

Expanding the Concept of the Monument? ¹

By Willibald Sauerländer

At the last Documenta, a very peculiar type of exposition was on show: accumulations of minute objects – in one case countless tiny pellets – with which artists attempted to reconstruct their pasts. There were accompanying comments, which read for example as follows: “I tried to retain moments of my life by conserving them in metal tins, so that, when opened, one part or another of my existence could be found unchanged in the interior. However, I soon ascertained that too many elements of every moment characterise our lives, so that what remained in my boxes was merely an unimportant part of it”¹. One is greatly tempted to dismiss such “individual mythologies”² as mere expressions of a narcissism exaggerated into neuroticism. However, a signal term soon appeared in reviews, one that hinted at completely different correlations: “securing of evidence” (Spurensicherung).³ Confronted with an exterior world in which memories are erased more and more, the yearning for memory is pushed back into an abstruse privacy; it degenerates to introverted fetishism, to a mad gesture of personal affirmation in an environment that has been stripped of identity. We all know what the architectural reality of this environment looks like. It is the technocratically planned and managed city, which has no more connotations, but only knows functions and hence is literally without monuments, or is even utterly incapable of monuments. The flight into individual mythologies is a phenomenon that is complementary to our cities, cities that are becoming inhospitable and devoid of signs.

Thus, in the first instance, we approached the topic in question here from a surprising, perhaps irritating point of departure, indeed we immediately unsettled and questioned it: “Expanding the concept of the monument”. I admit that the title of this lecture at first nonplussed and also terrified me. Surely, there can be no lack of clarity regarding what is meant. With the increasing significance of conservation protection for historic ensembles, which is not completely new; with the changed positive attitude towards phases and variations of historic architecture of the previous century, and last but not least with the consideration of previously ignored or despised categories of monuments – for example industrial installations and transportation facilities, simple residential developments and tenements – the circle of objects considered worthy of protection twenty years ago has been expanded in a way that was hardly foreseeable for most of us. To this extent, the topic assigned to me is by all means an evident and clearly tangible issue.

What I find questionable is whether it is correct to describe these processes as mere “expansion”. One would thereby allege that the motivations for conservation protection have remained unchanged in spite of historical change, and that with the quantitative advance of historical awareness it merely follows that the results of ever more eras and ever changing needs would be accepted as worthy of protection: thus since approximately the time of Leo X it has been antiquity that counts, since the Boisserée brothers and Victor Hugo it has also been the Middle Ages, since Garnier and Gurlitt the Baroque, and now most recently it is the 19th century, at first only churches and palaces, but later also city gates and patrician houses and now furthermore factories and workers’ estates. Let us be clear: the viewpoint is in no way completely false and for the practice of monuments conservation these shifts may indeed be thus represented. However, if one thinks consistently in this direction, one quickly reaches an endpoint that has something of the absurdity of “science fiction”. For one would have to predict that at some point in this quantitative advance in historical awareness, everything would become a monument – also the non-architecture that is currently

¹ The text of the lecture delivered on June 20, 1975 before the Union of Regional Conservationists of the Federal Republic of Germany in Goslar was left unchanged. The footnotes are limited to the sources which were easily available to the author in the form of books, essays and text editions.

being slung at us in cities and landscapes. The old saying, “Veritas filia temporis” would then be trivialised to suggest that time eventually makes everything seem to be a monument⁴. Entire countries would ultimately have to be put under protection and at some point those who govern would declare an era of total monumentalism and every change to what exists would be penalised as vandalism.

Naturally I am exaggerating. I do this in order to invite reflection on whether we are currently dealing more with a qualitative transformation, disruption and endangerment of an outdated notion of the monument, or with an expansion that can be understood purely quantitatively. Are we not confronted today with the confusing question: What is actually happening when a populace relinquishes traditional concepts of history, culture and customs with growing speed, but in the same breath acts like the artist evoked at the beginning, fearfully conserving relicts of his private biography in tiny little boxes? The call to preserve what has been handed down has never been as loud as it is now, and it refers not only to traditional monuments, but also and in a much more vital and comprehensive way to the entire received environment and its store of orientation points, signs, and memories. Hence we find ourselves in a schizophrenic situation in which the “farewell to history”⁵ and the updating of conservation emerge as simultaneous phenomena. The problems that become apparent here are not so much addressed by the phrase “expansion of the concept of the monument” as they are obscured by it. One could more rightly support the hypothesis that the traditional notion of monuments has long since been destroyed by the changes described, even if we art historians still refer to it and – *faute de mieux* – use it in the work of preserving and inventorying. There can be no doubt that the horror that has gripped people in view of the increasing desolation of cities and the fear of an environment in which large tracts of landscape are transformed into a planned desert, have been a more effective and important propulsive force for monuments conservation in the last ten years than have any new historiographical insights. It seems to me that precisely here lies the decisive and fundamental difference between our situation and that of the 19th and early 20th century, when it was still possible to link the concept of monuments to history as it was understood then, and to art as it was absolutized at the time. This claim is certainly also a simplification. If at all, it can only be relativized by turning now, in a necessarily aphoristic way, to the history of the concept of the monument.

