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# Riegl's 'Modern Cult of Monuments' as a theory underpinning practical conservation and restoration work

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## ABSTRACT

'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Origin' (1903), written by Alois Riegl, is the first systematic analysis of heritage values and of a theory of restoration. His values and concepts became fundamental principles of the Venice Charter (1964). However, in conjunction with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Charter in 2014, it was pointed out that the attempt to reconcile notions of the monument with the 'postmodern' idea of multiple and shifting values has resulted in an ever-expanding definition of the 'monument' – without serious questioning of the underlying principles that guide its treatment. This article analyzes Riegl's 'commemorative values' and 'present-day values' in the light of the conservation and restoration work of the Norwegian architect Kristian Bjercknes, who in 1979 was awarded a European prize for his preservation of cultural heritage. His work illustrates how Riegl's age value theory can be used for a wide variety of building types and situations. Bjercknes applied it as a strategy for conservation and restoration of wooden buildings, and in adapting architectural heritage to modern living conditions. He also transferred the theory to museum work and to the rebuilding of demolished buildings. His preservation work illustrates how theory and practice are intertwined.

## KEYWORDS

Alois Riegl; restoration; age value theory; Venice Charter; authenticity

## Introduction

The essay 'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Origin'<sup>1</sup> (1903), written by the Austrian art historian and General Conservator Alois Riegl, was intended as a theoretical introduction to a legislative proposal for the protection of cultural heritage in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The aim was to develop a cognitive framework and a platform for understanding and formulating opinions that underpin various choices of solutions in the treatment of historic buildings and artifacts. In the nineteenth century, the idea of 'stylistic unity' was preferred, and reconstruction became a strategy for contemporary architects. Riegl uses the terms 'age value theory' and 'theory of historical evolution', in order to explain that everything which history has changed is

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irreversible and as such has become part of a building or artifact. Therefore, it is not the original form concept which is regarded as authentic, but the building as it has been handed down to us through history. Riegl's heritage values and concepts became fundamental principles of both the Athens Charter (1931) and the Venice Charter (1964). The UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) deals with heritage sites of outstanding universal value, and highlights the need for authenticity.

The term 'authenticity', which appears in the preamble of the Venice Charter,<sup>2</sup> was introduced without definition, because most of those involved in writing the charter shared similar response to conservations problems.<sup>3</sup> However, in conjunction with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Charter in 2014, it was pointed out that the attempt to reconcile notions of the monument with the 'postmodern' idea of multiple and shifting values has resulted in 'an ever-expanding definition of the "monument" – without serious questioning of the underlying principles that guide its treatment.'<sup>4</sup>

According to Wilfried Lipp, one of the international figures in the theory and philosophy of conservation and restoration, the increase in complexity has contributed to a crisis of common sense in responding to the question: 'What is a monument?'<sup>5</sup> In addition, the majority of doctrinal texts seem to be more concerned with concepts of conservation and protection than in offering guidance for conservation and restoration practice.<sup>6</sup> 'Too often there is a gap between theoretical intent and practical execution.'<sup>7</sup>

In this context it is of interest that the Austrian professor of art history and preservation, Walter Frodl, who in the 1960s reintroduced Riegl's concept of a value-based preservation,<sup>8</sup> was the Chairman of the Committee<sup>9</sup> at the official presentation of the 'Gold Medal for Outstanding Achievements in the Preservation of Historic Monuments in Europe'. In 1979 this prize was presented by Frodl to the Norwegian architect Kristian Bjercknes (1901-1981), who had attracted international attention from his contemporaries for his research into and protection of Norwegian wooden buildings. He received particular recognition for his conservation and restoration of stave churches, which focused on a unique part of the European building heritage. That same year, Urnes stave church (c. 1130) on Sognefjorden in the west of Norway was listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Riegl 'was the author of the first systematic analysis of heritage values and of a theory of restoration'.<sup>10</sup> The art historian Harry Fett headed the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage from 1913 to 1946. He refers to Riegl's 'Modern Cult of Monuments' when he writes that what characterizes the twentieth century's conservation and restoration practice is an ever-increasing emphasis on age value.<sup>11</sup> The aim of this article is to both highlight Riegl's 'Modern Cult of Monuments' as an analytical framework for conservation and restoration of historic buildings and explore the activity of an architect who, in the years between the Athens Charter and the Venice Charter, was guided by the concept of authenticity and the principle of respect for age value.

