

## Chapter Eight

# THE ICONIZATION OF A MONUMENT: THE MIQUA IN COLOGNE, BETWEEN INTERPRETATION AND IMAGINATION

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THE MUSEUM PROJECT MiQua combines the *in situ* presentation of archaeological monuments and objects with story-telling of two thousand years of history in the heart of the City of Cologne.<sup>1</sup> The conceptualization of the museum entails multi-perspective access to the site. On the one hand, the understanding of the place as a memorial site, with the three-dimensional remains of the architecture and buildings, the finds, their reconstruction, and the understanding of the development process of the urban structure and organism over the times; on the other hand, the understanding of the place as a site of memory (*lieu de mémoire*). People, images, and stories contribute to the iconization of the place, to it being a place of imagination. This requires a whole new approach to the interpretation and presentation of monuments.

### The Memorial Site

The future MiQua in Cologne is being built on a site that has played a significant role in the respective images of the ancient, medieval, and modern city for two thousand years. Archaeological monuments and fragments transmit this two-thousand-year history in a dense stratigraphy that is linked to rich historical source material. With the Roman Praetorium and the remains of the medieval Jewish quarter, some of Cologne's most important archaeological monuments are grouped on this site.<sup>2</sup> In connection

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<sup>1</sup> MiQua stands for "Museum in the Quarter." <https://www.dreso.com/de/en/projects/details/jewish-museum-miqua-cologne#:~:text=MiQua%20stands%20for%20Museum%20in,%C2%A9%20Wandel%20Lorch%20Architekten>.

<sup>2</sup> The basic historical and archaeological literature on the different phases of settlement is well researched with overarching works; for example, for the Roman period: Werner Eck, *Köln in*

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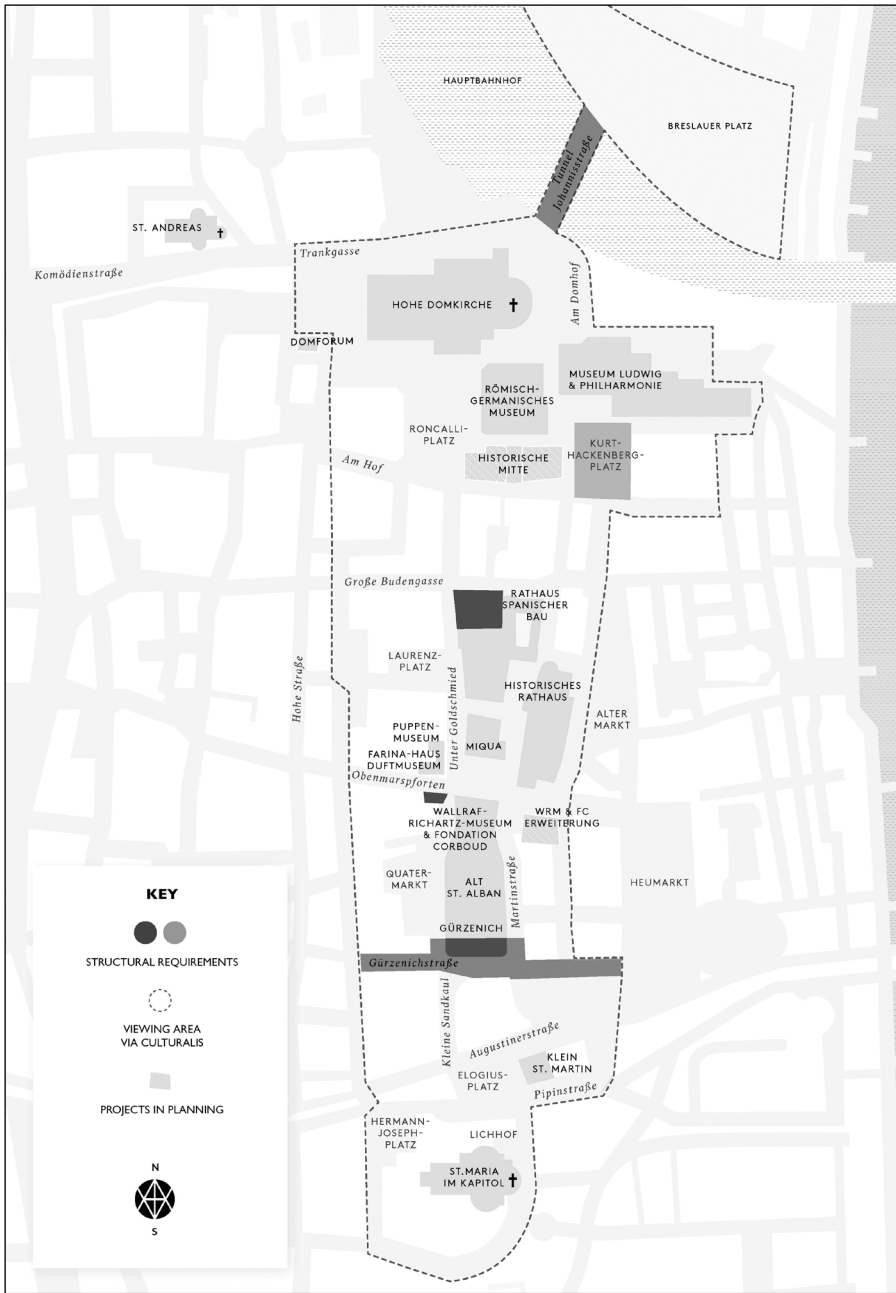


