

Manual guía de Dümmerling para la transformación de espacios sagrados. Un enfoque de Europa Central-Oriental en un ambiente político ateo después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial

Dümmerling's guiding manual for transformation of sacred spaces. A Central-East-European approach in an atheistic political environment after WW2

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Resumen

El Sancrosanctum Concilium aborda los aspectos artísticos de la arquitectura desde la liturgia, mientras que la Carta de Venecia aborda el espacio arquitectónico desde los principios de protección del patrimonio. Ambos enfatizaron la simplicidad, la funcionalidad y la legibilidad. La importancia y el efecto combinado de los dos documentos en la práctica de la construcción de iglesias en Europa del Este pueden considerarse significativos, ya que la posibilidad de rediseñar el espacio litúrgico surgió principalmente en el contexto de la renovación de edificios históricos en el entorno político ateo. La prueba de esta declaración se presenta en el manuscrito del arquitecto Ödön Dümmerling. El arquitecto, practicante de restauraciones de monumentos y admirador del espíritu de la arquitectura moderna, fue llamado a elaborar una guía de diseño después del cierre del Concilio Vaticano, haciendo recomendaciones para nuevos equipos para espacios litúrgicos. Junto a esto, examinamos la práctica arquitectónica húngara, que no tenía posibilidad de construir nuevos espacios sagrados, sino iglesias medievales renovadas con restauraciones de vanguardia en relación con la protección de monumentos patrocinada por el estado. En estas renovaciones encontramos los espacios litúrgicos que atestiguan el espíritu del mundo moderno con respecto a los documentos definitorios: muestran un valor inmanente con materiales nobles, simplicidad y funcionalidad.

Abstract

The Sancrosanctum Concilium approaches the artistic aspects of architecture from the liturgy, while the Charter of Venice approaches the architectural space from the principles of heritage protection. Both emphasized simplicity, functionality and readability. The significance and the combined effect of the two documents in the practice of church construction in Eastern Europe can be considered significant, since the possibility of redesigning the liturgical space arose mainly in the context of the renovation of historic buildings in the atheist political environment.

The proof of this statement is presented in the manuscript of the architect Ödön Dümmerling. The architect - a practitioner of monument restorations and an admirer of the spirit of modern architecture - was called upon to draw up design guide after the Vatican Council was closed, making recommendations for new equipment for liturgical spaces. Alongside this, we examine the Hungarian architectural practice, which had no possibility of building new sacred spaces, but renovated medieval churches with state-of-the-art restorations in connection with state-sponsored monument protection. In these renovations we find the liturgical spaces testifying the spirit of present age regarding both the defining documents: displaying an immanent value with noble materials, simplicity and functionality.

Palabras clave: espíritu de la época, manual de diseño, simplicidad, funcionalidad

Keywords: the spirit of the age, design manual, simplicity, functionality

Preface

In the late 1950s, a special architectural solution was used to restore the Lutheran church in Lovászpatona. Historic forms, the gothic openings known from the excavation, were expanded and a new large window was opened on the side wall of the temple. With this solution, the historical, old age was discovered, significantly influencing the appearance of the church space. The solution used did not disturb the architectural use, nor the rational use of the liturgical space. This is not why we find it interesting at a conference on the transformation of Catholic liturgical spaces. The solution used an era-specific design methodology, which can be identified in the document of the Venice Charter published a few years later.

Our statement, which will be discussed later, is that around 1964 two decisive documents were produced in which the "spirit of the age" was emphasized. While the Sacrosanctum Concilium approaches the artistic aspects of architecture from the liturgy, and the Charter of Venice approaches the architectural space from the principles of heritage protection, both emphasized simplicity, functionality, and readability. I would introduce the proof of the statement with a pivotal manuscript by an architect, Ödön Dümmerling. Along the way, we examine the Hungarian architectural practice, which is special in comparison with the many examples presented at the conference because of the atheist political power in the country in the 1960s. While it was not possible to build new churches during this period (with some representative exceptions), the restoration of historic buildings under state control has yielded significant results, among which, thanks to cultural policy, church buildings represented a surprisingly high proportion of their overall art value. (Figure I.)

