Friedensreich Hundertwasser and his «Green Architecture»

L M Stratonova¹

¹Ufa State Petroleum Technological University, Ufa, Russian Federation

E-mail: di@rusoil.net

Abstract. Environmental and globalization problems are swiftly becoming a focus of an ideological, political, and economic warfare. Today, it can be a reason of violent collisions and conflicts. Alongside, many solutions have already been found and are actual and successful. The world-known Hundertwasser-KrawinaHaus in Vienna can certainly be referred to such projects. The unforgettable outlook of this building excites designers’ and architects’ minds but its creator’s ideas have not been developed widely in the contemporary urban environment. The objective of the given article is to analyze main conceptions of Friedensreich Hundertwasser, a gifted and original designer and architect of the XX century. His bright creations captivate by freedom of self-expression, humane attitude to nature and people, artistic outlook of architectural forms, and highly expressive decorative and colour design of his main creation – Hundertwasser-KrawinaHaus, Vienna. At present, methods of arranging a harmonic urban environment where social cooperation of people originates on a freewill basis, can demonstrate ways of formation of a really innovational urban environment. According to Hundertwasser, nature is an inherent part of the city life and a source of purity and freshness. The care for “tree tenants” is socially important collective activities and voluntary joining together efforts of every inhabitant of the urban environment. Results. A study and usage of the past successful experience, which being a bold experiment, has become an important and meaningful part of the world cultural heritage. Such an experience can be regarded as a kind of a trigger for creative thinking of future designers and projectors. Hundertwasser’s creative work can serve as a source of inspiration for students of the Chair of Design and History of Art of the Ufa State Petroleum Technological University while making a collection of models and an exposition at the gallery “ACADEMIA” in Ufa.

1. Introduction

The creative work of one of the most outstanding designers and architects of our time Friedensreich Hundertwasser is in the focus of professionals and art and architecture lovers. This is not surprising. His concepts of green architecture, free individual creativity, and wavy line architecture are actual today as never before. The reborn interest in the heritage of this extraordinary artist is a good reason to turn to his original ideas. It is necessary to analyze his sudden images, paradoxical projects, and striving to violate architectural patterns of his time. This surprising master’s creations boggle imagination, and they are extremely impressive. The vital capacity of his concepts is growing more and more obvious. It is hard to find an environmentalist more passionate and consistent than Hundertwasser.

His manifestoes, articles, and public lectures made many people see problems of urban space formation, human wants, and “creature comforts” quite differently. The fascinating novelty of his ideas brought him a world-wide fame and won a great number of followers. The environmental
movement of last decades captured the world and gave rise to a vast variety of speculations, fake news, polemical fights, and marginal leaders like Greta Thumberg. On the whole, the green movement gave no striking results. Uncivilized exploitation of natural resources and chaotic urban building continue; hazardous industries grow wider. Huge sums are contributed to the so called pollution control.

Hundertwasser’s impulse and consistent struggle for a new world view influenced at least two generations’ consciousness and attitude to themselves and nature. His boundless fantasy, courage, and capacity to inspire those, who could promote realization of his projects, gave him an opportunity to implement many of his ideas that he considered vitally important and salutary for the nature and the humankind. In the middle of the last century, few people thought of how the progress and civilization influence the environment, what everybody’s striving for comfort could bring, and what price for unlimited consumption could be paid. The new generation of “millennials” to full extent became aware of natural resources finiteness and the danger of productions, spontaneously established. Gradually, they work out a new strategy of behavior and consumption.

These processes show that it is necessary to turn to Hundertwasser’s heritage and feel the force of his artistic concepts. They are popular in the Western society due to certain reasons. And due to the same reasons they are almost useless and unrealizable. Contemporary Russia has a great potential for his projects to be further developed and “reincorporated”. There are still virgin nature, undeveloped territories, economic strength, and gifted architects and designers, supporting ecological and environmental development. Russia’s science welcomes positive ideas and new conceptions concerning interrelations with the environment that should radically differ from generally accepted destructive methods of nature reclaiming. It is necessary to investigate and make use of the past experience, which turned from a bold experiment into a considerable part of the common cultural knowledge. It is necessary to make a project challenge out of this experience in order to inspire students’ creative activities.

2. Materials and methods

Friedensreich Hundertwasser is one of the greatest and most successful Austrian artists of the XX century. His influence on the contemporary art is specified not only by his paintings and surprising design of constructions built according to his projects. His environmental, political, and social views made him one of the most influential figures of our time. There are not so many creators, who could be distinguished by so an independent and consistent humane viewpoint as Hundertwasser’s; and it served a basis for his creations during all his life. His philosophic convictions were based on his deep understanding of human nature, his love for living nature, striving for self-expression, and belief in creative capabilities of all people. He opposed uniform and unexpressive architecture, its lifeless and tiresome geometry of straight lines and right angles. By his opinion, only flowing and wavy lines, inherent to natural objects, can make human environment harmonic, full of life, and positive. Nature was his ever source of inspiration and knowledge.

