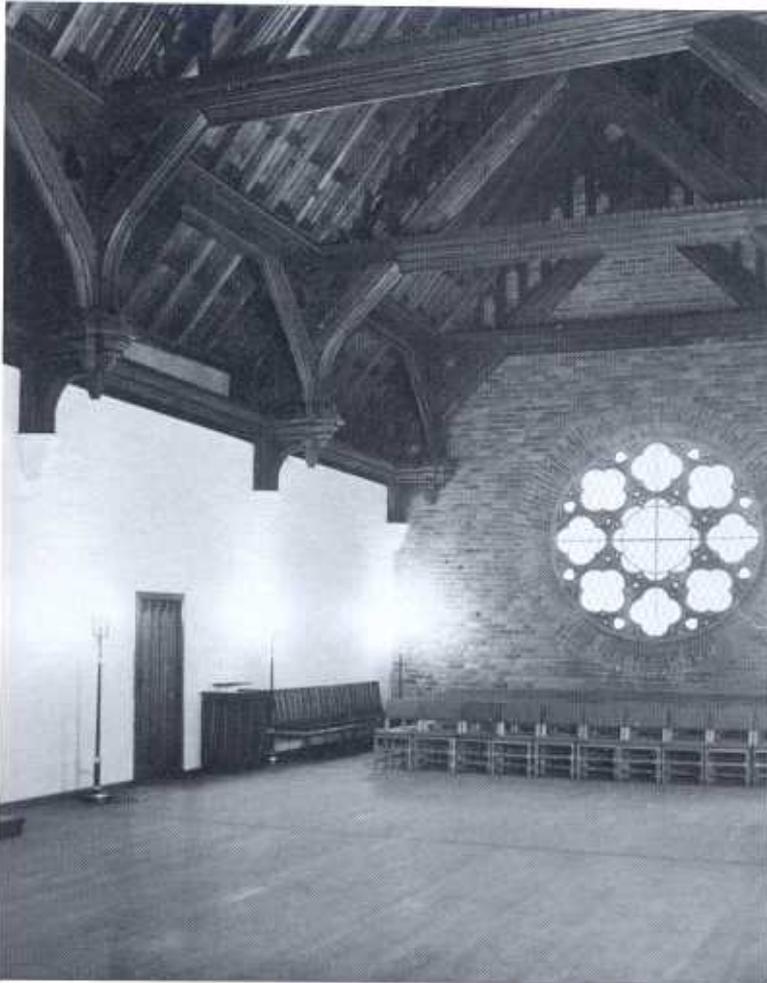


## In retrospect

# The restoration of Akershus Castle, Oslo<sup>1</sup>

DAG MYKLEBUST



<sup>1</sup> This paper is partly based on my research for an unpublished thesis entitled 'Akershus Slotts Restaurering 1895-1922', presented at The University of Oslo in 1979 for the *magister artium* degree. I am greatly indebted to Mrs Erla Bergendahl Hohler, Mr Lars Midthaug and above all Miss Dorothy Telfer for their generous and heroic efforts to improve my English.

FIG. 1. The banquet hall in the North Wing finished in 1917, seen from the east.

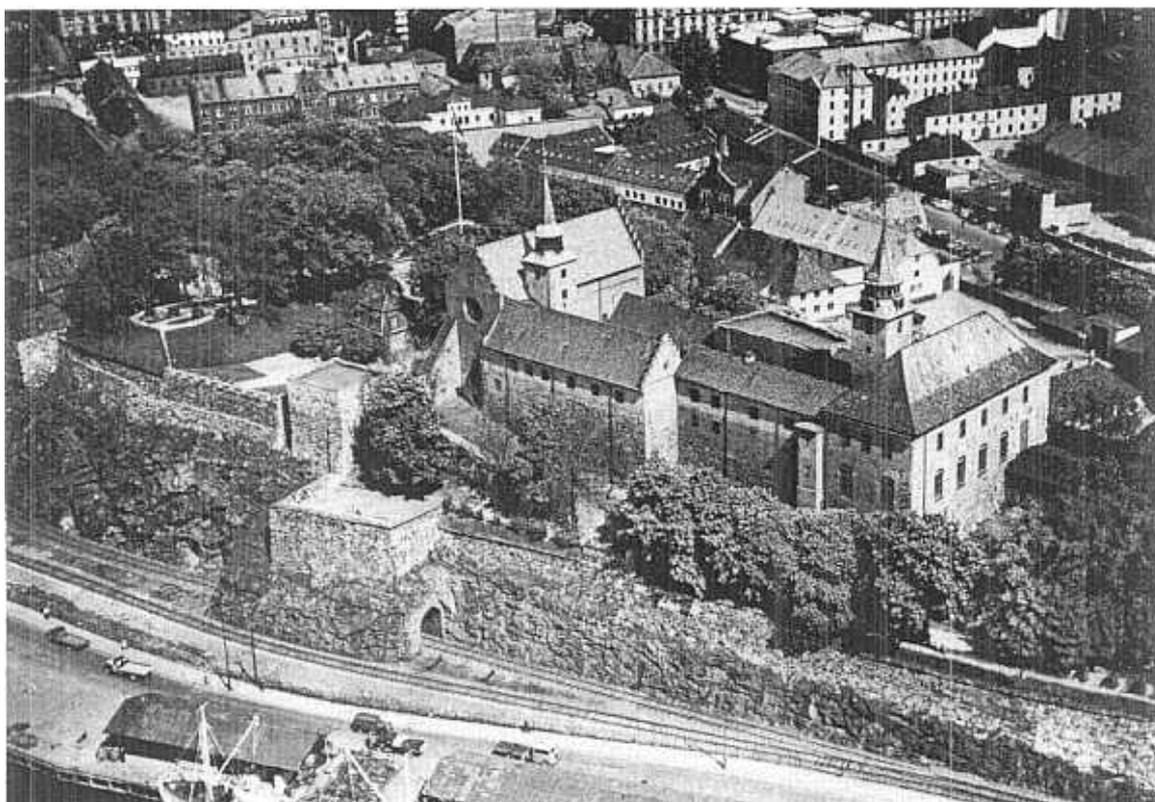
Approaching Oslo by sea, you will notice that one of the most characteristic features of the harbour front of the town is the medieval castle of Akershus (*Fig. 2*). This is situated right in the centre of the Norwegian capital, and its structure rises to an impressive height above sea level. Today its silhouette is rivalled by the twin towers of the Town Hall; but in the first half of the last century, when Oslo was called Christiania and mostly consisted of two-storeyed buildings, the impact of the castle was even more striking.

This was the way the writer Henrik Ibsen first saw it when he sailed into Christiania in 1848. One of the earliest poems he published was called 'At Akershus' and in it he imagines the castle inhabited by famous characters from the history of Norway. But alas, this is all past; nothing remains, and the poet is brought back to the present by the shouts of the guards from the prison housed at Akershus in Ibsen's days.

Ibsen shared the assumption prevalent until as late as the 1920s: that hardly anything was left of the medieval castle known to have been there. The standing structure was thought to be a Renaissance castle, built mostly in the seventeenth century. In order to understand the significance of such an assumption for contemporary attitudes towards the castle, it is essential to be aware of a few historical facts.

FIG. 2. Akershus Castle seen from the south-west.