„*Omnia monumenta dicuntur, quae faciunt alicuius rei recordationem*”, it says in a late antique commentary to Cicero⁶. The Roman use of the word *monumentum*, with the root “*monere*”, remind, admonish – and one could also point to the Greek “*mnema*”, which is only the neuter modification of “*mneme*”, memory – evokes the original layers of our term, which were overlaid, moderated and partly forgotten through later developments, but continue to have a latent effect to this day. In its original meaning, “*monumentum*” belongs to the elemental field of tension between death and impermanence on the one hand, and the need for perpetuation, survival, everlasting remembrance on the other. The graves on the Via Appia could simply be called “*monumenta majorum*”⁷. The remains of the battered walls that Aeneas glimpses in the Aeneid are shown to him with the words “*reliquias veterumque vides monumenta virorum*”⁸. History books that are meant to annul time and forgetting through capture in writing are considered “*monumenta rerum gestarum*”⁹. The poet who wishes his poems to resound for centuries describes his ambition with metaphorical catchphrase “*monumentum aere perennius*”, and then expresses the vain hope that “*non omnis moriar multaque pars mei vitabit libitinam*”¹⁰. Certainly, we are dealing with an empty literary phrase and topical dilution here, but behind the Horatian set phrase, something of the magical original interpretation of the monument shines through – as a stone or a piece of writing, it is a mark against death and impermanence, an address to descendants; it is the materialized safeguarding of institutions, customs and rights. The testaments reach way back, one need only think of the famous inscriptions, Egyptian and Assyrian, that are

preserved for us today and that were intended to serve the continuation and immortalization of the sovereign's glory¹¹. This original meaning of monument, "monumentum", survived completely intact until late into the modern age. The Latin-German dictionary by Frisius from the year 1574, for example, does not yet include the word "monument", however it lists the thing under "Dachtnusz" and defines a "dachtnusz" as "any kind of commemorative sign which admonishes us, such as graves, pictures, books"¹². The first universal German lexicon, the Zedler of 1734, defines it as follows: "Monument ... is the name for memorials and cenotaphs ... [It denotes] all such things and buildings, through which one attempts to keep the fame and name of a deceased person, as well as his most notable merits and deeds, in good memory for later descendants". As examples, the following are listed: "magnificent graves, inscriptions, statues, pictures, temples, triumphal arches and other sorts of buildings, similarly odes and epic poems, all kinds of collected historical communications, yearbooks and diaries and other written documents, as well as all kinds of books and papers". The list ends with: "In a word, everything that has been written and built for the sake of honour and everlasting remembrance"¹³. This is the old idea of "monumentem acre perennius", still intact. There is not even the shimmer of that new meaning which the 19th century added to the old concept of "monumentum" in the form of the peculiar term "art monument" (Kunstdenkmal). Zedler's definition of "monumentum" is extraordinarily personalized and refers specifically to the immortalization of an individual. To date this original meaning has not been completely absorbed into the broader meaning of "monumentum" as a sign under which groups and castes, cities and nations attempt to secure their ancestors and their histories, their continuity and their posthumous fame; indeed it must be seen as a basic pattern of socialization in general. It has also repeatedly experienced atavistic renaissances. In recent history, the megalomaniac building practice of totalitarian states has invoked the topos of the secular perennitas of the monumentum. This original meaning has also flowed into the concept of the monument in modern conservation, often forming one of its strongest emotional and ideological driving forces, and perhaps it is even characteristic of the long and not always satisfying discussion about a scientific monument concept, with its many difficulties and inconsistencies, that this old, powerful notion of monumentum and the younger idea of the art monument rooted in subjectivity, could never be completely amalgamated, but could also only be cleanly separated using rather doctrinaire abstractions.

The extent to which this original meaning of "monumentum" is permeated by ideological aspirations and by an efficacy that is almost mythical in its power, becomes most clear where the monument falls victim to decay through time or through destruction by a malicious act. For centuries the decayed monumentum has been symbolic of the finite impermanence of all human greatness and all earthly fame. As is well known, for a long time this was one of the leitmotifs of post-antique poetry: "Passan vostre grandezze e vostre pompe, passan le signorie; passano i regni, / Ogni cosa mortal tempo interrompe", as Petrarch is heard to have said upon seeing the ruins of antique Rome¹⁴. However, the emotional potency originally possessed by the "monumentum" speaks much more powerfully through the processes that lead to the downfall of monuments. The Roman "damnatio memoriae" also included the eradication of all visible and material signs of memory. Names on inscriptions and coins were scratched out, statues toppled. In 1950, when Berlin's Stadtschloss was blown up, we saw that when driven by ideological hatred, such "damnatio memoriae" can tear down entire palaces. "The symbol of the complete decay of that feudalistic and imperialistic power which once erected it" – the formulation of the specially-appointed scientific authority of the time – was razed, but yet it remained under the spell of the original meaning of monumentum, since

the earlier Portal IV of the royal palace was immediately built into the new republic's Privy Council Building – from then on it was known as the Karl Liebknecht Portal, a memorial and founding monument of the establishment of the first socialist republic, and one still in the sense of the old “*Omnia monumenta dicuntur quae faciunt alicuius rei recordationem*”¹⁷. This case exemplifies the kinds of ideological tensions to which the monumentum was subject for such a long time, the way in which it is taken literally. And it is quite thought-provoking to the historian today to re-read Ernst Gall's courageous protest of November 1950 in this connection. One is alarmed when one recognizes how powerless and without response the invocation of the other notion of monument, that of an art monument worthy of protection, remained in confrontation with this ideological “*damnatio memoriae*” at the time. Full of noble intentions, yet with fatal aesthetic pathos, it appealed to “the secret life of structured form, which, emanating creative power, is continually reborn in transmuted form”¹⁸. The printer's ink of these sentences was not yet dry when the explosive charges in Berlin were ignited. I would consider it a fundamental error to neutralize this case by declaring it singular. The only thing that is singular about it is that it was so spectacular and that the opposing positions confronted each other so openly and starkly. If one sets aside these distinguishing features, then the entire complex of problems associated with the concept of monument that has emerged under the aegis of art history since the 19th century, its greatness, its dignity, is revealed; but also – and above all – its limitations and contradictions. We will now devote our attention to it.

