, was a lie, a falsification, not the original real thing anymore. This strong approach to restoration particularly influenced many European countries since the 1870s, first of all France and Italy. At the beginning in France, English experiences led to the establishment of a State organization for the protection of national monuments and a systematic study of medieval architecture; in spite of this, however, in a short while the faithful method turned in analogical reconstructions and the practice of a “*stylistic restoration*”. In many works of complete restoration, against any respect for all periods of past history, final projects involved a purification from historic additions, as well as construction of parts that never had existed. In Italy instead, it is possible to see a sort of compromise among the issues of restoration and conservation: the drafter of the Italian Conservation Charter (1833), Camillo Boito, was the promoter of a strict conservation, even if he firmly disapproved both English and French practises of restoration; his pupil Luca Beltrami instead didn’t scorn at all the stylistic approach. A modern attitude towards the treatment on ancient monuments could be seen particularly after the two World Wars, thanks to Giulio Carlo Argan, Roberto Pane and Cesare Brandi, and it can be defined as critic restoration. The main point is a historical-critical evaluation of the object and a strictly conservative method; all the historical phases are considered significant, taking into account both historical and aesthetic features, and possible re-integrations on art works can be allowed under specific conditions, just without committing an artistic or historical fake.

It is possible to see how all the different approaches from different cultures have actively contributed to create the basis of the existing international guidelines, which have been drafted in the latest years. Witnesses of the past have been definitively considered as a universal cultural heritage, strictly connected to the value of authenticity: this has become the key word for the approach to the antiquities and this has formed the basic principle for one of the most important document about restoration and conservation, the Venice Charter.

### **1.1. Since the Renaissance**

During the Renaissance, especially in Rome, artists, poets and writers began to see special values in historic buildings and their remains, first of all their cultural significance as memorials of the past. Francesco Petrarca was the first humanist to display a sentiment of nostalgia for the past and a profound respect for the ancient greatness of Rome; he visited the city in 1337 and firmly condemned the situation of neglect and destruction of its remains. His new sentimental concept, the so-called “*deploratio Urbis*”, was a sort of preview of the future ideas of Romanticism. Almost a century later, the rediscovery of the Vitruvius’ manuscript “*De Architectura*” in the monastery of Montecassino, thanks to the famous Italian humanist Poggio Bracciolini, focused the attention on the ancient buildings (threatened by the destruction due to the search of raw materials) and on its major problems, as conservation and restoration. The Renaissance has represented a moment of new awareness of the importance of cultural values from the past, of the national significance of these monuments for the modern society and also as testimony of the early phases of Christianity. However, this was not the first instance of re-evaluation of historic structures and their remains, because also in the ancient world many attempts to protect, conserve or restore them were conducted. In the fifth century BC, for example, the Athenians decided not to rebuild the temples destroyed by the Persians, keeping their remains as memorials; otherwise, there were many cases of a greater respect for the original builder than for the material form of the building. Just after the Christianisation of the Roman Empire, in the fourth century, the use of spoils from older monuments in new constructions became common and their exploitation continued throughout the whole Medieval age. Later, the humanists of the fifteenth century

criticized any activity of destruction which did not understand the importance of monuments and ancient works of art: in this context, the Church and the various Popes took the lead of the city, starting to promote many restoration works, who dealt mainly with ancient monuments or buildings which still had a contemporary use, e.g. the Pantheon, the basilicas, the bridges or even the mausoleum of Hadrian. Paul II (1464-1471) was the first pope to take care also of other monuments, as the triumphal arches and the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, and two centuries later, on July 1659, Alexander VII Chigi (1655-67) published an edict referring to the attempts of his predecessors to maintain ancient Roman structures. Furthermore, during the early part of the nineteenth century, a great interest was given to the significance and the value of cultural heritage, due to the development of new artistic theories and concepts and further to the recent losses of works of art, exported abroad. The Papal government, the so-called Camera Apostolica, had designated two departments with special responsibilities in the field of conservation: the Camerlengato, the general administration of Papal States, which was responsible also for the general legislation, inspection and evaluation of ancient monuments; his director, the Camerlengo, could name an Inspector of Fine Arts and a Commissioner of Antiquities. The Treasury instead, under the direction of the Chief Treasurer, had to handle the financial aspects and legislative acts, in addition to the execution of works, as excavation, restoration and maintenance of ancient objects; a subordinate commission, called the Consiglio d'arte, and architect-inspectors were responsible for the projects and supervision of works. The typology of these were decided by the Camerlengato, while the Treasury had to care for the rest, allowing the other office, however, to check that the conceptual basis for the project and the quality in the execution corresponded to their requirements.

Very interesting to remark is that already during the previous century, there was a debate particularly on the position and the role of restorers, because of the Neoclassical context of scientific and technical development and because of the question about the relationship between the liberal and mechanical arts. It was arranged that he had to be a professional and able to adjust to different styles; thus, he had to master special skills related to new working methods and techniques. Finally, in 1745 restoration gained official recognition in Milan, where it was ordered that restoration of public pictures and sculptures should only be permitted under special license.

## **2. DEVELOPMENT OF RESTORATION THEORIES**

### **2.1. The question of conservation in France**

The French population was one of the most alerted to the problem of conservation and restoration of ancient buildings, particularly since around the half of the nineteenth century, when the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte brought into power and established a second empire. Napoleon III presided over France since 1848, taking inspiration for his politics from the Roman empire; his intense desire was to rebuild Paris as Augustus had renovated Rome. Between 1852 and 1870 entire quarters of the city were demolished, also because of the epidemic of cholera; there was a modernization of sanitation, public utilities and transportation, many construction activities were started in order to create new roads and avenues, public buildings, residential areas and parks. But this often meant to destroy also lots of ancient structures, which were not functional anymore for the modern town-planning of Paris. The general inspector of historical monuments in France in 1834-1860, the famous archaeologist, historian and writer Prosper Mérimée, had to fight hard for the sake of antiquities, to defend their conservation and to argue with the other administrations about their proper use if they served for public functions. In 1848 a "Commission des Arts et Édifices Religieux" was established, to organize the activities of diocesan architects; the following year a document was published, based on the report of Mérimée and the French architect Viollet-le-Duc: "Instruction for the conservation, maintenance and the restoration of religious buildings and particularly cathedrals". The content was related to the matter of restoration, its objectives and methods, in addition to many pertinent practical aspects; the maintenance was declared as the best means in order to conserve historical buildings. This document represented a step forward for the clarification of preservative principles: before its publication, the main goal for archaeologists and architects was just the protection of a monument with minimal interventions, but later - thanks also to the development of the archaeological research and a better

knowledge about history of architecture and buildings method -, the purpose was to achieve a complete restoration on the most valuable historical objects. It was the mark for the beginning of a new modern concept of restoration.

