Restoring Charlemagne's chapel: historical consciousness, material culture, and transforming images of Aachen in the 1840s

Jenny H. Shaffer

In his article of 1840, ‘Ueber die Karolingische Kaiser-Kapelle zu Aachen’, Franz Mertens lamented the chapel’s current state as a ‘mutilated representation’, and asserted that ‘As a consequence of all the changes during its thousand-year existence, [Charlemagne’s chapel at Aachen] is so entirely disfigured or cloaked that the depiction of its original form requires special work.’ Noting that ‘until now’ no such work had been undertaken, Mertens emphasized that ‘the rarest building of the Middle Ages is also the least known.’ Intending to remedy this situation through his article, Mertens offered what he termed a ‘restoration’ (Restaurirung) of Charlemagne’s chapel, in images and words, ‘based absolutely on evident facts which leave no margin for arbitrariness.’

With his focus on Aachen, Mertens, an architect and architectural historian with a keen interest in medieval buildings, engaged the chapel’s current relevance. Certainly, the church had been a centre of attention many times and for many reasons over the course of its long life, its image varying in the different and shifting contexts of which it was considered a part. Within this long life, the 1840s saw a shift in the understanding and treatment of the chapel, providing medievalists today with crystallizing images of the building that remain fundamentally familiar.

1 Franz Mertens, ‘Ueber die Karolingische Kaiser-Kapelle zu Aachen’, Allgemeine Bauzeitung, 5, 1840, 135-152; quote 136. ‘Nach diesen geschichtlichen Notizen kann man abnehmen, zu welcher verstümmelten Repräsentazion nunmehr die Kapelle Karls des Großen herabgesunken ist. In Folge aller jener Wechsel während ihres tausendjährigen Bestandes ist sie so gänglich entstellt oder verdeckt, daß eine Darstellung ihrer ursprünglichen Gestalt eine besondere Arbeit erfordert; weßhalb denn, da solche bis jetzt nicht unternommen oder bekannt macht gemacht wurde, das seltenste Bauwerk des Mittelalters zugleich auch die wenigsten bekannt ist. – Beigehende Zeichnungen restaurieren gleichsam den von ihrem gegenwärtigen Aussehen weitabstehenden ursprünglichen Zustand der Karolingischen Kapelle, wobei versichert werden kann, daß diese Restaurirung durchaus auf augenscheinlichen Thatsachen beruht, die der Willkür keinen Spielraum lassen. Dieß wird auch aus der Beschreibung und architektonischen Erörterung des Gebäudes, zu welcher wir nunmehr übergehen, hinlänglich zu erkennen sein.’

2 For a brief biography of Mertens, see Eva Börsch-Supan, ‘Mertens, Franz’, in Neue Deutsche Biographie, eds. Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 17, Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1994, 182-183. While a part of the coalescing discipline of art history in Prussia, Mertens has remained on the margins of later scholarship, no doubt because he was relegated to the margins in his own time owing to his explication of Gothic as an architectural style originating in France rather than Germany. See below, page 30-31 and footnote 98.
During this decade, Aachen made an auspicious entrance into the scholarly literature of the emerging discipline of art history, with Mertens at the forefront. Simultaneously, the well-known restoration of the extant medieval chapel, which was to get underway in the 1850s and continue into the early twentieth-century, found sure footing during the remarkable preamble to that protracted undertaking: the reinserter of the chapel’s columnar screen.3

These endeavours – both centred on the pursuit of an obscured Aachen – were spurred by shared concerns for the state of the rundown, altered building and interrelated images of its importance as an imperial, Christian, and German work. Indeed, in a turbulent, post-Napoleonic Europe, as German-speaking states lurched uncertainly towards what was to become, in 1871, the German nation state, the chapel provided a common focus for disparate groups. The complex discussions swirling around the building in the 1840s reveal something of the intertwined contexts within which Aachen was included, and underscore both the tensions between and artificiality of strict boundaries: popular and scholarly; religious and political; local and national; past and present. These enmeshed restoration movements rooted in the 1840s – on paper by German-speaking scholars centred in Prussia and in actuality by groups as varied as the Aachen cathedral chapter, the Prussian government, and the town’s populace – diverged significantly in their methods and results in following decades. Yet the concomitant, triumphant images of the chapel that emerged during this decade are familiar today and remain at the heart of both the staggering quantity of scholarship, primarily in German, devoted to questions of uncovering and deciphering the Carolingian building and the glittering monument in Aachen’s town centre.

I. Possession and power: Aachen’s spolia columns between empires

In 1840, Aachen was but one locus in a Europe that had been characterized for decades by turmoil. The Continent in particular, first devastated by Napoleon’s relentlessly acquisitive imperial ambitions in the opening years of the nineteenth century, had then been transformed by, and was still responding to, changes brought about in the aftermath of the French leader’s decisive defeat at Waterloo. With the Congress of Vienna of 1814-15, the prevailing powers – Austria, Britain, Prussia, and Russia – radically redrew the map of Europe to make concrete their

---

vision of a future in which France was kept firmly in check within a continent characterized by a balance of power.

Figure 1 Chapel at Aachen, plan, plate 40 from Georg Dehio and Gustav von Bezold: Kirchliche Baukunst des Abendlandes, 1887-1901. Stuttgart: Verlag der Cotta’schen Buchhandlung (photo: Wikimedia Commons).

Figure 2 Johannes Poppel, engraving of the Cathedral of Aachen in the first half of the nineteenth century. Figure 181 from Karl Faymonville, Der Dom zu Aachen und seine liturgische Ausstattung vom 9. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert, 1909. Munich: F. Bruckmann.

Within this European landscape of loss, change, and redefinition, the chapel at Aachen showed obvious signs of the passing years. What remained of Charlemagne’s centrally planned building, begun by the late 780s and completed in the opening years of the ninth century, was the heart of an architectural
conglomeration that had formed piecemeal over time. The Carolingian chapel, sixteen-sided on the exterior, centred on a crisply articulated octagonal core topped by a dome. This central space was encircled by a two-story ambulatory, vaulted to join the central octagon, into which it opened through a double story of large round-headed arches. Entry into the chapel was gained through the multi-storied, towered westwork. The exterior wall of the Carolingian church was broken intermittently by chapels ranging in date from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The vast choir, constructed from 1355 to 1414, rose precipitously to the east. The upper reaches of the west block had been rebuilt most recently in the seventeenth century and, in the 1780s the west portal had been replaced by a three-sided entryway. A late seventeenth-century domed roof capped the chapel. Aachen’s interior had been altered as well, the octagon frosted with Italianate painting and stucco decoration by Johann Baptist Artari from 1720 to 1730.

(Figs. 3, 4 and 5)
Figure 4 Chapel at Aachen, interior stucco decoration in tambour, ca. 1865, Figure 176 from Karl Faymonville, *Der Dom zu Aachen und seine liturgische Ausstattung vom 9. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, 1909. Munich: F. Bruckmann.

Figure 5 Chapel at Aachen, interior stucco decoration in dome, ca. 1865, Figure 177 from Karl Faymonville, *Der Dom zu Aachen und seine liturgische Ausstattung vom 9. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, 1909. Munich: F. Bruckmann.
The church had been modified and re-modified over the thousand years since it was first built. Numerous changes were dictated by the physical condition of the structure, yet many alterations were brought about by the chapel’s transforming functions. No longer surrounded by the palace complex of which it had been an integral part, the building stood alone, additions to its fabric testimony to changing needs. Additions and changes reveal shifting preferences in building and artistic styles. Aachen’s conglomerate state underscored the enduring vitality of the building, which had been in use over the years and incorporated into differing and specific presents. Its motley appearance was understandable – necessary and expected, even. The State of the Chapel indicated that the preservation of the integrity of the medieval work had not been an issue.

For Mertens, however, Aachen’s conglomerate state was an issue. He opened his article of 1840 with a detailed account of the chapel’s genesis and existence under Charlemagne, followed with a lengthy rehearsal of later modifications to the building. Mertens then delineated what he saw as a terribly fresh and injurious change – one that coloured his assessment of the building’s current physical state:

The crude plundering of soldiers followed [the] elaborate [stucco] decoration of the cathedral by the clergy. In 1794, on 30 October and the days following, the French set about breaking out of the cathedral the granite and marble columns found in the upper arcade, which, since the time of Charlemagne, had been a chief ornament of the building. The columns were transported to Paris and displayed with the antiquities in the French national museum. Today, the most beautiful of these still adorn several rooms of the ancient art galleries in the Louvre. The rest returned in 1815 to Aachen, from whence they never should have been allowed to leave. There they now lie around in various locations, damaged and neglected, and it does not appear that the cathedral will ever again get its column decoration.

---

6 Fires prompted many alterations. Sources report fires in 1146, 1224, and 1366. Lightning struck the tower and set it ablaze on 25 June 1624, and on 2 May 1656, a huge fire caused extensive damage to the town and the church. Faymonville, *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Aachen*, 62 and 66.

7 Mertens, 135-136.

As Mertens so bitterly noted, the town of Aachen, located southwest of Cologne between the Rhine and Meuse rivers, had been in the path of the French army as it marched across the Rhineland, and was snatched up on 23 September 1794. During the initial occupation, the chapel suffered damages. Yet, guided as he was by a dream of empire, Napoleon took a special interest in Charlemagne and his creation: once he became emperor, Napoleon referred to Charlemagne as ‘my illustrious predecessor’ (mon illustre prédécessor) and, in 1804, he visited the chapel. While some items from the church’s treasury had been taken to Paderborn for safekeeping prior to the invasion, remaining works seen as tangible – and portable – vestiges of Charlemagne’s creation were taken to Paris. The chapel was stripped of its decoration, including its famous wolf and pinecone, and, as Mertens described, the columnar screen of the second story interior arcade, commonly understood as having been fashioned from spolia obtained from Rome and Ravenna by Charlemagne, was dismantled and carted off to the Louvre. Following Napoleon’s defeat in 1815, the town of Aachen, along with the rest of the German-speaking northern Rhineland, was ceded to the Kingdom of Prussia at the Congress of Vienna. With the peace, the columns were recovered. Some remained in the Louvre, having been incorporated into the Salle de la paix and Salle des empereurs romains – Charlemagne’s spolia now Napoleon’s. Once returned, the spoils indeed were simply left lying in and around the chapel.

