Theatricalization of Architecture as the Strategy of Habitat Humanization

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Abstract. The problem of theatricalization of architecture, significant in the theory of architecture in relation to a fundamental revision of the basic categories of formation, composition, design semiosis, methodology of designing in architecture and design environment. It is shown that theatricalization of architecture is again relevant and needs to rethink its methods of interpretation. Currently, there is an intensive exchange between the arts techniques and theater penetration as a mass art accessible to all areas of life - from politics to culture. Far from beyond the boundaries of theatrical art, the term "theatricalization of architecture" takes on new meaning. Distinguishing theatricality and theatricalization, the authors present a number of grounds on which in the near future a shift in attitude towards the uneasy and ambivalent phenomenon of theatricalization in architecture may begin. Keywords: theory of architectural designing, architecture theatricality, theatricalization of architecture, culture of spectacle, the commodification of architectural form, morphogenesis in architecture.

1. Introduction

At present times, under the pressure of an increasingly aggressive market of spectacularity, the socio-communicative dimensions of architecture are steadily drifting towards mass culture and consumer demand, losing depth, meaning, authenticity. From the very beginning of its existence the architecture has had scenographic qualities - it was able to organize space, time, ritual. But today, the very essence of theatricality is associated with the rhetoric of the postmodern eclecticism and the ability of the object of art to excite interest, also by using the semiotic aspects of the architectural language. However, as we tried to show in our previous works [1-3], in this context it is already problematic to speak about the original architecture theatricality - starting with the deployment of the project of modern architecture, it is replaced by the theatricalization of architecture that is a strategy of artificial and secondary, external to architecture and it is put at the service of the commercial culture of the spectacle.

2. Targets and tasks: distinction between the concepts

Theatricality is the name of the effect, which is necessary to realize the most important processes of the living world of traditional communities, and which was first achieved by architecture at the dawn of its evolution - in the pre-literate era. Afterwards the theatricality confidently has attached to the architecture, and only relatively recently and only partially to the radically changed world and society
could be achieved in other socio-spiritual practices: theatre of various kinds, cinematography, design, "virtual reality", various synthetic spatial-temporal types of contemporary art.

The term "theatricality" can not be considered the most successful to denote these qualities and phenomena of architecture. Its origin, apparently, by chance, came to be by analogy and predates the appearance of the very phenomenon. But there is no other term, except, perhaps, the ancient term "scenography" that is even more "theatrical" sounding today. Vitruvius called "scenography" a technique of overcoming the surface of the image (facade), in which you can see the echo of the ancient ability to create a different reality, inherent to architecture, as well as the pressing desire of genuine architecture to work with four dimensions, including time.

The term "theatricality" should be written in quotes, because in the architecture this quality is manifested long before the emergence of the actual art of theater and the theater as a cultural institute. The original architecture "theatricality" is apparently associated with its direct participation in the organization of rituals, with its opportunities to create spaces for religious mysteries. But we can assume that these qualities of architecture are not just used in mythology and religions, but they gave an impulse to many of them, they defined the forms and the way of worship. Architecture possesses an undeniable psychological suggestion: by transforming the landscape, the architecture acts out the scene of the divine, becomes an incarnation of "here and now". It is the architecture that makes possible the ideal, conceivable, dreamed: it manifests its "forms" and "kinds" as a reality that can already be dealt with in an immediate sensory experience. The architecture controls the access to its limits – keeps the limits between the worlds.

In order to understand the concept of theatricality and its difficult historical fate there are two important circumstances. First of all, the architecture "theatricality" is not something secondary, neither for architecture nor for the theater. On the contrary, it originates from architecture and it served as the main organizing paradigm in the formation of the institute of theater and in the spatial, temporal and scenic principles of theatrical art. Second of all, while modern monopoly of sight was establishing [4, 5] the possibility of theatricality in architecture were drastically reducing, it was losing its symbolic and phenomenological horizons, it was flattening. At the same time, the culture of spectacle, which was gaining strength, carried the request for expressiveness, to which the immanent architecture theatricality was no longer able to respond. Therefore, from the already formed by that time spheres of artistic practice - including theatre-starts a secondary in its nature influence on architecture (as well as on other arts and aspects of life and activities). All we just mentioned is the theatricalization.

