



Presentations

Intrigue of Infinity on the Border of Two Worlds on the basis of 'The Street of Crocodiles' by Bruno Schulz, i.e. a metaphor of Bruno Schulz's prose in Izabela Cichońska's concept

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Izabela Cichońska:

We can talk about Drohobych in two ways: we can talk about a provincial town with its present culture and sociology with reference to the existing space or read Bruno Schulz's prose and talk about today's 'Real Drohobych' which is not even aware of its own existence, although it contains 'Transcendent Drohobych'.

This specific parallelism of the town – as an undoubtedly interesting phenomenon – causes conflicts, paradoxes and misunderstandings in the modern town, but it also raises the image up to the level of another reality. That which is unreal and was described by Schulz also constitutes a reality and the imagined world has a right to exist and sends out signals of its existence.

The purpose of the project was to generate space on the basis of the literary texture (features of prose, deformed time, multidimensionality) of *The Street of Crocodiles* (lit. *Cinnamon Shops*) by Bruno Schulz. The relations between the two towns such as their common elements, differences and characteristic features constitute a foundation of the strategic project leading to the formation of 'Antiquarter' idea, i.e. a square which changes the assumptions of the accepted formula of forming space in Real Drohobych and gives possibilities of the multi-faceted opening. The place of the project becomes a sphere between a myth and the truth, immensity and finiteness, reality and dream, i.e.

a border between Real and Transcendent Drohobych. In this way, it is a very concrete place; it's just that it simply 'did not manage to fit in time'.

My formal quests were concentrated around the following notions: multidimensionality, mobility and infinity. I made an attempt at materializing a word through an image. I looked for methods how to achieve a certain pretense of infinity by means of matter.

One of the first assumptions was to create a multi-threaded public square within the limits of the town near the market square and on the border of disintegration of a quarterly shaped town tissue. I did not think about shaping the objects as forms which strictly marked out the public and private border, but rather about forming public space with liquid borders so that a human being walking in this territory could freely move from a completely opened place to a closed one and a substitute of the object formed on a plot of land could constitute a culmination of closing space and create a sort of an urban set design.

Antiquarter is organized along two axes resulting from an analysis of both towns – Real Town axis maintaining the synagogue view and Transcendent Town axis resulting from the Topographic Combinatorial Analysis of places described in *The Street of Crocodiles*. A designed function, which is formed in the land cubature and development, is often not fully expressed or has several variants of using space. In the area of elaboration the following functional zones intermingle: *free transformations, enigmatic functions, markets, cognition of intrigue of infinity, a concrete function* as well as *a zone of theatrical transformations*, inspired by the activities of Grotowski's experimental theatre.

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Fig. 1. “Intrigue of Infinity on the Border of Two Worlds on the basis of *The Street of Crocodiles* by Bruno Schulz”, author: Izabela Cichońska
 II. 1. “Intryga nieskończoności na Granicy Dwoch Światów w oparciu o *Sklepy cynamonowe*, Brunona Schulza”, autorka: Izabela Cichońska

The square development is distinguished by three intermingled objects: *Theatrical Object*, *Gallery Object* and *Object of Recognising Intrigue of Infinity*.

The zone of Recognising Intrigue of Infinity is the object strictly connected with Bruno Schulz's prose. The building constitutes my spatial interpretation of the family house described by Schulz in *The Street of Crocodiles*. The object is situated on the Transcendent Axis which runs through the plot of land. The building is a place for one person who decides to undergo multi-faceted experiences. A visitor will have an opportunity to confront his/her own images concerning the Transcendent town with the existing space as well as recall his/her own childhood memories and dreams like the main character of *The Street of Crocodiles*. The building constitutes real concentration of Schulz's 'fermentation matter'. Spaces are hidden in it, not fully expressed and mobile, stimulating all senses.

Schulz in his descriptions moves vertically and horizontally – which for me constituted a significant determinant in the formation of space. Viewing the world from different angles: bird's, frog's, child's, adult's and free touching of micro-, macro- and mega scales imbues the world of his prose. Constructions undergo destruction and stratification, multiform matter is condensed and then escapes, whereas forms are doubtful, problematic and border-like. 'Intrigue of Infinity' is a notion introduced by Emmanuel Levinas and refers to repeatability of the world, its schemes and processes, cosmogony of the Universe, God, macro- and micro-cosmos, which participate in a continuous act of creation and permanent action. Action which is from end to end creative, repeatable and creates a transcendent entirety. The Universe disintegrates, transforms and then it again assumes its original form. Władysław Panas compares this infinite action of cosmos to the elusive and difficult to imitate style of Schulz. Schulz wants to hand out his picture of the world to us and it is possible that he wants us to follow the plots of his unique work and participate in his intrigue of infinity, take up plots, develop them and come back again to their beginning. This infinity is also a plan that goes far beyond the human cognition view and architectural space. Schulz simply encourages us to look for sense and for 'infinite intrigue' of the enigmatic world.

