

When tones melt to form a melody

A slight flutter of fabric - two bodies intertwined - small notes swirling in midair - an early thirties tune. Ginger and Fred keep swaying in the breeze of an unworlly melody frozen into architecture, enhancing the genius loci of a newborn country's jazz riverside. A Goethe-ish echo.



The Dancing house alias Fred and Ginger

Yet musicality has been a part of architecture and life itself since ancient times. An époque ruled by myths, when people tuned themselves to the sound of the universe while floating in a mythical ageless space.* Every column served the purpose of creating its own timbre to compose a harmony. Interestingly enough, some features of a temple have been named after an instrument such as the tympanum (drum) **.

A similar idea regarding Gothic architecture has been pinpointed by Louis Charpentier***. Walter Pater links form and content to sound and sense, architecture and space. Moreover music is a formidable element of a culture, another piece of the puzzle for us to understand a different age's thinking.

Besides music, there are other significant components of a culture, such as literature, visual arts and crafts. All of them together represent a certain view of the world and all of them have a common basis.

Ancient Greeks put emphasis on harmony, which can be seen in their buildings, sculptures and writings. Art Nouveau for the first time put individual emotions to a building by using grimaces and masks (unlike Baroque, where suffering portrayed on sculptures is supposed to express

earthly suffering and devotion to God), while collaborating with other (often expressionist) artists. In functionalism form follows function and the same applies for design, with the most prominent example being Bauhaus. Cubism and Art Deco also ties visual arts with architecture and design.



Municipality house - front facade - Art Nouveau



Interior of Black Madonna house - Cubism - Josef Gocar



Exterior and interior of palace Adria - Pavel Janak, Josef Zasch - Rondocubism, Art Deco

Sometimes architecture and arts are forcibly united, probably in an attempt to shape culture in order to follow ideology. It can be clearly shown in Nazi or Stalinist architecture. However this pattern doesn't apply only to totalitarian regimes. When the government decides to build a memorial to commemorate an event, they decide to pick one interpretation of history, which can lead to overlooking other important elements. For example works on the National Monument

and the Jan Zizka statue started during the First republic of Czechoslovakia, to commemorate his heroic acts as a leader of the Hussite army and to enhance the Czechoslovakian identity (in honor of the Czechoslovakian legionaries), while disregarding the attacks and brutality the Hussites committed.



The National Monument

Even though this monument was meant to secure the Czech identity, since it became Gottwald's mausoleum during the Communist era, it has been engraved to the masses as a symbol of communism and tends to be looked down on. It failed to serve its purpose, because of these incidents.

On the other hand, the Dancing House many objected to, given its unique shape that didn't seem to fit on the coast, has proven itself to be a success. Even though it was erected amongst Baroque and Art Nouveau structures, the frame of the building is well connected to the surrounding houses and the tall part of the glass construction is of similar height as the towers of the coast. It became a monument to a newly established state.

In general a public building, besides fulfilling its technical function, serves as a symbolic object that represents how a nation should be perceived by others. It just so happens, that before a crisis an enormous construction is being erected – as if to prove the nation's strength. For an architect's work to be picked, it has to fulfill the given requirements. An architect is therefore obliged to cater to the commissioner's needs. Be it a patron like Medici for Brunelleschi, Guell for Antonio Gaudi, or the government. Though an architect adds his own style, he still has to follow the rules. This applies for all commissions.

If he is required to create a gigantic high-tech building next to small wooden houses, he will design one and he might not consider the surroundings. This doesn't mean that the architect is

too carried away by technological progress, but that he is required to create such a construction, otherwise the mentor would not finance it. An architect has always been dependent on his patron, who criticized his work; though nowadays his commissions are also doubted by the public.

In other words, architecture is a melody that combines every possible element of a culture, it corresponds with prevailing arts, consists of the wants of the commissioner and ideology of a certain age.

Benedikt Straňák, Melina Toumpaniari

* e.g. Zdeněk Neubauer

** Charles Jencks – Architecture becomes music <http://www.architectural-review.com/essays/architecture-becomes-music/8647050.article>

*** Louis Charpentier The Mysteries of Chartres Cathedral

Short summary: <http://www.sacredconnections.co.uk/holyland/MysteriesofChartres.htm>