

Mihály Balázs – Tamás Tarnóczy
– Balázs Tatár: Library and
science center, Pécs, 2010

Mihály Balázs – Tamás Tarnóczy
– Balázs Tatár: Knižnica
a vedecké centrum, Pécs, 2010



Photo Foto: Tamás Bujnovszky

NARRATION, ABSTRACTION, CONTEXT

Contributions to the interpretation of the architecture of contemporary public buildings in Hungary

ROZPRÁVANIE, ABSTRAKCIA, KONTEXT

Príspevky k interpretácii súčasnej architektúry verejných budov v Maďarsku

V posledných dvoch desaťročiach sa spôsob prijímania maďarskej architektúry odvíjal prevažne od medzinárodných tendencií a teoretických konceptov. Kritici uvažovali v kategóriách štýlov – a to oprávnené –, keďže z interpretačného uhla pohľadu sa vnímanie procesov v Maďarsku a ich porovnanie s medzinárodnými trendmi javilo ako samozrejmé. Existuje však viacero dôvodov v záujme využitia nových aspektov pri analyzovaní architektonického vývoja nedávnej minulosti a súčasnosti, ktoré ďaleko presahujú štýlové charakteristiky. Moja štúdia je pokusom systematizovať špičkové a zároveň najtypickejšie architektonické výtvary uplynulých rokov a sformovať určité zásady prostredníctvom skúmania pôvodu ich koncepcií. Analýza z tohto pohľadu môže viesť k záveru, že neraz formálne alebo štýlisticky odlišné predstavy patria do jedného koncepčného rámca typického architektonického prístupu s rozoznateľne príbuzným postojom. Ide o najvzrušujúcejší vývoj v súčasnej maďarskej architektúre.

Namiesto skúmania počiatkových teoretických myšlienok alebo vonkajších formálnych a štýlistických znakov sa analýza zameriava na metodológiu architektonických koncepcií. Ide o klasifikáciu súčasnej maďarskej architektúry posledného desaťročia podľa konkrétnych individuálnych prístupov architektov, nie podľa obdobného narábania s materiálom alebo podľa vzhľadu, ktorý sa už pred jeden a pol desaťročím javil unifikovane (napr. regionalizmus alebo tehlová architektúra typická pre prelom milénia). Práve tieto, na architektoch založené prístupy, jasne načrtávajú tri radikálne odlišné koncepčné smery, (Originálny text používa pojem „concept-creating“.) ktoré možno definovať ako koncepciu rozprávania, abstrakcie a kontextu. Tento trojitý ideový konštrukt zjednodušuje označenie niektorých výrazných príkladov, ale upozorňuje aj na pozoruhodné prechodné koncepcie, bohaté na odtiene.

Prostredníctvom niekoľkých ukážok stavieb postavených v poslednom období v Maďarsku sa pokúsim predstaviť potenciálne modely výkladu, ktorých dominantná charakteristika obsahuje vzory a predlohy, či už z oblasti teórie, alebo

architektonickej praxe. Jedna z výrazných skupín je založená na postupoch rozprávania, ktoré sa pokúšajú prezentovať prirodzený a formálny predobraz. Tieto vychádzajú z vopred daných názorov, ktoré sa určitým spôsobom vymykajú z oblasti architektúry. Druhá ukážka obsahuje abstraktné idey založené na istom druhu pravidelnosti a posledná, tretia ukážka, je skupinou koncepcií reflektujúcich vnútorné a vonkajšie kontexty architektúry. Niektoré prechodné skupiny vytvárajú súvislú sieť medzi všetkými uvedenými metódami a experimentmi. Koncové body tejto siete tvoria zároveň určitý interpretačný rámec, ktorý môže byť užitočný pre analyzovanie aktuálneho architektonického snaženia. Vybrané príklady pozostávajú prevažne z verejných budov, lebo tento žáner má okrem väčšej slobody pri tvarovaní a koncipovaní – ktoré umožňuje rozsah budov – rozhodne prirodzený vzťah k architektonickej reprezentácii. Tým sa rozširujú možnosti uplatnenia odlišných prístupov, čím sa jednotlivé rozdiely zvýraznia.

Na krajnom bode tohto trojitého interpretačného rámca sa nachádzajú zaujímavé naratívne a analogické príklady. Rozprávanie je postavené na asociáciách (ideách a predobrazoch) mimo oblasti architektúry, takže výsledkom je budova, ktorá je viac-menej ľahko dešifrovateľná aj laikom. Z uvedenej stratégie sa odvíja radikálny symbolizmus, expresivita a zvyčajne aj zmena mierky – nezávisle od pôvodu tvaru. Tieto stavby sú veľkými objektmi par excellence a pôvod formy možno dohľadať v rozprávaní imitujúcim, či už prírodu, alebo formálny predobraz. Hoci pramene ich naratívnych, ilustrovaných foriem sú vzájomne od seba veľmi vzdialené, môže ich spojiť priamy experiment, ktorý dodá význam v súvislosti s komunikatívnosťou architektúry.