Oslo was founded as a small trading port around 1050, and was



originally situated on the other side of the easternmost of the two bays flanking the Akershus promontory. About the year 1300, i.e. at the end of the most glorious century of Norwegian history, when the nation was at the peak of its power, a fortification was built on top of the cliff, the only natural place in the area to erect a fortress. As a consequence, however, it came to be situated so far away from the old town that this was left unprotected, and was very vulnerable to attack from the Swedes, who were able to shoot down into the town from the hill nearby. They succeeded in setting Oslo on fire several times, the last in 1567. At that time, Norway had long been in decline, and had been ruled by the King of Denmark for nearly two hundred years. Thus although it formally was an independent kingdom, in reality it was nothing more than a Danish province.

King Christian IV of Denmark was the first to take a serious interest in the second and much poorer of his two kingdoms. Mining was introduced, the lumber industry was encouraged, and the foundation of a new prosperity was laid. When medieval Oslo burnt again in 1624, King Christian IV decided to move the whole town to the area just below the castle, and to build a protective wall around it.

Akershus had fallen into decay after a fire in 1527, when the North Wing was struck by lightning. The fire also destroyed the upper part of the keep, the Daredevil's Tower. Some medieval parts had been pulled down and a few repairs had been made, but Christian did not regard the place a fit residence for a king. He ordered a royal apartment to be built on the remains of the medieval castle, and substantial parts of Akershus as we know it today were erected under his rule, which lasted till 1648. A Renaissance fortress was built surrounding the castle in Christian's days, and it was as a product of this period that it gained its place in the people's consciousness in the nineteenth century (*Fig. 3*).

It was at the beginning of that century that one of the most important events in Norway's political history occurred. As a byproduct of the Napoleonic wars Norway broke off its ties to Denmark. Independence did not last long—only for a few months in 1814—but in this period the Norwegians managed to draw up their own constitution, a document very radical in its time, inspired as it was by the ideas of the American and French revolutions. When Norway was forced by the victorious powers to enter a union with Sweden, the Swedish king had to recognize the most important parts of this constitution.

Norwegian history of the past century is marked by the fact that one of the poorest countries of Europe was faced with the need to build up all the institutions required by an independent nation. It is also characterized by a school of historical thought which consciously aimed at providing evidence for the existence of a particularly Norwegian history, thus substantiating Norway's claim to be a legitimate independent nation. This naturally led to a strong interest in prehistoric times and the Middle



FIG. 3. The castle seen from the east in 1904, before restoration. Note the roof on the North Wing to the right.

Ages, and—perhaps to an even greater extent than in other countries in Europe—the effort to preserve ancient monuments was concentrated on those periods.

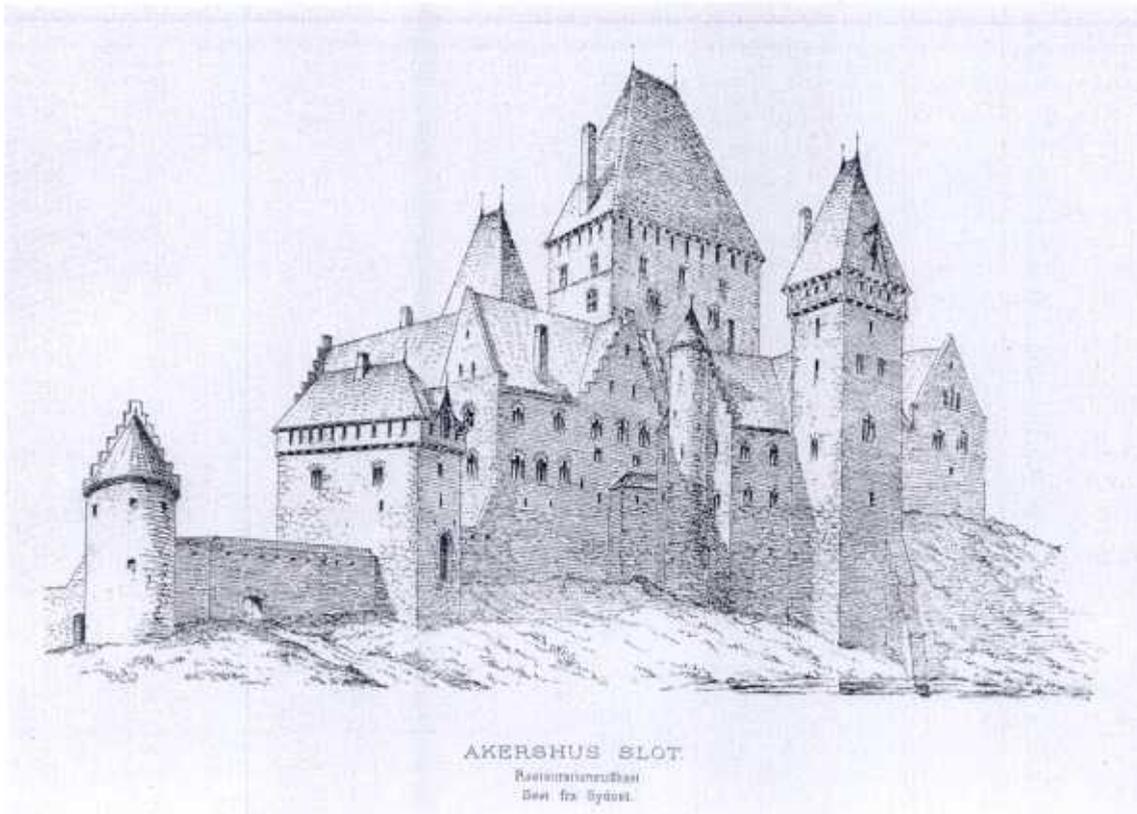
As documented by the literature of that period, Akershus was regarded as a monument to Danish rule, a symbol of a phase of Norwegian history that was humiliating to national pride. For this reason interest was not focused on Akershus in connection with the restoration of medieval monuments that resulted from the politically-based interest in Norwegian history of that period. Instead Nidarosdomen, the cathedral in Trondheim which was used for coronation ceremonies, became the national rebuilding project.

It was not until a few years before the turn of the century that some people became interested in the history of the construction of Akershus. The first was the historian Yngvar Nielsen, who held the opinion that far more of the castle was medieval than had generally been thought. While he regarded the castle as basically a Renaissance monument, his view was that parts from all periods should be preserved in order to show all of a building's history. This attitude is today generally regarded as being quite modern, but a corresponding opinion was also expressed by the painter J. C. Dahl and the architect H. F. D. Linstow in the 1840s in writing concerning the restoration of Nidarosdomen. The first to undertake an archaeological examination of Akershus was the architect P. A. Blix (1831–1901), who began in 1895. At that time he was an experienced

archaeologist and restorer of medieval monuments. He had been educated as an engineer and architect in Hannover and Karlsruhe, Germany, and had kept in close contact with what was happening in the rest of Europe. Among other things he had restored the stave church of Hopperstad by the Sognefjord, as well as a small Romanesque stone church in the same area. The latter was bought and restored at his own expense, and consequently in accordance with his own wishes. It shows a strong influence of Viollet-le-Duc, and it must be pointed out that Blix's ideas had more in common with the middle than the end of the last century. The proposed plans for restoring Akershus castle that followed his studies were thus already out of date when they were presented in 1898, and they eventually stirred up a great deal of controversy (*Fig. 4*).

