NORDISK ARKITEKTURFORSKNING 1996:2

Application of the Venice Charter in the Restoration of the Parthenon

– Too much intellect, too little emotion?

by Anna-Maija Ylimaula

In this article the writer has made comparisons between the ongoing restoration of the Parthenon and the Venice Charter which was written in 1964. The conclusion is that advanced technology has given way to *anastylosis* with the help of new materials like the titanium. This difficult project serves as a model to many other restoration works, also in Scandinavia.

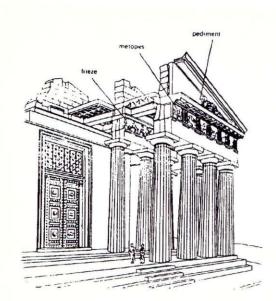
HEN I WAS DOING RESEARCH ON THE ELGIN MARBLES in the British Museum, at the Roman Greek department there was a Chinese scholar sitting on the other side of the desk. The discussion was not allowed in the research room, but during the coffee break my Chinese colleague, an archaeologist, asked me what I was studying and I told her, the restoration of the Parthenon. She sighed and said: – Well, I am not interested in such new things... – What do you mean, by new things, Parthenon? – Yes, it is only about 2500 years old, that is not very old, and restoration, it is quite a new thing, only a few hundred years old.

Maybe she was right about what is old and what is new, but in case of the Parthenon, its restoration history is nearly as old as the temple itself. The temple was built between years 447 and 432 BC and the first earthquake damaged it already in 426 BC and the damage was repaired and the temple restored shortly after.

Since year 1986 I have had the opportunity to follow the restoration of the Parthenon in Athens. As an outside researcher I am not taking stand to the actions and decisions made in this restoration work, I have only made comparisons with the Venice Charter. It is worthwhile to see how the Greek and the international specialists involved in this project are applying and interpreting the 32-yearold Charter of Venice. The present restoration of the Parthenon has now been going on over ten years and will evidently last until the next millennium before all twelve programs are carried out. The restoration of the Parthenon is highly demanding since it serves as a model to a multitude of other restoration projects all around the world. Whatever decisions are made in the restoration



Anna-Maija Ylimaula Uleåborgs Universitet Uleåborg, Finland



The original placement of the Parthenon sculptures. Drawings by A. Orlandos.

of the Parthenon revibrations from them are felt elsewhere. This has happened, for example, in the use of titanium, which is now being used in many other restoration works, one of those is Fontana di Trevi in Rome.

UNDE? QUO?

In my study I have tried to set this restoration work into a wider frame-work of conservation philosophy, so I am not trying to write a report on the restoration of the Parthenon, that is done and will be done by those who are actually involved in this project. Concepts like philosophy, cultural values, archetypes (both Jungian "primal image" and as Aby Warburg's "example" or

"model") interpretation and truthfulness, are to be considered in almost every restoration project.

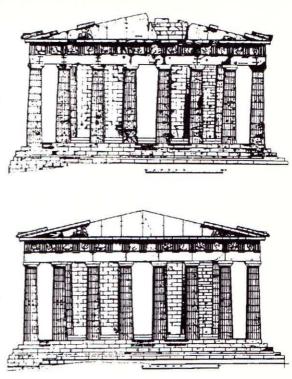
What are the responsibilities of the restoration architect? Why do we sometimes try to beautify histiory? Every restoration is a testing ground for principles, every conservation measure is a statement that touches upon cultural values and our understanding and interpretation of the past¹. It is so easy to repeat the high-minded ideals and theories of restoration, but they can be tested only in praxis. To keep alive the five aspects which Johannes Exner has pointed out² – building's originality, authenticity, identity, narrativity and reversibility – in every restoration work is ongoing rebellion of insticts.

The Belgian professor Raymond Lemaire, who was one of the writers of the Venice Charter, has reminded that the Charter was never intended as a dogma; the intention was rather to provide some basic principles which could be interpreted and even changed if time and circumstances showed the necessity for this³ This is being done in the restoration of the Parthenon. Whatever opinion one has about the Venice Charter, thanks to it restoration activities are no longer seen as a matter of duty but rather as a matter or honour in most countries around the world.

