

# PCP Forum 29/2017: Staging of Cultural Property

Nina Mekacher: Editorial. The staging of cultural property. ....	2
Dieter Schnell: Staging buildings.....	2
Ueli Habegger: Lucerne's Plan Lumière. Less is more.....	3
Sina Jentsch: Wrapping the Reichstag.....	3
Hans Schüpbach: Thoughts on the staging of Chillon castle. ....	4
Cordula M. Kessler: European Heritage Days. The example of cultural staging.....	4
Silvia Müller: Museum Night in Bern .....	5
Daniel Schulz: Staging of reliquary statues in the canton of Zug.....	5
Bruder Gerold Zenoni OSB: Madonna's Fashion made in Switzerland.....	6
Sven Straumann: Augusta Raurica Roman Festival. Bringing history to life.....	6
Lars Meldgaard Sass Jensen, Manuela Gloor: The Company of St. George. ....	7
Rino Büchel: Staging – two examples from the PCP Inventory. ....	7
Markus Fritschi: Protection and cultural staging.....	8

## **Nina Mekacher: Editorial. The staging of cultural property.**

Dear reader,

Constant change, alienation and virtualisation have become part and parcel of our everyday lives. At the same time we yearn for authenticity. We vote for genuine politicians, our holiday experiences have to be original, we trust in brands selling natural products and we unwind by watching reality television. Yet, the reality on offer to us is for the most part staged: politicians know that they need to project a good image to succeed; the tourism and the retail industries rely on intensive marketing for their survival; docu-soaps depend on ingenious dramatization.

We seek out enduring values in our cultural heritage too. For us, cultural heritage promises meaning, identity and a point of reference. To safeguard the authenticity of these objects, experts have devised guidelines, which primarily focus on preserving their materiality. Scientifically proven restoration and conservation practices pay great attention to the substance of the object and the layers of time it has accumulated, with the aim of preserving historical evidence. The social and cultural dimensions of such objects are of secondary importance.

Yet, it is precisely the intangible dimensions of cultural property that are a source of meaning, identity and a point of reference. If more people are to appreciate the importance of cultural heritage preservation, greater effort should be made to explain for whom and why a given object ought to be preserved. Here, staging can prove very useful, as it makes it possible to show objects in a new light, exposing hidden facets and offering new forms of access. Yet, staging is not without its risks. Objects that are not marketed in a media-friendly way, will garner little interest. Only the sensational counts; the everyday loses its appeal. The visuals become all-important; materiality becomes marginalised.

So, what kind of staging is appropriate for cultural heritage? What steps can be taken to ensure that the evidentiary power of these objects does not become limited to a few specific aspects? How can we honour the legitimate demand for a cultural experience without sacrificing the authenticity of the object to our entertainment-driven society and its world of illusion? The present issue of PCP Forum will explore these issues in depth and uncover the complexities of staging cultural property.

## **Dieter Schnell: Staging buildings**

For the world of architecture, staging means accentuating a structure so as to lift it out of its context and commend it to the viewer as an exhibit. In the pre-modern era, buildings were staged by positioning them on top of a hill or on raised foundations. Alternatively, buildings could have a tract of open space at the front which kept them at a respectful distance from the surrounding environment, or they boasted a long sightline that made them stand out from afar.

The modern age sought out new staging techniques, such as giving the structure an unusual shape, painting it a bright colour, or using materials that were unique for the given location (e.g. glass façades). Like earlier techniques, these structural measures are designed to decontextualise the structure and thus transform it into an eye-catching object.

Generally speaking, the degree to which a building should be staged is already addressed early on, at the blueprint stage. However, it is quite possible that a building is staged at a later point or that its pre-existing staging is changed by the introduction of additional measures. This article will use the example of two historic city gates to demonstrate how restoration work may lead to staging when structures have become monuments at some point in their existence. One of the key justifications in such instances is the “historical evidentiary value” which determines whether a structure can be

considered a monument or not (Guidelines of the Federal Commission for Monument Preservation, FCMP, 2007: Section 1.4). Without doubt, this process of visually articulating the evidentiary value of a structure during restoration work contains elements of staging, such as “accentuation” and “presentation”.

