Images without Image Carrier? Problems in Dealing with Architecture-related Art

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Large-format works of art (murals, mosaics, glass paintings, sculptures) with a direct relation to a building or urban space regarding content or design are often not properly understandable without these. Often they are also inseparably connected to the building, the construction virtually being the image carrier.

At times, the quality of the work of art is rated much higher than that of the image carrier, that is, the architecture or urban space for which it was created. Unfortunately, the latter applies in particular to the architectural heritage of the 20th century. Often only the work of art is evaluated. The time of origin and the architecture as the actual image carrier are not sufficiently considered.

If this is done within the framework of the monument inventory and if only a public interest in keeping and listing the work of art but not the architecture as a picture carrier, this can lead to serious problems in the practical implementation of the preservation of the listed monument. A demolition or conversion of the image carrier leads either to the loss of the listed artwork or to its translocation.

The building of the former mine Paitzdorf of the Soviet-German mining company "Wismut" was demolished in 2006. At the top was the location of the mural "The Peaceful Use of Nuclear Power" by Werner Petzold, created in 1974. Fig. 2 shows the salvaged painting as set up in 2009. Its spatial reference has been lost. As a two-dimensional work of art it now looks like a banner, but hardly like a monument.

Fig. 1: Erfurt, Krämpferstraße, wall relief by E. Toll, 1980 on the outer wall of the courtyard of the former Hotel Kosmos (photo TLDA, Patrick Jung, 2018)

Translocations with the purpose of preserving the artwork have been quite common for centuries and usually technically possible. However, essential information about artistic, creative, art-technological and historical aspects as well as urban-spatial references are always lost. It is precisely these aspects that help us understand a work of art and the intentions of its creator and its clients, and thus the historical conditions under which the work came into existence.

Five examples from Thuringia, all from the 20th century, are used to illustrate the associated methodological problems of heritage conservation. But at first, we look to former West Germany.

Fig. 3 shows the Porta Nigra in Trier in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate. The city gate of the Roman city of Augusta treverorum, built in the 4th century AD, is considered to be one of the best-preserved and most important architectural testimonies of Roman times in Germany. For many generations it was the main attraction of the city. That seems to change.

As you can see in Fig. 4, the Karl Marx monument, which was inaugurated on May 5, 2018 on the occasion of Marx' 200th birthday, seems to have overtaken the Porta nigra. The Karl Marx statue is a gift from the People's Republic of China to the birthplace of the most important son of the city of Trier. It was created by the Chinese sculptor Wu Weishan.

The artist actually wanted a central location for his sculpture, for example in the main shopping street of the city, which begins immediately behind the Porta nigra. This place for the monument of one of the greatest critics of capitalism seems to have been unpleasant to the city. Finally, they agreed on a historically prominent, but ultimately somewhat remote location behind the Porta nigra. The layout of the square was designed in consideration of the remnants of the Roman buildings and the design by Wu Weishan. Anyone who asks what Porta nigra and the new statue of Karl Marx have to do with the topic dealt with here must wait until the end of my paper.
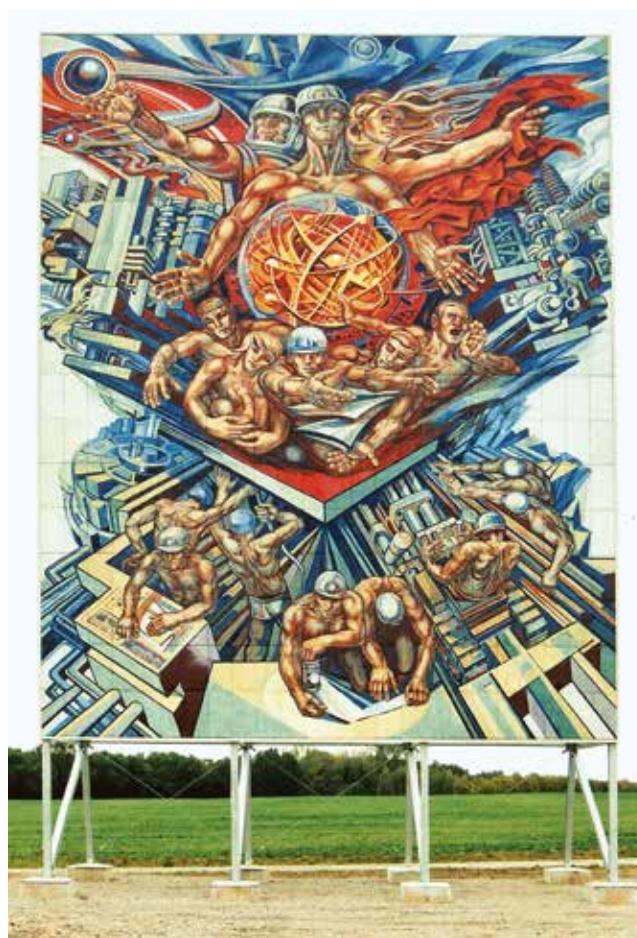

