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HOW MUCH ARE ARCHITECTS ALLOWED?

ILE WOLNO ARCHITEKTOM?

Abstract

How many mistakes justify the work of architecture? Is “pretty” enough? Are the “Stars” of architecture allowed more? These are uncomfortable questions that the author poses and tries to answer. The questions are part of the main theme: *The truth and the lie of architecture*. In our space, a large number of inefficient, uneconomic buildings and space for users have been appearing recently. They are often of high technical and aesthetic quality, which does not justify the designer from mistakes in other qualities. An inefficient, non-functional, uneconomic, etc. object, even if it is “pretty”, is a waste of the chance to build a better one for many years. The author negates only the artistic, intuitive approach, based only on fashionable design, superficial analysis. However, he promotes qualitative design based on knowledge (Design by Research), needs and priorities with a program and pre-project research. This does not exclude fashionable design and personal satisfaction of the architect.

Keywords: architecture, qualitative research, object assessments, future architecture

Streszczenie

Ile błędów usprawiedliwia dzieło architektury? Czy „ładny” jest wystarczające? Czy „Gwiazdom” architektury wolno więcej? To niewygodne pytania, które postawi autor oraz spróbuje na nie odpowiedzieć. Pytania wpisują się w temat przewodni: *Prawda i kłamstwo architektury*. W naszej przestrzeni pojawia się ostatnio dużo nieefektywnych, nieekonomicznych nie spełniających potrzeb użytkowników budynków i przestrzeni. Są one często o wysokiej jakości technicznej i estetycznej, co nie usprawiedliwia projektanta od błędów w pozostałych jakościach. Nieefektywny, niefunkcjonalny, nieekonomiczny itp. obiekt, nawet gdy jest „ładny”, to na wiele lat strata szansy na lepszy. Autor neguje wyłącznie podejście artystyczne, intuicyjne, oparte tylko o modny design, powierzchowne analizy. Natomiast promuje projektowanie jakościowe w oparciu o wiedzę (Design by Research), potrzeby i priorytety z programem i badaniami przedprojektowymi. Nie wyklucza to modnego designu i osobistej satysfakcji architekta.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura, badania jakościowe, oceny obiektów, przyszłość architektury

1. IS “PRETTY” ENOUGH?

The title question, provoking discussion, fits into the main theme: *The truth and the lie of architecture*. In our space, it appears a large number of uneconomic, inefficient buildings and spaces that do not meet the needs of users. They are often of high technical and aesthetic quality. But does this justify the designer from mistakes in other qualities. Each next completed inefficient, non-functional, uneconomical, inflexible, without the possibility of expansion and adaptation changes of the object, is a waste of the chance to build a better one for many years. Regardless of whether it is “pretty” and has a fashionable design. It seems that qualitative design using qualitative research is a standard and obligation. The

author negates only artistic approach, intuitive, based only on fashionable design, interesting detail, attractive inspirations, the idea of design, superficial analysis. However, he promotes design based on knowledge, needs and priorities with a well-prepared program and qualitative pre-project research. This does not exclude high aesthetic quality, fashionable design, interesting detail, personal satisfaction of the architect or receiving prestigious awards.¹ The author has repeatedly addressed the topic of quality in architectural design in conference speeches and lectures, as well as in magazines.² Since 2012, several dozen publications on quality assessment, popularizing the methodology of design by research (Design by Research and Research by Design) and the architect-researcher model³. Quality is one of the most important aspects of the architect's profession, as well as being important in economic terms. Every decision of the designer is important for the success of the investment and user satisfaction. The success of a project depends on good preparation for design. That is why the initial phase, pre-design studies, programming and concept made on the basis of research results are extremely important.⁴ Does every architect perform pre-design studies based on five qualities (technical, functional, organizational, economic, behavioral)? And yet, it is the quality of the object that depends on meeting these qualities. Its adaptation to the needs, efficiency and economics of the solutions, operating costs, and other important factors in use. In 2012, in the title of his publication the author asked the question: *Form or something more? – modern design with the use of qualitative research*.⁵ How current is the question. In the further part of the publication, further questions were formulated, which the author tries to answer.

2. HOW MUCH ARE ARCHITECTS ALLOWED?

How many mistakes justify the work of architecture? Are the “Stars” of architecture allowed more? These are just some important questions. The questions are to draw attention to the problems of many inefficient, uneconomic, non-functional, but “nice” objects, to the responsibility of the architect for the success of the designed investment. Responsibility for the financial resources spent by the investor, as well as interest and care for the future of the object during the next years of its operation and the associated costs of use. Further

¹ According to K. Fross, *Ile wolno architekturom?*, Builder, 2017, no. 241 (8), pp. 30–32.

