

Thesis Summary

Metamorphosis - sedimentation and originality

5.1) architecture is a process

Despite current tendencies and the inanimate nature of the built environment – architecture is a constantly changing, never-ending process: spatial and temporal transformation lie within its nature. The constant change of our physical environment cannot be disrupted, only influenced.

5.2) acknowledging the architect's role is a prerequisite for practicing this profession

Understanding the characteristics of the different processes and their effects on each other is of key importance in defining the role of the architect and in creating enduring architecture that possesses the inherent ability to change, thus creating an enduring and dynamic identity.

5.3) the correlation between origin and unintentionality

Origin: existing and unpredictable attributes constitute an unavoidable and fundamental part of an emerging building, and as such, *unintentionally* contribute to the creation of “*beauty*”, or in other words, relevant value. As a consequence, we may find that the originality of the *found* material world is more complex and rich in meaning than the world of merely logical compositions. The added values deriving from the unintentionality of inherent characteristics project the possibility of a more complex world. Apart from the actual *place*, the found world refers to the importance of the *material* and the building technology it requires, and thus instead of a mere formal approach, the focus may shift towards the place and the internal characteristics of the material.

5.4) the correlation between sedimentation and complexity

The complexity of the built environment and its embeddedness into complicated systems becomes deeper and more layered over time. Buildings are complete realities, which, due to the unpredictability of their origin and the logical order of their sedimentation constitute a closely knit system. The motto of this thesis refers to the temporally layered character of this complexity: “*every act of building is supplemental*”³³³.

³³³ Tamás Tomay, in reference to a university project, 1998

5.5) the contradictory relationship between unintentionality and complexity

In reference to metamorphosis, the unintentionality deriving from the origin and the complexity deriving from sedimentation inevitably result in a heterogenous and thus contradictory character. Yet this multilayered character is a key element in enabling metamorphosis and thus creating lasting architecture. Being open to multiple interpretations enables it to endure and maintain its relevance.

5.6) *the complexity of the material*

As a result of their dressing-like behavior, buildings visibly change their external appearance, if not quite by human standards, but corresponding to the changes of intellectual tendencies and eras. In addition to the 'dressing' adjustments and changes made in the appearance of buildings, "seams", i.e. ornaments have once again received a significant role. The ornament disguises the finiteness of the material, at the same time „*hinting at the complexity of the order it conceals*"³³⁴. The multifaceted surface of the material and its adjoining connections draw our attention toward the complexity that justifies the relevance and progressivity of a building. Therefore, following the complete dismissal of the ornament in the early 20th century, its revival does not imply a romantic desire to resurrect past eras, but rather shows that the physical expression of a building - the material - has once again found its worthy place. The ornament accentuates the surface, texture and connections, i.e. the details of the material.

³³⁴ Hannes Böhringer:
Begriffsfelder. Von der Philosophie zur Kunst. Berlin, 1985

5.7) *endurance and progressiveness*

The endurance of a building - its ability to change - plays a fundamental role in our unstoppably eroding material and digressive intellectual world. Not only in a pragmatic sense, meaning that architects spend the money of others. Responsibility is not only a material/economic question, but primarily a cultural/social issue: the buildings surrounding us convey values and are values within themselves; in other words, they are responsible for ensuring the continuity of history.

Yet due to its endurance and the often irreplaceable values it embodies, architecture cannot be regarded as a mere question of conserving material characteristics; buildings do not share the desire to become lifeless monuments or symbolize a longing for a dream world of the past.

The endurance of a building lies within its relevance, or in other words, its progressiveness. "*Art (architecture) can only be progressive*"³³⁵, where progressiveness refers to the embeddedness into a given era rather than innovation or the pursuit of trends. Creating a work of art not only requires being in possession of the knowledge of our time, but also the ability to transmit this knowledge. Architecture can only be relevant and convey values if it grows from the knowledge and speaks the language of its time.