Until that point architects had been predominant in contributing to the preservation of our architectural heritage, but now the art historians entered the scene. The first Norwegian professor of art history, Lorentz Dietrichson, protested against Blix's plans, as did Harry Fett, a 24-year old prodigy returning to Norway after four years of study abroad. Fett was later to become the Director General of the Central Office of Historic Monuments, from 1913 to 1946, and the foremost figure in the field of the

FIG. 4. P. A. Blix's project for the restoration of Akershus in 1898. View from the south-east.



preservation of Norway's cultural heritage during the first half of this century.

In view of this resistance it was no wonder that the plans drafted by Blix were never carried out but they helped to create a strong public interest in Akershus. A private society was founded, and it started collecting money to restore the castle. The amount collected was considerable, and this led the Ministry of Defence to put the restoration of Akershus in the hands of a committee which emerged from this society. They hired Holger Sinding-Larsen (1869–1938), an architect educated in Christiania and Berlin, to carry out new and more thorough examinations of the buildings, and his work marks the beginning of the real history of the restoration of Akershus.

It is my objective in this paper to present a critical review of the restoration actually carried out at Akershus. But I have found it necessary to outline its history at length in order to supply a background to make the problems faced by Sinding-Larsen intelligible to today's reader. He was continuously attacked by nearly every member of the Norwegian cultural élite throughout the years in which he was occupied with work at Akershus. People accused him of trying to build medieval parts of the castle that had never existed, while through his examinations he was

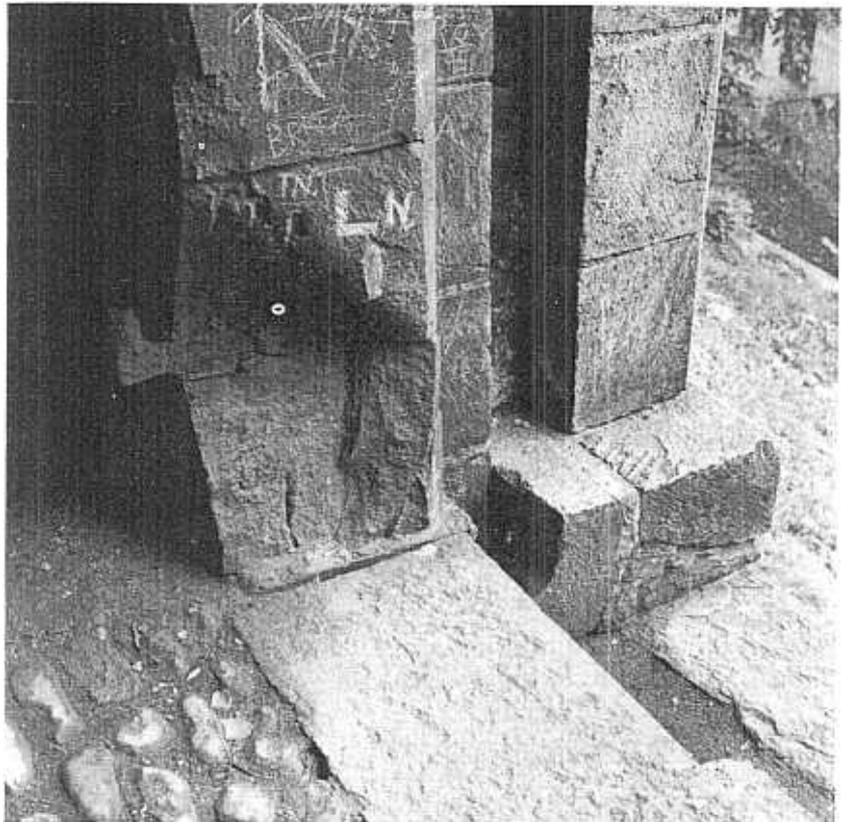


FIG. 5. Grooves for an iron grid, a hole for the axle of a draw-bridge and remains of a medieval door found in the Virgin's Tower.

gradually rediscovering the medieval parts still in existence. His opponents based their attacks on the notions of the previous century concerning the castle's building history, while Sinding-Larsen, for his part, was very reluctant to publish his results or to give his enemies access to his material.

Let us have a look at what Sinding-Larsen had to start with when he began his examinations in 1904. The castle itself consisted of four wings around a courtyard, a tower to the north-east and two more to the south, all three towers being connected to the castle by walls. The East Wing was mostly in ruins, protected only by a simple roof. The ground floors in all the other wings were of rough masonry made from stone quarried at the cliff on which the castle rested. The first floor of the West and South Wings were of brick, partly of the Renaissance type. The North Wing's upper levels were partly made of local stone and partly of medieval-type brick. Two Renaissance towers were situated in the courtyard. All the walls were covered with thick layers of whitewash. The castle was used as a store for mainly military equipment, and the upper floor had been rebuilt as a granary in the early nineteenth century.

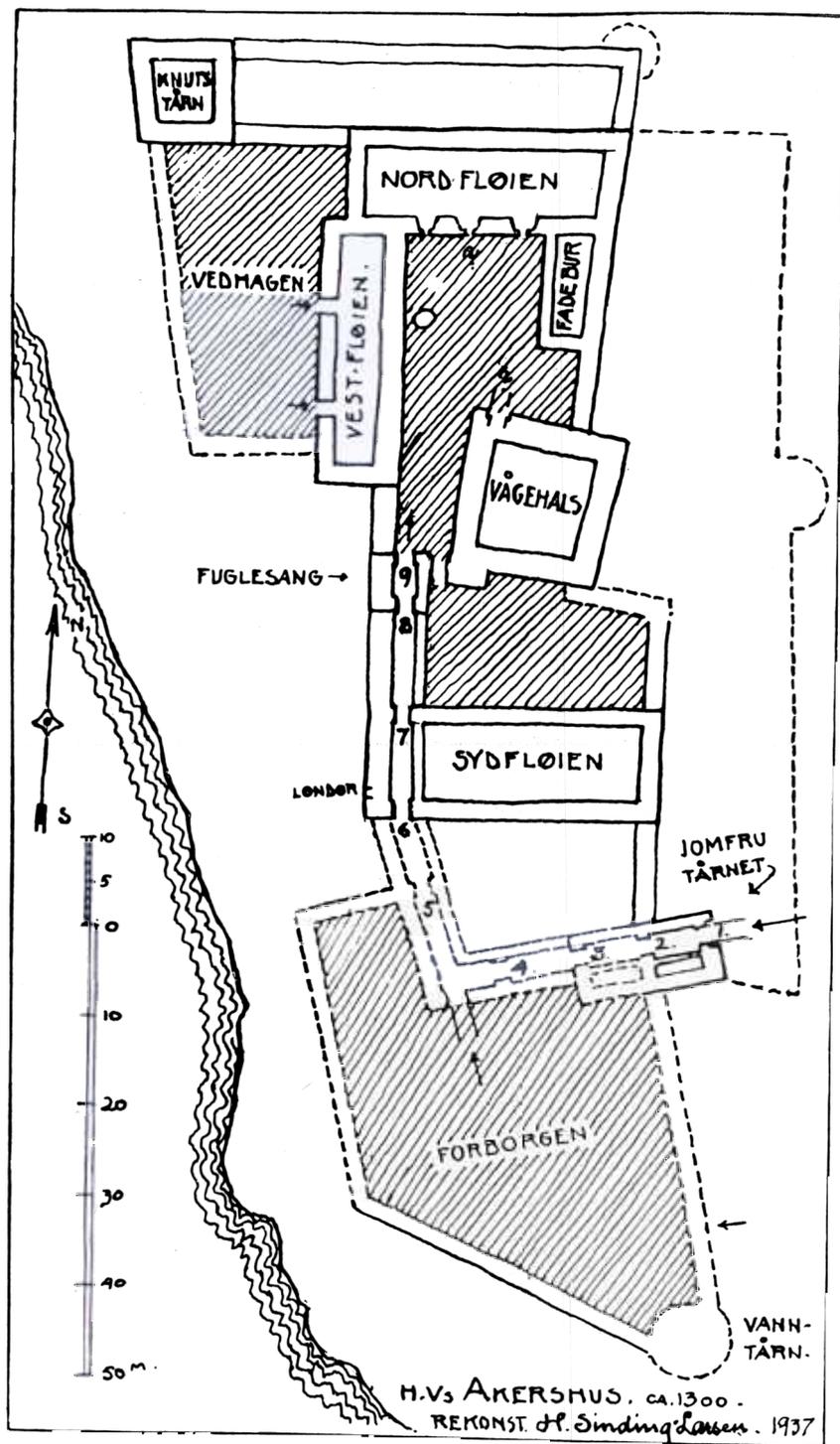
There was some knowledge about the building history of the castle. The main written source was a description dating from around 1580, handed down orally and based on an old history book lost some fifty years earlier. This description was preserved in a copy from the 1640s. It is obvious that such a source would be the subject of a number of different and varying interpretations. Blix was the first to test the literary sources by using archaeological methods, but his conclusion that the castle had reached the pinnacle of its power and glory in the early sixteenth century was emphatically disputed.

