

Ján Bahna: Architecture might be less hilarious

Author: Martin Trstenský | Published: 06.10.2009

How has the economic crisis affected architectural studios?

The economic crisis has gradually affected all areas of our life and is naturally also mirrored in the work of architectural studios. It has had the biggest impact on studios where the investors cancelled or suspended large projects. Such studios had to respond and release some employees, or search for alternative opportunities. The crisis has got under the architects' skin, which has been slowly showing on architecture as such. I expect it to be less hilarious, more rational, with due respect to sustainable development requirements. We saw the same thing in the 1970s, during the energy crisis. At that time, there were first serious contemplations about heat insulation.

Has your company adopted any specific anti-crisis measures?

Our studio was not dependent on any large project that would be suspended, and therefore we do not feel the direct impacts of the crisis. Most of our contracts involve family houses and villas for reconstruction. We are rather affected by the lengthy processes of allocation of European funds for the reconstruction of monuments.

Many property developers have suspended their projects. What does this mean for architects?

Property developers realized that they were playing for time. The culminating situation of 2007 and 2008 produced numerous unripe plans and projects. Unrealizable demands were put on architects in terms of deadlines, building heights and density. Many of these projects have been suspended and are pending review. Naturally, architects have lost these major projects.

When do you expect the construction sector to catch new breath, if at all?

Until a short time ago the construction sector finished, by inertia, its in-progress projects whose funding was secured. Some buildings under construction have been halted and the investors are currently looking for funds for their completion, or such buildings are waiting for adjustments. The construction sector is an indicator of the society. About 70% of the state's production is said to be associated with construction. First of all, however, we need renewed designing operations, since construction activities follow them.

Do you think that the economic crisis has brought any positives, e.g. experience for the future?

The question is if we should only talk about the economic crisis. We have to think if this is not a crisis of the society, of the social model of the consumer society. Nobel Prize winners in Economy will have to create a new financial and value-based model. The whole Western civilization is in crisis and is getting more and more dependent on new third-world powers, which inevitably we have to accept. This crisis will gradually impact architecture - I hope this influence will bring more rationality and higher quality.

Curriculum vitae

Ján Miloslav Bahna, senior lecturer, academic architect and associate professor, was born on 8 April 1944 in Pukanec, in the district of Levice. He graduated in Architecture from the Slovak Technical University in Bratislava, where he was taught by Professor Jozef Lacko (1967), and from the University of Graphic Arts in Bratislava, where he was led by Professor Vojtech Vilhan (1970). Until 1989 he worked in the State Design

Institute in Trade. Since 1990 he has been in charge of the private architectural studio AA ateliér architektúry. In the same year he came to the University of Graphic Arts in Bratislava as head of the Architectural Studio III. In 1992 he passed habilitation and in 2008 was inaugurated as Professor. He is the founding member of the Slovak Chamber of Architects and the Union of Slovak Architects and became the latter's President last year.

Bahna - an advocate of organic (fluid) architecture and opponent of stiff dogmas and stereotypes - is the holder of many architectural awards. During his 40 years of practice he completed dozens of projects, in particular in Bratislava (for example the headquarters of the bank Všeobecná úverová banka, awarded the 1997 Building of the Year prize and the prestigious Dušan Jurkoviš Award). Most of his works comprise interiors, department stores, banks, reconstructions of inter-war and historical architecture, villas and family houses. He was the curator of many important exhibitions that promoted Slovak architecture abroad. He is also the member of editorial staffs and expert commissions. He regularly publishes in specialized press as well as magazines for the general public. His works are displayed and published abroad, too.

Photograph - ASB / matiasmx

06.10.2009 12:53, Martin Trstenský