

2020 DEFINIOWANIE PRZESTRZENI ARCHITEKTONICZNEJ
PRAWDA I KLAMSTWO ARCHITEKTURY
DEFINING THE ARCHITECTURAL SPACE
THE TRUTH AND LIE OF ARCHITECTURE

DEFINING THE ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

The subject to be discussed: **THE TRUTH AND LIE OF ARCHITECTURE**

1. The truth? Creators are still looking for the truth. There is the inner truth of a work, the truth of time, the truth of art, the personal truth of a creator (I see it that way!)... Artists, viewers, art theorists, philosophers believe in the existence of the truth of art, they accept this idea. The audience may believe that Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Mona Lisa contains some mysterious truth; it is difficult to imagine the depth of the truth of Fernando Botero's Mona Lisa. One can also believe that there is the truth of abstract painting. The truth of literature is widely accepted: the truth of the worlds of Joyce, Kafka, Gombrowicz, Borges... However, we do not wonder about the essence of the truth of Ciaccona from Bach's Partita for Solo Violin No. 2, nor about the Gesamtkunstwerk of Wagner's Valkyrie. In the recent past of architecture, the concept of "truth" played an essential or significant role. There were directions based on a certain ethics in architecture; the architectural form resulted from the assumptions of the guidelines described as the sincerity of architecture; the aesthetics resulted from a kind of game of the truth. In brutalism, the truth consisted in the "sincerity" of the material; later, the truth of the form was also related to function. The issue of truth was also an important guideline for the development of concepts related to the logic of the building's construction system; these concepts seem to have been displaced by individual efforts to demonstrate the originality of the architecture and – the architect.

2. The great lie of art. "We all know that Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand." This statement by Picasso remains valid! It is not clear what the truth is, the lie has gained a new colour. Once more, we are moving within an aesthetics that dazzles with a category of fictionality. Its existence has never been exposed so much. Even the significance of the slipping keystones in Giulio Romano's Palazzo del Tè was concealed by a thick layer of ideology of beauty. Nabokov put forward the category of the great lie as the main attribute of art. The play of the artist and the audience can be compared to a game of chess, and interpreted as a conscious acknowledgement of the rules of artificiality on both sides of the mirror of fictionality. It seems that the matter with literature is simple: a literary work is not a statement that can be true or false. It is a statement that is not subject to such verification; this is the status of fiction. Declaring fiction as play and the great lie as a pretext is the way to create things. The adoption of such an idea assumes that art should be seen through the foggy glass of consciousness, that here we are watching – the world of art, the artificial world, the world in a mask. In this haze, one can seek the depth and vastness broadening the reception of an artistic object. Architecture also hides behind a veil of play, irony, and all other curtains proclaiming their artificiality. And the synonyms for "the great lie": fiction, mystification, illusion, fantasy, poetry, irony, joke... are justified.

3. The easy lie. In the vicinity of the lie of art, there is the area of the greatest sincerity, "the easy lie", the area of kitsch – the art of happiness. Kitsch is not just a description of things, it is also a definition of a certain kind of attitude and then, as a result, action. There is pleasant Hundertwasser's kitsch in architecture. There is also a huge building in Warsaw, The Palace of Culture and Science, the greatest kitsch in the world, once grim, now tamed by time. It is an architectural thing with references to a certain tradition of historical architecture, built for – man's happiness. And right on the edge of kitsch – the great art of postmodern architecture and the vagaries of supermodernism.

4. The goal. The great lie and the search for the truth – do not fit into a single architectural theory. One can get an impression that the primary value is not so much the art called architecture as the goal – its originality enabling it to distinguish itself from everyday life's surroundings and to be accepted by the world!

Dariusz Kozłowski, Maria Misiągiewicz



VOL. 1

**DEFINING THE ARCHITECTURAL SPACE –
THE TRUTH AND LIE OF ARCHITECTURE**

DEFINIOWANIE PRZESTRZENI ARCHITEKTONICZNEJ –
PRAWDA I KŁAMSTWO ARCHITEKTURY

VOL. 1

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THE REPRESENTATION OF TRUTH. LE BARON JENNEY IN CHICAGO

PRZEDSTAWIENIE PRAWDY. LE BARON JENNEY W CHICAGO

Abstract

If architecture may be defined as an Art, the issue of truth becomes particularly challenging. Architecture, however, is also Science, as it relies on a more certain scientific component. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the School of Chicago achieved a balance between art and science, in the pursuit of a non-positivist truth as the foundation for the earliest high-rise buildings. The essay reviews the work of one of the School's first representatives – William Le Baron Jenney.