The "feast of sight", demanded by the commercial culture of the spectacle, is not provided by deep and immanent architectural ability to organize sustainable structures of events, that is decisive for human life in the archaic and even medieval society, and is not architecture "theatricality". This new and growing demand is met by borrowed tools from a variety of sources, among which the theatre itself that is the most common of the references and the metaphorical empathy towards the collective image of such sources. Let’s mark that the "theater" in the processes of theatricalization is no more than a metaphor. The theatricalization does not prohibit the direct transfer of artistic means or compositional principles from the arsenal of theatre arts or scenography, but it doesn’t represent an inexhaustible source, in which pre-made and perfect means or tools of the rationally planned process of "theatricalization" are stored and waiting for use. The theatricalization, that started in the architecture of modern times, is not someone’s project plan or an economic program in the current environment and culture. It is a quasi-natural process, i.e. realizes in a naturalized, by habits and professional norms, mode of the everyday functioning of many people. Heidegger would say that this is the "fate of existence" - festive and lively in appearance, but in fact sad. It is not the result of any kind of ideologica or artistic harm (although it often causes aesthetic harm); it is (apparently) not carried out as a policy, but is implemented as a convention. Theatricalization is a basic process of impersonal discourse of the power of the spectacle.

In the era of the "classical" baroque opera the theatricalization already treated the architecture as if its forms and laws were not enough expressed and therefore young, but, at the same time, prone to be strengthen. This aggravation can take the scale of a paranoia, in which the architecture finally loses its
own theatricality and it is used as a decoration, freed from any sense and obligation, projected to the infinity of the spaces and landscapes.

For at least 500 years of its deployment in the European culture (if we do not consider the events of ancient Rome, where a similar trend was already manifested) the theatricalization managed to form many different configurations and methods of realization. Its most intensive application is in the Baroque period and the classicism, afterwards in the neo-styles and the eclecticism of the nineteenth century. But in the twentieth century the theatricalization got quite unprecedented development: after being briefly freezed, without completely disappearing from the periods of avant-garde and modernism, it spread explosively and widely in the postmodern and contemporary architecture and design. With the aim to create an attractive and competitive image of architecture, its theatricalization uses today's innovative computer technology. From our point of view, the information technologies, including the virtual reality, belongs entirely to the long-term historical trend of theatricalization of architecture, and it represents its actual technological hypostasis. This vast, relentlessly growing and extremely aggressive cultural sphere of the modern civilization does not contain "pure" answers to the most significant objectives of the development of the architecture itself and to the questions about the quality and the meaning of the environment of human habitation. However, there are indirect opportunities that we will try to find and identify. But first we will pay tribute to the tradition of the critical interpretation of the theatricalization of architecture.

3. Criticism of the theatricalization of architecture

The theatricalization, including its digital variations, has received and still receives a considerable amount of criticism from theorists of architecture, culturologists, philosophers, sociologists and psychologists. Despite the potential of new technologies to develop the communicative and artistic aspects of architectural discipline and despite certain positive social effects, achieved by the theatricalization in the creation of public spaces, the very theatricalization of architecture is traditionally condemned by many authors as a deviation from architecture towards pictorial arts, the transformation of construction into a purely visual and semiotic practice. It is accused of imitation, falsification, commercialization, etc.

The criticism of theatricalization is undoubtedly well founded. Similar to the description of "the society of the spectacle" by Guy Debord as a monopolization of the realm of visibility [6], the modern architecture is blamed for its picturality, figurativeness, and insufficient constructiveness [7]. Critics claim that the architecture and planning have forgotten their own slogans of the avant-garde of the 1920s: "Don’t we have enough of a life in which nothing is valued, nothing is recognized, in which everything is scenery and decoration: the man is decorated, his house is decorated, his thoughts are decorated, the floor is decorated and embellished with all the strange and unnecessary things to hide the emptiness of life" (A. Rodchenko, "Line", 1921, [8, p. 85]) and claimed: "[not] just "beautiful", decorate life, but ...to build, to organize, to construct" [8, p. 85]). And the critics were right: the architectural profession lost its life-building ambitions and in addition to the usual utilitarianism acquired semiotic servility. The consequence of the notorious picturesqueness in architecture is, in particular, the excess of details, shapes and materials. The perception of architecture is now calculated on the emotional evaluation and memorability of the brand, but not on the understanding of the worldly message, on the experience of constructive and tectonic solutions.

