

11TH CTV

back to the sense of the city

CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN SPIRITUALITY - NEW FORMS OF SACRED SPACES

Beata Malinowska-Petelenz

PhD. Eng. Arch., Assistant Professor

Institute of Urban Design

Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology

Ul. Podchorążych, Cracow, 30-084, Poland

+48 12 628 2020

Key words: church, temple, chapel, place of cult, spirituality, minimalism

Abstract

The 20th century witnessed changes which altered radically the world hitherto functioning in the same way for centuries. The pluralist global culture is characterized by rapid and unpredictable changeability involving continuous challenging of traditional values. Architecture is no exception to this rule, including religious architecture, which best reflects the spirituality of its time. Revaluation which took place in the last century resulted in the need of a new interpretation of the concepts of the sacred and the profane, as they have lost their clarity and significance. In consequence of the conflict between the dogmatic understanding of stability on the one hand and the modern culture, science, thought and world interpretation as well as the pace and style of living on the other, the need has emerged to build new places of cult that embrace the Zeitgeist of today – stripped of almost all ideology, visually modest, devoid in their décor of intense expression or a large number of stimuli. There are also temples which invite into the same space people of different religions as well as people who are seeking faith or are doubtful, places focused on catering for spiritual or contemplation needs, but also offering intellectual rest.

The sacred – the profane: in the past and today

The centuries-old division of the world into the sacred and the profane, i.e. the saint and the secular, introduced order into reality and all the areas of human life and thus safeguarded the stability of the European civilisation. In architecture, the order was reflected in verticality, axial symmetry, ornamentation, adequate location and the magnificence of material. Religious buildings – revered and inviolable – over time became monuments of their period, subject to the special rules of place. Being the most attractive buildings in the landscape, they ordered and organised space as well as marked out public spaces. This bi-polar division of space was clear and easily perceivable, and the borders were visibly outlined.

The global culture of the late 20th and early 21st century is characterised by universal, rapid and unpredictable changeability in every area, involving continuous challenging of the bi-polar and hitherto invariable values sanctioned by tradition. Z. Bauman writes: everything or almost everything in our world is changing: fashions we follow and objects we devote our attention to

(as ephemeral as everything else: don't we lose interest today in what only yesterday we were attracted to? Tomorrow we will grow indifferent to what today we find so exciting), things we desire and fear, things which give us hope and which fill us with anxiety. The conditions in which we live, work and try to plan our future (...). In short, our world, the world of liquid modernity, surprises us incessantly: what today seems certain and in its right place, as early as tomorrow may turn out to have been a pitiful error, something useless and absurd. (...) we need to be constantly prepared for change.¹ The time when great myths based on permanence, transcendence and invariability were still valid has gone and will never come back. The driving forces of our civilisation now are their opposites: impermanence, variability and temporariness. Today, in the open space-time and reality built on interculturality and globalisation, on huge corporations and international projects, in which there is no longer any identity but only transformations,² reinterpretation of the concepts of the sacred and the profane has become an absolute necessity.

Spirituality of contemporary Europe

The space for the sacred understood in the traditional way is systematically marginalised in the non-homogenous, pragmatically oriented and postmodern city. Communities organised around one system of values have long ceased to function in the contemporary cities of the Western world. The direct consequence of these processes is the diminishing religious significance of churches, which translates into their less prominent status as centres organising the life of local communities. Temples, even if old and of historic value, stand vacant, unwanted and troublesome, at best doomed to be adapted for some other, secular functions. The direction and success of these transformations depend primarily on the economic considerations, which are complied with even at the cost of deformation or destruction of unique architectural values.³ There have been cases of closing churches in Holland⁴, Germany⁵, Belgium⁶ or Ireland⁷, putting them up for sale and adapting for offices, galleries, concert halls or flats. An extreme example of what a church may be turned into is the Brigittines Chapel in Brussels. In its long history it has already served as a bookshop, a weapon manufacturing facility, a military pharmacy, a shelter for homeless people, a banquet hall, a letter sorting centre or even a slaughterhouse.⁸ Finally, since 2007 it has been housing the Contemporary Arts Centre for Movement⁹. A radical example of a contemporary church defying tradition is the Dutch Transparent Church By Frank Los – mobile, inflatable transparent church which performs the function of a place for meditation

¹ Z. Bauman, *44 listy ze świata płynnej nowoczesności*, Kraków 2011, pp. 5 – 7. [*unless stated otherwise, all the quotations have been rendered into English by the translator of this text]

² After: Z. Bauman, *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej*, Instytut Kultury, Warszawa 1994, p.30.