## **The choice between three commemorative values**

'Only around the beginning of the twentieth century have we come to recognize the necessary consequences of the theory of historical evolution, which declares that all artifacts of the past are irrecoverable,'<sup>12</sup> writes Riegl. In order to explain why this theory should be a fundamental basis in modern preservation work, he distinguishes between

three different commemorative values in monuments; intentional value, unintentional value (historical value) and age value:

Both intentional and unintentional monuments are characterized by commemorative value, and in both instances we are interested in their original, uncorrupted appearance as they emerged from the hands of their maker and to which we seek by whatever means to restore them. In the case of the intentional monument, its commemorative value has been determined by the makers, while *we* have defined the value of the unintentional ones.<sup>13</sup>

Riegl advocates that intentional monuments, those originally conceived to mark or remind people of a particular memory, whether it is a person, event, or other activity, should be restored. An example is a memorial column, which loses its commemorative value without a readable inscription. The restorations of Viollet-Le-Duc in France and Sir Gilbert Scott in England are manifestations of, both in theory and practice, Riegl's definition of unintentional monuments. He phrases it as follows: 'historical value singles out one moment in the developmental continuum of the past and places it before our eyes as if it belonged to the present'.<sup>14</sup> In this perspective, unintentional monuments take on a surreal contemporaneity.

Riegl calls the third category, the 'new commemorative value', which appreciates the past for its own sake, for 'age value'. Age value which manifests itself through visible perceptions and appeals to our senses, is seen in the corrosion of surfaces, in their patina, in the wear and tear of buildings and objects. According to Riegl, age value possesses universal validity, because it transcends differences in education and understanding of art. The criteria by which we recognize age value are as rule so simple, that they can be appreciated by everyone. 'This advantage of age-value, contrasts sharply with historical value, which rests on a scientific basis,' writes Riegl.<sup>15</sup>

If we keep in mind that the cult of age-value is nothing but a more advanced form of the cult of historical value, then one may be inclined to consider the latter to have been superseded. For the practice of conservation, it would follow that the conflict between these two commemorative values would have to be resolved in favor of age-value.<sup>16</sup>

Riegl's concept of 'age value' and 'commemorative value' is very similar to John Ruskin's appreciation of the passage of time upon a building, and his conviction that it is impossible to re-gain an original shape by restoration. In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), Ruskin entitled the chapter on conservation 'Lamp of Memory'. He thought it was a betrayal of an old building to deprive it of its historical dimension, or depth of time, by tapping it for all the individual features that time had given, and by locking it into a certain time and style. Ruskin who identified the values of historic buildings and objects more clearly than anyone before him, provided a foundation for modern conservation philosophies.<sup>17</sup> Riegl points out that we must guard against superficial similarities between the cult of ruins, which can be traced back to the seventeenth century, and the modern cult of age value.<sup>18</sup> A wooden building, for instance, would hardly be evocative as a ruin.

In connection with the award of the International Preservation Prize in 1979, Bjercknes opened his speech by referring to the Norwegian artist J.C. Dahl, who founded the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Norwegian Monuments in 1844:

At his own expense, J.C. Dahl published a pamphlet, which was translated into German. With respect to the stave churches, he said there are some remarkable country churches in

Norway that are threatened with destruction. The text was accompanied by perspective drawings (Figure 1).<sup>19</sup>

There are many commonalities between the attitudes of J.C. Dahl and Ruskin, who called for conservation instead of restoration. It is also likely that J.C. Dahl, who was an artist and interested in Turner's paintings, had acquired Ruskin's book *Modern Painters* (1843). This may have helped him to take a clear stance on restoration issues, particularly on the demolition and reconstruction of stave churches. Fett writes that age value has always been the Society's 'core belief', even though it was founded at a time when historical value was the ideal all over Europe.<sup>20</sup>

The approach that a building should be preserved as it has been handed down to us though history was opposed by the protagonists of restoration based on stylistic criteria. Riegl, therefore, refers to the nineteenth century as the age of historical value, and the twentieth century as that of age value: 'For the time being we are still in a period of transition, which is naturally also one of struggle.'<sup>21</sup> The following statement about Urnes stave church, from a Norwegian architect in 1903, shows how the change in approach characterizes the concept of the preservation of cultural heritage, which took place in the beginning of the twentieth century:

The more I think about it, the more I feel that we have a duty to let it stand untouched without any kind of restoration. Last year I thought very seriously about bringing it back to its original form, to demonstrate that we now know more about the original appearance of these churches than the previous generation did.<sup>22</sup>

Interest in the unrestored character of buildings was first awakened when, in England, a new philosophy of preservation arose in the late nineteenth century. The Society for



**Figure 1.** Urnes stave church. North facade. Drawing by Franz Wilhelm Schiertz, in J.C. Dahl, *Denkmale einer sehr ausgebildeten Holzbaukunst aus den frühesten Jahrhunderten in den inneren Landschaften Norwegens*, Dresden 1837.

Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), founded in 1877 by William Morris and other leading architects and artists in the Arts and Crafts movement, clarified Ruskin's conservation philosophy. In its Manifesto of 1877, the SPAB presents the argument in favor of conservation and against restoration, and encourages regular maintenance of older buildings. There was a universal sense of responsibility for world culture, and a permanent sub-committee was established to promote SPAB's ideals outside the United Kingdom. The Manifesto was translated into French, Italian, German and Dutch. Riegl points out that nineteenth-century laws were all tailored to the notion that monuments possessed only historical value, but with the rise of age-value these laws became inadequate.<sup>23</sup> The concept of a unity of style was first declared invalid at the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments in 1931. The charter laid down general principles of preservation, which reflects English conservation principles and Riegl's age value theory. All nations were encouraged to follow the declaration, and the term 'World Architectural Heritage' was introduced.

Urnes stave church, [Figure 2](#), which is today counted amongst the great monumental masterpieces of architectural history, exemplifies Riegl's definition of the term 'monument'. The better age values are passed on from one generation to another, the more monumental a building becomes. The origin of the word comes from the Latin *monumentum* ('memorial') and from *monere* ('to remind'). This in contrary, to the history of architecture where the word 'monumental' often refers to buildings of extraordinary size and power.



**Figure 2.** Urnes stave church. South and west facade. Photo: Per Gunnar Maurtvedt, Kulturhistorisk museum, UiO. Unimus.no.

## The relationship between present-day values and age value

Riegl then turns to a consideration of other values that a monument offers to modern man. These values he groups as present-day values, as opposed to commemorative values or values of the past. Riegl distinguishes primarily between utilitarian value (use value) and art value. The art value is subdivided into 'newness-value' which demands completeness and coherence of form and 'relative art-value' (changing taste), the aesthetic appreciation of a monument, in agreement with the contemporary *Kunstwollen*. The value of an unintentional monument, for instance, is relative;

when we call such works of art 'monuments', it is a subjective rather than an objective designation. It is not their original purpose and significance that turn these works into monuments, but rather our modern perception of them.<sup>24</sup>

Restoration to the original state has a strong element of aesthetic preferences as the principle of unity is considered one of the main elements of architectural beauty in a building. During the Renaissance antique art and its forms were considered as the only true and objectively correct ones for all time. The relics of antiquity were seen as a stimulus to reconstruct ancient grandeur. The nineteenth century's desire for 'purity of style' was inherited from these classical tastes. The aim was to return medieval structures to a state that could rival, or surpass, ancient monuments. Riegl claims that this point of view was normative, authoritative, and hence antique-medieval, but not historical in the modern sense of the term, since it does not recognize development.<sup>25</sup> According to Riegl, unintentional monuments, which were specific to Western culture were strongly associated with nationalist sentiment, while age value knows no borders.

