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Minimum Documentation Fiche 2003

composed by national/regional working party of:
Architects' Chamber of Romania (OAR)

0.1 Picture of building/site



depicted item: IAR Administrative Complex and Casino, Braşov
source: photograph Aurelian Stroe
date: 2012

1. Identity of building/group of buildings/urban scheme/landscape/garden

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1.1 current name of building | “România de Mâine” Foundation, “Spiru Haret” University, Braşov branch. |
| 1.2 variant or former name | IAR Administrative Complex and Casino |
| 1.3 number & name of street | no. 7, Turnului st. |
| 1.4 town | Braşov |

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1.5 province/state
1.6 zip code
1.7 country
1.8 national grid reference
1.9 classification/typology

Braşov
500152
Romania

EDC – “Spiru Haret” University, Braşov branch, previously ADM – administrative offices and meeting spaces for the Romanian Aeronautical Industry (IAR).

1.10 protection status & date

Under consideration to be listed as monument, 2012.

2 History of building

2.1 original brief/purpose

The Administrative Complex and the Casino were built to solve both the problem of office space and that of the representation of the factory at the level of the city. The Casino, meaning a gathering hall and not the gambling facility, provides the needed spaces for meetings of the employees on different occasions. The buildings comprise of meeting rooms, offices, the casino hall, the clerks club, the workers club, a library, halls, the water tank, a few apartments and annexes.

2.2 dates: commission/completion

1937/1938

2.3 architectural and other designers

Octav Doicescu; sculptor Constantin Baraschi

2.4 others associated with building “Tractorul” (The Tractor) Factory

2.5 significant alterations with dates

During the communist regime, the production of the IAR factory was changed from airplanes to tractors. The name changed to “Tractorul”. In the attempt to hide the history of the company under monarchic rule, a lot of the information regarding the buildings constructed before 1944 was hidden. Nowadays, the absence of this information makes research very difficult.

2.6 current use

The function on the ensemble changed, the “România de Mâine” Foundation and the “Spiru Haret” University function here now.

2.7 current condition

Good general condition of the ensemble. The surrounding area is in deplorable state, because some of the former production halls (at least one with architectural value) are kept unoccupied, in order to be demolished.

3 Description

3.1 general description

The composition of the representation ensemble is moderately monumental, by means of articulating several simple and clean volumes, and not by excessive decoration.

The vertical dominant of the ensemble is the water tank tower of the industrial platform.

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Through a clever gesture, the architect Octav Doicescu placed the management offices in the tower and thus transferred the value of the function on a building that needed the height for functional reasons.

The buildings form a *cour d'honneur* (entrance court) from which one could access the office wing, the casino or the production halls, through a gangway. The casino represented a series of gathering halls, for meetings, performances, celebrations, destined for the engineers and workers of the IAR Factory. The idea to provide meeting spaces for the employees is a rather western one, but with some tradition in Braşov at that time. It follows the same principle of exclusivist clubs. Actually, Sextil Puşcariu identifies the name "casino" with the Austrian German "*Kasino*", which means a club and not a gambling facility.

3.2 construction

The ensemble is an example of modernist style, very skillfully executed using face brick on large surfaces. The balanced composition is made up of simple, articulated volumes. The color of the brick emphasizes the volumes, which are defined by slender, light colored cornices. The structure is simple, with reinforced concrete pillars and beams.

3.3 context

The few remaining production halls of the former factory that are still standing are in danger of being demolished. At least one of them, the former "cell factory" is of great architectural value. The real estate pressure keeps these halls in deplorable state, in order to have them demolished as soon as possible. Thus, behind the administrative complex, the image is saddening. As the production halls were never listed as heritage, there is the possibility of constructing new buildings too close to the ensemble, which would change the balance of the composition.

4 Evaluation

4.1 technical

The face brick finishing is remarkable and is in good shape even now. The reinforced concrete pillars and beams structure assured the flexibility of the interior, thus the changes to university spaces were not destructive.

4.2 social

The ensemble is symbolic for two stages of development in the Braşov society. On one

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hand, the decision to base the Romanian Aeronautic Industry here in 1925 meant the development of the industrial city of Braşov. It also meant the apparition of a number of highly educated Romanian specialists in a town with large number of German and Hungarian minorities and this was initiated as a measure to balance the ethnic composition of the area.

On the other hand, after the war, here was the tractor factory, which employed over 20000 people in 1990. Thus, the ensemble is representative for the industrial modernization brought by the monarchy and for the massive industrialization of the communist period.

The modern architecture of the administrative buildings, of the industrial halls and of the houses for employees, together with the high number of engineers who moved here from the whole country to work for the IAR, brought modernity to Braşov.

4.3 cultural & aesthetic

The modern architecture of the ensemble is representative for the high technology required by airplane production. The new industry is thus connected to modern architecture. Yet, the reserved monumentality of the ensemble ensured that during the communist period the buildings were still a reason for local pride, even though after the war socialist realism became the official architectural style. Unfortunately, though the buildings were kept in good conditions, the history behind them was wiped out. In this project, Octav Doicescu shows his skillful handling of modernism, which he previously advocated, together with Marcel Iancu and Horia Creangă in "Towards an Architecture of Bucharest".

4.4 historical

In Octav Doicescu's corpus of designs, this project represents a moment of synthesis, as the author uses language elements he previously designed or would revisit in subsequent projects, that in this particular design form a balanced expression. For example, the fact that the façade of the casino is a reinterpretation of the monarchy pavilion in the "Luna Bucureştilor" exhibition designed by Doicescu in 1936 is significant. The idea to place bas-relief on an opaque plane is present in the façade of the casino, with a sculpture by Constantin Baraschi. The tower of the water tank is a more abstract

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version of the tower Doicescu would design for the Romanian House at the New York World's Fair in 1939. The tower he designed there is different that the one that was built. A delicate arch detail on top of one o the glazed verticals stands as witness to the neo-Romanian inspiration of the architect. Also, Doicescu designed a similar façade for the production hall for the Banloc tire factory in Florești (1937-1938).

4.5 general assessment

On local level, the ensemble is unique, both in size and importance, but, at the same time, is part of the phenomenon of modernizing architecture in Brașov through industrial buildings. In the context of Octav Doicescu's oeuvre, the ensemble is valuable through its balanced composition of elements that define the author's monumental perspective on industrial architecture.

Because it was completed just on the brink of war, the ensemble represents a synchronization moment of Romanian architecture to the international modernism.

5 Documentation

5.1 principal references

- Directia Judeteană Brașov a Arhivelor Nationale – Fondul Industria Aeronautică Română, IAR Brașov/ The Brașov Regional Department of the National Archives – The Romanian Aeronautical Industry Fund.
- Zamfir, A.M., Hilohi, G. – *Brașov. Un secol de arhitectură 1885-1984*, OAR, Brașov, 2009.
- Palade, M. – in Stroe, M., Taloș, O. – *Orașul memorabil Brașov/ Brașov – Memorable City*, C2 Design, Brașov, 2011.
- octavdoicescu.blogspot.ro – online blog about the life and works of Octav Doicescu, administered by his son, Andrei Doicescu.

5.2 visual material attached

1. architectural drawings of the casino buiding, from the IAR Fund in the Regional Department of the National Archives.
2. sketches of the architect - octavdoicescu.blogspot.ro
3. recent overview photographs, author Aurelian Stroe.

5.3 rapporteur/date

Miruna Stroe, 2012.

6 Fiche report examination by ISC/R

name of examining ISC member:

date of examination:

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approval:
working party/ref. n°:
comments:

NAI ref. n°:

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