

**CZECH TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE, PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC**

AUTHOR: Bc. SIMONA POPADIČ

DIPLOMA PROJECT SUPERVISOR: VLADIMIR SITTA

DEPARTMENT 15120 (LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE)

SCHOOL YEAR 2017/2018 WINTER TERM

TITLE OF MASTER'S PROJECT: **SONODUC**

LOCATION: NANTES, FRANCE

### **1.0 Introduction**

Simona Popadič speculates in her work the post-industrial future of Nantes, a significant city near the Atlantic coast. The fate of once mighty industrial hub is not dissimilar to many cities in Europe and also in the world. Some cities reach for the dynamite – a simple and effective method how to pulverize their own history. Crass commercialism often follows. Others proudly and painstakingly try to recover as much as possible from the industrial past which has been often the sole formative force for their existence.

### **2.0 Analysis**

The author gives us a lean but sufficient diet of background conditions. Individual objects are briefly analysed and assessed in regard to their possible future or resurrection. When the structures are considered to be beyond repair Popadič explores other possibilities: particularly how to evoke the past spatial frameworks. Whilst she uses a whole gamut of devices, one of them definitely stands out. It is the use of blocks of vegetation in lieu of solidly constructed volumes. In practice, landscape and urbanism are held apart by professional boundaries which are reinforced by divergent tactics and working scales. Joining these two terms into a hybrid methodology represents a viable method, where landscape supplants architecture's role as the basic building block of urban design. The silo is then a subject to the more detailed autopsy. This is not at all surprising. This ponderous juggernaut is simply impossible to ignore. The comparison of scales on the page 36 speaks for itself.

### **3.0 Connections**

The site grew almost by a functional sedimentation and a gradual reclamation of the swampy ground. River edges **were** frequently subjected to pragmatic interventions in the past. Consequently, there is a strong separation of residential and industrial areas. Stitching those parts together via new elevated links, bridging roads and railway barriers, forms a base of the new urban armature. To provide an unimpeded access to the Loire riverfront is a key move for its resurrection. The author uses those links also to access newly provided public spaces.

### **4.0 Program**

The program is outlined on pages 30 and 31. The author suggests **that the** formerly idle, ecologically inert surfaces (carparks, storage yards etc.) are assigned to public/community use. There are also suggestions how to reuse structurally sound existing buildings. A focus is on the silo and its possible programmatic reinterpretations. If there is any structure offering ethereal experience, it must be the silo. From Simona's hands I have witnessed many functional and conceptual variations. What transpired at the end of this process, was a focus on the scenography of sound. Simona proposes to work with the sound almost in a shamanic way. The visitor would be able to recall virtually any sounds known to human ears from the vast library. New technologies enable visitors' deep immersion in the world of sounds, to recall various sources, mix and juxtapose them.

### **5.0 Architecture**

This is the architecture of subtraction. Instead of constructing, substantial parts of the existing structure are removed. To repurpose the silo requires a radical surgery. Hollowing the structure as suggested by the author can yield quite amazing spaces, not commonly seen elsewhere. Regarding feasibility of such gestures, one can refer to successful precedents, like MOCAA in Cape Town for example. There is an interesting paradox. A need to create an additional void in order to store and distribute the immaterial sound. Sound conspiring with light is used to create almost an unworldly experience. As proposed, the light inside could be quite amazing, changeable, varying the shadows, sharp and soft lines modulated by sound. There is a potential for each sound to create light fields of their own and make for multiple readings of geometry as visitors moved within the soundscape. Outside skin of silos is left virtually unchanged, bar some slashes for windows. Those

slashes are handled with the formal dexterity. I suspect however that their distribution and calibration is a bit arbitrary with some disdain for light conditions within accommodation units. The floor internally and externally is left unadorned, retaining its industrial qualities. Some modifications within sound chambers to improve acoustics could be required.

## **6.0 Graphics**

The work is elegantly, almost ascetically presented. This is quite refreshing given a flood of the augmented reality and photoshopic hallucinations permeating current architectural practice.

## **7.0 Blemishes**

Text: In all respect to Simona's courage and gutsy celebration of synthetic conceits regarding the possible reclamation cycle, there are a few lapses of her attention. Firstly the language. I am not criticizing so much her syntax where too much of her native language oozes through formulations, rather the use of words which may sound similar, but mean something different (for example maid instead of made). Even if I accept some poetic licence, the meaning is from time to time nonsensical. Unfortunately a normal spellcheck does not pick such things.

Graphics: Some drawings in the brochure are so heavily reduced that the attached legends and dimensions are at the edge of legibility.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

I thoroughly enjoyed the journey through this project, the entire process of Simona's searching, finding, thrashing already drawn and searching again and again. I applaud Simona's courage to venture into a realm of unknown. To my knowledge there is no other museum of all known sounds anywhere in the world. To supervise work like this is an exciting, albeit demanding journey. I recommend this project, without any reservations, for defence in front of the jury.

Suggested mark: A – Excellent



Vladimir Sitta, Prague 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018