As a point of departure, let us employ a phrase by Goethe, one repeatedly quoted in conservation literature until very recently. It says: “All works of art as such belong to all of civilized humanity, and their possession is bound up with the duty to take care of them in order to support their preservation”.¹⁹ No-one will hold it against those responsible for practical monuments conservation if they co-opt this sentence, so to speak, “as an ever-valid motto for work with monuments”²⁰. However, one must also allow the historian who is to speak about the concept of monuments to put this quotation from Goethe under the microscope and to use it for reflections which point in a different direction. In general, and surely not unjustly, monuments conservation is seen to be a product of romanticism and historicism, whatever one understands by the latter. By contrast, the question as to which impulses from the Enlightenment may have been incorporated into conservation is rarely posed, even though it might offer a chance to show that in the course of its history, conservation has in no way been only a restorative phenomenon. When, in the sentences quoted above, the publisher of the journal *Propyläen* puts “artworks” and “all of educated humanity” into a relation of ownership and assigns to this relationship a duty to preserve, then he does not regard those works of art as historical phenomena; rather, and very much in the spirit of the 18th century, he sees them as an educational and moral power, one which not only reminds people of something, but should also cultivate them. In other words, he does not see monuments of art retrospectively as a historian, but rather as exemplars, as potentialities and models that affect the future. A single sentence from the Introduction to the *Propyläen* can remind of us of this correlation. With reference to the best work of art it says there: “We cannot do what we want with perfection, we are compelled to surrender ourselves to it, in order to be given back to ourselves elevated and improved by it.”

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However, here we touch on an issue that burdened the idea of the art monument from the very beginning – and by the way the term was Janus-faced in its very phrasing – and can probably never be entirely separated from it. This issue was clearly seen and addressed in the practice-oriented polemics of conservation theorists around the turn of the century – above all Georg Dehio and Alois Riegl. It is necessary to recall this briefly now, from a greater temporal distance and changed

point of view. As correct and variously attestable as is the view that monument conservation in the 19th century – from Schinkel to Schäfer to Tornow – was a product of historicism, it is just as necessary on the other hand to make it clear that the intentions of this historical conservation included keeping exemplars, models and specimens present in order to preserve artistic activity or patriotic ethos, but also to actively influence, promote and improve them. This idea that an art monument is not only a record of the past and not only an art-historical document, but that an educational message is also inherent in it, entered into the new, historicist field of monument conservation as a gene inherited from the old idealistic aesthetic and pedagogical practice of art academies, and allowed it to become a civic-patriotic educational task of the highest order. It conferred upon conservation that astonishing optimistic impetus with which it not only conserved monuments of old art, but also cleaned, exposed and perfected them. As proof of this connection it suffices to quote a paragraph from that famous exposé that Schinkel directed at the Prussian Interior Ministry in relation to monument conservation on August 17, 1815. There it states: “An appreciation of our national treasures, introduced and fully implemented throughout the Fatherland in this way, would be the most beautiful monument which the current time could set; and this especially if one endeavoured to organize this enterprise in connection with art schools in the provinces, which would not only be instructed from within this Institute, but in which at the same time a spirit would be created that is so beautiful that it could in turn contribute to the perfection of the Institute.”²² The connection between monuments conservation and artistic-patriotic education is expressed here quite clearly.

Now it hardly needs to be emphasised that the historic and social conditions which were the basis of this lofty and enthusiastic civic-patriotic understanding of conservation, were all overtaken by a process of disintegration during the course of the 19th century, and as is well known, disintegration processes are not reversible. The more Bacon’s slogan “Knowledge is power”²³ came to rule the intellectual life of the era, the more the forces of social influence, which had actually been inherent in Goethe’s idea of a “civilized humanity”, petered out. And the advancement of the exact sciences increasingly pushed everything historical into a position of secondary importance, worse yet into “museality”. In 1873-74 Nietzsche sarcastically wrote, “The fact that something has gotten old now results in the demand that it be immortal”; he then went on to and hurl a scoffing remark at representatives of what he called “monumental artist-history”: “They act as if their slogan were ‘Let the dead bury the living’”²⁴. Above all though - and in our context this is the most important thing – the industrial mode of production had increasingly hollowed out the normative position of old works of art and finally reduced them to absurdity. The long debate about style at the close of the century ended with a farewell to history, also for architecture and the applied arts. Henry van der Velde writes: “Our teachers said it was enough to imitate and to copy”; and at another point in the same paper adds, with reference to the New Style: “Is there anyone who is in contact with contemporary, that is modern, life today who regrets the disappearance of columns, gables, caryatids, consoles, towers, battlements and embrasures, the entire ornamental clutter of floral hangings and garlands, urns and obelisks, masks and mythical creatures?”²⁵. Old art monuments now finally stop being proud paragons and become mere witnesses to the art historical past. For monuments conservation this is an hour of crisis, but also a profound turning point that augurs new hope. The responsibility for art monuments now slips more and more out of the care of enthusiastic patriots, is removed from the access of architects who want to clean and perfect it; from now on, it seems that their only custodians are professionals in art history. In his Kaiserrede of 1905, Dehio says of the monuments conservation of the 19th century that it was able to arise and proceed in this way “because public opinion was unclear about the true essence of monuments and made the error of assuming that it was a task for artists, whereas the task in fact lies essentially in the