Sinding-Larsen's first task was therefore to determine more facts about the construction history. The first part he finished examining was the Virgin's Tower. By removing brick which had been added later he found that the tower had been a fortified entrance with a drawbridge, grooves for an iron grid that could be lowered and traces of a barred door (*Fig. 5*). Here he had found what later turned out to be one end of the internal communication system of the medieval castle (*Fig. 6*). It was this system, which made it possible to defend Akershus with a very small garrison, that convinced Sinding-Larsen that large parts of the preserved castle were medieval. He also discovered that the original medieval fortification had been larger than what now existed, but had decreased in size owing to the decay that had taken place before the rebuilding in the seventeenth century. This opinion was completely contrary to the prevalent view at that time.<sup>2</sup> In 1912 he presented his results in a lecture to the Norwegian Scientific Academy, but they met with no response. His two volumes on the medieval history of Akershus were not published until 1924–25 (*Fig. 7*); but before reaching that point Sinding-Larsen had experienced more than fifteen years of bitter struggle over his plans for the restoration of Akershus.

<sup>2</sup> Until recently Sinding-Larsen's opinions have been generally accepted. But Mr Christopher Hohler suggests that a new examination of the castle should be undertaken to check on Sinding-Larsen's results, since he finds it unlikely that such an advanced structure as Akershus could have been built in a remote place like Norway as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century. He is supported by Mr Hans-Emil Lidén in the latter's chapter on medieval Norwegian stone architecture in a volume of the new Norwegian art history which has been published recently. However, Lidén also considers the castle, as reconstructed by Sinding-Larsen, to be medieval, but asserts that it gradually developed from a smaller fortification.

The general facts of Norwegian history would appear to support Sinding-Larsen's opinion that medieval Akershus was planned and built as one large entity. The great plague of 1349 put an end to the prosperity that had blossomed in Norway in the thirteenth century. I find it hard to believe that any Norwegian king could have undertaken any sizeable building projects after that date. See Lidén, H.-E., 'Middelalderens steinarkitektur i Norge', *Norges Kunsthistorie* (Berg, K. ed.), vol. ii, Oslo (1981) and Sinding-Larsen, H., *Akershus. Bidrag til Akershus' slots bygningshistorie i de første 350 aar 1300-1650*, 2 vols., Oslo (1924–25).

FIG. 6. H. Sinding-Larsen's reconstruction of the plan of Akershus Castle c. 1300.



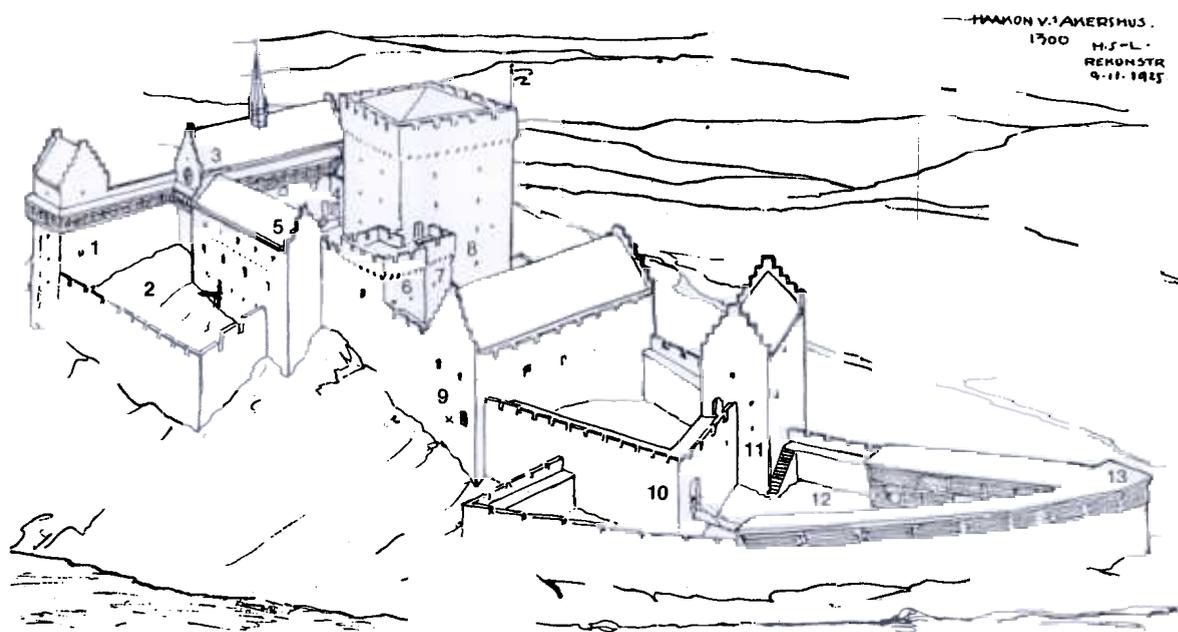
In his examinations of the castle he worked his way from south to north. The whitewash was scraped off, and some of the lower parts of the walls were dug out. He was commissioned to draw plans for the restoration of the North Wing only, the single part of the castle on which there was agreement in the Akershus committee that it might be restored to its medieval character. But when he presented his plans in 1908 he had made a draft for a restoration of the entire castle. As an architect he had been struck by the fact that there were large rooms suitable for festive purposes situated at approximately the same level in three of the wings. He considered it natural to link the three rooms with a new building east of the courtyard. The remains of the East Wing did not lend themselves to reconstruction, but they were to be preserved and incorporated as part of the new building. The entrance was to be placed in the remains of the Daredevil's Tower. The West Wing was not to be altered, but the South Wing would receive a new pitched roof instead of the hipped one from 1742. The North Wing was to be restored to the medieval period. Sinding-Larsen gave detailed archaeological evidence for his opinion that the building had had three storeys with a banqueting hall in the uppermost. This hall had a rose-window in the west gable and three lancet windows in the east.<sup>3</sup>

The tactical blunder Sinding-Larsen committed was to include a ballroom in the second storey of the planned East Wing. This led his attackers to accuse him of sacrilege towards one of the nation's most important historic monuments.