Keywords: technique, art, Chicago, Le Baron Jenney

Streszczenie

Przy próbie zdefiniowania architektury jako Sztuki kwestia prawdy okazuje się nie lada wyzwaniem. Architektura jest jednak również Nauką, ponieważ opiera się na pewniejszym elemencie naukowym. Dążąc do niepozytywistycznej prawdy leżącej u podstaw najwcześniejszych wieżowców, szkoła chicagowska osiągnęła równowagę pomiędzy sztuką a nauką w drugiej połowie XIX wieku. W eseju dokonano przeglądu twórczości jednego z pierwszych przedstawicieli tej szkoły – Williama Le Barona Jenneya.

Słowa kluczowe: technologia, sztuka, Chicago, Le Baron Jenney

INTRODUCTION

What is truth in architecture, as architecture is recognized as an art by now? Can *truth* exist in art, in an activity based on representation? And if it can, where would we find it? In the represented object or in a possible faithfulness of representation?

For architecture, an art with a strong scientific component, this issue becomes all the more thorny. In phases of high confusion, the recourse to the certainty of science was often a way to provide the discipline with a foundation, a positivist truth according to which architecture coincided with the science of construction, and that identified the forms of architecture as the faithful translation of structural calculations. During the twentieth century, major engineers like Pier Luigi Nervi criticized such approach, as they believed in the importance of a creative, *intuitive* act even in technical solutions, as a dialogue to be related with the choices and goals typically pursued by architecture.

While the realm of science and technology of constructions is certainly the most conducive to certainty and truth, it is also, at the same time, understood in this sense, the one that mostly erases architecture, its specificity and autonomy, its value and *raison d'être*.

In order to follow the choices of a world that claimed a role for architecture without denying its presumed objectivity, I would like to take you to the United States of America around the mid nineteenth century, to a city that did not exist yet but would be a reality within a few decades thanks to the commitment of a group of architects who successfully tackled the formal expression of its difficult construction.

We are going to see whether these events may provide some kind of lesson about the possible interpretation of *truth* in architecture.

The story I would like to tell you may begin in October 1871. This is the story of the birth of a proud city that, starting from a remote village of huts in a marshy and inhospitable site in the middle of the new continent, would become one of the richest, most productive, vibrant and still powerful cities in the world – Chicago.

As the paradigm of America and its very recent history, the expression of its riches, dreams, myths and extreme contradictions, Chicago is a city where everything is amplified, everything is excess and contrast, both in nature and in man-made elements: pomp and destitution, heterogeneity and segregation, a crowd of buildings that get rebuilt taller and taller in an endless mutual challenge, and bleak expanses of inexorably flat prairies as far as the eye can see, boundless suburbs that surround the city of skyscrapers and a lake so mighty one cannot even see from shore to shore.

In this story of conquest, of relentless race to the construction of a new world and development of an ideal of civilization, architecture plays a primary role. Necessity, laws of the market, technical achievements, economic pressure, and a typically American resourceful and optimistic pragmatism are the conditions that lead to the birth of a new type of building that emerges along with an idea of city in deliberate contrast with the European one. But the determination of its residents in shaping a face and an identity for the new civilization that was going to rise, and particularly, the awareness of its architects in thinking that precisely the architecture of the new city would be responsible for representing this new nation in the eyes of the world, has kept these buildings from being merely necessary and technical achievements, and provided them with the status of extraordinary architectures we regard as the most authentic expression of the American city.

1. 1871: THE GREAT FIRE

In 1871, Chicago was completely destroyed by a violent fire that burnt on for days, spurred by the wind that through the region of the great lakes blows onto the *windy city*. Like many other American cities that were damaged by fire during the same years (New York, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, San Francisco), Chicago mostly comprised low buildings, made of thin and cheap wooden joists, a building material sourced in the Northern American forests. Manufactured in standard sizes, these joists were easily assembled into the rigid, light and quickly buildable *balloon frame*. Buildings seldom relied on brick frames that required longer construction processes for which there was neither a tradition nor a necessity in America.

