Minimal Intervention in Adaptive Reuse: The Search for the Minimum Through Current European Case Studies (2013-2025)

Karolína Bujdáková[1*)], Alexander Schleicher[2)]

[1*)] Institute of Architecture of Public Buildings, Faculty of architecture and design, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Námestie Slobody 19, 812 45 Bratislava, Slovakia, karolina.bujdakova@stuba.sk; 0000-0003-2204-7080
[2)] Institute of Architecture of Public Buildings, Faculty of architecture and design, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Námestie Slobody 19, 812 45 Bratislava, Slovakia, alexander.schleicher@stuba.sk; 0009-0007-1463-7562

https://doi.org/10.29227/IM-2025-02-02-074

Submission date: *2025-07-25* | Review date: *2025-08-21*

Abstract

This paper explores the extent and form of the minimal intervention concept, essential for the adaptive reuse of buildings and spaces, within 21st-century architecture. It focuses on European case studies from the last 15 years. By its nature, minimal intervention has the potential to reduce the environmental impact of construction, support recycling and upcycling processes and address current architectural challenges in Europe and globally. The paper presents the diverse perceptions and applications of the concepts of "minimum" and "almost nothing" in architecture throughout history. This ranges from pragmatic approaches to minimalism, such as cost optimization during crisis periods, through the understanding of minimalism as an architectural movement associated with Mies van der Rohe's "less is more" adage, to Burckhardt's considerations of preserving existing architecture without intervention. Based on an analysis and comparison of three European case studies, the paper describes what constitutes the "minimum" in each, across their entire lifecycle from design to eventual disappearance. For the case study of "Elektrický anjel," a theatrical play situated in an old boiler room in Bratislava, the minimum was achieved by maximizing the utilization of the old boiler room's character, condition, and genius loci. Into this space, a self-supporting, reversible structure defining a provisional stage was inserted. In the exhibition "The Exciting Mysterious Aquarium" by Andrej Dúbravský, the minimum was achieved by introducing art into an unfinished metro depot in Bratislava. The new gallery function primarily emerged from a programmatic redefinition of this raw, abandoned space, into which Dúbravský's paintings were placed with minimal physical intervention (solely by mounting them on walls and providing provisional lighting). The exhibition demonstrated how a subtle intervention can yield significant spatial and conceptual impact. "The Theatre of the useFULL," presented at the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale, featured a pavilion with integrated projection within an old industrial hall. The intervention was constructed from materials and pieces of furniture chosen by the architects in collaboration with local initiatives supporting the homeless. After the Biennale, the temporary theater was dismantled, and all elements were donated to the initiatives that needed them. Almost nothing was left unused from "The Theatre of the useFULL," a core principle conceived from its very inception. These analyses suggest that minimal interventions represent a multifaceted approach, offering relevant and responsible solutions that address contemporary architectural demands such as sustainability, economic efficiency, recycling and upcycling, the elimination of new construction, and the overall minimization of material, costs, and energy. Minimal intervention emerges as a viable alternative to the often complex and resource-intensive structural changes commonly associated with architectural conversions.

Keywords: *adaptive reuse, minimal intervention, architecture, art, Europe*

1. Introduction

The concept of the minimum in architecture is a fascinating and multifaceted inquiry that has permeated design theory and practice for centuries. How, precisely, can "minimum" be defined within a discipline as inherently creative and complex as architecture? Throughout history, architects, critics, and theorists have grappled with this phenomenon, with their interpretations of "little" or "minimum" varying considerably across different eras and movements. While for some, minimum implies a purist approach to material and form, others find its essence in creating highly utilitarian spaces optimized solely for function. Still others discover the minimum in the radical act of limiting new construction altogether or in the meticulous in-situ conservation of historical buildings, preserving their inherent authenticity. In the 20th century, this enduring concept solidified into a distinct architectural movement known as minimalism, famously encapsulated by Mies van der Rohe's enduring axiom "less is more." However, in the 21st century, the understanding of the minimum has evolved, increasingly perceived as a guiding principle of preserving existing structures and/or implementing minimal intervention. These refined approaches are now emerging as profoundly suitable strategies for extending the operational life cycle of buildings, actively fostering a circular economy, and offering a demonstrably more sustainable and responsible alternative to the pervasive trend of new construction.

