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**Authenticity, Paradox and Reflection**

**Aspects of the Theorisation of Ruins by the Use of the Example of the Moselle Position**

*This paper examines the intersection of fortification architecture and ruin theory through the lenses of authenticity, paradox, and reflection. Fortification ruins, as remnants of military architecture, embody a transformation over time, resulting from abandonment and decay. The Moselle Position, a series of fortifications built by the German Empire, serves as a case study, illustrating how these structures have transitioned from functional military installations to modern ruins. The concept of authenticity is explored not as a claim to originality but as a reflection of individual encounters with ruins, highlighting the emotional connections that arise during exploration. The paradox of restored versus open ruins is discussed, emphasising the tension between the spectacle of restoration and the authentic experience of decay. Finally, reflection is positioned as a critical tool for understanding the historical significance of ruins, linking them to broader narratives and historic contexts. Through this analysis, the paper contributes to a nuanced understanding of ruins as complex entities that provoke both aesthetic appreciation and critical inquiry.*

**Introduction**

Using fortification architecture as an example, this paper explores three aspects of ruin theory: authenticity, paradox and reflection. Ruins, or the remains of buildings, are the outcome of a transformation of architecture over time. It is a change under the impact of (natural) forces after the architecture has lost its principal function, maintenance has ceased, and the building has been finally abandoned. In this context, fortification architecture can be understood as a disappearing category of architecture. In contrast to other types of architecture, the purpose of fortifications is to enable survival under conditions of war or to carry out actions of war on the basis of sheltered spaces. The disappearance of fortification architecture is not due to the fact that the danger of war has been permanently eliminated, but because the static and permanent fortification of places has lost its military value due to changed conditions and techniques of warfare. This means that fortifications are no longer an essential part of applied architecture, as was the case, for example, in Europe until the Second World War and to some extent until the end of the Cold War. Today, we encounter fortifications from various periods as ruins and stripped of their military function. An example of this is the so-called Moselle Position, which was built by the German Empire around 1900 in Lorraine as a border fortification against France. To this end, a series of *Festen* or group fortifications were built around the cities of Thionville (in German: Diedenhofen) and Metz. The *Feste* is a type of fortification in which individual forts, casemates and bunkers are grouped together within a secured perimeter. Today, the fortifications of the former Moselle Position form a ramified network of ruins. These structures are of modern origin. They are massive and solid, thanks to the use of stone, concrete and steel in their construction. Their appearance is still striking in keeping with their former military purpose. In this way, they do not conform to the image of the classical ruin.

At this point, however, the concept of authenticity is not assigned to a postulate of originality. Rather, on the one hand, it constitutes an aspect of the discourse on the modern ruin in its assertion against traditional

images of ruins. On the other hand, authenticity is concerned with the qualities of individual relationships to ruins, which differ in momentary encounters. Qualities define relationships with ruins, whereby the process of ruination has a temporal dimension in which the stage of decay of the building and the status of the ruin change. Moreover, authenticity is at the crossroads with the paradox that arises in the encounter with ruins when we are exposed to their past, present and future. This paradox is particularly evident in the case of the restoration of ruins in regard to the contradiction of the function of what has been restored. Thus, the restoration of the buildings and the reconstruction of parts of the fortifications of the Moselle Position only create the impression of an original, apparently intact fortress, while the simulation of military-architectural functions subsequently becomes a tourist event. But how does the spectacle lend itself to reflection? The analysis follows the argument that the spectacle is not particularly suited to establishing monuments in the sense of objects that animate our reflexive capacities. In their presence, the ruins of the Moselle Position are themselves representative of their entanglements, for example with the militant nationalism of the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe, while, today, these issues become the subject of fields of study such as historiography. This analysis will show how the ruin itself recedes into the background in the examination of these entanglements. Instead, the building is recontextualised as ›original‹ entity and its effects are theoretically reconstructed.

