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THE PERFECT HOUSE RATIONAL OR INTUITIVE WAY

DOM IDEALNY – RACJONALNA CZY INTUICYJNA DROGA

Abstract

This text presents the problems of designing houses as architectural objects. It will show the motives leading in the process of the formation of houses, as well as various paths leading to the final form. Based on the referenced masterpieces of architecture and their characteristic features, the text will allow the definition of the “perfect” house to be approached. The question of aesthetics, the utility of objects of modern residential architecture, and their relations with the surroundings as well as their general reception will also be discussed. The work will also touch the psychological aspect in terms of impact on the life and behaviour of the inhabitants of the architectural environment in which they reside.

Keywords: rationalism, intuition, knowledge, premonition, single-family home, beauty, aesthetics, texture, taint, utility, functionality

Streszczenie

Tekst przedstawia problematykę projektowania obiektów architektonicznych, jakimi są domy jednorodzinne. Ukazane zostaną wiodące motywacje towarzyszące ich powstawaniu, a także różne drogi prowadzące do uzyskania ich formy. Na podstawie przywołanych dzieł mistrzów architektury i ich cech charakterystycznych praca pozwoli przybliżyć się do zdefiniowania określenia domu „idealnego”. Poruszona zostanie także kwestia estetyki i użyteczności obiektów współczesnej architektury mieszkaniowej oraz ich relacji z otoczeniem, jak również ogólnego odbioru. Praca poruszy także aspekt psychologiczny, jego wpływ na życie i zachowanie mieszkańców domów.

Słowa kluczowe: racjonalizm, intuicja, wiedza, przeczucie, dom jednorodzinny, piękno, estetyka, faktura, barwa, użyteczność, funkcjonalizm

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The design process is based on a constant interplay of feeling and reason. The feelings, preferences, longings, and desires that emerge and demand to be given a form must be controlled by critical powers of reasoning, but it is our feelings that tell us whether abstract considerations really ring true.

Peter Zumthor

Architectural works are created as a result of various inspirations. The first impulse is an idea born within the architect's mind. It is then usually transferred to paper. Drawing plays a significant role in the design process. It was given special attention by Vitruvius, who recognized it as the basic form of communication in the architect's workshop. *[An Architect] must have a knowledge of drawing so that he can readily make sketches to show the appearance of the work which he proposes*¹. Often, the first conceptual sketches become carriers of design ideas, providing the basis for the material creation and the real object. They are also an excellent form of reflection, allowing the creator to realize the vision and assess the accuracy of their choice.

When analysing the design criteria of an architectural object, including a single-family home, particular attention should be paid to the aspects that perfectly illustrate the words of Vitruvius: *these must be built with due reference to durability, convenience, and beauty*². He is undoubtedly right, for a house is a very specific space, defining the life comfort and affecting the behaviour and decisions of a human being.

Contemplating the rational and intuitive way in architecture, the above criteria should be considered. Durability and utility are undoubtedly connected with knowledge and skill. Based on the knowledge of materials, new technologies and general principles of construction, an architect creates a solid creation which is directly related to security, quality of operation as well as economic reasons of the facility. But is durability also about lasting in space and therefore timelessness? If we think about this word in this exact meaning we will also find the effect of intuition on meeting this criteria.

Regarding usability, we count the aspect of functionality that should be given special consideration in the case of a single-family home. As a psychological space of life, it must meet the many needs of the individual. *All men have the same organism, the same functions. All men have the same needs. The social contract which has evolved through the ages fixes standardized classes, functions and needs producing standardized products. The house is a thing essential to man*³.

Aesthetics also play an important role. Men, as rational beings, strive to find beauty in their lives, they want beauty to surround them, commune with them. However, we must ask ourselves if it should define them? It is an extremely complex and ambiguous concept that should be analyzed on many levels. The general assumption is that a beautiful thing is proportional. The ancient Greeks understood the world as an ordered whole in which they clearly defined the identity of form and saw beauty. For Pythagoras, the

¹ Vitruvius, et al. *Ten Books on Architecture*, Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 6.

