

termelődik ez a tudás. Ezek a mi kiskapuink, amiket mi megtaláltunk. Ez az, hogy ha a magyart kiküldik ezen az ajtón, a másikon visszajön, hogy tudja mindennek az ellenkezőjét, tudja a fölülte uralkodók sebezhető pontjait. Mindig tudja a sötétség és a világosság együttműködését, azt, hogy nem egyértelmű a világ. Van lent és fönt. Van igen és nem. Van jobbra és balra. Van férfi és nő. Miért pont a törökudulás és a 150 éves török uralom volt az, ami a magyarság identitását fönntartotta? Talán nem is lennének, – tanítottad nekem éppen te, Nemeskürty István – ha ez a törökudulás nem lett volna Magyarországon. Mert akkor a magyarság pontosan a neki megfelelő szituációba került, mert átjárható kapuvá vált Kelet és Nyugat között. Ezek mind szinonim fogalmak. Ezért is van az, hogy pont Nyugat felé produkálja Magyarország a lent és a fönt egyszerre látását. Bár nem azonos ezzel, mert ő bent lakik a két fal között, a suttogások és a sikolyok között. Nem lehet még így sem ráismerni – a Nyugat számára biztosított image mögött sem –, de ezt is tudja. Ez a nép elképesztő bölcsessége és nagy ereje. Olyan elképesztő bölcsesség és erő, amiben ha nem hinnék, akkor nem élnék itt.

A pavilonnak a nyugati frontján, egy elég hosszú szakaszon üvegfalat csináltunk. Nyitva vagyunk Ausztria felé, ők is átláthatnak, ha akarnak, az üvegházukból hozzánk, és mi is átláthatunk hozzájuk. Amikor pedig a látogatók ide érkeznek és a hang lemegy az üvegfödém alá, akkor a fény fokozatosan kialszik a nyugati image területén, majd a szűrő fények rámutatnak arra a nyílássorra, hat nyílásra, amelyek a tornyok alatt vannak. Ekkor automatikusan kinyílnak az ajtók és az emberek átmehetnek ezeken az ajtókon a keleti féltekébe. Átmehetnek azon a kettős falon, amit korábban már megtapasztaltak. Namármost! Amikor átjutnak a nyugati féltekéből a keletibe, akkor ott megjelenik egy film, megjelenik Magyarország tiszta, vad, fényes keleti imaginációja. A zene elkíséri az embereket, átjön velük és összemósódik a film mondanivalójával. E nagyerejű benyomás után távoznak és szembetalálkoznak a Vatikán pavilonjával, megmérettetésünk eszközével. Jó lenne, ha minden állam valami ilyesmit csinálna, hogy egy kicsivel jobban egymásra találjanak a nemzetek, mint ahogy ezidáig sikerült. Én persze annak is örülök, hogy végre lehetőség nyílt arra, hogy kísérletet tegyünk Magyarország belső fizionómiájának a kifejezésére, hogy valamilyen – mégha nem is teljesen érthető – üzenetet tudjunk mások számára közvetíteni.

*(Megjelent a Magyarország Sevilában című világkiállítási kalauzban)*

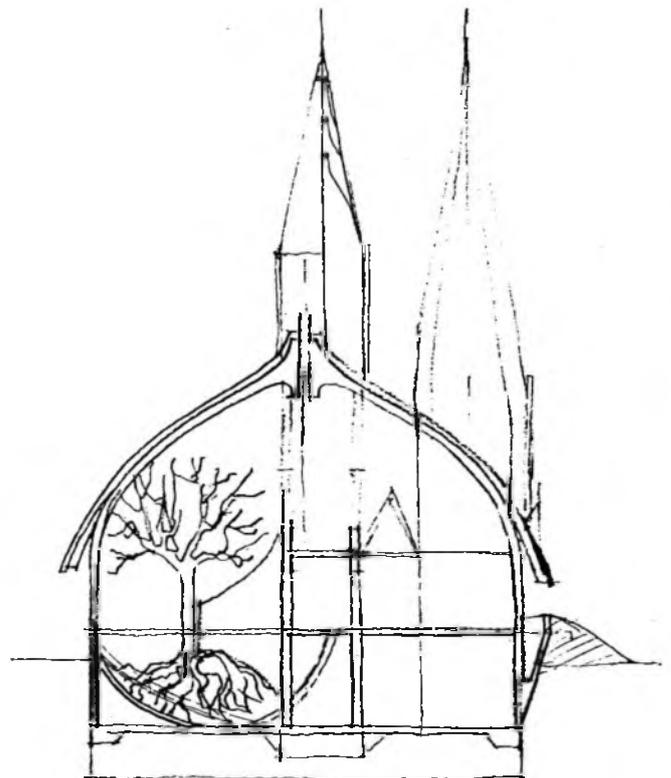
Makovecz Imre vázlatteve 1990 (a 4-7. oldalon) metszet és homlokzat / The sketches of Imre Makovecz 1990 (4th to 7th pages) section and elevation / Die Entwürfe von Imre Makovecz 1990 (4-7. Seiten) Schnitt und Fassade