**Authenticity: authority and quality**

The ruins of the Moselle Position are part of the spectrum of the epochal legacy of modernity, which can be understood as the result of accelerated processes of transformation and accumulation, while geopolitical and military-technical changes have been causal in relation to the relics of the Moselle Position. In the academic view of ruins, however, there is a tendency to distinguish between modern and classical ruins in terms of their appearance,[1] with this distinction being based on the contrast between »abandonment« or non-maintenance and »ruination« as an ongoing process of decay.[2] In fact, modernity, by multiplying its legacies, has produced multifaceted forms of ruins. But how are the former fortifications of the Moselle Position characterised as ruins, and how can they be discussed as such? The fortifications were built massively, including through the extensive use of concrete and steel. They were designed and built to withstand destruction under the impact of attacking forces. Their condition is similar to that of other bunker buildings, whose demolition and removal is still difficult or very costly,[3] while their external erosion is a barely perceptible process (Fig. 1.). The way in which modern buildings decay is then used as a point of reference in the discussion of whether they are at all suitable as ruins – in the sense of the notion of a classical ruin.

In Andreas Huyssen's remarks on the »authenticity of ruins«, for example, this question tends to be answered in the negative. Instead, the ruins of ancient buildings are seen as models of a genuine ruin imagination. Accordingly, the temporal dimension – the slow decay over centuries – as well as their

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[1]   Wells 2018, 16.
[2]   Kushinski 2016, 4.
[3]   A prominent example is the monumental ruins of World War II-era concrete block houses and anti-aircraft towers in Berlin, Hamburg or Vienna.

materiality – the weathered stone – make them »authentic ruins«. In contrast, there is the temporal dimension on the one hand, and the materiality of modernity on the other hand: The first concerns the ›shortening of time‹ through »the sudden destruction caused by human intervention«[4] as well as the continuous reworking of the built landscape according to concepts of its commodification. The second refers to the qualities of the »modernist architecture, as the building materials of concrete, steel, and glass do not erode or decay in the way that stone does. They refuse the return of culture to nature which was still so central to Simmel.«[5] What makes the ancient ruins classical or authentic is their ›rediscovery‹ at the beginning of the Enlightenment, which found expression in an incipient reflexive and artistic engagement with the ruins. Thus, according to Huyssen, it was Giovanni Battista Piranesi who, with his depictions of ancient ruins (Fig. 2.) and monumental dungeons (the *carceri*), created an imagination of ruins that can be accepted as historically authentic, but precisely because they are not naturalistic representations but artistic exaggerations, and thus, in consideration of Theodor Adorno's *tour de force* paradigm, can claim authenticity.[6] Huyssen rightly recognises in authenticity a »carrier of authority«.[7] Nevertheless, authority loses its justification when it becomes permanently dominant for a concept, while disregarding or excluding essential aspects. This is also the case when it is necessary to recognise that the emergence of classical ruins is due not only to decay, which is an ongoing process over time, but also to recurrent massive human intervention. Throughout the ages, ancient buildings had been partially or completely demolished in order to obtain building materials, as well as metals, materials, and furnishings were stolen for reuse, effectively leaving the buildings in a state of ruin.[8] In a similar way, modern buildings have been turned into ruins, such as the Austrian fortifications built between the late 19th century and the First World War on what was then the border areas between Austria and Italy. Their state of ruin is not primarily the result of hostile action against the fortifications during the First World War. After the war, the border areas and the fortifications fell to Italy, and in the 1930s the fortifications were blasted and demolished in order to recover the steel elements and parts that had been used in their construction. In this way, Fascist Italy sought to satisfy its demand for steel, which it desperately needed, among other things, to maintain its colonial war of conquest against Abyssinia – today's Ethiopia. This led to the massive destruction of many of the fortifications. However, in today's encounter with the remains of the fortifications, the aesthetic experience of the ruin is equally evident in the remains of both the stone (Fig. 3) and concrete (Fig. 4) fortifications of this period and region.