Fig. 2: Beerwalde, formerly Paitzdorf, mural "The peaceful use of nuclear energy" by Werner Petzold, 1974; formerly on the social building of the bismuth pit Paitzdorf; new installation in the field of the district Beerwalde (photo TLDA, Nicola Damrich, 2009)

Example 1: Weimar, murals by Oskar Schlemmer and Werner Gilles in the apartment of Adolf Meyer, 1923

In 1919, the architect Walter Gropius founded probably the most important German laboratory for design, art and architecture of the 20th century in Weimar, calling it "Staatliches Bauhaus". The work of the "bauhaus" had enormous influence on modernity on an international scale. The founding director Walter Gropius succeeded in bringing renowned representatives of the avant-garde as teachers (called "masters") to the Bauhaus, inter alia Wassili Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger, Oskar Schlemmer, Marcel Breuer.

In 1923, the Bauhaus felt obliged to organise a first "Bauhaus exhibition" because of critical political voices. In addition to student works, an art exhibition, new room designs in the Bauhaus itself and the building of the model house Am Horn – also an incunabulum of modernism – the newly designed private apartment by Adolf Meyer in Buchfarther Straße 4 was shown.

Meyer was head of the private architect's office of Walter Gropius. Apart from the head of the mural painting workshop Oskar Schlemmer, Bauhaus students Werner Gilles and Hinnerk Scheper also contributed to the design of Meyer's apartment. In keeping with the Bauhaus programme of 1919, Adolf Meyer based the design of his apartment on "the reunification of all artistic disciplines". The general theme was "The New Human". The focus of the design were four murals. Oskar Schlemmer titled his paintings "Et in Arcadia ego" and "A figure between alpha and omega".

The House Am Horn or the large-scale wall paintings by Oskar Schlemmer in the Bauhaus school building were of scientific interest as early as the 1970s. They were subsequently restored. But the paintings in the apartment Meyer fell into oblivion. Reason was the continuous use of the apartment over more than seven decades by different tenants. It was not until the 1990s that the Bauhaus research became aware of its former existence. A restoration study carried out in 2014 revealed that extensive fragments of the painting were still present.

The apartment and thus the artistic fragments are private property. The only way for the state to take hold of this remarkable testimony of the early Bauhaus is the Thuringian monument protection law. Therefore, the ministry of culture

Fig. 3: Trier, Porta Nigra
(photo TLDA, Holger Reinhardt, 2018)

asked the monument authority for an assessment of possible reasons for listing the paintings as a cultural monument. Therefore, the apartment was listed in 2016 for historical and artistic reasons. Despite the losses incurred, the fragments of artistic design have a high degree of authenticity. However, the intensive restoration investigation carried out in 2017 revealed that much less had been preserved of the paintings of 1923 than expected.

At present, an association and the management of the Weimar Bauhaus Museum are trying to take off a part of the wall paintings. This concerns the painting "Et in Arcadia ego" by Oskar Schlemmer and its display in the new Weimar Museum. In spite of the highly fragmented state, they are hoping for another highlight for the new museum.

This is understandable from the perspective of the initiators. As a versatile artist and teacher, Oskar Schlemmer shaped the importance of the "Bauhaus" at least as much as his colleagues Paul Klee, Wassili Kandinski or Lyonel Feininger. At the Bauhaus he was not only head of the mural painting workshop, but also as a musically interested person he developed the well-known "Triadic Ballet".