Therefore, we must always bear in mind two risks: staging should not cause any irreversible damage to the object, and that it should be clear to the viewer that the result of the restoration is not historically enacted.

## **Ueli Habegger: Lucerne's Plan Lumière. Less is more.**

Lighting design (plan lumière) is one way of beautifying a city. The French city of Lyon is a pioneer in the field, having dazzled both visitors and the authorities with its stunning light display during the Millennium celebrations.

In contrast to Zurich, the plan lumière adopted by the city of Lucerne centres on street lighting. The aim is to create a harmonious nightscape by simply changing the colour, type and height of the city's public lighting. The city is enveloped in a beautiful halo of light that enhances rather than exaggerates the cityscape. Stage lighting is restricted to only a handful of attractions, while the shoreline of Lake Lucerne remains unlit.

The Plan Lumière is very different from the illuminations that have been in place since 1932. Today, artificial lighting remains lit for a short period of time – until 11 pm. Since the new lighting design concept was approved by a referendum in 2008, it has undergone gradual updates and developments. Lucerne's Plan Lumière also helps combat light smog. Its energy consumption is around half that of the original illuminations, and its impact on the urban space and attractions is more flattering. As a result, Lucerne's Plan Lumière has been lauded both nationally and internationally.

## **Sina Jentsch: Wrapping the Reichstag**

On 24 June 1995, artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude were finally able to begin wrapping the Reichstag building in Berlin. After 24 years' of protracted negotiations, beginning in the 1970<sup>s</sup> and lasting until the 1990<sup>s</sup>, a team of 90 specially trained rock climbers and 120 assemblers began making the artists' vision a reality. Over the course of two weeks, they covered this important historical building in 100,000 square metres of sparkling silver material, all under the watchful gaze of five million onlookers. Dismantling work began on 7 July 1995, and all of the recuperated material was recycled.

The 1971–1995 period and the Wrapped Reichstag are an important chapter in the history of the building, which itself is a part of Germany's cultural heritage. The artists memorialised the project in an extensive documentary exhibition featuring close to 400 displays.

In 2012, local man Roland Specker set up a foundation to acquire the exhibition in order to safeguard this piece of German history for both the city of Berlin and the Reichstag.

In the end, it was businessman Lars Windhorst who purchased the entire collection. The Wrapped Reichstag is now on permanent display on the Presidential Level of the building and is open to the public.

## **Hans Schüpbach: Thoughts on the staging of Chillon castle.**

Chillon castle is one of Switzerland's most important and popular heritage sites. Its key strategic location on a rocky outcrop on the shores of Lake Geneva lends the moated castle perfectly to the use of staging techniques. However, what sets Chillon apart is the fact that its cultural importance is derived not from historical events but from the attention it received in literature and art.

The castle is not without key historical events, though. Objects dating from the Bronze Age have been found on the site, while coins unearthed found during excavation work in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century indicate the possible existence of a Roman camp. From then onwards, the history of the castle can be divided into three distinct periods: the Savoy period (1200<sup>s</sup>–1536), the Bernese period (1536–1798) and the Vaud period (since 1798). Despite its eventful past, the castle came close to being demolished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In its current state, the castle is the result of several centuries of constant building and renovation work. This included the 40-year-long research and restoration project carried out by Albert Naef from 1897 to 1934. Despite being extremely conscientious, Naef and his restoration work – which is also a form of staging – had a major impact on the castle's architectural history. So much so that it is almost impossible to accurately date certain parts of the complex.

The most important staging of the castle occurred in 1816, with the publication of Byron's poem "The Prisoner of Chillon". Consequently, it began to feature in the correspondence, poems, travel accounts and novels of many authors. The lakeside castle and its impressive backdrop of snowy mountains became a much-loved subject for painters too. It is these works which have helped forge the image of Chillon that has survived to the present day.