Figure 8.1. Map of the Via Culturalis in Cologne. Courtesy of MiQua: LVR-Jüdisches Museum.

with the urban development of their respective periods, they also stand for important institutions, such as the town hall, which was built in the middle of the Jewish quarter from the twelfth century onwards. The town hall consequently continues the tradition of the administrative seat on the site of the former palace of the Roman governor in the Middle Ages.

In the modern cityscape, these institutions blend into the immediate and wider neighbourhood and embody the modern idea of the *Via Culturalis*.<sup>3</sup> (See Fig. 8.1.) This refers to a cultural axis that runs north–south through the centre of Cologne. It begins in the north with the cathedral with its treasury and building lodge, the historic squares surrounding the cathedral, the Ludwig Museum, and the Roman-Germanic Museum, as well as the Philharmonic Hall. In this area on the southern Roncalliplatz, the idea of the Historic Centre will later find its place, with the extension of the Roman-Germanic Museum and the Archbishopric. To the south, the residential quarters of the historic old town and the flanking Alter Markt are joined by the town hall with the Spanish Building, the historic town hall with the tower and Renaissance dormer, as well as the Wallraf Richartz Museum & Fondation Corboud, MiQua, the Doll Museum, and the Farina House with the Fragrance Museum located on Rathausplatz. The next building complex, to the south, includes the church ruins of Alt St. Alban with the Gürzenich. The *Via Culturalis* finally ends south of Augustinerstraße with the church tower of Klein St. Martin and St. Maria im Kapitol. In conjunction with the underground development of the important archaeological structure of the Ubier Monument, it thus also precisely marks the perimeter of the Roman city, following the underground preserved course of the eastern Roman city fortifications and their southeast corner.

The museum project of MiQua. LVR-Jüdisches Museum in the Archaeological Quarter of Cologne, the centrepiece of the *Via Culturalis*, so to speak, has been in planning since the early 2000s.<sup>4</sup> The full museum name already reveals that a museum is being created

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*römischer Zeit*, Geschichte der Stadt Köln 1 (Cologne: Greven, 2004); Werner Eck, *Spurensuche: Juden im römischen Köln*, Beiträge zur rheinisch-jüdischen Geschichte 1 (Cologne: Gesellschaft zur Förderung eines Hauses und Museums der jüdischen Kultur, 2011); Felix F. Schäfer, *Praetoria: Paläste zum Wohnen und Verwalten in Köln und anderen römischen Provinzhauptstädten* (Mainz: Nünnerich-Asmus, 2014); Matthias Schmandt, *Judei, cives et incole: Studien zur jüdischen Geschichte Kölns im Mittelalter* (Hannover: Hahn, 2002); Zvi Asaria, ed., *Die Juden in Köln von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart* (Cologne: Bachern, 1959); on the history of excavations and the results of modern excavations: Katja Ullmann, "Südöstlicher Praetoriumsbezirk und jüdisches Gemeindezentrum in Köln: Römische, mittelalterliche und neuzeitliche Baubefunde," *Kölner Jahrbuch* 36 (2003): 309–406; Sven Schütte and Marianne Gechter, *Von der Ausgrabung zum Museum-Kölner Archäologie zwischen Rathaus und Praetorium: Ergebnisse und Materialien 2006–2012* (Cologne: Stadt Köln, 2012).

