

Restoring the spirit of the place in the old interwar buildings, refunctionalized in the communist and post-communist period

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents an elaborate study on the refunctionalization and reintroduction of the old interwar buildings in the Banat area into the public space, preserving the spirit of the place and the old cultural, architectural and the interior design values promoted through them. At the same time, it presents a proposal of interior arrangement on the palace from Căpâlnaş. It which highlights the emblematic activities for which the palace was noted, namely the collection of butterflies and insects of Count Teleki, along with a library area and their passion for music. The main scope of the paper is to bring forward new methods of intervention on the interior spaces that highlight the existing architectural elements or bring back to life those destroyed during the communist or post-communist period.

Keywords: Mocioni-Teleki Palace, interwar, refunctionalization, communism, genius loci, architecture, restoration.

I. INTRODUCTION

The study aims to reintegrate the old interwar buildings in the public space through different cultural activities, the reason why it becomes a touristic area.

I.1. Organization of tourism in Romania

„Tourism is a sector of activity with a complex profile, full of services and activities with multiple implications in all branches of national life and, in order to evolve unitary, coherent and efficient, it needs an appropriate institutional framework.” [1] The first attempts to organize the tourist activity in our country date back to the 19th century. A number of associations, organizations or societies have emerged from private initiatives. They carry out a tourist activity on natural areas, seeking to attract as many people as possible. The tourism associations and organizations in Romania carried out their activity both before the First World War and during the period between the two wars.

“The strategy in tourism will consider the following directions of action:

- taking the organizational model from countries with experience in tourism.
- consolidating the experiences and traditions of the Romanian tourism (mountain, coastal, youth tourism, cultural circuits, rural tourism etc.) by connecting them to European and global trends and practices;
- developing and promoting tourism products with added value (eco tourism, health, conferences and congresses, cultural, etc.);
- the introduction of quality standards in the tourist activity, which become the main instrument of state control in the field of tourism;
- promoting and capitalizing on the competitive advantage of some Romanian products and services (medical, agricultural, IT, creative industries, etc.)” [1], cultural and architectural tourism (Monasteries of Moldova, Maramureş, Bran Castle, Peles Castle, etc.), in this category, can be included the case presented in this article.

I.2 Case study from Europe

There are numerous examples throughout the world, from the same category with the chosen architectural program that presents a housing

type unit villa and the old mansions that have resorted to a function conversion. Nowadays there are many mansions and noble residences that have been returned to the rightful owners and refunctionalized over time. Most of the abandoned buildings were noble residences that belonged to wealthy, having large properties and many land areas. Thereby, the study presents a special attention both to the architectural specificity of the analyzed noble buildings, their history, and the genealogy of aristocratic families, their origin, the aesthetics of the dendrological parks and the architectural details found inside the castles and mansions.

An example of a mansion that has used a function conversion is Villa Maser in the city of Veneto, Italy (Fig. 1). It was built around 1550 by the architect Andrea Palladio in order to host the agricultural estate of the noble Venetian brothers Daniele and Marcantonio Barbaro. After their death, the villa comes into the possession of other families, following in 1850 to be acquired by SanteGiacomelli, who began to renovate the property. Following that, in 1934, Count Giuseppe Volpi, the founder of the Venice Film Festival, bought the villa for his daughter. The building has undergone many changes over time, both architecturally and functionally.

Thereby, the new functions were difficult to adapt because it was made to have only one role, namely residence. Nowadays the villa is inhabited by the descendants of the family, while also having a tourist area that presents both an impressive collection of carriages and a rich collection of frescoes. The space also hosts numerous temporary exhibitions from the biennial of art and architecture.

The interiors give a great importance both to the exhibition spaces, which is why the pieces of furniture are present in the second plane, in a minimalist form but adapted to the period, as well as the architectural elements that are highlighted through the chromatic range.

Another example of a residential villa that has undergone transformations over time from a functional point of view is Villa Cornaro, located in Veneto, Italy (Fig. 2).

This villa was designed by the Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio between 1553

and 1554. In 1969 the villa was purchased by Richard Rush at an Italian government dedicated to the preservation of national monuments in Italy in the city of Veneto. He, together with his wife, Iulia, restored the villa using a functional conversion over the rooms, over a period of 20 years, which is why they furnished it with antiques and made it known to the public, assigning it as a tourist point.

In 1996 the villa was preserved as part of the world heritage "Vicenza City and Palladian Villas of Veneto" [2]. Currently, it does not have any function.