In contemporary architectural discourse, particularly within the dynamic European context, there is a rapidly escalating emphasis on the critical importance of adaptive reuse. This significant trend is propelled not only by the overarching and undeniable necessity of sustainability in an era of climate change but also by the urgent need for the efficient and intelligent utilization of the vast existing building stock and increasingly constrained natural resources. The European Union directly champions and supports this forward-thinking concept through initiatives such as the European Green Deal and the transformative New European Bauhaus (NEB). The NEB, in particular, explicitly highlights the sustainable transformation of the existing building stock, actively advocating for a transdisciplinary approach that robustly emphasizes sustainability, aesthetics, and pervasive inclusiveness [1]. Consequently, conversion projects, specifically those realized through minimal intervention, are proving to be an exceptionally relevant and potent approach for shaping future architectural

strategies and addressing the complex challenges of urban development.

This paper presents selected principles of understanding the minimum in architecture within its historical context, then shifts its focus to a contemporary exploration. Specifically, it examines the application of minimal intervention in existing, often disused, architectural structures for the explicit purpose of their adaptive reuse for new functions. The primary geographical focus is on projects realized in the 21st century, particularly those from the last 15 years, within the diverse European context. Through a analysis and comparative study of selected case studies, this paper aims to evaluate and describe various potential approaches to contemporary architectural conversions effectively employing principles of *minimum*.

2. The Concept of Minimum, Less, and Almost Nothing

Historically, the motif of the *minimum* in architecture commonly emerged primarily from pragmatic considerations. Until the Middle Ages, typical new constructions largely utilized local, readily available, and cheap materials to the maximum extent possible. Representative, sacred, fortification, and other significant structures were exceptions. The highly pragmatic reuse of old, vacant buildings for new functions was also common, for instance, during or after wars, where properties often underwent no spatial alterations. Essentially, what was available was simply utilized as best as possible [2]. In contrast, in the twentieth century, the concept of *minimum* became a deliberate strategy in architectural practice. For modern architecture of the 20th century, the core principles of the *minimum* that architects embraced included simplicity, abstractness, and spatial lightness [3]. Its quintessential figure, Mies van der Rohe, famously articulated his architectural philosophy with the adage "less is more." Beyond this renowned quote, his repertoire of aphorisms includes others pertaining to the *minimum*, such as "almost nothing," which readily evokes his ethereal architecture. According to Mies, architecture should not include any "superfluous" elements like ornamentation or decorative features. Furthermore, *the minimum* in his work manifested in the design of layouts characterized by large, open spaces with minimal dividing walls, aiming for maximum universality. When partition elements were used, he opted for mobile structures to enhance spatial variability. The material palette of Mies's architecture also conveyed the *minimum*: subtle metallic rod constructions complemented by large-format glazing that blurred the boundary between interior and exterior. This materiality, through its transparency, did not impose a new layer but instead acknowledged and integrated with the surrounding environment. Not only Mies himself but also critics frequently employed his aphorism "almost nothing" to describe his works, such as the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin (Fig. 1), as empty boxes infused with light and air [4]. It was against the backdrop of Mies's ideas that the architectural movement known as minimalism emerged, focusing on the reduction of forms and elements to their absolute *minimum*, with a strong emphasis on functionality and simplicity.

Fig. 1. Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, Mies van der Rohe, author: A. Savin (with consent by [5])

Swiss theorist Lucius Burckhardt, who devoted himself to architecture and urbanism at the end of the 20th century, also shaped views on minimum in architecture [6]. Burckhardt contended that interventions in the environment should not be physical changes but rather aesthetic or conceptual strategies within the "landscape in the mind." He coined the term "the smallest possible intervention," which advocated for prioritizing minor modifications that respect the history, culture, and ecology of a given place. He also maintained that such changes should be flexible and undertaken after thorough observation and understanding of how the environment functions and how people use it, thus implying that the public who utilizes the environment should be involved in decision-making processes regarding changes. Burckhardt further suggests that the most profound form of minimal intervention might be the conscious decision to prevent construction altogether and prioritize the existing state. This perspective encourages contemplation on whether any changes are truly necessary and if the *minimum* might indeed reside in restraint.