² The article contains theses, excerpts, quotations presented in publications listed in the bibliography. The author's bibliography is an extension of the subject. For several years the author has been a propagator of designing with the use of research and qualitative evaluations of objects at conferences, lectures, presentations and many publications.

³ First comprehensive publication of the author in the field of qualitative research: K. Fross, *Badania jakościowe w projektowaniu architektonicznym na wybranych przykładach*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej, Gliwice 2012.

⁴ More on qualitative research: K. Fross, *Knowledge as a way to architecture. Designing with the use of research – design by research* [in:] Kozłowski D. (ed.), *Defining the Architectural Space*, vol. 1, Wydawnictwo PK, Kraków, pp. 33–43.

⁵ According to K. Fross, *Nowoczesność w architekturze – forma czy coś więcej? Nowoczesne projektowanie z wykorzystaniem badań jakościowych* [in:] Witeczek J. (ed.), *Nowoczesność w architekturze. Transformacja – Technologia – Tożsamość = Modernity in architecture. Transformation – Technology – Identity*, vol. 6/2, Wydział Architektury Politechniki Śląskiej. Katedra Projektowania Architektonicznego, Gliwice 2012, pp. 65–81.

interest in the facility during its operation, and not only until its commissioning. That is why it is so important to carry out qualitative research during the operation phase of the facility in the first days, months and subsequent years. It is the results of such studies that constitute the database of information about the facility and verification of the validity of design decisions taken.⁶

As it has been written before, inefficient, uneconomic, not meeting the needs of users buildings and spaces is a waste of opportunity for many years. Even high technical and aesthetic quality does not justify the designer from mistakes in other qualities. Quality design with the use of qualitative research is a standard and obligation today. Research by Design and Design by Research simply pays off. Research by Design and Design by Research guarantees success. It does not exclude high aesthetics and fashionable design. It is ideal to combine good preparation for design with the creation of interesting architecture. Proper recognition of users' needs should be a priority of architectural design. Based on reliable research, right and justified design decisions are made. Pre-design studies allow to minimize errors. Qualitative assessments of objects with similar functions are also an effective way to avoid mistakes made earlier by other designers. To learn users' opinions about the building and good design practices. It is worth to use the available methodology of pre-project research and investment programming in everyday design practice⁷. It is in the interest of both the designer and the investor. Of course, the most beneficial thing is that the user of the building will benefit from it.

An architect is a beautiful and creative profession, for people with passion and creativity. It is, above all, designing to meet requirements, creating objects which are to satisfy the investor's expectations and at the same time user's needs.

3. ARCHITECTURAL DISCUSSION AT THE GENIUS LOCI SALON

As part of the discussion conducted in the article, it is worth mentioning the Architect's Day at the Genius Loci 2020 Salon of Culture, Science and Business.⁸ The participants of the Salon included university rectors, university teachers, scientists, inventors, creators,

⁶ According to K. Fross, *Wirusy architektury. Co wolno architektom? Czy ładny – to wystarczy? Projektowanie jakościowe w oparciu o wiedzę, potrzeby i priorytety – standard i obowiązek* [in:] Fross K. (ed.), *Badania Interdyscyplinarne w Architekturze 2. BIWA 2. Monografia konferencyjna*, vol. 1, *Zagadnienia interdyscyplinarne*, Wydział Architektury Politechniki Śląskiej, Gliwice 2017, pp. 7–18.

⁷ E.D. Niezabitowska, *Metody i techniki badawcze w architekturze*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej 2014; E.D. Niezabitowska, *Research Methods and Techniques in Architecture*, Routledge, London 2018.

