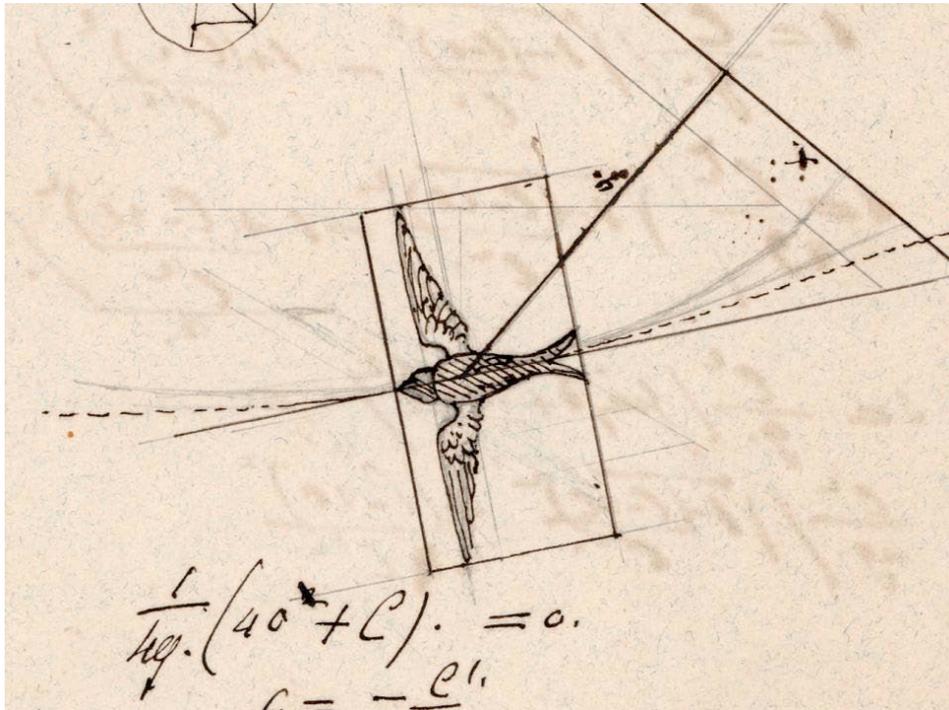


Curves of Motion
On Mathematics in Gottfried Semper's Aesthetic of Form

Conférence, 24 mai 2018, 12h00 – 13h00, ANT salle 2024



The architect Gottfried Semper (1803 Hamburg – 1879 Rome) is an exceptional phenomenon. His buildings include key works of architecture of the 19th century, but he is also one of the most original and profound architecture theorists. The extension of an architectural theory to a general theory of material culture, as well as its interpretation with the inclusion of further disciplines (archaeology, art history and general history, linguistics, evolutionary biology, ethnology/anthropology, mathematics) contributes significantly to the fascination he exerts up until today. The focal point of the presentation is mathematics, a discipline rarely dealt with by Semper research.

Its starting point is Semper's studies in Göttingen, which preceded his training as an architect. Through his teacher Bernhard Friedrich Thibaut, Semper came into contact with the school of thought of Johann Friedrich Herbart. Herbart's linking of geometric methods with perception phenomena was in many ways reflected in Semper's theoretical work. The most prominent case is the publication *Ueber die bleiernen Schleudergeschosse der Alten und über zweckmässige Gestaltung der Wurfkörper im Allgemeinen. Ein Versuch die dynamische Entstehung gewisser Formen in der Natur und in der Kunst nachzuweisen* (*On the leaden Projectiles of the Ancients and the purpose-driven Formation of Launched Bodies in general: An Attempt to derive the dynamic Genesis of certain Forms in Nature and in Art*) composed largely during exile in London (1850 – 55), but not published until 1859.

The presentation reconstructs the development history of the work in the context of contemporary debates about the curvature of ancient temples. This reconstruction allows a new view of Semper's attempt to make fundamental statements about the aesthetics of form and perception with the help of a physical-mathematical case study.

Since 2011 Sonja Hildebrand has been a professor of *History of Modern Architecture* at the *Accademia di architettura, Università della Svizzera italiana* and since 2017 also vice-dean for research. She studied art history, classical archaeology and journalism in Munich and Berlin. In 1997 she obtained a doctorate at TU Munich with a dissertation about the architect Egon Eiermann and in 2008 she habilitated there.

After the dissertation, research projects at TU Munich and Bamberg University. 2001-2010 research associate at Institute gta, ETH Zurich, 2010 deputy professorship. Alongside this, various lectureships at TU Munich, Bamberg and Zurich Universities and Università della Svizzera italiana. Curator of exhibitions, including about Gottfried Semper, Haefeli Moser Steiger and Karl Moser at the Museum für Gestaltung Zürich and Kunsthau Zürich.

Current research projects focus on the theoretical work of Gottfried Semper. Many publications about architectural history and theory, as well as urban development and planning history of the 19th to 21st centuries. Recent publications: *Architettura e saperi / Architecture and Knowledge* (2018 ed. with Daniela Mondini and Roberta Grignolo); *Form-Finding, Form-Shaping, Designing Architecture: Experimental, Aesthetic and Social Approaches to Form in Recent and Postwar Architecture* (2015, ed. with Elisabeth Bergmann); *Villa Garbald. Gottfried Semper – Miller & Maranta* (2015, ed.); *Kunst. Bau. Zeit. Das Zürcher Universitätsgebäude von Karl Moser, 1914–2014* (2014, ed. with Stanislaus von Moos).