Zjavne odlišnú skupinu tvoria stavby, kde je pôvod tvaru abstraktným pravidlom alebo myšlienkou, nie nejakou jasne identifikovateľnou analógiou alebo predobrazom z oblasti mimo architektúry. Najskôr v týchto abstraktných postupoch vidíme pravidelnosť, pričom výsledok formy, príbeh – ak nejaký existuje – sa nenachádza mimo architektúry. Tieto budovy sú zároveň veľkými abstraktnými objektmi, skulpturálnymi formami,

a zároveň majú – ako ďalší spoločný znak – vždy silné korene ukotvené primárne v rámci architektúry. Zároveň je očividná pravidelnosť, ktorú možno definovať konvenčným spôsobom. Pravidlo sa potom stáva hlavným sprostredkovateľom odkazu stavby.

Ale myšlienky, ktoré dané stavby zhmotňujú, stoja na odlišných základoch. Reflektujú vnútorný kontext architektúry (realitu architektonickej tradície) alebo externý kontext prostredia, ktorý nenesie žiaden – alebo len nepriamy – význam mimo oblasti architektúry. Takisto koncepty vychádzajúce z kontextu možno pozorovať prostredníctvom širokého spektra, ale zmyslový, hmatateľný, a teda v určitom zmysle nadčasový výraz architektúry je pre všetky skupiny spoločný.

Uvedené príklady môžu ilustrovať, že koncepcia rozprávania, abstrakcie a kontextu nám umožňuje rozdielne – ale vôbec nie výhradne – opísať naše súčasné architektonické ambície. Pozadie týchto konštruktov nie je však teoretické alebo štylistické – je predovšetkým výsledkom rozdielnych metodologických prístupov navrhovania. Je tiež zjavné, že tento výkladový model nemá žiadne krajné hodnoty a exaktné hranice so skutočnosťou. Zároveň tu však jasne vystupujú momenty hustoty, medzi ktorými možno presne

definovať prechody, zdôraznenia a jednotlivé vzťahy. Jeden z prípadov pracuje s rozprávaním, externým významom, analogickým spôsobom myslenia a napodobňovaním ako hlavnou metodológiou na vytváranie formy. V ďalšom prípade môžeme hovoriť o abstraktnej pravidelnosti, kde forma nie je začiatočným bodom, ale práve následkom. Do tretice, špeciálnou skupinou sú koncepty založené na kontexte – v podstate ako výsledok hlbavého a o sebe uvažujúceho architektonického postoja – kde môžeme hovoriť najmä o vzťahoch prostredia vo fyzickom, ako aj intelektuálnom význame, o stavebných hmotách, medzipriestoroch, mierkach, stene, okne, strešnom hrebeni rovnako ako o materiálnej realite.

Hlavný záver môjho príspevku je, že má význam – a nadišiel čas – pristupovať k súčasným trendom prostredníctvom návrhových a koncepcných stratégií, nie pomocou fenoménu klasifikovaných a definitívne usporiadaných teoretických ideí. Platnosť trojitého modelu, ktorému sa tento príspevok venuje, vzbudzuje potrebu nastoliť ďalšie vzrušujúce skupiny a modely. Kým znova nenastane obdobie kategórií štýlov, môže tento model predstavovať jednu z možných ciest interpretácie súčasnej maďarskej architektúry.

In the last two decades, the reception of Hungarian architecture has mainly been aligned towards international tendencies and theoretical concepts. Critics have thought in stylistic categories, and rightly so, since the comparison to international trends and the perception of Hungarian processes seemed obvious from the concepts of interpretative point of view. However, there are several arguments in favor of using new aspects that lead far beyond style characteristics for the analysis of architectural developments of the recent past and present times. My study is an attempt to clarify and to systematize the top-ranked and the most typical architectural creations of recent years through examining the origin of their concepts. An analysis from this standpoint can result in the conclusion that often different formal or stylistic concepts belong to the conceptual scope of a typical architectural strategy with an identifiable similar approach. This finding is the most

exciting development in contemporary Hungarian architecture.

Thus, instead of preliminary theoretical concepts or exterior formal and stylistic features, the methodology of the architectural concept is the focus of the analysis. It takes the assumption that the tendencies of contemporary Hungarian architecture of the last decade could not be classified by their similar use of materials or by an appearance that seemed to be unified even a decade and a half ago (e.g. regionalism or the brick architecture typical at the turn of the millennium) but by the concrete, individual strategies of the architects. Nevertheless, these architect-rooted approaches clearly outline three radically different concept-creating tendencies that can be described by the concepts of narration, abstraction and context. This tripartite conceptual construction makes it easy to identify several strong examples; at the same time it also draws attention

to the remarkable concepts of transition that are rich in complexity.

PROBLEMS OF THE VALIDITY OF STYLISTIC INTERPRETATIONS

The present study is not intended as a full exploration of the reasons that have led to a decline in the importance of stylistic aspirations at present. However, it is worth recalling – without trying to be exhaustive – some of the approaches and explanations which are now out of central focus or which can uncover our changed circumstances.