**3** The *Via Culturalis* is a phrase first coined by Oswald Mathias Ungers to describe an urban space that aims to make the layers and levels of time from two millennia of urban and cultural history visible and tangible in public space: *Via Culturalis Cologne: Stadt, Kultur, Geschichte. Ein Handbuch für den öffentlichen Raum* (Cologne: Stadt Köln, Die Oberbürgermeisterin, 2019).

**4** Thomas Otten and Christiane Twiehaus, *An Encounter with Two Millennia: The Updated Concept for MiQua. LVR-Jewish Museum in the Archaeological Quarter Cologne*, Beiträge zur rheinisch-jüdischen Geschichte 6 (Cologne: MiQua-Freunde, 2018).

here whose clear classification defies the usual norms. In addition, the site selected for the museum, the Rathausplatz in Cologne, was ordained by the location of the monuments described earlier in the urban space—monuments whose existence remained fixed in the city’s memory for centuries, and this, initially, independent of the archaeological uncovering of their fragments.

## Cologne’s Archaeological Heritage

Given that the urban space as an overall organism is also defined to a large extent by the staging of the monuments, a multi-layered preservation of this urban archaeological ensemble is of the utmost importance. The question of how to deal with these monuments arose immediately during the first large-scale excavations by Otto Doppelfeld in the 1950s.<sup>5</sup> The governor’s palace of the Lower Germanic province, one of the most important public buildings of the ancient city, is located in this area along with the multi-phase remains of the Praetorium (see Fig. 8.2). The findings related to the last, Late Antique building phase were remarkably coherent and the extent of the surviving foundations significant, leading to an initial decision by the City of Cologne towards the end of the 1950s to make the archaeological monument permanently accessible. From then on, a new cultural institution of Cologne was permanently anchored with the Praetorium under the Spanish Building of the City Hall, accessible from a small side entrance in the Budengasse.<sup>6</sup>

While the Roman heritage of the city was and is always present in the broad consciousness of Cologne’s population, the extent to which monuments of the medieval Jewish quarter and the Christian goldsmiths’ quarter of the Middle Ages were intact was a surprise when they were uncovered by Otto Doppelfeld. On the other hand, they have always had a formative influence on the cityscape, because the structure of the quarter can still be seen in today’s cityscape as well as in the names of the surrounding streets: Judengasse, Obenmarspforten and Unter Goldschmied.

The Praetorium under the Spanish Building of the City Hall served for over sixty years as a test case, so to speak, for the modern concept of MiQua: a museum space that, with the help of archaeological artefacts, allows broad public access to the past and brings it to the attention of civil society and visitors to the city. The Praetorium was given an almost iconic role through its presentation and staging, bolstered by the impressive architecture of the Spanish Building erected as a protective building. A filigree, double-arched stretched ceiling, which rests on a few mighty pillars, grants the viewer extensive perspectives and insights.<sup>7</sup> Presented with minimal teaching aids,

**5** Otto Doppelfeld, “Die Ausgrabungen im Kölner Judenviertel,” in *Die Juden in Köln von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Zvi Asaria (Cologne: Bachern, 1959), 71–145.

**6** The excavations were the occasion for one of the most successful popular books on archaeology in Germany: Rudolf Pörtner, *Mit dem Fahrstuhl in die Römerzeit: Städte und Stätten deutscher Frühgeschichte* (Berlin: Deutsche Buch-Gemeinschaft, 1961).

**7** During the years 1954 to 1956, head architect (the so-called “Oberbaurat”) Theodor Teichen and director of city building, Franz Löwenstein built the Spanish Building. See Peter Fuchs, *Das Rathaus*



Figure 8.2. The archaeological remains of the Roman Praetorium in Cologne.  
Courtesy of MiQua. LVR-Jüdisches Museum.

almost no textual description nor interpretation, the monument's impact can effectively assert itself in this ambience.