This as well as his paintings contributed considerably to the international reputation of the avant-garde Bauhaus. The museum presentation of a hitherto almost unknown work by Schlemmer would surely bring much attention to the new Bauhaus Museum in Weimar.

The State Monument Authority does not consider the proposed removal and relocation of the wall painting "Et in Arcadia ego" by Oskar Schlemmer to methodically justifiable. This would disrupt the overall design and iconographic context created by several Bauhaus artists. The authenticity of the already only fragmentarily preserved art-work would be further reduced at the authentic location. The painting itself would be deprived of its iconography if it were presented alone. Ultimately, that would be an unacceptable, further reduction of the cultural monument.

Only in the case of an impossible permanent preservation in the authentic place would a translocation to a museum be justifiable. However, this would have to include all artistically designed wall fragments of all participating artists, not just the painting of the most famous among them. The discussion continues. It remains to be seen whether the interests of the museum or the statutory conservation mandate of the monument authority will be accorded a higher public interest.

Fig. 4: Trier, Karl Marx monument by Wu Weishan, 2018 (photo Holger Reinhardt, 2018)

Fig. 5: Weimar, Rudolf-Breitscheid-Straße 4 (former apartment of Adolf Meyer, 1923 interior design by Oskar Schlemmer, Werner Gilles, Hinnerk Schäper), fragment of the mural "Figure between Alpha and Omega" by Oskar Schlemmer (photo TLDA, Holger Reinhardt, 2018)

Example 2: Erfurt, mosaic "Man, Nature and Technology" by Josep Renau, 1983–1986

For the center of a newly built residential area in the north of the city of Erfurt a cultural centre was built between 1979 and 1983. For its urban emphasis, Spanish-born artist Josep Renau was commissioned to create an artistic façade showing the theme "Man, Nature and Technology". Renau opted for a large-scale façade mosaic.

Josep Renau was born in Valencia in 1901. As a committed communist he fought in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Popular Front. For the 1937 World Fair in Paris he designed the pavilion of the Republic of Spain. For this he commissioned Pablo Picasso's famous painting "Guernica", which deplores the suffering in the war. After the victory of the putschists, Renau emigrated to Mexico. There he worked together with David Alfaro Siqueiros, who besides Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco was one of the most renowned representatives of the Muralists. This group contributed significantly to the breakthrough of the "murales", the large-format murals in Latin America.

Invited by the government of the GDR, he moved to the GDR in 1958. Here he designed and realised some large-format murals for blocks of flats and office buildings. His last work was the wall mosaic in Erfurt, whose completion he did not live to see. He died in 1982 in Berlin.

With the end of the GDR in 1990 came the crisis of state cultural promotion. In the mid-1990s, the cultural center was closed and resold several times as a speculative property. Vacancy, vandalism and decay followed.

As early as 1993, the large-format wall mosaic was listed in the monument list of the Free State of Thuringia because

of its prominent creator. This concerned the artwork only, however. The reference of the artistic design to the architecture of the building and its urban context was ignored. Finally, in 2006, the cultural center was demolished to make room for a shopping centre. At least, thanks to its listing as a cultural monument, the mosaic was professionally removed and stored in a depot for the purpose of a later re-installation elsewhere.

The loss of the mural was perceived by the population as a loss of local identity. People demanded its re-installation on the facade of the planned new building. At the same time, the Renau Society in Valencia showed interest in the acquisition of the mural and its transfer to Spain. Thanks to a regulation in the Thuringian Monument Protection Law, the purchase of the mural by the city of Erfurt was successful with the aim of setting up the artwork again in the district.

With financial support from the state of Thuringia and a private foundation, the re-installation of the mosaic at almost the same site is imminent. This largely recreates its former effect in urban space. Ultimately, this was only possible by listing the mural as a cultural monument. However, this success cannot hide the fact that the historic context relevant for its creation was lost.

Example 3: Erfurt, residential area centre Rieth, Mainzer Straße 34–38, mural by Erich Enge on the library building, 1977–78

There is a similar problem for another large-format work of art with a direct reference to architecture as an image carrier in the same district. The façade of the district library, built

Fig. 7: *Erfurt, residential area centre Rieth, former library building from 1973/74 with wall painting by Erich Enge. Condition 2014 Photograph: TLDA, Werner Streitberger, 2006*

Fig. 6: *Erfurt, Moskauer Platz 20, former cultural and leisure centre of the residential area Moskauer Platz from 1979–1983 with wall mosaic "Man, Nature and Technology" by Josep Renau; condition before demolition of the building in 2006 (photo TLDA, Werner Streitberger, 2006)*

in 1977, is completely covered by a mural by Erich Enge painted in silicate technique. This library was also closed in the course of the social changes after 1990 and sold to a private enterprise. Instead of a library, a hairdressing salon and various offices were installed there.

