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jún 2020
ročník 27
2,60 €

#216

Webinár ASB

Pre stavebníctvo môže byť kríza impulzom na zmenu

Centrum románskeho umenia

Múzeum v Portugalsku

Najvyšší mrakodrap v Kanade

Herzog & de Meuron v Toronte



„I transform emotion into space.“

Jan Revaj is a combination of an architect, artist, and visionary in the contemporary world.

His art has a unique emotional value and shifts from material to emotion.

He is an artist who builds his paintings. He has experience with data architecture of Zaha Hadid, as well as with a famous architectonic studio – COOP Himmelb(l)au.

It made him realize that his architecture will not be based solely on numbers.

BRATISLAVA TEXT: LUDOVÍT PETRÁNSKY, FOTO: ARCHIV JANREVAJ ARCHITECTS

“Let’s not seek emotion only in data, let’s seek it in people.”- is the main motto of your art. What does it mean exactly?

It’s about the creative process, about rational and free creating. When you fall in love with someone, it can be caused by your brain but also because you feel something. Nowadays, it all seems too one-sided. Rational, economic and calculated. Tables, norms, parameters make our unctioing easier, but also build barriers while creating something new and different. They create schemes inside us into which we fit. I’m about emotion.

Does rejection of developers’ excel tables belong to it?

To pigeonhole ourselves into tables takes away our curiosity and space for our own creativity. When I started to draw and think beforehand about where I would draw the line, it created “heavy” drawings without life – they were missing something. When I started to draw intuitively, “from my heart” and focused only on the feeling which I wanted to capture, the drawings were relaxed and light. This is also true for buildings and life. You can see where the expenses were economically calculated to the bone and the table didn’t budge. The problem is that buildings don’t affect only those who buy them but also those who pass by them. We have to realize that they create an environment which affects and forms all of us.

I have a feeling that there is a lack of combination and things that are created are identical. We are then brought up with these qualities - too identical, rational, and without emotion.

Do you think that buildings, which are created mainly for income, cannot have parameters of humanity?

Each of us apprehends the parameter of humanity differently. Everyone has their limits set up differently. Developer activity is not a charity, it’s a business. Any development is built for income; some people are satisfied with less, some with more. How do you or I apprehend it, is our personal feeling. So, every building has a parameter of humanity, it’s just different for every person. That’s all...

Norms, parameters make our functioning easier, but also build barriers while creating something new

From your point of view, what is the contemporary architecture missing the most?

Traditional architecture, as we know it, is dead. The whole sector will go through a transformation. Artificial intelligence and technology will substitute and reduce the number of architects to a great extent. Charts can be filled out by a machine.

A lot of them don’t have the added value in architecture and the market is overfilled with them, which lowers the standard and quality. A lot of activities will be possible to process and exclude the human factor. An architect will once again have to be a personality, that creates and that is not only a service for an investor. The machine will serve for that. The architect will have an added value in comparison with the machine and that I think will be imagination and creativity.

Why is it so?

The consumer society, which we built, is getting bigger and that will lead to “productivism”. People live parallel virtual lives, their interest, and focus changes. They will perceive housing more as a product that will generate brands in housing as there are brands in clothing or cars. We came to this point by natural evolution in society and the transformation of the market will lead to it, too.

Is it one of the reasons why you created the platform ByourD?

Yes, this platform connects people by housing; it builds up urbanistic units which are interconnected by technology. The product ByourD is an urbanistic concept, which by its philosophy, flexibility, and design creates a quality environment for housing of the new generation. Its prototype can be found in Malinovo (Three Waters Malinovo) and its goal is to have a space where people can “grow”.

A lot of world-known architects (I can mention, for example, Steven Holl or Eva Jiříčná) draw their projects by hand. They lead off from the artistic qualities of the art, human emotions, and demands on the use of the environment. In which way do you continue in their methods and in which are you different?

Everyone has their own aesthetic sense; it is important to become aware of it and thus get to know yourself. It is also important to realize that being unique is natural. Then you will create unique things, and that you will do naturally because it will come from you within. It means that you can like various things but if you won’t follow your inner principal, you will soon hit a limit by which you stop to develop. Onward you will only copy and be average. I have my own language which I develop and form. So, if they draw, we have that in common, we differ in the theme, in the perception and in the result of what we draw.

In other words, art and technology are no dilemma in your work, but allies are. How does their cooperation look like from the beginning to the final design or reference – is it possible to “build paintings”?

I like feminine beauty, delicate dynamic, and elegant female curves, which have power and create magical energy. I use those as a tool, I capture emotions with them. And so, I form and work with emotions. I capture them and create “my lines”. This way, there is an “aesthetic DNA” developed in me which I then shift into architecture.



