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Framing Fragments

Architectural Montage as Critical Preservation

As an object of cultural heritage, the fragment poses itself as a challenge for the preservationist imperative to the complete. The element of absence inherent in the fragment complicates the idea of heritage as representation. By framing its buildings as fragments the paper explores the architectural montage "Bungalow Germania" and its potential to question the representational power of architecture. The montage can be seen as an experimental preservationist intervention which shifts the meaning of the buildings from representations of grand ideologies into slippery ambiguous signifiers. By creating a representational void, the performative potential of the fragment in narrating architectural heritage is here foregrounded. With its privileged access to the flesh of the fragment, preservation might thus hold promise of a creative just as much as a restorative field of practice.

The strategy of montage

As artistic strategy the montage frames the signifier as discursive and dialectical: "The dialectical mission is to fuse fragments as concentrated form; the discursive one is to create fissures or interruptions in the established order"[1]. Well-known from Avant-garde and Modernist art, montage refers to how different elements are joined or juxtaposed in order to form a new whole and meaning. Deeply connected to the experience of modern urbanity, montage has been used as both experimental artistic expression (from dada to constructivist art), as cultural comment and critique (Walter Benjamins' *The Arcades Project* uses montage as approach to a new historiography [2]) as well as architectural principle (1920s Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein indeed saw montage as an essentially spatial form, where in the architectural path "the spectator moved through a series of carefully disposed phenomena".)[3] In the montage, the fragment becomes a main figure: "Montage deploys all the techniques of allegory: the depletion of previous meanings and the formulation of new ones by the appropriation and dialectical juxtaposition of fragments set in a new context. It is a procedure in which one 'text' is read through another."[4] The dialectic relation of fragments in this way unveils the seams of narratives and representations as potentially unstable. It puts meaning into motion, and the friction occurring in framing fragments, where one "text" is read through the other, calls forth another important aspect of the montage – the constructive role of the interpreter. As Michael Newman writes, montage "allows for the constitution of subject positions which are dynamically entered into, or even repudiated by the viewer/reader/interpreter, who participates with the "author" in the creation of the work."[5] In this way, the convenience of reading signs as fixed representations is interrupted. The mutual framing of fragments within a montage creates what Eisenstein called a *Tertium Quid* – a third indefinite whole bigger than the sum of its parts[6]. While still making the composite parts identifiable, montage is an editing and layering of fragments and a thus a methodological process which also enters the field of architecture. Hence, in the installation Bungalow Germania, the montage can be seen not only as an artistic intervention but as an experimental principle of preservation. That is, preservation where editing and layering of historical architecture is not happening from an objective of care and repair but from one concerned with modification and assemblage of histories through intervention into architectural heritage. Arguably, it is within the discourse of experimental preservation that montage as an artistic strategy becomes a principle of preservation.

Experimental Preservation

To be experimental regarding the preservation of highly valuable objects has rarely been seen as an asset. Such objects are more likely expected to be handled with care and that by an expert. In this regard experimentation comes forth as a threat, which itself holds a clue about how the role of preservation has often been perceived. Nevertheless, experimentation is proposed as the game changing approach within preservation in the book *Experimental Preservation*.[7] With contributions by Jorge Otero-Pailos, Erik Fenstad Langdalen and Thordis Arrhenius it is, emblematically, a conversational book that performs a manifesto-like discussion in between case studies, with the aim of exploring preservation as a self-reflexive practice. "The starting point is doubt"[8] as Otero-Pailos states, and with that the book positions itself as a critical alternative to what it defines as "the long-standing identity of preservation with the governmental protection of cultural objects, and the largely unquestioned narrative that preservation bureaucracies always act for the common good."[9] What was a threat is turned into an operational doubt. When occupying the experimental as a position that both conceptually and practically tests what is relevant knowledge to preservation, the possibility for widening the frames of what it means to preserve has been given. Experimental preservation is therefor also interdisciplinary preservation, the preservationist being both an insider and an outsider to this field. In order to provide a lens that enables the figure of the

Fig. 1　　　Pollution as cultural heritage. Latex cast of more than one-hundred years of accumulated pollution on a chimney of the Old United States Mint, questioning our expectations to what the notion of heritage can contain. Artwork from the series Ethics of Dust by Jorge Otero Pailos. © 2021 Studio Otero-Pailos.

fragment to come forth as a quality in and of itself within preservation, a reinterpretation of two fundamentals of this field is useful: how preservation defines its object and its tool of intervention.

