

Architecture and the Globalization of Knowledge in the 19th Century. Gottfried Semper and the Discipline of Architectural History

Architettura e globalizzazione del sapere nel XIX secolo. Gottfried Semper e la disciplina della storia dell'architettura

Responsabile del progetto all'USI
Head of project at USI
Prof. Dr. Sonja Hildebrand (lead)

Cooperation partner
Prof. Dr. Philip Ursprung, ETH Zurich

Collaboratori / Collaborators
Elena Chestnova M.A. (USI)
PD Dr. Michael Gnehm (USI)
Dr. Dieter Weidmann (USI)
Claudio Leoni M.A., dipl. Ing. FH (ETH Zurich)

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Gottfried Semper (1803–1879) has left behind a large theoretical oeuvre in which he had interpreted architecture as part of material culture. The project focuses on the years of his exile in London (1850–55) when he was presented directly with expressions of advancing globalisation. Semper kept in step as an observer, practicing architect (e.g. for the World Fairs of 1851 and 1855) and instructor at the Department of Practical Art.

His deliberations on the global development of architectural culture are investigated from the point of view of the history of the discipline and in the context of the history of science and knowledge. The project includes two dissertations that pursue the question of formation of methods in architectural history under the comprehensive influence of those aspects of globalisation manifested in material culture. In connection with these, an anthology of so far unpublished or little known writings by Semper of those years (mainly from his bequest at the gta archives in ETH Zurich) will be prepared. The anthology will be accompanied by a number of critical essays by the members of the project team and guest authors.

The project is conceived as a contribution to the historical background of the, now topical, disciplinary expansion of architectural and art history towards 'world' or 'global art history'. It aims to highlight some aspects of current globalisation from a historical perspective and to

contribute to the current discussion on the significance of the material object in the increasingly virtual world.