³ J. Rabej, *Chrześcijańska architektura sakralna — problem świątyń desakralizowanych oraz przestrzeni parasakralnych*, *Liturgia Sacra* 18 (2012), no 2, p. 559

⁴ An old Dominican church transformed into a library, Merx+Girod, Maastricht, 2008.; in Arnhem St. Joseph church was turned into a skatepark, 2011; more [in:] D. Kuśnierz-Krupa, M. Krupa, *Nowe życie średniowiecznych kościołów z Maastricht*, *Wiadomości konserwatorskie* 24/2008, pp. 103-106

⁵ *Martinszentrum*, Weis&Volkman, Bernburg 2007

⁶ A deserted Anglican church in Rue de Stassard in Brussels was transformed into a music club; Pure Sang Design Studio

⁷ The Church Bar & Restaurant, Duffy Mitchell O'Donoghue, Dublin, 2005

⁸ See: *Zamieszkać w Domu Bożym* [in:] http://www.bryla.pl/bryla/1.85298.7493386.Zamieszkaac_w_domu_Bozym.html; as of the 9th March 2016

⁹ Contemporary Arts Centre for Movement, designed by Adrea Bruno+Sum Project, Brussels 2007

or a discussion forum at various events, festivals or even private ceremonies. Undoubtedly, the outcomes of the inevitable processes of adaptation and functionality change of places of worship depend to a considerable degree on the current fads and the personal good taste of the involved designers.¹⁰

The complex issues related to the ambiguity and multithread nature of the concepts of the sacred/profane and their transformations, the need of transcendence as well as the dynamic changes in practising religion taking place in the Western societies have been subject of numerous dissertations and studies by sociologists, anthropologists, ethnologists, theologians, philosophers and other theoreticians and scientists exploring the field of culture, such as Émile Durkheim,¹¹ Mircea Eliade,¹² Roger Caillois,¹³ Erich Fromm¹⁴ and others.

Metamorphoses and transformations of forms of religious practices taking place in the Western societies “tend towards their pluralisation, individualisation and privatisation.”¹⁵ The concepts of practising religion and spirituality were initially perceived as separated and frequently set in opposition to each other. Practising religion was associated with traditional forms of group practices and related to religious institutions, whereas spirituality was presented as seeking universal truth, with the emphasis placed on individual forms of worship or convictions which put an individual in some sort of relation with the world. The individualist trends themselves originated from the broadening perspective of cultural pluralism.¹⁶

The sacred understood in the contemporary fashion withdraws from where we used to expect it, and moves to the areas where it was previously absent. An example illustrating the above are monuments and mausoleums, now acquiring new spirituality, other public utility facilities which have a cathartic effect upon their users, or spaces provoking various metaphysical experiences in people who visit them.¹⁷ The sacred seems to be less and less willing to dwell in the traditional religious institutions; moving into the sphere of the subjective, it enters mysterious and mystical places, but also popular culture and the world of advertising.¹⁸ Maria Rogińska writes in her text about the religious sensibility of the contemporary humans – the category may adopt minimal forms – reduced merely to the question about the existence of “something more” or the elusive intuition confirming this existence. Elsewhere, it adopts more tangible forms, where – referring to religious symbols – it is striving to make itself comfortable in the space of the profane. Scholars are looking for the symptoms of the secularised sacred in shopping malls, at management courses and in psychotherapists’ offices, where quasi-religious language and specific secular rituals are commonly used. Maximal forms, on the other hand, adopt the form of

¹⁰ J. Kurek, *Laicyzacja sacrum. Współczesna adaptacja świątyni do nowych funkcji*, PIF’15, pp. 225-234

¹¹ E.g. E. Durkheim, *Elementarne formy życia religijnego*, transl. Anna Zadrożyńska-Barącz, PWN, Warszawa 1990

¹² E.g. M. Eliade, *Sacrum, mit, historia*, PIW, Warszawa 1974

¹³ R. Caillois, *Człowiek i sacrum*, transl. A. Tatariewicz, E. Burska, Oficyna Wydawnicza Wolumen, Warszawa 2009

¹⁴ E. Fromm, *Szkice z psychologii religii*, transl. J. Prokopiuk, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1966

¹⁵ M. Rogińska, *Sacrum ponowoczesne. Nauka i nowa duchowość w poszukiwaniu całości*, [in:] *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Sociologica VI* (2014), vol. 1, p. 51

¹⁶ M. Jarosz, *Pojęcie duchowości w psychologii*, [in:] *Studia z Psychologii w KUL*, vol. 16, Lublin, CUL Press 2010, p. 13

¹⁷ E.g. Ghetto Heroes Square in Kraków, design by Biuro Projektów Lewicki Łatak, 2005; the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, design by P. Eisenmann, Berlin 2005

¹⁸ M. Grabowska, *Zmysłowe sacrum - jak reklama i kultura popularna ucieleśniają sacrum (na wybranych przykładach)*, [in:] <http://www.publikacje.edu.pl/pdf/10189.pdf>; as of the 6th Feb. 2016

extensive systems of beliefs, constructed to suit subjective tastes, or emerging as new religious movements or even whole new religions.¹⁹

Innovative places of cult

Architecture is the most articulate of all arts in expressing the spirituality of the era in which it is created. The liquidity and multiculturalism, so characteristic of the contemporary world, as well as the fusion of secular and religious areas, have generated demand for places of cult (meditation, tranquillity and contemplation) – modest and simple, where the narrative of archetypes is intertwined with extraordinariness, a necessary quality when it comes to the space of cult. Such chapels – of a specific religious denomination or non-denominational – often emerge in unexpected places: in metropolitan business centres,²⁰ in spaces filled with hustle and bustle: railway stations,²¹ motorways,²² shopping malls,²³ in former industrial areas²⁴, but also, more traditionally, in the mountains or in the wilderness.