This artistic influence is still felt today, though new forms of staging have been added to attract visitors: merchandising, tours and workshops, concerts, plays, markets and wine-tasting events, to name but a few. The canton of Vaud, which owns the castle, has entrusted the management and conservation of the site to a foundation. Its directors ensure the continuation of careful and informed restoration work, while taking care that all events hosted by the heritage site afford it the respect it deserves.

## **Cordula M. Kessler: European Heritage Days. The example of cultural staging.**

Since its inaugural event in Switzerland (1994), European Heritage Days have provided extensive access to the country's diverse, rich and important collection of cultural property. The 24<sup>th</sup> edition, on 9 and 10 September 2017, will be held at hundreds of locations across the country. Entitled "Power and Glory", this year's two-day event will focus on the staging of cultural heritage by shining a spotlight on imposing and sumptuously decorated buildings, prominently positioned in the urban and rural landscape.

The European Heritage Days initiative was launched by the Council of Europe in 1991. Since 1999, the European has been a programme partner. Some 50 European countries now take part, together boasting some 50,000 individual buildings and architectural ensembles of cultural interest, and attracting around 30 million visitors.

The events have diversified over time, with the addition of bike trails, hiking trips, film screenings, concerts, panel discussions and workshops for children to the usual guided tours. In Switzerland, the Heritage Days are made possible thanks to very generous contributions by the Federal Office of

Culture (FOC) and the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAHS), not to mention the longstanding support of many other partners.

In 2018, European Heritage Days will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This milestone year is the ideal moment for the initiative to move its development forward. Under the slogan “Sharing heritage”, plans are afoot to:

- hold Heritage Days over four weekends in September, each time in a different region;
- give the Swiss with the opportunity to discover their home country, come together, celebrate, talk, and explore Switzerland’s diverse cultural heritage;
- address issues regarding value and benefit: why (not how) should we preserve our cultural heritage? What does society stand to gain? What do each of us individually stand to gain?

“Staging” cultural property and enabling the public to engage emotionally with and play a part in Switzerland’s diverse cultural heritage will help to make this initiative a success.

## **Silvia Müller: Museum Night in Bern**

For the last 15 years, the people of Bern have a sure-fire way of knowing when spring is on its way: Museum Night. This event sees the city’s museums, archives, libraries and other cultural institutions throw open their doors for an evening of discovery, fun and sharing. Visitors of all ages, from around the corner or further afield, converge on the Swiss capital, which for one night only is transformed into a sea of light and an enormous boulevard.

The aim of Museum Night is to offer visitors new and exceptional experiences, such as access and insights into the capital’s cultural life that are not only surprising but are also usually off limits. Doors are flung open to reveal pop-up exhibitions and provide a fascinating glimpse behind the scenes. Inhibitions are broken down, with many visitors taking in a cultural institution that they would not have gone to under normal circumstances.

Since it was launched in 2003, the initiative has gone from strength to strength. In 2017, over 111,000 tickets were sold, the second highest number in its almost 15-year history. Although many consider Museum Night as a celebration of the city’s culture, it is not organised by the local authorities but by the association “museen bern” and its 35 member institutions. The association’s director is in charge of overall project management. Great care is taken to ensure that the event is not “misused” for political or financial gain. Also, Museum Night is not a commercial venture: the only items on sale are the refreshments.

The CHF 25 ticket price covers entry to all participating institutions and events, as well as the use of public transport from 6 pm until the institutions close their doors.

Preparations for the 16<sup>th</sup> edition, on 16 March 2018, is already well underway because for the participating institutions, when one Museum Night ends, another is just beginning.

## **Daniel Schulz: Staging of reliquary statues in the canton of Zug.**

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the bones of many catacomb saints were brought to the canton of Zug. Some remains were fashioned into reliquary statues, as part of the anti-Reformation movement that sought to restore the veneration of relics. These bones were no longer kept in caskets and hidden away from the public gaze, as was the case in the Middle Ages. Instead, they

were proudly displayed, although not every day. In fact, they were concealed behind paintings and pictures, which often depicted the given saint in human form or the reliquary statue itself. It was only on feast days, during religious processions and mystery plays that the holy remains would be removed from their hiding place and unveiled, with great effect, to the gathered faithful. In those times, the indestructibility of bones and teeth were considered a sign of incorruptibility, in other words divine intervention prevented the saint's body from decaying like those of mere mortals. It was hoped that the public display of reliquary statues would revive the Catholic traditions and articles of faith that had existed prior to the Reformation.