## THE TREE OF LIFE

### A Conversation with the Architect (Selection)

*Imre Makovecz:* The task of designing the Hungarian Pavilion fell on my shoulders very unexpectedly. I had a few basic principles from which I could start. One was the location of the site itself. The place that had been designated for us was very interesting. To the West of Hungary is the Austrian pavilion, and to the East on the opposite side of a wide road is the site for the Vatican. I found this enormously thought-provoking and interesting. It brought many thoughts to my mind at the time. It occurred to me that geographically our position is almost the same as in the exhibition.

The mentality of people on the other side of the iron curtain also came to my mind: the financial difference that because of bank policy it is worth bringing rubbish to Hungary and it is worth buying cheap goods in Hungary. It is worthwhile to transport polluting wastes here and to have dental work done, get married and have wedding feasts, to buy cheese, Soviet champagne and so on. In recent years, this was the characteristic traffic between Austria and Hungary. And at the same time the poor Hungarians went over to Austria to buy coffee, cars, television sets and deepfreezers. They did this in a world in which the Soviet Union supplied Hungary with energy, and it was impossible to know when the tap would be turned off. But stability, the feeling of security – being able to store meat in the deepfreezers – this is what masses of Hungarians bought on the Mariahilfer-



Strasse (the „Hungarian“ street, as the Viennese call it). It would be hard to imagine a more „Freudian“, terrible relationship: I buy the deepfreezer and take it home, so that I can have the appearance of security in my own apartment. These thoughts arise when we ponder over the fact that the geographical position of Austria and the West repeats itself here at the exhibition.

*István Nemeskürty: So the West looks down on us with compassion, or while looking down on us is compassionate. What about the other side?*

