

Rolf Kuhn*

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE IN ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND ON THE WATER

WSPÓŁCZESNA ARCHITEKTURA NA WODZIE W KONTEKŚCIE HISTORYCZNYM

Miasto Gubin i główny kościół – co jest wartością przy przekształceniach oraz, związana z tym kwestia, jaki rodzaj architektonicznego podejścia jest stosowny w przypadku kościołów, które zagubiły swoją pierwotną funkcję lub formę?

Może odpowiedzią jest pływająca architektura – taki rodzaj architektury mógłby się w przyszłości stać symbolem Łużyckich jezior.

To mark this occasion for the IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land GmbH, this lecture will address the question of how work on sacred, war-damaged buildings may be approached today. This question is put specifically in relation to Gubin town and main church, one of the 25 projects designated by the IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land GmbH as one of its spheres of activities in Lower Lusatia from 2000 to 2010. What is the potential for conversion and, tied in with this question, what architectural understanding is necessary for churches that have either lost their original use or whose original form has been impaired by war damage?

The town and main church was badly damaged in the latter stages of the Second World War. The towering roof, which was a landmark in the town at the time, burned down. So did the church tower, which today is just an empty shell, whilst virtually the only remaining part of the nave is the facade. In 2005 a foundation was set up on the Polish side, and a development association on the German side, both of which are committed to the initial aim of ensuring the continued existence of the remains of the church. This should then lead to a German-Polish meeting centre, which will accommodate church and cultural activities. Some ideas on this have already been developed in recent years: In 2001 a German-Polish artists workshop was held, which looked at tempora-

ry uses for the church. In summer 2002, the workshop ideas were amplified in project seminars at Wrocław University of Technology and the University of Applied Sciences Lusatia, and presented in Gubin.

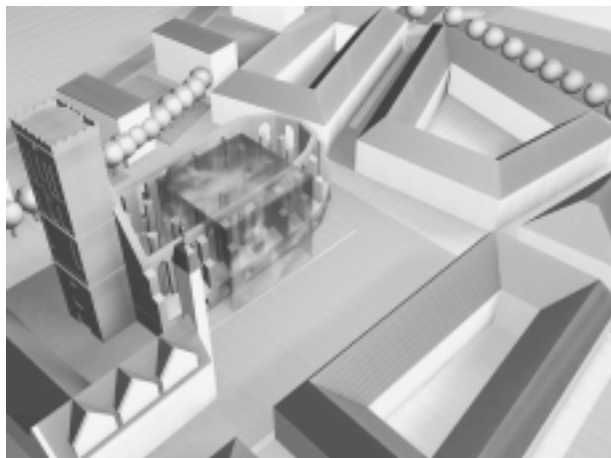
On 8 and 9 September this year a congress was held in Gubin, which addressed different aspects of the subject of the main church in the town. At this point we must mention the contributions and discussions, which highlighted the many different ways of dealing with the church: reconstruction of the church including all the intricate structural details or, on the other hand, a modern approach as represented not least by the IBA.

Before the lecture returns to the question of Gubin main church, reference should be made to selected cases, which are also classic examples of the subtle differences between total reconstruction and an architecturally designed rebuild:

The Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtnis Kirche may be cited as a particularly well-known example of a war-ruined church used again for religious purposes. The church, situated in central Berlin, was dedicated in 1895 and largely destroyed by bombing raids in 1943. Initial discussions as to whether the church should

* Kuhn Rolf, prof. dr inż. arch., IBA Fuerst – Pueckler – Land GmbH.





be rebuilt on the spot, which was becoming quite congested by then, were finally concluded in 1957 with a decision to design a new church building with the help of an international architectural competition. In 1958, as a result of public pressure, the executive architect, Egon Eiermann, and others involved in the project had to distance themselves from the demolition of the church and seek an acceptable solution. In 1961 the church was dedicated by the then Bishop Dibelius in the form in which it is known today, part memorial part church. This particular example clearly shows the exceptional quality of architectural design that can be achieved through the interplay between existing structures and a modern architectural approach. It is also clear that those with personal ties to people who knew the church in its original condition can be involved in a procedure like this, without it causing any emotional ill-will.

The Marienkirche in Neubrandenburg shows another aspect of dealing with destroyed churches. Here, the decision was taken to use the church in future as

a centre for cultural events. Built in the 14th century, the Marienkirche underwent a neo-Gothic transformation in 1842. After being destroyed in the Second World War, the church remained a ruin until 1952. There followed measures to protect it and eventually, in 1997, an international workshop. In 2001 the church was handed over for its present-day use as a concert hall. As far as external design is concerned, the approach chosen for the Marienkirche was different from the one for the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche: the exterior of the church was restored to its original condition. The interior of the church, on the other hand, has been designed to bring harmony between existing and rebuilt parts of the building and modern elements. The present-day use of the church can be referred to as an outstanding model of conversion. The modern structural alterations and fixtures satisfy functional and aesthetic considerations in equal measure.

The Resurrection Church in Berlin Friedrichshain may be cited here as another church put to cultural use. It was built in 1895 in the style of a late

Romanesque brick church and badly destroyed by air raids in 1943/45. Work started in 1947 to rebuild a simplified version of the church. Following extensive conversion work the „Environmental Forum Berlin” was finally opened in 2002 in the Church of the Resurrection. In this example, the interior alteration of the church into a modern conference centre is revealed by the external architectural language. A modern facade has been added to those parts of the original church building that still exist. The contrast between old and new is reflected not only in the modern architectural design, but also in the use of materials in the form of steel and glass.