The fascination for the 'shiny new' is central in 'Modern Cult of Monuments'. Generally, only new and whole things tend to be considered beautiful, while the old, fragmented, and faded are thought to be ugly. As this is rooted in thousands of years of perception, newness value is the most formidable opponent of age value. The entire nineteenth-century practice of preservation rested essentially on the historical value and newness value: 'the aim was to remove every trace of natural decay, to restore every fragment to achieve the appearance of an integral whole', writes Riegl.<sup>26</sup>

Some 50 stave churches were still standing in Norway in the 1850s, and thirty years later the number of stave churches had almost halved, to 27.<sup>27</sup> Several stave churches were rebuilt or demolished, because they were too dark or too small to be used as parish churches. In addition, the old stave churches were not in agreement with the contemporary *Kunstwollen*: Riegl explains: 'Nineteenth-century preservation of monuments rested essentially on the two premises of the originality of style (its historical value) and the unity of style (its newness-value).'<sup>28</sup>

In the 1950s and 60s, Bergen City Council decided to demolish old wooden houses in Rosesmuggrenden, an area in the city center, in order to build roads and residential blocks. In Bjerknes' work with protecting these small, wooden houses from demolition, he experienced that newness value often destroys what should be preserved in old buildings:

When you enter one of the old, modernized houses in Rosesmuggrenden, it feels like you are entering a completely new flat. The floors have been leveled, the walls and ceilings are totally flat. In a way they are well-preserved, pleasant houses, but it is a shame how little has been done to preserve their age value.<sup>29</sup>

However, it is important to point out that Riegl acknowledges that a monument also relates to contemporary values, like use and aesthetic enjoyment. Adherents of age value, therefore, have to tolerate a certain degree of newness value in historic buildings that have use value:

Take, for example, an apartment building on a busy street; we would expect it to be occupied. If it is uninhabited and abandoned, it tends to create the distressing impression of actual destruction.<sup>30</sup>

Fundamental to ICOMOS charters that guide global heritage conservation practices, is the notion that a monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in which it occurs. Relocation is unacceptable unless this is the sole practical means of ensuring its survival. This was the case in Bergen, where large areas in the city center were destroyed after an explosion in 1944. Some houses were so severely damaged that they were condemned by the authorities and had to be demolished. These wooden buildings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were transported to an area just outside Bergen, where they provided the basis for the Old Bergen open-air museum, which opened in 1946 (Figure 3). Bjerknes recalls:

Even if trusses were broken, walls were destroyed, and windows and doors were smashed to pieces, everything was still there. These houses were measured up, dismantled, and moved to Old Bergen where they today constitute the core collection of our museum.<sup>31</sup>

Shortly after the war, the Norwegian Museum Association held an annual meeting where Bjerknes gave a lecture on 'The theory and practice of measuring, dismantling and moving old buildings.' Here he explained how to transfer the theory of age value to museum work. The Director of the Norwegian Folk Museum summarized his arguments as follows:



**Figure 3.** Old Bergen Museum. Photo: Author.



Instead of obsessing about the building's original state, he emphasized respect for the history of the house, including additions and alterations, imperfections, wear and tear, all of the things that tell us about the personal life of the house as generations have come and gone. And instead of right-angled uniformity, which doesn't differentiate between a house marked by the ages and a new-build, he demanded that houses should be moved as carefully as possible in order to preserve their character. He showed that it is possible to make choices about what you want to preserve, and still manage to transfer most of the age value that gave the house its unique quality in its original setting to the open-air museum.<sup>32</sup>

Fett writes in his memoirs during the Second World War that Europe is still fighting against the destruction of age value and the influence of Viollet-le-Duc.<sup>33</sup> The reconstruction of historic buildings and historic towns was against the established guidelines for conservation and restoration. This situation was summarized in a meeting at Perugia in 1948, by Guglielmo De Angelis d'Ossat, then Director General of Antiquities and Fine Arts. He divided war damage to historic buildings into three categories: 1. limited damage, which could be repaired with reasonable efforts; 2. major damage and 3. practically destroyed. The challenge was the second category. The opinions tended to go in two directions: either reconstruction in the previous form, or reconstruction in a form that did not copy, but conserved what was left, allowing for reinterpretation of the lost parts,<sup>34</sup> which was the case in Old Bergen Museum. De Angelis d'Ossat, who became one of the principal partners in the development of international training courses at ICCROM, was a member of the committee that awarded the European preservation prize to Bjerknes in 1979.

