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FINDING
THE REALITY OF MAGIC SPACE
ARCHITECTURE

ODNAJDYWANIE
RZECZYWISTOŚCI ARCHITEKTURY
PRZESTRZENI MAGICZNEJ

Abstract

If there is a Magic Space of art, which is shown by reality, then there may also exist a Magic Space of architecture, not only in the form of hand drawn art. The affinity between architecture and literature, fine arts, and probably visual arts – is not obvious (likewise the Magic Space) but possible to prove.

Keywords: the magic space of art, The Alchemists' House, Villa Fortezza

Streszczenie

Jeśli istnieje Przestrzeń Magiczna sztuki, co ukazuje rzeczywistość, to może istnieć Przestrzeń Magiczna Architektury, nie tylko w jej wydaniu jako sztuki rysowanej. Powinowactwa literatury, sztuk plastycznych, a także zapewne sztuk wizualnych i – architektury jest nieoczywiste (podobnie jak Przestrzeń Magiczna), ale możliwe do udowodnienia.

Słowa kluczowe: magiczna przestrzeń sztuki, Dom Alchemików, Villa Fortezza

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1. THE MAGIC SPACE

The key to understanding the nature of the architecture of Magic Space might be the 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.”¹ The painting is from 1840. We are witnessing the confusion of the languages of nineteenth-century architecture. The artist had predicted or sensed that the confusion of languages would repeat again and again and that there would appear the (postmodern) confusion – of the languages among the residents of the Tower of Babel! Yet, he had also predicted the existence of the languages of the Magic Space. At the core of magical architecture there is the supremacy of imagination, dream-like experiences, fears and hopes over rationality. It also includes noticing the differences between ordinary and poetic things; then it might happen that a certain architecture will take on the status of magical things. They constitute the poetics and – finding the reality of architecture; words such as a name, story or myth are also significant as pretexts to build the real world. Thus, regardless of the type of art, one cannot turn away from the language, text and literature in this space.

The idea of magical architecture is close to the concept of magical realism – the trend in the twentieth-century painting which was inspired and related to surrealist painting. Carel Willink, who developed the style created in the 1930s. Magical realist painting shows a realistic world which departs from normality. In Willink's paintings one can see landscapes of the ancient world, with sculptures on pedestals, with ruins in orderly arrangements or perspectives; the mood is intensified by dramatic clouds. Thus, there are some Ruins, City, Street, Square, Intriguing Device, Strange Figure. Surrealist directions raise questions to which, as a matter of fact, nobody expects a reply. Elements of uncertainty tend to create their own interpretations.

We remain close to the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico. De Chirico's magical realism fills views of the city – squares and streets with characters or figures of his own ideas. The meanings of those strong colours of architectural things and landscapes are amplified with some thrown shadows. This creates dramatic stories of the actions seized in the stillness. Giorgio de Chirico's painting had a significant impact on the concept of the *Way of Four Gates*, the Seminary of the Resurrectionist Congregation in Krakow, a thing from the Magic Space without a doubt.

Rene Magritte's characters are also readily associated with the trend represented by magical surrealist painters. Magritte's space is highly absurd, full of things, including the architectural ones and figures which are both strange and inspiring. Max Ernst's landscapes are among the most “condensed” in meaning and memorable (*The Entire City*). Man Ray, a declared surrealist, is an important personality in this narrative – important owing to the painting with flying red lips (*Observatory Time: The Lovers*).

The ideas of Magic Space shaped in painting can be also found in the literature of Magic Realism. The literary genre flourished most luxuriantly in Spanish-speaking Latin American literature. Among the novels regarded as those depicting the poetics of the magic space there are Miguel Ángel Asturias's *Legends of Guatemala* (1930), Jorge Luis Borges's *A Universal*

¹ P. Krakowski, *Teoretyczne podstawy architektury wieku XIX*, Kraków 1979, p. 87.

