

A SYNTHESIS OF SENSUALITY AND SOBRIETY: THE ARCHITECTURE OF HANS GANGOLY

UDK 72.071
COBISS 1.02 pregledni znanstveni članek
prejeto 1.9.2005

Sinteza čutnosti in treznosti: Arhitektura Hansa Gangolyja

izvleček

Dela Hansa Gangolyja na graški arhitekturni sceni v osnovi sprožajo spremembo iz radikalnosti, ki je bila nekoč prepoznana za graško posebnost, k treznosti in čutnosti. Gangolijeve teoretske predpostavke so najboljše vidne na delih, kjer se sooča z zgodovinskimi okvirom. Označuje jih previdna in dobro uravnotežena simbioza starega in novega. Gangoly opredeljuje osnovo svojega oblikovalskega delovanja prek dveh načel: načelu sodobnosti, ki se nanaša na spremembe vsebin zdajšnjih struktur in na načelo spremenjenega zaznavanja starega in novega, prek neposrednega in enakovrednega soočanja.

Gangoly najraje uporabi preprostost pravokotnih prostorov. Sledi življenjskemu pravilu, da je treba krepiti preprostost oblikovanja prostora obratno sorazmerno pogostosti njegove posamezne ali skupinske rabe. V svoji navidezni previdnosti, vendar ob spoštovanju natančne in dokončne vsebine, se je na krajinske razmere in okoliške stavbe sposoben odzvati izredno poetično. Zaradi berljive razlike med zgodovinskimi in sodobnimi podobami je zato takoj mogoče prepoznati medsebojno razmerje starega in novega. Nastala nasprotja vseeno niso predstavljena z avantgardno patetičnostjo. Pomembna Gangolyeva metoda je morfološka integracija novih arhitekturnih dodatkov v različne zgodovinske okvire. Gangolyeva arhitektura je daritev za vse pozorne formalne posege, saj prav zaradi te pozornosti lahko ponuja še več ravni zaznave.

ključne besede:

Gangoly, arhitektura, Gradec, zaznava, integracija, zgodovinski okvir, poseg.

abstract

Hans Gangolys works are influencing essentially the change of the Graz architectural scene from a radicalism originally receipted as a Graz specific to an architecture marked by sobriety and sensuality. The theoretic positions of Gangoly are being presented best in the works dealing with a heritage context. These works are characterised by a careful and well-balanced symbiosis of old and new. Gangoly defines his design proceeding as being based in generally on two principles: the principle of actualising which refers to the change of existing structures in their contents and the principle of the changed perception of old and new by their direct and equal confrontation.

Gangoly prefers to make use of the simplicity of rectangular spaces. He is following the maxim that a space has to be designed as simple as more often it's used by a person or a group of persons. He is capable in his apparently cautious, but with regard to the contents precise and conclusive way to react very poetically on landscape situations and existing buildings. Hereby the interrelation of old and new can be recognised at a glance because of the readable differences between the historic and contemporary images. The contradictions coming into being are not presented with avant-garde pathos. An important method of Gangoly is the morphological integration of the new architectural additions in the different historic contexts. The architecture of Gangoly is offering for all the careful formal interventions, or may be because of this caution, some more levels of perception.

key words:

Gangoly, architecture, Graz, perception, integration, historic context, intervention.

Hans Gangoly is a representative of the younger generation of architects in Graz, whose works are influencing essentially the change of the local architectural scene from a radicalism originally receipted as a Graz specific to an architecture marked by sobriety and sensuality. Though Gangoly has done his first steps in architectural design under the dominant influence of the founding generation of the Graz School with its radical form language and militant challenge to unreflective modernism and historical post-modernism, he has searched for an individual position leading towards a programmatically and theoretically founded plainness. To receipt this plainness just as a self-establishing strategy in opposite to the originators of the Graz School would misguide the understanding of his works, because the term Graz School doesn't implicate that the architectural phenomenon in Graz are passing into a unity visible at a glance, which can be hypostatized. Graz has ever been a cosmopolitan cultural space giving shelter to multifarious and contradictory phenomenon and has ever been in a process of movement and change which is evident to every dynamic culture field. So the aim to create an innovative architecture reflecting on the context has been a guiding principle since the genesis of the Graz School. There are just the manifestations of the innovation not any more so obvious and astonishing, but presented in a more cautious way. In this sense the architecture of Gangoly, which doesn't present itself by radical forms and exaggerated contradictions¹ is not to be explained by a change of the initial concept, but in the evaluation of the ideas. His work appears to be a field rod in this general tendency. The theoretic positions of Gangoly are being presented best in the works dealing with a heritage context. These works are characterised by a careful and well-balanced symbiosis of old and new. Gangoly knows perfectly how to synthesis in his works existing vernacular and landscape elements and new additions

into a complex whole by respecting the demands of the conservation of valuable historic structures.

