Monastery conversion for a behavioral addictions rehabilitation facility, Otyn, Poland

Main author
Jakub Grabowski, architect, Gdynia, Poland

Project data
Project group: Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client: Palliative Care/Behavioral Addictions Rehabilitation Centre
Project background: Research project

Summary and appraisal of the project by the jury

Located in the ruins of an old monastery in the town of Otyn, the project for a center for behavioral addictions rehabilitation offers a valuable solution of how to address the derelict conditions of historical monuments that require care themselves. A timber structure enforces the existing building in order to protect it from further degradation. Additionally, walls made of wood are inserted within the sequence of existing spaces to accommodate new functions where needed. Renewable resources are used by means of geothermal boreholes, heat pumps, and solar panels on the roof to heat the building in the winter. The organic quality of the timber construction stands in dialectical tension with the heavy masonry of the monastery building, resulting in a playful combination of the old and the new.

The jury appreciated the project's parallel agendas to create spaces for people requiring care, while caring for buildings requiring support and maintenance themselves. Whereas the metaphor at first appeared too obvious, the jury nonetheless applauded the author's carefulness in avoiding the line for the correspondences between the rehabilitation of the building and its use as a rehabilitation center. At the core of the discussion was not only the question of how to best restore historical buildings, but moreover the deployment of architecture in its aesthetic value for people in times of need. The jury noted that a "modern sanctuary" is being created, namely, a place of tranquility, repose, beauty, and poetry.

Statements on the sustainability of the project by the author

Ethical standards and social inclusion - People
The building houses health care facilities (the hospice, the pain treatment clinic and the behavioral addictions treatment center), residential space and the sacred space (monastery and shrine). The dying find their peace, addiction therapies (while serving in the infirm) and their comfort. The elements are reusable created by the local manufacturers using local, natural materials.

Resource and environmental performance - Planet
Renewable resources such as geothermal energy and solar radiation are used in the building. Boreholes are drilled on site for a heat pump (building heating) and solar panels installed on the roof (water heating). The reuse of the prefabricated construction elements is also relevant to the issue of being environmentally-responsible. The majority of the site area is car-free. The park surrounding the building is revived and dedicated to the users of the monastery and the community of the town. The area in close proximity of the river was cleaned up and now serves as a promenade. In consequence the path between the town and the green/recreation areas is recreated. The orchard, saw-mill, and the old factory provide goods and services that yield a profit.

Innovation and transferability - Progress
The idea behind the project is to create a new system of the preservation of the historic monuments in Lower Silesia. Conservation and revitalization after WWII, re-privatization and restructuring in the 1990s were the major causes of the catastrophe. Hundreds of the historic monuments were ruined and there is a need to think about efficient, open-access programs to save the cultural richness of the region - based on low-tech architecture. Architectonic elements presented in the project are temporary prefabricated constructions supporting the outer walls of the building. Lattice girders form the ceiling, and the structures (beams) allow adaptation/hiving in the object. The elements are reusable, created by the local manufacturers using local, natural materials.

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