Only the mighty foundations of the final, Late Antique construction phase of the governor's palace have been preserved. To deduce the original architecture from these foundations requires a considerable three-dimensional imagination on the part of the viewer. Pictures and models can to a certain extent support this mental leap. The fragmentation of the monuments thus equally challenges the viewers as well as those constructing the narrative, the cultural creators, to an enormous degree, for a use of history by cultural tourists that works with different perspectives of the past.<sup>8</sup> From an epistemological point of view, this construction of the narrative is the rediscovery of a culture, through which we become aware that the narrative is based on what more or less accidentally went into the ground and got preserved there. In this respect, this also only reflects a section and a selection of the original "living culture."<sup>9</sup>

zu Köln. *Geschichte, Gebäude, Gestalten* (Cologne: Greven, 1994), 151.

<sup>8</sup> Valentin Groebner, "Touristischer Geschichtsgebrauch: Über einige Merkmale neuer Vergangenheiten im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert," *Historische Zeitschrift* 296, no. 2 (2013): 408–28.

<sup>9</sup> Hans Jürgen Eggers, *Einführung in die Vorgeschichte* (Munich: Piper, 1959), 255–70.

## The Urban Context

In 2010, the City of Cologne decided to expand this ensemble of monuments and combine it with the monuments underneath the Rathausplatz to create a museum complex. This included the construction of a new museum building on the Rathausplatz. The framework for this was provided by the Regionale 2010, a structural funding program of the government that also enabled large-scale urban development projects in the field of cultural heritage.<sup>10</sup> The modern excavations of the early 2000s in preparation for the museum building, mainly from 2007 onwards, raised awareness of the quality of the medieval and modern findings even more. Complex urban archaeological findings reveal the entire two-thousand-year history of the city in microcosm, including the astonishing, equally long-lasting continuity of the city's administrative centre.

The decision to build the museum was essentially motivated by two aspirations: one, the desire for a complete valorization of the monuments, and two, the idea of an urban reorganization of this central location. The reasons for the first motive have already been outlined with the presentation of the Via Culturalis. The archaeological objects and monuments also have an impact in their fragmented state, but they need a suitable framework in order to be understood in their interplay with the more recent surrounding buildings and urban institutions: not only as museum exhibits, but also as part of a historically developed urban organism.

Without such a framework and appropriate mediation, the monuments would only be accessible to the initiated, they would barely be decipherable beyond their aesthetic and haptic appearance. The presentation of fragmented archaeological monuments in an urban context and public space is not always a success—neither in Cologne than elsewhere—as many examples show. If the necessary framework is missing, they remain foreign bodies and are hardly noticed any more.<sup>11</sup> In the worst cases, they are exposed to neglect, which ultimately robs them of their aesthetic impact. The social reception of monuments left uncontextualized in this way—their historical classification, their function in the cityscape—remains random and subjective.<sup>12</sup> The situation in

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**10** Jens Grisar, ed, *Dokumentation der Regionale 2010 in der Region Köln-Bonn* (Cologne: Regionale 2010 Agentur, 2012).

**11** Martin Müller, Thomas Otten, Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt, eds., *Schutzbauten und Rekonstruktionen in der Archäologie: Von der Ausgrabung zur Präsentation*, Xantener Berichte 19 (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2011) with numerous examples of a national and international perspective.

**12** In the years between 2014 and 2018, a series of public colloquia was dedicated to this topic organized by the Working Group on Archaeological Monuments in the Rhineland: Archaeological Memory of the Cities, with the support of the Fritz Thyssen Foundation in Cologne. The colloquia essentially followed two lines, current topics dedicated to the practical preservation of monuments and the discussion of systematically oriented questions: Henner von Hesberg, Juergen Kunow, Thomas Otten, eds., *Die Konstruktion von Gedächtnis: Zu einer Standortbestimmung von Archäologie in der Stadt*, Schriftenreihe des Arbeitskreises Bodendenkmäler der Fritz Thyssen Stiftung 1 (Worms, 2016); *Denkmal—Erinnerung—Wertstiftung: Aspekte der Validierung im europäischen Vergleich*, Schriftenreihe des Arbeitskreises Bodendenkmäler der Fritz Thyssen Stiftung 2 (Worms, 2017); *Mit der U-Bahn in die Vergangenheit: Erinnerungsorte im Massenverkehr*, Schriftenreihe des Arbeitskreises Bodendenkmäler der Fritz Thyssen Stiftung 3 (Worms 2019); *Bildmacht des*

