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SACRED EYE-CATCHERS

SACRUM PRZYCIĄGAJĄCE UWAGĘ

ABSTRACT

The paper investigates and analysis sacred eye-catchers in Transylvanian gardens and parks. Interpretation of visual connections defined by landscape features with a sacred meaning (crypts, chapels, crosses, thumbs etc.) are the present study's main purpose. The analysis of the visual connections on a landscape scale comprises the examination of outstanding visual elements (eye-catchers) that are decisive in the case of historic landscapes, gardens and parks, and among these in the case of castle gardens, manor houses and demesnes as well. In these cases the relationship between a manor garden and the surrounding landscape is the result of a conscious shaping of the environment. The sights which determine forcefully the historicity of the landscape are the results of enduring cultural influences over time. Although only just a very few of these former landscape connections persist, their preservation represents a public interest.

The investigated eye-catchers – as outstanding landscape elements – determine in a decisive way the structure of garden landscapes in Transylvania. The sentimental, then romantic trends prevailing in the 19th century in many cases expected that outstanding buildings also become important parts of the gardens.

The study proves the landscape compositional role and importance of the sacred features situated within the manor gardens, or outside the gardens, in the surrounding landscape, representing a visual entity with the castle garden ensemble.

Keywords: theory & practice, terminology, structure, design knowledge

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule poddano badaniom i analizie obiekty *sacrum* przyciągające uwagę w ogrodach i parkach Transylwanii. Interpretacja powiązań widokowych, definiowana przez cechy krajobrazu o znaczeniu sakralnym (krypty, kaplice, krzyże, itd.) stanowi główny przedmiot badań. Analiza tych powiązań w skali kraju obejmuje badanie wybitnych elementów wizualnych (przyciągających uwagę), które mają zdecydowane znaczenie w krajobrazach historycznych, ogrodach i parkach, a wśród nich także ogrodach zamkowych, dworach i posiadłościach. W tych przypadkach związek pomiędzy ogrodem rezydencjonalnym a otaczającym krajobrazem jest wynikiem świadomego kształtowania środowiska. Zabytki, które determinują wartość historyczną krajobrazu są wynikiem trwałych, zachodzących pod wpływem czasu, wpływów kulturowych. Pomimo, iż przetrwało tylko kilka historycznych powiązań krajobrazowych to ich zachowanie stanowi interes publiczny. Badane obiekty przyciągające uwagę, jako wyróżniające się elementy krajobrazu, determinują w decydujący sposób strukturę krajobrazu ogrodowego Transylwanii. W sentymentalnych, a następnie romantycznych tendencjach panujących w XIX w. w wielu przypadkach spodziewano się, że wyróżniające się budynki również staną się ważnymi częściami ogrodu.

Badania potwierdzają rolę komponowanego krajobrazu i elementów sakralnych, sytuowanych w ogrodach dworskich, lub poza nimi, w otaczającym krajobrazie, reprezentujących wizualne połączenia z zamkowym zespołem ogrodowym.

Słowa kluczowe: teoria i praktyka, terminologia, struktura, teoria projektowania

1. INTRODUCTION

A landscape presents several structural elements, which determine the landscape's current aspect, development, natural and aesthetic values. The visual axes, the sight connections play a significant role in the visual connection of different landscape elements, therefore these are the markers of the landscape structure and of the feature of the landscape.

The creation and display of landscape elements is the result of a creative spatial arrangement. These elements differ depending on whether they are natural or built elements, and from this difference ensues a different cultural value. Thus the visual connections ensuring their display are in some cases difficult to acknowledge; occasionally they even transmit different messages to different segments of the society.

That is also a reason why cautious and thorough interpretation is needed when assessing their aesthetic value: besides the examination of the physical appearance, the analysis of the emotions and of the atmosphere evoked by the landscape is also essential.

1.1. Preliminaries

The discovery of the visual values of the landscape has its roots in the Renaissance, and the acknowledgement of the aesthetic value of the landscape can be detected in the renaissance descriptions of Transylvanian gardens as well. The virtual extension of the borderlines of a park, the introduction of the sight of the surrounding landscape into the overall display of the garden later became a deliberately applied tool in landscape design for baroque manor gardens as well throughout Europe. Though rarely, this endeavour is present in the few Transylvanian baroque manor gardens as well with a more moderated style: for example the main baroque allée of the garden of the Bánffy Castle in Bonțida allows the neighbouring village, Răscruți (which was built subsequently), situated on the opposite bank of the river Someșul Mic to become part of the garden's overall view; while the northern linden-tree allée leads to the 35 m high watch tower (it is still standing) belonging to the old castle of Luna de Jos built in 1698 by Pál Teleki and to the surrounding manor park.

