



Presentations

The complex of monastic buildings with St. Michael the Archangel Orthodox Church in Jarosówka

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Introduction

This work is a summary of diploma project at the faculty of Wrocław University of Technology – Architecture and Urban Design. It has won the prestigious Zbyszek

Zawistowski Main Award by The Polish Architects Association – Diploma of the year 2010.

Monasticism

Although the term monasticism (monastery) derives from Greek *monachos* meaning alone and *monasterion*, hermit's cell, the essence of that form of religious life is a community which combines the human desires to achieve a spiritual perfection, chastity, modesty and poverty. Consequently, a mon-

astery is not only the bricks protecting the monks. A monastery is the monks – people who devote their lives to God in prayers and work. However, what's monastic will not form in man without the atmosphere, without seclusion, without architecture, without sacred space.

Guidelines

It can be assumed that a great majority of Eastern Orthodox monasteries were not originally designed as complexes of buildings. They rather evolved in the process of development driven by need and restricted by possibilities. Some patterns, however, can be identified in the way of creating monastic spaces, which are repeated both in the case of designing new monasteries and extending old ones. Most monasteries have central of semi central layout where the sacred space (church) is 'protected' by surrounding buildings or monastic walls. The reasons why such solutions are used include a necessity to maintain the defensive character of monastic buildings. Although it was indeed the underlying reason, monastic walls defended monastics not so much against the attacks of conquerors but against the human psyche.

Spiritual growth, as a human need, is one of the highest needs and in order to satisfy it the most strict conditions must be met. All lower needs, especially the basic ones such as physiological needs and security must be satisfied. Pilgrims are offered meals and a place to stay. The defensive character of the walls evokes a sense of safety in them as well as makes what is protected by the walls more noble. When you do not need to care for everyday life necessities, you can join the life of a monastery, prayers and work. What is significant at this stage of cognition is architecture which should create an atmosphere of peace and order inside of that secluded from the 'turmoil' of everyday life outside. That separation is the idea behind the development of every monastic space. In order to create such a specific borderline that can be crossed, and

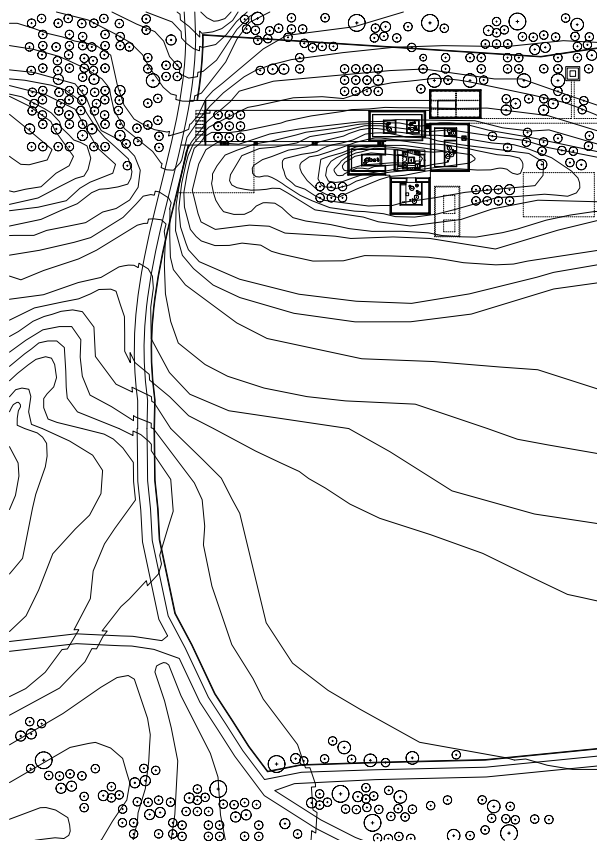


Fig. 1. Site

II. 1. Sytuacja

must be felt, by anybody, a lot of patterns of ecclesiastical buildings were worked out. What is their common denominator is the walls (that borderline).

The most important place in a monastic complex is the space for prayers and as such it must be archetypically 'protected' by the other buildings. For the same reason the design with a centrally located temple was preferred. Pil-



Fig. 2. View from access road

II. 2. Widok z drogi dojazdowej

grims should subconsciously realize that they approach the heart of the design.

Apart from corporal inviolability, the sense of security also requires the assurance of the possibility to satisfy future physiological needs. That is why the designs of monastic complexes include internal gardens and water wells which, in spite of being insufficient to provide enough food, due to their size or kind, do demonstrate the subconscious human desire to live in a place that can satisfy their needs. The internal gardens should seem diverse, rich, abundant and natural.

The windows of the house for guests as well as other rooms which pilgrims can visit should look out east (where the sun rises) and provide the view on the church. The building itself should be as far away from the monks' cells as possible and their windows should also look out east yet not onto the publicly accessible court. Furthermore, pilgrims should have an easy access to refectory and chapter house.