In spite of all the opposition he encountered Sinding-Larsen managed to complete his restoration of the North Wing; it was finished in 1917.

<sup>3</sup> I presume that some of my readers now have jumped to the conclusion that this is more like a chapel than a hall. The matter is rather complicated, however, since there is evidence that the castle's church has been located in the South Wing since the sixteenth century. See Sinding-Larsen, H., *Akershus. Har Haakon Vs borganlæg indeholdt en hal og en kirke, og hvor har disse rum i tilfælde ligget?*, Oslo (1927).

FIG. 7. H. Sinding-Larsen's reconstruction of Akershus c. 1300. From the left Knut's Tower (1), the North Wing (3), the West Wing (5), the Birdsong Tower (6) (the remains are now included in the southern part of the West Wing), the Daredevil's Tower (8), the South Wing (9), Entrance Building (10) and the Virgin's Tower.



<sup>4</sup> After having put in the huge beams that support the floor of the banqueting hall, Sinding-Larsen found archaeological evidence that the floor had originally been 60 cm lower. This would have given the room a more harmonious appearance. Probably for fear of the expense he did not let this discovery influence his restoration.

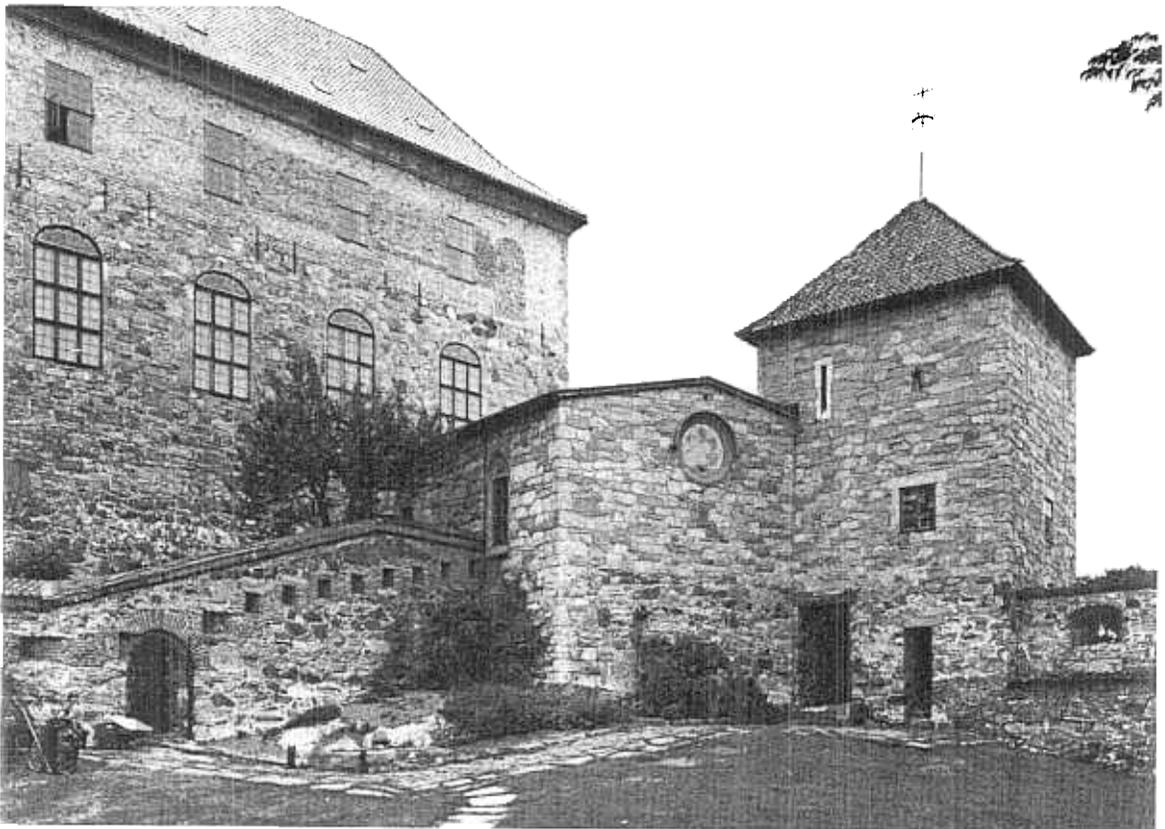
FIG. 8. The South Wing, The Royal Mausoleum and the Virgin's Tower seen from the south. The mausoleum was built and the tower enlarged in 1948.

There are only 140 centimetres between the floor and the bottom of the windows, which creates a rather awkward impression, at least to people familiar with medieval architecture.<sup>4</sup> But the most characteristic feature is the heavy roof, a hybrid scissor-beam construction derived from a stave church and an English hammerbeam roof. The decorative elements are clearly borrowed from Westminster Hall in London (*Fig. 1*).

The other work Sinding-Larsen managed to complete before losing his position as chief restorer in 1922 as a result of intrigues, was the restoration of the church in the South Wing and the addition of a Renaissance helm on the tower in the courtyard between the North and West Wings.

When the work started again in the 1930s it was led by the well-known architect Arnstein Arneberg (1882–1961), who had been educated in Christiania and Stockholm. He was advised by Norway's leading medieval archaeologist, Gerhard Fischer. All the people who had fiercely fought Sinding-Larsen's idea of turning Akershus into a place where official Norwegian government receptions and dinners could be given now fell silent when Arneberg started work towards the same objective.

Apart from reresoring the church, Arneberg left almost all Sinding-Larsen's work alone. He enlarged the Virgin's Tower, and between it and



the South Wing he added a new Royal Mausoleum (*Fig. 8*). He also linked the South and North Wings by erecting a new East Wing, though not in two storeys as Sinding-Larsen had planned (*Figs 9 and 10*). Like him, however, Arneberg used the remains of the Daredevil's Tower for a new entrance hall. This was designed to indicate the shape of the old tower by rising some feet above the rest of the wing. The original dimensions are shown in the pavement in the courtyard; this is also the case as regards the original entrance building south of the castle. 1963 marked the official completion of the restoration of the castle, when it was also opened to the public as a museum.

In reassessing a restoration it is of little use to evaluate it in terms of today's standards. In my opinion, at least, it is not fruitful to approach a restoration performed in earlier times in terms of the terminology and conceptual contents of the 1980s, nor to give a good or a bad mark by any standard. The important thing is to understand why things turned out as they did, and to find out what problems restorers of the past had to cope with, in order eventually to become aware of what consequences *our* choices will have for the monuments *we* restore.

