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# Editorial

Henrieta Moravčíková

Are research methods based on the relation of the centre and a periphery still relevant in the context of current architectural historiography? How does one approach an assessment of architectural works in the regions which are traditionally marginalized or completely ignored by western historiography? How does the architecture in the former Communist countries overlap with international architectural historiography?

These and many other questions were posed by the participants in the first international colloquium of architecture historians from Central and Eastern Europe in February 2013. The Faculty of Architecture STU, in cooperation with the Institute of Construction and Architecture, Slovak Academy of Sciences, organized the colloquium as part of the Annual Business Meeting of European Architectural History Network (EAHN). The Faculty hosted many distinguished architecture historians, whom we had the opportunity to meet from 31<sup>st</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> February. Within those few days, this unique common ground which was offered to participants from many parts of the world undoubtedly facilitated the communication among historians dealing with European architecture. Moreover, this international event allowed architecture historians from Central and Eastern Europe to join in and share their erudition.

This issue of ALFA presents a selection of the topics which were presented at the colloquium. Many of them deal with topics determining the architectural historiography of the former 'East Bloc' countries. The articles reflect on the relationship between the centre and the periphery and the related concepts of architecture history writings; they also bring in questions dealing with the connection of the centre and the periphery in the current polycentric world, as well as the internationalisation of research on local history of architecture. Attention was also concentrated on themes relating to specific areas in architecture, such as the architecture of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – its ideological tendencies and its current interpretation, or new findings arising from research on the architecture of the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The selected papers, including talks and discussions which were presented at the colloquium, prove that permanent interfacing among the various research areas and concepts of history is not only inspiring, but also necessary, because it unveils specific as well as the universal laws and associations of architecture and its research. Such international discussion is at the same time a necessary precondition for the definitive removal of the Iron Curtain within architectural historiography.

# Slovakia, or what could be the Meaning of the Architectural Periphery?

Henrieta Moravčíková

## Prologue

On the occasion of the official meeting of European architectural magazines in Montpellier in 1999 Dietmar Steiner, the director of the Architecture Centre in Vienna, offered a competition for a prize to be awarded to the architectural magazine which would be the first to publish the Glass House in Stupava. Most of the participants at the conference had no idea what he meant. Not only did they not know where Stupava is, but also most of them were still confusing Slovakia with Slovenia. However Dietmar Steiner was well aware of what he was speaking about. As one of just a few western Europeans, he visited the small-sized glass prefabricated house, which had in the meantime become a frequently visited architectural attraction. Architects Ján Studený and David Kopecký conceived the detached family house in the spirit of the architectural discourse of that time. The architecture was only intended to frame the events tied to the family life. They refused traditional categories such as walls, windows or the functional articulation of rooms. The house was a unique example of such thinking in the whole of Central Europe. As a matter of fact, no review of the Stupava house was ever published in any of the foreign magazines. The photography of the house under construction in the Slovenian magazine *Arhitektov bilten*<sup>1</sup> that illustrated Steiner's contribution from the conference was the only exception. As far as I know, the Slovenian editorial office, however, never received the promised Sacher cake from Steiner.

From the beginning the house, made of glass concrete shaped pieces was given a puzzled reception on the domestic architectural scene. Though some enthusiastic reactions appeared, especially from among the ranks of architecture critics and of the youngest generation of architects, most architects presented sceptical views on the habitability of the house. In spite of that, the house was awarded all prestigious local architectural prizes.

In 2004 the house was rebuilt by its owners; it was walled around, plastered white, filled out with windows and balconies. The house acquired a standard neo-modernist look. The local architectural scene unanimously claimed: it was more than expected! The experiment was over.

This story, as well as the questions it brings forth, is characteristic for the Slovak environment, for its local architectural discussion, for the relation of the builder and the architect and even for the relationship of Slovakia to the rest of the world.

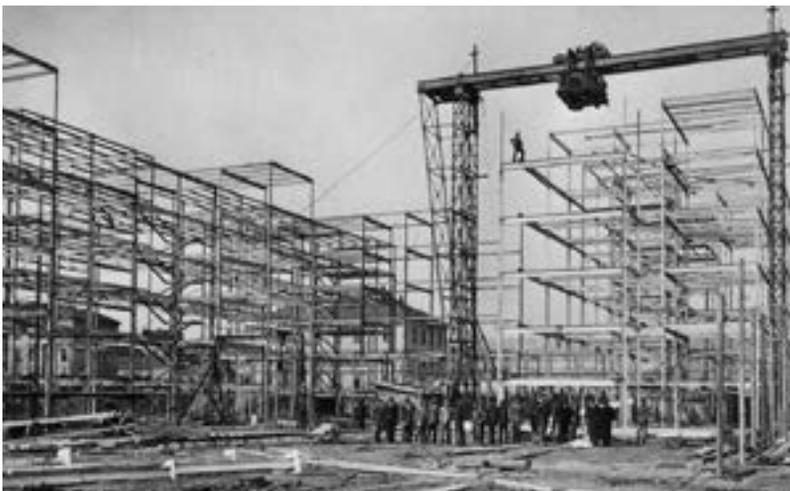
## Evanescent Impulses and Enduring Tradition

In the words of the art historian Ján Bakoš, Slovakia is characterized as a "crossroad of cultures" whose particularity lays in "the sharp clashes of intense but evanescent impulses on the one hand and long-lasting, even conservative traditions" on the other hand<sup>2</sup>. The geographical position of Slovakia on the edge of the western world presupposes the strong influence of western centres on its culture but also the presence of eastern or southern impacts. Slovakia lived through its national emancipation as well as modernization only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was only in 1946 that the first school of architecture was opened here. The first architects educated in Slovakia started to practice at the beginning of the 1950s. Just to illustrate the speed of the modernization process; we can compare the situation of the 1940s with the present one. Today there are 3 schools of architecture and 2 thousand architects in Slovakia, which is inhabited by 5 million people. The character of the local architecture is a logical consequence of the given geographical facts, of the inner dynamic and human potential of the country. The Slovak environment is characterised by its capacity for immediate reaction to external impulses and their transformation within the domestic environment. This promptness and openness however bring along the danger of superficiality. Enhanced by the technical imperfections of the construction process, or simply by inexperience of architect and builder in relation to the attractive novelty, the impulses are often reduced to formal ones or due to incorrect practical processing they do not take root. The rapid action of acceptance of an impulse is often followed by a similarly fast reaction of refusal and a move towards more conservative positions.

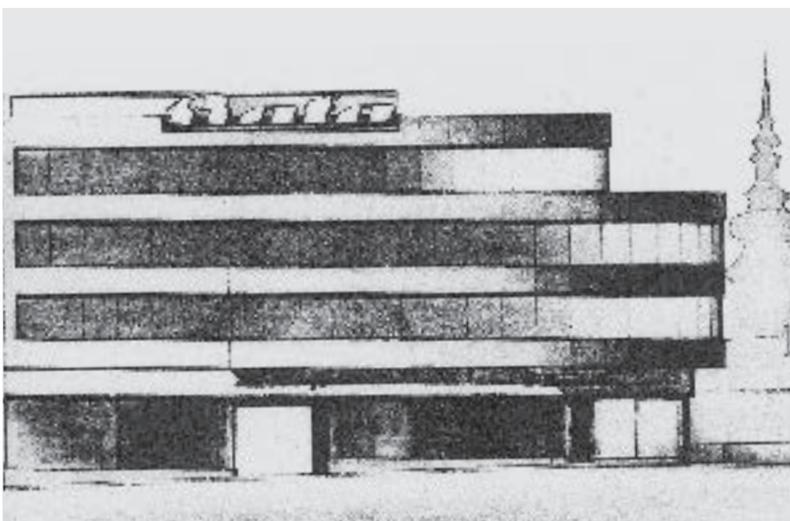
We can observe such a process in the example of the *Nová doba* (New Age) Housing estate, which was the first apartment block constructed with a steel skeleton. It became a local manifestation of fast building processes, unification and standardisation of construction elements and modernisation in general. However, only the first stage was built in such a manner. The second stage, which started immediately after the first one was finished, was based on a more traditional concrete skeleton construction and individual crafts. Or we can take a look at the first curtain wall ever used on the Slovak territory. The director of the city insurance company personally encouraged the architect



Family House, Stupava, David Kopecký – Ján Studený, 2000  
and the same house after rebuilding in 2004, Photo: Archive of Architecture, oA USTARCH SAV



Nová doba I. / New Age I. housing complex, Bratislava, Friedrich Weinwurm – Ignác Vécsei, 1932 – 1935  
and Nová doba II. / New Age II. Housing complex, Bratislava, 1935 – 1936, Photo: Archive of Architecture, oA USTARCH SAV



Baťa Shoe Company department store, Bratislava, Vladimír Karfík, original proposal, 1930  
and realised building, 1931, Photo: Archive of Architecture, oA USTARCH SAV





Agrarian bank of the Vaag region, Žilina, Friedrich Weinwurm – Ignác Vécsei, 1930, demolished 1996 and new commercial building built on the same site 2000, Photo: Archive of Architecture, oA USTARCH SAV



Villa T, Bratislava, Friedrich Weinwurm, 1929 and Family house, Bratislava, Christian Ludwig – Augustín Danielis, 1929, Photo: Archive of Architecture, oA USTARCH SAV

to use the most modern style of construction. The very first example of a glass facade in the whole country was enthusiastically welcomed by local critics and avant-garde architects. In the local press it was even written that due to this world novelty Bratislava would finally become a metropolis. Nevertheless, this was not only the first but the last curtain wall implemented in Slovakia until the 1960s. The market simply did not trust a spectacular novelty.

Somehow similar was the situation with the first high-rise building, called Manderla, in Bratislava. The initially warmly welcomed and ambitious 12-storey "skyscraper" was later strongly criticised not only by the general public but by the architects themselves. To underline this special features of the local situation we can compare the easy route to implementation of the first high-rise in Bratislava with the complications that accompanied the construction of the first high-rise – the famous "Hochhaus on Herrengasse" – in Vienna.

It was not necessarily the fate of novelty that led the Viennese to hesitation, but perhaps the need for deeper analysis and reflection. And in Bratislava it was not necessarily the braveness of the architect and investor but perhaps the superficial and less experienced regulation committee that influenced the construction process.

We could illustrate this so called openness towards novelties with another example – the process of approval for the construction of the Baťa shoe company department store. The department store was to be built in the historical centre directly adjacent to the old town walls. The Baťa architect Vladimír Karfík came out with a proposal for a modern very elegant city building. After a series of proposal redesigns by the local authorities, the regulation committee finally approved the very industrial styled and most radical of all of Karfík's proposals. Even the protests of the local antiquities board could not stop the construction. The department store was erected within a few months of obtaining its building permission.<sup>3</sup>

It might sound surprising, but today the place of enduring tradition is occupied by modern architecture, at least as conceived by architects. The strong development of modernism is connected with the interwar period, in Slovakia identified with the first Czechoslovak Republic, with the years of national emancipation and the intense development of an authentic local culture. Modernity is considered to be a timeless value and is reflected in the works of

architects widely separated by generations, localities and opinions. Even the best examples of postmodernism in Slovakia were narrations of the domestic functionalist experience. In the nineties it was a reaction again the strong position of the modern tradition that caused the rapid formation of neo-modernist architecture.

However, the strong modern tradition in Slovakia is connected with the fact that modernism never gained any extreme position. The melting of the „evanescent impulses“ to a form acceptable by the domestic environment, their moderation and even deformation, characterizes the Slovak architectural scene all through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. "Sharp extreme positions are being abandoned in the name of the values important in this environment." What are these values? Probably it is all about practicality and elementary functionality. Pragmatic solutions have been long since well received in the local milieu.

This is probably the reason why Emil Belluš is considered to be the foremost Slovak architect of the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century. Belluš was always able to respond very pragmatically to fashionable trends and to transform them to into perfectly functioning and artistically attractive forms. His abilities can be judged by following his work from the early 1930s functionalism, through the late 1930s, when he was strongly inspired by the Italian *novo cento*, up to the 1950s and his approach to dealing with socialist realism, the official Soviet doctrine in arts.

#### **Bad Builder and Good Architect**

As far back as 1938 the architect Oskar Singer from Nitra complained: "for an architect it is not easy to work in the provinces" where his opinions meet a "lack of understanding and acceptance from the provincial man."<sup>4</sup> Similar feelings accompany contemporary architects too and the builder is again and again regarded as an obstacle to the creation of the valuable architectural resolutions. Such a relationship is proved by the fact that builders or users reject many works of architecture rewarded with top architectural prizes. The story of the house in Stupava is a tale taking place quite often in different variations in the Slovak environment.

We can look back at the ambitious form of the family house of the former director of an important Slovak printing plant, Karol Jaroň built in 1929 according to the design of the Czech architect Alois Balán. After a few decades it was rebuilt to a traditional



Demolition in the historical core of Bratislava due to the construction of new bridge over the Danube river and New bridge, Bratislava, Jozef Lacko, Ladislav Kušnír, Ivan Slameň, Alexander Tesár, 1973, Photo: Archive of Architecture, oA USTARCH SAV; Lubo Špirko

shape and eventually demolished in 2012. An even more striking example: the Agrarian bank of the Vaag region in Žilina designed by the most extraordinary personality of the Slovak avant-garde, Friedrich Weinwurm. After a lengthy process of approval by the local authorities, the bank was finally built in 1930, but never really accepted by the general public. Despite its being the first example of modern building on the piers with a roof terrace it was destroyed in 1996 and replaced by a paraphrase of historical building style in 2000.

In 1993 the architects Jozef Ondriáš and Juraj Závodný designed a villa and built it with their own resources. It was a manifesto of personal architecture conceptions and at the same time a very up to date design. Many enthusiastic admirers of architecture visited this ideal architectural project. For years the architects unsuccessfully tried to sell the villa till finally it became an administrative building.<sup>5</sup>

An immediate nomination for a local architectural prize followed the completion of another house, this time a weekend house in the form of a steel-wooden container built in 1999 by the fhp architects in Horná Potôň. Later it was published in a whole range of architectural magazines, including the Austrian *Architektur aktuell*<sup>6</sup>. However, the builder never used the house, which still today stands abandoned as a symbol of an unaccepted and thus unsuccessful concept.

However, there are builders in Slovakia who not only accept an extravagant concept with enthusiasm, but who also identify themselves with it over a long time span. In 2000 the architect Ivan Matušík designed a family house in the shape of a tube. He was 70 at that time and the family house Elipsion was in a sense the culmination of his lifelong credo "form follows form". The family house found enthusiastic investors, who have inhabited it for four years without refusing the excursions of visitors admiring its architecture. Critics and ranks of architects respect the house perhaps due to the important architectural prize it was awarded.

### Polarity

Another permanent and characteristic feature of the local architectural discourse all through the 20<sup>th</sup> century is polarity. Polarisation influences the architectural press, architectural prizes and the life of the architectural community. The polemic between the conservative and the modern characterized the architectural discourse as early as the thirties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Let's just mention texts by architect Christian Ludwig adoring reserved traditionalism and the stirring avant-garde claims of Friedrich Weinwurm. While Ludwig defended architecture as a matter of art, Weinwurm advocated the "Sachlichkeit" / matter of factness. This polarity could also be illustrated by the works of both architects. The polarisation of the architecture scene of that time was as well supported by the only two existing local architecture journals, *Forum* and *Slovak Builder*. While *Forum* supported the avant-garde, *Slovak Builder* defended the positions of conservative pragmatism.

In late 1960s the construction of a new bridge over the river Danube in Bratislava polarised the local scene. Due to the construction of the bridge part of the historical structure of the town was slated for demolition. However at that time the majority of architects stood on the side of the innovation.<sup>7</sup>

A similar polarity again appeared in the 1990s in the discussions raised by the debates between Peter Pásztor, a traditional-oriented follower of the famous Hungarian architect Imre Makowec, and Ján Bahna, an enthusiastic supporter of innovation and new modernity.<sup>8</sup>

### "Sahara"

Another characteristic feature of the local architecture discourse is the irreconcilable critique of the actual standard of architectural displays. Here the rhetoric is the same all through the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The loudest purveyors of such opinions are precisely those architects strongly oriented to the latest actual trends and western models. In sharp polemics they refer to the domestic



Roman Catholic Church, Lovinobaňa, Peter Pásztor, 1993  
and General credit bank headquarters Bratislava, Ján Bahna and others, 1996, Photo: Archive of Architecture, oA USTARCH SAV

architectural scene with the term "Sahara" since architecture is in the state of "prehistory".<sup>9</sup> The scissors between them and the pragmatically-oriented majority are getting more and more opened. Though some critics find this polarity to be irreconcilable, it presents an important factor of the domestic architectural production, in which the orientation to the latest trends permanently clashes with the pragmatic position of the majority.

Looking at the serious and successful Slovak builder Jozef Hlavaj criticising the ultra-left positions of Karel Teige when discussing the necessity of establishing a united Chamber of Architects in the Czechoslovakia of 1930, we have to state that the pragmatists often succeeded in evaluating the situation better than the idealistic innovators.

### Are We Different or Backward?

The last of the characteristic features of Slovak architecture is the constant effort to overcome a feeling of backwardness and inferiority in relation to the more developed western neighbours. Domestic architects are affected by questions such as "Were we different or backward? Were we different because of being backward?" posed by the philosopher František Novosád and truthfully describing the feeling of the Slovak artistic scene. The lukewarm reflection of Slovak events in the European centres, connected with the peripheral position of Slovakia, is perceived as a suffering of wrong and often leads to enclosure and isolationism. Let us mention only the fact that the Slovak avant-garde never succeed in penetrating the main magazines of Prague avant-garde of that time, not to speak about the architecture press in Germany or France! The situation got even worse after the Second World War, when behind the Iron Curtain Slovakia became part of the Communist world.

Slovakia and its architecture were discovered by the western world only in the 1990s. The total lack of any relevant information on Slovak architecture led for example to the enthusiastic welcome of the

modern utopias of the Slovak group VAL exhibited in the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2008 or to the uncritical admiration for the monumental works of Slovak late modernism presented through the images of the Austrian photographer Hertha Hurnaus in the book *East Modern* published in 2007.

The features of the Slovak architectural scene mentioned above are not unique; in variations they happen anywhere, yet their combination creates the uniqueness of the local scene. It is not about formal specificity. Foreign observers in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot "read any regionally specific signs" in the language of Slovak architecture anyway, and they evaluate Slovak architecture as a typical display of the Central European architectural culture<sup>10</sup>. It is rather the inner mechanism of functioning of the local architecture that is revealed by these features. In the light of 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture we can thus perceive Slovakia as a region which produces architecture that might be considered random or marginal but which at the same time represents a complementary answer to the extreme architecture solutions and in this way is a legitimate part of international architecture discussion and an important tool of diversification of the European architecture culture.

<sup>1</sup> Steiner, Dietmar M.: Forget the Publishers, the Readers, the Architects – let's do a Magazine. About what? *Arhitektov bilten*. 1999, Nr. 145 – 146, p. 92 – 94.

<sup>2</sup> Bakoš, J.: In: *Problémy dejín výtvarného umenia na Slovensku*. Veda 2002, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Moravčíková, Henrieta: Die Architektur des Baťa-Konzerns als Faktor der Modernisierung: Beispiel Slowakei. In: *Zlín – Modellstadt der Moderne*, Winfried Nerdinger (Hg.), Berlin, Jovis Verlag 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Singer, Oskar: *Bauen in der Provinz*. Forum 8, 1938, p. 176 – 185, here p. 180 – 181.

<sup>5</sup> Dulla, Matúš – Moravčíková, Henrieta: Jozef Ondriáš and Juraj Závodný, Villa in Bratislava and Mýtnik Office Building. *Architecture Design* 66, 1996, Nr. 1 – 2, p. 55 – 59.

<sup>6</sup> Moravčíková, H.: Ein Haus wie Morgensterns Lattenzaun. *Architektur Aktuell*, 2000, Nr. 243/244, p. 156 – 157.

<sup>7</sup> Bútor, Ivan: Who Destroyed Podhradie? In: *Lost City*. Eduard Nižňanský (Ed), Bratislava, Marenčin PT 2011.

<sup>8</sup> For the detailed argumentation of both sides in the 30s and 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see DULLA, Matúš – Moravčíková, Henrieta: *Architektúra Slovenska v 20. storočí*. Bratislava, Slovart, 512 p.

<sup>9</sup> Zervan, Marian: Slovenská architektúra: na rozcestí. *Architekt* 5, 2003, Nr. 2, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Halík, Pavel: Pavel Halík on ARCH Magazine Prize 2002. *Architekt* 5, 2003, p. 35.

# Is Eastern European Architecture Bound to Speak? On Matters of Peripherality and Representation

Carmen Popescu

This paper attempts to look at how the architecture of Eastern Europe – and consequently of its historiography – has made use of matters of ‘strategy’ and ‘tactics’ in articulating its discourse and narrative. In doing so, it intends to briefly explore what are the most appropriate historiographical tools when dealing with Eastern European architecture, and – hence – hopefully open a debate here on methodology.

I will refer to Eastern Europe in a broad geographical perspective whose limits are mostly determined by the idea of ‘otherness’, be it in the cultural sense forged by the Enlightenment – as showed Larry Wolff in his *Inventing Eastern Europe* –<sup>1</sup> or in the political sense induced by the polarization of the Cold War. This means that I will sometimes refer to different entities – Central Europe, Eastern Europe – in order to address similar situations in the architectural realm. Chronologically, I will start with the nineteenth century and the first decades of the following century, which will allow me to introduce the idea of contextualization that I will treat mainly through the lens of the socialist regimes.

Due to space limitations, the picture might be sometimes schematic, lacking not only details, but also important chronological fragments. However, the scope of this paper is not to offer an exhaustive view, but to change the way of looking at Eastern European architecture.

## Speaking languages: contextualization matters

In 2006, the University of Chicago Press published a solid study, lavishly illustrated, entitled *When Buildings Speak*.<sup>2</sup> Its author, Anthony Alofsin, chose this metaphoric title to treat “Architecture as Language in the Habsburg Empire and Its Aftermath, 1867-1933”.

The author’s approach of treating identity as a methodological bias in studying Central/ Eastern European architecture,<sup>3</sup> was not a new one. Scholars like Friedrich Achleitner and Ákos Moravánszky<sup>4</sup> – to quote here only the most prominent – had already

investigated this perspective in several works. What is striking in Alofsin’s book is the way ‘meaningfulness’ turns into a crucial concept in decoding an architecture which, due to its “otherness”, has but a “limited ability to speak to us now”.<sup>5</sup> The idea of architecture as language is at the core of the structure of the book, each chapter exploring a different facet of this metonymy. Hence, “The Language of History” is followed by “The Language of Organicism” and “The Language of Rationalism”, the entire picture being completed by “The Language of Myth” and “The Language of Hybridity”. By translating the core notion of the Herderian theory – all national culture is based on a specific language –, Alofsin succeeded both in introducing the Western reader to the largely unknown architecture of Central Europe and in confirming the marginal position of this latter which – once again – needed a code in order to be understood.

Two important things are at stake here. As a periphery, Central Europe – and it is ironic to note that something which is labeled as “central” has such a marginal place in the current mainstream discourse – requires contextualization. The set of maps at the beginning of the book is the first tool of contextualization, situating the object of the study. Seemingly, a map is a ‘neutral’ instrument of knowledge, a useful ‘prop’ for the discussed notions; however, its presence reveals a lack of background, indicating a certain theoretical marginality of the object. Thus, in Alofsin’s book, geographical situation comes together with conceptual contextualization. The concepts that the author proposes as pivotal notions of each chapter – History, Rationalism, Organicism, etc. – form the basis of his methodology. Their function is not only to bring meaning to an uncategorized architecture (because not taken in account by the mainstream discourse), but also – and this is equally important – to create connections with the methodology of the prevailing historiography. These connections are meant to establish parallels with the Western context, both in terms of the architectural currents and of (and here their role

is even more important) the operativeness of a similar methodology. Peter Collins' *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture*,<sup>6</sup> a central study for modernist historiography, employs similar concepts in articulating the different chapters of his book. These treat Romanticism, Revivalism (a chapter dealing with several crucial styles in establishing architectural identity in the nineteenth century), Functionalism, Rationalism, etc. Moreover, the chapter on functionalism addresses several types of architectural analogies, among which are discussed the biological and the linguistic analogy.

The predicament of approaching (geographical and theoretical) peripheries was not new for Alofsin. a close collaborator of Liane Lefaivre and Alexandre Tzonis in their early years of elaborating the theory of 'critical regionalism' in the late 1970; he had contributed to the advancement of this study. So, one could say that it was not Central Europe that opened Alofsin's eyes to the concept of identity, but the other way around. It was his interest in identity, derived from critical regionalism, that led him to Central Europe – a region commonly seen as the battleground of national cultures. Addressing a topic such as identity in architecture is undoubtedly a strategy of visibility, most often associated to (cultural) peripherality. Developed in the nineteenth century, under the pressure of Hegelian historicity, the architectures of identity were meant to create an idiosyncratic filiation for those peoples which were not already seen as part of the large taxonomic picture of (valuable) cultures. The result of this quest for identity, expressed either as 'national styles' or as assimilated models of Western modernity, was not deprived of ambiguity. While the aspiring Nation-States were propelled into the 'bigger picture', they were meanwhile stamped as marginal due to the yet unachieved meaningfulness of their identity. In Eastern Europe, that was the predicament that faced generations of architects: how to position themselves in order to build up a (meaningful) place for their nation on the geopolitical map.

From a stigma – uncivilized cultures eventually creating an image of specific culture – identity was progressively turned afterwards into a strategy of visibility. Being specific – or better said, being finally specific – represented not only a strategy of integration, but also an attempt at positioning within the mainstream. And indeed, this strategy proved to be in many cases successful in terms of architecture – as showed, to take two different examples, Jože Plečnik and Károly Kós – and instrumental in terms of historiography. Nevertheless, the thus acquired visibility was a poisonous gift: what was meant to render the otherness acceptable nonetheless stamped it as different.

Hence, one could also argue that when Alofsin articulated his approach as almost a response to Collins' he might have intended to escape this vicious circle affecting the territories ignored by the dominant discourse in historiography.

#### **Still speaking? Architecture in Eastern Europe during the Cold War**

The marginality of Eastern Europe, as we still experience it today, was actually enhanced (if not forged) during the Cold War. The remains of a cultural peripherality, which had been in many cases almost wiped away, were in those years turned into an ideological peripherality. The political polarization meanwhile extended the territory of alterity to what was coined as the 'Soviet bloc'.

That it was not a bloc is well-known by now. However, the Iron Curtain was not only an expressive image but functioned, in most situations, as an efficient barrier within a polarized world. Its claimed opacity (which is debatable from today's perspective) served to enhance the definition of political alterity. This ideological marginalization, in a time when the world was extending far beyond the former borders and its map was filling up with new peripheries, had consequences in both architecture and historiography. In terms of of new peripheries and tactics of centrality, Eastern Europe in certain circumstances managed to reframe geopolitical



Anthony Alofsin, *When Buildings Speak. Architecture as Language in the Habsburg Empire and Its Aftermath, 1867-1933*, University of Chicago Press, 2006



Vladimír Dedeček, the new wing of the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava (1967-79).  
Photo: Carmen Popescu, 2013

dynamics, exporting its expertise and creating new alliances – particularly within the ‘Non-Aligned’ group – and thus placing the Second World as an intermediary between the First and the Third on the international scene. However, this tactical positioning hardly affected the architectural discourse of the Cold War years, where the Third World more often found place, due to Western architects’ interventions, than Eastern Europe.

Excluded from Western historiography, which admitted only “absolute values” – to quote Bruno Zevi –,<sup>7</sup> Eastern European architects were also politically confronted with trends from the capitalist world judged inappropriate for building socialism. In this context, architecture behind the Iron Curtain was constrained to develop an idiosyncratic approach. From Socialist Realism to postmodernism, most of the official architectures in Eastern Europe were bound to convey a message. And even if Socialist Realism was meant to oppose the ‘cold’, ‘morally corrupted’ capitalist architecture, while postmodernism was more or less synchronized with the Western scene, this message dissimulate the same content. It was about a meaningful architecture, one able to create values – if not what was considered as a value on the Western side, then at least its own values.

This search for meaningfulness developed strategies of visibility which favored, even if not explicitly presented as such, images of identity. I do not mean by that that it aspired to create a harmonized architectural identity of the entire bloc – though, for a short interval, Socialist Realism came, almost all over behind the Iron Curtain, to embody a common identity of a new world. My point is that meaningfulness as a value provided such an identity.

