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ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

RYSUNEK JAKO FORMA KOMUNIKACJI

Abstract

Drawing is the most natural way of recording a piece of architectural work. One line depicting the building has a huge narrative potential and that one line can communicate more and much more thoroughly than whole loads of paper full of verbal description, or than even the most suggestive pantomimic show. In my opinion, an architectural drawing is for architecture what musical notation system is for a musical work. It is a code that enables to move a piece of work in time and space. It tells about the architecture beyond linguistic barriers.

Keywords: drawing, dialogue

Streszczenie

Najbardziej naturalnym sposobem zapisu dzieła architektury jest rysunek. Rysunek przedstawiający budowlę posiada ogromny potencjał narracyjny. Jedna linia potrafi przekazać więcej i dokładniej niż całe strony słownego opisu lub najbardziej sugestywny pokaz pantomimiczny. Rysunek jest dla architektury tym czym zapis nutowy dla muzyki. Jest kodem o mocy przenoszenia dzieła w przestrzeni i czasie, potrafi opowiedzieć o architekturze ponad barierami językowymi.

Słowa kluczowe: rysunek, dialog

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The views expressed in this article will be presented from the position that is beyond the main strand of the discipline generally defined as architectural drawing.

As a practicing architect and a teacher of architectural design, I use drawing and teach how to draw daily. Nevertheless, I feel like a stranger among the “drawing” architects. This impression does not come only from the fact that I have always drawn poorly.

The fact is that the average level of performance in this area has discouraged me from perceiving architectural drawing as the aim of my creative activity.

I do not frame the drawings or hang them on a wall, I do not exhibit them. I draw to talk. I draw to think. I draw to build.

In my opinion, architectural drawing is for architecture what a musical notation system is for a musical work. It is a code that enables to move a piece of work in time and space. It allows the specialists, who can read it, to complete the task. It tells about the architecture beyond linguistic barriers.

The commonly used and difficult to substitute project design deserves to be called a “language” of the architects. This metaphor is inseparably connected to the dialogue. An architect, with a drawing’s help, communicates with the recipients of his work: the investors, the users and the contractors of the future building, and not only with them.

I draw to think

The language is also used in a monologue. One delivers a monologue in order to present oneself with a problem to be solved – “to be or not to be”. A monologue can also serve as a preparation before the dialogue. A drawing – monologue is a record of the ideas and options in the first stage of a project creation. A drawing, just like a thought, can be wandering. In my opinion a drawing is inevitable. I think, therefore I draw. There is not much to survive of an unwritten thought. Just like some phrases of a monologue can be used in the subsequent dialogue and some can never be heard, it is the same with the drawings. Sometimes the final resolution is presented, some other time the set of the previous sketches depict the way to achieving the goal.

I draw to talk

The creator engages in a dialogue using a drawing as a help. The form of drawings should comply with their purpose. The future user’s interest in the concept of the form will differ from the contractor’s. For the recipient of the final work (an investor or a user) the most important thing is: what it looks like when it is finished. He is concerned with its appearance, dimensions, functional solutions. An investor expects the architect’s drawing to present the illusion of the future reality.

I draw to build

Different requirements toward a designer are set by the contractors, they ask a substantial question: how to build IT? They need a portrayal of a building that can unambiguously transfer its dimensions and the ways to erect it to the construction site. This process can be simplified by two-dimensional representations of an object. These are flat views (top down perspective, front view and side view). Two-dimensional drawings enable to scale an object. As a result, its dimensions from the drawing will be multiplied by a constant value and it will result in the real measurements of the object.

I hand over these personal thoughts to the practitioners. Providing the “introduction to the architectural design” classes, my task is to teach the basic skills of the architectural craft. My first lecture is about drawing. Contrary to expectations, its clichéd theses meet fierce opposition in practice. No one protests against the fact that drawing is the most natural way of recording a piece of architectural work. Everyone agrees that a drawing depicting the building has a huge narrative potential and that one line can communicate more and much more thoroughly than whole loads of paper full of verbal description, or than even the most suggestive pantomimic show. Nevertheless, it is difficult for some students to start expressing their ideas by means of a drawing. At first, they want to tell specifically about their project, with gestures’ help.

Only when supported by the acceptance of their vision, do they start drawing.

They present their projects using graphic experience gained while preparing to take the drawing entrance exam to the Faculty of Architecture.

It is a new experience for the students when they hear that the project drawing is characteristic of its media aspect. Contrary to the “artistic” drawing, project drawing is not an end in itself but a means to create the final work – the building. This distinctiveness has its formal consequences. If the drawing person does it “from their nature” or “from their imagination”, they are looking for the image on the plane of the observed or imaginary forms. This search is expressed in the form of drawing. Drawing the objects from their nature is created with the bars of repeatedly multiplied lines, added after further verifications. The search for this one, right contour, resembles the artillery aiming at the target.

Project drawing does not „search for” the image of the form, it “defines” it. The line whose task is to accomplish the material form should be drawn unambiguously, without any doubts concerning its run, thickness, beginning and end. It is meaningless whether the line is drawn by hand, with the help of technical drawing instruments or a computer. When teaching architectural design, I expect such a manner of drawing from the very first concept. I advise students to eliminate ambiguity and understatement of the impressionistic drawing, so that these features are not present in a project disposition.

What is of particular concern to me is the fact that a project drawing becomes the main activity of designers. They move in the world of drawing and they are astounded by how different from their first perception is the space created on the base of this drawing.

“Very often the architects get used to working on the concepts, forms. They consider a plan as a plan and a drawing as a drawing. I am not interested in a sheet of paper. I am looking for architecture. I want to know how to get into the drawing in order to see the truth. I need to move in the world of drawing but forget about the drawing itself.” Peter Zumthor in the interview for *Architecture and Business* in February 2003, p. 21.

An image of a building created on the plane of a sheet of paper according to universally acknowledged environmental rules, will continue to be the easiest way to conceptualize the existing or planned building for a long time to come. However, we notice dynamic changes in practising of our craft and it is difficult to say how long this state will be valid. Even now, it is rare to see an architect working with drawing instruments’ help and completing the working drawing with a precise hand draft. The contractors on construction sites expect electronic versions of a project, and they treat paper drawings as documents to deposit in the archives.

Nowadays there are programs that create the perspective, axonometric projection and architectural sections of a particular solid entered onto the computer.

It is possible that drawings in the present form will one day disappear from architectural studios; an investor will be introduced to his building thanks to spatial projections and the instructions for building robots will be sent through digital devices. But before our ideas are directly intercepted from our brains, and eagerly transferred to the computer's memory with implants' help, I do hope that the future buildings will arise in hand scrawling on the margin of a morning (paper, not electronic) newspaper in the form of a plan, section or a roughly sketched perspective.