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ARCHITECTURE AS SCULPTURE. RATIONALISM AND INTUITION IN DESIGNING PROCESS

ARCHITEKTURA JAKO RZEŹBA. RACJONALIZM, CZY INTUICJA W PROCESIE PROJEKTOWYM

Abstract

This text presents the problem of the relation of architectural art and sculpture. It will show the rational aspect, which is an indispensable element in the design process and its dependence on the intuitive approach, as well as the weight in the course of reasoning. The article will come closer to defining the interdependence and correlation of both processes leading to a single conclusion, the goal being architecture. Selected works of the creators of both fields of art will be discussed and they will form the basis of the presented conclusions.

Keywords: intuition, rationalism, space, sculpture, sensitivity, skills

Streszczenie

Niniejszy tekst przedstawia problematykę zagadnienia, jakim jest relacja sztuki architektonicznej i rzeźby. Ukazany zostanie aspekt racjonalny, będący nieodzownym elementem w procesie projektowania i jego zależność od ujęcia intuicyjnego, a także waga w toku rozumowania. Praca przybliży się do zdefiniowania współzależności i korelacji obu procesów prowadzących do jednego wynikowego wniosku, celu, jakim jest architektura. Omówi wybrane dzieła twórców obu dziedzin sztuki, na podstawie których zostaną przedstawione wnioski.

Słowa kluczowe: intuicja, racjonalizm, przestrzeń, rzeźba, wrażliwość, umiejętności

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Impulses for the creation of an architectural work, which is a consequence of the designer's artistic search, can be found in the whole world around us. Most often, however, the art of architecture takes from the areas related to it, such as drawing, painting or sculpture. At this point, we can ask a question: How is architecture created and what is it in the first place? At a first glance, it seems that the answer to this question is simple, but the concept itself is complex and difficult to define. Architecture is an indispensable element of a human being, it is almost everything that surrounds people. It is closely related to aesthetics, using shapes, volumes and proportions and illustrating the concept of beauty. It seems to be the result of artistic actions showing the technical capabilities of a given designer. However, it should be remembered that it consists not only of sensitivity to beauty, but also of the knowledge and technical skills they possess.

For the work to be consistent, the artist must stick to a specific concept adopted in the initial design phase. It is obvious that in the course of trials and reflections the idea evolves over time. Assuming various forms, closer or further to the beginning, to the very end it is present and is still defining a finished architectural work. Faith in the originality and uniqueness of works of art, which has already appeared in the Renaissance era, continues to guide artists. The most important is the idea, because the modern world, saturated with a multitude of impulses, places great demands on designers. One cannot resist the impression that it is difficult to create something unique.

Being the closest artistic field, sculpture often becomes an inspiration for architecture. We can even make a statement that the architectural mass is literally a sculpture. It should be remembered, however, that both of these artistic expressions should be read in different categories. Architecture is considered in context, the place to which it is assigned is important. Sculpture, on the other hand, is an independent, isolated creation. The architectural form, as a spatial continuum, arises in close connection with the environment, it must create a harmonious relationship with it by entering into it, or acting as a non-coincident and, in spite of everything, a proper contrast.

The landscape should be coherent, therefore a thorough analysis of the area is very important, at the very beginning of the design process. The essence is illustrated by the words of Christian Norberg – Schulz: (...) *nature sets the direction of human existential space (...), all landscape contains directions and specific spaces that help people find support*¹. We must remember that space should be readable and accessible to people, and architectural objects are a form of a kind of signposts. The assumptions must be designed in such a way that a man can intuitively find himself and move in them without problems.

A well-designed space has characteristic points. They consist of dominants that define its readability. Regardless of the path chosen by the architect, the perception of the whole should create cohesion, but it is important for the assumption to function as a kind of a sequence – the path through which the potential recipient builds self-awareness in that space. The planes and directions resulting from the surrounding environment define the architectural body. This space is a medium for the designer. It can be freely shaped, combined, divided and distorted, and thus create unique and original structures that are components of urban planning and architecture.

¹ Ch. Norberg-Schulz, *Bycie, przestrzeń i architektura*, Wyd. Murator, Seria Biblioteka Architekta, Warszawa 2000.

Architecture, however, has a feature that significantly differentiates it, giving it a completely different meaning. In contrast to sculpture, it is not only an aesthetic form, because it is created for men and must also be fully functional. For the sake of this fact, we cannot assume that design is based only on intuition. In theory, an architect, as a human being, knows what is good for people, hence they could base their creative work on their feelings. In practice, however, it should be admitted that creating architecture through intuition is unrealistic. Knowledge and skills play an equally important role in the design process. It is worth to mention Maria Misiągiewicz, who writes about the creations of the Masters of Architecture: “Outstanding precursors of modernity, most of all: Le Corbusier, Mies van der Roche and Frank Lloyd Wright were endowed with the sensitivity of using technical possibilities to transform their poetic visions into innovative forms of architectural space. Their talent should be measured by the power of influence and ideas, and the buildings they created. Their work still inspires the search for a suitable “pretext” to support the definition of new forms attractive enough to exist in the social imagination. These forms supported by the ideas of tracing the originality (or beauty) extracted from the self, expressed in a unique shape, appearing to human eyes for the first time, about beauty (originality) having nothing to do with whim”².

