

HOUSE, CITY, HISTORY – A THEATRE IN A FORMER FOREMAN MANSION IN KIELCE

DOM, MIASTO, HISTORIA – TEATR W DAWNYM DWORZE STAROŚCIŃSKIM W KIELCACH

Abstract

The rebuilding of the complex of the foreman's mansion and the smithy on Zamkowa Street in Kielce for the needs of The Puppet and Actor Theatre "Winnie" was the subject of an architectural competition conducted in 2015. The analysis of the adequacy to serve as a theatre was not favourable for existing buildings. The question of the meaning of these buildings as objects that are under conservation protection looked much better. Considerations related to their importance as urban artefacts, as Aldo Rossi would call them, led to some interesting conclusions. The point of the reconstruction does not lie in the relevance or congruence of the building to the new function. The value lies the historic structure itself, but primarily in its history and the place in the city. These three aspects of urban artefacts should constitute the basis of any transformation of this space. The buildings themselves are heavily degraded by several reconstructions, and only because of their history and place in which they were built are they a part of the historic complex of the castle hill. The foreman mansion and the smithy for almost two centuries served as a prison. In the days of the Nazi occupation the south area by the walls was to be used as a place of executions. The intervention seemingly insignificant for the architectural form that is the change to the theatre does not have to remain here in the shade. A significant historical value may be supplemented by the theatre, or even replaced by a cultural value that the theatre supports. Therefore, this value can be built through the form of the building – as an urban artefact on the one hand and through the idea of community expressed by the theatre space. Kozień Architects recognized the value of the existing historical site in conjunction with the introduced cultural value as an appropriate basis for the architectural concept.

Keywords: architecture, theatre, values

Streszczenie

Przebudowa zespołu dawnego dworu starościńskiego oraz budynku kuźni przy ul. Zamkowej w Kielcach dla potrzeb Teatru Lalki i Aktora „Kubus” była przedmiotem konkursu architektonicznego przeprowadzonego w 2015 roku. Analiza adekwatności funkcji teatralnej nie była korzystna dla istniejących budynków. Inaczej przedstawiała się kwestia znaczenia zespołu budynków jako obiektów będących pod ochroną konserwatorską. Rozważania związane z ich znaczeniem jako miejskiego artefaktu, jak nazwałby je Aldo Rossi, prowadziły do interesujących wniosków. Sens przebudowy wcale nie jest tu wbudowany w adekwatność, przystawalność

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obiektu do nowej funkcji. Wartość odnajdywać można raczej w samej zabytkowej strukturze, ale przede wszystkim w jego historii i miejscu w mieście. Te trzy aspekty miejskiego artefaktu stanowić powinny bazę wszelkich przekształceń tych obiektów. Same budynki są silnie zdegradowane przez przebudowy i tylko ze względu na historię i miejsce, w którym powstały wchodziły w skład zabytkowej zabudowy wzgórza zamkowego. Dwór i kuźnia przez niemal dwa wieki służyły jako więzienie. W czasach hitlerowskiej okupacji teren międzymurza od strony południowej miał być wykorzystywany jako miejsce egzekucji. Pozornie mało znacząca dla formy architektonicznej ingerencja – zmiana funkcji na teatralną nie musi jednak pozostać tu w cieniu. Znacząca wartość historyczna może zostać przez teatr uzupełniona, czy nawet włączona w wartość kulturową, wzbogaconą przez teatr. Wartość ta budowana jest zatem z jednej strony przez formę budynku – jako miejskiego artefaktu, z drugiej – przez ideę wspólnoty wyrażaną przez przestrzeń teatralną. Zespół projektowy Kozień Architekci uznał istniejące wartości historyczne miejsca w powiązaniu z wprowadzaną wartością kulturową za odpowiednią bazę dla budowy koncepcji architektonicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura, teatr, wartości

The mansion with stables, the coach house and the smithy are a part of the former buildings of a foreman dating from the beginning of the eighteenth century, when they belonged to the service buildings of the palace of the Bishops of Krakow. The foreman's buildings were built parallel to the east wing of the stables of the bishops, on the southern side of the palace. A road runs between the buildings of the complex, leading from the gate of the castle courtyard to the gate of the ramparts of the hill. The entire complex within the walls is now a protected part of the urban landscape scheme of the city entered into the register of monuments, whereas the foreman's mansion and the smithy appear in the municipal register of monuments. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, these buildings were used as a prison. They have been repeatedly rebuilt and expanded.

