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## AUTHENTICITY: A VERY GREEK WORD IN A COMPLEX EUROPEAN SETTING

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**ABSTRACT:** A focal point in present-day conservation terminology, authenticity comes from the ancient Greek word *afthentikós*, which in modern times has come to mean genuine and valid. Based on this interpretation, it entered the conservation agenda, through the Venice Charter, in 1964, received added attention, through the Nara Document, in 1994, and since then, has generated multiple debates among conservation specialists. Yet while a wide consensus on a definition and method of assessment of authenticity pends, other key players in the European setting, namely national authorities, separate bodies, public groupings, and individual owners endorse, and in many cases, assume action in opposite directions. Considering the practical impact of these contradictions, the overall issue needs to be urgently discussed, which is precisely the goal of this paper. Based on extensive bibliographic and archival research, it initially addresses the evolution of the term “authenticity” and its current standing in the conservation agenda. It then examines and evaluates the aforementioned opposite postures, with reference to characteristic examples throughout Europe, and concludes by outlining proposals for the necessary reconciliation.

**KEY WORDS:** Authenticity, Europe, evolution, contradiction, reconciliation

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## Introduction

A major point of reference in modern conservation terminology, authenticity comes from the ancient Greek word *afthentikós*. Initially linked to a person who commits murder on his own, it enjoyed a spectacular evolution in later years, culminating in its association with the qualities of genuine and valid in modern times. Based on this interpretation, it was introduced into the conservation agenda with the Venice Charter, in 1964, gained further attention through the Nara Document, in 1994, and has since sparked numerous debates among conservation specialists. Yet while a wide consensus on a definition and method of assessment of authenticity pends, other key players in the European setting, namely national authorities, separate bodies, public groupings, and individual owners endorse, and in many cases, assume action in opposite directions, which contradict the priorities set by the conservation community. Considering the practical impact of these attitudes, the overall issue needs to be urgently addressed.

The present paper pursues its discussion, through an initial focus on the evolution of the term “authenticity” and its current standing in conservation matters, followed by a systematic review and appraisal of the contradicting mentalities and actions. The above analysis is conducted on the basis of extensive bibliographic and archival research and allows for suggestions to be made for the much-needed reconciliation.

### I. The evolution of the term “authenticity”

A very Greek word, authenticity comes from the adjective *afthentikós*, which in turn originates from the noun *afthentis*. The latter literally means someone who acts on his own. Yet in its initial appearance in the works of Herodotus, it was used to refer, specifically, to a self-reliant person who commits murder. This interpretation, along with that of someone who is simply responsible for murder, persisted in ancient times, gradually relaxing, during the post-classical era, into an identification with a person who is generally responsible for an action, always committed without accomplices. As such persons are often dominant, in Byzantine times, *afthentis* came to mean an individual of authority, namely a master, a ruler, an owner or a boss. In subsequent social contexts, these dominant figures were recognized as holders of complete and absolute knowledge. This led to the term, and along with it, *afthentikós* and authenticity, becoming associated with qualities of unquestionable truth, and consequently, with what is considered genuine and valid<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The preceding outline of the evolution of the term “authenticity” is based on the information provided in the following sources: Doikas S. (Ed.). (n.d.). *Afentis* (Master), [in] *LSJ Ancient Greek Dictionaries*. Retrieved September 16, 2024, from <https://lsj.gr/wiki/%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%AD%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82>; Stamatakos I. (1999). *Afthentis*, [in:] *Lexikon Archaias Ellinikis Glossis* (Dictionary of the Ancient Greek Language), (p. 193); Sarantakos N. (2024, April 17). To afthentiko afentiko (The authentic boss). *Sarantakos.wordpress*. <https://sarantakos.wordpress.com/2024/04/17/afentiko/> (retrieved September 16, 2024); Papazachariou G. (2024, July 4). To noima kai i istoria tis lexis: Afthentikos - Afentis (The meaning and the history of the word: Authentic - Master). *Kamini*. <https://www.kamini.gr> (retrieved September 16, 2024).

