

BOGUSŁAW PODHALAŃSKI

ORCID: 0000-0002-3524-0210

Cracow University of Technology, Poland

YURIY KRYVORUCHKO

ORCID: 0000-0003-1352-1924

Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ukraine

TRUTH IN CONCRETE AND FEELINGS

PRAWDA ZAKŁĘTA W BETONIE I UCZUCIACH

Abstract

Creating monumental religious architectural forms is based on traditions of temple building. Christian temples of the Eastern and Western tradition differ, just as the two traditions differ themselves, while also coming from a common source. Architecture is a form of expressing material beauty that should be accompanied by transcendental beauty. Only then can we say that a given building is a work. The canon does not change in its dogmatic essence, doing so only in the practical sphere, which allows us to discuss evolution and a certain freedom of architectural creativity in church design.

Reality verifies the efforts of artists, whose works are created in the rational sphere, while their spiritual sphere is defined by people, without whom buildings would merely remain an empty form in space.

Keywords: religious architectural forms, monumental architecture, church, Orthodox church

Streszczenie

Kreowanie monumentalnych, sakralnych form architektonicznych oparte jest o tradycje budowania świątyń. Świątynie chrześcijańskie, wywodzące się z tradycji Wschodniej i Zachodniej, różnią się, tak jak różnią się te dwie tradycje, wywodzące się ze wspólnego źródła. Architektura jest formą wyrażania piękna materialnego, któremu musi towarzyszyć piękno transcendentalne, i dopiero wtedy można mówić o danym obiekcie, że jest dziełem. Kanon nie zmienia się w swojej istocie dogmatycznej, a jedynie praktycznej, stąd można mówić o ewolucji i pewnej swobodzie twórczości architektonicznej w odniesieniu do projektowania świątyń.

Rzeczywistość weryfikuje usiłowania twórców, których dzieła powstają w sferze racjonalnej. O ich sferze duchowej decydują ludzie, bez uczestnictwa których budynki pozostają jedynie pustą formą w przestrzeni.

Słowa kluczowe: sakralne formy architektoniczne, architektura monumentalna, kościół, cerkiew

1. INTRODUCTION

Architecture does not lie – people lie through architecture, disrupting its divine proportion, as featured in Geometry,¹ or rather Theometry² – a manner of presenting Beauty to the eyes of man. The question is whether the truth of architecture's beauty can be proven by

¹ (Greek) Γεωμετρία.

² (Greek) θεο μετρία.

the falsification of the architecture of beauty? In this situation, it is only ruin or kitsch that are true. It is a certain manner, a type of denial or expressing the truth of the architectural form as recorded in this material. Not preserved, but recorded, for a record can be modified or erased. Is architecture that is not durable true? Does the thought: 'let this moment last' have an axiomatic character in reference to architecture? One could risk making the statement that there is no architecture that continues to exist in an unchanged form and time and its accompanying circumstances are a measure of truth as to architectural form, equal to architecture's function – particularly religious function. *Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis*.³

2. THE TRUTH AND LIE OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM

The truth and the lie are mutually linked – the lie is a corrupted truth, a neglect of Truth, a departure from Truth, Truth with a minuscule 't' – is subjective among people – so it is true only in the case of God as the sense of All in one Frame, and cannot be human in its all-encompassing volume, just as man cannot fully perceive the Universe, nor the all-causes of the existence of Everything. What remains, then? Only faith in the Truth of the Universe, the Truth of the Creator, Truth with a capital 'T', belief in the Truth of this Faith as a form of referring to Truth. Faith as a representation, as a vehicle for Truth, allows everyone to have their own truth, which everyone also wants to verify – this great Truth – by drawing closer to It.

This is why architecture, which is an expression of human faith, comes close with its truth to Truth – this is the hope that a creator of architecture has. The eternal human pursuit of perfection, to build forms, canons, patterns, to assemble archetypes – psycho-formal statements in the human mind, constructing rituals, traditions, shaping styles and various forms in the meanders of their continuity – all this is a testament to this Truth. The consequences of transformation change the dimension of architecture's forms from a spatial to a temporal one, which allows spatial shapes to be 'perfected' over a longer period of the predominance of a given canon, style or tradition.

