

INVENTING NEW HERITAGE

Reuse of second-hand components with co-authorship

Zhengwen Zhu

CO-AUTORIALITÀ, COMPONENTI DI SECONDA MANO, INVENTARE PATRIMONIO

Nella vita dei componenti edilizi di seconda mano, considerare la co-autorialità ci fa capire cosa vale la pena conservare per dare valore storico al loro riutilizzo. La co-autorialità spiega che il patrimonio non è più autorizzato da una singola certificazione degli architetti, ma è una creazione comune degli agenti collettivi coinvolti, una cultura materiale sull'eredità e la creazione dell'esperienza e dei ricordi collettivi dell'umanità. Preservare o mettere in discussione la co-autorialità esistente nel riutilizzo dei componenti significa rintracciare e scavare nelle vite passate e presenti dei componenti di seconda mano e ispirare il loro prossimo ciclo di vita. Questo articolo si concentra sulla connotazione della co-autorialità nel riutilizzo dei componenti di seconda mano, in particolare su come essa contribuisca a trasformare i rifiuti in un nuovo patrimonio. Attraverso tre casi, cerca di approfondire la situazione dei coautori, le caratteristiche sperimentali della co-autorialità e il modo di lavorare collaborativo di più autori nel riutilizzo di componenti di seconda mano. Poiché non rientrano nella giurisdizione delle leggi sul patrimonio autorizzato e sul diritto d'autore, il riutilizzo di componenti di seconda mano potrebbe ripensare la conservazione, la trasmissione e persino sfidare e mettere in discussione l'attribuzione dell'opera esistente. Rivela il dinamismo e la complessità, talvolta persino la vaghezza della co-autorialità, mentre le posizioni e i ruoli dei vari autori possono cambiare nel tempo. La partecipazione collettiva e la negoziazione di più autori fanno sì che il riutilizzo di componenti di seconda mano formi una rete sociale e culturale. Concentrandosi sulla co-autorialità, i componenti di seconda mano nel loro riutilizzo si reinventano come patrimoni.

CO-AUTHORSHIP, SECOND-HAND COMPONENTS, INVENT HERITAGE

In the survival of second-hand building components, valuing co-authorship reveals what is worth preserving to bring heritage value in their reuse. The co-authorship explains that the heritage is no longer authorized by a single certification from architects, but a co-creation of the relevant collective agents, a material culture about the inheritance and creation of collective human experience and memories. Preserving or challenging the existing co-authorship in the reuse of components means tracing and excavating the past and present lives of second-hand components, and inspiring their next life cycle. This paper focuses on the connotation of co-authorship in reusing the second-hand components, especially how it helps to transform the waste into a new heritage. Through three cases, it tries to elaborate on the situation of co-authors, experimental characteristics of the co-authorship, and the collaborative working way of multiple authors in the reuse of second-hand components. Since they are away from the jurisdiction of authorized heritage and copyright laws, second-hand components' reuse could rethink the preservation, transmission, and even challenge and question the existing authorship. It reveals the dynamic and complex, sometimes even vague and constructed in co-authorship, while the positions and roles of various authors may change over time. The collective participation and negotiation of multiple authors make the reuse of second-hand components form a social and cultural network. Through focusing on the co-authorship, the second-hand components invent themselves as heritages in their reuse.

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Although buildings have been constantly demolished, deconstructed, reconstructed, and adapted to changing needs since ancient times, it was not until the criticism of consumerism in the 20th century, the environmental crisis, and the rise of the circular economy that the reuse of building components gradually returned to the discussion. It is not a fantasy to regard second-hand components as heritage or to give them heritage value, although they often cannot escape the fate of being discarded, destroyed, and decayed today. On the one hand, "material reuse may fit into a broader understanding of what constitutes heritage, but it upends the field's traditional thinking about what to do with heritage" (Arlotta 2020). On the other hand, focus on the economic and environmental effects forces the field of heritage to address the complexity of building components reuse, and "new approaches are required to address the expanding scope of heritage and specific issues of buildings, materials and assemblies of the recent past" (Ross and Angel 2020). Both needs mean the heritage dimension of second-hand components is supposed to be considered fully. Therefore, what is it in the reuse of second-hand components that gives them heritage value and makes them a new heritage?

