Reconstruction of Religious Buildings (online/Aachen, 25-26 Sep 23)

Online / RWTH Aachen, Lehrstuhl für Architekturgeschichte, Sep 25–26, 2023
Registration deadline: Sep 24, 2023
www.frh-europe.org/frh-masterclass-reconstruction-of-religious-buildings-in-the-20th-and-21st-century-europe/

Prof. Anke Naujokat, Marcus van der Meulen

Reconstruction of Religious Buildings in 20th and 21st century Europe. Monuments, Heritage, Identity.

The blaze that destroyed Notre Dame de Paris in 2019, the earthquake that destroyed the basilica of L'Aquila in 2009, or the current devastating war going on in Ukraine – the fragility of historic religious buildings continues to raise the question of why and how the destroyed buildings would be rebuilt. In past centuries the destruction of a church or cathedral was an incentive to start the construction of a completely new edifice. Several gothic cathedrals were erected after destruction by fire of their predecessor building. A change in approach is perceptible in modern Europe after 1800; a connection between the historic religious building and national identity is substantial in many restoration projects of the nineteenth century when the restoration of historic churches and cathedrals progressed towards the construction of a supposed ideal.

Europe has changed profoundly in the twentieth century by wars, secularization, the rise and fall of socialism. With regard to the restoration of historic buildings, the rise of modernism and the establishment of the Athens Charter (1933) and the Venice Charter (1964) have significance. Whether and how historic buildings were rebuilt is a tangible component of these changes. The explanation why these buildings were restored or reconstructed cannot (only) be explained by the need for a place of worship. The decision for a reconstruction was often made for other reasons: to revive or recreate a monument or heritage site that could shape a new identity. The methods why and how this is done remain contested, as the polemics about the reconstruction projects in Paris and Potsdam illustrate.

Whether and how historic cathedrals, churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious buildings should be reconstructed is topical again after the fire that destroyed Notre Dame in Paris, and the ongoing war in Ukraine. At the same time there is a growing debate about how this reconstruction should take place, with Notre Dame in Paris being the most striking example. The current polemics about reconstruction taking place in Paris and Potsdam, among others, can be summarized as a conflict between functionality and connotation as a place of worship, a conflict of alteration of the existing situation due to the intended reconstruction of a historical state, and the way in which this reconstruction is carried out. The approach to the problem of why and how to rebuild the destroyed church has changed in contemporary Europe, through political and religious

changes and through changed understandings of restoration methodology. By looking beyond national borders this conference aims to come to a better understanding of the restorations and current polemics.

This hybrid conference will bring together experts in Architectural and Art History, Architecture and Monument Conservation from several European countries such as Germany, Belgium, France, Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Czech Republic, Hungary, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Ukraine. By bringing together speakers from different countries in an academic setting, similarities and differences in the approach to the reconstruction of historic religious buildings in Europe and the development between 1918 and the present day will be discussed.

The event will take place in presence at RWTH University Aachen, but we offer the possibility of online participation.

For registration and information, please contact:
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Conference Programme

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Day I – 25 September 2023

13:00-13:05 Welcome - Anke Naujokat

13:05-13:15 Greetings - Sabine Verheyen MEP, Chair of the Committee Culture & Education.

13:15-13:30 Introduction - Marcus van der Meulen

13:30-14:15 Keynote
Why Ukraine's Medieval Churches are under Threat of Reconstruction
Nazar Kozak (Senior researcher, Ethnology Institute, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine/Associate Professor, University of Lviv)

14:15-14:30 Discussion

14:30-15:00 Coffee break

Session A – reconstruction after war destruction 1

15:00-15:20
The Reconstruction of Medieval Heritage in Flanders Following the Destruction of the First World War: The Challenges of Church Reconstruction during the Interwar Period.
Marcus van der Meulen (RWTH Aachen)

15:20-15:40
Museum of Atheism and A Prison’s Firewood Storage. Reconstructing Medieval Churches in Soviet Estonia
Anneli Randla (Head of the Department of Conservation and Cultural Heritage at the Estonian Academy of Arts)

15:40-16:00
The Postwar Reconstruction of Churches in Normandy, France
Mathieu Lours (CY Cergy Paris University)

16:00-16:15 Q&A - Coffee break

Session B – reconstruction after war destruction 2

16:15-16:35
The Wismar Miracle: Reconstruction of St George's Church 1990-2010
Anja Rasche & Nils Jörn (GWZO Leipzig/ Network Hansekultur)

16:35-16:55
The Second Life of Major Sacred Buildings in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Miroslav Malinovic & Jasna Guzijan (Head of Department for History and Theory of Architecture and Building Heritage Protection, University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina) [ONLINE]

16:55-17:15
The Reconstruction of the Garrison Church in Potsdam
Thomas Albrecht (Architect, Hilmer & Sattler und Albrecht Architekten, Berlin)

17:15-17:30 End of day discussion

17:30-18:30 Reception

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Day II – 26 September 2023

Session C - representing the nation

9:00-9:20
Constructing Identity: Aesthetics and Ideology of the Interwar Church in Galicia
Sofia Korol & Oksana Herii (Head of the Art History Department, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) [ONLINE]

9:20-9:40
Restoration of the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague and the (re)construction of progressive national traditions in socialist Czechoslovakia
Jan Randák (Charles University Prague)

9:40-10:00
Resurrection Church in Kaunas
Giedrė Jankevičiūtė (research fellow at the Art History and Visual Culture Department, Lithuanian Institute for Culture Research /professor of art history, Vilnius Art Academy)

10:30-11:00 Coffee Break

Session D – purpose and community

11:00-11:20

Unification of style, or not? Enlargement just before and reconstruction after WWI of the parish church of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-Waver (province of Antwerp) by provincial architect Eduard Carels
Mario Baeck (Tiles & Architectural Ceramics Society TACS, Belgium)

11:20-11:40
Transformation of Listed Hungarian Roman Catholic Churches from Vatican II until Nowadays
Erzsébet Urbán (Architect, monument preservation specialist; Head of Secretariat at Deputy State Secretariat for Monument Protection, Ministry of Construction and Transport) [ONLINE]

11:40-12:00
The Reconstruction of the Medieval Synagogue in Worms after the Shoa. Motifs, Interests and how it developed into a Jewish space after 1990s
Susanne Urban (Head of Research and Information Department on Antisemitism, University Marburg; Co-chair FRH Conference 2023; Chairwoman Moreshet-Jewish Heritage Network)

12:00-12:15 Q&A - Discussion

12:15-13:30 Lunch break

Session E – contemporary methodology

13:30-13:50
Reconstructing Religious Buildings in the Post-Communist Era: The Saint Friday Church in Bucharest
Mara Popescu (Architect, Lecturer at the Department of Architecture, Targu Mures University / Advisor of Built Cultural Heritage, Cabinet of Minister of Culture of Romania)

13:50-14:10
The Craft Scientific Reconstruction of the burned down 14th Century Wooden Church in Sröda Råda, Sweden
Karl-Magnus Melin (University of Gothenburg)

14:10-14:30
The Reconstruction of the Gothic Spire of Saint-Denis, France
Jacques Moulin (Chief Architect of Historic Moments of France)

14:30-14:50 Final discussion

15:30-16:30 Excursion Aachen Cathedral – St Foillan

Reference:
CONF: Reconstruction of Religious Buildings (online/Aachen, 25-26 Sep 23). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 16, 2023 (accessed Nov 16, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/40086>.