

Empty spaces – instinct places

The atmosphere and architectural layers of amusement parks in Hungary,
in the decades of the socialism

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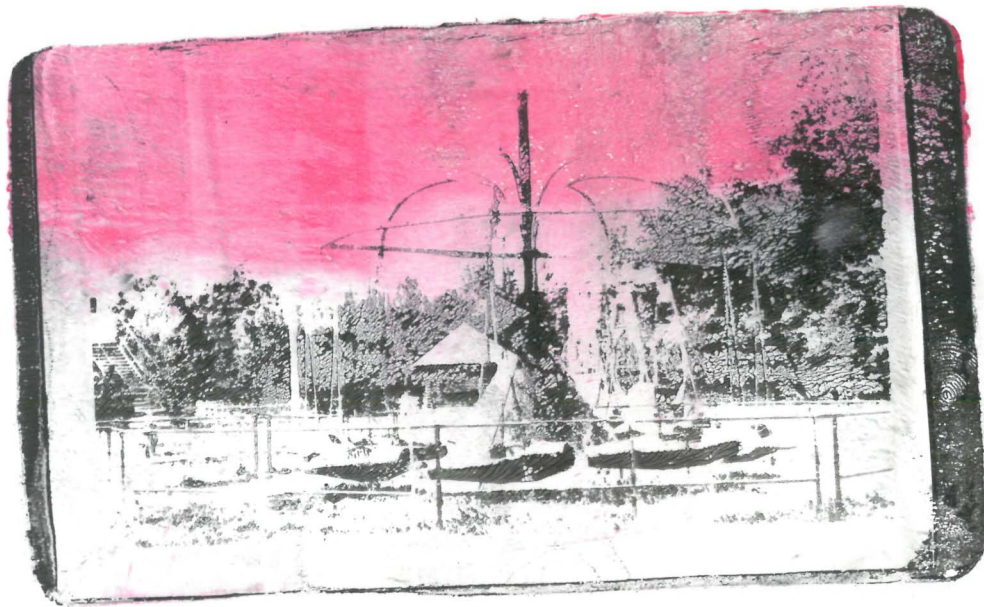
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summary

There were built ten amusement parks in Hungary from the fifties to the nineties. They were parts of the cultural park concept in socialism. These amusement parks had unique characteristics in the socialist block although they are not integral parts of the contemporary mainstream architectural discourse yet. They were built through collective community work which was expected by the political system. Through this community experience, the workers and their families were deeply involved in the history of the parks and attached to the architectural plots and objects. Howsoever these amusement parks were closed in the last decades, except one.

As it can be seen from the perspective of time, the plots were not released and were mentally free. The stories of the places survive through the memories of the people. Their identical forces cannot disappear in a short time after demolishing the objects. What physical marks and which connected feelings are left? The remaining empty plots still have a strong atmosphere even after the transformation of the function.

In my research, I attempt to reconstruct the former spatial situations and the remained atmospheres left nowadays. I use several methods, such as textual data analysis, archive research, field works (e.g. visiting plots and recording visual imprints). I focus on the change of the emerged spatial dimension and atmosphere of the place during the time. For the seek of the better understanding and the detailed analysis, the transformation process is divided into four phases. These are the Idea, the Matter, the Lack and the Disappearance. These stages provide a deeper understanding of the transformation and disappearance of our architectural environment.



