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TO MAKE SPACE UNREAL – THE DECONSTRUCTIVE TREND IN ARCHITECTURE ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE WORK OF COOP HIMMELB(L)AU

ODREALNIĆ PRZESTRZEŃ – NURT DEKONSTRUKTYWISTYCZNY W ARCHITEKTURZE NA PRZYKŁADZIE TWÓRCZOŚCI COOP HIMMELB(L)AU

Abstract

The most important area in which postmodernism and deconstructivism could offer a new value in architecture was the question about the meanings and the way in which individuals organize the world. The aim of the article is to discuss the deconstructivist trend in architecture of the 20th and 21st centuries on the example of Coop Himmelb(l)au's works. A comparative analysis of selected architectural objects provides an answer to the question of what diversity of form and thought is in deconstructivism and how it is expressed.

Keywords: Coop Himmelb(l)au, deconstructivism, expression

Streszczenie

Najważniejszym obszarem, w którym postmodernizm i dekonstruktywizm mogły zaoferować nową wartość w architekturze, były pytania dotyczące znaczeń i sposobu porządkowania świata przez jednostki. Celem artykułu jest omówienie nurtu dekonstruktywistycznego w architekturze XX i XXI wieku na przykładzie twórczości Coop Himmelb(l)au. Analiza porównawcza wybranych obiektów architektonicznych pozwala podjąć próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie, czym jest i jak jest wyrażana różnorodność formy i myśli w dekonstruktywizmie

Słowa kluczowe: Coop Himmelb(l)au, dekonstruktywizm, ekspresja

1. INTRODUCTION

The modern movement in architecture was characterized by a particular approach to the role of the architect and the search for sources of architectural form. Some designers emphasized functionalism and the creation of ideas under the influence of a certain biotechnological determinism. Others, on the other hand, emphasized the architect's intuition and genius as the "giver" of the form. Nevertheless, the common feature of both groups

was their relative indifference to history and tradition¹. Beginning in the 1960s, emerging first from the writings of the anthropologist and structuralist Claude Levi-Strauss, and then from the philosophy of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, two directions emerged: poststructuralism and deconstruction. They influenced the considerations of architecture and the construction process itself, especially in the United States and Western Europe. Structuralists sought to explain how meanings arise. Levi-Strauss recognized meaning and the mechanisms that produce it as independent of pre-existing ideas and completely beyond the control of the individual. In architecture, it was not important how meanings arise, but the question of entrusting the architect with responsibility for designing a building that radiates meaning².

Architects who designed in the spirit of deconstructivism saw themselves as a new avant-garde at the beginning of the 1980s, thus becoming associated with the militant and politically engaged modernism of the first half of the century. They identified their formal sources by pointing to both Russian constructivism as well as to contemporary sculpture and painting. These connections allowed them to assert themselves radically while distancing themselves from real political struggles³. In their work, the use of dynamic metal structures was clear, but in the case of deconstructivists it was all theoretical conjectures and served as a polemic with traditional assumptions. They aestheticized the conflict or the incompatibility of elements, which was expressed in constructions built on the borderline of stability⁴.

2. DECONSTRUCTIVISM – ORIGINS AND DEFINITION

In 1988, Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley organized an exhibition “Deconstructivist Architecture” at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which featured drawings and design models by Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind, Bernard Tschumi and Coop Himmelb(l)au. Selected projects were presented in relation to the works of constructivists, and the concept of “deconstruction” was taken from the philosophy of Jacques Derrida. Interestingly, the authors of the exhibition did not clearly define deconstructivism as a new style. They emphasized the common elements between the presented buildings, which could not be accidental, which gave an inflammatory factor to the discussion on the previously unnoticed phenomenon.

Derrida himself defended himself against defining deconstruction, seeing it as a method of analysis rather than a separate philosophical direction. He was also sceptical about the use of this method in architecture, as confirmed by Bernard Tschumi⁵: “When I first met Jacques Derrida to convince him to confront his work with architecture, he asked me: But how can an architect be interested in deconstruction? After all, deconstruction is anti-form, anti-hierarchy, anti-structure, it is the opposite of everything that is understood by the concept

¹ D. Ghirardo, *Architektura po modernizmie*, Wydawnictwo VIA, Toruń 1999, p. 10.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 32–33.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 35–36.

⁴ C. Wąs, *Przestrzenie różnicy. Modernizm, postmodernizm i dekonstruktywizm w architekturze (próba definicji)*, “Quart” 2008, Nr 4(10), pp. 101–102.