Despite these early examples, in Transylvania the intended use of visual connections is characteristic mainly to 19th century landscape gardens. Conscious landscape design resulted in many landscape compositions, which instead of functional elements, applied rather picturesque objects and decorative edifices as visual elements, as staffage and

emotive elements. In Transylvanian landscapes too eye-catchers received an outstanding role, a significant emphasis within a composition, becoming the starting points of visual axes, and sometimes bearing a very intense sacred-symbolic meaning as well.

1.2. Scope

The scope of the paper is to highlight that during garden history research as well as during field research special emphasis has to be led on the definition and interpretation of visual connections. The analysis of the visual connections consisted in the examination of outstanding visual elements (eye-catchers).

The identification of different characteristic, outstanding eye-catchers suitable for closing visual axes, and the definition of the visual connections determined by these. The eye-catchers can be either built or natural elements, but this study refers only to built elements taken for outstanding visual elements. The sacred eye-catchers represents a special group of it.

1.3. Research methodology

The research method is partly based on analysis of texts, definitions from references. For another part it is based on historical research and field investigation.

The leading principle of the Transylvanian manor garden survey is that the examined locations can and should be interpreted only together with the surrounding settlement and landscape, as this is the only way how we can understand their former significance and present value. During the past eight years we examined 100 complexes of manor gardens, through the research of two essential aspects.

GARDEN HISTORY RESEARCH

It is the first phase of the research. The historic overview compiled on the basis of the accessible archives aims at elucidating as much as possible the development of the surveyed gardens. It treats the role of gardens in shaping the character of the landscapes and settlements, it examines all those connections on landscape scale, which were taken into account as local conditions at the conception of the manor gardens, and which determined significantly the aspect of the larger areas hosting the examined castles. Garden history research also touches upon the history of the castle and the family history of the owner.

FIELD RESEARCH

The field research is carried out during survey or examination on the spot. In the case of each manor garden the existing situation was described accurately (drawings, manuals, PGS coordinates,

geodesic surveys, plant survey, digital photos etc.), and we also made the inventory of the values to be found and to be saved. Thus the field survey offers progress report and a basis for comparison for a future protection and reconstruction strategy, whenever such project would be carried out. Field research also aims at elaborating a value and state survey of garden architecture, made with the help of the geodesic map (land registry map etc.). An important step was the definition and systematization of the survey criteria. In order to achieve this, we took as a starting point the criteria applied in monument survey in Hungary, but we also deemed necessary a few additions and modifications based on local conditions. We specified on data sheets the data characteristic for the examined terrain according to historic monument, landscape, townscape and dendrologist criteria, setting up as a primary task the definition of the botanic, architectural and unique landscape values, respectively of the visual connections and landscape structure.

2. DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

We will give a brief overview of definitions for the terms 'eye-catcher', 'sacred' and 'sacred eye-catcher'.

EYE-CATCHER

The term 'eye-catcher' in the Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture: „Folly, ruin, temple, or other structure in a landscape, such as a *gloriette*, drawing the eye to a desired point.”¹ In the Webster's New World College Dictionary, is the eye-catcher defined as „something that especially attracts one's attention”² and in a glossary of terms as „a structure, often an artificial ruin, built on a distant rise to catch the attention of a viewer and carry his or her eye out of the surrounding garden into the wider countryside.”³

SACRED

'Sacred' has a more generic meaning, defined in Cambridge English Dictionary⁴ in the following ways: it is considered to be holy and deserving

respect, especially because of a connection with a god; it is considered to be connected with religion; it is considered as something which is too important to be changed.