Here, too, a listing took place in the mid-1990s due to the work of art. Due to the artist's chosen technology, the painting is chemically linked to the plaster as a picture carrier. Unlike the cultural centre, the mural at the library is inextricably linked to the building; therefore, the entire library building was registered as a cultural monument. However, the scope

of protection refers expressly only to the work of art, for the existence of which the building is indispensable.

At that time, the listing of the residential area centre for its architectural quality was not considered. Between 1971 and 1974, according to the plans of a German-Lithuanian team of architects, in addition to the library, shops, a terrace cafe, a clock tower, a large fountain, recreation areas etc were built. In the 1990s, the residential area centre was considerably changed.

After the loss of the fountain, the new layout of the square and the impending demolition of the clock tower, there is now a conflict of interest between the inhabitants and the private owner. The inhabitants fear the loss of essential, identity-creating elements in their residential area. The private owner, on the other hand, is only prepared to have the necessary conservatory measures carried out on the mural and the clock tower if these measures are publicly funded.

Incidentally, as in the example above, the socially extremely important task of visual art in public space is evident here. Its relevance usually only becomes evident when it no longer exists or is in acute danger. It turns out that the privatisation of publicly funded buildings and art does not guarantee their preservation, even if they are classified as worth preserving and listed as cultural monuments. The future of the mural on the library façade will only have a chance in the long term if it is publicly funded.

Example 4: Bad Frankenhausen, panorama "The Peasants' War and the Early Civil Revolution in Germany" by Werner Tübke, 1975–1989

The following example is a reverse case in so far as art was not created to embellish and enhance architecture, but ar-

Fig. 8a: Bad Frankenhausen, panorama building on Schlachtenberg, 1975, condition 2013 (photo TLDA, Werner Streitberger, 2013)

chitecture was the shell and frame for a work of art. The artistically highly important panorama painting by Werner Tübke and the museum and protective building near Bad Frankenhausen explicitly created for this purpose even form an existential symbiosis between artwork and architecture.

In 1973, the party and state leaders of the German Democratic Republic decided to build a memorial site for the German Peasants' War of 1525 and its leader Thomas Müntzer. The GDR saw itself in the legitimate succession of the peasants' struggle for social justice. In particular, it referred to the historical-philosophical interpretation of Marx and Engels. Both rated the German peasant uprisings as revolution-

ary events that ushered in the transition from feudal society to early capitalist society

In accordance with an idea from the Soviet Union, a rotunda for a panoramic painting entitled "Early Civil Revolution in Germany" was built from 1975 to 1978 at the site of the defeat of the central German peasant army near Bad Frankenhausen. The painting was commissioned in 1976 to the then internationally renowned painter Werner Tübke.

On a surface of 1722 m², a monumental work was created that is not only one of the largest canvas paintings in the world. This highly complex painting, with numerous quotations from the European art of the 16th century, the intel-

