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The Forbes Prize Lecture

The Forbes prize was established in 1958 to honour Edward Waldo Forbes, emeritus director of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, and the first honorary fellow of IIC. It is awarded by the Council of IIC for conspicuous services to conservation and the recipient customarily delivers a lecture during IIC’s international congress, held in 2012 in Vienna. The 24th recipient of the Forbes prize in 2012 was Dr Manfred Koller.

Dr Manfred Koller was born in Vienna in 1941. He earned an MA in art technology and conservation at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, and a doctorate in the history of art at the University of Vienna. In 1965 he joined the Austrian Bundesdenkmalamt (Federal Monument Agency) and from 1980 to 2005 he was chief restorer and head of the Federal Laboratories for Conservation and Restoration in Vienna. His life’s work on the conservation of paintings, polychrome sculptures, and mural paintings and the examination of architectural surfaces has been centred in Austria. From 1970 to the present he has been a lecturer in conservation and technology at a number of academies of art and universities in Vienna. He joined IIC in 1966 and was created an honorary fellow in 2006. Dr Koller was a founding member of the Austrian group of IIC in 1979, and its president 2003–2011. He was the editor of Restauratorenblätter, the German language journal of the Austrian group of IIC, from 1973 to 2011, and he is the author of c. 580 publications on the history of art, technical art history, conservation of paintings, polychrome sculptures, mural painting, stuccowork, stone, and architectural surfaces.

The decorative in urban Vienna: Its preservation

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The Vienna cityscape has retained its nucleus of the Roman fort through Medieval times to the present. Since the thirteenth century it has been enlarged, and its outlines changed again with the building of new fortifications in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gardens spread around the perimeter during the eighteenth century until the building of the new Ringstraße after 1857 replaced the dismantled bastions. Vienna’s cathedral, the Court, palaces, public and private houses with characteristic built features including details such as pavings, lighting or railings, symbolic ornaments on buildings or in public spaces, all illustrate aspects of the decorative. In 1864–1874 the first museum and school for applied arts in mainland Europe set new standards for techniques and design of decoration. In 1889 Camillo Sitte in his book on urban architecture promulgated the idea of retaining historic details in growing cities, and regarding them as artistic creations. In 1895–1905 plans to adapt the narrow city streets for modern traffic following the example of Paris would have destroyed large areas, but the plans were cancelled in time. Adolf Loos rejected superficial ornamentation in 1908 and placed bare white plaster or coloured marble or precious metal on his façades. Around 1900 Otto Wagner had even more influence on the townscape through his own immense oeuvre and the works of his many disciples. Decorations on Viennese façades were made from a variety of stone, lime plaster, lime stucco and since 1847 Roman cement, bare brickwork and glazed tiles, which will be briefly discussed in their historic context, along with aspects of their conservation. Colouring, mainly in ‘stone colours’, has been examined and can be compared to paintings of the city from the fifteenth century onwards. There is less direct evidence for painted façades from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and only small traces still survive. From the time of the Ringstraße frescoes and sgrafitto have undergone conservation, in recent decades combined with increasingly scientific examination and precise documentation. Major issues in urban conservation within Vienna include the disruption of its skyline by the construction of speculative tall commercial buildings.
close to protected areas (which include the World Heritage Sites of Schönbrunn designated in 1996, and the city with the Ringstraβe and Belvedere, designated in 2001), reduced context for historic façades due to the preservation of the façade but not the interior construction (façadism), expanding the elevation with additional storeys, and aggressive confrontation from new façades made from steel and glass.

**Keywords:** Vienna, Townscape, Buildings, Urban furnishing, Roofs, Façades, Ornamentation

**Tradition and transformation of ornaments**

Urban civilization is one of the oldest manifestations of human culture. Its history has been widely studied in terms of its origins and development, regarding places, structures, and functions chosen for with their ground plans, spatial organization, and individual buildings. Specific ornaments, ornamental styles, and decorative compositions are commonly attributed to the applied and the fine arts. For architectonic façades and interiors ornamental decorations are often erroneously regarded as secondary, and not coherent with nor essential to the built structure. That is in some way true, but they are nevertheless of definitive importance for the visual aspect of single buildings, architectonic ensembles and even more so for urban sites as a whole.

A historic city can be viewed as a work of art created throughout history. Cities are created over different periods in a symbiosis of tradition and innovation. The basic rules of building were developed in antiquity, and terms and principles were codified in ten books on architecture from the first century CE by Vitruvius. These principles gained new importance from the fifteenth to the early twentieth centuries. They included order, ornament, and decoration in architecture, and the design of landscapes from the ecological perspective. Similarly, all formal elements of buildings from the ground plan of the whole city with its streets and public spaces to that of buildings, façades, roofs, surface decoration, and structures before the application of shorter-lived colour schemes, compose the urban decorative ensemble.

At present we are suffering from an extremely rapid worldwide convergence of building techniques and trends, due to globalization of the world economy and the dominance of western civilization. Uniformity in individual towns and habitats is a possible consequence, which can only be balanced by regional and local by-laws for retaining historic structures and preserving their characteristic functional and visual character. I shall try to demonstrate this individual character as an example of the decorative principles and aspects of my home town Vienna, through two thousand years of history. I shall discuss problems in the preservation of architectonic and artistic values within her ornamental cosmos from town planning to single buildings, and on to the decorative design of details and the colours of the townscape. Finally I shall highlight present opportunities and necessary steps to be taken to preserve historic decorative features in a modern capital like Vienna in balance with contemporary construction.

Extraordinary contributions to understanding the development and meaning of ornament in the history of art were made by two Viennese scholars. Alois Riegl (1858–1905) was curator of textiles in the Museum of Applied Arts, and the first general conservator for monuments. He analysed how the old Egyptian lotus became the Greek palmette and was combined in many variations with the dynamic Greek wavescroll, through both tradition and transformation (Riegl, 1893), see Supplementary Fig. A http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S1. Ernst Gombrich (1909–2001) emigrated to London in 1936 after his studies in Vienna. He explained, in the footsteps of Riegl, how the individual psychological perception of ornament is depending on a common ‘language’ of architecture and decoration. This enables us to understand and distinguish different forms and patterns (Gombrich, 1982).

**Terminology of decorative principles**

Occidental philosophy and aesthetics are based on the thinking of the Greeks 2500 years earlier, and its interpretation and mediation by the Latin culture of the Roman empire. In parallel the antique influenced development in the crafts and arts. After a more covert transmission of both through the medieval period, European culture from the Italian Renaissance onwards again explored its ancient roots, transforming them into the sequence of common styles and individual interpretations we know from the history of art and architecture (Kruft, 1991, pp. 72–79).