Mertens’ apparent anger at the French for preying on the building’s fabric – related as a final indignity after years of changes to the original structure – was redoubled by the failure to reinstall the columns in the twenty five years since their return. In voicing his alarm, Mertens was not alone. The jarring damages of the recent, gruelling past had ignited broad concern for the chapel’s state, with


10 For example, the lead roof was removed to make ammunition, the underlying wooden structure left, in the words of one contemporary, ‘ganz entblößt dem Winde und Wetter’. Erich Stephan, ‘Unbekannte Bilder des Inneren des Aachener Domes’, in Vom Bauen, Bilden und Bewahren. Festschrift für Willy Weyres, eds. J. Hoster and A. Mann, Cologne, 1964, 63. See also Winands, 339-340.


12 Faymonville, Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Aachen, 67-68; Franz Bock, Das Liebfrauen-Münster zu Aachen in seiner ehemaligen baulichen Entstellung und in seiner teilweise vollzogenen Wiederherstellung, Aachen: Hensen, 1866, 8; and Winands, 339-340.

particular focus on the columns. Yet while Mertens’ dismal outlook for the columns’ future would seem warranted, he must not have known, when he penned his article, that the reinsertion of the columnar screen – what may be termed the column restoration – was imminent.

The miserable circumstances of the recovered columns were not due to disinterest either locally, in the town of Aachen, or in the Prussian capital, Berlin. In 1826, the chapel’s new Probst, Matthias Claessen, decided that something had to be done with the scattered fragments. Turning to the Prussian bureaucracy, Claessen asked the newly appointed Königlicher Bauath Johann Peter Cremer for a study as to the feasibility of re-erecting the pieces within the building’s arches. Cremer reported that many columns, capitals and bases were missing, and that many that had been recovered were in deplorable condition; furthermore, the project would require money, which the chapter did not have. After a series of studies and an abundance of correspondence, Cremer appealed Aachen’s case to the sympathetic Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia who, after his coronation in 1840, pledged financial support. The project began in the spring of 1844 and was completed by the summer of 1847.

In the almost twenty year time lag from the stated desire for the re-erection of the screen to the implementation of the column restoration, enthusiasm for the project had gained new urgency for the somewhat strange bedfellows directly involved in the project. The hammering out of plans and battling of Prussian red tape aside, this conspicuous expanse of time crackled with the tensions that came with the Prussian presence in the northern Rhineland, and the town of Aachen in particular. The accommodation of the column project within this new and uncertain order presented ideological turf on which the anxieties of the complex situation could be played out.

The Congress of Vienna had carved up the extensive Rhineland between three separate, ethnically German states, and the imposition of new rule did not ensure compliance with or enthusiasm for the new rulers. Prussia, awarded the northern areas, had the greatest difficulties with the territory to be assimilated, and the Rhineland presented particular problems grounded in its deep differences from distant Prussia. While Prussian society, run by the aristocratic Junkers, was primarily rural and Protestant, the Rhineland was predominantly Catholic, more urbanized and, because of its French experience, had less of an aristocratic turn to its bourgeois society.

The gulf between Prussia and its western territory, then, was not merely one of miles, but one that cut to the heart of differing local interests and identity. Within

14 My recounting of these events follows Franz Jungbluth, Die Restauration des Aachener Münsters bis zur Hälfte des Jahres 1862, Aachen, 1862, 6-13.
this mix, the town of Aachen stood out, most obviously as an industrial centre as early as the mid-1830s. Linked to major cities by the newly built railroad, the town had prospered under the French, and continued to look to the west and north even after Napoleon’s defeat. As the Rhineland’s premier industrial centre – it was the most industrialized city in the area around mid-century – Aachen was flourishing, and was no doubt a plum for the rural Prussian realm, at the very least in economic and technological terms.

Yet the area was preponderantly Catholic, especially in rural areas, and Aachen was overwhelmingly so for a city, with more than seventy-five percent of its inhabitants declaring that confession. The town provided a contrast in its Catholic bourgeoisie, which set it apart in a society where social standing, and thus power and affluence, were linked to confession and those in the uppermost tiers were almost exclusively Protestant. While French secularization had led to problems within the church itself as well as anti-clericalism among much of the Rhineland’s middle class, Aachen’s Catholic bourgeoisie was distinguished by its overt piety. As Jonathan Sperber wryly stated:

There was nothing in the Palatinate or Rhine Hessen to compare with the factory town of Aachen … where clergy and pious merchants and manufacturers joined to promote the saying of the rosary, establish St. Vincent de Paul societies, and pronounce anathema on Protestants, or on Catholics who wanted to marry one.

The town’s upper crust may have presented an exceptional situation, yet, as in many manufacturing centres, there were growing divisions between the haves and the have-nots. While the economic and educational elite – the manufacturers, professionals, as well as the clergy – prospered, the situation of the swelling underclass was becoming increasingly difficult, and tensions exploded in sporadic unrest. Poor harvests in 1816-17 and 1828-1832, which sparked uprisings in many areas, were marked in Aachen by violence; coupled with news of political uprisings in France – the July Revolution – and Belgium, textile workers in Aachen destroyed
factory machines, called for wage increases, and destroyed the houses of prominent manufacturers in 1830, at times invoking the memory of Napoleon.\footnote{Sperber, \textit{Rhineland Radicals}, 110 and 161; and Beate Althammer, \textit{Herrschaft, Fürsorge, Protest. Eliten und Unterschichten in den Textilgewerbestädten Aachen und Barcelona 1830-1870}, Bonn: Dietz, 2002, 177-202.}

Not surprisingly, the proposed column project took a pronounced ideological turn in the early 1830s. Those in power couched the issue in terms of putting back what the French had had the audacity to take away. Virulent anti-French rhetoric – almost twenty years after their exit – peppered official statements regarding the column reinsertion, with the motivation and accomplishment of the project coded as a symbolic act of assertion against an oppressive force by disparate groups tentatively sharing a common outrage. In 1833, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, who, as \textit{Königlicher Oberbaudirektor}, had come to Aachen to assess the situation, voiced Prussian support for the proposed plan, stating:

The recent destruction by the French of this ancient monument of Charlemagne is still not restored. The famous columns of varying types of polished stone are still lying around … but their original places are empty. It would thus surely appear to be a duty to put an end to this situation, because victory supplied us again with these relics of a memorable time as trophies.\footnote{Jungbluth, 7. ‘Die letzte Zerstörung dieses alten Denkmals Karls des Großen durch die Franzosen ist noch nicht wiederhergestellt. Die berühmten Säulen aus verschiedenen polirten Steinarten liegen noch … umher … aber ihre ursprünglichen Plätze sind leer. Es schieße doch wohl Pflicht, diesem Umstande ein Ende zu machen, da aus der Sieg die Reliquien einer denkwürdigen Zeit als Trophäen wieder zugeführt hat.’}

Claessen, the local Catholic voice, echoed similar sentiments in 1834, saying:

The columns in our church have, mind you, historical importance. Textual sources provide evidence that they come from … Ravenna and were taken from there by Charlemagne. Their historical importance ought to rise dramatically if they, as so many monuments to victory over French arrogance, were to be re-erected in their original places, where the aesthetic eye now perceives a displeasing void.\footnote{Jungbluth, 7-8. ‘Die Säulen in unserer Domkirche haben allerdings historische Wichtigkeit. Aus der Urkundensammlung … läßt sich der Beweis herstellen, daß sie aus … Ravenna herrühren und von dort durch Karl den Großen hiehin gebracht worden sind. Ihr geschichtlicher Werth dürfte dadurch ungemein erhöht werden, wenn sie, als eben so viele Denkmäler des Sieges gegen Frankreichs Uebermuth, an ihrer früheren Stelle, wo das ästhetische Auge jetzt eine mißfällige Leere wahrnimmt, wieder aufgerichtet würden.’}

Schinkel and Claessen – mouthpieces of the Prussian government and the Catholic Church respectively – described the columns as imbued with the potency of right, victory, and authority. Their rhetoric underscored the passionate stances of
the parties involved. In terms reminiscent of Mertens’ marked disgust at the fate of the columns, both expressed scorn for the French and their ignoble deed, with the perceived gravity of French actions augmented by a notion of the chapel’s historical worth as a building – according to Schinkel, a monument (Denkmal) to Charlemagne. Indeed, the columns’ already enormous value had been enhanced by their recent experiences, and they became symbols of wrongful subjugation and victory over the oppressors. The recurring image of the French as the incarnation of chaos implicated these recent foes in the present disorder. Reinserting the columns became a means of damage control for the Prussians as well as a segment of the Aachen elite.

The two very different groups had found common ground in what they thought they, and the columns, were not – namely, French. This united front; this shared identity grounded in polarization was a veneer behind which the two groups worked to realize their own agendas in the decades following the tumult of Europe’s reorganization. While all parties involved in the project could be labelled German, the term, particularly in the early nineteenth century, was notoriously fluid. As James Sheehan aptly stated, ‘of course for centuries people have thought of themselves as French, or German, or English, but these national identities were almost always less important than their religion, region, immediate community and kin.’

While the column project came to be bathed in a unified nationalistic glow as the restoration of the entire medieval chapel, undertaken in the following decades, took on a decidedly German flavour, this early project resonated with bids for authority in uncertain circumstances. Both groups, in their focus on the chapel, were trying to deal with the loss of a long-standing, familiar order – the loose-knit Holy Roman Empire – through a building that was seen as embodying, in various ways, this dissolution and confusion. The Aachen Chapter and the Prussian government

---


30 Sheehan, 47-59, especially 57.
each had their own score to settle with the past, and, through the column project, could attempt to establish an authoritative stance that had current, as well as future ramifications.

The cathedral chapter appears as the victim, for whom the column replacement was a matter of dignity in the wake of humiliation; a bid for power spurred in part by the re-established chapter's freedom from the anti-clerical French, who had curbed the church's power in the Rhineland. While the Prussians granted Rhineland Catholics more power, the Aachen Chapter nevertheless may have been wary of the new rulers, whose Protestant bureaucracy was known to meddle in church affairs, going to such lengths as appointing parish priests and having power over the election of bishops.\(^\text{31}\) Perhaps for this reason Claessen's rhetoric appealed to history – a sort of back door to a past \textit{status quo}.

For Prussia – Napoleon’s conquerors and the Rhineland’s new rulers – the column project could present tangible proof of their supremacy and authority, couched as a benevolent gesture to the past. While Friedrich Wilhelm’s interest is an example of the ruler’s legendary proto-nationalistic medievalism expressed through restoration projects, Prussian involvement reveals the specific circumstances of Aachen. In joining to right the wrong perpetrated by the French, Prussia assumed not only a paternalistic stance of non-French solidarity with its new possession, but, with their need for allies to establish control, they may be seen as tacitly trying to ingratiate themselves to Rhinelanders – at least the elite Aacheners – by way of the Catholic chapel. With their support, they inserted themselves into a local landscape in which they did not really belong.