3. The Concept of Minimum and Adaptive Reuse (Conversion)

Conversion, in the context of architecture is understood in this work as the process of changing the function of a space or object while preserving its spatial characteristics and structures. Some literature also uses the term reconversion [2]. In English-speaking countries and in foreign literature, the term adaptive reuse is mostly used for the concept of conversion as we understand it. Peter Lovich also points this out in his research on conversion. [7]. In the context of our research, the term adaptive reuse is also used in documents such as the New European Bauhaus or the Green Deal, and as a result, this phrase is being used more and more often in connection with conversion.For the reasons described above, the terms conversion and adaptive reuse are used synonymously in this article.

The question of the minimum significantly impacts not only the design of new architectural works but also the crucial subsequent phase of their life cycle: the processes of revitalization, adaptation, and conversion. When buildings cease to fulfill their original function—be it for economic, social, or environmental reasons—this period often becomes pivotal, determining whether they're preserved and revitalized or demolished. A strong impetus for a new approach to existing buildings emerged after World War II. The extensive devastation led to a period of massive reconstruction, which gradually spurred intense discussions about alternative approaches to renovation and conversion. By the 1970s, the term adaptive reuse fully established itself as an independent creative discipline with its own precisely formulated philosophy and theory [8]. Adaptive reuse is a complex process that involves various forms of intervention, from minimal, almost invisible adjustments to more extensive transformations. Crucially, even significant interventions have to still be adhere to the fundamental principles defining this process. H. Zemánková characterizes conversion as *"a comprehensive set of processes by which, following the obsolescence of a building's or building complex's original purpose, their spatial structures are preserved and appropriately modified for new use*" [9]. This approach is rooted in a deep respect for the existing structure and its inherent potential. The idea of minimalism in interventions is closely linked to international guidelines for cultural heritage protection. Minimal intervention, or minimal change, is explicitly mentioned in the esteemed Burra Charter, where it's defined as: *"changing as much as necessary but as little as possible"* [10]. This formulation is the basis of the philosophy of conservation and restoration, emphasizing a responsible approach to historical structures. The Charter also introduces the important concept of "spirit of place" (genius loci), which strongly correlates with minimal intervention. It underscores the undeniable value of architecture in its authentic state, reflecting a broader understanding of heritage that includes social and cultural intent, extending beyond purely physical aspects.

4. Case Studies

This paper examines contemporary case studies of conversions achieved through the least possible intervention, structural alteration, or, in some instances, entirely without structural intervention. We define minimal structural intervention as only essential alterations without which the space could not function safely or be suitable for human occupancy (e.g., safety measures, remediation of deteriorated sections, or repair of static defects). Conversions arising without structural changes are considered those where the new function introduces independent structures and inserts that are not fixed to the existing building [11]. The article analyzes current case studies of conversions that required minimal intervention, meaning that they were carried out with the minimum necessary structural intervention or no structural intervention at all. Through comparison, this paper highlights the diversity of "minimum" in current architectural conversions and summarizes potential approaches characterized by minimal intervention. In this research, the term "contemporary" refers to the 21st century, with our focus narrowed to case studies realized within the last 15 years. While many contemporary "minimal" conversions exist in Europe, the subset meeting the criterion of absolute minimum intervention during their inception is smaller. In selecting case studies, the research prioritized conversions that demanded the fewest architectural spatial and structural changes for their creation. Additionally, it focused on projects where the transformation undergone during conversion could be observed, allowing for a clear description of what constituted minimal intervention in that specific context. The selection of case studies aims to showcase the diversity of authorial perspectives on the issue of minimalism when introducing a new function into an existing space.