The term is used and interpreted in a scientific-philosophical context as well, which could be interesting focusing on the relation to design disciplines. „For religious man, space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others. 'Draw not nigh hither.' says the Lord to Moses; “put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus, 3, 5). There is, then, a sacred space, and hence a strong, significant space; there are other spaces that are not sacred and so are without structure or consistency, amorphous.”⁵

The relation of the sacred to the fine arts has been described by Morgan: „the sacred is best understood not as a category of classification, nor as a particular kind of experience, but as a form of cultural work... the sacred is a two-fold operation: any artifact, creature, place, or practice is set off from the world around it as special – for a moment or much longer – and serves as a way to join human beings to a larger reality”⁶; and by Meyer as well: „We can speak of the sacred in art when we think of the power of presence, the capacity of some works of art to grip us, to stop us dead in our tracks, to command our attention, to shock or surprise us, to take the wind from our chests, to reduce us to silent awe.”⁷

SACRED EYE-CATCHER

Starting from the first two interpretations of the notions 'eye-catcher' and 'sacred', we defined the sacred-eye catcher in our work as a highlighted structure in the landscape with space-organisational, high artistic and emotional value. Accordingly, eye-catchers represented by tombstones, burial vaults, chapels, tempiettos, crypts, obelisks, churches and some artistic features (sculptures, statues) were considered, approached and investigated during our research as sacred eye catchers.

¹ James Stevens Curl, 2006, *A Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture Second edition*, Oxford University Press. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198606789.001.0001/acref9780198606789>

² Webster's New World College Dictionary, 4th Edition. Copyright © 2010 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. All rights reserved.

³ *A Glossary of Terms – Landscape Gardening and Architecture*. John Tatter, Professor of English Birmingham-Southern College <http://faculty.bsc.edu/jtatter/glossary.html>

⁴ <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sacred>

⁵ Eliade Mircea, 1956, *The Sacred and the Profane. A Harvest*. Book Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. New York

⁶ Morgan David, 2017, Defining the sacred in fine art and devotional imagery RELIGION, 2017 VOL. 47, NO. 4, 641–662. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2017.1361587>

⁷ Meyer Birgit, 2016, “How to Capture the ‘Wow.’ R.R. Marrett's Notion of Awe and the Study of Religion.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22 (1): 7–26.



II. 3. The obelisk in the Teleki castle garden in Gornești (Photo: Fekete, 2016)

III. 3. Obelisk w ogrodach zamkowych Tel-eki w Gomești (fot. Fekete, 2016)



II. 4. The obelisk in the Bethlen castle garden in Arcusi (Photo: Fekete, 2014)

III. 4. Obelisk w ogrodach zamkowych Bethlen w Arcusi (fot. Fekete, 2014)



II. 5. Sketch and archive photo of the already disappeared Gloriette of the Jósika Castle Garden in Vlaha, and a photo of the location nowadays, without the eye-catcher (Photo: Fekete, 2017)

III. 5. Rysunek i zdjęcie archiwalne zanikającego ogrodu Gloriette w ogrodach zamkowych Jósika w Vlaha i zdjęcie obecnej lokalizacji, bez obiektu przyciągającego uwagę (fot. Fekete, 2017).

3.2. Sacred eye-catchers situated outside the castle gardens

Most part of the eye-catchers situated outside the castle gardens once belonged to the property. However, since most of the Transylvanian garden landscapes lying on extended properties were partitioned during the 20th century (following the two notorious acts on land properties), part of the eye-catchers fell outside the properties' boundaries. Even if the new owners didn't deteriorate the relic-like or artistic value of the eye-catcher, in most cases they wound up the organic unity and embeddedness into the landscape created through earlier visual connections and landscape usage. Thus the artistic value of the garden diminished as well. The area of the garden might have gained the status of a protected area or protected monument, but the original compositions and the visual elements assisting to the creation of these connections were abolished. Moreover, the eye-catchers left outside the properties' borderlines in most cases weren't protected as they should have been, thus they suffered rapid decay.

As a significant part of the eye-catchers left outside the examined gardens are memorial buildings (chapels, burial vaults, family tombs), a few relevant illustrations can be seen on Figures 6–10: the burial vault of the Kemény family in Ciumbrud and of the Teleki family in Glodeni shaped like pyramids, the Crypt and cross belongings to Bethlen family from Tirimia, the obelisk of Csáky family from Almasu and the tempietto of the Jósika family in Surduc.