German philosopher Georg Simmel, in turn, has formulated the appeal of ruins in terms of the fact that the impact of nature regains sovereignty over the man-made structure, which contrasts with the aesthetic devaluation of the ruin through human destruction.[9] In Simmel, the special right of erosion, weathering, and overgrowth in terms of aesthetic significance also relates to the ancient ruin. If it is then argued that

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[4]  Huyssen 2006, 232. »[I]n den Katastrophen des 20. Jahrhunderts sind Monumente des langsamen Verfalls durch Zeit und Natur solchen der plötzlichen Zerstörung durch menschliches Einwirken gewichen.«
[5]  Huyssen 2010, 27.
[6]  Huyssen 2010, 22–23.
[7]  Huyssen 2010, 23.
[8]  Günther 2010, 72.
[9]  Simmel 1919, 125–133.

modern architecture cannot become a ›real‹ ruin because of the way it is built and the materials used, which supposedly make it impossible for the building to decay back into nature, then this argument proves inconclusive. Even buildings made of potentially decaying materials do not simply crumble to dust, but nature covers or penetrates the structures. This phenomenon can also be observed in the fortifications of the Moselle Position, both in the stone and in the concrete parts of the buildings. The characteristics of the material and the exposure of the building parts to the elements create different qualities of vegetation and overgrowth. From the outside, many of the structures appear only slightly dilapidated, but they are densely overgrown with shrubs and foliage, making it difficult or impossible to approach the fortifications, especially in the period from spring to autumn (Fig. 5). Mosses, lichens and ferns cover the masonry and concrete walls, which in turn are inhabited by animals that use them as source of food and shelter. Moreover, it is precisely the material permanence of the ruins that allows nature to take long-lasting possession of them. In the state of ruin, the relationship of the building to its environment is newly or differently constituted. In terms of their habitability as a specific category of architecture, the fortifications have been removed from the context of their maintenance. For the most part, they have been disengaged from any human use at all. In many places, they have been stripped of the infrastructures that make them habitable and usable, and abandoned to further decay. They are now primarily subject to the influence of nature rather than human use.

Regardless of any epochal classification of ruins or the need to give them an aesthetic preference, abandonment, destructive human intervention, and the effects of nature are all factors in the ruination process and are jointly responsible for the diverse appearance of ruins. We are constantly confronted with new and different forms of ruins. The ambivalence of the concept of authenticity is evident not only in the intention to distinguish between classical and modern ruins, but also because the evolution of ruins is a temporal phenomenon that implies change. When is a ruin authentic? Ruins are multiplicities in time. From this point of view, the authenticity of ruins cannot be clearly objectified. Every encounter with ruins is a momentary event, since ruins are practically left to time. In this sense, we understand authenticity rather as an attribute of the actual experience of ruins. Authenticity is therefore something that lies more in the emotional connection with ruins. The study of the appeal of ruins – to which the sense of authenticity can be added – is a recognised part of ruin theory. However, the appeal of the ruin can vary according to the point of view of individuals and groups, such as of the investing explorer,[10] the curious tourist,[11] or the conserving restorer.[12] From the point of view of the explorer, which is also the point of view of the author of this text, experiences of authenticity can arise from moment to moment in the autonomous exploration of the ruin, in which its dimensions become clear only gradually; in which the ruin and its elements are discovered and examined in stages of their material decay; in which ideas about the original functionality of the building and assumptions about the reasons for its abandonment are thereby formed. In this respect, the ruin must allow for first-hand experience and be open to extensive and insightful exploration (Fig. 6). The impression of non-authenticity, on the other hand, arises immediately with the observation that the

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10    Jansson 2018.

11    Cf. Donica 2018 and Jansson 2018.

12    Cf. Jones/Yarrow 2013.

ruin is not pristine and that one's own exploration is not an exclusive experience. This realisation is brought about, for example, by encountering the left-behinds of other visitors to the ruin, such as excrement, rubbish, graffiti or devices designed to make it easier or even impossible to walk through the ruin. In the encounter with other visitors to the ruin, authenticity as a quality in the relationship with the ruin is momentarily completely lost. Similarly, the study of photographs of a particular ruin, taken at different times, can reinforce the impression of inauthenticity if obvious man-made alterations and the removal of elements of the structure are noted. Authenticity, as a quality of the individual experience of a ruin, is thus continually replaced by non-authenticity in the awareness of the constant change of the ruin and the improbability that it will remain in a permanent unspoilt state. In relationships with ruins, what is accepted as authentic and what is not is constantly negotiated individually.

