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**THE MAGIC SPACE OR FINDING
THE REALITY
OF THE WAY OF FOUR GATES**

PRZESTRZEŃ MAGICZNA
ALBO ODNAJDYWANIE RZECZYWISTOŚCI
DROGI CZTERECH BRAM

A b s t r a c t

The architecture of the Magic Space is a kind of poetry of the art of shaping space close to the art of surrealism and the architecture of post-functionalism. This is a category close to the idea of “architectural pretexts” as a theory of design process. It is also a place for the poetics of the transmutation of concrete.

Keywords: fair-faced concrete

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

Architektura Przestrzeni Magicznej, to pewien rodzaj poezji sztuki kształtowania przestrzeni bliskiej sztuce surrealizmu i architekturze postfunkcjonalizmu. Kategoria bliska idei „pretekstów architektonicznych”, jako teorii postępowania projektowego. Tam jest także miejsce dla poetyki transmutacji betonu.

Słowa kluczowe: beton architektoniczny

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*Architecture is a poetic structure that tries to say something.
The architect is a poet of space.*

1. The Magic Space¹

1. The key to understanding the nature of the architecture of the Magic Space might be the 1840 painting entitled *The Architect's Dream* by the American painter Thomas Cole which gives the impression of being a vision of an architect who – as William Cullen Bryant wrote: “fell asleep after reading a work on the different styles of architecture”. At the core of the magic architecture there is the supremacy of feelings and hopes over – rationality. It also consists in separation of ordinary and poetic things. It is not only the hand drawn architecture that assumes the status of magic things. They constitute the poetics and – finding the reality of architecture; words such as a story or myth are also significant as the pretexts to construct the world.

2. The architecture of *The Way of Four Gates* constitutes a whole with Dariusz Kozłowski's hand drawn intentional architecture – the possibility of transforming the invented magic thing into the real one also constitutes its magicity. There is also a place for transmutations of concrete, without which a place in the Magic Space would be impossible. The architect attaches great importance to drawing architecture (keeping distance to his works). His sketches, pictures and paintings are – studies, illustrations, manifestos and... games. The architect declares that his creative activity belongs to the post-functional era or rather the timelessness of anti-functionalism, and confirms these statements with his paintings. He declares that he builds his art using “pretexts”: among others, it is the language of forms “from the past”. In relation to the alleged prototypes, they appear to be deformed, processed and above all used in other than the usual semantic contexts. Wandering through different periods and cultures, he picks the remains of various imageries and paintings, without desire for their thorough exegesis and without an apparent attachment to any of them.

3. There is a certain convergence with the idea of Italian Transavanguardia. Things take on a different meaning – the interpretation is left to the audience. The following comment on early De Chirico also comes to mind here: “Using even familiar objects, making them enter unusual associations, the painter alienates them from the real world, and however accurate their representation would be, the result is a feeling of strangeness and surprise as the world of one's dream visions is not a familiar world for anyone.” – Janicka writes in *Surrealism*, Warsaw 1985.

Here certain forms get repeated and it seems that they create a catalogue of favourite things. The architect's game consists in the repainting of symbolic codes, changing the meanings of spatial elements and obtaining a new object from a rejected, aesthetically worn-out thing. The architect does not want *a priori* representational or abstract forms in his painting and architecture: every single shape means something, and it is the architect's role to fill the form with this particular matter to create a realistic or abstract painting in any shade of

¹ Based on: Maria Misiągiewicz, *O prezentacji idei architektonicznej (On the Presentation of the Architectural Idea)*, Kraków 1999.

brightness or haze. To achieve this, he willingly presents dissection of the syntax elements of the language of space into independent elements and leaves them in this state to obtain the scenographic effect. The poetics of the drawn space serves to demonstrate the “artificiality” of: the language of architecture, the constructed world of metaphors, the ideology presented by architecture, the idea and the art itself – directing reflection somewhere deep towards the general state of the art of building, without denying the thesis that architecture is the art of building fictitious things in such a way as to make them look real.

4. If one is to agree that architecture tries to say something, then the need to “name” it stems from the fear that architecture says too few words while speaking. The “stuck” name, evocative of the meaning of form, and the shape clearly prompting and predicating the term – name. In this way he builds another convention of turning a real image – the space of architecture – into a fairy-tale vision; the name-idea-written word appears as a spell that summons reality-unreality. Numerous pictures tell about the convent – *The Way of Four Gates*, the building in Cracow. At the same time they are illustrations to the idea behind the Way written in blank verse, presentations of the idea of a particular architecture, and perhaps also a reference to a certain situation in contemporary architecture. The way of presenting paintings and architecture is a demonstration of a certain mood of incompleteness and nonchalance as a complement to the opposition to fulfilment and concreteness.

These records can be treated as polemics with the doctrines of modernism: with a house as a machine for living in. The drawings created for the purpose of building things are not just instructions for a bricklayer or an illustration for a customer. These aims appear to be only a pretext for the architect’s true inquiries, reflections on the nature of habitation.

