Zsolt Gunther   Thesis of DLA Dissertation

INVERSE TRADITION

The Architecture of the Province in the Future

András Ferkai PhD   supervisor
professor

Problem statement

The dominance of existing information culture in Hungary and the past eras generating rapid and radical changes have pushed the status of the countryside and its culture to the periphery. The province has lost much of its value, it has become invisible from a certain point of view. How can we break out of this situation and what could be the proper strategy in architecture?

Research questions, aims and objectives

I keep looking for the architectural attitude against the nostalgic interpretation of the countryside and its architectural projection, which responds to contemporary challenges, which dares to undertake the new and the fresh and is still connected with the province. In my eyes, this artistic attitude is an alternative one, I don't regard it as exclusive. Posterity will tell which way is expedient and useful.

Identity and its relationship with the site represent a crucial moment in my research. I do not consider the constraints of establishing an artificial identity as a positive aspect, I have rather the opinion that the proper identity reveals itself afterwards. A new architectural language is not a precondition for the emergence of this new identity, it is rather the creative process which ensures a wide horizon in its stylistic, functional and material aspects for the definition of the future vision of the countryside.

The structure of the dissertation

The first part of the dissertation provides the theoretical background for my masterpiece. In the first chapter, I outline the appearance of the found object in the field of architecture. I support the most important qualities of *as found* such as the ordinary, the simple and materiality with precedents. The thesis of the third chapter is of utmost importance from the point of view of the dissertation. I treat the whole of the countryside – with its traditions, landscape and architecture – as an objet trouvé, and I introduce the principle of "soft intervention" in this field. I analyze architectural interventions on the found object in the fourth chapter. Mapping of rural forms, spaces and their relationship with the environment, then inserting them into a new context represents the pragmatic design methodology, which I present with the help of my own and various foreign works. I analyse the relationship between the *as found* and the site in the next chapters. Depending on the direction of the driving forces in the production of the buildings, various conclusions can be drawn – either the building reacts on the site in a more traditional way, or the programme of the building influences its environment. At the end of my theoretical exposition, I present the inverse tradition as a tool: the design as a process, the intertwining of the analytical and intuitive way of thinking, the taking away of the as found, its charging with new meanings and its insertion into the context

represent the alternative which serves as an authentic possibility to renew the architecture of the province, its environmental culture.

The structure of the masterpiece

I present my masterpiece in the second part of the dissertation: one building and two projects. These three objects - a single-family house, a small public building and a visitors' centre focusing on the relationship between the building and the landscape – span various scales showing the use of inverse tradition in each case.

The lodging in Koroncó was done before my research. During my studies, the instinctive planning methodology applied on this project has become conscious and deep. I applied the principle of *as found* in a more profound way, the bold and fresh character of the two latter projects can be derived from this. I do believe that each of my projects represents a step forward and the experience of the previous projects will be merged into it. Although there is a certain degree of resemblance among the buildings, they never repeat themselves. The shown projects are milestones in my career.

The lodging for mentally disabled in Koroncó can be found in a pine-tree forest. The building has an extremely simple, rectangular floor plan extended by a portico with a lamellar structure on one long side, all designed as if entirely unconcerned with the roof. The latter forms a standalone, compact unit, a declarative rural tile-clad wooden structure, but not at all a jarring appendage. Appearing to float over the upstairs terrace, propped on the timber structure of the portico along one side, and not closed by gables on two sides, the roof establishes informal relationships between the two units, in a kind of mutual aesthetic opening-up of the modern building and the ancient, associative roof for "multivalued", both interdependent and free, autonomous.

The single-family house in Paloznak standing on the boundary of the plot evokes the image of a clear, archetypical building. The simple design is, however, confronted with a challenge in the interior. The lack of the traditional attic, the linear grouping of the rooms towards the garden resulted in a fragmented spatial structure, which follows the whole of the building and is peeled off from the outer rigid form as a shell. The plasticity of the triangles joining each other is strengthened by the natural light coming through the longitudinal skylights arranged on the rooftop. A portico is delicately situated in the additive row of rooms. This covered area defines a clear distinction between the day and night functions of the house.

This visitors' centre and educational path, which suits both for scientific research and for the entertainment of tourists, focuses on the presentation of the living world of the moorland lying

nearby. The main consideration was to create harmony with the surrounding nature

and to fit the object into the existing landscape. The building sinks into the gently sloping ground, it emerges just seen from the water. The main access to the centre is a ramp cut into the ground, which already entertains the visitors by displaying amphibians behind glass panes. The main showroom and the deck in front of it overlooks on the swamp. The layout follows the cracks and fissures of the landscape, which manifests itself not only in the path running along the swamp, but in the design of the furniture as well.

Thesis

1. The importance of as found

As found means the ordinary, the characterless, the everyday object, the things, which are simply in front of us. It is not striking because of its simplicity and of its unaffectedness. The revaluation of the objet trouvé and its introduction into the contemporary art discourse is an alternative beside the overgrowing gossip of contemporary art. It is a calm and authentic anchor facing the tyranny of the new. It seems truly radical to me if the existing, the *as found* is used and the future result is based on it.

2. The province as objet trouvé

The loss of value of the countryside from an economic and cultural point of view manifests itself also in its architecture. Drifting, even eroding values characterize the built environment and the landscape. This fact is analogous with the found object from a phenomenological point of view. The objet trouvé can be a chance by taking its existing values into account and inserting it into the context of our days. The use of the *as found* opens up a totally new horizon in the field of the reinterpretation of the countryside.

During my research, I have come to the conclusion that the traditional provinces have survived identifiably only in two extreme aspects: on the one hand in their materiality, and, on the other hand in the morphology of settlements. However, the most striking elements, the buildings, have been continuously changing. Traditional objects, found in the provinces are thus less object-like; they have rather been passed on us in forms of abstract terms and specific materials. Thus the forms deriving from the buildings can be interpreted more freely, the „remembrance" of the objet trouvé allows us more rope.

3. The relationship between the place and the objet trouvé

There is a strong contrast between the often sentimental interpretation of the notion place and its real condition. Places have often become empty because the existing or the imposed programmes have turned out to be generic or even banal. The *as found* recharged through new meanings can re-establish the position of the place.

Thus the pledge of the original is not only the individual appearance of the artist's intervention, but the basic research of the found object and its remodelling based rather on its programme than on its local context. The programming of the place will be decisive contrary to the notion of place in such a way that it is not the loci that defines the building, but – on the contrary – the building defined by the programme makes the place characteristic. In this manner, specific and meaningful relationship

will be established between the site and the programmed found object.

4. The inverse tradition

The design attitude aiming at the inverse tradition is based on two pillars: the first one is the critical thinking which interprets data by analyzing them, the second one is the intuitive approach which can be defined as the process of generating ideas. The inverse tradition as a tool means a reflexive attitude, the found object and the cited elements do not turn into their own reference. It is critical both in its analytical and in its intuitive condition. It treats new and old simultaneously, not depending on whether it is an object, a building, or even the landscape, the countryside. The old can be tracked all the time, the accidental will turn designed, but the charm of the incidental remains somewhere in the depth.

Although the architectural object produced in this way differs from its surroundings, it can still be fitted into the tradition: it remodulates continuously the inherited identity. The basic experiences in architecture – such as spatiality and materiality – are organic components of the building: the house addresses all of our senses. The relationship between old and new settles during this procedure and it becomes an architectural statement. It adds something to the place, to the affiliation.

Lodging for Mentally Disabled - Koroncó, 2003

Single-family House – Paloznak, 2006

Visitors' Centre and Educational Path – Keszthely, 2006