³³⁵ Fülep Lajos:
From the Revolution of Art to the Great Revolution, 1974

Progressive thus enduring.

abstract:

Metamorphosis - sedimentation and originality

„Every act of building is supplemental” - Tamás Tomay, supervising prof.

My doctoral research examines the metamorphosis of architecture – in a broader context: the human environment – and is thus an analysis of the temporal and spatial dimensions of architecture.

Over the course of their existence, buildings undergo changes as a result of different effects and influences, and their transformation implies that architecture can be defined as an accumulation of individual *processes*.

process

Metamorphosis and change are considered essentially natural phenomena, yet our surrounding artificial world is the subject of continuous change as well, which is evoked by mankind: by the changes of humanity. In other words, as a result of changing opportunities and thus changing demands, humans shape the environment to suit their needs - within their power. Natural metamorphosis perfectly corresponds to present day challenges and demands induced by change. Although the built environment is not a living organic organism, it follows similar behavioral patterns (aging, degradation, transformation).

The recognition of changing possibilities and different demands results in a changing environment. In this process of transformation, the spaces and spatial relationships within the built environment are subject to change – supplementation - sedimentation - and demise. When the demands toward a created space cease to exist, the space usually follows in its path as well. Yet rarely, it withstands the reorganizing and destructing desire of nature and mankind. The majority of abandoned and unused objects or buildings disappear, cease to exist, a handful survive and transform irrevocably.

Architecture is a process.

Despite the inanimate nature of the artificial world and current tendencies – architecture is a constantly changing, never-ending process: spatial and temporal transformation lie within its nature. The constant change of our physical environment cannot be disrupted, only influenced.

the architect's role

In addition to the extensive theoretical background of my research, as a practicing architect, I find its most exciting aspect to be the influence it exerts on my work: it is essential for an architect to recognize the direction and characteristics of the processes taking place within the built environment, attributes to which we can add to or take away from, in other words: transform.

The acknowledgement of the architect's role is a vital element, a prerequisite for pursuing this profession.

Understanding the characteristics of the different processes and their effects on each other is of key importance in determining the role of the architect and creating enduring architecture with the ability to change.

*The more things change, the more they stay the same.*³¹⁴

³¹⁴ Alphonse Karr, Les Guêpes, 1849

methodology

The phenomenon of continuously changing architecture (i.e. the human environment) may be examined through five different segments of the built environment, in reference to their transformation.

Intuitively using the metaphor³¹⁵ of this natural phenomenon, the examination may proceed within the cycle of complete metamorphosis; the discussed segments portray different developmental phases within our built environment.

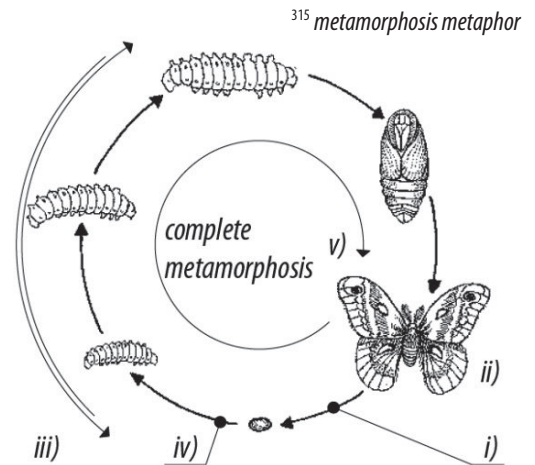
Based on the above-described segmentation, the five elaborately discussed chapters are loosely linked to the different stages of the complete metamorphosis cycle: The *ruin*ⁱ⁾ is an object deprived of its former characteristics, capturing the last moments that precede the 'demise of the imago': incapable of conveying the original "perfection" (*completeness*) of the still existing object/organism, it receives a whole new meaning, thus possessing new (added) values, which cannot be associated with the original.

The *monument*ⁱⁱ⁾, the 'fully-developed specimen' (imago) embodies the state of completeness and motionlessness. The examination of this stage evokes a realization that the monument itself does not change, it is the relationship between the viewer and the *memories* it calls forth that are subject to change.