Fig. 8b: Bad Frankenhausen, panorama painting by Werner Tübke, 1976–1987 (photo TLDA, Werner Streitberger, 2013)
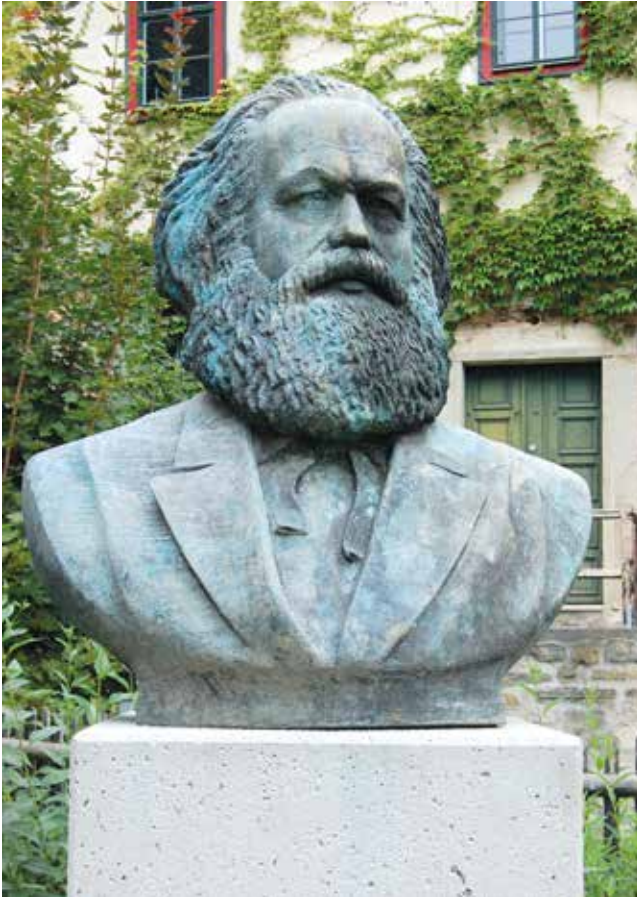
Fig. 9: Rudolstadt, Karl Marx bust by Fritz Cremer, 1953, in the courtyard of the municipal library (photo TLDA, Rainer Müller, 2018)

lectual world and social disruption at the transition from the Middle Ages to modern times are represented from the point of view of the artist. The painting continues to fascinate and polarise three decades after its completion in 1987. Only a few months before the peaceful revolution in the GDR in 1989, the panorama was opened to the public. Together with changing exhibitions of contemporary art in the connected gallery, it has become one of the most frequented art museums in central Germany.

In 1996, the entire complex, including rotunda, paintings, museum construction and open spaces was listed as a cultural monument.

Not only the creation of the painting was an artistic and technological challenge. The same applies to its preservation. The high mechanical residual stress of the picture painted on canvas requires a stable climate in order not to disturb the fragile balance of the physical forces on the painting. This would cause irreparable damage to the colour layer and thus to the painting itself. Therefore, the building was constructed as a double-shell construction. The painting is fixed at the inner shell made of vertical hyparboloid concrete elements. An outer shell, also made of vertical hyparboloid concrete elements serves as weather protection. The narrow, inaccessible space between the two shells serves as a climate buffer. The entire space with the panoramic painting is air-conditioned.

There are currently concerns about potentially possible corrosion damage to the prestressing steels of the concrete elements of the protective casing. The lack of accessibility of the gap between them prevents the standard visual monitoring. The painting cannot be removed for repair work on the protective structure without provoking its destruction. The associated changes in the mounting of the painting would lead to irreversible loss of the colour layer. The painting could not be hung up again.

The alternatively proposed construction of a second outer shell with revision access is not only costly but would also alter the cubature and architecture of the building constructed in early postmodern forms. The building with its specific function tailored to the panoramic painting is useless without this and would be superfluous. A solution to this problem, both from the conservational and the methodological point of view is a challenge for the years to come. At the moment, the heritage conservation authority is in favour of a technical monitoring in order to be able to assess the actual need for action in a well-founded manner.

Example 5: Rudolstadt, Bust "Karl Marx" by Fritz Cremer, 1953

Do you remember the new Karl Marx monument of Wu Weishan in Trier shown at the beginning? There, in his parents' house, an exhibition and various works of art commemorate this important philosopher. There are several sculptures dedicated to him in the house and in the garden. One of them was made by Fritz Cremer in 1953.

Born in 1906 and deceased in 1993, Cremer was an important German sculptor of the mid-20th century. He is known in particular as the creator of the memorials for the victims of National Socialism in the former concentration camps of Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Vienna and Buchenwald near Weimar.

In connection with an unexecuted Marx-Engels monument for Berlin, Cremer dealt intensively with the characteristic head of Karl Marx. In this context, a bust was created in 1953, which was cast in several copies. These were erected in Frankfurt/Oder, in Neuhardenberg, Neustrelitz, and also in the Marx House in Trier.