Gangoly defines by his own² his design proceeding as being based in generally on two principles. The first one is the principle of actualising which refers to the change of existing structures in their contents structures, which original function has got out of date and which existence is therefore endangered. By the adaptation of the buildings to the meanwhile changed individual expectations of the users and with regard to the inherited shape the time difference between their setting-up in a totally different historic and public context and the present time is being overcome, but the cultural meaning is being preserved.

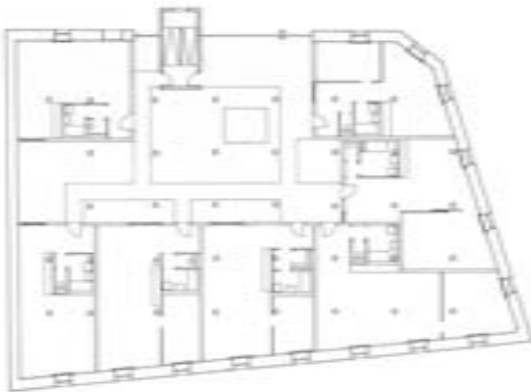
As a second principle Gangoly formulates the changed perception of old and new by their direct and equal confrontation. Both the contrast and the completion cause a revalorisation of the old and new parts. The side by side or one upon the other of the existing objects and the geometrical gestures of the contemporary additions determined by the classical modernism create new kind of mutual relations and visions. The inclusion of the outer space and the nature plays hereby an important role. It is an aspect of architectural design not being given inside the old structures. The contemplation on the landscape respectively on the existing objects in the proximity as objects of reference and spatial definition is setting off spiritual interactions and enlarges the horizons of thought.

The calm relation³ to the balance of a context formulated by Gangoly is being announced in several design works referring again and again to his individual master hand. The revitalisation of the former city mill in Graz in 1999 expresses best the duality of his starting positions described above. The mill is situated in the densely overbuilt historic suburbia of Graz on the right side of the river Mur, in between trade buildings and rental houses from

the 19th century. The waters of the artificial millstream which have been driving the mill-wheel are still flowing under the building.



Slika 1: Masiven značaj fasad mlina je ohranjen.
The massive character of the mill elevations has been preserved.



Slika 2: Stanovanja, umeščena v leseno nosilno strukturo, so razporejene okoli obsežnega notranjega dvorišča v skupinah.
The flats are arranged in groups around a large inner court inserted in the wooden construction.



Slika 3: S projektom se v dvorišču, prekritem s stekleno streho, lesena nosilna struktura razkrije v obliki prostorske mreže.
The project exposes the wooden construction as a spatial grid in the court covered by a roof light.



Slika 4: Dostop do stanovanj je prek vitkih armiranobetonskih mostov.
The accesses to the flats run on slender reinforced concrete bridges.

The historic city mill as a historic typological heritage object presents itself today as a voluminous building of 27 meters deepness. The prosaic elevations are confronted inside by an impressive wooden construction running over 5 floors. The round turned wooden columns have an enormous aesthetic effect. The fast urban development and the innovations in the mill industry have brought the original function to an end already before the Second World War. Since this time the building has been used as a storage room or has stayed empty at all in the last years. The mill has been declared as an architectural monument of culture even in 1995. It was especially the specific character of the well preserved wooden construction inside being evaluated as cultural heritage. The building has been adapted to housing uses. The exposition of the preserved wooden construction in the common space was next to the functional necessities of lightening and ventilation of the flats the primary design criteria. The exterior character of the massive building corpus was left unchanged.

The single flats are threaten as separated elements, arranged in groups around a large open inner court running over the whole floors and inserted in the wooden construction. The flats themselves follow the principle of exposing the wooden construction too. The loft-image of the flats created is due to the visible wooden construction and the mostly opened flat-rooms. The wooden columns and girder have the effect of permanent present guests in the open living rooms with cooking niches. The existed large height of the floors which had to be respected allowed putting up the sanitary cells as self-contained volumes. This causes the secondary effect that the relatively small-sized flats appear to be quite larger.