One of the main guidelines which were defined at the origin of the design was its simple construction and technology. All elements of the complex were developed in such a way that they could be built without technologically complicated materials and machines. It should be possible to build the whole design in traditional technology by people who are not experienced constructors and must learn how to do it themselves.

Monastery – town

By analogy, the design suggests directly the same approach as the one applied in urban planning as in fact a monastery is a miniature town (Fig. 1, 2). It is enough to mention such notions as self-sufficiency, borders, entrance-gate, a group of buildings or a number of events to see a small city or a suburb. Consequently, what should be designed is not a finished work or composition where adding or taking away any component elements would prevent its further operation or decrease its aesthetic qualities. What should be done is provide a rule – an algorithm – which

while developing would create from the very beginning through all successive stages a space adequate to the needs which would correspond in order and harmony to the context.

The urban design should be clear but at the same time it should seem complicated in its harmony. While providing a number of possible actions and arrangements of micro-events, it should create a soothing atmosphere of peace. Its inhabitants should perceive it as diverse and as a result they should feel safe there and in the right place.

Idea

Seclusion is a characteristic feature of every monastic design. The easiest logical way to separate a given area is to build a wall and locate all activities in the buildings enclosed

by it (just like the first Christian hermits in Egypt). The problem arises when, due to the costs and size, that wall cannot be built at once and until its completion a monastery must