Only a few comprehensive analyses exist regarding the architecture of the decade after the regime change. The essay of Ferenc Vámosy written in 1999 ^{1/1} still placed the most prominent Hungarian examples into definite stylistic categories, distinguishing high-tech aspirations, contextualism, post-modernism, deconstructivism, neo-modern and organic architecture. In his study published in 2001 ^{2/2}, Rudolf Klein tried to offer a comprehensive picture of contemporary Hungarian architecture. Though his groups – namely pragmatic constructors, organic architects, post-modernists and deconstructivists, the followers of the “third way” as well as the trustees of the “new simplicity” – could have fully described the situation some ten years ago but by now the validity of these too exact (i.e. too ideology-specific) categories became questionable. From our point of view, the key finding of Klein’s study, written more than ten years ago, is that “even the typical pluralism of Hungarian architecture is reviving and it can enrich the culture of Middle-Europe with new colors again” ^{3/3}. This diversity is still typical, and in a certain sense contemporary architecture has become even richer, more diverse and thus more difficult to categorize. A network of constantly interacting architectural attitudes and strategies has developed, sometimes in closer, and other times in looser relationship with each other. Apart from the clearly identifiable, closely related works of the already institutionalized organic school that was established following the intentions of Imre Makovecz; the interpretations can rightly create a relationship between the works of architects whose approaches might have seemed far removed from each other before.

The architects representing the typical approaches of the 1990 – 2000s along current theo-

retical concepts or other architecture-identifying developments (e.g. the use of materials) created an important chapter in the reception of contemporary Hungarian architecture. In Hungary, the most popular theoretical concept of the 2000s was (critical) regionalism. Miklós Sulyok, curator of the Hungarian Pavilion at the 2002 Venice Biennale of Architecture, presented the work of Tamás Nagy, István Ferencz and Gábor Turányi as the representatives of the architectural approach described by Kenneth Frampton’s term “critical regionalism” ^{4/4}. Regionalism, as an aspiration applied to small or medium-scaled, location-bound buildings, was context-sensitive, using essentially hand-crafted building technology, features that favorably matched the opportunities within Hungary. However, concepts coming from the most varied directions could themselves be interpreted retroactively as representatives of regionalist aspirations. Mariann Simon rightly pointed out in her 2004 study ^{5/5} that the search for identity and the creation of images typical for regionalism, overlapped in these regionalist aspirations. “Houses... with well-recognizable external marks... were easy to identify and they almost claimed a common classification. The architectural press started to use the terms regional and regionalism and felt predilection for linking them to brick and stone buildings.” Based on this approach, Antal Puhl took into account the developments of nearly twenty years – being defined as “weak architecture” and considered as forward-looking – in his study, as a prologue for the Hungarian chapter of the book published in 2009, presenting the architecture of the Visegrad Group ^{6/6}. However, in this volume the interpretation of Hungarian architecture, which shows a common pattern when compared to other countries, presented a rather uniform selection from the architecture of two decades after the regime change; though it faithfully represented the mainstream architectural thinking of the previous decade. As a proof of the impact of regionalism, it still can be used as a reference concept when analyzing present developments ^{7/7}.

In the last five years, the stylistic categories that were apparently valid before have been questioned by the radical setback in the construction industry due to the economic crisis. For the identification of trends and tendencies, a critical

quantity of buildings is a necessity. At the same time, new aspects were integrated in the architectural discourse, even internationally, with the current concept of social and environment-conscious construction coming to the fore. However, there is another argument, even stronger than these tendencies, in favor of establishing new categories based on the architectural concept-creation: namely that the focus seems to be moving towards individual inventions and their architectural narration. The structure formed by determinative pattern-creating architectural studios was gradually replaced by a network of intellectually more decentralized smaller studios and designers.

In the present paper, I try to present possible interpretative models through a few examples recently built in Hungary, the main characteristics of which have their own models and antecedents either theoretically or in terms of architectural

practice. One of the distinctive groups consists of narrative strategies that try to present a natural and formal prefiguration, and are based on preconceptions from outside of architecture in a certain sense. The second one contains abstract concepts based on some kind of regularity; and finally, the third is the group of concepts reflecting on the inner and outer contexts of architecture. Several transitional passages establish a coherent network between all these methods and experiments. At the same time, the endpoints of this network create an interpretive scope broad enough to render it suitable for analyzing the most recent architectural efforts. The examples I have selected are predominantly public buildings. The reason for this choice – beyond the greater freedom of formation and conception allowed by the size – is undoubtedly this genre's natural relationship with architectural representation, which broadens the



István Lukács
– András Vikár:
Autoklub headquarters,
Budapest, 2011

István Lukács
– András Vikár: Autoklub
riaditelstvo, Budapešť, 2011

Photo Foto: Tamás Bujnovszky

facilities of different strategies, thus also making their differences more evident.

NARRATIVE CONCEPTS

At one corner of our 'triangular' interpretative frame are the interesting narrative and analogical examples. Narration is built on associations (concepts and pre-images) beyond architecture, and thus the result is a building easily decipherable by the more or less lay public. Radical symbolism, expressivity and usually a change of scale all arise from this strategy – independent of the origin of the formation. These buildings are large objects par excellence, and the origin of the formation can be traced back to a narrative imitating either nature or a formal prefiguration. Though the origins of their narrated, illustrated forms are very distant from each other, they may be connected by the direct experiment of providing a meaning, in relation to the communicability of architecture.