Fig. 1. Villa Maser, Veneto, Italy 2018 [2]



Fig. 2. Villa Cornaro, Veneto, Italy 2018 [3]

II. THE REFUNCTIONALIZATION OF THE OLD MANSIONS FROM THE COMMUNIST AND POST-COMMUNIST PERIOD IN BANAT

Numerous interwar buildings in the Banat area have been abandoned, left in decay, although they have both historical and architectural value, many of them being included in the list of historical monuments. Some of them resorted to a conversion of the function, but unfortunately, the chosen functions did not capitalize on the initial cultural wealth and often the architecture

and interior design of the buildings have undergone irreversible changes. Although the Banat area presents many buildings with impressive stories and important historical values, these often end up being abandoned and left to decay. Within the project "Forgotten Monuments in Banat, 118 noble residences were identified, of which about 60 have stood the test of time. Only half of them have retained their architectural value, the others undergoing major transformations being in a state of degradation that makes them irrecoverable.

Among the mansions that still stand out we have the one from Folea locality (Fig. 3). Having a private property, it appears on the map of the 31 mansions and castles in Timiș County, prepared by the Association for the Promotion and Development of Tourism, with the support of the Cultural Association of Ariergarda" [4].

The mansion has been in its present form since 1905, being built on the site of an old residence, destroyed in a fire. "The owner was the noble Georg Beniczky, who gave the construction the name of his wife, Antonia, a beautiful and rich heir from a wealthy family" [4]. The architect of the manor was Laszlo Szekely, known as the creator of several emblematic buildings of Timișoara such as: Neptun Spas, Decebal Bridge, Saint Mary statue, Water Plant and the Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture.



Fig. 3. Folea Mansion, 2010 [5]

"After nationalization, the manor came to be placed in a shade where it gradually deteriorated over time. It was returned to the family after 1989, and is currently owned by a private company." [6].

Another example of a mansion that has an impressive value and was abandoned is the Kloboski Mansion (Fig. 4). It is located in the village of Gurasada, in the county of Hunedoara

and dates back to the 18th century. The building belonged to the Klobosisky noble family, but after their death, the mansion came into the possession of Benedect Lajor. During the war, a large part of the noble families settled in Hungary. Thereby the manor was transformed by the Communists into the IAS, following as later into an agricultural research center. Currently, it does not have any function, but it has major degradation problems.



Fig. 4. Klobosiski Mansion, 2010 [7]

Also, the Wekerle-Petala Mansion is a historical monument building that is currently left in decay (Fig. 5). It was bought in 1826 by Janics István, and later sold, in 1838, to the Zombori family, who will divide it to the three heirs: Beniczky Miklós, Nyéki Antal and Onossy Mátyás. The construction was built in 1840 by Nyeky Antal, in rural baroque style, being remade at the end of the 19th century in neoclassical style. After the Great Union of 1918, the manor became the property of General Vintilă Petala, who lived in the manor until 1951. In the 1990s, the manor was returned to the great-granddaughter of the general Marie-Rose Mociornița, who sold it to Erina's family. Nowadays this is the property of SC Quintino Agriculture.



Fig. 5. Wekerle-Petala Mansion, 2010 [6]

The next example that used a conversion over time is Manaszly Mansion in Hodoni, which cur-

rently has a function open to the public (Fig. 6). Being a building with an impressive history, the new owners decided to restore the building, which is why they tried to restore the atmosphere of the mansion from another time, by preserving the architectural elements, the few pieces of furniture found and the lighting fixtures from that period. At the same time, the modality of intervention on the building is a modern one, focusing on the original elements of that period. Thereby, the modern interventions succeed in highlighting both the elements and the decorations.



Fig. 6. Manaszly Mansion, 2012 [8]

Like other historical buildings, the Manaszly area of Hodonihides has an impressive story. This is a representative ensemble for the rural landscape and the history of Banat. It was built in the first half of the 19th century; the ensemble includes a small neoclassical mansion, administrative units and a park. The building is representative for the small mansions of Banat, the neoclassical style being adopted and propagated in the era and region of the small and medium nobility. "In 2004, when it was returned, the ensemble was in an advanced state of degradation. The buildings and the park had been abandoned in the post-1989 period and left in decay" [9]. The new owners decided to restore the mansion and, with minimal intervention, the ensemble was transformed into an event center, becoming an example of good practices regarding the valorization of the Banat noble assemblies. It is treated both indoors and outdoors with clean surfaces that let the materials speak for themselves, thereby managing to tell their story by their unique form. Also, the few remaining pieces of furniture are harnessed, which is why they are highlighted alongside the luminaires that are still found inside.

