

**THESES OF DOCTORAL (PhD) DISSERTATION**

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**THE ROLE OF LANDSCAPE AND URBAN OPEN  
SPACES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
PAINTERS' TOWN, BAIA MARE**

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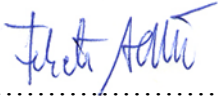
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## BACKGROUND, PLANNED OBJECTIVES

The historical Maramureș is one of the most well-known ethnographical regions of Romania. However, the city of Baia Mare that is proclaimed to be the capital of the region, and pigeonholed as a mining town - due to its Artist Colony -, has gained multiple layers of meaning in time, that turn the city into the scene of the epoch-making and unique movement of Hungarian fine arts. For the landscape architectural development of the settlement, the study of the open spaces of the town from a fine art perspective is also required. We encounter a special case of local character in Baia Mare, which is unique on the Romanian level.

The starting point of my research was the finding that landscape of Baia Mare is probably the most often painted landscape of Romania.<sup>1</sup>The landscape architectural relation between painting and urban development was initially supported by two sources: The discovery of the name of Béla Rerrich on the list of painters, assembled by István Réti, who was working in Baia Mare in 1898, and the open space design plan of Baia Mare's town square, entitled "Kisváros főtere" (The town square of the small

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<sup>1</sup>Compared with the work of other Romanian private schools (Cluj-Napoca, Bucharest, Târgu-Mureș, Dej, Oradea, Arad, Timișoara, Alba Iulia), as well as the number and nature of works carried out here, that focus on painting a limited landscape unit and/or urban landscape.

town) in the oeuvre of Imre Ormos, and illustrated by the watercolor made by István Balogh T. about Baia Mare's town square.<sup>2</sup>

During the research of the open spaces of Baia Mare, I have based my findings on the urban open space typology set out in the doctoral dissertation<sup>3</sup> by Péter István Balogh. I have studied public parks, urban streets and squares, and thus, I do not discuss sites that are important from an art historical perspective, and belong to the private sphere, such as the garden of the Artistic Colony, the former house of the Ferenczy family and its garden, the house of Sándor Ziffer and its so often painted garden. Furthermore, my research topic does not concern the presentation of the garden of the city bath.

After discovering the sites that are the object of my research, I wanted to answer two questions: what could have led to the disappearance of the emblematic nature of the investigated sites, and how could it be possible to evoke the former inspirational character of painters' town.

During the research, I was led by a triple objective: Writing the development history of the open spaces in Baia Mare, and proving the historicity of the particularly studied sites, defining the pronounced image motifs of the

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<sup>2</sup> Another watercolor depicting the town square of Baia Mare, made by István Balogh T., can also be found in the 2012 article by Mócsényi Mihály, "Ormos Imre gondjai". <http://tajepiteszek.hu/ormos-imre-gondjai-mocsenyi-esszek-6>

<sup>3</sup> A szabadterek szerepváltozása a nagy európai városmegújításokban, 2004

painters' town, and preparing a strategic proposal that can be applied for the development of green spaces with local values.

As the examination of the open spaces in Baia Mare can only be complete by presenting the oeuvre of the Artist Colony, I have also carried out exploring, analyzing, categorizing hundreds of paintings from Baia Mare relevant for the topic, and later I have identified subsequently the painted sites.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The dissertation is based on three pillars:

I. The development history of the open spaces in Baia Mare, that is based on qualitative research. In this chapter, in parallel with the development history of the Transylvanian towns, I emphasize the urban planning theories applied in Baia Mare. The research covers the period from the beginning of the 19th century to the present days. Based on the historical events, I discuss the examined time in four periods, as follows: the beginning of the 19th century - 1918, 1918 - 1945, 1945 - the end of the 20th century, and the period from the 2000s to the present. In order to explore and describe the development history of urban open places in a complex manner, I tried to present the knowledge from several primary sources.

If we only examine the history of change, the influencing factors (historical-political) can be generalized in the development history of Transylvanian towns. Nevertheless, due to the different characters of our towns, by their unique problem-solving skills, and by responding with local self-knowledge to impulses, the results do not show coherence.

