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# D e t e r m i n a t i o n

The framework of the realization of the architectural work

T h e s i s B o o k

The critical construction history of the Budapest-Vizafogói Tours-i St. Martin's Parish Church  
DLA dissertation

Masterpiece:  
Transformation and expansion of the Budapest-Vizafogói Tours-i St. Martin's Parish Church  
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D e t e r m i n a t i o n - The framework of the realization of the architectural work  
The critical construction history of the Budapesti-Vizafogó-i St. Martin's Parish Church

## ABSTRACT



Budapest-Vízafogó Tours-i  
St. Martin Church  
- west facade

Considering the architectural heritage of the ages close to us is a problem for contemporary architects. While the buildings and the work of their creators from fifty years ago have already been recognized, an initial unanimous rejection of the younger ones can be experienced. The waves of memory and recognition are beginning to elevate the architecture of the previous decades, as they did before with the socrealism.

István Szabó is the iconic church builder of the seventies and eighties. His last church, the Budapesti-Vízafogó Tours-i St. Martin's Parish Church, was built in his life and it stands at the corner of Váci road and Fáy street.

The transformation of Váci Road after the change of regime, as it became a victim of capitalist property speculations and turned into a thematic office park brought the building of the church building reflecting the autonomous design of the era into a more prominent position.

This temporal and spatial context makes the research on the church important and actual. This is why an evaluation written by a contemporary architect is required beyond the usual art history analysis. While the art history analysis looks at the building from an outside point of view as a completed work, the viewpoint appearing in the research topic shows the design as a complex creative process with the eye of the architect who made up the building. It places it on the basis of control factors, forces, decisions, alternatives, and their contexts.

In the fall of 2014 unique documents were found in the archives of the church. It is a collected but forgotten material that contains a significant part of the design documentation of the church which was believed lost.

The correspondence of the parish priest called György Herpy, was also found which contains more than five hundred documents on the preparation of the building construction and accompanying correspondence in ten files. The course of construction is organized in two photo albums, besides this about two hundred photos attest to the stages of construction.

The significance of the found material is increased by the fact that only very little material is available for both the architect, István Szabó's heirs and the Hungarian Architectural Museum treating his architectural heritage.

The dissertation begins with the factual and objective presentation of the current state of the building being realized. The understanding of this architectural promenade and the expectations of professional readers are served by a complete set of survey design documentation that fill a gap due to the non-existence of the realization plans and fix the status of the church in 2015. Based on survey plans and on-site photographs a three-dimensional model illustrates the spatiality of the building.

The second part of the dissertation is the history of the first construction period. This historical description was made on the basis of the research and systematization of the numbered correspondence placed in chronological order by the priest.

Budapest-Vízafogó Tours-i  
St. Martin Church  
- model photo



A large part of the correspondence covers a period of five years including the preparation of the construction of the church (1980-1982), licensing and construction (1982-1985), and the consecration (16.11.1985). Some parts of the correspondence give an insight into the afterlife of the church and the life of the church community until the mid-nineties.

Based on the documents, the dissertation analyzes the following:  
It presents the history of the previous operation of the parish in the district, its locations, the properties used for this purpose, including the consequences of the World War II and the nationalization affecting the church. It describes the impossibility of the life of the parish in the basement of Frangepán Street 4 13th District, and the possibility of the construction of a new chapel.

Furthermore it explores the operational mechanisms of that era between the state and the church. This cooperation is emphasized by the support letter of János Kádár in the construction history of the church, which became real with the help of the powerful intervention of Imre Bíró. Imre Bíró was the parson of the Farkasréti Svájszki Church (1977) designed by István Szabó and built as the first church after World War II in Budapest. He was also a member of parliament and the secretary of the Catholic Committee of the National Peace Council. This includes the construction related role of the State Church Office and of Esztergom Budapest Archbishopric. It is explained that during the planning of the church several locations were found for the building.

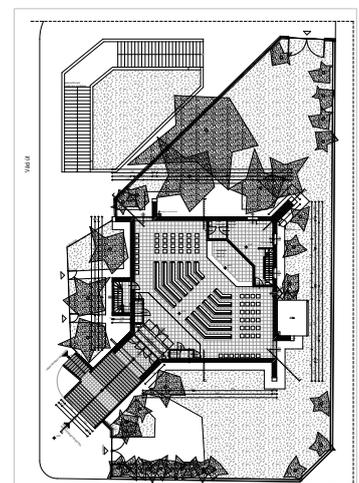
These plots and ownership relationships are presented in the next subchapter, depicted them on the map. It details the financial difficulties that occurred during the construction and categorizes supporters since the necessary amount of money for the construction of the church came from various sources. The support of Esztergom-Budapest Archdiocese was a significant. They could collect donations from foreign aid organizations in such a part. These donations were money and asset donations. The faithful supported the church with the help of money in proportion of their possibilities, and other ecclesiastical denominations also took part in the fundraising. In addition to this the parish needed a bank loan, which was disbursed by OTP.