In other words, my aim is to make clear the *intentions* of the restorer and then try to analyse whether he succeeded in realizing them. I believe that the natural way to analyse intentions is to analyse what *values* the restorer *finds* in his object and what values he intends to *preserve and present* through his work on the monument.

My reasons for applying this method in a reassessment of a restoration are based on my general view of the philosophy of restoration. This is developed from an article entitled '*Der moderne Denkmalkultus – sein Wesen und seine Entstehung*', written in 1903 by the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1858–1905). Riegl, in my opinion, was the man who best helped us to see that:

1. All objects have the potential to become monuments.
2. They all have several different values, which may come into mutual conflict.
3. They have values for us which are psychologically based and thus difficult to measure.

Based on the recognition of these points I have further developed Riegl's system of values and their different consequences for how monuments should be treated. This can be used as a system of analysis to find out how a restoration should be executed today by determining what values the monument contains and which of them are the important ones for us.<sup>5</sup> In this case I will use the method as a means of examining the history of the restoration of Akershus.

One obvious conclusion which this system leads to is that as long as one recognizes that the different values of a monument can come into

<sup>5</sup> I have presented my opinion on this matter in the paper 'Verditenkning – en arbeidsmåte i bygningsvern' in the 1981 year-book of the Norwegian Society for the Preservation of Ancient Norwegian Monuments. I have used Riegl's article as reprinted in *Gesammelte Aufsätze* from 1929.

Another interesting attempt to re-activate Riegl's way of thinking was made by Professor Walter Frodl in a lecture given in 1963, see Frodl, W., 'Denkmalbegriffe und Denkmalwerte', *Festschrift Wolf Schubert. Kunst des Mittelalter in Sachsen*, Weimar (1967).

The trouble with both Riegl's and Frodl's systems is that they do not solve the problem that arises because most values include aspects of the others. This necessitates a two-dimensional system, as I have tried to show in the paper mentioned above. See Myklebust, D., 'Verditenkning – en arbeidsmåte i bygningsvern', *Foreningen til norske Fortidsminnesmerkers Bevaring Arbok 1981*, Oslo (1981), 85 ff. (Summary in English).



FIG. 9. The courtyard seen from the north with the East Wing to the left, before Arneberg's works.

<sup>6</sup>Even the demand for reversibility can be problematic, for instance when the lack of technical means to meet this demand prevents the restorer from stopping the devastating deterioration of a monument. The destruction of stone sculpture by the sulphuric acid produced by pollution is one example.

conflict any doctrine of principles for restoration will be of little help. A couple of general rules can certainly be introduced, such as the demand for documentation of the work performed and the demand for its reversibility.<sup>6</sup> But a doctrine cannot help to decide whether one particular monument should, for instance, be preserved for documentary reasons or whether it should be given a function in a living society. In the first place, the conclusion as to which values we *can* find in a monument differs from one monument to another, as also which values we *want* to find.

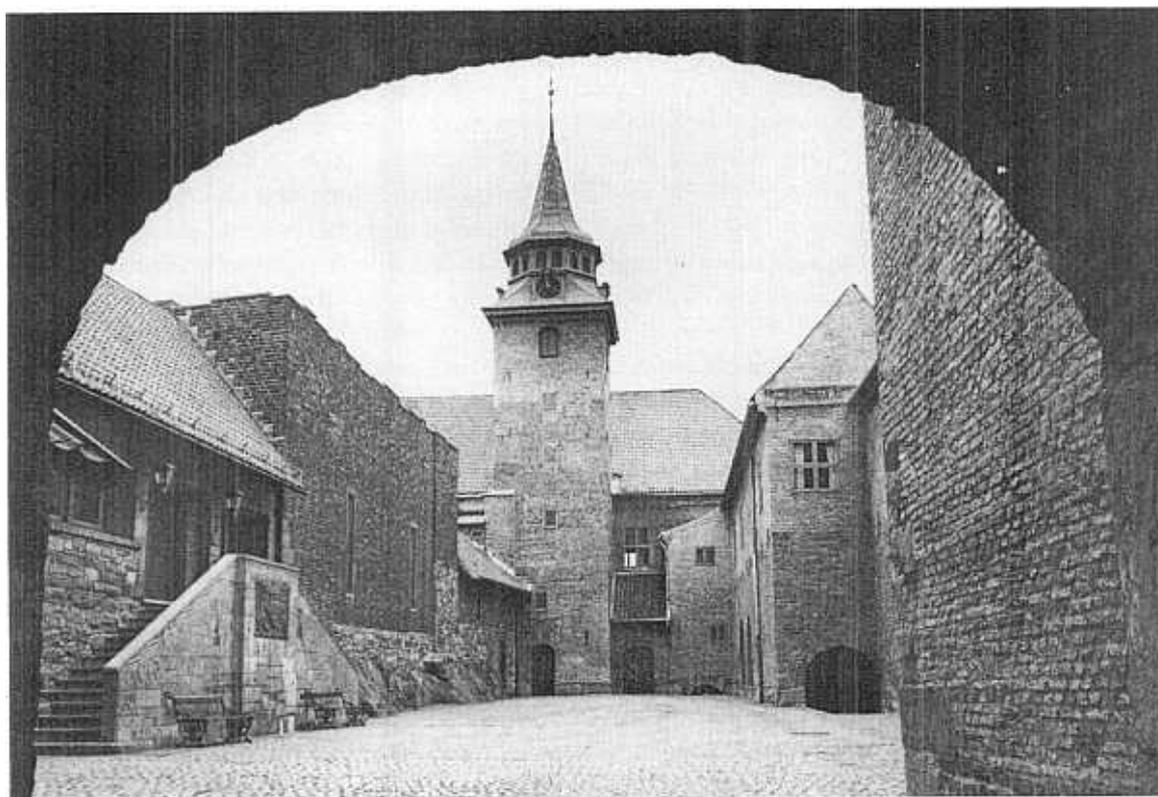
As I hope to have shown in my description of the history of the restoration of Akershus, a society's attitude towards monuments reflects the values there is *a need* to find. Akershus was not considered a

monument from the medieval era, the period that gave legitimacy to the idea of a Norwegian nation, and was thus of less interest.

The situation was changing about the time Sinding-Larsen took up his work on Akershus. Norway withdrew from the union with Sweden in 1905, the dream of independence was realized and one was able to look at the country's monuments with new eyes. The monuments of the Renaissance were now regarded as worth protecting, not least because Norway as a small and poor country on the edge of Europe could not boast a rich architectural heritage of monuments of artistic value. This is part of the reason for the strong opposition Sinding-Larsen met, as well as the explanation for the fact that Blix did not succeed in his efforts to restore the castle.

In German terminology of the last part of the nineteenth century *Kunst- und Historische Denkmäler* was the common term for monuments. This reflects a dualism which is clearly evident in Blix's writings. He chose the sixteenth century as the period on which the restoration of Akershus should be based because he considered that to be the time when the castle was most important as a piece of architecture, in other words when it had its greatest *artistic value*. He also regarded Akershus as a monument to the national heroes of Norway, but he viewed this *historic value* in general terms, not in connection with specific historical incidents.

FIG. 10. The courtyard seen from the north with the new East Wing finished in 1963.