area of historic-critical thinking". He then proposes the well-known new principle: "Conserve, do not restore"²⁶. We all know how much skilled conservation work would have been impossible to achieve without the introduction of this golden rule. However, let us be aware that the art historian Dehio can only invoke the following as a motivation for monuments conservation: "Its last motive is regard for historical existence as such"²⁷. The tie between aesthetic education and the old art monuments was broken with the birth of modern conservation around 1900. It was the price that had to be paid for the transformation of conservation into a science and its emergence as an art-historical specialization. Riegl expressed this much more categorically than did Dehio. "According to older opinions", he writes, "a work of art possesses art-value insofar as it conforms to the demands of an allegedly objective, but to date never perfectly formulated aesthetic; more recent opinion holds that the art-value of a monument is measured by the extent to which it complies with the requirements of the modern *Kunstwollen*". He then declares rigorously and categorically: "it (i.e. the art-value) is to be eliminated from the concept of the monument"²⁸. What remains is then nothing but the "age-value". Before we continue, a conclusion must be drawn from this review. Since then, it has only been possible to invoke Goethe's dictum "All works of art as such belong to all of civilized humanity, and its possession is bound up with the duty to take care of them in order to support their preservation" in full consciousness of the historical distance that separates us from him. Otherwise the appeal to art and tradition threatens to degenerate into a decoration that in practice is not without risk. The "aesthetic church"²⁹ in which this beautiful sentence had its full validity, already became a ruin during the course of the 19th century, and around 1900, with the synchronous development of modern art and modern monument conservation, it was largely cleared away. Its congregation of "civilized humanity" had long since dispersed amongst the general population.

However, let us go further, in order to finally come closer to the current crisis in and endangerment and transformation of the concept of the monument. Put rather too pointedly, the monument concept introduced and circumscribed by art historians working in the mindset of science around 1900 had as its notional model the historical document. Sentimental-romantic and idealistic arguments naturally continued to play a certain role, referring back to patriotism and love of one's homeland. But since then it has been more about the following: material witnesses of the past – both those conventionally designated as works of art, and others seen as documents of the history of settlement and production – should be archived, so to speak, for the future and posterity. When accomplishing this primary task, the use of imagination should be avoided if possible, since it spoils the document or record in the same way that a bad transcription does the linguistic/literary tradition of the original text. Hence "Conserve, do not restore". With this, monuments conservation connected with the age of exact sciences and became an applied historic discipline. Its inventories have something of the diligence of a documentary edition and its conservational activity approaches, *mutatis mutandis*, that of the archivist; as already stated, *mutatis mutandis*, and with all necessary exceptions. There, at the point where it must defend itself against all amateurish encroachments by designers and enthusiasts, the conservationist can now justifiably insist on his expert knowledge: "No-one can judge better than a conservationist what a work of art or a monument means, which values can be ascribed to it"³⁰. Similar determinations based on true competence can be found again and again in major professional journals since the beginning of the century. Conservation work in the past few decades has proven positively what the application of these principles can achieve for the conservation and archiving of monuments, even if in reality neither theory nor practice turned out as flawlessly as I have abstracted them here. These principles will continue to remain in force as a procedure for the conservation of many old architectural monuments. Having achieved a certain level of advancement in the applied historical sciences, there is no going back.

But why has the concept of the monument that lay at the base of everything and was seemingly so conclusively defined, entered a state of crisis in the last ten years, and indeed as I suspect a crisis of its very being? We are probably making it too easy for ourselves we answer that the preconditions for the scientific conservation approach – or put another way: the traditional art-historical concept of the monument – have been dashed by the sharp rise in pressure from the economy and traffic and the unimagined growth of new objects. In part this is very true and accurate. However, we must ask ourselves whether the crisis has even deeper roots. What I now present is expressed with care and in the knowledge that every such consideration of complex processes is overexposed and simplified. To a significant extent the so-called pre-scientific monuments conservation of the previous century, which was allied with historicist architecture, still largely had the character of a great public task – communal or national – with broad resonance, and was carried by a patriotic-educational movement and powerful needs for representation. The new scientific discipline of monuments conservation, however – like the historical discipline itself, like the discipline of art history - inevitably had to take the path toward specialist activity, and – as we know from many fields of work in the meantime – specialization always brings with it a certain repression of the question of meaning, because the service to the cause, the tidy completion of the task at hand moves into the foreground and takes on a life of its own. Motivation is taken for granted; that it might have become questionable is considered hardly at all in the case of specialist activity, or else much too late. Monuments conservation was able to hold this position as long as its activity pertained to a relatively limited part of the public space and operated in a clearly defined field with limited conflicts – or in political terms: in a cultural interior zone, which is gladly entrusted to conservationists by those who otherwise make no bones about sacrificing witnesses to history and art on the altars of their realities. But the results that could still be achieved with this position became ever more questionable: at the latest since the sixties the monuments that were conserved and inventoried with so much love and expertise began to disappear into the shadows cast by those bleak, dull, inhuman and non-urban buildings that have been put up rapidly and prolifically in our cities, not designed or formed but only calculated, like piles of bad packaging. Grotesque and eerie alienation resulted: St. Maria Ablaß in Cologne, the tiny little Gothic church in a monster landscape of high rises. What one tried to keep as an idyll, turned into a blasphemy that could hardly be borne, a picture that puts the fear of God into us. It is at this point at the latest that the entire misery of specialization, of a specialized art history and a conservation that is specialized in art history, becomes evident. The call to expand the concept of the monument, to protect ensembles, attempts to remedy this misery through new operational procedures. Its necessity is beyond doubt. But shouldn't the question of meaning be posed first? In view of such reversals, shouldn't we be asking ourselves: Is conservation as the documentation of architecture and art history now nothing but an irrelevant specialist occupation, one whose actual object – the preserved testimony from history – coagulates into an absurd specimen? And should we not then question the meaningfulness of our activity from the bottom up, given that we are in a situation that neither Goethe nor Schinkel, neither Dehio nor Riegl had to endure? Must we not newly justify the whole notion of conserving memories, and do so not only for our science, not only for our view of history, but also for people and citizens who would perhaps thankfully accept the conservation of memories that they can comprehend, whereas they remain perplexed at monuments as documented art history and probably have no choice but to flee into denial. Further concrete considerations can now only be made if we refer to individual conflict zones, in which monuments conservation, that is the preservation of memories, must be practiced today and tomorrow. This can be outlined only briefly and sketchily here, and only using selected examples.

