

Comment doit-on mesurer l'émotion?

An interview with Vlad Gaivoronschi by Ana Maria Zahariade

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Vlad Gaivoronschi is not only a respected academic personality and a successful Romanian architect whose projects have been awarded many distinctions, but he is one of the few Romanian architects involved in the re-construction of the architectural profession in post-communist Romania. In 1990 he founded one of the first liberal architectural studios in Romania, *Andreescu and Gaivoronschi Associated Architects*,¹ together with his friend and fellow architect, Ioan Andreescu, with whom he had participated in an underground avant-garde group of reflection in the 1980s. Based in Timișoara, the studio occupies a special place within the architectural landscape of present-day Romania. Aside from designing, teaching and writing, Gaivoronschi assumed many responsibilities in the new associative life of the profession, consistently contributing to the elaboration of principles and regulations meant to settle an honest and honorable liberal architectural practice in Romania. In this capacity, he was also active in various bodies and working groups of the international organizations concerned with the architectural practice, such as the International Union of Architects (UIA) and the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE).

Ana Maria Zahariade: *In the past years, the Superior Council of Colleges of Architects of Spain (CSCAE) has been advocating a bill on Architecture and Quality of the Built Environment as a matter of public interest which should be defended by public authorities for bettering the quality of life.² I think that this is a highly interesting initiative and, maybe, a crucial step for our profession, which the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) was eager to salute, especially taking into account the formal and intellectual quality of Spanish architecture.-*

It seems to me that this proposal is somewhat akin to the earlier document of the International Union of Architects (UIA), titled UIA Guideline Concerning the Value of Architecture Enhancing the Quality of Life, in the elaboration of which you were deeply involved. You were even one of the promoters of this project, together with Albert Dubler from France.

Generally, this kind of documents are rather technical, based on various performance indicators and measurable parameters, sometimes indigestible to many architects, and even more unpalatable to architectural theorists. Or, as far as I know, it is for the first time that such a prescriptive document dares to introduce not-quantifiable values, of cultural and aesthetic nature, as defining dimensions of architectural quality, and discuss possible indicators and parameters. It was an unusual approach against the backdrop of quantitative parameters of architectural value; in a way, it was an almost impossible approach, yet necessary, in my opinion, as far as it is not acceptable to avoid this issue when discussing architectural quality. And I know that your endeavor has a history inside the UIA. I kindly ask you to retrace it, because apart than the anecdotal part, it reflects an actual professional need.

Vlad Gaivoronschi: Looking back, the year 2008 was important for my experience not only because I started my activity in the UIA Professional Practice Commission (UIA PPC). The year 2008 was an important one for the redefinition of the value of architecture, building

1 <https://www.andreescu-gaivoronski.com>

2 In the summer of 2020, the Ministry of Transportation, Mobility, and Urban Agenda already launched the procedure to turn the bill into law.

and landscape in relation with the quality of life, and I was lucky to participate at memorable events related to this topic. The great conference “Designing for the future: the market and the quality of life,” organized by the ACE in April in Brussels, did put the topic Quality of Life in a more pertinent perspective than before, considering not three, but four pillars of sustainability, adding to the consecrated ones (social, economic and ecological) a fourth pillar – *culture*. The debate brought together professionals and non-professionals, left and right options, consistent and contradictory ideas. But it was preceded and followed by in-house ACE meetings and panels, where architects from around Europe sought to define objective principles of quality and value. *Comment doit-on mesurer l'émotion?* exclaimed then Albert Dubler, member in the French delegation, and his exclamation brought a new “color” in an assembly of architects convinced that quality might be measured and defined objectively.

In the same year 2008, the UIA Congress took the debate in the streets of the beautiful city of Torino, where speakers like Joseph Rykwert, Massimiliano Fuksas, Kengo Kuma, and Dominique Perrault stressed the need to evaluate the quality of architecture in a more comprehensive, more inclusive way. In making visible this issue from both professional and non-professional perspectives, two conferences stood out: Muhammad Yunus’ presentation of his battles against poverty and for sustaining development in poor countries, and Peter Eisenman’s surprising confession concerning his project in Santiago de Compostela. We all knew his competition entry; it had been largely reported in all media and displayed in the Venice Biennale. Yet, the City of Culture of Galicia that Eisenman presented was finalized in an unexpected way, tightly connected to critical regionalism. A lot of Eisenman’s admirers who attended the conference were noisily disappointed; others, like me, suspected him of playing a promotional game. Yet, the built reality was there; the *genius loci*, the traditional morphologies put into work were stronger than the abstract and intellectual diagrammatic order we were expecting, relativizing them at the same extent as it relativized our beliefs concerning aesthetics and its values.