**Paradox: open ruin and restored ruin**
Andrè Jansson has coined the term »imaginative authenticity« to describe the sense of authenticity in the exploratory encounter with ruins: »[I]imaginative authenticity is reinforced if there are certain material clues that may trigger imagination and establish meaningful links between the site and the biography or identity of the explorer.«[13] The significance of the concept of authenticity is therefore not primarily in the claim to originality, but in the emotions evoked by the building that has undergone the transformation from architecture to ruin. The individual's sense of attraction is linked to the characteristics of the ruin. This situation is also a trigger for *Ruinenangst*, or ›ruin anxiety‹. By this I do not mean a fear of ruins because of the uncanny qualities the abandoned place might possess, but rather a concern for the ruin; for the permanence of an extraordinary place, unaffected by restoration, modernisation and intentions of exploitation. The concern for ruins is the expression of a longing in hoping for at least some places to continue to exist, detached from processes of re-functionalisation and commercialisation. Ruins that resist general accessibility and instead remain open to individual exploration are always ›endangered buildings‹ in terms of appropriation by these forces. In contrast to these ruins, which Jansson categorises as »open-ended«, he further distinguishes the »named ruin«.[14] According to this, the named ruin is already »a cultural icon and a machinery of historical knowledge«[15] as well as an object of massive dissemination in (social) media. It is preserved, controlled, and a tourist showpiece.

Because of their specificity, their structural permanence, their remoteness and their inaccessibility, the ruins of the Moselle Position have in many places resisted complete transformation into named ruins. However, in Thionville and Metz individual fortresses have been transformed into museums and tourist attractions. In both places, this has been achieved through restoration, and by repairing and reconstructing elements of the fortress machinery, such as gun turrets, ammunition stores, engine rooms, kitchens, sanitary facilities and first-aid stations, with the aim of giving the best possible impression of their function (Fig. 7). For this purpose, weapons, components and equipment from other fortresses of the Moselle Position are dismantled and reinstalled and reused in the respective show forts to complete the

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13    Jansson 2018, 227.

14    Jansson 2018, 220–221.

15    Jansson 2018, 220.

reconstruction. The restoration evokes a paradox in terms of the contradictory function of what is being restored. The restoration transforms the ruin into an ostensible originality, into a building that once had a specific purpose as a fortress, while this purpose has long since ceased to be relevant. The simulation of a military-architectural function actually becomes a tourist one. This apparent authentication of the ruin is achieved not only through restoration, but also through the demonstration of the functionality of elements of the fortress, up to and including the simulation of the firing of weapons systems.[16] Taken together, this may evoke ideas about the life and tasks of the soldiers who served in the fortress, but no claim to authenticity can be derived from it.

This paradox can be described by a reciprocal formula:
1. The restored ruin gives the appearance of what was once real, but as a spectacle. At the same time, the possibility of authenticity as a quality of the individual encounter with the ruin is lost.
2. In the open ruin, the actual is again given as decay. The ruin evokes ideas of past situations that can no longer equally be experienced or grasped.

These contradictions arise from the fact that »[a]ny ruin posits the problem of a double exposure to the past and the present.«[17] Although the ruin is actual, it is at the same time an overtly bearer of its past. The ruin, in its present state of decay, is always also ›beyond‹ or ›super‹: On the one hand, it is beyond in the sense of being a reference to the past. On the other hand, however, it is also a representative of its own future which is potentially defined by disappearance through demolition, exposure through restoration, or the return to architecture through reuse. Within the contradictions that are evident in both categories, open and restored ruins, it is equally possible to gain knowledge about the past. In the first case, by exploring the ruin and drawing conclusions on the spot as well as through further, external research. In the second case, through explanations. Even when encountering a restored fortress, explanations are necessary to gain insight, although the explanations are mainly focused on what has been reconstructed – the parts and elements of the fortress. The restoration of the fortress is primarily aimed at its impressive technical sophistication, rather than at discussing the history of the fortification. This fact is reflected in the intentions of its preservation and tourist marketing.