The adaptation design cared about the exposition of the wooden construction as a spatial grid in the common inner court covered by a roof light. The accesses to the flats run on slender reinforced concrete bridges. The unique spatial experience in the zone between the main entrance and the flats as well as the unconventional ambient led to a rapid rush on flats: all the flats have been rented within a fortnight.

The constructional and fire protection problems have to be solved and to be broth in conformity with the regulations for the preservation of cultural monuments were enormous. The multifarious particular solutions called the administrators, the technicians and the architect for readiness for unconventional thinking. It is especially the comprehension and engagement of the building owner who was rewarded with the Price for Building Owners of the Central Association of Austrian Architects⁴.

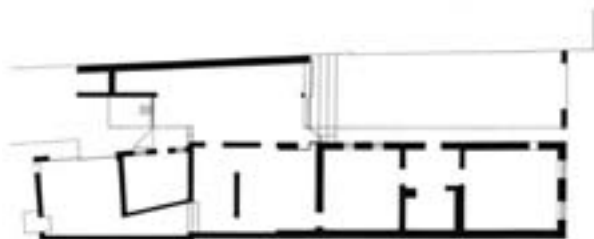
The House Hemetner in Stoob rebuilt in 1998 is a former vernacular residential building enlarged with an art gallery.

Gangoly added here a new, autonomous building volume in the house-court and enlarged the linear sequences of spaces, traditional for that region. The new volume divides the court into a public gallery-court and a private inner-court with garden. The court-oriented elevations of the new volume are transparent and make possible the visual contact between the two courts. The large scaled glass faces are in contrast to the traditional small sized windows and intervene between inside and outside. Even the vernacular building can be experienced in its whole original shape. The traditional creating of spaces by ground, ceiling and walls is being confronted by the attempt to define a space with differently designed surfaces. On this way the true ceiling face of the new volume is being lifted up and completed with a wall pane oversized in the height. The glass strip inbetween is both an elevation and a ceiling at the same time.

The added gallery is not able to correspond with the horizontal wideness of the landscape because it is situated as a narrow, longish volume in a traditional regional inner-court. It is the vertical direction of the wall pane above the skylight cube being in competition with the huge vernacular shape next to it. The skylight of the added gallery seen from the upper parts of the garden forms a block-volume self-confidently put in opposite to the roof shape of the traditional building.



Slika 5: Hiši Hemetner je na dvorišču dodan novi volumen.
Too the House Hemetner a new volume in the court has been added.



Slika 6: Novi volumen deli dvorišče na javno dvorišče in zasebni vrt.
The new volume divides the court into a public courtyard and a private garden.



Slika 7: Stekljeni pas je hkrati fasada in strop.
The glass strip is both an elevation and a ceiling.

The element of the skylight comes up again and again in the specific context relations of the works of Gangoly. In the building adaptation and extension of the Institute of Dialect in Oberschuetzen in 2002 Gangoly succeeds a culmination in the application of his initial principles.

The society for the local dialect in Oberschuetzen acquired an old farm, which has been revitalised and now accommodates a museum of folklore, exhibition halls and the meeting hall of the society. The new extension building is not just closing the gap to the existing buildings, but is taking up the traditional regional morphologic structure: a closed, crosswise to the main street ribbon development of buildings with narrow courts surrounded on three sides by arcades. The rhythm of these ribbons has been continued until the inner organisation of the new building. The analogy appears hereby not as a direct correspondence, but more likely as belonging to each other of different contexts of time. The sequence of the single rooms is taking up the traditional arrangement of functional rooms and open spaces in a row as well as their different heights, exposes and outer connections. The contemporary addition creates a close sensitive link to the direct surrounding. The rooms are facing the old building by generous glassworks. The building presents itself to the entrance with a roof-outline vividly structured by skylights. It is a fifth elevation seen from a special location, a symbolic interpretation of dialects one can hear in a certain region.

The open structure of the rooms of the Institute of Dialects is setting oppose to the traditional cell-structure of the old buildings a new dimension. Also the materiality and the colours make the differences clear. The powerful traditional white of the plastered walls and the dark colours of the roof tiles are being confronted by the homogeneous colours of the concrete-grey and grey-green of the new building parts. The colour scale of the new building is being underlined by the inevitable shade of the thermic protection glasses.