Leaving Socialist Realism aside – though its well-known slogan ‘national in form, socialist in content’ represents a clear species for identity in architecture –, I would like to look at two other cases: what I call Socialist brutalism and postmodernism. Both these currents were initially developed in reaction to the crisis of modernism; but even if architects in the

Eastern bloc were not unfamiliar with these theoretical debates, here these currents came to embody a certain image of officialdom. Both provided tools that served the official ideology perfectly: monumentality on the one hand, and a connection to tradition and history – both values cherished by the communist ideology – on the other. Meanwhile, their criticism against modernism appealed to the party ideologists in certain countries of the bloc, even if what was later called Socialist modernism was developed in all of Eastern Europe. Moreover, while Socialist modernism was often assimilated to the monotonous and minimalist aesthetics of mass-housing, brutalism and postmodernism displayed daring geometries and symbolic elements.

Seen from this perspective, it is not surprising that brutalism and postmodernism were more successful in countries with a strong tradition in identity issues, like Slovakia, Bulgaria or Romania. Henrieta Moravčíková, who extensively researched these forms of monumental late socialist architecture in Slovakia,<sup>8</sup> showed that without being exclusively the product of a political demand, the monumental appetite of the architecture in the 1960s-1970s was supported by a strong political will whose expectations it satisfied. The 1968 Law of Federation, stipulating equality between the Czech and Slovak parts of the republic, encouraged the development of identity issues which, as a matter of fact, already had important roots in Slovak art. Among many examples of this quest for monumentality stands the new wing of the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava, by Vladimír Dedeček (1967-79), whose expressive volumes of the street façade provide a dialogue in time with the Neo-Renaissance Esterházy palace (built in the 1870s), which hosted the gallery since its foundation in 1949. Moravčíková states that the powerful expressionism of brutalist architecture was instrumentalised by the Communist government both as a vector of Slovak identity and as a demonstration of democracy, since the same architecture – abstract in the majority of the cases – was used also by the capitalist West.



Abstraction was not really what motivated either the Romanian Nicolae Porumbescu or the Bulgarian Nikola Nikolov in their approach towards a Socialist brutalism.<sup>9</sup> After a (late) modernist phase, Porumbescu moved to a new orientation which made a ground-breaking effect in mid-1960s Romania, at a time when the political leaders were themselves looking to renew the ideological discourse. He thus opened the path for a Romanian brutalism, whose “lyrical nationalism” was founded – as Porumbescu declared – both on the latest tendencies in Western architecture (he quoted Le Corbusier, Tange) and on the Romanian national genius (Brancusi, Enescu, with whom he associated the Romanian peasant).<sup>10</sup> This massive interpretation of Western trends and Romanian folklore – as illustrated by his series of Houses of Culture – seduced the Party ideologues, who saw in his approach an excellent means of expressing the new line of nationalist politics. Henceforth, this type of architecture came to embody the official image.

A similar ideological background is to be found in Nikolov’s architecture: his Veliko Turnovo hotel (1967), built in the city with the same name, counts among the most appreciated and reproduced Bulgarian buildings from the communist times. What appears as a clever interpretation of the architectural context – Veliko Turnovo being one of the most picturesque and historically rich Bulgarian towns, which had actually highly impressed the young Le Corbusier during his *Voyage d’Orient* – might be read, in the same time, as a political statement. This connection to the site and the explicit symbolic language displayed by the hotel echo the nationalist politics led by the Bulgarian Communist Party in those years, a politics largely exploiting the discourse of a national past. The town of Veliko Turnovo, as the first capital of the Bulgarian Empire, occupied a crucial position in this narrative – and, as a matter of fact, not far from the hotel stands the monument of the Assenevtsi erected in 1985, a statuary group of vast dimensions, glorifying the

founders of the Second Bulgarian Empire. The populist, celebratory language of the sculpture suggested directly parallels with the proclaimed flourishing state of communist Bulgaria.<sup>11</sup>

Going back to contextualization, how should the architectural historian interpret such examples of multi-layered symbolism? Could (s)he ignore or simply separate the real effect of the *Zeitgeist*, which pushed the architects from Eastern Europe to embrace brutalist and later postmodern precepts, from the political endorsement operated by folklore or historicist quotations? The three architects briefly discussed above were clearly driven by the desire to synchronize their work with the new trends developing on the other side of the Iron Curtain, in the world of ‘valuable’ architecture. By doing so, they aimed not only towards the formal aesthetics of these architectures, but also to their new degree of meaningfulness. While seeking alternatives for modernism’s crisis, examples like Chandigarh or Japanese architecture of the 1960s also overtly addressed identity issues. However, in the heavily politicized context of the communist bloc, this new meaningfulness was hardly separable from the State ideology.

Thus, contextualization is not a (simple) strategy of visibility for the architectural historian working on Eastern Europe: it is a prerequisite tool of analysis.

### Back to contextualization: historiography of Eastern European architectures

Instrumentalizing architecture is neither a recent development and nor is it specific to socialist regimes. The fall of the Wall in 1989 did not totally erase it; on the contrary, in several circumstances, it appeared enhanced both by the rising nationalist tendencies and by the (same) aspiration for geo-cultural visibility. The gigantic project of Skopje 2014, drawing inspiration from the architectural styles of Classic Antiquity, is an eloquent example in this sense, being meant to affirm the national pride of the newly founded State after the dismantling of the

Slovak National Gallery:  
view towards the Esterházy palace.  
Photo: Carmen Popescu, 2013



Nicolae Porumbescu, the House of Culture in Suceava (1966-1969). *Arhitectura*, n° 4, 1969



Nicolae Porumbescu, the House of culture in Suceava (1966-1969): detail. *Arhitectura*, n° 4, 1969

former Yugoslavia.<sup>12</sup> Those interested in the urban and architectural transformations undertaken in this process of political reconstruction could certainly not discuss them without significantly using contextualization.

One could argue that the example of Skopje 2014 is too particular to be taken in account in assessing methodological matters related to Eastern Europe architecture(s). However, its ideological mechanisms and formal architectural vocabulary are in direct filiation with an entire architectural process (of identity) developed in Eastern Europe in the past two centuries.

But then, is contextualization the only manner to produce and speak about the architecture of this area?

I would argue that contextualization represented (and still does) a major tactical narrative, whose mechanics was activated by the positioning of the mainstream discourse, both in terms of architectural production and of historiography. If the major architectural surveys of the Cold War left aside, in most of the cases, the examples from this area, they did so not (only) for ideological reasons, but mainly because of the epistemology of their discourse, explicitly constructed on value hierarchies. The blank spot which marked (most of) Eastern Europe in mainstream historiography was the result of a lack of 'significance', in different respects, of the architectures produced here. In this sense, the rare occurrences referred to those Eastern European architectures related to the mainstream practice – otherwise said, to those examples bearing a certain significance.

Today, the obsession of being global, on the one hand, and the turn in the architectural historiography, on the other – the two being to a certain extent related – changed the perspective in terms of peripherality. However, the geopolitical mutations and the historiographical reassessments hardly changed the reading of the architectures

from Eastern Europe, which thus remain a marginal topic – one that still needs to be (heavily) contextualized in order to find a place in the now vast arena of mainstream historiography. Contextualization is required both by the 'ordinariness' of its (mass) production – which demands that the architectural historian integrates the approach and sensibility of the anthropologist or of the sociologist – and by the 'extraordinariness' of certain architectures produced here. Concepts such 'turbo-architecture', coined by Kai Vöckler in order to analyze post-1989 architecture in the Balkans (and mainly in the regions of the former Yugoslavia),<sup>13</sup> or 'Capitalist Realism', used by Goldhoorn and Meuser to describe the recent examples in post-soviet Russia,<sup>14</sup> are perfect examples of exploiting the peculiarities of the former communist bloc. As a matter of fact, the enthrallment for Socialist Realism, which opened the interest of Eastern Europe in the post-1989 historiography,<sup>15</sup> is not unrelated to backing extraordinariness as a quest for significance.

Even the ordinariness commonly associated with the architectural production of the communist bloc is sometimes read as being extraordinary. Socialist modernism might look dreary, but its image in the last years has been interpreted as concealing a tragic rift: visual artists along with architectural historians presented it as an unfinished project, one about failed promises, one which is itself about to vanish.<sup>16</sup> Contemplating the architectures of those years seems to intimate a set of reflections that question not only the political project in its complexity, but also the principles of modernism as an architectural project. Suddenly, the architecture behind the Iron Curtain reveals itself as exemplary for a reality larger than that of the communist bloc itself.

If contextualization might serve as a tactical approach, it surely constitutes a valuable methodological tool as well. Recent architectural



Nikola Nikolov, Veliko Turnovo hotel,  
Veliko Turnovo (1967). Photo Carmen Popescu, 2007

Nikola Nikolov, Veliko Turnovo hotel,  
Veliko Turnovo (1967): detail. Photo Carmen Popescu, 2007

historiography benefited immensely from its approaches, which helped in the forging of new methodologies. Contextualization is an important means for reaching another type of understanding of the object of our discipline. And as a matter of fact, Eastern Europe, as a field of study, contributed significantly to refining new approaches in architectural history. Ordinarity for instance – as I have briefly discussed above – was already present as an object of study in the Western milieu before 1989, due to the openings operated by sociologists and anthropologists like Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, but subsequently gained a new importance thanks to Eastern European topics. Mass-housing, as a paragon of ordinarity, stimulated an array of readings, from dealing with the problems raised by “XXL architecture” (including urban inventories) to assessing the ideals associated with it.<sup>17</sup> Politics, sociology and anthropology, matters of transfers – these are concrete examples of such methodologies developed through studying Eastern Europe. Let me cite only two such approaches which contributed to expand the field of thinking in our discipline: David Crowley’s political and anthropological interest in the communist bloc<sup>18</sup> and Ákos Moravánszky’s research on transfers from the Second to the Third World, a topic which is now continued and extended by Lukasz Stanek.<sup>19</sup>

I think that the architecture of the Eastern Europe, and implicitly its historiography, could still contribute to refining the tools and methodologies of our discipline. Instead of conclusions, I would say rather that our task is how to define these tools in order not only to speak about meaningful architecture – that is, an architecture provided with sense, because otherwise the interest in it would make no sense – but to speak meaningfully about architecture.

<sup>1</sup> Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford University Press, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Alofsin, *When Buildings Speak. Architecture as Language in the Habsburg Empire and Its Aftermath, 1867-1933*, University of Chicago Press, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> “My purpose here is to outline a method of historical and critical analysis” – Alofsin, *op. cit.*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Among the many references of these two authors, I will quote here only the following two: Ákos Moravánszky, *Competing Visions. Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture 1867-1918*, MIT Press, 1998; Friedrich Achleitner, *Region, ein Konstrukt? Regionismus, eine Pleite?*, Birkhäuser Verlag, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Alofsin, *op. cit.*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750-1950*, Faber and Faber Ltd, 1965.

<sup>7</sup> See Bruno Zevi, *Saper vedere l'architettura: saggio sull'interpretazione spaziale dell'architettura*, Einaudi, 1951.

<sup>8</sup> Henrieta Moravčíková, “Monumentality in Slovak Architecture of the 1960s and 1970s: authoritarian, national, great and abstract” in *Journal of Architecture*, special issue “Behind the Iron Curtain: architecture in the former communist bloc, between isolation and fascination”, guest-edited by Carmen Popescu, no. 14/1, 2009, pp. 45-66.

<sup>9</sup> See our articles, “Un patrimoine de l'identité: l'architecture à l'écoute des nationalismes”, in *Etudes balkaniques*, special issue “Architectural Heritage in the Balkans”, no. 12, 2005, pp. 135-172; “Maisons de la culture en Roumanie socialiste: une architecture de représentation”, in Richard Klein, Bernard Toullet (eds.), *Architecture de la culture. Relais du pouvoir européen*, Paris: Docomomo International, 2007, pp. 46-54.

<sup>10</sup> Porumbescu, N. and Vaida-Porumbescu, M., “Specificul în arhitectură”, in *Arhitectură*, no. 2, 1967, pp. 12-17.

<sup>11</sup> See Nikolai Vukov, Luca Ponchiroli, *Communism of Stone: Monuments in Bulgaria, 1944-1989. An Album*. Ponchiroli editori, Mantova, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> See the article published at <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/gallery/skopje-2014> (accessed on April 25 2013), which gives a series of links for this project.

<sup>13</sup> Kai Vöckler, *Prishtina is Everywhere: turbourbanism: the aftermath of a crisis*, Archis, 2008. See also, Kai Vöckler (ed.), *Balkanology*, special issue of *Swiss Architecture Museum*, no. 06, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Bart Goldhoorn and Philipp Meuser, *Capitalist Realism. New Architecture in Russia*, Dom Publishers, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> As a matter of fact, the interest in Socialist Realism preceded the fall of the Wall, as shows Anders Åman’s study, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era. An Aspect of Cold War History* (The Architectural History Foundation/MIT Press, 1992), which was first published in 1987 in Swedish (Carlsson Bokförlag).

<sup>16</sup> See the research project and the series of exhibitions with the same name, *Unfinished Modernizations. Between Utopia and Pragmatism*, curated by Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić. In relation to this, see also Vladimir Kulić, Maroje Mrduljaš and Wolfgang Thaler, *Modernism In-Between. The Mediator Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia*, Jovis, 2012. There are several articles, publications and exhibitions which constituted in the past years a field of ‘ruinophilia’ of communist architectures, exploring their moral and physical decline after 1989. See, among others, Richard Pare (with an essay by Jean-Louis Cohen), *The Lost Vanguard. Russian Modernist Architecture 1922-1932*, Monacelli Press, 2007; Armin Linke and Srđan Jovanovic Weiss, *Socialist Architecture: The Vanishing Act*, Ringer, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> See, among others, Mart Kalm and Ingrid Ruudi (eds.), *Constructed Happiness. Domestic Environment in the Cold War Era*, Estonian Academy of Arts, 2005; Kimberly Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011; Henrieta Moravčíková et al., *Bratislava Atlas of Mass Housing. Welcome to Prefab Story!*, Slovart, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> See Susan E. Reid and David Crowley (eds.), *Style and Socialism. Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*, Berg, 2000; David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (eds.), *Socialist Spaces. Sites of Every day Life in the Eastern Bloc*, Berg, 2002; David Crowley and Jane Pavitt (eds.), *Cold War Modern Design 1945 – 1975*, V&A Publishing, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> See “Export Architecture and Urbanism from Socialist Poland”, special issue of *Piktogram*, no. 15, 2010-2011, guest edited by Lukasz Stanek.

# Unfinished Modernisations: Reconstructing the Architectural History of Socialist Yugoslavia

Maroje Mrduljaš  
Vladimir Kulić  
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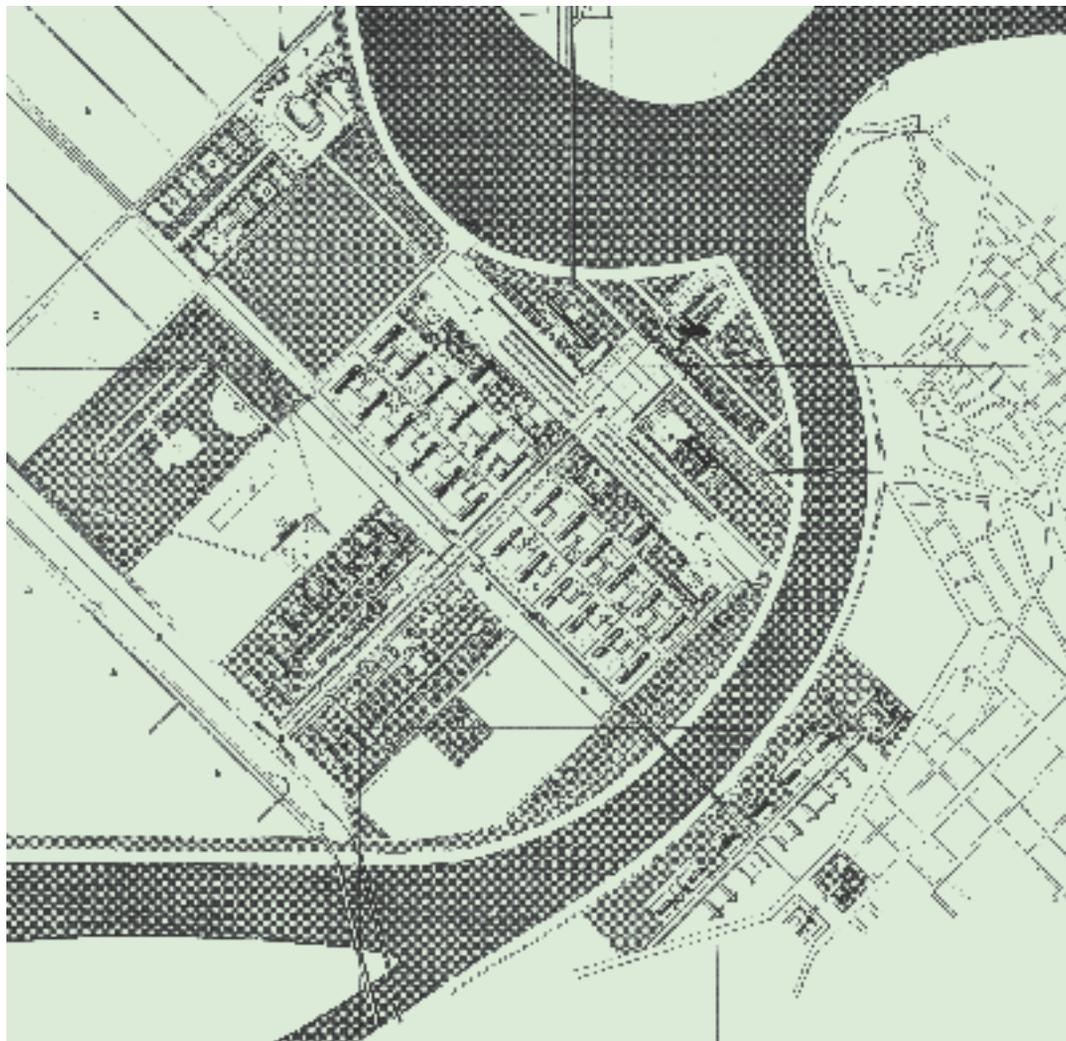
More than 20 years have passed since the break-up of Yugoslavia, a state that during the 20<sup>th</sup> century experienced every great turning point in the world—World War I, World War II, the collapse of the Cold War division, the crisis of neo-liberal capitalism—through its own traumatic internal transformation. The region was the testing ground for a variety of ideologies, thus continuing the already complicated history of an extremely heterogeneous territory in terms of ethnicity, culture and civilization.

We conceived the regional research project *Unfinished Modernisations—Between Utopia and Pragmatism: Architecture and Urban Planning in the Former Yugoslavia and the Successor States* in order to explore how the dramatic social and political changes affected the production of the built environment in the region. We centered the project around the keyword “modernization,” rather than modernism or modernity, as a way to highlight the transitory character of the processes rather than the finished products. We argue that Yugoslavia’s multiple unfinished modernizations, with their divergent and often contradictory goals, capture the defining character of the resultant built environments.

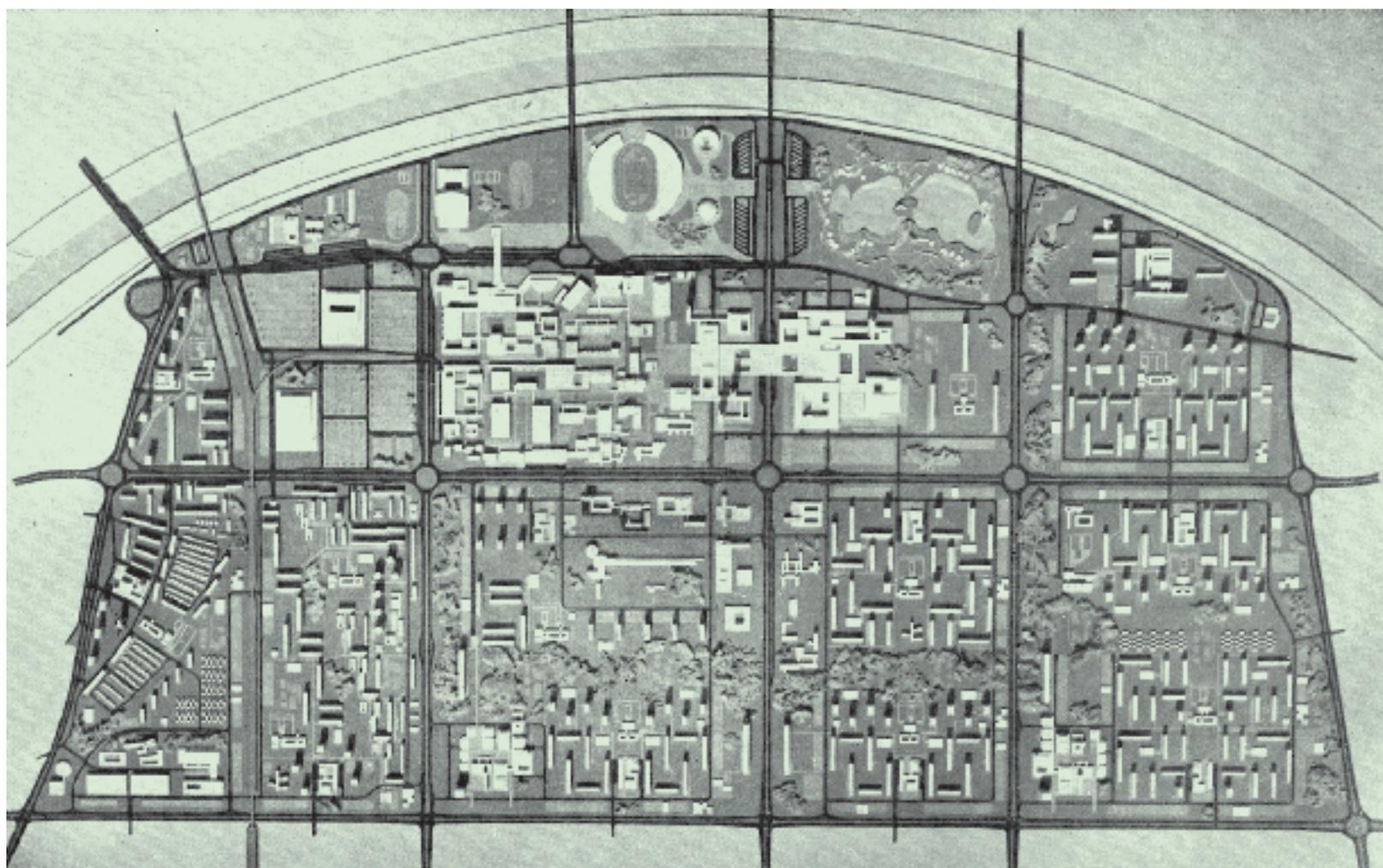
For the purpose of indicating the conceptual and theoretical framework, we understand modernism as a social formation, and modernity as an epoch with its pertaining values. The history of socialist Yugoslavia is still relatively poorly researched, and integrated interpretations are lacking in all fields. The processes of modernization, with their different

motivations and effects, offer an instructive perspective of the ways in which architecture and urban planning were linked to the social context. Modernity’s global diversities and variations manifest themselves particularly through precisely these processes. Here we consider modernity as the point of departure for modernization, and the various modernisms as its forms.

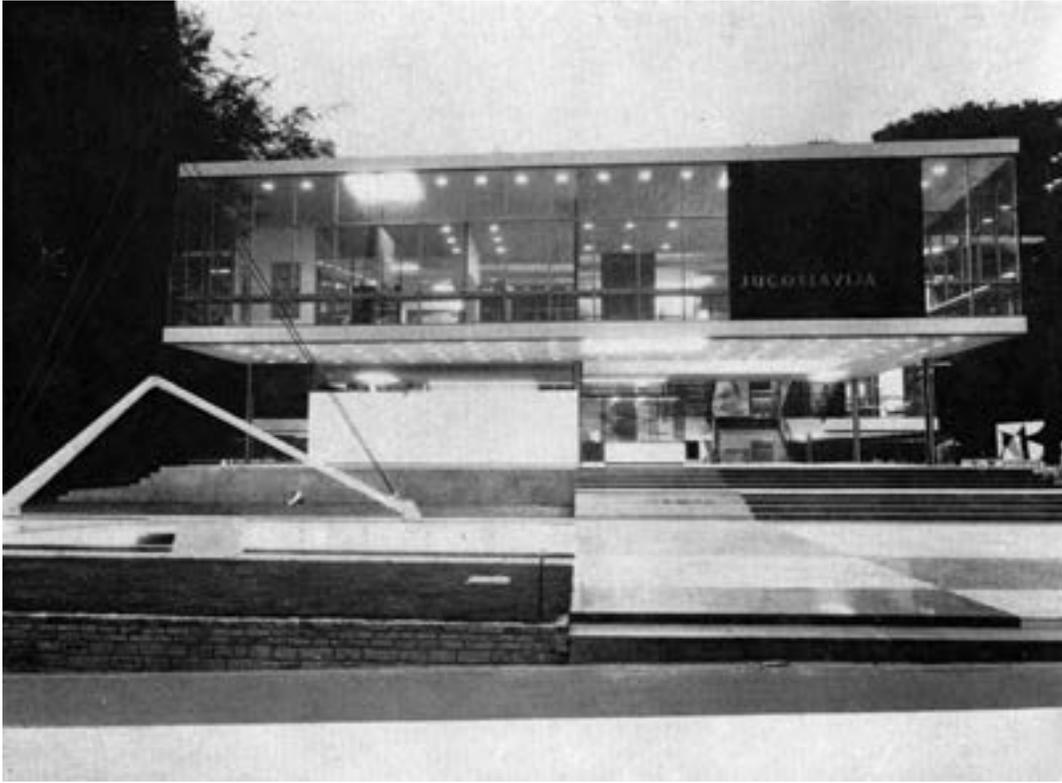
We refer to modernizations in the plural because we consider them to be multiple and fragmented processes: the history of the region is crucially marked by interruptions, attempts at establishing continuity, and the repeated revisions of the concepts of modernization. These processes, whether intentionally or consequentially, showed a certain degree of independence or divergence from how they played out in the international centers of modernity, which was essentially affected by Yugoslavia’s “inbetween” position: between the socialist east and the capitalist west, the economically developed north and the underdeveloped south, progressive cultural experiments and re-traditionalization, between innovative political conceptions and repressive mechanisms of ideological control. Under such conditions, an unprincipled blend of pragmatism and utopia may have seemed necessary both to the governmental elites that carried out the modernizations, and also to the widest strata of the citizenry who expected, if with anxiety and doubt, a better future from these modernizations. Our understanding of the Yugoslav context, then, is based on a reading of two positions



Edvard Ravnikar: Plan of New Belgrade, 1947



Zagreb City Planning Office: plan of New Zagreb, 1962



Vjenceslav Richter: EXPO 58 pavillion, Brussels, 1958



Bogdan Bogdanović: Jasenovac memorial, 1966

“between:” one related to the global and the other to the inner contrasts that fundamentally marked the history of the region.

There are several reasons why we believed that a project like this was necessary at this particular moment. The first is an attempt at intervening in the historical moment with the goal to historicize the recent past while it’s still relatively fresh and while many of its original protagonists are available for interview. Upon the collapse of the socialist state, the architectural history of Yugoslavia had a similar fate to that of another failed multinational state in the region, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Like Austria-Hungary, Yugoslavia was also a polycentric state characterized by a tension between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, which led to the construction of distinct architectural cultures of the constituent ethnicities, yet under a shared political-economic system, thus resulting in numerous commonalities and overlaps. After the collapse of both states, their closely intertwined cultures were partitioned according to new national borders and the resultant narratives aimed at stressing national selfhood and uniqueness. The built environment produced under the same socio-political conditions thus lost an important common dimension. Attempts at reconstructing the shared architectural history of the former Austro-Hungarian lands emerged only in the 1990s, seventy years after the collapse of the Empire. With *Unfinished Modernisations* we hope to shorten the lag for the former Yugoslavia.