Prussia could secure Aachen – the chapel and the town along with it – politically, ideologically, historically and even culturally within a tenuous present, and, hopefully, a secure future – all through a past.\(^\text{32}\) The importance of this anchoring was not only spurred by intangible issues, but also influenced by the very practical issue of geography. The town of Aachen was barely within the westernmost border of Prussia’s newly acquired territory, just as today the city is found just within Germany’s borders. By tying the work on the chapel so clearly to a Prussian agenda, Aachen was being distanced, if not geographically from France.


\(^\text{32}\) Wrangling for possession of the chapel, and thus of what it was understood to represent, had been going on since the early Middle Ages. For example, Charles the Bald, who was not granted Aachen with the Treaty of Meerssen, attempted – unsuccessfully – to capture it in 876 after the death of Louis the German. Charles’ failure to secure Aachen contributed to his move to build his own palace chapel to the Virgin at Compiègne. In his foundaation charter of 877, Charles the Bald stated that he was ‘imitating’ Charlemagne in building his church. Little is known of the now-lost building, and the celebrated passage on the chapel in a poem by Johannes Scotus cannot provide a clear formal picture. Albert Verbeek, ‘Zentralbauten in der Nachfolge der Aachener Pfalzkapelle’, in \textit{Das Erste Jahrtausend}, ed. V. Elbern, Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1964) II: 907; and May Vieillard-Troiekouroff, ‘La chapelle du palais de Charles le Chauve à Compiègne’, \textit{Cahiers archéologiques}, 21, 1971, 89-108.
(and Holland and Belgium as well), at least in terms of its associations. No doubt the Rhine Crisis of 1840, in which the French seemed to be suggesting that the river created a natural border between France and Germany – granting France, once again, German-speaking areas east of the Rhine – ratcheted up the anti-French sentiment.

Mertens’ article of 1840 materializes in part as a scholarly response to this current situation. His timely paper restoration of Charlemagne’s church presents an alternative to an actual restoration of the chapel’s columns – an event he feared would never take place – and a signal of a growing, more broad-based desire to retrieve the medieval building. Mertens’ scrupulous work, however, went far beyond reinstalling the columns. While Mertens’ discussion of the building does not have the immediacy of the column restoration discourse, he and the proponents of the column restoration – the Prussian government and the Aachen chapter – understood the chapel, Charlemagne’s creation, as a tangible conduit to a potent – predominantly German and Christian, respectively – past. The building’s current, corrupt physical state – encapsulated in the fractured columnar screens – obstructed access to that auspicious past. The prevailing notion was that the recovery of the original Carolingian chapel could reveal the building’s powerful and continuing significance.

33 For the issues of historical consciousness, incipient nationalism, and the preservation of material culture in the nineteenth century German-speaking states, see Crane. For the tensions between historicism and regional versus national identity in the Rhineland, see Cortjaens, De Maeyer and Verschaffel, ‘An Upside-down World.’ Mertens’ particular image of Aachen’s import can be tied to the broad notion of cultural nationalism, centred on medieval buildings in particular and rooted in the desire to articulate German identity through a shared, idealized past. As is well known, early nineteenth-century German nationalism presented its own particular visage because there was no Germany to speak of. The Romantic movement remedied this lack of a German national entity through the discovery and celebration of a collective consciousness found in a common cultural past. In this mix, the Middle Ages came to be admired as it had not been before, and it was in this particular past that the present need for a strong Christian national power was met. The search for common roots took on many guises, spurring such projects as the Grimm Brothers’ fairy tales and the founding of the Monumenta Germaniae Historica, all sharing the seductive rallying point of the cult of the past. In Berlin, the lack of German political unity, and the potential power of a common cultural past, was ever more keenly felt – fostered, and pursued by – a Prussia struggling for stability and authority. The government, dedicated to the broad notion of cultural nationalism, enthusiastically supported not only restoration projects, but also scholarly enterprises aimed at elucidating a common German – and often medieval – past. Indeed, scholarly enthusiasm for art’s history galvanized a heady mix of intellectual speculation in post-Napoleonic Prussia, the epicentre of research activity, studies seethed with awareness of the current social and political implications of the past. See Georg Iggers, The German Conception of History. The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present, revised ed., (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983; Iggers and James M. Powell, eds, Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline (Syracuse, NY: University of Syracuse, 1990; Peter Hans Reill, The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975; A. Nitschke, ‘German Politics and Medieval History’, Journal of Contemporary History, 1968, 3:2, 75-92; and Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973. For the issues of nineteenth-century nationalism, see especially Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, revised
II. Restoring the chapel on paper: Prussian scholars define Carolingian Aachen

Mertens pinpointed the extant chapel as a portal into a pivotal imperial past, asserting that the historical importance of the city of Aachen, as Charlemagne’s capital and, in the following centuries, the coronation site of German kings, was rooted in the Carolingian ruler.\(^\text{34}\) For his paper restoration, Mertens subtracted physical changes to the structure and established and added lost aspects. He implied that, through his work, he would give substance to the far-reaching imperial significance he had assigned to Aachen. Mertens grounded his restoration in his lengthy documentary history of the chapel from its origins to the present – a record interspersed with episodic reinforcements of the building’s imperial meaning, such as Otto III’s opening of Charlemagne’s tomb in the tenth century and the tomb’s reopening in 1165 by Friedrich Barbarossa. He thus established the building’s imperial meaning while explaining its present – corrupted – physical state.

Focusing on the building’s structure, Mertens devoted the bulk of his article to his restoration – he expunged even the later medieval additions – in which he rebuilt Charlemagne’s chapel on paper through a detailed description of its formal characteristics.\(^\text{35}\) He established the building as a domed octagon surrounded by two-stories of vaulted ambulatories, fronted to the west by a towered structure, and terminated to the east by a now lost, two-story, altar chapel. The second floor ambulatory opened into the central space through arcaded screens, above which were windows. The multi-storied, vaulted west block was flanked by stair towers and originally preceded by a forecourt. Mertens then turned to the original decoration of this reconstituted architectural shell. He weighed in on the timely subject of the columnar screen,\(^\text{36}\) recounted the issues of the lost mosaic decoration, and discussed the bronze doors and the second floor railings.

Mertens’ verbal restoration of Charlemagne’s chapel was given visual form through illustrations: a view of the exterior from the southwest, notable for its restored west end; a section, complete with columnar screen; plans of the chapel’s two stories; and interior details, including a column. (Fig. 6) While this visual restoration differs in some particulars from scholarly reconstructions of Aachen today – for example, the east end is now reconstructed as rectilinear on the interior and exterior in plan, and the westwork is reconstructed with a taller central tower –

---

\(^{34}\) Mertens, 135.

\(^{35}\) Mertens, 136-142.

\(^{36}\) Mertens, 142-146. See below, footnotes 77 and 78.
Mertens’ images, like his verbal description, are easily recognizable to scholars as the Carolingian chapel.

![Figure 6 Chapel at Aachen, plate CCCXL from Franz Mertens, ‘Ueber die Karolingische Kaiser-Kapelle zu Aachen’, Allgemeine Bauzeitung, 5, 1840.](image)

In Mertens’ closing, Carolingian Aachen – restored in words and images – was the setting for a lengthy discussion of the church’s later use as the coronation site of German rulers. His understanding of the original chapel as an image of Charlemagne’s power that conveyed the promise and fulfilment of a later German empire revealed the notion – soon to be stated forcefully by the chapel’s would-be restorers, the Karlsverein – that history had a continuity and that the future could be divined through the past. Stressing that the city was currently on the rise, Mertens indicated that Aachen’s authority not only lingered, but also, in 1840, was reanimating – a notion that lent support to his scholarly restoration.37

While the column situation gave impetus to Mertens’ article, the lack of a scholarly presence in Aachen studies clearly spurred his endeavour as well. Antiquarian interest in medieval architecture, increasingly encouraged by emerging historical and national consciousnesses, was at high pitch in later eighteenth and especially the opening decades of the nineteenth century throughout Europe. Yet

37 Mertens, 135.
interest in early medieval architecture was limited to its prefatory role in the development of later medieval styles, Gothic in particular, which was celebrated in German works as German in origin. Thus Johann Dominik Fiorillo, in his widely read Geschicht der zeichnenden Künste in Deutschland und den Vereinigten Niederlanden of 1815, discussed Aachen only in the introduction of his first (of four volumes) volume. Praised as a German building, the chapel, which was not illustrated, was explained in terms of its long history as revealed through textual sources, with a fascinating digression into some lurid details of its recent treatment by the French.

While attention to current issues anchors Mertens’ article in the time in which it was written, his work is nevertheless familiar to scholars today in interests and approach: his focus on the recovery of the original building. His concentration on the Carolingian chapel – on reconstructing a lost building, in words and images, and fixing it in the time in which it originated – contrasts with relatively recent works in which the building was understood, as with Fiorillo, primarily as an aggregate of its pasts. For example, Christian Quix’s widely read Historische Beschreibung der Münsterkirche und der Heiligthums-Fahrt in Aachen of 1825 was typical in its attention to the chapel’s history from its inception to the present. Only a small portion of the book discussed Charlemagne’s building, although Quix commented on the French plundering of the columnar screens. Quix’s illustrations were of the chapel as it looked in 1825. Christian Ludwig Stieglitz, in his well-known architectural history of 1820, Von altdeutscher Baukunst, briefly treated Charlemagne’s church within his chronological format. He described the chapel in extremely general form, and, in a footnote, said it was comparable in plan to San Vitale in Ravenna. Yet the plates do not strictly depict the Carolingian chapel; they certainly make no attempt to ‘restore’ it. The illustration of the interior was derived from Hendrick van Steenwijk the Elder’s 1573 painting (people, chequered floor, and Barbarossaleuchter removed), the exterior was illustrated solely through an


39 Johann Dominik Fiorillo, Geschicht der zeichnenden Künste in Deutschland und den Vereinigten Niederlanden, vol.1, Hannover, 1815, 28-38. Germann discussed Fiorillo’s treatment of Aachen, as well as his use of the term ‘German’ for ‘Gothic’. Germann, 47-48. Moller’s Denkmäler der deutschen Baukunst, first published in 1831, very briefly discussed Aachen, noting Fiorillo’s work as the source to consult, but illustrates, in terms of Carolingian buildings, the Lorsch Torhalle. I have seen the second edition: Georg Moller, Denkmäler der deutschen Baukunst, 3 vols, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1844?

