

Cultural Heritage as Cultural Tourism – Reconstruction of Hungarian Art Gallery

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Elisabeth Kovacs
Member, ICOMOS, Hungary

The Art Gallery was opened for the public on 2 May, 1896. On the occasion of the first exhibition Hungarian contemporary art was presented by 1300 works of 267 artists. The former exhibition hall (built in 1877) was not suitable for requirements any more, it proved to be too small for the explosively growing town since the number of inhabitants doubled between 1877-96. (from 402,000 to 862,000)

By its architectural appearance and artistic expression Art Gallery tightly attached spiritually to the Millenary Exhibition and Fair organized on the occasion of thousand year anniversary of our conquest.

Using today's expression Art Gallery was built for the purpose of cultural tourism. As a matter this terminology was unknown at that time.

The splendid realisation of the idea has been proved by the fact that the Art Gallery and the joined Millenary Complex are nowadays one of the most important scene of cultural tourism in Budapest and they are one of our first class listed historical monuments.

The Art Gallery was built following the plans of Albert Schickedanz. He was commissioned to draw up the plan of a 4000 m² exhibition hall in 1894. The detailed programme following the concept of 1889's World Exhibition in Paris prescribed the retrospective presentation of Hungarian arts (fine arts and architecture) it had to provide room for exhibition of contemporary art as well.

It was a quite paradox element of our history that we celebrated the millenary anniversary of our statehood when

Hungary was a part of The Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. The millenary building complex and the Art Gallery as well which purpose was to show Hungarian art were planned by an architect who was born in Biala (Poland) as a son of an old Saxon family. By the way Biala's affiliation varied by turns to Poland or Russia. That time it was attached to The Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy.

Schickedanz was a child when his parents moved to Kesmark (nowadays it belongs to Slovakia) then he studied architecture in Karlsruhe (Germany) and later on worked in Vienna (at Tietz's bureau). He came to Hungary in the 1870's and worked as the assistant of Ybl, the prominent representative of Hungarian historicism, the architect of buildings like the Opera, the Main Custom-house, The Varkert-kiosk etc. Schickedanz working together with Ybl gained experience adaptation classical architectural elements which he boldly applied even at the turn of the century (Art Gallery, Millenary-memorial, Museum of Fine Art etc.).

The detailed building programme of Art Gallery precisely described the illumination, the measurement of the halls and the height of the walls regarding to the hanging of paintings.

The three-naved basilica, planned by Schickedanz reminds of a mediaeval cathedral, has been closed with an apse. Because of the claim of exhibition instead of arches there are solid walls between the nave and ailes. The backside front of the building has been emphasized by a portico closing with a pediment. The transept appear as projections on the backside facades of the building. The six-columned portico

of the main entrance has been closed up with pediment as well. The side front of the building is wrapped with clinker brick, the base is made of stone, the cornice, the inserts of apron and the capitals are made of polychromic ceramic so called pyrogranit. The architectural character of the entrance-hall is Renaissance. The main axis is emphasized by the apse closing of the sculpture-hall and by the arrangement of halls.

In spite of the poor financial resources the construction of the building was finished within a year. The clear, so to say, antique arrangement of halls, the extremely decorative classical mass and dimensions of the building created a lasting home for arts. The stability of walls and ceiling are still sufficient. For financial reasons the deep foundation was not carried out at that time, but later on in 1960's it had to be accomplished. Although the building originally was planned for a 30 years survive, but the steel roofing and hot-air heating system has been carried out at a surprisingly high level.

The polychromic terracotta decoration and the brick-cover of facades, applied as a result of the architect's study-tour in Italy. It's worth to mention as well according to the original idea of Schickedanz he planned steel and glass facades. The steel and glass facades themselves were an unusual solution in Hungary at that time when representative buildings were traditionally decorated with stone.

The frost resistant pyrogranit was patent of Zsolnay from the middle of the last century. Because of its exquisite form and colourfullness it became the meaningful element of the Hungarian secession. The secession is one of the most flourishing style of Hungarian architecture. The quality of polychromic terracotta can be best proved by its present condition.

