

Katalin Alkér

**FOUND AGAIN AND AGAIN**  
On the Architecture of the Whisperers

Thesis summary

masterpiece:

Reconstruction and conversion  
Budapest VII. , Klauzál Street No 8

supervisor:

Péter Klobusovszki DLA

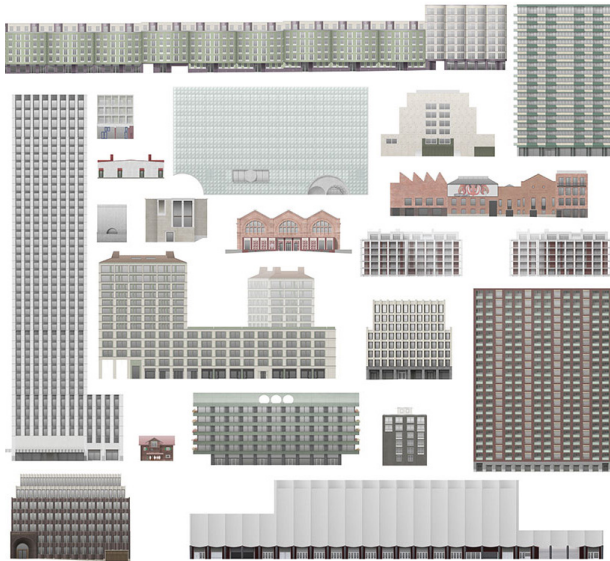
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Doctoral School of Architecture Budapest  
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## **Abstract**

On the contemporary architecture scene, the work of three English architecture practices: Tony Fretton Architects, Adam Caruso & Peter St. John, Jonathan Sergison & Stephen Bates clearly stands out. They do not draw attention by technical feat but by their artistic sensitivity and their defined architectural position. Devoted students of the Smithsons, they did not only realize their masters' lessons but surpassed them, as well. Their attitude towards modernism is rather critical, as regards to historic traditions almost eclectic. They consider architecture as a cultural artefact, as practice of art with social responsibility. From this position of theirs follows an architectural credo committed to the beauty of the everyday life. Their multiple engagement with the public is reflected in urban design projects. The thesis examines their architecture along five key ideas and makes an attempt to position them on the wide field of culture. The Whisperers themselves are most unlikely to obtain such a high level of social backing enough for them to become mainstream. Despite their basically critical approach, the alternatives they offer in their buildings convey a positive message and are tightly interwoven with modern life. The architectural language they speak is easy to understand and use, the discussion they initiate is open for all.

## Theses



## Startopposition

**The debut in the 1990s critical towards architecture and society was determining the subsequent career of Caruso St John, Stephen Bates and Tony Fretton.**

Unlike others they preserved their provocative, ethical position they adopted in the early stages and have stuck to it despite growing professional recognition and clients' confidence. They found their own social task within the field of architecture again and again.

## Modern or postmodern

**The foremost question for the Whisperers is to define modern life, what they consider as an intimate unity of the modern self and the modern environment originated in the age of industrialization.**

They do not believe in the positivism of classical modernism and the total freedom of art from history and geography. They are sceptical towards the weak and empty formal abstraction of nowadays' neomodernism devoid of ideological basis, as well. Postmodernism opened up a critical perspective for them: the possibility of individual choice and the responsibility it involves. They can relate themselves to premodern artists' position based on realism and historical continuity, both socially and physically engaged.

## New fruits of the past

**The Whisperers are conscious of the dynamic process of history. They use examples of architectural history as references to induce association and gain new meaning in the end.**

They believe that the artwork can gain its value in historical perspective. According to them art of different times and cultures have a common ground and are interwoven universally. They are not super-sensitive with monuments either: with adequate knowledge and empathy they form existing and new parts to a complete whole.

## Urban picturesque

**The picturesque quality of the English landscape garden is characteristic of their architecture.**

For the Whisperers design means the observation of urban and rural atmosphere. Their buildings have therefore picturesque features – on contrary with the affection of modernism and postmodernism towards the heroic.

## Art and architecture

**The work of the Whisperers is distinguished by close cooperation with artists. They consider architecture as cultural artefact, as a relevant social factor.**

They are interested in the reality of the everyday life, the aesthetics of the ordinary. The value of their work lies not in its novelty, but in its multi-faceted layers and world of images embracing a rich and wide field of associations.

# Masterpiece

## Reconstruction and conversion Budapest VII. , Klauzál Street

2016-17

under construction / with Hetedik Műterem

architect in charge: Levente Szabó DLA

architects: Katalin Alkér, András Márk Bartha, Zsófia Kovács, co-architects: Dorottya Bujdosó, Nóra Debrei, András Németh

co-design: Páll András