It is from this period on that a broader based international collaboration was started, including technical missions, campaigns, documentation and especially training. Although many countries had established their legislation for the protection of cultural heritage in the first decades of the century, the Venice Charter was a stimulus for their updating and completion.

writes *Jukka Jokilehto* in the conclusions of his doctoral thesis.⁴ I was moved by the speech which the Swedish professor *Ove*

Hidemark gave in a ICOMOS Conservation seminar in Helsinki in June -95. He wanted that old buildings should be treated as old people, one should try to understand and help them, not to change them. He also wanted that the old ones should be listened to, also old buildings, to what they tell (it is the narrativity of the building). And when I think of it, what it is that charms us in old buildings and monuments, I have to confess it is the genuine ageing of the material, age that is visible, age that can be touched and felt. It might also be the spirit of the place or the spirit of time, but there also is something that exceeds them both, something sublime, which carries trough generations the essence of the building. Style I see as the underlying philosophy, as a carrying idea that goes through the whole work of art5. Certain features of style, details or forms may be copied, but style cannot be copied, since



it presupposes authenticity.⁶ Architecture expresses values which transcend above time and place.

UBI? QUA?

According to German philosopher Martin Heidegger essence is something one cannot loose without becoming something else.⁷ Fani Mallouchou-Tufano, who is working in the Committee for the preservation of the Acropolis Monuments, says that "If we conserve the blocks, we conserve the essence of the monument" and she goes on "We think that the best way to safeguard these blocks is to place them back to their original places with the additions which are necessary for replacement. We know their original positions, we have almost complete knowledge of this part of the monument, this is why we proceed with anastylosis."⁸ The restoration of the Parthenon is in many aspects a question of **anastylosis**, reassembling of existing but dismembered parts. However this reassembling often requires also new marble or titanium for strengthening the structure.

RESCRIBO? RESPECTO?

The nature of the present restoration of the Parthenon is that of a rescue operation. It aims at the removal of the causes of the continuing detoriation, at the better conservation of the temple

Before the restoration of western facade. Drawing by M. Korres.

After the restoration of western facade. Drawing by M. Korres.

The Nara Document on Autenticity (Nov. 1994) was written in the spirit of the Venice Charter. It demands autenticity, but states that it is not possible to base judgement of value and autenticity on fixed criteria, since it depends on the cultural context to which it belongs. after the work has been completed and of the improvement of the value of this monument.

The introduction of the Venice Charter grants every country a responsibility for applying the principles within the framework of its own culture and traditions.⁹ This is found very important in the case of Parthenon by Professor Charalambos Bouras for three reasons¹⁰:

a) it is a monument of exceptional importance from every point of view b) the work is not now beginning: even in the theoretical sphere there exists a precedent that cannot be ignored c) the knowledge and interpretation of the Parthenon are unusually well advanced, and any consideration of the problems of the monument is correspondingly more complex.

Article I gives a definition to the concept of a historic monument. The restoration of the Parthenon follows this definition clearly. It

embraces not only the single architectural work, but also the setting, in which is found the evidence of this particular civilisatation. There are relics or ruins of 53 monuments on the hill and in the restoration of the Parthenon all other ruins are also taken into account, even the most modest ones. The Committee for the Restoration of the Acropolis at Athens was set up in 1975 and the conservation is now financed by the European Commission and UNESCO among others. The experiences gained from the restoration of the Erectheum, which was in most immediate need of restoration, are now in good use in the restoration of the Parthenon.

Article 2 demands that conservation and restoration of monuments must have recourse to all the sciences and techniques which can contribute to the study and safeguarding of the architectural heritage. This requirement is met by the international transdiciplinary meetings for the restoration of the Acropolis monuments.¹¹ This was also the case with the preliminary study and its evaluation. All plans of interventions have been open for inter- and transdiciplinary discussions.

Article 3 says that the intention of conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as works of art than as historical evidence.

This presupposes preservation of the authentic material evidence of historic objects and works of art. Professor Bouras sees that the proposals for improving the value of the Parthenon, both as a scientific-historical document and as a building of great artistic value, "obviously cover the requirements of the article"¹² In the Proposals for improving the value of the monument are a) improvement as a historical document b) as a work of art and c) as a functioning building.¹³ The last one includes also Parthenon as an educational monument and proposal to put casts in place of the sculptures that are now in museums.