Chicago had been founded a few years before, in 1837, soon after the Midwestern territories had been annexed to the states of the Atlantic coast. The city was built over muddy ground on the edge of endless prairies, looking out to the southern shore of Lake Michigan, where the small Fort Dearborn had been built as a defense against the Indians. The climate was inhospitable – icy and windy during the winter, and unbearably humid during the summer.



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BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE BUSINESS DISTRICT OF CHICAGO

- Ill. 1. Map of Chicago with the Fort Dearborn, about 1830
- Ill. 2. Map of Chicago at the time of its foundation, 1834
- Ill. 3. Bird's eye view of Chicago's Loop, 1898

In those years, the city bets its fate on the construction of a canal in order to establish one vast waterway network connecting the basins of the Great Lakes and of the Mississippi, the mighty river that crosses America from north to south down to Memphis and New Orleans and its delta in the Gulf of Mexico. The canal opened to traffic in 1847, followed in 1848 by the railway connecting the Midwestern city to other more established and populated cities in the East; in 1869, the railway reached the Pacific coast, thereby connecting the two oceans.

Placed at the intersection between the two major communication axes of the new continent, the north-south naval axis and east-west railway axis, Chicago became the core of America, the hub of passage, gathering and sorting of trade for the entire territory of the United States. The settlement received a sudden and quick acceleration that turned it into a whirlwind catalyzer of goods and capitals, equipped with increasingly enhanced transportation systems. At the end of the Civil War (1861–1866), Chicago was on the verge of becoming the major system of interior naval transportations in the world and the largest railway hub in the world. The savage deforestation conducted in the Northern regions provided the city with immense quantities of lumber; the railway network carried livestock from all over America to what would eventually become the largest slaughterhouse district in the world – the *stockyards*. Equally immense quantities of cereals reached the city in order to be stocked and ground; the need to manufacture the machinery required by the new industrial processes would spur the mechanic industry, and so on, in a self-feeding chain.

The residents of Chicago started to become aware of the potential of the newly established city, and to nurture a civic spirit based on the pride of the enterprise they were going to accomplish and on the responsibility of the city's future development.

More or less at this point of the story, in 1871, a watershed for the city, the wooden Chicago went up in flames, erased in its physical body but more vibrant and enterprising than ever in the spirit of its inhabitants. After the great depression of 1873, the construction of a City finally aware of its role and of the mission it would fulfill finally began.

2. SQUARE MILES, GRIDIRON AND CITY BLOCK

When, around 1800, the Midwestern territories were annexed to the first American states, President Jefferson suggested finding a simple, rational and ordered system for land organization. Therefore, land was divided into *square miles* – square mile plots in the north-south and east-west direction.

Each mile square or section as it was called would contain 640 acres which could be divided again into four 160 acre farms, or sixteen 40 acre farms. But one mile could also be divided into 128 city blocks.

This division into city-blocks, the grid-iron system, established the typical American pattern. This pattern made it possible to build cities of any size, large or small, simply by adding new blocks. [With this elementary principle of organization, Hilberseimer argues], each city could now be extended as desired, and could spread out endless as the city [...] of Chicago in Illinois demonstrate without apparently causing any planning problem.¹

¹ L. Hilberseimer, *Planning in the U.S.A.*, typewritten document, Ryerson & Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1958, Series 5, box 1. Paper for an Exhibition.

Since its origin, Chicago grows by following this one law, by aggregating regular *blocks* around the first core placed at the intersection of the two branches of the river with the lake. Although the orthogonal grid system is a far from new invention, in America it merely introduced the geometric subdivision of the land, eventually distributed according to the criterion of private ownership.

Cities emerge with neither boundary nor shape; their streets have neither distinction nor hierarchy, there are neither open collective spaces, nor a recognizable center as the seat of religious or civil institutions. The only purpose of the grid is the ordered subdivision of the land into easily sellable lots. In this way, the city expands according to the rule of profit and of the maximum exploitation of land.

In Chicago, this law is inexorable. Therefore, the idea of developing high-rise buildings represents a special opportunity, particularly in terms of investment. The street increasingly becomes a void cut out into the compact and closely-knit mass of buildings, an austere space squeezed among these behemoths, a void required to provide buildings with access, ventilation and light, a space from which the sky is almost invisible.