Finally, I want to underline that 2008 was also the year when the German Sustainable Building Council launched the DGNB certification system. Studying it meant a lot to me, and certainly influenced my options. Comparing it with the parameters considered by LEED or BREEAM, this new document represented an important step, opening a second generation of certification systems. Especially the DGNB *socio-cultural parameters* made the difference, referring to the art within architecture. The first generation of certification systems comprised the concept of *innovation* as the only parameter able to cover artistic – tangible and non-tangible – aspects of architectural value. DGNB brought the novelty of associating *culture* with art and architecture, which was an important achievement in this field of extreme measuring and classification. I also studied other initiatives that evolved in the same period, after the LEED and BREEAM businesses flourished. The English CABE and DQI are to be mentioned as similar reactions in favor of a holistic approach to defining the quality of life in relation with the built environment.

So, my involvement in the UIA PPC started in December 2008. I have to mention that this Commission, together with the Commission for Education and with the one for architectural competitions, are the three main pillars of the UIA. Two years after, I proposed a special panel to work on a document regarding the quality, or the value of architecture. My decision was prompted by my concerns regarding both architectural theory and practice, and it was announced by a critical article I had written under the influence of the DGNB certification system.³ My proposal was received with interest, and I was asked to draft a document to be annexed to the *UIA Accord on Recommended Standards of Professionalism in Architectural Practice*, the programmatic PPC-UIA document supporting the *Chicago Declaration of Interdependence for a Sustainable Future* (18-21 June 1993), with its main goals: “Consideration of Resource and Energy Efficiency; Healthy Buildings and Materials; Ecologically and Socially Sensitive Land Use; and an Aesthetic that Inspires, Affirms, and Enables.”

3 Vlad Gaivoronschi, Ioan Andreescu “Risks and Promises of a European building quality evaluation grid,” in *Recent advances in risk management and mitigation* (Bucharest: WSEAS Press, 2010).

In her speech at the end of her mandate as President of UIA, at the 2011 Congress in Tokyo, Louise Cox referred unexpectedly to the “non-tangibles” forgotten by architects. It was encouraging for me. The next UIA President, Albert Dubler, supported my determination to address such subjects and, finally, we worked on the guide together. The document was refined after numerous presentations – the first, very broad and academic, at the PPC Meeting in Tangers, in 2012.

My first concern was to outline the architectural value as mirrored by crucial terms coming from the architectural culture and, on the other side, by documents coming from outside our profession. Beginning with Vitruvius and continuing with other voices, with John Ruskin, Louis Kahn, Aldo van Eyck, Christian Norberg Schulz, Christopher Alexander, Glenn Murcutt, Wang Shu, Patrick Schumacher or Vicente Guallart, I tried to portray an overarching professional vision on the subject. This draft was followed by a more synthetic version, presented at the PPC Meeting in Durban, in 2013; the complete presentation took place at the UIA Congress in Durban in 2014.

Finally, at the 2015 and 2016 PPC Meetings in Paris, it was decided that this annex to the *Code of Good Practice* would become an aspirational UIA guide. It was voted and adopted at the PPC Meeting in Khartoum at the beginning of 2017 and adopted by The UIA Congress in Seoul, September 2017.

AMZ: *You have just used the term the non-tangible, a noun meaningfully different from the more common intangible, generally used as adjective. It is not largely used in architecture. Would you like to elaborate a little?*

VG: Defining beauty and aesthetics in architecture, looking for value into this field remains a difficult and very complex effort for all of us, architects, theorists, critics and all the others. You know, working in these professional bodies, I realized the contradiction between how we, the architects, understand and communicate our tasks and scopes, and how these are perceived and required by others – clients, stakeholders, other professionals, politicians, the civil society. Certainly, having worked as an architect for almost 35 years, with many clients and according to different scenarios, I had the occasion to experience myself the contradiction. My conviction is that we have to carefully consider these matters, in order to make others aware of their importance.