The present spectacle has developed to the image at the stage of accumulation, when it becomes capital. The image uses commodity aesthetics, it distorts architectural traditions according to the rules of the market. Theatricalization duplicates aesthetic categories and brings to them visual consumer fetishism of commodity aesthetics. The introduction of psychological methods in architecture creates opportunities to control the viewer's feelings and experiences, and under the influence of the market "seduction" becomes the one and only goal for phenomenological interpretation of the viewer's experience [9]. As a result, the content of the architecture is no longer important – the image becomes important since it is thrown into the markets of exchange and consumption. The present
theatricalization of architecture is a commodity expression of the architectural language, where architectural tradition and history are neglected.

The universal artistic reality of theatricalization that is sensual and concentrated in expression leads to the replacement of the common space and to a contemporary spectacular commodified image of architecture and life in itself. After all, unlike performing arts, theatre and pictorial arts, architecture creates a space to life with its unavoidable routine and creates a latently alleged presence. This can be considered as a resource of the return of human aspects in the architectural design. At least, this intention is still supported by the actual "environment approach", anthroposophic architecture in Northern Europe, participatory design, contestation and other significant movements in the professions, related to design. The theatricalization is threatening by devaluing these still persisting qualities of architecture and environment.

In contemporary theatricalized architecture (that is almost totally theatricalized) the reactions and the actions of the user are designed (or directed), his image is created in advance and imposed as a behavioral role. This leads the user, who has just become a consumer and a spectator, to alienation from himself, and also creates a barrier to understanding the work of art. In K. Marx's critical theory the problem of alienation was considered as a negative consequence of the industrialization of production. There are more radical critical ideas on alienation in Heidegger's "oblivion of Being", the concept of "spectacle" by Guy Debord, the concept of technology of G. Simondon, or the concept of multiple copies of life - "simulacrum" by Jean Baudrillard. The last concept is interpreted according to the researcher of Baudrillard - N.B. Mankowski as "pseudo object replacing the "agonizing reality" by postreality, using a simulation that makes the absence present, erasing the distinction between the real and the imaginary" [10, p. 60]. In the works of J. Baudrillard and R. Barthes the alienation gains the character of its imaginary opposite - paranoid consumer enthusiasm, leading to the complete identification of a person with things, dissolution in them [11, 12].

The list of sins of theatricalization can be easily continued, because it (under different names), as well as numerous related phenomena, today is the topic, almost the most assimilated philosophical, culturological and other criticism of architecture. However, it is not easy to get rid of the theatricalization, as well as of the cult of vision or logocentricity of modern civilization. It seems that architectural and design activities will remain under the hypnosis of the self-sufficient visual for a very long time, and thus under the charm of certain variants of the strategy of theatricalization. Understanding this fact made us try to find in the very theatricalization, what could limit its negative impact and may be even reverse its flow in a more acceptable and desirable direction from an axiological point of view.

4. The methodology: resources behind the strategy of theatricalization of architecture

Therefore, it is necessary to highlight some properties in the theatricalization, forcing of which could allow to achieve greater control over it. We could add a few more positions to the already mentioned communication and the ability to bring back, at least partially, the lost architecture theatricality of the syncretic epochs.