Sources of architecture as a means for humans to preserve life and survive in the world are rooted in two spheres of the existence of man – the pragmatic and the spiritual – the sphere of existing day-to-day and in the projection of this existence into the future.

Stone architecture that has survived to this day in its various different areas, developed in a surprising manner: from highly a complex form, made using currently unknown technologies⁴ and tools, to very simple⁵ earthen and timber structures between the second and the fourth century AD, to technically and technologically complex forms once again in the Middle Ages and the Modern period.

³ (German) *Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis*. Wszystko, co przemija, jest tylko wizerunkiem. Source: J.W. Goethe, *Faust*, p. II, act 5, *Góry i przepaści*, <https://wolnelektury.pl/media/book/pdf/goethe-faust.pdf> (access: 08.10.2020).

⁴ W. Chrząszczewski, F. Zalewski, *Jak to robili nasi poprzednicy?*, Rynek Kamienia, 2008, no. 34, pp. 46–52, <http://www.rynekkamienia.pl/data/download/egipt-nk34.pdf> (access: 08.10.2020).

⁵ *Słowiańskie mega warownie – waly od Wicina do Żmijowych* [in:] RudaWeb, <http://rudaweb.pl/index.php/2017/04/11/slowianskie-mega-warownie-waly-od-wicina-do-zmijowych/> (access: 08.10.2020).



Ill. 1. The Serpent's Wall crossed by a road. Vicinity of Kyiv, Ukraine. Photo by B. Podhalański

Stone, as the structural material of great edifices, is one of the most durable materials and is highly resistant to natural destructive factors, provided that it has been properly selected and processed. Through its properties, it has also become a highly 'honest' material,



Ill. 2. Giants' Grave. Coddu Vecchiu, Sardinia. Photo by B. Podhalański

that is very hard to use in forms that are ‘severed’ from its physical properties. It carries with it the traces of tools used to shape it and adapt it to the role of structural or ornamental elements for centuries. Properly selected and worked, it surprises us with its potential for sophisticated detail and diversity of forms. Examples of this include Portuguese structures in the Manueline style on the one hand, and the might of scale of Lebanese Baalbek on the other.



Ill. 3. Fragment of the walls of a temple in Baalbek, Lebanon. Photo by B. Podhalański

Stone is also used in the present. As before, it is primarily used to build monumental structures, fulfilling the role of ornamental more than structural elements. However, natural stone can be falsified by making so-called artificial stone, which allows for exceptionally complex forms. The necessary element of the technological process of manufacturing artificial stone is the destruction of natural stone and combining it with a proper bonding agent – the resultant composite can be further worked into specific shapes. Concrete, which has come to be widespread today, is a material that belongs to this group of materials, which can be shaped into various forms, depending on structural or visual needs. Information about



Ill. 4. Stained-glass window in the Cathedral in Milan, in the flamboyant Gothic style, Italy. Photo by B. Podhalański

the use of similar artificial materials manufactured in ancient times is known.⁶ When asking the question whether artificial stone is a falsification of natural stone, it is necessary to ask another question – is the application of artificial stone to create architectural forms historically assigned to traditional materials a lie? In other words, is an architectural form, an architectural detail or even an entire historical building, recreated in another material that is different to the one that had been used originally, a ‘lie’ of this architecture? We have numerous examples, primarily among religious buildings in Greece, as well as Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine and Poland, where the architectural forms of temples that had originally been built using brick were transformed, expanded and built using a completely different material – concrete – and then decorated so as to reference the original material, hiding the concrete structural system underneath. To laymen, such buildings, when observed from outside and the inside, appear as masonry buildings while in reality they are a layered composite of concrete, brick, mosaics, thermal insulation and plaster. Can such buildings be a truth or a lie both from the standpoint of form and structural

⁶ F. Zalewski, *Charakterystyka mineralogiczno-petrograficzna materiałów użytych do budowy megalitów Starego Państwa Egipetu*, doctoral thesis, Sosnowiec, Uniwersytet Śląski, 2014.

