



**Architecture as Philosophy – The Work of Imre Makovecz**

Edited by János Gerle, with a preface by Peter Blundell Jones.  
252 pp. with 420 ill., 240 x 330 mm, hard-cover, English  
ISBN 3-932565-56-8  
Euro 78.00, sfr 118.00, £ 49.00, US\$ 89.00, \$A 139.00

At the start of this book Imre Makovecz gently criticises the commentators who first brought his work to the West. He is grateful to them of course, but he claims they only half understood, simplifying and misinterpreting. They presented him as a heroic rebel against the communist system, rather than seeing his battle against a larger enemy that we all still face: this he calls materialistic individuality. When he remarks that architecture is not regarded as an art in Hungary, but as a service, and that it has no place in the Ministry of Culture, we find it all too familiar. It is perhaps understandable that someone so concerned with cultural memory – especially long-repressed folk memories – should arise in much-oppressed Hungary, which was fought over for millennia even before the advent of the Soviet Empire, but the same cultural amnesia is occurring throughout the world, exhibited in increasing rootlessness and placelessness. Perhaps the most misleading reading of all has been Makovecz the wild man or primitive, but this book shows him to be a highly articulate architectural philosopher and intellectual, conversant from the start with a wide range of international sources. There is much more to the work than the expressive image we first encounter. It warmly embraces place and community, and quite aside from its ecological dimension, there is a concern with the building process and the participation of craftsmen that would have warmed William Morris's heart. Most bold and most intriguing is Makovecz's claim to be tapping into ancient and universal folk memories that are lodged in hand-made patterns, gestures and even dance. Over the last century we have had to revise our sense of civilisation, for cities and writing are but five thousand years old, yet our forebears tens of thousand years ago could scarcely have been less intelligent and communicative than ourselves.

Imre Makovecz was born in 1935. He studied at the Technical University in Budapest, worked in different state offices until 1983, when he was able to establish his own architectural studio in Budapest. Apart from a few examples he was active only in his home country. He is a honorary member of several architectural associations (among them the Royal Institute of British Architects, the American Institute of Architects and the Bund Deutscher Architekten) and was awarded with the Gold Medal of the French Architectural Institute. He is the president of the Hungarian Academy of Arts.

János Gerle is a trained architect and author of several books and publications about Imre Makovecz and about Hungarian Art Nouveau architecture.

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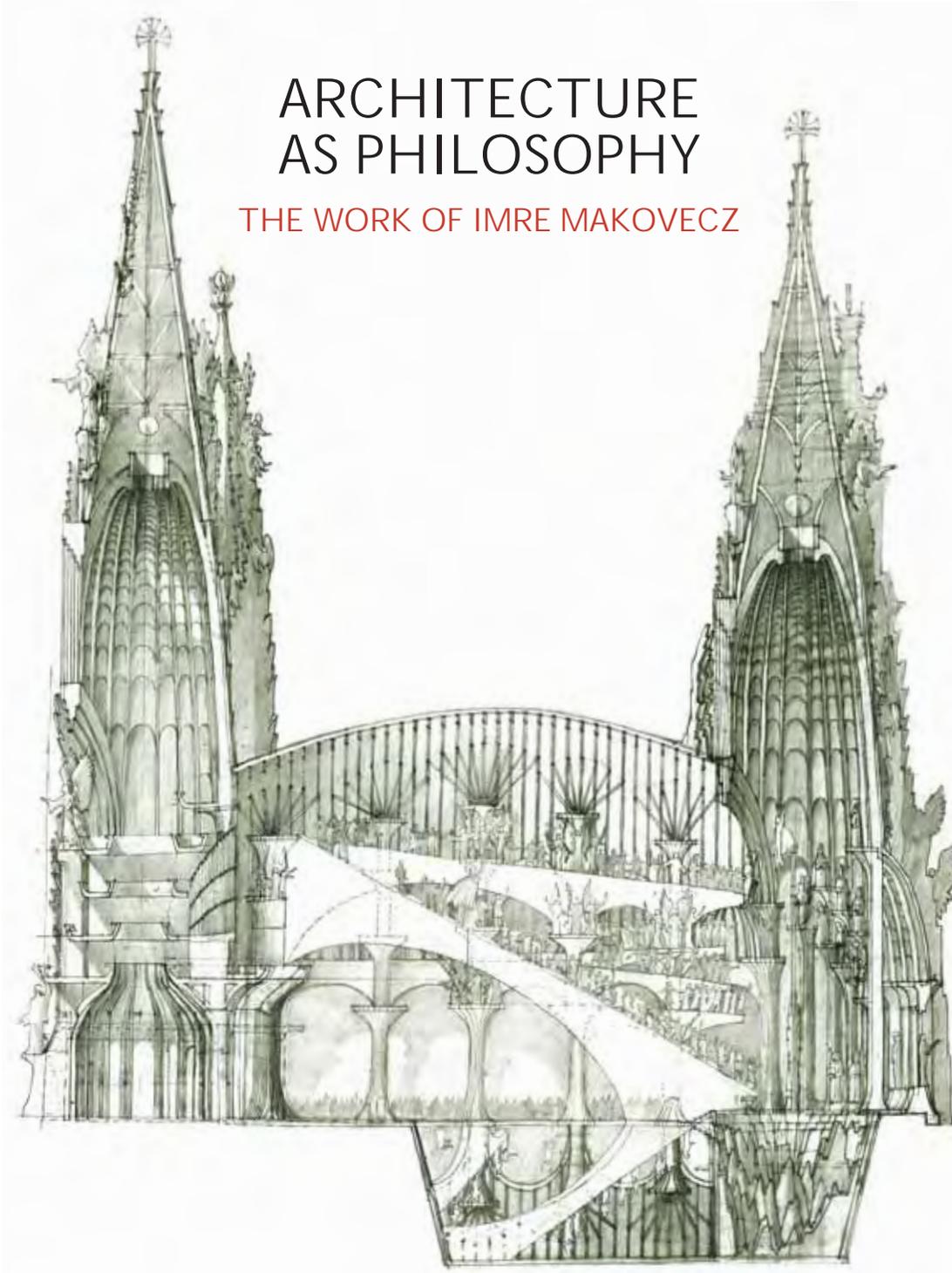
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# ARCHITECTURE AS PHILOSOPHY

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078.00 Euro ISBN 3-932565-56-8 58900  
118.00 sfr  
049.00 £  
089.00 US\$  
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