If we accept architecture as art – certainly an art that is useful and used on a daily basis – we have to accept that certain aspects in the experience of architecture are not easy to define, and are even more difficult to measure. These issues are not addressed, discussed, *touched*, but they do exist, they do matter, even in the daily life. I called them *non-tangibles*; it is sort of metaphor... I do not know if it is the most suitable term, but I think the word is immediately comprehensible, and it was accepted as such by the members of the group. Probably Goethe's parallel between the pleasurable sensation a person has when dancing and when being led blindfolded through a well-built house refers to those subtle, non-tangible values, which might rather be described through poetry than lend themselves to measurement.

AMZ: *In an article about architectural education that I used to discuss with my students, Christian Devillers draws similarities between designing architecture and poetry, as the designer employs inductive and synthetic thinking in order to give coherence to an array of heterogeneous factors which are not previously connected in obvious ways - and this is akin to the “composing” poetry, if I may use un mot maudit.⁴*

VG: And if we add the complex relation between content and expression, between form, space and scenario, between the tangible, pragmatic values (as health, use, economy, etc.) and the non-tangibles (as aesthetics and metaphor), we can understand the complexity of the debate on the topic.

4 Ch. Devillers, “Sur l'enseignement de l'architecture,” *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 282 (1992): 9-13.

AMZ: *I quote from the Guide:* Beside accepted professional views, the guide must take into consideration perspectives on the matter coming from outside the professional realm. It should, simply put, try to define those values which make the difference between bad and good architecture. *Will you elaborate on these ideas, which I consider to be crucial?*

VG: An important phase was to browse through a whole range of quality certification systems coming from outside our profession, from the first generation “green building approach” (LEED, BREEAM, CASBEE, etc.), to the second generation “sustainable building approach” like the DGNB. I must emphasize that the UIA Guide is not meant to be a competitor for these systems, but to become an aspirational guideline able to prompt a third generation of certification, centered on “architecture quality approach.” What I consider important is that, starting with 2016, a new certification system, The WELL Building Standard, offers a new perspective for improving human health and well-being through the built environment; body, mind and soul are closer to nontangible values than other parameters, and we can see that the effort to bring a more holistic approach comes not only from within our profession, but also from outside of it.

Identifying and corroborating different sources (internal or external to our profession) which raise the issue of the value/importance of architecture, we formulated *negative quality indicators*, indicators that define bad architecture. These include non-functional but objectively measurable indicators, such as: *too expensive, dangerous, badly built and badly aging*, etc., to which aesthetic indicators are added – *the banal and the unidentifiable, the extravagant and the “too noisy,” the meaningless, the “out of scale,” the fake, and the ugly*. What is mentioned in the Guide and is important to understand and to accept, is that the non-quality criteria of banality, extravagance, exclusivity, meaningless, fake or ugly, which are commonly refused by architects, are not necessarily refused by the public; and it is impossible to quantify these indicators by comparison with the “tangibles,” which are relatively easier to measure and understand.

AMZ: *How was this Guide received by the participants in UIA meetings?*

VG: My work ended at the beginning of 2017, with the approval of the document at the UIA PPC meeting in Khartoum. In all those years, together with Albert Dubler (former UIA president 2011-2014), we had the full support from the PPC Director Rick Lincicome, from the USA. He was favorable to this effort, but Zhuang Weimin, the PPC Co-director, was more skeptical, asking why Vitruvius's *utilitas, firmitas* and *venustas* are not enough. For some colleagues from Japan or Switzerland, the goal of this document was unclear; Regina Gonthier, leading the UIA Competitions Commission, also expressed her opposition; but the majority was in favor of finalizing it, considering it useful for future architecture regulations in their countries. It is possible that these oppositions might have been generated by the feeling that an architect shouldn't have to speak about such things, that one has to keep a shadow of mystery over the non-tangibles. To make things more complicated, what is commonly acknowledged as a non-tangible value in Switzerland or Japan may be disregarded or considered insignificant in other cultures. It is difficult to decide upon a direction, to be general but also to allow a variety of interpretations. Also, extreme necessities are always pressing, and UIA, as an important voice in partnership with UNESCO, must address important issues like poverty, hunger, health and wellbeing, education, gender equity, clean energy, climate change actions, decent work, industry innovation, infrastructure, inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, pandemic crisis and healthy environment, etc. “An Aesthetic that Inspires, Affirms and Enables” had been a UIA slogan from 1993 until before the global awareness of these problems. Consequently, words like *sustainable* or *resilient* are infinitely more present in the UIA documents than any other word defining the value, or the quality, of architecture.

