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PLAYING "HIDE AND SEEK" OR PENETRATING ARCHITECTURE

ZABAWA „W CHOWANEGO" CZYLI DRĄŻENIE ARCHITEKTURY

A b s t r a c t

Creating a relationship between space and the matter of a work of art has resulted in the fact that the relationships between the exterior and the interior are more important than ever before during the development of modern architecture. Together with the modernist revolution, the engagement of creators in surpassing the threshold of the visible exterior to enter the purely internal plane became the basis for the most radical manifestation of freedom and everything that is connected with defining the new architecture.

Keywords: carving, matter, stereotomy

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Nadanie relacji pomiędzy przestrzenią a materią dzieła spowodowało, że kwestia związków pomiędzy zewnętrznym i wewnętrznym nigdy nie była tak ważna, jak w czasach rozwoju architektury współczesnej. Właściwie należałoby powiedzieć, że począwszy od modernistycznej rewolucji zaangażowanie twórców w przekraczanie progu widzialnego zewnętrza na plan czysto wewnętrzny stało się podstawą najradykalniejszej manifestacji wolności i wszystkiego, co można by było nazwać definiowaniem nowej architektury.

Słowa klucz: drążenie, materia, stereotomia

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1. "A magic box". Architectural space is defined by its limitation, a kind of confinement in the form. Architecture is a *limited* space whose meaning and understanding are expressed by the matter of the limitation chosen by the author. The universalism of this definition entails understanding this architectural space which, through being encapsulated in the form, is an interpretation of some archetype based on relationships between the "closed" exterior and the "open" interior. This architectural game of "hide and seek" is situated on the opposite pole of another architectural ideology – that based on an open and abstract architecture dematerialised by Le Corbusier's five points of architecture.

For those who believe in creating an architectural "void in the mass" this is simply a game of *subtraction*, for others a game of "choosing", "carving" in a predefined matter. Still others treat it as the formal rigour of a "magic box" – a *boîte á miracle* which serves to deprive architecture of its external content for the benefit of demonstrating internal forms. For all supporters of this type of discipline architecture consists in rejecting the rule of discovering other original forms in the "visual culture" of the 20th century – oculocentrism. The widely disputed Brother Claus Field Chapel in Wachendorf (2006) created by Peter Zumthor and carved from one piece of concrete seems to be an example of just such a programmic negation when viewed in the context of the entire programme formalism – a conviction that apparently art does not need expression, the conviction that it is not only useless, but even harmful. This is confirmed by the architect and phenomenologist Juhani Pallasmaa – an advocate of tactile values in architecture and admirer of Zumthor's works.

The history of architecture teaches us, however, that the division is compatible with the bipolar concept of architectural space – one rule revolves around creating architecture through the prism of a solid or the play of solids, while the other – antagonistic – defines the value of void in a solid. Steen Eiler Rasmussen even claims that some architects seek the "structure", others the "void", and that some architectural periods tend to create solids while others prefer "voids" [4, p. 48]. The critic gives the example of the Gothic, with its "structural" cathedrals, and the Renaissance, represented by the concept of "voids" of Michaelangelo's St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Still another group of "hidden objects" incudes the monolithic temple of Bet Giyorgis carved in the 13th century from a variation of limestone which was commissioned by the emperor of Lalibela.

2. Mass and void. The establishment of the relationship between the space and the matter of a work of art has resulted in the fact that the relationships between the *exterior* and the *interior* are more important than ever before, at the time of the development of modern architecture. Despite artists' involvement in forming the "visible", the most radical manifestation of independence and what can be called defining the new architecture was surpassing the threshold of the *exterior* and entering the world of the *interior*. The certainty with which Adolf Loos spoke about the "barbaric splendour" of architecture one hundred years ago expressed his firm belief that modern architects also have other, non-formal standards of excellence. The ideal of rational restraint is built upon metaphoric rhetoric and is inseparably connected with the classical and monumental tradition. Loos's disregard for the avant-garde was only a prelude to attempts at defining the identity of architecture. In this way he established a clear and consequent continuity – a building should be *silent on the outside and speak only inside*. Through a free play of ***Raumplan*** the Villa Muller in Prague (1928) and the house of Tristan Tzara in Paris (1925) introduced modernism into the world of architecture created from solid matter enclosed by the impassable for the eye barrier of the building's walls. The

search – a characteristic feature of the whole period of modernism – in Loos's works took the form of a logical structure for the interior, discovering forms and economical spaces similar to the function of a house. Thanks to this tradition we can quote Loos as saying: only two small elements belong to architecture: *the monument and the tomb*. Everything else, which serves a particular purpose, needs to be excluded from the kingdom of art [2., p. 153].