The issue of the representative ability of architecture is not new even in the Hungarian architectural discourse. As early as his 1986 study ^{/8/}, Péter Reimholz, a dominant architect of recent decades, took a definite position: "Actually, architecture is not a representational art, especially not when compared to the others, to the real representational arts. It does not want to, nor can it, represent things other than architecture. However, architecture – as an independent, autonomous, self-improving universe existing in time and space and originated in archetypes – can be considered real enough to be represented. The attention of representational architecture is directed towards this reality. In contrast, abstract architecture may be one approach that abstractly represents the real universe of architecture but also another that represents – either really or abstractly – things outside of architecture, things that are abstract compared to the reality of architecture or any of the realities (technical, technological, cultural, anthropomorphic etc.)." Reimholz found that contemporary Hungarian architectural trends and main tendencies could be described by this dichotomy.

In 1999, Dezsó Ekler published his magnification-theory ^{/9/}, in which he searched for different magnifying gestures in architecture both from the creative attitudes and from the aspects of the recipient's interpretation. Examining certain

historical and contemporary buildings and plans, he distinguishes those examples which magnify forms and spaces from those examples which enlarge the abstract, immaterial (esoteric) features of genius loci. From our perspective, the importance of Ekler's magnification-theory is that it highlights the barely verbalizable nature of the architectural genre, which becomes identifiable, understandable and communicable through the gesture of magnification (and at the same time through imitation, mimesis).

In his PhD thesis ^{/10/} written in 2006, Andor Wesselényi-Garay aimed at establishing a universal system of architectural mimesis, classifying concepts that imitate objects, living beings, architectural concepts, topographical features, diagrams and abstract theories within one single interpretative framework. In his opinion, the identity of imitation, mimesis, is justified by the essence of the design method: "From this point of view, whether a facade imitates the portico of a Greek temple or a human face is nearly the same as whether, in the creation of a work of art, recollection takes the place of intuition ^{/11/}."

Representation, magnification or imitation: such congenial architectural processes and methods, during which the building almost "tells" its story of origin. All of my selected examples can be considered as narrative examples, involving formal gestures as well as architectural concepts based on the narration of living beings or natural phenomena.

The headquarters building of Autóklub, designed by István Lukács and András Vikár (2011) forms a strip twisted by a single gesture. The building is small compared to others of its genre; its end walls and roof are defined by the surface of the metal-sheet-clad strip, while the glass facades of the office floors appear in between these surfaces. In this structure, the form displays primarily a gesture, a snapshot of a motion. In his study, Ferenc Cságoty mentions "Möbius-architecture" as a separate category among the styles determining the spirit of the age ^{/12/}. After building the original Möbius-house of Ben van Berkel in 1993, the related international and Hungarian examples were in fact built in rapid succession. However, usually the single-gesture nature of formation, its radical object-like character and the contradic-

tions arising from the building's function led to solutions that weakened the abstract basic form. The contradictions of our example are also a result of the above circumstances, since the "loop" of the strip is not filled with one contiguous space but by a traditional office building fragmented through floors and parapets. The "frozen" gesture becomes a graphic sign, a logo, interpreting the architectural meaning with a message encoded in a clear form.

In Pécs, one of the large key investments of the European Capital of Culture project was the building of the Kodály Center, designed by Richárd Hónich, Ferenc Keller, Benedek Sólyom and Tamás Fialovszky, finished in 2010. In the design of this structure, located in a neutral urban environment, a context-based conceptual foundation simply could not work. Most likely, in the closed national design competition through which the plan was selected, and also in the clarity of the realized building, concepts like identification and iconic shaping played and still play a key role. Both the design and the shaping of the built form are defined by its winding network of spiral spaces and the snail-like space arising from it. The architects wrote the following in the technical description of their competition design: "The building that

we can walk around, and the concert hall where music is all around us. Two sides of the same world. Exterior and interior. Object and space. Extroverted and introverted. Community and inner silence. Stone and wood. Hard and soft. Cold and warm. Timeless and intimate. The off-white stone snail is slowly surrounding the concert hall, which is fully covered with timber. And in this hall, as if we were sitting in the cavity of a huge tree or inside a musical instrument, we become immersed in music ^{/13/}." The analogies like the enlarged snail form pervading the design of the whole building in its logic, inner space structure and its shaping, as well as the image of a large instrument manifested in the dichotomy of the radical use of stone and wood are all antecedents beyond architecture. Here all architectural decisions – like the use of the same material for the roof and the wall, the placement of the narrow windows on the exterior plane, definition of the main entrance as more of a slit or opening, or the display of the inner routes and the object-like block of the concert hall – can be derived from the chosen analogies.