40 Christian Quix, Historische Beschreibung der Münsterkirche und der Heiligthums-Fahrt in Aachen, Aachen, 1825. For his discussion of Carolingian Aachen, see: 5-6.

41 Christian Ludwig Stieglitz, Von altdeutscher Baukunst, Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer, 1820. Long relegated to the scholarly dustbin for being a dull encyclopedist, Stieglitz, who wrote numerous works on architecture, has been experiencing a more positive reappraisal. See especially: Klaus Jan Philipp, Um 1800: Architekturtheorie und Architekturkritik in Deutschland zwischen 1790 und 1810, Stuttgart: Axel Menges, 1997, 79 ff.

42 Stieglitz, 38-39 and 88, note 11. He probably got this comparison from d’Agincourt. See below, note 44.

43 For Hendrick van Steenwijk the Elder, see Hans Jantzen, Das niederländische Architekturbild, Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1910, 25-32. For the context of van Steenwijk’s paintings, see Thomas Fusenig,
image of the seventeenth-century dome; and the plan shows the Carolingian core with no apse and a very schematic west end. (Fig. 7) The contrast with Mertens’ painstaking reconstructions of the Carolingian building is immediately apparent, and striking.

Figure 7 ‘The Chapel of the Holy Virgin at Aachen’, plate 6 from Christian Ludwig Stieglitz, XXXIV Kupfer zur altdeutscher Baukunst, 1820. Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer.


44 His images appear to have been taken from Jean-Baptiste Séroux d’Agincourt’s well-known Histoire de l’art par les monuments. Jean-Baptiste Séroux d’Agincourt, Histoire de l’art par les monuments, depuis sa décadence au IVe siècle jusqu’à son renouvellement au XIVe siècle, 6 vols., Paris, 1823. While his work was published in its entirety in 1823, after his death, it had appeared in instalments beginning in 1811. Séroux d’Agincourt illustrates Aachen in vol. 4, plate XXV. His three images are the same as Stieglitz’s, but appear in different order.
Mertens’ work offers a lucid example of scholarly practice for what was, in 1840, the coalescing discipline of art history in the Prussian capital of Berlin. This broad, even amorphous field had architecture firmly within its purview, with historians of medieval architecture often leading the way. Mertens, as an architectural historian, was part of a crystallizing academic world centred in the Prussian capital. His article on Aachen was a watershed, his analysis and illustrations of the Carolingian chapel immediately the standard reference. Yet despite Mertens’ attention to the greater historical role of Aachen’s meaning, he did not work to position the chapel within a more expansive history of art. While he occasionally anchored his formal observations in a broader flow, Mertens’ chief goal was the recovery and establishment of the original building. The clarification of the chapel’s role in more expansive histories was the primary concern of some of his contemporaries.

Aachen eased into this burgeoning art historical scene through its conspicuous inclusion in the broadly conceived German-language survey texts that


46 While today architectural history and art history are increasingly differentiated disciplines, this was not the case in the nineteenth century. The study of buildings, and medieval buildings in particular, had a formative role in the development of art history. Alina A. Payne, ‘Architectural History and the History of Art: A Suspended Dialogue’, Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, 58: 3, 1999, 292-299.

47 Mertens tied Aachen’s plan and structure to Roman vaulted buildings and the original impression of the chapel’s interior with such mosaicked churches as San Marco in Venice, San Vitale in Ravenna, and Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Mertens, 41.
were a major scholarly genre of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The production of this still-familiar construct was neither haphazard nor monolithic, but an increasingly clarified project steeped in complex and at times conflicting epistemological models drawn not only from other disciplines, but from related, urgent, and contemporary discourses that underscore art history’s mongrel pedigree as well as its impressive aspirations. Despite differences, the assumptions, preoccupations, choices and implications of the survey genre created an atmosphere in which Aachen prospered. Indeed, groundbreaking 1840s surveys reveal Mertens’ reconstructed chapel inserted into a context for which it was ideally suited.

The exhilaratingly expansive scopes of two remarkable and highly regarded texts of the early 1840s broadcast the optimism and enormity of these scholarly projects in which Aachen was embedded. Franz Kugler presented his ambitious, one-volume Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte of 1842 as a survey of art from its beginnings to the present day, while Carl Schnaase, too, covered the globe and time in his multi-volume Geschichte der bildenden Künste, begun in 1843.

Kugler stated that his explicitly art historical work was, as far as he knew, the first of its kind. He dedicated his formidable undertaking to the king, underscoring that the task of retrieving the past often was corralled under the auspices of the Prussian state, whose interest in, and even control over, historical studies as well as contemporary and historical art – Kugler, in his capacity as a civil


49 For an in depth discussion of Aachen’s treatment in German survey texts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Shaffer, ‘Chapter Two. Putting the Past in Order: The Scholarly Image of Aachen and Its Place in the History of Art’, in ‘Recreating the Past’.


51 Kugler, ix. There has been a surge of interest in recent years in Kugler as a groundbreaking figure in the formation of art history. For recent studies dealing with various aspects of his work, see, Franz Theodor Kugler. However, Kugler apparently had difficulties getting through his academic program. See Garberson.

52 Kugler, Dedication page preceding Introduction. Kugler characterized him as a magnanimous protector of historical studies.
servant, highlighted aspects of Prussia’s desired programmatic role\(^{53}\) – revealed something of the state’s perceived role in the production, preservation and dissemination of culture. Asserting that ‘the goal of all historical research and account [is] to detect the course of development’,\(^{54}\) Kugler expressed a wonderful enthusiasm for the study of art’s history and a pioneering spirit towards his chosen task. The ways in which Kugler chose to describe art history – as a science in the young stages of a life-like process; as a realm to be conquered; as a chaotic wilderness to be cleared by a process of civilization; as a jumble of details to be organized and ordered – expressed aspects of his attitudes towards the past and his underlying interpretive strategies to recover that past.\(^{55}\) Kugler’s art history was a persistent process, and the task of scholars was to uncover the intrinsic and proper order of the works themselves.\(^{56}\)

Schnaase was equally forceful in defining his undertaking, but he positioned his effort explicitly in relation to Kugler’s already-published text.\(^{57}\) Barely able to hide his disappointment that Kugler had scooped him and worried that his own long-envisioned work might be perceived as pointless, Schnaase took great pains in his introduction – which took the form of a letter to his perceived rival, to whom the book was dedicated – to differentiate the two. Paraphrasing Kugler, Schnaase couched art history in terms of mapping uncharted terrain, but noted that Kugler’s text made any other such work superfluous.\(^{58}\) Seconding his rival’s assertion that much remained to be done, Schnaase stated that, in contrast to Kugler, his work was a more contextual, interdisciplinary investigation centred on major works.\(^{59}\) While working to fill perceived scholarly lacunae, Schnaase, like Kugler, had a rapt public in mind as well.\(^{60}\) Both saw a wide, receptive audience for their endeavours – an
audience just as hungry for art historical knowledge as they themselves were. That there was, in the mid-nineteenth century, a German-speaking public captivated by the past is seen in Aachen’s restoration, much discussed in the 1840s and begun soon after the publication of these early surveys.

Despite their differences, Kugler and Schnaase constructed similar, broadly conceived frameworks that ensured not only the chapel’s inclusion, but also its pre-eminence. Both threw a net wide over historical time and geographical space to gather up works. The past was punctuated by periods defined or explained by the historical power markers of rulers and nationally oriented groups or dynasties, stretching back from the present. This general organization echoed much of contemporary Prussian historical scholarship for which power and the exertion of power were the primary focus. Indeed, Kugler explicitly described art history as a part of a larger, even cooperative historical project, stating that it was in the service of ‘the general historical science’ that ‘we strive to conquer this [art historical] realm’.61 History was the realm of great and powerful men, and art history the landscape of their creations.

Kugler and Schnaase both identified Aachen as the premier building for its designated period and location – the ‘early Christian’ (altchristliche) period in Germany (Deutschland) – and tied it inextricably to Charlemagne. Kugler saw this period, inaugurated by Constantine’s acceptance of Christianity and given resolution through the hard-won unity of the Carolingian Empire, as a transition between the ancient world, strikingly described as a crumbling building (a temple, no doubt), vulnerable to the elements, and the creation of a new, presumably more vibrant (and Christian) order, the Middle Ages (das Mittelalter).62 He presented Charlemagne’s tenure as the pinnacle of Frankish architectural achievement – the Carolingians thus identified in ethnic terms – and the chapel at Aachen as the most superb example of early Christian architecture this side of the Alps63 (thus locating Kugler, and his intended audience, firmly in Northern Europe). While not interested in detailed forays into significance, he subtly designated, yet left as self-explanatory, the building as an imperial and Christian work. Moreover, Aachen’s placement under the sub-heading of early Christian architecture in Germany supplanted historically grounded geographic terminology with contemporary notions of national boundary, giving the chapel an updated historicity.

Schnaase enthusiastically characterized the early Christian age as a triumphant return, after a lengthy discussion of foreign works, to native soil.64 He upheld and celebrated the auspicious relationship between Christianity and the Germanic peoples as a momentous, providential, even preordained confluence of

---

61 Kugler, Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte, x. ‘… die allgemeine historische Wissenschaft … [die] wir jenes [kunstgeschichtlichen] Reich zu erobern streben’.
62 Kugler, Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte, 323, 326.
63 Kugler, Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte, 353.
64 Schnaase treated Aachen in his third volume: Geschichte der bildenden Künste im Mittelalter, Düsseldorf: Buddeus, 1844, 3: 455, 462-3, 469.
religion and nationality that allowed each to fully develop and achieve greatness. Quoting liberally from Tacitus, Schnaase drew an ennobled picture of the tribal Germans as a proto-Christian, Rome-centred culture imbued with an innate sense of freedom and equality, thus ascribing to the Franks a romanticized split personality in which they worked to acquire Roman learning and civilization, but did not cease to be authentically German. Charlemagne – described as truly Christian and German – was upheld as the greatest of the Franks and the architect of the mighty Empire, his greatness seen in his fusion of Roman culture and German power. For Schnaase, Charlemagne’s rule was an auspicious epoch for architecture, and the chapel at Aachen was the most important and well known of the ruler’s creations.