## II. Integration in the conservation agenda

Under its latest interpretation, authenticity made an official entrance into the conservation arena, through the Venice Charter, in 1964. Though not defined, but merely mentioned at two points of the renowned text (preamble and article 9), in this initial appearance it echoed the overall precedence of the western-oriented document to the preservation of the morphological and material entity of the architectural heritage, as shaped over time, in conjunction with a specific setting<sup>2</sup>. A much-needed further discussion of the term, given its one-sided perception, began only in the build-up to the thirtieth anniversary of the charter. By then, it had been made clear that “authenticity”, as mentioned in the Venice Charter of 1964, could not be applied to all cultural contexts, particularly in traditional societies, with age-long customs that involved the preservation solely of form, structure, and place<sup>3</sup>.

Greatly accelerated by the adoption of the World Heritage Convention by Japan, in 1992, this discussion led to the drafting of the Nara Document on Authenticity, two years later (1994). An undisputed milestone in conservation history, the Document acknowledged cultural heritage diversity, yet without providing a definition and method of assessment of its key subject<sup>4</sup>. Instead, it outlined indicative parameters for the perception of authenticity in different cultural contexts, with its concluding reference to “*other internal and external factors*” (par. 13) leaving the door wide open for further discussion.

Indeed, in the thirty years that have passed since then, the debates have been multiple and the emphasis on the content and use of the term repeated<sup>5</sup>. Most indicative is the fact that, on the occasion of the successive anniversaries of the drafting of the Document, additional international meetings were held, namely:

- “The Safeguarding of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Towards an Integrated Approach”, again in Nara, in 2004, producing the Yamato Declaration.
- “Heritage and Societies: Toward the 20th Anniversary of the Nara Document and Beyond”, in Himeji City, in 2012, producing the Himeji Recommendations.
- “Meeting on the 20th Anniversary of the Nara Document on Authenticity”, in Nara, in 2014, producing the Nara + 20 Report.

With two additional meetings scheduled on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary, namely “Authenticity from a European Perspective: 30 Years of the Nara Document on Authenticity”, in Thessaloniki, in 2024, and “The Further Evolution of Authenticity through the Lens of Heritage Ecosystems: Heritage, Communities, and Sustainable Development”, in Takasaki City, in 2025,

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<sup>2</sup> Jerome P. (2008). An Introduction to Authenticity in Preservation. *APT Bulletin* 39(2-3), (pp. 3-4); Stovel H. (2008). Origins and influence of the Nara document on authenticity. *APT Bulletin* 39(2-3), (p. 12).

<sup>3</sup> Jokilehto J. (1999). *A History of Architectural Conservation*. Butterworth-Heinemann, (pp. 296-298).

<sup>4</sup> Jerome P. (2008). An Introduction to Authenticity in Preservation. *APT Bulletin* 39(2-3), (p. 4); Stovel H. (2008). Origins and influence of the Nara document on authenticity. *APT Bulletin* 39(2-3), (pp. 9-10).

<sup>5</sup> Stovel H. (2008). Origins and influence of the Nara document on authenticity. *APT Bulletin* 39(2-3), (pp. 11, 13-16)

there can be no doubt that authenticity has attained a principal standing in the present-day conservation agenda, if not a considerable popularity.

Yet despite the feverish discussions, concluded and anticipated, a close look at the last supplementary text to have been produced, namely the Nara + 20 Report, reveals that, while an initial definition of authenticity has been secured, multiple interrelated issues remain to be settled. For instance, the Report specifies that “*a better understanding is needed of the processes by which authenticity can be periodically assessed*” (par. 2). Ten years later, this issue remains at the top of the agenda, as indicated by the respective emphasis in the initial call of the conference of Thessaloniki.

### III. Contradicting postures in the European context

While conservation specialists engage deeper and deeper in the analysis, evaluation, and enhancement of authenticity, a remarkable phenomenon is noted in the European setting. Other key players in architectural heritage management, namely national authorities, separate bodies, public groupings, and individual owners, support, and all too often, undertake initiatives in full contrast to the priorities ardently set by the conservation community.

This phenomenon has multiple manifestations. Indicatively, one can initially turn to Hungary. In 2019, the Hungarian government launched the National Hauszmann Program, an 11-year scheme to restore the heavily ruined, in the last days of the Second World War, castle district of Budapest. Within this context, historic buildings that were levelled after the war were faithfully reconstructed, based on surviving original plans<sup>6</sup>. The reconstruction of the Guardhouse (2020) - (Figs. 1, 2) and the Riding Hall (2021) - (Figs. 3, 4), in particular, attests to a truly stunning resurrection of two historic buildings that display, nonetheless, debatable outstanding significance on their own. Hence, a clear contrast to the respective prerequisite of the Riga Charter on Authenticity and Historical Reconstruction is noted, a result of the program's declared priority to “*bring about a 21st century renaissance of [...] national identity*” and to “*enrich [...] built heritage*”.

