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Carol Cortobius Architecture

Maria BOSTENARU DAN¹

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to document current research on the works of the architect Carol Cortobius in Bucharest, Romania. The interest for this architect was raised due to the fact that in current documentation of Art Deco Bucharest it turned out that the Church of Saint Helena is an early example of such architecture, just as turn of the century Hungary, as he built for the Hungarian community. Outgoing from the research hypothesis that the investor and the architectural style might be related, the author built on former research of turn of the century Hungary, related to that one in Vienna. The investigation started with literature of the Catholic church in Bucharest, since the archives are not public, including a list of the works of Carol Cortobius. With help of historic maps the places of the works and their existence/disappearance were identified. Many of them do not exist today anymore because of demolitions either to build new streets or those of the Ceaușescu period (Uranus ex. the opereta theatre, a former pharmacy). Images of these were looked for in groups dedicated to be disappeared Uranus neighbourhood. Some of the common buildings have an interesting history, such as the first chocolate factory, which supports the thesis of the Viennaise Secession style, also present in Budapest. Another interesting early Art deco building sustaining the thesis of the early appearance of the style in Bucharest is the pelican house. There are common details between this and the restored church of Bărăția.

Keywords: *Secession, Art Deco, Hungarian community, Bucharest, sacral architecture.*

1. Introduction

Carol Cortobius was an architect trained in Germany, with an initial practice at Otto Wagner in Vienna, building also for the Hungarian community in Bucharest, especially churches (Figure 1), and also a baptist seminar. Research on turn-of-the century architecture in Hungary and in Vienna was previously done by the author (Bostenaru, 2011, 2013).

2. Methodology

The paper aims to address in an empirical way (field work) the research question if the influence from Austro-Hungary (Otto Wagner, see Houze, 2006 for principles) determined the early appearance of Art Deco through the works in

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Bucharest. Related examples to Saint Elena church (Figure 1, Table 1), an early example of Art Deco, are Otto Wagner: Postsparkasse, Vienna and József Vágo: Arkaden Basar, Budapest, two buildings of Secession. Outgoing point were the books by Dănuț Doboș (2012, 2015a, 2015b) on the catholic churches of the architect. These contain historic images and a list of the works. Maps of the city from the time were consulted from the UAUIM DITCP database to identify the old house numbers in order to see if and where the buildings are today.

3. Results

Many buildings were in the Uranus area, demolished under the totalitarian regime of Ceausescu, to make place to the new civic centre, including key ones such as the Stoenescu pharmacy and the Opereta house of which photographs exist in the related civic group. Other buildings were demolished with city development. See table 1 for details.

Fig. 1. Religious buildings by Carol Cortobius: from left to write: Saint Elena church, Saint Antony of Padova church, Bărăția church, Baptist seminary. Photos by the author.

Table 1. Carol Cortobius works (on the basis of the list of works in Doboș, 2012b, pp. 27-28 classified by the author after fieldwork and map consultation)

Visited	Demolished	Not visited
1912 - I. Doiciu building, Franklin Street; Franklin 7	1912 - Dr. N. Stoenescu property, 51 Izvor Street, Bucharest; Uranus	1910-1911 - House and annexes Eng. Zahariade, 31bis Șoseaua Kiseleff;
1914-1915 - Sfânta Elena Roman-Catholic church, 102 Cuza Vodă Street	1912 - Iosif Fischer house, Palas Street; Uranus	1913 - Annexes on Elena Nicolau property, at 81 Calea Călărași, at the corner of Romulus Street; House existing nr 77
1918 - Albert Farchy house, General Budișteanu Street; existing casa cu pauni Budișteanu 18-20	1912 - Eng. C. Saidel house on Popa Rusu Street, at the corner of Italiană Street; Demolished with the tram line	1915 - Eduard Hohn house, 2-4 Lirei Street; Thermoisolated Lirei 26
1926 - Baptist Seminary, 15 (now 29) Berzei Street;	1913 - Eng. Hirsch house on the former Neatârănei Blvd	1921 - Houses for Spandonide family, Bulevardul Cuza Blvd.

	(now Mărășești Blvd.); Uranus	and Șoseaua Ștefan cel Mare;
1932-1936 - Sf. Anton de Padova chapel, Colentina, 113-115 Magnoliei Street; Modified ? - C. Zamfirescu building, 36-38 Elisabeta Blvd.; existing Elisabeta 54	1914 - E. Behles house on Artei Street, at the corner of Rahovei; Uranus	1922 - Workshops, garages, warehouses (for Anastasiu brothers), 47 Șoseaua Bonaparte; today Iancu de Hunedoara, in the N
1928 - "Sfânta Maria" church, Bărăția restoration modified	1924 - A. Dattelbaum house, 18 Popa Tatu Street	1924 - A. Păunescu house, 41 Independenței Street; Parcelarea independenței. Azi Bd. Eroii Sanitari 41
	1926 - D. Arțăreanu house, 40 Vasile Lascăr Street	1929-1930 - His own house in Sinaia, Șoimului Street, made of prefabricated materials;
	1926 - Fritz Rubinstei house, 62 Berthelot Street	
	1929 - "Regina Maria" Operetta Theatre; Uranus	
	Attorney Ighel-Deleanu house, 2 Antim Street.

Fig. 2. Buildings supposed to be of Carol Cortobius: from left to right: Albert Farchy house with pelicans, Zamfirescu building, Doiciu building. Photos by the author.

4. Discussion

Some buildings were not surely identified and further work will be done using archives, when the sanitary situation will permit. Such are the Albert Farchy pelican house, which has similar details to the Bărăția church at the columns, and features Art Deco pelicans, the Zamfirescu building the first chocolate factory (Zamfirescu, 2018). All these feature early Art Deco features, which support the research hypothesis on the influence of Austro-Hungarian Secession which was converted to Art Deco instead of Art Nouveau before WWI and which was present in the work of Carol Cortobius thanks to training.

5. Conclusions

Houze (2006) highlighted some principles in the work of Otto Wagner which led to a certain architectural language (Art Deco instead of Art Nouveau) ahead of its time. This spread not only to countries of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy but, due to investment, also to Bucharest in Romania, as the work of the architect Carol Cortobius shows.

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