### 1.1.1. Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc

Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879) was one of the leading figures in the advancement of restoration theories and practices in France and his methods influenced lots of contemporary and successive architects in all European countries. He practiced in architectural studios and he was an excellent draughtsman; he developed many passions, like archaeology, history, conservation and restoration, besides obviously architecture. He usually proceeded following a very systematic method, based on a thorough analysis of each case: he had to curate restoration projects of lots of renowned buildings, as the Cathedral of Paris, Amiens and Reims, the churches of La Madeleine in Vézelay and of Saint Denis, the fortified old town of Carcassonne and the ramparts of Avignon. He used to take actions first with a cognitive analysis through sketches and drawings of the building, in order to become aware of the proportions, the materials, the construction phases and the role of the elements; then, he prepared the planning studying the different solutions, illustrating them and describing the action modalities. At the beginning, he moved toward a preservative approach to restoration, respecting historic stratification with archaeological and documentary values; later, his aim turned into completing and reinstating the monument in order to give it back its previous appearance. According to him, *«To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or to rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which may never have existed at any given time.»*<sup>2</sup> Every part should had been restored in its own ideal style, with regard not only to the appearance but also to the structure. Since the Antiquity actually, lots of buildings had undergone repairs, restorations and changes in the style of the current time; otherwise few structures, particularly during the Middle Ages, had been completed at one time, consisting often of different types of modifications and additions. Therefore, Viollet-le-Duc evaluated as essential, prior to any work, to carry out a critical survey, to ascertain exactly the age and character of each part. He considered the style as the harmony between the forms, the means and the object: forms and proportions already existed in universe, but different cultures produced different characteristic forms. For this reason, the task of man was to discover these two elements, developing the principles of construction according to the requirements of his cultural context, precisely because the concept of style was independent from the object and it would vary according to the culture. Thus, the unity is the foremost rule of art, because the form of architecture is the unique logical consequence of the structural principles, which depended on building materials, structural necessities and programmes to satisfy.

One of the most important step within the restoration method proposed by Viollet-le-Duc was a critical assessment of historical monuments: if an originally defective element of the building had later been improved in a repair, it was certainly justified to preserve this later modification; on the other hand, if later repairs had only weakened the original structure, it was justified to restore the building back to its original unity. Preservation of later changes and additions could be justified, instead, if these were significant from the point of view of the history of architecture. He gave a great importance to the enhancement of structures, where possible and indispensable, to give them a longer duration; in particular, a special care should be given to the choice of best quality materials. Viollet-le-Duc completely changed the previous current concept of restoration in France: from a total respect and intention to preserve historic monuments with all their changes and historical modifications, avoiding modern additions, presently the main task became to achieve and respect only its architectural unity, just trying to minimize the alterations that a new use might require. He conceived restoration work as a creative and original activity, with the aim to bring monuments back to their ideal form and style: with this concept, Viollet-le-Duc gave birth to the so-called “*stylistic restoration*”.

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<sup>2</sup> Viollet-le-Duc, “*Dictionnaire raisonné de l’architecture française du XI° au XVI° siècle*”, vol. VIII, 1866. (The article on “Restoration” starts with this definition).

## 2.2. England: a romantic approach towards restoration

During the eighteenth century in England, instead, people had strong connections with the sources of classicism; artists and architects were trained in “grand tours” to the Mediterranean area and gentlemen aspired to collect as much as possible classical objects and art works. At the same time, however, the fascination for Gothic was never really extinct: many architects were commissioned by their patrons, under the influence of Romantic tendency, to design mansions and villas or to remodel them in the revived Gothic style. In this context therefore, during the 1840s, a new debate began about the principles of conservation and restoration of historic buildings, especially of mediaeval churches: on one hand, restorers promoted a “faithful restoration”, if necessary reconstructing the original architectural form and emphasizing practical and functional aspect; on the other hand, a group of anti-restorationists declared that each object or structure belonged to its specific historic and cultural context and that it was not possible in any way to recreate it with the same significance in another period. The principal protagonists of this debate were Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-78), the most successful Victorian architect, and John Ruskin (1819-1900), a controversial intellectual and art critic. Scott recommended to preserve all the various styles and irregularities that indicated the evolution and the history of the building, which also could increase the interest and the picturesque character of buildings; certainly, there were often exceptions and, thanks to a critical evaluation, oldest and newest parts of structures had to be evaluated if there were of great or little interest and so if they had to be restored. The approach of Scott was respectful towards the original design, not for the original material nor for the form achieved through history; a good documentation and an archaeological evidence could justify a restoration work, reconstructing what had been lost or damaged. Ruskin instead, as a promoter of the “anti-restoration movement”, asserted that the only possible task was to protect and to conserve the authentic material of the original object, which represented the real cultural heritage. This dispute gradually influenced the common practice of restoration, addressing this towards a more conservative approach; it culminated in 1877 in the foundation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) by William Morris (1834-96), artist and writer, promoter of ideal socialism and of the Arts and Crafts movement.

### 1.2.1. John Ruskin

He firmly took sides against the inventive restoration proposed by Viollet-le-Duc, which was influencing many European countries, and against the English trend towards a Gothic revival, denying any form of restoration. According to him indeed, restoration meant *«the most total destruction which a building can suffer»*, a false description of it. *«It is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture»*<sup>3</sup>, because this was always based on conjectures. This is due to the fact that the proper spirit of a monument was given only by the workman who created it; therefore, it could never be recalled. The spirit of the dead workman cannot be summoned up and so if another spirit, given by another time, operates on the old building, it will then obtain a new building. The mere copying was impossible for Ruskin. He absolutely defended the material truth of the historic architecture, as memorial of the past and a nation’s heritage: consequently, in order to learn anything from the past or to be remembered in the future, men had two essential duties, that are to make the today’s architecture historical and to preserve that of the past ages.

In his most famous book, “The seven lamps of the architecture”<sup>4</sup>, Ruskin made a definite distinction between “architecture” and “building”, which were not considered as the same. Precisely, the building was only *«the actual construction according to the requirements of intended use»*, while the architecture represented *«those*

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<sup>3</sup> Ruskin J., “*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*”, London 1925; “The Lamp of Memory”, XVIII-XIX.

<sup>4</sup> The idea for the title of the Seven Lamps came to Ruskin from the words of his favourite Psalm 119: *«Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path ... Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.»* The Lamps were conceived as the seven fundamental and cardinal laws to be observed and obeyed by any conscientious architect and builder. They were not intended as the only rules to follow, but in Ruskin’s opinion they were the important ones.