**Order**

The Greek term kosmos (Gatzemeier & Ebert, 1976) has Indo-Germanic roots linked to the term order (Meinhardt et al., 1984). Its prior meanings covered military, social, and public order (Plato, Aristotel), rules for the universe against the natural emptiness of the chaos, or for the balance of the universe by the principle of harmony, with human beings seen as part of it. But in the philosophy of Epicure and the Stoics, man became a microcosmos in himself. Medieval philosophy and theology retained both meanings of kosmos – for the universe and for adornment. The latter changed in modern languages to cosmetics as a mere superficial embellishment.
The Latin word *ordo* means (military) rank and file, unit, rule and order. In his handbook on architecture (around 25 BCE) Vitruvius had already used *ordo* for the different styles as well, which he described as developing from the male *doric* to the female *ionic* to the third order called *corinthian* (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 172 [IV/1]). But the different orders of columns and temples he collectively called *genus* (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 168 [I/1,18]).

**Ornament**

The Latin word *ornare* in Vitruvius’ handbook corresponds with the English *adorn* (German: *schmücken*, French: *orner*, Italian: *ornare*). He called *ornamenta* the embellishments on a building which architects like to design (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 24 [I/4,6]) – on a temple mainly for the architrave (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 26 [I/5,10], p. 278 [VI/143, 24]), the gable (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 334 [VII/173, 13]), and the columns (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 174, [IV/88,8]). But with the term *ornare* painted decorations are also included (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 334 [V/174, 2,5]). In Vitruvius’ fourth book the origins of the various orders of columns and their adornments are described. The ornamental systems of *triglyphs*, *mutuli*, and *denticuli* on stone doric and ionic temples came from the imitation of earlier timber constructions (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 176 [IV/89, 90]). It is of interest to learn that Vitruvius called for entablatures without *ornamenta*, to save laborious work and make the building less expensive (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 230 [VII/118,15]). He often used *ornare* when discussing the furnishing of the interiors of buildings in his seventh book on architecture (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 230 [VII/166,2]).

**Decoration**

Finally we have to inquire for the linguistic sources and meanings of *decoration* and *decorative*, which are often taken to be synonymous. The meaning of the Latin verb *decorare* is in fact very close to *ornare*, but in a more general way. Metaphorically it also means to celebrate and signify a person. But for the cultivated Romans the adjective *decorus* suggested more immaterial qualities such as decency, gratitude, and even brilliance. Vitruvius used the term *decor* as one of his six main principles of his aesthetic guidelines for architecture: *Ordinatio*, *Dispositio*, *Eurythmia*, *Symmetria*, *Decor*, and *Distributio* (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 36 [II/11, 10–25]). According to Vitruvius *decor* means the perfect outlook of a building without defect and made in an appropriate manner and style. *Distributio* means economy in the use of resources and methods of construction. In Vitruvius’ proposals for various functions of a building *decor* stands often for good taste, adequacy, or dignity and is mentioned together with beauty, called *venustas* (Fensterbusch, 1964, p. 294 [VIII/151, 20]). It should further include the *naturalis decor* (*decoration* coming from nature) by building on healthy sites and according to the best natural (ecological) conditions: bedrooms or libraries should receive sunlight from the east, bathrooms and winter rooms from the southwest, while picture galleries should have even light from the north (Fensterbusch, 1964, pp. 40–43 [II/13,23–14,11]).

From Greek and Latin etymology and the definitions of ornament and decoration in later sources and languages (Irmscher, 1984) we learn that its essence is much broader than the mere formal embellishment of surfaces. It has to do with being handsome in accordance with a certain meaning or expression, and with general aesthetic representation in the sense of order (natural or man-made), harmony, and beauty.

**The decorative order in the cityscape**

These Vitruvian principles were a suitable instrument for colonization, and they spread throughout the Roman empire from the first century onwards. In that period Romans settled south of the Danube and became neighbours of the German tribes on the northern banks of the river, organizing the provinces of Noricum and Pannonia with fortified military camps like Vindobona (Vienna) and some larger cities like Carnuntum (c. 70 km to the east) or Aquincum (Budapest). Vienna’s earliest layout, a rectangle with rounded corners, can still be seen in the city map (Fig. 1). The Roman camp was sited on an area with an elevation of 10–15 m, between the natural borders formed by the banks of Danube at the north and creeks to the east and west, and was secured to the south by a moat (which later became the area called Graben). So we already find within Roman Vindobona Vitruvius’ *ordinatio*, with good proportions and symmetry, together with the *naturalis decor* provided by a well-protected site.

After the Dark Ages and migration in the eleventh century, the region of Vienna became part of the Carolingian east marches, when Bajuvarian-Germanic settlers mixed with the relics of a local Celtic population. From 1156 onwards Vienna developed into a princely residence, first of the Babenberger dukes until 1246 and from 1278 to 1919 for the Habsburg dynasty.

**Ground plan or horizontal urban pattern**

The Medieval town – named *civitas* in 1137 – was subject to municipal law from 1221 and basically kept the Roman ground plan with its main traffic routes, but with new public spaces and quarters around it. The Medieval fortification was an encompassing stone wall with battlements and tower gates,
as shown on the Schotten altarpiece from 1469. After the first Turkish defeat in 1529 the simple walls were adapted to a more modern system of defences, with 12 bastions and seven gates, which enclosed the inner city until the second half of the nineteenth century, when they were demolished (Jeitler, 2010). These fortifications gave Vienna, like most post-Medieval European cities, a star-shaped outline. In its central position was (and is until today) St Stephen’s cathedral at the confluence of six streets (Fig. 2).

The second victory over the Turks in 1683 stimulated not only the renovation of private and government buildings within the city, but also the creation of gardens with palaces to replace the burnt-out suburbs. For their protection a much larger outer fortification wall had to be created in a hurry in 1703 against the threatened invasion of the so-called Kuruzzen. A detailed survey was required, undertaken by Italian engineers Anguissola and Marinoni and printed in 1706. They later taught at the military academy. The layout of these gardens developed as a halo with a semicircle of rays leading out of the enclosed city, well documented in a series of engravings mainly by Salomon Kleiner, and 1759–1760 in the wonderful panoramic paintings by Bernardo Bellotto, now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna. Yet only in the area of Prince Eugen’s Belvedere has a small part of this ‘green halo’ survived (Schröder & Sternath, 2005, p. 59, see Supplementary Fig. B http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S2).