Example 1: the conserved, destroyed, deformed and alienated city. First off, a

report from a recently experienced meeting. A leading local politician, a lawyer, ironically asks the historians and monument conservationists the pivotal question: "So I understand you correctly, that the entire city should be a monument?" Having received an answer in the affirmative, the equally ironic reply follows: "Well, in your eyes then, the entire country is also a monument". This local politician can leave the conversation with the consoling certainty that kindergartens and department stores, employment expansion and thoroughfares, will destroy this utopia of total monumentalism of their own accord, will expose it as the daydream of professional connoisseurs of antiquity. We specialists, however, should beware of not taking him seriously, of making him taboo by haughtily dismissing him as a "philistine". What is potentially instructive about his question is its vivid demonstration that when applied to an entire city, the traditional, so-called documentary concept of the monument is overtaxed. The task of conservation must be newly argued here and above all be made comprehensible in new ways for those affected. What historical research can discover about the historic city – for example the specific regional forms of warehouse districts of the late Middle Ages, or an aggregation of typical 16th-century tanners' houses in a characteristic arrangement next to a river tributary – is indispensable as a basis for urban conservation, but remains only a positivistic indication for a purely museal conservation. Such purely historical findings are of limited importance as motivations for conservation when entire urban districts are concerned, because fellow human beings cannot reasonably be expected to take on the role of extras in an antiquarium, instead of living their lives. The aesthetic justification for conserving entire urban districts has an importance that should certainly not underestimated, yet is still limited, even when it appears rationalized and quantified through informational or semantic investigation. If this aesthetic justification is exalted as the predominant motivation for conserving entire urban districts, then the objection is easily raised that an aesthetic sensitization is emphasised here at the expense of the entire experience of living, working and leisure in the city. In practice this can lead to visually pleasing but questionable results from a monument conservation point of view, for example to those façade renovations that offend like inappropriately youthful make-up on ladies who have grown very old. Here it is forgotten that make-up cannot of course conserve. The aesthetic rationale for preserving urban districts, even when it refers to Barthes, Bense or Eco, therefore remains closer to the traditional concept of art than it wants to admit, and stretches thin in the face of the concrete task. Thus, one must indeed motivate in an entirely different way. Only when the urban district is grasped as a comprehensive system of designed social relations, as an ordered structure of temporarily hidden but latently persisting directives and signs, in which certain interchangeable social experiences can either be preserved or revitalized – neighbourhood, rooting, feeling at home in the pub next door and the store on the next corner, then in tension with this the greater space, the public sphere of profane monumental buildings and churches – can the so-called urban monument be released from its documentary torpor and transformed into active, urban memory. And our motto would no longer be "A Future for Our Past" as the European Monument Conservation Year would have it – for that would still be the old historicism – but vice-versa: an urban future only with preserved tradition. The purpose of conservation would no longer be the archiving of documents but rather the activation of the offerings which the city, designed in the course of history, makes to its inhabitants of today. Conservation would mean knowledge transfer and not only the preservation of historic witnesses. In practice this would mean making old urban districts habitable for its inhabitants of today, in the knowledge of their defunct historic functions but using their symbolic structures. This is the programme that should be set in contrast to technocracy's inhuman pressure to change, and against rigid administrations focused only on the economy. Such a socially-conscious

conservation would have to accept that fellow human beings – and precisely those who are socially vulnerable – cannot simply be ghettoized in museums of past settlement patterns, if the living conditions there are unhealthy, unhygienic or otherwise unacceptable. We as art historians in favour a future-oriented urban conservation should reject as simply indecent the argument that is sometimes actually made, namely that such ghettoization was the case for centuries. This is the task on which conservationists together with architects and planners, but also public welfare and medicine should collaborate in our threatened, in large part steamrollered cities. Openness and flexibility would be required to an extent never demanded of us by the maintenance of documents, by the preservation of works of high art – openness to change, even to sacrifice of the old, where for obvious urban reasons it cannot be avoided. But let us break off here, since such postulates have long since been raised elsewhere and are already beginning to influence practice here and there. Things are therefore in flux. Only when we keep going in this direction is there a chance that the ironical question quoted above, “Should the entire city become a monument”, will one day fall silent, because it would then testify to incomprehension of a *social* necessity. The alternative of a living environment under an art-historical bell jar is not even worth commenting on, since it cannot preserve memory in our cities because it does not offer a message for tomorrow. To quote Dehio once again: “respect for historical existence per se” is no longer convincing as a motivation for conservation in the conflict zones of our cities. In its place, a monument conservation practice must emerge that communicates historical form socially in new ways.

Example Group II: new categories of monuments and displaced time parameters. The question regarding the categories of monuments that should be preserved because they recall memories of past human activity or witness past traditions, is posed anew, and once again because motivations have changed. These changes are easy to name or at least to identify by their symptoms. The essence of the traditional, absolute concept of art is eroded, its metaphysical or ontological exaltation has become implausible. The borders between high art and folk art, art and triviality, art and kitsch, original and reproduction have dissolved. Research in architectural history has revoked the strict differentiation between hut and palace. I need only mention Forster’s essay “Back to the Farm. Vernacular architecture and the Renaissance villa” in “Architectura” 1974³¹. These changes retaliate against monument conservation practice and dissolve at least partially the hierarchy of objects to be protected. However, there should be a warning against the ideologization of this process. The iconoclastic plunge, which would simply reverse the previous pecking order of monuments, was nothing other than proof of the negative fixation on outdated concepts. Simple common sense teaches that Frankfurt’s train station is not only larger than the next linesman’s cottage, but also semantically denser and incomparably richer in propositions as structured social fabric. This now results in objectively justified preferences for conservation and inventarization, which one should be able to cope with. However, what is more important is that this de-hierarchization, as demanded very decisively by Roland Günther in “The Glory and Misery of Inventarization”, gives productive impulses to the transformation and expansion of the concept of the monument.³² Again the restriction up front: The art-historical conservationist, who supposedly only cared for the cathedral, the castle and the palace, is naturally a legend that never corresponded to reality. We all know it: Even the oldest inventories list at least the better huts in addition to the palaces. Nevertheless, the most important merit of the demand for de-hierarchization is that it has sharpened perception for groups of objects that were hitherto excluded or little appreciated. This applies to everything from more modest living quarters in older cities to workers’ settlements, and right up