material? Are they an illusion, a form of image of a yearning for a lost harmony of the matter and spirit of the world? At the same time as these forms are built, concrete structures are built whose material is exposed and that do not pretend to be anything other than they are. Brutalist temples⁷ are reluctantly accepted by ordinary people, while being highly praised by sophisticated architectural aesthetes who prize their uncompromising honesty: that of their material and their form. However, matter and form in religious buildings are merely an introduction to art, as temples are formed only by the synergic synthesis of all essential fields of art: music, painting, sculpture, mosaics and the Word. All of this is finalised by *γεωμετρία* – the proportion and measure of the Spirit, the *θεομετρία* – it allows us to understand and admire the final result of a synthesis of time, space and feelings, which transport the community gathered in the temple into the symbolism⁸ of the dimension of cosmic time – *χρόνος* – allowing it to come closer to the transcendental space of the Heavenly City – so beautifully expressed by Kornouchow in the Redemptoris Mater chapel in the Vatican,⁹ expressing the idea of a return to the beginnings of Christianity.



Ill. 5. Heavenly Jerusalem. Redemptoris Mater chapel, the Vatican. Photo by B. Podhalański

⁷ W. Niebrzydowski, *Architektura brutalistyczna a idee Nowego Brutalizmu*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Białostockiej, Białystok 2018.

⁸ J. Uścińowicz, *Dialektyka znaku i symbolu w architekturze – powrót do przeszłości?*, Czasopismo Techniczne. Architektura, 2011, no. 4A, pp. 364–371.

⁹ A. Mikulski, *Niebieskie Jeruzalem. O mozaikach Aleksandra Kornouchowa w kaplicy Redemptoris Mater w Watykanie* [in:] *Niedziela.pl*, <https://www.niedziela.pl/artukul/143739/nd/Niebieskie-Jeruzalem> (access: 08.10.2020).

3. ARCHITECTURAL FORM AND FEELINGS

Religious architecture is an art called on to serve people in experiencing themselves in the darkest parts of their lives. They are often horrible times, in which man is afraid even of himself, afraid to admit to themselves something they have done, when they search for something good in them, searching for help amongst themselves and those close to them, while also searching for something bright, which gives them hope for a better life.

Religious architecture must resound within man, and man must accept it to enter into a dialogue with the place that such architecture 'marks' for them, to return to this place while truly returning to themselves, without fearing themselves. If a person searches for themselves in some manner and accepts themselves the way they are – they must also accept the place where this acceptance takes place – including the temple. They have a certain relationship with the temple, creating a whole with it.

Aid comes when one meets another person. Interpersonal relationships allow feedback as to what the person who seeks aid pleads for, and can then hear themselves. People come and gather at the place they choose, acting in a common interest, multiplying their energy together through joint effort. A stone upon stone, brick upon brick, from one conversation to another and from one feeling to another – a joint creation emerges, a joint work. They come in the morning, they meditate by prayer, they channel their energies in one direction – towards joint effort. This is how a temple is built.

The temple consecrates a place and people likewise want to be consecrated, saved from their ailments, troubles and everyday concerns.

Such a temple was created by people in Czechowice-Dziedzice, where every spatial and material solution – by brick and concrete – was explained to them by the architect who sought his Path to the Absolute and also wanted to show it to others – his own, true Path. It was Stanisław Niemczyk who implemented these praiseworthy ideas – for a long time, without haste, sparing no time and effort in explaining his ideas and discoveries to people, creating a true Gospel in stone with his built temples. This is how speaking stones and speaking walls are made, this is how the Word sounds. Through the effort put into the stone. The energy of feelings, the energy of living human effort. The importance of every brick can be seen in the love with which the Master adapted 'rejected stone' into the most important places – a burnt brick, typically discarded as defective already during manufacturing. To the Master, just like to God – there were no defective things.

