

Home and Place: The Basic Constants in the Search of the Kristek House Substance

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Between 2015 and 2018, the Czech painter, sculptor and performer Lubo Kristek contributed to the creation of another artistic object, oscillating on the boundary of architecture, art assemblage and exterior installation. The object is the Kristek House, which can be found on Tišnovská Street in Brno – the Černá Pole city district. In an imaginary cyclic circle, with this work of art, Kristek symbolically returned to the place of his childhood, and thus expressed his endeavour to contribute to the restoration of the location and the Stará Tišnovka railroad.

By way of this project, Kristek refers to the utmost existential subject that involves the need to create meaningful places and populate the world. In the words of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger: *'Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build'* (Heidegger 1971, p. 148). Man is spontaneously predetermined to dwell and, by the nature of his existence, he establishes a district of a comprehensible intimacy that is kind to him, he is acquainted with and where he feels at home. On one hand, the house and the home are an objective and indispensable reality making it possible to survive; on the other hand, it is a semiotic system with an array of connotations and various layers of signification (Moore 2000). It is both a means of adaptation to the exterior environment and a symbolic value, a structure or a centre of the world shared by its inhabitants (*axis mundi*). Home can also be perceived as a familiar place or background (Lévinas 1969), and simultaneously it can be experienced as a form of togetherness and an expression of personal and cultural identity reflecting the relationship of an individual to a geographic entity and place (Kohák 2009, Brickell 2012).

What is more, home is a place of intimacy and a refuge from which the world opens before the people. Without home, man is a dissipated being. In this sense, home means the stability of a place (*stabilitas loci*). Last but not least, home represents the horizon and an angle of view from which we can understand the world. *'Before he is "cast into the world", as claimed by certain hasty metaphysics, man is laid in the cradle of the house.'* (Bachelard 1994, p. 7)



The notion of home is related to something well-known, familiar and close. The substance of both metaphysical and factual home resides in its uniqueness. Home is also associated with the word dwelling: it is a way of installing somewhere, of inhabiting a space; it is a way of creating one's own centre of the world and *'imitate the work of the gods, the cosmogony'* (Eliade 1959, p. 51).

With the effectuation of his house, Kristek created a *'dwelling place'* (Heidegger 1962). Yet, at the same time, he formed an object and a space that revitalized the cultural memory, evoked memories and generated an authentic social life. Under the influence of his artistic object, the non-place, a transit and anonymous space of spiritual rambling, uprootedness and existential solitude, is transformed into a place filled with identity, relationships and specific history (Augé 1995). Today, the places enabling a meeting of people and sharing of their social lives do not need to be necessarily represented by buildings only, which fulfilled their function as churches or cathedrals in the past, for example (Harries 1998).

From this point of view, the Kristek House enables a deeper reflection on everything that a new, and even more powerful and spontaneous public and social space may be. The effectuation of a project whose objective was to present the *'house as an assemblage'* to the public can have not only an aesthetic but also a social and ethical function. This is because such an artistic concept of a house and home can create a unique space and a singular opportunity for a wide spectrum of various gatherings and social relationships.

The Kristek House is both a material and symbolic space, which stimulates human imagination and endows the gatherings of different generations, friends, neighbours and random passers-by with a fantasy dimension. The reason is that the edifice Kristek spiced up artistically represents a projection screen and, at the same time, an artistic challenge destroying the boring traditional depiction of our houses and cities.

Therefore, the Kristek House can be understood as a point of return to the archetypal foundations of human existence and, simultaneously, as an ideal and utopian goal, whose objective is to provoke an emotional experience and constitute the world of symbols and meanings within the context of everyday activities and relationships.



One of the significant dimensions of Kristek's project is his endeavour to achieve life reaching the house (Hundertwasser 1997). From this point of view, Kristek is getting close to anthroposophy whose objective is to liberate man from the constraints of the material and rationalist world. Kristek belongs to the artists who, by artistic means, dispute generally accepted standards, doctrines in art and cultural stereotypes. Despite this, in his work, he reveres the genius loci of a particular place and respects the effect of colours, shapes and local materials (Carlgren 1990, Day 1990, Steiner 1999). After all, this corresponds to his artistic nature, because he is not an architect in the first instance but rather a painter and a sculptor.

Kristek is one of the artists who does not resist the heterogenous connecting of organic and inorganic materials that are transforming mutually (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, Suske 2008, DeLanda 2016). It is no surprise then that the result of his project is a remarkable, artistically dominant edifice enlivening the everyday network of streets. The central art elements decorating the house facade are purple vertical stripes, an astronomical clock working as a plastic time machine and the human hands protruding from the house clenching a tree as a symbol of the connection of man with nature.

When observing the Kristek House rising in the city space, we may dream, criticize or praise, yet we cannot suffer from indifference, everydayness or pettiness.

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"Pau hori horizent"

2015
D. Thirion