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WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

Vladimir Gradev

Editor-in-Chief

“Come and see.”

John 1:38 – 39

What do architecture and philosophy have in common? The former builds spaces, the latter concepts. Yet both arise from the same human aspiration: to orient ourselves in the world and to give order, beauty, and meaning to our dwelling within it.

In European culture, philosophers have often viewed the world as architecture, while architects have understood building as a form of thinking. From Plato’s polis and Augustine’s Heavenly City to Baron Haussmann’s modern capital and Robert Moses’s hyper-modern metropolis, space has always been more than mere space: it is an image of the human being, an embodiment of human aspirations.

In 1966, Martin Heidegger famously declared that “only a god can save us.” Sixty years later, as new, ever more expensive and increasingly anonymous buildings rise all around us, scarcely a day passes, as I walk through the city or make my way toward the sea or the mountains, without the spirit of the place whispering to me that “only an architect could save us.”

Must we change our way of being in order to change our way of building? Or must we change our way of building in order to change our way of being? Formulated either way, the question reveals one thing: nothing is more intimately connected to our being-in-the-world than our practices of construction. For the world into which we find ourselves “thrown” is always already a built world. We discover the world through what surrounds us, and what surrounds us is, to a large extent, our own creation. Architecture, which rises from the foundation and reaches toward the sky, is the place where our dwelling in the world begins and ends.

Is the destruction of place that we witness today, not only in my own country but almost everywhere in the world, inevitable? We still hope it is not. Only a new architectural thinking, despite bearing part of the responsibility for this state of affairs, can set us on the path toward recognizing our debt to the earth and to the tradition, and thus toward a new philosophy of habitation.

We need architecture that carries within its lines, volumes, and materials the reality of human life on earth and in the city. Buildings should not only stand proudly upright;

they should also know how to lie humbly upon the ground. They should not only ascend toward heaven but also descend into the underworld, where the ancestors dwell and where the *genius loci* abides. If a house, a village, a neighborhood, or a city is not tangibly inhabited, in the very features of its architectural countenance, by the history of the place; if memory does not shape its forms from within, then it becomes detached from the earth, from its subterranean depths and its celestial horizons, freezing into something soulless, that is, dead to the lifeworld. One of the profound ironies of our lifeworlds is that they are animated by those who came before us, lying beneath us and watching over us.

This thematic issue is situated within the liminal zone between thinking and building. In their articles, the contributors remind us that architecture has never been, and is not, merely a technique of building or an art of form, but that it is memory and project, order and imagination, power and freedom, home and horizon.

One significant theme stands out in this issue: how architecture preserves, transforms and transmits human experience; and it is precisely this theme that the authors address in one way or another, in order to explore architecture as a specific form of cultural self-awareness and to reflect on the memory of places, the relationship between space and identity, and the role of the architect as a mediator between the past, the present and the future.

This issue also focuses on the present: from Barcelona and its transformations, through the relationship between architecture and contemporary art, to the challenges of the digital revolution, the sustainable and “intelligent” city; the contributors to this issue raise the question of how to preserve the dignity of human living together amidst new forms of urbanization and social organization.

Thus, the texts in this issue discuss architecture not merely as a technique of building, but as a relationship to time. For Todor Kreteev, this is memory; for Thierry Oppikofer, it is the common good; for Georgi Lozanov, it is space as a cultural debate; for Boyko Kadinov, it is resistance against the ‘eternal’ present and the loss of historical depth.

Last but not least, this issue pays tribute to the 70th birthday of Prof. Arch. Boyko Kadinov – one of the leading figures in contemporary Bulgarian and European architecture. As an architect, researcher, lecturer and public figure, he combines, in a rare way, innovative boldness with a filial care for our heritage, cultural sensitivity and civic responsibility for the world we are building and in which we live. This anniversary issue is a modest expression of the respect and affection held for him by colleagues, students and friends, and of their gratitude for all that he has contributed to contemporary architecture and its critical and fruitful interpretation.

✉ **Prof. Vladimir Gradev, Dsc.**

Sofia University

Faculty of Philosophy

E-mail: vgradev@phls.uni-sofia.bg