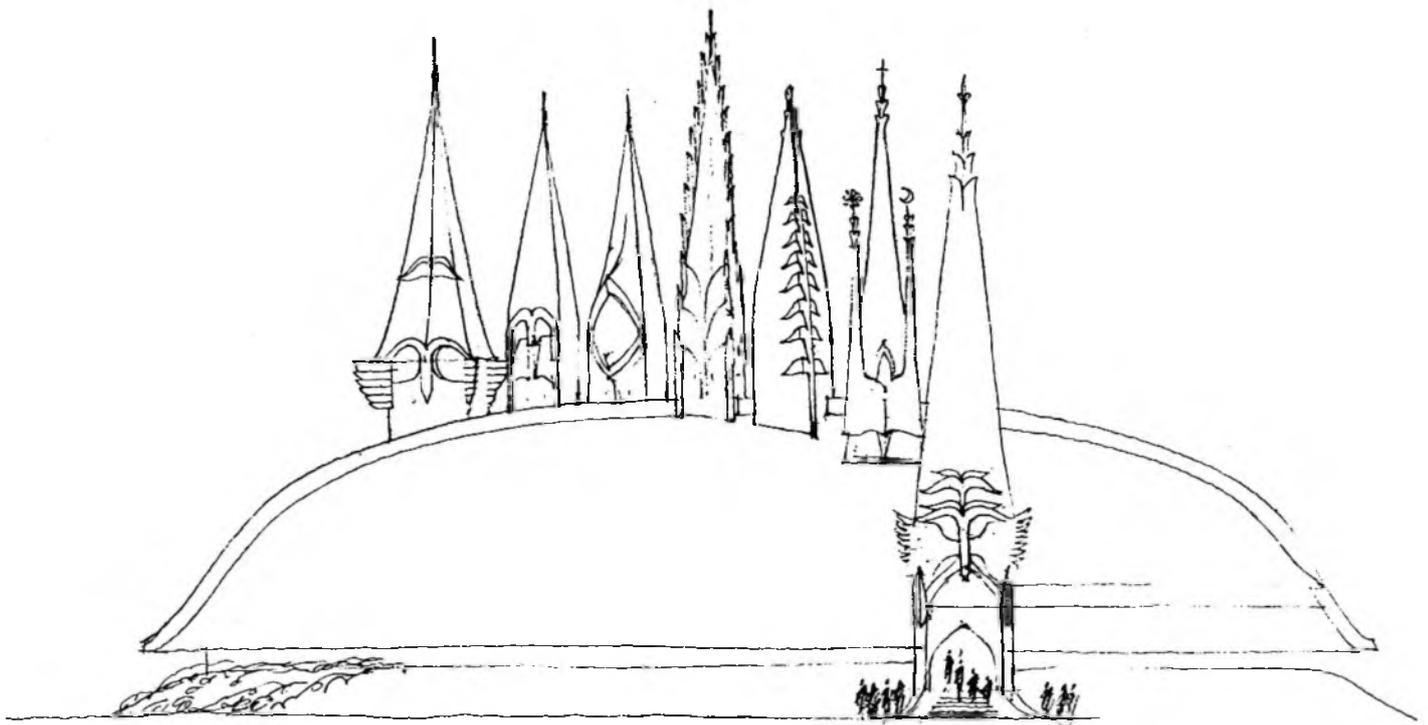
*Imre Makovecz: The other side is the typically Hungarian situation. There is really a self-defensive knot in the Hungarian consciousness. It does not want to think realistically toward the East, it does not accept the Turks, it does not accept the Tatars, it does not accept the Russians, it does not accept anything that comes from the East. This is in spite of the fact that although regarding its fundamental mood it is a typically Eastern and closed world, yet it is oriented toward the West. Around the year 1000 A. D. St. Stephen wanted to safeguard an eastern nation on its ancient land. According to many, the Magyar conquest did not take place in 896 A. D., but started 200 years earlier, and this was already the seventh conquest. In other words, they think that the Carpathian Basin was the legally continuous territory of an always existing Heavenly Empire. I think that this expresses the country's psychological condition, rather than the mood of a warlike people entering by force.*

Ever since I can remember, I have always found the Hungarian people to be tolerant, not warlike. Still, it is continually taught in the schools that

this is a warlike people. Even if I go to Romania, I read the same thing these, if I go to Slovakia, there too I only hear about warlike Hungarians. But I have never yet seen a warlike Hungarian, except for the communists. I always saw instead tolerant people, always looking for loopholes. I find an experienced and ancient nation around me. Well! St. Stephen's time - 1000 years after Christ - is when the Hungarian king received the crown symbolizing his legitimacy from the Pope, recognition from the West. And here in Seville, the Vatican pavilion lies to the East. In the direction to which the Hungarian people should be open. How strange, I hear two dissonant voices when I try to interpret this situation. To our East is the pavilion of the Vatican, from which we received our legitimacy. But it also occurs to me that in reality to our East we find the Csángó Hungarians, whom in a criminal way the Vatican in error failed to provide with priests for centuries, abandoning them to the Orthodox Church. I can say that I was influenced much more strongly by the site and position of the Hungarian pavilion than by any external pre-conception.

*István Nemeskürty: This endowment, this position gave birth to the building, which also speaks of more and of other things.*

*Imre Makovecz: Yes. Perhaps I am able to express with sufficient clarity that I was more interested special consistency I felt between West and East in Seville than anything else. So perhaps it can be understood why I actually cut the Hungarian pavilion diagonally into two, hemispheres, a western and an eastern one, why there is a typically eastern image expressed toward the West, and*



a typically western one to the East. In this duality I wanted to express the reverse of all this too.