History of Infamy (1935) and Alejo Carpentier's *The Lost Steps* (1953). The genre continues to this today.

2. THE HAND DRAWN MAGIC SPACE

Dariusz Kozłowski's architecture and paintings (referred to as pictures by the author himself) constitute a whole; its magicality stems not only from the possibility of converting invented things into real ones. Kozłowski attaches great importance to drawing architecture, keeping distance to his works. His sketches, pictures and paintings are studies, illustrations, manifestos and games. He draws and paints: his pen-drawn pictures seem to be studies for large-format painted compositions. He declares that his creative activity belongs to the post functionalist era, or rather the timeless of anti-functionalism, and he confirms these statements with paintings. Kozłowski builds his paintings (and architecture), using pretexts: the language of forms "from the past". In relation to the alleged prototypes they seem to be deformed, processed and above all used in semantic contexts which are different from the usual. Wandering through different periods and cultures, he picks the remains of various imageries and paintings, without desire for a thorough exegesis and, it seems, without attachment to any of them. In a sense, what one discovers here is an affinity with Italian trans-avant-garde. Things take on a different meaning – the interpretation is left to the audience. The following comment on early de Chirico comes to one's 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."²

In graphic records and paintings certain forms get repeated and it seems that they create a catalogue of favourite things. The architect's game covers the repainting of symbolic codes, changing the meanings of spatial elements and obtaining a new object from a rejected, aesthetically worn-out thing. Kozłowski does not want *a priori* representational or abstract forms in his painting and architecture: every shape means something, and the architect's role is to fill the form with this particular matter to create a realistic or abstract painting in any shade of brightness or haze. To achieve this, he willingly presents dissection of the language of space syntax into independent elements and leaves them in this state to obtain a scenographic effect. The poetics of the drawn space serves to demonstrate the "artificiality" of the language of architecture, the constructed world of metaphors (symbols?), the ideology presented by architecture, the idea, and the art itself – directing reflection somewhere deep towards the general state of the art of building.

Kozłowski titles his paintings (just as he "names" the architecture) as if they contained too few words. This way he builds another convention of turning a real image – the space of architecture – into a vision of a fairy tale; the name-idea-written word is seen as a spell summoning reality-unreality. Numerous pictures talk about the convent – the building of the

² K. Janicka, *Surrealizm*, Warszawa 1985, *ibidem*: *Zagadkowość, niepokój i melancholia marzeń sennych – czyli malarstwo Giorgia de Chirico*, p. 64.

Way of Four Gates in Krakow. At the same time they are illustrations to the idea of the Way written in blank verse³.

One can find affinities between the Krakow architect's thoughts and Hans Hollein's painted manifesto, it is the painting-concept of the façade – a model for a mock-implementation erected at Strada Novissima in Venice Arsenal at the Biennale of Architecture in 1980. The idea is based on the great order of six columns. The two side "real" columns with Doric capitals supported the real entablature of the roof covering of the Corderia exhibition hall. The space between them was filled with four "columns" whose dimensions were adapted to the existing pillars. Thus, there is a column: "a shaft capital with a capital", "Adolf Loos's Doric column" (a copy of the *Chicago Tribune* building design), "a fragment of a column" – a ruined form suspended at the entablature and "a column – a neatly trimmed tree". The whole is connected with a kind of a tympanum. The concept of the façade 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 architecture⁴. If one agrees with this thesis, then not only does Hollein's painting-design of the façade at Novissima Street take the form of a commentary on postmodern architecture, but it also has the value of a manifesto⁵.

3. ARCHITECTURE

It is not without reason that we direct our interest to the Venice Biennale of 1980. That is where the magic space presented itself to the world in all its glory. The name of postmodernism in architecture gained explanation. Later, architecture immersed itself temporarily in the baffling fiction celebrated by artists, passers-by and theorists with equal seriousness. Let us look at the remains of that fun.