II. I consider the oeuvre of the Artist Colony characteristic of Baia Mare. The sites that have seemingly no function in the first chapter, gain their purpose and value due to the oeuvre of the painters. The case of Baia Mare is special because the tradition of the Artist Colony is reflected in the professional decisions about urban planning on several occasions. The paintings examined and analyzed in my work were made in the period between 1896 (the founding of the colony) and 1960. As the artistic imagery of the physical environment, the paintings carry a high level of subjectivity. Nevertheless, the analysis of paintings depicting urban open spaces, has greatly enriched the information base of urban landscape.

During the research of art works, I placed emphasis on the qualitative elements that were supplemented with quantitative data. I have studied nearly 1,500 landscape-related paintings.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>During my work, I have mainly used catalogues published by auction houses, monographs of painters, studies, exhibitions (Budapest, Szentendre, Cluj-Napoca, Baia Mare), and the websites of auction

I have selected the paintings based on the potential of identification of the site and the criteria compatible with my research topic, so 787 paintings were used to examine the open spaces significant for both urban design and fine art.

III. Proving the historicity of the emblematic sites of Baia Mare, emphasizing the significance of the local character in the exploration and future development of the diversity of historical green spaces. Due to the lack of legal framework, the historicity is based on the currently applicable, but not applied Romanian laws and conventions.

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houses, such as Virág Judit Galéria, Kieselbach Galéria, MissionArt Galéria and Villás Galéria.



## RESULTS

During the research of the development history of urban open spaces, I have presented the gardens and green spaces of historical value, proposed for public use of Baia Mare. Disclosing the emblematic sites, and presenting the scale of change over time have helped in defining the existing historical values, and determining the strategic guidelines for green space development.

### **1. Establishing the oldest, still preserved garden architecture in Baia Mare.**

Based on my research in the history of gardens, I found that similar to other public parks in the Monarchy, the Liget ('grove') in Baia Mare was established by the second half of the 19th century, reaching its peak at the end of the century, becoming an integral part of urban structure and the most important scene of the local social life. Its compositional principles and functional units followed the typical design concepts of 19th century urban public parks. Its historical value is supported by some of the still functioning units and accentuated compositional elements: the bandstand, the line of hornbeams, the pine rondo and a pine group. Its historical nature is stressed by the site of the former artists' colony operating on the Jókai-hill. It is indispensable to declare the Széchenyi grove a protected site (as a historical

garden), the preservation of its values, and the realization of its development in a professional way, in the spirit of historicity.

## **2. Bringing to light the dialogue between Baia Mare urban planning and the artists of the Artist Colony.**

My research results prove that thanks to the persistent work of the painters creating in Baia Mare, building in the Liget (1904) and on the Klastromrét meadow (1934) was banned.

In addition, with the help of the local press, the artists highlighted the effects of the seemingly minor interventions that had a negative impact on the townscape, on the popular painting motifs or the valuable observation points. One example for this is Tibor Boromisza's bluntly written article in which he is concerned about the fences built on the Veresvív part of the town, the disharmony of the new buildings regarding their form and use of materials, etc., and in which he stresses the greatness in enforcing the natural approach. Moreover, the exemplary cooperation between the artists can be observed in the fact that they designed defining, important objects of urban spatial structure such as the fence of the Central (Cinterem) Elementary School at the beginning of the 1940s.

The seemingly spontaneously developed spaces which, from the point of view of urban development have no

particular use or function but are significant from the aspect of urban structure (e.g., Klastromrét, Libamező, Malomárók) will only gain their additional meanings in the context of the history of the Artist Colony. As emblematic sites, painted for hundreds of times, they have been incorporated in the system of values of the settlement, in the local memory. As a result, their natural character was preserved.

### **3. Outlining the highly important and characteristic period (1942-1944) from the point of view of Baia Mare open air architecture.**

I have found that Virgil Bierbauer and Imre Ormos, as significant representatives of Hungarian architecture and landscaping have contributed with several works typical of the period in developing the townscape that defined the image of the town's spaces for a long period of time.

