

## INTRODUCTION

There is an array of disciplines that participate in the kaleidoscopic world of historic heritage which add complementary and enrich the views on the problems of its trust and management, the criteria for its preservation and restoration, professional ethics and deontology, social perception and enjoyment of cultural goods and so many other aspects which contribute a large amount of bibliography. It is precisely in this academic context of exchanging experience, knowledge and ideas where this publication arises as a product of the international seminar Preserving the past, planning the future. Tendencies in 21st century monumental heritage, celebrated in Zaragoza on 11 and 12 April, 2013, attended by scholars and professors from both national and international universities with which the University of Zaragoza have kept institutional relationships for many years.

The aim of this meeting was to analyze the present situation of monumental restoration, going deeply in the tendencies, the problems, the debates arising in the last years, in order to consider new approaches for the future. As a starting point, we must take into account the long history of monumental heritage restoration as a modern discipline, linked to the emergence of the concept of heritage itself as an Illustration-inherited idea, to the appearance of historical awareness regarding the past, a feature that characterizes Contemporaneity. Monumental restoration is, therefore, a historically and critically based discipline, nurtured by the contributions of Contemporary Architecture, History, Technology and Science, recognizing the cultural values of the object to be restored, which are those that justify its preservation, with accepted methodology and criteria (above all the documents named International Charters, in addition to the laws of every country). These reference criteria, as professor Giovanni Carbonara named them, are the point towards restoration must be conducted: visual notoriety, reversibility, minimum intervention, respect for authenticity; despite these concepts being clearly a tendency (critical restoration), not all professionals agree on them.

As professor Stella Casiello states: "Above all it is necessary to preserve as much as possible, since the monument is a tangible document containing in itself an important background knowledge; any intervention whatsoever on the building must, therefore, seek the minimum loss and guide its physiologic transformation. At the same time, the intervention must be brought about critically, based on the deep knowledge of the work, where time layers and degradation itself acquire

complex meanings as additions to or destroyers of the piece<sup>1</sup>” and she carries on: “restoration, then, must establish some duties: to restitute the lost balance, to show the concealed values where, by means of a small loss of material, an otherwise threaten material, to make discreet functional adaptations according to ethical principles, and to abate the degradation keeping the work’s authenticity”<sup>2</sup>.

The truth is that restoration is a key theme in contemporary culture dealing with some fundamental aspects such as history and memory, on which, it seems, there is not yet a conceptual unity. We have difficulties in evaluating it, defining it, and we find antithetical criteria (from reconstruction to conservation). It is a contradictory and complex area that moves by means of antinomies: material/form, new/old, true/false, production/reproduction, etc., and so it deserves new approaches.

And, what does it happen with present time? There is a strange paradox now, as the Italian architect B. Paolo Torsello pointed out: “investments and attention on historical heritage grow, but in the last decades the interest on theoretical elaboration has waned, whereas all Europe commits in the defence and reassessment of Architecture, landscape and cultural and artistic objects”<sup>3</sup>. Yet, goes on Torsello: “Restoration, a scarcely visited, even disdained, area before is now suddenly inhabited. There are many and, at the same time, divergent and conflicting voices related to the trust of heritage, because everyone seeks his own professional interest (...) Today we can say that the conservation of historical and artistic heritage appeals to a variety of subjects and themes, notwithstanding the contradictory plurality of interests and aims”<sup>4</sup>. And what is threatening: “The objects, which once suffered neglect, are today on the verge of being crushed by excessive care, above all by heterogeneous approaches and the confusion of the languages applied to its fragile material”<sup>5</sup>.

In this contradictory scenario, there emerge at least two requirements. The first one is seemingly of a linguistic nature since it has to do with the terminology used in restoration which on one hand comes from different contexts (history, aesthetics, architecture, building, technology...) and on the other hand, produces different meanings. Terminology runs in a transversal way which involves many disciplines, being often ambiguous and confusing, thence the necessity for, first of all, clarifying the terms in order to later deal with the criteria, the contents. This is not a worthless task at all, since there are so many important questions in monumental restoration such as the role of history, the role of memory, the

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1 TORSELLO, B. P., *Che cos'è il restauro?*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2005, p. 31.

2 TORSELLO, B. P., *Che cos'è...*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

3 TORSELLO, B. P., *Che cos'è...*, *op. cit.*, p. 10

4 TORSELLO, B. P., *Che cos'è...*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

5 TORSELLO, B. P., *Che cos'è...*, *op. cit.*, p. 13

consequences the broadening of the concept of heritage has, and more formal aspects such as the meaning of restoration as architectonic plan, the relationship between new architecture and the existing one, the influence of aesthetics, taste and contemporary art in restoration.

It must be taken into account, as some authors have already stated (in Italy, Giovanni Carbonara, B. Paolo Torsello himself, among others; in Spain, Ignasi Solá Morales), that from the end of the 70s, with the arrival of postmodernism, history has become a consumer product and architecture itself has lost capacity for theoretical self-reflection, but in specific exceptions that tend to global sociological and aesthetic reflections like those by Rem Koolhaas (Delirious NY)<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, a reflection on restoration seems to be most appropriate, which is what has led us to this point. The publication of this book allows us to gather many views from different and complementary disciplines, history of art and architecture, which help and need each other, and from two cultural perspectives, Italian and Spanish, together with an extremely interesting contribution from Latin America, with a lot of similitudes and differences as well. In fact, the particular situation in our country, where restoration has been carried out with a somehow creative freedom, has led to some authors to talk about “restoration a la española”, what most times bewilders (and is sometimes the envy of) colleagues from other countries.