3. THE HIGH-RISE OFFICE BUILDING

Around 1880, the year of economic recovery, the growth and expansion of Chicago resumes with renewed fervor.

Many architects and engineers flock into the city, attracted by new work opportunities, to address the new issue then emerging. There are equally new functional, practical, constructional problems they are required to address, as well as the technical tools they have at their disposal. There are no references to possible solutions suggested by a tradition that, being exclusively European, is not recognized as applicable – many actually refuse it as an obstacle to the freshness and authenticity of the new ideas.

This is a special time for America: it is the birth of a civilization, of a specific kind of modernity. The problem the architects of Chicago have to solve far exceeds for scope and importance the construction, in itself difficult, of a high-rise building. Their task is shaping the identity of an entire people with neither a common root nor a common language. An identity they need to invent, express and manifest to the entire world.

In this sense, architecture plays a central role. It is the art primarily charged with the responsibility of giving a face to the new cities, of making this evolving culture recognizable, of expressing the values the American city, a city without history, entirely to be built, particularly in the West and Mid-West, is entitled to represent. Architecture is the medium for the expression of the values of a culture then in the process of defining itself – the ideals of freedom and democracy, as well as the pragmatism, optimism, trust in technology, the central role of the relationship with nature – in other words, all the themes that still characterize American culture.

The architects of Chicago will address the task of designing the new buildings for the city with the awareness of such civil responsibility, by identifying their architectural research with the aspiration to *shape* the rising American culture, so that it can be recognized and proudly exhibited by those who contributed to its creation. Such culture is even more necessary in a nation with no shared roots like America. The only possible roots are in the future, in the history the Americans will be able to create, and in the cities they will build. Here, architecture is invested with the task of providing places with no past with an identity.

The question the best architects of Chicago ask themselves is how can we represent a high-rise office or commercial building? And what will it represent? Its structure, its interior organization, its nature, its character? And what are these made of? What is the *true nature* of an office building?

Addressing such new problems means finding a way, clarifying the goals and experimenting solutions in a very short time, within few months, because even fast construction is an important term in this equation.

The solutions provided in these years are the result of a difficult and frantic, albeit aware pursuit of an expressive form for this new type of building. Architects are aware both of the extraordinary opportunities on the table and of the conditions and constraints that affect their work, of the gap between technical and artistic issues, of the difference between the building's structure and its representation.

4. THE CHALLENGE BEGINS

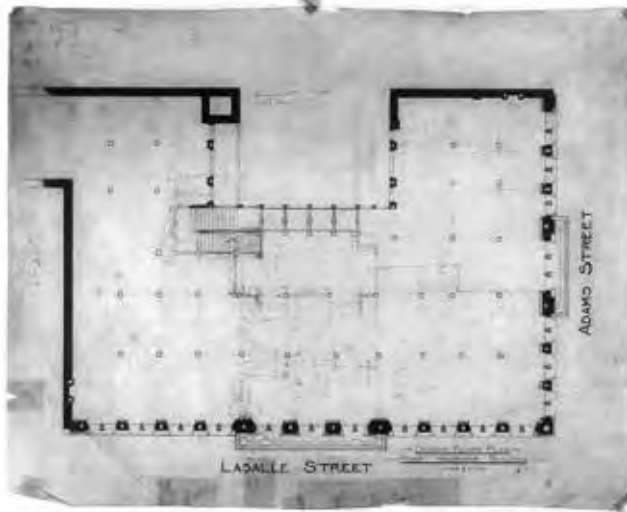
The features of the first high-rise buildings are defined in a very short time. As mentioned above, fast construction is an important element in the challenge. The buildings rise side by side as independent objects. Collective spaces and civil life are confined in the lobbies where retail spaces, restaurants, theaters, banks, post office and so on are located in the lower stories by covering the interior courtyards that provide light and ventilation to the closely-knit sections above. What emerges is a division into two parts, a sort of basement that occupies the entire building plot, and stories after stories of offices replicating above.

Cast iron and iron are the materials that allow for the vertical expansion of the new buildings through a light and resistant frame; mechanical equipment for the vertical transportation of people, systems of foundations adapted to the city's marshy ground, bracing systems to resist the strong winds are developed for the occasion. But the arduous problem, the terror of the inhabitants of the *windy city*, the real threat for the new constructions, even though wood plays no part in their frames, is still fire.