*characters of an edifice above and beyond its common use*<sup>5</sup>. It is a concept rather near to what is considered as ornamentation of a building: for the first time, this character had been emphasized in the context of the architectural whole. However, Ruskin understood that good architecture needed a good building and although he liked to distinguish clearly between these two aspects, he considered them together to contribute to one whole. Moreover, he described also the fundamental elements of the art of architecture, which were the quality, the beauty and various values. The quality was due to the action of architects and builders, because they should do their best and sacrifice themselves for the sake of architecture; it was important also selecting locally available materials of the best quality, in order to contribute to an aesthetic enjoyment and durability of structures, but both building materials and working methods had to appear honestly what they actually were, no fakes. Ruskin, moreover, strongly promoted the traditional workmanship against industrial methods of production, because in his opinion industrialization would alienate man from enjoying his work and this would result empty and lifeless. Another essential element in Ruskin's theories was the beauty, which for him was in God<sup>6</sup> and could be reflected in nature and art. It was divided in "typical" beauty, representing forms and qualities of forms, and "vital" beauty, concerned with expression, happiness and energy of life. Architectural forms could be more beautiful so far as they derived from nature, because man was not able to produce beauty by himself; but also the age in itself could contribute to beauty. One of the values typical of the architecture, indeed, was the picturesque one, a combination of beauty and sublime, since Ruskin believed that the marks of ageing on the materials were able to give an attractive and fascinating character to the monuments. Equally significant was the historical value, because of the significance for the history of our society and its memory. Architecture, as poetry, was one of the conquerors of time and it was divided into five categories, according to its social function: devotional, memorial, civil, military and domestic. Lastly, Ruskin asserted that emotional values also were an essential component of architecture, because he considered a house as a personification of life, affections and memories of the owner: so his descendants had to take care of it, protect it and conserve it. Future generations could not be deprived of any benefits, as a fundamental condition of men is to rely on the past, and it could be really the architecture, with its relative permanence, to create continuity through various transitional events and to contribute to the nation's identity.

Therefore, it is possible to see how the theories professed from Ruskin showed an utter romantic approach towards the safeguard of monuments, influenced by the cultural context of that time in England: he absolutely trusted more the issue of conservation rather than the restoration one. In June 1845, he even claimed: *«Let them take the greatest possible care of all they have got, and when care will preserve it no longer, let it perish inch by inch, rather than retouch it.»*<sup>7</sup> This did not mean however that he didn't want to face the need of repair; his aim was just to avoid "necessity of restoration", often given as an excuse by the time, focusing the attention on the importance of "maintenance" and "care".

### **2.3. Italy**

At the same time, the context in Italy was altogether different: in spite of the long history concerning the protection of antiquities, the situation was extremely variable in the various regions, until the event of Italy's unification and a unitary legislation. Moreover, although Italians were in contact with many countries of Central Europe and England, thanks to numerous cultural tourists, it took relatively long before deeper interest was shown in the protection and conservation also of mediaeval or later buildings. The nineteenth-

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<sup>5</sup> Ruskin J., *"The Seven Lamps of Architecture"*, London 1925; "The Lamp of Sacrifice", 16.

<sup>6</sup> The basic factor in Ruskin's conceptions and especially in his writings about art, was God. The basic text for him, since his childhood, was the Bible and he based all his thoughts and aesthetic theories on this Holy book, but also on studies of classical authors. Thus, all through his life, Ruskin maintained a deep admiration and love for nature, where he found perfect beauty and the presence of God.

<sup>7</sup> Ruskin, from a letter to his father (June 1845)



century guidelines<sup>8</sup> about restoration provided that the work should be based on an accurate preliminary survey on the building and its following additions and modifications, critically evaluating all the parts, to established if they were of historical or artistic importance and, thus, if they had to be conserved or removed. The aim actually was to suppress the difference between the original “normal state” of monuments and their “actual state” at present. Restoration of lost or damaged features was accepted only if a clear evidence of the original form existed or if justified by the need of structural stability; however, reconstructions had to be kept to the minimum, giving the main attention to the conservation of the original. Because of the relative delay compared with the remnant of Europe, Italy was able to acquire from the experiences of other countries, which had preceded it. As a result, different attitudes were introduced more or less at the same time, causing a continuous debate on these questions. Consequently, the official adopted procedures, which reflected the current French approach, did not have so much impact and various restoration theories and methods continued to coexist and develop.

### 2.3.1. Boito and the “philological restoration”

Camillo Boito (1836-1914), an architect of the Italian Eclectism and professor of architecture, was one of the main protagonists during the elaboration of guiding principles for restoration activities in Italy. In 1879, he had presented a paper on the restoration of ancient monuments during a congress of engineers and architects, contributing to the official document circulated in 1882; not completely satisfied, however, he presented a new paper to the Third Congress of Engineers and Architects, held in Rome the following year: he had summarized his recommendations in seven points, thus forming the first Italian Charter of Conservation. Developing later his theories, Boito promoted a philological concept of restoration, which could represent a middle ground among the English experience and the French one: he rejected the results of Ruskin’s “nonintervention”, but at the same time he considered Viollet-le-Duc as the great falsifier. Boito maybe took a simplified view of Ruskin’s theory, not admitting that he, although critical about the current restoration method in Italy, had accepted the necessity of consolidating the various structures, in a contemporary manner actually recommended by Boito himself. On the other hand, he was equally critical about the theory of Viollet-le-Duc: in his opinion, it was impossible to put oneself in the place of the original architect trying to guess what this would have done having the opportunity to complete the structure. It was a procedure full of risks and comparable to free invention, as «*a lie, a falsification of the antique, a trap for posterity*»<sup>9</sup>. According to him, monuments must be maintained and conserved, as they were documents of the history of many generations of people, respecting all successive alterations and additions, which were to be considered equally valuable as historic document. His approach was conservative, in order to consolidate and safeguard monuments; if restoration had necessarily to involve the addition of modern parts, there should be a clear distinction among the old and the new ones: these should be made clearly in the contemporary style of architecture, but in such a way that they would not contrast too much with the original. He considered appropriate using different materials, dating them or using simplified geometrical forms; all works had to be well documented and photographed, indicating the date of the conservation work on the monument.