The main subsequent alterations to the Viennese decorative ground plan were due to secularization under Emperor Joseph II (1780–1790). Many monasteries were dissolved, cemeteries surrounding the churches in the city were abolished, and the bastions were opened for public access. But the most impressive change to the urban ornamental was affected by the will of Emperor Franz Joseph II, after 1857 when the fortifications were demolished. The 600-m wide Glacis – until then kept free for military defence – was transformed to the new Ringstraße. A competition overseen by Rudolf Eitelberger prepared a boulevard with five angles running around the centre, accompanied by great symmetric blocks of housing, public buildings, and gardens at both sides (Wagner-Rieger, 1969; Podbrecky, 2002). Outside the suburbs a second road, called the Gärten (belt), was opened in 1873 as a substantially larger outer circle, in place of earthen defensive walls from 1703. Here, a metro line was built around the town from 1895 to 1902 (Banik-Schweitzer, 1978; Veigl, 2005). After 1975, this became integrated with the enlarged underground (lines 4 and 6). Expansion to the north followed the great regulation of the meandering river Danube from 1871 to 1875. The creation of the Ringstraße was a consequence of a more liberal society and economy during the Neo-Absolutistic period, and mirrors the situation in France and Germany. It enabled new urban development for Vienna, which became a model for many other central and eastern European capitals (Klein, 2008).

It inspired the Viennese architect Camillo Sitte (1843–1903) to write here the first book in German on urban planning (Sitte, 1889; Kruft, 1991, pp. 365–367). He claimed to learn from the beauty of the old Stadtbilder (visual impression of towns) and he underlined the importance of open spaces and their relationship to public monuments and buildings. Sitte’s approach to historic towns as works of art was quite opposite to Haussmann’s surgical cutting of boulevards into the old Paris, connected with the appropriation and destruction of many historic houses. Sitte pled for the continuity of property, liberal integration of buildings for different social levels, and industrial production. But when describing the historical beauty of old spaces and quarters he was not aware that in Italy there had existed since the fourteenth century regulations for town planning, the so-called Ufficiali del Ornato (offices for beauty) (Braunfels, 1982). This was still in effect for Venice during the nineteenth century (Schrammel, 1998). In northern countries from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries Bauordnungen (building codes) were, in some
ways, complementary. Under the Austrian Monarchy a ‘central commission for the research and preservation of monuments’ was founded in 1850 to document historic buildings and to care for necessary restoration. However, legislation for their protection could only be established in 1923 by the new republic of Austria with the establishment of the Bundesdenkmalamt (Federal Office for the Protection of Monuments). Municipal building regulation from 1930 still stated that the exterior appearance of new buildings should not disturb the harmonious features of the local Stadtbild in respect to form, material, and colour (Wolf & Schmid, 1930). In Vienna, even after the destruction caused by the two world wars during the twentieth century, historical structures were retained and the losses were reconstructed as far as possible.

**Elevation or vertical composition**

Authors like Enea Silvio Piccolomini (who later became Pope Pius II) around 1450 and Hans Sachs in 1567 mentioned the local proverb about the existence of two Viennas, a superterranean and a subterranean one, because of the deep and wide cellars (Tietze,
The first Medieval houses were made from wood, with a wooden framework. Stone walls were used only for the fortification, which also incorporated parts of the Roman gates. Only churches, the new court building, and some private houses had stone walls. Brickwork was first mentioned in 1276, and around 1300 a brickmaker was also recorded (Kühnel, 1975/76, p. 29). One hundred and fifty years later Enea Silvio Piccolomini stated that great and comfortable private houses were mostly built from ‘stone’ with vaulted entrance halls and stoves for heating (Kühnel, 1975/76, p. 30). The best impression of the late Medieval gable-ended houses with two or three storeys is provided by a 1609 engraving by Jacob Hoefnagel. The length of their ground plan was more than double their width and their cellars reached two or three levels below ground, as revealed by recent building research (Buchinger et al., 2002). During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, frequently two or three of these small houses were integrated behind a new façade by adding one or two floors on top to provide more space. This was often needed because the Court required temporarily rooms for guests when the owner had no privilege for exemption. A good example is the existing house in Tuchlauben 19 where the first two stories preserve two fourteenth-century houses inside, one of which has important wall paintings, uncovered in 1980–1981 (Höhle et al., 1982). Here this accommodation exemption was granted in 1716.

The consolidation of Medieval single houses into larger units allowed for more representative façades and altered the gable-fronts to a horizontal cornice and roofline; larger town-houses could thus assume ornaments from noble palaces. During the sixteenth century many courtyards were provided with Italian-influenced open arcades, which, however, were closed a hundred years later due to the severe climate, and in some cases reopened again in recent decades, like the house Stampa, Bäckerstraße 7 (Buchinger et al., 2002, pp. 499–505: Bundesdenkmalamt, 2008, p. 451, ill. 452) or the Hofburg-Stallburg and Amalienhof (Koller, 1997a).

1Further information may be found at: architecture, buildings, and cultural sites of Vienna: www.kulturgut.wien.at; Austrian Bundesdenkmalamt: www.bda.at (evidence on federal listed historical monuments in Vienna, and current projects for research and conservation); and initiative on protection of monuments: www.idms.at.
The first residence of the Habsburg dynasty was a square fortress with four towers in the corners close to the south wall of the city, which is now the subject of an EU research project on court residences (www.courtresidences.eu). Its irregular appearance with different wings and open spaces illustrates the development of the residence from the fourteenth to the late nineteenth century, because several plans for ideal regulations (mainly from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) were all left unfinished (Holzschuh-Hofer & Beseler, 2008).

Regular courtyards with corridors and surrounding rooms not only formed the typical ground plans for larger monasteries (cf. the Jesuit convent, or Klosterneuburg abbey near Vienna) but also for barracks. This model was then adapted for larger structures like the first public hospital from 1784 (Allgemeines Krankenhaus) replacing older houses for invalids and the poor, after the Emperor Joseph II had seen the Hotel de Dieu in Paris (Skopec & Gröger, 2002, see Supplementary Fig. C http://dx.doi . org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S3). Around 1990 this was changed to a campus for Vienna’s university but the historical structures were well maintained (Rizzi, 1992, ill. 210). Unique for Vienna is the architecture parlante (Philipp, 2006, p. 271) of the round tower for insane patients (Narrenturm), erected 1783 behind the last courtyard by French-born Isidore Canevale with a rusticated exterior and internal central heating system (Tietze, 1924, p. 122). A project for its conservation is now on the way.