Object

A common understanding might be that preservationists work on objects already intrinsically defined as heritage. This has long positioned the preservationist as technical doers possessing the expert knowledge necessary to practice the care and respect required towards the heritage object. Whereas the experimental preservationist might choose objects that are already canonical or enrolled in what Laurajane Smith has termed the

Fig. 2　　　Ethics of Dust by Jorge Otero Pailos. © 2021 Studio Otero-Pailos.

Authorised Heritage Discourse[10] – referring to the governmental and official choices of heritage that current generations "must" care for – the experimental approach to such sites would attempt to make the preservationist's work visible as discursive. The aim is to discover new latencies and to show that preservation in its protective sense is a strategic amplifying of its object as heritage. Unlike many modernist architects that also had the experiment to an end itself, the experimental preservationist uses experimental, artistic and creative strategies with the aim to test their object's potential as heritage.[11] The act of testing the cultural object here becomes the preservation work itself. Consequently, preservation becomes a way of overtly co-creating the heritage object or asking about its potential as such.

Intervention

Intervention has always been a key act in the preservationist's toolbox, and much preservation theory has consequently revolved around the degree to which intervention is appropriate and how. Likewise, intervention is a key element for the experimental preservationist. While intervention in its traditional understanding is highly associated with care and maintenance, an experimental approach needs intervention to actively que-

Fig. 3   Helmuth Kohl's car staged in front of the facade of the German Pavilion. Bungalow Germania. Alex Lehnerer and Savvas Ciriacidis. © Bas Princen.

stion our relation to a given object. Whereas intervention in a more conventional understanding has had an affirmative aim in seeking to uphold a certain meaning reserved for an object, the experimental approach intervenes in order to test the interpretive boundaries for an object, sometimes to the extent of collapse of meaning[12]. Within this understanding preservation becomes a practice that uses intervention in order to explore the illusory aspects of heritage and to question it as a self-explanatory given. Unlike textual and discourse analytical critique of this, the experimental preservationist uses physical intervention as a way of touching the realm of experience as a route to question architecture as testimony. Consequently, the experimental paradigm uses intervention not from an objective of care and maintenance but to play with boundaries, modification, re-contextualization and contrasting. It is in this way that the architectural montage can be seen not only as artistic practice but as part of an interventionist tool of experimental preservation practice.

Framing fragments - Bungalow Germania

The three-dimensional architectural montage Bungalow Germania is suggestive of how such a play with re-contextualization and contrasting produces fragmentary qualities which provi-

des the condition for the performance of new meanings. As the German contribution to the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2014, Bungalow Germania was created by architects Alex Lehnerer and Savvas Ciriacidis. It brought together two buildings with overtly political pasts: The German Pavilion in the Giardini della Biennale in Venice itself, the other a 1:1 partial replica of the Chancellor's Bungalow (Kanzlerbungalow) in Bonn, cross cutting the German Pavilion, creating a montage of two architectural languages and histories.[13] The fragment is here not to be understood as a found historical fragment. Instead, the Kanzlerbungalow is a constructed fragment, which in turn grants fragmentary qualities to the pavilion by juxtaposing it to the Kanzlerbungalow in the new whole of the montage. Although being a replica, the Kanzlerbungalow lends the historical and political meaning residing in the original in Bonn, thereby playing with connotations rather than authenticity. In the installation the fragment thus takes the form of both material and narrative fragment.