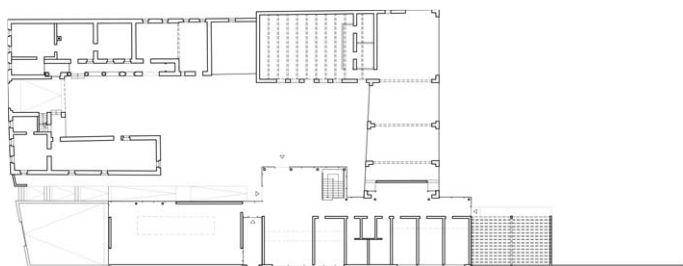
The Institute of Dialects links to the traditional building typology by another interpretation too: the entrance portal on the street side is reconstructing the face of the traditional courtyard house. The street-side windows of the new building are destructing at the same time the common face of regional architecture.

The gap between the old and the new building creates logically and simply the space for the entrance and is interpreting another traditional typological solution the traditional building rooms have been entered from the courtyard and not directly from the street.

It may be that the work of Gangoly is accompanied by the dealing with vernacular architecture he prefers to make use of the simplicity of rectangular spaces. As he notices in a lecture⁵ he has very rarely come to a design question not being able to be answered with a rectangular space. He is following the maxim that a space has to be designed as simple as more often it's used by a person or a group of persons. This enables the user to reflect individually on the space and to organise it according to the changing own ideas. Gangoly is renouncing in his works spatial concepts based on the idea of the surprising. He prefers to organise the spaces following the matter-of-course of their use. This is valid for the lines of movement as well as for the use of all the elements of architecture and technique.

Gangoly is capable in his apparently cautious, but with regard to the contents precise and conclusive way to react very poetically on landscape situations and existing buildings⁶. Hereby the interrelation of old and new can be recognised at a glance because of the readable differences between the historic and

contemporary images. The contradictions coming into being are not presented with avant-garde pathos. Gangoly establishes ambiguous connections to the heritage and the modern architecture.



Slika 8: Prizidek k Inštitutu narečij povzema tradicionalno zaprto podobo, ki je prečna na pasovni vzorec glavne ulice.
The extension of the Institute of Dialects is taking up the traditional closed, crosswise to the main street ribbon development.



Slika 9: Presledek med staro in novo stavbo logično vzpostavlja prostor vstopa.
The gap between the old and the new building creates logically the space for the entrance.



Slika 10: Stavba se predstavlja s strešno konturo, jasno členjeno s strešnimi svetilkami.
The building presents itself with a roof-outline vividly structured by roof-lights.



Slika 11: Nasprotno okna ležeča na ulični strani nove stavbe povzemajo značilno podobo regionalne arhitekture.
The street-side windows of the new building are in opposite the common face of regional architecture.



Slika 12: Vernakularna arhitektura pridobi žariščno točko zaznave, tako da uporabi sodobni stavbni prizidek.
The vernacular architecture is getting a focal point of receipt by using the contemporary building extension.

An important method of Gangoly is the morphological integration of the new architectural additions in the different historic contexts⁷. The architecture of Gangoly is offering for all the careful formal interventions, or may be because of this caution, some more levels of perception. This might be the result of the principle to offer large-scaled structures, surfaces, windows, floors, walls and ceilings on a first decision level, as a guarantee for the success of the uses expected. But on a second level of design decisions the architectural gestures are getting sensibly loaded, counteracted, opened and relativized, so that this, what could be denounced as being too rationalistic, proves to be a rich, multifarious and sensible architecture⁸. Gangoly says that he is not explaining the drawings by presenting the project to the building owner, but is telling stories about the use of the building, where the owner is founding himself. In this way there is usually no need to discuss with the owner about formal aspects of architecture. He is telling him the design as it should be an understandable story. Thus as his architecture is being percept by every observer.

Opombe

- 1 Walter Zschokke: Transformieren und Homogenisieren. Werk, bauen + wohnen 04/2001.
- 2 Hans Gangoly: Conversations. lecture in Valladolid, March 2004.
- 3 Andreas Vass: Gelassene Direktheit. II Giornale dell' Architettura 06/2003.
- 4 Bauherrenpreis der Zentralvereinigung der Architekten in Österreich.
- 5 Hans Gangoly: lecture at the Architectural Foundation Austria, Vienna 2001.
- 6 Friedrich Achleitner: Einfachkeit, oder? Architektur aktuell 12/2002.
- 7 Zschokke.
- 8 Achleitner.