

## REPORT - Michal Skoda

Also the second part of my stay in Krems / AIR / was very good for me. I am thankful for the opportunity to attend and I would like say many thanks to Sabine, Heidrun and Katharine. I can confirm what I wrote last time already - so kindly and hospitable environment with a high professional level. Important time for me.

I was here now thanks to ORTE / architecture Section of AIR / and I can say, that this month was really more about architecture. Not only walks and perception - through the city / mainly part of Stein / and surrounding areas, ( I saw interesting architecture work of A. Krischanitz – in Krems University - **Archiv der Zeitgenossen** too ) but again a lot of work with my creation , as well as textual reflections. So - one month only for work, thinking, concentration and new experiences. I was finished more than 20 drawings / A3 – A1 /. My work / as in the first part of my stay here / builds on my „open“ cycle Time and Environment. I spoke about this cycle in my last Report – now I was thinking simultaneously about more relatedness .

There was a time when I felt that my artist's books had a growing influence on my work; rather, I felt a greater "self-promotion" of this activity into the forefront of the "output" forms of my work. It really did happen, and today I can say that the style of work applied in my books has become a central starting point for my creative work. Since 2011 I've been working on the open cycle "Time and Environment". This cycle, mapping out my everyday life, is a fundamental point of contemporary work, in addition to other projects that form directly as spatial interventions.

Likewise, I realize how architecture became my prime interest some time ago. Not only in the sense of an "influencer" of my work, but as a comprehensive interest that not only gives me "the most", but also in that part of my other activities are mostly directed towards architecture. I am fully aware of its significance and importance, and this naturally has an influence on my curatorial and other activities in the field of architecture, when I believe that I can help something at least just a bit. Still, though, it's the same "path"...

Unfortunately, in the context of architecture one cannot speak merely of positive questions. An increasingly intense interest in this "discipline" reveals countless problems to me. / I can talk about the situation in Czech Republic – my experiences are from there /

A number of them have been discussed for a long time, and many critical attitudes in this context may come across as simple phrases. I believe, however, that this is not a phrase, but reality...

Architecture is increasingly gaining unlimited possibilities with the aspiration to be utilized as a "tool" for political and economic interests. A deeper cultural responsibility, however, is zero.

Conversely, there are moments that clearly fit into consumer culture. The method of construction does not offer or create, but to a large degree it negates the feeling of the place, its meaning and identity. The accelerated material age brings with it an increasing flood of insensitivity, aesthetization, and an arrogance of buildings with an expression of indifference.

Such moments would be exceptional which would affirm that "True buildings, rather than hampering and denouncing their less valuable neighbors, always improve their context and even make ordinary places important. It is most often true that general quality and integrity of an environment has a higher quality than the individual buildings in the foreground; this is why the primary responsibility of architecture is to contribute to the integration and harmonization of landscapes, town, and villages." ( J. Pallasmaa )

Consumerism, materialism, incompetence, and speed – the main moments that bring just the opposite – hand in hand with medicalization. One of the properties of architecture is that it becomes both a reflection and co-creator of the age. Even though we do not talk about architecture directly, but about the problems that surround our everyday life, we come first and foremost to the human factor, the aforementioned incompetence, and with many confessions of superficial values that bring with them superficial means, which returns back in architecture and its formality.

Time – speed, reasoning, when in terms of both investment and political perspective, everything is measured on the horizon of the electoral period – thus a very short time when quality could be seen, where what is valid, however, is investment returns. Short-term profit wins over long-term wealth.

"Truly great architecture is not about aesthetic styles – it is the embodied image of authentic life with all its contractions and opposites. Authentic architecture shares its existential meanings through our entire physical and mental makeup." (J. Pallasmaa)

The simplicity, austerity, ordinariness that I often mention – this is not about "minimalism", as I often hear, where many have a tendency to place me. These are essentially the aspects that are naturally based on my "I" that are very important and natural. They are based on the strongest of feelings, a certain mental state of mind. It is a conviction – a stance against materialistic society suffocating beneath layers of futility. I believe that harmony and pure space (with their very simplicity, ordinariness, austerity...) allow the mind to break away from the consumer lifestyle.

As Adriana Šimotová beautifully writes, "We live in our own solitude, but still we speak, we communicate, we touch each other. Each of us is looking for our own relationship to the world. A person looks for himself, and the closer he is to that self-recognition, the more he finds something outside himself. By seeking out his own identity, he discovers the identity of the world."

I am looking for my identity through, and in context with, architecture. I ask myself questions and then through my work I try to strive so that the questions are offered up. I'm trying to communicate – not only through my work, but through other activities as well.

I don't know where this will all develop, how and what I will create. I do think, though, that a radical change is not likely to come in the near future. If I said before that I would rather work more simply, then I have the feeling that it's even working. Occasional spatial interventions have passed on, and everything has become limited to a "simple" record of everyday life. The focal point has become drawing, often with an important moment of the time that it requires, and the photo as well – but not with the ambition of a "photographer". Everything is accompanied by the occasional collage and work with text intertwined with my "records", like some sort of connecting thread. I constantly find myself in the field of seeking and analysis of this world.

Definition, territory – the space I'm given to move in and often to ask "why" to a number of issues.

I do not consider architecture, however, to be the most important in terms of building, but from the position of a person. This is why I agree with one of the statements of Dalibor Veselý: "Architecture is primarily a discipline of the humanities – this should be clear to anyone who sees the difference between the means and the goal. The essence, goal, and main purpose of architecture is to situate our life in a concrete place and to create suitable conditions for our existence and coexistence, not only with other people, but also with the given natural conditions and cultural circumstances. The skills, techniques, and technology are only the means that help us fulfill this purpose and goal."

I'm continuously interested in the relationship "between" – I want to explore everything through myself. Everything stands on the basis of my own experience and feeling. A subjectivity, then, that may to a certain degree relate to objectivity. Most of all, I want to stand up to myself with what I do. I don't want to change the world, and I think that no artist is able to either. The politics that so often annoy me, about which I speak here – they never appear in my work. I don't like politics in art, especially on the level of pretension. I would lose my creative freedom. I am aware, though, that a person creates in a certain time, says something, expresses himself somehow – even reacting to politics to a certain degree.

If my work is to be sincere, which I am trying to do, it has to be built on my own experiences. I can, then, change myself, I can perhaps ask or open questions, but not give the answers. I cannot receive experience, I have to experience it. My theme stands on my own experiences, on my constant seeking.

The important thing is "time", and I ask how important. If it's not rather about its certain elasticity than its linearity...? I see the present, but the past as well and I ask whether these two "sections" can be perceived at the same time.

All this is the space – environment – of architecture. I expect architecture to be an enrichment, an added value of life in a given place.

My "workplace" is, both factually and inspirationally, still the city most of all. It's interesting, though, to follow "how" in a natural evolution over time there is a certain crossover, looking back, and return.

On returning to roots and to certain questions that I once opened. With the knowledge gained by experience, that is, returns to "something" but to a different understanding. Similarly so, a return to nature without wanting to reproduce it. Even more intensely, I realize its strength and beauty again, and the essential thing, that it was with nature in context with the "structure" that this fundamental interest in architecture once came. Even though my main "territory" has been the city for many years, everything evolves from experiences that fit into a natural environment. That is where the natural and most frequent return is taking place today.

"Architecture still has, and will have, an irreplaceable task: to be the mediator between the world and us, and to create a horizon through which we understand the world and ourselves." (J.Pallasmaa)