

## Opponency to Spa Jánské Koupele, diploma work

České vysoké učení technické v Praze Fakulta architektury

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The location is Jánské Koupele, a turn-of-the-century spa that sleeps like Sleeping Beauty, with so many historical buildings and memories of bathing experience. The graduate thoroughly maps the existing buildings in terms of both function and condition. The analysis reveals the basic principles that will be important in the construction of the new spa building: the historical buildings have a stone base at the bottom, followed by a plastered middle strip, and are finished with a log covered floor at the top.

The graduate makes a proposal for the restoration of the original buildings in the area, as well as for the demolition of building parts that were added later. A comprehensive spatial planning concept is being prepared for the entire area (e.g. a cafe will be placed on the island, the bridges leading to the island will fit organically into the system of renovated and supplemented walking paths). The existing axes, partly defined by the existing buildings, are enriched with new ones. The new traffic routes and parking lots are added to the historical ones, sensitively amending them.

The reprogramming of the area - together with the renovation proposals - is remarkable. The careful reconstruction aims to restore the memory of the place. By programming the historical buildings, the diploma work is stretched to its limits, however, these ideas anchor the new building into its context. The historical buildings are built additively next to each other, yet they form micro-spaces among each other. In this row, the graduate places the building of the spa - at the end of the row, which can also be understood as a signal: she does not want to interfere with the hierarchy of the existing buildings, rather she wants to complement it, and that's okay.

The centre of the three main levels (the middle of the sandwich) incorporates the reception level, where the ticket office and changing rooms are located. Now, even from the forecourt, there is a beautiful view of the entire area of the spa, it serves as a visual orientation point, framed by the landscape. This level can also be seen as a foretaste of the spa, as the small indoor hot water pool and the outdoor pools already initiate the visitor into the mystery of the spa. The main functions of the spa are located one level lower, integrated into the terrain. Some of the hot water pools are located hidden, in some places clearly visible, and in some places as "room sculptures". In each case, the exciting views among the spaces is characteristic. The saunas and relaxation areas are located on the upper level. The combination of the cafe and bar forms a separate unit, accessible both from the outdoor terrace and from the ground floor foyer.

For me, visual axes here are of particular importance. On arriving through the corridor of the hotel on the lower level, the outdoor pool of the atrium is revealed, as well as the indoor swimming pool, which is framed by the landscape. On the middle level, looking out to the right from the entrance hall, the landscape is revealed, but in the meantime, we can look down on to the atrium and have a look at the outdoor swimming pool on the same level. The upper level is also much more meditative due to the bar-like facade cladding - we have a filtered view of the landscape from the saunas and the rest areas next to them.

However, in addition to the many words of praise, I also have a few critical comments. From an operational point of view, it would be more economical to run the outside and inside cafe from a common bar counter located on the north side, even by reducing the size of the storage rooms. Although the number and location of the pools is exemplary, the size of the relaxation areas assigned to them on the lower and middle levels seems undersized. However, these minor

shortcomings do not detract from the generosity of the plan. The building is excellently characterized by spatial complexity and stratification. The outside and the inside of the building fit together harmoniously, the locomotion among the outdoor terraces shows a high degree of space dramaturgy. An additional virtue of the project is the refined graphic presentation.

At the end of my opponency, I have raised myself the following question : how can we enrich the traditional spa of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the 21st century? The graduate does not give the answer directly, although the relationship as for the use of materials between old and new is witty. The upper wooden cladding and the lower raw concrete surface imitating stone evoke the structural and facade logic of the historical buildings on site. The answer formulated by the graduate to the question posed is very diverse: she places the individual pools in varied spatial situations, thereby connecting the external and internal spaces in different ways. The visual axes even support this, so the abstract volume of the spa fits organically into the surrounding landscape and strikingly closes down the historic building row at the same time. These gestures raise the experience of bathing to the level of mystery. Based on these considerations, I recommend the thesis for acceptance, the grade I recommend is A.

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