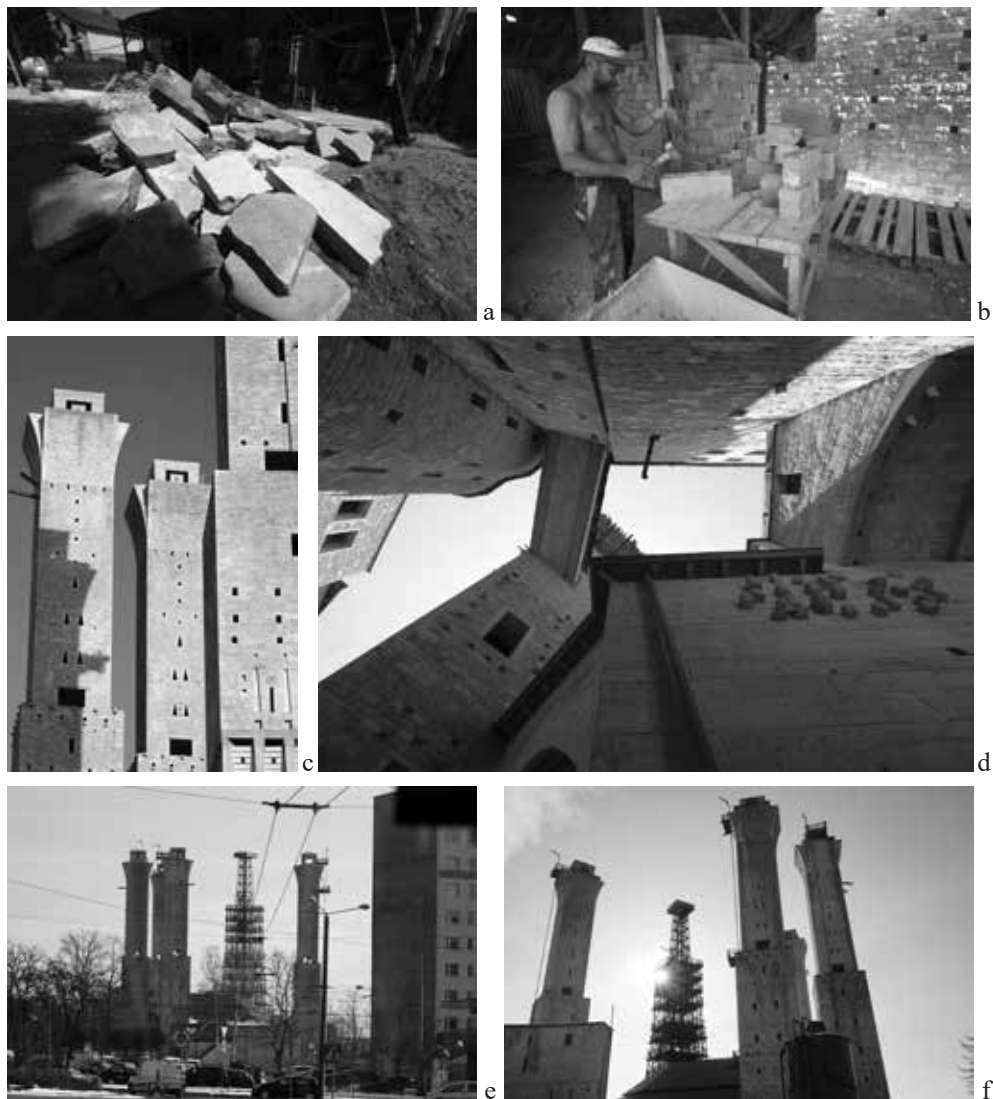
Apart from the warm, 'human' brick, Niemczyk's stone and concrete also speak as each of these materials, laid against the wall – is an individuality, is recognisable, is warm – through the warmth of the hands that made them and placed them on said wall – which is tall and strong, and is to preach the Gospel of life, which defeated death on the cross! Every pebble creates with other pebbles an energy which in a miraculous – tangible, visible manner – reveals to us the invisible in the visible, bringing us closer to the Mystery. The explanations that the towers of the monastery of St. Francis offered to us is that they are symbols of the nails hammered into the Body of God are merely a semantic supplementation for the insensitive human nature with a small capacity for perception and sensing of Energy. Just as killing God is unreal, the nails in the landscape of a peaceful small city in the quiet country, which does not pretend to a role of the preacher of the Gospel, and yet it preaches, are also unreal. The city preaches because of the Work of the Master. We have the World in the Stone, which speaks through it and because of it... The energy in this place resounds with the Word



Ill. 6. Church of Jesus Christ the Redeemer in Czechowice-Dziedzice. Photos by Y. Kryvoruchko

without sound. The size of the Nails highlights the cosmic dimension of the Event of the Crucifixion and the resurrection of God.