Cologne shows a wide range of treatments (or the lack thereof), representing a special dialectic of the interaction of the city with its monuments: a mixture of well-thought-out modern concepts (an example of which would be the incorporation of the church ground plan of St. Kolumba into the modern museum architecture of the Kolumba Art Museum),<sup>13</sup> outdated concepts, and obvious neglect. The latter is evident, for example, by the fragments of Cologne's Roman city wall, which can be seen above ground at various points in the city in varying degrees of preservation and in various states of conservation.<sup>14</sup> In the case of the MiQua, the city decided to go down the path of an overarching museum concept and, as a guideline for the architecture of the museum building, to foreground its functions of protection and preservation, presentation and mediation of the monuments.

The newly emerging MiQua museum architecture naturally also impinges on aspects of urban planning, especially in an area that is predominantly characterized by public buildings, museums, sacred buildings, and other institutions with a long tradition. In this respect, there were and are different expectations of this space. There have also been communal sensitivities (triggered, for example, by ongoing difficulties with other large-scale building projects), which in part led to discussions about the project being controversial and gave voice to differing positions on how to deal with the urban space.<sup>15</sup> The idea that the already existing framework of cultural institutions could have effectively conditioned expectations proved to be too positivistic. It was the urban planning concept of the Via Culturalis which developed simultaneously with the museum project that inspired a particular approach to urban design and the integration of the museum.

The museum fits into this framework with its independent architectural language and appropriately sized dimensions. With the neighbouring buildings, the Spanish Building of the City Hall in the north, the Historical City Hall in the east, the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in the south, and the private building block of Farina in the west, MiQua develops the public space of the Rathausplatz into a well-scaled array of cultural institutions. The street, Unter Goldschmied, will remain a traffic axis in the future; the museum's western façade toward the street continues the building line of the pre-existing historical structure and buildings. The area in the south on Obenmarspforten Street

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*Denkmals: Ikonisierung und Erleben archäologischer Denkmäler im Stadtbild*, Schriftenreihe des Arbeitskreises Bodendenkmäler der Fritz Thyssen Stiftung 5 (Regensburg, 2021).

**13** Marc Steinmann, "Die Ausgrabung in Kolumba," in *Schutzbauten und Rekonstruktionen in der Archäologie: Von der Ausgrabung zur Präsentation*, Xantener Berichte 19, ed. Martin Müller, Thomas Otten, Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2011), 355–68.

**14** In 2017, an association was founded to preserve, care, and advocate for the Roman city wall, along with its fragments below and above ground. See: <http://roemermuer-koeln.de>; Carl Dietmar and Marcus Trier, *Mit der U-Bahn in die Römerzeit* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer, 2005), 34–38; Thomas Fischer and Marcus Trier, *Das römische Köln* (Cologne: Bachem, 2013), 121–47.

**15** Various initiatives against the museum project that arose in the course of the architectural competition and in the period thereafter also put forward urban planning arguments, such as the loss of one of Cologne's few squares, a cubature of the museum building that was perceived as too large, the shading of the town hall harbour and the associated limited usability of the forecourt for weddings, and much more.

will be closed for traffic in the future, to provide a generous space and meeting area between MiQua and Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud through the recessed museum façade. A heavily used pedestrian route flows in this area between the site of the old town towards the Rhine and the busy shopping streets of Hohe Straße and Schildergasse. The renaissance dormer of the town hall is given a further square-like framing, the special feature being that the museum building here takes up the historical building lines of the medieval to early modern quarter. This can be seen as a restoration of the disturbed city layout caused by war damage and subsequent demolition of the building fabric.<sup>16</sup> With regard to the function of the town hall square, it can be said that the museum building gives it the qualities it previously lacked: an address, appropriate scale, and prominence. The impact of the archaeological monuments through the museum presentation is evident here in the quality of the urban space and its use and design. The vitality of the surrounding urban organism, a lively urban life, and the ensuing economic opportunities are therefore fundamental conditions for the feasibility of this museum project.

