

FRIENDS WITH AN OLD BOOK

ENEAS ARNALDI, „DELLE BASILICHE ANTICHE“, 1767

In the book "Delle Basiliche Antiche" he publishes his experience as a member of the Commission of Conservators; in the exercise of this function he made a proposal to the City Council for the restoration of the Basilica Palladiana in Vicenza, which was accepted.

In the essay he dealt with the etymology of the term and the origin of ancient basilicas (places of assembly) and Christian basilicas (places of devotion). Knowing the Basilica of Vicenza better than anyone else at the time, he wrote a documented history of the basilica from its medieval foundation to the eighteenth century. In conclusion, Arnaldi praised the wisdom of Andrea Palladio, who had solved every difficulty without deviating from the Vitruvian rules. Throughout the book and his work he adhered very much to the rules and constructions of Andrea Palladio and was known to be more of theoretical rather than a practical architect but always with an open mind and a modern attention to documentary research.

Then, between 1775 and 1793, he directed the demanding restoration work on the Palladian basilica always defending the paladine tradition in Vicenza as well as the preservation and restoration of the rules concerning the construction of architecture of antiquity.

The themes and keywords I used for the basis of my research in the digital library Xenotheka are „restoration“, „documentary research“ and „preservation of monuments“

The two books I've chosen to display the connection as well as the reinvention, redefinition of the keywords are as following.

The Architectural Capriccio, Steil, 2013

The book elaborates the notion of architectural capriccio, in which it talks about ancient architecture, often reunited and represented in idealized ensembles in art. Through this way of working, through the intense study of the buildings to represent them as accurately as possible, the knowledge of their construction is not lost. The result is a kind of conservation and a transmission of this ancient architecture through painting. The artistic interest of the 17. Century was primarily focused on the academic pursuits centered on antiquity. The art academies nourished the increasing interest in antiquity, promoting programs that centered on the reproduction of antique models. „Increased interest in the preservation and restoration of ancient monuments became of increasing concern.“

The second book is

Gender Space Architecture - An Interdisciplinary Introduction, Borden, 2000

This book describes, among other things, the establishment of new infrastructures and vessels in cities that are of cultural interest. Which are exposed to many tourists every year, some of which have monuments or buildings that are very rich in history. The aim is to preserve these cities, landscapes, historical markers, while respecting the needs of the local population, their culture, habits and traditions.

Unlike the other two books, I find this book, after brief research, broadens the concept of restoration and preservation of buildings, landscapes and monuments. It is important to respond to the current needs of the people who live there and not to build such architecture only because of the "well-known beauty of ancient buildings". It is important to deal with current situations and design infrastructures from them. Planning something top down for the sake of beauty that does not respond to the people and their needs is of little value.

Arnaldi's approach to what we would now call "historic preservation" (Denkmalpflege) is remarkable, although I don't know where the ambition comes from. Whether the motivation stems in the emulation of ancient buildings or in the preservation of already existing buildings. Based on his texts and repeated references to Palladio, I would think that the preservation, as well as the restoration in the effort to recreate ancient buildings is more important to him than preserving already existing ones.

The idea of sustainability and the importance that even the "simple" society have a say in the form of the city and urban spaces has probably only gained importance over time.