If heritage is considered as an ongoing cultural practice, then it is not a passive preservation of the past, but a creative interaction with the past. How to utilize the past and project it into the imagined future is the process of shaping second-hand components into heritage during their reuse. Imagine that when people are faced with a mottled but lovely window that is about to be removed from a wall, many pieces of beautiful but faded mosaic tiles on the floor, or several old wooden doors that are idle in the warehouse, would they be willing to reuse them? What attracts people to cherish old components again? How to continue and improve this treasured value in reuse? The answers to these questions actually all have to do with authorship on the second-hand components, which reflect the components' rich social biographies and complex experiences. When it comes to the reuse of second-hand components, the discussion about authorship is inevitable, as it not only refers to the ownership and copyright transfer of components, but also to the inheritance and change of their own identities. After all, any appropriation in cultural practice requires considering the role of different authors in conveying its meaning through inheritance, which undoubtedly involves a core discourse in heritage preservation.

Before the Renaissance, architecture was viewed as an anonymous craft, completed by the faceless members of artisan guilds through tradition and empiricism. It wasn't until Leon Battista Alberti's statement, "for it is no carpenter that I would have you compare to the greatest exponents of other disciplines: the carpenter is but an instrument in the hands of the architect" (Alberti 1988), that architects gradually acquired the status of author. This was essentially a re-empowerment of knowledge production, and distributes the significance of architecture on individual wisdom, rather than the social and collective processes it once was. Therefore, it's no surprise that Brunelleschi tried to assert his authorship and leadership in the completion of the dome of Florence Cathedral. The signature style authorship foregrounds a single author while intentionally or unintentionally ignoring the existence of collaborators, thereby attempting to suppress multiple, complex interpretations with a single narrative. This one-dimensional authorship is finally doubted and challenged in Roland Barthes's *The Death of the Author*, and he claimed, "the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author" (Barthes 1977). At the same time, since the 20th century, the primacy of architects as independent agents has been questioned, and co-authorship and collaborations have proliferated.

The discussions about authorship also appear in the field of heritage, as the long-standing dispute over restoration or conservation since the 19th century is due to different views on authorship. The two typical opinions originally came from different movements led by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and John Ruskin, whose disagreement implied “two versions of tracing authenticity to authorship,” the former one valuing “a reincarnation of the creative vision,” the latter one valuing “the materials from the moment of creation” (Roberts 2015). Alois Riegl ascribed the conflict to the different value systems and highlighted the creation of values while implying a dynamic and multifaceted understanding of authorship based on diverse value judgements. The *Nara Document on Authenticity* indicates that authenticity evolves over time and is influenced by the interaction between cultural heritage and society (ICOMOS, UNESCO, and ICCROM 1994), providing a situational authorship interpretation. The *Burra Charter* demonstrates that heritage is embedded in a dynamic process, and its value is multifaceted, holding different values for different individuals or groups (Australia ICOMOS 1999), indicating that heritage value comes from social recognition and no longer depends on a single authorization. The *Faro Convention* further expanded the social and political significance of social value, introducing the concept of heritage community, which “consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations” (Council of Europe 2005), making authorship almost a shared voice within the heritage community, who continue to preserve and practice their heritage.

Therefore, in the contemporary heritage discussion, especially for those far away from the authorized heritage discourse, the authorship is not a return to the signature certification of traditional architects or designers. Instead, it is a decentralization of authors, emphasizing co-creation of the relevant agents, not only the primary authors, but also including the possible hidden agents, the heritage community, and the magic of time and space. This co-authorship is a material practice and immaterial culture that is closely related to the inheritance and creation of collective human experience and memories. It explains why old objects are valuable - an identical new doll cannot replace an old doll from childhood because the author of the old doll is not only the product designer or the brand, but also the people who established their connections with it in their childhood. In fact, more often than not, people don't even care who the original author of an old doll is, while what they value more is the narrative and memories it evokes - what it has experienced in its life cycles. Then, in the reuse of second-hand components, how does the co-authorship work and transform them from waste into heritage?

