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DURATION AND PASSING OF ARCHITECTURE – STIMULATING CREATIVITY

The subject given to authors *Duration and passing of architecture*, gave to the author of the paper hereby, a chance to interpret those phenomena as factors stimulating creation a new architecture. Such a positive and active interpretation, results in countries reach with historical buildings, ensembles and cities – that a creative approach towards an ancient architecture, gives opportunities towards mature and successful shaping a contemporary environment.

Keywords: architecture, heritage, history, context, creation

Introduction – genesis

Even though the title notions include the aspect of the flow of time, they carry rather static, high and funereal connotations. They call up associations with monuments or cemeteries and distance themselves from the present day. They are also associated with explorers and researchers: archeologists, historians, restorers and adventurers. They bring back memories of excavations or discoveries in the jungle including edifices, urban complexes, towns and cities. The older, more beautiful and more-known they are, the more strongly they impose museum seriousness and utmost religious respect [1].

They are often alleged or genuine places of cult: Stonehenge, Abu Simbel, the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, Mediterranean Greek, Hellenistic and Roman relics. The architecture-time relation is presented in a fascinating manner by Angkor Wat, entwined and jammed by the forest. Such masterpieces – witnesses of history – produce a peculiar effect. Although durability and fleetingness stand opposite each other, in such cases both fleetingness and durability are represented

simultaneously as two phenomena in one being, as the unity of contradictions. They make a sign of *stopping* time as well as expose its destructive impact.

Fleetingness and the relay race of generations

The fleetingness of architecture has got two dimensions – physical destruction and the decline of collective memory. They may be synergic – architecture ceases to exist, so it is forgotten. Sometimes old architecture still exists but it loses significance, acknowledgement and interest. It is removed from memory, e.g. as a result of a change in the preference of tastes. It happened so to the 19th-century and Art Nouveau architecture when the Modern Movement dominated although both Art Nouveau and the Modern Movement were called modernism. An interesting phenomenon is keeping architecture – which vanished from the face of the earth but was preserved in oral, written and iconographical tradition – in collective memory.

Such duration without duration can be exemplified by edifices and urban complexes which were de-

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stroyed by a war, especially those demolished by an enemy. Their memory could be a tool for maintaining historical tradition and nationalistic feelings. Rebuilding such objects becomes a manifestation of identity. The physical and mental fleetingness of architecture is a pretext for new enterprises. It contributes to an increase in investing achievements and to transformations in culture. It is manifested by rising collective interest proportional to the growth of new works. It includes a peculiar analogy to the cycles of nature, including the succession of generations.

Duration, imitation, continuation

Duration is the contradiction of fleetingness but – in defiance of its static connotation and relative backward movement into the past under the influence of flowing time – it is, similarly to fleetingness, a stimulator of creative activity. It is a pretext for contextual, preservative creations and, by provoking authors, it encourages innovative, revolutionary or even blasphemous creation. For traditionalists, the persisting architecture of the past makes visible models for designing imitations and transformations with various degrees of literalness or a freer continuation of a prototype.

The durability of architecture, just like its fleetingness, may be of real or conventional character. The latter situation happens when an object does not exist but its credible images make it possible to create the collective feeling of identification and identity. Fleetingness and durability meet in an icon documenting a lost monument or, in another credible message, allowing a search for inspiration for new activities. In this measure, conduct of restorative, complementary and protective as well as contextual and continual character is self-explanatory.