Apart from being a particular kind of the quest for the meaning of human habitation on earth, Massimo Scolari's drawn records constitute the analysis of architectural form and the search for its rules. At this point it is fitting to raise the following question: which kind of space the *Wings* appearing here and there in Scolari's mysterious worlds belong to, they are also flying away over the *Gate for a Maritime City*. *Wings* which announced the Venetian Architectural Exhibition in *Il Gardini di Biennale* in 1985, and which finally found their resting place in the existing scenery of the erstwhile industrial buildings, suspended over the entrance to the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia.

One does not have such doubts while looking at Rob Krier's *Gate* at Rauchstrasse in Berlin. Temporarily abandoning his melancholic but rational analysis of the city, the architect suggested extending the game with poetic meanings translated into the language of architecture. The beginning of the myth is the abovementioned *Gate*, the residential building with two towers leading towards the inside of the park. The flanking "Teutonic" and "Tuscan" towers suggest continuation of the story: on the opposite sides of the park architects from the German-speaking and Italian-speaking cultural zones constructed urban villas according

³ J. Sepioł, *Oblicza postmodernizmu*, [in:] *Sztuka polska po 1945*, Warszawa 1987.

⁴ D. Kozłowski, *Figuratywność i dezintegracja w architekturze doby postfunkcjonalistycznej*, p. 30.

⁵ M. Misiągiewicz, *Zapis przestrzeni architektonicznej*, Kraków 2016.

to their ideas. On the one side – Hubert Herrmann and Francy Valentiny, Hans Hollein, and Rob Krier (the existing building); opposite – Klaus Theo Brenner and Benedict Tonon, Giorgio Grassi, Henry Nielebock, and Aldo Rossi. Rob Krier’s recorded ideas belong to the melancholic and Magic Space alike. The delicately drawn and coloured plans and elevations materialise a certain past composed anew. This is confirmed by the perspectives which also show the material and slightly ruined architecture. In the competition entry (which is how the project was selected) there are no towers – the idea came later. Rob Krier’s drawings support the poetics of the sometimes realised ideas.

When erecting buildings, Steven Holl is a magician, when drawing pictures of architecture he is a poet. His attitude to designing architecture is completely poetic, which is partly reflected by the pictures. He reaches architecture through poetry, claiming that “the soul is the essence of architecture” and the building stands in silent solitude. He urges cultivation of the metaphorical sense of reality, claiming that the mythopoetic understanding of undefined experiences and secrets enriches the soul⁶. Having their origin in dream-like rationalism, Holl’s drawn visions have changed in recent years, although traces of his earlier interest in typological-morphological aspects have remained – inspirations have begun to feed on the myths turned into reality. Holl needs pretexts so as not to disappear in the sea of intuition. To open architecture to the issues of perception, he continues in unbelief and disconnects the rational half of his mind, also divesting reason and scepticism of the right to priority in favour of novelty. In this laboratory, there is no confidence in the doctrines and the subject of meditation is intuition.

Within the landscape of 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 refer to the destruction of culture or cursing the tradition, but rather to that which Tomasso Trini described as *ni se souvenir, ni oublier*. These things belong to the *Time of Great Abandonment*, using the title of Purini’s painting. Aldo Rossi’s sketches and paintings of architecture studies on “historical memory”. Massimo Scolari’s watercolours are personal explorations of the “archetypal memory”. Hollein’s Strada Novissima is a demonstration of the distance to memory or is – the “ironic memory”. As an introduction to thinking about the basics of architectural creation, Franco Purini’s drawings constitute the discovery of the “genetic memory”⁷. Steven Holl’s drawings also contain a record of memory, their poetics resembling something indefinitely familiar deposited in the non-historicizing past though belonging to history, turning things without meanings into poetry: perhaps in the “magical memory? Woods, Hajduk and Abraham’s paintings depict things locked in the “time without time”.

4. TWO HOUSES ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF ARCHITECTURE’S REALITY

All things have their own names, without which they would not exist. On the other hand, proper names have tremendous power: they create a reality preceding the occurred thing.