By Vienna residents’ opinion, to live in the Hundertwasser Krawina house is to live inside a work of art. This project appeared to be the most significant and viable. It is a dwelling house (its creators called it “communal”) produces an imperishable impression – its sight is so extraordinary for Vienna and for architecture in general. This “patchworky” and “shaggy” building amazes in no time. It is called an oasis in the desert and an antidote to tedious utilitarianism. Hundertwasser and his co-author managed to join nature and human, art and architecture. The building was erected in 1985; and it is rightly considered to be the most prominent project of the two masters. It absorbed all Hundertwasser’s manifestoes and Josef Krawina’s adherence to ecological and environmental architecture. The happy tenants of 3 communal and 16 private terraces live in harmony with one another and with nature. Since the construction of the house was over they planted more than 250 trees; today, the larger part of the building exterior is covered with vegetation. The project authors called them “tree tenants”. Just like people, they change every season and live according to their laws. This is particularly the way that the creators thought of. The Hundertwasser Krawina house is intended
for 500 tenants; there are play rooms for children, a swimming pool with a sauna, a winter garden, exercise rooms, rooms for rest and intercourse, shops, and coffee-bars. Hundertwasser’s idea that each tenant should recognize his windows when he returns home, turned the house façade into a magic mosaic. The bright colours that distinguish living apartments, fade in time, by the artist’s opinion, particularly this process makes them beautiful. The façade fragments that were left grey, designate communal places. Many people consider the windows of the house to be the most extraordinary architectural solution. Being different in size and form, and framed with bright colours, the windows make the façade unique. Despite their rich décor, both interior and exterior parts of the house do not look pompous or exorbitant. On the whole, the design is simple and not annoying, it leaves space for tenants’ creative experiments. The creators of “green architecture” put overall harmony and permanently developing life as their main tasks, and they were a success to the full extent. The faster the civilization invades ecological and environmental systems, the more followers Hundertwasser’s humane ideas and vivid images win.

3. Discussions
“There appears an urgent need to replace the lifeless term “verdurization”, belonging to the past epoch, with a new one – “ecophilosophy”. The essence of this new thinking is obvious. If harmony, perfection, and sustainability of natural ecological systems are preserved in their virgin state, and this condition is accepted as an ideal then it is easy to determine the objective of projecting and forming newest infrastructures, integrated or “implanted” into the natural environment of particular territories. Fortunately, there are many such areas in Russia so far. The idea itself has a convincing historical experience even in those places where the population density and historical building preservation problems make formation of eco environment practically impossible” [16].

Hundertwasser could be called a romantic or a utopian if it were not for a considerable number of realized projects, which this unique master created independently or those, in which he took part, or those he inspired. His architectural ideas were mostly intended for European urban environment with its historical context, existing infrastructure, and building density. However, his pathos and creative impulse could not but captivate. All his creations were based on his deep thinking of human and human nature, and ideal world order where it would be possible to realize not a mere return to the fundamentals but a harmonic blending together with “the first nature” and conscious compliance with its development laws.

A recent great interest in conceptualist designers is accounted for by their striving to improve not only objects and environmental systems but also to propose most actual models of restructuring social relations and to work out new principles and scenarios of living conditions. Hundertwasser was one of such reformers. He proposed ideas and implemented them in real projects; he followed his ideas all his life. In our modern world it was a feat of art. Architects and designers of the whole world admire him and have respect for him. To make replicas of his creations is impossible and there is no need in it. They are too individual and costly. As for our exceptional conditions, vast virgin territories, natural diversity, and what is important, Russian unbeatable fantasy and creative potential, Hundertwasser’s manifestoes could be further developed into reality. Moreover, our country already had a similar experience of harmonic collective existence. “In 1920-s, masters of VKHUTEMAS and of German Bauhaus tried to join extremes of contemporary art processes to receive something integral. They wished skill and art, machinery and beauty, and, in the long run, life and culture were blended into an overall artistic creation, bearing social existence harmony” [14]. House-communes, houses – machines for living were not only designed but they were built. It is interesting that despite minimal and even ascetic living conditions from today’s viewpoint, the tenants are fond of these buildings, they do not want to leave them; many creative people possessing fantasy and taste, dream about them. Such is the famous complex “House-commune in Gogol Bulevard”.

It is difficult to define what in particular is so attractive for the tenants of these experimental complexes. It may be a general collective responsibility for the preservation of a unique culturologic experiment in creation of a new urban life scenario.
Specialists are skeptical about the architectural innovations of these complexes; their criticism is quite reasonable. However, as for the new scenarios of life, their arrangement, collective activities, perfectly different principles of communication – all what is implied in these projects need to be analyzed and investigated by sociologists.