AMZ: *As I have known you for many years, I am positive that the intention behind this Guide has a double history. You have already summarized the “institutional” one, but I would like you to tell us more of the other – the “personal history.”*

VG: Beginning with my first years of studying architecture, I was deeply concerned with what might be the scope and the aspiration of my being an architect. I have been an assiduous traveler, trying to understand perennial, timeless values. The first books I read as a sophomore, “Saper vedere l’architettura”⁵ by Bruno Zevi and “Meaning in Western Architecture” by Christian Norberg Schultz, opened my eyes. Although in my travels I was trying to immortalize seconds of atmospheres with photos and sketches, all the while I kept an interest in long term values.

In the eighties, the ideas we exchanged in our underground group⁶ gave birth to a programmatic text, with an explicit title *The Speaking Silence of Memory*.⁷ One year later, in December 1982, at the International Symposium organized by the School in Bucharest, citing Philip Johnson, we were convinced about the autonomy of the architectural language, by its capacity to transcend politics and other key factors, and able to embody fundamental values.⁸ In the following decades, I developed my thoughts on architecture by writing, teaching, and practicing the profession, and also by drawing from my passion for music, literature, and humanities in general. I tried to find objective non-tangible values through an anthropological and phenomenological approach, searching for continuities, for lively perennial patterns which transcend styles and bring value and meaning. I realized that there is a lot of relativity, because meanings and use are subject to change. Tangible and very rational values of ancient patterns acquire new meanings, comfort and function transform, as well. The non-tangible is also variable; what was once considered beautiful, seldom passes the test of time; and what today is considered surprise, magic and poetry in architecture might have had different meanings centuries ago, sometimes negative meanings such as of excessive power or terrible fear.

For sure, there are spaces and buildings, entire environments, which are timeless, such as the sacred ones, or certain institutions, etc. Louis Kahn was concerned with such themes as having more potential to be meaningful and timeless. The recent Donald Trump preoccupation for Institutional Architecture in U.S.A., or the Erdogan Regime decision concerning Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, with all the reactions that followed them, prove the symbolic and metaphoric power of certain aesthetics or monuments. We are living a special time, with extreme contradictions and overlapping between Left Extremism and Right Conservatism. Neo-Palladian architecture, once the ideal beauty, might be associated with slavery and oppression, but its intrinsic value will not disappear. This is also true for other architectures, disproved and even mutilated. I remember my 2014 experience in Warsaw, when I saw the realist-socialist Palace of Culture for the second time after thirty-seven years. In 1977, travelling as an architecture student, I had perceived it very negatively; it represented the worst. In 2014, as the building was surrounded by “iconic” commercial architectures by Liebeskind and others, it became for me a noble piece of architecture in stone. Travelling and experiencing places and landscapes, monuments and common architecture, I continue to look for non-tangibles – aesthetic values impregnating the environments at all levels – to find the poetry of the ordinary, of the “ad-hoc” architecture, etc., from shape and Gestalt typologies to movement, to topology and all morphologies thus derived.

AMZ: *You are a successful practitioner (together with your friend and colleague Ioan Andreescu), and your architecture has always been the result of an unaffected intellectual deliberation, never ostentatious, yet always substantiating your projects. Did your practical experience influence the approach and subsequent ideas of this Guide?*

5 Translated to English as Bruno Zevi, *Architecture as Space. How to Look at Architecture*, trans. Milton Gendel (New York: Horizon Press, 1957).

6 This friendly group of reflection on architecture was comprised by Ioan Andreescu, Florin Colpaci, Vlad Gaivoronschi and Florin Ionașiu, but it was not the only one in Timișoara, where the cultural phenomenon Sigma, unique in its way, had intensely stirred the general apathy/inertia and generated fresh intellectual searches, on the borderline of the legality of that period.

7 The text [orig. *Tăcerea grăitoare a memoriei*] was presented in the “Man – Town – Nature” Symposium in Iași, December 1981, an event looked at with certain political suspicion.