The rebuilding of the complex of the foreman mansion and the smithy on Zamkowa Street in Kielce for the needs of the "Winnie" Puppet and Actor Theatre was the subject of an architectural competition conducted in 2015. The modernized complex of buildings had to meet not only basic functions such as preparing and presenting theatrical shows, but to be – according to the requirements of the theatre – accessible for visitors of all ages and include educational activities that could be conducted in a wide range. The space of the theatre was to become friendly, open, flexible, with different, variable and difficult to precisely specify an application program. At the same time, due to its nature, the space would be isolated to create the atmosphere of safety for the users (children, youth) and to minimize the inconvenience to the surrounding areas. On the base of so determined specific investment plans Kozień Architects¹ defined their assumptions of the concept design of the theatre. The project sought to create a coherent group of buildings with correct and legible functional diagram. The presentation spaces (two halls, the stage with facilities) were to be integrated to extend the capabilities of the program of the theatre. They sought to create a one-level, open and accessible space with direct connection with the outer ground level for deliveries;

¹ Kozień Architekci: Marek Kozień, Magdalena Kozień-Woźniak, Katarzyna Kozień-Kornecka, cooperation: Jakub Dziewoński, Anna Eckers.

a clear separation of stages of availability for the audience, actors, and technical staff; interiors with a large multi-functional range with the ability to use large and small halls with daylight.

The analysis of the adequacy to serve as a theatre was not favourable for the existing buildings. The introduction of the new function necessitated the demolition of the entire two-level interior of the mansion. To bring the auditorium and the fly tower into the limited volume of the steep roof caused many difficulties. To build a fly tower outside the main body of the mansion, in the place of eighteenth-century kitchens, could be another answer. However, it would exclude the possibility of multi-purpose, one-level space as the sequence of interiors auditorium-main stage-small hall. As the outer contour of the mansion could not be changed, the entire width of the building had to belong to the audience hall, limiting the possibility of the circulation in the building. The existing layout of windows and doors had to be left unchanged. In terms of the basic function, they were insignificant, but they gave the potential of using the space with daylight. The connection of the interior of the hall and the street could become possible via the street door located on the axis passing in front of the proscenium. So the interposition of the theatre into the building was not impossible and the serial arrangement of existing buildings provided the opportunity for clear zoning of the objects.

The question of the meaning of these buildings as objects that are under conservation protection looked much better. Considerations related to their importance as urban artefacts, as Aldo Rossi would call them, led to some interesting conclusions. It is worth noting that the architecture, which is one of the fundamental aspects of the phenomenon that is the city, much more complex spatial structure, is also its most concrete, verifiable side. For Aldo Rossi [1] one of the essential elements of the architecture of the city was the urban artefact: building, street or a district, determined both by its history as well as its form². He argued that the form and the history decide on the importance of an urban artefact, regardless of the volatility of the function itself. The artefact is always part of the whole, which is the city. The buildings make up the city, just like the columns are elements forming the building. Spatial references and historical significance of the buildings as part of the city had to accompany the incorporation of the function of theatre to the mansion house.

The sense of the rebuilding of the mansion can be seen when looking at the building from this point of view – seeing it primarily as an urban artefact. The meaning is not in the relevance, congruence to the new function. The meaning can be rather found rather in desirability of protecting its forms. The real value can be found in its historic structure, but at the same time in its history and place in the city. These three aspects of urban artefacts should constitute the basis of any transformation.

The historic structure. The authors of the study architectural study of buildings [2] mainly indicate their historical interest, related to the historical events that took place in their surroundings. The buildings themselves are heavily degraded by reconstructions, which is the reason why, as such, they have not been entered in the register of monuments. They indicated their slim stylish features that are possible to extract during the revitalization. Only because of its history and place in which they were built, are the two buildings a part of the historic buildings of the castle hill. This guideline influenced the decision to maintain the outer dimensions of the existing buildings as well as their character consistent with adjacent

² A. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1984 (1966), p. 28–31.



