

## **Keynote Speech by Dan Hanganu, Architect**

### **Presentation of the honorary guest by Constantin Spiridonidis**

*Our third key-note speech and our fourth key-note speaker is Dan Hanganu. Dan Hanganu is an architect and a Professor in the School of Architecture McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. It is impossible to present you all the spectrum of his activities in few lines. I can just mention numbers and I feel that through these numbers we can probably have a picture of his profile. Dan Hanganu has a very long experience in teaching as visiting professor in United States of America, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, France, Italy and China. In his professional practice he has for the last two years six ongoing projects, which are under construction with a lot of millions of dollars budget each one. Thirty-seven projects developed after the '80s, forty-five architectural awards for projects and works done in Switzerland, Morocco, Romania and more recently in Canada. Ten first prizes in competitions from '86 to 2002. A lot of his buildings appear in publications in China, Argentina, Canada, United States of America, France, Great Britain, Germany, Holland, India, Italy, Japan and Romania. A big number of exhibitions hosted his work among others' and some of them were dedicated to his own work exclusively. We are really very proud to have Dan Hanganu with us and on behalf of the Council of the EAAE I would like to thank him for accepting this invitation to participate in this event and to deliver his lecture with the title "Theory and Practice".*

## Theory and Praxis

Dan HANGANU, Architect  
Montreal, Canada

*"The man acknowledges no act which has not been previously lived by someone else, some other being who was not a man. What he does has been done before."*

*Mircea Eliade*

In our fast changing times, the contemporary social fragmentation, the redistribution of the levels of decision and the current crisis of participation have no doubt a major influence on our behavior and production.

In a world - I quote Philip Johnson - a slippery meaningless world, where certainty is not even desired, much less attainable - end quote - in a world where the image replaces the word, **architecture**, more and more reliant upon the talkative, becomes the high blaze, fire works act

in continuous search of acclamation and prime time distribution.

Eisenman says:

"Society has no satisfaction from the actual product of our labor, people are only interested in the mediated result."

I am still interested in l'Abbe de Cordemoy's definition of architecture made in 1706 as "*ordonnance, disrtribution et bienaisance*".

I am still interested in what constitutes the **difference** between permanence on one hand and !that George Steiner calls unique, immediate and transitory on the other.

The difference between the architecture which passes the test of time and the volatile, trend-oriented "*consummation du menu du jour*".

I would like to cite Ken Frampton. He says:



*Quebec archives at Montreal, Montreal 1997*

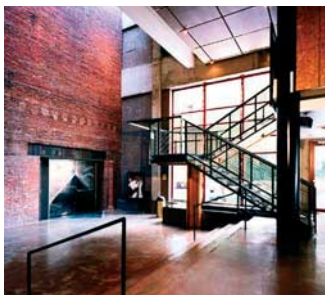
"Architecture - it is as much about place-making and the passage of time as it is about space and form. ... In this sense, it is neither high art nor high technology. To the extent that it defies time, it is anachronistic by definition. Duration and durability are its ultimate values. In the last analysis it has nothing to do with immediacy and everything to do with the unsayable."

It is in this context that I personally approach our contemporary behavior in search of education, critical knowledge, past experience, roots and understanding.



*Faculty of Law library. Mc Gill University, Montreal 1996-1998*





*Le théâtre du nouveau monde.  
Montréal 1994-1997*

I was born in Romania, a Latin Country. I was educated under Slavic influence by a misguided regime, I grew up with a Byzantine heritage and then I left everything behind, more than twenty seven years ago. I left Bucharest to go to Paris, which I left for Toronto, which I left for Montreal.

It is obvious that I established a connection between my experiencing different visual events and the way I practice; especially the results achieved.

To evaluate this, according to Rafael Moneo:

One approach would be to study the evolution of the architect and his work over the years, indulging in the pleasure of exploring how influences and circumstances have manifested themselves in his career.

First, I will show some images with certain comments. You will notice a discrepancy, an apparent disconnection between what I say and what I show you. This is intentional.

I will then present some projects, furniture and objects I have built, in the last twenty years, in which the echo of those memories can be traced.

There will be no conclusion.



*Le cirque du Soleil. Le studio de création et de diffusion,  
Montréal 1994-1997*



*H.E.C. Ecole des hautes études  
commerciales de Montréal.  
1992-1996*



*School of Design University of Quebec at Montreal 1992-1995*



The picture you see was taken in the Montreal Harbour. It represents a frame, a view through a limited opening.

It contains what we may consider the essential, hence eliminating the disposable. It deals with the notion of limits and limitations: central and peripheral.

Behind, there is an object of unknown size and shape. The more we advance, the more we see. Discovery and surprise. All this happens in a given frame which we accept or not.

Like the skillful manipulation of the skin of the object, the envelope of the architectural space contains all the elements of the tectonic vocabulary, from detail to intentional gesture acting as divider as well as unifier, but always favoring the view, the continuity of space, the framing of what is to come.

It is in our power to set boundaries for ourselves. It is in our own power to disregard them.



*Pointe - a - Callières. Museum of archeology and History of Montreal 1990-1992*



*Abbey Church. St-Benoit du Lac, Quebec 1989-1994*





*Chaussegros-De-Lery Complex.  
Montreal, Quebec. 1989-1992*



*Val de l'Anse. Nuns' Island,  
Quebec 1988-1990*



*Clos St-Bernard. Quetmont.  
Quebec 1986-1987*

I would like to associate these ideas with the natural behavior of building materials, their vocabulary, their limitations and... beyond that.

Notice the strength of stone, the prime form out of which the composition, the work of art, evolves.

Notice the resistance of the subject to its tool, the conflict, the opposition and the effort which goes into bringing about this metamorphosis.

It constitutes nevertheless a reproduction of what already exists.

I would cite again Moneo:

"Things, utensils, architecture, have no need to be subjected to continual changes just for the sake of respecting stylistic evolution."

I associate the interaction of tool and object with the dialogue between metal and masonry; each behaving according to their own characteristics, strengths and limitations.

I like to parallel my intentions to those of George Steiner's, when he talks about the scientific and humanistic aspirations of human beings.

- Masonry: solid, limited to its own predictable known strength, representing the humanistic as in a painting by De Chirico where time and place seem to coincide.
- Metal: more inclined towards new boundaries of discovery, versatile and continuously changing, representing the challenge, the boldness, therefore the scientific.

They both sense the play of gravity and abstraction of geometry, reason and memory: masonry striving for timelessness above the transitory succession of events, whereas metal, beyond its structural endeavor, gently transcends the boundary of decoration.

I would like to mention Semper's theory of architecture which derives its formal elaboration from the so-called industrial arts and, above all, from the craft of textiles.

Semper insists on the primacy of tectonic form, urging that one decorates construction rather than constructs decoration.

It is a characteristic which is shared by objects and buildings; or in other words the craft and architecture which operate on two levels: the object which could serve a purpose, a service and architecture providing a space which elevates the experience of use.

It is these peripheral components of the contained space which emphasize the most visible metamorphosis in

contemporary production. Faithful to today's priority of the perceived reality over the actual product, the skin becomes volatile, transparent, immaterial, changeable and obedient to temporary constraints.

Here we approach the contained image: mass and void, opacity and transparency, reflection, duplication. Real and reflected, reality and perceived reality.