



- Jan Revaj: He studied under Zaha Hadid, today he belongs to Europe's top architects**
- as a young boy he wanted to be a hockey player and win the Stanley cup
  - today, he transforms emotions into space which people like to return to and identify with
  - Jan Revaj belongs to the best architects

First, come emotions than substance. He is more interested in how will people feel in the space and what value he'll create than in how many meters squared will be at disposal. He does things naturally, based on his feelings. He does everything because it fulfills him and he does it as best as he can. It's one of the reasons why are his designs one of a kind. He's aware of how big of social responsibility has the work of an architect. He himself says they're curious navigators who sail to the unknown, who always need to explore and search for things that are natural for them. "Everyone's design is a mirror of their personality," said architect Jan Revaj in our interview.



### **Do you remember who did you want to be as a young boy?**

Hockey player. My dream was to play in the best league in the world as an 18-year-old and win the Stanley Cup. Later I understood that it wasn't my destiny, but I learned a lot. For example, I learned that in everything I'll do in life, I want to win the "Stanley Cup". I want to do things on the highest level possible and manageable. After all this time, I'm thankful that at least my friend could fulfill this dream.

### **When did you start drawing?**

It was pretty late, I think that I was in first or second grade in high school and I played youth hockey when I applied for art school. I didn't talk about it because I was ashamed. After all, hockey players don't draw; they're tough guys who chase after pucks. I still remember the first day and the drawing. I was drawing a bust and when I finished, the teacher came by and asked if I chop wood every day at home. I asked why.

He said that I have a heavy hand; with my lines, I scrubbed the paper. So I told him that I don't chop wood but I'm a hockey player. He asked me what I'm doing there and told me to go play hockey. But I told him I want to draw. I think that somewhere in the back of my mind that was the end of hockey and the start of something new, even if I hadn't realized it, yet.



### **One can feel great emotion and love for art in your designs. Why do you connect art and architecture?**

Thank you. Art became my instrument for creating architecture. It helps me to process emotions that I feel and transform them into space which people can identify with. This fulfills me. When I'm designing some space I'm thinking as I would be while drawing. I'm not thinking specifically but abstractedly. It means that I'm interested in how you want to feel in the space and then how many meters squared it should have.

### **Why are you primarily interested in how people feel in your space?**

Our inner world exists as well as our outer world. To be in balance, people have to build not only their bodies but their souls, too. Their physical and psychological side. When one of the sides is absent, people try to complete it. This also applies to space. When there are four blank walls, you often want to hang

something on them. Subconsciously, make it cozier, and to balance your psychological side you opt for painting. Why not create a space, which is of sufficient quality by itself so we can feel happy in it?

We all have this sensibility inside us in a different way. A lot of people cease to be aware of their own feelings; they especially suppress what they don't like. They take it for granted and space, where they live, consider as just a roof over their heads but forget that it's a place which forms them every day. Architecture can directly affect your feelings. If you think about it, it's a big social responsibility to this world and to others. I want to create value and not chop meters squared.

**Zaha Hadid is in the world of architecture an important name. How did you perceive her art before your studies under her? Did she change your perception of architecture?**

Zaha Hadid belonged to architects who connected art and architecture, that's how I perceived her before I studied under her. She had real experience with the realization of her visions. She worked at the development of architecture; she set the direction and the trend. She didn't restrict to right angles. That's how I perceived her before my studies. I saw that there isn't anything impossible in architecture and I understood that everyone has their own path. There won't be another Zaha Hadid, there was only one. So is there only one Jan Revaj, everyone should realize that being unique is natural and should look for their own path.



**Then you studied at various different colleges.**

There were four and each had its purpose. A certain part of life should be about finding yourself, experimenting, and getting to know yourself. In these schools, I was finding out what I like, what I don't, who I am. When I played hockey, school wasn't a priority for me. Everything was new to me, it was amazing and I was curious. I have never attended school because of the degrees but because of the information and knowledge. That's why I didn't finish all of them, except for one, and that was because of the degree, so I have the official stamp and can build. School isn't an obligation, it's where you want to be, if that isn't true for you, you're not in the right school.

## **Who influenced your designs the most?**

When we talk about value, I think, it was my parents and when it comes to art, it was Igor Rumanský, but I've been lucky to meet many smart people who have formed me with their thinking. And I'm still meeting them. Igor showed me in the art that the world can be seen differently and that is with your eyes closed. I was always stressed out, as a student, when I had to present my project. Igor once told me: Imagine that you're not a student and the judging-committee are not teachers, who will grade you, but you're an artist and the teachers are visitors of your art exhibit in a gallery and you'll just tell them how you create. Since then I haven't had stress and always followed his advice.

## **Is it possible to do things differently than the majority, be successful, always move up, and not burn out?**

I don't think about any of these things. I'm not trying to do things differently, be successful, or move up. I do things as I feel them, naturally, I don't think about them a lot. I do things which I enjoy and the best as I can. This way, art, and architecture give me an opportunity to create things, which don't exist, yet and can make me happy. Because to be happy is our choice.