For example, the restoration of the former *Feste Obergentrigen* at Thionville and the provision of guided tours of the fortress is being carried out by an association consisting of private individuals. In a brief interview with a member of the association after a guided tour, it became clear that the individuals in the group were more interested in the technical than in the historical aspects of the fortress. This technical interest, combined with the craftsmanship skills of the members, is beneficial to the restoration of the fortress. In this context, the fortification is considered as a kind of heritage, but heritage does not mean in-depth historiography. As a result, the exhibition rooms of the fortress create a sense of closeness, but without the potential for reflection. This situation is created by the restoration itself, but also by the display of weapons, furnishings and memorabilia (Fig. 8). The simulation of a trench warfare scene from the First World War, even though the fortifications were never involved in this type of fighting and the front was

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16   Cf. https://le-fort-wagner.com/ (27.11.22).
17   Huyssen 2010, 20.

located some 80 kilometres to the west of Thionville, or the display of war relics from both World Wars, serve primarily to stimulate visitors. Frank Möller has discussed this phenomenon in the context of the museum treatment of German Westwall bunkers built under the rule of the Nazi regime. Accordingly, these forms of staging are unsuitable for a reflexive engagement, as they lack a critical distance to historical contexts.[18] With regard to military architecture, there may be an increased need for such an examination from the perspective of a critical understanding of history. Its role in militant politics or involvement in the exercise of power by totalitarian regimes gives military architecture an historical significance that is often enough treated as an unwelcome legacy and thus neglected or given as little weight as possible. Consistently, historical objects are staged in a way that prevents serious historic analysis and discussions. The ruin, as an object situated in time, represents historical contexts which, however, themselves remain invisible.[19]

In principle, the restored ruin has very similar properties. But on top of this, reconstruction and spectacle, and the excitement they potentially generate, form an additional overlay on these contexts. For critical reflection, however, it is necessary to distance oneself from the spectacle, indeed from the ruin itself. This is not an *a priori* fact, but due to the pattern of how we are able to gain knowledge of something in the light of experience.

**Reflection: collective and individual responsibility**

As a result, reflection brings about a change of focus in relation to the ruin. Firstly, it moves the focus beyond the point of claims to authenticity that might arise from an open exploration of the ruin. Reflection thus becomes a factor in overcoming the concern for the ruin by creating a distance between oneself and the immediately apparent qualities of the ruin. Secondly, reflection potentially circumvents the spectacle and its paradoxes by critically assessing and directing the virtue of restoration processes or the re-functionalisation of ruins. Thirdly, reflection is necessary in order to carry out meaningful historiographical work, not only on the fortification itself, but also on its wider contexts. Documenting historical fortifications means studying the typology, the building forms and the techniques used to construct and militarily equip the building. It highlights certain types, uses and forms of architecture that have now disappeared from the architectural canon. However, this study does not directly contribute to explaining the facts, circumstances and contexts of a fortification's existence. Instead, the encounter with the ruin must provide a starting point for questioning narratives. As Kate Wells has attempted to suggest in the case of Detroit, the allure of the modern ruin simultaneously offers an opportunity to deconstruct the hidden narratives of modernity and instead examine them as a state of fact. The ruin thus marks the starting point for the demystification of contexts through further historical research.[20] The ruin is thereby linked back to its origins as architecture, which makes the essential circumstances of the building's construction and decay intelligible.

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18   Möller 2008, 28–31.

