SAVED PHENOMENON

Architecture is passing because of the devalued aesthetic. Disappears, but the resentment appears and soon it is considered an extremely important phenomenon. Modernist housing projects for Algiers and Casablanca were a failed experiment. Poorly remembered experience, because the legacy of modernism can also be social unrest. The annihilation of an object due to the war takes on special significance, and therefore it is recovering because saved phenomenon are not enough.

*Keywords: passing, architecture, meaning, history*

The past of architecture is not always obvious because its history concerns various events, circumstances, inventions and fashions. Rejection and destruction assume diverse tinges, too.

The fleetingness of architecture is often caused by rejecting its estheticism. A dominating fashion appears, enters the stage of history but soon vanishes annihilated by man. Then resentments return, reflections sometimes come simultaneously with its liquidation. It may be soon acknowledged as a masterpiece, a very important phenomenon remembered by history. Such was the case of *Maison de Peuple* in Brussels, Victor Horta’s greatest work opened on April 2, 1899. In spite of the irregular shape of the plot located at the round Vandervelde-Plein, the architect managed to implement a very functional building. It included offices, cafes, shops, conference rooms and a ballroom. Its facades were mainly of iron painted white (the construction soaked up more than 600,000 kilograms of iron). Construction works took eighteen months. 8,500 square metres of usable area were created. Shortly after the implementation, in 1899, it was acknowledged as a masterly work and an example of modern architecture, mostly on account of the then pioneering combination of glass and steel. The building was demolished in 1965 despite the international protests of more than seven hundred architects, participants in the International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Monuments held in Venice in 1964. Later, there were plans to reconstruct the pulled-down object but its dismantled, numbered elements laid in a shed in Teuven for twenty years. In 1980, they decided to create *Park Roi Baudouin* in the town of Jette situated northwest of Brussels. The elements of *Maison de Peuple* were transported but not protected. Soon, the funds ran out and the design failed. Victor Horta’s metal masterpiece rusted and eventually a part of it was scrapped. In 1988, the rudiments of the construction were bequeathed to the Museum of Industrial Engineering in Ghent – Horta’s hometown. In 1991, some elements of wrought iron were restored and shown at an exhibition of technology in Flanders. In 2000, *Grand Café Horta* opened in Antwerp where the spared elements of *Maison de Peuple* grace one of the *Art Nouveau Rooms*.

The *Blaton Tower* [1] has been standing in place of *Maison de Peuple* in Vandervelde Square since 1966. Such a manner of exchanging urban tissue,
Vandervelde Square, Brussels, elab. M.J. Żychowska
even by Brussels standards, is very radical. The city is also famous for the fact that only the front walls of historical tenements were left, while the rest was demolished. A huge high-riser was erected in the free space right behind the spared façade.

Later on, the modernist matter of some pioneering designs, such as Le Corbusier’s plan of Obus for Alger or an urban, architectural and sociological experiment in Casablanca undertaken in an area where modernity concurred with colonialism, were perceived as the nests of social evil and exploited values. Cleansing or, in fact, removing them means yielding a place to other investments on one hand; on the other hand – creating a space and another fallacious hope that architecture can improve interpersonal relations.

Modernists were full of good intentions and declared solving all the unsolvable social problems. They rejected history and old styles, oppressive regimes and kingdoms in order to annihilate the past totally. Their recipients were intrigued by modernist asceticism which neared utopian fantasies of a brave new world. Unfortunately, the illusion began to fail. Modernism became more and more bureaucratized and commercialized, the architects rejected formal limitations, the users did not accept the imposed frames, whereas the critics pointed out faults and mistakes. It led to several spectacular gestures, for instance the blowup of an eleven-storey block of flats in the Pruitt Igoe complex, composed of thirty-three high-risers of large concrete slab, in Saint Louis designed by the Japanese architect Minoru Yamasaki. This day – July 15, 1972 – is still described in textbooks as the symbolic end of modernism, the funeral of Le Corbusier’s idea of “the dwelling machine”.