² *Ibidem*, p. 17.

³ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, Dover Publications, 1931, p. 136.

deepest truth about the world was proportion and number which he considered as the essence of beauty and the principle of nature. Can we say that beauty comes from rationalism? Beauty is not only a mathematical calculation of proportions, one should not seek its sources in dry mathematical calculations. Beauty is, first of all, a feeling to which intuition directs us.

Due to the complexity and subjectivity in certain matters, it is very difficult to precisely define the concept of a perfect home. However, it is possible to define the elements that make up the architectural object. According to the words of Dariusz Kozłowski *a house carries meaning deeper and more extensive than a building. A house is also a living space and the community that lives inside it: residents, families, households; it is also a place for collecting things, and the related meanings, including sentimental ones (supported by personal memories)*⁴. It is impossible to disagree with these words, because what would a house be without a history of life created by its inhabitants, unsuitable for their needs? Only an empty shell.

Also noteworthy are the words of Master Le Corbusier, who in the Athens Charter points out that the home for people is *decent and friendly shelter for life's joys and setbacks, the focal point of the family, the receptacle for the individual and collective powers that are latent in each of us, the key-cell of a harmoniously organized society*⁵.

The space inhabited by a human is directly connected with the emotions and feelings they experience. It must affect life positively, motivate to act, create good conditions for work and rest, and meet personal expectations. Because of the degree of influence it has, it is a considerable architectural challenge in terms of the project. Undoubtedly intuition guides it to a large extent in the design process. Already at the stage of preliminary sketches he wonders, anticipates and visualizes emotions. Huge responsibility weighs upon him, because in some way he creates a stage design for other people's lives.

A good example worth quoting here is the Villa in Forteza. This unusual house, designed by the architects Dariusz Kozłowski and Tomasz Kozłowski was erected in the suburbs of Lublin, in the years 1999–2000. The building, also known as Villa Olajosy, surprises with its unconventional appearance. In the design, space is built not so much by the matter as by the light itself. According to the house owner: *The sun rises and I rise up to this sun, I watch where it falls, where it permeates. I admire the play of colours, refractions and reflections.* This creative space – a home, not only gives a sense of security, but also creates opportunities for experiencing unusual aesthetic experiences.

The object resembles an unusual, abstract, monumental sculpture and initially does not evoke associations with a residential home in the recipient. According to the owner, he saw people doing the sign of the cross at its sight. This proves that it is a perfect example of the combination of architecture and art, merging in itself a function and unrepeatable beauty. He also refers to the works of Le Corbusier, through the materials used – concrete poured in a traditional boarded formwork, with imprinted rings. “Kozłowski's approach to architecture, assuming the freedom to create new shapes and to provide them with metaphorical

⁴ D. Kozłowski, *Dom w mieście – właściwości rzeczy architektonicznej*, Pretekst no 7, 2017, p. 7.

⁵ Le Corbusier, *The Athens Charter*, Grossman Publishers, 1973, p. 26.



III. 1. Villa Olajossy, photo by Tomasz Kozłowski

meanings, allows his architecture to be defined as concrete poetry⁷⁶. To create such an amazing project, you not only need enormous knowledge, but also incredible intuition. Remember that that this house not only brings unconventional beauty, but is also very comfortable, and the combination of these elements with such a sculptural form should be called art.

The house is located in a villa district and it contrasts with the surroundings, because the block does not refer directly to the surrounding buildings. The form of the building is created by two elemental blocks playing with each other in a most peculiar way. This is best described in the author's own words: *The cylinder hides the Cube. The cylinder links the cube, but to be able to demonstrate it, it retains its surface nature; so that this imprisonment will not remain a mystery it reveals fragments of its interior. In turn, the trapped body continues in determined immobility, showing the nature of his cubism. Or maybe it is completely different: the cylinder covers the cube. It defends it and protects it against an intruder, or simply a passer-by*⁷.