Originally constructed as the Bavarian Pavilion in 1909 by Daniele Donghi, the German Pavilion came into its current name in 1912. However, its architectural styles and meanings have changed throughout history and was fundamentally remodelled in 1938

by the architect Ernst Haiger, whose design language was that of neoclassicism commonly used during Nazi Germany.[14] With its massive pillars, symmetry and clearly defined entrance it was in line with national socialist aesthetics and formulated a statement of power in stone, communicating a message of subordination to its visitor. In 1964 the pavilion went through its last significant renovation, where a wall and dropped ceilings were removed in order to make a central space with more light.[15] Its political history has recurrently sparked controversy of the future fate of the pavilion, some curators and public voices advocating for demolition.[16] Exhibits have therefor increasingly shown awareness of the space as a historical setting and not just as backdrop for exhibitions.[17]

Intersecting with the Pavilion is a partial replica of the Kanzlerbungalow in Bonn. The former German Chancellor's official residence and workplace was built in 1964 by architect Sep Ruf, as Bonn was the capital of West Germany.[18] According to modernist American ideals, the building has transparency, clarity and simplicity as its architectural language built with massive glass windows to view the wide vistas of its surroundings. Built to reflect a new democratic beginning, the Kanzlerbungalow was just as well raised on a political fundament. At the time of erection West Germany strived for integrating the idea of the European welfare state along the lines of growth and collective prosperity. Just as much as it was the governmental headquarter, the Bungalow was framed as the "living room of the nation" in its branding towards the public.

Fig. 4   Kanzlerbungalow, Bonn. 1979. © Bundesarchiv.

Fig. 5   Closed off to the public the paradoxical name of "The nation's living room" gained a public life through staging of photographic representations. Coalition talks between the SPD and FDP in the Chancellor's Bungalow. 1972. © Bundesregierung. Foto: Ludwig Wegmann.

Despite the democratic ideal of transparency and its living room metaphor, the building was hidden away by the Rhine River with a facade inaccessible to the public. A defining feature of the function of the building has in this way always been its circulation and reproduction through other mediums in public. The building was de-functionalised and soon slipped into oblivion as Berlin became the capital of Germany in 1999.[19] Originally built as the architectural answer to new ideals, the Bungalow entered a phase of reformulation of its meaning but is now an officially listed building for its style and political history and a visitor attraction.[20]

Both the German Pavilion and the Bungalow are directly built to reflect German and West German national identity at two different points in history and, although different, to reflect political ideals. Having trespassed the threshold of becoming historical, the buildings have gained the fragmentary quality of trace in the absence of their original context. Simultaneously however, they still possess the poignancy of their representational power from the past. In the case of the German Pavilion to an extent where it is perceived as an unbroken signifier, where a demolition or change of the building would keep its history at bay. The Kanzlerbungalow on the other hand is actively chosen and preserved as heritage. In the work of Bungalow Germania, the buildings are framed by each other as fragments of a larger political history by using the artistic strategy of montage. Each building becomes the frame, a stage, through which the fragmentary quality of the other is created and exhibited. Consequently, the buildings enter a representational void offering new latencies to negotiate.

Architectural montage as critical preservation

Most often used with two-dimensional mediums like photography and film, the montage of Bungalow Germania is a large-scale three-dimensional architectural montage. With its modernist simplicity and glass facades the replica intersects with the bombastic white stone walls and high ceilings of the pavilion. Like a typical Venetian palazzo, the pavilion has its strongest footing under the façade. Going through the ten-meter-high portico of the pavilion, visitors are met with the low and warm wooden ceiling of the bungalow. Already upon encounter the façade of the pavilion thus contrasts the plane surfaces of the Bungalow. A building type on the contrary alien to Venice, the Kanzlerbungalow is now strangely raised from the ground in its integration into the pavilion, creating a clash between horizontal and vertical architecture – structures that are both representative of the political systems they were built to reference. The famous wide panorama windows of the bungalow, originally connotative of the ideal of transparency, now offers a blocked vista. Disrupted by the white stone walls of the pavilion they have become an undetermined object. The fireplace of the bungalow has likewise been fenced off by stone walls on one side and the central exhibition space on the other, whereas the living room and an outdoor area surrounds it in the original setting. A clash is furthermore found in the respective material aesthetics employed in each building. Here the wooden walls and ceiling of the bungalow contrasts the clinical stone walls of the pavilion, radiating warmth and cold. Moving into the central patio of the bungalow, the space opens to the ceiling of the pavilion. Normally a space under the open sky, the patio has now been framed by the pavilions monumental high roof and becomes an exhibition space. Not only do two buildings meet, but also two types of spaces intersect in the installation. One intentionally massive and monumental and the other intimate and domestic. In this way the montage positions the materials and different building parts in contrasts to each other. Simultaneously the two different architectures grant each other new properties. By positioning the different architectural elements in new constellations, the functions intended for them are disrupted. The monumental and vertical space of the pavilion has been granted a fireplace and been crossed cut with wooden panels, and the panorama windows of the bungalow no longer offers a view while the patio of the building has a roof. As with montage the composite