III. WAYS AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

The paper illustrates a documentary study regarding the old palaces and abandoned mansions in the Banat area. It presents methods of refunctioning and reintegration of buildings in the public space through different techniques and ways. Moreover, there is presented both a larger study on the Mocioni-Teleki palace and the Mocioni family, from their origins to the present, as well as the way of its reconfiguration by changing the current function and reconfiguring the interior spaces. Over time, the palace has undergone many changes both at the functional level and at the architectural level, which is why new methods of spatial organization have been implemented that correspond to the new functions of the palace. Thereby, the research is based on restoring the spirit of the place of the palace through a tourist area having a villa type housing unit that presents on the ground floor different activities and cultural events, using the emblematic elements for which the palace was noted, namely the collection of exotic butterflies and insects, next to the valuable library of Count Teleki and also of the family's passion for music, especially for piano. This study presents some of the documentation made on the Mocioni family and the Căpâlnaş palace. The study starts from the origins of the family, of the residences held by them in the Banat area, until now.

III.1. Historic context

The Căpâlnaş estate came into the possession of the Mocioni family around 1853, when it was purchased by Ioan Mocioni de Foen from the Zichy family. The palace will be built between 1876-1879, under the leadership of his daughter Ecaterina Mocioni and her husband, Mihai Mocioni. The plans of the palace were made in 1867 by the Viennese architect Otto Wagner, and the execution of the works was carried out by the architect Kallina Mór. The property was later inherited by the sons of Mihai and Ecaterina Mocioni, Eugen and Alexandru Mocioni. Later it would be given to Eugen Mocioni, his wife, Therezia Horvath and their five children, while his brother, Alexander, will reside in the palace in Birchiş. Being passionate about classical music, Eugen and Alexandru Mocioni orga-

nized numerous musical events in the residence of Căpâlnaş. Theodor Botiş, the author of the Monograph of the Mocioni family, recalls in his book, one of the events in which he took part. This describes the atmosphere played by the family members at the musical concerts: " In the castle of Căpâlnaş, where Eugen Mocioni's family lived, the daily and almost unique entertainment was music. In the days of reception, real concerts of classical music were performed, using the two living room pianos. But the concerts received an artistic brilliance mainly due to the owner of the house, Therezia Mocioni, whose beautifully colored and well cultivated voice captivates the guests" [6].

Count Teleki died in 1947 and was buried in the palace park, next to his daughter. With the advent of the communist regime, the whole area was nationalized, which is why it is forbidden for family members to visit the area. Both the furniture pieces and the palace library and the butterfly and insect collection of the count were destroyed. "Thus, the palace was emptied and transformed into a preventive TB for children, and afterwards it was transformed into a psychiatric hospital, retaining its function to present" [10].

III.2 Residences held by the Mocioni family

The Mocioni family owned a total of five properties in the Banat area, the second in size after the Palace from Căpâlnaş, is the one from Bulci village, Bata commune, Arad County located only a few kilometers from Căpâlnaş village. The building was built in the first half of the 19th century, and at present, it does not have a function. Also in the Banat area, the family owned the castle in Birchiş, which belonged to Alexandru Mocioni. It was located in the commune of Birchiş in Arad County, near the village of Căpâlnaş in a place called "Dâmbul Bughii" [11], found on the edge of the forest in Birchiş. Around 1944 the castle was burned down. Another residence that belonged to the family is the Mansion from Foeni, this being one of the oldest buildings in Banat. The building is located in Foeni commune in Timiș County. It was built in 1750 and belonged to Andrei Mocioni de Foen, the great-grandfather of the Aroma-

nian priest Constantin. Currently, the mansion is used as a restaurant and is dedicated to the public, which is why they created a space dedicated to the memory of the Mocioni family. The last residence that belonged to the family is the Castle of Vlaicovăț, which is located in the Serbian Banat, a few kilometers from the city of Vârșeț. It was built in 1859, and at present the complex belongs to the state, having no function.