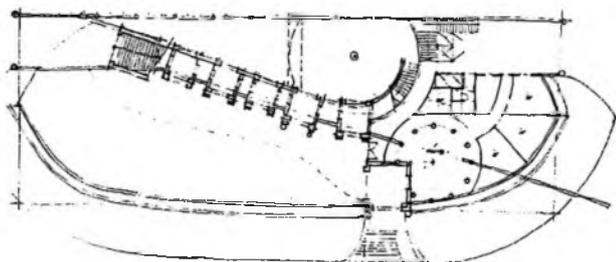
*István Nemeskürty: I would like you to give us a tour of this building.*

*Imre Makovecz: I cut the building in two diagonally and lengthwise with a double wall. It is a corridor with no view, and with seven towers built above it. One route, along which the visitors move, is enclosed in the seven towers. 150 loud-speakers have been placed along this route and the voices of Hungary speak from them: children's crying, mourning, singing, the sound of cars, wind, and so on – all kinds of sound that can be heard in Hungary. Perhaps it is not important for them to be characteristic – the main thing is that together, they give the impression of a living wall. It has to be understood as being somewhat the same as the way the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman handles walls. „History bleeds through the walls.” That is a quotation from János Pilinszky.*

*István Nemeskürty: Perhaps this will cause anxiety in the visitor, a longing to go out into the light. Have you taken this into account?*

*Imre Makovecz: Yes. Perhaps will experience that, the visitor, perhaps he or she will feel something which is essential to be brought closer to the Hungarians. On top of that, the visitor has to go up a staircase, and has to walk the length of the first level to reach another staircase, the point where the Hungarians' western „image”. This is on the western side of the building, where the structure continues underground in an inverted dome separated from the world above by a glass floor. The visitor arrives at this glass floor. At the geometrical centre stands a tree, the roots of which have been washed out from the soil. He or she sees a tree here, in a way it can never be seen in reality. Of course mankind and Hungarian folk art too have passed it down through many thousands of years this in the form of abstract symbols. This is the tree of life, which is found on the shaman's drums. It sometimes has seven branches – like the Jews' menorah – but underneath it has seven branches too. On the shaman's drum there is also a horizontal line across the middle.*

*István Nemeskürty: Let's take a closer look at this tree! Two Dutch authors wrote that in your architecture in recent years the living tree symbolizes human continuity. I quote what you said to them: „Ever since the sixties, I have been obsessed with the idea of washing a tree out of the soils using a high pressure jet of water.” If you have been thinking about this for so long, then it must be*



*something you have experienced very deeply. You are probably right, because in folk tales, Vörösmarty's „Csongor and Tünde”, and the tale of Prince Argyélus, it is with the help of the Hungarian tree of life that the spirit's immortality soars upward and can reach the cloak of the Blessed Virgin. What do you have in your memory of this: an image, a tale? What is it that struck such a deep chord in you?*

*Imre Makovecz: I can name two things. One is that in everyone's life there is a personal experience to which they recall as being the point from which they can call themselves „I”. I think we all have this kind of experience, although they differ very greatly in nature. I have such an experience, too. We were in Nagykapornak gathering hay. We loaded the cart. Of course it was not so easy to load, because the hay keeps slipping. People still thought rationally in those days and wouldn't dream of losing half the load on the way home, so it had to be stacked properly and tied down... When we were ready, then of course my grandfather sat in front, on the driver's seat, and I climbed up top of the hay-cart. I was a small child, I must have been about six. I happily lay on my back and gazed at the sky. I should mention that we were coming back from the Miska well to Kapornak: the road crosses the woods and scrub there, and so the carts have to go slowly. The horses don't trot. I was amusing myself by looking at the sky. Children today cannot amuse themselves in that way, because they are never in such a situation. You can't do that in a car. The point is, the sun was shining through the leaves. The sun was shining through the leaves of the trees, and it is a different kind of light from when the sun shines blindingly in your face. It was afternoon. Naturally it was late afternoon, when the light is different from the light at noon, or in the morning. It is gentler and more thought-provoking. I could say all sorts of things about this light. It was this sparkling, filtered greenish light that I came see myself as „I”.*