Bjerknes argued that age value adds an extra quality of life in a residential area, and that the approach of Old Bergen Museum could be of practical value when adapting older houses to contemporary use. For Bjerknes, a fruitful dialogue with the owners of the houses in *Rosesmuggrenden* was a prerequisite for the preservation of the individual houses and the surrounding area. A street network was formed, and Bjerknes had the homeowners' support when he took up the battle to convince the 'progress-friendly' municipal politicians to protect the residential area from being demolished. This might be the first time an architect in Norway managed to get the backing of a whole district for the preservation of a vulnerable built environment. Bjerknes considered the houses in the area to be of historic interest, and he worked to reconcile their age value with their use value. The Danish architectural historian Harald Langberg, who was one of the co-signers of the Venice Charter in 1964, recalls:

At a time when all over Europe it was almost taken for granted that in large cities wooden buildings had to give way to ones made of bricks, he managed to preserve *Rosesmuggrenden* as a habitable district while protecting its historical architectural value and attempting to make it a better place to live.<sup>35</sup>

## The Venice Charter and the concept of authenticity

'Authenticity' which is a key term in Riegl's theory, is emphasized in the introduction of the Venice Charter's statement on historic monuments: 'It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity.' Riegl explains the meaning of the term by referring to historical value and newness value:

Even a modern approximation of the original seemed to be more satisfactory to the adherents of historical value than an authentic addition or alteration in a different style. Newness-value entered into historical consideration insofar as one wished to restore the monuments to its original, self-sufficient appearance. Additions in different styles were thought to distract from the monument's integrity and were considered symptoms of decay. From this postulate of stylistic unity, entire sections were constructed that never existed in the original or large parts were removed so as to restore the monument to its supposed original style.<sup>36</sup>

According to Article 11 of the Charter: 'The valid contributions of all periods to the building of a monument must be respected, since unity of style is not the aim of a restoration.' Article 3 of the Charter emphasizes: 'The intention in conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as works of art than as historical evidence.'

Bjerknes' restoration of Kaupanger stave church (c. 1140) on the northern shore of Sognefjorden, was regarded by the international committee in 1979 as an exemplary restoration work. In Article 9 of the Venice Charter, as in the Athens Charter, the notion of 'restoration' does not mean to restore a monument to its original state, but rather to uncover and frame in age values that possess unique historical and aesthetic qualities:

The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and in this case moreover any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp. The restoration in any case must be preceded and followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument.

In 1862 the architect Frederik Hannibal Stockfleth modernized the exterior and interior of Kaupanger stave church in a neo-Gothic style (Figure 4), but without notable interference with the stave church's structure and details. The walls were painted white and the neo-Gothic windows caused the interior to be flooded with light. The installations and additions from the Renaissance and Baroque periods were removed from the church. In the 1950s, Kaupanger stave church was still in use, and it had to be insulated for it to retain its function as a parish church. The Renaissance and Baroque fixtures, which were preserved in the village, were decisive for Bjerknes' decision to black out the neo-Gothic windows, and remove the overpainted layers from the 1600s decoration on the wall planks. He exposed the roof structure in the chancel, which was intended to be visible from the church, and brought the rich heritage from the Renaissance and Baroque back into the medieval space they had once been a part of. Bjerknes described the subdued daylight that seeped in through the new leaded windows as 'an invitation to enrich the interior'<sup>37</sup> (Figure 5).

If any artifacts deserve the highest regard by virtue of their decorum, then it is ecclesiastical ones, which require complete integrity of form and color [...] the supporters of age-value must recognize the ecclesiastical requirement of a certain degree of newness-value insofar as the use-value of monuments must be preserved.<sup>38</sup>

Riegl's statements is mirrored in the Venice Charter. According to Article 11, the removal of later additions in order to reveal an underlying state or layer can be justified under exceptional circumstances when the material which is brought to light is of great historical or aesthetic value. Riegl argues that in a restoration work, age value and newness value, which represent two contradictory concepts, must be kept separate. According to



**Figure 4.** Kaupanger stave church. Stockfleth's neo-Gothic modernization. The ridge turret was added in 1672. Photo: National Library of Norway.

Article 12 of the Charter, any replacements of missing parts should integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time being identifiable. Bjerknes performs a 'differentiated restoration' where the new work is compatible with, but distinguishable from, historic parts of the building, that is, the 'old' stands out from the 'new'. In this way the newness value and age value establish a mutual relationship in which they both complement and emphasize each other. In order to maintain continuity between the 'old' and 'new', he uses traditional building materials and craftsmanship, which over time will become part of an organic whole, and themselves constitute part of the age value. The cladding of Kaupanger stave church shows how Bjerknes wanted to underline the



**Figure 5.** Kaupanger stave church. The chancel columns and the alter piece. Photo: Micha L. Rieser, Wikipedia.no.

contrast between a severe, plain and uncompromising exterior and a rich, animated interior (Figure 6).