5. The problem of history seems to be less significant than figurativeness. With their symbolism the works within the Magic Space create the synthesis of the projection of the idea and become the basis for defining architecture. Thus, the architect seems to deal with the problem of the relationship between architecture and memory-history, which, in his opinion, should no longer be a linear process, forcing one to reproduce and cite. This particular artistic activity satisfies the rationalistic thinking of form and interpretation of the verified history. The theme of reproduction is, therefore, the main problem for the architect who develops this motif in architectural design through theoretical works. In this perspective one can also place the “words already spoken”, indicated by the author in many drawings and collages from the seventies. Drawing has become a search for the possibility of applying these “words” as a combination of elementary forms that show through the created architecture. They lead the complexity of the composition through multiplication and repetition. The world of fragments that understand the logic of the past provokes certain changes in reality.

6. When erecting buildings, he is a magician, when drawing pictures of architecture, he is a poet. His attitude to designing architecture is completely poetic. He reaches architecture through poetry, and urges to cultivate the metaphorical sense of reality. Having their origin in the dream-like rationalism, his drawn visions have changed in the last years, although the traces of his earlier interests have remained: inspirations have begun to feed on the myths turned into reality. In this way, he is in an eternal suspension between the intentional reality, the image and the story and myth derived from a particular location or literary work, or from an abstract painting.



7. Within the landscape of the Magic Space one can see the relation between their magic and the meaning of the Name “memory”. The references to “the memory-oblivion” are Kozłowski’s “pictures” which signify the search in the memory but also oblivion of the sources of culture. This does not consist in the destruction of culture or the curse of tradition, but rather to that which Tomasso Trini described as *ni se suvenir; nioublier*, which is a demonstration of the distance to memory or is – the “ironic memory”. The drawings also contain a record of memory, their poetics resembling something indefinitely familiar, deposited in the non-historicizing past, and yet belonging to history, turning things without meanings into poetry.



2. Realities of *The Way of Four Gates*²

1. The poetics of architecture which enchants architectural forms in things or concepts from the worlds beyond it also falls within the current discussed. The realization of such an idea is the Higher Seminary of the Congregation of the Resurrection in Cracow. The idea of “The Way of Four Gates” accompanied the drawn construction of the monastery-seminar at the time of building the design concept of the building. First, the idea was created to obtain a metaphor-scenario that suggested a continuation to the story.

2. Thus, first, there was an idea. The idea of the metaphorical Way of the Spirit with four Gates was based on the archetype of “quaternity”. It corresponds to enumerating the four seasons, the four stages of human development – childhood, youth, mature age..., invoking the stages of change in human life – from the quandaries of aesthetics to the unambiguity of ethics. Here the way is divided by the Gate of Initiation, the Gate of Hope, the Gate of Knowledge and the Gate of Faith. The way leads through the Walls, Courts, Buildings, Squares; we pass the “true” and “false” Gates and Temples; ways leading to nowhere distract one’s attention from the right directions. However, the Way of the Spirit is not a real space, it is a proposal for the inhabitant and traveller to participate in the experience of passing through the gates and stages with one’s thought.

The theory of representational architecture in this sense appears as an idea rooted in tradition and historical patterns from the period before the Modern Movement. To be the basis for creative action, the metaphor proposed by it should be understood as an access to myths and rituals in the world of structures constructed by the architect .

3. The idea is realized by the composition of the monastery. The symbolic way became the axis of the layout anchored on one side at the central point of the Cracow’s Main Market Square, the arbitrary centre of the Old Town, piercing the limestone massifs of the Twardowski Rocks with the second one, which are the nearby background for the buildings of the Resurrection Seminary. The intangibility of the immaterial way is not an obstacle in reading the unambiguousness of em-

² Based on: Dariusz Kozłowski, *Projekty i budynki 1982–1992, Figuratywność i rozpad formy w architekturze doby postfunkcjonalistycznej*. Kraków 1992.



bedding the monastery in the close surroundings, and it appears to embed the object in the spatial context of Old Cracow, and thus in a specific cultural context.

In the area of the monastery, the Way of the Spirit, in its real and metaphorical dimension, holds the composition of the building's elements together, arranges the space in a non-intrusive manner, creating coherent fragments of the architectural environment's structure in a layout of a decomposed whole. This results in a slightly tenebrous space, preserving coherence only in places required by the absolute need for utility; blurry, unclear, ambiguous enough to resist the weariness of form in the monastic community cloistered from the world – wherever it was possible.

4. The spatial design of the idea – the monastery – was built using the language of forms applicable in buildings “from the past”. The complex consists of: *a church, dwelling house, refectory, house of sisters, cloister gate...* surrounded by *a monastery wall*. These architectural codes of the past serve as a pretext for building other worlds of architecture; in relation to the alleged prototypes, they appear to be deformed, processed and used in other than the usual spatial contexts, creating their modern versions, or just subsequent versions.