After the revolution of 1848 three barracks were erected in a strategic position (in particular the Arsenal, behind the Upper Belvedere) using a similar building type with a regular plan of connected rectangular courts, but with tower-like elevated corners (Fig. 4). This concept was frequently used by the architects of the Ringstraße Ludwig Förster, Theophil Hansen, Friedrich Schmidt, and Heinrich Ferstel for blocks of public and private building such as the Academy of Fine Arts, Parliament House, the Town Hall, University, a house on Schottenring 20-26 (Wagner-Rieger, 1970, pp. 173–221, ill. 14,16,17). A similar configuration was chosen in the 1920s and 1930s for the social housing programme Gemeindebauten concentrating on the outer districts – at that time with a largely blue-collar population. Three hundred and eighty-two units were built between 1919 and 1934, which became ‘a town itself spread over the remaining town’ (Tietze, 1931, p. 392). It was the last phase of this historical planning tradition in the urban architecture of Vienna and had great influence (Mang & Mang-Frimmel, 1980). After 1960 local continuity gave way to individual modernism, under international influences.

The decorative element in public spaces

After the general description of Vienna’s urban development in its horizontal and vertical figurations we...
may now focus on constitutive elements, from large structures down to several typical details of the whole decorative pattern which makes up a capital like Vienna.

**Open spaces and streets**
The larger open spaces of the Medieval town were until 1230 formed in parallel with the establishment of a new residence, parish church, or convent. These places served as centres for markets (Am Hof) and public functions such as justice (Hoher Markt) and are still in existence. In the Baroque period the three main open spaces were distinguished by great figurative votive columns in the centres, dedicated to the Virgin (Am Hof of 1646), the Trinity (Graben of 1692, also called plague column, 18 m high), and to St Joseph (Hoher Markt of 1712). They were regularly used, illuminated, and frequented by religious and dynastic events, such as the three pillars of faith of the Habsburgian pietas Austriaca (Polleross, 1998). The first monument erected by the municipality in 1737 was the fountain of Providentia on the Neuer Markt (new market) by Raffael Donner. It was followed after 1795 by five dynastic figurative monuments in the places of the old and new Court (1795 Joseph II, 1842 Franz I, 1847 Archduke Karl, 1860 Prince Eugen, and 1874 Maria Theresia). Monuments to famous musicians or poets were added at least in the planning of the Ringstrasse (Beethoven 1874, Schiller 1875, Goethe 1895, and Mozart 1896). Technically, the Baroque monuments were of marble, the fountain statues by Donner of lead, and the works after 1795 of bronze. The equestrian monuments by Franz Anton Zauner 1795 on the Josefsplatz and Anton Fernkorn 1847 on the Heldenplatz became famous due to their excellent casting techniques (Koller, 2009). These landmarks maintain their dominant position today, whereas their religious and political background have been largely forgotten: they have become urban ornaments.

In reaction to the reforms initiated by Emperor Joseph II (1780–1790) old churches were separated from their encircling cemeteries, and still-empty public spaces were filled with monumental sculpture. In 1792 the release of the space around St Stephan’s was documented perfectly by two engravings. This opening for the public determined the future of the city centre, and it stimulated decorative representation on façades in neighbouring streets. New open spaces were created with the planning of the Ringstrasse after
1857. The Emperor ensured that they were created along with new public buildings such as the Town Hall, the Court Theatre, and the Opera House. The asymmetric Heldenplatz with its two equestrian statues grew out of the largest project for an imperial forum after a design by Gottfried Semper and Carl Hasenauer in 1869 on the main battlefield from 1683, south of the old Court. It was left unfinished due to the First World War and the end of the monarchy (Kudriovsky, 2010). Furthermore six public parks became integrated between blocks in the Ringstraße, which itself was made into a walk with four parallel lines of deciduous trees. The species were changed after 1880 from Ailanthus and plane to domestic lime, elm, and maple which proved to be better adapted to the local climate. An initial idea to plant only trees of a small pyramidal shape to make façades easier to see was dropped (Masanz & Nagl, 1996).

At the end of the nineteenth century competition regarding new metropolitan concepts emerged between expanding capitals in central Europe (Blau & Platzer, 1999). These concepts, described between 1895 and 1905, endangered the narrow and irregular historical pattern of the inner city of Vienna. In order to speed up traffic one side of the street would have been enlarged by demolishing existing historical buildings. New open spaces and boulevards would have destroyed great parts of the old city (Kassal-Mikula et al., 1999/2000). But due to resistance from the Central Commission and engaged (art) historians, this so-called ‘regulation of roads’ was prevented (Zaloziecki, 1914) and many of the irregular twisted lanes still exist. Nevertheless, prominent historic houses were replaced by new ones, partly by means of an enlarged ‘copy’ of the previous building (cf. 1896 the Renaissance Regensburgerhof, Lugeck 4, documented in a painting by Franz Poledne 1897, Vienna Museum).

Paving

Paving on roads and open spaces was changed almost totally in the second half of the twentieth century to the current surfaces, which are made of asphalt. Since the fourteenth century cobblestones of local sandstone were mentioned for the great open spaces as well as for small lanes (Kühnel, 1975/76, p. 33). In 1450 Enea Silvio Piccolomini described paving made of hard stones in Vienna (Kühnel, 1975/76, p. 30). The paving was subsequently renewed in 1777 and 1826 with cubes of granite and lasted until the 1960s (Paul, 1910, p. 128). Expensive ornamental stonework patterns can only be found indoors, like the marble floor in St Charles’ church made before 1730. But even larger yards in the city were surfaced with sand and gravel until recently. Medieval curbstones to prevent damage to the walls of houses from the wheels of passing cars are still kept in the Griechengasse.