The second reason for *Unfinished Modernisations* was to offer a wide-ranging contextual perspective on the architecture of the recent past and thus to avoid the flattening of the historical perspective that unavoidably results from the passage of time. The past several years have witnessed a veritable wave of coffee-table publications about the architectural heritage of the former socialist world that have flooded the international book market. Often produced by curious outsiders, these publications highlight what is spectacular, unusual, or simply weird about the architecture in question. In a telling example, Frederic Chaubin’s heavily advertized book on the architecture in the former Soviet republics terms its topic “cosmic communist constructions.”<sup>1</sup>

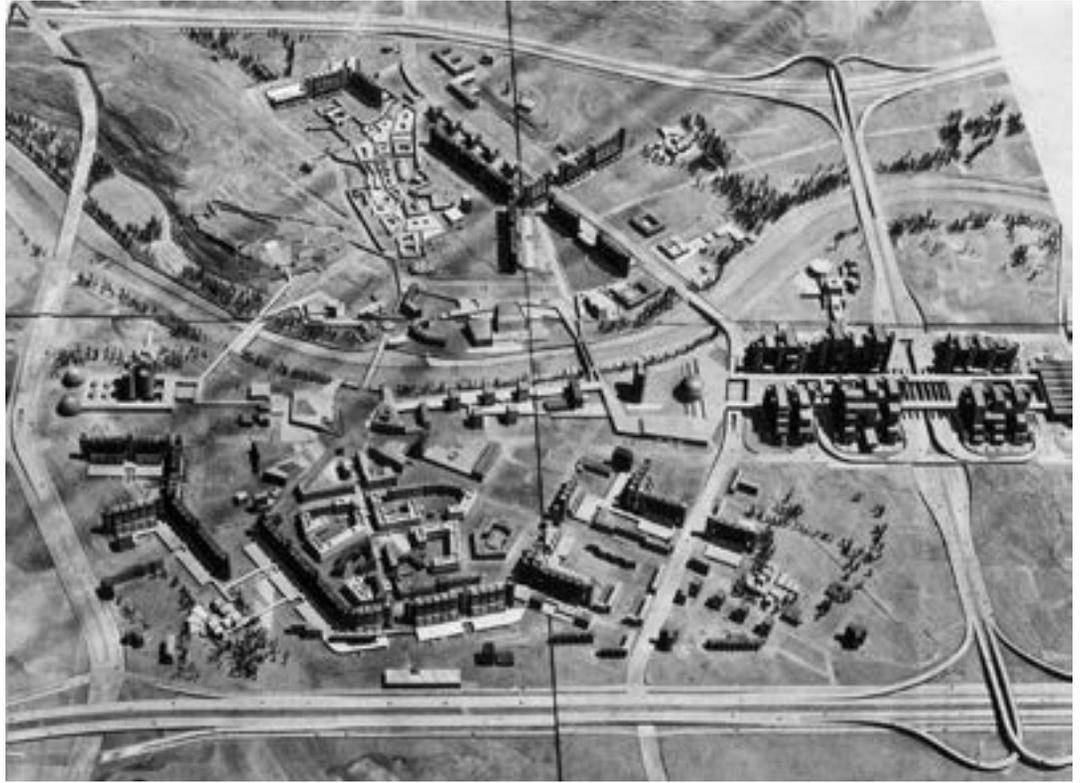
Another approach is to highlight the neglect and deterioration of architecture; the indicatively titled *Socialist Modernism* by the German photographer Roman Bežjak thus focuses on the “dirty magic of socialist architecture,” as one of the accompanying essays puts it.<sup>2</sup> Both approaches ultimately exoticize an unknown “other” that—no longer ideologically dangerous—can be enjoyed for its visual effect, but without much delving either into the background and context of its objects or into the reasons for

their current state. The architecture of the socialist period thus appears as something produced in a cultural, theoretical, and discursive vacuum, or at least something out of reach of contemporary interpretation, as if it were a product of a long-lost civilization whose documents we can no longer read.

At the time when we conceived *Unfinished Modernisations* in 2010, we were not fully aware that the project would be seen as an antidote to such simplified views, simply because most of the described publications had only appeared in the preceding two or three years. Yet our very point of departure was exactly the opposite from theirs. First, we were clearly aware that the architecture we were choosing to study was produced by rich architectural cultures operating under very particular historical conditions and with very particular social goals. Second, we understood that most of the built environments produced under socialism were not only not disappearing, but that they constitute a critical part of the existing urban fabric across the region, frequently more resilient than and superior to those produced in the more recent period under transitional and neoliberal economies. We asked ourselves: how is such resilience possible and what can we learn from it? What are the qualities and meanings of the built environments produced under socialism and how do they compare with the international "canon" of modern architecture, from which they are completely excluded?

There was another aspect that was built into the project from the very start, but that crystallized with increasing clarity as the project evolved. The title *Unfinished Modernisations* evokes Jürgen Habermas's qualification of modernity as an "incomplete project," and a project of emancipation.<sup>3</sup> We thus sought to evaluate the emancipatory qualities of the built environments inherited from the socialist past, and also to identify the reasons why the project of emancipation was in some instances only partly carried out, or even completely failed in others. We traced how the successive changes of the social context led to changes in the objectives of modernization, ultimately detecting a sequence of unfinished but mutually linked modernization projects easily discernible in today's physiognomy of the built environment.

Echoing its own theme of constantly shifting modernisations, the project was itself a "work in progress" that somewhat changed its course as it evolved. Originally we planned to pay equal attention to the successive transformations in the concepts of modernization from 1945 until today: the socialist revolution, the continuously evolving socialist state, its collapse in 1991, the post-socialist transition, and the current neoliberal economy. However, it soon



Kenzo Tange: Competition project for centre of Skopje, 1964



Energoprojekt: Lagos Fair, 1973-1977



Vladimir Braco Mušič, Marjan Bežan, Nives Starc:  
Split 3 housing district plan, model, 1968

became clear that the socialist period attracted the lion's share of attention from the majority of participants, not only because of its greater length than the subsequent periods, but also as an unavoidable point of comparison. Half-way through, the project's focus thus shifted completely towards the particular socialist modernizations, the complexity and multiplicity of which was nevertheless such that we could hardly exhaust it. Ultimately, the research was structured around the following five "spaces:" Spaces of representation

The section focused on architecture as the means of ideological representation. Besides analyses of buildings, it included parallel interviews with Kenneth Frampton and the Slovenian philosopher Rado Riha, as well as a film analysis of Yugoslav modernization, based on a film festival shown in conjunction with one of the project's conferences, held in Belgrade in 2011.

The break with the East Bloc in 1948 sparked the experiment of Yugoslav self-managing socialism. Both internal and external conditions urgently required the representation of the socialist order as modern, open and progressive. These messages were conveyed both through the aesthetics and the scale of massive construction programs, such as the new urban development of the twin cities of Novi Beograd and Novi Zagreb. (image Nikola Dobrović: Plan of New Belgrade, 1948); image Zagreb City Planning Office: plan of New Zagreb, 1962) Such endeavors had both pragmatic and symbolic value, embodying and representing the modernizing ambitions of the socialist society as on par with the leading international centers. Important building operations were used to legitimize the social order, and the best modernist architects were regularly commissioned for such tasks. In this way modernism became

a signifier of the proclaimed progressive nature of Yugoslav socialism, although this was not an official cultural policy, rather a logically established affiliation. Every architectural execution was presented as one more success of socialist modernization. In return for this aesthetic concession, projects that were particularly ambitious and advanced could be produced in areas of great symbolic significance, such as the building of the Federal Executive Council (the government) and the Defense Ministry in Belgrade, Revolution Square (today Republic Square) in Ljubljana, the incomplete City Hall complex in Zagreb, which was meant to be part of a new main city square lined with civic buildings, or the Museum of Liberation and the Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. The buildings of party administration, such as the headquarters of the League of Communists in Belgrade, Zagreb, Skopje and Titograd (today Podgorica) were also designed, each in their own way, in a modernist language.

Abroad, considerable attention was devoted to the appearances of Yugoslavia at great international exhibitions. Vjenceslav Richter and associates began designing neo-avant-garde projects for stands and pavilions at such shows as early as the late 1940s. Richter continued to investigate exhibition architecture in his internationally acclaimed projects for the Pavilions of Yugoslavia at the Brussels Expo in 1958 (image Vjenceslav Richter: EXPO 58 pavilion, Brussels, 1958) and the Milan Triennial in 1963. From the mid-1970s architectural representation shifted back to Yugoslavia as the country organized a number of high-profile international sporting and political events that affirmed its positioning in the global context. Among the most important of such events were the 1979 Mediterranean Games in Split, the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, the 1977 CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) Conference in Belgrade, and the 1987 University Games in Zagreb, all of them providing opportunities for major urban development and renewal projects.

An important segment in the symbolic legitimization of the system was the construction of monuments and memorials to the anti-Fascist war and the revolution. Their number was enormous and the quality and aesthetic expression uneven. Perhaps the most important memorials were built by leading artists and architects such as Vojin Bakić, Bogdan Bogdanović (image Bogdan Bogdanović: Jasenovac memorial, 1966) and Edvard Ravnikar. They designed complex non-figural environments that defied the conventional boundaries between architecture, landscape, and sculpture, their artistic achievement transcending the borders of the region.

### Spaces of global exchange

Socialist Yugoslavia's position between east and west had major effects on its architecture and urbanism. The country used its specific geopolitical position for the considerable advances in its technical capacities and culture. It facilitated encounters of the rival blocs, and even the merging and hybridization of their experiences. Its leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement opened up the chances for post-colonial collaboration in third world countries. Yugoslav architects underwent advanced training and specialization with the world's leading practitioners and institutions and kept up their international connections. It was highly symbolic that the famous last 10th meeting of CIAM was held in Dubrovnik in 1956, even though the participation of local architects was limited. The long tradition of the Zagreb Fair reached its peak at the height of the Cold War, between the mid 1950s and the early 1970s. The site was a testing ground for modernist architectural experiments in which architects from Yugoslavia and both Eastern and Western blocs built pavilions. Important fairs were also held in Belgrade and Ljubljana. The Biennial of Industrial Design (BIO) was first held in Ljubljana in 1964 and soon acquired an international reputation.

Exchange of exceptional symbolic importance were two large-scale urban planning projects, both co-financed by the United Nations. One was the plan for the reconstruction of Skopje after the disastrous earthquake of 1963, the other large scale regional plans for the Adriatic region. After an international competition, the leading Japanese architect Kenzo Tange and his team were commissioned to design the downtown area of Skopje; this was the first important export of modern urban planning concepts from Japan to the international context (image Kenzo Tange: Competition project for centre of Skopje, 1964). A number of Skopje's public buildings were donations from the various countries of the world, such as an elementary school designed by the Swiss modernist Alfred Roth and the Museum of Contemporary Art designed by the Polish Group Tigers<sup>4</sup>. Skopje thus enthused in a cosmopolitan air of collaboration. Exchange with international architectural discourse significantly contributed to the development local architectural scene. Plans for the Adriatic devised between 1967 and 1972 brought together local town planners and other experts, who had already drawn up a methodology for the analysis and development of the coast with international consulting teams from around the world. The project resulted in meticulously worked-out interdisciplinary plans aimed at the integrated planning of economic and urban growth

with special attention paid to protection of historical and natural environments.

Abroad, the Yugoslav construction industry, which was making progress thanks to modernization on its own territory, became competitive in the international markets too, mobilizing its political links with the Third World and East Bloc countries.

Construction companies offered a full range of services, including architectural and urban planning. Many of these companies, like Komgrap, Tehnika, Industrogradnja, Smelt and Energoinvest built successfully around the world. The largest one was Energoprojekt, which undertook jobs in over 80 countries. Some of these business connections have survived the collapse of Yugoslavia, but on a much smaller scale. (image Energoprojekt: Lagos Fair, 1973-1977)

### Politics of urban space

The section explored the evolution and contradictions in the development and governance of urban space. Large construction operations, although planned on rational principles, were in the formative decades of socialism essentially motivated both by pragmatic and political reasons. The appropriation of green field territories for new cities and settlements outstripped the real capacities of the period, and most likely the needs too. Often these areas still remain incomplete, with hollow spaces in the urban tissue that were never filled with the planned programs. Visions of new cities of utopian scale and ambitions certainly did change the social landscape and the demographic structure of society, for they



Janez Lajovic, Vladimir Mušič, Anton Pibernik, Savin Sever: prototype of housing unit, Flat for Our Circumstances exhibition, 1956

Andrija Čičin-Šajn, Žarko Vinček: Hotel Libertas model, Dubrovnik, 1968-72



enabled a major influx of the rural population into the cities, providing a supply of industrial labor and the formation of a new class of urban workers as generators of the development of socialist society. The vast energy put into these operations partially paid off: the basic planning concept of the “Radiant City” of sun, space and greenery was achieved and over the decades was perfected by humanizing the scale and spatial layouts. One of most notable examples of advanced “design for the largest number” is vast residential district Split 3, where the megastructural scheme included cozy pedestrian streets and variations of scales and architectural articulation (image Vladimir Braco Mušič, Narjan Bežan, Nives Starc: Split 3 housing district plan, model, 1968). Prefabricated building systems, such as IMS Žeželj and YU-61, were developed to facilitate their construction. “Public space” was abundant: common ownership of the land allowed for generous open spaces for all, but only in rare instances was that space treated as an active social space of the city. The socialist system, moreover, did not manage to achieve a rhythm of urbanization such as to ensure everyone the right to housing, and illegal and deregulated building was tacitly tolerated or ignored.

One of the consequences of the first wave of mass urbanization during the second half of the 1950s and during the 1960s was the development of the construction industry, which became one of the most powerful branches of the economy. With the economic reforms carried out in the mid-1960s, the influence of the building firms on the production of the built environment was ever more pronounced. The large architectural offices enabled effective planning and technological optimization, but in general did not stimulate conceptual experiments. Although it was constantly pointed out that Yugoslav socialism was supposed to lead towards a “withering away of the state” and to encourage the various forms of social participation, management of the space was in fact technocratic and top-down oriented.

### Design of spatial practices

This section focused on the design of the facilities for everyday life, predominantly housing and mass tourism. Urbanization left a particularly deep mark on housing. At the height of modernization, what is colloquially called “crane-urbanism” and the mass produced architecture of the housing estates and blocks produced visually and typologically uniform environments Yugoslavia-wide. These environments may not have been the complete realization of the ideal modern city, but the advantages derived from reliable standards and the lavishness of public space did ensure a sound level of residential building. The floor plans of flats were on the whole at

a high level and their continuous refinement aimed at pulling the maximum spatial qualities from limited resources. Modern housing included the design of furnishings, and was gladly taken as a signifier of general social progress. In 1956, the first all-Yugoslav conference on housing construction was organized in Ljubljana under the title a Flat for Our Circumstances, (image Janez Lajovic, Vladimir Mušič, Anton Pibernik, Savin Sever: prototype of housing unit, Flat for Our Circumstances exhibition, 1956) which included a competition for dwellings, equipment and sanitary fittings. A number of educational exhibitions with similar topics followed in other cities. With the advancement of urbanization, housing was addressed in an interdisciplinary way by incorporating substantial sociological and psychological research. These researches problematized the ways in which modernization affected or reshaped traditional social formations with the “nuclear family”, the presumed basic cell of socialist society. At the social level, egalitarianism in the allocation of housing led to social heterogeneity in most of the modernist housing estates, which is largely preserved to this day. Housing construction was accompanied by the production of welfare buildings that formed the basic infrastructure of community services, such as kindergartens, schools, and clinics.

Particularly advanced architecture was produced in situations with complex programs: educational institutions and hospital complexes. The economic development and the increasing openness of society instigated new social practices like mass tourism and consumerism, indicating a shift from collectivism to a more individualist society. This process was accompanied by the expansion of architectural typologies including row-houses, terraced houses and mixed density developments. These were alternatives to modernist slab-and-tower settlements, but also to illegal construction. As a result of the international growth of mass tourism, the Yugoslav coastline became a desirable and suitable destination for visitors from Eastern and particularly from Western Europe. Tourism was one of the main sources of hard currency. Tourist architecture in the period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s became an area of vigorous experimentation with results worthy of international consideration. Thanks to regional planning, the coast remained protected against excessive urbanization. (image Andrija Čičin-Šajn, Žarko Vinček: Hotel Libertas, Dubrovnik, 1968-72) Architectural research of buildings for commerce and the growth in their scale from supermarket to department store to prototype malls developed practically in a straight line from the end of the 1950s to the disintegration of socialism.

### Yugoslav architectural space

Should the former Yugoslavia be studied as a whole, considering that its architecture comprised distinct and authentic architectural cultures associated with the national architecture schools? Socialist modernization enabled the emergence of such cultures, which were further aided by the cultural autonomy and high status of the architectural profession. By the early 1920s, there were three architectural schools: in Belgrade (1897), Zagreb (1919) and Ljubljana (1920), followed immediately after World War II by those in Sarajevo (1949) and Skopje (1949). At the beginning of the 1980s a sixth school opened in Priština. All had similar polytechnic curricula, and the mastery of architectural design skills was based on gradually completing increasingly complex typological tasks, indicating a pragmatic education applicable in practice. In spite of their broad similarities, the schools developed distinct aesthetic and conceptual profiles. Such heterogeneity had several sources. Through most of the socialist period, all schools subscribed to a modernist ideology, but at the same time each drew on the greatly differing local traditions of urban cultures and vernacular forms. Leading creative personalities also greatly affected their profiles. Finally, individual schools gravitated towards different international centers where their leading architects completed their advanced training. For example, Ljubljana had contacts with Scandinavia, Zagreb with the Netherlands, and Skopje with the USA. All of Yugoslavia’s architectural scenes were well informed of and interested in current international goings-on.

Architecture in Yugoslavia was in no way a monolithic cultural formation; it was largely divided into individual national schools and scenes according to the federal organization of the state. What brought these separate scenes together, however, was a common socio-political context, which enabled the cultural autonomy of architecture and provided the general framework of modernization with its common programs, standards, and resources. Architects worked predominantly within their own republics and professional organizations, such as the architects’ associations, were organized at the level of the republic. The intensity of exchange between the different republics fluctuated; during the first post-war years it was strong, particularly when it came to aiding the foundation of new schools in Sarajevo and Skopje; in the subsequent years it had its ebbs and flows. Certain pan-Yugoslav phenomena emerged out of such circumstances, for example the unique success that Slovene architects had at architectural competitions around the country in the 1960s and 1970s, resulting in some significant executions. Despite a certain parochialism in all of the republics,

architectural competitions, congresses, exhibitions, and awards organized at the federal level allowed for regular exchanges. (image Marko Mušič: University Complex, Skopje, 1974)

### After socialist Yugoslavia

After the collapse of socialism and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the region entered a transition period marked by increasing differences among the newly established independent states. The western part has gradually stabilised, but the central and eastern parts are stagnating and even regressing economically. A strong division into East and West has been reinstated by the Schengen frontier on the eastern border of Slovenia, soon to be moved to the eastern border of Croatia. This has led to a kind of return to the pre-Yugoslav state of affairs. The dissolution of Yugoslavia has brought the countries of the region, from their one-time 'place in-between', once again into a provincial position. During the 1990s and in some places still today, the various degrees of re-traditionalisation and political and cultural regression have denied the achievements of the prior waves of modernisation. But the economic and cultural connections, interrupted during the collapse of Yugoslavia, have been recently gradually re-established, and the attitude to the joint socialist past, in spite of continued resistance, is ever less a taboo topic. Across the region, new actors in the real-estate business have transformed the built environment. At first, it was the local capital created during the controversial privatization in the 1990s, as well as the pettier private initiative that exploited the planning deregulation. The political normalization brought the inflow of international capital, which had an effect on the building boom trend up to the recent financial crisis.

Under such circumstances, both the physical remains and the lessons of previous uncompleted modernisations seem superior to the current situation, both in terms of concrete concepts of urban development, as well as the dominant politics of space that are ever more narrowing the realm of the public good. The occasional outstanding achievements in contemporary design show the continuity of architectural culture, while research into the built environment is turning to analyses of phenomena such as informal building and the active involvement of citizens in decision making about city development. There has been a kind of about-turn in the understanding of the role of urbanisation as against the ideology of the socialist period: pure pragmatism is the only motive for urban development, and any critical counter-proposals take on a utopian character.



Marko Mušič: University Complex, Skopje, 1974

<sup>1</sup> Frederic Chaubin, *Cosmic Communist Constructions Photographed* (Cologne: Taschen, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Inka Schube, ed., *Roman Bezjak: Socialist Modernism* (Ostfildern bei Stuttgart, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> See: Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," in: Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib, eds., *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Jerzy Morzynski, Eugeniusz Wierzbicki, Waclaw Klyszewski

# On Difficulties in Writing the History of Romanian Architecture

Ana Maria Zahariade

"All [of these countries] seem to be governed by the same principle of the *identity crisis*, of the conflictive absorption of contradictory cultural waves, of a provincial model, low-keyed, but haunted by failure and lack of perspective. All seem to struggle between the majoritarian indifference and the elite's schizophrenia, all seem to have something in common, but none of them knows the others, as if they were under a common curse: resonating with distant and disdainful centres instead of relating to ignored brothers."

Sorin Alexandrescu, "Identitate în ruptură"<sup>1</sup>

I am not the only one to be convinced that there is, in the CEE region, a transnational dimension still hidden and insufficiently explored, a dimension substantiating in a particular way what we generally and restrictively call "national" architectural developments. In many respects and in parallel moments, countries in Central and Eastern Europe had comparable evolutions "at the crossroad of cultures"; they behaved in accordance with a similar ethos, analogous influences and common constraints. They are still in this position, lamenting separately their "provincialism". In these circumstances, I do believe that only in a comparative context can the historian bring to the fore the specific meanings and do justice to the negotiation between the local and the transnational, which could stimulate a more accurate and richer questioning of the countries' respective architectural developments.

With this in mind, I decided to skim through the Romanian "histories of architecture", offering some snapshots meant to call into question our historiographical tradition, its manner of relating to the past and the present, and the way we could geometrise and problematise meaningfully our modern development. The last twelve years witnessed a growing interest of a new generation of researchers in the history of modern architecture, materialised in a meaningful number of remarkable studies, published volumes or doctoral theses. They encompass a number of original approaches, and a significant amount of novel material and information whose importance trespasses the arbitrariness of the political frontiers. Please consider this paper as an invitation to the much-needed "comparative context," the lack of which we felt painfully in our research. That is why I am here, trying to break the frustrating isolation that has been a dimension of our historiographical tradition.

## Isolation as historiographical tradition

The systematic recording of the architectural past is a recent discipline in Romania; it was born in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fostered by the ethos of the eruptive modernisation of the late 1800s. The whole process was administrated by a particular ideology, in which a strong "idea of modernisation" was meant to bridge the gap between the new national entity and Europe; it was pragmatically, but also imaginarily, oriented towards a future symbolised by Western civilisation, and, consequently, it rejected anything that might have

evoked the Ottoman past. When this sort of "European awareness" collided with the deeply rooted order of the Byzantine, Orthodox and medieval traditions, it provoked an anxious frame of mind, a specific state of modernity, that would underlie the Romanian modern culture as a basic (and contradictory) dimension.

Consequently, the historians who set the bases of the discipline (Nicolae Ghica-Budești, Gheorghel Balș, Griogore Ionescu<sup>2</sup>) conveyed inherently in their narratives the particularities, inconsistencies and fluctuations of this substratum, such as: (1) a keen, even compulsive, search for national identity (which is problematic to assess in the context of three historically separated provinces<sup>3</sup>); (2) a timorous acceptance of idealised Western models (that Sorin Alexandrescu put daringly in terms of *hierarchy of power* historically settled<sup>4</sup>); (3) a paradoxical "rejection-adherence" binomial, concerning both circumferent cultural transfers and Western influences (following the dynamics of the modern identity construction and of the reference points it used).

With such dilemmatic premises (difficult to resolve), and busy with the recording of the architectural heritage (a ground-breaking endeavour seen as a "patriotic duty" in itself), the architectural historiography of the first generation remained basically self-centred, but in an ambiguous way: its self-centrism was adulterous, discriminatory and idiosyncratic. Here are some indications:

(1) The Herderian idea that drove the national discourse was contradicted by the very aim of "becoming European" (to be read "West European"), by the eagerness to assimilate the Western models as signs of modernisation, and in historiography, by the attempt to insert the old architectural tradition into the Western stylistic patterns.

(2) In order to apply a proper geometry to a heritage that did not fit the Western patterns of architectural evolution, authors like Gr. Ionescu (whose 1982 edition is still the most complete history of architecture in Romania) tried to find its evolutionary key and its roots in the "national" vernacular tradition. We are in full ambiguity: the "national roots" were mainly looked for only in the *Old Kingdom* (Moldavia and Wallachia). Transylvanian architecture was not present at all in his 1937 history, in spite of the national identity of *Greater Romania* that was at stake; it appeared for the first time in 1959, in a history of feudal art<sup>5</sup>.

(3) The neighbouring cultural areas were generally neglected, while an idealised (at least at the beginning) Western Europe remained “the” term of reference. However, its status was also unstable: this “European awareness” varied following various ideological shifts.

In any case, Romanian historiographical interest in the neighbouring cultural areas was largely absent: some of them were rejected as contaminated with the Ottoman past (the Balkans); others were viewed with indifference (part of *Mitteleuropa*); others were feared (the Soviet Union). The only well-known exception to the rule was the historian Gheorghe Balș, the first and only author to have placed Romanian architecture in the context of its nearby influences<sup>6</sup>. His contextual approach has been resumed quite recently as a research method (Gh. & Victor Sebestyen, *Arhitectura Renașterii în Transilvania*, Bucharest, Ed. Academiei RSR, 1963, 251p.), and especially since 1989. The recent examples are generally “micro-histories”; still they are meaningful (Brătuleanu, Anca, *Portraits of Romanian Princes in Foreign Collections*, Bucharest, ICR, 2010, 80p.).

As a general rule, the isolationist drive, the “autochthonist” state of mind, remained a persistent dimension of Romanian historiography, furthered by the various politically triggered *nationalisms*, recurrently resurfacing until today and biasing historical interpretations<sup>7</sup>. Neither the adherence to modernism, which was almost concomitant throughout the whole region, nor the existence of the CIAM East sections induced historians to look attentively over the frontiers. Furthermore, Romania’s entrance into the USSR orbit together with seven other CEE countries<sup>8</sup> should have favoured a cross-border dialogue. Paradoxically, it deepened the self-centrism. In my opinion, these are matters to be substantiated through future studies in order to penetrate their inner reasons and their “chemistry”; obviously, these are topics to be investigated cooperatively.

### The stylistic approach

This introverted approach encountered a specific problem that drove the architectural historiography towards a descriptive narrative, called on to solve or to avoid (according to the author) what I termed the “stylistic predicament”. It is an avatar of the aforementioned “project of modernisation” and of the massive architectural acculturation it triggered. Almost concomitant imports of Renaissance, post-Renaissance, Enlightenment and 19<sup>th</sup>

century architectural models and forms were eagerly and unselectively imitated and amalgamated with juvenile, frivolous freedom, in the absence of the classical tradition’s rigors; their synthesis in certain particular (if not original) approaches occurred later. This resulted in a puzzling formal syncretism (especially in the Old Kingdom, again), denying any accepted chronological or stylistic geometry. Historians’ attempts to place this syncretism in Western patterns of artistic evolution were pitiful failures<sup>9</sup>. One consequence of this hardly solvable misfit was an overrated attention to architectural forms and to stylistic and aesthetic matters; eventually it favoured a prevalent descriptive approach.

On the other hand, the stylistic imports were conjoined with the loss of their original meanings; they acquired new, ideologically convenient significations through less-than-innocent negotiations between the local and the “faraway trans-national” – a bargaining process from which the neighbouring countries were absent. This semantic game has remained a constant feature of Romanian modern development, since, with different nuances and orientations, it continued under Communism and still prevails today. Yet architectural history did not notice it, and this indifference (or misunderstanding) was transmitted to the histories of the next generation. The construction of specific meanings was approached only after 1989, marking a turning point in our historiography. Hand in hand with the increasing volume of novel information recently uncovered, numbers of studies and publications have tried to interrogate and to characterise the “atypical” by spotlighting the connotations architectural development acquired in the local context (political, ideological, social and cultural), thus overstepping the inherited interpretative limits. *Centenar Horia Creangă 1892-1992*, (Nicolae Lascu, AM. Zahariade, Anca Bocăneț, Bucharest, Simetria, 1992, 219 p.), *Marcel Janco Centennial 1895-1995* (collective volume, Bucharest, Simetria, 1992, 148 p.), *Le style national roumain. Construire une Nation à travers l’Architecture 1881-1945*, (Carmen Popescu, Presses Universitaires de Rennes & Simetria, 2004, 370p.), *The space of Romanian modernity* (Carmen Popescu, Fundatia Arhitect Design, 2011, 183p.); *Art Deco or well-tempered modernism* (Mihaela Criticos, Simetria, 2011), Horia Moldovan, *Architecture in Wallachia, 1831-1866. Johann Schlatter’s activity* (UAUIM doctoral thesis, 2008) are only some examples (mentioned in chronological order).

### Theoretical weakness

According to Sorin Alexandrescu, theoretical elaboration seems to be negligible or condemned to banality in the “peripheral cultures”, despite having always played a decisive role in the culture of “the centre”<sup>10</sup>. I cannot really recognise the full worth of this idea for the other CEE countries, as I have found original discursive approaches (an interesting matter to be studied comparatively), but this appreciation is certainly pertinent to the Romanian case, and constitutes a problematic feature of our historiographical tradition; it is a matter of theoretical fragility.