The co-authorship in the reuse of second-hand components is dynamic and complex, sometimes even vague and constructed, while the positions and roles of various authors may change over time. In the Palatine Chapel in Aachen, Charlemagne had asked Pope Hadrian a few years before his coronation for permission to use second-hand components in the Chapel, such as columns from Rome and Ravenna, to demonstrate the legality of his rule. The second-hand columns allow architecture to acquire an authorized identity and become an irreplaceable part of a new narrative. Interestingly, when the French army marched into Aachen in 1794, the conquerors took around forty columns from the chapel, and thirty-two of them were exactly these spolia from Italy (Figure 1). After Napoleon's defeat in 1815, some of the columns were returned, ten of which remain in the Louvre today. In 1833, when Karl Friedrich Schinkel came to Aachen, he angrily voiced the situation of the random discard of returned columns in and around the chapel, “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” (Jungbluth 1862).

These columns became a symbol of victory over oppressors this time, and later were bathed in a unified nationalistic glow. The second-hand columns witness and evidence the memory and history, and its destiny is constantly rewritten in each life cycle, while the authorship it carries is constantly reshaped and inherited. The key co-authors here include its



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View of the Gallery Level of the Aachen Octagon, Frans Vervloet, 1818. Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, Aachen.

Photo by Anne Gold.

The spolia columns on the arch no longer existed at that time.

Italian creators, appropriators during the Carolingian dynasty, French plunderers, the modern preserver, and cultural practitioners, those who have written their stories about it in different life cycles of the column. Whether it is the long-distance transportation in ancient times or the improper dumping of plunderers, the practices of co-authorship have fulfilled these second-hand columns with heritage value, and shaped their irreplaceable material culture.

At the same time, the experimental attitude of co-authorship in second-hand components allows for introducing new annotations of the next authors while their interventions may enhance or challenge what is regarded as their past. Alexander Brodsky designed the Rotunda for the Arch-Stoyaniye 2009, a contemporary architecture festival. The building is an ellipsoid around an inside central chimney, with a series of second-hand doors distributed around, which were dismantled from the declining houses in the area (Figure 2). These fragments were combined to create a contrast with the white perimeter wall, while leading to the same rhythm of upper openings, creating a new mystical reality. Through defamiliarization and recontextualization, Brodsky experimentally combined the memories they evoked with the ritual space, trying to tell a new co-authorship from the participation of visitors and the new assembly way of these old doors. "Using these old things like doors and windows - I do it not only because they are beautiful, but also because they really give depth of time to the structure. One door can say a lot of things, and you can feel how old it is, how many times somebody opened and closed it. Every piece has an amazing, interesting history" (Dorrian, Brodsky, and Anderson 2016).

The Rotunda experimentally reveals that the dynamics of co-authorship allow interventions to trigger people's memories of past events, emotions, and experiences in a different context. Even if such memories or emotions are not necessarily reliable and individual, the blurred

authorship still could carry on people's need to look back and forward. It is not the credible preservation of the material, form, structure, craftsmanship, etc. of the objects, like in the traditional heritage field. Instead, subsequent authors' new annotations on second-hand components may lead to a rewriting of the previous stories in last life cycles. The reuse of second-hand components has no intention of playing the role of a lonely solid lying in a solemn showcase window in the museum, but continues to collaborate with new authors to collect and pass on memories and stories in the next life cycle, shaping changing co-authorship rather than only showing full respect to the past.