Kugler and Schnaase thus characterized the age of Charlemagne in terms that had current resonance for themselves and their various audiences – as a time of secure rulership, an idealized Christianity, and incipient nations. By equating Aachen with Charlemagne, they upheld the chapel as the ruler’s perceived characteristics translated into invulnerable materials. Yet while Kugler and Schnaase both tied Charlemagne and his church to their own perceived forefathers – lending a dose of optimism to the Prussian present – neither voiced the acute personal stake in the chapel that the column restorers did. In their overwhelmingly flattering scholarly assessments, Charlemagne and his chapel, as the prime evidence of a generalized German and Christian potentiality, rose above the tribal tangle of the early Christian period to supplant the exhausted Roman Empire. In this scheme, the lessons of the imperial past were essential to the artistic education of the untutored Germanic peoples, and the Franks, located in Germany, emerge as victors in a cultural competition that paralleled the already-decided historical struggle for political unity and primacy.

Providing access to Charlemagne’s chapel brought the analyses into specifically art historical territory. Kugler and Schnaase necessarily had to produce Charlemagne’s original creation, and both footnoted, in texts with very few citations, Mertens’ recent article. Through Mertens’ paper restoration, they offered the building’s formal and structural properties at the time in which it was built as the tangible evidence of its supremacy, establishing the terms through which the chapel would be understood as an art historical parallel to the historical figure of Charlemagne. This reconstructed Carolingian reality was the point from which to ascertain the building’s role in the greater narrative. This process required, first and foremost, the demonstration of Aachen’s formal and structural relationship to past works. Indeed, Kugler’s and Schnaase’s explications of the building’s forefathers bolstered Aachen’s meaning as a pivotal imperial, Christian, even German monument.

Schnaase, 3: 462-469.
Schnaase, 3: 484-487.
Schnaase specifically mentioned Mertens’ description and illustrations. He also cited Nolten’s Archäologische Beschreibung der Münsterkirche in Aachen of 1818. Schnaase, 3: 487.
Kugler maintained that Aachen clearly was a copy (\textit{Nachahmung}) of San Vitale in Ravenna.\textsuperscript{68} He enumerated the chapel’s characteristic formal aspects, which he compared and contrasted with San Vitale’s: the octagonal core with a sixteen-sided ambulatory, defined by eight piers and having an eight part central dome; a groin vaulted ambulatory opening into the octagon; and a second barrel vaulted gallery opening into the central space through a columnar screen topped by a tambour. Kugler thus secured Charlemagne’s church as a successful step forward within his developmental framework, which posited the art historical past in terms of formal and stylistic problems and solutions grounded in confrontation and influence. While the explication of Carolingian Aachen was foremost, Kugler destabilized his chronological frame through his acknowledgment of the building’s subsequent history. Discussion of the \textit{spolia} screen led him to recount the columns’ time in Paris, their subsequent return, and present fate. He briefly mentioned later changes to the building, particularly the choir and the interior decoration. Kugler’s subdued nods to the chapel’s present again hint at a contemporary perception of history’s – particularly medieval history’s – current resonance and relevance, a notion more conspicuously at the forefront of Schnaase’s work.

Noting the chapel’s octagonal shape, domed central space surrounded by a two-story ambulatory, a towered west entryway, and two-story rectangular apse, as well as the rich interior decoration, including the columnar screen and mosaics, Schnaase related Aachen to the broader Byzantine tradition.\textsuperscript{69} Acknowledging that the chapel was tied more closely to the Byzantine church of San Vitale than a Roman basilica, Schnaase still gave it a nuanced tie to the West, stating that the structure was clearer and more coherent and highlighting the ambulatory vaulting solutions and construction techniques. Schnaase’s Aachen was, thus, a sophisticated building in which choices from both east and west complicated its meaning as an auspicious imperial and Christian work. Yet whether in Kugler’s pointedly formal history that subtly encoded meaning or Schnaase’s meaning-laden cultural history grounded in formal explication, Aachen’s prodigious importance, anchored with the chapel at its moment of inception, seeped into the building’s future. Schnaase recounted the building of the choir, alterations to the west end, changes in decoration, and, finally, the removal of the columnar screens by the French.\textsuperscript{70} Nonetheless, like Mertens, Schnaase could imagine the splendour of an imperial coronation in the chapel, despite these changes to the Carolingian core.\textsuperscript{71}

While both Kugler and Schnaase grounded their connection of Aachen and San Vitale in their physical comparison of the two churches, the relationship was understood to go well beyond formal considerations. On the most basic level, Kugler and Schnaase saw the two structures as comparable because they were exponents of the classificatory field of centrally planned churches. Perhaps adding

\textsuperscript{68} Kugler, \textit{Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte}, 353-354.
\textsuperscript{69} Schnaase, 3: 488.
\textsuperscript{70} Schnaase, 3: 490.
\textsuperscript{71} Schnaase, 3: 490.
to the allure was the opportunity to present, and give broader validation to, oft-cited
textual fact: Einhard’s report that Charlemagne had columns brought from Ravenna
for Aachen; and Pope Hadrian’s written permission for the ruler to remove
architectural and decorative elements from Ravenna for use at Aachen. The
assumption, hypothesizing motive and opportunity, was that Charlemagne saw and
understood San Vitale as imperial and Christian and chose to tap its meaning
through explicit formal cues. That San Vitale was extant and therefore a handy
comparison no doubt played a role.

Yet inherent in the juxtaposition of Aachen and San Vitale was the unexpressed notion that Charlemagne’s model had to be a
major imperial and Christian centrally planned work of the past. Within the survey
format, it was a given that the greatest men created the greatest and most influential
works and that all production of a period could be seen in relation to these high
points; just as key men exerted power, their creations exerted influence. There was
no stigma in seeing the Carolingian chapel as tied to San Vitale: indeed, the choice
was seen as auspicious. Moreover, the church’s relationship to San Vitale was
qualified. Just as there was only one Charlemagne, there was only one Aachen, his
unique creation. Charlemagne was seen as choosing from a readily available array
dof great works, taken whole or in parts, as infusing his creation with a uniquely
Western quality, even a Germanness that made the chapel an autonomous
masterpiece and standard for its age.

Anchored on the art historical timeline at the time of its inception,
Charlemagne’s chapel established a point from which to look forward as well.
While the building’s relationship to works falling on each side of its secure position
were ascertained similarly, the ways in which the chapel could relate to its past and
future differed. Kugler and Schnaase couched Aachen’s impact on subsequent
architecture primarily in terms of copies of Charlemagne’s chapel. In identifying
this handful of buildings understood as comparable – for Kugler, Nijmegen and

---

73 The perceived degree of reciprocity between the two buildings is underscored by Ferdinand von Quast’s query, in his 1842 book on early Christian Ravenna, as to whether the evidence for the lost mosaic at Aachen could also give clues as to lost mosaics at San Vitale. Alexander Ferdinand von Quast, Die alt-christliche Baukunst von Ravenna vom fünften bis zum neunten Jahrhundert, Berlin, 1842, 34, footnote **. Von Quast pointed readers to Mertens’ article in his discussion, and also stated that his image of Aachen (Fig. 9) ‘ist nach den sehr genauern Zeichnungen gegeben, welche den Aufsatz des Herrn Mertens über diese Kirche in der Wiener Bauzeitung 1840 S. 135 seg. begleiten. Die altarnische
ist von Herrn Mertens restauriert.’
74 The term ‘copy’ remains current among historians of medieval architecture to signify a building that
is seen as being modelled, in some manner, on another building. For a brief discussion of the term, see
Jenny H. Shaffer, ‘Letaldus of Micy, Germigny-des-Prés and Aachen: Histories, Contexts and the
Problem of Likeness in Medieval Architecture’, Viator, 37, 2006, 74, note 93. While the terminology
used for these structures varied – Kugler used the word Nachbild, Schnaase Nachahmung and Copie – the
shared, and generalized, meaning of these terms is apparent in the designation and analysis of these
buildings. Clearly no rigid terminology was in place, and these scholars were either comfortable with,
or unconcerned about, the implications of their word choice.
Ottmarsheim and for Schnaase, Ottmarsheim and St. Jean in Liège – these scholars relied on formal, particularly typological criteria. In contrast to Aachen’s perceived relationship to past works, the chapel’s followers were not given the gloss of originality; by definition, they could not. The discussion of the copies was relatively brief, in part, no doubt, because, with the early state of scholarship, the number of known comparative works was small. The copies were not seen as a dazzling array of major or imperial works. Little interest was shown in the individual meanings of these buildings; the formal tie indicated acquiescence to the Carolingian chapel’s meaning. Inserted into narratives, out of their chronological slots, the copies appeared as a subset of Charlemagne’s chapel that confirmed Aachen’s designated – lofty – status.

III. Constructing the past: the Karlsverein and the call for total restoration

These scholarly discussions of Aachen – restored in words and images on paper and inserted into sweeping histories that established the scholarly agenda for the chapel – coexisted with the actual column reinsertion. The column project presented a number of problems, not the least of which was that it was unclear how the columns had been arranged within the arched openings; after all, a half century had passed since their removal. It was agreed, from textual descriptions and pre-Napoleonic images, that each upper arch had enclosed a two-story screen of two superimposed columns, requiring thirty-two altogether. There was disagreement, however, as to whether the architrave resting atop the lower columns and forming the base for the upper range had been a combination of straight and broken, or broken; it was

75 Kugler, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, 355. Kugler designated Nijmegen as Carolingian, thus seeing the chapel as an example of Charlemagne copying his own chapel at Aachen. No doubt part of the reason that Nijmegen was dated to the Carolingian Age was because it was seen as resembling Aachen so closely. However, the ‘Valkhof’ has been shown to post-date the Carolingian Age, perhaps dating as late as ca. 1030. Kubach and Verbeek, 2: 882-883; H. van Agt, ‘Die Nikolauskapelle auf dem Valkhof in Nymegen’, in *Karolingische und Ottonische Kunst. Werden. Wesen. Wirkung*, Wiesbaden, 1957, 179-192. Recently, Fremer associated the building with the Ezzonen, and Theophanu of Essen in particular. Torsten Fremer, *Äbtissin Theophanu und das Stift Essen. Gedächtnis und Individualität in ottonisch-salischer Zeit*, Essen: Peter Pom, 2002, 79-81. Around the time that Kugler and Schnaase were writing their surveys, Ottmarsheim was receiving scholarly attention from Jacob Burckhardt, a student of Kugler. Jakob Burckhardt, ‘Die Kirche zu Ottmarsheim in Elsass’, *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Vaterländische Alterthümer in Basel*, II 1844, 27-32.