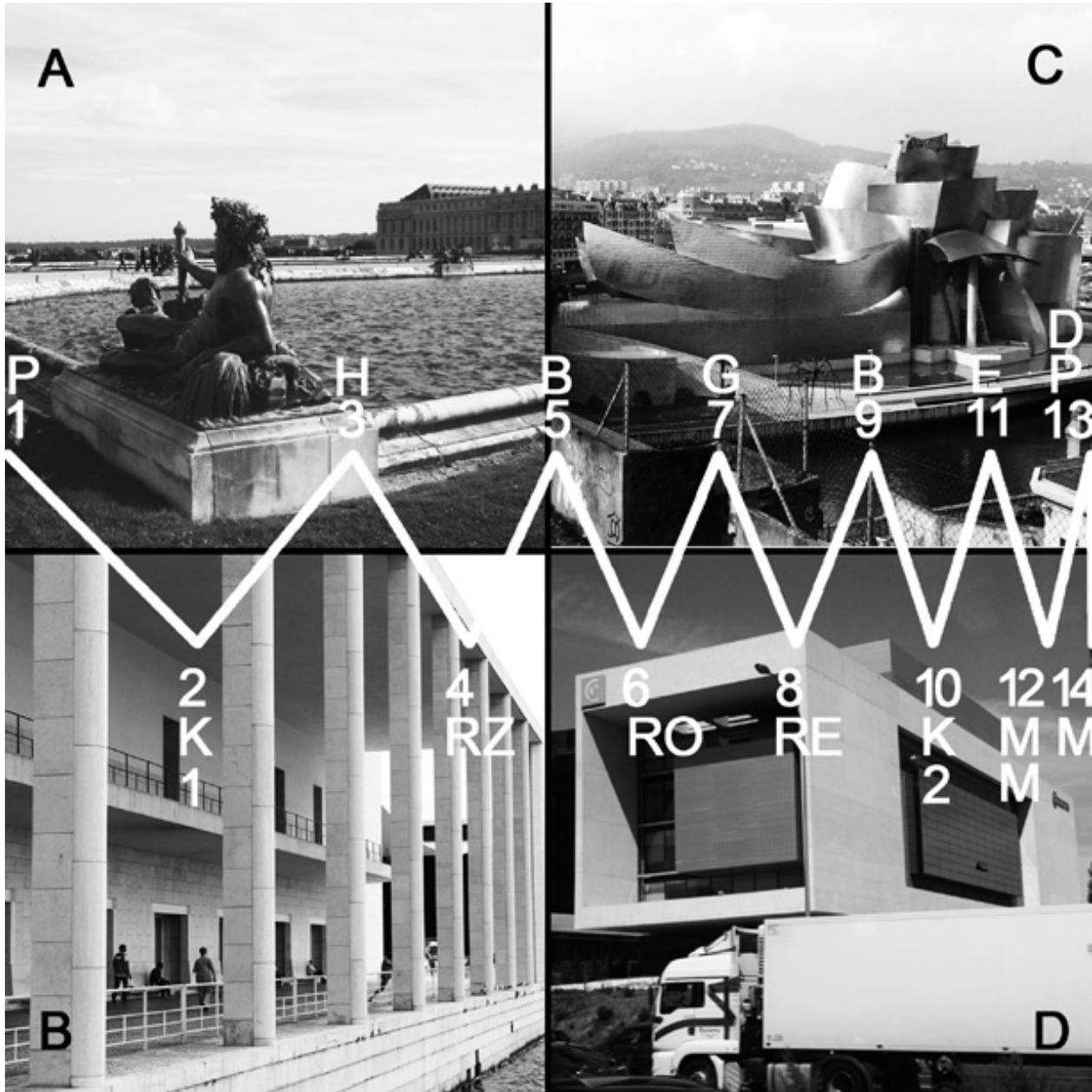
Metamorphoses, impacts and objections

The presented theory can be exemplified empirically. The durability and fleetingness of architecture is

presented in the historical, chronologically depicted transformations of esthetical tendencies, artistic styles and fashions. A monumental depiction of this issue was prepared by H. Wöfflin [2]. He outlined a model sinusoid reflecting the stylistic transformations of architecture. He showed that a new stylistic epoch contradicts its predecessor and then it is contested by its descendant. The common denominator of these transformations and the criterion of divergence is the question of irrationalism and rationalism in an approach to an idea and to architecture. The fleetingness of architecture is related to the changing appearance of styles with dominating irrational and rational tendencies.