In further pursuit of this aim, the building of the Ministry of Finance, also in the area of Buda Castle, is currently undergoing a large-scale transformation. Having not been levelled after the war, but rather modestly restored, under the socialist administration, to a coherent entity that displayed respect for surviving original parts, the historic edifice is nowadays reacquiring its

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<sup>6</sup> For further details on the program and its various projects, see: Várkapitányság Integrált Területfejlesztési Központ Nonprofit Zrt. (2022). *National Hauszmann Program* [Imprint], (pp. 8-55). <https://nemzetihauszmannprogram.hu> (retrieved September 30, 2024).

<sup>7</sup> Várkapitányság Integrált Területfejlesztési Központ Nonprofit Zrt. (2022), p. 8. For further discussion of the issue, see: Arnóth Á. (2019). The ethical problems of architectural reconstruction - Hungarian case studies. *Protection of Cultural Heritage* 8, (pp. 1-8). <https://doi.org/10.35784/odk.1021>

initial form (Figs. 5, 6)<sup>8</sup>. Though meticulously documented, the overall intervention stands out as yet another overwhelming resurrection, which erases a significant phase of the monument's history, in sharp contrast to the requirements of the Venice Charter for the preservation of authenticity.



Fig. 1 The site of the Guardhouse, in Budapest, before the 2020 reconstruction [source: Várkapitányság Integrált Területfejlesztési Központ Nonprofit Zrt. (2022), p. 11]



Fig. 2 The reconstructed Guardhouse (2020), in Budapest [source: Várkapitányság Integrált Területfejlesztési Központ Nonprofit Zrt. (2022), p. 11]



Fig. 3 The site of the Riding Hall, in Budapest, before the 2021 reconstruction [source: Várkapitányság Integrált Területfejlesztési Központ Nonprofit Zrt. (2022), p. 15]



Fig. 4 The reconstructed Riding Hall (2021), in Budapest [source: Várkapitányság Integrált Területfejlesztési Központ Nonprofit Zrt. (2022), p. 15]

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<sup>8</sup> For further details on the project, see *Neo-Gothic Building of the Royal Ministry of Finance in Buda Castle under Renovation*. (2024, January 8). Hungary Today. <https://hungarytoday.hu/neo-gothic-building-of-the-royal-ministry-of-finance-in-buda-castle-under-renovation> (retrieved September 30, 2024).



Fig. 5 The building of the Ministry of Finance, in Budapest, before the 2024 reconstruction [source: <https://www.google.com/maps>, retrieved September 30, 2024]



Fig. 6 The building of the Ministry of Finance, in Budapest, under reconstruction, in 2024 [source: *Neo-Gothic Building of the Royal Ministry of Finance in Buda Castle under Renovation* (2024)]

Similar deviations are encountered in Germany. In Potsdam, since 2010, the local authority has been pursuing the complete revival of the Old Market Square, also heavily damaged at the end of the Second World War. Among the separate projects undertaken with the aim of restoring the square's pre-war appearance, was the reinstatement of an entire building block on the west side of the site. This action required, however, the demolition of a building that had taken up the specific spot in the 1970s. Constructed by the socialist government, the initial Institute for Teacher Training, and later home to the local University of Applied Sciences, constituted a focal point in the cityscape and a significant embodiment of the architectural modernism of the socialist era. Nonetheless, after intense debate, the local authority proceeded with its demolition (2018), which was followed by the erection of a block whose fronts are partly replicas of earlier façades and partly modern adaptations of pre-war building styles (2024) - (Figs. 7, 8)<sup>9</sup>, a sequence that marks, once again, a clear distance from the related principles of the Venice Charter.