Comment to the project by D. Eng. Arch. Jacek Kotz and D. Eng. Arch. Roman Czajka:

The object or as a matter of fact the subject of the author's elaboration is, clad in space and architecture, the border of two towns – the same and simultaneously extremely different, each of which cannot do without the other one: the existing, until today provincial Drohobych and the imaginary Drohobych, in her elaboration named as *Transcendent Drohobych* which constituted the background of the meta-physical drama described by Bruno Schultz in his work *The Street of Crocodiles*. In other words, the said *Transcendent Drohobych* – a small provincial Galician town in Schultz's story constitutes the *locus*, background and the entire universe in which normal boundaries between time, space and personal roles ascribed to everyday life are suspended – similarly to a mythical tale. This universe-town keeps re-updating all the time – it is broken into fragments and built up anew – similarly to the language matter of Bruno Czajka's stories.

The border between these two Drohobyches became materialized and was interpreted by the author in the presented diploma project.

The author in her considerations, which are contained in the written part, arrives at such understanding of the town as Władimir Toporow outlined in his works. He understands the town in the possibly most developed way – as a 'semiotic cauldron'. It is not only the matter and space that constitute the town but also – created by various previous and present communities living in this town – images, different kinds of myths connected with them, stories, heroes as well as totally private and collective memories – those newly created, existing and the past – forgotten ones. All of them – partly personified by various people – overlap, come into inevitable conflicts and partly materialize and in this way they cause its constant transformation. Last but not least, the town is transcendent in the sense that at the brink of its beginnings it always possessed its non-earthly model contained in the mythical tale, according to which it was created. In the presented work, this *Transcendent Drohobych* by Bruno Schulz fulfills a parallel role oscillating between the present, contemporary times and the past.

However, contemporary Drohobych, similarly to contemporary Wrocław, as opposed to prewar Drohobych in which Schulz lived, is a completely different town. The community living there is different, its statehood has changed as well as the culture and language which is spoken there; also its space and architecture has undergone changes. Finally, the attitude of its residents towards Bruno Schulz and his creative activity differs significantly from ours by oscillating – according to the author – between rejection, incomprehension and total indifference. Schulz and his short stories are known only by the cultural elite of the town. Therefore, the author's intention is to recall from oblivion the figure of Bruno Schulz and his short stories; the presented project consequently constitutes a widely understood tool aimed at achieving this purpose.

For the needs of the project the author constructed several methodological tools taken partly from structuralism and partly from post-structuralism. They are collections of relations connecting the places of those two Drohobyches, *topographic combinatory analysis of places described in 'The Street of Crocodiles'* and the idea of *antiquarter* – a 'quarter the other way round' which is one of the foundations of the project. This idea taken from the features of *Transcendent Town* and the language itself of Schulz's prose is confronted with contemporary Drohobych, which was previously described in its broad meaning, where both of these towns are understood in a deep semiotic sense. All these tools formulate a particularly logical strategy which enables the author to take up the project activities. At the same time, the author considers her project as an event which does not have temporal characteristics and which – similarly to the events in Schulz's prose – did not find its place in time, being somewhere *in between*.

The urban space of contemporary Drohobych has its own character which was greatly changed after the war. The city centre has a mono-centric character based on the square-shaped Market Square along with the town hall with full frontages changing to quarters of the development. Outside the centre a compact development system is defragmented and spreads in the direction of Lviv on the basis of two struc-

tures, i.e. housing estates with great-slab blocks of flats built in the years 1960–1980, which destroyed the scenery and dispersed development of single-family houses.

The author locates her project with the particular square-sculpture character in the area of the Old Town near the Market and the so called Small Market – on the border of disintegration of the quarterly arranged Old Town tissue. The author situates it on the plot of land surrounded by disorganized development which does not form uniform frontages and comes from various historical periods, mainly from the 1990s. Concurrently, the area of the development is situated near an important pedestrian street. A vista closed by the Synagogue dominant goes through this area, whereas the Town Hall tower can be seen from the western side. A further part of a broadly understood context consists of the abovementioned dominants, i.e. trade streets, the market square and – enormous in the scale of the town – residential districts.

