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Dreaming of a Museum of Architecture in Serbia

When speaking of the museums of today one thing is evident - a constantly present tendency of redefining their role, meaning and importance in an era of mass media and communications. The museums have become flexible, sensitive to the time and space in which they exist, increasingly adapting to the life, needs and wishes of their users. They have undergone a conceptual revolution primarily attempting to induce the public to think about the meaning of exhibited object rather than having the exhibit itself be the purpose and objective of the layout. Until recently inconceivable, elements of entertainment, fun and pleasure are added to museum exhibitions and information systems, which are now more accessible and interesting. By providing information, education, satisfaction, entertainment, but also a critical independent view of the surroundings, society and history, the museums contribute to the development of identity and freedom of personality by assuming the role of an arbitrator and a growing responsibility in the cultural policy of a specific community. Thus, they foster their growing influence and importance in the social and economic life of their communities. According to Gustav Pauli, once Manager of the Art Hall in Hamburg, "Contemporaneity is one of the most direct and nicest tasks of museums". The one who wants "everything to stay the same" says the Count in the work of Tomaso di Lampedusa "The Leopard", has to change it. With regard to the museums' function this would mean that if we are to preserve this cultural institution as a collecting, safekeeping and educating point, we then have to adapt it to new contexts, without neglecting the museums' tasks and their essence. Quicker modernisation of the museum and museological activities would contribute to museums becoming a prestigious space for organising the cultural, historic and social events of today that would be deeply imprinted on the memory of visitors of all generations. In this way the museums would become imperative identification points of every environment, providing answers to numerous essential questions of the man's existence and survival today. Finally, museums could serve as a fortunate replacement for the superficial populist entertainment which fill the life with meaningless, shallow and, frequently, dangerous contents.

One of the best statements about museums came from the museological expert Barry Lord who said that museums actually do not deal with objects, but rather people. In line with this, the famous art historian of our times, Ernst Gombrich, wrote that museums are a fundamental expression of the man's history, his being and thoughts. These statements could primarily relate to the architecture, which from among all forms of arts is most directly linked to the man and his needs, directed to their most functional satisfaction from the very beginnings of his existence. The aesthetic and ideological functions came only as an addition to this basic, useful function of architecture. Architectural structures most tellingly express man's personal and religious feelings, his nature, character, taste and power. An even more than that, according to the architectural aesthetic Milutin Borisavljević, architecture is also a symbolic art expressing our state of mind. In his opinion, the whole architecture is anthropomorphic, which is why everything that is architecturally beautiful is an imitation of ourselves. Nice forms correspond to the nature of our sense of vision, and whereas the rhythm in architecture corresponds to the man's pulse

our breathing is in line with the length of individual architectural parts, such as the distance between individual pillars. Irrespective of the social status and education, each man daily comes in close contact with architecture. It's the only art that is constantly with us and around us, same as we are in it. You do not have to pay a ticket for it so as to see it in a gallery or a museum. Nevertheless, there remains a paradox that although being the closest and most easily accessible to a man, architecture is least known to him. Namely, every no matter how little educated man tries to get to know literature, music, fine and plastic arts the best he can, while except for experts, architecture remains quite unknown to the broadest public. Unbiased criticism and analysis of architectural structures is likewise an indisputable need in our midst and artistic life. Much more is written about music, sculpture and theatre than architecture that most serves the man and his needs, as an applied art. Scientific study of architecture is particularly lacking, with architect Milutin Borisavljević being practically the only one dealing with this subject. By getting to know architecture, analysing all that makes a work of architecture good and valuable, one becomes able to enjoy things that previously left him indifferent. It is equally important to raise the general level of architectural taste and understanding, as it is to create a number of good architectural works. On the other hand, raising the architectural education will significantly promote and speed up the process of an orderly architectural development.

Following in Plato's footsteps, Borisavljević thinks that architecture is superior to all other arts because it is a creative art par excellence, and not an imitative one like the others. Of all forms of art architecture is the one that mostly speaks of the times in which it was created and society's development level most evidently reflecting its needs and aspirations. Social relations are recorded in architecture and, in that way documented in space. The fact beyond any doubt is that the influence of technology on the development of art is most manifestly reflected in architectural creativity, which by its very nature includes an expressly marked technical component. It is therefore not a coincidence that debates whether architecture is a technology or an art have been going on for centuries. In the end, the solution was found in a compromise definition that it is the both, i.e. a synthesis of both these spheres. However, there were opinions that characterised architecture as a pure technology. Namely, in the debate on whether architecture is an art or technology and following the earlier attempts of the Vienna architect Adolf Loos, who separated the problem of architecture from the scope of arts and relied on the achievements of technical architecture, strict constructivists took a consistent and decisive stand that modern architecture is not an art, but rather a pure technology. In this respect a Museum of Architecture, which this paper will consider in more detail, would be closest to technical museums to which a greater part of this gathering is dedicated.