Boito insisted that one had to do «*everything possible, and impossible, in order to maintain the old artistic and picturesque aspect of the monument*»<sup>10</sup> and that any falsifications should be out of the question. He also divided architecture into three categories according to its age: the antique architecture, of archaeological importance, must be subject to an archaeological restoration; in the event of a picturesque appearance of a mediaeval building, one would speak of pictorial restoration; lastly, an architectural restoration was suitable for modern constructions, because of their architectural beauty. Concerning monuments of Antiquity, all

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<sup>8</sup> In 1872 the Ministry of Education established the first General Directorate, ‘*Direzione generale degli scavi e musei*’, transformed in 1881 as ‘*Direzione generale delle antichità e belle arti*’. In 1882 the General Directorate prepared and circulated provisional guidelines for the restoration of historic buildings and the document was signed by the General Director, Giuseppe Fiorelli, a famous Italian archaeologist who had been working in the excavation of Pompeii.

<sup>9</sup> Boito C., “*I Restauratori*”, Turin Exhibition Conference, 7 June 1884; p.31

<sup>10</sup> Boito C., *ibid.*, p.33

their parts were very significant and even the most modest remains could become essential for the study: excavations had to be carried out with the utmost care and restoration should aimed to preserve what remained of the original monument, distinguishing any necessary support or reinforcement from the antique. Dealing with more recent structures, he accepted that they could need repair and consolidation and that sometimes it could mean even to replace some original elements, trying however, especially in mediaeval buildings, to keep their picturesque appearance. Regarding the latest architecture instead, it was easier to imitate the original forms and thus replace decayed elements where necessary: Boito recommended caution in reconstructions, accepting them exceptionally when there were documentary evidences to justify them. To conclude, he saw restoration as a way to preserve the remains, without altering the overall appearance of buildings; his purpose was the authenticity of monuments, therefore reconstructions could be allowed just in the event of well-documented lost parts and demolitions of successive additions could be accepted only if they appeared disturbing and lacking any historical and artistic value. These, indeed, were the assessment criteria for the preliminary analysis on monuments, in order to conserve or restore them: however, in case of incompatibility between them, the second one should prevail on the other one.

### 2.3.2. Luca Beltrami and Gustavo Giovannoni

Later in Italy, other two important conservation theories were developed after the Boito's one. His pupil Luca Beltrami (1854-1933) promoted a historical approach to restoration, basically in line with the French stylistic one: he had studied and worked in Paris for about three years, and so his philosophy - of course - was influenced by the French experience, but with an essential difference. In his opinion, restoration should be based on concrete data intrinsic to the monument itself, absolutely not on the imagination of the architect, even though he used to distinguish between the different cases according to the needs of the ancient building. An archaeological-historical research, studies of archive documents and analysis of other analogous structures should be the basis of any restoration work on buildings: only in this way it could involve also necessary modern additions and integrations.

In the meantime, Gustavo Giovannoni (1873-1947) conceived the idea of a scientific restoration, firmly disapproving the theory of Viollet-le-Duc as antiscientific: he aimed to preserve the authenticity of structures, respecting the whole artistic life of the monument and so all its significant phases; any modern additions, which had to be based only on absolutely sure data, should be dated. He had studied engineering and architecture, as well as being a planner and architectural historian; therefore, he analyzed very well the various possible cases of architectural interventions, dividing restoration activities into four different types: "by consolidation", "by recomposition" (*anastylosis*), "through liberation" and "through completion or renovation". He agreed with his master Boito however that the best restorations are those where it seems that nothing has been done and in many cases he accepted that this could be achieved using modern methods and technology, underlining the importance of notions as maintenance, repair and consolidation. He also evolved the modern Boito's approach to conservation, besides considering the architectural aspects, the use, the historic context and the environment of buildings and focusing - for the first time in history - on the minor architecture. For the environment of the building he recommended, «*even if this was not the original one, but a continuation of its relationships in masses and colours, the same cures and the same criteria as for the intrinsic conditions*»<sup>11</sup>: these same principles were presented by Giovannoni at the International Congress in Athens in 1931, contributing to the formulation of the Athens Charter.

## 3. THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY: AN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Finally, the historical event of the twentieth century marked a further substantial evolution in the history of the architectural restoration: since the end of the previous century, regular meetings had been annually organized to discuss about problems of conservation and repair of ancient monuments. Moreover, during the

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<sup>11</sup> Giovannoni, G., "Questioni di Architettura nella storia e nella vita: edilizia, estetica architettonica, restauri, ambiente dei monumenti"; Roma, Biblioteca d'arte, 1929

congress held in Madrid in 1904, for the first time an international recommendation concerning “The Preservation and Restoration of Architectural Monuments” was approved, recognizing the principles of stylistic restoration and a distinction among “dead” and “living” monuments. More serious problems of reconstruction however sprang up after devastations left by the I World War, provoking a worldwide debate, which gradually moved into three different positions. Somebody desired to keep the ruins as memorials of the destroyed past; others proposed a new layout for the damaged cities, after the recent developments in town-planning; lastly, some others aspired to reestablish cities, rebuilding them exactly as they had been before the war, because of their symbolic value. At the end, the third approach was the most advanced in Europe. Some years later, in the wake of the recent sad experiences, the first International Restoration Charter was approved during the congress of Athens in 1931 (the so-called Athens Charter): it showed a general tendency to foster the authenticity of monuments and its conservation, respecting any historical and artistic work of the past and giving also a great attention towards the new purpose of buildings; possibility of a reinstatement using original fragments (technically, “*anastylosis*”) was allowed, but just making a clear distinction in case of new materials used. This Charter was extremely influential at that time, because it marked an end of a phase in the development of conservation concepts, abandoning the stylistic restoration method to encourage the conservation of authenticity of historical monuments and works of art, providing guidelines for their respectful restoration.

Unfortunately, the II World War sharply interrupted every international activity addressed to the safeguard of monuments; in that moment, restoration works aimed just to reinstate and reconstruct, totally or in part, damaged or destroyed buildings and cities, in order to erase psychological consequences of the war. It was allowed to proceed to the reestablishment of the artistic character of historic buildings, even if this often meant reconstruction of the lost artistic decorations. A growing attention was given to historic towns and their urban environment; meanwhile, the scientific restoration method collapsed, because it required too long periods and high costs. A critic approach to the restoration was favoured, in which the artistic value became the main object of attention, identifying it with a critical judgment. Later however, after these years of post-war reconstruction, numerous questions and viewpoints about conservation and restoration came around again: the cultural progress was becoming unable to adapt to the simultaneous increasing evolution of techniques and so it was necessary a whole reassessment of all the principles declared by the Athens Charter. Therefore, in 1964 another document was ratified: the “International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites”, drafted in Venice during the Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments. The following year it has been adopted from ICOMOS – the newborn International Council on Monuments and Sites – as the official universal code for the safeguard of cultural heritage. It represented a fundamental step forward in preservative field: it has conceived a new concept of “historic monument”, which involved not only the individual building, but “*also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilisation, a significant development or an historic event*”<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, it has focused the attention on the importance of a permanent maintenance and a socially useful purpose of buildings, the documentation before and after repair works, the protection of the setting and the use of modern techniques, respecting all the historical contributions and refusing any replacement of missing parts.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Even though the Venice Charter can be considered as a very modern and innovative, it has not managed however to conclude the everlasting debate about the issue about the most appropriate restoration approach. Actually, this charter is not based on a flawless theory, because it has many deficiencies (e.g. no mention about historic towns; otherwise no regard to the economic, social and cultural differences among countries, which could lead to a situation of inapplicability of its principles) and it has not succeeded to face all the problems of a modern and constantly changing society: the increased mobility, the mass tourism and its impact on historic monuments and sites, the industrial development on large scale and sometimes an