Villa Sky – photograph of Villa Sky building in the locality Koliba in Bratislava.



Villa Blanche – under construction, Bratislava.



Villa Octa – visualization.

Traditional architecture,

as we know it, is dead.

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Those are the same lines that I minimize and clean, reshape into an abstract form. In each one, you can feel my fundamental DNA.

Art is to a great extent an illusion. How can it be connected with a rational world which is architecture?

With awareness. When I draw, with each stroke I develop my aesthetic senses, which I shift to architecture. That is reflected in creation of concepts, designs, and details. Subconscious choice of materials, which fit together, combination of colors, surface, and design of the space. It teaches you discipline, builds a sense of where to add, where to detract, where to soften, where to use more force. When I draw, I always think about space. When I design, I always draw.

Steven Holl talked about his work as about a connected experience of many circumstances (light, space, utility...), which cannot be presented in computer graphics. Is it close to your conception?

My work is characterized by a transformation "From line to form, which is a transformation from emotion to space."

This quote also stands behind my manifesto. Everything starts with a line, then it transforms into form (shape) and afterward, it comes back to the line.

Does your approach to life mirror your work?

Yes, it is like a mirror. When you want to do things with easiness, you have to

be like a child – curious and brave. It doesn't matter if you become a famous architect or if everyone likes your work. You have to find joy in the little things, which can make you very happy. I'm as happy when I'm drawing as when I'm making a design. It's a creative process, which I enjoy equally. I do things that come naturally to me. First, you have to build yourself up then you will create big things without even knowing how. I'm grateful that I met a lot of wise people throughout my journey.

Connecting people with nature through architecture. With this in mind, you designed the object Slovak Art Centre in Bratislava by the Danube, which was inspired by Gerlachov peak. To what extent is it realizable?

When you look at the history of art, every period reflected a previous period or a social situation, for a long time, it developed linearly. It differed by the theme which the artists were concerned with and with its actual representation. Later, when they stopped to portray the seen (mimesis), they started to discover new art movements. When I design for more people (for example, public building), I look for the common denominator, by which I can connect them, interconnect, and which they can identify with.



Was ByourD about conceptual thinking about the growth of urbanistic structure?

Here I artistically dealt with "the known" - development of community on the basis of emotion and functional-social needs. I created a space "where you can grow". Space forms people. When it's creative, people, who live there, will be motivated to creativity. This prototype was realized in Malinovo and we have prepared a concept of further development of the philosophy.

And what about the concept 22 villas?

Villas are abstract of emotions, which I feel with the client. Here is the process of transformation of emotion to space. It's always personal. It's important who designs your house and who produces the furniture. The energy will be created around you and brought home.

And why is the collection of 22 villas around the world? I want to get to know new people, new cultures, every energy is fascinating. Villa is like a gem for me and I want to decorate the whole world with this gem. If I had to compare my villas to something, it would be the birth of Venus by Sandro Botticelli, a beautiful standing woman as a pearl in a shell. These are the villas that I want to build - delicate, elegant, gorgeous, full of energy, and strong at the same time.

How are these three diverse concepts connected?

At the beginning, there was emotion, which I felt, and that is how I created the space. From line to form, it's like playing chess. To play, you need figurines, which have different position and roles. And so I use lines that are descriptive, "storytelling", hidden, essential and complementary. It's a collection of playing elements so the game can be played... And checkmate is the formation of the final form.



ByourD, Malinovo – photograph of a replicable urbanistic concept.



Slovak Art Centre – visualization of the Slovak Art Centre inspired by Gerlach peak.



Zimný prístav – visualization of winter harbor in Bratislava.

Every assignment from the investor I transform into a particular question, which I work with and look for an answer to.

How do you plan to further develop the philosophy of ByourD?

By the realization of the prototype ByourD in Malinovo we confirmed that on the market exists the demand for community housing in an aesthetic and stimulating environment. We plan to bring this concept to different cities and show that people can grow anywhere in the world. It doesn't have to be only Bratislava, but also Poprad. The product ByourD was designed for small and medium-sized developers and investors who don't have to have experience with development. They want to minimize the risk and build something meaningful.

You've mentioned investors. How does your cooperation with them look like?

It's not true that a client has to be the richest in the world. It's a person in certain point of thinking, who has understood that even if they had four billion, they wouldn't eat more than the four slices of bread in the morning and wouldn't drive two cars – they will only have fifth, sixth, seventh billion. It's a person who is at a point in life where they've understood all these things and their creative work fulfills them. They're on the top of the Maslow's pyramid, and know that the world turns around them and they won't be here forever. That's why they themselves want to become a part of the world and do something for it, not only for themselves. Their fortune is in their thinking. Every assignment from the investor I transform into a particular question, which I work with and look for an answer to. It's very important to be able to ask the right questions. Based on the question, you will get an answer. Here, the answer is my design.