Seven such catacomb saint statues found their way to the canton of Zug: Pius, Clemens, Boniface, Silvanus, Christina, Benignus und Theodore were staged as a powerful line of defence against its Protestant neighbour Zurich. The visual articulation of this difference in beliefs meant that the catacomb saints also served a political function; the martyr knights were supposed to safeguard and defend the true faith. These reliquary statues reflect not only the piety of the population at that time, but also the baroque love of theatricality and staging.

Three of the statues survive today. Only Saint Silvanus is still in his original spot, from where he continues to afford protection to all.

## **Bruder Gerold Zenoni OSB: Madonna's Fashion made in Switzerland**

The Einsiedeln's Madonna has a wardrobe of 35 dresses to choose from. The presentation of this statue is an excellent example of spiritual staging: the Madonna and Child carved probably from elm wood and dating from around 1465 has become instantly recognisable.

In olden times, it was the Catholic faithful who kept her wardrobe well stocked. However, thanks to "spiritual" globalisation, she has received garments from, among others, a Hindu from India, a Muslim lady and a Tamil. In 2000, Einsiedeln monastery was gifted a red Korean dress. Hoping to start a family, the donor and her husband had prayed to the Madonna; she answered their prayers.

An important part of the Einsiedeln Madonna statue is the jewellery collection. It includes a crown, a choker necklace, earrings, a pectoral cross, a large rosary, a votive heart, a sceptre, a bracelet, a ring for the Holy Mother, and a small crown, a votive heart and rosary for the infant Jesus.

Many famous visitors have passed through Einsiedeln over the years. In 1834 James Fenimore Cooper, author of "The Leatherstocking Tales" paid a visit, but was left disappointed owing to the pilgrims' physical appearance, writing "You did not see a comely female among them." After his time in Einsiedeln, Giacomo Casanova wanted to take holy orders and join the monastery, while the children's author Hans Christian Andersen presented the monastery with a Danish bible. Karl May wrote several Winnetou stories specially for the Marian calendar, and Queen Hortense gifted the monastery a valuable hortensia brooch. It is still held, original casket and all, by the monastery.

## **Sven Straumann: Augusta Raurica Roman Festival. Bringing history to life.**

Since its first edition in 1992, the annual Augusta Raurica Roman Festival has drawn thousands of visitors into the colourful and fascinating world of daily life in an Ancient Roman town. Some 1,000 participants bring these vast ruins to life through historical re-enactments, acting as craftspeople, gladiators, traders, legionnaires and dancers, to name but a few.

Staging informs the diverse events programme, and indeed the entire festival. Visitors of all ages embark on a journey back in time, taking in the sights, sounds and smells of Ancient Rome. As well as

historical re-enactments, history is brought to life through handicraft demonstrations, interactive activities, concerts and the sampling of Roman culinary delights.

Also, the Augusta Raurica heritage site itself is staged in a variety of different ways. The reproduction of a Roman townhouse, which opened officially in 1955, was modelled on an urban villa in Pompeii and is one of the oldest of its kind in Europe. Classical plays have been performed in the theatre ruins since 1936, and for the last 20 years, visitors, young and old, have been able to don ancient Roman togas and take part in the “Attia’s secret” tour around the Roman town. Archaeological research and finds inform all our cultural mediation events.

By using certain staging techniques, the Roman Festival continues to breathe new life into our ancient past. In doing so, it offers a direct pathway to the world of Ancient Rome, which may seem very close culturally, but is some 2,000 years back in time.