An architect-engineer stands out in these early challenges. He is a man from the East. Having graduated as an engineer in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he also studied in Paris, then visited Europe, travelled across America, and, during the Civil War, built railways. **William Le Baron Jenney** (1832–1907) arrives in Chicago in 1868, right before the great fire. Historiography credits him with the authorship and the merit of the first high-rise building with a load-bearing frame *entirely* made of iron.

Jenney becomes absorbed by the issue of high-rise buildings and by the experimentation of iron frames, a material whose application he is familiar with for having already tested it. But, besides deploying his experience and technical expertise, and developing a construction system that would become the standard practice in the construction of high-rise buildings, Le Baron Jenney very deliberately and consciously wants to address the most difficult and important problem for an architect. What are the forms to be used to represent this new, extraordinary achievement of construction technology to the world? What is the *true nature* of this building? Jenney too insists on an idea of architecture as the expression of a civilization: "We are the new people,"² he says, and wants his architecture to reflect this idea.

² Quotations of texts by W. Le Baron Jenney drawn from S.E. Loring, *Principles and Practice of Architecture*, Cobb, Pritchard & Co., Chicago 1869. The same quotations can be also found in other



Ill. 4-5. Home Insurance Building, W. Le Baron Jenney, 1884-1885, (demolished), drawings from the archive

5. LET'S START WITH THE TECHNICAL SOLUTION

The Home Insurance Building (1884–1885) earned Jenney the title of first builder of skyscrapers. He had been working for a long time at the skeleton frame, which comprises a simple metal, rigid and light metal cage, made of columns and beams tied together and bolted, according to a principle not so dissimilar from the widespread wooden balloon frame: here the floors are built with terracotta elements.

The plan is very simple: a 42x30 rectangle with an interior courtyard for lighting: the thin pilasters are distributed according to a regular geometric grid, ordered and sized based on a rigidly structural logic, for a height of 9 stories, plus two more added later.

However, another element would allow Jenney to provide a shape to this elementary structure: a fire-resistant masonry cladding, required to protect the building from fires, a component as *essential* to the construction of a high-rise building as the iron frame.

The Home Insurance Building reflects the division of the structure into two sections: the lobby, separated from the office section although they coincide in terms of plan and structure, acquires the role and image of a basement. Only the cladding differentiates the two sections; the building appears as a volume built with a pilaster system, clad in stone at the lower two floors and in brick at the upper floors. After its demolition, the Home Insurance Building was studied in order to understand its structural operation. What emerged is that the stone of the basement shares part of the building's load with the iron frame, while at the office floors, the brick pilasters, apparently too thin to carry the load of such a tall building, are *supported* by metal beams.

Clearly, if the masonry cladding reflects the need to protect the building from fires and the pilasters' rhythm results from the iron frame, the *form* of such cladding, the intention to shape it as a trilithic structure of different orders, the hierarchy and separation of such pilasters, their rhythm and measure are no longer the result of a technical reason, of a hypothetical structural *truth*, and rather reflect an entirely different intention. The fire-resistant cladding becomes the tool to provide the building with an expressive image, to provide the volume with proportion, to articulate its parts and describe its elements, to achieve the narration of superposed floors, a typical character of the new building: to *represent* its value, its very nature.

