



28th Conference of the Working Group of German and Polish Art Historians and Conservators

Mainz, 24. – 26.09.2020

Organiser :

Institute of Architecture, Hochschule Mainz – University of Applied Sciences

Institute of Art History and Musical Sciences, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

Venue:

LUX — Pavillon der Hochschule Mainz | Ludwigsstraße 2, 55116 Mainz

Visualization of historical conditions in the digital age: Opportunities and Challenges for Art History and Historic Building Conservation

The *Working Group of German and Polish Art Historians and Conservators* hold their annual meetings alternately, either in Poland or Germany, to discuss the interplay between their respective art histories and regions with shared cultural heritage. With this year's conference in Mainz, Germany, we are returning to where the *Working Group* first met in 1988. We are going to discuss computer-based visualisation and its related opportunities and challenges in the context of Digital Humanities.

The image-based or graphic representation of an object of study is the central point of interest for those scholarly disciplines that focus on physical objects. This holds particular relevance for art history, architecture and historic building conservation. Image as a medium is vital for those who formulate research questions and explore research problems. On one hand, it allows the visual documentation of a historic building in its current condition, and it also often serves as a basis for its interpretation. On the other, it can also be used for the reconstruction of a building in its historic condition, thereby creating a *virtual reality*. These images may increasingly facilitate access to a particular building, allow its thorough analysis and documentation and the dissemination of related findings. However, they fail to fully capture the building's material and aesthetic "reality". As a result, carriers of visual information have become an object of study and critique from art historians.

With the rapid development of technology in the twentieth century, image as a medium of information has become ever more widespread. Ubiquitous both in science and society, it has also given rise to concepts such as *iconic turn* or *media society*. The triumphant advancement of information and communication technologies and digital images paved the way for this development, the implications of which could easily be compared to the invention of moveable type in the fifteenth century. The printing press revolutionised access to knowledge and the distribution of information, while the invention of photography and offset printing gave rise to the triumphant advancement of images in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Art historians and historic building conservators and restorers were relatively swift in harnessing the potential of these new advances in technology for their own purposes. They utilised it for teaching and methodology, and as a medium for publication. However, they were also quite oblivious to the issues of methodology and interpretation, and the challenges they posed to the *reality* of buildings represented in images. This fundamental problem is only aggravated in the *digital era* of today, which brings new opportunities not only for documentation, but also manipulation. Since the 1990s, the rapid development of information and communication technologies has paved the way for far-reaching transformation. This *digital change* has engendered new forms of visualisation such as 2D, 3D and 4D, thereby broadening methodologies in particular fields of study and opening new dimensions not only for analysis, documentation or dissemination, but also manipulation. Visualisation opportunities are almost unlimited in the digital age, and this poses new challenges to scholarship. These challenges should be considered in the broad context of *open science* or *citizen science*.

The conference is focused on the questions and thematic complexes listed below. That said, the content of conference papers does not have to exclusively address the regions of *shared cultural heritage*. Case studies or comparative analyses are also welcome.

- Reflections on methodology and historiography and placing the development of *traditional visualisation* in time: traditional forms of the visualisation of buildings in their historic condition as a tool for teaching and methodology, and also as a medium of documentation and publication.
- Reflections on methodology and historiography and placing the development of *digital visualisation* in time: the widespread use of digital images (2D, 3D and 4D visualisations), digitality as an imitation of analogue qualities vs. digitality as a new dimension for the representation and dissemination of knowledge.
- Digital source criticism: ways with which to use sources harnessed for the creation of visualisation and providing access to these sources for users of visualisation; opportunities for further debate on the object of visualisation.

- Source-based digital 3D reconstruction as a new space for research: new computer-assisted methods and digital research environments/infrastructures, opportunities and challenges for scholarship (traceability and permanent access to digital research data) and knowledge transfer.
- New formats and new approaches to knowledge in the age of *open science* and *citizen science*: from digital image (pixel image) and 3D point cloud to *virtual reality*, *augmented reality* and *mixed reality*; photograph copyrights and licences, web-based repositories, open access to knowledge (*open science*) and citizen participation in knowledge creation and curatorial activities (*citizen science*).

Feel free to submit conference paper proposals (maximum length: 20 minutes) on the history of visualisation and its evolving forms in the context of ongoing *digital transformation*. A broad thematic framework of the conference (2D / 3D / 4D, AR / VR / MR) allows the examination of image as a medium and its rapidly changing forms from the 1990s until today, with a reference to established scholarship and the methodological underpinnings of particular disciplines. We particularly look forward to synthetic insights and interdisciplinary proposals which showcase both the innovative potential of digital technologies and the challenges they pose to the humanities. We will also accept case studies if they offer broader and problematised conclusions. The conference will be held in Mainz, where Johannes Gutenberg was born and worked. For this reason, we very much look forward to conference papers on the subject of computer-assisted access to knowledge (image-based) as opposed to printed knowledge.

The conference will be held in German and English. Apart from conference sessions (20 minutes), we are also going to organise an *information exchange* where you can showcase current individual or institutional projects focused on art history and historic building conservation in the context of artistic heritage in Central and North-eastern Europe (reports up to 10 minutes).

Feel free to send your conference paper proposal and reports (ca. 2,500 characters) and a short CV including your email and postal addresses along with a description of your current scholarly activity (max. 1,000 characters) **by 15th March 2020** to the following address:

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Programme Committee

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