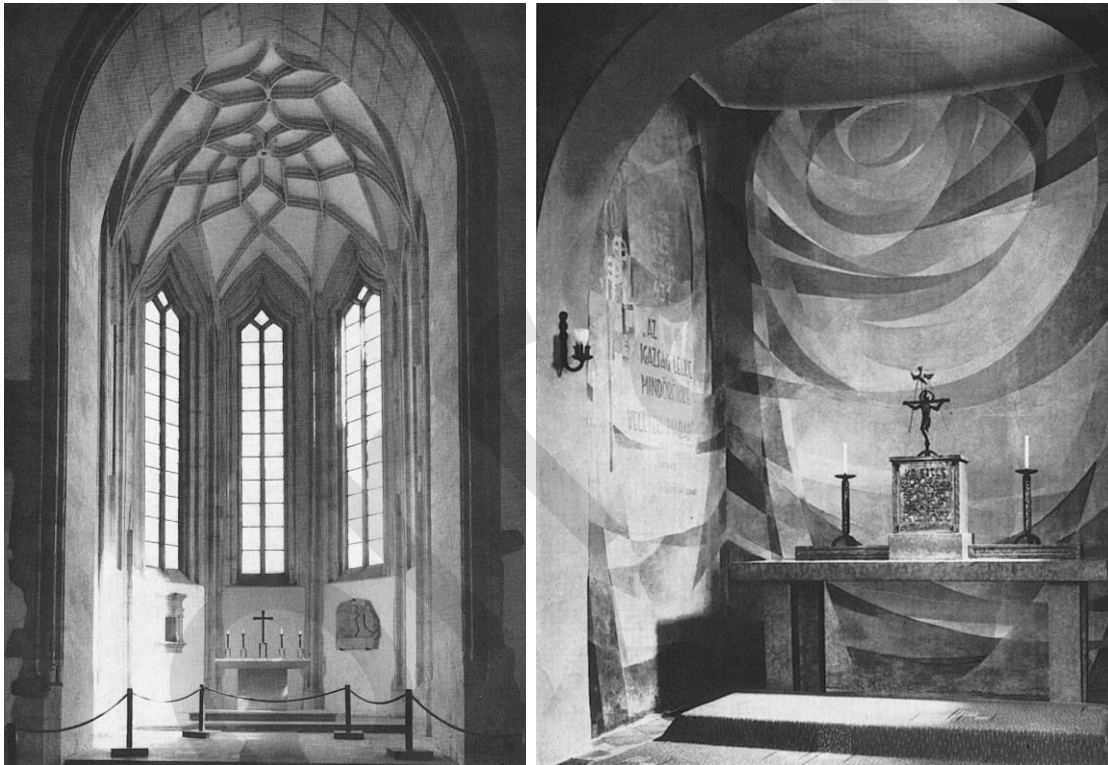


Fig.01.
Siklós, remodelling gothic exterior and Pilisszentlélek, remodelling baroque exterior, 1960's

Design manual for new liturgical spaces

The Sacrosanctum Concilium was designated December 4, 1963. The texts of the Council were continuously translated, but only in December 1969 was the full material of the Council and the corresponding instructions published. An agreement was reached between the Hungarian State and the Vatican in 1964, that settled the conditions for the functioning of the Catholic Church in a socialist political environment that was atheist. Having reputation in the operation of the Catholic Church, but also experienced in the restoration of historic buildings, Dümmerling has compiled a design manual for the collaboration between the state and the church, the so-called "National Council for Church Art and Monuments".

The manuscript made design suggestions for new liturgical equipment and tools. It is based on articles 122 through 124 of Chapter 7 of the Sacrosanctum Concilium, which formulate the expectations of works of art. The

aesthetic conceptions of Dümmerling, by virtue of their own upbringing, are essentially paralleled with the principles of modernist thinking. According to the typical practice of the time, the restoration of buildings in accordance with the modernist approach (see the Charter of Athens 1931) required distinctive, period-specific works following the principles of modernity. Dümmerling's recommendations show an aesthetic dimension that adds a new quality to the modernist approach, but of course recognizes - as he writes - the importance of preserving existing historical relics.

Let's just look at the highlights of words and sentences

As an attachment to a few pages of writing, a 14-page document containing drawing and recommendations in charts was also produced. In this, Dümmerling offers suggestions for altar (mensa), ambo, sedes, and even the use of benches by worshipers. (Figure II.) It also deals with the design of liturgical objects (chalice, patina, candlestick) as well as liturgical clothing. In connection with the 13 pages with the drawings, on page 14 he made a recommendation for his exemplary works and his own designs. It is interesting to note the names of the architects whose work (though taken from their whole environment) he himself takes as an example: Dominic Bohm, LE Corbusier, Emil Steffan, Rudolf Schwarz, Henrie Matisse, Hugo Schädel, Martin Weber. Sketches showing the transformation of old churches begin with a unified collection of drawings. Dümmerling recognizes the potential of a political environment in power, as during this period it was not the question of building new churches, but the focus was (first) on renovating old churches. In some sketchy floor plans, he expects to keep existing valuable altars and ancillary equipment, but the proposal states that where they are of no value, efforts should be made to create completely new equipment and worthless works should not be retained. The hierarchical system of the relationship between old and new equipment follows the principles of the Sacrosanctum Concilium, too: it is only acceptable for a valuable altar to keep the sacrament in the axis of the sacred space, at the end wall. At the same time, the creation of the new altar (mensa) creates an object suitable for holding the Mass of Mass toward the faithful. Typically, the altar is located near the faithful in the nave. These drawings are of great importance - no such concerted work or recommendation is known, and it is only summarized in an analytical book published in the decade preceding the change of regime. Thus, according to Dümmerling's recommendations, the liturgical spatial formations of the new spirit were essentially realized in significant monuments. The two examples shown also illustrates, in some cases, too much respect for historical space even resulted in functional errors.

