

Museum architecture: the monographic factor

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I. INTRODUCTION

My architecture-critical research is concerned with the architecture of single-artist museums. I investigate how the interest in the person of the artist and the singularity of his or her artistic endeavor manifests itself in museum architecture - I call this 'the monographic factor'.

II. APPROACH

In my dissertation, two theoretical sections frame the broader phenomenon of the monographic museum. A third section develops various problems specific to monographic museums, discussing canonical and critical cases.

Any critical assessment of single-artist museums cannot avoid taking stock of the survival and the 'operativity' of the myth of the artist. The meaning of such projects as preserving an artist's studio, or interpreting an artist's legacy into an architectural museum design always relies at least in part on conceptions that are constitutive elements of the artists' myth. Therefore, my dissertation opens with a section that critically presents and discusses this myth of the artist. I argue that to this day artistic authorship is highly mythologized, *in spite of* the theoretical undermining in recent decades of the myth's theoretical presuppositions. Most probably the growth of monographic museums and transformed artists' houses can be read as going against the current presentation and surveying strategies of general art museums, and indicates that the myth of the artist is unavoidable.

The second theoretical section develops a conceptual model of the monographic museum in comparison with the general art museum. The key processes here are 'museumization' and 'memorialization', processes each with different spatio-architectural conventions. In monographic museums, the tension between 'museum' and 'memorial' is constitutive.

The third section analyzes how a series of specific issues, 'problems' described in theory in the conceptual model are dealt with in the practice of artists, museum conservators and architects. This section's chapters deal with the particular make-up and interpretative structuring of single-artist museum's collections, with the problem of preserving and displaying artists' studios, or with the metaphorical interpretation of the person of the artist and the singularity of his/her artistic project in an architectural design. Both canonical cases such as Carlo Scarpa's design for the Gipsoteca Canoviana or Stéphane Beel's Raveel Museum and more 'marginal' but instructive cases such as Daniel Libeskind's Nussbaum Museum or the anonymous design for the Brussels Musée Magritte Museum among others are discussed from each chapter's thematic angle.

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