

The Figures of Memory

Doctoral dissertation | Theses

Pál GYÜRKI-KISS

Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design | Budapest
Doctoral School | Architecture Program
Supervisor | Béla PAZÁR DLA
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THESIS 1

The extensive relations of architecture and memory are deeply rooted and diverse, in which elements of the built environment of different genres and scales as well as various figures of memory can be observed. The connections vary throughout the course of history, however there are figures that have remained principally unchanged for millennia. Understanding the connections is greatly influenced by the approach and context of different narratives of memory produced by diverse interpreting traditions that are taken into consideration in the examined cases.

THESIS 2

Different genres and scales of architectural objects, the city, or a place per se do not 'remember' anything. The 'place' of memory is the human being itself i.e. the individual, which is the start and the end point of the memory process, even if we mean collective forms of memory. It is the human body and mind, which are able to store recollections, and which - because of capacity limitations - are able to transfer, store and retrieve these recollections in spaces beyond its range. In many instances, the place for storing is an architectural work, or any element of the built environment because of its material durability.

THESIS 3

Architecture is the medium of the different configurations of individual-social-historical memory, and architectural meanings are defined by a series of cultural practices, including remembrance. Evocation of memories depends not only on the individual concept of the past as an interpretational framework, but also on its context, including cultural mediums (architectural objects, the built environment) that help form memories.

THESIS 4

Architectural tradition plays a crucial role in the relation of architecture and memory, as it can be identified as a figure of memory. Tradition always preserves the traces of something formerly existing that can be reconstructed from it, so the memorial process of encoding, storing and retrieving as a metaphor can be observed here as well. By understanding tradition, one can recognize how the inner reproductive process of references operates in architecture, and at the same time, different figures of social memory can be identified. These two completely intertwine in architecture, which allows architects to expose entire cultural contexts.

THESIS 5

The practice of reusing references in architecture, which is partly responsible for maintaining tradition (i.e. lending and receiving references set in traditions) can be identified as an act of memory, in which the original reference tends to go through multiple modifications. Very often, the memory stored in architectural traditions remains in the background, and only much later - during reproduction - does it revive. However, if the memory stored in traditions is not recalled for long, it can vanish from the registers of culture permanently.