Without a doubt, architecture is an area that cannot be considered in isolation from the artistic element, despite all the features and aspects dictated by technical elements. Beauty plays an invaluable role, and *True architecture is sculpturing*³. A sculptor, looking for a form, is guided by intuition. His work is a reflection of the inner self – psyche. Shape language is a universal way of communication, thanks to which you can convey your ideas, thoughts or feelings. Non-verbal forms have the ability to reach a wider audience, thanks to which the work can become a sign of timelessness. Architect creates in the same way, but he treats his actions in a simultaneous way, seeking not only form, but also functions.

The sculpture itself is a utopian creation. This is best illustrated by Kazimierz Malewicz’s suprematistic works. These creations are a composition of complex geometric solids with a defined horizontal or vertical character. The first works of this type were created in the early 20’s of the 20th century. At that time, architecture still had the features of old eras, and the era of minimalism, represented by simple forms and empty planes, devoid of ornament was yet to come.

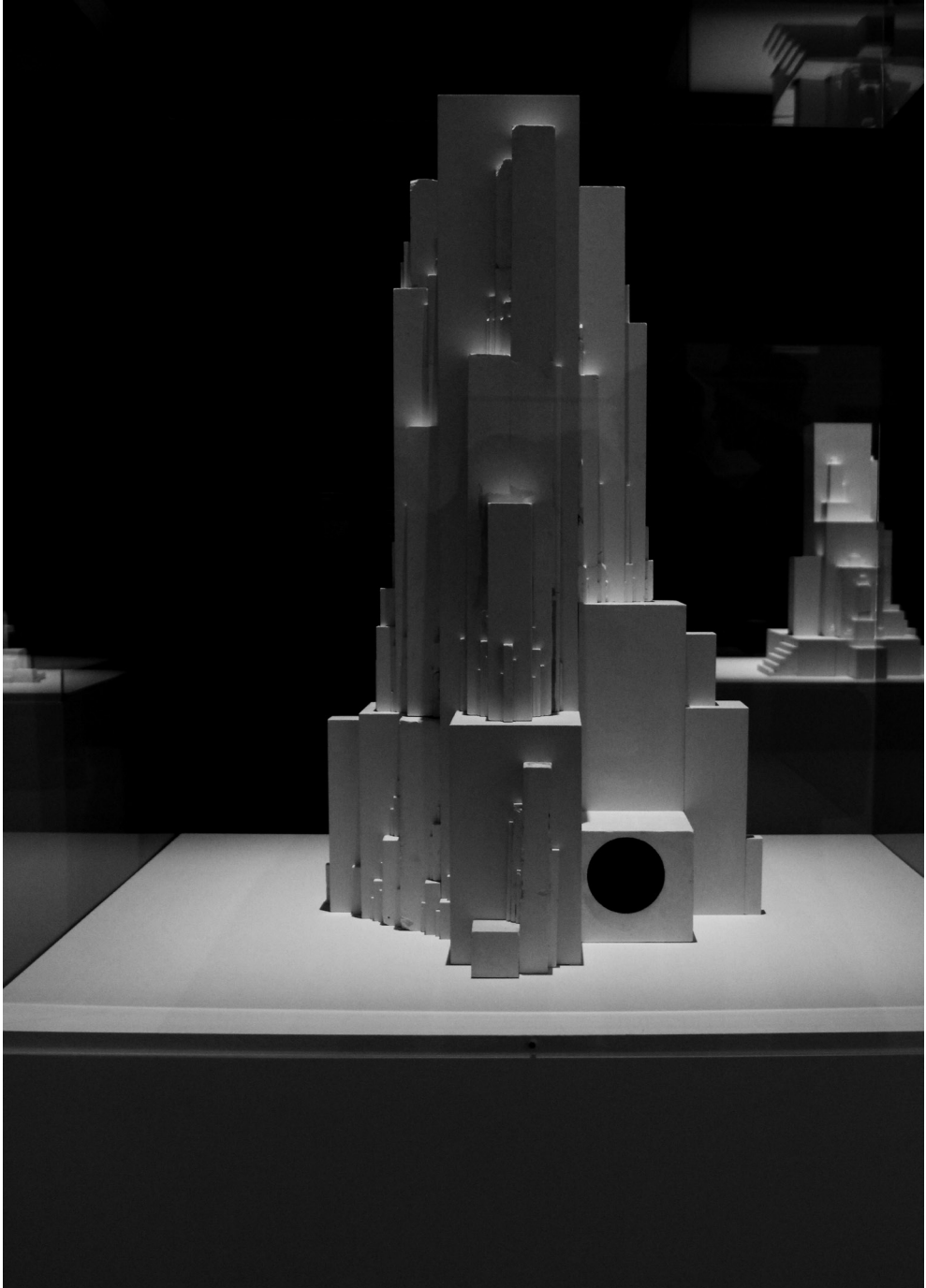
The suprematistic work is a perfect excuse to create architectural work. In itself, as a sculpture, it has no function – a beautiful proportional, though utopian, created by the artist with the help of intuition. According to Kazimierz Butelski, *Thanks to Malewicz’s suprematistic creations, the most architectural sculptures were created, which gave form to many modernist buildings, although they were not buildings themselves*⁴.