The sub-chapter dealing with the design is an important part of the construction history. While studying the correspondence it became apparent that the design could be divided into two distinct parts due to the designers' personalities: for the preparation and licensing planning stage, as well as for the implementation plan phase and closely related construction work. The building became known as István Szabó's and Pál Borsányi's joint work suggesting that they were co-designers. The history of correspondence shows that this was not the case. István Szabó built eight churches after building the Farkasréti Svájszek Church, which was consecrated in 1977. After this he started designing the Vizafogo Church. Thus he maintained a good relationship with the State Church Office and the Esztergom-Budapest Archbishopric. As a result of Imre Bíró's intercession, he was given the task of designing the church, which he carried out with the previously known expertise and dedication to the customer's full satisfaction. After obtaining the construction permit he and his design team began to make the execution plans. Shortly thereafter at the request of the parish priest László Lékai



Pope Paul VI receives John Kádár in the Vatican on 9th June 1977

Budapest-Vízafogói Tours-i  
St. Martin Church  
- existing state  
- floor plan





Underground Construction on  
Váci road  
- photo

Archbishop of Esztergom dismissed him from the work and entrusted Pál Borsányi architect and his co-designers with drawing up the plans. Borsányi had previously been the technical inspector of the building, who could have been the designer of the church as well. This part of the dissertation seeks to find rational causes and personal conflicts that led to a deteriorated situation and eventually to the change of designer.

The authorization plans of the building did not survive. The licensed constructed plan status showing István Szabó's original idea can be reconstructed from the correspondence and from the final baler plans and from the original model photograph.

Most of the correspondence is made up of the documents dated during the execution. While the design of the building is very similar to current trends, a significant difference is only in the way the licensing process is conducted, the circumstances of construction reflect surprising conditions. We need to learn and interpret such concepts that have been forgotten today as capacity assurance and capacity allocation as a consequence of a shortage of economies. The organizers of the implementation are continually struggling to gain the benevolence of the manufacturers producing building materials in the hope of producing and delivering the necessary building materials to the deadline. For these reasons multiple plan modifications were required during the execution. Similar efforts are needed in the case of good quality performance and futures work of contractors. The correspondence gives a rich documentation of these endless endeavors.

It is rare that the design and construction history of a building that has become a historical one can be explored with this detail and can be used to provide complex professional image and age picture.

The chart of the chronological list of events is an important summary of this chapter.

Closing its second part the dissertation examines the reception of the building by searching for contemporary newspapers and using private opinions.

The third part contains the second design and construction period of the church from the intention of construction to completion and analyzes it on the basis of the criteria listed above.

It is seeking to understand the problems and processes raised in the research topic by examining the parallel example of the two design and construction processes, revealing the impacts, the shortcomings and the solutions that can be provided.

As a summary special attention is devoted to the architect's design duties and responsibilities for the 'continuation' of such an inherited building.



Budapest-Vizafogói Tours-i  
St. Martin Church  
- liturgical area  
2017

## THESES

### Thesis 1

Besides the realized building, as a tangible result, the processes and circumstances influencing its creation often fall in the background. The accurate documentation of the creation of the building and the knowledge of it greatly contributes to a more accurate understanding and appreciation of the realized building and, last but not least the understanding of the architect's possibilities, dilemmas and the professional playground.



Budapest-Vizafogói Tours-i  
St. Martin Church  
- west facade  
1995

### Thesis 2

The research of the history of the first construction period resulted in the fact that the building of the Budapest-Vizafogói Tours-i St. Martin's Parish Church was not recorded by István Szabó and Pál Borsányi. It has been proved that István Szabó's design, after the withdrawal of his mandate, was continued independently by Pál Borsányi and the construction was under his supervision. The constructed building differs from the ideas of the original designer. István Szabó could not give his opinion about the changes after the withdrawal of his mandate, his opinion was not requested. Thus placing the building of the church in Szabo's life work should be clarified along these lessons.



Budapest-Vizafogói Tours-i  
St. Martin Church  
- in the context of the  
churches of Istvan Szabó

### Thesis 3

The second construction period also demonstrates how long the plan will be realized through many variations and significant changes. These changes may occur during the design process and the execution process.

During the realization the rules that define the design and construction, and the people influencing the process and the relationships between them have the strongest influence on the original idea. Design rules - even if they are often over-regulated or controversial - can mostly be handled from the designer's point of view, because they are predictable. You can prepare for them as a starting boundary condition. There is much greater uncertainty about the changing relationships between the people involved and the decisions taken along these lines.

The insecurity of a personal factor can only be minimized if the participants are aiming for the same and during the entire construction process, despite the problems that arise, everyone wants to go in the same direction. The change of the effect caused by them and of the original design idea is continuous.



Budapest-Vízafogó Tours-i  
St. Martin Church  
- west facade  
2017

### Thesis 4

The designer change that was discovered during the first construction period and the consequence of it showing the differences between the original concepts and the implemented design, was the dilemma of determining the starting point for further planning. The exact knowledge of the creation of the building greatly helped the deliberation and weighting of the variants. As a result going back to the design and to the designer's "spirit" in detail became possible. When writing on the building this reversal was only possible with examining the current spatial, use and social contextualisation.