No matter how much we criticize the theatricalization for its commercialism and its deadly commodification, it still strongly opposes to the direct calculative rationality of the target type (to use the terms of M. Weber). It is quite important that the theatricalization, at least, recognizes skillfully the existence of the sphere of human emotions, aesthetic expectations, and preferences and plays with it. The theatricalization did not allow the functionalism, the constructivism and other modernist minimalism as any long-term trends to take place, including undermining them from the inside - due to the theatricalization of their own components. It tends to be symbolic, but of course never reaches it. It's not the theatricalization to blame - such is the nature of today's culture, during a profound crisis of symbolic values [13]; the theatricalization compensates for the situation with simulacrae.

The theatricalization actually requires a knowledge about human perception, both individual and mass ones, including the perception of architectural forms and environments. In contrast to the functionalist simulation of research of the "human needs" (brilliantly ridiculed by J. Baudrillard in the
"For a critique of the political economy of the sign" [14]), the theatricalization inspired a varied and sophisticated body of works: from psychology (including the psychology of the environment), to the problem of the architectural ensemble; from the features of visual perception and its accompanying illusions, to the processes of social circulation of images; from branding, to the problems of identity; from semiotics to hermeneutics.

The theatricalization is objectively interested in the "tools", with the help of which it draws images and ideas. This means that in the social space there is a constant presence of relevant knowledge and ideas, cultural memory, developed associations and allusions. The theatricalization, of course, is not the most perfect institution of historical memory, but also its projects help museums and archives, monuments and scientific and historical schools to survive.

By definition the theatricalization is focused on synthetism, including the synthesis of arts, media, advertising. By relying, even if only metaphorically, on the image of the theatre (already synthetic form of creativity), it helped a lot and contributed to the fusion between various artistic practices, the discovery in them of similarities in them, the discovery of techniques, methods, as well as the active interchange of all this. The theatricalization, obviously, already not will provide us total and final Gesamtkunstwerk, but the efforts on connecting of the different, on making parallels in morphology and semantic relations in our divided world are never superfluous.

Being not free from representativeness, the theatricalization still represents a much more realistic practice of working with signs (semiosis) than the modernist "forming" - i.e. the secret concept of architectural "creationism", where the role of the Creator finally passes to the designer [15]. The theatricalization uses the interpretation as a permanent force of the flow in which to build new interpretations. "Each sign is in itself not the thing that presents itself to interpretation, but the interpretation of other signs" [16, p. 52] in architecture it's the theatricalization that supports this thought of M. Foucault the most.

In the framework of its tasks the theatricalization has achieved a remarkable success; its authors, creative collectives, schools were able to accumulate a rich set of methods, in some cases, brought to perfection. This cultural heritage, without any irony, has been successfully reproduced and translated, studied and applied in new fields, albeit under different names. The theatricalization dwells in the culture, in fact, morphologically, and its presence and impact are significant. If we try to remove from the history of art and architecture, from the libraries of theory and criticism, the traces of theatricalization, there would be probably nothing left, but the buildings of Adolf Loos (and those, together with the tractate "Ornament and Crime" (1908), originated from the struggle with one type of theatricalization for the sake of the other - for a distant resemblance to the architectural-anatomical theater).

Today's situation of the theatricalization is such that it is hard to notice - it is ubiquitous and easily produces its own versions of true and deep motives of creation of forms. But it is necessary to be aware: the true and deep motives of the creation of form in the contemporary culture, including architecture disappeared - they are canceled by the development of technology and entertainment market. The theatricalization is total, and it is time to explore its regions and loci not in the form of marginalia and exotics, but in a broad and realistic typological field. But we are interested in a rather narrow range of this field: the humanistic qualities of the environment, the anthropological orientation of architecture, the existential phenomena of habitat authenticity, the individuality of places, the meaning of the spaces of human existence, " the openness of presence" (M. Heidegger). The architecture and society gradually begin to realize that all that we mentioned are values of importance. And this happens after a century of dangerous experiments and nihilistic madness. We claim that they are the future of architecture and environment, if only because without them there will be no architecture or environment. How can theatricalization be related to them - is this a synonym of all that is not genuine and superficial? As we tried to illustrate - it is the most direct synonym. No, there is not straightness, of course, there is not, as there is no short path; on the contrary, the path is going to be long, difficult and tortuous. But there's no a straighter way.
The idea of the autonomy of architecture, clearly expressed in the intellectual field of the profession [17, 18], suggests that the architecture has a well-defined contour, knowledge of the boundaries, cultural and thinking norm (instead of formal and bureaucratic as it is today). In particular, these are the boundaries and norms of the system of acceptable images. But if the ritual and magical theatricality of architecture will not revive itself overnight, if the methodological problematization of the avant-garde adventure to create shapes shows its inconsistency [15], what can we do? We can only promote the values which we can only deal with in this technological and medium environment. We need to build a new téchnē on top of the structures the of total theatricalization, inside of it, with full understanding of its insidiousness, alienating from its hypnosis and rebuilding from its easy ready-made solutions. That is, in the words of Leonardo da Vinci, who foresaw many things, "The only thing that is left for us is the movement, which separates the mover from the moving" [19, p. 500].

