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↑ The building's facade playfully combines and reinterprets gables of the rustic houses in its vicinity.

Low-tech day-care centre, Zsámbék

Despite limited financial means, FÖLDES & Co. Architects delivered an advanced day-care centre fashioned on cloistral and industrial architecture.

HUNGARY — TEXT: EMIEL LAMERS; PHOTOGRAPHY: TIBOR ZSITVA, MÁTÉ TÓTH

In various places in Europe, new architecturally interesting crèches have been appearing in recent years. While in the 20th century attention was particularly given to safety and functionality in this building type, clients are currently showing an increased interest in the realization of distinctive architecture. In Hungary, a nursery was produced this spring in which the architects have tried to formulate a pleasant working and living environment through historically rooted architecture.

The building is located in the commuter town Zsámbék, a place with over 5000 inhabitants about 30 kilometres west of Budapest. The town is known locally for the well-preserved remains of a monastery from the 13th century, built in late Romanesque-Gothic transition style. The new building by architect László Földes stands next to a kindergarten completed last year, designed by Attila Turi (one of the founders of the architecture bureau Triskell). Turi was for years the right hand of Imre Makovecz, the most famous contemporary architect from Hungary, who passed away last year, and a schoolmate

of Földes. Characteristic of the kindergarten by Turi is a central courtyard with greenery. The sculptural brick facade and the use of much wood in the interior of the kindergarten clearly show the influence of Makovecz's organic tendencies. This contrasts with the more restrained design of Földes' new day-care centre.

The key principle in the design of the nursery was making a low-tech building. For this reason, Földes deliberately minimized the application of pricey construction engineering, partly because of limited financial resources – the construction budget, including building engineering, was less than 600 euros per square metre, leaving no money for such things as expensive heat pumps – but also because of an obvious priority, namely, the design of a building with as low as possible energy usage. Thus arose the idea of a floor plan in the form of a cloister.

The colonnade around a green, private courtyard provides shade when the sun is high and is ideal for young children. Carefree, they can play outside even when it rains. Because of its indoor-outdoor situation, the space is

also a pleasant place where parents can say goodbye in the morning.

The main entrance of the day-care centre is located on the south-western oriented Diófa street. Here the facade of the building is a playful interpretation of combined gables from the free-standing, rustic houses in the street. Simultaneously, this somewhat industrial-looking facade is inspired by another unique building in Zsámbék, the new building of the Ziegler biscuit factory from 2002, a small-scale structure made of brick and designed by Gábor Turányi of T2a (see Interview, A10 #21). The white, wavy roofline of the nursery, on the other hand, is an entirely individual added architectural element. According to Földes, the playful, undulating roof is a typically modern idea, in contrast to the historically anchored 'monastery' floor plan. The combination of both ideas, according to him, makes this a typical building from the 21st century. According to the original design, the facade of the building was to be executed entirely in brick. After several rounds of budget cuts, ceramic tiles consisting of different colours were chosen in the end.

From the entrance, on the left are a kitchen and several washrooms. To the right of the entrance is a first aid room, office, locker and shower rooms for staff, and a staff kitchen. The four group rooms, each about 40 m², are all accessible from the circulation hallway. Because of the increased roof area over these spaces, the rooms are nicely sized and each has a different shape. Between the hall and the group rooms are support functions such as changing rooms, toilets (also for the disabled) and toy rooms.

All in all, Földes succeeded in realizing a day-care in Hungary with minimal financial resources that is not inferior to similar projects in other European countries. It is widely known that an architect in Hungary is generally not commissioned to oversee the quality of building during the crucial stages of construction, as a result of which, following the tender, the contractor often uses cheaper materials than prescribed without the architect being able to exercise any control over the situation. Yet Földes managed to realize a pleasant, modern building; although without a construction management assignment, he worked closely with the contractor during the construction phase, which has certainly benefited the building's quality. The project now serves as an example to other day-care centres in Hungary and beyond. ←

DAY-CARE CENTRE ZSÁMBÉK, 2010–2012

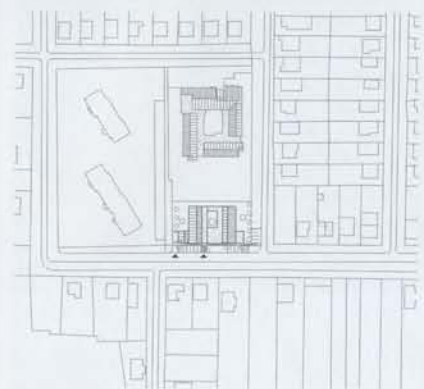
Architect: FÖLDES & Co. Architects
(László Földes and Csaba Balogh)
Client: Local Government of Zsámbék
Address: Diófa utca, Zsámbék
Info: www.foldesarchitects.hu



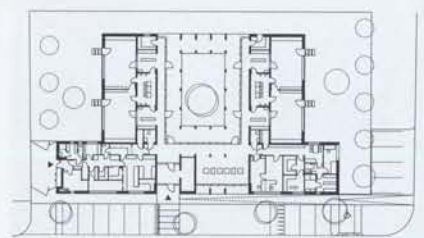
↑↓ Interiors open directly onto the green inner courtyard.



↑↓ The faux-brick exterior tiles become a recurrent theme within as well.



↑ Site plan



↑ Cloistral-inspired floor plan



↑ North elevation



↑↓ Sections