In his own way, architect Stanisław Niemczyk shows us true Theometry – his architecture never lies, it never claims to be something it is not, it does not pretend to be anything at all – it is simply itself, the architecture of the Master. This architecture is convincing in and of itself – when it creates a temple, it is a temple, it does not need indicators that it is not of this world – and it intended to be so. It shows a different reality. In a truly convincing way. It is not an ideal or a pattern to be followed – It is its own prayer, one that is unique. It is its own path that can only be followed by those who tread upon it – it is theirs and theirs only.



Ill. 7. The Church of St Francis of Assisi and St Clara in Tychy: stones as a material of nature (a), stone from under human hands (b), stone towers and walls (c, d), the entire Work of the Master, under construction, in the landscape of Tychy (e) and the landscape of the Sky (f). Photos by Y. Kryvoruchko

When looking at the master's works, one cannot not believe – he simply speaks the Truth with a capital 'T'.

4. THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER OF ARCHITECTURE

The truth of stone can be admired on Mount Athos in Greece. Its almost millennium-old monastic life caused Orthodox Christians to consider the space of the peninsula to be holy.

The construction of monasteries, and their ruin by enemy raids, their reconstruction and continued existence throughout the centuries of this peninsula's history, a peninsula that has been devoted to the Mother of God by the efforts of monks, has created a unique atmosphere and spiritual climate. Every small detail, every pebble laid by human hands produces an impression of this area's naturality and eternity. Picturesque roads and paths between monasteries, retaining walls, the stone under the feet of pilgrims, stairs laid with dedication by the hands of monks, create various images or simply a hard surface under the feet of the pilgrim or monk, as in the case of the Serbian monastery of Chilandar (Phot. 8). Walking on such stones, looking at our feet, aids in the walker in maintaining focus, developing the subject of the meditation of the everyday path that leads to the overall Path of Life.



a



b



c



d



e



f

III. 8. The stones of Athos, Chilandar Monastery (a, b), stairs (c, d) and a mosaic from sea stones (e, f).
Photos by Y. Kryvoruchko

Such is the sense of being present on Holy Soil – apart from beautiful frescoes, which completely cover the walls of every church, refectory, vault or column, conveying to the pilgrims the content of the Holy Scripture, the Holy History by experiencing every detail (there are no insignificant details here), and each of them aids us in focus, meditation or prayer. In this space, man becomes free, every visible and invisible element creates a whole and this world emanates with a synergy of this whole. This is the influence of holy space – even despite the will and indifference of the pilgrim – holiness permeates everything, giving an incomparable feeling of freedom.

The space of Athos – is the true space of the world's Theometry, which can be experienced through stone and feelings...

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Authors' Note:

Bogusław Podhalański, D.Sc. Ph.D. Arch.

Disciplines: urban design, spatial planning, architecture. In 1993, received the degree of PhD of Technical Sciences, and in 2014, he became D.Sc. at the Faculty of Architecture CUT. He developed not only a professional interest in the field of spatial planning, but in the architecture as well. Done (as the author and co-author) many architectural designs and collaborative studies of local plans, studies of conditions and directions of spatial planning. Partner in IPG Ltd design office.

boguslaw.podhalanski@pk.edu.pl

Yuryi Kryvoruchko, Prof. D.Sc. Ph.D. Arch.

Disciplines: urban design, spatial planning, landscape architecture, sacral architecture. 1991–2000 – Founder and Director of International Sacral Architecture School of the Lviv Polytechnic National

University. 1993–2012 – Director of the Chair of Urban Design, Lviv Polytechnic National University. 2003–2010 – Associate Professor, Chair of Landscape Design, Department of Environment and Agriculture, Agriculture Academy in Stettin, (from 2008 – West Pomeranian Technical University). 2006–2012 – Main Architect of Lviv, Director of Department of the Architecture, Lviv City Council, President of Urban – Architectural Council of City of Lviv. From 2012 – Professor of the Chair of the Architecture and Design and Architectural Fundamentals of the Lviv Polytechnic National University.
yuirikryv@gmail.com