to tenements. The whole chapter regarding the conservation of functional buildings and early industrial complexes also belongs here. This is not entirely new since monuments conservation previously also counted the Metzger, the granary, the port crane, the windmill and the Fuggerei amongst its objects to be protected. Therefore this is in part only a shift in the time boundary, in that the same object groups are now taken seriously and considered worthy of protection as historic witnesses if they date from the era after the industrial revolution. With the expansion described, conservation is essentially doing something natural. It is accommodating itself to a changed view of history. Historic research work today no longer concentrates exclusively on the activities of so-called high politics, but increasingly integrates economic and social history. Accordingly, if it wants to remain sincere with regards to history, the factual preservation of witnesses of the past by monument conservation must also encompass these "strata", must also preserve social disparities and social tensions in visible memory. In this, the objective securing of evidence should be required. The processing of previously underprivileged object groups into mere agitational material for retrospective social criticism did not fulfil this requirement. However, the necessity of integrating previously undervalued monument groups is beyond question. When it does this, the much discussed protection of ensembles, for example, not only conserves city silhouettes, but also acquires a social-historical dimension.

Shifts in the time boundary. I restrict myself here to the problem of the 19th century. The changed attitude towards historic architecture between the end of classicism and Biedermeier and the advent of modernism has incommensurably increased the tasks of conservation in quantitative terms. As when a dam has burst, a flood of new objects rolls towards us, objects which must not only be protected, but also inventoried, and indeed should be evaluated and judged. And the worst thing is: The apothecary of classic art history delivers no prescriptions for this diagnosis that has suddenly become necessary, since the patient was considered historical trash until very recently. Hence currently one observes a schizophrenic state. The practice of conserving historic buildings is gaining momentum and resonates with at least a part of the public in a surprisingly lively, even euphoric way. Science is reacting to this with the positivistic registration of objects, with the reworking of the material leading at times to questionable excesses. However, under the surface there is often poorly-disguised confusion. In any case it is no longer "up to date" to be against the 19th century and not to participate in this total renaissance of an ostentatious era. This pragmatism is not without pitfalls. It makes it too easy for those who would accuse the resurgent remembrance of Gründerzeit architecture of comfortable opportunism: of emphasizing appearance rather than substance, for example, or however the ontologizing judgement might be phrased. It is difficult to suggest solutions at the moment. The motivations of fondness which we feel today with regard to those "belle époque" buildings that until two or three decades ago were considered architectural pillage, are fairly discernible. Allow me to begin with a reminiscence once again. An urban planner recently argued as follows with younger colleagues: "I fail to understand how, given your political convictions, you can fight for the upper-class architecture of the Gründerzeit." This reproachful opinion was of course based on a misunderstanding. Namely, it overlooks the fact that rhapsodising and engagement for the architecture of our great-grandfathers derives not only from yearning, but also from protest. When a Jugendstil building was torn down two years ago in Munich, youths painted the ornaments of the only remaining wall section with bright colours and wrote aggressive slogans on it. The last fragments of a "fin de siècle" facade thus served as an aesthetic gesture of political protest – in my opinion this is quite a symptomatic effort. The first thing that should be noted is the pointed message: Ornament is no longer a crime. Then, however,

further thoughts follow, which I would again like to present here only as hypotheses. If it is true that the actual underlying impulse of diverse protest movements since the sixties has been a rejection of authorities that are felt to be obsolete, as well as – and more decisively – the rebellion against the monotonous constraints of a society that no longer does anything but function, then it was almost unavoidable that these movements would discover in the architecture of the “belle époque” and the “Victorian age” the promise of happiness in the form of a counter-memory that is threatened with extinction. And this precisely because this architecture – and only it – still carries with it the appearance of plurality, of creative charm, without showing the imperial attitude with which the older monumentum demanded either the subjugation or the retrospective reverence of the viewer. In other words: The newly discovered architecture of the 19th century still possesses a part of the lost beauty of times past, but is easier to live with than the grandeur of old cathedrals, castles and palaces. Its appeal is based on this, as is, apparently, its sudden significance at the moment. This is why this architecture has again become a living memory, evoking productive and above all sensual emotions, and why its preservation is so passionately demanded by youths and protesters, even to the point of using violence. It is the most seductive model of relatively democratized beauty, of easily accessible and light-hearted luxury, that the history of architecture has to offer.

Monuments conservation, which has no choice but to respond to this new demand for the preservation of Gründerzeit architecture and which, meanwhile, is indeed doing it everywhere, is confronted not only with the expansion of its mission, but once again with its structural change. It must now deal with memorial material that only partially corresponds to the old “monumentum”. Gründerzeit architecture is no longer fully consistent with the old-fashioned concept of historic and artistic uniqueness, and largely refuses all higher and absolute aspirations. Its documentary character is often questionable and illusory. Where its conservation is demanded with reference to individual artists and art schools, to stylistic representativeness or to a date of origin that commands respect, there is in many cases something disproportionately strange about this. Categories from the allegedly heroic age of pre-industrial architectural history occlude the actual motivation for the desire to conserve this 19th-century splendour. This wish has much more to do with the living desire of remembrance, the desire for happiness, and also with the fears and neuroses of today’s urban population, than it does with the imperative to conserve with reverence the “monumenta majorum” or the eternally present, great artistic monuments. Only a conservation that makes citizens’ wishes, both open and secret, its own concern has meaning and a chance. Or expressed negatively: To archive all of the works of 19th-century architects in the public employ as documents of art and architectural history would be difficult to justify and would really only lead to the morbid inflation of a concept of the monument that is rooted in yesterday. The actual mission is different: it is once again important to activate the potential which the remains of Gründerzeit architecture represents for the city of tomorrow, so that the Märkisches Viertel or Neuperlach do not become the only dimension of the urban future. And here the conservative desire to preserve joins up with the protest that presents itself as progressive but is in reality Romantic-Rousseauian.