Masterly examples of how the space of the sacred may be successfully created in structures of universal character and of a high aesthetic value are to be found in the UNESCO complex of buildings in Paris,²⁵ at the Swiss A2 motorway near the entrance of the St. Gotthard Tunnel,²⁶ in Austrian Locherboden,²⁷ in German Kolbermoor²⁸ and in Spanish Valleaceron,²⁹ where on a rocky hill stands a concrete chapel, whose austere form blends into the landscape and, since it is a place stripped of any traces of civilisation, it makes a perfect place for meditation. In Turku, Finland, architects Matti Sanaksenaho, Pirjo Sanaksenaho and Enrico Garbin have designed one of the most beautiful ecumenical chapels in the shape of a wooden boat hull placed upside down.³⁰ It has to be mentioned at this point, however, that designs for structures related to spirituality, without signing up to any religion, but referring to the philosophical foundations instead, have been created since the Enlightenment, called the Age of Reason.³¹ Designs by Claude Nicolas Ledoux³² or Etienne-Louis Boullée,³³ associated with the pantheist philosophy exemplifying the way of thinking characteristic of the Enlightenment, indicate an interesting

¹⁹ M. Rogińska, op. cit., p. 51

²⁰ E.g. La Defense (Paris), Donau City (Vienna), *Landhausviertel (St. Pölten)*

²¹ E.g. Hauptbahnhof in Vienna

²² The Chapel at the motorway, design by Schneider+Schumacher, Wilnsdorf, Germany 2013

²³ E.g. Silesia in Katowice

²⁴ Oasis - Pastoral Care Voestalpine, X Architekten, Linz, Austria 2011

²⁵ The concrete Meditation Space, designed by Tadao Ando, Paris, 1995

²⁶ The non-denominational concrete Chapel of the World's Religions, designed by P. Giugnard, S. Saner, Switzerland, 1998

²⁷ Night Pilgrimage Chapel, designed by G. Wiederin, Austria, 1997

²⁸ St. Benedikt Chapel, designed by Kunze Seeholzer Architektur&Stadtplanung, Kolbermoor, Germany, 2007

²⁹ Private Chapel, designed by Estudio Sancho-Madrdejos, Valleaceron, Almandejos, Spain, 2001

³⁰ (St. Henry's) Ecumenical Art Chapel, designed by M. Sanaksenaho, P. Sanaksenaho, E. Garbin, Turku, Finland 2008

³¹ W. Kosiński, *Architektura sacrum wobec konfliktów, tolerancji i pojednania. Historia, współczesność, perspektywy*, PiF'15, pp. 47-58

³² The most important design project in the life of Claude-Nicolas Ledoux – a famous visionary – were the Royal Salines de Chaux, near Besançon, the construction of which was commenced during the reign of Louis 16th

³³ His unrealised utopian designs of grand monuments, such as the round Cenotaph for Newton or the Metropolitan Basilica for Paris, as well as the designs of impressive public edifices – symbols of the new order: the national palace, the town hall, court, library and an amphitheatre for 300,000 spectators, are of unique significance in the history of architecture. All these designs were uniform in their maximum simplicity of form, reduced to the most basic geometric figures, symmetry and compositional harmony.

trend in the architecture of spirituality, in which it was believed that stimulating the human mind, memory and imagination by strong intellectual cogitation had a refreshing effect on the spirit.³⁴ Examples of new spaces for contemplation in silence are also to be found in unusual facilities situated in the open landscape in the area of Central Europe: Germany, the Czech Republic and also Poland. Of all these spaces, an absolutely unique experience is seeing the religious works of Peter Zumthor, whose body of works, showered with awards, resists classification into any of the now prevailing stylistic trends. It must be emphasised that all Zumthor's works demonstrate his great care and respect for the natural and cultural landscape.³⁵ His essays, collected in the volume entitled *Thinking Architecture*, are all about his perception of the world, about his multi-layered sensibility and experiencing a physical place where new sensual architecture is being created.³⁶ Adopting the approach of restrained rigour and using a minimum of resources, without any decoration or technological tricks, Peter Zumthor has designed an extraordinary structure in the natural scenery of an open landscape surrounded by farmland – a chapel dedicated to a Swiss saint – Saint Nicholas of Flüe, known as Brother Klaus.³⁷ The structure has been located between the two villages: Wachendorf and Mechernich, in North Rhein-Westphalia, southern Germany.