The eye-catchers left outside the manor gardens are in many cases ruins of a fortress or of other buildings, which are “symbols of transience (vanitas) and carriers of historic associations.”⁸ Since due to centuries of wars the Transylvanian landscape was rich in ruins (ruins of churches, castles etc.), these could be embedded in the overall artistic impression of a garden enhancing in the meantime the garden's value. From this aspect good examples are the old tower of the Almási Fortress seen from the Csáky castle garden in Almaşu (Fig. 11), the ruins of the Thoroczky Fortress visible from the Thoroczky-Rudnyánszky mansion garden in Colţeşti (Fig. 12) or the ruins of the Rákóczi Fortress once unfolding from the Rákóczi-Bornemisza castle garden in Gurghiu (by today forests hide this view, thus the ruins can't be identified undoubtedly from afar, and they don't have the role of an eye-catcher).

Each of these, as picturesque visual elements, could become elements in conscious space structuring:

⁸ Buttlar Adrian von (1989): *Az Angolkert (The English Garden)*. Köln, DuMont Buchverlag GmbH und Co.

“Ruins are the most effective in contributing to the overall impression, when viewed as part of the landscape. Deficient masonries are very impressive tools of architecture, as they show a slice of the building, yet they don't impede us in entering the building and experiencing its detaching from the exterior. Due to breaks, viewed from the outside, the horizontal and vertical division of the building becomes visible. Thus creativity and imagination awaken, and the viewer connects what is detached, re-builds what once may have stood in the place of the ruin.”⁹

4. CONCLUSIONS

Very often the same landscape composition allows for the definition of several representative visual axes and several connections. This is especially true for larger garden landscapes – at this point we can refer to an excellent foreign example, the most extended European garden landscape, the English garden of Dessau-Wörlitz, where Edith Kresta mentions more than 300 visual axes applied as parts of the composition.¹⁰ In case of one the most famous and influential British garden, the Rousham House Garden, we can quote as well the by sacred eye-catchers defined visual axes as the most significant compositional tools and depths of their success during the garden history till nowadays: „The many wandering walks through the gardens are full of delicious surprises, a sudden meeting with a dying gladiator, a glimpse of Apollo, or a long view of a Gothic mill, an ancient bridge or distant trees, or arrival at an unexpected seat in an alcove.” – says Hal Moggridge, English landscape architect.¹¹

Concerning Transylvanian castle gardens and landscapes, we tried to determine those eye-catchers and visual axes, which through their sacred meanings and symbolic messages play an essential role in the garden composition or landscape they are part to.

We defined the term “sacred eye-catcher”, we investigated 139 built features considered eye-catchers,

⁹ Hajdu Nagy, Gergely (2001): *A romok szerepe Magyarországon tájképi kertjeiben* (diplomadolgozat) (The role of ruins in the landscape gardens of Hungary – thesis) Szent István Egyetem, Tájépítészeti Kar Budapest 26.

¹⁰ „Visual axes are the main design element of English landscape gardens. ... There are 300 of those here – and so every turn in the path brings a new view of the garden kingdom.” Edith Kresta (2008): *Nature by Design Lush gardens and spacious parks characterize the garden kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz*. *The Atlantic Time*, May, 2008. In: http://www.atlantic-times.com/archive_detail.php?recordID=1324

¹¹ In: Everton S. (2014): *Why is Rousham England's most influential garden?* *Garden Illustrated*. <http://www.gardensillustrated.com/article/gardens/why-rousham-england%E2%80%99s-most-influential-garden>



