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THE PERMANENCE
OF A BUILDING
IN THE GAME OF SHADOWS

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Abstract

The contrast “old architecture” – “new architecture” is the result of consolidating fine relics of the past with the beauty of contemporary architectural forms. The game of contrasts: is the expression of an old building with the perfection of new elements a problem or an art?

Keywords: protection of cultural heritage, renovation, permanence

Streszczenie

Kontrast „architektura stara” – „architektura nowa” jest dziełem scalania szlache-nych pamiątek z pięknem współczesnych form architektury. Gra kontrastów: ekspresja starego budynku z perfekcją nowych elementów jest problemem czy sztuką?

Słowa kluczowe: ochrona dziedzictwa kulturowego, renowacja, trwałość

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The image of architectural relics along with simultaneously coexisting modern architecture reflects a passing reality. Should “old architecture” be the shadow in a landscape of new constructions, or should the shadow rather be modern style among relics of the past?

1. Protection of cultural heritage

In the modern-day world, the protection of cultural heritage is connected with the needs of civilization. Historical objects are used. The modernization of historical structures and their adaptation to modern needs is inevitable: “Modern-day conservation doctrine is based around changing the emphasis from instrumental to more personal treatment of a relic, a concept of which evolves over time, nowadays signifies not only an increasingly extensive scope of protection but also the multiplication of meanings which this relic is a carrier of,” A. Kadłuczka [1, p. 7–16]. Dynamic changes taking place around the world and technological

advancement are completing the guidelines of the Venice Charter. General assumptions regarding the different approaches to handling relics of course remain. The rules of fully respecting the original substance or choosing solutions which do not harm the object are always current. The rule of minimal interference calls for maintaining form and substance; however, it does not exclude introducing contemporary elements. These elements may not distort the historical content. Another rule regarding the clarity and distinctiveness of the insertions also allows for contemporary additions. The elements reproduced during construction work cannot dominate over the authentic matter. They must be distinctive but at the same time should not create aesthetic dissonance.

2. Combining buildings

The coexistence of landmarked buildings and modern architectural forms is currently an inseparable element of the landscape. Reconstructions, expansions, and insertions of infill buildings in frontages are all carried out. The new form always emphasizes the image of the historical object. New elements are introduced in an environment of landmark buildings in two ways, as new architectural forms directly attached to the fabric of historical buildings or in their nearest proximity. Modern-day additions, when it comes to aesthetic value, are in harmony with buildings of the past and do not blur the differences between that which is new and that which is old. The idea behind modernization and adaptation is to combine the historical magic of relics with the language of contemporary architecture in common dialogue. In the case of new objects built next to renovated historical ones, forms reflecting the historical surroundings are being created. The current functional standards that are an integral part of technological novelties do not destroy the historical urban fabric.

The interiors of historical objects subjected to renovation which incorporates contemporary details into the historical design are one of a kind. The original ceilings, columns, woodwork, balustrades or brick walls combined with the bold lines and bright modern colours of modern-day solutions give the interiors a unique character. Connecting history with the contemporary ideas of a designer results in the creation of inimitable objects.

The modernization and adaptation of historical objects is the result of ever-changing human needs. Adapting post-industrial objects in residential areas for modern-day uses has become something of a trend. The beauty of a historical building, however, has made it so that the changes carried out in the object are small. The novelties introduced are essentially fitted into the existing architecture. The protection of cultural heritage is starting to be viewed as “an exceptionally creative process directed towards the future and incorporating innovations in order to maintain and enrich the valuable resource that heritage constitutes,” [2, p. 11].

However, the skill of combining buildings often raises controversy. An example of this is the Louvre Pyramid, which continues to be a controversial issue to this day. The renovation of the Palace was overshadowed by the criticism of the newly opened underground entrance. The underground complex was necessary in order to improve the flow of tourist traffic; however, the glass pyramid in the courtyard of a Renaissance palace was a topic of wide-reaching discussion. Nowadays, the steel and glass construction has become yet another particularity of the Louvre. However, the Louvre does not lie in the shadow of this construction. Nothing can overshadow the beauty of the palace.

There are no clearly defined rules as to introducing new architectural forms in a historical landscape. The added form should always be distinct from the historical form. Contemporary elements added during the renovation of buildings are not a carefree pastime, but the finesse of good architectural taste.

References

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