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<sup>12</sup> Art. 1 from “International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites” (The Venice Charter): II International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice, 1964. Adopted by ICOMOS in 1965.

increasing political antagonism toward conservation, its issues and costs. So far, many additional charters have been mapped out to compensate for the lacks within the Venice Charter and many others probably will be inevitably created forth. But this is just the result of the continual technological improvement and the new emerging concepts from different and unstable historical contexts, within a constantly changing world. Concluding, for all these reasons, we are going to see that theories and methods concerning restoration of ancient monuments will always continue to change and develop, in order to try – in the best way as possible maybe – to meet the requirements of the different countries and cultures, simply because they are the outcome of the age which has produced them.

## Acknowledgment

I would really like to show my sincere gratitude to Prof. Erwin Emmerling and Dr. Roberta Fonti (Technische Universität München; Fakultät für Architektur, Lehrstuhl für Restaurierung, Kunsttechnologie und Konservierungswissenschaft) for letting me to participate to the Summer School «Dialogue on Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis» (Naples, 19-29 September). I am also immensely grateful to the rest of the Organizing Committee: Dr. Sara Saba and Dr. Anna Anguissola. They gave me the golden opportunity first of all to increase considerably my personal knowledge, thanks to many lessons, guided visits and lectures with them and with qualified experts in the field; to work also on a topic (restoration) which I had never professionally dealt with before; finally, but not less important, they gave me the wonderful chance to meet really fantastic people of different countries, to immerse myself in their cultures and to widen my experience. Thank you.

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## Irene Sartori

*“History and Theory of Restoration: from Ruskin to Camillo Boito ( without neglecting Viollet-Le-Duc)”*

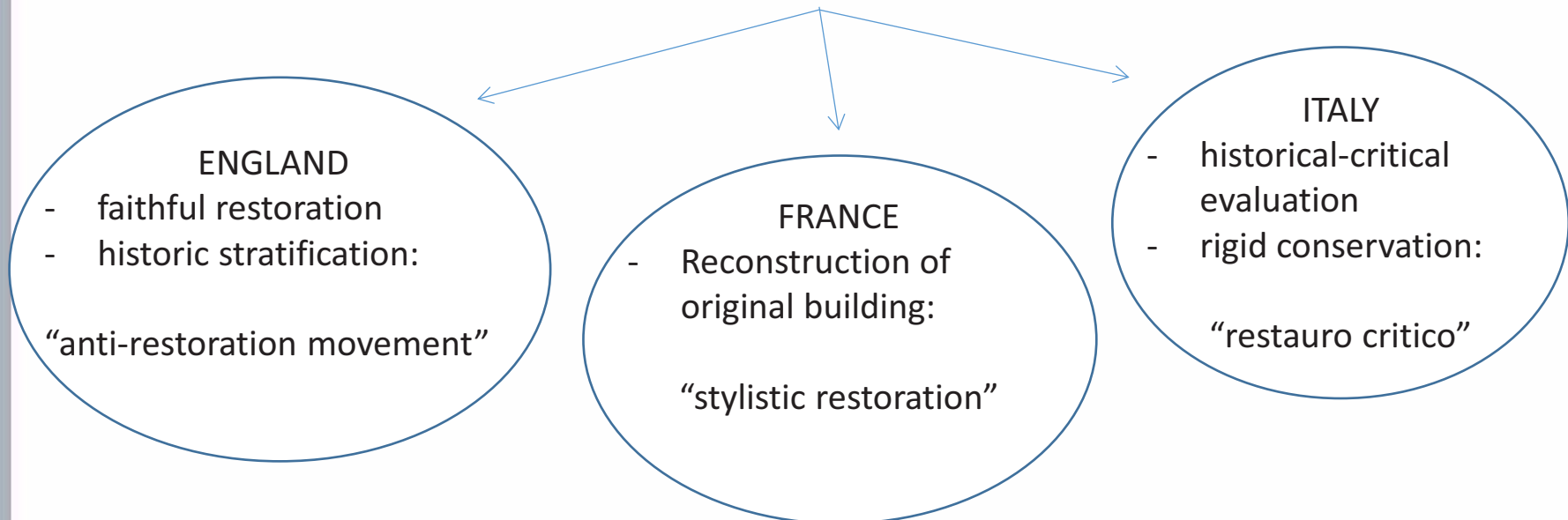


28 Sept. 2016

*Hotel Principe Napolit'Amo, Naples*

# The approach to the ancient monuments and their value

1. Traditional approach →
  - significance of structures with use values
  - restoration to keep intact the function
2. Romantic restoration →
  - nostalgic remains of the past
  - antiquities as models
  - new actuality in the contemporary society
3. Authenticity →
  - conservation and re-evaluation
  - historic stratification and original materials
  - no falsification



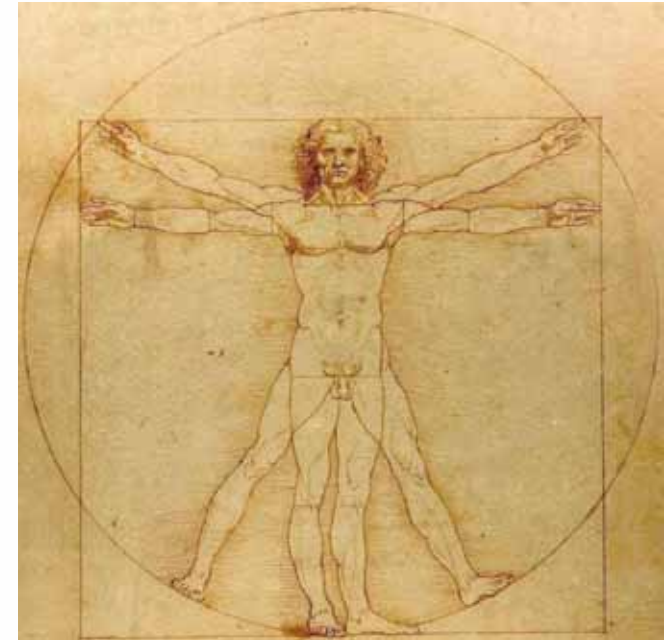


# The Renaissance and the following centuries in Rome

- Memorial values and nostalgia for the past
- Great attention to architecture
- A new significance in the modern age
- Restorations on buildings with a current use