8 The text entitled “From Ordinary to Stained Glass” [orig. “De la geam către vitraliu”].

VG: Trying again and again to put myself in the client's shoes, I learned a lot about the relativity of our beliefs as architects. I could see my projects raising and ageing, and that is a real experience, to understand time-passing, to see my own faults, to understand the role of the built project related to the destiny of end-users. On several occasions, I tried to convince my fellow architects that we should start awarding prizes for seven-year-old buildings and above. I learned that not expensive building doesn't mean bad architecture, and that expensive building might be a bitter trap.

To work on complex urban regeneration projects was a really eloquent experience, starting with the urban scale strategy, passing through all phases, coordinating all engineers, working with other architects and interior designers, in dialogue with the developer and his ideas and interests, working together and depending on the project manager, and finishing with the execution project, details, list of quantities, specifications, technical assistance, as built, maintenance and use manuals, etc. Moreover, as some of these projects were to be certified BREEAM Excellent, we had to work with the BREEAM Manual and to respect its rules step by step. Projects at this scale oblige you to have a holistic approach, you can't remain at the surface of things. If you want to offer end-users rich experiences, emotion, surprise and magic, you always must stay alert to numerous traps ahead.

AMZ: *You are also involved in the architectural education; you teach architectural design and also theory of architecture in the School of architecture in Timișoara.⁹ You wrote books and articles approaching architecture from a perspective that I dare classify as phenomenological in many respects, although this label is a little misleading. They are cultivated and sometimes poetical texts testifying to your personal quests into the creative process of design; they are marked by your genuine étonnement philosophique about what architecture is, your apprehension to miss the more appropriate path, even your emotions, although always tempered by your rationality. I love very much this quote from John Dewey, Où il y a étonnement, il y a désir d'expérience. What do you think? Does this tell something about you?*

VG: I have always gone back to the old Greek word *aesthetikon* that meant *perceptible* by the senses (coming from *aisthesthai*, to perceive). Although for the Ancients "the beautiful" meant a geometrical analogy with the harmonic Cosmos, *beauty* was however perceived with all senses – this "subjective" perception was also considered. All the more reason for staying close to this original meaning today, when talking about the aesthetics of architecture. I refer to Juhani Pallasmaa – a well-known theorist and a practicing architect as well – who has spent decades developing the topic of beauty and value in architecture, starting with his book "Architecture in Miniature" in 1991, and continuing with famous titles such as "The eyes of the skin," "The thinking Hand" or "The Embodied Image – Imagination and Imagery in Architecture." His work reminds and re-emphasizes the engagement of all senses in evaluating beauty and value; but he also points out two dramatic victims of the contemporary world, when memory is killed by speed, and imagination by the excess of image and "noisy language." I will also refer to the last book written by Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Architecture: Presence, Language and Place," in which he developed a synthetic view concerning the levels of understanding architecture as the "Art of Place" and its beauty; the typological, topological and morphological levels, a multilayered canopy influencing memory, orientation and identification, are all generating a complex understanding of beauty as a specific value for architecture. Close to this phenomenological and anthropological approaches, we find Christopher Alexander with his "pattern language," showing that the value and sometimes the beauty of architecture might come from an organic ensemble of problem & solution, life together with its envelope of form and space, which are generating what he defines in metaphoric words "The Quality without a Name," "The Architecture as a Gate." For me, what these three authors have in common is the assertion that you cannot extract just the photogenic image and consider it valuable or not for architecture. They help us to go beyond the "interesting" or the "catchy" – two

9 The Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning of the Politehnica University Timișoara (UPT).

highly superficial words employed too often in our debate about the aesthetics and value of architecture. In the last decade, Patrick Schumacher also refers to distinct layers of architecture, as organizational, phenomenological, and semiological, with a powerful accent on the latter in order to define aesthetics. Charles Jencks refers to value and values in architecture by recalling the iconic, visual and highly metaphorical quality (iconicism, adhocism, patterns of ornaments and the cosmic narrative). Others, like Markus Breitschmid in dialogue with Valerio Olgiati, or Kersten Geers, talk about nonreferential architecture or architecture without content, which refer to architecture beyond its social, functional role, namely to space metaphysics and aesthetics.

I strongly believe that the Art of Architecture goes beyond technology, green building, economy, safety, health, comfort, parametric certitudes or photogenic image; its complex aesthetic aspiration has to bring pleasure, joy and magic, vision and style; for me, it has to age obtaining the noble sound of an old musical instrument – you know that music means very much to me. This is, certainly, a subjective perspective. But it does not mean pure aesthetic autonomy, because I consider important to frame the problem of architectural aesthetics from an “exterior” point of view as well – a perspective probably differing from our beliefs, but that we have to discuss. After this, we’ll see what remains, what we have in common, what we can share as architects, theorists, art and architecture critics, stake holders, developers, civil society representatives, politicians...