76 Schnaase, 3: 497.

77 More than thirty-two columns were taken from Aachen. Mertens produced a table of the columns, complete with their measurements, materials, and current locations. He classified the columns according to where he thought they were originally, based on a reading of Noppius. See: Mertens, 136. Professor J. Nöggerath had been formally charged by the ruler to inventory the columns, and organized his detailed information on each piece by material used. J. Nöggerath, ‘Die antiken Säulen im Münster zu Aachen’, *Niederrheinisches Jahrbuch für Geschichte, Kunst und Poesie von L. Lersch*, Bonn, 1843, 193-208.
decided to make each broken by three semi-circular arches.\textsuperscript{78} (Fig. 3) There was also the pressing problem of missing and damaged architectural members.\textsuperscript{79} In order to achieve any restoration, gaps would have to be filled. Of the \textit{spolia} columns, which varied in material and size, many had been re-polished by the French and many were further reworked for the restoration.\textsuperscript{80} The altered original columns were interspersed with newly hewn ones.\textsuperscript{81} The few original bases, of various classicizing styles, were not used; new bases were made in an identical Attic style,\textsuperscript{82} these of varying heights to compensate for the unequal lengths of the columns. Of the remaining original capitals, three or four were used, and new, uniformly classicizing marble capitals were made.\textsuperscript{83}

While the Carolingian chapel’s upper story arches carried columnar screens, there was no certainty as to the particulars of its arrangement or the specific forms of the architectural members. From the fragmentary remains it appears that variety – in size, colour, style and age – predominated. The reworking of the originals altered their form, and the new, uniformly styled members introduced a more homogeneous aesthetic in the building. The resulting regularity of the columnar screens grafted a contemporary ideal of classicizing order and restraint – with a hint of the imperial – onto Aachen.

The hand of Cremer – known in some circles as ‘The Schinkel of Aachen’ – is seen in the resulting work, particularly in the classicizing elements.\textsuperscript{84} The local governmental functionary in charge of installing the screens, Cremer was an architect in his own right, his buildings testimony to his interest in and preference

\textsuperscript{78} Ingeborg Schild discussed the column project in depth and the changes in plan seen in Cremer’s various drawings. Ingeborg Schild, \textit{Die Brüder Cremer und ihre Kirchenbauten}, Mönchengladbach: Kühlen, 1965, 134-138 and 144-150. It is unclear from Jungbluth what evidence was used for the restoration. Mertens discussed the evidence of Noppius’ seventeenth-century description of the chapel and F. Jansen’s 1833 drawing of the chapel as it looked in 1794. He argued that the lower story original presented an arch only in the central section. See Mertens, 145-146. Von Quast disagreed with Mertens’ configuration, citing a picture in the Vatican that showed the lower columns were all joined by round arches. See: von Quast, 34, note ***. That von Quast – an architectural historian and first Prussian Konservator der Denkmäler – had opinions about Aachen points to the chapel’s resonance in the 1840s. For von Quast and aspects of his career, see Detlef Karg, ‘Vor 150 Jahren: Bestellung des ersten Konservators in Preußen, Ferdinand von Quast’, \textit{Brandenburgische Denkmalpflege}, 2: 1, 1993, 4-8; and Felicitas Buch, ‘Ferdinand von Quast und die Inventarisation in Preußen’, in \textit{Kunstverwaltung, Bau- und Denkmal-Politik im Kaiserreich}, eds. Ekkehard Mai and Stephan Waetzoldt, Berlin: Mann, 1981, 361-382.

\textsuperscript{79} Nöggerath discussed the state of the remaining (few) bases and capitals. Nöggerath, 200. See also: Faymonville, \textit{Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Aachen}, 77-79. The narrative of the original bases and capitals and the making of new bases and capitals is extremely complex. See Schild, 145-150.

\textsuperscript{80} Columns that had not come from the chapel were unwittingly used. Schild, 145.

\textsuperscript{81} It is not clear how the restorers arrived at the specific arrangement, though it appears that they decided to spread the originals around on the axes. Jungbluth, 10-11; and Schild, 145.

\textsuperscript{82} Faymonville, \textit{Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Aachen}, 78; and Schild, 146.

\textsuperscript{83} Faymonville, \textit{Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Aachen}, 79; and especially Schild, 146-148. Capitals used in the column project were later replaced by Faymonville and Josef Buchkremer, who were both Dombaumeister of Aachen.

\textsuperscript{84} For the life and career of Johann Peter Cremer, I follow Schild’s indispensable work. Schild,, 17 ff.
for classicizing forms.\textsuperscript{85} For the native Rhinelander – fortunate to land a job in the new Prussian order – work on the chapel was anything but routine. Proposed projects multiplied as attention focused more and more on the long-neglected chapel, and criticism of Cremer’s proposals was unrelenting.\textsuperscript{86} While Cremer, in his approximately twenty years of work on the building, ultimately was responsible only for the column project, his work as a whole underscores the complex, changing image of Aachen. The issue for Cremer was not the restoration, but the repair of the chapel. His numerous, and rejected, plans underscore his pragmatic approach, and his proposed solutions reflect his training and aesthetic preferences. Cremer wished to facilitate projects in a timely, economical manner, yet he was out of step with the increasingly urgent ideologies being grafted onto the building.

While, with the plundered columns, the initial goal was to return the spoils to their rightful locations, by the later 1840s, with the achievement of the column restoration, aspirations for Aachen’s chapel had changed significantly. A marked zealouessness crept seamlessly into discussions, along with some new players. On April 19, 1847 Franz Jungbluth, a local Catholic lawyer (and the chapter’s counsel) invited fifty-three citizens of the town of Aachen to a meeting to found the Karlsverein zur Wiederherstellung des Aachener Münsters.\textsuperscript{87} On August 1, 1847, the Karlsverein, looking to drum up support, published a ‘Call to the Citizens’, a stirring appeal that opened with an ideologically-charged architectural history of the chapel:

In our church we possess a solemn reminder, a witness of the distant past. The splendid octagon – the single extant Carolingian building in Germany – is the most important monument dating from the outset of the powerful development of German greatness under the beneficent influence of Christianity. As well, the lofty choir constitutes in the boldness of its majestic structure an amazing and arousing monument of national architecture. These two main parts of our church, along with their accompanying chapels and structures, testify to our forefathers’ great devoutness and their view of the relationship between the arts and religion. Our venerable temple, as the sepulchre of its great founder Charlemagne, remains for all time an important shrine of the German people. In this holy place,

\textsuperscript{85} He designed Aachen’s city theatre (1823–25) and, in conjunction with Schinkel, the fountains known as the Elisenbrunnen (1822–23).
\textsuperscript{86} For Cremer’s work on Aachen, see Schild, 127–154. For her discussion of criticism of Cremer’s work, see: 153–154.
Germany’s Emperors received their power and the consecration of religion. Here the glory of the German nation was consecrated.\(^{88}\)

In this powerful opening, with its amplified nationalist rhetoric, the chapel looms as an indomitable relic – albeit a dilapidated one – permeated with charged, intangible issues of vital, current importance. For the Karlsverein, the building’s attraction and power lay in its impressive, all-encompassing medieval pedigree, which stretched from its Carolingian core to its Gothic choir. This awareness of Aachen as medieval infused the building with a supercharged value, grounded in a perception, seen in scholarship as well, of that past as a time in which Christian ideals and German power were inextricably intertwined. Key in this heady historical mix was the original chapel’s patron, Charlemagne – a preoccupation of the Karlsverein, as their name suggests. Charlemagne was celebrated as the great, first Christian, German ruler and Aachen, his chapel and burial site, was his enduring monument and personal legacy.

The Karlsverein focused on this distant, yet seemingly palpable medieval past, and expressed a nostalgic identification with and longing for what was seen as that lost time.\(^{89}\) The pull of this past, so generalized in Mertens’ article, was deeply personal:

Of course our hometown has lost, through a variety of circumstances, the high status that it was allocated earlier in the ranks of German cities. The severe hardships of the disastrous intervening period and also the accompanying decline of architecture have especially plagued our church terribly. Its protection from further decay and its historically faithful restoration is the grave task of the present citizens...


\(^{89}\) For discussions of the modern affliction of nostalgia, see Jean Starobinski, ‘The Idea of Nostalgia’, *Diogenes*, 54, 1966, 81-103; and David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 4 ff. Lowenthal underscored how upheaval can lead to a sense of nostalgia for what had been before, citing specifically the Napoleonic Age, and as well the modern attraction to the remains of the past, and the desire to retrieve the past.

\(^{90}\) *Kölner Domblatt*, No. 32, August 29, 1847; and Jungbluth, 13-14. ‘Freilich hat unsere Vaterstadt durch mancherlei Verhältnisse den hohen Rang verloren, welcher ihr früher in der Reihe der deutschen
The ‘Call’, echoing Mertens, articulated the notion that the chapel’s unfortunate fate reflected microcosmically the town’s fate, the building’s decay mirroring the town’s decline. The expressed feelings of loss and sadness over the fate of Aachen since the Middle Ages were countered by the call to restoration – the proposed ‘historically faithful restoration’ (*historisch treue Wiederherstellung*) offered as an antidote to the current situation, as Mertens has presented his paper ‘restoration’ as an antidote to a different situation seven years earlier. For the Karlsverein, literally wiping out the marks of the modern age and making the chapel medieval again would allow the ideals and values that the building was seen to represent to be retrieved and renewed. It followed that the town would regain its perceived former status in the wake of restoration. The ‘Call’ presented a practical bid to elide the years separating the present and the Middle Ages: this glorious past could be retrieved through actual, material restoration. For the Karlsverein, in contrast to the column restorers, the chapel’s existence through time became the problem. While the post-war issues of the columns contributed to their self-appointed task of total restoration, indignation over more recent events – the desire to right the recent wrong – had been assuaged by the column project. The desire to return the church to its pre-Napoleonic state gave way to a more forward-looking mission to restore and enshrine the fractured medieval building.