After all, the experience of the pictorial tectonics from ancient times, including the Renaissance and after, the fertile Baroque and Art Deco, the gardens for the cultivation of the "constructive ornament" (Henry van de Velde, Louis Sullivan, etc.) and much, much more gives us today, in the digital era of professional design, a lesson that may sound somewhat cynical: even the authenticity itself is a particularly successful composition of pixels.

Is it meaningful and promising to bet for the theatricalization? Are its resources so great in relation to the updates of the profession, the new paradigm of design, in the implementation of the long desired "environmental design"? Will it get transcendence; will we be able to use it - at least in the apophatic strategy, not immediately and partly - to revive the original architectural "theatricality"? Will we be able to get closer to authenticity? Will we be able to reach presence? Answers can be found only in thinking and creativity.

5. Conclusion
The authors are sufficiently aware that the theatricalization of architecture is a technique of spectacularity, "absorbing" the viewer through a directed, personalized contact by means of theatricalized (most often – quite cynically) gestures of artistic composition. It is an architecture that reflects almost exclusively the consumer aspects of the viewer's complicity, and certainly inspires his overestimated self-esteem - self-contemplation; it is a space turned into an image; it is an environment reduced to a commodity. We are aware of the fact that the theatricalization creates actual (i.e. demanded by mass culture) images, using atectonic methods of construction (we reviewed them in detail in [3]), i.e. in many respects it is going against traditions of architecture, "parasitizing" on these traditions, on their cultural and social authority; we recognize that its efforts in architecture brings logic, alien to the centuries-old traditions of architecture. While recognizing all this, we cannot, however, fail to see that specific and difficult-to-express resource of meaning, which contains the increasingly evident trend of theatricalization of architecture in recent decades: in a situation of almost "hopeless" - in a situation of total and increasingly accelerating artificiality of the habitat, when traditional architectural values become not only difficult to reproduce, they are almost impossible to present as such in the mass consciousness and the bureaucratic, commercialized "practice" and even in professional design education, - the phenomenon of theatricalization can be used as a radical means of returning to the active and socio-cultural norm. Its paradoxical resourcefulness is similar to the objective renaissance of interest in the theatricality - to the original quality of architecture, the meaning of which is associated with the most primary experience of organizing human behavior in the space, which arose long before rituals and cults, before language and writing, and during centuries steadily reproduced by traditional architecture. Then this quality was forgotten for a long time, buried under the pressure of functional, rationalistic, technocratic and commercial purposes of architecture, which became a servant of industrial and commercial "progress". It is so forgotten that there is no direct access to it today. But there is a bypass move - the "knight's move", the possibility of which is not yet obvious - is a move through a well-thought and controlled theatricalization. In the end, as soon as the return to the meaning of the creation of form in architecture and design is now inextricably understood as an appeal to the category of myth [20 - 22], interpreted reflexively (which is
"murderous" for archaic mythology, but constitutively for design or proto-project methods of using the myth, already known to Plato), then why not try to rethink the phenomenon of theatricalization, discredited by the contemporary thinking. Especially because the theatricalization seems to be the last, though unreliable (we are also aware of this) "bridge" over the abyss of total nothingness and alienation, which more and more opens up in an optimistic professional culture as a new fashion or even the norm.

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