The modernized and graphically simplified zigzag in the authorial illustration shows fourteen epochs. It accentuates the increasingly shortened duration of individual styles being a counterpoint for those before them and those after. 1–P. Prehistory, 2–K1. Classical, mainly Greek, antiquity, 3–H. Hellenism, 4–RZ. Rome, 5–B. Byzantinism, 6–RO. Romanism, 7–G. Gothic, 8–RE. Renaissance, 9–B. Baroque, 10–K2. Neoclassicism, 11–E. Eclecticism. Neo-historicisms, 12–MM. Modern Movement, 13–PD. Postmodernism and deconstructionism, 14–M. Minimalism. Four selected objects ABCD are also presented. The top row includes examples with dominating irrational tendencies; the bottom row – examples with dominating rational tendencies; the left perpendicular – examples of traditional tendencies; the right perpendicular – examples of contemporary tendencies. A – Baroque. The Versailles. The palace and the garden. Designed by Jules H.-Mansart, André e Nôtre et al. Photo by author. B – classicism (in a contemporary version). Lisbon. The edifice of International Expo 1998. Designed by Álvaro Siza Vieira (photo by author) C – deconstructionism. Bilbao. The Guggenheim Museum. Designed by Frank O. Gehry (photo by M. Gyurkovich) D – minimalism. The centre of Madrid. A corporative building. Designed by A-cero Equipo Madrid (photo by author).

Diagram – the fleetingness of architecture and the shortening duration of styles with alternatively dominating irrational (1–13) and rational (2–14) tendencies. A – Baroque. The Versailles, the palace and the garden (photo by W. Kosiński) B – classicism. Lisbon, Expo pavilion (photo by W. Kosiński) C – deconstructionism. Bilbao, the Guggenheim Museum (photo by M. Gyrkovich) D – minimalism. Madrid, a corporate building, (photo by W. Kosiński) Commentaries in the paper



Apart from the holistic philosophy of the history of the fleetingness of architecture, we can indicate some interesting individual examples of the between esthetics from various epochs. The temporal course of significant styles is characteristic. After the pioneering phase comes the maturity period, characterized by the highest order and harmony, followed by the decadent period characterized by mannerism and the disintegration of form [3]. After the classical Greek period, it was time for Hellenism in the Alexandrine period – openness to the East, lower moral and religious values, the baroquization of classicism [4]. In the Middle Ages, after the coarse Romanism, Gothic makes sophisticated efflorescence. After the *pure* Gothic, whose highlights are the French cathedrals, the flaming Gothic develops with fan, palm and crystal vaults, especially in England. The Renaissance turns into (*nomen omen*) mannerism, Baroque – into Rococo, pure Enlightenment classicism – into the 19th-century dubious eclecticism and pseudo-historicisms, modernism – into postmodernism.

Some epochs were modelled after the past, *sampled*, as if a dusty book was taken out of a collection – a new life of excerpts from an old epoch, the duration of bygone esthetics in its new embodiment. In the Renaissance, it may be exemplified by the *Romanism of the Florentines* who built their style on the teachings from a found work by Vitruvius, that is why they could have a fresh look at the Pantheon and other ancient models. The *Greece of Schinkel* and other 19th-century German architects referring to antiquity is interesting. At the beginning of the promotion of postmodernism, Ch. Jencks said that its ideal model should be Art Nouveau but – not winning any support – he gave this intention up. The experimental German school *Erinnerungs Architektur* (The Architecture of Memory) was created for rebuilding monarchical castles in Berlin and Potsdam – the reconstruction of their facades with modern interiors. The continuation

of historical architecture and the national style as well as regional architecture is disputable. This dispute stretches between the demand for replicas of country and residential houses for traditionalists and radical opinions – *no more folk culture*.

Contemporariness – down with the context, ad hoc, deconstructionism, minimalism

The slogan: Fuck the context made a hit as the touchstone of an architect's greatness [5]. Disrespecting the context may result from a designer's low assessment of this feature, from his innovative ambitions [6] or synergistically from both. Such an attitude assumes the proportions of a seriously treated dogma in the face of an eruption of architects' individualism. Ignoring the context is a feature of poor investments, too. Besides the archistars' brocaded displays, there is a growing tendency to create ephemeral, turpist objects deprived of a cultural layer, planned for a short time of profitability and soon-to-happen demolition.

The sinusoid of transformations marking the durability and fleetingness of architecture condenses successively. Primal and ancient styles lasted for centuries. The Middle Ages and early modernity shortened this cycle to about two centuries, the Industrial Revolution – to around one hundred years. The Modern Movement did not even last that long. After contestation and further transformations, the sinusoid shortened and condensed its phases. These days, it is reaching the zero level. *Novelty in architecture is still the effect of a spectator's fatigue caused by the reception of the existing forms. Today, this process is getting faster and faster* [7].