In some cases, analogies beyond architecture apply only to specific parts of the building. In the case of the Knowledge Center, Pécs, designed by Mihály Balázs, Tamás Tarnóczky and Balázs

Richárd Hónich – Ferenc Keller – Benedek Sólyom – Tamás Fialovszky: Kodály Center, Pécs, finished 2010

Richárd Hónich – Ferenc Keller – Benedek Sólyom – Tamás Fialovszky: Kodály Centrum, Pécs, ukončené 2010



Photo Foto: Tamás Bujnovszky

Tatár and opened in 2010, the building stands only some hundred meters far from the structure mentioned above. The eponymous element of the building, carrying the main message, is the form of the “Hive”, a large work of art that only glimmers through the partial glass facades of the exterior, but in the interior it is present with its dual quality. Above the staircase space that bridges the level difference of the two-storied entrance hall, the Hive appears as a negative form, a bell lined with Zsolnay tiles, as a colorful arts and crafts project; while the inverse of this object intrudes in the void of the multi-storied reading room with gallery, it becomes a space organizing element, bringing other associations (e.g. a large beehive oven) too. This genuinely non-functional space, though in fact quite small compared to the total volume of the building, functions as a metaphor, a coded message in the house, as is the architect’s intention. The architect visualized the meaning of the library function within the new millennium – beyond his use of well-functioning, exciting space types – by compressing it into one single compartment, into an object, into a building element: “The intellectual center of the house is a ‘hive’ that represents stability. It is not a result of mere functionality or logic, but of the abstract thinking on library and knowledge: it is the metaphor of the freedom of knowledge, and vice versa, the knowledge of freedom”^{14/}.

The Laposa Winery designed by Péter Kis and Bea Molnár, 2010 – another realization enjoying international popularity^{15/} – simultaneously combines several preconceptions within and beyond architecture. The repetition-congestion of the archetypal vineyard press-house form, as well as the vegetative-form ornament “growing” on the fine concrete facade panels are concepts that carry independent meaning. The environmental prefiguration of emanated lava flows reaching the surface represents a tangible context between the building and its environment, and it integrates a natural analogy into the architectural concept at the same time^{16/}. In the case of this structure, there is a clear reference both to the natural landscape (basalt flows) and to the built environment (the world of press-houses built on a slope, rising from the ground). This duality of analogies obscures the clarity of both origins of form. In addition, as

one of the building’s critics aptly mentioned: when watching from the top of the hill, the presence of this building volume emerging from the hill side, created by the serpentine of repeated blocks of pitched-roof forms, enriches the possibility of interpretations with a new, certainly not intended, being-like connotation. This aspect reveals one typical feature of analogies, namely that the origin of meaning beyond architecture – just because of its transformation into architecture – is inevitably going to be lost, distorted or blurred. In addition, the Laposa Winery actually hides an industrial hall inside the vegetative-ornamented, pitched-roofed block of the building, winding serpentine-fashion as a mimed flow of lava, where the hall provides a high-tech technological frame for the exacting processes of wine production.

It can be seen that the design strategies of the narrative concepts are essentially the same: they copy, refer to, represent, and illustrate certain objects or phenomena outside of architecture. The same strategies, however, result in extremely diverse examples being fundamentally different in their form, their use of material and their scale.

ABSTRACT RULES

A clearly separate group is formed by buildings where the origin of the formation is an abstract rule or concept, instead of any clearly identifiable analogy or prefiguration outside of architecture. First, we see a regularity and results of formation in these abstract strategies; the narrative, if there is any, is not beyond architecture anymore. These buildings are also huge, abstract objects, sculpture-like forms; at the same time – as another common characteristic – they always have strong roots anchored primarily within architecture. At the same time, the regularity is clear, it can be formulaic defined. Because of this, the rule becomes the primer conveyor of the building’s message.

In the case of the community center built in 2011 in Sásd, designed by Pál Gyürki-Kiss and Márton Dévényi, the device behind the context-searching intention is the abstract regularity of the form. The building incorporates a multifunctional gym, a library and community functions as well, extending far beyond the scale typical of its environment. The sculpture-like method of articulating the large volume – in which the building mass was



interpreted as one single volume, a kind of material; and several parts were cut out of it in order to create the final form – organized all sectional decisions of the building's design under this object-forming rule. From the direction of the main road, we can see a pitched roof form, while at the entrance there is a carved, covered lobby and on the rear facade a hall-like shape undercutting its large size. The blocky character of this articulation is further strengthened by the facade design, where the different-sized windows appear in a homogeneous composition on the wall surface, creating a special perforation (also referring to other contemporary international examples). The building is typical of a certain abstract object-like status, enforced by the shaping technique of the mass, the distribution of windows as well as the use of material; however, the architectural connotations deriving from the pitched roof design can also be clearly identified. All the above features are the results of one single rule, the architectural concept of the building mass's three-dimensional formation.