You studied under Zaha Hadid in Vienna. Why her?

I chose her particularly because of her paintings. In that time I was drawing a lot with Igor Rumanský, an excellent artist and person. I was interested in the overlap from painting to design of a space. There, I also met Ján Tábor. He helped me a lot in my beginnings. I learned a lot about parametric design in Vienna.

What is it exactly?

In relation to him I created for example the design of winter harbor, where I was inspired by a big wave that breaks on a shore. Then I looked at the art piece called The Great Wave off Kanagawa by the Japanese artist Hokusai where I was interested in the break of the wave and its fraction into drops. From that, buildings are made; they develop into forms of buildings, facades, and structures. The whole urbanism has the same DNA and you can feel it in emotion. There are also limits and certain kind of retro for me in this parametricism. It's just a use of technology for the development of structuralism and pattern. In a certain way, I consider it as a fashion ornament, which is interesting only because not a lot of people can create it. On a bigger scale, it looks interesting, but you wouldn't hang this structure on your living room wall. It would look like a kitsch wall-paper. It's important to realize what does it mean scale in architecture. With contemporary technology, it's enough to enter a command in a program and you can a beautiful facade that you wouldn't even think of. We were learning how to program it. Sometimes I felt like an IT guru. It's only a question of time when it'll be too much.

During your studies under Zaha Hadid, you were working also in an architectonic atelier which belonged to one of her assistants – pihler traupman architekten. You've worked with him on the Raiffeisen bank in Austrian Eisenstadt, where you came across the folding principle in architecture. What is it?

My work process is a transformation from line to form. Folding is a trans-

formation from a surface to form. It is similar to origami – you take a paper and you form it by folding. It will create an object. That is how the bank looks like – an origami. On this building, the principle is easily noticeable, it is a dominant feature which gives the building a character.

You were working in Coop Himmelb(l)au during their designing of BMW museum in Munich. What did you take away from it for your work and consideration?

I joined the project BMW in Munich during vacation as a student and then stayed there for some time afterward. It was a big building. In the beginning, you help with models, then you join a team, which focuses on one part of the building because it's divided in functional parts because of its size. You learn how to work in a team, how to process big projects. I was fascinated by the precision and detail of the Germanic countries. There, the details were created and prototypes were brought to the office. They were trying to find a way, how to create things which haven't been created anytime before. How to create enormous slanted glazing, sliding glass door, ironwork, etc. This evolution was unbelievable – you were creating something that doesn't exist yet.

And New York?

I was working in New York for about half a year for Baltimore design where, as a student, I prolonged my vacation on Long Island. We were working on apartments in Manhattan and residencies on Long Island. There I earned that it's an art to pick an expensive door handle and that it's as difficult to design a good-value villa as a low-cost house. I understood that each market has its own segment and specifics which you profile in.

The world was struck by the coronavirus, it caused a crisis with a great impact especially on the economy and only time will show the extent of it. Can it be a space for a change in people's way of thinking or maybe for a new way of thinking about architecture as an art of our surroundings?



JAN REVAJ

(*1979)

He was born on May 10th, 1979 in Liptovský Mikuláš and has his architectonic studio JANREVAJ architects in Bratislava. He has experience with data architecture of Zaha Hadid and he also gained experience in a famous Austrian architectonic atelier COOP Himmelb(l)au. This was what made him realize that his architecture won't be based solely on numbers. He artistically evolved beside Professor Igor Rumanský. His newest work is a concept 22 White Gem Collection – 22 villas around the world. In Slovakia, he designed concept ByourD – Three Waters Malinovo, replicable urbanistic concept of housing for the new generation. He also designed a project of winter harbor in Bratislava, which should represent Slovak Silicon Valley. He studied at the Technical High School of Civil Engineering and because he was interested in the development of his artistic abilities he decided to study at the Faculty of Architecture of the Slovak Technical University (STU) in Bratislava and at the same time at The Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava because he sees architecture as a form of art. During his studies at STU, he decided to take advantage of the Erasmus program at the Vienna University of Technology and later continued at Die Agewandtne – Studio Zaha Hadid.

The word crisis doesn't exist in nature. It's artificially created by people. You see, a tree won't stop growing because there is a crisis. And you won't stop getting older. The word crisis is created by people because they're scared. They're scared because they realize they will lose something. Often it's connected with the economic situation. They're scared to accept things as they are and let them pass. The key is to be less materialistic and selfish, to create space, where others can grow, too, because what you give you will get back tenfold.



↑ Process of evolution and cleaning of lines.