*A sketch for the restoration project of Pantheon, Gian Lorenzo Bernini (XVII cent.)*



*«Homo Vitruvianus», Leonardo da Vinci (1490 ca)*

Apostolic Chamber

Camerlengato

Treasury

- general legislation
- inspection
- evaluation

- financial aspects
- legislative acts
- execution of works

# Restoration in France: Eugène Viollet-le-Duc

Re-urbanization of Paris under Napoleon III:

- Conflict for the safeguard of monuments
- *“Instruction for the conservation, maintenance and restoration of religious buildings and particularly cathedrals” (1849)*

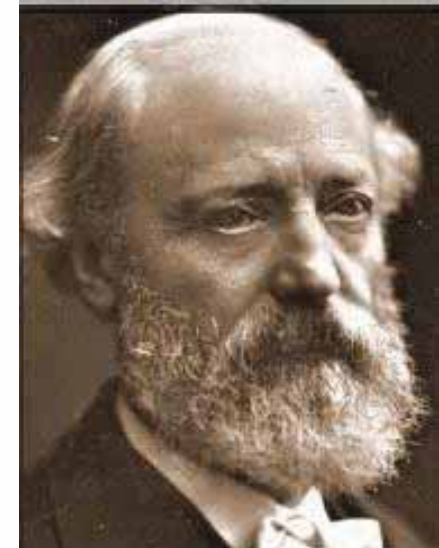
## The french architect (1814-1879)

- Cognitive analysis through sketches
- Planning : study of solutions, illustrations, description of modalities
- Restitution of static capability and duration

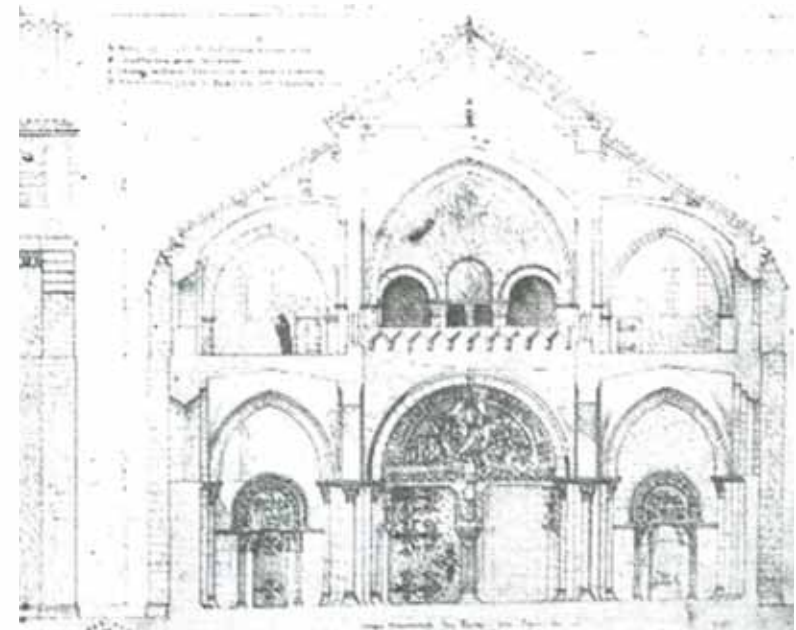


To replenish and reinstate in order to give back the original appearance

*«La Madeleine» in Vézelay, a sketch of the cross section by V.L.D before the restoration (1840-61)*



*Portrait of Viollet le Duc by Felix Nadar*

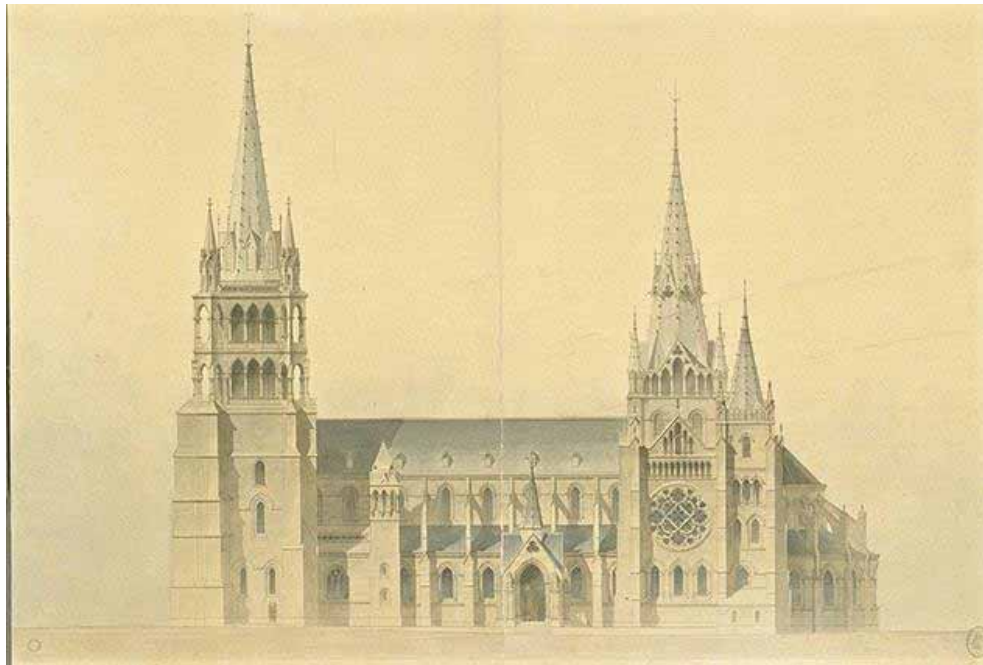




## RESTORATION

«To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or to rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which may never have existed at any given time».