Photo Foto: Zsolt Batár

Péter Kis – Bea Molnár: Laposá Winery, Badacsony, 2010

Péter Kis – Bea Molnár: Laposá vinárský podnik, Badacsony, 2010



Pál Gyürki-Kiss – Márton Dévényi: Community Center, Sásd, 2011

Pál Gyürki-Kiss – Márton Dévényi: Komunitné centrum, Sásd, 2011

Photo Foto: Zsolt Frikker

The concept of the small office building by Katalin Csillag and Zsolt Gunther, erected in 2013 in Medve utca, Budapest is based on a rule-system with origins of formation. The architects inserted a formally pre-determined concept into the special urban situation: the facade consists of a system of 5.4 m wide and one-story high box-like structural elements, the layout of which is shifted in a checkerboard pattern and continue around the corner. Transversely spanning the longitudinal space of the atrium, the rooms – created actually as boxes at this time – contain the rest areas and kitchenette serving the offices; at the same time, they provide an always-changing, complex, stimulus-rich sense of space and transparency conditions. Through its sophisticated and complex design of the support- and building structures behind it, the box structure resembles a system of elements placed on each other. Obviously, this reading is not the case: they only represent the façade's spatial transcript, the imprint of an imagined structure. The structure of the atrium, where the boxes lean on and float above the other, is a loose, more porous spatial version, a transcription of the façade's concept. The cohesion between the facade concept and the interior spatial world is strengthened as well by the homogenizing effect of its white color, which washes away the different meanings of floor, wall, slab, pillar, facade doors and windows, as if we were passing through a "printed" space carved out of one single material. The office building, demonstrating the model-like, sculpturally conceived features inside and outside, goes beyond the usual dilemma of office buildings – the irresolvable paradox of the exterior intended to carry a meaning and the neutral office interior – in an innovative way: simply by the consistency of the chosen abstract design logics.

The concept of the new building of Kékvölgy Waldorf School, Pilisszentlászló, designed by Csaba Valkai in 2012 is based on the repetition and addition of house-shaped volumes. The compact, and thus economical, form of the situation led to a solution for its location that is parallel with the ground's contour lines. Used to comply with the roof angle defined by the regulations of the building authority, the shape of the peaked roof was a logical choice, while the transverse repetitive arrangement is applied to avoid the inarticulate,

large mass, almost as a self-evident consequence. The shaping follows the system of the spatial structure; the compact building of appr. 550 m² in size is divided into smaller units by one big and five smaller pitched roofs pushed onto each other, with a hardly noticeable slope at right angle to the pitches. However, the formation emerging from the addition of pitched roofs is decisive, and not only the external appearance. While, as a result of the roof shapes, the interior of the rooms refers to a specific house-form, the waving roof of the hall opens an abstract world of space. The additive, repetition-based rule of formation is free of any emotional or meaning-creating intention. However, as an outcome, besides the decoding its child's-drawing-like, abstract nature, other interpretations also prevail in a natural way:

Katalin Csillag – Zsolt Gunther: Office building, Budapest, 2013

Katalin Csillag – Zsolt Gunther: Administratívna budova, Budapešť, 2013



Photo Foto: Tamás Bujnovszky

for example the traditional villagescape transcription seems to be a good association as well.

The reconstruction of the Rácz Bath, designed by Tamás Dévényi and Péter Kis, was completed in 2010. (picture 8) The existing building's various parts were constructed in different periods, and have often survived in a fragmentary condition or only in archival photographs, weaving and penetrating into each other. Between them, the homogeneous contemporary medium creates integration and especially spatial relations. During the reconstruction of the medieval and 19th century building remnants, it would appear that the architects passed obliviously across the eras and their imprints; measuring all minor architectural decisions again and again and treating the old objects and their history in a homogeneous, coordinative way. The spaces between the old building parts are consistently and homogeneously filled with a special texture of pillars and skylights arranged in a grid of equilateral triangles, appearing as a contemporary spatial structure. The lighting openings in the grid (sources of both natural and artificial light) represent a clever transcription of the skylight-eyes of Turkish baths; while the rigor of the grid connects the new and the old together. The historical elements are revealed like architectural fragments at an exhibition, inside a

building-texture that incorporates building parts constructed in different periods. This architecture is not sensual, in the sense typical of contemporary architecture related to the culture of public bathing. Here we primarily cannot rely on our senses and elementary experiences (as in the case of Peter Zumthor's bath in Vals) but on our intellect. The rigorous design rules of the contemporary building parts fill the spaces and determine the whole as well as the details.

As a result, abstract architectural strategies based on regularity build their architectural concepts on such formations or design principles, which in addition determine the architectural form itself. Obviously, this practice results in the creation of different forms, but they have something in common: the form is not a preliminary prefiguration but the outcome of the formation rule.

CONTEXT-ORIENTED CONCEPTS

Again, different foundations determine the concepts behind buildings that reflect on the inner context of architecture (on the reality of architectural tradition) or on the external context of the environment, bearing no extra meanings (or only indirectly) beyond architecture. Also, the concepts emerging from the context can be observed over a wide spectrum, but the sensual, tangible, and therefore in a sense timeless expression of architecture is common in all of them.

In his study *Érdektelen építészet* (Unconcerned Architecture) written in 2000, Béla Pazár contrasts buildings that try to give a deliberate meaning with works that are realized without any declared message (with "inner" meaning). In this approach, the idea originally proposed by Hans-Georg Gadamer¹⁷ appears to emphasize the autonomous nature of works of art and the substantial power of presence. In Pazár's reasoning, the type of work bearing a conceptual meaning is illustrated by the Berlin Jewish Museum of Daniel Libeskind ("The illustration remains an arbitrary, freely formed, magnified, bold, interesting work of art that is naturally consumed as art by consumers accustomed to novelty-addiction."), which is a counterexample of the sensually immediate, elementary, in a certain sense presence-less architecture. All this is in line with the thoughts formulated in the

Csaba Valkai: „Kékvölgy”
 Waldorf school,
 Pilisszentlászló, 2012
 Csaba Valkai: „Kékvölgy”
 Waldorfská škola,
 Pilisszentlászló, 2012



Photo Foto: Zsolt Batár



Photo Foto: Tamás Bujnovszky

Tamás Dévényi – Péter Kis:
Rác Bath, Budapest, 2010

Tamás Dévényi
– Péter Kis: Kúpele
Rác, Budapešť, 2010

well-known essay of Peter Zumthor, described with the concept of the “beautiful silence” of buildings: “The reality of architecture is the concrete body in which forms, volumes and spaces come into being. There are no ideas except in things”^{18/}.