The Karlsverein’s appeal for total restoration speaks to the widespread, often acute consciousness, in early- to mid-nineteenth-century Europe, of architectural heritage as a means of articulating national identity.91 Certainly, the restoration movement spreading through Prussia – the Rhineland in particular – had galvanized some of Aachen’s citizens. Most immediately and importantly, the townspeople could not help but be aware of the ambitious and highly publicized work on the Cathedral of Cologne, only 45 miles away.92 The enormous cathedral, begun in 1248, had been left glaringly unfinished in the sixteenth century, only its impressive choir substantially complete. The Gothic architectural fragment, widely regarded in the early nineteenth century as the prime example of a native medieval style, became, with Napoleon’s departure, a work that, through its very

---


incompleteness, could be celebrated and upheld, despite tensions between the Catholic locals and new Prussians rulers, as a pan-German national monument (Nationaldenkmal). While restoration of the structure’s medieval fabric began in the 1820s, new construction – the actual completion of the Cathedral, spurred in part by the timely rediscovery of medieval drawings of the envisioned building – started with the laying of the cornerstone of the south transept portal in 1842, the Cologne Dombauverein having been established in 1840 to raise funds to match those offered by the king.

The broad parallels and interconnections of the simultaneous projects in Cologne and Aachen – both urban centres with significant Catholic populations and prominent medieval structures in the post-Napoleonic, newly Prussian Rhineland – are many and clear. The enormity of the Cologne project, which commanded attention beyond German-speaking territories, ensured its dominant role, with Aachen’s chapel, as Hans Belting has stated, standing ‘in the shadow of Cologne Cathedral’. Aachen appears compliant, always a step behind Cologne, following its neighbour’s lead. At the April 19 meeting, Jungbluth explicitly acknowledged his town’s participation in the work in Cologne and characterized the Karlsverein’s work as another facet of a commonly held task – these connections reported, not coincidentally, in the Kölner Domblatt, the publication tied directly to the Cologne project. In the ‘Call’, this shared commitment was underscored, as the Karlsverein cited active participation in the Cologne project on the part of Aachen’s population as an impetus for the activity in Aachen, maintaining that their work for the Cathedral of Cologne proved that that Aachen’s citizenry was deeply involved with this calling – a task characterized as ‘the preservation of national [or native] architectural monuments’.

Yet despite parallels and interconnections, the projects in Aachen and Cologne were distinct endeavours, rooted in differing experiences and, ultimately, fundamentally changing perceptions. It certainly would be hard to compete with the grandiose Cologne project, but the Karlsverein, with possession of their chapel, held a disfigured, rather than unfinished, medieval structure. Moreover, through the building’s authentic medieval fabric, the group proudly pointed not only to the Gothic age, but also to a more distant German past – one that was growing in power and primacy in contemporary eyes. In the 1840s, the understanding of the German architectural past was changing dramatically. The Cathedral of Cologne’s primacy

---

94 For a recent discussion of the establishment of the Dombauverein in 1840 and its affiliate societies in the 1840s, see Wolfgang Cortjaens and Klaus Hardering, ‘The Aid Societies of the Cologne Cathedral Construction Society in the area of Today’s Euregion Meuse-Rhine’, in Historicism and Cultural Identity, 137-57.
95 Belting, 265. ‘im Schatten des Kölner Doms’.
96 Kölner Domblatt, No. 28, April 25, 1847.
97 Jungbluth, 14. ‘die Erhaltung der vaterländischen Bau-Denkmale’.
rested on its status as the pinnacle of Gothic, a style understood as German. Yet Gothic’s German origins were being challenged in the opening years of the 1840s, with Mertens, of all people, in a scholarly vanguard arguing for its Parisian roots. In 1841, Mertens lectured on Cologne Cathedral’s ties to French works and, in 1843, he published his seminal article on the origins of Gothic. The unhappy fact that Gothic originated in France – thus disqualifying it as a German national style – and, more specifically, that Cologne Cathedral was clearly indebted to the magnificent and very French Cathedral of Amiens, was known, and concealed, as early as 1842 by those in charge of the Cologne project, and only officially acknowledged in print in 1845.

According to his first footnote, Mertens had written his article on Gothic’s origins three years earlier, in 1840 – the year he published his article on Aachen. Mertens emerges as a scholarly bellwether of sorts, simultaneously shattering the notion of Gothic’s German origins and establishing Charlemagne’s chapel as a key German work of the Middle Ages. His seemingly distinct, if simultaneous, undertakings balance each other, the disappointing negation of Gothic as German assuaged by the materialization of Carolingian Aachen as a potent, pan-German rallying point. The Karlsverein’s ‘Call’ for total restoration appears within this tangled context of shifting nationalistic perceptions, with Aachen able to encompass the religious overtones of Gothic and the emergent, more overtly political implications of a Carolingian pedigree. Indeed, the tenor of the projects in Cologne and Aachen were quite different with, as Belting noted, Cologne lacking the imperial and nationalistic gloss (kaiserlich-grossdeutsch Konzept) that came to define Aachen’s restoration in the second half of the nineteenth century.

While the Karlsverein astutely positioned their monument (Denkmal) in conspicuous proximity to Cologne Cathedral, their proposed work, at least at the outset, was more intensely self-absorbed than the Cologne project could be. The Karlsverein held the chapel at Aachen up as a mirror in which they could glimpse


99 Lewis, 80-85; Germann, Gothic Revival, 152.


101 Belting, 265.

102 Cortjaens and Hardering note that the Cologne Dombauverein affiliate societies, while numerous, were located almost exclusively in the Rhineland, underscoring the role these societies had in articulating local identity. Cortjaens and Hardering, ‘The Aid Societies of the Cologne Cathedral Construction Society’, 142.
their aspirations – religious, cultural and political. The group identified themselves as Aacheners, and their interest was in renewing their town through their chapel, and then their town’s place within a larger construct. While they envisioned themselves and Aachen within this larger construct – as a town among other German towns – their use of the term German underscores the vagueness and changeability of the word’s meaning in mid-century: the nebulous Germany which they invoke was not a modern political nation-state, but an amorphous, pseudo-historical and cultural entity with Aachen – town and then chapel – at its centre. The Karlsverein was promoting their local interests by positioning themselves in a larger fictitious context that revolved around and was dependent on their perception of Aachen. The ‘Call’ invoked a medieval Germany – something that never existed – and maintained Aachen’s primacy within it. For the group, Aachen’s importance within this construct was tied overwhelmingly to religion – Catholicism – and religion, seen as embodied in art, was credited with having spawned and legitimized imperial power – a trend inaugurated by the local-boy-made-good, Charlemagne. By evoking what they regarded as their personal past, the Karlsverein intimated the possible future status of their town.

Yet certainly the Karlsverein’s mission appealed to a broader audience, as Aachen continued to provide a mirror in which diverse groups could see themselves. The group’s founding and plans were reported in a sympathetic Cologne,103 and, in the ‘Call’, the Karlsverein reported the nearby city’s great enthusiasm for their project.104 In Berlin, the chapel’s restoration was characterized as imperative, given the disastrous post-medieval history of the building.105 The image articulated in Aachen also found support and funding in the powerful regional Catholic hierarchy and the Prussian capital.106

The Karlsverein, with a crusading zeal that focused on the chapel as the townspeople’s personal historico-religious legacy, characterized its proposed project as a public mission. The work was to be funded mainly by contributions, and the association, founded by pillars of the powerful bourgeois community – doctors, lawyers, politicians – couched the project as a movement of the people, with the fifty-three citizens invited to the founding meeting chosen from all walks of life.107 Yet, communicating primarily in print, the Karlsverein’s audience was not the growing working class of the town, no matter the democratic gloss. The exclusive, conservative nature of the Karlsverein was reflected in the clubbiness of the group, which, in its organization, resembled the contemporary societies stemming from the

103 Kölner Domblatt, No. 28, April 25, 1847.
104 Kölner Domblatt, No. 32, August 29, 1847.
105 See reprint from the Preussische Allgemeine Zeitung in Kölner Domblatt, No. 34, October 31, 1947.
106 The support of Aachen’s movement may be related to Anderson’s notion of ‘official nationalism’, in which monarchs had to support such local enterprises in order to secure power over far-flung, heterogeneous holdings. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, revised edition, New York: Verso, 1991, Chapter 6, ‘Official Nationalism and Imperialism’, 83-112, especially 86.
107 Lepper, 122.
familiar and highly traditional religious and political associations and emerging sodalities of the day.\textsuperscript{108}

While not the first citizen’s group connected with the chapel,\textsuperscript{109} the founding of the Karlsverein and their public call for the building’s restoration moved the issues of the state of the structure and control of the work to different ground. The founders were appealing to their own – prosperous, educated, Catholic Aacheners – as well as tying themselves expediently to the Catholic hierarchy and the Prussian government, bodies as conservative, in their own ways, as the Aachener elite. With distaste for the intervening centuries, the Karlsverein was able to disregard what it saw as a disastrous time, as well as ignore the context in which they found themselves. This focus on a dilapidated building seems trivial in light of the Revolutions of 1848. Poor harvests in 1845 and 1846 were compounded by a workers’ riot in Aachen and, in April of 1848, a group composed primarily of artisans and day labourers forced members of the civil guard from Aachen, making their animosity towards Prussian authority abundantly clear.\textsuperscript{110} The upheavals surrounding 1848 only briefly interrupted the progress towards restoration. Jungbluth perfunctorily brushed off the struggles, stating that the commencement of the restoration project, which he characterized as a work of peace, had been impossible because of the political events of 1848.\textsuperscript{111}

By October 15, 1849, the Karlsverein’s statutes were completed;\textsuperscript{112} the thirty-two articles laid out the working order of the association, Article One stating that its purpose was the protection and historically faithful restoration of the chapel. Membership was open to all who paid annual dues, and yearly meetings were to be held to give progress reports and also to hold elections for officers. The statutes designated the Feast Day of Charlemagne as an annual day of celebration for the Karlsverein. The cogs of the restoration machine began to turn in 1849 and the continuation of work was ensured in 1850, when Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia became officially pledged financial support.\textsuperscript{113} As the 1840s came to a close, then, Aachen’s restoration was assured, and imminent.

\textsuperscript{108} Sperber, \textit{Popular Catholocism}, 30-34 and 74-77. Keeping with an old model for founding such a group, the first meeting took place in the traditionally egalitarian space of the local \textit{Nuellens’schen Gasthof}, and, with its fraternal feel, the Karlsverein incorporated the more secular nature of contemporary societies as well as some of the traditional aspects of religious organizations. Lepper, 122.

\textsuperscript{109} The Karlsverein took over from the Constantia-Gesellschaft. See Lepper.

\textsuperscript{110} Sperber, \textit{Rhineland Radicals}, 141 and p. 161; and Althammer, 314-324.

\textsuperscript{111} Jungbluth, 14.

\textsuperscript{112} Jungbluth, 14-15. For a reprint of the ‘Statutes’, see Lepper, 176-179.