The Art Gallery is almost 100 years old. The history of the building reflects all the affiliations on which our nation has been built. It was a home of representative exhibitions till 1914. Dur-

ing the first World War it was transformed in to a military hospital. Therefore the condition of the building rapidly deteriorated. For example the glazing of steel-roofing was painted with slaked lime in the summer against heat and this often caused roof-leaks as well. After the war the Ministry of Defence admitted its duty for compensation but it was never paid off. So the restoration of Art Gallery was financed by the National Society of Fine Arts. The restoration work lasted for years because of the lack of financial means. The uncompleted work directly caused numerous other faults. For example imperfection of water leaks led to deterioration of polychromic terracotta decoration. The deterioration of soft-limestone columns began at that time. The fresco of portico suffered also.

1938 was the thousand year anniversary of the first king of Hungary St. Stephen's death anniversary gave new stimulus to renovation works. At that time a decision was made to make tessellation on the pediment of the main entrance portico depicting St. Stephen as patron of artists. In addition the renewal of the heating equipment, the drainage, the floor was decided as well. These works tessellation were finished in 1941.

During the Second World war, the building sustained several damages and was partly ruined. The main entrance-hall collapsed. In the portico, the terracotta decoration was damaged as well. The roofing of the building was not mended for a very long time. The facades were renewed in 1949-50. Later on in 1950's constructional cracking arose on walls because of the lack of the foundation.

In the 18th century this place was a swamp area. After drainage it was filled and in the 19th century it was converted into a park. The soil approximately to 6-2 m. depth is miry sand, sand filling and black bog. That's why a stamped pile foundation has been made.

In the early 1960's reshaping of interior was carried out. New claim came up for auxiliary and executive

rooms without any possibility to enlarge the building but for the detriment of exhibition halls, for instance the hall of sculptures. By the rebuilding and by concrete slab ceiling the internal dimension was decreased but the sun rays introduced into the halls harmed the aesthetical and architectural values.

The motive of present running reconstruction was the endangering damage of above mentioned ribbed concrete slab ceiling but functional claims are concerned as well. We are going to renew the roofing and shell plating, modernize the heating, airing and canalization system and make cellar under the whole building without any alteration of facades and the picturesque appearance of it. By doing so we can find ways to create new lecture-rooms, projection-room, workshops, store-rooms and restore the original function of the hall of sculptures and other previously transformed exhibition halls.

The reconstruction work was prepared by a research. As a result of the study we have found 70 original signed plans/ approved plans, working plans, detail drawings/and other important documents. We used these dates for planning cellar sanitary engineering system and above all for the reconstruction of interior/cornices, frames, communication of exhibition halls etc. The evidences of original plans proved for us how much the interior has changed in past space of time. Its characteristic example is the changing of architectural details of main entrance-hall.

The constructional work is in progress. The cellar, the roofing have been finished already, the accomplishment of reconstruction will be completed at the end of 1994. The restoration of the cornice of the nave was carried out last summer. This was one of the most spectacular works.

The richly decorated polychromic terracotta cornice, the clinker cover with shaped brick has been cleaned by watered dolomite blusting. This cleaning method didn't deteriorate the surface of elements. Only few pieces of ceramic elements were replaced. 90-95 % of them have been restored on the spot. The polychromic elements made of tireclay ceramic burned at 1200°C. After burning they aren't permeable any more. Originally the colouring of elements is made of engobe technics. It means white bole with colour oxide carried up in moist condition. In the course of restoration the defect of surface was repaired by conveyance. The inefficient cemented repairing and pointing has been removed and was mended with organic materials. For the restoration of colouring we used cehalin primer and colour paste, regarding that the colour of ceramic elements was not even because of manufacturing process.

Time to time, because of the life-cycle, the buildings, the materials and the constructions need some revise and renewal. First of all as a consequence of unaffected alteration of materials and out of date fittings and also changing of demands. The Hungarian Art Gallely is one of the characteristic examples for it.

Assuring multifunction of museum, as a claim of our age, preservation of aesthetical and architectural value advantage on the best way of cultural tourism.

The one-hundred years old Square of Heros in Budapest, the buildings and the memorial besiege, the boulevard leading to the square, the structure of our town, the appearance of our representative buildings reflect our more than one thousand years history. All these are significant material proof of our architectural development.