Harry Fett disagreed with Blix's contention that Akershus is a work of art. He held the view that monuments should not be restored, but preserved as they have been passed on to the present day; however, they should be put to use. A method for reconciling these two aspects, however, was not given by Fett. Seen in retrospect, Blix stands out as a thorough and conscientious scientist in his efforts to determine the original dimensions of the area on which the castle stood. But his projects show clearly that in designing the way in which the castle was to be built up he was working as an artist. As we know, his plans suffered the fate suggested by William Morris: 'These learned restorations' should only be 'on paper to be kept in portfolios.'<sup>7</sup>

During the period when Sinding-Larsen was working at Akershus this attitude also changed. There was more receptivity to the idea of the restoring architect as a creative artist who added his personal touch to a monument. Sinding-Larsen's plans were criticized as lacking 'artistic power'. It was probably this power that was later found in Arneberg's solutions, since they met with no opposition.

Sinding-Larsen formulated his programme for the restoration of a monument as a position somewhere between the '*l'unité de style*' approach and what he calls 'the sterile demand for doing nothing'. The parts of a monument that cannot be used should be preserved as they are, but the parts that can perform a function should be brought into a condition in which they can meet the demands of modern times, as long as this can be done in a way that does justice to the history of the monument. Sinding-Larsen seemed to regard *functional value* and *historical value* as inversely proportional—when one increases the other tends to decrease.

He indicated that Akershus could be linked with the independence achieved in 1905, thus implying a *symbolic value*, but he did not stress that point. This is probably a reflection of the fact that Akershus was still looked upon as a monument to Danish rule. As an architect, Sinding-Larsen was concerned with making his works satisfactory from an aesthetic point of view; in other words he attempted to optimize the monument's *artistic value*.

Did Sinding-Larsen succeed in following his intention? This question can hardly be answered by yes or no. First, it must be pointed out that his intention was a very flexible one. There was nothing apart from his own personal preferences that served as a basis for his decisions as to which category each part of the castle was to be put into. Secondly, only a few of his planned works were actually executed. When he put a new helm on the seventeenth-century tower he was in fact restoring it, since old pictures had shown that it had had a similar one in an earlier period. His banqueting hall was hardly a restoration in the pure sense of the word. He had some archaeological evidence of its existence, namely the floor level (see note 4) and the windows. From the size of the rose window, which could be computed quite accurately on the basis of the existing remains,

<sup>7</sup> Letter to *The Times*, 7 June 1877. Here quoted from Tschudi-Madsen, St., *Restoration and Anti-Restoration*, Oslo-Bergen-Tromsø (1976), 17f.

he calculated the height of the lancet windows. Having established the size of the windows, he proceeded to determine the proportions of the gables accordingly. From the proportions of the gables he drew the conclusion that the roof could not have had tie beams resting on top of the north and south walls, since they would have obstructed the view of the windows. The roof itself is a unique design, as described above. This way of reconstructing—if one would allow the expression—a medieval hall was naturally easily criticized. The gables were three metres higher than those of the simple roof from the early nineteenth century. Harry Fett said that this would destroy the familiar silhouette of Akershus, which he regarded as an important landmark of Christiania. He attached great importance to the monument's *identity value*. The 'familiar silhouette' argument is often heard in debates on restoration matters, but it is obviously valid only for a limited period of time.<sup>8</sup> Today the silhouette of Akershus, which is virtually as designed by Sinding-Larsen and has consequently greatly distorted the one which Fett loved so well, is so familiar to the inhabitants of Oslo that it has been made the crest of the city's municipal transportation system. This is in fact a way of making use of the *identity value* of a historic monument.

Another problem important to discuss when reviewing Sinding-Larsen's work is the fact that he did not seem to consider it important to make clear which parts were original and which were his additions. I know from personal experience that laymen often believe his roof to be very old. They thus experience the feeling of *age value* that was so important to John Ruskin and his followers.<sup>9</sup> The appreciation of the *age value* of a monument is a matter of the spectator's belief, not of real authenticity. Today we regard truthfulness as part of the restorer's moral code but we also have a distaste for disharmony. We are therefore inclined to try to bring the necessary new additions into harmony with the old parts of a monument. But my question is: do the things that reveal their youth to the professional necessarily speak the truth to the layman? In the case of Sinding-Larsen's roof—obviously not.

We can, of course, do no more than speculate as to what would have happened at Akershus if Sinding-Larsen had been allowed to carry on. He was replaced by an architect who enjoys greater esteem among Norwegian art historians, including myself. But in many ways Arneberg had an easier task. It was determined that the function of the castle should be what it still is today. This had certain implications, for instance that *functional value* was regarded as one of the most significant. The result is a compromise between making rooms suitable for governmental receptions and furnishing the castle as a museum. Arneberg has managed to subordinate his new additions, like the Royal Mausoleum and the East Wing, to what was preserved from earlier periods. At the same they bear his personal stamp in their ornamentation.

The fact that the masonry of all the walls of Akershus is exposed, i.e.

<sup>8</sup> In Norway we have recently met this argument in the debate on whether or not the tower of Nidarosdomen should be rebuilt.

<sup>9</sup> The *age value* is also the most important concept in Riegl's philosophy. See Riegl, A., 'Der moderne Denkmalkultus - sein Wesen und seine Entstehung', *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Augsburg-Wien (1929), 144ff.

that no whitewash was applied, is probably due to the influence of the archaeologist Gerhard Fischer, who usually did the same thing in his own restorations. Though the merits of this kind of exposure are disputed, at any rate it provides the public with a good opportunity to recognize the complexity of a castle like Akershus.

A hall like the banqueting hall of the North Wing would probably not have been built today. However, it is a relief not to have to decide how to deal with the low-pitched and simple roof of the granary dating from the last century since the 1917 hall has now become a part of the history of the castle. I am sure that most of us are grateful to Sinding-Larsen, whether we really like his work or not!

### Acknowledgement

All illustrations are supplied by the Central Office of Historic Monuments, Oslo.

### Résumé

Le château d'Akershus est situé au coeur d'Oslo, la capitale norvégienne et forme un élément important du paysage le long du port. Au siècle dernier, on pensait que pratiquement rien n'avait survécu de l'ancienne forteresse médiévale et que le château devait être considéré comme un monument à la domination danoise que le pays avait subie jusqu'en 1814. C'est précisément de cette année, au cours d'une courte période d'indépendance, que date la constitution norvégienne; mais le pays fut bientôt contraint de s'unir à la Suède; aussi, les efforts accomplis pour légitimer l'existence d'une nation norvégienne indépendante sensibilisèrent-ils l'opinion publique à la restauration des monuments médiévaux – dont, traditionnellement, Akershus ne faisait pas partie. En conséquence, aucun travail de restauration n'y fut entrepris avant le début de ce siècle.

Akershus fut probablement construit au début du XIV<sup>ème</sup> siècle mais tomba en ruines à la suite d'un incendie en 1527. Au XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle il fut reconstruit dans le style Renaissance et entouré d'une forteresse. A la fin du siècle dernier, Akershus était utilisé comme dépôt de matériel militaire.

D'après l'auteur, les restaurations devraient être réévaluées suivant deux critères: d'une part l'importance qu'elles auraient eu pour la construction originale et d'autre part celle que lui accorda le restaurateur.

