

The fragile monument: on conservation and modernity



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出版者:Stockholm: Royal Institute of Technology

出版时间:2003

装帧:

isbn:9789172834866

A study of the discourse of conservation and its effect on the notion and role of the monument in modern western society. Through a revisionist account of the history of conservation, it is shown how the monument has been transformed from an object that originally communicated permanence to an object that is perceived as fragile and in need of protection. The thesis suggests that the expansion and popularisation of conservation is bound to a narrative of loss and danger which reveals a paradoxical relation between destruction and preservation. The study shows how spatial devices have been used to negotiate that paradox and investigates how this use of space has contributed to define the monument as an object of conservation. This investigation is made through a series case studies: Le Corbusier's plan to modernise Paris, the "Plan Voisin"; the iconoclastic crisis of the French Revolution in relation to its emerging discourse on conservation; Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc's and John Ruskin's experience of the new media of photography in the context of their theories of conservation; the art historian Alois Riegl's notion of the monument as expressed in his essay The modern cult of monuments.

作者介绍:

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