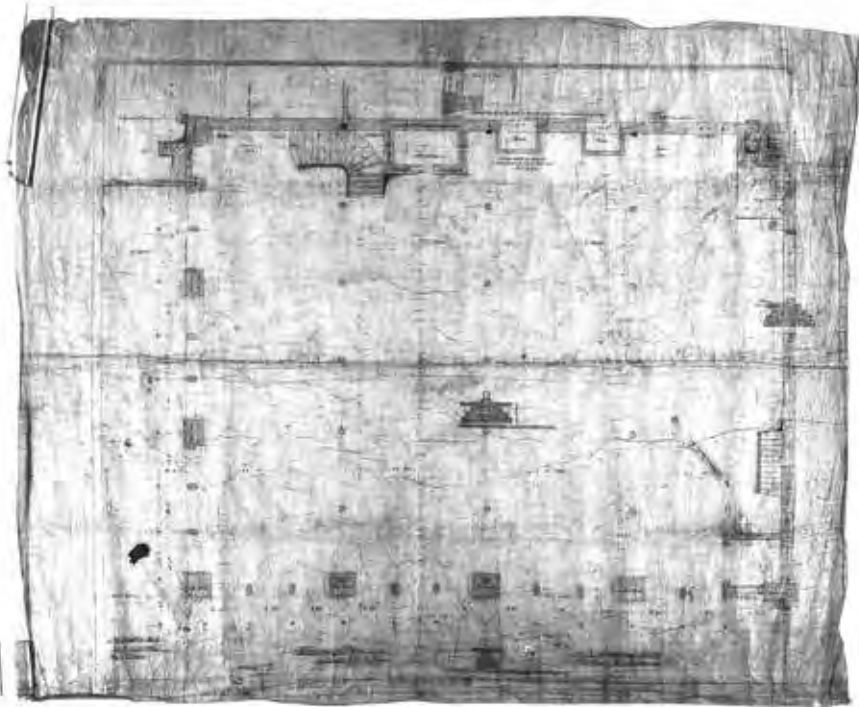
This narration becomes the opportunity to achieve a second, important research about the *expressiveness* of architecture, the need to provide a stable, recognizable form to its constitutive elements. For Jenney, technical and expressive research must go hand in hand.

In 1879, before the Home Insurance Building, Jenney had employed the iron construction system in the smaller **I Leiter Building** (later demolished) – a simple block with an elementary geometry, five stories only and a rectangular plan. Here, the structure is still mixed with wooden planks for the floors. The outer masonry pilasters are actually a second structure bearing its own load, abutting and connected to the iron frame, which bears the building's load.

In this case too, Jenney uses the fire-resistant brick cladding in order to describe the volume of the building and its typical features, the superposition of stories and the brightness of the interiors.

He describes the simple volume through a trilithic order of superposed slabs that, in order to unify the two elevations, does not coincide fully with the rhythm of the interior supports.

essays published in different Chicago's magazines.



Ill. 6-7. First Leiter Building, W. Le Baron Jenney, 1879 (demolished), photograph and drawing from the archive

Therefore, in order to provide proportion to their size, he divides the wide bays through a second order of small pilasters that originates the tripartite division of the windows. The elements are described in an analytic way, clearly separated in their role through stringcourses and cornices; the stories are articulated into decreasing height orders (respectively of 16, 14, 13, 12 and 12 feet), with a tall and well-delineated cornice topping the volume.

The technical construction system, not safe enough to remain exposed, as well as insufficiently expressive to be exhibited directly, suggests the principle for the definition of the volume and its elements. This reflects Jenney's concern about "being clear and explicit," and the declared intention to pursue a *principle of truth* in architecture. A principle of truth understood not in a strictly positivist sense, as a coincidence between architectural and structural forms, but as a *principle of coherence, adequacy and correspondence* between the essential features of the building and the forms that represent it. Showing what is not actually true is impossible. "The entire building must be true" and correspond to *its own nature*: Jenney considers not showing what does not correspond to the nature of things as a moral duty, a duty Louis Sullivan would reiterate even more clearly later on.

The form of the building cannot be simply the expression of its structure, as architecture cannot be in any way directly construction. However, structure suggests a possibility: it implies that architecture may be expressed through the *narration of structure*, and through the representation of its constructional principle.