⁵ G. Tyc, *Powinowactwa awangardy z architekturą współczesną*, doctoral dissertation conducted under the supervision of prof. Tomasz Kozłowski, PhD, DSc, Cracow University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture of the Cracow University of Technology, Krakow 2020, p. 25.

of architecture”⁶. Although the authors whose works were presented during the exhibition expressed doubts as to the definition of their objects as “deconstructivist architecture”, the name was adopted over time⁷.

In an interview with Christopher Norris, Derrida spoke more directly about the relationship between deconstruction and architecture:

Deconstruction takes place [...] when certain architectural philosophies, architectural assumptions are deconstructed – for example, the hegemony of aesthetics, beauty, utility, functionality, living, housing. You should then reformulate the goals of work, but you cannot (or should not) simply give up the values of habitability, functionality, and so on.⁸

In the intention of the authors of the exhibition, the works shown at MoMA broke with the principle of “form follows function” adopted by modernism, which in practice meant designing usable spaces in simple geometric solids. Deconstruction, understood as a violation of the stability of the structure, inevitably began to transform into independent aesthetics⁹. In the catalog for the exhibition, Mark Wigley wrote: “The architect has always dreamed of pure form, of producing objects from which all instability and disorder have been excluded”¹⁰. He further noticed that the objects presented at the exhibition were completely different. They are characterized by fragmentation, visual deformation of shapes, the introduction of curvilinearity where logical straight lines and levels have been used for centuries¹¹.

A deconstructive architect is therefore not one who dismantles buildings, but one who locates the inherent dilemmas within buildings. The deconstructivist architect lays the pure forms of architectural tradition on the couch and recognizes the symptoms of repressed impurity. This impurity is brought to the surface through a combination of gentle persuasion and brutal torture: the form is interrogated [...].¹²

Derrida pointed out that it is possible to search for new elements by arranging the old, obvious elements of the system differently, because wherever we meet the obvious, there is uncertainty¹³. Deconstruction does not mean a definitive break with the past, so that the resulting trend of deconstructivism in architecture does not belong to the radical avant-garde. It is characterized by the blurring of boundaries not only between architectural theory and practice, but also between architecture and philosophy¹⁴.

⁶ B. Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, The MIT Press, Cambridge 1996, p. 251.

⁷ G. Tyc, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁸ J. Derrida, *In Discussion with Christopher Norris* [in:] *Deconstruction II*, (An Architectural Design Profile) 77, London 1989; reprint in: *Deconstruction. Omnibus Volume*, (ed.) A. Papadakis, C. Cooke, A. Benjamin, New York 1989, p. 9.

⁹ C. Wąs, *Architektura a dekonstrukcja. Przypadek Petera Eisenmana i Bernarda Tschumiego*, Instytut Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2015, p. 25.

¹⁰ Ph. Johnson, M. Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, Museum of Modern Art., New York 1988, p. 10.

¹¹ T. Omieciński, *Główne założenia estetyczne dekonstruktywizmu na przykładzie Muzeum Żydowskiego w Berlinie Daniela Libeskinda*, “Architectus” 2017, 3(51), p. 29.

¹² Ph. Johnson, M. Wigley, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹³ C. Wąs, *Architektura a dekonstrukcja...*, p. 75.

¹⁴ *Eadem*, *Elementy filozofii dekonstrukcji w architekturze współczesnej*, Czasopismo Techniczne. Architektura, R. 107, z.7-A/2, p. 399.

3. COOP HIMMELB(L)AU – HEAVENLY COOPERATION

The architectural studio Coop Himmelb(l)au was founded in May 1968 in Vienna by Wolf D. Prix, Helmut Swiczinsky and Michael Holzer (left the company in 1971). It is believed that their early work can be compared to the work of the British group Archigram¹⁵. The name of the office consists of two parts: COOP is responsible for cooperation, HIMMELBLAU in simple translation means blue, the color of clear sky. In this case, the word is meant to symbolize the creation of a free and unrestrained architecture “in the shape of clouds”. The letter “l”, enclosed in time, cuts out the word BAU, meaning “construction”, from HIMMELBLAU. The architects wink at the audience and signal that their work will be multi-layered. From the beginning of their activity, they consistently create dynamic, often unreal structures, the presentation of which is accompanied by a commentary on philosophical aspirations. As they say themselves, not only architecture is important to them, but also music, philosophy, education, sociology, technology, etc. “This is how it works: Coop Himmelb(l)au is a team. There are two of us. When we draw architecture is put into words, the drawing is presented in a three-dimensional model. (We cannot prove it, but we have a strong feeling that the more intensively an architect experiences the project, the better the space built on its basis is perceived.)”¹⁶.