A similarly radical approach to the method of building modern monoliths is today observed in the works of Alberto Campo Baeza. The road to success is the rule of interchangeability and differentiation of architectural definitions in relation to tectonic-stereotomic deliberations. An example of this today may be those objects in which an important part of creating the architecture is celebrating the properties of **mass** [*gravidad*] and **void** [*vacīo*] – light and dark structure. According to Baeza, the strength of existence of every space lies mainly in mass and void. This is because creating a dialogue in architecture seems to be creating a metaphoric connection between the matter-content with the form – "the content and the vessel". Beaza's method, in its search for the essence of spatial connections, is a return to Loos's idea of modernism – it gives a new dimension to the cross-section drawing representing the third dimension, as opposed to a projection as a two-dimensional confirmation of the correctness of functional solutions. The architectural idea, which must generate a form, means for the Spanish architect generating a composition, the arrangement of forms and then solids in the physical substance and appropriate construction.

Raimund Fein also relates to Adolf Loos's theory of *Raumplan* in his work titled *Design by Theory*. The three-dimensional design method described by the architect is in line with the idea of architectural space created by a sequence of "penetrations". He writes: [...] *Space is the void defined by what fills it, or surrounds it"*. In the three-dimensional – stereotomic – method space is understood as an element defined from within, as if the space was carved from a three-dimensional solid mass. According to this theoretical approach space is the void which remains between the "mass" of walls and ceilings [1, p. 24].

3. A cave. There is also another starting point to understanding architectural space. There is the phenomenon of the skyline which separates the shape created "underground" or "under the sky". This is a ***cave*** (or grave, bunker, bulwark, tunnel) providing first shelter and safety – a hollow space, connected with soil or rock (later with reinforced concrete) and there is a *shed* (later house, palace, monument), which is a manifested form, connected with the matter of bones or wood (later bricks, steel) revealing to the observer the logic of the matter and the shape of the building it is formed with. The archetype of *cave* creates a world of mass, darkness, void and mystery, seclusion from the outside world – it is stability and is connected with the foundation. *Cave* needs light, in a *grotto* light plays a crucial role – the role of a guide showing "the ultimate purpose to the quest" and "the shape of the place" in the interior. According to Raimund Abraham the *cave* refers us through the universe of the mythical element to the primacy of the language, the mystery of the ritual, work, wall, or solid structure. It originates the genetics of this architecture which is based on a return to original natural rules, to the simplicity of forms and their purpose.

An important role in this trend was played by André Bloc of the "Éspace" group, with his concept of a concrete-brick amalgam as an "inhabited sculpture" (*Sculpture habitacle nr 2*, 1964; *La Tour*, Meudon, 1966). Unhampered forms ("follies") were supposed to become a space which organically created the full virtue of humanism in architecture, close in



Ill. M. Charciarek, *Museum,* stereotomic sketches, 2004–2006.

meaning to the original sense of "existence" in architecture. The time of Bloc's formal deliberations is also drawn attention to by the moment of discovery of the strength of the vivid architecture of bunkers of the Atlantic Wall by Paula Virilio from the "Architecture Principe" group and the meaningful significance of "survival" in the monolithic "grotto" of the Sainte-Bernadette-du-Banlay church in Nevers (1966). For both French architects, as with the work of a sculptor, there is a rule which is subtle but critical for mastering the brutalist work of art: when transposing a shape in one material, one needs to create this shape from within towards the exterior. For Bloc and Virilio, the form is in a way a premonition of the surface, which a sculptor attains by imagining that he is inside the monolith standing in front of him. The continuation of this creation is the house of *La Trufa* in Spanish Laxe built by the Ensamble Studio in 2010. The amorphous building by Antón García-Abril, undefined in terms of form and situated on a seaside cliff, is an attempt at searching for the integration of architecture (a hole in the ground) with the nature of a seaside cliff using an organic, non-defined image of concrete substance and the surrounding ground.

In the studio of Mauricio Pezo and Sofia von Ellrichshausen, at each stage of thinking, making drawing notes and designing, architecture is an attempt at identifying the properties of the context for extracting the form from the substance of absolute nature. In the practice of the Chilean couple this process ends with creating a physical building – an acknowledgement of "the continuum" of matter and confirmation of the fact that architecture as a part of the landscape structure complements its morphology. In the cubical building of the *Casa Poli*, concrete plays the role of exhibiting the "virgin" relationship between nature and architecture, between the structure of the terrain and the expression of the monolithic concrete. The cubical building not only becomes a part of the surroundings in its applied articulation of openings, walls, entresols and ceilings, but also plays the important role of joining the elements of the external and internal worlds. The *Casa Poli* seems to be a fragment of its environment in which it exists and rediscovers the meaning of the charm of architecture rooted in a coherent relationship with nature, in its immanent need to coexist. Concrete and rock are the main elements showing the meeting of two monoliths present in their physical form, without symbolising anything except for mutual interchangeability of meanings [3, p. 138].

This stylistics is continued in the works of architects from the Portuguese group Aires Mateus, which includes their involvement in formal experiments whose aim is to mark the significance of architecture as a thing carved out of a solid landscape. In the house in Alavalade (1999) designed in a square, the thickness of the external and internal walls as well as the arrangement of functions exhibits an affection for traditional "centripetal" organisation of space in Mediterranean houses. The entire structure of this approach is connected with a conscious underlining the importance of the building material of part of the architecture. A wall as an element expressly founded in the ground implies that the two dependent and interchangeable substances are strongly mutually interdependent like shapes in a negative picture or in a sculptural relief.