After many years, modernism was revived. The last decades of the previous century brought along revised evaluation and perception of this architecture. The first successful actions of modern conservation could be seen: the Bauhaus edifice in Dessau (1976) and Giuseppe Terragni’s kindergarten in Como (the 1980s) were renewed, whereas the rudiments of the Weissenhof estate were preserved.

Another aspect of the modernist heritage is social turmoil. Extensive modern housing estates sprang up on the outskirts of European metropolises, such as Paris or London. Such architecture, meant for a throng of residents, e.g. in North African colonies, was also imposed by the inflow of immigrants in Europe. In this way, colonial history returned to the metropolises, while European modernity bore the stamp of the experiences of independence movements. In France, similarly to the first riots expressing social aversions and anticolonial moods which were born in the modernist layouts of Casablanca, they appeared in analogous modernist housing estates. Such violent protests took place in 1998 in the complex of La Mirail in Toulouse and in Paris in 2005. Now English cities act as battlefields.

Let us mention that relationships between colonialism (e.g. French colonies in North Africa), modernist architecture and spatial planning as well as the social riots which have happened in some big European cities recently are sometimes displayed. Nevertheless, we must distinguish between demagogy, hooliganism and the forgotten experiences of the noble ideas of modernism.

The annihilation of an object, being the effect of war vicissitudes, assumes a peculiar meaning because irreversible departure is sometimes negated. The Old Town in Warsaw or the statues of Buddha in Bamian in Central Afghanistan are being revitalized. The memory of a phenomenon is insufficient, whereas sentiments may dominate logic although the role of a symbol is significant.

Before 1940, Rotterdam had been one of numerous grand Dutch cities. Its history began in the year 1283. In 1299, it received the municipal rights. The construction of the port commenced in the
16\textsuperscript{th} century. The city flourished in the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries on account of trade, mainly with France and England, as well as shipbuilding and textile industry. From around 1850, with the development of navigation on the Rhine and industry in the Ruhr as well as the extension and modernization of the port, the worldwide significance of Rotterdam increased. In the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the city was still extended. In its remote peripheries, a model modernist workers’ estate Kieftok Housin, designed J.J.P. Oud in 1925, was implemented in 1928–1930. It was a pioneering functional and formal solution in the spirit of early modernism which soon became an example of a housing estate built in the urban context as a quarter with multifamily houses in the linear layout with centrally located services. In May 1940, during World War II, Rotterdam was destroyed by the Luftwaffe’s carpet bombing calculated to provoke neutral Holland to join battle. In the centre of the Old Town, single monuments, for instance St Lawrence’s Gothic Church from the turn of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century, were spared. Rebuilt after the war, it became a symbol of the history of this city. The development of its central part began. The lack of a context gave total freedom to design architectonic forms. An analysis of the features of the city was un-needed. The architects were only interested in their own architecture and willingness to surprise people with novelty. Some fully modern works, satisfying the expectations of communities and business, were created. Their authors were Van der Broek & Bakema who designed \textit{Shopping Centre de Lijbaan} in 1951–1953. Rotterdam attracts the international community because it is acknowledged as the city of the most modern architecture. Several square kilometres in the city centre offer a complete survey of what was built after the year 1940. Every architect who was given such a chance left his stamp – more and more sophisticated, sometimes kitschy architecture. A new space came into existence where St Lawrence’s Church remains the only remembered and reconstructed phenomenon of sentimentalism.

\textbf{ENDNOTES}

[2] A competition was organized in 1961. Two years later, the satellite residential unit La Marail was implemented near Toulouse. Its authors were Candilis-Josic-Woods. It was meant for 100,000 people (http://www.hkw.de/en/ressourcen/archiv2008/wueste_der_modern_en/wueste_der_modern_projekt-detail_wueste.php);, Artistic director: Marion von Osten. Curators: Tom Avermaete, Serhat Karakayali, Marion von Osten. Accompanying text of the whole project, p. 9.