As a long-time board member of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Norwegian Monuments, Bjerknes played an important role in contemporary conservation debate. He took part in the investigations of Urnes stave church from the late 1940s onwards, and was in charge of the conservation work on the church. In conjunction with the 125th Anniversary of the preservation society in 1969, the head of the society used the term ‘age value’ when he referred to the conservation of the church:

Within this society, is there not a perennial feud between the leadership and the Bergen department about Urnes stave church, our holiest of holy properties? At some point in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, some local bigwig attacked the interior with an axe, cutting through a couple of load-bearing columns to make space for his chair, and then patched up the failing structure with diagonal braces [Figure 7] and awful things like that. An act of pure vandalism that spoils the architectural experience; but it happened a long time ago and tells a story. Age value and the Bergen department have thus far come out on top.<sup>39</sup>

Urnes stave church, which was not in use, should be conserved. Bjerknes was therefore highly restrictive about removing historical additions or alterations. Norwegian timber buildings built of pine in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries have survived with most of the original members intact. This is partly due to well selected timber, which is seasoned by different techniques in order to increase the section of the heartwood before a tree was felled. In addition the climate together with the design, must be considered as contributing to the long life of the buildings.<sup>40</sup>

In the European Architectural Year in 1975, Bjerknes emphasized that ‘age value is more ephemeral than most people realize – it is so delicate and can so easily be lost’.<sup>41</sup> Stressing the importance of the age value ‘and respecting it, is the best way to avoid



**Figure 6.** Kaupanger stave church. Exterior view after Bjerknes’ restoration (1959-65). Photo: Bjørn Erik Pedersen. Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage Database.



**Figure 7.** Urnes stave church. Nave seen towards the east. Photo: Axel Lindahl, Norsk Folkemuseum.

mistakes in conservation and restoration'.<sup>42</sup> The word 'authenticity' that appears in the preamble of the Venice Charter was 'introduced without fanfare, without definition, without any sense of the debates that will swirl around its use and meaning in the conservation world twenty-five years later', writes Herb Stovel in the foreword to *Nara Conference on Authenticity* (1994).<sup>43</sup> Today authenticity is a challenging term closely connected to conservation ethics, characterized both by high expectations and by a kind of 'shimmering vagueness'.<sup>44</sup>

## Summary

This article has discussed Alois Riegl's 'Modern Cult of Monuments' as a theory underpinning practical conservation and restoration work. Riegl's use of commemorative values and present-day values form a cognitive framework and a platform for understanding and formulating opinions that underpin various choices of solutions in the treatment of cultural heritage. Historic buildings with use value are not just monuments. They have a function that imposes requirements that change over time, and these requirements cut across cultural heritage considerations and inherited age values. One of the roles of the antiquarian or architect is to weigh up practical needs against the building's status as cultural heritage. Another one is to implement new additions in a way that harmoniously frames the age values of old buildings and environments.

Riegl's heritage values and concepts have been analyzed in the light of the preservation work of the Norwegian architect Kristian Bjercknes, who has attracted international attention for his preservation of wooden buildings. His work illustrates how Riegl's age value

theory can be used for a wide variety of building types and situations. He applied it as a strategy for conservation and restoration work and in adapting architectural heritage to modern living conditions. In addition he transferred the theory to museum work and to the rebuilding of demolished buildings. Bjercknes preservation work illustrates how theory and practice are intertwined.

The process of restoration as defined in the Venice Charter, is a highly specialized operation, and it is crucial to use appropriate terminology that defines the type of intervention required. The term ‘authenticity’ was introduced in the preamble of the Venice Charter without definition, because most of those involved in writing the Charter shared similar response to conservations problems. They followed the guidelines that runs from Ruskin and Morris, via Riegl, to the Athens Charter and the Venice Charter. It is against this background one can understand that Bjercknes was guided by the principles in the Venice Charter, years before it was written.

## Notes

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## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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