This book reunites ten different views on our discipline by experts with a long researching and professional run. It is started with a series of works reflecting on general questions that introduce the reader into a general panorama of the situation. The first contribution analyses the relationship between the restoration and safekeeping of monumental heritage, by JOSÉ CASTILLO RUIZ, art historian and professor in the University of Granada, who states that architectonic restoration must be understood as one more activity within the set of actions that make up the safekeeping of Historical Heritage, and so we must consult it in order to assess properly the tendencies in restoration today. He focuses on those aspects he considers more relevant, because of their being signals that show its future direction (tendencies), for constituting important challenges to overcome (challenges), or, finally, for generating illusions (hopes). Next, ASCENSION HERNÁNDEZ MARTÍNEZ, art historian and professor in the University of Zaragoza, reflects on the terminology used in architectonic restoration today, and

shows the tendency in the last years to avoid the use of the term restoration in favor of some others such as transformation, recycling, reusing, reassessment, appropriation or mutation. According to the author, this semantic shift lays bare the rejection to some of the criteria for the restoration of historical buildings, for a greater freedom when restoring monuments, which threatens the transmission

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<sup>6</sup> TORSSELLO, B. P., *Che cos'è...*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

of the historical and cultural values of heritage. And from the University of Sao Paulo (Brasil), the architect and professor BEATRIZ MUGAYAR KÜHL, offers a more-than-needed essay on the ethics of the preservation of cultural heritage, establishing that the reasons why a certain society preserves its heritage must be analyzed, since these are the basis of the theoretical principles that sustain the praxis of restoration. According to her, to work with coherent criteria and a solid methodology is a must, avoiding and refusing arbitrary interventions that are tied to personal and sector interests. These measures should guide the ethical and deontological principles of our discipline so as the cultural goods may be reliable documents that transmit the cultural values and, as such, real support for the historical and collective memory knowledge.

Within the professional praxis, LUIS FRANCO LAHOZ, architect and professor in the University of Zaragoza, reflects on the role of the architect in the restoration today, a complex and joint activity where the different disciplines try and find an agreement on the formative clues and last sense of every monument, regarding its metamorphoses, its material and constructive support, and the values that define it as a monument. For professor Franco Lahoz, architectonic planning in restoration has taken up the practice that aims at adding to the transformation of the building and keeping in tune with the old, without denying its contemporaneity. On the same way, the analysis of the restoration from the point of view of the architecture, are the next two essays. The architect and professor RICCARDO DALLA NEGRA, from the University of Ferrara (Italy), analyses the situation of monumental architecture, towards which two attitudes has been planned: the “planning culture”, which tends to consider as legitimate to intervene with contemporary language regardless of previous architecture, and the “conservation practice”, aware of the distance between past and present and therefore of necessity to keep the prints of history. Debate between both sides has provoked many misunderstandings and contradictions analyzed in his text. Next the architect and professor CLAUDIO VARAGNOLLI from the University of Chiara-Pescara (Italy), deepens on the use and consume of the heritage built in Italy in the 21st century through a selection of significant buildings restored in the last years. Among them, Tadao Ando’s interventions in Punta della Dogana and Renzo Piano’s in Fondazione Vedova, in Venice, or that by Emmanuelle Fidone in San Pietro, Siracusa. Professor Varagnolli considers not an optimistic acceptance of this but a criticism aiming at the understanding of the contributions of these instances to monumental restoration, linking them to recent theories that try to overcome the long ago consolidated positions, keeping the “intellectual conquests” of the field of restoration.

Completing the contributions from Italy, architect and professor SIMONA SALVO deepens on a particular point of monumental restoration from the point of view of the Italian culture: the interventions carried out in 20th-century architecture, pointing out the belief that, according to its peculiarities, the traditional

criteria taken from granted in the restoration activity could not be applied. In fact, professor Salvo confirms the greater amount of repriming activities than of restoration ones. The same happens in contemporary art, that is why relationships with visual arts were established. On this line, CARLOTA SANTABARBARA MORERA, art historian and restorer, analyses in her doctoral essay the conservation of contemporary art (University of Zaragoza), as a result of which is her contribution to this book, where, from the analysis of the restorations of significant works of art in different museums and international institutions, the criteria for the restoration are compared, which leads to reflect on the diversity of criteria and the evident confrontation today between the Italian and German restoration theories, and the questioning of the ideas of Cesare Brandi.

The existing heritage presents, at the same time, new fields that must be analyzed such as industrial heritage and social housing, with which this book ends. M<sup>a</sup> PILAR BIEL IBÁÑEZ, professor in the University of Zaragoza, deals with the situation of the first one in the 21st century, and relates it to the new condition of the city in this new millennium. The shift in the economic pattern, one of its pillars being the exploitation of heritage and cultural values of the cities, is the context where professor Biel places the conservation of this heritage, which in a many instances tries to turn the historical factory into a consumer product regardless of its historical values. Lastly, NOELIA CERVERO SANCHEZ, architect and professor in the University of Zaragoza, states how to preserve social housing developments, specially regarding the conciliation of their living conditions, reduced in many instances, with their different assessments (historical, architectonic, urban, social, etc). What strategies must be followed? Should we consider them up-to-date versions that integrate into the city and generate life? Or, on the other hand, should be more radical policies on urban development imposed?

These are some of the reflections professor Cervero contributes.

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by means of the translation of every essay into English, which constitutes the second half of the book, because our intention is to spread as much as possible a key question: the conservation of our cultural heritage, where every reflection and analysis is needed to create a forum, a space for common analysis which allows us to go as far as possible in our discipline. This is the task we are in charge of as academic and scientific people involved in preservation of our cultural heritage, open to discussion and compromised as responsible citizens in this task which falls to society as well.

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