

Meeting point of the dead and the alive

Discovering the symbols of national consciousness and funeral culture

Transmitting the spirit of the space thru the reconstruction works of the mausoleums of Hungarian historical person's.

Katalin Jelenik
Privat architect
1145 Budapest
Uzsoki street 49/a
Hungary

Abstract. It was a challenge to find and visualize the spirit of the end of 19th century during the architectural reconstruction of the mausoleums of Batthyány Lajos - the first Hungarian prime minister – and Deák Ferencz – who was the Sage of the Country at the reform period. The applied features on the „buildings” are based on the forgotten cultural and historical symbols of the 19th century. Historical background: In Hungary the War of Independence started in 1848. After the defeat of the War the prime minister Batthyány Lajos was executed. The Settlement of 1867 secured the autonomy of Hungary. The negotiation was assisted by Deák Ferenc. The purpose of mausoleums builders: Both mausoleums were built by public subscription. The national consciousness, the honouring were manifested in the outlook of the buildings. Funeral symbols on the mausoleums: Mausoleum as a type of funeral building, obelisk, angel, genius, lion, floral tribute, sarcophagus, palm branch, candelabrum, the four principal virtues, spinning wheel, soap bubble, laurel wreath. Symbols of the national consciousness: Historical and mythological allegory are on the walls. Justice, Prudence, Science, and Intemperance rounded by the well-known politicians, and the main groups of the society represent the historical spirit of that era. Other symbols: The historical citations on the wall, the sculptor of the historical person, the count's coat of arms, the national coat of arms. These symbols and figures were well-known. Now we have to find the material and immaterial tools to force the visitors to be sensible this spirit. The reconstruction of the two mausoleums uncovered these ancient spirits, and now they can express the honour of the nation for the history and these historical persons.

All of the funeral symbols are originally thousands of years old, or as old as human existence. The art connected to the burial was always related to the metaphysical conviction of people. In the 19th century, people still knew the meaning of the symbols.

The modern lifestyle, the omnipotence of technics and science, the disappearing of the traditional memorial services caused that these habits and symbols became forgotten. Instead of knowing the great historical persons, and bearing national consciousness, today we are flooded with thousands of unimportant news from the whole world, as a result of globalisation.

It was a special challenge to find and visualise the spirit of the late 19th century during the last architectural reconstruction of the mausoleums of Gróf Batthyány Lajos - the first Hungarian prime minister – and Deák Ferenc – politician at the reform period, known as the „Sage of the Country”. The applied features on the „buildings” are based on the forgotten cultural and historical symbols of the 19th century.

During the previous reconstructions of these mausoleums in the sixties, the funeral symbols and the objects expressing national consciousness were not accepted by the socialist culture. This resulted in the removal of some „unimportant” symbols, and the changing of the centrality of the buildings and the colours, so the spiritual meanings were extinguished.

Historical background

The Hungarian kingdom was part of the Habsburg’s monarchy from 1527 to 1918. The War of Independence started in 1848, aiming to achieve among others the separation from the Monarchy, the emancipation of serfs, and civil transformation. The two main leaders of this War were count Szécheny Istvan, and Kossuth Lajos. During the war, the first Hungarian government was formed. The prime minister, count Batthyany Lajos (1807 – 1849) was executed in 1849, after the defeat of the War of Independence, along with all military colonels, afterwards called „the martyrs of Arad”.

The Settlement of 1867 secured the autonomy of Hungary except for foreign affairs, military affairs, and finances concerning the above. The negotiations on the Settlement were assisted by Deák Ferenc (1803 – 1876), who was later referred to as the „Sage of the Country”

The purpose of mausoleums builders

Both mausoleums, the mausoleums of Batthány and Deák, were built after the Settlement by public subscription. The strong national consciousness, the honouring of human and political greatness were manifested in the outlook of the buildings. All applied architectural details and symbols originated from forgotten cultural and historical roots, which now had to be researched in order to be able to recall the spiritual hints of the buildings and the spirit of the 19th century.