(Viollet-le-Duc, "Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI° au XVI° siècle", vol. VIII, 1866)



The Cathedral in Lausanne, Switzerland, one of Viollet-le-Duc's last 'restorations' (the reconstruction involved substantial demolition work)

## STYLE

- forms
- means
- object

- logical consequence of the structural principles
- architectural unity

## STYLISTIC RESTORATION

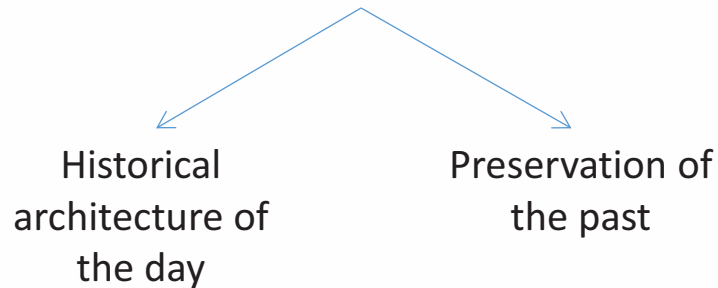


- Preservation through a new use
- Creative architecture
- Reestablishment of the original structural project

# John Ruskin and the «anti-restoration movement»

(1819-1900)

- «Restoration means the most total destruction of a building»
- «It is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything»
- Restoration is always based on conjectures
- material truth of historic architecture



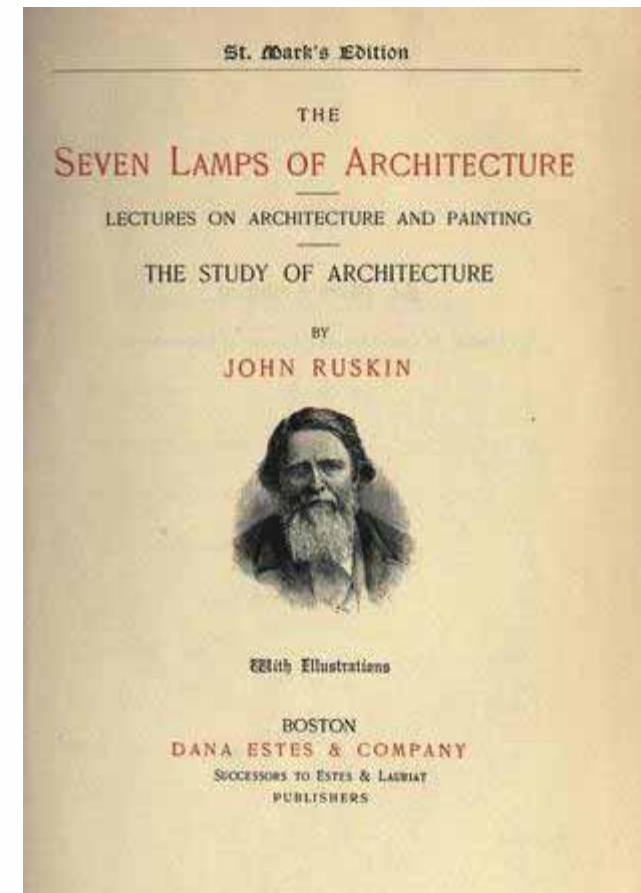
## Building

*“the actual construction according to the requirements of intended use”*

≠

## Architecture

*“characters above and beyond its common use”*



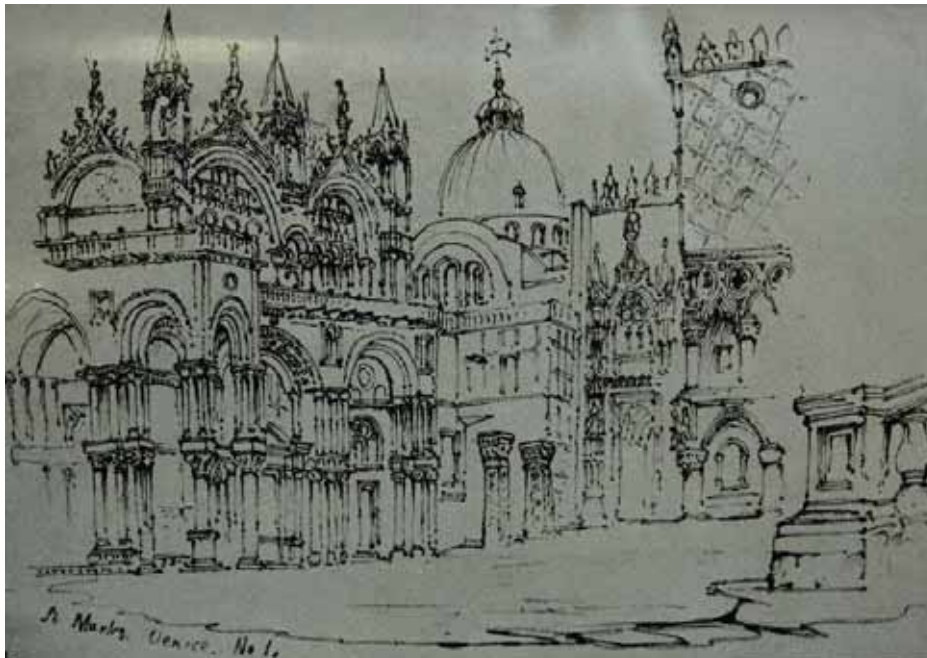
J. Ruskin, «The Seven Lamps of Architecture»  
(London, 1849)

## QUALITY OF THE ARCHITECTURE

- sacrifice of architect and builder
- locally available materials

## BEAUTY

- Perfect in God, as a reflection in nature and art
- architectural forms should be derived from nature



Piazza and Basilica of St. Mark's, Venice; drawing by Ruskin (1835)

## PICTURESQUE VALUES

- beauty and sublime
- marks of ageing

## HISTORICAL VALUES

- history and memory of society
- conquest of the time

## EMOTIONAL VALUES

- house as a personification
- Not to deprive future generations



## **ROMANTIC RESTORATION**

*“Let them take the greatest possible care of all they have got, & when care will preserve it no longer, let it perish inch by inch, rather than retouch it.”*

*(J. Ruskin, from a letter to his father, June 1845)*

# Restoration in Italy

- Accurate survey on the building and its modifications
- Critic evaluation of all the parts
- No difference between «normal state» and «actual state»

## ➤ Camillo Boito and the «philological restoration»

- Conservative approach to consolidate and safeguard monuments
- Architectural monuments as essential documents of all the historic facets
- Understandable distinction of new parts restored



Camillo Boito (1836-1914)

- Disapproval of the previous main approaches:
  - Rejecting the Ruskin's "nonintervention"
  - Denying the theory of Viollet-le-Duc, as falsifier



*"Doing everything possible, and impossible, in order to maintain the old artistic and picturesque aspect of the monument"*

*(Camillo Boito, "I restauratori", 33, Conference at Turin Exhibition, 7 June 1884)*



