ARCHITECTURE, UNCERTAINTY, AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF VISUAL EVIDENCE IN HERITAGE SCIENCES

DOMINIK LENGYEL[1]

Resumo | Abstract

The visualisation of built heritage stands at the centre of this proposal. For too long, spatial representation in archaeology and art history has moved between two inadequate poles: the romanticised reconstruction, whose atmospheric imagery displaces scientific content, and the bare technical diagram, which communicates precision at the cost of any spatial or interpretive legibility. Architecture — its reading, modelling, and communication — is where this tension is most consequential, and most productive.

What emerges from taking this tension seriously is not a corrective but a methodological complex. The interdisciplinary visualisation of uncertainty translates archaeological and art-historical knowledge from text into image through spatial projections of abstract geometry, rendered as if built. Explicit abstraction becomes the operative principle: it neither simulates a false completeness nor retreats into illegibility, but holds open the interpretive act. This is simultaneously a technological advance and an ethical position.

Images and their contexts are inseparable from this problem. The history of visual media — from early cinema to contemporary digital environments — has consistently shaped the reception of antiquity in ways that outpace scholarly correction. Understanding how images produce knowledge, and how they circulate within and beyond expert communities, is not peripheral to archaeological expertise but constitutive of it. Equally, vernacular material culture and its modes of transmission inform what counts as evidence, what gets modelled, and what remains outside the frame of reconstruction altogether.

These three dimensions — architecture as primary site of inquiry, the epistemology of images, and the scope of material evidence — do not succeed one another. They bear on the same questions simultaneously: what can be known, how it can be shown, and with what degree of honesty toward the limits of the discipline. Exhibited projects will illustrate this method in practice.

Palavras-chave | Keywords

Reconstruction; abstraction; interdisciplinarity; digital humanities; material culture.

[1] BTU Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg.

Resumo biográfico | Short biography

Dominik Lengyel. Full university professor and Chair of Architecture and Visualisation at BTU University of Technology since 2006. Studied mathematics and physics for one year before studying architecture at University of Stuttgart in Germany; graduated with distinction and architecture prize after two years at Ecole d'Architecture Paris-Tolbiac and ETH Zurich, Switzerland. Worked as architect at Prof. O. M. Ungers in Cologne, Germany, where he founded an office for architectural visualisation with Catherine Toulouse. First deputy professor, then full professor in Cologne. Member of European Academy of Sciences and Arts in Salzburg, Koldewey Society, Association for Architectural History Research, and correspondent member of the German Archaeological Institute. Research projects funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), the private German Gerda Henkel Foundation for Historical Humanities and the Federal Ministries for Education and Research (BMBF), for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) and for the Interior, Building and Housing (BMI), among others.