Street furniture

Visual evidence of historic street furniture in open spaces for lighting, railings, and lavatories dates only from the second half of nineteenth century onwards (Wehdorn, 1979; Dehio Wien I, 2003, pp. 963–964). There are several cast iron wall brackets for street-lamps reminiscent of the first gas lighting which was operated until 1910 by competing local and English companies. Electric lighting was introduced in 1903 and the tramways were electrically powered. The negative aesthetics created by the overhead contact wires caused public debates, but they were finally installed even on the Ring and the Mariahilferstraße. Several free-standing historical iron candelabra with glass cylinders are recent reconstructions, as are the advertising pillars – called Litfaßsäulen after the inventor from Berlin (Am Hof, Stock-im Eisenplatz). Historical candelabra for lighting designed by the respective architects are still to be found at the front of Parliament House (cast bronze), the Town Hall, and Opera House (cast iron) and the University (stone). In the area of the Court new lighting concepts have been adapted to the historic situation (Kupf, 1997). More decorative standing lamps are integrated into the monumental iron railings running along the Ringstraße: around the Kunst- und Naturhistorisches Museum designed by Carl Hasenauer and nearly 1 km long along the Heldenplatz and the Imperial residence 1864 after a design by Moritz Löhr. The cast iron of the latter came from Blansko in Moravia and its original purple colour and gilding was recently reconstructed, but only near the central gate (Koller, 1997a, b, pp. 535–536) (see Supplementary Fig. D http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S4). These railings were true landmarks separating the areas of the Court from those of the municipality, which are still separately administered today, the former by the federal government, the latter by the town council.

Finally a few historical lavatories should be mentioned, underground on city open spaces, and at pavement level in the parks along the Ringstraße. The only older facility, from the seventeenth century, is in the Obizzipalais, now a museum for clocks (Buchinger et al., 2002, p. 480). A 1905 Liberty-style WC on the Graben can be accessed by decorative stairways. Technical equipment for WCs had been produced since the late nineteenth century by Wilhelm Beetz GmbH in Vienna and Budapest. These historical lavatories are listed as technical monuments and have been restored as such (Wehdorn & Georgeacopol-Winischofer, 1984, pp. 5–6).
Decorative roofs, chimneys, and symbolic ornaments

Now we will observe the appearance of single buildings from the top down, and the characteristics of their historical decorative elements.

Towers and roofing

Of Medieval towers only the two gothic stone spires of St Stephen’s cathedral and of the church Maria am Gestade with tracery and foliage survived. However, their upper sections are now copies using the original technique, made during 1863–1864 and 1890–1894, respectively. Other Medieval church towers have acquired later Italian-inspired helmets like those of the Baroque era. They were again changed to Neo-gothic spires during the nineteenth century, partly made from iron (St Augustin). The Baroque domes of St Peter, St Charles, and the Church of the Visitation are covered with copper sheeting, like the mansard roofs of the Upper Belvedere, and the domes of the court buildings at Michaelerplatz from 1733 to 1892, here with ornamental gilding work.

Generally Medieval and Baroque roofs were protected with rectangular terracotta tiles, sometimes with joint patterns made from lime plaster. Examples of the products from local tile-works can be seen in the Viennese tile museum (www.ziegelmuseum.at). Glazed coloured roof tiles on St Stephen’s have a continuous tradition back to the thirteenth century (Romanesque towers) and were renewed for the huge saddleback roof above the naves in 1856, and again after war damage in 1945. Roofs on the great buildings along the Ringstraße included for the first time here grey and black slate. The Votivkirche in French cathedral style has a geometric black and grey pattern, for which a schematic underdrawing was applied to the timberwork below. The octagonal domes of the great museums have rounded elements of slate fixed between ribs of profiled zinc. Much ornamental gilding work on the roofs had been nearly forgotten and 100 years later could be restored again. In 1869 the architect Heinrich Ferstel built a Neo-Renaissance palace for Archduke Ludwig Viktor (Schwarzenbergplatz 1), which features a round bay corner topped with a copper roof just where the Ringstraße changes direction. There I found in 1984 traces of the first ornamental gilding. After its reconstruction in 2002 the roof again presents a brilliant sight-line for those moving along the road (Supplementary Fig. E, a and b http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.SS5 and http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S6). Ferstel further stressed the ridge of the saddle-shaped roof both here and on the Votivkirche by a horizontal iron lattice with gilded tracery. Another example of lost ornamental roof gilding was the famous sphere from wrought-iron leaves crowning the 1898 Joseph Maria Olbrich Secession building. The roof was burnt in 1945, and no remains could be found, but a report from the opening in 1898 stated ‘Gilding with three stripes’! During the last restoration 15 years ago we could not visualize this description until architect Krischanitz zoomed details from old photographs to reveal the typical Liberty-style pattern of three congruent oval circles, which were then reconstructed (Kapfinger & Krischanitz, 2003).

Architectonically and visually prominent chimneys are rare in the urban panorama of Vienna. Exceptional are the two 38-m-high flues designed by Theophil Hansen for the Parliament House, with ionic columns with capitals made from gilded cast iron (Bundesdenkmalamt, 2008, p. 454, ill. 554) and the painted and gilded smoke-stack of the 1990 heating plant in Spittelau by Friedensreich Hundertwasser.

Symbolic ornaments

We must not forget an important group of decorative entities which carry a religious or political message. There are gilded crosses on top of the church towers. On churches with imperial patronage the crosses stand above a gilded copy of the Habsburg family crown, now in the imperial treasury (Karlskirche, Votivkirche, Stiftskirche, Universitätskirche). This crown from 1602 is even present on top of the lanterns in the iron railings around the imperial district along the Ringstraße and on the door-handles of the new wing of the Hofburg. Another symbol frequently found since the sixteenth century is the gilded chain of the Golden Fleece Order, mainly connected with the coat of arms of members of the Habsburg family as displayed on the portal to the Schweizerhof in the Court, erected 1552 under Emperor Ferdinand I. The elements of this chain represent the Burgundian heritage of the Habsburgs since Emperor Maximilian I. The linked symbols of the flint and the fire iron are shown not only in the entablature of the outer and inner portals of the Schweizerhof but are also repeated as political ornament in the masonry surrounds of all the windows in this oldest part of the Viennese court. They served as a ‘personal logo’ for Ferdinand I and symbolize the owner of this imperial residence as protector of church and Christianity and rescuer of Europe – during Ferdinand’s reign the Muslim Turks were defeated for the first time in 1529 on the outskirts of Vienna (Holzschuh-Hofer & Beseler, 2008, pp. 650–653, ill. 752, 757–768).