Figures 1-4. Bruder Klaus Field Chapel, Mechernich-Wachendorf, Germany



Source: Photos by Beata Malinowska-Petelenz

³⁴ B. Stec, *Architektura duchowości*, A&B, 7/8, 2014, p. 39

³⁵ M. Skaza, *Petera Zumthora myślenie architekturą*, ARCH 2(16), p. 42

³⁶ P. Zumthor, *Myślenie architekturą*, Karakter 2014

³⁷ *Bruder Klaus Field Chapel* Chapel, designed by P. Zumthor, Wachendorf, Germany, 2007

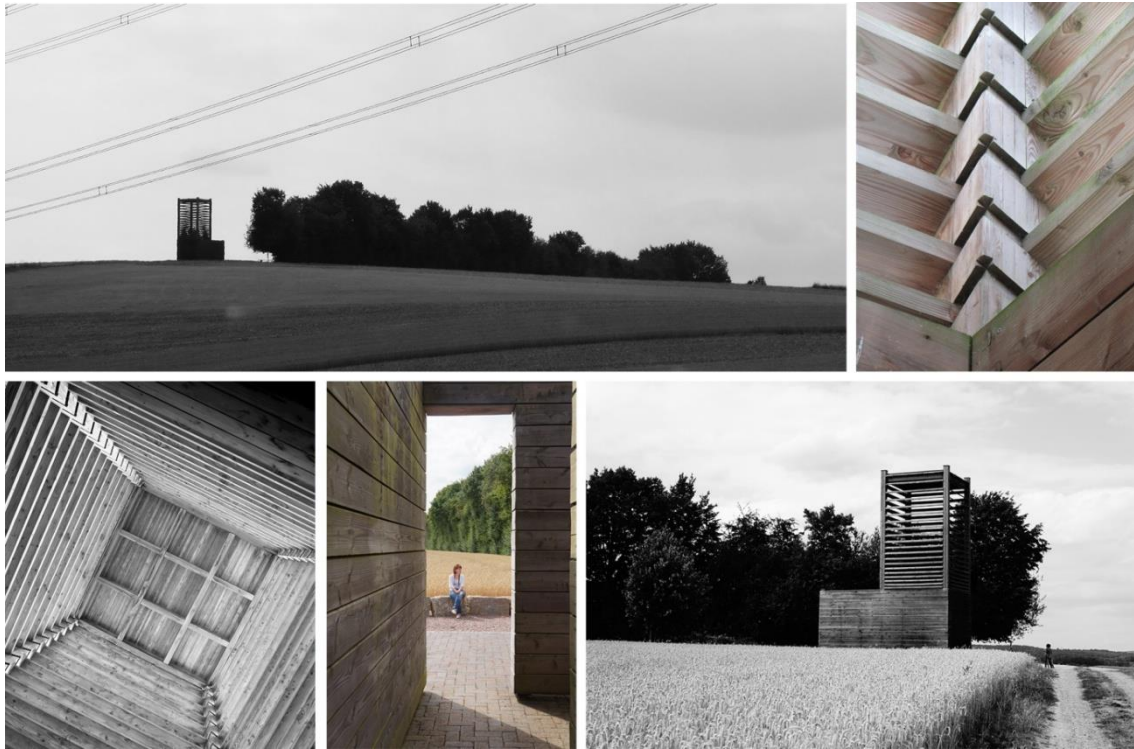
The chapel commissioned by a foundation of local farmers is private property, yet visitors are offered unlimited access.³⁸ It has been paid for by the foundation and built with the help of local craftsmen. Due to its form and context, the structure, though rather small, is a clear landmark and a strong feature, when related to the nearby village. From the outside, this small ascetic building, betraying no information as to its function, is a slender monolithic cuboid prism built of raw concrete. The only opening in the solid is the sturdy triangular door, over which hangs a delicate, barely visible cross. The dark space inside does not impose any religious symbols either, as their presence has been reduced to minimum – the only element indicating the function of the building is a small bronze figure of saint Nicholas and a small St. Benedictine's encircled cross. Through the form and the selection of materials, the architect has created a unique place, remaining in natural, physical and sensual contact with its surrounding landscape and nature. This poetically non-definable structure, closely bound with its context, emerging from arable land, stirs emotions “provoking fear, astonishment, truth of the experience and necessity of identity,” and its simple shape “seems to offer the chance to transgress the border between permanence and passing away and to satisfy the hunger for dignity.”³⁹

Another example of the universal sacred, stripped of religious references, also a powerful presence in the natural and landscape context, is the wooden Field Chapel in Buchen⁴⁰ – a project carried out in the ecumenical spirit, following the principles of religious openness and programmatic progressiveness. This minimalist structure has been erected among fields and forest, on a picturesque hilltop, in the triangle of roads between Bödigeheim and Seckach. There is visual contact between the chapel and the castle on a hill in Bödigeheim, crowned with a tall and square stone tower, approximately 2 kilometres away from it to the north.