If article three is understood so that the intention should be to preserve the authentic material evidence¹⁴, there is a clear contradiction. "This 'contradiciton' is latent in any restoration", writes Manolis Korres in Study for the Restoration of the Parthenon "and gives cause for concern only in the case of important, unique monuments like the Parthenon." – "When for whatever reasons, we redress them, we meddle with history and falsify the evidence."¹⁵ So the architect in charge of the work in situ is well aware of the problem.

RETINEO? REPONO?

Article 4 finds it essential to the conservation of monuments that they are maintained on a permanent basis.

This article is met in the proposals by the wish that the ruin should be made self-conserving. This means that the building would also protect itself. The ancient parts themselves, writes *Manolis Korres*, when restored (with either ancient of modern additions), will make it possible to conserve the monument properly and afford the building the required degree of protection.¹⁶ There is no doubt that in the case of Parthenon, conservation is maintained on a permanent basis. One of the new additions in order to protect the sculpture has been done in the east facade. The concrete copies were used in place of the authentic metopes between the triglyphs.¹⁷ One could say, without hesitation, that articles 1–4, that is the common definitions, are used as such also in the restoration of the Parthenon. Part of the eastern frieze of the Parthenon. Dionysos and Hermes on the right. 440 B. C. The British Museum. Photo by M. Putkonen. Article 5 reminds that "the conservation of monuments is always faciliated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose.

Such use is therefore desirable but it must not change the lay-out or decoration of the building. It is within these limits only that modifications demanded by a change of function should be envisaged and may be permitted.⁷⁸

Professor Bouras argues quite correctly that the proposals for the restoration of the Parthenon do no include any changes in the lay-out or the decoration of the temple, for obvious reasons.¹⁹ However, this conservation work makes the temple useful also socially, that is proven by the emphasis of the educational aspects of the restoration. The use of the concrete copies of the metopes was motivated by the educational purposes. Also the Charter has been criticised for this point:

Is it necessary that every conservation act has a socially useful purpose behind? How to define useful? Does it include the idea of free entrance to the monument? What is socially useful? According to Fani Mallouchou-Tufano:

The restorative part of the works responds to the new social demands of a more immediate appreciation and enjoyment of the monuments and their surroundings, as well as the growth of mass tourism and global mobility.²⁰

Social demands should however be in balance with the sensitiveness of the object in question.

Article 6 says that The conservation of a monument implies preserving a setting which is not out of scale. Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept. New construction, demolition or modification which would alter the relations of mass and colour must not be allowed.²¹

There already is a museum, which is built on the hill, a new one will be built on the Makryanni site in front of the hill. The design competition for this new museum was won by two Italian architects, Lucio Passarelli and Manfredi Nicoletti. Even though the setting of the Parthenon was slightly altered already when the pedestrian routes were built, they were absolutely necessary because of the steadily growing flow of the visitors. Professor Bouras firmly writes that

...in the case of the Parthenon there is no question of changing the general environment, but only the immediately surrounding space; for the last two centuries this has been filled with the dispersed architectural materia that it is now intended to organise and classify or to set in position on the building.²²

This is already causing contradictions in terms of the Venice Charter.

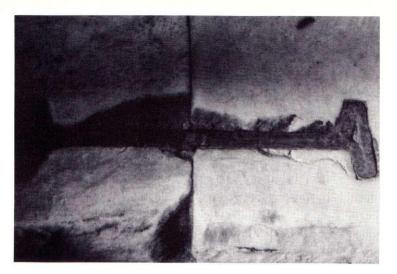


REPOSCO? REQUIRO?

Article 7 claims that a monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in which it occurs. The moving of all or part of a monument cannot be allowed except where the safeguarding of that monument demands it of where it is justified by national or international interests of paramount importance.²³ The wishes of this article were actually damaged already by Lord Elgin in 1801 when he took the parts of the frieze and the metopes along to England. Of the original 92 metopes there are only 18 left, 16 of them in the Duveen Gallery of the British Museum in London, one in Louvres in Paris and one on the Acropolis. Without trying to moralise upon Lord Elgins actions, the Greeks wish to have the marbles some day returned seems justified. For the British part the task is not quite so simple, requiring among other things a change in the law. Returning of the Elgin marbles might also lead to the unfortunate situation in which all the other countries would start claiming the exhibits back to the original surroundings. Anyhow it was this article 7 to which the late Greek minister of culture Melina Mercuri referred, when she expressed her wish of getting the sculptures of the Parthenon back to Greece. This problem will get repeated interest when the new museum will be built.