<sup>9</sup> For further details on the project, see: Anker J. (2017, November 5). Potsdam hat keinen Platz für die DDR-Moderne. *Berliner Morgenpost*. <https://www.morgenpost.de/brandenburg/article212442859/Potsdam-hat-keinen-Platz-fuer-die-DDR-Moderne.html> (retrieved October 2, 2024); Kramer H. (2023, September 4). Potsdams neue Mitte: Erste fertiggestellte Fassaden - aber auch Verzögerungen. *Tagesspiegel*. <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/potsdam/landeshauptstadt/potsdams-neue-mitte-erste-fertiggestellte-fassaden-und-verzoegerungen-10415020.html> (retrieved October 2, 2024); Wenk E. (2019, October 28). Potsdams Antlitz: Die FH ist weg - die Debatte bleibt. *Tagesspiegel*. <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/potsdam/landeshauptstadt/die-fh-ist-weg--die-debatte-bleibt-7901329.html> (retrieved October 2, 2024). See also ProPotsdam GmbH. (n.d.). *Integriertes Leitbautenkonzept Potsdamer Mitte*. Retrieved October 2, 2024, from <https://www.propotsdam.de/ueber-uns/unternehmensverbund/sanierungstraeger-potsdam-gmbh/alter-markt>



Fig. 7 The west side of the Old Market Square, in Potsdam, with the building of the Institute for Teacher Training, before its demolition in 2018 [source: Anker, J. (2017), from imago/Jürgen Ritter]

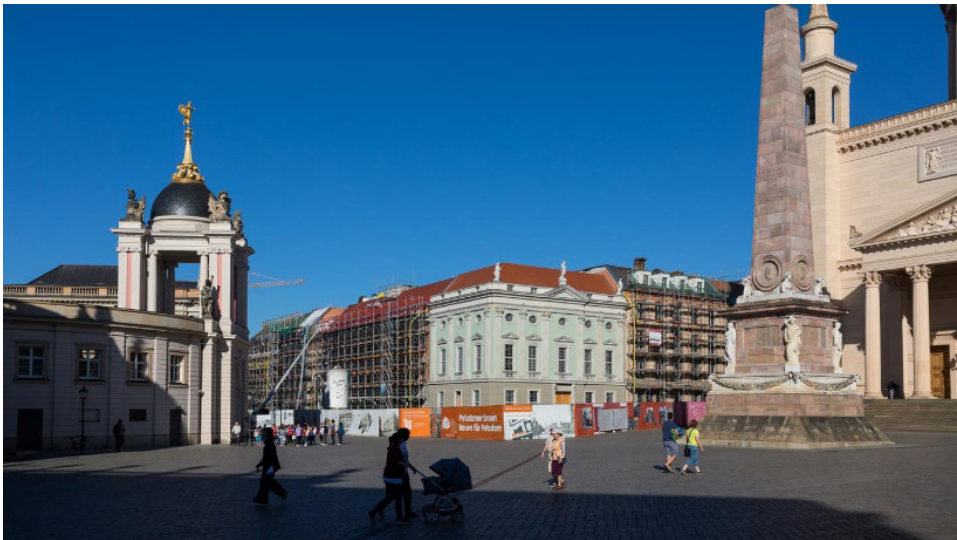


Fig. 8 The west side of the Old Market Square, in Potsdam, with the block that replaced the building of the Institute for Teacher Training under construction, in 2023 [source: Kramer, H. (2023), from Sebastian Rost]

An even greater distance is witnessed in Herrnhut. In the early 1970s, next to the southwest corner of Zinzendorf Square, a site whose building stock had been severely dilapidated at the end of the Second World War, the socialist administration erected a High School. Yet another characteristic example of socialist modernism, specifically of the “Dresden type” schools, not to mention at a prominent spot of the town, the building in question was unreservedly demolished in 2019,

under a decision of the school's administration, in order to clear space for a new educational unit<sup>10</sup>. Apart from the loss of a significant trace of the town's post-war evolution, what is most concerning is that the new building, a completely modern structure in terms of construction materials and interior arrangement, was clad with façades in the area's pre-war architectural style (Figs. 9, 10), thus broadening the falsification of the site's history, in full violation of conservation standards on authenticity.