The double-headed eagle represents the Holy Roman Empire of the Habsburgs. Coats of arms made of stone or metal with respective crownings on the gables or above the doors of palaces declare noble owners. On public monuments they indicate
the different reigns of the founder, such as those of Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary on the plague column in the Graben dedicated by Leopold I. Another ornamental symbol with a personal message consists of the initials of the owners on façades and gates. In the seventeenth century they were integrated, for example like ‘LI’ for Leopold I in the 1683 copper cross with double-headed eagle on St Stephan’s spire (now in the Vienna Museum). Among the ornaments of the wooden doors of the Reichskanzlei in the Court stands ‘CC’ for Emperor Charles VI. Entangled into the ornament on iron gates ‘E’ and ‘S’ in the Belvedere gardens represent the patron Prince Eugen from Savoy (Supplementary Fig. F http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S7) and ‘FJI’ represents Franz Joseph I on the new wing of the court.

Decorative façades in Vienna

The French word façade comes from the Latin facies (face), which early townships in central Italy transferred to facciata for characterizing the entrance elevation of a building (Braunfels, 1982). Façades are essential for the identification of a building, much like a face is for a person. Therefore façades became predestined for adornment.

Masonry

Stone façades were rare in Vienna. Local caves in the Vienna woods produced fine sandstone, and since Roman times limestone had been quarried in the Leitha mountains 40 km to the east. The Romans introduced square stones with an embossed surface for their fortifications (Kronberger, 2009, p. 31). Similar embossing was used in the gate towers of the Medieval town and the first Hofburg from the late thirteenth century (Mitchell, 2010, ill. 33, 34). Other Medieval stone buildings were mainly the churches. Baroque churches and palaces used diluvial limestones from Lower Austria for static and decorative parts or sculptures only, and reddish lime marbles from Salzburg for the masonry or cartouches of noble doors. Both stones were provided by shipping on the Danube. At the construction of the Ringstraße many public buildings received exterior façades of limestone, which came originally from Lower Austria and later from Istria, from which transport became easy after 1870 on the new southern railway from Triest: the Opera House, Court Theatre, Town Hall, University, and the museums for art and natural history (Kieslinger, 1972). But on most of the inner façades masonry was imitated by various plasterwork techniques. Polished marble on the Ringstraße was introduced by Theophil Hansen for the Parliament House (1871–1883). The building for New York’s Equitable Assurance company near St Stephan’s followed in 1891 with dark reddish and grey polished granite which is well preserved today. After 1890 Otto Wagner introduced white marble, combined with iron framing for his noble metro stations (Karlsplatz), or geometric marble slabs fixed with metal dowels and heads from aluminium composed of decorative patterns (Postsparkasse, Kirche Am Steinhof; Lehne, 1999).

For the façades of the public buildings along the Ringstraße limestone or white marble (Parliament House) became the material of choice. The results of competitions were approved by the commission after highly elaborated models from gypsum with all ornaments in a scale of 1:2 for lifesize sculptures or 1:20 for buildings or parts thereof. The damaged model for the dome of the Kunsthistorisches Museum underwent conservation, but losses due to long storage were retained (Koller, 1997b, ill. 544) (Supplementary Fig. G, a and b http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S8 and http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S9). Some smaller model figures are made from wax and painted white. These original gypsum models were originally intended to be kept for later purposes of restoration. But after several changes of storage rooms, out of 1200 models only about half have survived in the cellars of the court.

Soon after 1900 Adolf Loos (1870–1933), son of a stonecutter from Brno, preferred extraordinary coloured marble from Greece for shop entries and for the lower façades of his first house built in 1909–1911 in front of the Hofburg, eschewing any applied decoration (Czech & Mistelbauer, 1976). Like Otto Wagner he introduced equal height for all upper floors, while previously different heights had indicated the different social positions of the people living there. In practice the visible marble of the Looshaus corresponds to the antique technique of incrustation, which served to hide a simple structure from bricks with a more prestigious material (Supplementary Fig. H, a and b http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S10 and http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S11). In 1908 Loos designed the entry of the ‘American Bar’ which is still in use (in the Kärntner Durchgang), with Greek marble, glass mosaic and brass, and in the same year he gave his famous lecture ‘Ornament as a crime’ (Sarnitz, 2003, pp. 84–89). Loos excepted therein the tattooed Papua natives, but after further evolution of culture he considered that tattoos would only belong to criminals or the degenerate. Consequently the extinction of ornaments from items of daily use was for him an act of evolution. To the surprise of the society, two Maori natives tattooed on their facies and bodies had already come to Vienna on board the imperial frigate Novara in 1859–1860.
(Sauer, 2010). From 1893 to 1996 Loos was in the USA and surely became familiar with Louis Sullivan’s essay ‘Ornament in Architecture’ which proposed in 1892 to dispense with architectonic ornaments for some time (Kruft, 1991 p. 420). Presumably unknown for him was the ‘architect of the revolution’ Nicolas Ledoux in Paris, who quoted in his treatise on architecture from 1804: ‘Ornamental details are without moral value and fatigue the eye …’ (Ledoux, 1804, p. 89; Stoloff, 1977, p. 108).

**Lime plaster and stucco**

Yet from the thirteenth century to the 1960s the main material for façades in Vienna was not stone but coatings of lime plaster, with increasing amounts of cement binders after the mid-nineteenth century. Different treatments of these plasters provided decorative relief on the surfaces: traces made by working tools, and fine or rough structures. The latter were made by stippling or incrustation with little stones. Imitation of square stones treated *alla rustica* had been known since Roman times, for use on basements or pillars. *Alla rustica* facings with stippled plasters are found mainly from the seventh century, whereas the grainy incrustations on plain walls are typical for eighteenth- to nineteenth-century façades (Koller, 1997a, p. 532, table 2). Façades from around 1700 by architects like Fischer von Erlach or Hildebrandt have perfectly smooth plasters with a thin layer of pure lime reinforced with fibres on top. Lime technique was even used for stucco ornaments and flat reliefs like those on Prince Eugen’s Belvedere. In 1836 the architect Ludwig Förster introduced the Italian *marmorino* from Venice to Vienna (Förster, 1836). Around 1900 this at least inspired – together with international experiments for the revival of antique Roman plasters in the United States and in Europe – architects like Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos to use whitish, smooth, marble-like lime-bound wallpaper, which avoided the need for paint. The final step in anti-decorative perfection achieved with plain whitish plaster can be seen on the façades of the house designed 1926–1928 by the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (with Paul Engelmann) for his sister Margaret Stoneborough (Kapfinger, 1984). Its sophisticated technical details of metal window framings and vertically sliding metal shutters sprang from technical novelties (not yet studied in detail) introduced during the building of the Ringstrasse.