This report will present possible guidelines for establishing a programme platform of a future Museum of Architecture of Serbia, with a framework of activities through which such a platform could be implemented. I will also attempt to define the mission and objectives of such a museum, its specificities, collection and relation to the protection of architectural heritage. I would also touch upon some of the existing similar institutions in the world, as well as potential museum and private collections in Serbia that could become a nucleus of a future Museum of Architecture.

A specificity of a Museum of Architecture compared to general or specialised art and technology museums is expressed in their impossibility to collect final products, i.e. works of architects and town planners, and rather archive documentation on designs and their authors. Therefore, in contrast to other museums, a Museum of Architecture would not form a collection, but preferably an architectural archive, thus dealing with other levels of architecture as a branch: theories, ideas and documentation. It is for these reasons that institutions which museologically process architecture as a medium, are directed to varied means of establishing contacts and communications with the public. The idea of the final architectural product is gained indirectly, which, as a consequence, demands a multimedia approach offering the public the best possible way to conceptualise an abstractly imagined space.

When it comes to Serbia, at the republican level the only institution that museologically treats architecture as a medium is the Museum of Science and Technology. Department of Architecture of the Museum of Science and Technology was established in late 1991 with an aim of protecting the cultural assets in the field of architecture and town planning. In view of the fact that as a result of negligence, lack of care or conditions for that care a major part of the designs of renowned Serbian architects has vanished without a trace, in its work to date the Department of Architecture attached priority to the collection of the legacies of outstanding Serbian builders of 19th and 20th century, which represent a precious and irreplaceable source in the study of the work of individual architects and their contribution to the development of construction architecture in Serbia.

The realised designs represent the easily accessible and best known segment of the overall creativity of one architect. However, as a rule, they least disclose the author's real sensitivity and his intimate creative orientation, as socio-political circumstances of the times and investor's demands have frequently had a decisive impact on the construction's appearance. Only by studying sketches, drawings and non-implemented designs, which are for most part preserved just in the legacies of individual authors, we can get an integral picture of their construction opus. Materials from architectural bequests frequently gives us just a glimpse into how an idea on a design developed and transformed, because it often happens that due to different circumstances the author's original idea is visible only in sketches, drawings and unrealised designs, which is almost unrecognizable in its constructed variation. It is not rare for preliminary sketches and drawings to bear a sign of one and the record drawings of another architect. Contents of legacies also offer a possibility of resolving controversial attributions with a high degree of certainty. Study of legacies has also a great importance in attempts to reconstruct the original appearance of pulled down, damaged or subsequently altered structures. Materials included in the legacies are of exceptional importance for more comprehensive understanding of the personality of individual authors, environments in which they worked, their working conditions and methods, comparative fields of interest. We frequently find in architects' notes valuable data on them and designs they produced, from the circumstances under which they were created up to the progress and method of implementation.) Apart from the Museum of Science and Technology that contains the most important and numerous architectural collection in Serbia, valuable collections are kept in the Museum of Applied Art and the Town Museum, that together with legacies that are still privately owned by architects'

families, would make a nucleus of the future Museum of Architecture of Serbia. (Apart from architecture it could cover the field of town planning and construction. In line thereto, the Museum would aim to show the historic development of architecture in our country by interpreting the idea of the space, structure and forms of important designs of outstanding Serbian architects, as well as those of other nationalities who had been building on the Serbian's soil. It would also show the town planning development of Serbia's cities and settlements. It would find ways to explain the notions of force, pressure, stress, resistance of materials, pre-stressing and make it possible to learn about the basic laws of statics, structural elements and construction engineering.