³⁸ B. Stec, *Droga – Kaplica brata Klausa*, *Architektura&Biznes* 7-8/2007, pp. 41-42

³⁹ E. Węclawowicz-Gyurkovich, *Poszukiwanie emocji*, *Technical Transactions* issue 7. *Architecture* issue 1-A1, p. 153, Kraków 2009

⁴⁰ Bödigeheim Field Chapel, designed by students of College of Architecture (academic supervisor: prof. Frank Flury), Illinois Institute of Technology, and Ecker Architekten, Buchen- Bödigeheim, Germany, 2009

Figures 5-9. Bödighheim Field Chapel, Buchen-Bödighheim, Germany

Source: Photos by Beata Malinowska-Petelenz

The authors' concept for the chapel in Buchen-Bödighheim was that it should be a combination of three motifs or models belonging to entirely different worlds. The authors drew inspiration from the main building of the Temple in Jerusalem, the castle's square stone tower in the nearby Bödighheim and the local tobacco drying barns, tobacco being the primary crop produced by local farmers in the area.⁴¹ "This ultra-minimalistic and laconic chapel is a paragon of a universal temple, going beyond, in its form, the boundaries of Christianity" – Wojciech Kosiński writes. Due to its shape and the simplified structure, its ideological foundations and a specific experiment in the organization of the project,⁴² the chapel has become an iconic sacred space of the 21st century, thus entering the textbooks on the history of architecture. A similar contemporary landscape project is the see-through church in Limburg, Belgium. This installation – Reading between the Lines – is a kind of sculpture, 10 m high, which is a structure built of Corten steel. The design reflects the scale, ground plan and the concept of traditional temples in the region, here transformed into an installation of a kind – a work of art.⁴³

⁴¹ After: W. Kosiński, op. cit., p. 86

⁴² More [in:] W. Kosiński, op. cit., pp. 82 – 87.

⁴³ Arch. Gijs Van Vaerenbergh, Limburg, Belgium, 2011; more in: A. Zachariasz, *Sacrum i ogród – wzniosłość i genius locci*, [in:] *Cmentarze i ogrody w krajobrazie. O sacrum, symbolice, kompozycji i przemijaniu*; Cultural Landscape Committee, Polish Geographical Society Sosnowiec 2013, pp.119-120

Figures 10-15. Haus der Stille, Königsmünster-Meschede, Germany

Source: Photos by Beata Malinowska-Petelenz

Haus der Stille⁴⁴ designed by Peter Kulka is yet another austere and abstract contemplation place created in the minimalist spirit. It has been erected in the vicinity of the Benedictine abbey in Königsmünster towering over the German town of Meschede like a mediaeval fortress. The abbey – designed by Hans Schilling – a huge brick monument resembling a defensive structure, was built in the period of the revolutionary changes initiated by the Second Vatican Council.

The meditation building – a stunning white parcel devoid of any Christian symbols, is composed of two ascetic, sharply cut glass and concrete cuboid prisms partly slid into the slope of a hill, with a narrow crevice between them – the entrance. The upper part of this crevice has been filled with a glazed-in junction, separating the two parts of the house. The crevice is also spanned with three glass bridges running on three storeys, providing additional connections between the two structures. At the entrance and the first floor level, the architect has designed 20 simple cells furnished only with the most basic furniture, a refectory, two parlatories, an office and a gathering hall destined for courses and meditation.

Peter Kulka's ascetic architecture, made of concrete and light, alludes in its austerity and abstract character to the works of the Japanese architect Tadao Ando, who does not differentiate between the recipients of his meditative art of building and directs his works to single-family houses residents, museum visitors or conference participants alike. The contemplative atmosphere of this place as well as the architectural modesty, sparseness and asceticism helps to break away with the outer world.⁴⁵ From the point of view of form and

⁴⁴ *Haus der Stille*, design by P. Kulka, Meschede, Germany, 2002

⁴⁵ See: *Closer to God*, Gestalten Berlin 2010, p.106

material, the structure remains in stark contrast with its surroundings, the monastery buildings – made of brick, heavy and fortress-like in their expression – provide a perfect background for the white, minimalist and cubistic structure. It constitutes a clearly outlined, extremely simplified and neutral accent in the open landscape. The whole complex, in compliance with tradition, situated on a hilltop, is a spatially dominant feature, powerfully defined by the two characteristic towers of the abbey.