The clarity of the idea was contrasted with the fragmentation of the spatial elements of the seminary, which formed the tenebrous system – labyrinth. Mysterious for both the stranger from the outside and the intruder. A place of refuge for the locals, who, while familiarizing themselves with space, can experience daily discoveries in this world of detachment from reality. This way of reading the architecture of the seminary can, unintentionally, bring to mind Piranesi's strange candelabrum – which is also to be perceived differently today – but there is no reason to disagree with the interpretation of the critic.

5. The poetics of the Gates on the Way of the Spirit is based on symbolic formations. These are in turn: a crack in the “monastery wall” with a spring blocking the further real road – the “Gate of Initiation”, a fissure in the theatrical wall of a residential building with a pink building emerging from it – the “Gate of Hope”, emptiness between the two columns with steps of the amphitheatre fleeing to the horizon in the shade of the chapel and library – the “Gate of Knowledge”, and finally a double metaphor – a cross existing only in the imagination of the insider – composed of the vertical bell tower and the horizon of nearby limestone rocks, a sacred object existing only in the imagination, perceived as the “Gate of Faith” by those who “believe”. The key to the symbolism of the last gate is the fragment of Cyprian Kamil Norwid's *Promethidion*: “[...] Christianity – through the crossing of the horizontal earthly line and the overland line – perpendicular, falling from the sky – that is the mystery of the cross...”

6. One way is to use a specific philosophy of layers, to show breaking down the syntax elements of the language of architecture to autonomous elements, and leave them in that state to achieve the scenographic effect. This treatment that falls within the category of the breakdown of form. In the monastery, the layers of the façade were separated from the basic structures of the buildings, which, on closer inspection, also turn out to be elements of the scenographic layout. In this way, the outer parts of the building – the façades – gain their “thickness”, and appear to belong both to the building and to the courtyards, which designate define without defining an unambiguous relation to any of these parts of space.

7. »In the building of the Resurrectionists the monastery wall constitutes such an outer enclosure, it is a strong reinforced concrete structure, demonstrating its uselessness in places

where it does not form a connection with the outer walls of the buildings, or where there is nothing to bear and support. The front wall of the dwelling house, the main body of the composition, emphasizes its simultaneous belonging to the courtyard, whose main side it designates, and to the building itself. This is achieved by the inconsistency of the shape and size of the window openings in the applied layer and the background of the building. The same kind of aesthetics is created by reliefs on the walls of the cubic chapel, giving the illusion of the temple of the past, and the pediments of “false temples” – terrace buildings on the top floor of the house of professors and alumni. These are flat images of spatial architectures of the past.« One of them was inspired by the baroque reconstruction of the Gothic chapel in the Bernardine church in Radom, where a new wall-layer with an illusionistic relief was attached to the old structure of the building. The relief depicted the chapel covered by a dome, thus covering the top wall with the outline of the gable roof. »Inside the church, the same role is served by the “building in the building” that reduplicates the form of the coping rather than the roof of the building. In the rooms and corridors on the ground floor and, in the most dramatic form, in the hall, as well as in the library and the chapel of the sisters house, the ceilings are formed by the weights of the reinforced concrete masses of the “hanging” vaults which declare that we are in the monastery and demonstrate their theatrical absurdity by detachment from the pillars – walls or columns.

A further sequence of the game involves repainting architectural codes, i.e. changing the functions of space elements. In addition to the ceilings and vaults that bear nothing, heavy columns which support nothing but light something appear in the interiors, and the bay windows in the seminarians’ rooms turn into a massive colonnade from the outside. The roof of the hall is an amphitheatre, and the “roof” of the chapel opens outwards, not protecting from the rain.« These concepts may bring to mind a phenomenon in art defined by Adolf Goldschmidt as the “disintegration of form”; the term *breakdown of form* or *disintegration of form* brought to life in a new non-evaluative sense, can be considered as the supreme artistic category of post-functional architecture.

8. The realization of idea behind *The Way of Four Gates*, could count on understanding only on the basis of comprehending the special convention. The content of the idea itself, its semantic content, may seem trivial and its form – anachronistic. Only construction of the appropriately strange world of architecture could bring acceptance of the idea and the whole spatial concept. This purpose is served by the convention of turning a real image of architecture into a fairy-tale vision – and building a convention from a fairy-tale image; in this context, an idea – written word appears as a spell that summons reality. Another kind of the poetics of space serves to demonstrate the “artificiality” of: the language of architecture, the constructed world of metaphors, the ideology presented by architecture, the idea and the art itself – directing reflection somewhere deep towards the general state of the art of building, without denying the thesis that “architecture is the art of building fictitious things in such a way as to make them look real”.

R e f e r e n c e s

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- [2] Kozłowski D., *Projekty i budynki 1982–1992, Figuratywność i rozpad formy w architekturze doby postfunkcjonalistycznej*. Kraków 1992.