The museum would collect designs, photos, scale models and documentation of the most important architectural achievements, town plans, domes and bridges of our exceptional experts. In that context, the mentioned fields could be considered within several historic periods: the Ancient World that would include a collection of drawings, photos and scale models of major ancient localities on our soil such as Singidunum, Sirmium, Gamzigrad, Viminacium and Lepenski vir; then the Middle Ages period that would contain a collection of drawings, photos and scale models of Serbian Medieval churches and monasteries; the Modern Age with a collection of designs, drawings, photos and scale models of most important constructions of the Renaissance, Baroque and 19th century styles; and finally the present times and contemporary practice with a collection of designs of the most important architects and a collection of competition designs and surveys.

One of the basic tasks of the Museum of Architecture of Serbia would be to form a collection that would provide as complete as possible insight into the development of Serbian architecture from its beginnings up to the modern and contemporary architecture, in the context of historic continuity, also including a comparative survey of the world architectural practice. This collection would form a basis of the Museum for preparing a concept and lay out of the standing exhibition of the national architectural production by focusing the observers' attention on the relevant phenomena, manifestations and personalities in the Serbian architecture and at the same time forming a "time frame" which would show general historic circumstances and cultural context in which they appeared and developed. In parallel, the Museum would organise occasional exhibitions the subject of which would be selected depending on the target public: from strictly professional, specialised and problem areas to trans-disciplinary treatment of architectural problems of interest to a wider public. Educational programmes would be a compulsory accompanying activity of exhibitions organised for the public from different age groups and of educational profiles. In that sense, expert guidance through an exhibition is the most frequent form of interaction with the public at the architectural theoretical level, but it would also be recommendable to organise lectures, panels or symposia with workshops for the public. Each programme unit should also include a publication. Educational programmes and publishing activities are the basis of criticism in architecture. The Museum's publishing activity would be based on publications produced as a result of comprehensive studies of the architectural theory and practice. One of these would be the Encyclopedia of the Serbian Architecture that would include data on the life and work of most important Serbian architects and their most representative buildings or a Guide through the Architecture of Belgrade and other Towns of Serbia in which the appearance and development of the urban

environment would be set in the corresponding historic context. The Almanac of Events on the architectural scene of Serbia would also be a useful publication. Such and similar issues would produce an interactive data bases that would include texts on important architectural buildings in Serbia, with photos, drawings, authors' biographical data, accessible over the Internet at all times. One of the Museum's basic tasks would also be to form a professional public library with relevant publications about the architectural history, theory and practice. The Museum would also carry out an open and broad educational activity as a supplement to the general education of the public, students of architecture and experts' specialised knowledge. These project activities should be developed for three basic target groups: children, youth and adults.

The mission of the future Museum of Architecture of Serbia would be to promote architecture as a discipline dealing with the analysis of the relation between the space and survival by presenting the past and topical architectural theories and practice, as well as analysing the development trends of the architecture for the future. It would follow the historic development of the Serbian architecture in the European and world context, and thus secure for itself a position of the central national institution when it comes to the knowledge and information about the Serbian architecture. It would thus become the renowned exhibition, information and creative centre that could participate in the national and international architectural exchange on equal footing. The Museum would be the centre of knowledge and information about the contemporary architecture that links all the participants in the process of designing and constructing urban units: theoreticians, users, design engineers, representatives of political and business elites. For that purpose an Architects Club would be established as a special platform for partners of the Museum of Architecture, as well as those who actively support its work. Also, the Museum would actively participate in the protection of architectural heritage as a complex and continuous process of preserving original functions laid down by the author and the meaning of structures and space systems. This protection does not only imply the preservation of a form in its original state, but rather a continuous process of revitalising all structure's functions. The Museum would initiate debates on topical architectural issues and take a critical stand by publishing public appeals and subject-specific presentations, as well as presenting the awards of the Museum of Architecture. It would open up a possibility for a broader discussion on socio-political aspects of modern town planning and space in the towns of Serbia that would treat the subject of the public places in Serbia, materials and technologies that enable more flexible use of innovative space design, offer some answers to questions as to how to encourage town population to more actively participate in the shaping of building environments, on ways in which provisional buildings and interventions can adapt the space and redefine its potential purpose, how fundamental re-examination of important historic, architectural and town planning movements reflects on current practices. And, finally, the Museum would represent an inspirational diversity of modern architecture offering new reading of the history of architecture and architectural visions for the future.

Dear colleagues, I shared with you my dream about the Museum of Architecture in Serbia. Someone once said that nothing is ever achieved without it being dreamed about first. Hoping that this paper has given some contribution to making this dream come true, I thank you most kindly for your attention.