The Lutheran church of Békásmegyer, built in 2000, became a complete building complex in 2008 with the implementation of the care home for the elderly, designed by Béla Pazár, Éva Magyari and György Polyák. Its situation reveals a comb-like image from the direction of the surrounding environment of detached houses and a more closed appearance from the microdistrict. A new context is created that is valid for itself – and basically denies the existing context – with application of pitched roof volumes with the same building width. The small brick module determines the architecture both in the width of the building block and in the composition of details.

The complex is typical of its timelessness, the main reason of which is the spectacular, clearly identifiable form, the lack (or more precisely the denial) of shaping. Doubtless, all the meanings that we would fail to find in the lack of shaping can be found hidden in the consequences of the design method, which is determined by the use of the small bricks as building material. The surface, mass, modular construction, thermal comfort and atmosphere that result from the rigorous process of placing bricks on top of one other, the tactile dimension of the walls and their emotional associations imply an architectural asceticism present only on the surface. We are faced with a kind of concentration where the margin of different architectural articulations is constricted, such that their importance becomes appreciated. The architecture of the Lutheran complex in Békásmegyer is a unique, elementary example of non-narrative



Photo Foto: Levente Szabó

Béla Pazár – Éva Magyarai
 – György Polyák: Lutheran
 church, Békásmegyer, 2000
 Béla Pazár – Éva Magyarai –
 György Polyák: Evanjelický
 kostol, Békásmegyer, 2000

contemporary architecture: its “inner meaning”, meant to be almost exclusive, inevitably stands ahead of us as a message or a kind of manifesto. Thus its context, which exclusively determined the architectural strategy, is double: the definition of an independent siting system emerging from the neutral environment, and the clear relationship with the “other modern” architectural tradition (e.g. of Sigurd Lewerentz, Hans van der Laan and others).

The office building standing on the corner of Kacsá and Gyorskocsi utca in Budapest was designed by Tamás Tomay, Zoltán Galina and Zoltán Szabó and was completed in 2009. The two neighboring houses of the corner site are different in every possible sense: on one side is a recently constructed six-story house with a flat roof, while on the other side is a two-story registered landmark with a pitched roof. Tomay and his partners (rejecting the step-down building articulation) eliminated the regulatory paradox, which demands the connection of houses in an unbroken row, by creating two separate masses and a semi-private space between them that organizes the entrances. In this way, they focused on the relationship between the buildings and

the connecting neighbors. The two buildings, as two elements of the composition, have different characters but are still in a close relationship. The higher mass with its ground floor and five upper stories has a flat roof; its retracted top floor is emphasized by huge exposed concrete cornices. The lower house is attached to its neighbor with the pitched roof, yet on the corner a seemingly independent, third “mutant” building component erupts from it, which is closer to the higher section both in its height and in its shaping. This corner element works as a special “interface”: from some views it seems to be independent, from other positions similar to the higher part, and it predominates primarily as part of the smaller building. The two masses masterfully balance the asymmetric spatial situation that arises from the height differences of the buildings attached to the corner plot. Their approach analyzed the situation to the extremities, and this attitude resulted in a quiet but strong, “just-here” architecture.

The original building of the Ferenc Bessenyei Cultural Center, Hódmezővásárhely was designed by István Janáky Sr. while the conversion and extension, finished in 2012, is a design of István Janáky Jr. and György Janáky. The former Sándor Petőfi Cultural Center, built in the 1940s, was reconstructed with a radical interior conversion and partial additions to the dominant brick architecture. The functions (smaller rooms and a larger dance hall) that did not fit in the old building were placed in a new, independent structure. As the last work of the late István Janáky Jr., the new building forms a layout concept in which not only the facade material but also the siting can be interpreted together with the original cultural center and the Serbian Orthodox Church located in the inner yard of the complex. This impression is also confirmed by the immediate surroundings – designated by the same paving material and the planned boundary hedge of hornbeam – that provides a frame to the three buildings. After going around the building, one arrives to the main hall through the ramp that is carved into the mass; here the old culture center, the design of the father, is placed into a new context when looking through the large windows. This feeling is strengthened by the striking roof shape with a diagonal slope to one point, running in the same direction. According to Miklós Péterffy, one



Photo Foto: Tamás Bujnovszky

Tamás Tomay – Zoltán Galina – Zoltán Szabó:
Office building,
Budapest, 2009

Tamás Tomay – Zoltán Galina – Zoltán Szabó:
Administratívna budova,
Budapešť, 2009