Two further features of the architectural design ensure both the communication of the new building with its surroundings and its functionality. On the one hand, there is the museum's skin: open-pored natural stone and spolia veneers that visually quote the stone monuments of the past, which also link to the façades of neighbouring buildings, while at the same time allowing targeted views of the archaeological monuments from the outside. On the other hand, the hall-like museum building—by dispensing with a ground floor area—provides opportunities for a variety of visual cross-references between the archaeological level in the basement and the exhibition areas on the upper floor.

With the ongoing and long-term urban planning perspective of the Via Culturalis and as citizens can witness the building of the MiQua progress, an increasingly positive attitude has emerged towards the establishment of this new museum facility in Cologne.

## Staging the Museum

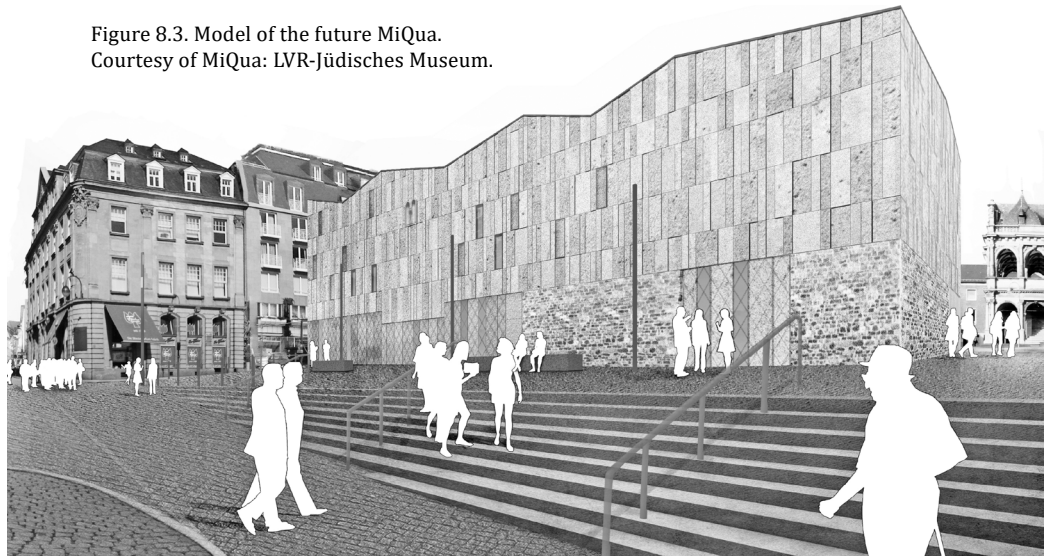
Due to the *in situ* preservation of the monuments, the conception of the interpretive framework of the permanent exhibition was already predetermined.<sup>17</sup> The tour opens up the entire subterranean area and is guided via visitor walkways that were fitted into the archaeological findings in a long work process. During the tour, visitors are oriented



<sup>16</sup> The decision not to rebuild the building structure in front of the town hall, which had been heavily destroyed during the war, but to demolish it and design it as an open square was a conscious urban planning decision in the 1950s: one could also say a conscious decision against repairing the architecture of the Prussian period in the Rhineland.

<sup>17</sup> Otten and Twiehaus, *Encounter*, 6–18.

Figure 8.3. Model of the future MiQua.  
 Courtesy of MiQua: LVR-Jüdisches Museum.



in the archaeological level and in relation to the ground plan of the city via models and plans. Finally, the highest priority of the museum as it has been conceived is to preserve the archaeological monuments as comprehensively as possible. All explanations, didactic contents and media are tailored to this purpose. This also applies to the presentation of the objects—the excavation finds—that can be shown without exception at their immediate sites of discovery and thus contextualized. The authenticity of the site and the perception of the monuments are thus always preserved, their impacts undiminished. Significant for the presentation of the original archaeological building structures and their experience by the visitors is the minimization of modern museum architecture. This is understood as a fitting framework for the archaeology, not as a competing, technical or artificial environment. (See Fig. 8.3.)