**Roman cement**

After 1850 Roman cements became a widespread alternative to lime plaster. These are currently being studied across Europe, with coordination from Austria (Veigl, 2002, 2009; Bayer *et al.*, 2011) (www.rocare.eu). In Vienna cast Roman cement ornaments were first used in 1847 for the former Rothschild palace (*Rennagasse* 4) by Ludwig Förster. Theophil Hansen and Otto Wagner preferred this material to imitate plain masonry with imprinted rectangular joints, and for drawn profiles. Its characteristic light yellow-brown colour made no additional paint layer necessary. Good examples can be seen in the *Kolissenedepot* (depository for opera-scenes, *Lehargasse* 6) by Gottfried Semper and Carl Hasenauer (1873) (Supplementary Fig. I, a and b http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S12 and http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S13) and the Epstein palace by Hansen (1871) next to the parliament building, both conserved authentically in 2000 and 2004–2005 (Baatz *et al.*, 2005, pp. 142–155). In contrast, several new washes on modern white smooth plasters no longer possess their intended clarity (the metro stations and the *Secession* building).

**Brickwork**

Façades with intentionally exposed brickwork in Vienna were used more for factories or barracks, but rarely for public or residential buildings. It was the architect Heinrich Ferstel who introduced visible bricks and terracotta ornaments on his Ringstrasse buildings. His new museum and school for the arts and crafts from 1866 to 1873 (*Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie, Kunstgewerbeschule*) were the first ones on the continent after the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Wagner-Rieger, 1970, pp. 182–184). They were stimulated by Rudolf von Eitelberger’s visit to the third of the world exhibitions in London, in 1862. He was the first professor of art history at the University of Vienna and also became director of the new museum. At this time the new movement for ornamental design, in reaction to neoclassic purism, was spreading from England (stimulated by the world exhibitions in London in 1851 and 1862) and culminated in the instructive *The Grammar of Ornament* (Jones, 1856). This publication like most of the other earlier and later printed pattern books was collected in the library of this Austrian Museum for Art and Industry, later called the Museum for Applied Arts, as a working tool for new and high-quality design for the crafts and industry. Collections and library are now available to consult online on this museum’s website (www.mak.at). The well-preserved façades of Heinrich Ferstel’s buildings for these institutions show yellow and red brickwork with black painted joints combined with basement and square quoins made from limestone. But in addition they demonstrate the revival of traditional historic decorative techniques such as *sgraffito*, reliefs in glazed terracotta and Venetian glass mosaics. Decorative elements of terracotta for application

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onto façades had been produced since 1869 by Heinrich Drasche’s company Wienerberger Ziegeleifabrik after the design of leading architects (Wehdorn, 1979) (www.wienerberger.at – today the leading international company producing brick-based materials for the building trade). The appearance of perfection on this visible brickwork is due to precisely profiled joints, which in addition could be painted (Arsenal, Museum of Applied Arts, Greek Orthodox cathedral). The new building of the older Academy of Fine Arts, after a design by Theophil Hansen (1872–1877), came soon after and has its own programmatic adornment: stone, Roman cement plaster, terracotta sculpture, and fresco painting.

Ottoman Wagner recommended glazed tiles or mosaics with ornamental effects in his manifesto Modern Architecture, which together with his buildings influenced development within central Europe (Wagner, 1895; Kruft, 1991, pp. 367–369; Moravánsky, 1993). Best known are his house on Linke Wienzeile 40 from 1899 with floral majolica from the Wienerberger company and the shop, atelier, and residential building for Porrois & Fix, Ungargasse 59–61, by his disciple Max Fabiani (1900), covered with a geometric composition with yellow-green tiles (Lehne & Kalmár, 2002 pp. 30, 33, 54). Sadly, most of the interesting warehouses on the Kärntnerstraße or Mariahilferstraße built after 1865 with decorative metal elements in their glassfronts were destroyed in the Second World War, or later (Lehne, 1990).

The colours of Vienna

Finally, some brief reflections on the decorative role of colour in Vienna’s historical architecture are in order. Examination would verify the fifteenth-century pictures we have mentioned. In the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century St Stephan’s cathedral and private houses, yellow ochre and grey stone colours (with white or red squares and lines) and darker quoins were found, for which uncovered areas reveal evidence visible today (Tuchlauben 19, Kleblattgasse 5). The historical German terms for ‘stone colour’ or ‘brick colour’ in fact mean the particular colours of real stones or bricks which the builder had in mind, and the terms were used until the end of nineteenth century (Koller, 2003). Therefore the predominant stone colour changed when new types of stones came in fashion, as can be documented on the façades of the imperial Court (Koller, 1997a, pp. 528–532). During the sixteenth century dark grey was favoured, which has recently been restored in the courtyard of the Imperial Riding School (Holzschuh-Hofer & Beseler, 2008).

Very few illusionistic wall paintings on façades of late Gothic and Renaissance houses have survived. The most interesting one was the so-called ‘House of Rabbits’, with scenes of a distorted world where rabbits rule over men. Before demolition in 1737 it was documented by Salomon Kleiner in a precise drawing, now in the Vienna Museum (Tietze, 1924, p. 83). Figurative painted façades returned only on buildings of the Ringstraße with fresco paintings (Academy of Fine Arts, south façade) or sgraffito decorations (rear of the University, inner courts of the art history museum), which have recently been restored.

For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, technical examination has revealed harmonious monochrome or two-colour compositions with bright stone colours, which agrees well with paintings of the citycape made from 1759 to 1760 by Bernardo Bellotto, now exhibited in the Museum of Art History (Koller, 2011). The emperors refused any loud colouring for the court, which upheld the tradition of noble restraint in stone hues. Most palaces of the nobility and many private houses all the way to the suburbs followed this example, like those in the Spittelberggasse (close behind the museum quarter). For the late eighteenth century Neoclassic monochromy was typical up to the pure lead white and oil-based paint on the doric stone temple in the Volksgarten, designed by Pietro Nobile (1823) for Antonio Canova’s sculpture of Theseus, restored in 2011. Monochrome yellow ochre was typical for the Biedermeier period, until the revolution of 1848. With the making of the Ringstraße leading architects tried to realize the ideals of Materialbau, showing unpainted surfaces of bricks and stone or using stone-like plaster, such as Roman cement or marmorino, mentioned above in connection with architects such as Hansen, Ferstel, Schmidt, or Wagner. But on the other hand contemporary research and discussions have raised awareness of polychromy in ancient and medieval architecture (writings by Gottfried Semper and others: Kruft, 1991 pp. 355–361; Philipp, 2006 p. 322). Decorative paintings in red, blue, yellow and with gildings were recently examined and conserved on façades by Theophil Hansen (the Parliament House, south façade) and Carl Titz (Klein-Palais, Dr Karl Luether Platz 2) (Supplementary Figs. A; J, a, b, c http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S14, http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S15, http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2047058413Y.0000000087.S16).

