

ADAPTATION OF HISTORIC SACRED BUILDINGS TO SECULAR PURPOSES KEEPING THE SACRED FUNCTION AS A LINK BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE

INTRODUCTION

Sacred objects are an important part of Europe's religious heritage. Due to the current laicization of Europe, the adaptation of sacred buildings into secular functions has become a necessity for economic reasons. Their owners, architects, conservators and historians are faced with a dilemma: how to preserve an object or transform it into another function? Places of worship cannot be treated in solely economic terms due to the identity of the place, its current function and symbolism. The phenomenon of desecralization has occurred in all cultures and is not a specific feature of our times. Historic examples demonstrate that sacred objects have been constantly transformed over the centuries. Today, it requires attention because of our greater awareness of the symbolic, artistic and historical value of sacred buildings and the items conserved in them. Adaptation of historic sacred buildings to secular purposes keeping the sacred function can be a possible answer to the troubled future of religious heritage with a strong symbolic value.



The church of St. Gertrudis in Heerle.



The church of St. Laurens in Rotterdam.

PURPOSE

The aim of this research is to draw attention to the important and often forgotten semantic aspect of sacred objects during adaptation to secular functions. **Narrative research** can be used to analyze selected adaptation implementations and to present a certain model of conduct during the adaptation of sacred objects. The purpose of the research is to find acceptable new secular functions for former churches, where sacred, historical and conservation values are taken into consideration. New purposes and solutions that can be implemented in a society with strong Christian values without causing a cognitive dissonance.

METHOD

The narrative research consists of the following points (aspects). The method assumes analyzing selected projects in two periods: creation and adaptation. They are: **history** (the story told by the object), **place** (the location of the object in the architectural, urban and social context), **time** (the aspect of time of origin and transformation to secular function), **creator of the narrative** (the idea of the architect, the artist, the builder, his creative intentions, beliefs and intentions), **purpose of adaptation and reconsecration** (whether the desecralization process is reversible? Whether the building will be able to fulfill liturgical function again, e.g., in 50 or 100 years?).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Adaptation of sacred objects has become a common practice in Western Europe. Transformations of sacred objects must be carried out with respect to the existing historical tissue and sacred tissue (elements of sacred interior furnishings, altars, reliquaries, tabernacles or tombs). Aesthetic solutions do not always carry ethical content.

The pre-conceptual design analysis of sacred objects can be supplemented by the method of narrative research, which allows for the analysis of various aspects. The purpose of a narrative in a cultural context is related to the site, the narrator, the recipient and the time of narrative. Narrative research of semantic architecture, as one of the measures of researching sacred architecture, may be one of the directions of analysis and the designing process to be decorously allocated to secular functions.