III.3. Description of the Mocioni – Teleki palace

The silhouette of the palace has a square plan, with a basement, two floors and a hidden frame. The volume of the building is thought in a manner characteristic of the time, being compact and imposing, but not without grace due to its classical architectural elements. From a compositional point of view, each facade is treated symmetrically, which is why it keeps the same rhythm on the whole surface, while also being divided into three distinct horizontal registers. At the bottom of the building the register of the pedestal can be read, well contoured and highlighted, it gives rise to a large terrace on the main facade. The intermediate level is marked by the hollows of windows that grow vertically, being oversized and imposing, they accentuate the height of the edifice. Following that, at the upper level, the hollows of the windows are reduced on a smaller scale, marking the main access area. At the same time, we notice a register composed of the articulation of the cornice with the level of the string of balusters that mask the construction coating. The main facade is intended for the public, which is why it is richer ornamented, being more imposing due to the four huge columns, with Corinthian capitals. At the same time, the main facade is in contact with the wide access terrace that benefits from two monumental semicircular stairs, which deeply mark the access. The secondary facade from the park is a private area for the family, reason why it is treated differently from the main facade. This is highlighted by a classic pediment supported by two columns and the lack of excessive ornamentation. The side facades are not richly ornamented, but they are slightly withdrawn, which is why attention isn't required on them. The hollows of the doors are treated equal to

that of the windows of the ground floor, thus they contribute to finishing the composition, softening from the robustness of the pedestal. One of the most important elements that adds an artistic value to the monument is the decoration.

III.4. Similarities and differences between the Mocioni - Teleki Palace and the little trianon in Versailles

The building was designed by the Viennese architect Otto Wagner between 1876-1879. It was inspired by the Little Trianon of Versailles. Both buildings are located on a large surface of natural land, surrounded by an extended green space, which is why a direct connection with nature is desired.

At the same time, the two buildings benefit from a park that is divided into two zones, namely an area for the public and a private area (Fig. 7).

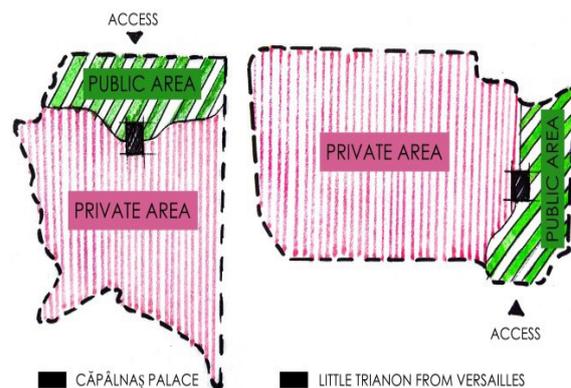


Fig. 7. The public and private areas of the two buildings

At the architectural level the buildings have some similarities, Otto Wagner wanted to take over some of the essential elements of the style during that period. Both buildings have a square plan, in which the facades have a symmetry for the windows and doors hollows. At the same time, the facades are treated differently, which is why its desired a special emphasis on the main facade that is intended for the public and on the secondary facade that includes the private area (Fig. 8).

Thus, the side facades represent a transition zone between the two accesses, these being less ornate. Although both buildings have the

same symmetry and rhythm on the facades, Otto Wagner decides to approach the vertical surfaces of the palace from Căpâlnaș differently to the Little Trianon, which illustrates a massive and imposing volume. They become much more sinuous and at the same time manage to completely outline the silhouette of the palace, illustrating an imposing volume and full of nobility (Fig. 9). The height of the buildings differs, but the hollows of the windows and the access areas of the two buildings are treated in a compositional way. Also, the ornaments that are present on the two buildings emphasize the hollows of windows and doors.

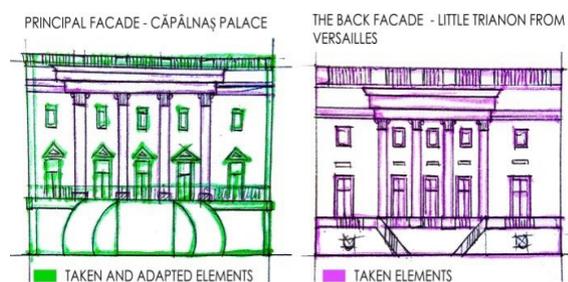


Fig. 8. Elements taken over the main facade

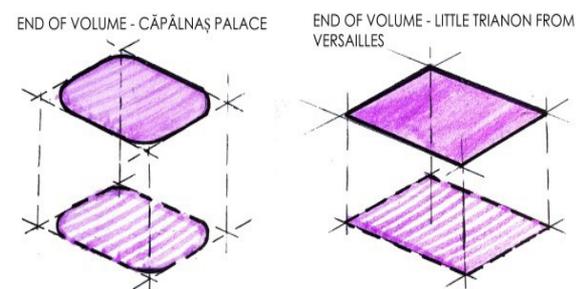


Fig. 9. The endings of the two volumes

At the same time, they mark the main access areas by the presence of four columns, made of natural stone with Corinthian capital, which are resting on the top of the pediment that comes out. Moreover, the completion at the upper level is noticeable on both buildings with a register composed of cornice joints with the level of the row of balusters that mask the construction coating. At the main access level, both buildings have a transition zone through the presence of external terraces. These differ in composition, because the building at the Versailles palace has two access stairs face to face, which is why