*Vernacular architecture*ⁱⁱⁱ⁾, i.e. unintentional or spontaneous architecture (the "larva" stage within the metamorphosis metaphor) is fundamentally characterized by its *grown* character. Its development and evolution is uncontrolled, or as Koolhaas states: "the concept of layeredness, density and fulfillment are alien to it: it has no layers"³¹⁶. Undesigned spontaneity is characteristic of our world; it cannot be reproduced, imitated, avoided or disregarded.

Willful architecture^{iv)} is an arrogant type of artificial architecture that is unable to change, thus representing the rudimentary "ovum" stage, incapable of transformation and development. It is a hopeless attempt to disregard the above discussed "unintentionality", or in other words, the *ability to change* and the presence of *man* (its purpose), ultimately resulting in a quick demise.

Timeless architecture^{v)} represents the cycle of "complete metamorphosis". Its timelessness and endurance are rooted within its ability to change. The imprints of its transformation, the layers of *sedimentation* are visible on its *origin*, and therefore it is characterized by complex "miscellany".



i) ruin: stage preceding demise of the 'imago'

ii) monument: 'imago' and 'pupa' stage

iii) vernacular architecture: 'larva' stage

iv) willful architecture: 'ovum' stage

v) timeless architecture: 'complete metamorphosis'

³¹⁶ Rem Koolhaas: The Generic City, 1995

sedimentation and originality

Apart from the characteristic differences between the various segments, the elaborate examination process resulted in shared aspects of investigation as well. Böhringer states the following in reference to the ruin:

*“However dull and appalling a building was originally, as a ruin, it suddenly becomes more complex. The ruin is not a fruit of intention: it develops – either gradually or as a result of sudden destruction. Even if it was intentionally destroyed, only the act of destruction was intentional, not the state it left behind. Since the development of a ruin is unintentional and unpredictable, it possesses a formal complexity that cannot derive from intention and the deliberate realization of a composition. Ruins embody the transiency of all things.”*³¹⁷

Certain elements described by Böhringer in relation to the development and character of the ruin can be extended to the examination of architectural metamorphosis as well. The *unintentional* character of emergence (“originality”), the *complexity* resulting from the transformation process (“sedimentation”), as well as the questions related to *transiency/endurance* are intellectual aspects of metamorphosis. Questions regarding endurance are also closely linked to *materials*, the physical elements of architecture: due to their transiency, they affect the value of the original building, which in turn results in some form of architectural metamorphosis as well. The above discussed aspects can be organized in the following system:

physical aspects of metamorphosis:

- *materials*

intellectual aspects of metamorphosis:

- *unintentionality*
- *complexity*
- *transiency/endurance*

material

As physical components of a building, materials appear in various contexts within the five above-listed chapters in reference to their metamorphosis.

In relation to the *ruin*^{ij}, building elements play an important role within the physical demise of the built environment – parallel to the development of Riegl’s³¹⁸ concept regarding *historical and memory value*: during the natural aging process and demise of the material, the building is enhanced with added values and meanings, which no longer derive from the original character of the building, but from the change in material and thus form: deformation.

In relation to the *monument*^{ij}, the endurance of the material lies within the sturdiness that justifies its monumentality. In reference to both the ruin and the monument, the widespread popularity of the so-called *monument cult*³¹⁹ can be examined from the physical and geological aspects of the applied materials.

³¹⁷ Hannes Böhringer:
Begriffsfelder. Von der Philosophie zur Kunst. Berlin, 1985

³¹⁸ Alois Riegl: The Modern Monument Cult:
Character and Origin
(Der moderne Denkmalkultus, sein Wesen, seine Entstehung)
1903

³¹⁹ Venice Charter, 1962

A much more exciting connection can be found within the signification of the material and the role it plays within the building process, as well as in how the chosen material affects the form shaping, evolving and transforming process.