19   Cf. Treinen 2013, 112.

20   Wells 2018, 24–27.

The historical significance of the Moselle Position lies in its connection to the conflicts that accompanied the formation of the European nation-state system in the 19th and 20th centuries. The founding of the German Empire in 1871 as a nationalising state contributed decisively to this dynamic. The construction of the Moselle Position took place at a historical crossroads for the German Empire, where statehood and nation-building coincided. The evolution of the state in the 17th century as a »a territorially-bounded political unit«[21] necessarily required fortified and protected borders. In the 19th century, the question of state-building merged with that of nation-building. Military architecture and fortifications, which had initially served to maintain the territorial integrity of a state as one of its organising principles, now entered into the context of nationalisation processes. The German Empire was founded as a nationalising state that could not yet claim historical self-evidence,[22] but first had to prove its stability as a state, for example in relation to historical territorial states such as France. The German Empire was the result of a political will that initially found expression in the consolidation of the state's territory, which took place through three wars - the so-called German Wars of Unification.[23] The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, which France had been forced to cede to Germany after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, completed the initial territorial consolidation of the Empire. From this moment on, the preservation of the territorial integrity – the maintenance of the idea and reality of the Empire as a territorial unit – continuously counterbalanced the far more problematic definition of the internal order of the nation, which at that time was primarily guaranteed by the policy of the strong state. The development of a national system of fortifications on the frontiers of the Empire served the state to protect its territorial integrity. The assertion of this integrity also ideally contributed to the internal consolidation of the nation-state and the process of national integration. While the characterisation of the nation still remained ambiguous, due to ethnic and social conflicts,[24] the will to protect the state, on the basis of common sacrifices by its people, formed an element that was to unite the people as a nation.[25]

However, states did not limit themselves to defensive strategies in order to preserve their own territorially bound nation by military means. In line with the military zeitgeist and political compliance, policies also included offensive options for fighting other nations on their territory. As Klaus Hildebrand has argued, the militarisation of politics after 1871 had a compensatory effect on the security needs of individual European states. This led to the blending of statecraft and the art of warfare, which meant that political action was increasingly influenced by military thinking.[26] In this context, also the significance and function of the Moselle Position becomes clear: The fortifications were not only intended to block and channel enemy troop movements in order to ensure an effective defence, but they were also to serve as strategic flank protection for a possible offensive army operation against France, as it was actually carried out in the initial

[21]  Longo 2018, 91.
[22]  Hildebrand 1995, 7. »Alles in allem waren die Bürden, die der Bismarckstaat von Anfang an zu schultern hatte, enorm; allein, sie gehörten nun einmal zu seiner Existenz […], mit der zum Ausgleich zu finden die Aufgabe der Staatskunst war. Ihr generell schwieriges Mandat wurde dadurch erschwert, daß das spät Erworbene, der Nationalstaat, noch keine historische Selbstverständlichkeit zu beanspruchen vermochte.«
[23]  Second Schleswig War (1864), Austro-Prussian War (1866), Franco-Prussian War (1870/71).
[24]  Lepsius 1990, 233–235.
[25]  Schieder 1992, 51.
[26]  Hildebrand, 2006, 24-25.

phase of the First World War. The presence of the ruins of the Moselle Position is therefore a testimony to the military-political mindset in the genesis of the European nation-state system before the First World War and the resulting conflicts.

Reflection re-establishes the links between the fortifications and these processes and provides insights into the original meaning of the Moselle Position in its historical context. From this point of view, the question arises as to the ability of the ruins of the Moselle Position to function as monuments, and how they inspire an examination of the patterns and consequences of the manifestation of the European state system – and the role that the buildings had played in it. The restored ruin is first and foremost a monument to the architectural and technical sophistication of the former fortress. It creates the illusion of its original function, even though it has long since lost its significance. The restored ruin is open to the public, albeit in a controlled way, but this also makes it suitable for testing interventions. According to the characteristics of the restored ruin, reflection can be understood as a collective responsibility. This means that the educational process must reach further and go beyond the former immediate function of the military architecture; from the fortress itself (which is documented, for example, by the restoration itself as well as by plans, models or photographs), to the wider frame of reference (the structure and strategic function of the Moselle Position) and finally to the historical context, which must be made intelligible through the intervention. Within this responsibility, there is a well-known spectrum of interventions such as the explanatory guided tour, the designed exhibition or artistic-reflexive impulses. In the individual exploration of the ruin, on the other hand, the sense of authenticity is a momentary quality in the relationship with the ruin as a result of a sensual experience. It is closely related to the way in which impressions of the ruin evoke ideas of the former structure and functionality of the building. Faced with the open ruin, reflection becomes an individual responsibility. In order to assume this responsibility, it is necessary to detach oneself from the aesthetic experience of the ruin not only by documenting (for example by photographing) the remains and traces of the building but also by contextualising them. The ruins of the Moselle Position occasionally contain overt references to the complex of nationalisation processes, in which they played a part. Some of the austere military buildings are adorned with ornamentation that refers, for example, to the need to make sacrifices in order to defend the state in the event of a military conflict and to fulfil one's duty as a people in order to consolidate the one's nation. One of the bunkers, built during the last phase of expansion of the Moselle Position during the First World War, is decorated with a striking embellishment that belongs to specific symbolics, calling upon devotion, unity, and decisiveness in the duty for the fatherland (Fig. 9). The heraldic figures refer to the imperial dynasty as national identification figure as well as to the houses of the ruling class. The sword and ceremonial baton symbolise the national military authority. The oak and laurel leaves are part of the generally comprehensible symbolic language of the German nation. Applied lines of text call upon ›loyalty‹ and demand the ›development of strength through unity‹. In other bunkers there are again indications of the strong identification of individual army units within the national army of the German Empire with their respective federal states (Fig. 10). The embellishments thus also testifies to the discrepancy between the nationalist ideal and the complexity of the integration processes that challenged the German Empire as a nationalising state. In the light of what