Figures 16-19. Chapel Maria Magdalena, Zollfeld, Austria

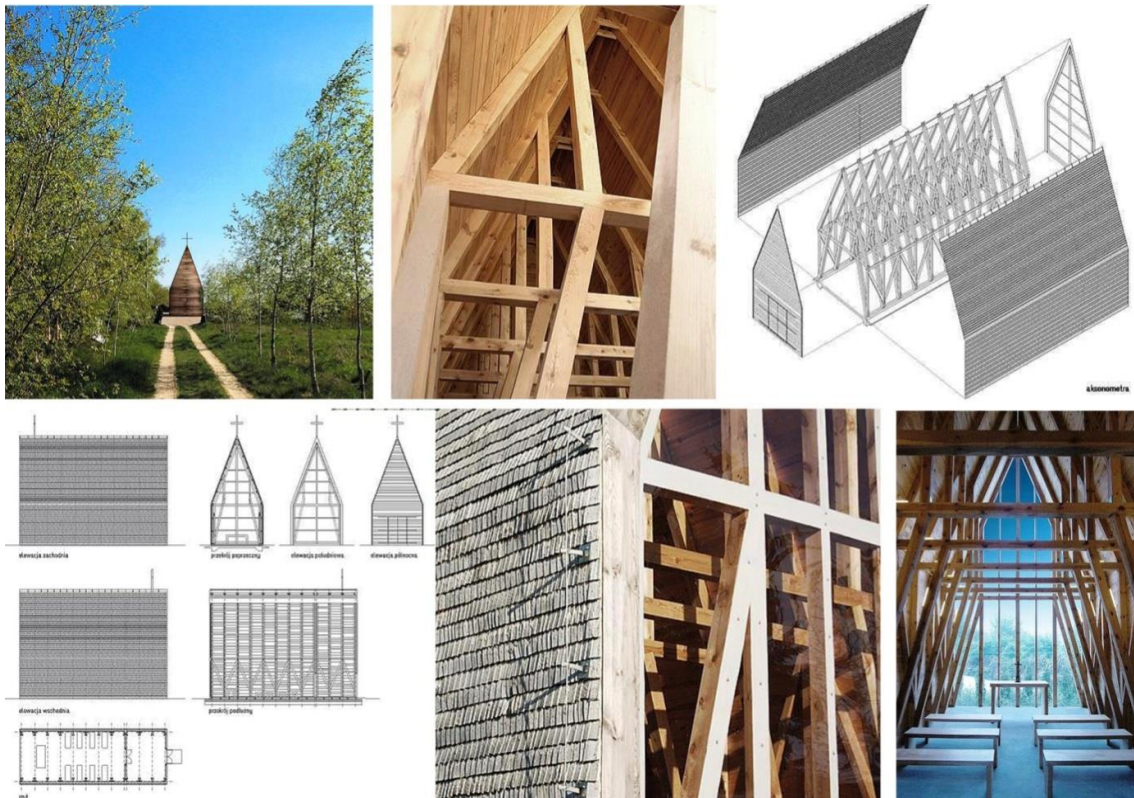


Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/770771/chapel-maria-magdalena-sacheocierrchitectes>

Another such example is the private Maria Magdalena chapel in Austria designed by the Sacher.Locicero.Architects.⁴⁶ Hidden in the Carinthia mountains and located near a small vineyard Zollfeld, it draws its richness from the natural scenery that surrounds it and fills it with almost mystic character. The proximity of the impressive Hochosterwitz castle and the pilgrimage church Magdalensberg makes the place even more majestic and noble in its expression. The restrained, classic and almost archaic form of the structure, the simplicity of its interior and the architectural purity are ideally harmonized with their surroundings. The chapel has been built of white concrete, which is an ascetic material and a perfect match for the natural landscape. The texture and colour of the materials change depending on the atmospheric conditions, but they remain almost shiny regardless of the weather. The most characteristic feature is the high pitched roof, which creates the impression that the chapel almost “reaches” the sky. The radically simple interior is decorated with furniture made of whitewashed oak, and all the other elements have been designed following the principle of simplicity: a huge brown cross situated on the axis of the entrance, the two-wing bronze door as well as the colourful stained glass slits, which are the only, and top-quality, decoration here.

⁴⁶ Chapel Maria Magdalena, design by Sacher.Locicero.Architects, Zollfeld, Austria, 2014 [in:] <http://www.sacher-locicero.com/complete-works/>; as of the 6th March 2016

Figures 20-24. Church in Tarnow, Poland



Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/39747/chapel-in-tarnow-beton>

Poland may also boast a chapel that is both universal and local in its form: a small wooden church – Votum Aleksa in Tarnów upon the Vistula river, near Garwolin.⁴⁷ Here, at the bend of the Vistula river, 60 km away from Warsaw, upon the river scarp, at the end of a no-asphalt cul-de-sac stands a tiny temple which has already gained certain renown and has been written about in international publications.⁴⁸ The building is charming in its simplicity and modesty, yet at the same time it provides a good illustration of what a powerful impact a material may have if applied to the right structure and surroundings.⁴⁹ It has been financed by a private person, the only thing that has been revealed about the donator is that he is a writer living in this village, who wanted to restore a place of cult and contemplation to the village since it used to have one – a church from the 17th century – which was destroyed during the war. The temple is a simple symmetric structure of slender proportions, with a pitched roof and no windows, in its entirety covered with aspen wood shingles. The only source of natural light is the back gable wall, made entirely of glass, thus offering splendid views over the Vistula landscape, which provides a natural background for the wooden altar.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Votum Aleksa chapel, design by Beton (Marta and Lech Rowiński), Tarnów nad Wisłą, Polska, 2010