There is no better material to emphasize the sculptural nature of the form than concrete. This material is successfully used by both architects and sculptors to realize their creative ideas. Guided by the words of Dariusz Kozłowski, *Concrete has a soul. At first, this metaphorical statement evokes anthropomorphic associations – by watching an architectural creation from concrete, we commune with its external appearance, we watch its “skin” to assess its form. When reflection or inquisitiveness requires to look deeper, one can see the power of the material, the forces running inside the structure – sometimes taking on only the feeling*

² M. Misiągiewicz, *Idee, preteksty, inspiracje*, Pretekst nr 3, Kraków 2010, p. 54.

³ W. Łysiak, *Flet z madragory*, Nobiles, Warszawa 2009.

⁴ K. Butelski, *Detal kinetyczny*, Wydawnictwo PK, Kraków 2012.



III. 1. Kazimierz Malewicz, Architekton, 1926. Photo by Magdalena Kus

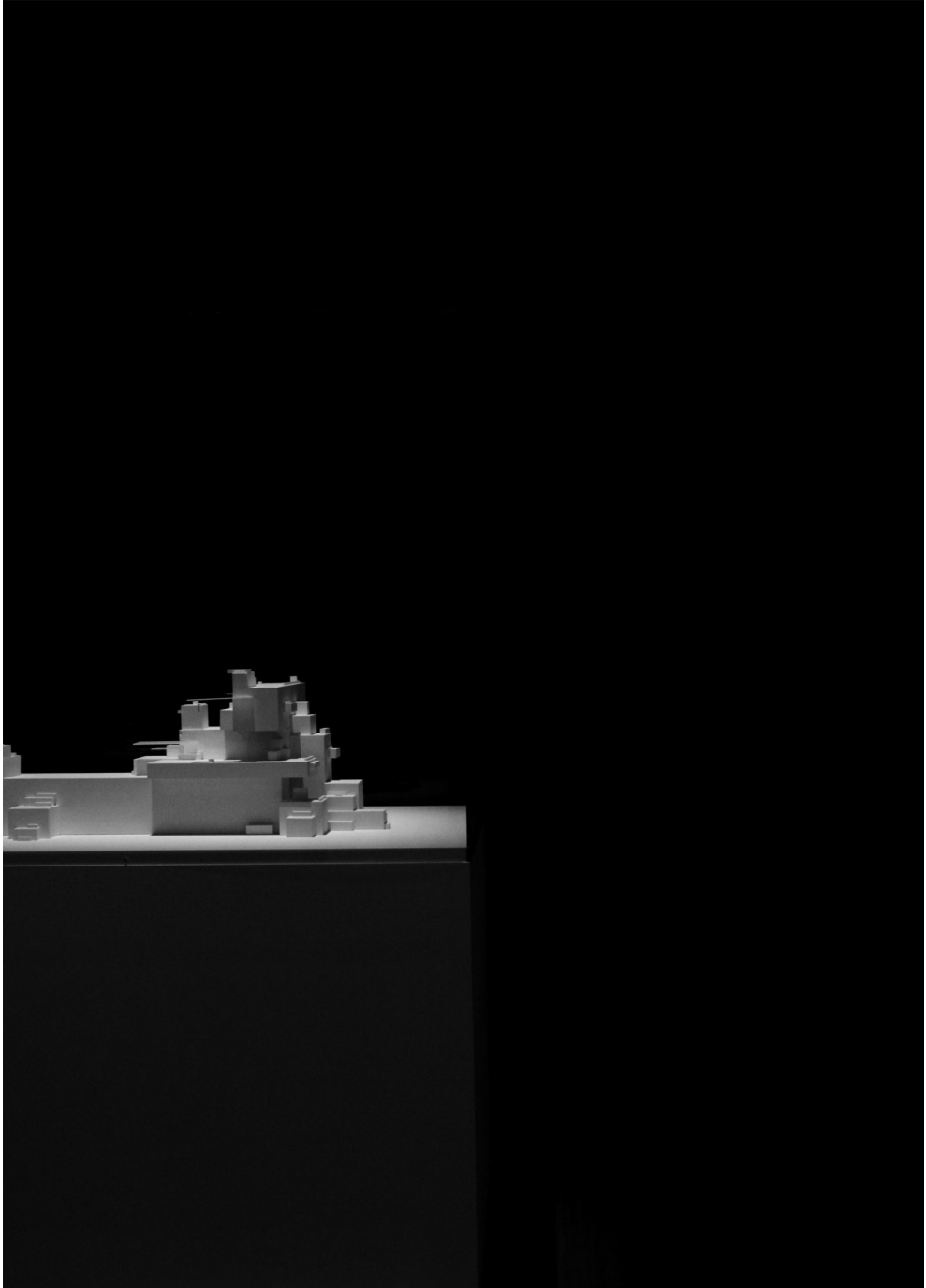
*of the hidden steel parts. Sometimes the soul of concrete can be seen – when the shape of things reveals it only from possible combinations – beauty, purpose, durability of the product of human imagination*⁵.

