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Modern architecture at Střešovice. From entirety to detail 1. – Ořechovka

ANNOTATION

This study was created within the research project “Professional cognition, survey, scientific evaluation, inventory and documentation of architectural cultural heritage of the 19th and 20th century”, which enabled a detailed survey and recognition of one of the most famous quarters in Prague at Ořechovka and its surroundings in Střešovice cadastre. The first of the intended article series reviews the conditions of the establishment and urbanism of Ořechovka villa quarter and it presents one of its leading personalities, architect Jaroslav Vondrák and his own villa.

SUMMARY

In 1918 one of the main tasks of the new state was to transform Prague as soon as possible into a modern capital city for the Czechoslovak republic. Intensive work started on the concept of a regulatory plan of Great Prague. In July 1919 the ministry of public works drew out “A Competition of tenders for a colony of family houses by the building society S.J.V.Z. at Vořechovka” as an exemplary case of a garden villa quarter. Virtually every prominent architect and builder took part in this competition. The urban conception of Ořechovka was created after one of the two winning projects (by arch. Vondrák), while other participant architects cooperated on projects of separate residential blocks. Building started expeditiously and a modern garden town with a dense, mostly terraced development was built within two years. In 1923-1930 more dispersed development continued to the south, east and west from the original colony. Several buildings of outstanding quality by known architects can be found there (P. Janák, A. Dryák, L. Machoň, B. Paul and others). The Main Square with a park and tennis courts was completed together with a Central building as a commercial, social and cultural centre of the area. The western side of the square is dominated by the villa of architect Vondrák, who also created many other buildings at Ořechovka, including the Central building. This building of markedly expressive forms displays elements of both modernism and rondo cubism, a particular offset of a so called “national style” of the 1920s. The final expression also reflects a modification of the project documentation, accomplished by the architect within a single year. Also the influence of Dutch architecture of the period is apparent, which was a great inspiration for Czech architects from the time of Jan Kotěra. The villa shows a relationship in style with the work of architect Michel de Klerk, who was pointed out in Ořechovka context by the historian of architecture Zdeněk Lukeš. In the interior with the original layout and a number of handicrafts elements there is a great staircase situated in the northern semicircular risalit. The upper part from the first floor to the attic is illuminated by three small circular windows (evoking a favourite “steam ship” shape of windows at functionalist houses); circular apertures are also in the staircase partition. The fittings are also unique, especially notable are the “trumpet shaped” door handles on the doors into the living rooms. Architect Vondrák designed his house globally including two levelled garden with a terrace with attention paid to every detail. Due to legal difficulties with the property it has never been subjected to any significant reconstruction and has thus remained preserved to the present day essentially in its original form.

Fig. 1. Prague 6-Střešovice, part of the Ořechovka villa colony. Josef Gočár, Pavel Janák, 1919, axonometric situation and projects of the facades of the row houses – competition project by architects Gočár and Janák was not among the award winning entries. “Architecture of the most modern style does not express the construction, nor respects it; in order to achieve diversity the houses are painted with various colours. The authors completely deprecate principles to express material and construction in architecture” (repro SF 1919, 97).

Fig. 2. Map of the heritage zone Ořechovka villa colony with colour coded house blocks with authorship proportion of the participants in the competition “Ořechovka villa colony”. Architects are ordered in columns according to their place in the competition, the last three without award, outside the succession (completed by V. Nový, 2010, NPÚ HMP).

Fig. 3. Prague 6-Střešovice. Row houses by architect Vondrák, Lomená street,. Postcard from the building period, around 1922 (repro archive A. Křížová).

Fig. 4. Prague 6-Střešovice. Row houses by architect Vondrák differ only in details. **A)** No. 243–246, Východní street 34 – 28. **B)** No. 260 – 263, Spojená street 1 – 5 (photo P. Havlík, 2010).

Fig. 5. Prague 6-Střešovice, pumping station Bruska no. 467. South view from the street Pod hradbami. A quality project of an industrial feature with elegant fencing is an equivalent neighbour of spectacular villas on the opposite side of the street (photo A. Křížová, 2007).

Fig. 6. Prague 6-Střešovice, situation to the project of row houses in Lomená street. Architects J. Vondrák – J. Šenkýř. House blocks follow the contour, trees are suggested at bevelled corners to the crossroads (SA Praha 6, repro H. Křížová, 2010).

Fig. 7. Prague 6-Střešovice, Vondrák's villa no. 488, Západní 21. View onto the eastern facade to Západní street and Machar square with a single street facade. Construction of a winter garden is apparent at the 1st floor; the fencing imitates the original (photo H. Černá, 2010).

Fig. 8. Prague 6-Střešovice, Vondrák's villa no. 488. Project for glazing the verandah and enlarging the windows at the ground floor. The plan depicts modifications of the glazed construction above the original terrace space at the 1st floor. Original plan documentation, the plan is dated 1930 and contains a stamp and signature of architect Jaroslav Vondrák (SA Praha 6, repro H. Křížová, 2010).

Fig. 9. Prague 6-Střešovice, no. 488. Photograph from a period after 1930 with a glassed terrace at the 1st floor. A design of a garage was worked into the photograph. Undated photograph contains a stamp and signature of architect Jaroslav Vondrák (SA Praha 6, repro H. Křížová, 2010).

Fig. 10. Prague 6-Střešovice, no. 488. Original entrance door with rondo cubism motives. This main house entrance is situated on the western facade and is accessible across a small ramp from the garden. This entrance was used by Vondrák's family; access for clients was a separate entrance into the office and atelier at the ground floor level in the front part of the house facing the street (photo H. Černá, 2010).

Fig. 11. Prague 6-Střešovice, no. 488. Western garden front, view from the upper garden level (from the terrace) onto the western front, in the left side with the main house entrance (photo H. Černá, 2010).

Fig. 12. Prague 6-Střešovice, no. 488. Roof landscape, detailed view onto the rugged roof of the house and a monumental feature of a decoratively formed chimney stack including the chimney bridge (photo H. Černá, 2010).

Fig. 13. Prague 6-Střešovice, no. 488. Detail of the main staircase and its terminal part at the attic, where the staircase partition verges into the massive railings of the upper landing. Characteristic circular apertures correspond with the style of other rondo cubism details. (photo H. Černá, 2010).

Fig. 14. Prague 6-Střešovice, no. 488. **A)** "Trumpet shaped" door handle. An interesting type of fitting on the doors at the ground floor and partly also at the 1st floor (social facilities space). **B)** Decorative type of a door handle preserved on the glazed door of the living rooms on the 1st floor (photo H. Černá, 2010).

Fig. 15. Prague 6-Střešovice, no. 488. View from the south west corner of the garden plot to the upper garden level with a terrace and a pergola construction, in the background west and partially south face of the villa (photo H. Černá, 2010).

Fig. 16. Vernissage of the Interwar architecture of Střešovice exhibition (photo J. Sommer, 1. 10. 2010).

English by Linda and Patrick Foster