Ill. 1–3. Kozień Architekci, comeptition design of a theatre in Kielce

buildings, particularly those located on Zamkowa Street. Allowed, even very deep interference in the interior of the building was, however, to remain largely hidden behind its historic walls. The currently built kitchen building, added to the mansion in the second half of the nineteenth century and recognized as worthless, was the only place that gave a chance for a new architectural body in the narrow space between the mansion and the smithy.

The spatial interference was to be meant as an adjustment to the existing, repeatedly rebuilt system in the concept design of Kozien Architects. The kitchens were demolished and a new form to connect the mansion and the smithy was introduced. It was to be the next step in the transformation of the freestanding buildings to the street frontage. The main entrance was located in the new building, which somehow gave meaning to the historic former jail, now and then with the closed front door of the mansion. The basic system of spatial composition was based on the principle of the continuation of the building line. A new building in the place of demolished kitchens constituted the link between the buildings of the mansion and the smithy, providing only narrow independent passages to the area of the projected parking plot on the eastern side of the theatre building. The basement of the proposed switch would be the entire complex of the theatre's entrance hall for the audience. The entrance area is adjacent to the covered walkway to the parking lot and to the area of the walls that leads to the Place of Executions. The building of the former smithy designed for theatre workers (performers, technicians and administration) is available from the level of the existing square and a pedestrian way leading to the staircase descending to the Place of Executions. This system preserves not only the individuality of a former smithy, but allows double-sided access to the lower square of the walls with the watchtower (Place of Executions).

Part of the palace complex. The mansion and the smithy are significant elements of the composition of the palace area limited by the walls. This belonging to a greater whole is a very important feature of them. Lined up along Zamkowa Street and sloping towards the walls, they form a significant system supplementing the palace complex itself together with the opposite stable buildings (now a museum). It is worth noting the competition concept of Atelier Loegler that subjected all functional and spatial solutions to precisely this aspect. The most important part of the project was a square space formed between the two buildings (after the demolition of the kitchens), with a basement connecting the two parts of the unit. In this way, it was not the theatre building, but an open public space to become the most important asset introduced to this part of the hill.

The concept of Kozien Architects is based essentially on the exchange of existing substances of former kitchen and the placement at this point the main entrance to the theatre. This decision was taken after analysing the possibility of introducing a string of three adjacent buildings next to each other. The result of these considerations was associated with the analysis of the existing urban and architectural composition on one hand, and with a desire to make the most limited intervention in the landscape of the city on the other hand. The availability of the halls to the actors and to the audience was extremely important for the function of the object. To enable the supply of decorations in the area of the stage, the main hall and the small hall was another goal. To maintain the integrity and autonomy of each of the three blocks of the existing buildings as well as to preserve existing dominant architecture was also an important guideline. The aim was to achieve a recognizable and personalized contemporary architectural form clearly subordinated to the historic architecture of the castle hill. The height of the planned buildings were close

to the height of the connector window lintels floors of the mansion (which is clearly below the cornice crowning) and the linker with the building of the former smithy reaching only the base of the crowning cornice.

The introduction of a simple and clear forms of the connector was to bring a calm space, not competing with neighbouring chunks of historic buildings. It also allowed the exploration of the arrangement with a clearly defined compositional and spatial scheme based on a sequence of interiors.

The Place of Executions. The mansion and the smithy served as a prison for almost two centuries, from the time Austrian Criminal Court was located here. In the days of the Nazi occupation of the area, the walls in the south were used as a place of executions. After the war, buildings belonged to UB, communist Committee for Public *Safety*. The prison was closed in the 1980s. It seems that this aspect was the most important issue for the concept of the winning project by WXCA. The theatre was inserted into the silent walls of the mansion and the smithy, and the effect of closure was strengthened by a heavy form of the fly tower build between the two buildings.

The Place of Executions itself is located next to the south wall with a corner prison guard tower. There are small remaining fragments of the prison walls also along the east facade of the former smithy. Koziń Architects' concept of separation of this part of walls depended on the reconstruction of the eastern walls which was designed in the form of additions made of architectural concrete. An openwork steel fence with kinked endings was added to refer to the once built prison camp fences used to obstruct escapes. The part of preserved walls with the watchtower and the reconstructed steps and steel doors was considered a symbolic Place of Executions. The wall was subject to maintenance with uneven plaster with various textures. Wild trees were left, as a symbol of hope and faith in the renewal of life.