## **Lars Meldgaard Sass Jensen, Manuela Gloor: The Company of St. George.**

The main interest of the Company of St. George is the military and civilian daily life of an artillery unit from the time of Charles the Bold, the Duke of Burgundy (1467 to 1477). Our aim is to recreate the clothing, the equipment, the day-to-day life and the training programme of the soldiers as realistically as possible, as well as the camp itself, the helpers, artisans and their families. This covers, besides armed guards, also the camp, aids, artisans and their families. In doing so, we enable the modern visitor to go back in time to 500 years ago and dive into the fascinating world of the late Middle Ages.

The Company of St. George is seen as benchmark in historical re-enactment. Thus we expect from our members a precise and careful examination of the historical model. Our research is geared towards archaeological finds, museum exhibits, source texts and historical pictures. In this way, we constantly replace and improve our equipment, thus aiming to advance our and our partners’ knowledge regarding the daily life in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This expert knowledge and high, uncompromising commitment to quality has enabled successful cooperation with museums and institutions across Europe over the last 25 years.

## **Rino Büchel: Staging – two examples from the PCP Inventory.**

The present articles look at two examples of cultural staging from the PCP Inventory: the treasure of St Maurice Abbey in the canton of Valais, and the late medieval Letzimauer of Näfels in the canton of Glarus.

Saint Maurice Abbey is the oldest Christian monastery in the world. Over time, it has accumulated a sizeable and important church treasure, including one-of-a-kind relics and shrines. In 2014, there was a complete overhaul of the way in which this collection is displayed. Thanks to the latest technological and visualisation advances, some of the objects can be admired in 3D. For example, a film sequence allows visitors to marvel at the Charles the Great water pitcher from all angles. The rotation effect is achieved by the clever installation of the recording camera and positioning of the vase so that the background does not detract from the exhibit itself.

Another example of staging is the carrying of the relic shrines in the annual procession through the streets of Saint Maurice on 22 September.

The people of Glarus believed that their victory over their Austrian overlords on 9 April 1388 was a sign from God. In 1389, the canton built a chapel in Sendlen to remember the fallen. It would

become the starting point for the annual Näfels Procession. According to tradition, this pilgrimage takes place on the first Thursday in April and serves to commemorate the historic victory and the dead. It has also played an instrumental role in the development of the Glarus community and Switzerland's collective consciousness. A reminder of this is the surviving section of the Letzimauer (defensive barrier), which features in the PCP Inventory. Also, part of the wall was reconstructed on the site of the monument commemorating the Näfels victory. Today, the Näfels Procession follows strict rules that date back to a cantonal assembly decision of 1835.

## **Markus Fritschi: Protection and cultural staging.**

The heads of PCP in the cantons of Aargau and Obwalden worked closely with Wettingen and Engelberg monasteries, emergency response services and professional consultants to devise contingency plans for the two institutions.

It was decided that drills should be organised to test out the protective measures and emergency structures contained in these plans. In view of the major fires of 1507 and 1729, coupled with vivid descriptions of the fire hazards, initial reservations about deploying the fire service so close to a cultural heritage site quickly dissipated. The process of devising the training exercise provided an opportunity to identify, discuss, and assess potential risks (increased foot traffic, abrasion, grinding and impact damage, water usage, soot deposits, contamination, damage from handling, damage to reputation), and to come up with ways to combat them.

On 11 September 2010, a joint fire service and PCP training exercise was successfully held in Wettingen, and in Engelberg on 17 September 2016. Both were observed by invited experts and members of the media.

The key findings were:

- In terms of cultural property protection, staging should never be an end in itself.
- Importance of raising awareness among and inclusion of all partners concerned.
- The PCP should carry out an exercise at the original site only when it is within the framework of contingency planning.
- The contingency plan must contain a realistic exercise scenario.
- The aims of the exercise must be communicated to and achievable by the parties concerned.
- All exercises should also involve the rescue of persons.
- The risk must never outweigh the benefits.
- Those with direct responsibility for the cultural property always should decide on the type and scope of action to be taken.
- Only the documentation of the exercise process can ensure sustainability.