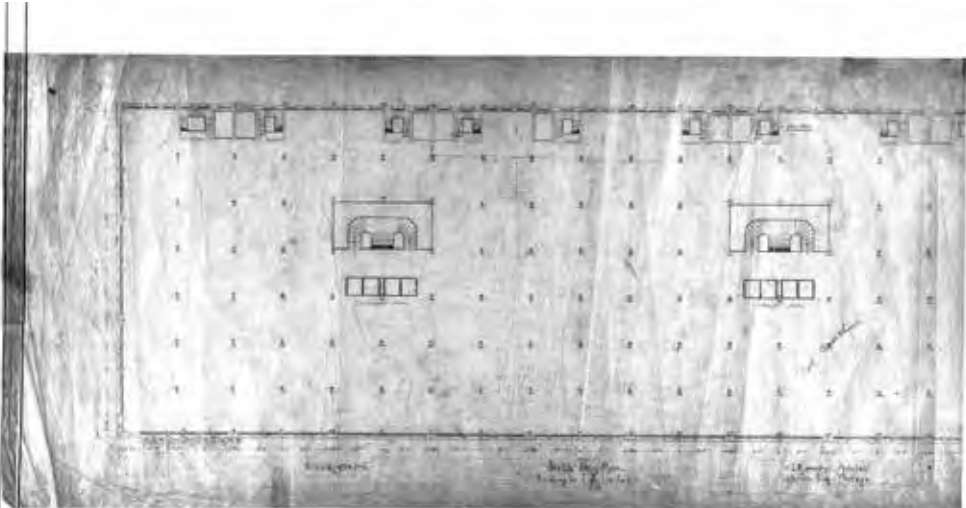
The iron frame structure, from which the high-rise building derives its typical features, must be *enriched*, in formal terms, with the ability to become *evident* and *eloquent*, to become manifest; this pursuit of expressiveness represents the purpose of art, the task of the architect. "Art must be used in order to underline construction," Jenney argues, in a way that reinforces the correspondence all while confirming the separation between *technical aspects* and *expressive requirements* of the building. "Architecture is the art of building in a sincere and decorative way": in architecture, construction should disguise itself into the forms, in order to become "ornamented construction", or "constructive ornamentation", that means precisely the formal expressive quality of architecture. He further argues that "Decoration should arise naturally from the construction, and the constructive idea be carried out in every detail." Because "an architect is a building artist", who relies his art on construction. His words evoke and anticipate Perret, according to whom the architect "thinks and speaks through construction."

Even in the **II Leiter Building**, perhaps his most refined and meaningful work, erected in 1891 and still existing, Jenney pursues this orientation after having improved on the iron construction with stone cladding technology, in this case with white Maine granite.

Originally designed as a six-story building, later expanded with two more stories, the Leiter, later Sears Building, is a large rectangular commercial volume built on a grid of iron pilasters where the only indication provided in the plan concerns the position of stairs and elevators.

In this case too, the image the building presents to the city is the shape of the stone cladding, which becomes an eloquent narration of the structure, "pursued and shown in every detail," as the *representation of the constructional idea* that makes it possible and governs it.

This *decoration* is responsible for the definition of the volume, the distinction of its elements, the barely hinted basement, the powerful and variously rhythmmed corner pilasters that establish the boundaries, the tall entablature on top. And then the building's volume, its partition into bays through giant-order pilasters, the superposition of stories with thinner



Ill. 8-9. Second Leiter Building, W. Le Baron Jenney, 1891, photograph and drawing from the archive

pilasters, the partition of the windows' bays. Jenney shapes the elements by conferring an explicit role to each in the constructional narration: because "stability must necessarily be an effective, as well as an apparent quality of buildings; an excess of strength must be represented in order to satisfy the mind. [...] Apparent insecurity, however strong in reality, is always unsatisfactory."

The building must *show* stability. Merely providing the building with a good technical construction is not enough. Art requires the *narration* of such construction, it requires that solidity, an essential condition for architecture and an indispensable quality of its structure, *be made evident and eloquent, exhibited*. The representation of construction and stability becomes the principle that shapes the miraculous construction of the high-rise building, in other words its *expressive*, appropriate form, what confers dignity and *decorum*.

For Jenney, the correspondence and distance between *truth of construction* and its *representation*, between *construction* and *decoration*, a gap entirely included in the form of the elements, encapsulates the expressive power and artistic quality of architecture. A truth that, being not absolute, requires a shift in order to be understood and appreciated. This shift deriving from the pursuit of the *appropriate* representation of the nature of the building is what contains, for Jenney, the *truth* of architecture.