it is not fully open to the public, compared to the Palace in Căpâlnaș where the stairs invite the visitor to explore the interior (Fig. 10). Otto Wagner wanted to integrate in his work one of his pre-stages, which invites the visitor into the spaces through a road. Thus, Otto Wagner prepares this stage by illustrating two large curved, imposing and graceful stairs placed facing the public.

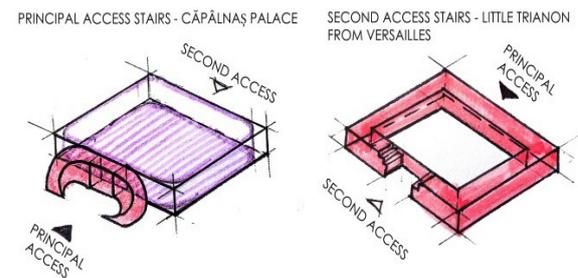


Fig. 10. The access zone

III.5. THE INTERIOR DESCRIPTION OF THE MO- CIONI – TELEKI PALACE

From the point of view of the treatment of the interior, in the communist period, a special attention was paid to the details. Thereby we can notice the chromatic range, the finishes found, the quality of the materials used, the decorative elements and the plastic subtlety of the accessories. The color range is a warm one, thereby they want to create a sense of warmth and familiarity. The decoration on the walls is much more lush than the outside one because it presents various stuccoes, but in some rooms, there is the color palette from the outside, associated with the finish of the floor mosaic from the main entrance halls. These are much more numerous, more subtle and better treated.

The compositional principle of the field of walls cites the one from the outside, with three horizontal registers:

- THE FIRST register, the lower one, is marked by the plinth and the base of the pilasters.
- THE SECOND register, the middle one, benefits from a neutral field from which the frames of holes and pilasters are highlighted.
- THIRD register, the upper one defined by a cornice that joins the wall with the ceiling.

The ceiling is simple, with decoration only at the starting point of the luminaires. Also, there are

some original luminaires in the space, from that period. At the same time there is a part of solid wood furniture and fireplaces that are still preserved, which attest the noble image from its peak era. The emphasis on details is focused on the doors, the vertical circulation and the first illuminator that is found on the ground floor of the building. They contain profiled and carved elements of solid wood.

III.6. INTERVENTIONS CARRIED OVER THE TIME INSIDE THE PALACE

Over time, the palace has undergone many changes, both aesthetically and functionally. The palace was designed with the role of a noble residence, but after the coming of communism, it was transformed into a psychiatric hospital. After the fall of communism, the palace retained its function of hospital, and later it became a restaurant.

Thereby, the spatial organization had to be modelled for the purpose of the architectural program that it has at present. The interventions made in the rooms of the palace during the communist period are major, so they are found in every room inside the palace. Many of the interior ornaments disappeared with the change of the function of the palace, both the pieces of furniture and some lighting fixtures,

but at the same time, the most precious space was preserved, namely, the library area. The color range was changed throughout the palace after the communism period in green and beige shades, which is why it was wanted to emphasize the new function (Fig. 11).

Although the changes were major, some ornamentation elements were kept, such as the decorative element on the ceiling, where the luminaires are placed, the luminaires in the main rooms and the wood that is the most precious material inside. It can be found both at the level of the door hollows, next to the first illuminator that is located above the library area as well as next to the vertical circulation that connects the ground floor to the first floor.

After the renovation of the palace, it lost its brilliance again because the architectural elements that remain inside are not highlighted as they were in the past. At the same time, the wood was kept indoors, in natural hues along with some original luminaires.

At the ceiling level, the cornice that is presented on several levels is not fully accentuated, while the ornaments that are centrally found on the ceiling are not highlighted. The color range used in the rooms is taken from the outside, which is why a connection is created between the two (Fig. 12).