⁸ On September 27–29, this year, the second edition of the Genius Loci Culture, Science and Business Salon took place in Szklarska Poreba under the patronage of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The event was personally honored by Minister Wojciech Murdzek, who actively participated in the sessions for two consecutive days. The guests were: Marshal of Lower Silesia, Vice-Chairman of the Lower Silesia Regional Assembly, Lower Silesia Voivode, Mayor of Szklarska Poreba, Director of NCBIR, Chancellor of Lower Silesia Business Center Club Lodge. The main organizer of the Genius Loci Salon was art. Konrad Tomaszewski. The Faculty of Architecture of the Silesian University of Technology was a co-organizer of the Salon. The author was the moderator of the first discoverer's panel and of the Architect Day, together with Dr. Jacek Grzelak.

sculptors,⁹ architects, builders, business representatives, and science promoters. The author gave an introductory lecture entitled: *Trends in contemporary architecture – Dubai – Singapore – London – Tokyo – Venice – Sydney – Gliwice – “Safe journey”. Challenges facing the architecture of the future*. Conclusions from the lecture are given at the end of the article¹⁰. Interesting observations based on the realization of own projects were presented by Prof. Ewa Kuryłowicz in the presentation entitled *Architecture – every project is an invention*. The following speakers were: Prof. PŚ Klaudiusz Fross, arch. Katarzyna Downarowicz, arch. Maciej Łobos, arch. Mariusz Tenczyński, arch. Iwona Wilczek, arch. Dorota Szlachcic, art. Mirosław Struzik, sculpture art. Konrad Tomaszewski, Jacek Grzelak, PhD. Representatives of the Polish Institute of Passive and Renewable Energy Construction and the Lange lighting brand also spoke. The main theme was: *challenges facing the architecture of the future and the needs of the user of the future*. The Salon was attended by eminent artists, creators and architects, including Prof. Ewa Kuryłowicz from Warsaw University of Technology – designer of the prefabricated and assembled on-site research station in Antarctica; arch. Dorota Szlachcic – designer of fantastic oceanaria, including the Afrykanarium at the Wrocław Zoo; art. Mirosław Struzik – author of stunning Bubble Foret Nice and Dandelions Dubai; sculptor Konrad Tomaszewski – author of glass and kinetic sculptures and the “Enchanted Garden”. Thanks to the above-mentioned artists, the Salon has become an important place for exchanging views on the future of architecture and human needs. It is important that architects meet and discuss not only the present but also the future. Architecture shapes our surroundings and has a significant impact on the quality of life.

4. ANSWERS TO UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTIONS

At the end, in the form of conclusions, author’s comments, an attempt was made to respond to the questions asked at the beginning, inconvenient and provoking a wider discussion. Questions that need to be asked. Questions constituting the essence of the architectural profession.

How much are architects allowed? I think that as much as there is “enough talent” as the framework of regulations and professional ethics determine, so that the needs of users are always the primary goal. Because we create architecture for users. It is often said that we live in architecture. It is important to remember that “ego”, as well as “creative competition”,

⁹ During the Genius Loci Culture, Science and Business Salon, an exhibition of sculpture was opened. The works were exhibited by well-known Polish artists: Władysław Garnik, Grzegorz Gwiazda, Kazimierz Kalkowski, Poli Kuncewicz, Barbara Jankowska-John, Przemysław Lasak, Czesław Podleśny, Michał Pruszyński, Mirosław Struzik, Konrad Tomaszewski, Paulina Ziemia, Ewa Li-jewska and Klaudiusz Fross. Klaudiusz Fross presented “BenchMan.” During the vernissage the Minister of Science and Higher Education Wojciech Murdzek presented for the first time the “cultural GENIUSZ” award to the artist Władysław Garnik. The author of the glass statuette “Genius”: art. Konrad Tomaszewski.

¹⁰ K. Fross, Trends in Modern Architecture – Dubai – Singapore – London – Tokyo – Venice – Sydney – Gliwice – “Safe Travel”. Challenges facing the architecture of the future – introductory lecture, Architect Day, Genius Loci Salon of Culture, Science and Business, Szklarska Poręba, September 27–29, 2020.

the desire to design something new, fascinating, with unique spatial forms and aesthetics, does not overshadow the essence, that is, design for the user. To make the design not only a creative self-fulfillment of the author but also an object for the user. An object where the aforementioned 5 qualities could be evaluated at the highest level. It is worth to design using research techniques available to architects. A compendium of knowledge in this area are books by E. Niezabitowska¹¹.

