

At the time of writing this editorial, Hamas attacked Israel on 7 October 2023, resulting in over 1200 casualties and 240 kidnapped persons, and Israel is still waging war against the Hamas in Gaza, destroying large sections of the city and its buildings, accompanied by a high number of civilian casualties. At the same time, war is still raging in Ukraine, even if the media reporting has currently shifted. The reason we begin this editorial by mentioning these terrible conflicts is that in addition to the horrors inflicted on the people in these regions, they also have an impact on the discourse of our diverse society in Central Europe, including that of our universities. Rifts that previously remained mostly hidden now visibly open up between different members of our institutions, at the level of knowledge and its production, activism, media consumption and identities. It also becomes evident that many of us are poorly informed about the political, cultural, racial and religious heritage of the minorities among us. This manifests itself in our inability to recognize where the sensitivities lie and leads to well-intentioned, yet unsuccessful and at times even offensive attempts to communicate across divides. Some members of the university now find themselves discriminated against, are afraid to speak out or unable to find a place to express themselves, protest or grieve. For fear of further misunderstandings, unwanted offence or stigmatization, many of us end up choosing not to speak at all. If we wish to counteract this process of isolation and division within our society and our universities, we must act towards establishing the scientific basis on which we recognize and discuss the heritage of diverse members, and facilitate the discussions themselves towards finding common grounds. In this way, we can learn to appreciate, nurture and preserve the diverse heritage that our society presents to us today.

The theme of this issue is rooted in a research and mediation project entitled *A Future for whose Past? The Heritage of Minorities, Fringe Groups and People without a Lobby*, which the editors together with their partners are conducting in Switzerland, Austria and Germany to mark the 50th anniversary of the European Heritage Year 1975. Among the many contributors and project participants is a civil society advisory board, which brings together representatives of the Yenish, Sinti and Roma minorities, Muslims, LGBTQ+ community, Jews, People of Color as well as the elderly, children and women as people without or with a weak lobby. Even without the polarization caused by current conflicts, this advisory board is a place of encounters, tensions and understanding, at a professorship that counts inclusion and mediation among its research priorities and believes in the importance of outreach to society. Nonetheless, we are not trained experts in inclusion and have to keep learning. We

are also aware of the difficulties that result from openly discussing controversial, even painful topics and memories, and that these moments can also be productive when we talk about ‹heritage› in the plural.

The concept of the project and the outline of contributions to this issue were formulated before 7 October 2023. Now, this issue and the project appear in a new light which makes the violence and trauma better visible, and also emphasizes the human rights that are taken for granted in our specialist disciplines but are rarely addressed. Clara Arokiasamy OBE, President of ICOMOS UK, talks about the concept and gives examples of rights-based approaches (RBA) in the UK's cultural heritage through policy and practice responses to the marginalization and under-representation of African and Asian history and heritage, and – following the toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol in 2020 – the long-awaited guidelines on the treatment of historic heritage assets from the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Tom Avermaete and Rune Frandsen investigate the urban, social, economic, and environmental injustice suffered by migrant, post-colonial workers in France and Switzerland in the *Trente Glorieuse* while Maria Kouvari interviews Kostas Tsiambaos about children and orphans in civil war-torn Greece after the Second World War and the now little-known ‹heritage› of their placement in children's villages. These contributions point to the potential of monument preservation and architectural history to raise awareness-making and foster reconciliation in the longer term. Thomas Röske and Caterina Flor Gümpel as well as Anne Hultzsch each present research that is based on processes of recognition. While Röske and Gümpel discuss the successful process of recognizing the ‹heritage› of artists from a psychiatric context whose art has become heritage through musealization, Hultzsch and her research group analyze the contributions of women to architecture in the 18th and 19th centuries through writing, translating and editing, thus expanding the place and concept of architectural production and making it more gender-equitable, an ongoing process. Helen Wyss examines the tension between the tangible and the intangible in the (sub)cultural heritage of skaters and its impact on the preservation, destruction or abandonment of skate spots as results of spatial production. Daniel Gethmann and Petra Eckhard refer to the cultural hegemony of European appropriation processes of the ‹Orient› at world exhibitions and explore Orientalized architecture as a space-shaping embodiment of a constructed cultural dissimilarity. Such embodiments of dissimilarity, which brings us round full circle, persistently characterize the European perspective on the Middle East.

The editors have decided to dedicate this editorial to their personal thoughts on the relevance and impact of the current wars and armed conflicts to the project and to our own professional environment. The idea that this issue would not or would only marginally reflect the current situation and our reactions to it did not seem appropriate to us. We work in an interdisciplinary, multinational environment at ETH Zurich. Wars, crisis and conflicts have an impact on our daily work, personal relations, and, of course, on the publication of this issue.

**Regine Hess:** I have many connections to Israel, to friends and academics whom I hold in high esteem and who are committed to the democracy movement. Israel has had a right-wing government with interruptions since 1977; the Six-Day War, or the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, and the occupation of the Palestinian territories were only 10 years ago. The first Intifada began in 1987. The peace process towards a two-state

solution has been stalled for a long time, and the only democracy in the Middle East is putting itself in great danger through its policies; this has become evident by the security gap and the massacres. As a German, I wanted to know how things went on in Israel after the Holocaust, how the survivors continued to live, and I travelled there to research and teach. Talking to students, I realized that they could not simply travel across the border to neighboring countries and how restrictive the geopolitical situation is. But I rather kept a low profile on conflicts in the Middle East. Now I can no longer do that because, as I am also committed to fighting racism, I want to counter generalized suspicions against Muslims. Unfortunately, I have had so far only little exchange with Palestinians in Israel and elsewhere, and I hope that there will be more in the future. For me, however, it remains the case that Israel has the right to self-defense. When I hear in conversations that Israel is committing 'genocide' against the Palestinians, I am shocked by the distorted use of terms at many universities – for me, this also applies to 'apartheid' and 'colonial struggle'. But at the moment – despite all the necessity – here it is perhaps not only about clarifying terms, and also about fears, worries, experiences of violence and insecurity. The fact that, in November 2023, a Jewish friend in Munich no longer dares to leave her flat is a huge step backwards! As teachers, we have a responsibility, including for ourselves, of course. I have often found it difficult to concentrate in the last few weeks and, as I have learnt through conversations, students experience the same.