Last group of examples: the concept of the monument and the concept of the original. The definition of the original that applied when its essential characteristics were primordially, uniqueness and therefore unrepeatability, seems to be losing its validity more and more in today’s awareness. I will not address here the emergence and history of the partial dissolution of this concept as it has existed since the middle of the 18th century. However, the changes indicated cannot leave the concept of the monument untouched, and to this extent they pertain to the topic discussed here. To give just one

example: As we saw, in the conservation of 19th-century architecture, with its frequent accumulation, transposition and repetition of themes, the practice of monuments conservation encountered a material that could not or could only partially stand up to the demand for originality and singularity. On the contrary, it is precisely the trivialization of a stock of motifs adopted from history that represents the new, modern and productive features of this architecture. Thus, both the concept of the monumentum and that of the document-equivalent original are relativized in the current practice of monuments preservation. The question is whether the remaining fields of monuments conservation remain untouched by such experiences, or whether there could be repercussions here. Just a few considerations on this: As long as the monumentum was unique per se, it could only be preserved or else effaced by later history. That is the ethos, but also the fate which the concept of originality imposed on the monument and on conservation. The question of the effects of this imposition in the situation after 1945, given the shattered monuments, given the effacement of history by bombs, is currently has begun since we have had beginning to engage us. Characteristically, research on reconstruction after the Second World War emerged once our concept of the monument became uncertain. One cannot yet speak of results. But it is noteworthy that the reconstructive solutions – from the Goethehaus to the Munich Residence and the Prinzipalmarkt in Münster, not to mention Polish cities and Russian palaces – are regarded more positively today than they were a decade ago. When the solemn exaltation of the original becomes questionable, one discovers that signs, memories from the past can be re-evoked, called up again, not only mentally but also in the area of the visible. Let me be clear: in practice the copied monument will always remain the rare exception, but the solemnity with which it is rejected as untruthful sounds more hollow and museological today than it did in 1950. Reproduction no longer spooks us. But this is also part of a changed concept of the monument which is oriented to the urban future. Today one is able to go beyond even Friedrich Mielke's thought-provoking and astonishingly flexible statement from the year 1961 – naturally I am thinking of his essay "The Original and the Scientific Concept of the Monument" – in the direction of concepts that are more strongly integrative³³.

Let us finally close the discussion. It is likely that everything it was possible to say here is not new. Today, the notion of reproducibility applies not only to monuments, but also to thoughts and lectures. Those affected, the speakers and unfortunately also the listeners, must reconcile themselves to this situation. The fact that it was only possible to speak about the conflict zones was a consequence of the topic posed. There are many conservation tasks for which older concepts and ways of working remain viable, for which the old concept of art continues to be available as an intact argument. It seems to me that our situation no longer allows working with a monolithic notion of the monument but rather demands a pluralism of concepts and working methods. But one last thing: All of the considerations presented here remain so much wasted breath if the priorities that currently dominate our handling of urban space are not newly ordered and subjected to new values. It is not the case that that the bleak architecture we have placed next to old monuments and landscapes in recent decades is only the expression of a lack of creative imagination. Such a view would only confound the external appearance of this architecture with the causality of its misery. No, the reasons lie elsewhere completely. In 1927 a regional report about New York and its surroundings stated: "Where the early plan was once content to be a noble design, the

modern plan aspires to qualify as a productive piece of economic machinery” 34. Well, one can hardly state more clearly where the root of today’s misery lies. As long as a purely quantifying analysis of use remains the guiding principle of planning, then it can only result in architecture that is semantically dumb, that expresses or represents nothing, conveys nothing, but is only materialized function. This result is, however, always incommensurable with the surviving architecture of the past, and indeed not only because their forms are not comparable, but because the older buildings always also constituted a structure of signs within the civitas. What is terrible about bad modern architecture is not only its formal but also its social and semantic impoverishment, and this is why it is so incompatible with architecture received from the past, this is why the old no longer finds any welcome resonance in the new. We cannot merely protect and preserve the past; it must also continue to be lived, otherwise it hardens into a museum fragment in an amorphous environment. “Expanding the concept of the monument” cannot therefore be the only goal. The sheer enlargement of museal interior zones does not suffice as a concept for communicating the visible witnesses of history to the future. At this juncture, it becomes apparent that the task of preserving memory reaches far beyond the competence of art historians and conservationists, of architects and urban planners, and that it must obligate our entire communal being – and indeed it must do this seriously, not only verbally, not only in ceremonial speeches, and not only in the Monuments Year. The current situation demands of us a sense of responsibility and a willingness to act over and above every type of specialization. This is demanded in the service of a concept of the monument that is not only expanded, but is also socially aware and urban, oriented to the future of citizens and the res publica – to a future that is not brutally cut off from every memory. And so, in view of memories that are threatened from all sides, the fearful artist mentioned at the outset – the artist who attempts to hold on to some traces, in the form of pellets, of a past that is slipping away from him – becomes a kind of symbolic figure. However, let me not end without adding one thing: Anyone who comes out of the quiet of a research institute to speak to conservationists about the preservation of historic monuments feels a little bit like this: he spouts off, while “the work is done by others”³⁵. And so, I must thank you for the patience with which you have listened to me.