4. Stereotomy. Modern architecture became a sculpture which you can enter, and even inhabit. In order to fully understand the spatial concept of a building it is necessary to understand architecture via its cross-section. The term ***stereotomy*** connected with this notion, which means "carving in stone", today seems, however, more appropriate to the method of formation of concrete monoliths. Concrete as "liquid stone" or "hollowed stone" is most predestined to creating the impression of a structurally homogeneous sculpture, in which the

architect tries to express an individual method. Thanks to the idea of monolithism, which gave the matter the basis for instantaneous transformation of thoughts into forms, concrete brought architecture closer to the art of free choice, in which the artist presents both the inner *essence* of the building as well as what is *ideal* about it. While in sculpture, monolithism created a pretext for using the three-dimensional way of thinking about construction, structure and form freely, in architecture unsurmountable states of possibilities of monolithic matter defined the boundaries of modern atectonics. Modern artists look at themselves as well as at former achievements, where among sculptural architecture those were distinguished which attained the status of model residential sculptures – the concrete secession of Barcelona tenement houses, the *Las Pedreras* ("quarries") by Antonio Gaudi or the *Goetheanum II* (1928) by Rudolf Steiner in Dornach, typical of early modernism. In particular, the coherence of shape of *Goetheanum*, exposing the relationship between voids and masses, became the example authenticating the meaning of purely intuitive gestures in architecture, which, in turn, authenticate the natural image of architecture made of sculptural concrete.

Among architectural motivations, one of the basic five notions relating to the stereotomic essence, "the game of confinement in the form" is the ***labyrinth***. The intended freedom to form and the instinctive, supra-rational articulation is responsible for the shape of this space, which is not a continuation of the mythical symbolism of Dedal's building or the Piranesian *Carceri,* but is responsible for the sources of specific trends in expressionism. Among all kinds of labyrinth systems an appropriate interpretation entailed in the structure of a building is the City Cultural Centre in Ofunate (2008), a project created by the Chiaki Arai studio. The concrete monolith, resembling on the outside a biomorphic metaphor (crustacean), in its interiors reveals additional, unique shape interpretation of a rocky marine morphology. The sculptured body of the building creates a concrete pattern of arches of Anatooshi-Iso – a local tourist attraction composed of eroding inselbergs embedded in the ocean. Similarly, the interiors of the foyer and the auditorium, clearly geological in character, resemble a labyrinth in their tectonics of contours and grottos which fulfil the role of topophilia due to their monolithic representation – a subjective, emotional reception of the identity of the place and its material character.

A similar reference to the concrete labyrinth can be found in the works of Fernando Menis. The *Magma* Congress Centre (1998) in Tenerife, the Holy Redemeer Church in La Laguna, or the almost completed Congress and Culture Centre – CKK Jordanki in Toruń – are all underlining the isotropic properties of concrete and stone: carving, hollowing, grooving, forging, shifting figures – decomposing in order to highlight the labyrinth properties of its architecture. Each time the search for a new identity for concrete through reinterpretation of the monolithic figure serves the purpose of exhibiting the full homogeneity of deformed figures. As a result, the mixture of concrete and volcanic rock *picón canario* (la Laguna) invented by the architect, or the conglomerate of concrete and bricks (Jordanki) not only gives the buildings their mimetic character, but also takes on a noise and light absorbent function, which further brings out the mystery of the "geological" structure.

A project created in 2004 for the X International Architecture Biennale as part of the confrontation on the new location of the Cricoteka – the Museum of Tadeusz Kantor – is a suitable point of reference in deliberations on the idea of *boîte á miracle.* The reduced concrete and cast cuboidal solid interpreting the artist's thought on the role of objecting to the rule of imposing the "meaning" on the form in modern art became its ideological principle. The monument of the Cricoteka tries to do without light, colour, visible structure, and framework.

According to Kantor's will it is to be a manifesto against expression, and so should be devoid of any aesthetic values and engaging content. The museum is designed to be simply a material object – a thing rejecting any external message. The content for this form is a metaphor hidden in a labyrinth of cast-iron. The idea behind penetrating this substance (the cast-iron) is to involve the spectator in the game of discovering invisible meanings: "the house", "the tunnel", "the wandering" – presented in parts on stereotomies selected by the author. The building has no traditional ceilings, walls, or windows as its essence is celebrating the aesthetic idea formed by thickness, weight, solid, and void. This thought is the conviction that architecture means defining space by means of a "purpose" (rooms) and "the way" (exhibition). The project is also a presentation of a metaphoric "house" filled with "rooms" – the mysterious and intimate space providing shelter for objects and ideas.[1]

References

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[2] Loos A., *Architektura,* [in:] *Ornament i zbrodnia. Eseje wybrane,* Tarnów 2013.

[3] Pareyson L., *Estetyka. Teoria formatywności,* Kraków 2009.

[4] Rasmussen S. E., *Odczuwanie architektury,* Warszawa 1999.

[1] The project in 2004 was awarded the Grand Prix of the X Architecture Biennale, entitled "Architecture – the art of the future. The place of art in the city".(authors: Marcin and Katarzyna Charciarek).