The details of the monuments:

Both of them are in Budapest, in National Cemetery at Fiumei street.

Mausoleum of Batthyány Lajos

Architect Schickedanz Albert, was appointed as the winner of a competition
Year of building 1878
Character of the building Underground family crypt, and memorial place for the martyr minister of the first independent government.



Funeral symbols on the building:

1. Lions



Originated from the Pre-Christian time. It keeps guard over the dead. It is the symbol of power and bravery, which are attributed to the dead person. It is the attribute of bravery and power.

2. Obelisks



In ancient Egypt, these were connected with the cult of the Sun God. Name is issued from the greek word obeliskos, which means spit. It is a squared bottom prism, with a pyramid at the top, which was gilded, and the raising sun flashed on it. It symbolised the connection between earth and sky.

3. Triglyphs



These are vessels to make fire in, decorated with lions. The fire is connected with the burning of the dead, and it is also a symbol of purity.

4. On the reliefs: Janus and firebird



Two-faced person. Symbol of death and life, and the duality of the world. Firebird is an immortal bird.

Natinal symbols:

5. Coat of arms of Hungarian Kingdom
6. Coat of arms of the Batthány family



Ancient symbol of Hungarian Kingdom, and an ancient hungarian family's coat of arms

Mausoleum of Deák Ferenc

Architect Gerster Kálmán, was appointed as the winner of a competition

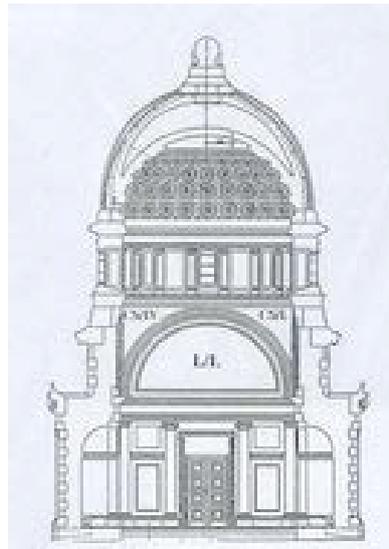
Years of building 1884-1887

Character of the building Monospace building covered with a cupola, standing on a pedestral with stairs. Inside the central space is a sarcophagus original with a statue, on the walls allegorical pictures in the four lunettes, enshrining the memory of the dead. The coffin is walled off underground.

Creator of the statue of the genius is Kiss György

Statue (destroyed) on the sarcophagus is the work of Stróbl Alajos

The mosaics are based on the paintings of Székely Bertalan, and made by Róth Miksa.



Funeral symbols on the building:

7. Mausoleum as an architectural form

Mauszolosz is a greek word. A great tomb was built for the Persian governor Mausolos and for her wife in 350 B.C. in Halikarnassos. It was a building resembling a pyramid on a pedestal, with an allegorical figure on the top.

8. Central layout with a cupola

The symbol of the other world. The cupola is the mundane copy of Heaven. The symbol of the soul that has reached eternity.

9. The three part-arrangement of the space is symbolical

Upper level: Cupola symbolizing Heaven.

The Heaven is where the soul arrives.



Middle level: The level of life.

Representation of the events of the War of Independence and the Settlement, which were important in the life of Deák. These pictures are composed around the four main virtues, relating to the merits of Deák.



Lower level: The level of death.



The dead body is underground; in the middle of the space is the sarcophagus which is a catafalque of Deák. An angel with a palm branch is bent over the statue of the empty body, which was the prison of the soul.

10. Conscious use of the colours.

Lower level: The colour of death is black.
The death of the body

Middle level: Life is colourful. It shows the triumph of life on the Earth, historical events and persons which were important in the life of Deák.

Upper level: Heaven is blue, the colour of the sky with golden stars.

11. Winged genius at the top of the cupola



Symbol from the times before Christianity. The word is of latin origin, means protecting spirit. A man's body with wings, an unearthly person. The angel of death is standing on an orb, which is the expression of the universe, of unearthly life. At the feet of the angel is the cherub with four faces, who are the

guards of the Paradise.