*Vernacular architecture*ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ derives from a lack of materials, thus using the “found” objects of its environment – typically regarded as waste - as building elements. Due to the homogeneity of the “found” material - typical of a time and place – and the unfinished continuity of building, the (continuously changing) form possesses identifiable characteristics.

The radical demise of *willful architecture*^{iv)} is closely linked to the emergence of *new building materials*: the reduction of structures and bordering surfaces is the result of a desire for liberation, yet the extreme thinness negatively influences the physical/formal durability of the materials, which in turn accelerates their demise. New materials often impede the transformation and thus shorten the existence of a building, since the passing of time brings the deterioration of physical values which could justify the conservation or transformation of the building.

Timeless architecture^{v)} strives to reverse this process of devaluation which derives from the growing insignificance of the material – following the theory of *Semper*³²⁰. As Wright states: “*an idea that suits one material cannot suit another.*”³²¹ Yet the architecture that embraces the concept of transformation also seeks the original character of the material, or in the words of Caruso: “*the character of the material determines the space.*”³²²

Apart from the questions regarding materiality and meaninglessness, it is important to address the “*dressing*” theory of *Semper*³²³, not because of its historical authenticity and theoretical quality, but because it mirrors the architecture of our time and our approach to change. As a result of the dressing theory, the external appearance of a building changes visibly, if not quite as often as by human standards, but corresponding to the changes of intellectual tendencies and eras.

In addition to the “*dressing*” adjustments and changes in the appearance of buildings, *seams* i.e. *ornaments* - terms used by *Semper* - have obtained a significant role again. The ornament disguises the finiteness of the material, at the same time “*hinting at the complexity of the order it conceals.*”³²⁴

The multi-faceted surface of the material and its adjoining connections draw our attention toward the complexity of the material, thus justifying the relevance and progressivity of the building. Therefore, following its *complete dismissal*³²⁵, the revival of the ornament does not imply a romantic desire to resurrect past eras, but shows that the physical expression of a building - the *material* - has once again found its worthy place. The ornament accentuates the surface, texture and connections, i.e. the *details* of the material.

origin and unintentionality

Origin: existing and unpredictable attributes constitute an unavoidable and fundamental part of an emerging building, and as such, unintentionally contribute to the creation of *beauty*³²⁶, or in other words, relevant value.

³²⁰ Gottfried Semper: The Theory of Envelopment in Architecture (Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten oder Praktische Ästhetik), 1861

³²¹ Frank Lloyd Wright, 1943

³²² Adam Caruso: Sigurd Lewerentz, 1997
Caruso St John Architects: As built, A+T, 2005

³²³ Gottfried Semper: The Four Elements of Architecture, 1851 – according to the ‘*dressing*’ theory, the wall, due to its textile-like quality, is a filling element with a representative function, which merely protects the material of the building structure from the forces of nature

³²⁴ „*Clothing hides nudity, yet it also articulates the human body. It reveals and conceals at the same time.*”
Hannes Böhringer: Begriffsfelder.
Von der Philosophie zur Kunst. Berlin, 1985

³²⁵ “*Ornaments today are the symptoms of obscurantism or degeneration.*”
Adolf Loos: Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays. 1908

³²⁶ “*Beauty cannot be forcefully created.*”
István Janáky: Hidden Architectural Beauty in Hungary,
Budapest, TERC, 2004

In relation to the *ruin*ⁱ⁾, Böhringer discusses its “*unintentional, unpredictable emergence*” and added aesthetic value. A similar kind of formal- atmospheric deformation can be witnessed in relation to unused, decaying buildings as a result of unintentional abandonment, where the deterioration of the long-forgotten building accentuates the ambience of a past era.

In another context, *Kahn* uses the term unintentionality in relation to the *monument*ⁱⁱ⁾ when referring to its *mysteriousness*³²⁷ and resistance against direct intention.

Furthermore, unintentionality cannot only be witnessed in the spontaneous manifestations of *vernacular architecture*ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ – which show a striking similarity to the *Böhringer ruin* – but also in the premeditated (and often visibly forced) pursuit of unintentionality within the *willful architecture*^{iv)} of our time.