The design activity carried out by Bierbauer and Ormos must have been influenced not only by the past of the painters' town, but also by their accentuated art historical role in Hungarian painting. It is well known that the garden artist Béla Rerrich, who started his career as a painter, was Simon Hollósy's student in Baia Mare in 1898. As a continuation of his discipline-creating work, Ormos established the Department of Garden Planning in Budapest, and the disciple-master relationship could deepen along their shared artistic attachment to Baia Mare.

#### **4. I have determined the defining role of Imre Ormos's garden planning activity in the development of open spaces in Baia Mare.**

Imre Ormos's design activity is especially significant from the point of view of the history of gardens in Baia Mare, as building on the tradition of geometric gardens, taking into consideration functional characteristics and plant communities, he developed the design of five important public spaces in Baia Mare in 1942-1943 (II. Rákóczi Ferenc square, Szendy square, Világh Károly square, Malom square, Horthy István square).

During my research, I identified the documentation of the open space architecture of these five sites in Baia Mare at the Baia Mare branch of the National Archives of Romania. Based on the available data, work started on only one site based on Ormos's plans, the development of the Szendy square, this square however was completely restructured during the great socialist urban planning.

#### **5. I have identified the characteristics of public plant use in the 1940s in Baia Mare and I have compiled the list of the most characteristic taxa in the settlement in the given period of time.**

Plans were always accompanied by planting schedules and detailed plant lists, thus we get a clear picture of the ornamental plants used in public spaces in the 1940s. Comparing the plant material planned by Ormos with the

woody taxa typically used in Baia Mare today, it can be found the the current use of ornamental plants is extremely poor in the case of the Main Square compared to the one planned in 1942 (the number of woody taxa in Imre Ormos's plans is 28, while currently it is only 4).

It is clear from the plans conceived by Ormos that among the used/planned plant variety in the public spaces of Baia Mare in the 1940s, a particular importance was given to the *Chaenomeles japonica*, *Picea pungens* 'Kosteri', *Pyracantha coccinea* 'Lalandii', *Cornus alba*, *Cornus sanguinea*, *Corylus avellana* 'Atropurpurea', *Deutzia crenata*, *Diervilla amabilis*, *Forsythia intermedia*, *Hibiscus syriacus*, *Ligustrum ovalifolium*, *Philadelphus grandiflorus*, *Philadelphus x lemoinei*, *Prunus padus*, *Symphoricarpos x chenaultii*, *Viburnum opulus* 'Sterile', but the number of herbs was significant as well.

## **6. Determining the values of the cityscape and emblematic sites.**

By analyzing the paintings of the Artist Colony, I have highlighted the values of the cityscape, I have determined the most valuable points and emblematic sites of the town from a visual, aesthetic point of view.

In Baia Mare, every painter was free to develop his/her own painting style, but the works created over the decades - irrespective of their style - were built on the love of nature set out at the beginning of the foundation of the

school. In this way, the paintings of the examined period - although they represent a wide range of stylistic orientations - did not deviate from the originally formulated “creed of Baia Mare”, so they are suitable for landscape aesthetic research, and contributed significantly to evoking the painted atmospheres, and providing information on emblematic sites and popular spatial situations (Széchenyi liget, Klastromrét, Malomárok, Libamező), about which, during my research, I found little or no archive documents.

## **7. Determining the reason leading to the disappearance of the emblematic sites.**

I have found that the most significant painted sites developed during the history of the Artist Colony, and directly related to the cityscape and the framing landscape, have disappeared with the powerful industrialization of the town.

While the comparison of the city maps of 1900 and 1940 shows harmonious urban growth, the map of the 1980s, due to powerful industrialization and disproportionate territorial development in relation to Baia Mare, shows a significant change in the urban silhouette and constructing on the popular open spaces.