Article 8 "Items of sculpture, painting or decoration which form an integral part of a monument may only be removed from it if this is the sole means of ensuring their preservation."²⁴

The eastern pediment of the Parthenon in Oct. 1993. H. Putkonen.



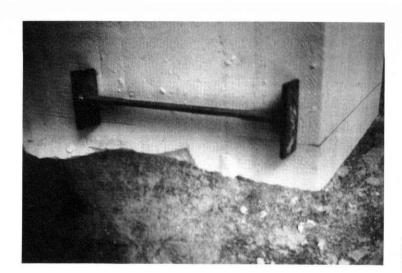
Original iron clamp of the Parthenon. Photo by A-M Ylimaula.

> This article is applied to the present solutions quite carefully. "Whether or not the principle enshrined in the article is being observed, depends basically on an assessment as to how far the removal of the sculptures is 'the sole means of ensuring their preservation'", writes Prof.. Bouras.²⁵ The last sculptures of the pediments have already been removed, the pollution of the Athens air left no other choice. But if the pollution of the air will belong to the past someday and a more ecological solution for the traffic and industrial problems are found, it might also be possible to place the sculptures to their original places. The Greeks are not very optimistic in this matter.

RESTAURO? RENOVO?

Article 9 admits that 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.²⁶

There is an obvious contradiction of the emphasized improvement of the values of the Parthenon and this article. The most difficult matter is the question of authenticity. According to Jukka Jokilehto from ICCROM, one of the principal objectives in preserving the universal value of World Heritage sites and monuments is to maintain their authenticity. "This authenticity lies in the original material and workmanship as well as in the architectural form and history of the monument."²⁷ Jokilehto also criticizes the present restoration of the Parthenon for pushing rather far and considering that the only reality today is the present one.



The materials used for new parts have been titanium and marble. By using titanium and artificial patina it is evident, that the restoration bears a contemporary stamp. The artificial patina is problematic, it can be seen as fake or untrue addition (see article 12). However Professor Bouras finds that "the requirement in the Charter that restoration should bear a contemporary stamp clearly refers to work that goes beyond the bounds of certain restoration – that is, to work based on inference and comparative data. No such work is proposed for the Parthenon."²⁸The last part of this article 9 is very true in this case – the restoration of the Parthenon was preceded and is followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument.

Article 10 promises that where traditional techniques prove inadequate, the consolidation of a monument can be achieved by the use of any modern technique for conservation and construction, the efficacy of which has been shown by scientific data and proved by experience.²⁹

The unfortunate use of cement by Nicola Balanos as substitut for marble has deteriorated in a few decades and much of the present work includes repairing of the damages caused by the previous restoration. Now the titanium is used for all the connecting elements, "since data derived from experiments in artificial ageing have demonstrated that the metal is highly resistant to corrosion and effectively has an infinite life", explains professor Bouras.³⁰ However the experience gained from the use of titanium is quite short compared with the age of the object. Prof. Fritz Wenzel in his comment as a civil engineer encourages this reinforcement of the damaged structural members "only to a degree that is equivalent to the beaving capacity of the undamaged ones. This is also meant as it concerns the results of earthquake calculations".³¹ He also urges to find out why the still existing structure survived so many earthquakes.

New titanium clamp for the Parthenon. Photo by A-M Ylimaula.

Article II gives credit to all earlier phases of the monument: *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./—/

Evaluation of the importance of the elements involved and the decision as to what may be destroyed cannot rest solely on the individual in charge of the work.³²

In the proposals these requirements are observed so that the Christian staircase in the south-west corner of cell and the Roman phases are to be preserved. The dispersed pieces of the Pergamene colonnades of the interior will be displayed in a new exhibition. The pieces added by Balanos are removed, since they clearly are or little interest and not of value alluded to in the Charter.³³ To give credit to all the previous phases is only possible in the extent to which they are preserved and respected until today. This article also refers to many details in the restoration of the Parthenon, which are not possible to go through in my short presentation.

RESTITUO? RETRACTO?