12. Palm branch and laurel wreath in the hands of the genius. The palm branch is the tree of life in Mezopotamia and in ancient Egypt, the symbol of eternal life, and immortality of the soul. In Christian art it means the victory of Christ and the martyrs. The laurel wreath is an evergreen plant, symbolizing immortality and eternity. It stands for the fulfilled life of the dead person.

13. Sarcophagus



The greek word szarkophagosz means carnivorous. It was a kind of limestone which reduced the body of the dead quickly to dust. The golden age of using the sarcophagus was during the Christian and roman times, but it was known by ancient Egyptians and was used in Asia Minor as well. Usually it is a great decorated stone coffin with reliefs on its three sides representing the everyday life or mythological persons, who have connection with the transitoriness, and with the other world.

14. Angel statue



On the sarcophagus, as a catafalque was lying the stone body of Deák, and an angel was pulling off the winding-sheet, covering the body with a palm branch.

15. Bronz floral tribute

The floral tribute on the graves relate to immortality.

16. Angels with a palm branch at the corner



The angels with golden background are the delegates of God. They inherited the wings from non-christian geniuses. They accompany the dead to eternity.

17. In the four lunettes are the main virtues with their well-known attributes. These virtues relate to the eminence of the dead.

Justitia, with the balance and the sword.



Prudentia with a mirror in her hand.



Fortitudo with a sword and armour.



Temperantia with bridle-bit in her hand.



18. Laurel wreath around the head of Prudentia
Laurel wreath, the symbol of immortality.



19. Spinning wheel, and spool



At the left side of Fortitudo is a poor woman, just throwing away the spinning wheel and the spool, symbols of fate in the greek mythology.

23 Anchor, and a soap bubble.



At the right side of Temperantia, children are playing with soap bubbles, which are the symbols of mortality. The children represent allegorically love, the anchor at their mother's leg means the hope, and green, the colour of the mother's clothes is the symbol of resurrection.

24 The floral tribute of the queen



It shows the role of Deák as a politician, conciliating the Hungarian nation and the Habsburg rulers. Queen Elizabeth (Sissi) had a special chaffing to Hungarians.

25. Laws and words of Deák on the wall

That which is taken away by force and power
can easily be regained through time and fair luck,
but of what the nation, fearing distress, resigned
voluntarily, is always hard and doubtful to reclaim. (1861)

26. Justitia, with the leaders of the War of Independence.



At her right side stands Kossuth Lajos in a blue coat, the popular leader who was preferred by the popular masses. At her left side stands count Szecheny, the moderate politician, beside him is Deák, who completed the negotiations. The placement on the opposite sides show that they take the opposite standpoints. Among them, the Hungarian shepherd, in red-white-green clothes decorated with ribbons, and the other peasants symbolise the problem of the different nationalities living in Hungary.

27. Prudentia with the educated, noble people and with the poor



There was a great difference in the living standards of the social classes. The red flag of the revolution is in the hands of young parliamentary representatives, wearing the special, national 'Bocskai' suits. The poor man is sitting with his back to the revolutionists.

28. Fortitudo between the powered and the poor men.



At the right hand of her is an armoured knight wearing a long mantle and a sword is in his hand: he represents the ruler. Behind him is a captive with a chain and a cross. At the other side is a person with a torch, who raises the people. A woman is throwing away the spinning wheel and holding a scythe.

29. Temperantia between the hope of the future and the hopelessness of reality.



At her right side is a mother carelessly playing with her children, with an anchor symbolizing faith. At the opposite side are two women, one of them is praying, the other is holding out her hands for help.

During the reconstruction works of these two mausoleums these ancient spirits were rediscovered, and we had to find the material and immaterial tools to enable the visitors to revive all of it.

The mausoleums are now the scenes of national celebrations, and they worthily express the honour of the nation for the history and the historical persons.



Katalin Jelenik
Meeting point of the dead and the alive
Discovering the symbols of national consciousness and funeral culture