Most of our architectural historians were architects (with a few exceptions, they still are); some of them were even successful practitioners. Or, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the modern architect (as he was born in the Renaissance) entered Romanian society replacing the traditional “master mason”, he generally came from Paris – frequently as DPLG (“diplômé par le gouvernement”). He was indebted to the theoretical background of the Ecole des Beaux Arts eclecticism, which has never pretended to have settled on a generalising theory. On the contrary, this background fostered a certain formal relativism and permissiveness, which was all the more effective in Romania due to the absence of a classical tradition. In the new national School of Architecture, theory was taught by translating or directly reading Gaudet, as the intellectual society was largely francophone. Even if one can say that this relativism catalysed to exuberance the formal syncretism and local creative freedom, it certainly did not stimulate theoretical reflection. A more or less “original” theory – the first form of an articulated local deliberation – emerged a little later, in connection with the search for a “national architecture”. Though the discourse took rather essayistic forms, it grew as a vivid ideological debate (“national” vs. “imported”), and was sharpened between the two World Wars when it was confronted with the Modern Movement’s ideas and forms, which were seen as a new stylistic import. Thus, the ideological core of the deliberation remained confined almost exclusively within the limits of the architectural aesthetics. Generally, forms/styles were supposed to play a crucial, innovative role; endowed with all worthy meanings, they obnubilated other dimensions of the modern architectural ethos. Even the most intellectual and original group, centred around the *Simetria* magazine<sup>11</sup>, proffered no substantial exception.

Meanwhile, born in close proximity to the policies of modernisation, the urban thinking firmly matured under the pressure of city development, evolving from its earlier form of urban regulations to remarkably articulated theoretical and historical writings. In fact, here we can find a critical modern theory, where the local development was analysed and appreciated in a larger European context.<sup>12</sup> This helpful guideline for the interpretation of our modern architectural advances did not contaminate the architectural historiography, which was concerned with objects and their aesthetics<sup>13</sup>.

The recuperation of the urban theory and of the city is another recent historiographical endeavour, which has been given a remarkable start: Lascu, Nicolae, *Urban Regulations and development, Bucharest 1831-1952* (UAUIM doctoral thesis, 1997) and *Bucharest boulevards till the 1<sup>st</sup> WW*, Bucharest, Simetria 2012; Popescu, Toader, *The Romanian railway project. Spatial and cultural faces of modernity within the planning and functioning of the railway system. 1842 – 1916* (UAUIM doctoral thesis, 2012); Sebestyen, Monica *The Public Monument and The Public Space. Bucharest 1831-1948* (UAUIM doctoral thesis, 2012).

Pre-war urban thinking gradually surrendered under Communist pressure, as did architectural theory (which was weaker, and thus easier to defeat). With rare and enciphered exceptions, we can hardly speak about theory during that period, and even less of criticism. Thus, theory failed to confer a reflective, critical dimension to the historical discourse, while its unilateral inclination towards aesthetics justified the descriptive approaches and the concentration on the surface of forms.

### Communist biases: the history of modern architecture

Up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW, the main historiographical concern was the recording and the interpretation of the disturbing variety within the ancient architectural heritage; the 19<sup>th</sup> century was too close and all Western stylistic imports were endowed with a modernising dimension. These semantic transfers made more problematic the interpretation of what exactly “modern architecture” was in Romania and when it started. In a way, the dilemma was partially simplified after WWI, once modernism entered the architectural scene; the new formal import was seen as a Western “foreign body” in stylistic (and ideological) conflict with the national style, even if the genuineness of the latter was equally disputable. Yet, this did not simplify the problem of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which could explain why Gr. Ionescu ended his 1937 history with the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>14</sup>; certainly the time was too short, also. Modern architecture had to wait until after the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW, when the history of architecture

was resumed in a new context – that proved to be less favourable to its development.

The history of modern architecture started in 1965 with Gr. Ionescu’s second history<sup>15</sup>, and added its own problematic issues, against the background of new ideological constraints. Though claiming *internationalism*, the new regime paradoxically enhanced the historiographical self-centrism, as I already mentioned. At the same time, this new instance of modernisation, which bore the standard of a resentful “new”, forced the separation of the Communist architectural development from its pre-war precedents; no continuity was allowed. History was thus split into two distinct narratives, each condemned to its own isolation.

The first, the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the interwar period, became, to say the least, a highly unfashionable topic. Modernist development and its relation to the “bourgeois” avant-garde were especially unwelcome. Gr. Ionescu, as he was a remarkable modernist architect, daringly introduced it in his second history in 1965; yet, from the same personal perspective, he missed the meanings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He resumed the topic in 1982, in his third edition<sup>16</sup>, and followed it by a review of the communist developments, in which he avoided soberly any evaluation in ideological terms. Published a year earlier, Gh. Curinschi-Vorona’s history<sup>17</sup> is an example of a purely Stalinist approach to the same period, using the Stalinist rhetoric.

After 1989, the interwar modernism resurfaced vigorously; highly overrated, it underwent a transfiguration, up to considering it *unique* in the CEE context. A simple visit to the neighbouring countries would have re-settled the balance. Though a number of new volumes (starting with the aforementioned catalogues of the two centennial exhibitions *Horia Creangă*, 1992, and *Marcel Janco*, 1996, and continuing with Machedon, Luminita, Scoffham, Ernie, *Romanian modernism*, 1999, MIT Press, and Popescu, Carmen, 2011 op.cit.), exhibitions, and international colloquia tried to establish a more objective viewpoint, the necessary comparative perspective is still waiting to be studied.

The second period, that of the Communist development – decently glorified by Gr. Ionescu, who introduced it in his 1982 final history, and encomiastically recorded by Curinschi-Vorona in the same year – was not only shunned after 1989, but also blamed: all of Communism’s sins were indiscriminately wrapped around the architecture of that period, thus distorting its perception, as well as attracting its unselective destruction.

The first historical approaches to this recent but quantitatively dominant heritage focused passionately on the exoticism of the *House of the People* or

on the dictator's psychological abyss; they were followed by more objective readings in light of the universal dimensions of totalitarianism (Ioan, Augustin, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project. The Romanian case*, Bucharest, ICR, 2009, 198 p.).

Without denying the validity of this interpretation, but rather by nuancing and enriching the understanding of local architectural development during Communism, serious archival explorations have, in recent years, surpassed this approach. Today, the number of such inquiries is growing. The history of architecture under Communism has turned out to be extremely provocative, yet it is interspersed with new difficulties: from biased and unreliable records to questions on how to write the history of an epoch which is ideologically suspect to such an extent.

### Communist biases: intimacy with the political ideology

In 1968, Manfredo Tafuri wrote that the architectural historian has to be "part and parcel of the profession of political theorist"<sup>18</sup>. I did not understand how true this dictum is until I started my own research. In a context where the whole system of architecture was ideologically administrated and controlled, and where theory was replaced by political dogma, we have to ask how it was possible to have built an architecture presenting similarities with the development in the "free world". Such an interrogation requires the historian to take the measure of the amoebic and unstable space of professional freedom that infiltrated the framework of political constraints; eventually it is about a particular form of complicity between the profession and the establishment, or about a sort of subversion, hard to decipher and to geometrize. It seems impossible to establish a meaningful chronology of the period in any other way than by gauging the depths of this entangled and dramatic relationship, its dynamics and its specific outcomes. In my opinion, this is a key issue in geometrizing the history of that period (Zahariade, Ana Maria, *Architecture in the Communist Project. Romania 1944-1989*, Bucharest, Simetria, 2010, 144 p.). To this end, several remarkable doctoral theses have succeeded in bringing to the fore decisive political and architectural documents, most of them seen for the first time; they have thus cast new light on the specific background of this problematic development: Tulbure, Irina, *Architecture and Urbanism in Romania between 1944 -1960: Constraint and experiment* (2011, UAUIM); Miruna Stroe, *Miruna, Housing between Design and Political Decision. Romania 1954-1966* (2012, UAUIM); Irina Băncescu, Irina, *Waterfront Problematic Issues. Aspects of the Evolution of the Romanian Seaside during the Communist Period* (2012, UAUIM); Răută, Alexandru,

*Negotiating the Civic Center. Architects and Politicians in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Romania* (2012, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven); Simiraș, Mihnea *Recovering neighborhood in the districts of collective dwellings in Bucharest. Human activities, social relationships and space* (2012, UAUIM)<sup>19</sup>.

In this manner, what was a descriptive discourse has become a reflective narrative – a political history of architecture. It is still an incomplete mosaic of insights, waiting to be completed; it is waiting to be understood in a larger context as well.

How much richer would the interpretation of this new material be in the comparative context I mentioned at the beginning! Again reading Sorin Alexandrescu, the discourse can no longer be only about several "provincial" architectural cultures; it should be about a shared "culture of margins", about a cultural construction different from the cultural construction "in the centre"<sup>20</sup>. It must be about a more encompassing interpretative perspective, which trespasses the narrowness of the national borders.

As I am still under the charm of the recent AzW Congress and the exhibition on *Soviet modernism*<sup>21</sup>, both of which have shown how many unexpected directions can be explored in a comparative context, my point is that our architectural history is still problematic because its issues are insufficiently problematized comparatively and transnationally. Since to a certain extent CEE countries share a common background and past, networking and starting common projects becomes essential for surpassing our ignorance of each other, for developing a critical apparatus, for gauging our distinctiveness, and for writing our architectural histories.

Do we ask the right questions? I shiver when I recall George Santayana's frequently quoted words: *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Published in *Secolul XX* magazine, nr. 10-12, 1999 – 2000, București

<sup>2</sup> Nicolae Ghica-Budești, *Evoluția arhitecturii în Muntenia și Oltenia*, I-IV, „Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice” (BCMI), 1927, 1930, 1932, 1936; Gheorghe Balș: 1922, (with N. Iorga), 1925, 1928, see details infra; Grigore Ionescu, *Istoria arhitecturii Românești din cele mai vechi timpuri până la 1900*, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> Present Romania is the result of two political unifications: the 1859 union of Moldavia and Wallachia that created the so called Old Kingdom (United Principalities, from 1859 to 1881, and the Kingdom of Romania, after 1881), and the 1918 union with Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina (the so called Greater Romania).

<sup>4</sup> Alexandrescu, Sorin, *Identitate în ruptură, Mentalități românești postbelice*, București, Ed. Univers, 2000, 320 p.

<sup>5</sup> Virgil Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Țările Române*, I, București, Ed. Academiei, 1959, 1020 p. Before 1959, only some minor Transylvanian authors had written, starting with the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, on the wooden churches that were considered Romanian-Orthodox architectural works.

<sup>6</sup> Gheorghe Balș: *Histoire de l'art Roumain ancien (XIV-XIX)*, Paris, E de Brocard, 1922 (with N. Iorga); *Bisericile lui Ștefan cel Mare*, with a summary in French, in BCMI, XVIII, 1925, fasc. 43-46, 331 p. și 1926, 330 p.; *Bisericile și mănăstirile moldovenești din veacul al XVI-lea*, with a summary in French, București, 1928, 397 p., 425 il. (in BCMI, XXI, 1928, fasc. 55 – 58). For details see Brătuleanu, Anca, *Quelques notes sur la modernité de la recherche architecturale de George Balș*, in *Series Byzantina X*, Warsaw, Neriton, under printing (by courtesy of the author). To some extent, Gr. Ionescu also understood these limits in his later works, which is noticeable in the title of his main opus: from *History of Romanian architecture*, in 1937 and 1967, to *History of architecture on the Romanian territory*, in 1982.

<sup>7</sup> Constantin Joja, *Actualitatea tradiției arhitecturale Românești*, București, Ed Tehnică, 1984, or Silvia Păun's post 1989 chimeric writings are such examples.

<sup>8</sup> The number of 7 satellite countries takes into account the political geography of the time.

<sup>9</sup> O. Tafuri, *Istoria artelor*, Iași, s.n., 1922, (vol I-II) 419+592p., where the author summons all his science to make the architectural evolution in Wallachia and Moldavia fit the Western stylistic epochs.

<sup>10</sup> Sorin Alexandrescu, op.cit.

<sup>11</sup> The *Simetria-Caiete de arta și critică* magazine, founded and directed by G.M. Cantacuzino, published between 1939-1946 (with the collaboration of O. Doicescu, Matila Ghyka, Tudor Vianu, P.E. Miculescu, Marica Cotescu, Haralamb Georgescu)

<sup>12</sup> Cincinat Sfințescu (1887-1955), *Urbanistica generală: evoluția, igiena, economia și circulația, estetica, legislația*, Bucovina, I.E. Toroutiu, 1933, 803 p.

<sup>13</sup> Maybe, this aspect is to be linked in future studies with the professional education of the authors, since both the urban theorist Cincinat Sfințescu and the architectural historian Gh. Bals were educated as engineers in Charlottenburg and Zurich.

<sup>14</sup> Ionescu, Grigore, *Istoria arhitecturii Românești din cele mai vechi timpuri până la 1900*, 1934-1937, Cartea Românească, 498 p.

<sup>15</sup> Ionescu, Grigore: *Istoria arhitecturii în România*, 2<sup>nd</sup> volume: *De la sfârșitul veacului al XVI-lea până la începutul celui de al cincilea deceniu al veacului al XX-lea*, București, Ed. Academiei RPR, 1965, 543 p. (the 1<sup>st</sup> volume was published in 1962)

<sup>16</sup> Ionescu, Grigore, 1982, *Arhitectura pe teritoriul Romaniei de-a lungul veacurilor*, București, Academiei RSR, 1982, 712 p.

<sup>17</sup> Curinschi-Vorova, Gheorghe, *Istoria arhitecturii în România*, București, Ed. Tehnică, 1981, 390 p.

<sup>18</sup> Tafuri, Manfredo, *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, Bari, Laterza, 1968

<sup>19</sup> All these doctoral theses have English abstracts. They can be consulted in the UAUIM Library and in the „Carol I” Central University Library of București (B.C.U.).

<sup>20</sup> Alexandrescu, Sorin, op.cit.

<sup>21</sup> 19th Vienna Architecture Congress, 24-25.11.2012, *Soviet Modernism. 1955-1991. Unknown Stories*, Az W

<sup>22</sup> George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, 1<sup>st</sup> volume: *Reason in Common Sense* (1905-06), Dover Publications, Inc., 1980, [eBook #15000] Release Date: February 14, 2005; Available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15000/15000-h/15000-h.htm>; Accessed 14 January 2013.

# On Michal Milan Harminc – Builder and Architect of the Central European Region

Specifics of the Biographical Historiography of Architecture

Jana Pohaničová  
Peter Buday

Architects and builders working in the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and its successor states in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century represent a particular phenomenon of the historiography of Central European architecture. Research on their life and work is difficult due to the large territorial scope of their „opus“. Almost the entirety of Central Europe and often other countries became sites of their activities. From this point of view, the personality of builder and architect Michal Milan Harminc (1869 – 1964), one of the doyens of Slovak architecture, is an interesting topic for research. He is known as an architect of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an excellent eclectic whose work exhibits a wide range of styles and typologies. It combines the legacy of historical styles with the impulses of modernism and functionalism. Impressively, between 1887 and 1951 he completed nearly 300 buildings in the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, including what was then Czechoslovakia (now the Slovak Republic) and other successor states (Hungary, Serbia, Romania and also Ukraine).



He ranks among the most productive architects not only in Slovakia, but also in Central Europe. However, in this context his work has not yet been adequately evaluated.

Michal Milan Harminc was born on 7 October, 1869 in Kulpín, near Bački Petrovac (Serbia), and died on 5 July 1964 in Bratislava. His father was a carpenter. After graduating from elementary school in Kulpín (1875 – 1881) and German school in Bulkes, he studied at the German Business Academy in Novi Sad. At the young age of 17 he left for Budapest with a clear vision of becoming a successful builder, architect and businessman. He first worked as a carpenter for the building company „Neuschloss and sons“ (1886 – 1890). After completing his military service, he gained employment in the office of J. N. Bobula, the only Slovak builder in Budapest at the time. Between 1894 and 1896, Harminc worked for the company „Schikedanz and Herzog“, where he participated in the most important architectural projects related to the Millennial celebrations.



On April 1, 1897, he established his own independent design and construction office in Budapest. Nationality was always an issue close to his heart. Harminc tirelessly declared his Slovak nationality through his awareness-raising activities and the propagation of Slovak folk art, and he was a patron of young Slovak students in the Hungarian capital. In 1904 he married Anna Holcová, a Slovak from Žilina, and in the same year he completed his masonry and carpentry master test. He acquired his builder's title in Budapest (1908) and worked all over Austria-Hungary. He settled down in Slovakia in 1916 and opened his office there, first in Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš (1916 – 1919) and then in Nový Smokovec (1919 – 1922). From 1922 until 1951 he lived and worked in Bratislava. He died there at the age of 95.<sup>1</sup>

Only with great difficulty can we find in the history of Slovak architecture someone with as extensive a portfolio as Michal Milan Harminc. His uniqueness lies mainly in the rich typological and stylistic variety of his works, which can be understood as an inevitable reflection of his changing architectonic

view during the sixty years of his activity in architecture throughout the vast region of Central and Eastern Europe. Thanks to his many realized structures of various typological kinds, we see a parade of different styles beginning with historicism, moving through romantic reminiscences of medieval architectural styles, episodic echoes of secessional Secession-Art Nouveau and folk inspiration, and ending with the monumental forms of modernism and functionalism at the close of this masterful eclectic's career. Harminc's creative approach should be admired for the appropriateness of style choice in relation to the typological kind, for the transparency and logic of the layout contexture and for his sense of interior creation, as well as for his sensibility to the scale of the surroundings, for his contributions to urban planning, for his excellent construction knowledge, his understanding of the details of construction and, importantly, his craftsmanship.

Based on the changes in Harminc's architectonic view that took place throughout his career, his work is categorized into three periods:

Bratislava – Carlton-Savoy Hotel,  
historical postcard: M. Dulla's private collection



Bratislava – Agricultural Museum (Slovak National Museum), historical postcard: M. Dulla's private collection



Michal Milan Harminc, ALU SNK Martin, SH7\_1

- the so-called “Budapest period”, connected with historicizing themes in his work,
- the period of “modern official monumentalism,” rooted in eclecticism as well as in the emerging modernism,
- the functionalist period.<sup>2</sup>

Today, 116 years after the beginning of the independent creative „flight” of the doyen of Slovak architecture, and looking to the more than three hundred architectural works that Harminc gave birth to in the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (predominantly in Slovakia and Budapest), we can conclude that he successfully fulfilled his dream of becoming a respected builder and architect. However, within the field of Slovak and European historiography of architecture his work is only partially mapped. A number of theorists and historians of architecture have tried to evaluate the life work of the man who was probably the most productive Slovak architect and builder to date, but his typologically and stylistically heterogeneous legacy still offers opportunities for deeper study. Until recently, special attention was focused mainly on the architect's period associated with modernity and functionalism.

The fact is that many of the buildings created during his period of „monumental modernism” are remarkable. The original style of his structures from this period is characterized by the harmony between modernism and the legacy of historical styles. Variations on antique motifs transformed into simplified shapes, refined materials, and precise attention to detail in construction, were mainly responsible for the quality of his work during this time and gave it the stamp of monumentality. Respectability, solemnity and presentability became the common denominator uniting different kinds of his structures, including both residential buildings (villas, apartment buildings) and public buildings (sanatoriums, museums, administration buildings, as well as sepulchral structures). Their architectural qualities also enhanced the phenomenon of town formation and urban planning, which rank among the most distinctive features of this exceptional period of

Harminc's work. In this context, we can cite the Palace Sanatorium of Dr. Szontágh in Nový Smokovec (1917 – 1926) and three buildings in Bratislava – the Tatra Banka Palace (1923 – 1925), the Museum of Agriculture (1925 – 1928) and the Carlton-Savoy Hotel (1927 – 1928) – all of which are the work of an architect and builder of European calibre.

However, research next needs to focus primarily on M. M. Harminc's least explored but very productive Budapest period. As the latest research shows, it presents a qualitatively equal part of his diverse work. This period is also one of the key areas of focus for a research grant project at the Institute of History and Theory of Architecture and Monument Restoration of the Faculty of Architecture at the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, to be realised during the years 2011 to 2013. (*Grant VEGA No. 1/0417/11: M. M. Harminc – from historicism to the modernity and functionalism. Head of project: Jana Pohaničová. Jana Pohaničová and Peter Buday, a member of the research team, are the authors of this text.*)

The portfolio of Harminc's Budapest period (1887 – 1916) offers an architecturally first-rate and typologically extensive set of buildings, abundant in variations on historical architectural styles. These structures are located throughout the region of the former Austria-Hungary, mainly in Budapest and Slovakia. This legacy and to a large extent the bravura with which he took over the richness of forms of earlier styles, brought him to pragmatic eclecticism, which became the basic principle of his work not only in this period but also throughout his career. Typology-wise it is dominated by sacral works for various denominations, headquarters for banks and financial institutions, and residential structures (city palaces, villas, apartment buildings), as well as industrial compounds (tanneries), medical facilities, museums, schools and occasionally also sepulchral works.<sup>3</sup>

The key realizations of his work in Slovakia from this period include the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Pribylina (1901 – 1902), the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary in Černová

(1905 – 1907), the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Prietrž (1906 – 1907), Stodola's Villa in Liptovský Mikuláš (1902 – 1903), two structures in the town of Martin – the first building of the Slovak National Museum (1906 – 1908) and Tatra Banka (1910 – 1911), and bank houses with Slovak investment capital – Slovenská Banka in Ružomberok (1901 – 1902) and in Trstená (1903), Ľudová banka in Nové Mesto nad Váhom (1904 – 1906) and in Vrbové (1906), and Slovenská hospodárska banka in Trnava (1914).

In the last two years, our grant project was based on both archival and "in situ" research, as well as on the consistent study of architect's estate in the collections of Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava.<sup>4</sup> However, with few exceptions, the collections contain only documents from Slovakia. Previous research within the grant project has brought substantial findings on the following works of Harminc and themes related to his work:

- *the mapping of residential buildings (houses, palaces and villas) designed by Harminc in Budapest and Slovakia*<sup>5</sup>
- *the personal and architectural background of the establishment of the first Slovak banking institutions*<sup>6</sup>
- *research on Harminc's typologically unique sepulchral objects – singular mausoleums in Pomáz and Sládkovičovo.*<sup>7</sup>

Another important part of the project includes activities to better the understanding of Harminc's work and its wider cultural context:

- *international cooperation in the production of a documentary film*<sup>8</sup>
- *a series of exhibitions presenting architecture in Slovakia in the 19th century*<sup>9</sup>
- *the extension of knowledge about the key works of architect in the period between 1897 – 1916*<sup>10</sup>
- *the preparation of a monographic publication that will present Harminc's most important works and provide a characterization of the architect's career in Slovakia.*<sup>11</sup>

The present research has produced a wide variety of completely new information about Harminc and



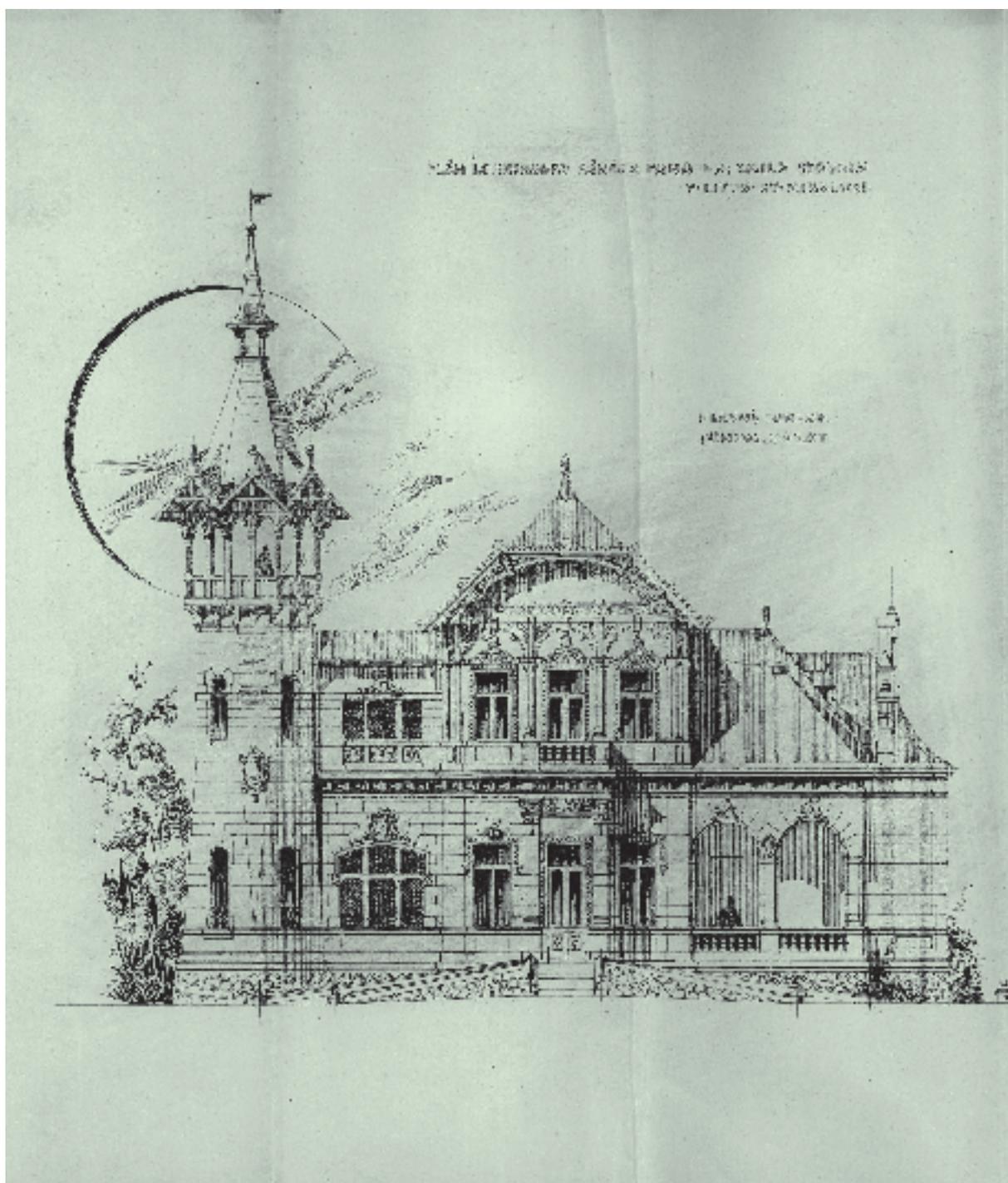
those of his works that remain as yet "undiscovered" by the professional public. It cast light on the unknown personal background of the architect's projects. On the other hand, the "Harminc issue" is still open, with numerous unsolved questions. This is especially true of his extraordinarily productive Budapest period (1887/1897 – 1916). In order to develop a more thorough treatment of the personality and work of the builder and architect Harminc – particularly in relation to the European dimension of his work – it would be optimal to establish broader cooperation within the fields of archival and terrain research, as well as between grant projects. The aim of this cooperation should be to extend our knowledge of the important personalities of the European architectural scene of past centuries. This branch of research could present interesting contributions beyond the field of the Central European architectural historiography. Finally, from perspective of the preservation of both Slovak and European cultural heritage, it can serve as a basis and an instrument of knowledge guiding the historic restoration of key works of important authorship.