The emblematic sites from the perspective of both art and cityscape, can partly be found physically even today, but they have changed significantly in their character. The

restoration of the former cityscape is impossible, but this is not a goal, as the development of open spaces takes place in order to meet the changed functions, the increased number of city dwellers and the current social expectations. The museum-related developments are inappropriate, but from a cultural history point of view it is important to create artistic memorials at the previously famous sites, to summon the former atmosphere and milieu.

## **8. Determining the landscape elements applied by the painters of the Artist Colony, characteristic of the town.**

*The characteristic landscape elements of Baia Mare - painters' town, are characteristic elements of the urban landscape that are of natural or artificial origin, and their physical characteristics and atmosphere can be found in most of the paintings.*

Based on the examination of the 787 paintings (following the criteria on the ability of identifying the site, the topic of public space, and depicting the town or its immediate environment), I have found that the more than half (54%) of themes of the paintings from the examined period depict one of the sites from the right side of the Zazar river. After further examining the sites of the right side, I found that the popularity of the Liget (14%) and the Klastromrét (12%) was similar when it came to thematic

preferences of the artists. This fact increases the historical value of the two sites.

In addition to the criterion-based categorization of the existing picturesque themes<sup>5</sup> and motifs, I have set up a classification of external spaces according to the contents of the paintings, and of the spatial constellations according to the visual elements, which can be either natural or artificial points (eye-catchers), linear elements (dynamics, division) and surfaces or bodies (image stability). The classification highlights the popular landscape elements and landscape architectural atmospheres, emphasizes the importance of the various points of reference and points of view existing in the past, but also has an inspirational effect on forming external spaces.

## **9. Determining the role of the fine art past in the development strategy of the town.**

Evoking the fine art past of Baia Mare gives an opportunity to strengthen the multicultural, international and innovative image of the town, reconnecting it to the international circulation.

The interventions evoking the memory of the painters' town should be part of the development strategy of the respective city administration. Such developments - that

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<sup>5</sup> MURÁDIN, J. et al. (2014): Genius loci. Festői témák és motívumok Nagybányán. Baia Mare: Electro Sistem



are efficient and successful both socially and from the point of view of the cityscape - can be realized through the joint work of art historians, landscape architects, town organizers and local artists working in the spirit of the former Baia Mare.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The open spaces and green spaces of historical value in Baia Mare - given their central location, dimensions, block-like layout forms, their stable, valuable, woody stock, and the cultural history values represented by them - are the basic elements of the urban green infrastructure.

Due to their parameters, these elements of green space systems can be classified into the groups of town-level public parks and urban spaces. Although they have a significant value from the perspectives of architecture, fine arts, art history and/or garden history, none of them are registered as monuments.

Taking into account the common characteristics of the examined historical values, there is a need for a revitalization strategy that should include the following general program points:

The application of the value protection methodology developed in the spirit of monument protection laws and

charters in order to achieve the unity in assessment, restoration, maintenance and development; the creation of case studies during analysis, the credibility, detail and professional grounding of which will further the complete protection of the analyzed historical garden and open space ensembles.

The application of an assessment and value-based design approach: in addition to historical exploration, the definition of new functions and needs of usage (with community involvement, sociological methods, etc.).

Developing an independent green space work plan in the medium and long-term urban settlement development strategy, which pays adequate attention to the revitalization of historical gardens and open spaces as well as to the renovation program of an important part of urban green space.

The role and approach of the Romanian state and local decision-makers in the field of heritage protection should be reconsidered, decision-making levels should be separated and clearly defined. (For example the system of regular field supervisors and a system of independent expert supervision needs to be introduced).

Due to their historical character, their local atmosphere components and their ideological values related to the Artist Colony of Baia Mare, the examined green spaces and open spaces are defining elements of the cityscape, and they also have a great importance of settlement ecology.

## PUBLICATIONS CONNECTED TO THE TOPIC

### Journal articles

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Scientific coordinator at the “Școala de Vară la Castel” interdisciplinary Summer School organized by the “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest, the ARCHÉ- and the Teleki-Castle Association in Gornești, Romania, 19-29 July, 2016.