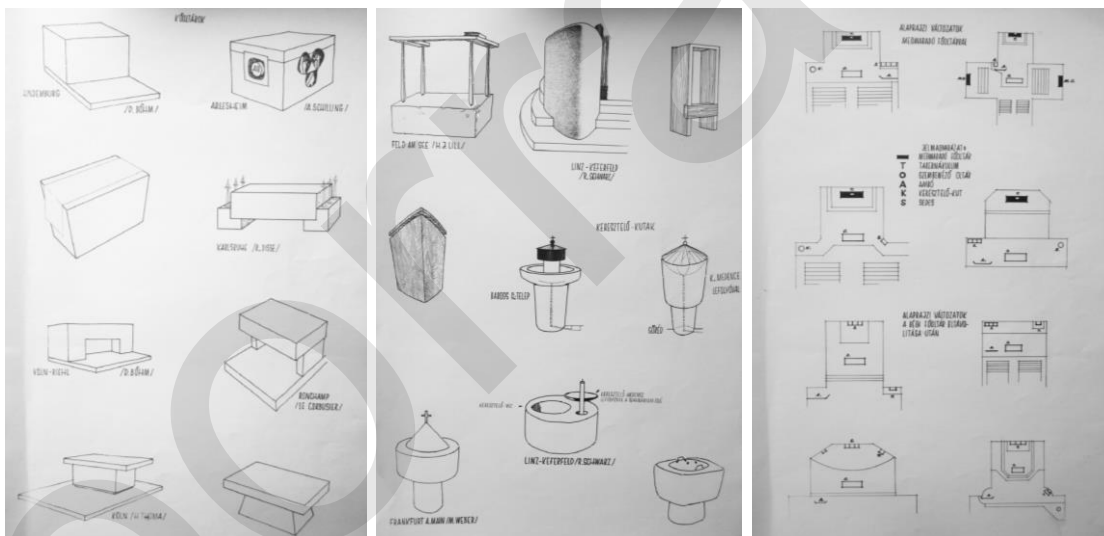


Fig.02. Samples of the manual of Dümmerling, 1966 (official print in 1968).

Case studies for renovation and reconfiguring sacred space

Our statement is therefore that the Council's decisions and recommendations that determine the functioning of the modern church can be paralleled with the design principles applied at that time, with the recommendations of the Charter of Venice, in terms of the formation of the liturgical space. With just a few excerpts from the documents, we can see that his symbolism clearly sees the creation of a Christ-centered image through works of noble simplicity, a thought which is paralleled by the aesthetic principles of the Venetian Charter. I would essentially illustrate this statement with examples from the second half of the 1960s.

The example at Becsehely was work in progress at the time of the creation of the documents, the principles of the Constitutio have not yet been validated, and we are actually seeing a classic monument-restoration of the liturgical space.

At the church of Nógrádsap, the familiar Constitucio guidelines and the renovation-principles brought the integrated Baroque altar into silence, with the restoration of medieval frescoes and a new altar table with noble simplicity.

In the church of Mecseknádasd, after the removal of the non-valuable altar, an altar was created that was nicely adapted to the nature of the medieval space and used for its simplicity.

At Velemér's Romanesque church, a solution was created that allowed the appearance of valuable medieval paintings and the possibility of spatial composition of the Gothic-style east window.

In the Roman Catholic Church of Zalaszentmihályfa the designer used several periods known from the excavations. This solution occupies a special place in the concept of liturgical spaces, where the new altar table is placed within the line of the altar space of the first church, and the ambo is raised on the pedestal behind the altar in today's expanded version.



Fig. 03. Sopronbánfalva, 1969

Conclusion

The examples illustrate the aesthetic quality of liturgical space arrangements in an atheist country following the recommendations of the Vatican Council, which meets the design principles of another major document of the era. The aesthetic dimensions of the Sacrosanctum Concilium and the Charter of Venice aim to truly portray a modern world. (Figure III.)

With noble materials, simplicity, functionality, with readability appearing – displaying an immanent value.

Biography

Architect, monument protection specialist. He graduated in 1996 from the Faculty of Architecture, Technical University of Budapest, at the Department of Public Building Design. He received his PhD degree in 2003. At present, he is an associate professor at the Department of History of Architecture and Monument Preservation,

Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BUTE). He is a lecturer of contemporary architecture and sacral architecture and a supervisor on PhD-program of BUTE Faculty of Architecture.

He is an author on architectural issues, curator of contemporary architectural exhibitions and lecturer of several international conferences on sacred architecture (Bangkok, Ourense, Washington, Kielce, Venice, Tokyo, Shanghai, Bruxelles, Sevilla, Bologna, Puebla, Lisbon, Santiago de Chile). His special interest in sacral architecture led him to establish the Sacral Architecture Studio at BUTE where they investigate the contemporary sacred architecture by cooperative studies.

He is a member of editorial board at *Metszet Journal of architecture*, *Hungarian Architecture Journal* of Association of Hungarian Architects and he is editor-in-chief of *Architectura Hungariae* Online scientific journal on architecture. He co-edited the book 'New Lutheran Churches'. He authored the book 'Serbian Orthodox Churches of Hungary', 'Contemporary Dutch Architecture' and co-authored 'Model of the Universe – Contemporary Hungarian Church Architecture' and 'Contemporary Portuguese Architecture'.

He is a member of the Scientific Committee of CIARC.

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