At times, the accidental and unsustainable vitality of certain unfinished buildings – even if only temporarily – can add a certain sacred quality to the unintentionally unfinished state of the building.

As a consequence of the above, we may find that the originality of the *found* material world is more complex and rich in meaning than the world of merely logical compositions. The added values deriving from the unintentionality of inherent characteristics project the possibility of a more complex world. Apart from the actual *place*, the found world refers to the importance of the *material* and the building technology it requires, and thus instead of a mere formal approach, the focus may shift towards the place and the internal characteristics of the material.

sedimentation and complexity

The complexity of the built environment and its embeddedness into complicated systems becomes deeper and more layered over time. Buildings are *complete realities*, which, due to the unpredictability of their origin and the logical order of their sedimentation constitute a closely knit system. The motto of this thesis refers to the temporally layered character of this complexity: “*every act of building is supplemental*”.³²⁸

Böhringer completes his views regarding the *ruin*ⁱ⁾ by accentuating the formal *complexity* that develops parallel to its unintentional emergence. The author regards this complexity as an example, a goal that should be, if not reached, at least approximated.

The enduring complexity of architecture does not only, and not primarily materialize within the physical environment, but also in the viewer. As *Fülep* states: “*our remembrance divides the past, motionless time into segments and phases [...] in order to operate with them*”³²⁹, and thus the act of recalling memories, of finding connections within the various layers of our recollection and reviving unconscious memories may deepen our relationship towards certain buildings, as can be experienced in relation to *monuments*ⁱⁱ⁾.

Both *vernacular architecture*ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ and *willful architecture*^{iv)} lack the complexity and layeredness that could enable them to create enduring and relevant values.

³²⁷ “*Monumentality is mystical. It cannot be forced.*”
Louis I. Kahn: *Monumentality*, 1944

³²⁸ Tamás Tomay supervising professor in reference to the announcement of a University project, 1998

³²⁹ Fülep Lajos: *From the Art Revolution to the Great Revolution*, Magvető, Budapest, 1974

The relationship between the above discussed unintentionality and complexity is contradictory – as Venturi states: “architecture is necessarily complex and contradictory. Long lasting architecture possesses many layers of meaning, which draw our attention into different directions: the elements of space can be interpreted and used in several ways simultaneously.”³³⁰

³³⁰ Robert Venturi: Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, 1966

endurance and progressiveness

The endurance and progressiveness of a building plays a fundamental role in our unstoppably eroding material and digressive intellectual world. Not only in a pragmatic sense, meaning that architects spend the money of others. Responsibility is not only a material/economic question, but primarily a cultural/social issue: the created buildings surrounding us both convey values and are values in themselves; in other words, they are responsible for ensuring the continuity of history.

Yet due to its endurance and the often irreplaceable values it embodies, architecture cannot be regarded as a mere question of conserving material characteristics; buildings do not represent the desire to become lifeless monuments or symbolize a longing for a dream world of the past.

The *endurance* of a building lies within its *relevance*, or in other words, its *progressive* quality. In the words of Fülep: “art (architecture) can only be progressive [...] it is not valuable due to its progressiveness, but progressive due to its values.”³³¹

³³¹ Fülep Lajos: From the Art Revolution to the Great Revolution, Magvető, Budapest, 1974

Thus creating a work of art not only assumes the acquirement of the knowledge of its time, but also the ability to transmit this knowledge: “progressiveness is practically the apperception of our time.”³³¹

Architecture can only be relevant and convey values if it grows from the knowledge and speaks the language of its time.

Progressive thus enduring.

„The more things change, the more they stay the same.”³³²

³³² Alphonse Karr, Les Guêpes, 1849

Yet the line between progressiveness and fashion is not always clearly visible, this is a dilemma we struggle with in our everyday work. Theoretical and practical research may provide a critical overview and insight into this process, which is complemented by the following case studies as well as the findings of the master project.