

THE ARCHITECTURE OF DEPARTMENT STORES, AND ORIGIN OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING AS EXEMPLIFIED BY SELECTED REALIZATIONS IN GERMANY IN THE PERIOD BEFORE YEAR 1939 – SUMMARY

The 19th century was the period of important technological and socio-economic changes in the history of humanity connected mainly with the industrial revolution. Urbanization, mass transport and mass production were developing rapidly. Those factors had a beneficial influence on the formation of new models of trade architecture, among which the predominant role played department stores, and along them evolved systems of promotion and advertisement which were unknown before. The purpose of this dissertation is to present the role of the 19th century emerging visual merchandising in the creation of internal structures of department stores and defining basic architectural tendencies in designing objects of this function based on the chosen constructions built prior to the outbreak of world war II.

The theme scope of the research was narrowed to three chain department stores whose founders were Oskar Tietz, Georg Wertheim and Rudolph Karstadt. Their activity was mainly focused in Germany, which became the territorial scope of the research. Since the late 90's of the previous century the objects under consideration have become components of one company – Arcandor AG as a result of the following sales and fusions, and at present after proprietorial changes belong to one person Austrian investor René Benko.

The basic purpose of the dissertation is to present the diverse attitude to the creation and architectural design of the object among one consortium, as well as proving that regardless of the differences in the creation of facade and block, the interiors features similar stylistic and structural components. The realization of the above mentioned objectives is possible by demonstrating the rightness of the thesis that the creation of the architecture of the department stores belonging to the Tietzs, the Wertheims and Rudolph Kartstadt up to 1939 succeeded in separate stylistic trends featuring common interior elements resulting from visual merchandising.

In this dissertation non-architectural determinants which influenced the emergence and functioning of department stores were analysed. Among them technical, socio-economic factors and causations stemming from national specifications were mentioned. Additionally major designing trends of those buildings are presented in the discussed time period based on European and American examples and the principles of their operation in the socio-economic context are shown.

In the fundamental part of the dissertation the stylistic classification of department stores under consideration was attempted in terms of external architecture and separating common features as far as interior design is concerned. The classification of facades was based on the typology elaborated by Thomas Irrgang and Helga Behn and within it four main groups were identified:

- I. department store in the style of “trade palace” based on European models:
 - 1) facades with shop-windows limited to the ground floor,
 - 2) facades with shop-windows comprising several floors,
- II. department store in the neoclassical convention with national features:
 - 1) facades with the use of the wide vertical division,
 - 2) facades with the use of the thick vertical division,
- III. department store characterized by additional form,
- IV. department store in the modernism style.

It stems from the analyses conducted that the most numerous group of objects were the ones characterized by the neoclassical style with national features and facades with the use of thick vertical division. Issues resulting from the national specification as well as the popularity of fashionable in the 19th century neoclassical theory promoting Greek and Gothic styles for their

structural integrity enhanced its popularity. In the creation of the department stores a form which performed well reflecting national features – a crude block and the impression of a “solid” construction was worked out. It was repeated when designing department stores for all researched consortiums: Tietz, Wertheim and Kartstadt and thus it is hard to define this phenomenon as an emergence of branding. The research regarding the organization of a store (e.g. introduction of theme sections, internal courtyard covered with a skylight and a parade staircase), design of shop-windows as well as the issues concerning advertisement and employment of artists to lower the merely commercial nature of department stores let us claim that all elements of interior equipment worked as a scenography enhancing the sales system. They served to expose the goods at their best, to evoke sensual connotations and common admiration acting according to the rule: “Successful store exterior pulls people inside, while a good interior keeps them from wanting to leave”¹.

In this dissertation the stylistic diversity of blocks of the researched department stores and at the same time the dependence of the arrangement of interiors of those buildings on the principles of visual promotion meant to proper exhibition of goods, the ability to experience the spaciousness of the building and allowing the suitable communication between the customer and the product was proved. The conducted analyses proved also that the emergence of visual merchandising took place along with the emergence of new trade structures – department stores in the second half of the 19th century.

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¹ Quotation of Frantz Jourdain