

History of the Venice Charter

The need to create an association of specialists independent of the already existing association of museologists became urgent. The development of conservation and restoration techniques required qualified specialists, but at the same time, this very development represented a new threat to historic buildings in general.

In 1931, the International Museum Office organized, at the Athens Conference, a meeting of conservationists of historic buildings. It was not until 1957 that the architectural specialists themselves organized their own congress in Paris.

Specialists grew aware of a new fact: the sole listing and safeguarding of major historic buildings were not enough. These were, in principle, out of danger, being works of art preserved in situ. It was essential to place the architectural heritage in its real context and the historic buildings in their environment.

The First International Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings, Paris 1957

The Congress strongly recommended:

1. that the countries which still lack a central organization for the protection of historic buildings provide for the establishment of such an authority,
2. that the creation of an international assembly of architects and specialists of historic buildings should be considered,
3. that a specialized professional training of all categories of personnel should be promoted so as to secure highly qualified workmanship and that remuneration should be commensurate with such qualifications,
4. that the hygrometric problems relating to historic buildings should be discussed in a symposium,
5. that contemporary artists should be requested to contribute to the decoration of monuments,
6. that close cooperation should be established among architects and archaeologists,

7. that architects and town-planners cooperate so as to secure integration of historic buildings into town-planning.

Finally, UNESCO invited all member states to join the Rome Restoration Centre (ICCROM).

The Congress ended with the invitation of Mr. Piero Gazzola to hold the second Congress in Venice.

The Venice Charter 1964

At the Second Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings held in Venice in 1964, 13 resolutions were adopted. The first resolution is known as the *International Restoration Charter* or the Venice Charter.

The second resolution, which was put forward by UNESCO, provided for the creation of ICOMOS.

Five major principles sum up the Charter:

The concept of historic buildings - this concept has been extended as regards both isolated buildings and groups of buildings.

Conservation - in order to secure the conservation of a building, its use is actually necessary, but no change of lay-out or decoration should be permitted. The surroundings should be protected. No transfer should be allowed nor any removal of ornaments (except in case of emergency).

Restoration - will be undertaken only when necessary. *No reconstruction should be admitted*; the structure and authenticity of materials must be respected. Any new element should be distinguishable. Whenever traditional techniques prove to be inadequate recourse may be made to modern but well-tried techniques.

Elements of value of any period should be respected.

Falsification in replacing missing parts is to be ruled out.

Archaeology - Excavations should be carried out only by specialists.

Rehabilitation of archeological sites should not alter the buildings to enhance understanding.

Documentation and publication - any action taken should be accompanied by a report to be deposited with the public archives.

Publication is recommended.

A comparison of the 1931 and the 1964 texts bears witness to the long evolution of ideas and actions. To begin with, the concept of 'monument' has been extended. Also, a greater importance is attached to the need to keep a building 'in situ'.

Finally, unlike the Athens Charter, the use of modern materials is subject to restrictions whereas traditional techniques are recommended.

However, a number of concepts still remain unformulated:

- The concept of site which also applies to historic landscapes and gardens
- The concept of reversibility in restoration
- The social and financial issues

In subsequent years, the scope of action of specialists has been extended and with the proliferation of investigations a greater number of symposia took place; they gave birth to resolutions and recommendations whose purpose was to create a consciousness among specialists with regard to their responsibility.