parts are identifiable while at the same time intersecting and layering. Each building become fragments of their original intentions and functions – while making the gesture of exhibiting each other. Exhibited is the fragility of political narratives and their dependence on having a language in architecture.

On a closer look the installation is not only creating the fissures and ruptures of a montage, however. The neat arrangement and clear orchestration of lines also creates a strange harmony between the buildings. By having another piece of architecture built into it, the pavilion is not only a backdrop for exhibiting art. It is itself exhibited as architecture, which enforces its political and historical dimensions. Likewise, the Kanzlerbungalow is positioned in a broader history of ideologically connoted architecture, thereby questioning the conviction that transparency equals democratic architecture. The boundaries between the actual representative potency of each building and the very process of exhibiting architecture are dissolved, creating an absurd irony to the installation. The discursive element of the montage of interrupting established order is thus brought forth by a double play on contrast and unity. Unity is here not only a visual matter but is created from a strange levelling of the

buildings where the hierarchisation of them is eliminated. Both buildings operate from rather simple architectural languages, making the installation somewhat easily read. Yet, the fragmentation brings about an uncanny tension positioning them in the spectrum between the familiar and unfamiliar, releasing the question of what meaning architecture holds when its functions and embedded metaphors are disturbed.

Montage in its three-dimensional form here intertwines the grand narratives of 20th century German and European ideologies with the intimate experience of their spaces. Montage is here an experimental preservationist intervention in so far as preservation should also care for the continuous and unsolvable intellectual labour that having a heritage comes with. Representational space is not entirely dissolved but the overlap of chronologies and narratives brings about a shift from what the buildings represent to the gesture of reading them itself. In the form of the fragment architectural heritage in this case comes forth as an existential condition, more than something to be chosen or discarded of. Despite a lean aesthetics of wood and stone the installation points at the porous nature of the relation between materiality and meaning. If the "Tertium Quid" of the montage becomes a

Fig. 6   Bungalow Germania. Alex Lehnerer and Savvas Ciriacidis. © Bas Princen.

Fig. 7   Bungalow
Germania. Alex Lehnerer and
Savvas Ciriacidis. © Bas Princen.

**From architectural
representation to the
performative fragment**

The *performative* is a nomadic concept
and has been employed within several
disciplines. Generally, it refers to mea-
ning as specific to context and insepa-
rable from the enactment of it.[21] The
concept is anchored in J. L. Austin's
conception of rhetorical performativi-
ty as put forth in his 1975 book *How to
Do Things with Words*[22]. Here speech is
suggested as inseparable from the social
enactment of what is being said, thereby
stressing the social effect and the speech
act itself as significant. With the perfor-
mative turn in the humanities and social
sciences in the 1990's, the focus on the
performative came as reaction against
the explanation of social life through
symbolic and textual representations.[23]

principle of preservation, its concepti-
on of heritage can lastly be articula-
ted through the notion of the perfor-
mative.

Similar to the idea that social identity
is of fluid nature, the performativity of
architecture and space refers to how its
meanings are formed in moments of en-
counter, stressing its phenomenal quali-
ties and interrelatedness to its users. Ar-
chitects Helle Juul and Flemming Frost
define the performative space as a *space
of activity* contrasting what they term re-
presentational space. They sum up fur-
ther: "*The performative accordingly con-
sists of getting something to happen, of
providing the occasion for something to
occur*".[24] In her book Uses of Heritage,
Laurajane Smith introduces the con-
cept of performativity in relation to he-
ritage. As she notes on performativity "*it
reinforces the idea that heritage is not a
passive subject of management and con-
servation or tourist visitation – but rat-
her an active process engaged with the
construction and negotiation of mea-
ning through remembering*".[25] Frost and
Juuls' definition combined with Smith's
indicates how reflection and negotiation
could also be seen as "occurrence".