\textsuperscript{113} Jungbluth, 20-21.
IV. The chapel secured: Aachen poised at mid-century

In 1851, with the building’s restoration finally underway, the long-planned picture compendium to Kugler’s *Handbuch* was finally published. Kugler had envisioned this visual component from the outset ‘to sustain’, as Hubert Locher stated, ‘the argument by means of the pictures’. Each large page of illustrations grouped a number of works together to reinforce Kugler’s formally driven narrative, and, as Locher noted, this format provided some interesting contexts for works. Charlemagne’s chapel was embedded within the page devoted to Byzantine architecture, which was organized around images of Hagia Sophia. (Fig. 8) Shown as Mertens’ cross-section, the building is second down on the left, readily comparable to the cross section of San Vitale below. The placement of the restored Carolingian chapel, outside of its temporal slot in favor of proximity to its hypothesized inspiration, visually bolstered the notion, so clearly explicated by Kugler – as well as Schnaase and the text of the picture atlas – of Aachen’s prestigious imperial pedigree; of the chapel’s assumption of the Byzantine central plan.

Figure 8 ‘Byzantine architecture’, plate II, from J. A. von Voit (begun by) and continued by Ernst Guhl and Joseph Caspar *Denkmäler der Kunst zur Übersicht ihres Entwickelungs-Ganges von den ersten künstlerischen Versuchen bis zu den Standpunkten der Gegenwart*, vol. 2. Stuttgart: Ebner & Seubert, 1851.


116 Locher, ‘The Art History Survey’, 169. For his entire discussion of the atlas, see 165-172.

117 *Denkmäler der Kunst*, 2: 54-55.
In the 1840s, scholars offered thoughtful solutions to the then-imperative problem of retrieving and ordering a vast, scattered and neglected past – solutions that presented persuasive and fruitful paradigms for exploration. Aachen – fixed, pristine, at the moment of its inception by Mertens – emerged in surveys as a unique building, redolent of imperial, Christian and German import, wisely and willfully embedded by Charlemagne in an auspicious formal past and naturally followed by a recognizable, deferential group of followers. This chapel, drained of religious and political hyperbole, remains familiar today. Indeed, scholars have been tweaking Mertens’ restoration since 1840, and the immediate and far-reaching impact of Kugler and Schnaase’s precocious surveys – they were reprinted, reworked, and translated well into the twentieth century – was extraordinary in an incipient academic discipline in which scholars strove to build on the achievements of their predecessors.

Thus Wilhelm Lübke, offering his own comprehensive survey in 1860, credited Kugler and Schnaase for opening the art historical door and charting paths to follow.118 Already in the 1850s and 1860s, the art historical landscape, to borrow Kugler’s metaphor, had been significantly tamed. The wealth of accumulating information – Lübke suggested a comparison between the first and third editions of Kugler119 – as well as the increasing specificity of issues to address led not only to the refinement of the broad survey, but also more circumscribed sub-narratives of subject, time, place, medium, or type, these developmental mini-narratives operating under the umbrella of the overarching and understood art historical narrative.120 In these works Aachen, its import firmly established in the 1840s, flourished, the issues of the original chapel, its origins and its impact answered with intensifying specificity. Indeed, the building continued to flourish in scholarship into the twentieth century – and to the present – these familiar issues discussed with increasing focus and complexity.121

119 Lübke, Grundriss, vi.
121 Needless to say, the literature on Aachen, its sources, and its influence is immense. For essential bibliography, see especially Faymonville, Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Aachen,1-58; Kubach and Verbeek, I: 1-13; Grimme, 371-382; Shaffer, ‘Recreating the Past’, 301-327; Untermann, 163-64; and Matthias Untermann, ‘Karolingische Architektur als Vorbild’, in 799: Kunst und Kultur der Karolingerzeit, 172-73.
As the Carolingian chapel was being reconstructed on paper in increasing detail by scholars, the actual chapel came to acquire an overwhelming gloss of imagined medieval and imperial splendour through the work done to it under the auspices of the Karlsverein, through whom the official story of the restoration was delivered to an audience in published form.\(^\text{122}\) The well-known narrative of the intentional transformation of the building from a structure physically embodying aspects of its thousand years of existence into the magnificent monument on display today has been recounted a number of times, for a variety of reasons.\(^\text{123}\) This protracted restoration began with the Gothic choir, and then moved on to the chapels surrounding the Carolingian core. By the 1860s, work on the octagon’s exterior, which was to include the destruction of the upper reaches of the extant west tower in favour of recreating its thirteenth-century predecessor, was underway. The interior decoration of the cherished octagon, debated since the 1840s, began in the 1870s, the Baroque decoration removed and replaced with glittering mosaics as well as, in the early twentieth century, marble revetment. Despite relentless criticism of the work as historically inaccurate, calls for scholarly intervention fell on deaf ears, for they challenged the formidable force of the desires of the prominent Aachen citizenry, the church, and the monarchy, all of whom were becoming caught up in a more pointedly united German vision – one that no doubt was seen as playing itself out with the establishment of the German Empire in 1871.\(^\text{124}\) The completion of the Karlsverein’s restoration, which had been spurred in

\(^\text{122}\) The centrality of the group in the composition of the narrative underscores their fundamental attempt to control the story, and thus the chapel. In addition to Jungbluth, see Bericht des Vorstandes des Karlsvereins zur Restauration des Aachener Münsters unter dem Allerhöchsten Protectorate Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs, Aachen, 1894, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1904, 1909, 1914; Karlsverein zur Restauration des Aachener Münsters (unter dem Allerhöchsten Protectorate Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs), Aachen, 1893; Karlsverein zur Wiederherstellung des Aachener Münsters, Aachen, 1901.

\(^\text{123}\) For general accounts of the restoration, see: Faymonville, Der Dom zu Aachen, 399 ff; Grimme, 335-351; and Belting. Placing his general restoration account within contemporary nationalistic and religious contexts and anchoring his discussion in the issues of Denkmalpflege, Belting highlighted the scholarly problem of restoration and conservation. Others have discussed the restoration work within the contexts of particular architects and individuals involved in the project. See Schild: 127-154; Herbert Philipp Schmitz, Robert Cremer. Erbauer der Technischen Hochschule und Restaurator des Münsters zu Aachen, Aachen: Aachener Geschichtsverein, 1969, 79-103; Schild, ‘Die Baumeister am Aachener Dom’, Karlsverein zur Wiederherstellung des Aachener Domes. Bericht, August 1983; and Lepper. I discussed Aachen’s restoration as a ‘copy’ of the chapel in my dissertation. Shaffer, ‘Chapter One. Constructing a Common Past’, in ‘Recreating the Past’.

\(^\text{124}\) For an early published critique, see M. Debey, Die Münsterkirche zu Aachen und ihre Wiederherstellung, Aachen, 1851. For an early example of the citizens of Aachen expressing concern, see Kölnner Domblatt, No. 79, August 31, 1851. They pleaded with the Karlsverein to meet them on the neutral ground of scientific research to reconcile the issues, and registered their complaint as well in a letter to the archbishop of Cologne, in which they stated that they feared that an historically accurate restoration was not being carried out, as in no way had an attempt been made to ascertain carefully the original disposition of the chapel. They were not well received. Kölnner Domblatt, No. 80, October 5, 1851. See also Bock, Das Liebfrauen-Münster zu Aachen. This is but one of Bock’s many publications against the restoration. Given the restorers’ passion for their project, and public enthusiasm for the work, it is not surprising that pleas for intervention fell on deaf ears. Indeed, it was no doubt difficult for critics to
part as a response to war with the column reinsertion, coincided poignantly with the outbreak of World War I. For the Karlsverein, and Aachen Domäneimaster Josef Buchkremer, this was portentous: once again, the chapel was seen against the backdrop of highly charged contemporary events – this time as a thoroughly German monument; a vital and official symbol of national identity – with Buchkremer perceiving ominous parallels between the Napoleonic era and the impending conflict with the French.\textsuperscript{125}

The enormous amount of work on the chapel from the mid-nineteenth century through the early decades of the twentieth century reflects the changing motivations and transforming attitudes among those involved, as the project came to be embraced more and more as a pointedly German national task and the embodiment of an integrated and undisputed nationalism; it is clear why Cremer, after the column reinsertion, was more or less shut out of the chapel project.\textsuperscript{126} Dispassionate repair and preservation would not suffice; actually constructing Aachen – recreating the medieval chapel, often through the addition of architectural fabric and decoration – became a way for the restorers to assert their transforming image in an unstable present and unknowable future. Indeed, the building that emerged – and that remains largely intact today – is as heterogeneous in structure and meaning as its dilapidated early-nineteenth-century predecessor.

The push for Aachen’s restoration in the 1840s – on paper and in actuality – reveals something of the complex, intertwined contexts of which the building was seen as a part, and the accompanying images of the chapel – multifarious, changeable, coexisting – that were current in these various and entangled arenas. These images of Aachen – and others as well – echo today in scholarship as well as in the building itself. The chapel, whether viewed on paper or in person, is just as multifaceted today, its complex life, or lives, ongoing. Certainly Aachen – whether through the unending preservation of the building’s historic fabric, its perennial fascination for scholars, its privileged status in world cultural history as a UNESCO

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{125} Bericht des Vorstandes des Karlsvereins zur Restauration des Aachener Münsters, 1914, 8-9.
\textsuperscript{126} Schild, Die Bruder Cremer, 144. In an fascinating twist, Cremer’s son, Robert, followed in his father’s professional footsteps, and, after attending school in Berlin and holding a number of posts in the Rhineland, he became Bauinspektor of the Aachen area in 1862 and held the position until his death in 1882. Ably trained in a number of historical styles, Robert Cremer got along with the Karlsverein, and Jungbluth in particular. The work on the chapel done under his tenure would take on a very different feel than the project and proposed projects of his father. Schmitz, Robert Cremer.
\end{flushright}
World Heritage,\textsuperscript{127} or its understood role as an historical touchstone for the ‘New Europe’ – remains a work in progress on any number of intersecting fronts.

\textbf{Jenny H. Shaffer} is an architectural historian whose work has centred on issues of context and meaning in Carolingian and Ottonian buildings, with a particular interest in the broader historiographic, methodological and theoretical issues of art historical paradigms of origin and development. She currently is Adjunct Associate Professor of Art History in the McGhee Division of New York University.

jshaffer@nyc.rr.com

\textsuperscript{127} The 1978 application for inclusion in the UNESCO list reads like a page from Kugler. See: http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/003.pdf