*Perhaps this in itself does not say much. But it is connected to the second part of my answer, because for me the tree, as a living thing, has always remained important. Since then, of course, I have learnt a great deal about trees. The most important thing is that a tree grows simultaneously upwards and downwards, toward the light and toward the dark. Darkness belongs at least as much to the essence, as does light. At the same time we always talk only about what is visible: leaves, chlorophyll, the circulation of water in the tree... We never talk about the roots with the same emphasis. We have of course learnt that the roots dissolve salts and the tree uses them to build itself, but no one ever talks about the fact that the tree's connection with darkness is just as weighty, just as significant, as their connection with light. We pray „upwards” to God, too, because God lives somewhere up there, behind the sky. We deal with this, but never with the centre of the earth, darkness, or communication with it. To my mind darkness, with which we must learn to communicate, has always been at*

least as important as light. Perhaps because I have never been capable of lying to myself as much as is customary. And to me, the tree has always meant what it does to the Japanese: I looked at the tree, at the part of it above the ground, but with the eye of a visionary. I looked down into the depths, toward the roots reaching downwards, and at the same time I saw the whole tree. And I said that the tree is in love with the sun above, it offers its blossoms, it sings upwards. As to the song it sings downwards, I have no idea what it is, but I said that it sings in that direction too. And I thought that this strange creature, which grows upwards and downwards at the same time, must be known in its entirety. Well, if people complete their view below with as much strength as above, then they will see a different world!

Beginning with this, the horse is an enchanted human being, who returns your gaze and suggests history to you. You should have the compassion to free him. He suggests that it is not enough for man that Christ redeemed him, but that man's task is to redeem the living world. He must redeem it with the same strength Christ devoted to man, when he redeemed man from his sins. For isn't original sin a horrible mutation? The same kind of mutation, that immobilized trees. Because what if the trees could walk once?! And tree shepherds lived on earth! And as the consequence of some horrible mutation, a cataclysm, there was a terrible wailing which has sounded out for thousands of years – only we no longer have the ears to feel the trees' suffering – because they cannot walk any more. And so they were forced into a vertical communication of singing downward and upward at the same time. In this way they offer us an example of how we can understand the fundamental thoughts of a three thousand year-old culture.

This is connected with the fact that this tree – which exhibits its roots as well as its branches – is in the western half of the Hungarian pavilion. It shows the West this consciousness, this ancient, inelible consciousness of the Hungarian people. It shows that in spite of all destruction, this consciousness is generated again and again. These are the loopholes that we have found for ourselves: that when Hungarians are turned out of one door, they return by another, they know the opposite of everything, know the weak points of the ruler above them. They have always known the cooperation between darkness and light, and that the world is not unambiguous. There is something below and above. There is yes and no. There is right and left. There is man and woman. Why was it that the Turkish devastation and the 150 year of Turkish rule preserved the Hungarian identity? Perhaps we would not exist – as István Nemeskürty taught me – if this Turkish devastation had not taken place in Hungary. Because that is when the Hungarians found themselves in the situation appropriate to them, because they became a gateway between East and West. These are all synonymous concepts. This is why Hungary produces its simultaneous view on below and above just in the western direction. Even if the

country itself is not identical with this, because it lives inside between the two walls, between the „whispers and the screams“. It cannot even be recognized in this way – not behind the image maintained for the West – but it knows this, too. This is the people's astonishing wisdom and its great strength. It is such an astonishing wisdom and strength that if I did not believe in it, I would not be living here. We built a glass wall along a fairly long part of the western facade of the pavilion. We are open to Austria, they can look over if they want to, from the glass houses to us, and we can look over to them. But when the visitors arrive here and the sound comes down under the glass floor, the light gradually dies out in the area of the western image and the piercing lights point out the series of openings, six doors, which are located under the towers. Then the doors open automatically, and people can pass through them to the eastern hemisphere. They can cross the double wall, which they have already experienced before. Well, then! When they cross from the western hemisphere to the eastern one, then there is a film showing Hungary's pure, wild, shining eastern image. The music accompanies the visitors, it crosses with them and merges into what the film has to say. After this powerful impression, they move on and find themselves facing the Vatican pavilion, with its means of taking our measure. It would be good, if all countries could do something like this, so that nations could find one another a little better than they have been able to in the past. Of course I am happy that finally a possibility has opened for us to attempt to express Hungary's inner physiognomy, for us to somehow send a message – even if not an entirely comprehensible one – to others.

*(Published in the Guide to the Hungarian Pavilion at the World Exhibition: Hungary in Seville. Translation: Judith Livingstone)*

Földszint és galériaszint alaprajza / Plan of ground floor and first floor / Grundrisse Erdgeschoss und erster Stock