⁶ S. Holl, *Soul*, [in:] *Steven Holl*, introduction by K. Frampton, Zürich-München-London 1994.

⁷ M. L. Cannarozzo, *Architettura disegnata*, p. 130.

The building was erected in the single-family houses district in Krakow, to be more precise, detached houses built in the 1970s. The house with a usable area of 870 square metres is a functional part of the earlier built (in 1987) facility belonging to the HEAN cosmetics factory, and indeed it is a single-family house!

The house consists of two parts – residential and studio. The residential part includes the rooms one usually expects to find in a house: hall, living room, dining room, kitchen, bedrooms. The studio was designed as a large two-storey space⁸. The shape of the building allows one to read two different forms: the strong, angular body with earthy carmine clinker, topped with four concrete obelisks which leave the spectator uncertain as to their purpose, and the soft, undulating wall of the same material, ostentatiously demonstrating its thickness and structure. The narrower wall of the angular body of the building opens up to the street presenting its “face”, “the mouth” – the entrance door and “the eyes” – shallow reliefs in the clinker wall to a passer-by. The obelisks crowning the studio also mean something, likewise the four rows of windows which seen from the side of the building blur the scale of the two-storey building.

The pink sculpture, a vertically arranged form leaning against the front façade – the “Mouth”, an object of a height equal to the buildings which serve as its background, singles the building out from the surroundings of the factory. It seems that it is here that Man Ray left his flying sign. The whole is a composition of forms juxtaposing fragmentation, compilation, multiplicity of directions and planes, the variety of architectural details hidden behind the undulating wall – with the transparency of arrangement, extent of the interior and legibility of the cubic rectangular massif. The walls made of irregular and unevenly fired, black and purple clinker road brick constitute the background for the smoothly polished rosy Mouth made of artificial stone.

Inside, where the house and the studio meet, a multi-storey narrow “interior-exterior” is created. The studio’s wall bears traces of the same bricked-up windows as in the opposite outer wall; the residential part muscles in with stairs and balconies, opens up with windows, contrasting its white plaster interior walls with the colour of clinker. Both forms of the walls fight each other, flexing at a standstill.

The thing was called – *The Alchemists’ House*. The author explains the name: “The pretext is provided by the investors’ profession – the owners of HEAN, which manufactures lipsticks. Continuing the fun in its intention, the house’s architecture was to be the architecture of riddles which should raise questions and doubts: Where exactly do the Alchemists live? – Why does the undulating exterior wall have an anthropomorphic outline on the house’s plan? – The concrete forms on top of the building may provoke thought: are they obelisks or chimneys? – The arrangement, number and scale of the windows in the “alchemists’ workshop” suggests a building much bigger than in reality, and a multi-storey one. – The front of the residential part contains decomposed elements. – At the pediment of the alchemists’ workshop one can detect an outline of a face, perhaps a mask. – What does the sculptural element leaning against the front side of the house, the “Mouth” signify: is it another game with anthropomorphic form,

⁸ Publications: Architektura 1989, No. 2; The catalogue of the exhibition *Polnische Architekturzeichnungen der Gegenwart*, Aedes – Berlin, 1989, SARP Kraków 1989; D. Kozłowski, *Figuratywność i rozpad formy w architekturze doby postfunkcjonalistycznej*, Kraków 1992; Tomasz Oborski, *Dom Alchemików*, Architektura i Biznes 1993, No. 3; The catalogue of the exhibition *Baustelle: Polen – Dariusz Kozłowski*, Akademie der Künste zu Berlin 1994; The catalogue of the exhibition *Qvo vadis Architecture*, Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu; 2000 – *Rocznik Wydziału Architektury Politechniki Krakowskiej*, 2000.

a symbol of cosmetics produced here, advertising or something else? – The deformation of shapes can cause some anxiety; there are no right angles between the most essential walls on the plan. – The fence does not have a gate leading to the entrance of the house.

