TO OWN – TO PRESERVE – TO RESTORE

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Keywords: heritage, historical value, art-value, recall value, age-value, intentional monuments, historical monuments, ambient value, built heritage.

Abstract: The issue of the values that heritage, in its wider sense, from built heritage to archaeological object, carries with itself over time is determining for the behaviour of heritage owners. Heritage values are at the same time the subject of an instability and of contradictions that are decisive to the often incredible destiny of works of art that follow a sinuous and hazardous road, passing through oblivion, abandonment, lack of recognition, in the aseptic and luminous space of the great values of humanity. Starting from Alois Riegl's theory of values of built heritage the author presents three examples that illustrate the way in which the trinity to own – to preserve – to restore heritage is understood.

Rezumat: Problema valorilor pe care patrimoniul, în sensul cel mai larg, de la patrimoniul construit la obiectul arheologic, le poartă cu sine peste timp este determinată pentru comportamentul proprietarilor de patrimoniu. Valorile patrimoniale sunt în același timp subiectul unei instabilități și al unor contradicții decisive pentru destinul de multe ori incredibil al unor opere de artă care parcurg un drum sinuos și accidentat, trecând din uitare, abandon, nerecunoaștere, în spațiul aseptic și luminos al marilor valori ale umanitații. Pornind de la teoria valorilor patrimoniului construit a lui Alois Riegl autorul prezintă trei exemple care ilustrează modul în care a fost înțeleasă pe teritoriul românesc triada a avea – a păstra – a restitui patrimoniul.

One of the definitions of heritage that I have accepted for a long time with a sentiment of comfortable stability was formulated more than three decades ago by Andre Chastel and Jean-Pierre Babelon. In the opinion of the two authors the objects, places, material goods that represent the inherited thesaurus of humanity don't obey the law of “immediate use” yet have a privileged status.

In my years as novice in the field of restoration, when I used to follow this vision, one of the attributes of this privileged status was the protection of the stability of heritage values, immunity to any changes of a political or social order, or even of mentality. Once protected, I used to believe, heritage avoids any manoeuvres that might endanger its status, being protected by a shield of absolute values.

The change of vision that I had to accept soon after my apprentice years was due to a life experience, in direct contact with the existence of heritage, and a confrontation with the history and evolution of the concepts of protecting and intervening on the inheritance of the past.

Hence the question “Whom does Heritage belong to?” or “How do we intervene on Heritage?” In other words, establishing the identity of the owner becomes insignificant if one doesn't simultaneously know the owner's vision on the heritage that he inherits, in which measure he feels responsible for the inclusion of his property in a more ample thesaurus, protected by the boundaries of the city, the country which it is in and even more so and especially how much he feels the need to maintain the identity of the values that he owns.

The issue of the values that heritage, in its wider sense – from built heritage to archaeological object – is burdened with through the passage of time is determining for the attitude of heritage owners. Heritage values are simultaneously the subject of an instability and a contradiction that are decisive for the sometimes incredible destiny that some masterpieces face, by navigating a bumpy and sinuous road that passes through oblivion, abandonment, lack of recognition, in the aseptic and luminous space of the great values of humanity. An analysis of these objects that was fundamental to the modern vision on heritage was made, in the effervescent moments at the beginning of the 20th century, by Alois Riegl. I find the evoking of his vision on the “cult” of monuments as necessary today, in the sense of built heritage, in order to answer the triple question that I started with, which attempts to identify at the same time the owner of the heritage, his vision on his inheritance and the way in which he understands the preservation of its authentic substance.

The system of values that Riegl advances is in fact the answer that 19th-20th century man gives when encountering the built heritage, an answer that continues to be found, in the 21st century, in the behaviour of

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1 Babelon, Chastel 1994, p. 12.