## **What is the most important thing in your designs? Do you have any stereotypes or rules that you follow?**

You have to enjoy things. I never do things I don't want to or work for people that I don't want to. That is the beginning of the end, in my opinion. Nothing in the world is worth it. That kind of money doesn't exist in this world. Because one day, there'll come a time, when you would give everything you have just to be here a little longer. However, that won't be possible and you'll regret the time when you did things you didn't want to because there was no time left for things you'd like to do. When you understand finiteness, you'll look at things you do from a different angle.

## **At first glance, which elements should a building have for you to say that it's designed and built well?**

For me, it's only one. You have to feel some energy from it. You can feel energy during sunrise but also looking at a building or urban concept. For example, try to go to church and to shopping center, to historical

city center, and to a new neighborhood which was just built. Observe your emotions and feelings. It's sad when you feel nothing in a space which should form you and your children, space where you live.

**Why are your designs different than what we are used to from Slovak architects?**

Each of us is influenced by the space where we live, by people around us, and by our experience to a great extent. That is what forms us and develops the potential of our personality which we are given. My designs are the mirror of my life and thinking. However, each of us has our own path, that's why we cannot judge others. Only ourselves. I'm a curious person and I like to explore, that's what keeps me going. It fulfills me to create and discover new things which I haven't seen before.

**Do you think that Slovakia is a conservative country? What are the differences between our and western architecture?**

I wouldn't say conservative but consumer and easily manipulated. Superficially, we accept ideas of others instead of finding our own. Nowadays, a good internet campaign is enough and we prefer northern housing, then industrial housing, German urbanism, or minimalism. As you can see around you, things are created more by copying existing products than creating a new one, and only the PR text changes based on a current situation for it to sell. I'm missing the desire to show that also here can originate something different and that we're capable of it. To show that we're not just average and that Bratislava doesn't have to be just the suburb of Vienna; Vienna can be the suburb of Bratislava.



**In your opinion, how can Slovak cities develop during COVID-19?**

I think they should be more flexible and independent in decision making. They should have a bigger responsibility. Every country is as strong as its weakest city. A city is composed of people and so it should support those who live there. It's necessary to "build" strong cities. My father always says that life is about relationships. I think that the relationship between an inhabitant and a city and between a city and a country has to be the same.

## **Can a city create a relationship with its inhabitants?**

It should keep quality people, build a relationship with them. It should create a city where they can grow and evolve, so they don't have to commute. Technology connected our world; it gives us an opportunity for international cooperation so we can cooperate from any place. We saw it now, during the pandemic when people could work in the home office without any problem.

Even if for the evolution of the Roman Empire were characteristic their conquest wars, it's remarkable, how they managed to unite different cultures on different levels of evolution into one community established on a consolidated agricultural and juridical basis, then it was something new but it is valid until today.

When you think about ancient cities referred to as polis, then Athens was called the "community of Athenians". Now you're just an inhabitant of some city. You perceive your relationship with the city and its significance differently. Those are interesting questions for the development of cities and villages, but that's a long story.



## **How was the Concept ByourD for city development created?**

I feel like the present times are too one-sided. Rational, economic, and calculative. We have to understand that buildings don't influence only those who buy them and use them, but also those who walk by them. We have to understand that they create an environment that forms us. Everything is too identical, rational, and without emotions. That's why I created the urban concept for city development ByourD, so people can have a space with emotion where they can grow. A lot of people already understand it, which means there are less built-up areas, fewer people on the premises, and in the halls, a space called "outside" has suddenly a bigger value than their apartment which they were closed in.

The prototype can be found in Malinovo (Three Waters Malinovo) and its goal is a development of a community based on emotion and functional-social needs. This urban concept with its philosophy, flexibility, and design creates a quality environment for housing of a new generation. Space forms people. When it's creative, people who live there will be motivated to be creative.

**Besides the concept ByourD you've created a collection of villas called 22 White Gem Collection. What philosophy does this concept hide?**

My designs are characterized by a transformation from line to form. I'm inspired by woman, her independence, strength, and passion with which she creates magical energy around herself. I capture these emotions, form them and create lines with their own "aesthetic DNA" which then I carry to the villas. The drawing itself should be an art piece full of energy and uniqueness and in each villa, you can feel my basic DNA. If I had to compare my villas to something it would be the painting "The Birth of Venus" by Sandro Botticelli, beautiful standing woman as a pearl in a shell. Those are villas that I want to build all around the world. Delicate, elegant, beautiful, full of energy and strength at the same time.



**How do you perceive the profession of an architect?**

An architect should be like a curious navigator. In the beginning, he's sailing to the unknown. When he sees an island, he stops by, explores it, and from time to time takes something from it. He sails from one island to another. On some, he stays longer on some a shorter period of time. Somewhere he settles down and lives there for the rest of his life or his life becomes the sailing in which he looks for luck. Every island is some architectonic or artistic style. Some join one style, some look for their own. Each of us has a different type of personality. Some people like challenges some don't. For some the top is something that for others is not even the beginning. So everyone's design is a mirror of their personality.