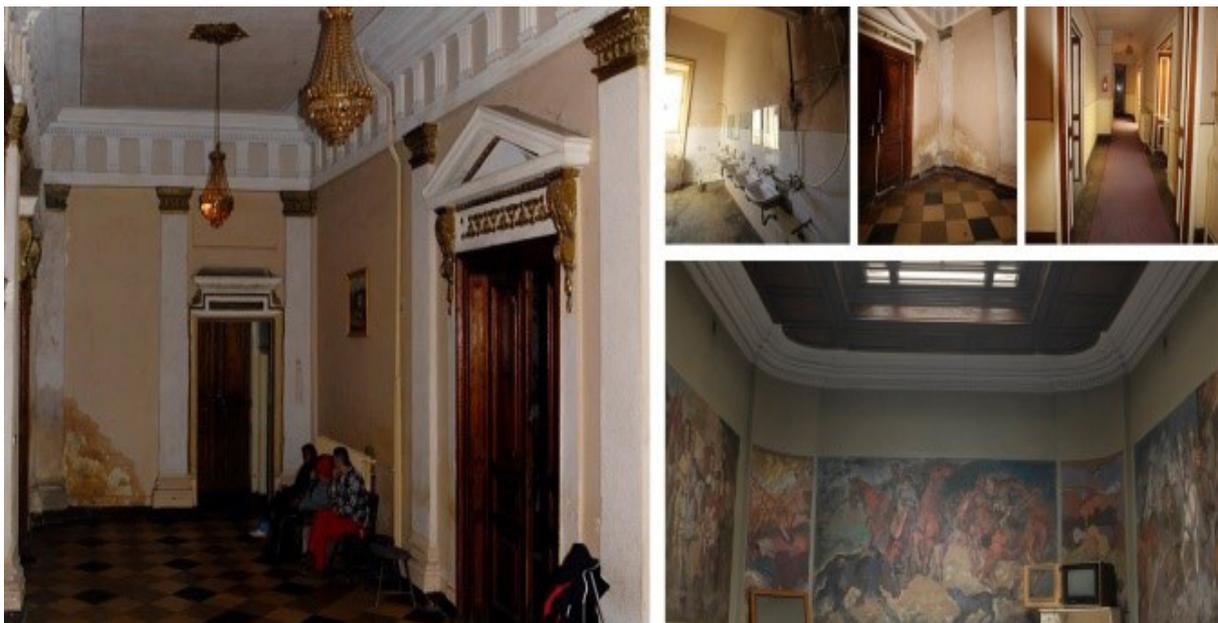


Fig. 11. Interior pictures from the Mocioni-Teleki Palace, 2010 and 2011, Photo: I.Oprescu

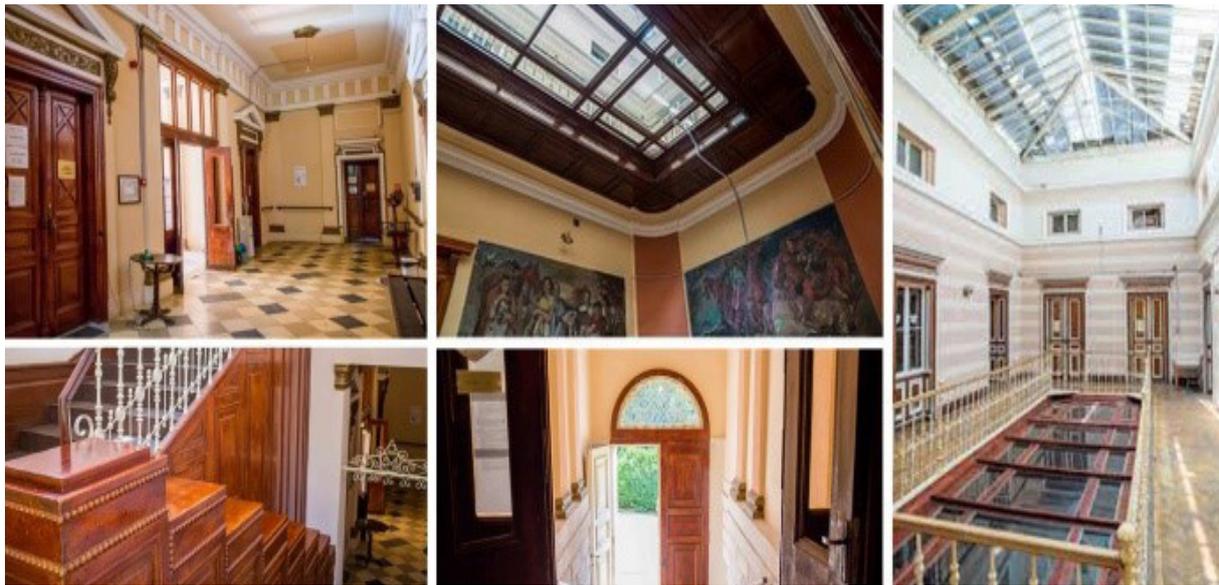


Fig. 12. Interior pictures from Mocioni-Teleki Palace, after renovation, Photo: C. Butuşan