With this project, the archaeological work already in Cologne—the excavation of the cathedral, the exposed church foundations at Kolumba, the Ubier Monument and the Roman burial chamber in Weiden, to the west of Cologne—will enjoy a significant boost to their mission of protecting, preserving, and presenting the city’s archaeological heritage effectively and in an appropriate context.

### The Site of Memory

Viewers’ understanding of the museum with its monuments as a *lieu de mémoire*, as an authentic locus for the history of the city, requires the support of a narrative that visually presents people and their story through images, symbols, and objects. This narrative contributes to the iconization of the MiQua, to its function as a place of imagination. This means a whole new approach to the interpretation and presentation of the ensemble of monuments.

Three examples from how the future MiQua has been conceived will illustrate this. The monument of the Late Antique palace affects viewers through the massive physical bulk of its foundations and the rooms that are created in the underground part of the museum. In combination with three-dimensional analogue and digital models and reconstructions, onlookers will get an impression of the magnificence and impact of the ancient architecture, the built expression of Rome's political power on the Rhine. For this palace was the seat of Rome's governor in the Lower Germanic province.

Information on the construction history and furnishings of the palace, and on the typology and function of the Praetorium is provided in an accompanying exhibition. The real storytelling, however, consists of the stories of the governors and their officials who had a political impact over the four centuries of Roman presence on the Rhine.<sup>18</sup> A selection of them will be presented in a gallery of governors with their respective life stories and career stages before and after their time in Cologne, because then as now it was the people who shaped history. The intention is to contribute in this way to a better understanding of the history of the city of Cologne.

The medieval period will also be brought to life through a gallery of archbishops and mayors in their roles as rulers of the city. Selected examples of biographies of these personalities who were crucial in the history of the city show the balance of power in central to late medieval Cologne. In the early and central Middle Ages, the archbishop was initially the city ruler, while increasingly patrician and bourgeois powers later gained in importance. After the Battle of Worringen (1288), the archbishop played only a subordinate role in the city. His secular power was limited to individual privileges, such as "the Jewish regal"—an intertwining of the church and the Jewish community—which will be an important component of the exhibition around the medieval Jewish quarter. Among the citizens of Cologne, the established patrician families initially had power and influence. In the late Middle Ages, however, merchants and craftsmen with their civic associations, the so-called "Gaffeln" that emerged from the guilds, asserted themselves. The special effects of this part of the exhibition will be the visualization of the life stories of some of the political and social actors of this time—at the original site of their activities—thus history becomes directly tangible and comprehensible for the visitors. Because these individuals will be familiar to locals and visitors elsewhere in the city, in places, in names, in monuments, and in company and family histories—they will bring the past to life today.

Finally, another powerful part of the narrative revolves around those symbols and objects that have been lost to history. The autobiography of Luise Straus-Ernst exemplifies the impact of the loss of such symbolically charged objects. Straus-Ernst's biography is representative of the fates of many other Cologne Jews; she emigrated to France, was deported to Auschwitz in the last months of the war, and killed there. The first wife of the painter Max Ernst and an art historian, artist, journalist, and author, Straus-Ernst wrote her autobiography *Nomadengut* while in exile in France. In it, she describes four

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**18** Schäfer, *Praetoria: Paläste zum Wohnen und Verwalten*; Eck, *Köln in römischer Zeit*; Rudolf Haensch, *Capita provinciarum: Statthaltersitze und Provinzialverwaltung in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, *Kölner Forschungen* 3 (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1997), especially 705–60.

objects “that accompany me everywhere, that are symbols of a past that has remained alive and that create my own atmosphere in the places where I stay for a little while. I want to tell about these things.” Within the exhibition, these four lost objects are represented through her words in an empty space. The loss of the objects and their significance for Straus-Ernst at the time become associatively tangible for today’s museum visitors through her precise descriptions of them.

This chapter has highlighted the iconization of a monument charged with significance through its existence within the imaginative space between that which is concretely graspable and explicable, and what is lost or eludes concrete description. For the particular type of museum represented by MiQua, the associative component described last—the life of Luise Straus-Ernst—is perhaps the most resonant of the specific character of the museum and a new kind of museum experience: still a place of learning, but above all a place of memory and remembrance.

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