It is necessary to be more attentive to experimental viable projects that were realized in our country with her unique historical experience. Their originality and challenge boggle imagination up to now. Actual social institutions should have more confidence in designers’ efforts to create a new environment. Financing of Hundertwasser’s extraordinary projects is an example of such confidence. Unfortunately, an immense archive of ideas and concepts of Russia’s designers is left unclaimed.

4. Results

A “revision” of the creative heritage of Hundertwasser, one of the brightest and most consistent creators of the modern world, is an urgent necessity today. Those, who had an opportunity to see his creations with their own eyes, begin to see the reality in a quite different light. It is a real feat of art – not only to declare one’s ideas, to be satisfied by recognition, and to rest on one's laurels but also to find like-minded persons, to find financing, to find strengths in oneself to implement these artistic and architectural concepts. Only a man of character, a man of strong personality could do it; a man, who is ready to devote his life to his creative work. It is a pity that Hundertwasser’s creative activity is mostly known only by specialists, i.e. people engaged in art, design, and architecture. For a wonder, heat power engineers are also familiar with Hundertwasser’s work; the fact is amazing. His famous incinerator in Austria (a wonderful construction with a giant rooftop cap as a business card of the author) is included in the curriculum of heat power engineering students at the universities in Russia.

It is useful to consider technological aspects of the Hundertwasser-KrawinaHaus. Before starting construction and making cost sheets and engineering calculations, they made three models. The first model of the house was made out of matchboxes in 1979, while the authors were discussing the project. The second one was made in the end of 1980. No doubt, so extraordinary and complicated projects require multiple verifications. Making a model for solving so complex tasks is the most efficient method of looking for optimal solutions.

It is exactly the reason why a great attention is paid to the elaboration of model complexes at the Chair of Design and Art History of the Ufa State Petroleum Technological University. All forms of visualization are used in the process of searching for ideas and forms of their realization. Still, models have a magic power. They produce an impression of some actual reality, that of a miniaturized piece of the Universe with its inhabitants and life hidden inside. And this world is ideal.

The students of the Chair of Design and Art History of the Ufa State Petroleum Technological University prepared a large exhibition of model projects. The exhibition was arranged in two places of the University complex: the Modeling Studio and the “ACADEMIA” gallery. There were exposed students’ conceptual projects, in which modern materials and technologies were applied. All the participants of the exposition searched for conception formation solutions, based on the first and the second nature interrelations. In fact, they continued developing ideas of eco architecture that had been proposed and formulated by many well-known masters, and by Friedensreich Hundertwasser as well. Certainly, these were already completely new modern conceptions, based on advanced technologies and, in the first place, on new thinking and new level of social responsibility.

5. References

[1] 2008 Hundertwasser (German: Tashen Books) p 46
[2] 2010 Hundertwasser – The Painter-king with the Five Skins Pierre Restany (German: Tashen Books) p 216
[3] 2013 Hundertwasser-Crawinhaus Vienna (Vienna: Ing. Mag. Harald Boehm) p 128
[4] 2014 Hundertwasser, der Maler (German: Otus Books) p 58
[5] Dai C 2000 Places where the soul lives: Architecture and the environment as a means (Moscow: Ladiya) p 324
[6] Hundertwasser Architecture. Angelika Muthesius (editor (German: Tashen Books) p 46
[7] Inozemtsev V L, Kuznetsov E S. 2001 Global conflict of the XXI century. Reflections on the sources and prospects of inter-civilization contradictions (Moscow: Politics) p 137
[8] Kolodin K I. 2004 Formation of objects of a suburban environment (Moscow: Architecture-S) p 276
[9] Kuznetsova G N. 1995 Design as plastic formula of harmony. Collection of scientific works of MGOPU: Design and art criticism Is. 1 (Moscow: MGOPU Publishing house) pp 51 – 55
[10] Lipp R. 2008 ElCity The concept of modern urban infrastructure Vol 1 Moscow XXI century (Briesen: StrassenHaus Ltd&Co) p 134
[11] Lviv D, Moiseyev N. 1999 Russia in search of the third way Political and legal magazine 3
[12] Pereslegin S B. 2009 New cards of the future, or Anti-Rand (Moscow: AST, AST MOSCOW; St. Petersburg: Terra Fantastica) p 704
[13] Rozenson I A. 2010 Bases of the theory of design (St. Petersburg: Piter) p 224
[14] Sokolova M L, Mamedova I Yu, Furnike M Sh. 2005 Dizayn (Moscow: MGAPI) p 127
[15] Stolovich L N. 1972 Nature of esthetic value (Moscow) p 271
[16] Stolovich L N. 1985 Life, creativity, person (Moscow) p 415
[17] Stratonova L M. 2018 Design as a way to develop a relevant urban environment J. Fundam. Appl. Sci. 10(6S) pp 36-44
[18] Suprun V I. 2006 Tendencies of development of world cultures Analysis methodology Bulletin of Library Assembly of Eurasia 1 pp 32-33