Fig. 9 The site next to the southwest corner of Zinzendorf Square, in Herrnhut, with the “Dresden type” High School, before its demolition in 2019 [source: Evangelische Zinzendorfschulen Herrnhut. (n.d.). *Der Schulneubau in Bildern*]



Fig. 10 The site next to the southwest corner of Zinzendorf Square, in Herrnhut, with the school building that replaced the “Dresden type” High School, after its demolition in 2019 [source: Evangelische Zinzendorfschulen Herrnhut. (n.d.). *Ein neues Schulhaus für die Zinzendorfschulen*]

<sup>10</sup> For further details on the project, see: Evangelische Zinzendorfschulen Herrnhut. (n.d.). *Der Schulneubau in Bildern*. Retrieved October 2, 2024, from <https://ezsh.de/neubau/der-schulneubau-in-bildern>; Evangelische Zinzendorfschulen Herrnhut. (n.d.). *Ein neues Schulhaus für die Zinzendorfschulen*. Retrieved October 2, 2024, from <https://ezsh.de/neubau>



Equally alarming is the fact that the disturbing intervention received praise from the general public, as indicated by the highly positive comments of the followers of the “Architectural Uprising” movement on a relevant post. Currently active through Facebook and Instagram, the group in question is a people’s forum that deserves notice. With a remarkable basis of nearly 45.000 followers and 25 national branches in Europe alone, it promotes the cause of a peaceful rebellion “against the continued uglification” of the world’s cities<sup>11</sup>. To this end, its followers have expressed, on repeated occasions, staunch support for highly disputable actions of development agencies and private owners in relation to the conservation postures on authenticity.



Fig. 11 The plot on 29 - 33, Cours Evrard de Fayolle, in Bordeaux, before the 2016 development [source: Martins Architecture. (n.d.). *Logement collectif: Immeuble type XIX*]



Fig. 12 The plot on 29 - 33, Cours Evrard de Fayolle, in Bordeaux, after the 2016 development [source: <https://www.google.com/maps>, retrieved October 7, 2024]

Among the actions that have been praised, one can initially distinguish multiple cases of modern development in historic settings. In France, specifically on 29 - 33, Cours Evrard de Fayolle, in central Bordeaux, an empty plot, at a prominent point of a long building front, was filled up, in 2016, with a multi-storied apartment and office block, which acknowledges the height, volume, and colour of the surrounding buildings. Yet in further pursuit of aesthetic compatibility, its façade was shaped as a more or less exact replica of the façade of the adjoining historic building,

<sup>11</sup> For further information on the movement, refer to its website (<https://www.architecturaluprising.com>, retrieved October 7, 2024), as well as to its Facebook and Instagram pages. For the latter, see Architectural Uprising - International. (n.d.). *Home* [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved October 7, 2024, from <https://www.facebook.com/ArchitecturalUprising>; Architectural Uprising - International [@arch\_uprising]. (n.d.). *Posts* [Instagram profile]. Instagram. Retrieved October 7, 2024, from [https://www.instagram.com/arch\\_uprising](https://www.instagram.com/arch_uprising). As concerns the appraisal of the Herrnhut project, refer to the respective posts on the movement’s Facebook and Instagram pages. For the latter, see Architectural Uprising - International. (2024, August 24). *New school in Herrnhut* [Image attached] [Status update]. Facebook. [https://www.facebook.com/ArchitecturalUprising/photos/new-school-in-herrnhut-before-an-unsustainable-modernist-school-building-now-rep/122166946628057398/?\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/ArchitecturalUprising/photos/new-school-in-herrnhut-before-an-unsustainable-modernist-school-building-now-rep/122166946628057398/?_rdr) (retrieved October 7, 2024); Architectural Uprising - International [@arch\_uprising]. (2024, August 16). *A new school built in 2019 in Herrnhut (Germany)* [Photograph]. Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/arch\\_uprising/p/C-uQYo6ouH4/](https://www.instagram.com/arch_uprising/p/C-uQYo6ouH4/) (retrieved October 7, 2024).

which dates to the 19th century (35, Cours Evrard de Fayolle) - (Figs. 11, 12)<sup>12</sup>. The consequent deceit and distortion of the site's history, though unacceptable under the conservation norms for authenticity, has been well-received by the followers of the movement, with particular praise for its "beauty"<sup>13</sup>.

Approval has also been reserved for numerous cases of external alteration of existing buildings in areas of historic interest. Starting with the conventional units, which lack historic significance, a most characteristic case is that of the multi-storied building on 55, Plataion Street, in central Athens. Erected in the 1970s, as a typical example of the multistoried apartment blocks that cluttered the Greek capital in post-war years, it was recently upgraded into an innovative business hub (2023). Yet along with the creation of attractive modern interiors, its prominent fronts were dressed in neoclassical style (Figs. 13, 14)<sup>14</sup>. Though misleading in terms of the area's evolution, and hence in contrast with conservation principles on authenticity, this transformation has been once again lauded by the supporters of the movement, not to mention the local residents' acknowledgement of the renovated building as "a milestone that links the past with the future"<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> For more details on the project, see: Martins Architecture. (n.d.). *Logement collectif: Immeuble type XIX*. Retrieved October 7, 2024, from <https://www.martinsarchitecture.com/fr/projet/33/immeuble-type-xix>