⁴⁸ E.g. Church In Tarnow [in:] L. Feireiss, *Closer to God. Religious Architecture and Sacred Spaces*, Gestalten Berlin 2010, and also *inter alia* in: <http://www.archdaily.com/39747/chapel-in-tarnow-beton>; <http://www.architectural-review.com/today/church-by-beton-tarnow-poland/8600964.fullarticle>; as of the 9th March 2016

⁴⁹ P. Lis, *Znaczenie tworzywa*, *Autoportret* 1[48] 2015, p. 64

⁵⁰ A. Cymer, *Wbrew schematom. Kościółek w Tarnowie nad Wisłą*, [in:] *Krytyka Architektury* 1(1), 2010, p. 29

The building is a combination of three elements: the human, the sacred and the natural, so characteristic of folk cultures, whose traditions, although Christian, have preserved a lot of primeval beliefs closely linked to nature, its cycle and transformations. Humans, being a component of a larger whole, had to understand the laws of nature and obey the established order, which in return guaranteed the sense of security and continuity of existence. Chapel Votum Aleksa evokes this archetypical union between man and nature, which is the sacred, and thus constitutes an attempt to return to tradition based on a strong spatial, sociological and cultural context.⁵¹

The need of privacy and greater distance from the world manifests itself also in the increasingly more popular form of recreation: going into retreat combined with fasting and meditation, simple healthy food within silent monastery walls. More and more big city dwellers choose this type of relaxation and recreation, they spend their holidays with monks, hoping to run away from their daily rush, the stress and the merciless reality of corporate toil. When we write Benedictines of Tyniec near Kraków or Camaldolese monks of Rytwiany or Camaldolese nuns of Złoczew, we will find places of rest, "spiritual spas." This form of relaxation and rest, combined with getting a taste of monastic life is also offered by the Trappists from the famous Plzno monastery.

Figures 25-28. Monastery of Nový Dvůr, Czech Republic



Source: Photos by Beata Malinowska-Petelenz

⁵¹ P. Dudko, *Kościół Votum Aleksa w Tarnowie*, *Architektura współczesna* seminar [in:] http://www.architektura.pb.edu.pl/arch-wsp/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11:kocio-votum-aleksa-w-tarnowie-arch-grupa-beton&catid=1:artykuy&Itemid=2; as of the 20th Dec. 2015

An interesting example of how a former noble family house could be incorporated within the cluster of monastery buildings is the minimalist design by British architect John Pawson.⁵² His strict architecture fits perfectly the rule of the Trappists order, a branch of the Cistercians, and makes an extraordinarily successful, discreetly outlined intervention into the natural landscape. Extreme and austere décor, combined with the historic Baroque edifice, have produced an exquisite effect of harmony, simplicity and purity – a synthesis of the mediaeval ideals of the Cistercians and the contemporary minimalism. White monastery walls, white light coming in from the cloister, white habits of the monks, white surfaces in the interior, which seems to know no other colour, unmistakably invoke silence, tranquillity, nobility and immateriality.⁵³ The structure is situated in an inaccessible place on a high hill surrounded by old trees, at the edge of a small hamlet. It would seem that combining a Baroque mansion with an extremely minimalist chapel may be a bit risky, to say the least, yet the designer has managed to create the effect of entrancing architectural asceticism.⁵⁴

Summary – conclusions

Spirituality is a field of study for theologians, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists and researchers into culture. The semantic complexity of this concept encompasses both the lifestyle focused strictly on religion and the atheist attitude, there is also room for the existence, desired by many, that is free from the influence of institutionalised religion – the Church. If sociologists are to be trusted, contemporary spirituality is a category which may be placed beyond the religious context, however, with the sensibility of the soul still preserved.⁵⁵ Such religionless spirituality gains popularity, attracts more and more proponents among former Catholics and people subscribing to various other Christian denominations as well as to other religions.⁵⁶ All these people are looking for what G. Van der Leeuw described as “the religion of peacefulness,” which would be the antidote to insecurity and a chance for liberation from fears, offering a kind of therapy.

The spirituality of contemporary Europe manifests itself in small unpretentious chapels – of some denomination or non-denominational – resulting from the need to put community over divisions and to break away from the rush and overstimulation of everyday life. These chapels are secluded places of silence, rest, contemplation and encounter with another human being. Similar symbolic spaces of universal character, stripped of any religious emblems or having them barely noticeable, emerge in various parts of Europe. They originate in the ever greater craving for silence, concentration, alienation, regeneration of the mind and the spirit. Their often minimalistic and abstract form, not infrequently rising above the language of symbols, stimulates the visitors to set off on their own, individual inner journey and embrace intellectual rest.