Here is an example of a perfect house, which now can be called iconic. Created by the outstanding creator Le Corbusier – Villa Savoye, the form of which is basically based on the simplicity of forms. According to the words of Maria Misiągiewicz *Le Corbusier built the world of a building supported on purist aesthetics and formulated in the 'five principles' combining modern architecture with modern construction*⁸. The rules he created have significantly influenced the search for the fulfillment of the dream of a perfect home, and the design is their quintessence because it meets them all.

The fact that Villa Savoye was created on the basis of strictly set rules seems to suggest that the creator was driven by rationalism. The phenomenon of the project is granted by perfectly balanced proportions. Each element seems to be placed exactly in a space designed for it thus creating a perfect whole. The body of the building, in the shape of a rectangular prism was not directly placed on the surface of the plot, it floats above it on relatively thin pillars, which gives the impression of levitating. Certainly, Le Corbusier created a very logical and well-thought-out structure, but it should be presumed that intuition also had a strong influence on the form of the building. The project shows his personal feelings, including his thoughts in the field of architecture. *His thinking was constantly subordinated to looking for architectural form. He noticed the poetry in the game of elemental solids*⁹.

One cannot resist the impression that Villa Savoye is an ideal space for living and self-development. It gives the individual great opportunities to commune with and contemplate nature. The landscape plays a big role in the project, it unites with it, and the windows of the house like the ribbons capture the views, creating kinds of images “hung” in the interiors. On the roof there is also a terrace, giving its residents an excuse to rest and spend free

⁶ C. Wąs, *Bunt kwiatu przeciw korzeniom. Polska architektura sakralna lat 1980–2005 wobec modernizmu*, Quart. Kwartalnik Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, no 1/2006.

⁷ D. Kozłowski, *Dom – próba opisu, albo “miękkie” i “twarde” tworzywo architektoniczne Villi in Fortezza*, Czasopismo Techniczne z. 9-A/2006, *Definiowanie przestrzeni architektonicznej – Architektoniczne tworzywo*, D. Kozłowski, M. Misiągiewicz (red.), Kraków, 2006, p. 54–58.

⁸ M. Misiągiewicz, *Architektoniczna gra z betonem – Klasztor La Tourette*, Budownictwo, Technologie, Architektura 2 (18) / 2002, p. 10.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 10.



III. 2. Villa Savoye, photo by Fondation Le Corbusier

time, also allowing additional usable space to be obtained. It is well explained by the fact that Le Corbusier distinguished *three basic joys – sun, space, greenery*¹⁰. It seems that the beauty of Villa Savoye will never pass away, the form is timeless and still very up-to-date, and the program that it implements also still perfectly fits today's requirements. To this day, it strikes with its beauty conditioned by perfectly balanced proportions and unblemished purity, guaranteeing the audience a phenomenal artistic experience, both from the outside and inside.

A house that also deserves to be called perfect, is 4x4 House – the work of the modern Japanese architectural master Tadao Ando. This architect has created his own original style, combining geometric modernism and Japanese aesthetics. Its architecture is based on simple forms and strict rules of geometry. According to his words: *I want to create architecture as the essence of basic materials, techniques and spaces. Architecture intrigues the human spirit*¹¹. 4x4 House is a simple and authentic project. It also leaves the classic form of a house, like the realization of a daydream, taking the shape of a vertical solid.