Bratislava – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, photo: J. Hofer, archiv MMB



Nový Smokovec – Palace Sanatorium of  
Dr. Szontágh, Archív PÚ SR v Bratislave, č. 9427

Liptovský Mikuláš – Dr. E. Stodola's villa,  
MV SR ŠA Bytča, 2591/1902, K218





Černová – Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, photo: J. Pohaničová



Prietrž – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, photo: E. Lukáčová



Martin – the first building of the Slovak National Museum, photo: I. Štrbík



Martin – Tatra banka building, historical postcard: private collection of J. Pohaničová

**Michal Milan Harminc – selection of works***Works from the Budapest office (1887 – 1916)*

- 1887 Budapest (Hungary) – roofing of the livestock market hall
- 1895 Budapest (Hungary) – cooperation on the Millennial Exhibition
- 1897 Budapest (Hungary) – the apartment building of I. Krell  
Budapest (Hungary) – the apartment building of A. Vajdics
- 1899 Budapest (Hungary) – the apartment building of A. Bulyovszky
- 1901 Budapest (Hungary) – the apartment building of P. Joanovics  
Pribylina – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession  
Ružomberok – Slovenská banka (Slovak Bank)
- 1902 Budapest (Hungary) – L. Toldy's villa  
Budapest (Hungary) – adaptation of a Serbian Orthodox church  
Hybe – elementary school  
Liptovský Mikuláš – Dr. E. Stodola's villa  
Mohács (Hungary) – adaptation of a Serbian Orthodox church  
Szentendre (Hungary) – adaptation of the bishop's palace
- 1903 Trstená – Slovenská banka (Slovak Bank)  
Vršac (Serbia) – bishop's palace
- 1904 Myjava – Evangelical vicarage  
Myjava – county court  
Nové Mesto nad Váhom – Ľudová banka (People's Bank)  
Novi Sad (Serbia) – adaptation of a Serbian Orthodox church  
Púchov – adaptation of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession  
Černová – Church of Our Lady of the Rosary
- 1905 Hybe – adaptation of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession
- 1906 Martin – first building of the Slovak National Museum  
Vrbové – Ľudová banka (People's Bank)
- 1907 Nadlac (Romania) – community center  
Prietrž – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession
- 1908 Aradac (Serbia) – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession  
Martin – Dr. J. Kohút's villa
- 1910 Martin – Tatra banka building  
Subotica (Serbia) – adaptation of a Serbian Orthodox church
- 1912 Pomáz (Hungary) – mausoleum of the Luppa and Mandics families
- 1914 Báhoň – Church of St Francis of Assisi  
Kovačica (Serbia) – Evangelical Church

- of the Augsburg Confession Liptovská Porúbka – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession and vicarage  
Trnava – Slovenská hospodárska banka (Slovak Agricultural Bank)
- 1915 Liptovský Mikuláš – the Lacko-Pálka tannery
- 1916 Liptovský Mikuláš – J. Lacko's family house

*In the style of modern official monumentalism (1917 – 1927)*

- 1917 Nový Smokovec – the Palace  
Sanatorium of Dr. Szontágh
- 1919 Bytča – Tatra banka's apartment building  
Martin – Tatra banka's apartment buildings
- 1921 Martin – Sporiteľňa's apartment building
- 1922 Bratislava – Chamber of Commerce building
- 1922 České Brezovo – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession
- 1923 Bratislava – the Tatra banka palace
- 1924 Bratislava – Dr. E. Stodola's villa  
Lučenec – the YMCA administration building
- 1925 Bratislava – Dr. P. Fábry's villa  
Bratislava – Agricultural Museum (Slovak National Museum)
- 1926 Teplička nad Váhom – St Martin's Church  
Nitra – Mission House of Our Lady on the Calvary  
Nový Smokovec – Mr. Végh's villa  
Pliešovce – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession  
Sládkovičovo – the Kuffner family mausoleum  
Vráble – county court
- 1927 Bratislava – the Carlton-Savoy Hotel

*Under the influence of functionalism (1929 – 1951)*

- 1929 Martin – Slovak National Museum  
Rabča – The Church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary
- 1930 Trenčianske Teplice – House of the Slovak Teachers' Choir  
Babín – The Church of the Holy Ghost
- 1931 Bratislava – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession  
Liptovský Mikuláš – the Lacko family villa  
Nový Smokovec – P. Hupka's villa  
Nový Smokovec – villa Lengyel  
Poprad – county council  
Šaľa nad Váhom – county council
- 1932 Nitra – Všeobecná banka (General Bank)  
Urmince – The Church of St Michael the Archangel
- 1933 Zuberec – The Church of St Wendelin  
Vlčkovce – The Church of St Thérèse of Lisieux
- 1934 Bátovce – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession

- Bratislava – House of the Slovak League  
Martin – hospital, obstetrics pavillion  
Nový Smokovec – Palace Spa House  
Liptovský Mikuláš – the Bethánia home
- 1935 Žilina – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession  
Krásna nad Hornádom – The Church of St Cyril and Methodius
- 1936 Veľký Grob – Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession
- 1938 Bytča – Farmers' Mutual Treasury building  
Levice – county court  
Spišská Nová Ves – State Farmers' School  
Spišská Nová Ves – County Council  
Terchová – The Church of St Cyril and Methodius
- 1940 Spišská Nová Ves – financial offices
- 1941 Novotý – The Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Banská Štiavnica – county court  
Skalica – The Merciful Brothers' Hospital  
Trnava – "Oravská dedina" housing project
- 1942 Lúčky – hotel and spa house with a colonnade
- 1944 Holíč – orphanage
- 1945 Ústie nad Oravou – water reservoir construction – central building, apartment buildings for clerks and construction workers, tourist house
- 1946 Skalica – „Slovenská búda“ wine house
- 1947 Bratislava-Lamač – The Church of St Margita  
Nová Polianka – army sanatorium

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<sup>1</sup> See the following texts about the life and work of M. M. Harminc: Toran, Eduard: *Architekt Milan Michal Harminc*. In: Saučín, L. /Ed./: *Z novších výtvarných dejín Slovenska*. Bratislava: SAV 1962, p. 327 – 402; Šlachta, Š.: *Milan Michal Harminc*. Študijná úloha. Bratislava: ZSA 1986, no pag.; Kubičková, K. – Zajková, A. /Ed./: *Milan Michal Harminc 1869 – 1964*. Exhibition catalogue. Bratislava: SNG 1991, 41 p.; Dulla, M. – Moravčíková, H. /Ed./: *Architektúra Slovenska v 20. storočí*. Bratislava: Slovart 2002; Lukáčová, E. – Pohaničová, J.: *Rozmanité 19. storočie*. Bratislava: Perfekt 2008. 243 p.; Pohaničová, J.: *Výnimočné stavby dlhého storočia*. Bratislava: TRIO Publishing 2011, 185 p.; Dlháňová, Viera: *Michal Milan Harminc a jeho sakrálna architektúra*. 2007. Diploma thesis. FF UK Bratislava.

<sup>2</sup> Significant phases of Harminc's work were characterized in the studies of E. Toran (see Toran 1962, ref. 1, p. 327 – 402), resp. K. Kubičková and A. Zajková (Kubičková – Zajková 1991, ref. 1), in exhibition catalogue *Michal Milan Harminc – stavitel' a architekt* compiled by Jana Pohaničová (Bratislava: TRIO Publishing 2013, 27 p.)

<sup>3</sup> The latest work on the „Budapest-period“ is a study by Pohaničová, J. – Buday, P.: *Adalékok egy alapító életművének ismeretéhez. Adatok Harminc M. Mihály budapesti építészeti irodájának tevékenységéről (1897 – 1916)* [Additions to the knowledge of the work of one founder. Activities of the architectural office of Michal Milan Harminc in Budapest, (1897 – 1916)] In: *Építés – Építészettudomány*, vol. 45, N. 1, 2013; p. 115 – 144.

<sup>4</sup> *Archív výtvarného umenia a zbierka architektúry Slovenskej národnej galérie [Fine Art Archive and Collection of Architecture of the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava]*, pozostalosť M. M. Harminca [Legacy of M. M. Harminc].

<sup>5</sup> Selection from published texts: Pohaničová, J.: *Rodinné domy a vily v diele M. M. Harminca, alebo: Oscilovanie medzi historizmom a modernou [Family houses and mansions by M. M. Harminc, or: Oscillating between historicism and modernity]* In: *Michal Milan Harminc, významný európsky architekt*. Zborník príspevkov vedeckej konferencie. [Michal Milan Harminc, important European architect] Compiled by P. Mikloš. Bratislava: In Form Slovakia 2009, p. 9 – 12.; Pohaničová, J.: *Michal Milan Harminc a jeho mecenáši alebo Rodinné domy a vily v diele nestora slovenskej architektúry. [Michal Milan Harminc and his patrons, or Family houses and villas in the work of the nestor of Slovak architecture]*. In: *Umenie na Slovensku v historických a kultúrnych súvislostiach 2009*. Zborník z vedeckej konferencie, Trnava: 21.-22. X. 2009. [Art in Slovakia in historical and cultural context 2009. Collection of texts from conference, Trnava October 21 – 22, 2009] Compiled by I. Gojdič. Trnava: FF TU 2009, p. 59 – 68.; Buday, P.: *Poznámky k výskumu budapeštianskych prác Milana Michala Harminca. [Notes on research of Harminc's work in Budapest]* In: *Informátor Archívu Pamiatkového úradu SR*, N. 45, 2011, p. 16 – 18.

<sup>6</sup> Pohaničová – Buday 2013, ref. 3; Pohaničová, J.: *Menej známe odtiene tvorby Milana Michala Harminca – bankové budovy. [Less known shades of work of Milan Michal Harminc – bank buildings]* Study prepared for: *Umenie na Slovensku v historických a kultúrnych súvislostiach 2011*. Zborník príspevkov z vedeckej konferencie, Trnava 26.-27. X. 2011. [Art in Slovakia in historical and cultural context 2011. Collection of texts from conference, Trnava October 26 – 27, 2011] Compiled by Z. Ježeková and I. Gojdič. Towarzystwo Slowakow w Polsce, FF TU Trnava, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Buday, P.: *Mauzóleum. [Mausoleum]* In: *Sudová, E. /Ed./: Kuffnerovský hospodársky komplex. Mesto Sládkovičovo 2012*, p. 141 – 143; Prepared for print: Pohaničová, J.: *Návrhy hrobiek z pozostalosti M. M. Harminca*. In: *LONGIUS AUT PROPIUS MORS SUA QUEQUE MANET*. 11. zasadání k problematice sepulkralních památek. 31. X. – 2. XI. 2012. Praha. [LONGIUS AUT PROPIUS MORS SUA QUEQUE MANET. 11<sup>th</sup> session on the problem of sepulchral monuments, Prague, October 31 – November 2, 2012]

<sup>8</sup> „Stavitel' Harminc“ [The builder Harminc] Scenario:

M. Babiak. Coproduction: the Slovak redaction of Radio and Television of Vojvodina, Serbia. Cooperation from the Slovak part: J. Pohaničová, D. Buran, V. Dlháňová, M. Semančík, P. Buday, Š. Šlachta. Premiere: October 7, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> *Architektúra 19. storočia na Slovensku [Architecture of the 19th century in Slovakia]* Prague, Gallery of the Slovak Institute, January 26 – February 27, 2012; *Od klasicizmu k moderne v architektúre na Slovensku [From Classicism to Modernity in the Architecture of Slovakia]* Dušan Jurkovič Hall. Association of Slovak Architects. Bratislava, Balaša House, March 21 – April 16, 2012. Curator and author of exhibition libretto and texts: J. Pohaničová. Graphic design: V. Kvardová, P. Buday. Editors: J. Pohaničová, M. Dulla, 2013 – 2014.

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Pomáz (Hungary) – the mausoleum of the Luppa and Mandics families, photo: P. Buday



Bratislava – House of the Slovak League, photo: J. Hofer, archív MMB



Budapest (Hungary) – the apartment building of A. Buljovszky, photo: P. Buday

# Architectural and Material Research of Peter Behrens Synagogue in Žilina, Slovakia

Peter Szalay  
Magdaléna Kvasnicová

The paper briefly presents ongoing research on the Neological synagogue in Žilina, the work of the world famous German architect Peter Behrens. The article is based on the collaboration with docent Magdaléna Kvasnicová who began the research on the occasion of the planned reconstruction of this monument and its conversion to an exhibition space – Kunsthalle.<sup>1</sup>

We would like to show some recent results of the research which is being executed by several experts on history of architecture and restoration from various academic institutions, from the Faculty of Architecture of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, the Department of Architecture, the Institute of Construction and Architecture, Slovak Academy of Sciences and the Department of Conservation and Restoration of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of the research is to reveal as much as possible the original form of this work by Peter Behrens which would be fundamental for the restoration of the building and its conversion to a Kunsthalle.<sup>3</sup>

## The broken mosaic of the original concept

There is in Slovakia no other building built by such a world known architect than the synagogue in Žilina. Therefore, our research was focused firstly on identifying the “primary layer” of the synagogue, and on defining the concept of the famous architect.

The oeuvre of Peter Behrens is published in almost every relevant publication on history of 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture, and so it is with the Žilina synagogue, which is included in the majority of published works on 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture in Slovakia.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless our knowledge of the original appearance of the

building is rather fragmentary, and we are still having lots of problems in reconstructing how the synagogue originally looked, especially its interiors.

Our research is therefore concentrated in two directions. There is archive research concentrated on the detection of the original concept through the visual and written materials of the period, and in addition there is physical or material research of the building in situ using non-destructive as well as destructive restoration methods. Through these two approaches we aim to assemble a mosaic which reveals the look of the original work and the story of its reconstructions and transformations.

The Žilina synagogue is a relatively young monument, being only 80 years old; nevertheless in some parts of the building we are still faced with doubts, as in cases of research into much more older architectural monuments. The reason for this uncertainty is that the rebuilding of the synagogue in the post-war period destroyed some parts of the material evidence, and archival documents are as well preserved only in fragments. For example there are only two pictures of the synagogue’s main hall interior from the 1930s. And we have identified only a few parts of the implementation plans. So we can find the most complex records of the synagogue’s primary conditions in contemporary articles from the time of the construction of the building.

## Modernistic or conservative masterpiece?

Behrens’ Neologist synagogue in Žilina originates in one of the greatest eras of our architectural history. This is the period between the two world wars, the period of the so-called International style, the style



of functionalism and modernism in architecture. In this era architectural production in Czechoslovakia was on a high quality level and as well in keeping with production in the world centers.

Peter Behrens' work in Slovakia, the synagogue in Žilina, hasn't such a progressive modernistic concept as other works of star architects designing their works in Czechoslovakia, for example Adolf Loos's Villa Muller in Prague or Mies van der Rohe's Tugendhat house in Brno. Behrens probably hadn't this kind of ambition. The Austrian art historian, Max Eisler, who wrote the first review of the Žilina synagogue, emphasized this conservative approach of Behrens in the introduction of his text from the year 1929, when he wrote about the competition.<sup>5</sup>

The competition for the design of a new synagogue which Behrens won in 1928, was not an open competition. As Eisler wrote: "Only three artists were invited: Peter Behrens from Berlin, Josef Hoffman from Vienna and one architect from Budapest."<sup>6</sup> This nameless architect was Lipót Baumhorn (1860 Kiskőrös – 1932 Kiskőrös), a specialist on synagogue architecture in the traditional 19th century eclectic style. From this small indication we can surmise how he looked at the conservative approach in contemporary architecture. And Eisler continues somewhat sarcastically in his critical view on the competition: "The cultural council of Žilina thought, that thanks to the invitation of famous and well-established artists they could avoid failures, but experiments as well..."<sup>7</sup>

But these expectations of the review author were not entirely fulfilled; both Josef Hoffmann (1870 Brno – 1956 Vienna) a famous architect of the Vienna art nouveau, and also Behrens' pioneering

modernism, introduced fresh ideas and experiments into the competition.

Professor Dulla, who wrote the most extensive study on Behrens' synagogue work in 2004,<sup>8</sup> identified the design of Josef Hoffmann as the most modern of all three submitted concepts. On a difficult corner building plot in the city center Hoffmann created a very non-monumental and simple project whose shape was reminiscent of a nomad tent. As professor Dulla emphasized, Hoffmann's project was in high contrast with the monumentality of the historicist design of Baumhorn, with ornamentation mixed of Oriental and Classic typical for him and which we can also see in his other constructed works, such as the synagogue in Eger.

From the point of view of monumentality, the Behrens' synagogue is situated somewhere between these two projects. He designed the synagogue as a massive cube with rough plastering which is settled on a base articulated with naturally-shaped stone cladding. The huge dome on the top of the cube is almost invisible concerning the overall/entire view of the whole building. So the building itself does make an impression of significant monumentality, but it doesn't clash with the actual city structure of Žilina so much; it looks much more unrecognizable than we would expect.

Peter Behrens, the teacher of Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius, was almost 60 when he entered the competition for the Žilina synagogue. At that time, he was a respected professor at the Vienna Academy of Arts. In the period of the end of the 1920s, his architecture balanced between various approaches, on the one hand between

Peter Behrens Neologistic synagogue in Žilina, 1932; source: Archive of 20th Century Architecture, Institute of Constructions & Architecture, SAS



Detail of the sound survey on the interior's east façade.  
Photo: Peter Szalay, 2012

modernism and functionalist approaches, and on the other hand between forms inspired by historical medieval architecture.

We can see this contrast also in two huge industrial projects – the complex of the Tobacco concern in Linz,<sup>9</sup> which is his most functionalist concept, and the administrative complex of the Hoechst AG Company in Frankfurt –Hoechst,<sup>10</sup> which illustrated his inspiration from the language of expressionism and medieval architecture.

We can state that the Žilina synagogue is situated somewhere in the middle between these two examples. On the sketch of the synagogue interior made for the competition we can see an allusion to Behrens' expressionist approach from the Frankfurt Hoechst administrative building, especially on the drip stone shaped decoration of the shrine or pillars. But this expressionist decoration element was not carried through into the constructed interior, which was simpler.

The exterior fundamental form of the synagogue, the dynamic shape of the roof cornice with the stone elements in their corners, indicates Behrens' inspiration from Expressionist and also medieval architecture. His relationship to and influence from historical construction technologies are visible in the stone cladding of the ground floor, which was masterfully handcrafted. The contrast of the almost graphical structure of the stone cladding on the ground floor with the simple plaster surface of upper part of building also reflects a contrast between traditional handcraft work and the modern cement plaster technology of the upper part of the facade.

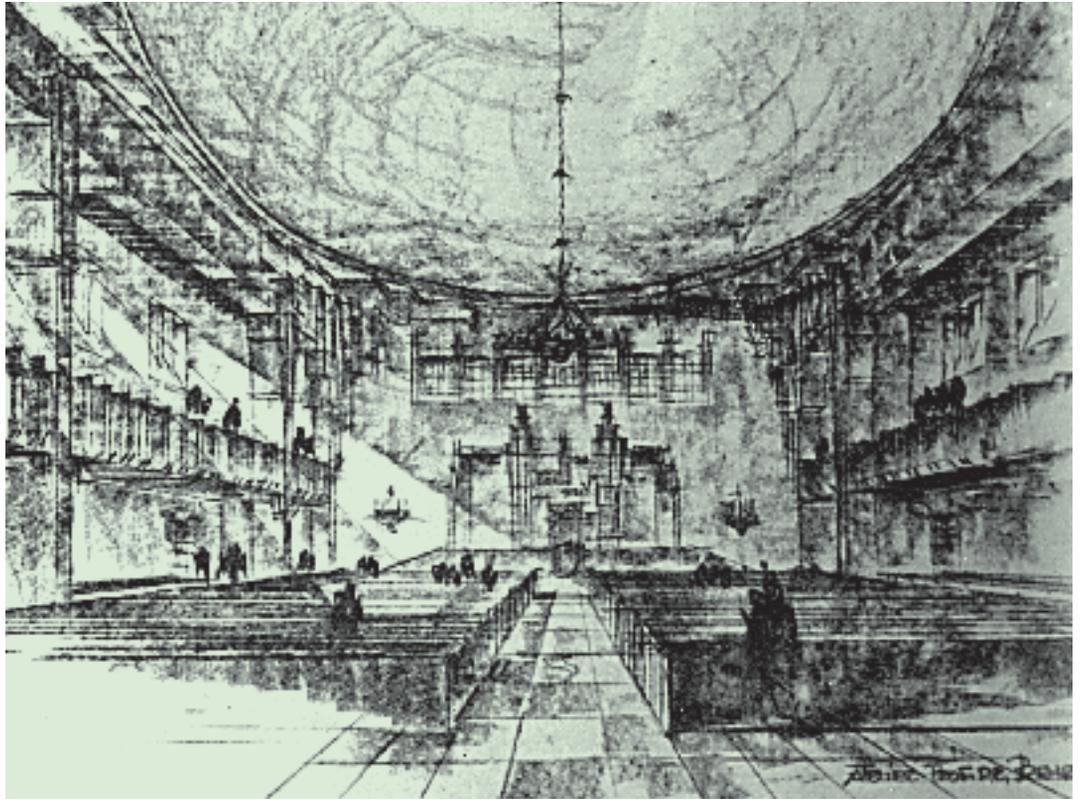
#### **Interior: a mirror of history**

The interiors of the synagogue witnessed the turbulent history of the building in contrast with the exterior, which was kept without any radical changes throughout the whole existence of the building. Of course the radical changes of the interior's disposition were sometimes visible on the facades of

the building, where the changes included the window apertures and some others minor details, but generally the principal conception of plaster and stone cladding remained untouched. It shows that the architects who took part in the reconstruction knew the value of the synagogue as a treasure of the famous architect's artwork.

The statement of the Slovak Architects Union at their session in Žilina in 1954 also proves this, since they demanded that Behrens' synagogue be declared a heritage work to be used for the purposes of a museum and as a memorial to the famous architect. This statement was initiated by the central union organization in Bratislava in December 1953, with the intention to prevent future rebuilding and interventions to the building.<sup>11</sup> But this effort by the architects' union was not immediately successful, since the synagogue was declared a cultural heritage only in 1963. However the architects did retain the outside form of the building without caring about the interiors, which is still nowadays not unusual in the designs of heritage reconstructions.

In 2011 when Doc. Kvasnicová's research began, the object's interiors were in very different conditions in comparison with Behrens' original design. The function of the building was changed from a temple to a warehouse at the beginning of WW II. After the war the state returned the building to the Jewish community, but the small group of surviving people could not properly take advantage of such a huge building. In 1948 the municipality of Žilina bought the synagogue and the object became the property of the city organization, PKO-Park of Culture and Recreation.<sup>12</sup> In this time, the synagogue was turned to a more proper function as a cultural and representational space. In the early 1970s, Behrens's synagogue changed owners again, becoming the property of the Žilina University of Transportation. It was used it as a lecture and representational hall for more than 20 years. In recent years it was used as a cinema.



Drawing of the synagogue interior from the competition in 1928.  
 source: Archive of 20th Century Architecture, Institute of Constructions & Architecture, SAS

All these owners intervened more or less and changed the character of the building. The last extensive reconstruction of the interior was not so damaging. For the rebuilding of the main hall they covered all vertical surfaces with chipboard panels, the dome of the main space was hidden under a soffit made of aluminum elements, and of course an auditorium was built in to the temple hall and a projection room, needed for the function of a lecture hall as well as for the cinema, was constructed in the north gallery.

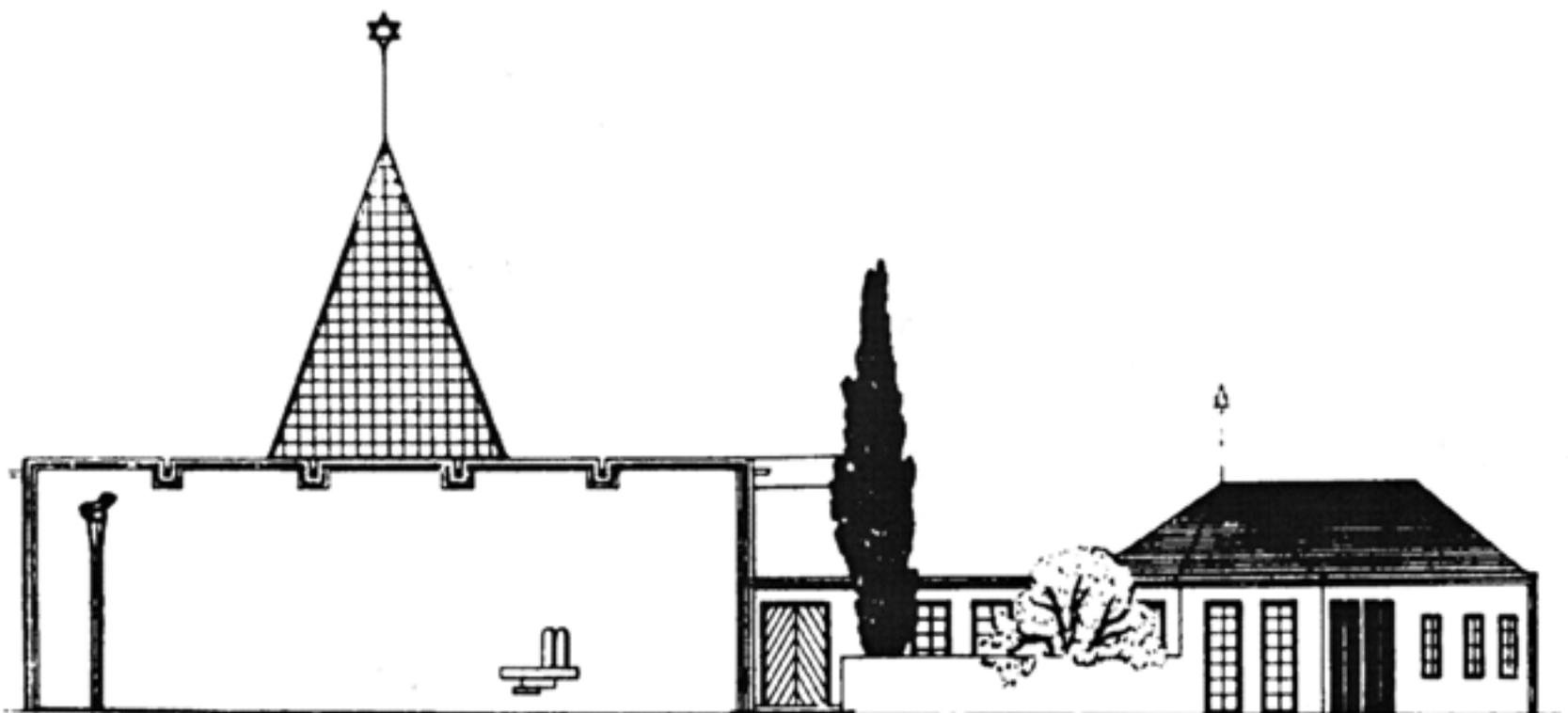
The most significant and also most destructive change executed here was the turning of the aspect of the main hall. The synagogue was, as was customary, oriented with their shrine or aron-ha-kodesh to the east and the main entrances to the north and south. During the first conversion of the building to

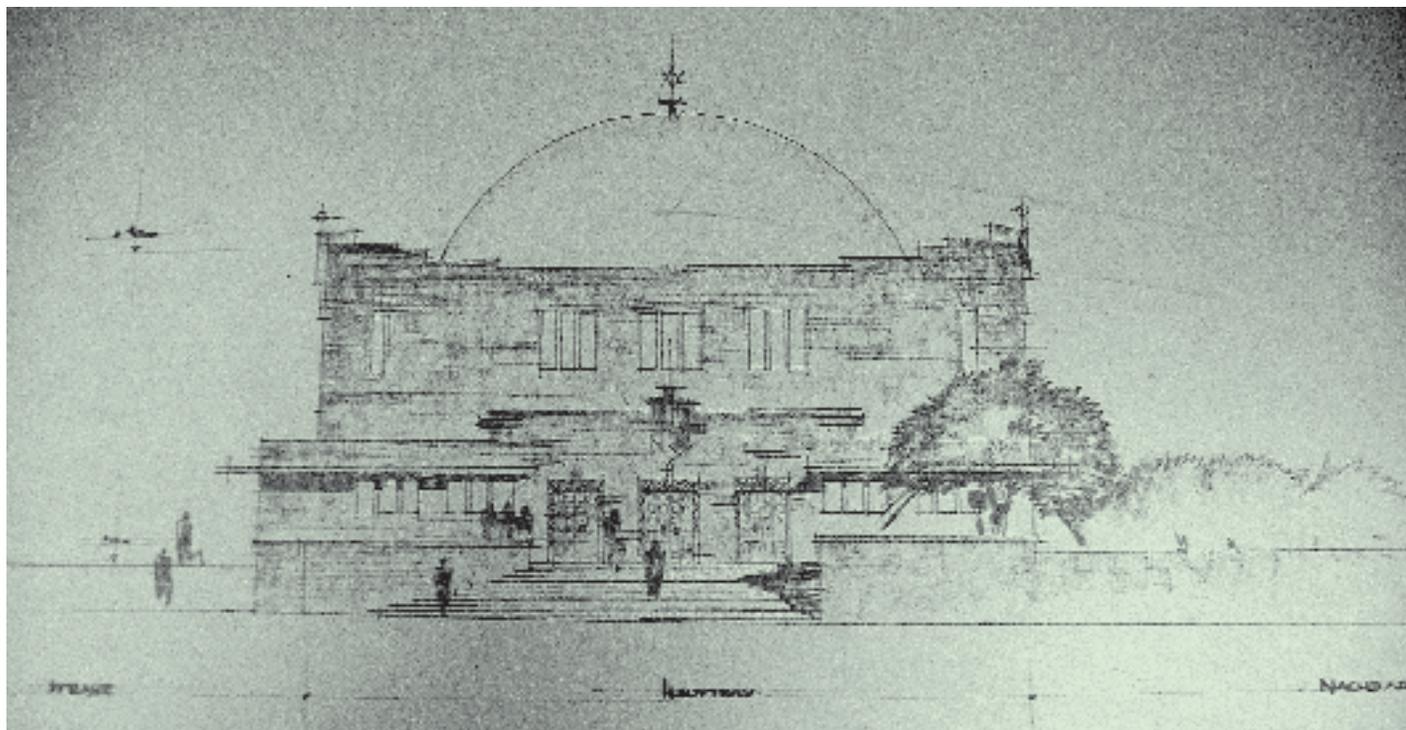
a cultural facility in the early 1950s, the architects situated the stage and then the screen in the south side of the hall.

The removal of the chipboard "fairing" from the interior at the beginning of the year 2012 unveiled the first stage of the conversion of the building made in the early 1950s, clearly showing the change of layout. Following this removal we could see the conversions of the synagogue to a cultural space, theater and dance hall. This first reconstruction was made in the period of so-called socialist realism, which was characteristically represented in the painted and stucco decorations.