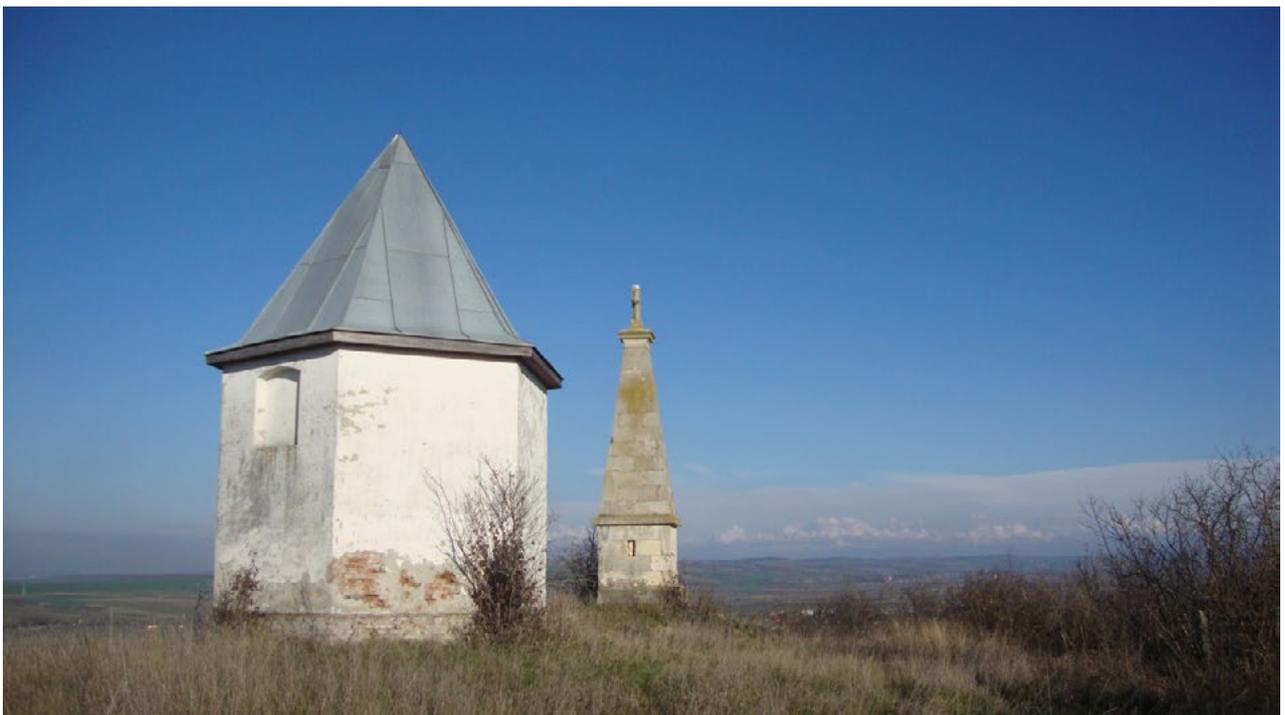
Il. 6. The burial vault of the Kemény family in Ciumbrod, shaped like pyramid (Photo: Fekete, 2017)

Ill. 6. Grobowiec rodziny Kemény w Ciumbrod, w kształcie piramidy (fot. Fekete, 2017)



Il. 7. The burial of the Teleki family in Glodeni shaped like pyramid (Photo: Fekete, 2013)

Ill. 7. Grobowiec rodziny Teleki w Glodeni w kształcie piramidy (fot. Fekete, 2013)



Il. 8. The Crypt and a cross belongs to Bethlen family from Tirimia (Photo: Fekete, 2012)

Ill. 8. Krypta i krzyż należące do rodziny Bethlen z Tirimii (fot. Fekete, 2012)

we described the current conditions of the visual axes and we specified by the sacred eye-catchers (full visual contact, semi visual contact, missing visual contact).

The investigation proved the important compositional role of the sacred eye-catcher, which can serve as a basis for the renewal of the visual communication between garden and landscape.



Il. 9. The obelisk of Csáky family from Almasu (Photo: Fekete, 2017)

Ill. 9. Obelisk rodziny Csáky z Almasu (fot. Fekete, 2017)



Il. 10. The tempietto of the Jósika family in Surduc.in 1930's (Photo Archive of KÖH)

Ill. 10. *Tempietto* rodziny Jósika w Surduc, w latach 30. XX w. (fot. archiwum KÖH)



Il. 11. The old tower of the Almási Fortress seen from the Csáky castle garden in Almasu (Photo: Fekete, 2017)

Ill. 11. Stara wieża twierdzy Almási widziana z ogrodów zamkowych Csáky w Almasu (fot. Fekete, 2017)



Il. 12. The ruins of the Thoroczkay Fortress visible from the Thoroczkay-Rudnyánszky mansion garden in Colțești (Photo: Fekete, 2015)

Ill. 12. Ruiny twierdzy Thoroczkay widoczne z ogrodów rezydencjonalnych Thoroczkay-Rudnyánszky w Colțești (fot. Fekete, 2015)

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