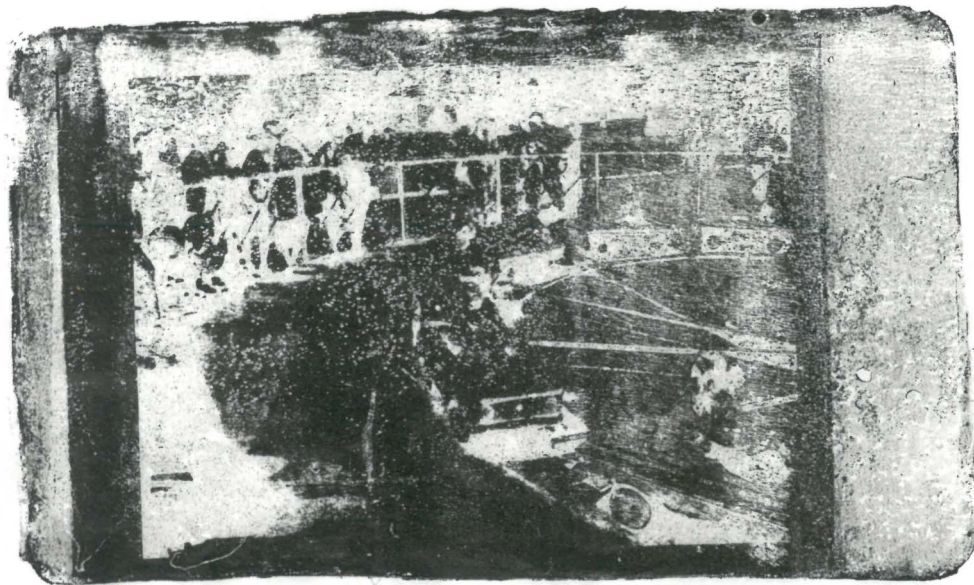
theses

introduction | 0

International architectural creators often see pop culture's vivid harsh projects as inspiration or reference (e.g. OMA, Filipe Magalhaes, Max Otto Zitzelsberger Architekt, Lütjens Padmanabhan, Peter Märkli, Innauer Matt). The culturally, content-wise and even formally despised architectural style has a unique and characteristic formal language. These amusement parks of the socialist era should be considered as part of our heritage as well.

The architecture of amusement parks is not part of the mainstream canon, but they use a coherent architectural language. They could be inspirations and references due to their naive object tools.

In the transformation of the amusement parks (or similar public buildings) both the material and the collective memorial aspects have to be examined simultaneously, because of their strong sociological impact. The plots have dual properties: spatial physical and atmospheric.

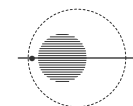


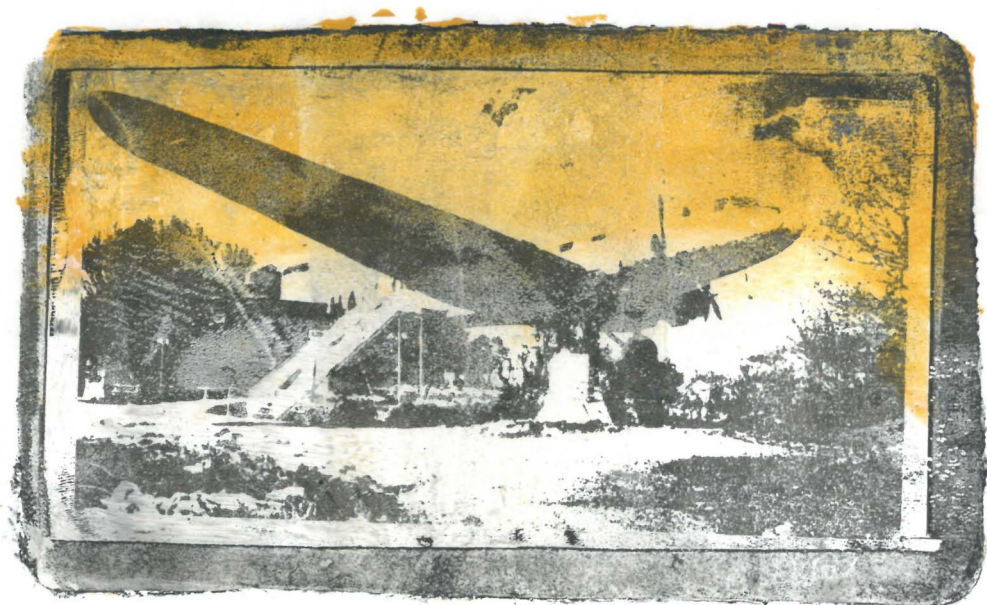
IDEA 11

The creation of architectural objects is based on ideas, thoughts, concepts, and inspirations which can come from a myriad of sources (e.g. similarities in form or function, artistic parallels... etc.). These common ground can link together creative works. There is nothing new on Earth because we are incapable, as human beings, of inventing something completely new - something that is free of any reference. In our thinking, we create mental representations based on the information we acquire, based on our memories.

The identity of a newly established building or built area is determined by the references. The impact of the inspirations can be non-intentional and contra-references can affect them as well.