we have called reflection, the ruin itself offers a spectrum of clues: it is both a reference to historical realities and a carrier of information about the building's involvement in these events.

To conclude: Authenticity, paradox and reflection are aspects of the encounter with ruins. They constitute points of view from which a theory of ruins can be derived: Authenticity refers to the allure and the power of the ruin to produce appealing effects as a building beyond architecture. It is a quality when individual relationships with ruins are established. Paradox refers to the contradictions in dealing with the ruin as an object immersed in time. Reflection requires distancing oneself from the qualities of the ruin in order to allow for the reconstruction of the building's meaning in historical contexts and, through deeper insights, to circumvent the problems of (imaginative) authenticity and paradox.

**Figures**



Fig. 1 Thionville, fortress Obergentringen, 1899–1914, infantry casemate, photo 2018



Fig. 2 Giovanni Battista Piranesi: Views of Rome, The Aqueduct of Nero, 1775, Cleveland Museum of Art

Fig. 3 Folgaria, remains of the Austrian fortification Werk Serrada, 1911–1914, photo 2018



Fig. 4 Folgaria, remains of the Austrian fortification Zwischenwerk Sommo, 1911–1914, photo 2018

Fig. 5 Thionville, fortress Obergentringen, 1899–1914, bunker of the perimeter defence, photo 2022



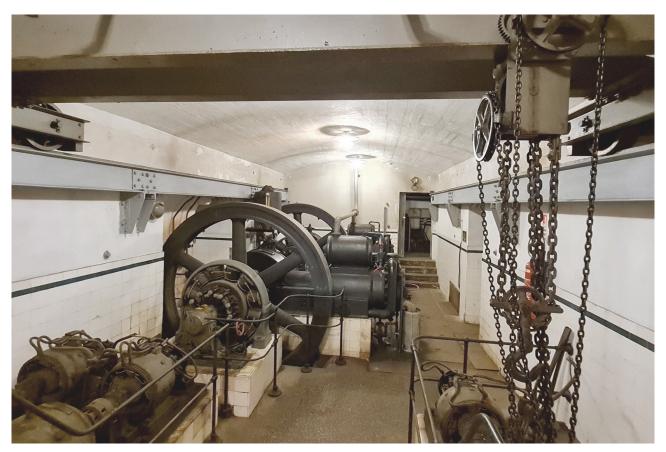Fig. 6 Metz, inside of an artillery casemate of the Moselle Position, photo 2019

Fig. 7 Thionville, fortress Obergentringen, 1899–1914, restored generator room with working engines, photo 2022



Fig. 8 Thionville, fortress Obergentringen, 1899–1914, weapons exhibition, photo 2022

Fig. 9 Thionville, ornament of Moselle Position bunker, ca. 1915, photo 2022


Fig. 10 Metz, inscription »God be with you my saxony« inside of an artillery casemate of the Moselle Position, photo 2019

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