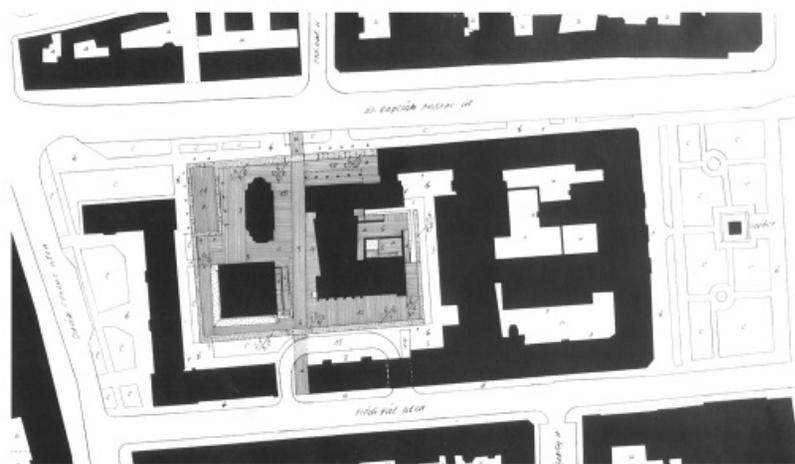
of the building's reviewers, "the method of István Janáky Jr. is... the way of thinking in mass, material, surface and picturesqueness ^{19/}." Indeed, this kind of design approach has created a new context that was not, however, set down through abstract urban-planning decisions but – as Janáky's drawings show with precision – by the picturesque volume and surface scales composed with regard to the different spatial viewpoints.

In 2004, the air control center of the Hungarian airport (the building of HungaroControl Zrt.) was placed in a highly noteworthy building. The brick-clad building wings at a right angle to the longitudinal bulk, designed by Tamás Nagy, were built on the familiar office typology, but their concept also applied a poetic solution: the designer used glass lamellas decorated with magnified, colored bird-feather patterns as a reference to aviation. The siting created an open system: namely a structure that can be continued with the rhythm of the cross-wings, a kind of regularity. The extension of the building complex was finished in 2012, from the design of Zsolt Zsuffa and László Kalmár as the winners in the competition in 2007. "The surroundings do not require any new architectural character, preferably the existing one needs to be

reinforced", the architects stated in the technical description of the competition plan. In actuality, they formed a building that is integrated into the original one both in its siting and in the use of materials – yet it is clearly different. Instead of brick facade cladding, the architects applied a ceramic lamella system as a secondary skin, installed on

István Janáky Jr. – György Janáky: Cultural Center,
Hódmezővásárhely, 2012

István Janáky Jr. – György Janáky: Kultúrne centrum,
Hódmezővásárhely, 2012



Drawing Kresba: István Janáky

a separated load-bearing structure. This solution – according to their aim – adapted the main characteristic of Tamás Nagy's building, which was the architectural use of burnt clay, and at the same time radically reinterpreted it: the familiar connotations of brick, its massiveness, sensuality and hand-craftsmanship were replaced by the lightness, sterility and industrial style of lamellas. This unique solution – similarly to the allusions of the ANS II's glass feathers – can give meaning to such a building where the function itself is actually neutral, the technology of air traffic control is strictly regulated and a neutral space structure derives from the applied office typology. In this example, the context-based strategy is manifest in the rigorous architectural definition of the sensitive and thoroughly analyzed relationship with the extended building.

Zsolt Zsuffa
– László Kalmár: Air
Navigation Center,
Budapest, 2013

Zsolt Zsuffa – László
Kalmár: Centrum vzdušnej
navigácie, Budapešť, 2013



Photo Foto: Tamás Bujnovszky

A common feature of the architectural strategies based on the analysis and reinterpretation of the context is the sensitive examination of the context existing on the site or in the course of architectural tradition. The concepts of these buildings may be quite different, yet their essential and common characteristic is the sensitivity of the reflection.

SUMMARY

The presented examples can illustrate that the concepts of narration, abstraction and context enable us to describe differentially – but far from exclusively – our contemporary architectural aspirations. However, the background of these emphases is not a theoretical or stylistic one; they are much more the results of different methodical approaches to design. It is also apparent that this interpretation model has no extreme values and exact boundaries in reality. At the same time, the density points between which the transitions, emphases and relationships can be precisely identified stand out clearly. In one of the cases, the main methodology of the formation is narration, exterior meaning, an analogical way of thinking and imitation. In the other case, we can speak about an abstract regularity, where form is not the starting point but primarily the consequence. Third of all, the context-based concepts form a distinct group where – essentially as a result of a reflective and self-reflective architectural attitude – we can mainly talk about environmental relations both in a physical and in an intellectual sense, about building masses, intermediate spaces, scales, walls, windows, sills or roofs as well as the material reality.

The main conclusion of my paper is that it is worth taking the time to approach the contemporary trends from the direction of concept-making and design strategies instead of as phenomena classified and ordered under final theoretical concepts. The validity of the triple model discussed in this paper raises the need for constructing further exciting sections and models. Until the time when style categories return, this method could be one possible way towards the interpretation of contemporary Hungarian architecture.

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