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DEFINIOWANIE PRZESTRZENI ARCHITEKTONICZNEJ

Temat do dyskusji: **PRAWDA I KŁAMSTWO ARCHITEKTURY**

1. Prawda? Twórcy wciąż poszukują prawdy. Bywa prawda wewnętrzna dzieła, prawda czasu, prawda sztuki, prawda osobista twórcy (ja tak widzę!)... Artyści, odbiorcy, teoretycy sztuki, filozofowie wierzą w istnienie prawdy sztuki, akceptują tę ideę. Widzowie mogą wierzyć, że obraz Mona Lisa Leonarda da Vinci zawiera jakąś tajemniczą prawdę, trudno sobie wyobrazić głębię prawdy Mona Lisy Fernanda Botero. Można także wierzyć, że istnieje prawda malarstwa abstrakcyjnego. Prawda literatury jest powszechnie akceptowana: prawda światów Joysa, Kafki, Gombrowicza, Borgesa... Lecz nie zastanawiamy się nad istotą prawdy ciaccony z 2. sonaty Bacha na skrzypce solo, ani Gesamtkunstwerku Walkirii Wagnera. W nieodległej przeszłości architektury zagadnienie „prawdy” odgrywało rolę zasadniczą lub znaczącą. Istniały kierunki w architekturze oparte na pewnej etyce; forma architektoniczna wynikała z założeń wskazówek określanych jako szczerłość architektury; estetyka wynikała z pewnego rodzaju gry w prawdę. W brutalizmie prawda polegała na „szczerości” materiału; później prawdę formy odnoszono także do funkcji. Zagadnienie prawdy było także ważną wskazówką w tworzeniu koncepcji odnoszących się do logiki systemu konstrukcji obiektu; koncepcje te, jak się wydaje, zostały wyparte przez indywidualne dążenia do demonstracji oryginalności architektury i – architekta.

2. Wspaniałe kłamstwo sztuki. „Wiem już teraz, że sztuka nie jest prawdą. Sztuka jest kłamstwem, które nam pozwala zbliżyć się do prawdy, przynajmniej do tej prawdy, która jest dla nas rozpoznawalna”. To stwierdzenie Picassa jest aktualne! Nie bardzo wiadomo, co jest ową prawdą, kłamstwo zyskało nową barwę. Znowu poruszamy się w obrębie estetyki, która epatuje kategorią fikcyjności. Istnienie jej nie było nigdy tak eksponowane. Nawet sens wypadających zwrotek w Palazzo del Té autorstwa Giulio Romano skrywała gruba warstwa ideologii piękna. Nabokow wysuwał kategorię wspaniałego kłamstwa jako naczelną atrybut sztuki. Zabawę artysty i odbiorcy można przyrównać do gry w szachy, i rozumieć jako świadome zaakceptowanie reguł sztuczności po obu stronach lustra fikcyjności. Wydaje się, że z literaturą sprawa jest prosta: dzieło literackie nie jest wypowiedzią, która może być prawdziwa albo fałszywa. Jest wypowiedzią, która nie poddaje się takiej weryfikacji: to jest status fikcji. Ogłoszenie fikcji jako zabawy, a wspaniałego kłamstwa jako pretekstu jest drogą do tworzenia rzeczy. Przyjęcie takiej idei zakłada, że sztukę należy oglądać przez zamgloną szybę świadomości, że oto oglądamy – świat sztuki, świat sztuczny, świat w masce. W owym zamgleniu można szukać głębi i rozległości poszerzających odbiór przedmiotu artystycznego. Architektura także chowa się za zasłonę zabawy, ironii i wszelkich innych zasłon głoszących swoją sztuczność. A synonimy „wspaniałego kłamstwa”: fikcja, mistyfikacja, iluzja, fantazja, poezja, ironia, żart... są uzasadnione.

3. Łatwe kłamstwo. Blizutko kłamstwa sztuki jest obszar największej szczerości, „łatwego kłamstwa”, obszar kiczu – sztuki szczęścia. Kicz to nie tylko opis rzeczy, to także definicja pewnego rodzaju nastawienia a potem, w rezultacie, działania. W architekturze są sympatyczne kicze Hundertwassera. Jest także ogromna budowla w Warszawie: Pałac Kultury i Nauki, największy kicz na świecie, ongiś ponury, dziś oswojony przez czas. To rzecz architektoniczna z odniesieniami do pewnej tradycji architektury historycznej, zbudowana dla – szczęścia ludzi. I tuż, na skrajku kiczu – wielka sztuka architektury postmodernizmu i igraszki supermodernizmu.

4. Cel. Wspaniałe kłamstwo i poszukiwanie prawdy – nie mieszczą się w jakiejś jednej teorii architektury. Odnieść można wrażenie, że naczelną wartością stała się nie tyle sama sztuka zwana architekturą, co cel – jej oryginalność umożliwiająca wyróżnienie się z otoczenia codzienności i przychylne zaakceptowanie jej przez świat!

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