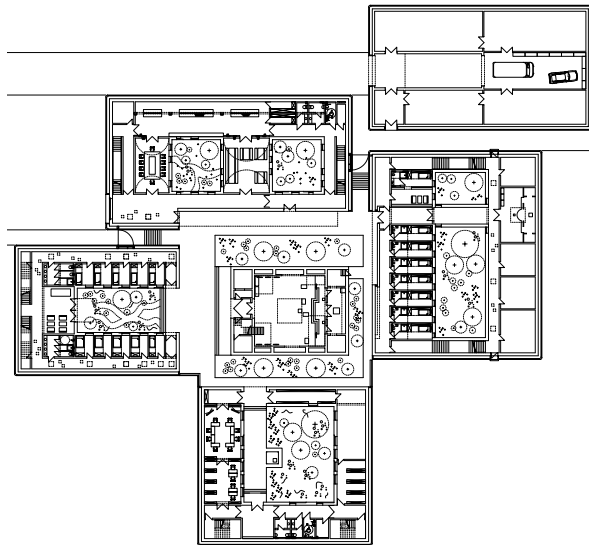


Fig. 3. Plan of ground floor

II. 3. Rzut parteru

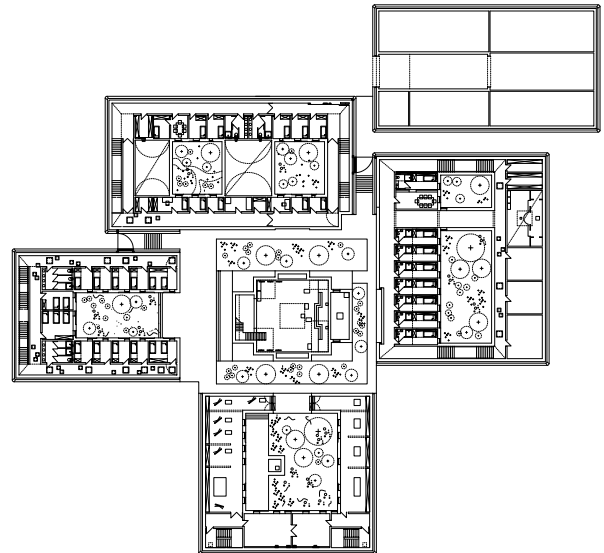


Fig. 4. Plan of upper floor

II. 4. Rzut piętra

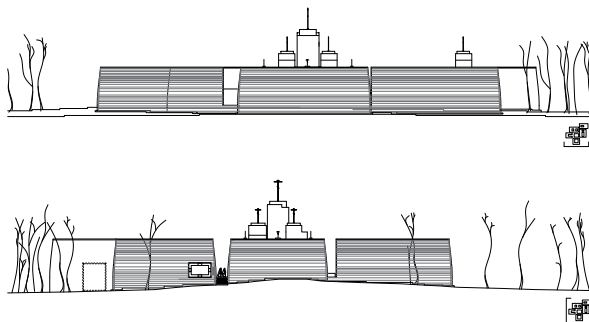


Fig. 5. Elevations

II. 5. Elewacje

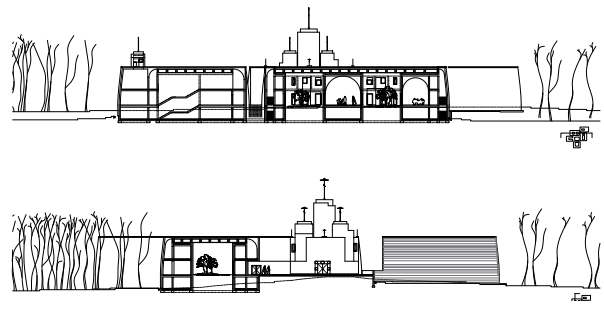


Fig. 6. Sections A

II. 6. Przekroje A

operate provisionally. The idea is to divide the enterprise into stages in such a way, however, that after completion of each stage of development the buildings would constitute a complete monastic complex. Treating the buildings as the fabric of the “wall” would prevent the necessity to build a separate outside enclosure of the complex. The size of the functional design would result in a monumental complex with uniform external walls. That is why functions were planned in six separate buildings, each of which was protected by external walls without significant perforations, opens only to its internal courts with diverse, abundant gardens. The functions were planned in them in such a way as to reduce movement between individual buildings to a minimum. Different shapes of buildings and different kinds of division of elevations were analyzed. It was decided to choose the design with a centrally located church surrounded by the first monastic building from the north, the second monastic building from the east, library and workshops building from the south and the house for guests from the west (Fig. 3, 4).

The proportions, relations between individual buildings, their location, shape, material are an attempt at escaping the monotony and repulsive character of sim-

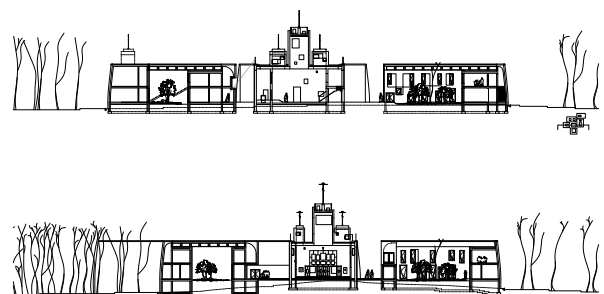


Fig. 7. Sections B

II. 7. Przekroje B

plicity. In order to achieve an effect of lightness as well as a strong connection of these buildings with earth at the same time, the thickness of their walls slightly decreases upwards. It has a symbolic significance – faith grows from people who are inseparable from earth. It is also a formal act of dematerialization of a solid vertically. Most forms of ecclesiastical architecture, and not only, demonstrate such a quality (Fig. 5–7).

The sacred

The sacred space was created by building up borders to be crossed over by pilgrims. The first of them was a low concrete wall at the edge of the monastery painted white. White color, in stark contrast with the grass of the meadow and forest surrounding the monastery, shall be seen and recognized from far away as an ideological representation of the sacred. That passage is allowed in a designated place that is through an entrance gate which, though it is open all the time, marks a mentally perceived border (Fig. 8). Next pilgrims, approaching the bare walls of monastic buildings covered with larch shingles, begin to feel a kind of dread, discomfort, and fear. Their eyes, however, focus on a large glazing

through which they can see the life going on inside and on crosses glaring in the sun which extend above the walls. Finally, they get to the monastery gate which is as narrow as the “eye of the needle.” The uncertainty about what they are going to see builds up in them. This is when they go across the border of the walls and this is when they are dazzled by what seemed from outside austere and cold, is clear, elevated, and fresh inside (Fig. 9–11). The next border is the orthodox church building. When they enter it from the daylight court the pilgrims are surprised by a dimmed and quiet interior with bright candle flames and light flowing from the openings in the ceiling and walls (Fig. 12, 13).



Fig. 8. View at front gate
Il. 8. Widok na furtę wejściową



Fig. 9. View at orthodox church entrance
Il. 9. Widok na wejście do cerkwi



Fig. 10. View at orthodox church main court
Il. 10. Widok na dziedzińiec główny klasztoru



Fig. 11. View at garden in workshops and library section
Il. 11. Widok na ogród w części warsztatowo-bibliotecznej



Fig. 12. View at iconostas inside orthodox church
Il. 12. Widok na ikonostas wewnątrz cerkwi

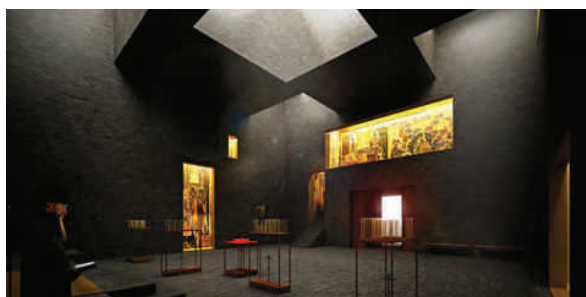


Fig. 13. View at choir inside orthodox church
Il. 13. Widok na chór wewnątrz cerkwi

