

Opening remarks

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It is with good feelings that I open this festive scholarly session of the School of Architectural Engineering's Institute of Architectural History and Theory, honoring a guard of retiring faculty — as stated in the program.

The title 'Tradition and Intuition' may seem paradoxical for the outsider, who is not an architect, since tradition, and in this case, that of architectural history, is felt to be a thing of the past, while new ideas and intuition are regarded as being quite in opposition to the past.

This is not so however, and in the case of this Institute's tradition never was so. At the beginning of this century, in the great era of the Technical University, design studios did not exist, rather studios were set up according to the historical epochs, and their leaders, the famous great teachers, were renowned practitioners of a certain period and architectural style, such as Imre Steindl, Frederick Schulek, or later, Dezső Hültl, of Gyula Wälder.

Modernism, which turned its back on historicism, although it threatened the cultivation the significance of the heritage of architectural history, in this Institute it was specifically the legendary memory of the great teachers that preserved the cult of the past.

'It is necessary therefore that the architect be talented and knowledgeable in the arts and sciences — for neither talent without scholarship nor scholarship without talent will produce a perfect artist —; he should be familiar with literature, clever in drawing, trained in geometry, he should know optics, above all of mathematics be he knowledgeable; he must know the important events of history, diligently listen to the philosophers, understand music and also understand the medical sciences; be not unfamiliar in the arts of healing either, be familiar with the opinions of scholars of the law, and be informed about astronomy and the principles of astral bodies.'

(Vitruvius I,1)

And let us see now why all this is important?

However, evolved society has become — the task of the architect remains the same; however increased our knowledge has become, and the number of specializations has grown — the demands of the task have not eased; and however much our historical perspective has changed - the knowledge of the lessons of the past has not proved unnecessary.

And now, let me turn my attention to the day's celebrities, to Kossuth-medallist Professor Gyula Hajnóczy, to our teachers János Bonta, Ferenc Merényi, Alajos Sódor, and Margit Szűcs, whose period of activity extends over the decades following the war, up to the present day — I would like to emphasize the fact that their importance lies in exactly their cultivation of the knowledge of the history of architecture and the respect of the past. It is up to the presenters of today's papers to demonstrate their intellectual contributions in architectural historical terms. I think it is understandable for me as the Chancellor of the University, to have emphasized first of all the accomplishments of our teachers. Complex thought and sensitivity to tradition, have a significant place in the esteem in which Hungarian architecture is held, internationally, and in the quality of the training given at the Budapest Technical University School of Architecture. The profession and the University owes these special characteristics to the efforts of the great teachers of the recent past such as Jenő Rados, Frederick Pogány, Máté Major, just as to the guard honored here today. It is to their credit that Hungarian architects of the post-war era entered the profession and pursued their activity, both at home and abroad with a formation in architectural history, in classical culture and a sensitivity to architectural tradition.

I greet Gyula Hajnóczy
János Bonta
Ferenc Merényi and
Gitta B. Szűcs

and in the name of the University, thank them for their long years of selfless service.