NOTES

- 1 Text by Christian Boltanski. Catalogue Documenta 5, Kassel 1972, 16.9.
- 2 For the term “individual mythologies” cf. amongst others Catalogue Documenta 1972, 16.
3. Cf. also the title of the exhibition: “Spurensicherung. Archäologie und Erinnerung”, Hamburg Art Association, April 6 to May 19, 1974.
- 4 For Veritas filia Temporis cf. Gellius, Noctes Atticae XII. 11/7.
- 5 Here I freely paraphrase the well-known book title, cf. A. Weber, Abschied von der bisherigen Geschichte, Bern 1946.
- 6 J. C. Orellius, M. Tullii Ciceronis opera Bd. V.2, Zurich 1833. pp. 391/3 ff.
- 7 Cf. the evidence in K.E. George, Lateinisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch, Hannover/Leipzig 1918, vol. 2, col. 1001.
- 8 Aeneid 8/356.
- 9 Cf. the evidence of the Cicero citation in George, op. cit. note 7, col. 1001.
- 10 Horace, Carmina 3/30/1.
- 11 On this cf. the very informative article “Monumento” by R. Assunto in: Enciclopedia Universale dell’Arte, Venice/Rome 1963, vol. IX, cols. 623ff., especially col. 627.
- 11 J. Frisius, Dictionarium latino germanicum, Zurich 1574, p. 687 (earlier editions 1556 and 1568). Quoted here according to Trübner, Deutsches Wörterbuch, Berlin 1939, vol. 3, p. 43.
- 13 J. H. Zedler, Großes vollständiges Universallexikon, Leipzig/Halle 1739, vol. 21, cols. 1430 ff.
- 14 Cf. the reference in W. Rehm, Europäische Romdichtung, Munich 1960², p. 75.
- 15 For the Damnatio Memoriae cf. F. Vittinghoff, Der Staatsfeind in der römischen Kaiserzeit. Untersuchungen zur Damnatio Memoriae, Berlin 1936.

- 16 On this, cf. *Das Berliner Schloß und sein Untergang. Ein Bildbericht über die zerstörten Berliner Kulturdenkmäler*. Commissioned by the Federal Ministry of All-German Affairs., ed. K. Rodemann, Berlin 1951, p. 15.
- 17 Cf. Waltraud Volk, *Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR*, Berlin 1972, p. 119, where it is stated: "The portal was salvaged from the destroyed Berlin Stadtschloss and carefully restored by the Sculptors' Brigade of the VEB Stucco and Stone in 1950, before being incorporated into the Privy Council structure". See also Plates 150, 151.
- 18 Cf. *Das Berliner Stadtschloss*, op. cit. note 16, p. 8. The quote has been changed slightly compared to the original text, so that it remains comprehensible out of context.
- 19 Cf. for example W. Bornheim gen. Schilling, *Zum Recht der Denkmalpflege*, in: *Denkmalpflege in Rheinland-Pfalz XVI/XVII (1961/62)*, pp. 7 ff.
- 20 Cf. W. Bornheim gen. Schilling, *Bewahren und Gestalten. Enge und Weite des modernen Denkmalbegriffes*, in: *Deutsche Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 24 (1966), pp 1 ff., esp. p. 9.
- 21 J. W. Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke, Propyläen-Ausgabe*, vol. 11, p. 39.
- 22 Excerpts from Schinkel's treatise are printed in an essay that was published without identifying its author, *Zur Geschichte der Denkmalpflege in Preußen*, in: *Die Denkmalpflege III (1901)*, pp. 6 ff. The quote here is from this excerpt.
- 23 See F. Bacon, *The advancement of Learning*, ed. G. W. Kitchin, London 1954, p. 57.
- 24 F. Nietzsche, *Gesammelte Werke*, Musarion edition, vol. VI, pp. 254 and pp. 249 ff.
- 25 H. van de Velde, *Vom neuen Stil*, Leipzig 1907, pp. 56 and 36.
- 26 G. Dehio, *Kunsthistorische Aufsätze*, Munich/Berlin 1914, pp. 179 ff.
- 27 Cf. Dehio, op. cit. note 16, pp. 267 ff. – The national motivations, which Dehio also names, can be ignored here. They do not constitute the originality of his statements. A polemic against this part of Dehio's views, as is occasionally found in newer papers on monuments conservation, is quite groundless in a phenomenon that has long since become historical. At best such posthumous ostracism only facilitates gloating feelings of one's own know-it-all attitude, but does not serve any further insight.
- 28 A. Riegl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Augsburg/Vienna 1924, pp. 147 ff.
- 29 The term "aesthetic church" was used by H. Schrade to refer to the art museum of the early 19th century. On this cf. H. Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte*, Salzburg 1965⁸, p. 31.
- 30 W. Bornheim gen. Schilling in: *Deutsche Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 18 (1970) p. 19.
- 31 K. W. Forster, *Back to the Farm*, in: *Architectura* 1974, pp. 1 ff.
- 32 R. Günther, *Glanz und Elend der Inventarisierung*, in: *Deutsche Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 18 (1970) pp. 109 ff.
- 33 H. F. Mielke, *Das Original und der wissenschaftliche Denkmalbegriff*, in: *Deutsche Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 19 (1961) pp. 1 ff.
- 34 Quoted according to G. Albers, *Entwicklungslinien im Städtebau. Ideen, Thesen, Aussagen 1875-1945. Texte und Interpretationen*, Düsseldorf 1975, p. 41.
- 35 I use the book title by H. Schelsky here, *"Die Arbeit tun die anderen. Klassenkampf und Priesterherrschaft der Intellektuellen"*, Opladen 1974, which, however, has a different thrust.