This is how the contra-reference of the western-type amusement parks had an impact on the socialist park's concept.

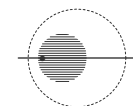


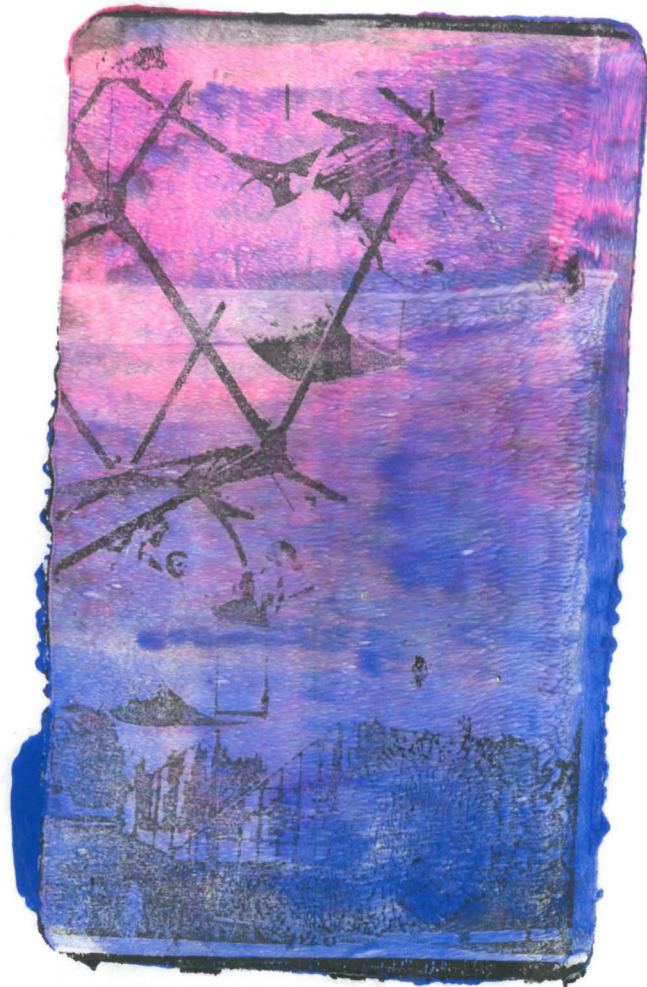


MATTER | 2

The construction process and the connected narratives may have a strong impact on the perception of the architectural object. Our attitudes toward places are determined by the cognitive connections to the physical environment. The layers of meaning become richer and richer during the lifetime.

For instance, the amusement park, as the scenery of other cultural creations gives a unique atmosphere. During this period the parks are filled up with new layers of meaning. This is a back-and-forth effect between the generated and associative layers of meaning.



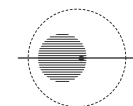


LACK 13

After the closure, a sort of emptiness appears on the sites. This emptiness is initially perceived only in (dis) use. At a certain moment, the site still gives space for active spatial relations and actions, and then suddenly, these connections are blocked out. In the case of public facilities, the closure of the site often results a no-go zone for the former users.

There are significant differences between abandoned and under-use places. The former users and creators of a not well-working architectural place often invest significant effort to keep them alive again. If the attempts are not successful, this situation generates material changes.

For instance delay in maintenance works, physical degradation or in an extreme case vandalism.



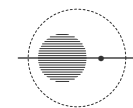


DISAPPEARANCE | 4

A given location which is in the process of being emptied from the perspective of physical properties, is still filled with remembrance. Many former users still have personal stories and memories of the location. If the intensity of the social impact of a function in decline is considered, these two layers (physical properties and cognitive structures) are significant.

The intensity of the memory of a place is determined by both the physical signs of the former useage and the density of remembrance stored in the collective memory.

Moreover, the physical and cognitive layers interact. The tangible elements that are still present help to recall and keep the stories alive. And place-based memories can attract people and trigger different interactions with the space (e.g. cleaning, demolition...etc.).





closure | x

A non-existing building can have an impact through the represented idea or the former user's experiences and memories. The transformation of the physical environment and the connected cognitive content fills up our living place in several layers.

This is especially true in the case of amusement parks. They live in our memory because of their inspirational social and esthetic values.