The introduction of the theatre to the former mansion, which in this case seems insignificant for an architectural intervention does not have to remain here in the shade. A significant historical value may be supplemented by the theatre, or even outbalanced by the cultural value that theatre brings. The theatre, which is an inherent part of city life, can become a tool in its modernization, in particular by strengthening a sense of community: "the modernization, containing cultural elements, makes designing the use of both the whole baggage of knowledge in this field and – more importantly perhaps – to demonstrate the intuitive delicacy, one's own culture, moderation and tact in bringing the past to the contemporary life of the city," wrote Konrad Kucza-Kuczynski³. Here follows a coupling of cultural values, providing the splendour of the past, the psychological affirmation and acceptance of forms that modernity is not able to offer. The cultural element includes both a commitment to the residence by identifying with the values of ancient culture a pure moment of teaching: the old architecture of the city is a part of the whole culture of the city, region or country. The historical form and its belonging to the site expressed in this case in particular the memory of its history; it is thus used by the theatre that takes those values and transforms them into a cultural value. It returns the place to live. This value is built, therefore, by the form of the

³ K. Kucza-Kuczynski. *Czwarty wymiar architektury miasta*, Arkady, Warszawa 1982, p. 38.

building – as an urban artefact on the one hand and by the idea of the community expressed by the theatrical space on the other.

The architectural concept of Kozieln Architects is based on an opened, sequential arrangement of the interior giving a chance to implement plans of the initiators of the project, to bring a friendly, open, flexible space. Functional divisions were introduced to enable the most rational and comfortable way to use the building. It led towards a maximum elimination of differences in height and to allow the possibility of diverse and independent functioning of the object. This association has expanded recreation spaces for children and their patrons. The functional and spatial link between different interiors greatly expanded the range and capabilities of their functioning. Daylight has become an important element introduced in the project to specify the possibilities of the interiors. The existing large windows in the side walls of the mansion, equipped with electrically operated blackout blinds, gave the ability to quickly introduce daylight into main hall and optional on the stage and the backstage (windows of the eastern and western facade). It significantly extended the scope of the functions to offer ballet exercises, musical events, and educational meetings.

The mansion has been the subject of a substantial interference in the spatial and functional structure. This was due to the introduction to its entire interior space of the basic element of the program that is the auditorium with a capacity of 300 spectators and a stage with a backstage. This decision entailed the necessity to remove almost entirely the internal structural components including all ceilings and walls (except for the cellar in the north-eastern part of the building), leaving “relics” in the form of preserved fragments of basement walls in the south west. In the north part a staircase for servicing facility was extracted. The outer walls of the building were left without fundamental changes, with some minor adjustments of openings. The main auditorium would be available through two entrances with stairs from the entrance hall which form a part of the main hall. It would have two additional exits leading directly to the outside. The auditorium is designed as a telescopic folding seats, with the possibility (imposed by the stage platforms) of obtaining a flat surface with a stage, backstage, a small hall, driveway discharge and storage. The hall is equipped with two technical galleries on both sides, rear gallery lighting, lighting towers and speakers. The spatial and functional assumptions defined a range of transformations of the internal space of the building. The building of the former smithy was adapted for rooms for actors, administration and social rooms for technicians. A new object was designed on the site of the demolished building of the former prison kitchen binding the buildings of the former mansion and the smithy. It was to be a two-storey building in the front part, with an entrance hall on the ground floor and a small hall on the first floor. A three-storey part at the back was to house toilets and two storages of decorations. The small room was to be connected directly with the first level of the performers’ part of the backstage in a former smithy. Also in this room they allowed the introduction of daylight to create a space for fun and educational activities for young people. A sequence of related spaces gave a chance to enjoy a variety of unexpected ways to use them as spaces of culture, art, education.

All the design decisions taken during work on a task as complex as the reconstruction of historical buildings for the needs of the theatre are based on the whole range of reasons and excuses. It is important to consciously define those conditions, and the effects has to be based on rational analysis. In the case of the reconstruction of the complex of the foreman’s buildings in Kielce existing value of historic places in connection with the introduced cultural

value was considered to be an appropriate basis for the architectural concept. First, you need to contemplate the historical buildings as urban artefact.

R e f e r e n c e s

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