Aesthetics

Beauty is the distinctive feature of the Eastern Orthodox Church and its theology is full of mysticism; it is a legacy of Hellenistic culture, Platonism and Neo-Platonism which developed until the fall of Constantinople. It is clear in Eastern Orthodoxy that God is revealed in art and art without the sacred space quickly dies or it is not possible at all. The liturgy affects the faithful with beauty in every possible way. All human senses are affected. Hearing – the beauty of choral signing, intonations, diversity; vision – icons, iconostasis, theatricality of rites; smell – incense, aromatic oils. Architecture must conform to that thought too. Architecture is per-

ceived here in a similar way to that by Peter Zumthor or Herzog & de Meuron. Historically, the aesthetic simplicity was imposed by limited means and that restriction forced designers to apply well-thought-out solutions. An objective must have been achieved despite unfavorable circumstances – frequent robberies and damage. The aesthetic effect was supposed to be intensified and built up in the inhabitants through different simple measures. Today, the aesthetic simplicity, which is achieved through incomparably huge means, is the result of the development of art that achieved what the “spiritual artists” created then and what proved timeless.

Symbols

Due to their symbols, all ecclesiastical buildings tend to direct the eyes of the viewers upwards, maximizing the perception of vertical divisions. Logically, one could come up with the idea to use only those. However, the space cannot be described only with the use of vertical direction. Let's take for instance a vertical line. One such line will not create space but if two lines are used, their ends will mark horizontal direction (the lines must end somewhere). The way an architect copes with that uppermost horizontal direction determines the quality of the ecclesiastical architecture. The most original result of that thinking is the use of barrel vaults or domes where the vertical directions shaped by the curvature of arches meet. They also symbolize the heavenly vault by analogy of shape. However, both of these shapes cause significant formal and aesthetic problems which have been addressed over the centuries by using different kinds of vaults (cloister, ribbed) and arches (pointed, flamboyant arches.) The barrel must be closed by a wall, which causes a formal disturbance in the place where the arch meets the wall. Termination with an apse offered a kind of solution,

however, it caused a problem with the functioning of the interior of the sanctuary (altar is a rectangular prism to the left of which there should be a table of Preparation – a place of preparation of the Holy Gifts). The dome placed on a square base requires pendentives. This problem can be avoided by using a circular base but then it makes it difficult to expose the sanctuary and iconostasis.

The designers of the church decided to use a rectangular plan with elongated sides for the sanctuary and narthex with a choir above it. The design of the towers, typical of the Eastern Orthodox Church, four corner ones and one in the middle, symbolizes Christ and four evangelists. Each tower is a little different just like the Biblical accounts of the apostles slightly differ from one another. The elevations refer to the universally known graphic symbol: the Golgotha cross where the mount is symbolized by a pedestal. On top of the elevation, in the shape of a stepped pedestal, there is a cross. The church ceiling has five openings, additionally lit through the towers, symbolizing the stellar heavenly vault. At the bottom of the central opening there is a mandylion (holy face of Christ).

Finishing elements

Two finishing materials were used on the elevations: white cream Venetian plaster and oak or larch shingles. The materials were selected in such a way as to contrast the passage between different spaces. The edges of the shingles straight, the cuts in the white plastered planes with full boarding and the elevation timber impregnated against water and fire. The color applied corresponds to the windows and doors.

The interior of the orthodox church has stone cladding. The interiors of the other buildings were designed as plastered and with finish coat (Fig. 14). Mineral gray and white paint to correspond with plastered elevations.

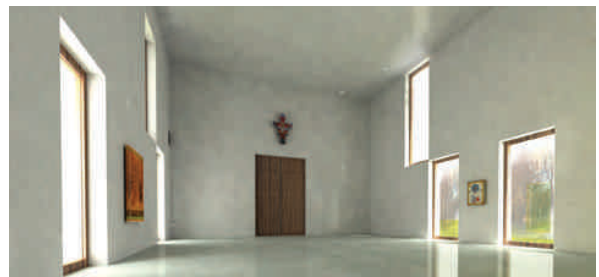


Fig. 14. Refectory
Il. 14. Refektarz

Zespół budynków monasteru wraz z Cerkwią Św. Archaniola Michała w Jarosławce

Problem projektowy klasztoru można ogólnie opisać trudnością w wykreowaniu przestrzeni *sacrum*, przestrzeni, która ma uspakajający, ale ułatwiający skupienie wpływ na użytkownika. Analiza istniejących

rozwiązań, jakkolwiek pomocna w zrozumieniu zjawiska, nie jest podstawowym źródłem wiedzy. Skupić by się bardziej należało na człowieku, na jego psychice, sposobach poznawania przestrzeni i jej odczuwania.

Key words: monastery, cloister, sacral architecture, orthodoxy, *sacrum*, Orthodox theology

Słowa kluczowe: monaster, klasztor, architektura sakralna, ortodoksja, *sacrum*, teologia prawosławna