

## Opponent's Review

### Savka Marenić: The Isle of Education

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The assignment is rather tricky, if not deliberately insidious. It is an invitation to speculate on the possible future of the Detský ostrov. Being closed for the public after the floods in 2013 it is currently abandoned and overgrown with trees. Nevertheless, as a void in the dense structure of Smíchov, autonomous and isolated from it, the island undoubtedly represents a quality – it is a unique moment in the city. Therefore any attempt to colonize it should be carried out thoughtfully and very cautiously.

Savka Marenić chose to dedicate the island to the education of children at the age of 6–14. Even though the name of the Detský ostrov is not older than fifty years, the decision to follow up with it seems to be a legitimate way of acknowledging its public character. An educational facility corresponds suitably to the importance of the project site. The analytical chapter of the thesis deals with the topic in question in a satisfactory manner, too. A substantial part of it is concerned with different educational principles and historical examples. However, a clear description how this acquired knowledge translates into actual architectural aspects of the project, is missing.

The school itself is an impressive longitudinal two-floor building with a generous playground on the roof. It is basically a single robust plinth that carries six different sculpture-like elements. This creates certain tension that makes the whole composition very attractive. Due to its horizontal nature the building can easily blend with its surroundings and disappear in the existing vegetation. This fact is highly appreciated. On the other hand, it's a pity the school does not respond to the unavoidable flood threat in a natural way. With its first floor at the ground level its protection would need a very difficult secondary solution.

Regarding the internal logic of the building, it is organized into a narrow 3-tract strip of corridors and rooms. The corridors serve as common areas for students, while the rooms provide more intimacy or specific usage. Maybe it is the decision to unite all students in one space that addresses the frequently mentioned unconventional educational principles. Anyway, it seems to be questionable if the corridors of these proportions and dimensions meet the needs of their purpose. Considering this layout of the building, including its overall accessibility and operational performance, it seems to be a bit clumsy and schematic. It is probably the prize one has to pay to fit such a complex programme into a slender form like this.

Particular attention is paid to the six elements on the roof – the so called "rooms" Half objects, half sculptures, they were designed to trigger the children's imagination. They provide an important stimulus for students or visitors and can be considered the key architectural elements of the educational facility. Each of them is designated to serve a specific ritual and is named accordingly. As a matter of fact, it is this predestination that makes them less convincing. It is hard to imagine these abstract forms could serve only one purpose, or in that case why only the particular chosen one. Instead a more open utilization of the elements would serve much better.

To conclude it has to be highlighted that the proposal offers a suitable alternative for Detský ostrov without its over-exploitation. Moreover, it possesses an appropriate degree of consistency as well as a high level of artistic qualities. The proposal has a very strong visual appearance obviously influenced by the work of post-modern movement, although it seems to be a little bit more about the late avant-garde's imagery than its actual ideas.

According to the above mentioned I suggest to give Savka Marenić grade "C"

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Martin Jančok