## Three categories of the architecture:

**Antique**  
archaeological importance



archaeological restoration

**Mediaeval**  
picturesque appearance



pictorial restoration

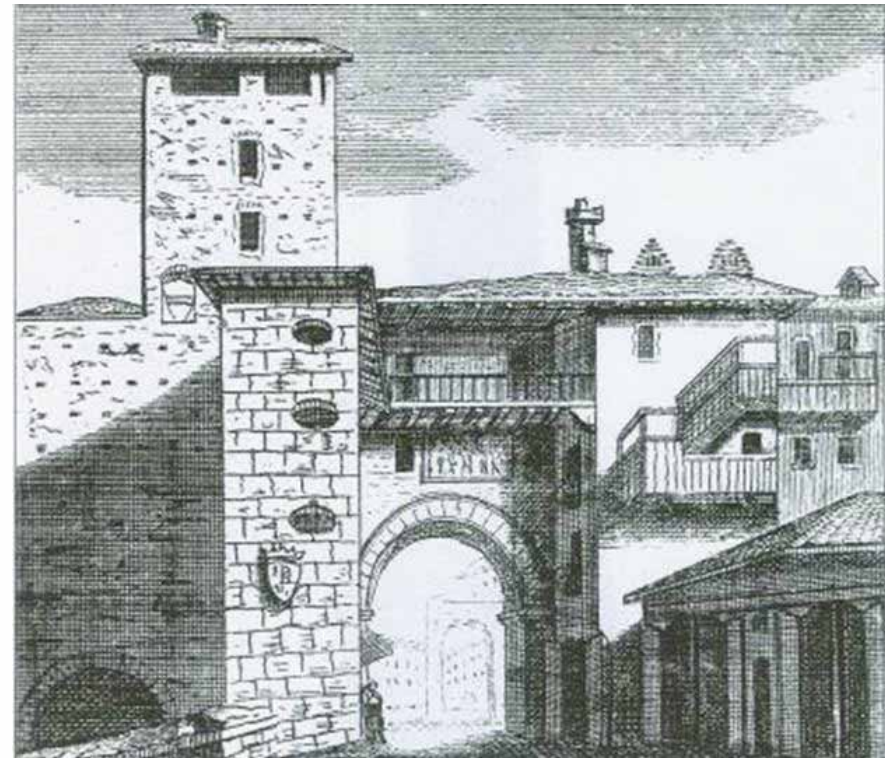
**Modern**  
architectural beauty



architectural restoration

- Preservation of the remains
- No alteration of the overall appearance
- Safeguard of the authenticity
- Importance of historic and artistic values

*Porta Ticinese in a picture  
of the XVIII c., later restored  
by C. Boito (1861-65)*



- **“HISTORICISTIC ECLECTICISM”** = recovery of the architectonic model of monuments to reach a balance between architectural coherence and legibility of the additions.

## ➤ Luca Beltrami: the «historic restoration»

- Similar to the stylistic restoration
  - Restoration based on concrete data of the monument itself
  - Archaeological and historical research, studies of documents and other analogous structures
  - Documentation as the basis of any restoration
  - Potential additions and integrations
- 

## ➤ Gustavo Giovannoni: the «scientific restoration»

- Critique of Viollet-le-Duc for his “anti-scientific theory” of restoration
- Preservation of the authenticity of structures
- Attention to architectural aspects, historic context and environment, use of buildings and to the significance of the ‘minor architecture’
- 4 categories of restoration activities: by consolidation, by recomposition (*anastylosis*), through liberation and through completion/renovation

# The 20° century: an international development

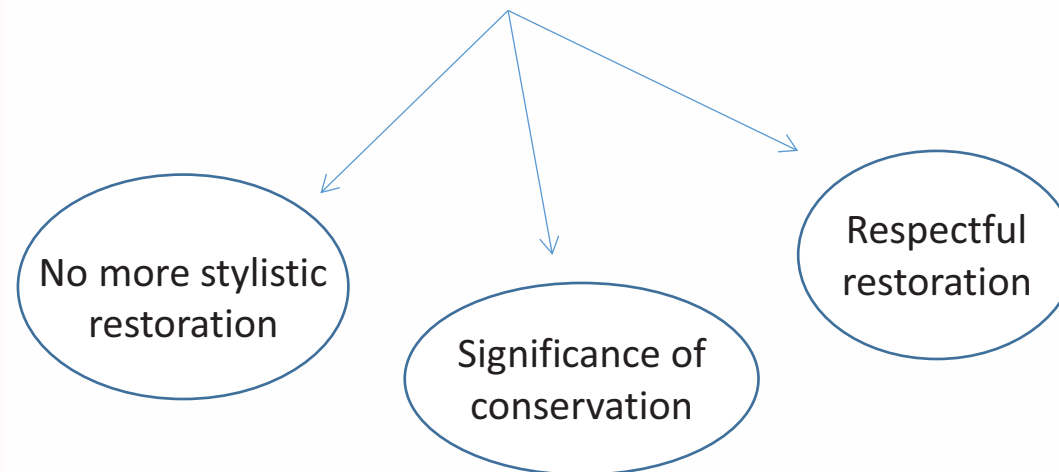
Regular annual meetings about restoration and conservation of historic monuments

- Congress of Madrid, 1904 → principles of stylistic restoration and division between dead and living monuments

Reconstruction after the I World War:

1. Ruins as a memorial
2. New city lay-out
3. Exact reestablishment of cities

- 1931: the **Athens Charter**
  - Conservation of authenticity of historic monuments
  - Respect for any historic and artistic work of the past
  - *Anastylosis*
  - Possibility to distinguish the 'new'

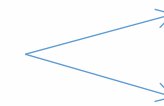


*A church damaged during the I World War ;  
S. Andrea sull'Isonzo, Italy*

## II World War:

- Reinstatement of the artistic characters of buildings
- Growing attention to historic towns and urban environment
- Crisis of the scientific method

➤ CRITIC RESTORATION → prevalence of the artistic value



1. Critic judgement
2. Release of figurative elements



*The Ruins of St. Michael's Cathedral in Coventry, England (1945)*

The «Venice Charter»  
1964

- new concept of historic monument
- permanent maintenance, socially useful purpose, protection of the setting, use of modern technique
- respect for any historical period
- replacements of missing parts



# The latest years



*Recent restoration works on Colosseum  
(from Corriere della Sera, 14 July 2014)*

- Many deficiencies within the Venice Charter
- New problems of the modern and changing society:
  - increased mobility of society
  - mass tourism and its impact
  - industrial development
  - political antagonism
- Many additional charters
- Continual technological improvement
- Different historical contexts

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