In their creative activity, they focus less on the process of creating a work than on the work itself, they are artists who create emotions. What is important for them are the thought processes taking place at the design stage and the analysis of the relationship between the environment and the object. They expressed the philosophy of their work in many manifestos in which they opposed “safe and sound architecture”. They wanted to be cut off from archaic forms and bodily relationships in creating expressionist and futuristic images. In their opinion, “The solitude of squares, the desolation of streets, the devastation of the buildings” characterizes today’s city and so it will be in the city of the future, and “the mission of contemporary architects is to follow the way of solitude and strengthen the differences until they become schizophrenic”¹⁷. The group claims that contemporary architecture can only be honest and real when the devastations of the city evolves into ‘fascinating landmarks’; so, when the open spaces, structures and substructures reflect the reality of the city’s image¹⁸.

Coop Himmelb(l)au buildings are not objects, but structures that enrich the space. Equipped with the ideological and philosophical thought given by the creators, they force you to reflect, hypnotize and pull you inside. How, then, is the variety of deconstructivist form and thought expressed in their realizations?

4. TO MAKE SPACE UNREAL – THE WORK OF COOP HIMMELB(L)AU ON SELECTED EXAMPLES

The key to the selection of the projects discussed below was the willingness to present flagship projects of public buildings created by the Viennese architectural studio. Design

¹⁵ A. Betsky, *Violated Perfection: Architecture and the Fragmentation of the Modern*, Rizzoli, New York 1990, p. 114.

¹⁶ Coop Himmelb(l)au, *The Dissolution of our Bodies in the City* [in:] O. Gruenberg, R. Hahn, D. Knecht (eds.), *The Power of the City*, Büchner, Darmstadt 1988, p. 12.

¹⁷ <https://coop-himmelblau.at> (access: 24.06.2022).

¹⁸ C.S.ErsineMasatlioğlu, *Onmeaning–image: CoopHimmelb(l)auarchitecture*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340460809_on_meaning-image_coop_himmelblau_architecture (access: 19.06.2022).

solutions belonging to the “company brand” were used, at the same time formulating various spatial structures.

4.1. BMW WELT, MUNICH, GERMANY

In 2001, Coop Himmelb(l)au won the competition for the BMW Welt building in Munich (Ill. 1, 2). The form and finishing materials are a reference to the nearby BMW Museum by Karl Schwanzer¹⁹. The building consists of five thematic blocks: Hall, Premiere, Forum, Gastronomy and Double Cone. The basic design idea was a coherent combination of architecture, modern technologies and energy efficiency, which was achieved by minimizing mechanical devices for ventilation, heating and cooling. The gigantic Hall is thus conceived as a solar-heated, naturally-ventilated subclimatic area, a multifunctional space that does not follow the otherwise customary requirements for heating and ventilation²⁰.

The forum is a “building within a building.” It is located in the north wing of the facility and houses an auditorium for 800 people. Equipped with a hydraulic platform system, the space can be adapted for both a press conference and a theatrical performance.

The icon of the BMW Welt is the Double Cone, which serves as an exhibition space. The corner funnel is finished with diagonally mounted elevation panels enhancing the impression of twisting like a whirlwind. The roof and the Double Cone are statically united, and the Double Cone simultaneously acts as the main support for the 16,000 m² roof structure (it could cover St. Mark’s Square in Venice). In order for the roof to give the impression of a floating cloud, great importance was attached to minimizing the supports. In the end, only eleven were used²¹.



Ill. 1. BMW Welt, view of the Double Cone, source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/bmw-welt/> (access: 24.06.2022).

¹⁹ G. Tyc, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

²⁰ <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/bmw-welt/> (access: 24.06.2022).

²¹ *Ibidem*



Ill. 2. BMW Welt, view from Skatepark Olympiazentrum, source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/bmw-welt/> (access: 24.06.2022).

Dynamism and composition clearly refer to futuristic images. Twists and waves that occur in the body are torn and stretched in places. These shapes create the impression of movement. The designers denied the static nature of architecture and fulfilled the formal demands of the futurists²².