Article 12 declares that replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does no falsify the artistic or historic evidence.³⁴

This article contradicts the demands stated in article 3 (about the historical evidence). Is artificial patina falsifying a historical object? The demand of distinguishing between original and replacement parts causes special problems. A deliberate distinction in terms of form or colour would disturb the superb harmony of the temple, writes ProfBouras and recommends the solution adopted by Balanos, which was to carve informative inscriptions on non-visible surfaces of the new parts.³⁷ David Watkin argues against article 12: "Such a dogmatic pseudo-moral approach to restoration will more effectively extinguish the last glimmers of life in our historic monuments than any ravages wrought by time and pollution. The Charter of Venice is an unhappy by-product of the erroneous Modernist belief that twentieth-century man no longer needed a living relationship with his past."³⁶

In so far missing parts which have been replaced, do fit harmoniously to the monument, but the new parts do not manage to fit in without problems. The Greek project has firmly believed in the power of *anastylosis*, which has also been criticised, especially by the Italians who have chosen a different approach in the restoration of the Paestum.

Article 13 requires that additions cannot be allowed except in so far as they do not detract from the interesting parts of the building, its traditional setting, the balance of its composition and its relation with its surroundings.³⁷ The additions made in the restoration of the Parthenon are only those which are necessary to maintain the stability of the construction. Or could the concrete copies of the metopes also be seen as additions which cannot be allowed if the Charter of Venice is strictly followed?

Article 14 demands that the sites of monuments must be the object of special care in order to safeguard their integrity and ensure that they are cleared and presented in a seemly manner.³⁸

This is certainly the case in the restoration of the Parthenon. Special international care does not necessarily guarantee the integrity of any historic monument, sometimes it can even diminish the integrity.

Article 15 hopes that excavations should be carried out in accordance with the scientific standards and the recommendation defining international principles to be applied in the case of archaeological excavations adopted by UNESCO in 1956.³⁹

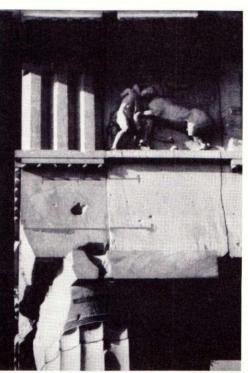
Article 15 rules out all reconstruction work a priori. Only anastylosis, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts, can be permitted.

The restoration of the Parthenon constitutes a typical case of anastylosis in the international sense of the word – and causes also the biggest disagreements. Prof. Bouras finds it noteworthy that this article does no preclude restoration with contemporary materials provided that it is done with the least amount necessary for the restitution of the ancient structure.⁴⁰ With this he may be defending the determined use of titanium and the use of artificial patina.

Fani Mallouchou-Tufano finds that "These are without question interventions which take into consideration the messages and perceptions of our own times, they are based on the established principles of restoration set out by the Charter of Venice, but are enriched with complementary provisions and stipulations that have emerged out of the specific nature of ancient Greek monuments."⁴¹ The temple of Parthenon has become an archetype in the warburgian sense, it is an example and a model for the western space concept. It's restoration is thus highly demanding.

In his remarks to the restoration committee in 1989, the Danish architect Erik Hansen wrote:

The fallen stones are cleared away, put into rows, numbered, treated and replaced in the buildings. The more interest we show



Detail of south-west corner.

to the monuments, the more they get the mark of our time, and the more they lose their own identity. We are all captured in the vicious circle whether we like it or not. There is no way back; the state of the monuments reflects the problems of our own society. We cannot restore the eternal life to the buildings.⁴²

I do not share Hansen's pessimistic view. To preserve means to keep alive, not eternal life. Instead of a nihilistic attitude we could consider each old building a gift from the past, something which donates us its own historicity in all its layers. It seems to me a mistake to consider our own time less or more valuable than any other time, or less or more problematic in our values than the periods before us. Seeing an old building as a gift instead of a burden, gives meaning to the restoration work.

Article 16 reminds that in all works of preservation, restoration or excavation, there should always be precise documentation in the form of analytical and critical reports, illustrated with drawings and photographs.⁴³

This is perhaps the most conscientiously realised part in the restoration of the Parthenon and the application of the Venice Charter. The book on Acropolis Restoration, The CCAM interventions, was published in 1994. It gives a good general view of the actions which have taken place so far.

CONCLUDERE?

Still I would like to go back to Prof.. Ove Hidemark's words from June 1995. He said also that restoration demands balance between intellect and emotion, like in all art. He saw that very often there was too much intellect and too little emotion, also lack of sensuality. This, as I see it, has happened in some Scandinavian restoration projects, f. ex. in the restoration of the Koldinghus castle in Denmark and restoration of the Hämeenlinna castle in Finland.