Needless to say – nobody lives in the *Alchemists' House*.

Near the city of Turek, at a distance which allows one to keep urban citizenship simultaneously releasing them from the nuisance of the hustle and bustle, unexpected meetings and mere curiosity – a house was designed. It is quite big: with the floor space of 2 200 m².

The idea of the building, called *Villa Fortezza*⁹, is presented in the painting *Il combattimento del signor K. e dei mulini a vento, ossia Villa Fortezza*. The pretext for the painting's title was provided by a wallpaper "acting" as glazed ceramic tiles with windmills which was supplemented with the drawing of the villa. The intentions contained in the painted message, name and idea are connected by the title of a Baroque opera, the poetics of the metaphor of "fighting windmills", a presentation of the idea of a specific architecture, and perhaps also a reference to a particular situation in contemporary architecture.

The house was situated on a hill on the edge of an old forest. The south slope of the elevation ensures attractive views of the surrounding area. Another benefit of the location can be assessed by those inside: the hill conceals the halls, corridors and rooms spreading far beyond the contour of the main body of the building, also including garages and a swimming pool which opens up towards the forest with a window after all. Another time of window into the underground labyrinth is the cut-out of the terrain – a water garden with views into the underground. A dedicated listening room, home bar and gym found their place in this zone. The upper level holds the daily use functions. An open library and hidden bedrooms found their place above. The composition develops from the intricacies of the underground to the obviousness of the roof-terrace form with four surreal towers.

The form is built by the outer casing which, nevertheless, enables a peek at the mystery of "the other side of the wall". The external structure inside reveals the free composition of non-abstract geometrical forms. Both of these worlds exist in the fusion of opposites. The release of the external structure, walls and coffered ceiling formed a kind of an "exhibition space" – for the (difficult to describe) blocks allocated for the living room, dining room, library, and bar. Also, Mother's House. This made it possible to show things which are normally invisible – the non-existent external forms of the rooms and halls!

The house provides many games with architecture. These may include a fun journey through the maze or a game of interpreting meanings – the language of architecture is not obvious. The abstract forms are united in a free composition theoretically enabling the change or the continuation of the arrangement. One can also play the game of historical references to *Villa Fortezza*'s name and form and the semantics based on multiple layers of decomposition. The final game involves tracking affinities with the things from symbolism's other worlds.

Needless to say, nobody lives in *Villa Fortezza*!

⁹ Publications: Deutsche Architekturbuletten 1992, No. 10; „Projekt roku 1992, SARP Kraków” – the catalogue of the exhibition Kraków 1993; „Architektura i biznes” 1993, No. 12; D. Kozłowski, *Rezydencja*, „Architektura i biznes” 1994, No 1; the catalogue and the exhibition: *Baustelle: Polen – Dariusz Kozłowski*, Akademie der Künste zu Berlin, 1994; *Gazeta – Biennale Architektury*, SARP Kraków, 1994, No. 2; the catalogue *Dach płaski w krajobrazie*, Galeria + 217.5, SARP Kraków 1995.

5. FICTITIOUS THINGS?

Conversation about art – an attempt to explain – theorizing is as difficult as translating poetry into another language, or even impossible. Can we then translate the text of a pictorial representation into the language of the verbal world? One must also agree with Picasso who at one point said that art is a lie (that makes us realize the truth!). This judgement can be extended: art is a Great Lie. Man does not look at the world with an absolutely “pure” vision. They interpret it with their own experience, stereotypes and tastes. Thus, to clearly see the Magic Space one needs glasses allowing them to look at the world in a certain way, glasses with lenses which facilitate taking a favourable look deep inside art and noticing its secret world where knowledge meets faith, irony, game and philosophy... If one accepts this theory, the thesis about the existence of the Magic Space does not need to be explained and described, while the definition: *Architecture is the art of building fictitious things in such a way as to make them look real*¹⁰ becomes obvious.

¹⁰ Dariusz Kozłowski, 1988.