Around 1900 Vienna favoured the pairing of white and gold (e.g. J.M. Olbrich’s Secession of 1898, Otto Wagner’s metro stations and church on Steinshof) (1907), iron bridges, and the iron glasshouse in the gardens of the Court). Colouring for the municipal social housing blocks, designed by renowned architects between the two world wars, was influenced by the expressionistic emphasis on pure colours spread by the German architect Bruno Taut. Technically they used coloured cement plasters (see the German
The decorative in urban Vienna

Koller

In urban Vienna, the decorative is a subject of legal protection and care of monuments with historical, municipal: building regulations and the definition of Hunderwassermuseum (Krist & Neubarth, 1997, 1999).

After 1945 until the 1960s and 1970s many historic façades were purified of all ornament and reduced to bare greyish plaster. Against this tristesse and the rejection of ornament in modern architecture the Viennese painter Friedensreich Hundertwasser described his philosophy for radical natural living and building in a manifesto Los von Loos (Away from Loos, see Hundertwasser, 1983 pp. 174–179).

He created many buildings with irregular forms, organic or fantastic decorations, and multi-coloured paints. Plants and trees are integrated into windows, balconies, and roofs. His works are not only attractive attractions for tourists in Vienna (Hunderwasserhaus and Hunderwassermuseum: 3, Löwengasse 41–43, built 1985) but in Austria and Germany too (Magdeburg and Darmstadt). The problems of their future conservation are still an open question.

During the last few decades examinations of historic façades made by the Bundesdenkmalamt and later by independent conservators have revealed a rich variety of materials and colours on the historic surfaces of Vienna’s built architecture (Koller, 2007). Restorations have followed, with craftsmen specifically trained through courses organized by the Bundesdenkmalamt at the ex-Carthusian monastery in Mauerbach, near Vienna, which since 1980 has served as a work station and documentation site for the authentic conservation of historic buildings (Krist & Neubarth, 1997, 1999).

Problems and perspectives of urban conservation

Living towns like Vienna have at every period to find a new balance between their history, present needs, and future perspectives, in regard to characteristic ornamentation. That is the fundamental difference compared to single art objects kept in a museum. For the last 20 years a battle has been ongoing between recent, often speculative, urban developments and the cultural and social engagement of citizens and experts, despite the existence of local and federal laws. But in political terms, these are often weak instruments for protection and appropriate preservation, if the owners are not willing. The legal instruments are:

- municipal: building regulations and the definition of protected areas known as Schutzzonen (Pal & Wehdorn, 1992)
- protection and care of monuments with historical, artistic, or cultural value by the federal office for monuments (Bundesdenkmalamt) (the current list of buildings can be seen at www.bda.at/service/down loads/denkmalverzeichnis)
- international: world heritage sites such as the castle and park of Schönbrunn have been designated since 1996, and the central area since 2001, yet UNESCO has no jurisdiction over them (Wehdorn et al., 2004) (Fig. 5).

Essential for the conservation and possible restoration of the urban decorative in Vienna is the preservation of the ground plan together with the spatial arrangement of the historic town and its listed built and artistic monuments. This is more or less fully accepted by now. The current reduction of traffic in the city and pedestrianizing of historic quarters, partly with reconstruction of the historical furnishing, or the restoration of traditional coffee-houses with municipal support, are highly acceptable to both inhabitants and tourists.

Principally we need more public information, as well as fundamental discussions about possible alternatives, mainly in relation to the introduction of ever higher buildings which disrupt views of the historical townscape. Conservation of old buildings and integration of contemporary architecture is the central problem of every urban ensemble, from the whole town, to local areas, down to single junctions or roads. Selecting the right proportions between both in height and mass requires a clear concept from town planners.

At present, good facilities are provided for historic and scientifically based examination and authentic conservation of single façades and historic monuments, with all their details. Due to intense effort over five-year studies (masters level) for technology and conservation on both universities of the arts in Vienna, professional specialists are available for any work carried out, and there is good cooperation between experienced architects and specialized craftsmen (Krist & Griesser-Stermschegg, 2011). Most projects now are carefully prepared, carried out economically through pre-planning competitions, and are supervised by the experts of the Bundesdenkmalamt. But preventive conservation and monitoring once a project has been finished are still under-developed.

Authentic preservation of historic buildings and their façades was for a long time accepted only for works before about 1850. But 90% of the existing urban architecture in Vienna is of later date: about 50% from the period of historicism until 1914, and about 40% from the last hundred years. For a long period the rich ornamental façades in neo-Gothic and neo-Renaissance to neo-Baroque styles were not assessed, and art historical research in this area was lacking (Frodl-Kraft, 1976). Therefore many façades were ‘purified’ to plain and naked walls with only traces of prior decoration left. An even worse compromise is the so-called ‘façadism’, where only the old
façade is kept as the historic frontage of a new structure built behind. This has occurred in a few cases even in the centre of the city, for example the former Grand Hotel of 1861 (Kärntner Ring 9), or the Medieval-Baroque Hochholzerhof (Tuchlauben 5).

Another problem which now urgently requires a sensitive solution is the extension of offices or apartments into the roofs of buildings. Finally we must question the calculated contrast between historic structures and those with new materials and design. Can Hogarth’s principle of variety from *The Analysis of Beauty* (Hogarth, 1753) be adopted too for the deconstructed decorations of today? Might the titanium-based wing by Hans Hollein (2003) at the entrance of the world-famous graphic collection of the Albertina be regarded for a contemporary ornamental accent in contrast to the restored old façade behind? Or wasn’t Vitruvius right when he said that less ornamentation could save money too? Or perhaps Vitruvius was only a humourless writer who hated ornament!

I am sorry that I could not fully define the preservation process in my title. But I have tried to analyse the complexities of the urban pattern of Vienna from a contemporary perspective on its conservation, restoration, and reconstruction, based on the evidence from historical and technical research and documentation. The future conservation of Vienna’s historical urban decorative, however, is not only a matter of technically perfect and thoroughly ethically conservation. It needs above all approval within the whole of society, to create favourite conditions and engender public support for our work. Critical and experienced visitors like those from the worldwide community of the International Institute for Conservation could be of help there, and they are always welcome.

References