The author accepted, among other things, the following project assumptions: maintaining view axes (*vistas*), respecting cultural landscape by selecting an appropriate scale of the development, which does not exceed three floors as well as a perception of the entire complex from the streets leading to the square. The designed development was based on partly mutually entwined functional zones of *theatrical transformations*, *free transformations*, *functional mysteriousness*, *marketplace*, *perception of intrigue of infinity as well as a particular function*. The author used here the aforementioned tools. In this respect, a particular role is played by *The Sphere of Theatrical Transformations* which constitutes, firstly, a stage-scene that works based on Grotowski's ideas, i.e. eliminating the difference between the actor and the spectator and secondly, entwining the market function with the aforementioned one, similarly to a mediaeval town.

The designed square consists of three intermingled objects: *Object of a theatrical character along with the stage*, *Gallery Object with the entrance to the garage*, *Object of Recognizing Intrigue of Infinity*. The entire complex is built according to the idea of *antiquarter*.

Object of a theatrical character consists of a café which opens to *The Sphere of Theatrical Transformations*, a small forum with a mezzanine and a rehearsal room on the first floor, at this level connecting to *the Gallery Object*. *The Gallery Object* consists of a city information point on the ground floor, a box office and a staff room,

whilst on the first floor there is a small art gallery; the whole object is connected with an underground garage.

The Object of Recognizing Intrigue of Infinity is strung on *The Axis of Infinity* that is derived from Topographical Combinatorial Analysis of the places described in *The Street of Crocodiles*. Having been designed for a stay of one person who can be confronted here with some experiences, it constitutes a spatial metaphor of Bruno Schulz's family house according to the author's interpretation. Symbolic meanings of the particular storeys of Schulz's house find their analogy here. The concept of *intrigue of infinity* – by Emmanuel Levinas as it is used by the author when translating the fragments of his works which had never been published in Poland into the native language – refers to the constant process of surround creation, transformation, disintegration and reactivation of macro- and micro-cosmos. This concept that was the basis of his vision of cosmogony was transferred to the area of philosophical and literary studies on Schulz and his prose by Władysław Panas. The life of Schulz also makes a certain metaphorical circle. The author refers this concept to the imagination and she uses it in her project as a sort of strategy.

The author's quest, which intentionally refers to the categories derived from Bruno Schulz's short stories: multi-dimensionality, mobility and infinity, constitutes an attempt at making their spatial images and she assumes a changeable, labile and uncompleted functional programme, and consequently advanced changeability of the proposed spaces which constitute both exterior and interior of forms. Similarly, the entire complex which is supposed to constitute a multi-thread town square – public space with liquid boundaries – is smoothly connected with labile interior spaces. The opposition interior/exterior like in the anthropological category of boundary is eliminated here. Everything is in constant dynamic movement with internal spaces being transformed while people move within them. Similarly, the dynamic character of deconstructing structures – sculptures oscillates on the brink of explosion being consciously contrasted with the provincial (in a positive sense) nature of 'this real' Drohobych.

In conclusion, it must be said that the presented diploma project constitutes a remarkable study which goes far beyond the scope of requirements for MA theses. The discussed project is characterised by remarkable consistency and logic of the project activities based on an equally deep logical foundation – and as a consequence – perfectly designed spaces and architecture having the features of almost certain virtuosity.

Translated by
Bogusław Setkiewicz

Intryga Nieskończoności na Granicy Dwóch Światów w oparciu o „Sklepy cynamonowe” Brunona Schulza, czyli metafora prozy Brunona Schulza w ujęciu Izabeli Cichońskiej

Artykuł jest prezentacją pracy dyplomowej Pani Izabeli Cichońskiej, studentki Wydziału Architektury Politechniki Wrocławskiej. Praca dyplomowa została wykonana pod kierunkiem dr. arch. Romana Czajki i obroniona w 2010 roku. Tytuł oryginalny pracy dyplomowej: „Intryga

nieskończoności na Granicy Dwóch Światów w oparciu o *Sklepy cynamonowe* Brunona Schulza”. Dyplom jest architektoniczną metaforą *Sklepów cynamonowych* Brunona Schulza, osadzoną w realiach współczesnego Drohobycza.

Key words: metaphor of Bruno Schulz's prose

Słowa kluczowe: metafora prozy Brunona Schulza