In the 21st century, for the first time to such a considerable degree, extremely opposite trends exist. This situation resembles Gombrowicz's description of the protagonist of *Transatlantyk* who *had a short long nose*. The paradigms of total freedom, liberalism, tolerance and pluralism, supported by technological possibilities and unprecedented funds, spur over-

weening ambitions in the authorities and investors. Artistic trends mean less today – what really counts is the creators' originality. If we search for some dominating trends, however, two extreme contradictions will appear: *opera buffo versus opera seria – plumed architecture versus minimum architecture* [8].

In the illustrative diagram, the *plume* of deconstructionism, proclaimed at the MOMA in 1988, is situated as an example of an irrational tendency (13). Especially with reference to urban architecture, it often makes a provocation, a volt after the fashion of the Modern Movement but beyond functionalism. *Architecture overcomes servility... An edifice is admired, described, praised by pilgrims, to the glory of the city, its creator and architecture. The examples of Bilbao, Graz, Gronningen are not exceptional* [9]. Another symptom of irrationalism is the high-riser race, also in the aspect of locating them as close to the historical hearts of the cities as possible. Foster's Swiss Re, as an icon of London, outshone the tower of Big Ben. Nouvel's Torre Akbar is presented as a symbol of Barcelona more often than Sagrada Familia.

Minimalism is on the opposite side of the diagram marking rational premises (14). In this place, the sinusoid assumes the shape of a vertical line. Minimalism is a contemporary of deconstructionism: it dates from the 1980s, too. For a balanced evaluation of this two-value situation, let us distinguish a quickly passing fashion from high values – order, seriousness, durability and elegant fleetingness with the perspective of influencing the architecture of future epochs. Minimalism is situated in the layer and family of timeless classical and rational styles which existed in the days of Pericles, through the pragmatism of Rome, the seriousness of Romanism, the humanism of the Renaissance, the clarity of Enlightenment classicism and – last but not least – the early Modern Movement. The stimulators of minimalism are the Egyptian pyramids, the Cistercians, the Shakers, zen architecture, the Japanese conciseness of white walls and the module of the tatami mat. These days, this noble origin is reflected in equally noble, fully modern architecture which exists beyond time and fashion and receives a chance of durability.

ENDNOTES

[1] J. Gąssowski, *Prahistoria sztuki*, Trio, Warsaw 2008, *passim*.

[2] H. Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, Benno Schwabe et C°, Bâle 1961, pp. 60–68.

[3] D. Kozłowski, *Projekty i budynki 1982–1992. Figuratywność i rozpad formy w architekturze doby post-funkcjonalne..* Cracow University of Technology Press, Cracow 1992, pp. 46–50.

[4] M. M. Austin, *The Hellenistic world from Alexander to the Roman conquest: a selection of ancient sources in translation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1981, p. 450.

[5] R. Koolhaas, *Fuck context – that's the basic rule of bigness*. [in:] *Thinking big – Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas – interview by John Rajchman*, [in:] Artforum No. 6, Art & Education, New York 1994, *passim*.

[6] D. Kozłowski, *Architektura dziś albo miasta nieśmiertelnych* [in:] Czasopismo Techniczne. 7-A/2010, Cracow University of Technology Press, Cracow 2010, p. 159.

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 156. On condensing transformations in stylistics, also: R. Józwiak, *Dzieje kształtowania się centrum w strukturze przestrzenno-funkcjonalnej miasta – jego rola i znaczenie*, Doctoral College, FA, Warsaw University of Technology, typescript, Warsaw 2011, pp. 25–26.

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 26. In another depiction: D. Kozłowski, *O pięknie architektury (współczesnej) – uwagi o ułomności rzeczy użytecznych*, [in:] Czasopismo Techniczne, 6-A/2007, Cracow University of Technology Press, Cracow 2007, p. 76.

[9] D. Kozłowski, *Transfiguracja form, albo – niech szczęście funkcjonalizm!* [in:] Czasopismo Techniczne, 10-A/2004, Cracow University of Technology Press, Cracow 2004, p. 77.

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