⁵² *Monastery of Nový Dvůr, design by J. Pawson, Czech Republic, 2004*

⁵³ A. Mielnik, *Architektura klasztorów cysterskich a współczesna architektura prostoty*, Technical Transactions CUT Press, issue 13-A/2005, p. 129

⁵⁴ *Novy Dvur Monastery* [in:] E. Heathcote, L. Moffat, *Contemporary Church Architecture*, Great Britain 2007, pp. 172-177

⁵⁵ J. Baniak, *Wielowymiarowość i konteksty kulturowe duchowości religijnej a inne formy duchowości*, [in:] *Humaniora*. Czasopismo Internetowe No 2 (2)/2013, p. 16

⁵⁶ J. Baniak, op. cit., p. 32

Simplicity and asceticism are universal ideas present in architecture and art for ever. Modernism has absorbed them, but they should not be associated exclusively with this trend. Their sources may be found in Cistercian monasteries, Japanese philosophy and architecture, in abstract art, Adolf Loos's theory or Mies van der Roë's famous "less is more." Perhaps the architecture of silence and visual modesty is the antidote to the multi-threaded chaos and restlessness of the contemporary world. Simplicity with no attached ideology, a constituent of the universal sacred – acceptable in the model of a temple in the multicultural Europe – is probably the only way to arrive at the inner truth.

Bibliography:

- Baniak J.**, *Wielowymiarowość i konteksty kulturowe duchowości religijnej a inne formy duchowości*, [in:] *Humaniora. Czasopismo Internetowe* No 2 (2)/2013.
- Bauman Z.**, *44 listy ze świata płynnej nowoczesności*, Kraków 2011.
- Bauman Z.**, *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej*, Instytut Kultury, Warszawa 1994.
- Closer to God. Religious Architecture and Sacred Spaces*; introduction by L. Feireiss; Gestalten, Berlin 2010.
- Cymer A.**, *Wbrew schematom. Kościółek w Tarnowie nad Wisłą*, [in:] *Krytyka Architektury* 1(1), 2010.
- Dudko P.**, *Kościół Votum Aleksa w Tarnowie, Architektura współczesna seminar* [in:] http://www.architektura.pb.edu.pl/arch-wsp/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11:kocio-votum-aleksa-w-tarnowie-arch-grupa-beton&catid=1:artykuy&Itemid=2; as of the 20th Dec. 2015
- Grabowska M.**, *Zmysłowe sacrum - jak reklama i kultura popularna ucieleśniają sacrum (na wybranych przykładach)*, [in:] <http://www.publikacje.edu.pl/pdf/10189.pdf>; as of th 15th March 2015.
- Heathcote E., Moffat L.**, *Contemporary Church Architecture*, Wiley-Academy, Great Britain 2007.
- Jarosz M.**, *Pojęcie duchowości w psychologii*, [in:] *Studia z Psychologii w KUL*, vol. 16, Lublin, CUL Press 2010.
- Kosiński W.**, *Architektura sacrum wobec konfliktów, tolerancji i pojednania. Historia, współczesność, perspektywy*, PiF'15, 2011.
- Kurek J.**, *Laicyzacja sacrum. Współczesna adaptacja świątyń do nowych funkcji*, PiF'15, 2011.
- Lis P.**, *Znaczenie tworzywa*, *Autoportret* 1[48] 2015.
- Mielnik A.**, *Architektura klasztorów cysterskich a współczesna architektura prostoty*, *Technical Transactions CUT Press*, issue 13-A/2005.
- Rabiej J.**, *Chrześcijańska architektura sakralna — problem świątyń desakralizowanych oraz przestrzeni parasakralnych*, *Liturgia Sacra* 18, no 2, 2012.
- Rogińska M.**, *Sacrum ponowoczesne. Nauka i nowa duchowość w poszukiwaniu całości*, [in:] *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Sociologica* VI (2014), vol.1.
- Skaza M.**, *Petera Zumthora myślenie architekturą*, *ARCH* 2(16).
- Stec B.**, *Droga – Kaplica brata Klausa*, *Architektura&Biznes* 7-8/2007.

Węclawowicz-Gyurkovich E., *Poszukiwanie emocji*, Technical Transaction CUT Press issue 7. Architecture issue 1-A1, Kraków 2009.

Van de Leeuw G., *Fenomenologia religii*, Warszawa 1978.

Winnicka-Gburek J., *Kilka uwag o możliwości sacrum w sztuce współczesnej*, Estetyka i Krytyka 35 (4/2014).

Wojtuszek M., *Przemysł i sacrum – transformacje architektury*, Silesian University of Technology 2012, [in:] <http://repolis.bg.polsl.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=23566>; as of the 9th March 2016.

Zumthor P., *Myślenie architekturą*, Karakter 2014.