As long ago as 2002, a student workshop at Wrocław University of Technology sought potential architectural solutions to the problem of the remains of the main church in Gubin. Students were given the freedom to design possible solutions. Of the many different approaches put forward, a particularly abstract way of working with the existing fragments of the main church may be referred to by way of an example at this point. The original parts of the church building are not affected in terms of their structural form, but simply protected from further decline. A glass cube, which can be used for events and exhibitions, is planned for the sought-after German-Polish meeting centre. Part of the external facade is integrated within the cube as a structural element. This does away with the clear demarcation between interior and exterior. This design clearly shows how many possibilities there are when dealing with such an important, destroyed building. Depending on its intended use, any associated needs can be catered for without any loss of respect for the building in the course of work on it.

The previously mentioned student design ventures into an area which can be seen by some people

as a blatant disregard for still vivid memories. In its own way, the design pushes the current bounds of architectural sensitivity and might even remove them. Apart from such a split with existing architecture, felt by many to be too severe, there are also „gentler” alternative ways of providing new space, as the example of the Marienkirche in Neubrandenburg shows. In its original form the roof of Gubin main church was a distinctive feature of the town. If this leads us to the conclusion that a reconstruction of the roof is essential, there are nevertheless alternative ways of designing it. It is, for instance, feasible to fit the roof with modern „solar tiles”. With this method of using solar modules, the individual elements are not fitted onto an original roof, the solar panels themselves form the roof. In the case of the main church it would make sense to cover the south-facing half of the roof (approx. 1600 sm) with „solar tiles” and finish the rest off with identical-looking tiles. That would mean a production of some 145,000 kW/h per year. This corresponds approximately to the annual consumption of 50 detached houses.

So, when we look at the idea of preparing Gubin main church for its new role as a German-Polish or European meeting centre and if, at the same time, we would like to do justice to the building in terms of its past and future significance, then there is an opportunity for discussing any architectural alternatives to a reconstruction pure and simple. As the previous examples show, an international architectural competition would be a suitable way of developing an ideal solution, which combines content and form and, similarly, shows them to their best advantage without hurting any feelings. Whatever the case, it would be good if the layers of time – development of the church – destruction of the church – renovation and rebuild including change of use of the church – were to be expressed both in the external appearance and the interior design of the church, in other words, if

content and form were to constitute a single entity for the past and the future.. However, before we look at the future architecture of the church, let us go one step further: so far there is indeed an abundance of different ideas as to what a newly created German-Polish meeting centre should offer. First of all, requests and expectations in terms of content need to be discussed, so that the essential points can be defined in the form of a feasibility study. Once this first step is taken, the question of architectural work on the building will need to be asked.

Now to another project highlight in the work of the IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land, floating architecture. Floating architecture should become one of the trademarks of the Lusatian Lakeland in the future. Lusatia is in the south of the eastern part of Germany close to the Polish border. In the future, the newly emerging lakeland will be Lusatia's greatest potential for value added, alongside lignite. One way or another there will be no avoiding the question, why have floating architecture at all? Here are some answers to that:

1. In recent years there has been a sharp increase in the demand to live on, or close to, the water.
2. Areas of water and the shores around them have great potential for local and regional development, as they represent extremely attractive places in which to live and work.
3. Floating architecture is able to accommodate fluctuating water levels and thus help with flood protection.
4. Shore areas remain public places and are set aside for public use.
5. Mobile living? A new living and building culture?

The development of shore areas is one of the most important topics in Lusatia. Developments here are being pushed forward rapidly, so that the

transformation of the landscape can actually be experienced. Although floating architecture is not a new idea, it brings with it great potential for innovation.

By way of example, some interesting cases of floating architecture will now be presented:

In the newly flooded Ijburg district near Amsterdam part of the residential development, including community facilities, is being carried out with floating architecture.

The city of Hamburg is earmarking moorage berths for urban floating architecture on a variety of inner-city canals, with the intention of introducing this type of construction into building culture in the Hanseatic city.

Finished examples of contemporary floating architecture are the floating sauna in Berlin, the Water Studio floating house in the Netherlands, the floating sauna in Neuruppin and Staffan Strindberg's floating house in Kalmar, Sweden.

These examples show that floating architecture is of international interest and holds particular potential for the development of tourism in Lower Lusatia: the floating holiday home on Lake Partwitz was constructed as a reference asset in June 2006. It has been fully booked since opening. Aqua Casa on the opposite north shore of Lake Partwitz constitutes Lusatia's biggest holiday home project.

Another project that has already been implemented is the floating diving school on Lake Gräbendorf. The installation was completed in August 2006 in partnership with a private investor, who uses the house as a diving school. It is worth mentioning that this is a successful PPP project.

An ambitious project currently being keenly pursued is the Lake Bergheid floating restaurant. This is a contemporary complement to the F60, an additional tourist attraction of a highly innovative nature in terms of building services, energy budget and architectural language. The IBA will use this project to demonstrate in what direction floating architecture can develop.

The floating bridge on Lake Sedlitz is a floating crossing unique in its dimensions and execution. It will link the nearest points on the shores of Lake Sedlitz, thus closing a gap in the existing route around the lakes. The cost effectiveness of the bridge should be ensured as abutting owners move in. The construction of a floating settlement by the floating bridge is the greatest imaginable use for it, as it represents a unique attraction in this setting, combi-

ning the Lusatian Lakeland adventure with direct experience of an unspoiled area of water.

With the background idea of achieving the greatest possible degree of self-sufficiency, the full mobile potential of floating architecture should be drawn out of the IBA in the coming year on the water, enabling navigable links on the Lusatian lakes to be used for the enjoyment of a new living and holiday culture in Lusatia.

The Internationale Bauausstellung Fürst-Pückler-Land in Lusatia is seeking national and international partners to help it discover content and form in Gubin main church, and to further develop floating architecture in the Lusatian Lakeland. We would particularly welcome the involvement of Polish architectural counterparts.