The present pandemic has all the chances to change everything in our existence, including how we understand what beauty is – in our lives, in our homes and our cities and landscapes. A near perspective of death and suffering changes one’s perspective; the Spanish Fever after the First World War also generated a change of paradigm – the *machine à habiter*, first of all sanitary and full of light, and the new CIAM urban principles based on segregation of functions in sunny space, and healthy dwelling. Probably safe and healthy “antiCovid buildings” will be also nice because of their utility...

Yet, a question becomes very important: what is the relationship between sustainable, durable, resilient, and aesthetics? There is an important belief that ecologic value also supposes an aesthetic value, that carbon footprint zero buildings are nice because form and atmosphere follow function: the function to save energy, to integrate nature and biologic laws, finally to *be* nature. And as we will remain humans and mortals, architecture and other arts will have to do with spiritual aspirations.

AMZ: *How was it possible for you to find a balance “between theory and certification” (I quote here the title of the second chapter of the Guide), or between your personal beliefs and the condition of generality that such guide must have?*

VG: I tried to be honest and not forget anything. I considered it important to structure and precisely define almost all value parameters in a diagram with seven pillars. I also tried to be objective and to obtain a comprehensive image. The seven pillars of parameters were split in three categories, from objective to subjective ones: (A) Parameters described by objective criteria of analysis, assessment based on measurement, calculation;¹⁰ (B) Parameters described by objective criteria of analysis, assessment based mainly on estimation;¹¹ (C) Parameters described by subjective criteria of assessment.¹²

The last category includes what we generally name aesthetic parameters. These may refer to proportion and spatial structure, ease of movement, inner atmosphere and character, sense of place and site integration, intelligence and surprise, the regional design value; clarity of

10 1. Safety, Health, Technical Value, 2. Ecology and Gnomonic, 3. Economy.

11 4. Functionality, Comfort, Maintenance, 5. Process quality, 6. Social and Urban Values, Cityness, Generosity for Human Activity.

12 7. Cultural and Artistic Value - an Aesthetic that Inspires, Affirms and Enables.

organization, from site planning to building planning, order, consideration of time, ability to age / timelessness, scale, detailing and materials and many others.

As a synthesis of the whole guide, a possible common denominator defining a high value of architecture means the necessity to refer in a holistic way to: (1) efficient use of resources – sustainability (economy, rational, green, eco-balancing and life cycle cost, healthy); (2) generosity for human activity, *cityness* (accessibility, functionality, socially beneficial, ergonomic, resilience, affordable); (3) sense of place/human scale (art of place, context integration); (4) consideration for time / ability to age (well made, technical quality, enduring); (5) intelligence and surprise (iconic value, landmark, creative); (6) sensuous space and material/emotion/beauty (emotionally resonant, beautiful); the last four are certainly of aesthetic nature.

AMZ: *Once the cultural and aesthetic dimension is seen as essential for people's wellbeing – as is sustainability understood in its most complete sense – it acquires a strong moral sense. I presume that this ethical side is all the more important for you? I am particularly thinking of the work you have done at the beginning of the 2000s – in those heroic times, when the Order of Architects in Romania was born – on the elaboration of the Deontological Guide and of the Missions of Architects, two documents of utmost importance for the profession.*

VG: You are right, I worked for that guide which covered the missions, fees, contracting, etc., and it was an important effort, a collective effort, together with my colleagues Alexandru Panaitescu, Cătălina Bocan and our dear departed Doina Butică. I have always promoted complete missions for our fellows, Romanian architects, and considered that to assume full responsibility is a serious ethical matter. As I argued in a conference at OAR Bucharest in 2018, for us, architects, the main goal should be to sustain the quality of life with our projects, to promote a high value of the built environment. And these concerns are covered by all parameters, from the objective ones that cover fundamental needs, to the subjective and aspirational ones.