Motifs inspired by historical and vernacular ornaments were somehow apparently applied in the traditionalist interior concept, the dome bearing with the pillars, surrounded by galleries. It was sufficient

Josef Hoffmann's competition design;  
 source: Archive of 20th Century Architecture, Institute of Constructions & Architecture, SAS





Peter Behrens' competition design for a synagogue in Žilina, 8. February 1928;  
source: Muzeum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern

only to put some neo-Classical or vernacular decorations on the interior's surfaces. Without the need for any significant transformation, the synagogue interior itself became "clearly understandable" to the working class, the usual justification for Classical architectural forms.

After the partial removal of the "fairing" in 2012 some parts of the surface of the original layer were uncovered, making it possible for the restorers Ivan Pilný and Ján Hromada to carry out surveys. These proved Behrens' eclectic architectural thinking. The horizontal white and red stripping of the interior is the allusion to Oriental architecture but also to medieval architecture, for example the Dom of Speyer, but Behrens utilized it in an unusual way.

The oriental decoration was widely used and very popular in the design of synagogues dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We can find horizontal stripping with the same colour concept on the many synagogue constructions, but generally this decoration was not used in the interior, but on the exterior.

The historical allusions are also suggested on fragments of the shrine wall surfaces. Behrens there used

a soft vertical fluting made of stucco with a coating imitating gilding. In contrast to these eclectic elements the painting of the dome with a simple and abstract shape of Star of David shows Behrens' relationship to the modern and avant-garde art and his connection to the Expressionist movement.

#### The process of the restoration as an "experimental performance" in the Kunsthalle

The entire research was initiated by the NGO Nová synagóga, New Synagogue, which is an initiative of Marek Adamov, the head of the successful independent cultural organization Stanica in Žilina, the philosopher and theoretician Fedor Blaščák, and the architect Martin Jančok.

Their goal is to establish an art exhibition space – Kunsthalle – in the synagogue premises. The system of fund-raising for the restoration of building through donations and smaller grants inspired them to create an unusual concept for the conservation of the interior surfaces, while still using the space for exhibition activities. The method of double usage of the space was proposed by Martin Jančok, who

Panoramical picture of the conversion to a cinema, 2011,  
photo: Martin Jančok





Interior of the synagogue after removal of the 1970s facing uncovered the "social realist" layer, 2012, photo: Peter Szalay

designed the conversion of the heritage site from the very beginning of the project and who, together with the whole implementation team, was awarded the prestigious Bauwelt magazine prize.<sup>13</sup> The metamorphosis of his projects also shows a development of the understanding of – values of – original synagogue surfaces. This kind of system, which is often used by restorers in churches, could also be exploited in the Kunsthalle, with the restorers being a "performance" part of future exhibitions. In Slovak heritage reconstruction this would be a pioneer, and we hope also a successful experiment.

*The study is based on research supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency, in frame of the project APVV-0375-10 Differentiated typology of modernism: the theoretical basis for maintenance and conservation of works of modern architecture.*

<sup>1</sup> The architectural-historical research of doc. Magdaléna Kvasnicová was finished in November, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The other members of the research team are Ivan Pilný- Department of Restoration, Academy of Fine Arts Bratislava, Ján Hromada restorer, and Gabriel Hartl – Institute of History and Theory of Architecture and Monument Restoration, Faculty of Architecture, Slovak Technical University in Bratislava.

<sup>3</sup> The basic information about project is published at the webpage of project (<http://www.novasynagoga.sk/?lang=en> 14. 3. 2013)

<sup>4</sup> KUSÝ, Martin: Architektúra na Slovensku 1918 -1945. Pallas, Bratislava, 1971, p. 110; FOLTÝN, Ladislav: Slovakische Architektur und die tschechische Avantgarde 1918-1939. Dresden 1991. DULLA Matúš, MORAVČÍKOVÁ Henrieta: Architektúra Slovenska v 20. Storočí. Bratislava Slovart, 2012, pp 85, 86, 283, and 351. ; BORSKÝ, M.: Synagogue Architecture in Slovakia. a Memorial Landscape of a Lost Community. Unipress Trutnov, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> EISLER, Max: Entwürfe für eine neue Synagoge. Menorah 7, 1929, 2, s. 86-95.

<sup>6</sup> EISLER, Max: Die Synagoge in Sillein. Menorah 9, 1931, 11-12, s. 526

<sup>7</sup> EISLER, Max: Die Synagoge in Sillein. Menorah 9, 1931, 11-12, s. 526

<sup>8</sup> DULLA Matúš, MORAVČÍKOVÁ Henrieta: Architektúra Slovenska v 20. Storočí. Bratislava Slovart, 2012, pp. 283.

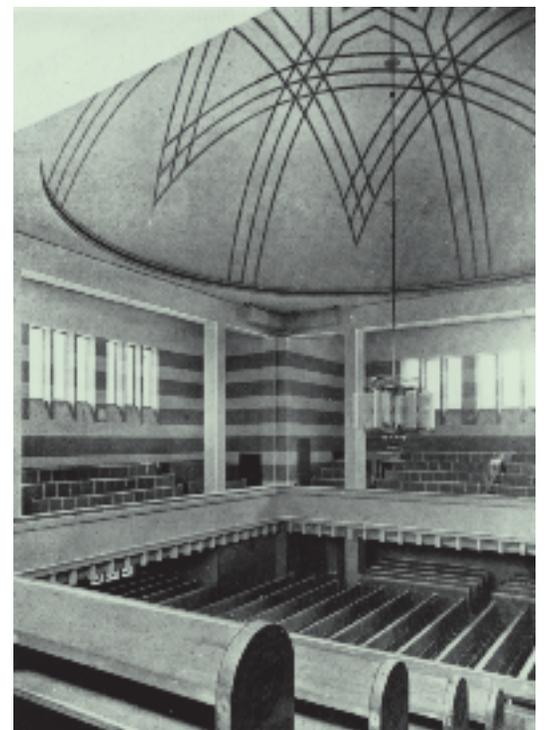
<sup>9</sup> Behrens built the „Tabakfabrik“ in cooperation with his former pupil Alexander Popp (1891 St. Leonhard am Forst – 1947 Linz) in 1929 – 1935. BINA Andrea, FELLNER Sabine, THIEL Georg: Tabakfabrik Linz, Kunst Architektur Arbeitswelt. Anton Pustet Verlag, Wien, 2010, pp. 342.

<sup>10</sup> The Technical Administration Building of Hoechst AG, was built in years 1920 -1924. BUDERATH, Bernhard: Peter Behrens – Umbautes Licht, das Verwaltungsgebäude der Hoechst-Aktiengesellschaft (exhibition catalogue), München, Prestel, 1990, pp. 192.

<sup>11</sup> ŠOA Žilina, Fond MsNV Žilina.

<sup>12</sup> The documents about the process of selling the property to Žilina city are in the States regional archive in Žilina, ŠOA Žilinafond PKO Žilina.

<sup>13</sup> Bauwelt price, Revitalisierung von Peter Behrens' Neuer Synagoge, Bauwelt 2013, no. 1. pp 23 -25.



Detail of the dome, 1931; source: magazine FORUM, 1931

# Flavouring 'Goulash Communism'

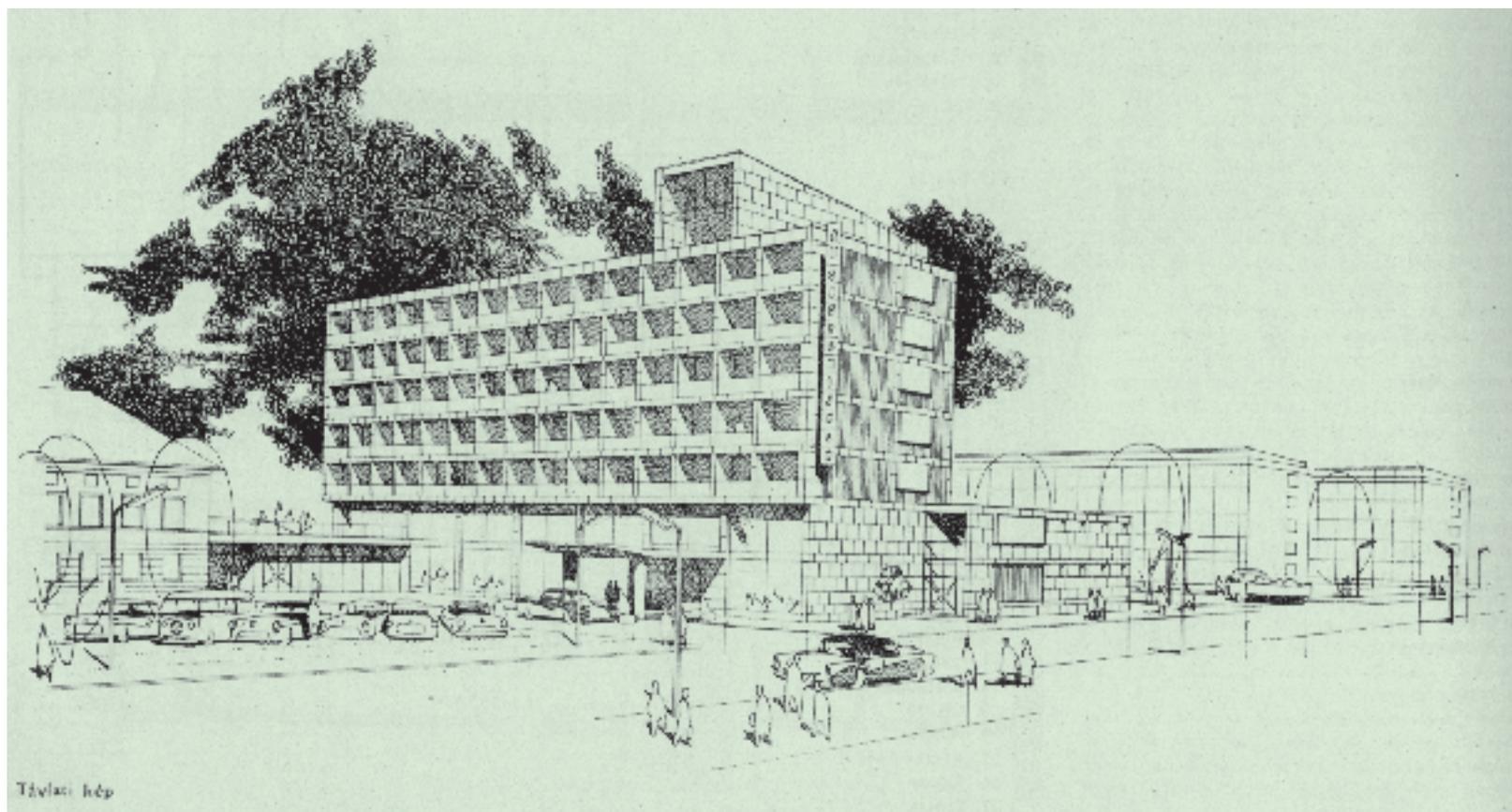
Approaches to Modern Architecture in the early Kádár Era in Hungary (1957-1963)

Mariann Simon

By the second part of the 1950s – after the short but impressive period of historicizing socialist-realism – Hungarian architecture had returned to modernism. In consequence architects had to reinterpret the old cultural demand of “socialist in content, national in form”, which was reaffirmed by politics, and they had to define their relationship to modernism within this buzzword. In this period of temporary political uncertainty and of gestures of détente, controlled discussions were tolerated.<sup>1</sup> This essay will be concerned with contemporary debates on the topic of returned modern architecture on a political, professional and public level. Questions to be answered include the following: How did Hungarian theorists and practicing architects react to the situation? Is it possible to define and separate different trends within their approaches? And if so, how can these approaches be connected to parallel international or to former national trends?

When Nicolai Sergeyevich Khrushchev, the first secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, declared the need for a change in architecture in December 1954, he referred to modern technology as a driving force for development. He accused architects of “disengaging from the modern economic-technical terms of development; under the pretext of fighting against constructivism they fell into other extreme of formalism: they became captivated by individual and artistic exaggerations, using architectural shapes, ‘unusual decorations’ (and unusual cubic meters) which made dwellings similar to churches or museums.” Architects had to draw the consequences that “the decisive factor of the further development, that the artistic aspects should have a closer contact with modern technology, with economic-technical aspects.”<sup>2</sup> He stressed the power of technology as a means of industrialization, pre-fabrication and standardization, all as means of quantitative development. The above factors were

parts of modernity, but modern architecture never restricted itself to rational considerations, so when Hungarian architects celebrated the political turnaround, they appreciated in first place the elimination of the required historicism. However in the following years the situation became controversial. Journals continued publishing revival-style buildings – it needed some time to build modern ones – while leading theoreticians (most of whom were party members) tried to explain, including to themselves, the sudden and radical change in political expectations. The time for a quiet explanation and also for official future guidance came about only after the failed uprising in 1956. Political power – which needed about a year and a half to stabilize its position – turned its attention to cultural questions only in 1958. The guiding principles for the cultural policy of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party were published in July of that year. The thesis of the paper was that the main obstacle to cultural and ideological development was nationalism, which had to be opposed with a national culture based on socialism. “The newly born culture is socialist in its content and national in its form. It preserves and comprises all those progressive cultural treasures which were collected through the development of hundreds of years in national works and in values adopted from other nations. Using the best results and inspired with the socialist ideal, it developed the synthesis of popular, national and humanistic character to a higher level.”<sup>3</sup> The label was kept but the intention became different. Nationalism was contrasted with socialist patriotism, which entailed the priority of socialist internationalism over national integrity. The theses made it also clear that the “popular, national and humanistic character” of the culture should be based neither on the peasants’ folk culture nor on the petty bourgeois’ urban culture, but on the culture of the working class, which played



the leading role in the fight against capitalism. The paper didn't describe any features of the working class culture, but referred to technological development as a defining component of the future of socialist culture. "The great scientific and technical transformations of our age demand even faster development on the general cultural and technology level. This new requirement shall be enforced in the different fields of culture, and shall be counted on when defining the detailed tasks."<sup>4</sup> To conclude, the guidelines clearly defined the 'socialist content' of the new culture but they didn't have standards on how the 'national form' should look.

The weakening importance of national aspects can also be detected in the field of official (politically based) architectural decrees. The Association of Hungarian Architects prepared a thesis for the meeting of the architectural associations of socialist countries to be held in November 1958 in Prague. Before presenting the thesis the management of the association discussed the main points. The proposed paper touched on the following questions: 1. "What should architecture be in countries building socialism or in countries where socialism has already been built? 2. How should this architecture relate to the architecture of the capitalist West and how to its own, national (feudal, capitalist) past, that is to architectural history?"<sup>5</sup> Although the wording itself – which stressed the 'national' as something connected to former, rejected social and political systems, like feudalism and capitalism – expressed a distancing, some participants felt it important to have such a relationship. The opinion that the "Hungarian character should necessarily be present in architectural work" was left alone, but the view that our architecture should be based on home milieu, landscape, climate and nature was shared by others. Some contributors didn't question the importance of traditions. This new definition of socialist

architecture "doesn't mean that architecture should ignore its traditions. But beyond the finding that respect for tradition should never be at the expense of modernisation, according to the socialist architecture we shouldn't follow but feel traditions and with this impulse we have to begin the new tasks with new means" – one participant stated.<sup>6</sup> In light of the original questions, the national aspects of architecture seemed not to be a current issue of the discussion. The leadership was much more interested in the organizational changes in the building industry and in the place of creative designers within it.

Máté Major, the president of the architectural association, published a slightly revised version of the theses in an academic journal.<sup>7</sup> Even the title of the article – *Current Problems of Socialist Architecture* – referred to the primacy of socialism. Form follows first of all materials, construction, technology and function in modern architecture, the author states, which is why socialist architecture has not differed yet from capitalist architecture except in local conditions. "Developing socialist content that is the socialist way of life, thought and message will help us to reach the stage of the national form – the difference in people, society and ideology that separates our architectural forms from the capitalist West over its locality – and socialist architecture, the new, special, historically matured, higher step of universal architecture, will be formed."<sup>8</sup> The message of this quotation and of the whole paper is that the national form should grow organically out of socialist content. In other words the two concepts cannot be separated: the national character of our architecture means that it is embedded in the socialist society. The difference should be developed from a different superstructure – in line with Marxist ideology and terminology.

The intended result was a different form of modern architecture, though the authors usually omitted

Plan for developments in the centre of Kecskemét, with Hotel Aranyhomok in the foreground.

Architects: István Janáky, Dénes Perczel.

*Magyar Építőművészet* 1-3, 1958



Hotel Aranyhomok, Kecskemét, 1962.

Architect: István Janáky. *Magyar Építőművészet* 4, 1964  
István, Dénes Perczel. *Magyar Építőművészet* 1-3, 1958

the word 'modern' and simply mentioned 'socialist architecture' in their writings. When the leading figures had to choose from the palette of modern architecture they preferred the functionalist approach of Walter Gropius, which seemed to be in tune with the leading political password, industrialization. "Our architecture, that striving towards prefabrication, should rely on rationalism, logical consistency and realism as an imperative. In this respect we agree with the functionalism of Walter Gropius, who connected functionalism with the social tasks of architecture and with the standardization of mass housing."<sup>9</sup> The connotation of modern architecture was capitalism, so even if the methods, materials and technology were accepted, the difference needed to be stressed. "Architecture should be thoroughly reconsidered and revolutionized with the basic belief in the power of the socialist world. If capitalism has its modern architecture, then we have to create architecture in socialism with a super-modern method, in the purest sense of the word." – read an enthusiastic contribution at the conference of the Association of Hungarian Architects in 1961.<sup>10</sup> As opposed to the theoreticians and the official representatives of the profession, for the majority of practicing architects it was irrelevant if the new architecture was called 'socialist', 'modern' or 'super-modern'. They enjoyed the fact that they had escaped from the standards of using historical forms and traditional building materials, and they celebrated the regained pragmatic

modernism, the rationality and the promise of using new technical solutions. The windows facing international modern architecture were opened.

While for most Hungarian architects this situation meant a longing for similar materials, details, forms etc. as were applied in the West, it also awakened a special approach to modern architecture. Raising the old/new issue of the Hungarian character in architecture was part of a wider cultural discussion in the country. Parallel to the historians' and the art historians' debate on nationalism, at the turn of 1961 some articles were published in *Magyar Építőművészet* (Hungarian Architecture) the leading architectural journal, dealing with the traditions of Hungarian architecture. The author of the keynote paper began with the statement that contemporary Hungarian architecture couldn't be compared with the quality of French, Italian, Scandinavian or American architecture. He found the reason for this in the fact that the foreign examples referred to both followed modern principles and preserved their connection to their roots. On the contrary Hungarian architecture had lost contact with its traditions. The author called attention to the importance of tradition in general, but with a special emphasis on turn of the century Art Nouveau and peasant architecture as styles worthy of being followed in their approach and formal richness. "We see that the basics of modern architectural principles were already set out in works from the turn of the century. These



Mortuary, Szeged, 1960.

Architect: Béla Borvendég. *Magyar Építőművészet* 6, 1961

principles – fidelity to materials, sincerity, utility, functionality, national character – haven't changed since then... Some foreign impacts (Finnish) played a role in turn of the century architectural efforts, but our traditions, especially folk architecture, formed their basis."<sup>11</sup> Responding articles all shared the opinion that we shouldn't ignore our traditions, but they differed in relation to the question of whether we should look for them or rather choose a certain period or style to follow. In the hope of regaining the artistic freedom enjoyed by the practicing architects, one architectural historian expressed the approach of the majority: let architects create and they will instinctively reflect on tradition. "Elaborating a special Hungarian architecture based on traditions is more an instinctive than a conscious phenomenon. The architectural and aesthetic needs of the creator force giving birth to it, as an internal necessity."<sup>12</sup>

However when the contributors to the debate tried to identify the atmosphere of Hungarian architecture they all included features of peasant architecture. Identifying Hungarian architecture with peasant or folk architecture was not a new development: it had the roots in the creating of the nation in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. But there was another reason which made peasant tradition relevant: because of the rationality represented in its structures and use of materials, folk architecture was the only tradition which was acceptable for modern architecture.



After the painful interlude of historicism in the 1950s, Hungarian architects were reluctant to look for traditional sources, even in folk architecture; consequently the theoretical proposal – at least within our period – found no followers in practice. In spite of all this the myth of folk architecture was present. It was not an exception that when reviewers felt any reference to traditional architecture in an executed modern building they celebrated it – even if the architect had no intention of recalling the shape of a rural building. Just one example – in 1961 a reviewer evaluated a recently completed mortuary as follows: “It is a synthesis of what latest modern architecture offers, using conscious and unconscious symbols and the values of the most ancient folk architecture. ... It refers to both the smoking houses of the Great Hungarian Plain and to Le Corbusier’s chapel in Ronchamp.”<sup>13</sup> The architect didn’t protest against this interpretation, but when he was asked many, many years later about the building in an interview, he referred to pure practical considerations, and elsewhere made clear his admiration for Le Corbusier.<sup>14</sup>

Alongside the two aforementioned approaches to modern architecture – oriented towards technology or national traditions – we have to list a third one. This trend differs from the others in that it doesn’t have a direct theoretical background. The relationship between modern architecture and the built and natural environment, otherwise modern architecture’s human character, was on the agenda of international architectural discussions, especially in the late 1940s and early 1950s. There is hardly any writing with similar content or reference to these discussions in the Hungarian press. The only exception is a contribution at the 1961 Congress of Association of Hungarian Architects, in which one architect referred to Sigfried Giedion’s concept of “new regionalism” as an approach to follow if we intend to adapt to the conditions, to meet the given place, landscape, nation and circumstances.<sup>15</sup> At that time he was the editor of *Magyar Építőművészet*, the architectural journal which published many modern buildings in this period. Consequently the presence of a ‘modest’ or ‘situated modernism’ – the labels were created later – should be attributed to an international impact, not through theory but by familiarity with the examples, even if only from pictures. However the reception of Louis Kahn, Alvar Aalto or the next generation of Finnish architecture doesn’t alone explain the emergence of a trend. An explanation of the modesty of this third group of buildings is that they were mostly infill developments. This condition restricted if not excluded the use of prefabricated elements, while the architects took took harmony with the neighbouring buildings seriously.

Facades were plastered, coloured, used lane mouldings or had brick cladding, composed proportions and openings etc. To sum it up the best examples had the common features of using traditional materials on the facade, monolithic reinforced concrete structural frames, and a human scale concerning mass and proportion. Their additional characteristics were the sophisticated details, due to the invested design hours – in this time the old building professionals were still available, and because of the temporary decrease in investments state design offices were not overloaded with commissions. This sensitive approach to modernism was weakened over time. It supposed thorough and slow work, both in design and in construction; consequently it was not effective enough concerning quantity, which soon became the primary criterion for the building industry. Furthermore the architects themselves became fascinated by the new shapes and solutions offered by technologies expressing development and optimism.

Hungarian social scientists retrospectively named the early Kádár era ‘goulash communism’, following a contemporary expression used by journalists.<sup>16</sup> This combination of words refers to a politics which, while following the rules of the socialist camp as defined by the Soviet Union, strived to enhance the living standard in the country and de-politicize the society. This sophisticated dictatorship resulted in a special Hungarian style of socialism. Architecture of this period was embedded in a social and political background and kept pace with its main striving, modernisation. Modern architecture was announced as an appropriate means for modernization, though the political and the professional interpretation of its content differed in many respects. Politics stressed mass production, prefabrication and standardization, while architects were fascinated by the possibilities of recent technological approaches and innovations. Despite the inherent conflicts of the interpretations of modernism, the profession came to a compromise with the political powers. “The confidence and the belief that we can make up for lost time resulted in a strong consensus between the profession, society and the political trend. In the spirit of modernism, architecture compromised with power,” a contemporary recalled in the 1980s.<sup>17</sup> Architecture theoreticians made repeated attempts to define an alternative architectural modernism, naming it ‘socialist architecture’ or ‘super-modern’ but the majority of practicing architects followed – in their intentions – international modernism in architecture. There was only a smaller group of architects who, with the knowledge of foreign examples of modest or regional modern architecture, preserved the sensitivity of the former socialist-realist

period and in their projects created a kind of situated or even place-bound modernism. The trend of a particular Hungarian modernism was missing from the palette of early Kádár era architectural practice. The idea was raised, based on the history of this approach, but the old-new seed found soil only a few years later.

All in all, we identify three different approaches to modernism in our period 1958-1963, but none of them intended to represent a ‘particular Hungarian way’. Fortunately the label ‘goulash communism’ has another interpretation: as a result of increasing living standards, people could buy meat in the shops for their favourite goulash soup. And really Hungarian architects were pleased that they had regained modern architecture (the meat) and could experience with its different flavourings – at least for a while.

<sup>1</sup> The so-called ‘Hungarian issue’ of 1956 was removed from the United Nations Organization’s agenda only in December 1962.

<sup>2</sup> Khrushchev’s speech is quoted in MAJOR, 1955, p.137.

<sup>3</sup> A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt művelődési politikájának irányelvei, p.133.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.134.

<sup>5</sup> Board Meeting Minutes, 1958, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.16.

<sup>7</sup> Máté Major (1904-1986) was a leading figure throughout the socialist period. As an academician, a university professor and the president of the Association of Hungarian Architects (besides a number of other positions) he represented the official architectural theory in Hungary.

<sup>8</sup> MAJOR, 1959, p. 294.

<sup>9</sup> Theses of the secretary general’s report, 1961, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> FERENCZY, 1961, p. 132.

<sup>11</sup> KATHY, 1961, p.37.

<sup>12</sup> CSÁSZÁR, 1962, p.52.

<sup>13</sup> SÜDI, 1961, p.27.

<sup>14</sup> SIMON, 2005

<sup>15</sup> BONTA, 1961, p. 144.

<sup>16</sup> VALUCH, 2001–2002

<sup>17</sup> JANÁKY, 1988, p.3.

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Apartment house, Úri utca, Budapest, 1958. Architect: Zoltán Farkasdy



Apartment house, Árpád fejedelem útja, Budapest., 1958. Architect: Miklós Hofer

# Visions of Anarchic Space in 1980s Estonian Architecture and Performance Art

Ingrid Ruudi

In research into art and architecture during the Soviet era, one cannot pass over the question of the social implications of cultural production. During the last two decades we have seen a whole array of positions, starting from a model based on the clear-cut oppositions between collaborationist and so-called underground practices towards more nuanced readings. It used to be common to base the discussion on binary opposites like the Party and the People, oppression and resistance, repression and freedom, truth and simulation, etc, distinguishing between the 'real' and „the 'simulated', leading towards conceptualizing of the Soviet person as somehow schizophrenic. Interestingly, this model of binary oppositions has been strongly held by cultural producers themselves, who have maintained even until this day their dissident heroism. In the last decade, instead of black and white opposition, a lot of grey tones have entered into the discourse. One of the most fruitful recent contributions has been by the anthropologist Alexei Yurchak, who has challenged the common belief that the collapse of the Soviet system was made possible because during the whole Soviet period socialism was perceived as 'bad', 'immoral' and 'imposed' by the Soviets. Instead, Yurchak described the relationship toward ideology as dynamic and 'situated', whereby seemingly contradictory positions and beliefs could be reconciled within a person's mind.<sup>1</sup> It became increasingly important to reproduce the formal signifiers of ideological discourse, up to the point where the formal repetition somehow froze the rituals, and the form

of ideological discourse was increasingly floating free of its content. Yurchak has described this ritualized, hollowed-out performing of ideological gestures with the term 'performative shift', whereby the significance of gestures became a thing in itself, having lost touch with the initial, or the supposed, meaning of them.<sup>2</sup> The appearance of Soviet reality was working as a mask, and behind it, and within it, people were by the 1980s quite comfortably incorporating their much more heterogical everyday practices and social points of view. However, as Yurchak notes, what is important in this shift is that the participants of the system, the performers, were not fully aware of these workings. The introduction of perestroika, also initially meant only as a reform and not as a shaking of the foundations of the Soviet social and economical system, rendered suddenly visible this logic of the performative shift—the system of masks was suddenly there for all to see.