Valuing coauthors gives second-hand components the potential to require that regarding the components not as an isolated entity, but as an object participating in the network of society and environment during the life cycles. The co-authorship emerges from the co-creation relationship with different agents in its reuse. At the Kamikatsu Zero Waste Center, the appreciation and encouragement of co-authorship through second-hand components constructs new ways of living and producing for the local community, transforming itself into a new heritage. Facing a declining population, the decline of the key forestry industry, and a shrinking community, Kamikatsu became the first municipality in Japan to issue the "Zero Waste Declaration" in 2003, aiming to foster a society that won't generate waste. After discussions, local residents decided to bring their own waste to the town's waste station, except for household composting of kitchen scraps. The center was assembled from second-hand components donated by local residents, composed of a trash station in a circulation of sort-stock-recycle, a reuse shop for sale, and a public hall that promotes the zero-waste movement and improves people's communication (Figure 3).

During the planning and construction phases of the center, Hiroshi Nakamura & NAP Architects, local residents, and the municipality composed the three most important co-authors through mutual consultation. The second-hand components were salvaged from the local residents, through the architect's call for waste at resident briefings and the local public relations magazine, with authorization from the local municipality. For example, the collage of second-hand windows shaping a double-glazing facade describes the family

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The Rotunda,
Alexander Brodsky, 2009.
Photo by Yuri Palmin.



memories and personalities of residents, and the ambition to gather the community for zero waste. The shared authorship forged through the participation and negotiation of different agents allows the reuse of components to acquire a new heritage identity recognized by the community. More than just a collection of personal memories, they also serve as a vehicle for a new narrative about zero waste. This co-authorship imbues the components with current vitality, a living heritage that underpins new lifestyles and symbolizes a local circular economy. Residents drive to the center with their waste, chat to each other, and can take any second-hand items on display in the shop for free. The center becomes a participatory place promoting the new lifestyle and consciousness, revitalizing the local community in a circular culture, and a new heritage will be passed down to future generations.

Therefore, it is necessary to recognize that the authorship of shaping heritage has shifted from individual genius to the community and social public sphere, and its meaning production is returned to diverse cultural groups. In the Palatine Chapel, authors from different eras valued the second-hand components differently, sometimes even in conflict, resulting in diverse preservation under co-authorship. In the Rotunda, the inclusion of new narrative experimentally transforms the anonymous authorship of the second-hand components into a co-authorship with the architect, imbuing them with heritage value and evoking present-day experiences. At the Kamikatsu Zero Waste Center, co-authorship transforms the reuse of second-hand components into a process of building a heritage community, creating a living heritage interacted with a new lifestyle. The co-authorship is exactly the one that brings the second-hand components' heritage value, and the invention of such new heritage should be understood as the preservation, transmission, even questioning, and challenging of the existing authorship in the reuse. At the same time, the co-authorship in the second-hand components is complex, dynamic, unstable, and constructed, telling the reuse story of

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The Community Hall in Kamikatsu Zero Waste Center, Hiroshi Nakamura & NAP, 2020.
Photo by Koji Fujii / TOREAL.



multiple authors. It exists in all the social-cultural relations that give the components value and meaning, and may constantly change the respective positions and roles of authors.

The reuse of second-hand components becomes a discussion and decision on how to treat its multiple authors and how to participate as co-authors. Since they are away from the jurisdiction of authorized heritage and copyright laws, and even in most cases are currently considered waste today, the second-hand components have the opportunity to rethink their co-authorship, which should become the focus and experimental tool in their reuse process. From the perspective of co-authorship, the authorship that already exists in second-hand components is itself a treasure with the potential to become heritage, and the intervention of new authors is precisely to achieve a new ensemble with it without obliterating the past, while emphasizing the shaping of the broader heritage recognition of second-hand components in a more diverse and democratic way. How new authors continuously join in shapes a constantly changing co-authorship that develops in the life cycles, even though their annotations may raise issues of the way of editing and reshaping the meaning that the components convey. But it is undeniable that these components have gained new possibilities in their life cycles and trigger new relationships with people's lives, continuing their stories. The co-authorship constantly develops in the life cycles of second-hand components, reminding their provenance, opening up the possibility of the afterlife, and inventing the components themselves as new heritages.

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