AMZ: *For this issue of sITA, we have also interviewed Jeremy Till who, in his book Architecture Depends, is very critical towards the “codes” we transmit in architecture schools; among them, “the aesthetic codes” that are meant to support the idea of autonomy of architecture, along with certain specific “rituals” (deriving from this alleged autonomy). He argues that perpetuating the idea of autonomy may lead to the marginalization and potential extinction of architecture as a discipline. I agree with him, but only partially. I keep asking myself about the risks, or dangers, of narrowing the understanding of this inescapable aesthetic dimension of architecture. Maybe we have to redefine it in terms of good and bad architecture, as you put it in the Guide. But what makes architecture good or bad? Is it possible to ignore what I cautiously call the artistic side of the creation of forms, which aims at producing an aesthetic experience?*

How do you cope with this artistic side of architecture in your pedagogy of architecture? Don't we have a sort of ethic responsibility towards what we generally call the aesthetic of our environment as part of people's wellbeing?

VG: Our responsibility is not only to educate students, but also our clients, stake holders, etc., to be able to listen and understand the opinions of others. Sometimes, life is right, and our architecture might be wrong, and we have to face this fact in all honesty. For me, aesthetics and ethics are integrated. I cite from Ian Ritchie's book “Being: an Architect,” that to be creative as an architect means to be authentic, to embrace moral values – “how we walk on earth,” to understand nature and tradition, and to develop a critical vision of precedents. I would add that one has to fight to discover this ...

My pedagogy? I am a story teller, not very severe with my students. There are already almost ten years that, together with my younger fellow Rudolf Graef, I introduced a new course for the fifth year, “Professional Practice.” I learned a lot by practicing, I also learned much in the UIA Commission or the OAR, and my experience might be useful to them.

I remember now that the year 2008 was also important because of Ole Boumann's lecture in our architecture school in Timisoara. Asked by the students what is sustainable architecture about, he admitted that it is not only green or else, but is the architecture that "you love," and that travelling is the main way to discover and learn about it. I was very happy and proud to have organized this event. It was a period when our school became very technical, and my course about the poetics of space for the third year seemed very isolated. Developed on the path of a phenomenological approach, the course aimed at establishing relations between architectural theory and the humanities, visual arts, literature, and music.

At the same time, as I was engaged in large projects, I coordinated the fifth-year studio for almost fifteen years. This was the period when I developed the UIA Guide, and I think that my holistic, all-inclusive approach may be helpful for the students.

For three years now, I have been coordinating the third-year architecture studio, and especially the second semester is dedicated to this artistic side. One of the projects we do is for a Contemporary Art Center on different sites in the city (future European Cultural Capital); and my course, now titled "Project Theory – Architecture Phenomenology," develops topics related to philosophical interrogations, architecture as applied phenomenology, alterity, metaphorical power of the art of architecture, etc. I invite them to research, to think critically by themselves — even when we discuss authors who were decisive for my formation (as was Christopher Alexander and his *patterns*), we try to understand them critically, to see what is valuable or not today, what can be learned after decades.... I try to make them reason, not to take for granted slogans and dogmas (for instance, to "form always follows function" I add that "sometimes form follows fiction", or when they "sanctify" the heritage, I try to make them understand that heritage is an asset to live with and there is no tradition without innovation); generally not to think of architecture and life in dichotomies, only in black and white, a way that they seem eager to use. To come back to the aesthetics of architecture, I tell them that this is to be found at all levels, from detail, form, etc. to atmosphere, and that it is about time and existential space. In a way, the main subject of the course is the seventh Value Indicator from the Guide – Cultural and artistic Value - an Aesthetic that Inspires, Affirms and Enables – with all topics mentioned before. Starting with the last year, I finish my third-year course with a conference about creative thinking, and the fifth year with a lecture on our scope, the *Value of Architecture for enhancing the Quality of life*. I think it is useful for students to reflect on these matters, not to accept uncritically what I tell them.

The parameters that can define the quality of a building, of an environment, vary between two great categories depending on the mainly subjective character of the assessment or the capacity to measure objectively, "scientifically," its performance. Sustainable architecture is not only the architecture that qualifies through measurable parameters such as carbon emission, energy save, etc. – as the majority of us understand this term. Sustainability is at the same time the joy that architecture or the whole environment generates. The quality of life is connected to a parameter called "emotion", and architecture can be loved; it can produce emotional reactions at a conscious or subconscious level. And I think that we, professionals and users together, must be aware of this.

In my opinion, this was the reason behind the elaboration of the UIA Guide we are talking about.