**Orkun Kasap:** We observe and experience our society and our built environment through the lens of our past experiences, cultural upbringing and education, and also group memberships such as race, class or gender.<sup>1</sup> The 'native' members of our society often go through their daily life without the need for thinking within the framework of such associations and perhaps unintentionally reflect their perceptions upon others, whereas the members of minorities, fringe groups and those without a lobby are constantly subjected to these reflections, at times against their will.<sup>2</sup> This applies to heritage preservation as well, and our project *A Future for whose Past?* at ETH Zürich investigates and counteracts the mechanisms which fail to consider the diverse 'pasts' amongst us. I believe that the war in Israel and Palestine caught our society in Europe and our universities exactly at this weak spot, in our inability to think and act on racial terms. We are struggling to create a safe and common ground on which we can discuss the conflict itself, and the collateral feelings of insecurity, discrimination, exclusion and not belonging, even in our universities where we have supposedly cultivated a culture of listening, learning and debating. *Whose* past do we consider as the basis on which we formulate our opinions, especially when these pasts are unavoidably biased? Having grown up in Turkey until the age of 24 and lived in Switzerland for 14 years, as a Queer person with a Muslim cultural background, as a member of a nation which is yet to grapple with its past and current atrocities against its minorities, I now – more than ever – see the need to share our opinions, to have uncomfortable yet highly insightful discussions with different members of our society and to learn from their perspectives. Recent written exchanges and statements within ETH Zurich, focusing on either the Israeli or the Palestinian past, seem to have caused more agitation than inclusive discussion, regardless of their necessity and intentions. It is imperative that we meet in person, share, visualize and discuss the various narratives of the past based on scientific material on a racial basis and not just as

virtually equal members of our institution. Otherwise, we cannot secure a future for those members of our institution and society who find themselves marginalized today and feel they have no lobby.

**Silke Langenberg:** The university is not a place independent of global political developments. The myth of the isolated ivory tower, untouched by the real problems of the world, certainly does not stand up to reality. Science, research and teaching, but also the co-operation of a privileged yet diverse university community are strongly influenced by current events – both political, economic and social. The horrors we are witnessing and experiencing in the Middle East, Ukraine and other countries around the world – even if we are at least physically safe – leave us helpless, perplexed and many also speechless. Some are personally affected by the conflict and related discourse, that speaking out is too challenging for them. Others, however, choose to stay out of the discourse and consider the topic not related to our mandate at the university. However, if we are talking about heritage – tangible or intangible – we can't simply limit our view within today's physical and political borders and should be aware and informed of the wider, broader context that is European – and in fact colonial.

Like other colleagues, as a member of the even more privileged, small group of professors, I am currently repeatedly confronted with demands for a public position and personal statement. Some colleagues want to give in to this, others do not. I myself am torn between the desire to help those directly and personally affected by expressing my sympathy and solidarity, but at the same time not allowing myself to be instrumentalized for the agenda or personal goals of others through ill-considered activism.

Dialogue is important and probably the only way. But this requires empathy and mutual respect. Putting pressure on others to speak out publicly shows little understanding for the other person, as does the insinuation that silence per se is a statement and equates to political disinterest, a lack of civil courage or solidarity. On the other hand, everyone should of course be free to express themselves without being attacked for it. Freedom of expression is a good that must be defended.

Our project on the occasion of the anniversary of the European Heritage Year and also this publication aims to initiate a constructive dialogue and promote mutual understanding.

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### **kb Debate 2024: The Rules of the Debate**

The existential crises of recent years – climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest wars and the rise of political populism – have led to a social debate culture that is increasingly emotional and ideological. The hardening of ideological standpoints and the communicative logic of the new media are accompanied by a boom in alternative offers of truth, which are increasingly accompanied by attacks on science and its institutions that constantly challenge the scientific rules of finding truth and solutions. The debate topic therefore aims to ask what strategies the humanities, and specifically art history, can offer to counter the erosion of the basic rules of a democratic exchange of opinions and the loss of trust in independent science. The debate begins with Wolfgang Ullrich's contribution *Kunstwelt im Konflikt*.

## Notes

1 Using the English term means that we rely on *race* as a social category, constructed to manifest human inequality, and not to the biologicistic German term *Rasse*.

2 In her book *White Fragility. Why it's so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*, Robin DiAngelo explains why many of us are unskilled at reflecting on our own group memberships and assume that having a racial viewpoint is to be biased. DiAngelo claims that those who consider themselves «white»

often reject that they are racially biased without actually reflecting on their social upbringing and being subjected to racial issues. As such, they take themselves out of the racial equation. Here, the term «native» replaces «white» to apply DiAngelo's thesis to the members of our society who are not minorities, who consider themselves well represented as members of the majority group, or are not discriminated due to gender, disability, background, etc.