“We want to create architecture that goes beyond its conventional boundaries. [...] we are talking about building clouds that float, change and are unpredictable. The building of BMW [...] demonstrates our efforts at creating a building like a cloud. In fact, the construction of its roof is one huge cloud”²³.

4.2. AKRON ART MUSEUM, AKRON, OHIO, USA

Decomposition, breaking up of form and the “cloud” motif also appear in the expansion of the historic Akron Art Museum completed in 2007 (Ill. 3, 4). The new section consists of three parts clearly distinguished in the massing: “The Crystal,” “The Box” and “The Cloud Roof.” The designers themselves call the building a “museum of the future,” where art has the opportunity to flow out of the building and the city to flow in. In their view, today’s museum is no longer just an institution for storing and presenting knowledge. It is now becoming an entire urban concept, a kind of urban connector and a tourist destination²⁴.

“Crystal” houses the entrance area, lobby, library, cafeteria and lecture halls. It serves as a link between the historic and new parts. “The Box” has an expansive space inside, where the number of supports has been kept to a minimum, providing flexibility in the exhibition

²² G. Tyc, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

²³ *Baroque Himmelb(l)au, Wolf D. Prix in conversation with René Erven and Bärbel van Zanten, 2002* [in:] M. Kandeler-Fritsch, Kramer T. (eds.), *Get off of my cloud, Wolf D. Prix, Coop Himmelb(l)au: texts 1968–2005*, Hatje Cantz, Stuttgart, 2005, p. 326.

²⁴ <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/akron-art-museum/> (access: 24.06.2022).

area. “Cloud Roof” acts as a horizontal landmark in the city, encouraging people to experience the intriguing architecture. Huge cantilevers obscured by perforated metal sheets float above the building, creating a blurred envelope for the museum because of its sheer mass and materiality²⁵.



Ill. 3. Akron Art Museum, front elevation, source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/akron-art-museum/> (access: 24.06.2022).

As in other Coop Himmelb(l)au projects, here too, great emphasis was placed on the energy efficiency of the building and the appropriate location of individual parts of the building in relation to the directions of the world. The floor is covered with poured in place concrete slabs with water-filled tubes that supply heating and cooling by changing the temperature state of the massive floor slab. This solution uses the mass of the concrete as a storage device that delivers a stable continuous source of heating and cooling²⁶.

4.3. MUSÉE DES CONFLUENCES, LYON, FRANCE

Deformations, mutations of form and variability are the main characteristics of the Musée des Confluences in Lyon – an interdisciplinary museum combining elements of anthropology, ethnology and natural sciences. Coop Himmelb(l)au architects won a competition in 2001 to design this building on an artificially enlarged peninsula (Ill. 5, 6). The location at the confluence of the two rivers Rhône and Saône provided the pretext for a building serving almost as a lighthouse, and at the same time a starting point for urban development²⁷. The project was part of the revitalization of this part of the city. Along with the building, the architects created a park and waterfront promenades²⁸. Coop Himmelb(l)au once again used the shape of a crystal and a cloud, which were combined into a dynamic and arousing

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/musee-des-confluences/> (access: 24.06.2022).

²⁸ G. Tyc, *op. cit.*, p. 81.



III. 4. Akron Art Museum, entrance hall, source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/akron-art-museum/> (access: 24.06.2022).



III. 5. Musée Des Confluences, view from Saona river, source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/musee-des-confluences/> (access: 24.06.2022).



III. 6. Musée Des Confluences, view from Rodan river, source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/musee-des-confluences/> (access: 24.06.2022).

common form. The cloud structure, floating on pillars, contains a spatial sequence of black boxes – admitting no daylight, to achieve maximum flexibility for exhibition design. The towering crystal, whose shape is meant to symbolize the everyday world, houses an urban forum and entrance hall for visitors. The cloud, on the other hand, gathers knowledge of the past hidden in numerous passageways.

The architects' idea was to create a building that would not create a visual obstacle for visitors coming into the city from the Pointe du Confluent. They designed a building supported in part by pillars, which made it possible to create a public space underneath. Inside the building, through the use of a heating and cooling system, care was taken to create an appropriate microclimate. The floors are cooled with groundwater. This will result in significant energy savings for the museum's foyer in the long term. In addition, the "cloud" facade coatings are extremely efficient in terms of thermal insulation. The main access areas are illuminated by natural light, and photovoltaics have been installed on the roof²⁹.