Another cast was set up in 1959 on Bayreuther Platz in Rudolstadt, in the course of which the square was renamed after Karl Marx. The garden design did not have any concrete reference to the sculpture. Similar to Neustrelitz or Neuhardenberg, which was renamed Marxwalde at that time, the erection was solely for ideological reasons. Unlike at Trier or at Jena, where Marx received his doctorate at the university, no personal references to Rudolstadt can be derived from Marx's biography. Incidentally, this also applies to Neustrelitz, Neuhardenberg and Frankfurt/Oder.

Nevertheless, the artistic value of the bust is beyond dispute. It was therefore listed as an art monument as early as 1988. But that did not protect it from oblivion for nearly three decades.

After the reunification of the two German states in 1990, much was considered obsolete that was related to the GDR and socialism. Karl-Marx-Platz was renamed Bayreuther

Platz and redesigned, the Karl Marx bust was dismantled. It disappeared into the municipal construction depot. For its dismantling and storage a permit would have been required in accordance with the Monument Protection Act. But at the time nobody of those in charge in the town of Rudolstadt thought this was necessary. The bust was only considered a relict from the GDR. The monument authorities were not even informed about this measure. That the sculpture was missing, was not even noticed during the revision of the monument inventory in Rudolstadt in 2017.

After all, 27 years after the unauthorised dismantling in Rudolstadt there was a more differentiated view, not only regarding Karl Marx, but also regarding the work of Fritz Cremer. The town decided to set it up again, this time in the courtyard of the municipal library.

Again this happened without coordination with the monument authorities, but not unnoticed by the public and ironically commented by the media. After all: The new site is a worthy place for the sculpture and for Karl Marx. In a well-designed courtyard and surrounded by the library buildings, the location is comparably intimate like the one in the garden of the Karl Marx House in Trier.

Conclusion

The evaluation of art related to architecture or urban space as part of a monument inventory should not only focus on the artistic aspect. The image carrier and aspects of the object's history must by all means be observed. In case of doubt, even architecture that may be only average or insignificant should be included in the listing. Otherwise, serious methodological problems in the preservation of the work are usually unavoidable. In addition, translocations of works of art created for a certain building or urban space are always accompanied by the loss of art-historical and art-technolog-
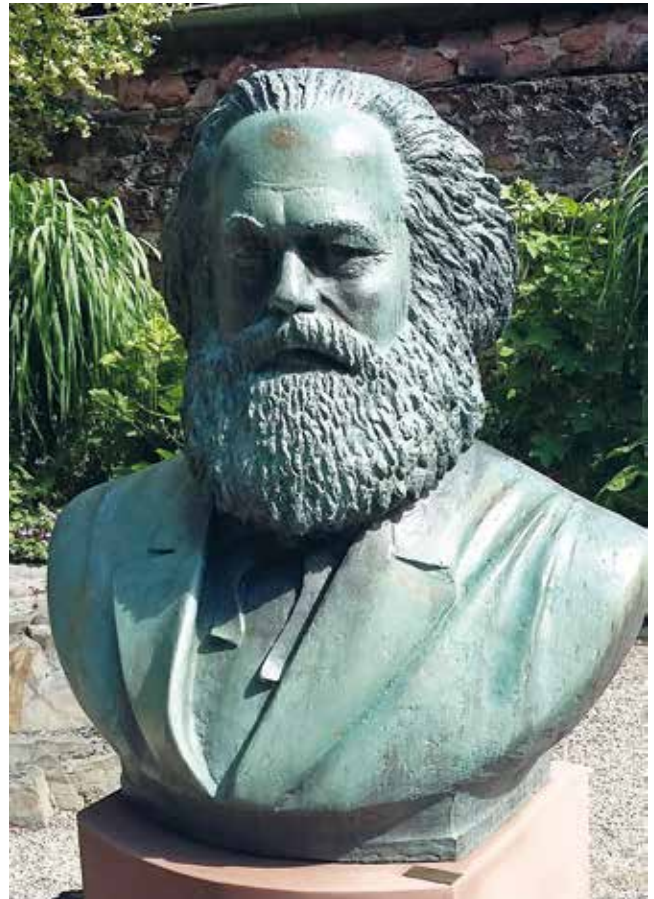

Fig. 10: Trier, Karl Marx bust by Fritz Cremer, 1953, in the garden of the Karl Marx House (photo TLDA, Holger Reinhardt, 2018)

ical information. The authenticity of the work of art is inevitably reduced.