<sup>13</sup> Refer to the respective posts on the movement's Facebook and Instagram pages. For the latter, see: Architectural Uprising - International. (2024, July 7). *Before and after in Bordeaux. The French like traditional architecture and build beautiful buildings!* [Image attached] [Status update]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=122160323810057398&id=61551721954191&set=a.122096293190057398> (retrieved October 7, 2024); Architectural Uprising - International [@arch\_uprising]. (2024, July 7). *Before and after in Bordeaux. The French like traditional architecture and build beautiful buildings!* [Photograph]. Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/arch\\_uprising/p/C9IXe4HIyfe/](https://www.instagram.com/arch_uprising/p/C9IXe4HIyfe/) (retrieved October 7, 2024).

<sup>14</sup> For further details on the project, see: PI55 Coworking Space. (n.d.). *The Building*. Retrieved October 7, 2024, from <https://www.pi55.com/the-building/>

<sup>15</sup> See, respectively, Architektoniki Epanastasi [@arkitektonikiepanastasi]. (2023, June 5). *Metatropi acharou ktiriou se neoklasiko* (Conversion of a graceless building into a neoclassical) [Photograph]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CtHJDVHowfw/> (retrieved October 7, 2024); PI55 Coworking Space. (n.d.). *The Building*.



Fig. 13 The building on 55, Plataion Street, in Athens, before the 2023 upgrading [source: <https://www.google.com/maps>, retrieved October 7, 2024]



Fig. 14 The building on 55, Plataion Street, in Athens, after the 2023 upgrading [source: PI55 Coworking Space. (n.d.). *The Building*]

Passing to the external alteration of historic buildings, a case that is most indicative of the priorities of the people's forum is that of the multi-storied edifice that currently houses the Administrative Litigation Court, on Gran Vía 19, in Madrid. Erected in 1921, as the first department store in Spain, on a prominent spot on the principal commercial street of the city, the building in question was renovated between 1975 and 1977, in order to house offices. As part of the overall project, its elaborate façade was replaced with a glass screen, fully rejected by the movement as “*a stain on an immaculate tapestry*” (Figs. 15, 16). Being unable to enforce change, the Spanish branch of “Architectural Uprising” launched in reaction an architectural competition for the redesign of the main front (2024). The directive to reshape the latter “*in a traditional style*”, with the option of “*direct and slavish copying of [other] buildings*” deemed acceptable, if “*duly justified*”<sup>16</sup>, attests to yet another widely supported initiative that favours falsification, to the expense of the authenticity of both the historic building and the wider setting, as appreciated by conservation specialists.

<sup>16</sup> For additional information on the development of the building and the directives of the competition, including the quoted phrases, see the respective design brief, namely Motín Arquitectónico. (2024). *Counterproposal - Competition. Madrid Gran Vía 19* [Design brief]. [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1iqzhu2oVOr9OBP\\_6scmjZNeCS8rGcbkT](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1iqzhu2oVOr9OBP_6scmjZNeCS8rGcbkT) (retrieved October 7, 2024). As concerns the support that has been expressed for the overall initiative, refer to the related posts on the movement's Facebook page and on the Instagram page of its Spanish branch. For the latter, see Architectural Uprising - International. (2024, June 26). *Architectural Competition. Help us reimagine the façade of a significant building on Madrid's famous Gran Vía* [Link] [Status update]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/ArchitecturalUprising/> (retrieved October 7, 2024); Motín Arquitectónico [@motin\_arquitectonico]. (2024, June 18). *Concurso. Por aquí tengo el placer de anunciar el primer concurso español de arquitectura neotradicional!* [Photograph]. Instagram. [https://www.instagram.com/p/C8Xf2XTNoGF/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/C8Xf2XTNoGF/?img_index=1) (retrieved October 7, 2024).