According to Wolf D. Prix, the deconstructed forms, the lack of a center, grid and axis brings the museum space closer to Einstein's theory and the feeling of relativity. The mass is as if cobbled together from previously shattered parts, which places the building in the circle of deconstructivist architecture³⁰.

4.4. BUSAN CINEMA CENTER, BUSAN, SOUTH KOREA

The Coop Himmelb(l)au team won first place in the competition announced in 2005 for the Busan Cinema Center in South Korea (Ill. 7, 8). The building is an important landmark on the city's map, as it is the site of the annual Busan International Film Festival (BIFF). Construction began in 2008 and was completed after four years. According to Wolf Prix "The basic concept of this project was the discourse about the overlapping of open and closed spaces, and of public and private areas. While the movie theaters are located in a mountain-like building, the Center's public space is shared between an outdoor cinema and a huge public space called Red Carpet Area – i.e. reception area"³¹. The most distinctive feature of the building is a "flying" roof, which is further differentiated by its three-dimensionally articulated ceiling³². The Director of Coop Himmelb(l)au points out the importance of the roof form solution for the building. He cites examples of Renaissance and Baroque domes, but also the roofs of Oscar Niemeyer's house in Rio de Janeiro or Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation, in which it becomes not only an element of protection, but also a place of display or sculpture, not strictly related to the projection. Building on these ideas is clear in the work of Coop Himmelb(l)au, no less in the Busan Cinema Center's culmination of the visual "suspension" of the mighty roof form in the air. The column-free cantilever is 85 meters high and overlooks the multi-purpose Memorial Plaza. The solution was entered in the Guinness Book of World Records for the "longest cantilever roof." Its ceiling is covered with LEDs that illuminate the undulating surfaces and allow artistic programs tailored to BIFF events to be displayed. The architects combine outdoor and indoor spaces in a surprising way, playing with the variation of forms and directions. The functional-utility program includes theaters, indoor and outdoor cinemas, conference rooms, office spaces, creative studios and restaurants.

²⁹ <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/musee-des-confluences/> (access: 24.06.2022).

³⁰ G. Tyc, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

³¹ Wolf dPrix <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/busan-cinema-center-busan-international-film-festival/> (access: 24.06.2022).

³² *Ibidem*.



III. 7. Busan Cinema Center, front elevation, source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/busan-cinema-center-busan-international-film-festival/> (access: 24.06.2022).



III. 8. Busan Cinema Center, source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/busan-cinema-center-busan-international-film-festival/> (access: 24.06.2022).

4.5. THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND PLANNING EXHIBITION (MOCAPE), SHENZHEN, CHINA

In 2013, Coop Himmelb(l)au began work on a complex consisting of the Museum of Contemporary Art and Planning Exhibition (Ill. 9, 10). MOCAPE is part of the master plan for the Futian Cultural District, Shenzhen's new urban center. In addition to its exhibition functions, it is also a cultural meeting place. The two museums are separate entities, tailored to their functional and artistic requirements, but at the same time they are framed in a common body connected by an open plaza. It contains a lobby, multifunctional exhibition halls, an auditorium, conference rooms, and services. A distinctive point inside the building is the impressive silvery shiny and softly deformed "Cloud." It houses a café, a bookstore and a museum store. The main level of the building is 10 meters below ground, creating a platform shared with neighboring buildings. The dynamic body was turned towards the Futian Cultural District, which influenced the location of the main entrance. The building's outer shell consists of a layer of perforated metal panels and a climate shield made of insulating glass. At the same time, it is structurally independent of the supporting frames of the museum building. The facility uses highly energy-efficient systems, using renewable energy sources, solar and geothermal energy³³.



Ill. 9. Museum of Contemporary Art and Planning Exhibition (MOCAPE), front elevation, source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/museum-of-contemporary-art-planning-exhibition-mocape/> (access: 24.06.2022).

³³ <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/museum-of-contemporary-art-planning-exhibition-mocape/> (access: 24.06.2022).



Ill. 10. Museum of Contemporary Art and Planning Exhibition (MOCAPE), view of the silvery "cloud", source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/museum-of-contemporary-art-planning-exhibition-mocape/> (access: 24.06.2022).

4.6. DALIAN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER, DALIAN, CHINA

In designing the Dalian International Conference Center, the architects set themselves the goal of fitting the building's ultra-modern, dynamic exterior into Dalian's traditions as an important seaport, industrial, commercial and tourist center. Their task was to create a recognizable monument at the center of the city's new district, an icon of the local community exciting tourists from all over the world. "The result is completely self-referential, as if an alien ship had landed on the shore of Dalian harbor. The building does not look for references to the context, it looks to the future"³⁴ (Ill. 11, 12).