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this paper is presented the strategy of the study. At the same time, the proposal of arrangement in relation to the edifice is illustrated, the way in which the new function of the space was born and at the same time the new vision of the interior spaces. The building was serving as a residence and public space at the same time, as well as bedrooms, a kitchen in the semi-basement of the building, a small pharmacy, and impressive library of rare volumes and a huge collection of exotic insects and butterflies that were located on the first floor, which is why it became one of the buildings featured in the book "Between The Woods And The Water" by the famous British traveler Patrick Leigh Fermor. Currently, the palace houses a private psychiatric hospital. In this project will resort to a conversion of the function, which is why the goal is to restore the building to life by presenting its impressive story. Thereby, the presented proposal wants to become again a public area, a tourist area where access is allowed to all. At the same time, through this public space, it is wanted to restore the brightness of the place from another time by creating numerous activities that will take place both indoors and outdoors. Also, the plan is to send the people who will step inside back in time, to live that epoch fully and at the same time to become acquainted with the pas-

sions of the owners. Thereby, it will reintegrate their passions inside the building, both the impressive collection of exotic insects and butterflies, an exhibition of musical instruments and a library in the memory of the Mocioni family, reminiscent of the old rare book library of Count Teleki. At the same time, it is being pursued to highlight the remaining important architectural elements, which is why highlighting the two illuminators that are in the center of the building is wanted.

The chosen architectural program presents a villa type housing unit, which aims to restore the spirit of the place and the value of the palace through the elements for which it was noted. Therefore: SEMI-BASEMENT - has a restaurant area
GROUND FLOOR - presents an exhibition space in which different cultural events are present
1ST FLOOR - has sleeping rooms (Fig. 13)
The ground floor level has cultural events, which is why it hosts an event room, a library area along with a reading area, an interactive exhibition of butterflies and insects and an interactive exhibition of musical instruments. The proposal aims to create interactive events in which people can have a unique experience. This will be done through new technology, electronic devices that will allow you to explore and analyze in detail each element (Fig. 14.1).