The group working with the proposals and also in situ with the restoration of the Parthenon has given an own, quite personal interpretation to the Venice Charter. They have opened all the problems to a wide international discussion and this article wishes to take part in it. Yet they have been very determined and kept their own vision. Those who work with this restoration project consider it a privilege and try to do their best. The future generations will get careful documents along with the preserved monument. Time will be the only objective and hopefully merciful judge even in this matter.

With John Keats's words On a Grecian urn:44

When old age shall this generation waste, Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," – that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Anna-Maija Ylimaula, arkitekt och tekn. dr KTH, är chef för tvärfacklig nationell doktorandkurs vid Uleåborgs Universitet, Uleåborg, Finland.

NOTES & REFERENCES:

- Viljo, E.M.: Why is history not historical enough the responsibility of an art historian. (unpublished lecture 24.8.1988)
- 2 Exner, Johannes: Restaurering Tab/Vinding, in *Bygnings*restaurering, helhed, hensyn & samarbejde, Nordisk seminar, Raadvad, 1991, p. 7.
- 3. Jokilehto, Jukka: *A history of architectural conservation*. The University of York, 1986. p. 442.(unpublished)
- 4. ibid. pp. 441–442
- 5. Ylimaula, Anna-Maija: Origins of style. Phenomenological approach to the essence of style in the architecture of Antoni Gaudi, C.R.Mackintosh and Otto Wagner. Acta Universitatis Ouluensis, Series C. Technica 59. Oulu, 1992. p.29.
- 6. ibid.p.44.
- 7. Heidegger, Martin: Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes (1935– 1936). Sonderausgabe, Stuttgart, 1956, p.7.
- 8. Mallouchou-Tufano, Fani: *Faut-il restaurer les ruines?* Memorial de Caen, 1990, Debat, p. 285.
- 9. *The Venice Charter.* International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites. Kansainväliset julistukset, ICOMOS, Helsinki 1992. p.10.
- 10. Bouras, Charalambos: Areas of concern. Athens: The Parthenon. Monumentum, 12/1984. p. 110.
- 11. 3rd International Meeting for the Restoration of the Acropolis Monuments. Proceedings, Athens 1990.
- 12. Bouras, p. 111.
- 13. 2nd International Meeting for the Restoration of the Acropolis Monuments, Parthenon. Proceedings, Athens, 1985, p. 88.
- 14. Jokilehto, Jukka: Authenticity in Restoration Principles and Practices. (unpublished lecture in Toronto, Sept. 1984) p. 1.
- 15. Korres, Manolis: Study for the restoration of the Parthenon, Athens, 1983, p. 718.
- 16. ibid. p. 706.

17. The CCAM Interventions: Acropolis Restoration. Edited by Richard Economakis. Academy Editions, London, 1994, p. 129.

18. The Venice Charter, p. 11.

- 19. Bouras, p. 111.
- 20. Mallouchou-Tufano in The CCAM Interventions, p. 191.
- 21. The Venice Charter, p. 11.
- 22. Bouras, p. 111.
- 23. The Venice Charter, p. 11.
- 24. ibid, p. 11.
- 25. Bouras, p. 112.
- 26. The Venice Charter, p. 11.
- 27. 3rd Proceedings, append.
- 28. Bouras, p. 112.
- 29. The Venice Charter, p. 11.
- 30. Bouras, p. 113.
- 31. Fritz Wenzel in the 3rd Proceedings, append.
- 32. The Venice Charter, p. 11.
- 33. Bouras, p. 114.
- 34. The Venice Charter, p. 12.
- 35. Bouras, pp. 114-115.
- 36. David Watkin in The CCAM Interventions, p. 210.
- 37. The Venice Charter, p. 12.
- 38. ibid. p. 12.
- 39. ibid. p. 12.
- 40. C.Bouras in The CCAM Interventions, p. 91.
- 41. Mallouchou-Tufano in The CCAM Interventions, p. 191.
- 42. Hansen, Erik in the 3rd proceedings, append.
- 43. The Venice Charter, p. 12.
- 44. John Keats, On a Grecian urn, in Tynni, Aale: *Tuhat laulujen vuotta*, WSOY, Porvoo, 1974.p.398.