³⁴ M. Kushner, *The Future of Architecture in 100 Buildings*, TED Books, New York 2015, p. 59.



III. 11. Dalian International Conference Center, front elevation, source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/dalian-international-conference-center/> (access: 24.06.2022).



III. 12. Dalian International Conference Center, view of the entrance area, source: <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/dalian-international-conference-center/> (access: 24.06.2022).

The main entrance faces the sea, highlighting the developing part of the city. In addition to a conference center for 2,500 people, the building includes a theater for 1,600 spectators, an opera house, intimate meeting spaces and an exhibition center. The floor plan is subordinated to the two main communication arteries running along the plot boundaries. Conference spaces overhanging the cantilever slide out of the body, creating a multidimensional structure. Looking at the building, one gets the impression that the interior is pushing and deforming the metallic coating. Perforated aluminum slats on the outer shell bring daylight inwards and create a sculptural look³⁵. The facades are covered with stainless steel corrugated sheet metal, which gives the massing a lightness and gives associations with the design motif characteristic of the Coop Himmelb(l)au – the cloud.

As in the vast majority of projects coming out of the hands of Viennese architects, here too there was a strong emphasis on sustainability and energy efficiency. The designers took advantage of Dalian's location by the sea and the energy of strong winds. In addition, photovoltaic panels were installed, taking advantage of concrete's natural thermal absorption and natural lighting. The bending of the massive steel plates was aided not only by modern design techniques, but also by the expertise of local shipbuilders, which ultimately resulted in a span of more than 85 meters and cantilevers of more than 40 meters. Wolf D. Prix referring to this action said: "At Coop Himmelb(l)au, we are thus putting Le Corbusier's words into practice, when he said that buildings should be constructed like ships"³⁶.

5. SUMMARY

According to Wolf D. Prix, architecture is a three-dimensional expression of society, and the more complex a society is, the more complex it should be³⁷. Complexity and dynamics contribute to the expressive power that gives the Coop Himmelb(l)au architecture a cosmopolitan character. Using radical artistic means, they expose construction paradoxes and look for contradictions in shape to finally create the concept of a "building-cloud" as a fluid dynamic form³⁸. Their work shows the tensions between the interior and exterior of the object, which interpenetrate the apparent chaos and surprise the viewer. Professional expert knowledge is put above traditions and habits. When designing, they strive to build the urban context and increase the value of the place. Objects become travel destinations and stimulate the activation of the place where they were built. They create discussions and do not allow to be ignored. Wigley suggested that deconstructivist objects are understandable only in the context of philosophical discourse. They have a different living status, they belong to the theory, therefore they should not be assessed in terms of visual objects³⁹.

Avant-garde combines innovation, symbol, assembly, contradiction, shock, autonomy, reconstruction, timelessness and disharmony. These components are evident in the works

³⁵ <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/dalian-international-conference-center/> (access: 24.06.2022).

³⁶ <https://coop-himmelblau.at/projects/dalian-international-conference-center/> (access: 24.06.2022).

³⁷ *On the added value of form. Wolf D. Prix in conversation with Roland Kanfer, 2003*, [in:] M. Kandler-Fritsch, Kramer T. (eds.), *Get off of my cloud, Wolf D. Prix, Coop Himmelb(l)au: texts 1968–2005*, Hatje Cantz, Stuttgart, 2005, p. 376.

³⁸ A. Serafin, *Ekspresja architektury Coop Himmelb(l)au na tle koncepcji estetycznej Gillesa Deleuze'a*, "Architectus" 2015, 4(44), pp. 46–47.

³⁹ C. Wąs, *Architektura a dekonstrukcja...*, p. 10.

of Viennese architects. They design walls and roofs, at the same time bringing out connections with heaven and earth, almost undermining the law of gravity. They build surprising prospects arousing the excitement and emotions of the audience. Peter Eisenman argues that the goal of deconstructivists is to distort not the object itself, but the perception of it. Simple and logical solutions are not ruled out, as long as they ultimately change the perception of architecture⁴⁰. The objects of Coop Himmelb(l)au let us see reality differently, do not bring silence, they force us to position ourselves, thus fulfilling the function of a cultural and philosophical initiation.

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