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Contemporary architectural strategies
in reconstruction of historical spas in Buda

Theses

masterpiece: residential building – Budapest, Kova street

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Contemporary architectural strategies in reconstruction of historical spas in Buda

As spatial collage of different ages, architecture of historical spa complexes in Buda has been characteristically representing variant periods: mostly the Turkish era, 19th and 20th centuries, which architectural layers are joined to contemporary architecture in many cases. 'Imprints' of different ages were mutually interacting to each other during their creation and this conjunction is still existing. Beside exploration of imprints created in a certain period, collective analysis can unveil exciting new aspects.

Unique character of historical spas in Buda is verified by the fact that their original function has endured centuries without any change. Our historical spas have characteristic of functional continuity through ages, which is rarely to be found among listed monuments. Therefore my dissertation is focusing on constantly renewing spas having the aforementioned uniqueness and preserving their function since the Turkish era. The only reason why this decisive constancy could have remained for centuries is the following: our historical spas have been suited to demand of subsequent time periods and their architecture were changed accordingly collecting layers of different periods.

In the dissertation – historical spas of Buda, related contemporary architectural solutions, reconstructions, extensions – are analysed in concrete case studies after a brief historical review, which reveals the complexity of the background.

Theses



Thesis No. 1

Characteristic of historical spas in Buda – having relation to Turkish era and still being used as a bath – is the following: they are simultaneously representing various periods with high density, creating a specific uniqueness. Additionally, contemporary architectural elements are joined to them enriching our built heritage in several cases.

Our historical spas are deeply embedded both in our social and cultural relations as they were functioning as significant scene of social life defining it and could preserve their identity as a bath despite changing expectations through ages. This continuity could only remain due to natural conditions: their site was designated by spring of thermal water ensuring their survival through several periods. Although they could meet challenges and changing expectations of different ages, they needed continuous and significant transformation gathering “layers” of various architectural phases.



Thesis No. 2

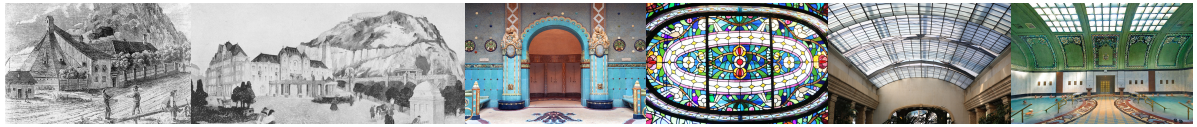
Triangle-grid of present reconstruction of Rác Bath, designed by Tamás Dévényi forms both theoretically and structurally holistic unity, which was able to create a spatial, structured entity, generating symbiosis among fragments of building complex, preserving imprints of many periods and using up-to-date architectural form without dominance of contemporary elements.

Existing building blocks remaining from time before reconstruction are coming from significantly different periods and were present as only loosely related separate fragments, so main design strategy was finding unity and framing. Even though the building has retained its original function, needs of various periods, supplementary baths-activities have been creating new services and further building extensions, which brought all the fragments to life. This fact created such a high degree of heterogeneity, that our historical spas completely differ from other monumental buildings and unique architectural reflections became necessary in contemporary reconstructions.



Thesis No. 3

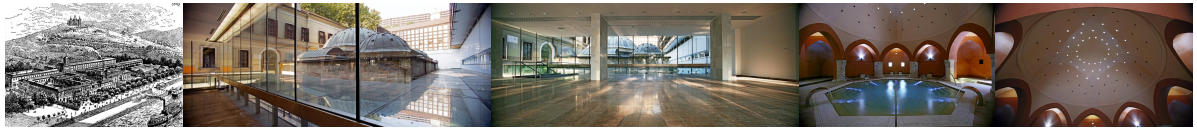
Recent reconstruction of Lukács Thermal Bath has created a special collective harmony among building sections from the Turkish era, two spa hotels built in the 19th century and the neo-baroque style – which can be seen today as well – by using authentic architectural shaping. The listed periods and styles can be found simultaneously in the spa building, in which contemporary elements are having non-decisive or emphasized but a subtle appearance helping the emergence of earlier periods.



Thesis No. 4

Szent Gellért Thermal Bath has been reconstructed in a way of using contemporary design, affecting only few part of the building, mainly with internal alteration, applying methods – analogous to earlier techniques – in many cases: cladding of thermal bath for women with harmonizing style and being structurally similar, restoring well housing having the original geometry. Original atmosphere could be restored according to Győző Bujdosó's design both in dressing rooms and at the thermal baths .

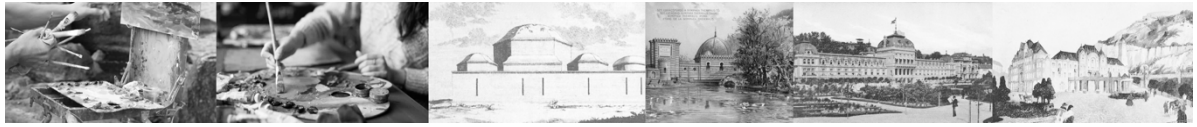
Site is having Turkish aspects as well but was originally built in Art Nouveau style. By reconstructing the concerning sections of the thermal bath the former atmosphere could be recreated.



Thesis No. 5

Characteristic building complex of Veli Bej Bath is a unique reconstruction of a monument, in which aim of Csaba Virág's concept was placing spatial emphasis on Turkish bath, 'liberating' it from 19th century, Hild-court and principally recreating original state of Turkish era.

Recently added architectural elements were built with significantly different materials and in contemporary way according to the need of touching period, in high quality. At the time of realization few compromises – concerning concept of preferred reconstruction of the original Turkish bath – were made according to the monumental aspects, especially regarding the relation of Hild-court to Turkish bath: architectural imprints of the two different periods are still partially 'assembled', fused together.



Thesis No. 6

Baths gathering history from several periods can be considered as a continuously evolving painting, on which layers and colors are put on the canvas one after the other often by different painters' brush. As canvas of painting determines its spatial extension and placement, thermal spring is assigning location of bath, which makes bath-identity and original function unquestionable through centuries. At a certain moment painting can never be regarded as completed, as it is changing constantly, but uncompleted artwork is also symbolizing completion in a certain minute: completion of creative processes of the past. So this permanent formation is imaging the future and further expected transformation accordingly. Theme of a painting is not altering but engrossing and evolving during its transformation, as unchanged functionality of our historical baths in Buda.



Thesis No. 7

Architectural responses to renewal of historical baths in Buda, contemporary architectural strategies and alterations are heterogeneous: reconstructed building of Szent Lukács Bath is accompanied by not pronounced contemporary architecture; period reconstruction and missing element completion with former analogous techniques can be found in Szent Gellért Bath; design of Veli Bej Bath has principally placed emphasis on presenting layers of Turkish era; In Rác Bath a complex reconstruction has been performed, where contemporary elements – having significant characteristic – are appearing creating harmony and cohesion between architecture of various periods.

As imprint of today's values, language of contemporary architecture – coming up in our significantly unique historical baths in Buda – is actual social and architectural reflection of judging them and our built heritage.