In my paper I shall try to focus on this most complex period of the falling off of the masks: the era from the proclamation of perestroika in the middle of the 1980s until 1991, which in the case of Estonia meant the re-establishment of an independent state. I shall focus on the practice of a new radical interdisciplinary grouping called Rühm T (Group T), initiated by the young architects Raoul Kurvitz and Urmas Muru and producing a wide array of creation ranging from architecture through painting and installations to performances. I'm primarily interested in the reciprocal relationship of Group T's conceptual architecture drawings and performance

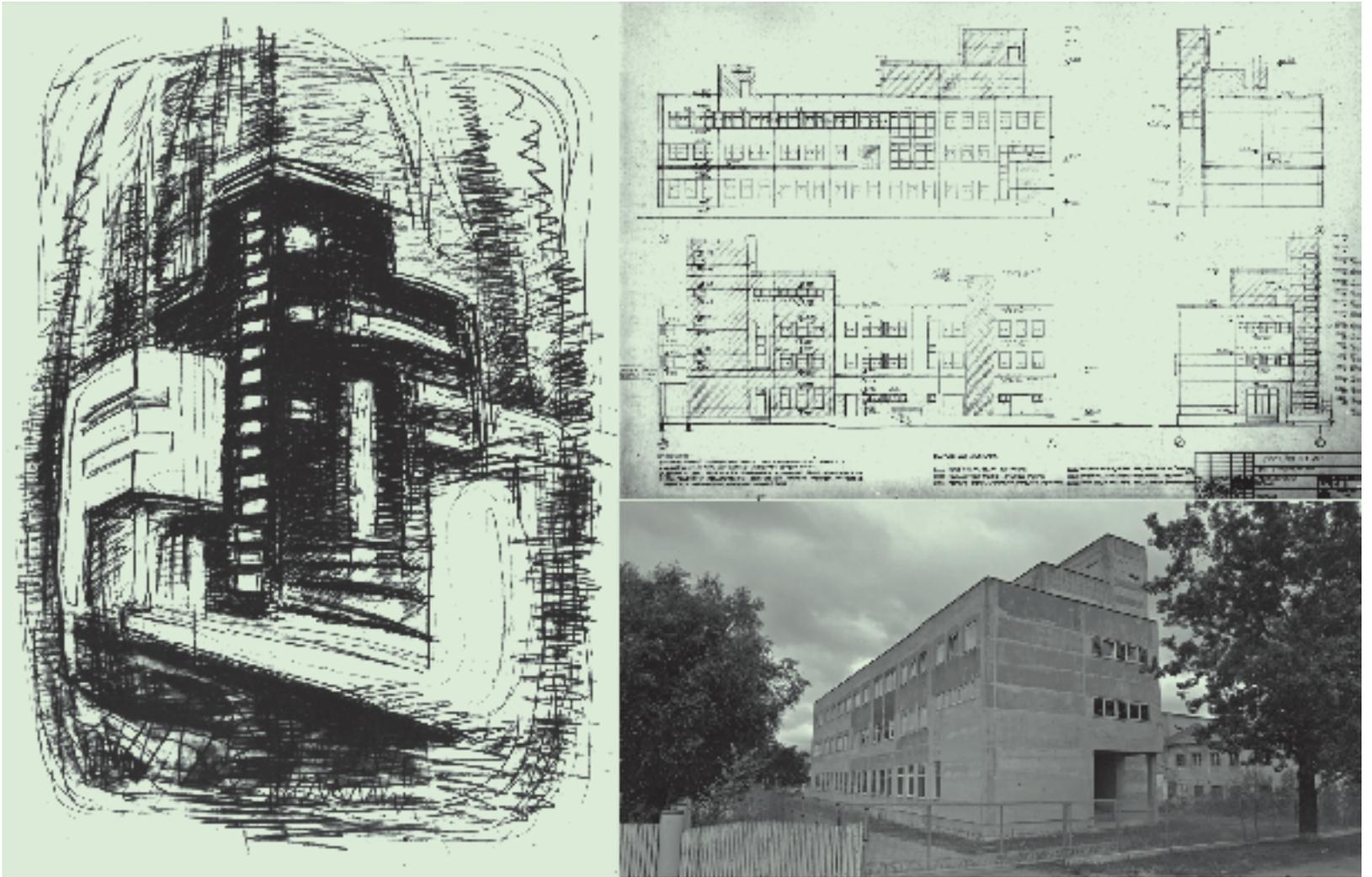


acts – what kind of space is imagined or produced? What is the relationship of the ephemeral or conceptual spaces thus created towards the social situation? Could this be read in terms of critical or dissident architecture<sup>3</sup> similarly as the examples known from the 1970s, or does the rapidly changing social situation render the critical, oppositional position more vague – what is the target of the criticism now? As the members of Group T themselves proclaimed their activities as being driven by anarchist impulses, what could it mean in the context of the end of 1980s social situation – a time when, on the one hand, the performative shift became visible, and on the other hand, nationalist impulses resurfaced and were consolidated towards regaining of independence? I propose that these questions might help a rethinking of the social and cultural processes during perestroika, and diversify the dominant reading of the end of the 1980s as a homogeneous, consolidated phase of national romanticist cultural production in Estonia.

Raoul Kurvitz and Urmas Muru graduated the Estonian Academy of Arts at the beginning of the 1980s. Ahead of them was the generation of so-called Tallinn school, which had revolutionized the local architectural scene in the 1970s, reclaiming the position of the architect as a creative individual in culture through a succession of conceptual projects and some examples of remarkable architecture, mainly commissioned by the kolkhoz system.<sup>4</sup> By the 1980s the Tallinn school architects had established their position quite firmly and were even, in

some instances, attempting an international breakthrough with contextual, post-modernist architecture. Among other things, the Tallinn school reintroduced values and notions like context, environment, locality, sustainability, while looking fondly back upon the heritage of the pre-war independent republic of Estonia. Their manifestation took place in the context of ongoing production of Soviet mass housing and necessarily attained the connotations of progressive resistance and nationalism. At the beginning of the 1980s it was hard to see a different kind of resistant position for an architect. But the Group T members tried to push this architect-artist attitude even further, also aiming at a revolutionizing of the rather conservative art scene. Raoul Kurvitz, the initiator of the group, invited the participation of various painters, musicians, poets and even a philosopher, in order to transform the mid-1980s Estonian art scene through exhibitions and performance events that transgressed the received notions of art. Their first exhibition as a group was in 1986 in the snowy back yard of an art museum in Tallinn, with exhibitions following yearly until 1991, when the group more or less dissolved. Group T must be credited for introducing a particular form of performance art to Estonia – a highly ritualised, mystical practice – and for freshening the art scene with neo-expressionist paintings. They also revived the genre of manifesto, with each exhibition accompanied by one such declaration. As background, one must also mention their strong connections with the local punk rock, and later techno, music scene,

The first exhibition of Group T in the back yard of Adamson-Eric Museum, Tallinn, 1986. Paintings, graphics, installations of metal. (Centre for Contemporary Art Estonia.)



Vision and reality: Raoul Kurvitz.  
ETUI (Building Research Institute) building, Tallinn, 1987.  
(Raoul Kurvitz's private archive.)

and an interest in various poststructuralist strands of philosophy, hitherto unfamiliar in Estonia. Generally, the Group T architects kept separate their artistic and architectural production. Art events featured paintings, installations, and performances; architecture was exhibited separately or published in magazines where they advocated conceptual drawing as a means of architectural production in itself.<sup>5</sup> However, it seems that it would be most fruitful to interpret their architecture in juxtaposition with performance events and also in the context of their varied written productions.

The core group – Raoul Kurvitz, Urmas Muru and also Peeter Pere – were daily working in the Estonian Industrial Project, a workplace widely considered the least imaginative among career possibilities in Estonian architecture. They counterbalanced the situation with a conscious focus on architecture's experimental side that found an outlet mainly in various forms of conceptual drawings. Regarding architecture, their inspirations were of a different kind from those of the earlier Tallinn school – by that time, the ideas of a new attitude, later to be amalgamated under the term 'deconstructivist architecture' after an exhibition of the same name at MoMA in 1988, had started to filter through to Soviet Estonia. The everyday reality at the Estonian Industrial Project, designing warehouses, railroad infrastructure, factory buildings, boilerhouses, power substations, etc, was a far cry from the conceptual and theoretical fireworks of, say, Coop Himmelb(l)au or Bernard Tschumi. But this passionate attitude, completely devoid of idealism or illusions of any kind, immediately rang a bell with youngsters who related

more to punk events than office routine; the disadvantages of their starting position were quickly inverted to celebrate the industrial in the manner of Sant'Elia, writing up a manifesto for technodelic architecture.

Actually named 'A manifesto for technodelic expressionism'<sup>6</sup>, this is a text deliberately full of paradoxes, starting from the name, coined by a merging of 'technology' and 'psychedelic'. The name was explained as 'a revelation of the technological world in a state of trance'. The text called for 'a completely new architectural sensibility that would combine contemporary technological advances and absolute subjectivity, a juxtaposition of industrial and organic impulses. This kind of architecture must be born from hallucinations and ecstasy, it is an environment for dreams and for realizing one's hidden passions. Technodelic expressionist designs as if delivering an erotic confession. Architectural forms are the residual products of emotions.'<sup>7</sup>

In this passionate, if slightly vague, manifesto it is hard not to see a parallel with Coop Himmelb(l)au's plea for a blazing architecture of the same time: "We want architecture that has more. Architecture that bleeds, that exhausts, that whirls, and even breaks. Architecture that lights up, stings, rips, and tears under stress. Architecture has to be cavernous, fiery, smooth, hard, angular, brutal, round, delicate, colorful, obscene, lustful, dreamy, attracting, repelling, wet, dry, and throbbing. Alive or dead. If cold, then cold as a block of ice, if hot, then hot as a blazing wing. Architecture must blaze."<sup>8</sup>

However, the manifesto for technodelic expressionism has another side: this very individualistic

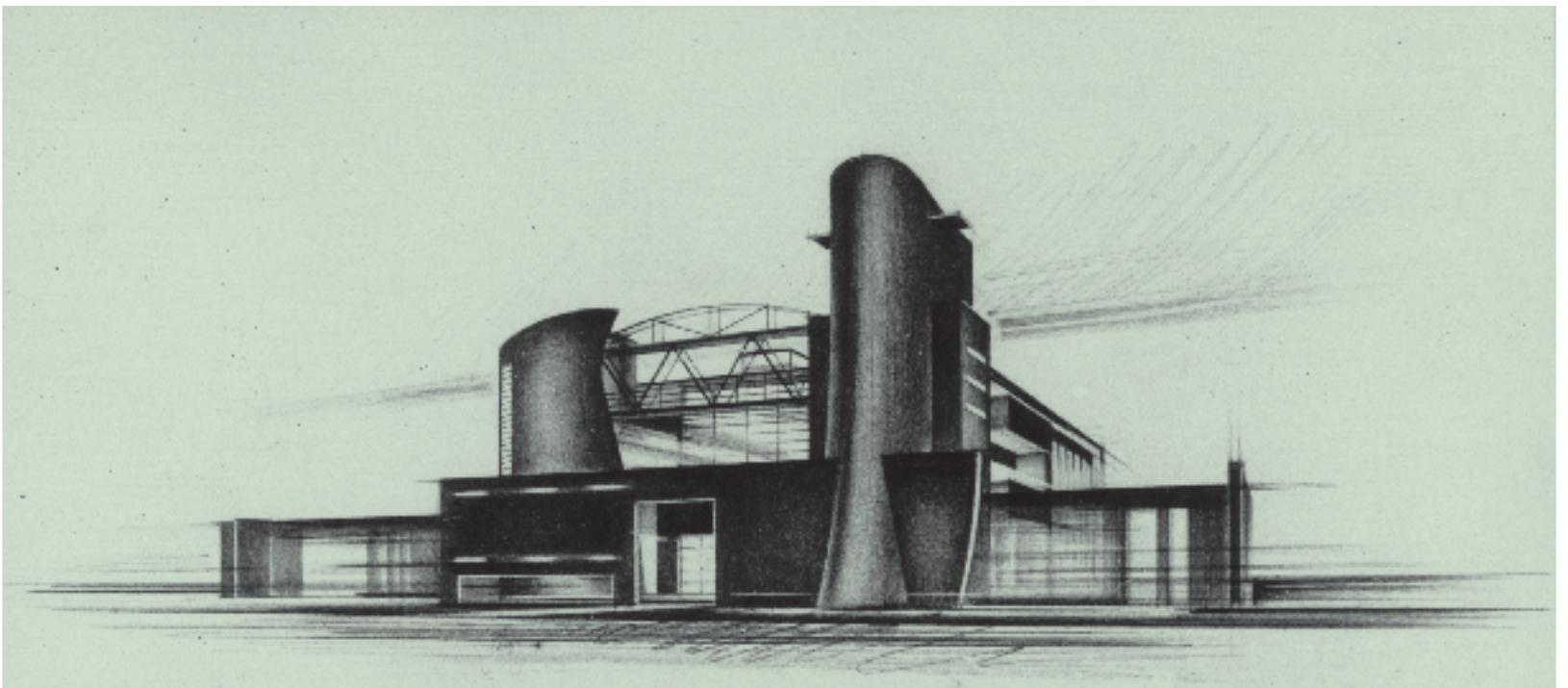
pathos is surprisingly combined with the concept of national subconscious: “architecture stems from specific climatic and racial features – the indifferent and harsh nature that has conditioned the Estonian temperament and biological code has resulted in a static, inward-looking architecture. Yet, this austerity is not our permanent feature: the same energy may be turned outwards instead, to unleash the stern movements.”<sup>9</sup> And to conclude again with a paradox: “Expressionist architecture is hallucinations and delirium plus maximum discipline.”<sup>10</sup> So the manifesto, seemingly very individualistic in its focus on subjective impulses as sources for design, does also contain a social dimension, a message to its era: to shake free the hitherto restrained energies, to build up a new world of maximum liberation.

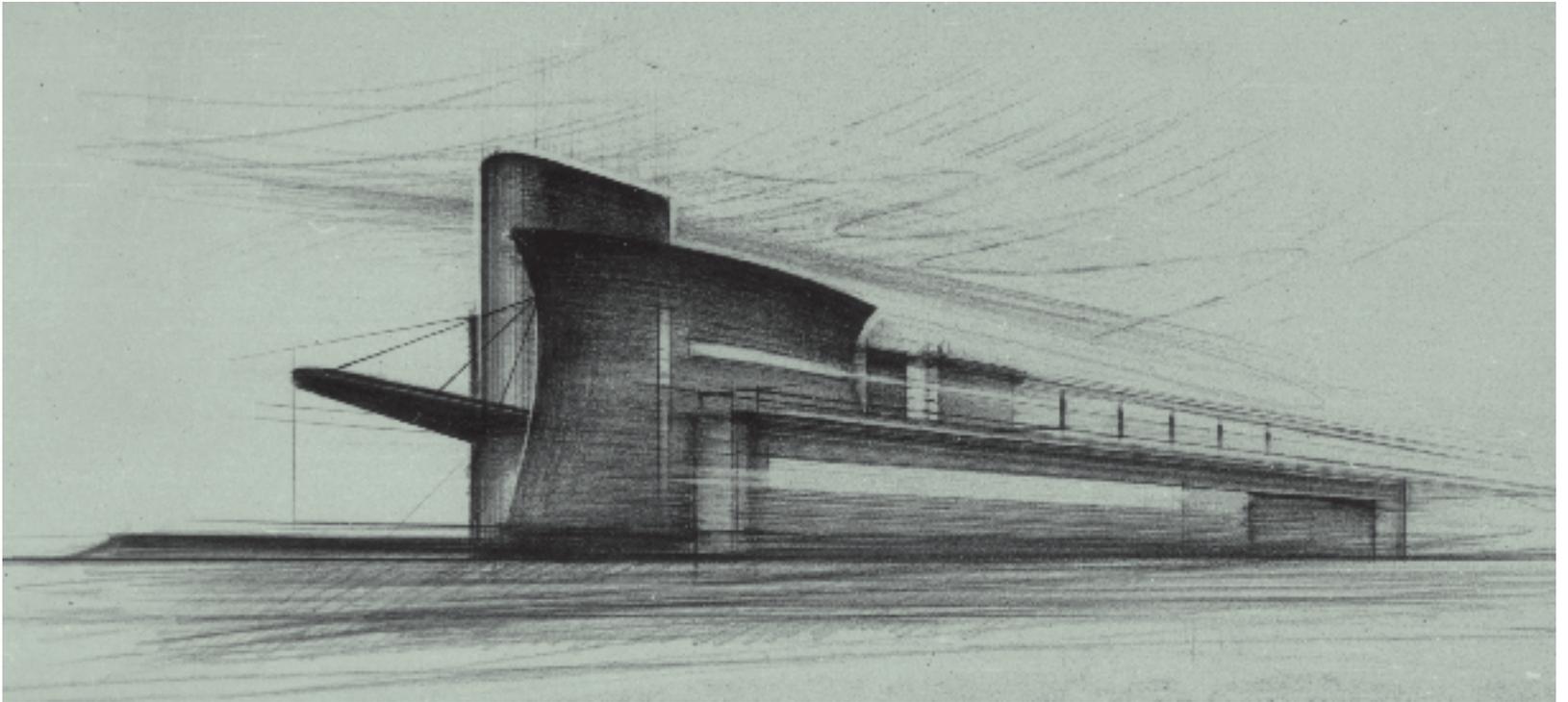
How did these calls for liberation and ecstasy manifest themselves in architectural design? There are several things that strike the eye when looking at the drawings of Group T. Firstly, as the formal references to expressionism and constructivism are obvious, these forms are not conceived in anticipation of some kind of new, utopian world. Although Bruno Taut was one of the main references in Urmas Muru’s article in a youth magazine promoting conceptual drawing in architecture<sup>11</sup>, in their actual drawings the expressionist forms have attained a somehow sinister touch. And although Urmas Muru explained the whole idea of conceptual projects in terms of creating visions ahead of their time, his actual drawings resemble more an anticipation not of a future utopia but rather some kind of post-humanist era. Moreover, whereas classically, visionary architecture has been preoccupied with imagining a new

or alternative kind of space – whether in drawings, elevations, plans, or models, the target has been a vision of space as a three-dimensional container, a space which hypothetically might be inhabited, bodily occupied – this is certainly not the case here. The drawings never depict an interior or even hint at the possibility of space as a container. Perhaps one could even see that they lack the feeling of three-dimensionality, feeling rather as masks. The feeling is the strongest with Urmas Muru’s black-and-white pencil drawings, dynamic and restrained at the same time – it is hard to imagine spaces behind these facades. It is even more striking because Group T architects actually never did real ‘conceptual’ drawings – all of the images are supposedly elevations of real commissions at the Estonian Industrial Project office – boiler houses, substations, port buildings, etc. Thus it must have been a deliberate choice to detach the depicted world from the slightest reference to the possibility of real space as a kind of strategy against reality. The same impulse is even more clearly manifest in the collages of Peeter Pere, again presented as official elevations of the designs, and often included as such in an anachronistic manner in technical design files or the official reports. More than Urmas Muru’s restrainedly cool but tense building-masks, the compositions of Pere represent a direct violation, and undoing of architecture. His collages may be viewed as the unrestrained culmination of the impulse to go against architecture.

This destructive impulse may be interpreted with the help of Georges Bataille, who has likened the role of architecture for a society to that of Lacan’s mirror stage in the development of the person.<sup>12</sup> Creating

Urmas Muru. Computing centre in Pärnu, 1988.  
(Museum of Estonian Architecture.)





Urmas Muru. Tallinn Greenery Board, s.a.  
(Museum of Estonian Architecture.)

architecture, in that sense, would constitute a mirror stage for a society, for our social image. Architecture is the authorized superego of a society, and thus for Bataille, equalled to a prison. Yet Bataille's architecture as conditioner of societal behaviour is different from that of Foucault, who sees space as the embodiment of power technologies and the carrier of power/knowledge relations. Whereas Foucault's space is something that surrounds, frames, encompasses, sees, conditions, orders and produces, effectual by being unnoticeable, Bataille's architecture as prison is primarily representation. Bataille and Foucault have different conceptions of the essence of power and that of the subject. Where Foucault sees architectural space as one of the agents or means producing the subject, Bataille sees it as the mouthpiece of societal order, oppressing subjects. To counter the oppression, Bataille looks for a space before the formation of the subject and the emergence of meaning – a space that would be non-subjective, non-meaningful. However, going against architecture is not enough. Or rather, it is indispensable but nevertheless futile. Because architecture is anthropomorphous, and the primary prison for Bataille is not social but physical – one's own body. This is taking to extreme the primeval equation of architecture and the human body, the long tradition of Western architectural thought which sees the body as the measure of architecture and architecture as the equivalent of the body. Reading the architectural visions of Group T through such a lens, one might see both the conceptualisation of architecture as pure representation (as in Urmas Muru's drawings) as well as an attempt to break it and search for a 'space before meaning' (as in Peeter Pere's collages).

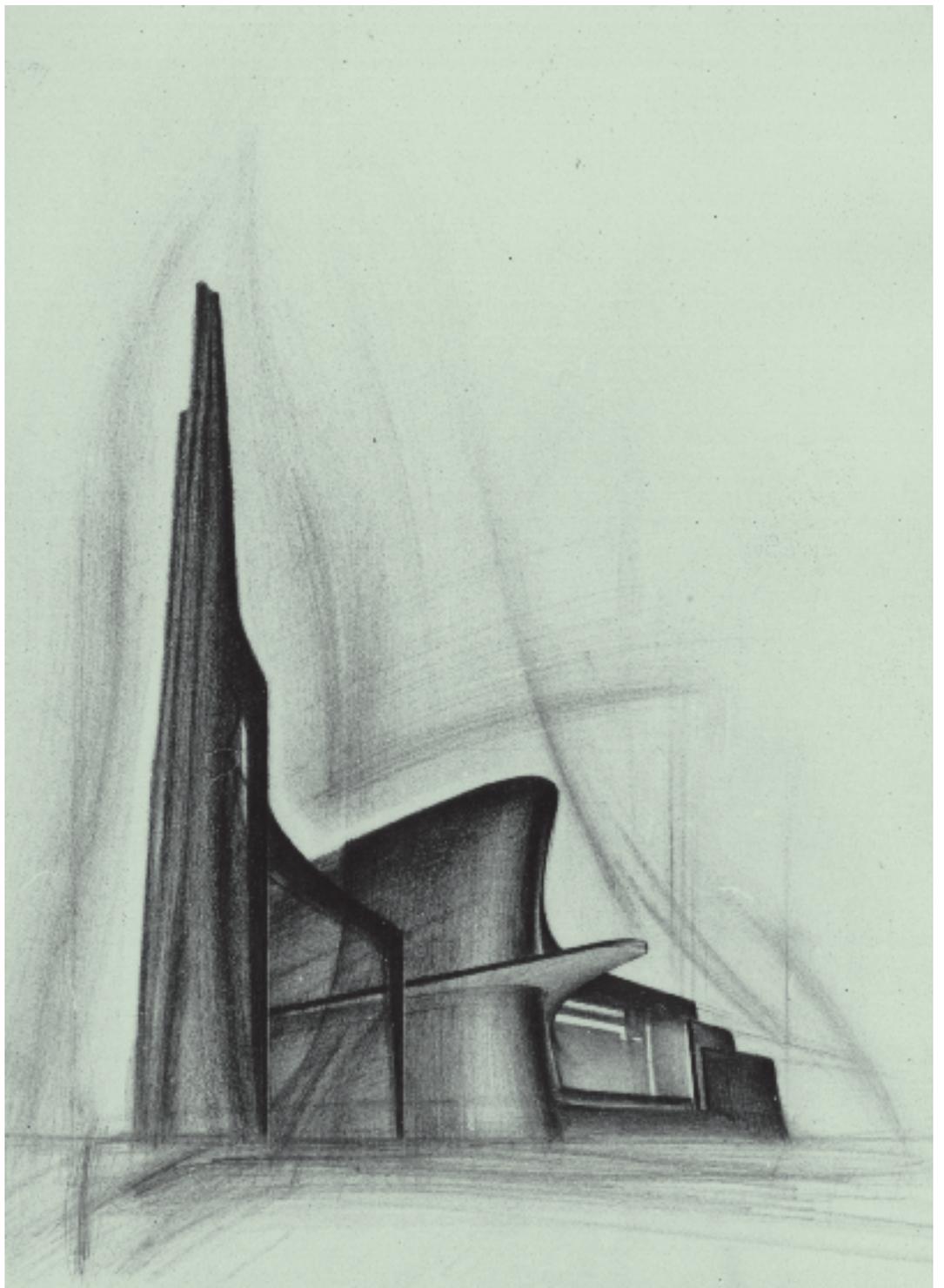
This is further explained by the performance practice of Group T. Recurring themes of their unprecedented and heavily symbol-laden performance practice were balanced on the verge of self-destruction, and a search for something inarticulate, often embodied by amorphous matter or primeval archetypes. This has so far mainly been interpreted as a token of sadomasochism, motives from the

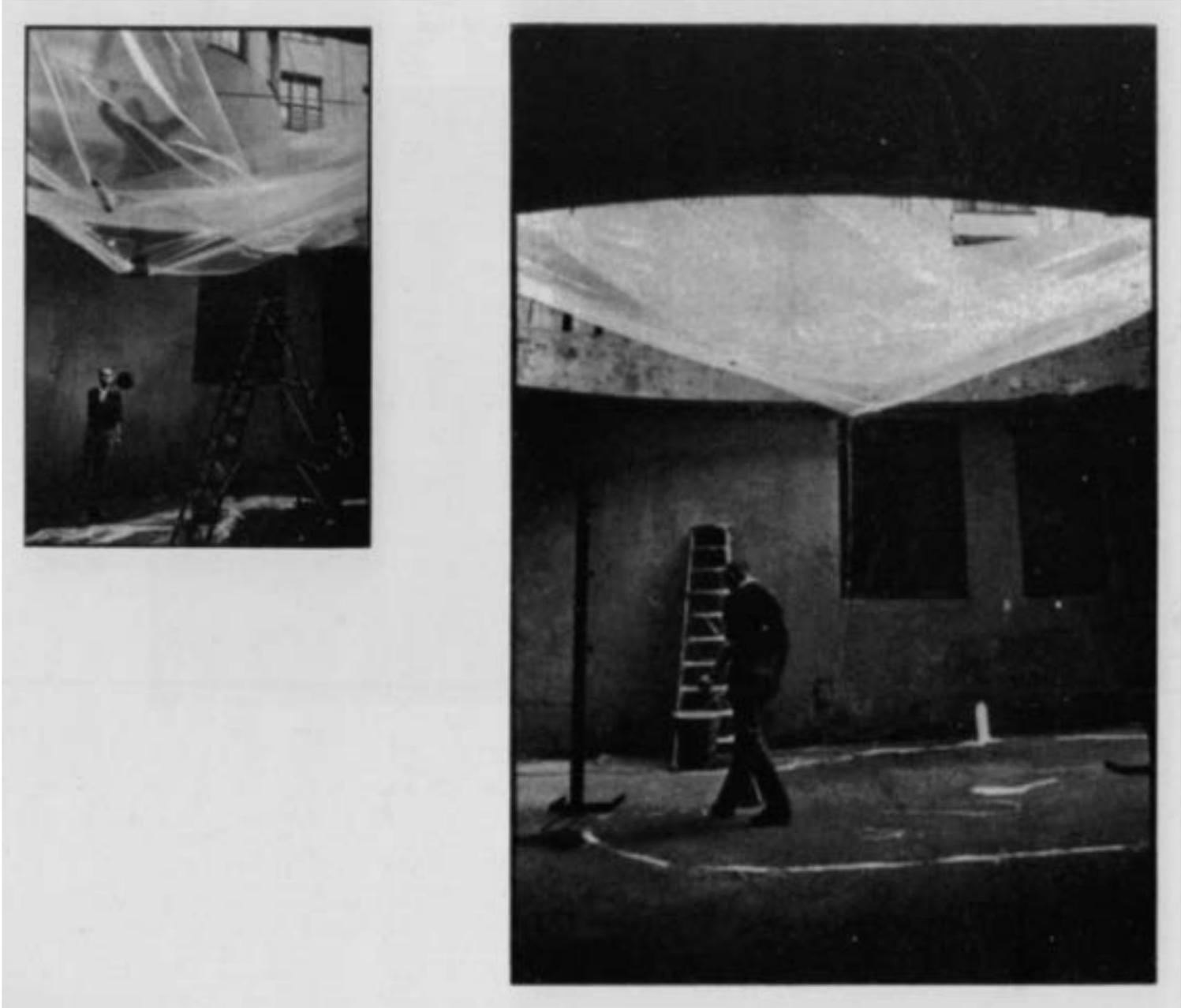
Jungian subconscious or the dialectics of violence and guilt, but the analysis has never departed from a subject-centered and decidedly asocial reading.<sup>13</sup> This is naturally in tune with the self-proclaimed utterly subjective, asocial and apolitical position of the Group T members; however, any such proclamations cannot be taken at face value if we take into account their objective – to decompose subjectivity and stable subject positions altogether. One of the most consistent working methods of Group T was to put oneself, one's proclamations and public image, constantly under question – once a slightly clear position or a consensual interpretation was beginning to crystallize, they instantly denounced it or claimed a contrary explanation. Juxtaposition of opposites and highlighting the state of being on the borderline were among the core ideas of Group T's performance practice<sup>14</sup>, together with the aim to reach a point where the meaning – any idea of meaning as such – dissolves.<sup>15</sup> It also seems that the juxtaposition of performance and architecture could help reintroduce the excluded social dimension into their practice. In this light, destructive impulses towards one's own body are conditioned by destructive impulses towards architecture, and the individual body is reunited with the social body. As time passes, the connection evolves from the metaphorical to the more literal: from Group T's earliest performances, like the one at the opening of their third group show in 1988, where Urmas Muru's violin performance was disrupted by his suit catching fire, towards their later performances, where bodies are in more direct engagement with different architectural spaces. Such was for instance their performance at the opening of Vaal gallery in Tallinn, where there was a clear juxtaposition of the architect's rational activities in measuring and designing, and real creative forces which are amorphous, unstable and also threatening.<sup>16</sup> In a covered gallery courtyard with an oval opening in the ceiling, Peeter Pere was absorbed in measuring the ground, calculating and drawing an oval equivalent to the one above his head, at the same time that the oval opening, covered with plastic, began to

Urmas Muru. Haljala chapel, competition design, 1988.  
(Museum of Estonian Architecture.)

be filled first with water, and then a human (Urmas Muru) emerged from it, symbolising the process of birth, or creation, as opposed to the futile abstractions down on the ground. Characteristically, the process involved a strong sense of threat or possibility of self-destruction as the human body was put in a situation testing the physical laws, dependent on, among others, architectural structures, and it was not at all clear whether the plastic would withstand the load. In the performance *Eleonora* at Tallinn Art Hall, a similar opposition could be seen, as the first part involved the participants hurrying around the room with metal structures of incomprehensible purpose, clashing them against each other and attempts at dismembering them.<sup>17</sup> Then, the floor got covered with a vast sheet of black plastic, waving as an amorphous, formless matter (a search for Bataille's space before meanings) and an obscure poem about oceans began to be recited.<sup>18</sup> During all this, a human body (again, Urmas Muru) was hanging powerlessly, suspended from the ceiling. The most direct juxtaposition of the human and architectural body took place in the performance *À rebours*<sup>19</sup>, where Urmas Muru was performing a balancing act on the balcony railing of the Helsinki Student Theatre.<sup>20</sup> He appeared to be 'conducting' the building, with black rectangulars that were filling all the openings of the facade, pulsating to the rhythm of the music by Allan Hmelnitski.<sup>21</sup> At the end of the piece, the facade 'spat out' the black rectangular cubes from its windows and openings as in a process of purging or purification, or as a sign of the internal collapse of the building, rendering the facade a hollow core.