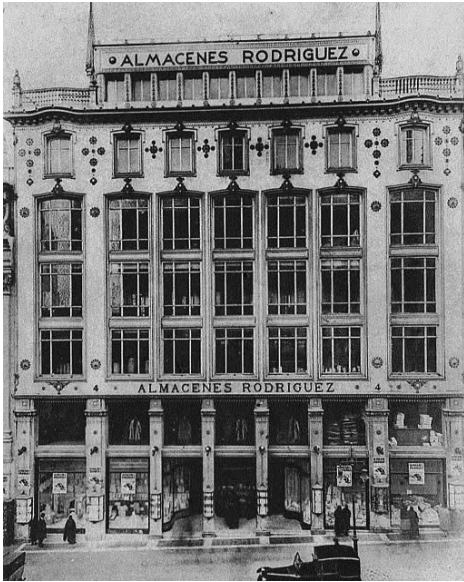


Fig. 15 The initial façade of the building on Gran Vía 19, in Madrid [source: Motín Arquitectónico. (2024). *Counterproposal - Competition. Madrid Gran Vía 19*]

Fig. 16 The façade of the building on Gran Vía 19, in Madrid, after the 1975 - 1977 renovation [source: Motín Arquitectónico. (2024). *Counterproposal - Competition. Madrid Gran Vía 19*]

Lastly, far from a call for proposals, endorsement has also been provided for completed reshaping of the exterior of historic buildings. The multi-storied apartment block on 13, Foksal Street, in Warsaw, was built in 1895, later becoming a focal point in one of the most prestigious areas of the Polish capital. In the 1930s, its new owner, a staunch supporter of modernism, financed an adaptation of its ornate façade to his preferred architectural style, in addition to adding the first open-view elevator in Warsaw on the back front. In 2019, a new, highly determined investor opted to enhance the elevator, and against considerable criticism, to reinstate the façade in its original form, on the basis of surviving photographic records (Figs. 17, 18)<sup>17</sup>. Though in evident contrast with the perception of authenticity by the conservation community, the consequent eradication of the principal trace of a significant phase of the building's history was yet again hailed by the public, not to mention beyond the "Architectural Uprising" movement<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> For further details on the development of the building and the recent project, see: Ghelamco. (n.d.). *Foksal 13/15*. Retrieved October 8, 2024, from <https://www.ghelamco.com/projects/poland/foksal-13-15>. See also Redakcja Pressland. (2019, September 10). *Foksal 13/15 - najpiękniejsze kamienice Warszawy odzyskały dawny blask. Ta inwestycja jest jak prezent dla miasta*. Bryła.pl. <https://www.bryla.pl/foksal-13-15-najpiekniejsze-kamienice-warszawy-odzyskaly-dawny-blask-ta-inwestycja-jest-jak-prezent-dla-miasta> (retrieved October 8, 2024).

<sup>18</sup> For the reaction of the public, see: Visit Poland. (2024, April 7). *Poland is renewing itself, including its buildings!* [Image attached] [Status update]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=370424022656179&set=pb.100090657513927.-2207520000&type=3> (retrieved October 8, 2024).



Fig. 17 The façade of the building on 13, Foksal Street, in Warsaw, before the 2019 renovation [source: <https://www.google.com/maps>, retrieved October 8, 2024]



Fig. 18 The façade of the building on 13, Foksal Street, in Warsaw, after the 2019 renovation [source: Ghelamco. (n.d.). *Foksal 13/15*]

## Conclusions

The above analysis illustrates a crucial reality in the European context: regardless of its fascinating linguistic evolution and feverish elaboration in the modern conservation agenda, authenticity, as perceived by conservation specialists, is all too often disregarded by other key players in architectural heritage management. Hence, numerous disputable projects are unreservedly pursued, concluded, and most alarmingly, praised throughout Europe. Keeping this in mind, one is right to wonder what is the purpose of engaging in deeper and deeper discussions on the content and use of the term, if, in the end, it is to be broadly ignored and undervalued.

A reversal of this inconsistency requires a reconciliation of mentalities, which can certainly be fostered by developing, to the utmost, consultation procedures. Yet more than that, the key issue is the diffusion and acknowledgement of related conservation principles by the widest audience possible. This makes imperative a consistent education on aesthetics and heritage appreciation from early on, coupled with the fostering of tolerance and social awareness regardless of age. Such qualities could stir a substantial change, foremostly in the attitudes of the public, which may, in the long run, prove decisive for a consistent pursuit of authenticity, keeping in mind that the latter depends, not only on the depth of the discussions of conservation specialists, but also on the vibrancy of their echo in the wider social setting.

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