The slippery and ephemeral nature of the performative is exactly what gives it critical potential and makes it a strategy within spatial practices like architecture and preservation, as it leaves space for meaning to fluctuate demanding its spectator to grasp it. Artist and architect Vito Acconci specifically ponders the relation between the performative and architecture in its fragmentary form. According to him, space that is presented as complete leaves the viewer with the option to relive the space, which for him belongs to the domain of fiction, the impulse being preservation which he categorises as conservative. On the other hand, if space is presented as incomplete, what is left for the user is "to try out space, attempt the space – this is the domain of essay, the impulse is change (radical)."[26] Acconci presents a lens through which to ponder the effects of montage as an incomplete, unscripted and thereby performative space.

Whether modern simplicity and democratic outlook or classical grandeur and subordination, the "complete", non-montaged versions of the German Pavilion and the Kanzlerbungalow respectively embody intentional architectural scripts for their users to enact. On a more general level Acconci argues how architecture is inherently a totalitarian activity, as the design of space is a design of people's behaviour.[27] Turning the two architectural languages into scripts with erasures in the montage however, moments of uncertainty are produced. These moments are performative in the sense of addressing our own expectations of space as regulated and predictable. The breaks in the "totalitarian" reproduction of the body here releases a performative space to inhabit as well as an unpleasant

Fig. 7   Bungalow Germania. Alex Lehnerer and Savvas Ciriacidis. © Bas Princen.

Fig. 7   Bungalow Germania. Alex Lehnerer and Savvas Ciriacidis. © Bas Princen.

awareness of the connection between authoritative and smooth space.

With Acconci's dichotomy of complete/incomplete space in mind we are faced with two buildings that separately represent a complete piece of historical architecture. With Acconci's words we can relive them, and by that be faced with the wish to preserve or demolish, very much reflecting the social reality of the buildings outside of the montage. Being brought into incompletion and fragments the buildings invite for a re-articulation – now in the domain of the essay – what can arguably no longer be a question of good or bad heritage. As visitor one is left to scrutinize the morals of having uncomfortable heritage in use and to question what happens if this is erased or replaced. Likewise, the Kanzlerbungalow is not only referring to its own history but enters a history of political architecture through its juxtaposition to the Pavilion. It is a juxtaposition which brings the awareness towards how this history is upheld by a hierarchisation with the selection and amplification of some buildings at the expense of others. This question is intrinsic to the Kanzlerbungalow itself which fell into oblivion after the shift of the German capital from Bonn to Berlin in 1999 and its later return as actively preserved heritage object for the public to visit.

Being planned as exhibition Bungalow Germania is inevitably itself a designed and intentional space. However, in planning with a release of a conceptual layer through the principle of juxtaposition and fragmentation, the montage becomes a principle of preservation where architectural heritage is not merely passed on to future generations. Rather, the historical object comes forth in the figure of the fragment, inviting us to perform a question regarding our faith and doubt in representations as markers of collective identity. Although contrasting in architectural language and combining site-specificity with a replica, its Tertium Quid seems not defined by difference and opposition solely. Evoked is an uncanny experience of how seemingly mutually exclusive spaces somehow depend on or are interrelated, just as we thought they were not. In fact, the encounter with the fragmentary here seems as a reminder of the latent instability of architectural representations at any given time, as these are caught up in mutual dependencies in maintaining representational order and hierarchisation. By framing the buildings as fragments, the perceiver must enact the transitional condition of ontological uncertainty that all buildings now perceived as "historical" have gone through at some point. Rather than operating from resolution and completion, preservation might look for its interventionist leitmotif in the fragment. This would be preservation when not only dealing with culturally significant objects, but itself becoming a self-reflexive practice significant to culture.

Anmerkungen:

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