How many mistakes justify the work of architecture? I think that a work of architecture should not have any mistakes. We know a lot of artistically fascinating objects, outstanding works of art and even icons of architecture, simultaneously uneconomical, ineffective, non-functional, etc. Objects with exceeded budgets, cumbersome and expensive to operate. But, fascinated by beauty, we try not to notice all the rest, resulting from the 5 qualities that have to be met in order to obtain a “good” architectural object. The designer’s main emphasis on building forms, aesthetics, design, fashionable detail, or artistic approach to design sometimes loses, consciously or not, other important elements of the object. It seems that it is possible to create both “nice” and economical, effective and functional building, meeting all expected needs. Despite the comment, I leave this question unanswered: *How many mistakes justify the work of architecture ...?*

Is “pretty” enough? This is another question, in a way a continuation of the previous one. The answer seems to be obvious. Certainly not, definitely not, but how much pretty, trendy design objects are, which are not adapted to the needs and do not meet the obvious goals of the investment. But it is possible to combine the beauty of form with economy and functionality, with energy efficiency, effectiveness, etc. An example is the Gardens by Sands hotel, which has become both a recognizable icon of Singapore’s architecture, a showcase of the place, a beautiful architectural sculpture, and an object with optimal solutions. The building has well organized internal space and functional connections. It impresses in every way. Similarly, Gardens By the Bay adjacent to the hotel. They fulfill perfectly all 5 qualities. They are an unusual place of recreation and a showcase of the city.

Are the “Stars” of architecture allowed more? I think so. Although, it would be appropriate to answer – no. Often it is about objects created by famous architects, there is something more. This is accompanied by great pressure to create another, unique and fascinating work. Creating an object with an additional functions – promotional, advertising, attention-grabbing and attracting thousands of users. Creating an icon, a business card of the place. In this case you allow “much more”. You can even “turn a blind eye” to the functional, technical or economic disadvantages. In this case, architecture is often supposed to draw attention, express the prestige and economic success, be for show. Thus, both the architect and the investor realize their ego, and there are no limitations in creating. Research shows that investments in interesting architectural objects and public spaces are the best promotion and advertising of a given place.¹² In this case, the benefits should be considered more broadly, on the scale of the city, region and even country. Therefore, qualitative assessments of an outstanding architectural object should be conducted in a broader context. However, the question posed is very reasonable.¹³ An interesting example of unusual development of architecture as an expression of economic success and attracting investors and tourists is Dubai. Dubai, where

¹¹ E.D. Niezabitowska, *Metody...*, *op. cit.*; E.D. Niezabitowska: *Research...*, *op. cit.*

¹² Research presented in the publications and lectures of Professor Wojciech Bonenberg.

¹³ For a broader discussion, see K. Fross, *Wirusy architektury...*, *op. cit.*

the image and promotional role of architecture is well understood – the highest, the best, the prettiest ...¹⁴

5. NEW CHALLENGES FOR ARCHITECTURE

The questions asked in the article, provoking discussion, are important for the quality of architecture and the users it serves. However, the architecture of the nearest future faces new, serious challenges. Some tasks are already being realized, but there are new ones, resulting from the current situation, evaluation of research and knowledge. This important issue will be developed in the next publications of the author¹⁵.

Architecture – challenges, expectations and tasks for the future (Fross, 2020):

1. Ecology, energy efficiency, energy self-sufficiency
2. Solutions in connection with climate change
3. Clean environment, indoors, air, soil
4. Epidemiological safety and security
5. Universal design – everything for everyone, without exclusion
6. Overpopulation, food production
7. Recycling, combating plastic and micro-plastic litter.



Ill. 1. Burj Khalifa (828m) and Creek Tower under construction (1.350m), Dubai, K. Fross 2018

¹⁴ See the article: K. Fross, Dubai – modern architecture as an expression of economic success [in:] W. Celadyn (ed.), *Defining the architectural space – tradition and modernity in architecture = Definiowanie przestrzeni architektonicznej – tradycja i nowoczesność architektury*, vol. 1, Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut, Wrocław 2019, pp. 47–59 and K. Fross, A. Gumińska, *Modernity in architecture – Tokyo, Osaka, Dubai, Gdańsk, Katowice*, IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering, vol. 603, no. 2, art. 022089.

¹⁵ K. Fross, *Trends in Modern Architecture – Dubai – Singapore – London – Tokyo – Venice – Sydney – Gliwice – “Safe Travel”*. Challenges facing the architecture of the future – introductory lecture, Architect Day, Genius Loci Salon of Culture, Science and Business, Szklarska Poręba, September 27–29, 2020.



III. 2. The hotel – an icon, Gardens by Sands, Singapore, K. Fross 2019



III. 3. Gardens – an icon, Gardens By the Bay, Singapore, K. Fross 2019



III. 4. Opera – an icon of world architecture, Sydney, K. Fross 2019

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