Unmatched in the art of shaping sculptural concrete architecture is the continuator of the idea of Le Colbusier – Carlo Scarpa. In a sublime way, he creates structures of a unique character. Their geometry is emphasized by the play of light and shadow in the refraction of the details created by the artist, making them a separate building material in this case. The tomb of San Vito di Altivole, in the Treviso region, is a perfect illustration of the original design approach represented by the architect. This project is a peculiar necropolis, located in the immediate vicinity of the cemetery. The place is an area of collision between two worlds. Scarpa builds his art with a “raw stone” which, combined with the savagery of the greenery of the surroundings, introduces the viewer to the peculiar dimension of sensations and feelings. The microworld created by Scarpa with a concrete wall creates phenomenal conditions for reflection. The object intrigues and introduces the viewer into a condition conducive to contemplation. Simple, geometric forms are accompanied by the mood of austerity and ascension. The premise is the spirit of art. The convention in which the building is maintained strongly affects the viewer. It is impossible to resist the impression that the creator builds a coherent whole with masterful precision, detail after detail. The specific play of sculptural surfaces is an eye-witness for the coherence of art and explains that architecture can be a scaled sculpture in some way.

Architecture in its form is an extremely sculptural machine of life, but a question should be asked whether it is possible that the sculpture itself would become an architectural work? A perfect example is the Church of St. Trinity in Vienna by Fritz Wotruba, a sculptor of worldwide fame. Deconstruction of the solid with which we have contact brings associations to ancient times and we can see a stack of stones in this landscape. Reinforced concrete blocks arranged at various angles in relation to each other create an unbelievable, almost aggressive composition that raises anxiety. This creation is certainly an unprecedented, danceable form. The viewer does not know what to expect, he loses confidence in what the assumption is. Enigmatism pervading the viewer suggests that we have to do with something sacred.

Wotrubakirche is an amazing example of brutalist and expressionist architecture. Seemingly inaccessible and even alarming, it shows its true face only after crossing the threshold. The play of light that takes place inside reminds of mysticism. Sacred architecture has been a great challenge for architects for centuries, because the relationship of man and faith was elevated to the pedestal. Light, as one of the tools building an object, plays a commensurate role with concrete, outlines directions, builds planes, intrigues and invites the recipient. The sculpted form aroused controversy both among the recipients and the clients themselves. This church was designed for the Carmelite order and was initially to be located in Steinbach near Mauerbach. Inadequate technical conditions stopped the entire investment, the ground on the original plot proved not to meet the requirements. Eventually, the facility was located near the Viennese park. Wotrubakirche is an unusual proof of the existence of sculpture, which in its final form became architecture. Despite its unusual, futuristic character,

⁵ D. Kozłowski, *O naturze betonu – czyli idee, metafory i abstrakcje*, Architektura Betonowa, Kraków, 2001.



III. 2. Kazimierz Malewicz, Architekton, 1926. Photo by Magdalena Kus

it perfectly reflects the character of its function. A monumental object, with an interior bathed in the light, carries the spirit of sacred architecture.

Undoubtedly, architecture and sculpture are artistic fields strongly connected with and interpenetrating each other. Through its form, an architectural work can be read as a sculpture, but in the opposite situation an additional factor is needed. The sculpture becomes architecture only with the help of function inserted into its frame. Both areas function simultaneously, drawing from each other, inspiring the creators. The architectural form can be created by intuition, but the final and necessary factor is always knowledge, which rationally gives utility to the shell. We can therefore conclude that architecture is a composition of knowledge, skills and intuition.

R e f e r e n c e s

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