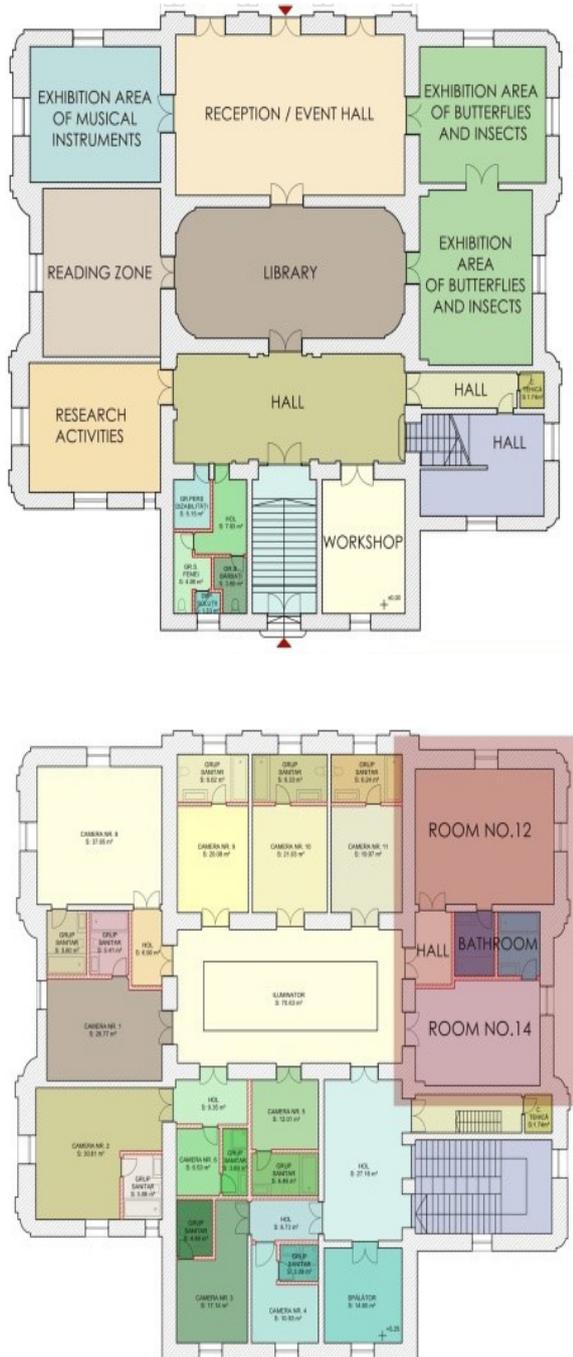


Fig. 13. Partitioning plan – Ground floor and 1st Floor

At the same time, the 1st floor plan illustrates the sleeping areas, and the area marked with red presents the surface that is analyzed. Thereby the new interventions will be clear, well defined and at the same time capable of creating their structure.

With the change of the function of the space, it brings with it a series of changes in the organization of the rooms, the finishing materials and the chromatic range. Thereby, the proposal wants both the materials used inside and the collection of butterflies and insects to be present inside, creating a whole fairy tale show, which is why it is wanted for them to become the main characters that invite and guide the visitor into the area, presenting you each part of the interior. The purpose of the arrangement is to restore the moments of brightness by introducing modern elements of reflection and mirroring. At the same time to keep the vintage theme of the building, which is why the furniture pieces will be in correspondence with it, also it is pursued to highlight both the original ornamentation elements and the luminaires that are present from the beginning. Moreover, the interventions proposed inside will have a fine and proper structure, so as not to affect the basic structure of the building, reason why the furniture pieces will present a composition (Fig. 14.2). Thereby, the proposal creates a space in which the concept of the theme starts from the basis of two essential elements, namely the nature and the collection of exotic butterflies and insects of Count Teleki. Also, special attention will be paid to the dendrological park, reason why it will be valued through an environmental arrangement in which the tree species will be highlighted. At the same time, the park will benefit from the public’s attention both through its exploration and through the research activities that will take place outside.

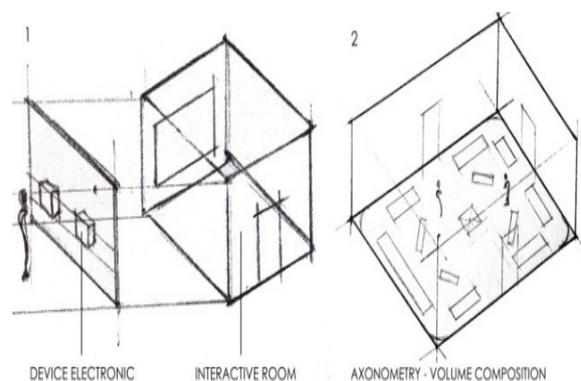


Fig. 14.1. Electronic panels and interactive room; 14.2. Axonometry - volume composition

V. CONCLUSIONS

The study of this topic aimed to reintroduce the old interwar buildings into the public space through tourist areas that convey the emotion of the place by presenting the stories that were once alive. As a result of this study, some improvements can be made to the palace from Căpâlnaş in relation to the function proposed in the space. The function proposed in the space is that of housing, which is why one of the improvements brought to Căpâlnaş Palace is on the interior spaces, by reconfiguring the spatial organization. Organizing the palace presents a reconfiguration of the spaces in order to have a more free and easy flow for walking, for the people who walk inside, and for the staff that must be exempted from a lot of walking. At the same time, a special treatment is proposed on the accesses of the main building from the ground floor, as these are the first rooms that have contact with the outside world and at the same time have different original decorations. Moreover, another area that is important and wants to be emphasized is the space in the center of the ground floor that rises on two levels, having two natural illuminators that shape the room and at the same time creates interesting games of shadow and light. Another element that this study wants to propose in the space would be the complete reconfiguration of the basement which currently has a kitchen, a dining area, two offices, a laundry room, a dedicated staff area and some storage areas. Although the current function of the building is being converted, the semi-basement remains with the same attributions of restaurant, which is why the flow must be rethought and reintegrated inside. The documentation shows that the most important element in the intervention of the historical buildings is the study on them, the historical research, the origin of the building and the members of the family, at the same time the attention to the architectural details. Also, the two important elements of this process are attributed to the function and the spatial organization that have the role of establishing the working areas, the places in which the activity is to be carried out and at the same time the positioning of the activities, the working areas other

important elements that underlie the project is the interior design in which materials have to be carefully chosen so that they correspond to the edifice, to the finishes, the chromatic range, the pieces of furniture, the artificial lighting and the natural lighting, all these must be integrated inside, keeping a balance between them.

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