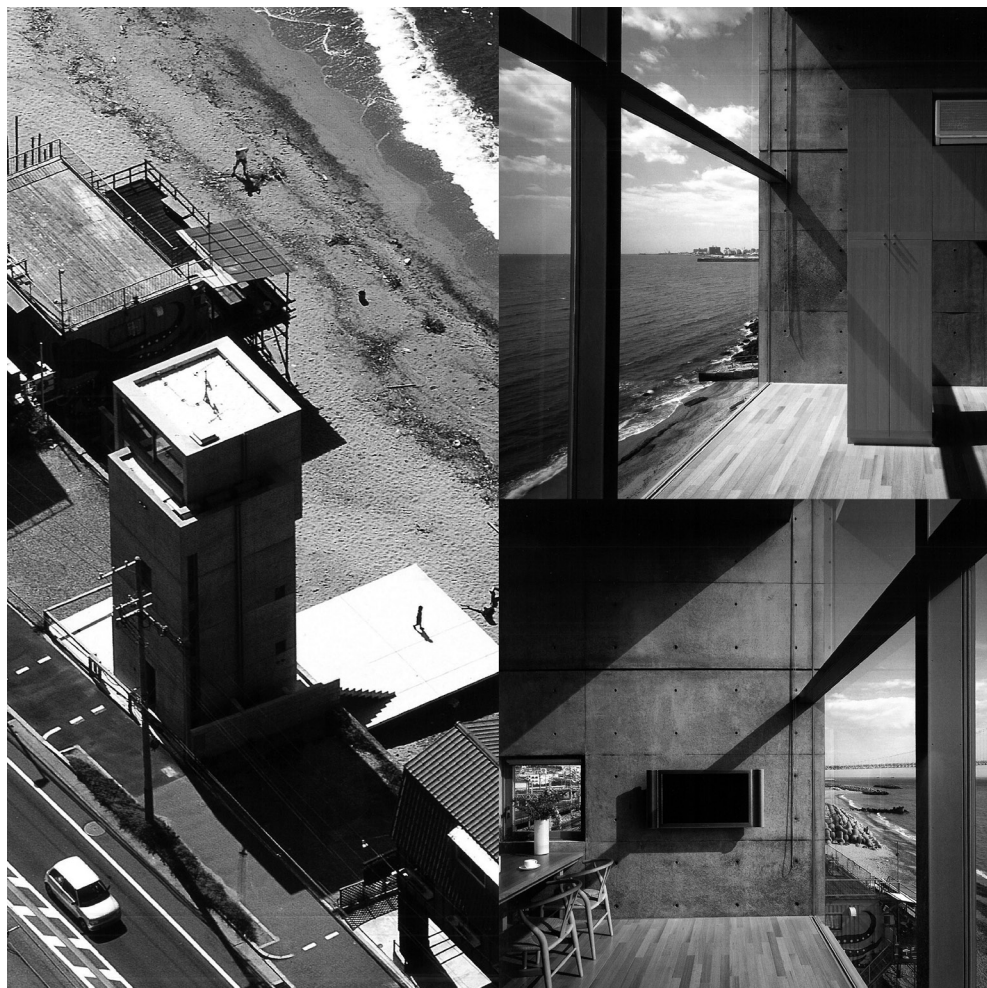
The composition of the house consists of a combination of two elementary solids – a cuboid topped with a cube projected from the axis of the building. The building has four floors, and the implementation of the functional program has also been in a way reversed. The living area was located at the very top of the building, while the bedrooms were located downstairs. This treatment allows the best views to be provided from the living room, where the residents rest. The concrete used in the project additionally emphasizes the simplicity and purposefulness of the forms, which in the context of the location of the house encourages the contemplation of the surroundings.

In fulfilling the dream of a perfect home, one cannot be guided only by intuition, but it cannot be completely excluded from the design process. It is hard to resist the impression that it plays the most important role in the initial phase. Idea, inspiration and intuition unquestionably accompany the first sketches. However, a subjective and unreflective realization of the three is not the way to create architecture. The element of rationalism and solid knowledge, translated into patient work largely guarantees the success of a project. However, original buildings would not be created if they were based solely on dry knowledge. Intuition guarantees the creation of avant-garde buildings and to a large extent adds piquancy.

A house is a very specific architectural object, being closest to Man it carries special design challenges. It must meet many difficult criteria and bring individualism into it, for the sake of its inhabitants. However, the examples cited above show that creating a home that can be considered perfect is possible to achieve by merging intuitive and a rational way in the architecture design process.

¹⁰ Ch. Jencks, *Le Corbusier – Tragizm współczesnej architektury*, Warszawa, 1982.

¹¹ S. Ratajczyk, *Architektura Tadao Ando*, Architektura & Biznes 3/2004, p. 68.



III. 2. Villa Savoye, photo by Fondation Le Corbusier

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