L'auteur, pour sa tentative d'établir un système de valeurs, se base sur le travail de l'historien d'art autrichien, Alois Riegl, qui montre que tous les

bâtiments sont potentiellement des monuments, qu'ils ont chacun de la valeur à plusieurs titres, parfois contradictoires et que, de plus, cette valeur dépend souvent de facteurs psychologiques donc difficiles à mesurer. La conséquence de cette manière de penser est que les théories de conservation n'ont que peu de poids en face d'une tâche donnée. Il est donc nécessaire d'analyser ce qui fait la valeur de chaque objet afin d'en choisir les aspects les plus importants dont découlera son traitement spécifique ultérieur.

Dans l'article auquel nous nous référons, la méthode de l'analyse de valeur est appliquée rétrospectivement à la restauration d'Akershus afin de discerner quels aspects furent importants aux yeux des architectes-restaurateurs.

En 1898, P.A. Blix présenta un plan de restauration qui était anachronique par l'emphase excessive qu'il plaçait sur la *valeur artistique* du château mais qui suscita l'intérêt du public pour Akershus. Des fonds furent rassemblés et un comité responsable de la restauration fut nommé. Il fut demandé à l'architecte Holger Sinding-Larsen de préparer un plan de restauration de l'aile nord. Mais, en 1908, ce fut un plan pour le château tout entier qu'il présenta, plan qui fut violemment contesté.

L'approche de Sinding-Larsen, si elle tient compte de 'l'unité de style', s'oppose néanmoins à 'l'exigence stérile de ne rien faire'.

Les parties d'un monument qui ne peuvent être utilisées doivent être conservées telles quelles mais celles qui peuvent avoir un usage doivent être

modifiées pour répondre aux besoins de l'époque moderne. Il considère et la *valeur historique* et la *valeur fonctionnelle* du monument et, comme la plupart des restaurateurs, il cherche à en souligner la *valeur artistique*.

Sinding-Larsen fut accusé de vouloir détruire la silhouette familière—et donc l'identité—du château lorsqu'il éleva les pignons de l'aile nord de trois mètres. Mais cet argument n'est valable que pour une période de temps limitée car une nouvelle silhouette devient à son tour rapidement familière. Sinding-Larsen fut limogé en 1922 après avoir réalisé seulement une partie de son plan.

C'est en 1930 que le travail recommença sous la direction d'un architecte connu, Arnstein Arneberg. Le gouvernement norvégien décida d'utiliser le château d'Akershus pour ses réceptions officielles d'où l'accent mis sur la *valeur fonctionnelle* du monument. Mais le château fut aussi meublé de pièces de musées et il fut ouvert au public en 1963. Arneberg subordonna les nouveaux bâtiments aux ruines de l'ancien château tout en leur imprimant sa marque décorative personnelle.

La salle des banquets de l'aile nord—l'ouvrage principal de Sinding-Larsen à Akershus—n'aurait probablement pas été reconstruite ainsi de nos jours. Néanmoins elle fait maintenant partie de l'histoire du château et nous y prenons plaisir comme telle, reconnaissants de ne pas avoir à nous occuper du simple dépôt de grains au toit bas qu'elle a remplacé.

## Resumen

El castillo de Akershus está situado en el centro de la capital noruega, Oslo, y constituye un rasgo importante de la zona portuaria de la ciudad. Durante el siglo pasado se creyó que ya no quedaba casi nada de la antigua fortificación medieval, y que el castillo debía ser considerado como un monumento a la dominación danesa que Noruega había soportado hasta 1814. En este año un breve período de independencia dio a los noruegos su propia constitución, pero el país se vio obligado después a la unión con Suecia. La lucha por la legitimidad de una nación noruega independiente creó el interés en la restauración de monumentos medievales, pero, al no ser reconocido Akershus como tal, no se llevó a cabo ninguna restauración hasta el comienzo del presente siglo.

Akershus fue probablemente construido a principios del siglo XIV, pero fue desmoronándose después de un incendio en 1527. En el siglo XVII fue reconstruido como castillo renacentista y rodeado por

una fortaleza. A fines del siglo pasado, Akershus fue destinado a almacén de pertrechos militares.

En opinión del autor, los trabajos de restauración deberían ser reevaluados por medio de un análisis que trate de aclarar qué clase de valores posee el monumento y cuáles de ellos fueron importantes para el restaurador. Para establecer un sistema de valores se basa en el trabajo del historiador austriaco del arte Alois Riegl, quien nos demuestra que todo objeto es un monumento en potencia, que todos tienen diversos valores de distinto signo que pueden estar en contradicción entre sí, y que sus valores a menudo se basan en factores psicológicos y, por lo tanto, difíciles de medir. Una consecuencia de esta actitud mental es que las doctrinas de restauración sirven de poco frente a un trabajo concreto. Es necesario llevar a cabo un análisis valorativo para determinar los principales valores en cada caso, ya que las consecuencias son distintas de cara al tratamiento posterior.

En este artículo se aplica retrospectivamente el método de análisis valorativo a la restauración de Akershus para averiguar los valores que resultaban importantes a los arquitectos restauradores.

En 1898, P. A. Blix presentó planes de restauración que, en su excesivo énfasis en el *valor artístico* del castillo, resultaban anticuados, pero que contribuyeron a la creación de interés público en Akershus. Se reunió dinero y se formó una comisión encargada de la restauración.

El arquitecto Holger Sinding-Larsen recibió el encargo de trazar los planes de la restauración del Ala Norte. Sin embargo, en 1908 presentó un proyecto de restauración de todo el castillo que fue altamente debatido.

La postura de Sinding-Larsen está entre el enfoque de '*l'unité de style*' y 'la estéril demanda de no hacer nada'. Las partes de un monumento que no pueden utilizarse deben conservarse como están, pero las que pueden desempeñar una función deben alterarse para conformar con las exigencias de los tiempos modernos. Se preocupa tanto del *valor histórico* como del *valor funcional*, y, como la mayoría de los restauradores, trata también de sacar el mayor partido posible del *valor artístico* del monumento.

Los que se oponen a Sinding-Larsen lo han acusado de haber destruido la familiar silueta del castillo al hacer los gabletes del Ala Norte tres metros más altos, destruyendo así su *valor identificativo*. Esta objeción es sólo válida durante un período restringido, ya que, a su vez, una nueva silueta se va haciendo familiar.

Sinding-Larsen perdió su plaza en Akershus en 1922, después de haber finalizado sus planes sólo en parte. Cuando las obras empezaron de nuevo en la década de 1930, fueron puestas en manos de un

conocido arquitecto, Arnstein Arneberg. El gobierno noruego decidió emplear Akershus para recepciones oficiales y banquetes, así que se recargó fuertemente el *valor funcional*. Pero el castillo se equipó para servir de museo y se abrió en 1963. Arneberg hizo que las nuevas edificaciones resultaran subordinadas a los restos del viejo castillo, pero llevan su sello personal en la decoración.

Hoy en día, probablemente no se hubiese reconstruido del mismo modo la obra principal de Sinding-Larsen en Akershus, el salón de banquetes en el Ala Norte. Pero, con todo, nos gusta como parte de la historia del castillo y sentimos que al menos nos evitó tener que enfrentarnos con la sencilla habitación destinada a silo, de techo bajo, que estaba allí antes del salón.