In the turbulent period of the end of the 1980s–beginning of 1990s, the architecture and performance of Group T worked as rendering visible the 'falling of the masks' of the period, at the same time claiming that there is no illusion of any coherence or order coming as a replacement. This is an important critique, as for the majority of the local Estonian population, the era was marked by consolidation in the name of reinstating independence, a process that was conceptualised not as the creation of a new societal

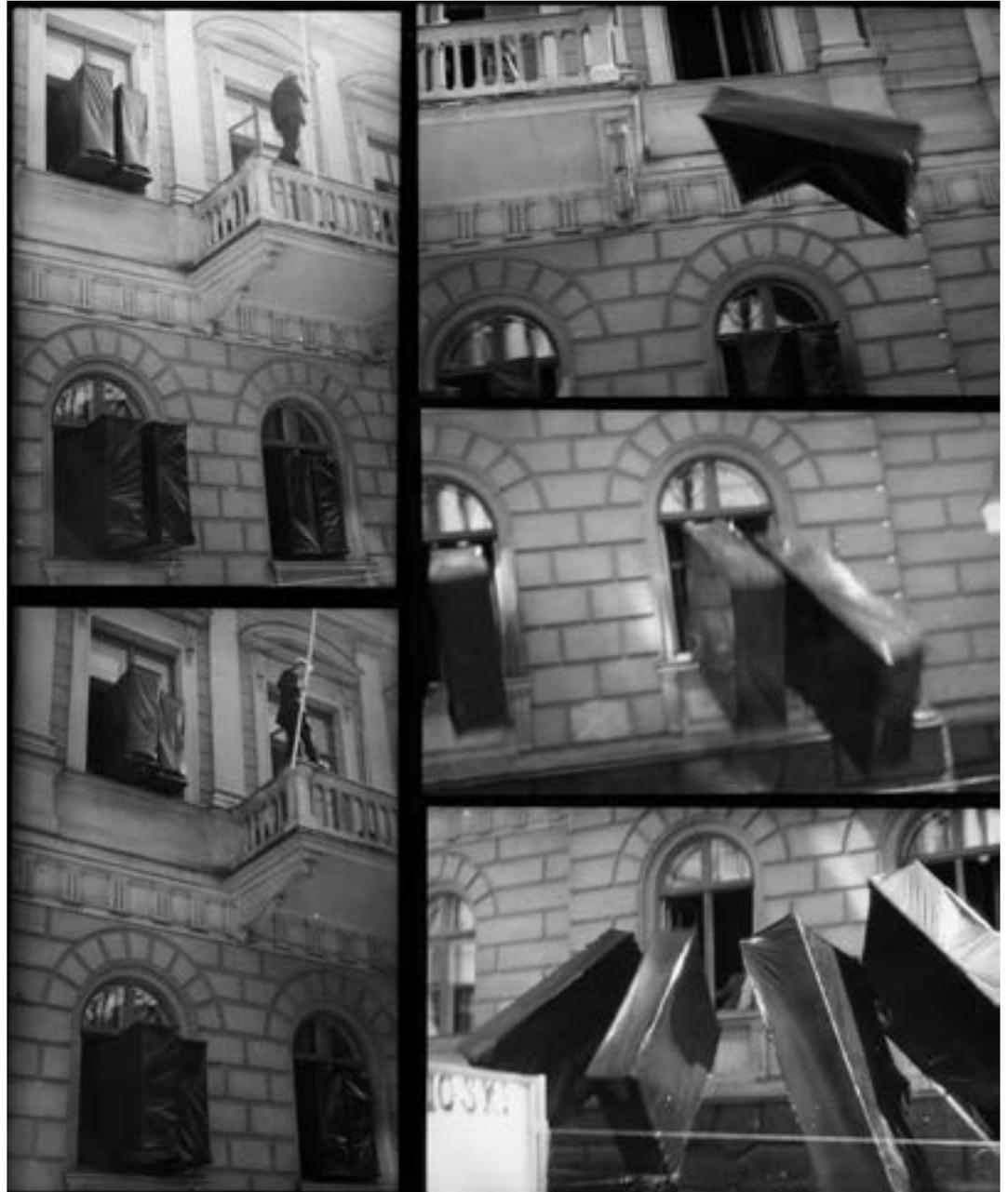




Urmas Muru, Peeter Pere. *Performance Oval, Tallinn, 1990*  
(Vaal gallery.)

order but as a restitution of a previous, pre-Second World War one, a necessary undoing of a historical disruption.<sup>22</sup> Such conceptualization meant curtailing the possibility of questioning of alternative paths. In architecture from the end of the 1980s this was mirrored in the emergence of architects who, as Mart Kalm has described, gave up the artist-architect position with a very rational, matter-of-fact attitude of 'a good practitioner'.<sup>23</sup> In this context, the Group T architects seemed at that time so anachronistic that they were almost dismissed in architecture criticism and only discussed as innovators of art. However, the anarchic position that becomes more consistent if perceived in art and architecture together is in hindsight an invaluable social commentary, being almost a critique ahead of its time, a critique of the restitutive processes and the soon to come 'normalization' of the society. The anarchy preached and practiced by Group T must be interpreted rather as a form of post-structuralist anarchy, or post-anarchy as recently conceptualised by Saul Newman<sup>24</sup> – in accordance with the lessons learnt from post-structuralism making the ideal of a single movement

impossible, postanarchism conceives of a political space which is indeterminate, contingent and heterogeneous; where the power of insurgency stems from it being local, unstable and individual. Instead of a coherent event with a clearly defined goal, postanarchism thinks of revolution in terms of a multiplicity of insurrectional and autonomous spaces.<sup>25</sup> Thus the individualism, incommunicable private myths, absolute subjectivity and violent corporeality of Group T turn out to be not a withdrawal from the political but rather the opposite – the most political stance of constructing non-representational, heterogeneous spaces. The spatial situations generated by them both revealed the tensions of the time and aimed at generating autonomous, antagonistic spaces of their own, where would be acknowledged the implication oppressive would be acknowledged.



Urmas Muru. *Performance À rebours*, Helsinki, 1992.  
(Raoul Kurvitz's private archive.)

<sup>1</sup> Alexei Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p 26. Earlier, Yurchak had described the same concept by the term heteronymous shift, see Alexei Yurchak, *Soviet Hegemony of Form. Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More*. – *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no 3 (July): 480-510. The term performative shift stresses rather the aspect of action, as ritualized performing, than the aspect of different meanings, invoked by the word heteronymous.

<sup>3</sup> The case for reading oppositional or critical architecture from the 1970s-1980s as dissident was again recently argued by Ines Weizman, see Ines Weizman, *Dissidence through Architecture*. – *Perspecta* 45: Agency. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2012: 27–38.

<sup>4</sup> For Tallinn school, see e.g. Andres Kurg, Mari Laanemets (eds). *Environments, Projects, Concepts. Architects of the Tallinn School 1972–1985*. Tallinn: Museum of Estonian Architecture, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Urmas Muru. *Mälestused tunnetest*. – *Kunst*, 1989, no 2(74), or Urmas Muru. *Arhitektuursed nägemused*. – *Noorus*, 1988, no 9.

<sup>6</sup> The Manifesto was published in the leaflet *Eesti ekspressionistlik arhitektuur 1985–1988*. Tallinn: RPI Eesti Tööstusprojekt, 1988.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, unpaginated.

<sup>8</sup> Coop Himmelb(l)au. *Architecture Must Blaze*. – *Architecture is Now: Projects, (Un)buildings, Actions, Statements, Sketches, Commentaries, 1968–1983*. New York: Rizzoli, 1983, p. 90.

<sup>9</sup> *Eesti ekspressionistlik arhitektuur 1985–1988*. Tallinn: RPI Eesti Tööstusprojekt, 1988, unpaginated.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, unpaginated.

<sup>11</sup> Urmas Muru. *Arhitektuursed nägemused*.

<sup>12</sup> Dennis Hollier. *Against Architecture*. The Writings of Georges Bataille. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. Hanno Soans. *Peegel ja piits. Mina köidikud uuemas eesti kunstis*. – *Kunstiteaduslikke uurimusi*, 10. *Eesti Kunstiteadlaste Ühing*, 2000, pp. 309–353.

<sup>14</sup> Hasso Krull, Urmas Muru. *Performance – praktika surm*. – *Eesti Ekspress*, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1991.

<sup>15</sup> Hasso Krull. *Ei juhtunud midagi (Eleonora)*. – *Vikerkaar* No 4, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> See Vaal 1990 / 2005. Tallinn: Vaal galerii, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Video recordings of the performances are kept in the Centre for Contemporary Arts Estonia.

<sup>18</sup> The poem was portion of *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1868-1869) by the Comte de Lautréamont, a nihilistic prose poem that was a major inspiration for the Surrealists, and the same portions were recited also in Jean-Luc Godard's 1967 film *Week End*.

<sup>19</sup> The title of the performance was referring to a symbolist 1884 novel of the same name by Joris-Karl Huysmans.

<sup>20</sup> Elisabeth Nordgren. *Mellan himmel och jord*. – *Hufvudstadsbladet*, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1992.

<sup>21</sup> Conversation with Urmas Muru, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> One of the most vital catchwords, especially in the second half of the 1990s, that was used in conceptualisation of Estonian culture, society, and Estonian-ness in popular rhetoric was perhaps the 'culture of disruptions', a term originally used by the philosopher Hasso Krull, and also the title of his first collection of essays, see Hasso Krull, *Katkestuse kultuur*. Tallinn: Vagabund 1996. The popularity of the phrase may be seen to testify to a conception of a hypothetical 'genuine' linear course of events as it was destined to be but failing to manifest itself due to constant historical disruptions; thus in creating a culture, 'reinstating' the 'true' course would be at least as important a task as creating something new.

<sup>23</sup> Mart Kalm. *Eesti 20. sajandi arhitektuur. Estonian 20<sup>th</sup> Century Architecture*. Tallinn: Prisma Prindi Kirjastus, 2001: 420.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Saul Newman. *The Politics of Postanarchism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, and Saul Newman. *Postanarchism and Space: Revolutionary Fantasies and Autonomous Zones*. [http://postanarchistgroup.net/?page\\_id=265](http://postanarchistgroup.net/?page_id=265) retrieved in Jan 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Saul Newman, *Postanarchism and Space*.

# Slovenské abstrakty

**Slovensko, alebo aký môže mať  
zmysel architektonická periféria?**  
Henrieta Moravčíková

Historik umenia Ján Bakoš charakterizuje Slovensko ako „križovátku kultúr“, ktorej zvláštnosťou je „ostré zrážanie sa intenzívnych, ale prchavých impulzov na jednej strane a dlhotrvajúcich až konzervatívnych tradícií“ na strane druhej. Pretavovanie „prchavých impulzov“ do podoby prijateľnej pre domáce prostredie, ich moderovanie, ba až deformácia charakterizuje slovenskú architektonickú scénu po celé 20. storočie. „Ostré vypäté pozície sa opúšťajú v mene hodnôt, ktoré sú v tomto prostredí dôležité“. Aké sú to hodnoty? Pravdepodobne ide najmä o praktickosť a elementárnu funkčnosť. Pragmatické riešenia sa tu oddávajú tešiu obľube. So záľubou v praktických, často zjednodušených riešeniach úzko súvisí aj pomerne zložitý vzťah medzi architektom a klientom. Charakteristickou črtou slovenskej architektúry je aj neustála snaha prekonať pocit zaostávania a menejcennosti vo vzťahu k vyspelejším, najmä západným susedom. Polarita, ktorú spôsobuje permanentná polemika medzi na Západ orientovanými „novátormi“ a na lokálne tradície sústredenými „konzervatívami“ by tak mohla predstavovať tretiu dôležitú vlastnosť lokálnej architektonickej scény. Spomínané črty slovenskej architektonickej scény nie sú ojedinelé a v určitých obmenách sa vyskytujú aj inde. Ich kombinácia však pravdepodobne predsa vytvára jedinečnosť miestnej scény. V snahe ilustrovať špecifický vnútorný mechanizmus fungovania miestnej architektonickej scény sa príspevok zameriava na výnimočné historické situácie, architektonické diela a texty charakterizujúce architektúru 20. storočia na Slovensku.

**Má sa východoeurópska  
architektúra vyjadrovať?**  
Periferialita a reprezentácia  
Carmen Popescu

V roku 2006 vydalo vydavateľstvo University of Chicago Press ucelenú a bohato ilustrovanú štúdiu s názvom *When buildings speak (Keď budovy hovoria)*. Jej autor Anthony Alofsin si zvolil tento metaforický názov pre „architektúru ako jazyk v habsburskej monarchii a v následnom období (1867 – 1933)“. Zaoberanie sa identitou ako metodologickým aspektom pri štúdiu architektúry v strednej a východnej Európe nie je novým prístupom. Už Friederich Achleitner a Ákos Moravanszky preskúmavali túto problematiku vo viacerých svojich prácach. V Alofsinovej publikácii však zaujme aspekt, ako sa „zmysluplnosť“ mení na rozhodujúcu koncepciu pri dekódovaní v architektúre, ktorá má len „obmedzenú schopnosť k nám prehovoriť dnes“. Pri prekladaní trópu herderiánskych národných teórií, že každá národná kultúra sa zakladá na špecifickom jazyku, sa Alofsinovi podarilo predstaviť západnému čitateľovi do značnej miery neznámu architektúru strednej Európy a súčasne potvrdiť jej marginálnu pozíciu, ktorá opätovne potrebuje na jej správne porozumenie kód. S touto zložitou problematikou sa stretávali generácie architektov aj ideológov z východnej Európy, ktorých záujmom bolo (zmysluplné) zaradenie ich národa na geopolitickej mape.

Tento príspevok sa bližšie zameria na problematiku, aký výrazný vplyv mali „naratívne taktiky“ na architektúru a následne na jej historiografiu vo východnej Európe. Preskúma „zmysluplnú“ architektúru s dôrazom na problematiku identity a identifikácie. Obdobie socializmu je tu použité ako protipól, bez ignorovania dôležitosti architektúry tohto obdobia v historickom vývoji. Budem overovať aplikovateľnosť koncepcií ako „zmysluplnosť“ mimo zaužívanej teritoriality identity. A napokon mám v úmysle analyzovať, ktoré nástroje historiografie sú najvhodnejšie pre potreby výskumu východoeurópskej architektúry.

**Nedokončené modernizácie:  
Rekonštrukcia dejín architektúry  
socialistickej Juhoslávie**  
Maroje Mrduljaš  
Vladimir Kulić  
Jelica Jovanović

Predstavujeme regionálny projekt *Nedokončené modernizácie – medzi utópiou a pragmatizmom: Architektúra a urbanizmus v bývalej Juhoslávii a v následných štátoch*, ktorý realizovala skupina výskumníkov zo Slovinska, z Chorvátska, Bosny a Hercegoviny, zo Srbska a z Macedónska v rokoch 2010 – 2012. Zdôrazňuje potrebu rekonštrukcie spoločných dejín architektúry v širšom regióne strednej a východnej Európy.

Pod vplyvom kolapsu socialistickeho štátu mala história architektúry v Juhoslávii podobný osud ako v rakúsko-uhorskej monarchii – inom multinárodnom zoskupení v tomto regióne, ktoré sa rozpadlo, a to jej rozdelením podľa nových národných hraníc. Obdobne ako rakúsko-uhorská monarchia bola Juhoslávia polycentrickým štátom. Federálne usporiadanie štátu a programová emancipácia participujúcich etnických skupín vyústili do zreteľne odlišných architektonických kultúr, hoci pod spoločným politicko-ekonomickým systémom v každej z republík a v rámci jednotnej spoločenskej ideológie. Tieto rôznorodé kultúry na malom území boli kontinuálne konfrontované výmenami informácií s medzinárodnými centrami architektúry. Výsledkom toho bola architektúra reflektujúca tak lokálne, ako aj globálne tendencie. Túto problematiku bude ešte potrebné kriticky začleniť do dejín modernej architektúry s využitím nových analytických a interpretačných nástrojov.

Napriek skutočnosti, že po druhej svetovej vojne pozostávala stredná a východná Európa z nezávislých štátov so svojou vlastnou kultúrnou identitou, väčšina z nich mala socialistické zriadenie, čím sa v nich vynára podobný okruh otázok, aké sú formulované v projekte *Nedokončené modernizácie*. Ponúkame tento projekt ako možný model skúmania danej problematiky.

## Problematika písania dejín modernej rumunskej architektúry

Ana Maria Zahariade

Dejiny modernej rumunskej architektúry sa začali systematicky zaznamenávať v prvej polovici 20. storočia. Prvá generácia historikov architektúry bola ovplyvnená étosom (a chimérami) výraznej modernizácie konca 19. storočia, čo so sebou prinieslo špecifiká, rozpolupnosť a výkyvy tohto procesu. Ich záznamy mali nekriticky deskriptívny ráz zameraný na objekty a štýly s dôrazom na estetickosť vyhýbajúc sa sociálnym a politickým aspektom. Okrem niekoľkých výnimiek išlo o egocentrické architektonické záznamy izolované len v rozmedzí národných hraníc.

Dokonca aj mladšie a krehkejšie dejiny modernej architektúry pridali svoje vlastné problematcké aspekty. Komunizmus, ako ďalší príklad modernizácie, rozdelil dejiny architektúry na dve časti, ktoré boli predurčené na hlbšiu izoláciu. Prvé medzivojnové obdobie, ktoré režim zatemňoval, je v súčasnosti idealizované a znova výrazne prezentované. Druhé komunistické obdobie, ktoré bolo vo svojom čase glorifikované a po roku 1989 obchádzané, je ešte problematckejšie, lebo zahŕňa neobjektívne a nespoľahlivé záznamy či úsilie zaznamenávať dejiny s dôrazom na ideológiu. V súčasnosti je výskum skôr záležitosťou individuálnej snahy niekoľkých bádateľov, ktorí sú naklonení rôznym tematikám. Záujem o túto problematiku má narastajúcu tendenciu, avšak dejiny ešte čakajú na to, aby boli (pre)písané a prekonalí zdedený „izolacionizmus“.

Vychádzajúc z danej situácie som sa rozhodla prejsť nedávnu historiografiu rumunskej architektúry a preskúmať jej úskalí pri interpretácii a usporiadaní faktov. Diskusie s historikmi zo strednej a východnej Európy, ktorí sa pravdepodobne stretávajú s obdobnými problémami, by mohol vytvoriť spoločný kritický nástroj pre lepší pohľad na význam lokálneho v porovnaní s nadnárodným.

## Michal Milan Harminc – staviteľ a architekt v stredoeurópskom priestore

Špecifiká osobnostnej  
historiografie architektúry

Jana Pohaničová, Peter Buday

Osobitý fenomén stredoeurópskej historiografie architektúry predstavujú architekti a stavitelia pôsobiaci na území Rakúsko-Uhorska a jeho nástupníckych štátov na konci 19. a v prvých desaťročiach 20. storočia. Skúmanie ich života a diela je ťažké vzhľadom na veľký teritoriálny záber tvorby, keď sa ich pôsobiskom stala takmer celá stredná Európa a neziadka aj ďalšie štáty. Z tohto pohľadu sa zaujímavou témou pre výskum javí osobnosť staviteľa, architekta Michala Milana Harminca (1869 – 1964), ktorý patrí k nestorom slovenskej architektúry. Je označovaný ako architekt dvoch storočí a bravúrny eklektik s nesmierne širokou štýlovou a typologickou škálou tvorby. V jeho diele sa snúbi dedičstvo historických slohov a podnety moderny aj funkcionalizmu, keď imponantných takmer 300 realizovaných stavieb na území bývalého Rakúsko-Uhorska, neskôr Československa (v súčasnosti Slovenská republika) či na pôde nástupníckych štátov – v Maďarsku, v Srbsku, v Rumunsku, ale aj na Ukrajine ho v rokoch 1887 – 1951 súčasne radí k najproduktívnejším architektom nielen na Slovensku, ale aj v stredoeurópskom priestore. Bádanie slovenských historiografov architektúry v rámci grantových projektov a monografických prác na pôde FA STU v Bratislave prinieslo v poslednom čase viaceré nové poznatky týkajúce sa Harmincovho diela na území Slovenska. Raná – tzv. budapeštianska fáza tvorby zahŕňa však aj diela v okolitých krajinách. Preto potenciálna kooperácia na tejto téme najmä na poli archívneho aj terénneho výskumu predstavuje zaujímavý vklad do stredoeurópskej historiografie architektúry s cieľom rozširovať poznatky o významných osobnostiach architektonickej scény minulých storočí. Tie budú slúžiť v konečnom dôsledku aj ako východisko pre pamiatkovú ochranu kľúčových diel architekta z pohľadu uchovania nášho aj európskeho kultúrneho dedičstva.

## Architektonický a materiálový výskum Behrensovej synagógy v Žiline

Peter Szalay

Magdaléna Kvasnicová

Príspevok uvádza aktuálne výsledky architektonického a reštaurátorského výskumu neologickej synagógy v Žiline, dielo svetoznámeho nemeckého architekta Petra Behrensa. Prebiehajúci výskum je súčasťou projektu konzervácie a obnovy, na ktorom spolupracuje niekoľko špecialistov z oblasti výskumu historického dedičstva z akademických inštitúcií (Fakulta architektúry Slovenskej technickej univerzity, Ústav stavebníctva a architektúry Slovenskej akadémie vied a Katedra reštaurovania Vysoké školy výtvarných umení v Bratislave) s občianskym združením „Truc sphérique“ v Žiline. Cieľom organizácie, iniciátora a investora pamiatkovej obnovy je konverzia synagógy na výstavný priestor typu „Kunsthalle“. Ako členovia výskumného kolektívu prezentujeme nielen výskum architektonických a historických „vrstiev“, ale celú koncepciu a stratégiu ochrany a prezentácie hodnôt architektúry synagógy ako celku. Hlavnou témou príspevku je prispieť do diskusie o otázkach možností a obmedzení reštaurovania a prezentácie architektúry moderného hnutia, ktorého je Behrensova synagóga výnimočným príkladom.

### Dochutenie gulášu zvaného komunizmus

Prístupy k modernej architektúre  
raného obdobia kádárovskej éry  
v Maďarsku (1957 – 1963)

Mariann Simon

V druhej polovici päťdesiatych rokov 20. storočia, po krátkom, ale pôsobivom období socialistického realizmu, sa maďarská architektúra vrátila k modernizmu. V dôsledku toho architekti museli reinterpretovať starú kultúrnu požiadavku „socialistického v obsahu a národného vo forme“, čo zdôrazňovala politika a svoj vzťah k modernizmu museli definovať v rámci tejto požiadavky. Keď v roku 1954 Chruščov oznámil potrebu zmeny v architektúre, o modernizme hovoril takto: zdôraznil silu techniky ako prostriedku industrializácie, prefabrikácie a štandardizácie. Maďarskí architekti, ktorí takisto oslavovali modernú techniku, sa nesústredili na množstvo, ale na otázku národných znakov modernej architektúry, na „pokrokové“ tradície a na to, či sa mali, alebo nemali prispôbovať to-  
muto trendu.

V období dočasnej politickej neistoty a prejavov zmierňovania napätia sa prijímali aj riadené diskusie. Štúdiá skúma súčasné diskusie na túto tému na úrovni politickej, profesionálnej a verejnej a analyzuje niektoré stavby a ich kritiky. Napokon uvádza niektoré možné interpretácie vedúcich názorov: 1. boli pokusom o vyrovnanie sa so súčasnou západnou modernou architektúrou, 2. boli v istom zmysle odporom k univerzalizačným tendenciám modernej architektúry alebo 3. ich môžeme vyhodnotiť ako „situovaný modernizmus“<sup>1</sup>, alebo ako „alternatívny modernizmus“<sup>2</sup>, zrodený na periférii?

<sup>1</sup> Pojem zaviedla Sarah Williams Goldhagen v Dodatku Recaptualizing the Modern v publikácii: S. W. Goldhagen and R. Legault eds. *Anxious Modernisms, Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*. The MIT Press, 2000, pp. 301 – 320.

<sup>2</sup> Pojem zaviedol Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar v publikácii: *Alternative Modernities*. Duke University Press, Durham 1999.

### Vízie anarchického priestoru v estónskej architektúre osemdesiatych rokov 20. storočia a umenie performance

Ingrid Ruudi

V druhej polovici osemdesiatych rokov 20. storočia sa Estónska architektúra a umelecká scéna transformovali pod vplyvom nového radikálneho interdisciplinárneho zoskupenia nazvaného *Skupina T* (Rühm T). Toto pomerne voľné zoskupenie tvorivých intelektuálov viedli traja mladí architekti: Raoul Kurvitz, Urmas Muru a Peeter Pere, ktorí denne pracovali na *Estónskom priemyselnom projekte* (Estonian Industrial Project). Toto najmenej nápadité miesto pre architektonické navrhovanie zmenili na vysoko expresívne architektonické kresby stanovujú si ciele v manifeste *Technodelický expresionizmus* (Technodelic Expressionism); vytvorili neoexpresionistické maľby a uviedli spôsob ritualistickej mystifikovanej interpretačnej praxe. Tvorivá inšpirácia vychádzala z takých rôznorodých zdrojov, ako boli Bataille, Nietzsche a novoprichádzajúce postštrukturalistické teórie na jednej strane a na druhej strane vzťahy k punk rock a neskoršiemu techno na hudobnej scéne.

Z tohto bohatého zdroja materiálu sa primárne zaoberám problémom konštruovania alternatívnej verejnej sféry v interakcii s koncepciou architektúrou a jej interpretáciou. V sovietskej socio-politickej atmosfére v polovici osemdesiatych rokov, presvedčivo opísanej Alexeiom Yurchakom, odolávanie dominantnej vláde bolo obšiahnuté ako pravidlo. Ale zatiaľ čo v Estónsku toto takisto predstavovalo silnú národnú tendenciu s úsilím znova získať nezávislosť, *Skupina T* bola výnimočná tým, že bola kritická k obom. Keďže v jednom z ich raných predstavení *Disciplína a anarchia* (Discipline and anarchy) odmietajú akýkoľvek svet, založený na tvrdých a stabilných nosičoch moci uznávajú nevyhnutnosť antagonizmu. Keďže architektúra vo svojich základoch je produktívna (a tým riadiaci) činiteľ, neostáva nič

iné, ako ísť proti architektúre. V praxi tohto zoskupenia (*Skupina T*) toto znamenalo kreslenie expresionistickej architektúry, ktorá odhaľuje samú seba ako prázdnu masku bez akéhokoľvek skutočného interiéru; a javiskové predstavenia, ktoré smerujú k priestoru pred podstatou, pred významom. Todd May ukázal, že by mohlo byť miesto, kde sa anarchizmus a postštrukturalizmus zbiehajú, a zoskupenie *Skupina T* práve predstavovali také miesto.

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