This work utilizes three selected case studies from Europe: two examples from Slovakia and one from Italy, to explore the degree and nature of their minimum.

4.1 Theatrical Play Electric Angel (Elektrický anjel), Karolína Bujdáková, Bratislava (SR), 2022

In 2021, an initiative for collaboration emerged between the Faculty of Architecture and Design (FAD) of the Slovak University of Technology (STU) in Bratislava and the renowned Slovak director Svetozár Sprušanský. The collaboration centered on the nascent production "Elektrický anjel," which sought an unconventional venue for its performances. The FAD STU building, designed by the prominent architect Emil Belluš in the 20th century, includes an extensive subterranean section originally dedicated to technical facilities. One of the largest spaces in the basement was a sizable coal boiler room. This area is distinctive due to its unique shape, scale, proportion, and details intrinsically linked to its original function. Over time, as technologies advanced, the rooms in the building's subterranean parts became vacant. This provided the faculty with specific, windowless spaces that had remained unused for several years. The director visited the former boiler room and determined its suitability for the upcoming play. The collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture and Design not only provided the spatial framework but also fostered a creative synergy. The boiler room space needed to be "theatricalized." This opportunity was extended to architecture and design students through a workshop and subsequent competition for the intervention's design, which then became the actual scenography for the temporary stage within the boiler room. In the final design, the stage is positioned along one of the boiler room's longer walls. It consists of a minimal steel rod structure that is freely placed within the space and not structurally integrated with it. The structure was custom-fabricated to respond to the atypical specifics of the room (Fig. 2). The intervention is site-specific, meaning it was designed for this particular space, drawing upon and utilizing its character, condition, and genius loci. Placing the intervention in this specific boiler room location allowed existing, distinctive spatial elements—such as the staircase and landing structure, and two brick furnaces—to be incorporated into the scenography. These elements served as substitutes for parts of the set that would otherwise have required fabrication or purchase. The remaining parts of the boiler room were left untouched and their original condition was presented.

During the theatrical off-season, the scenography was partially dismantled. The dominant black rod structure remained in place. This structure subsequently became part of an exhibition of student design works during the Night of Architecture and Design event Student design pieces were hung, wrapped around, or loosely placed on the old furnaces that the structure encompassed. The space with the intervention was later utilized for other purposes: a musician rented it for a music video, ASB professional architecture journal compiled a comprehensive overview of young Slovak architects and some portraits taken there, and it even hosted a fashion show for the Mugler x H&M collaboration collection. This demonstrated how the schematic and interdisciplinary nature of the spatial solution ensured multifunctionality and the capacity for transformation even for spontaneous uses. In some instances, the intervention presented an obstacle, while in others, it was precisely what was desired. In some cases, this existing intervention was an obstacle, while in others it was exactly what was needed. The boiler room with this intervention served for about a year, during which time it was used primarily for theatrical purposes.

Fig. 2. Theatrical Play Electric Angel (Elektrický anjel). Scenography and spatial design of a theatre play set in an old boiler room at FAD STU, Slovakia, author of photography: Dalibor Krupka (with consent by [12])

Several aspects define the minimum within the intervention concept for the "Elektrický Anjel" theatrical play. First is the initial aspect of minimum finances available for the entire production, including the set. The minimum is discernible in the context of the smallest possible number of added elements and props while simultaneously maximizing the visual and spatial utilization of the former boiler room. Several other temporary functions operated in the space with the same configuration as the theater, simply without props. The intervention's presence thus contributed to minimizing the addition of further elements to the original substance. Over the year of the intervention's existence in the FAD STU boiler room, it was possible to observe how other artists and cultural actors, outside of theatrical performances, recycled the minimum that was primarily created for the play.

4.2 The Theatre of the useFULL, Rural Studio, 15th Architecture Biennale, Venice (IT), 2016

The "The Theatre of the useFULL" installation was created for the 15th Architecture Biennale in Venice in 2016. It represents a temporary transformation of a section of the Corderie dell'Arsenale building, located within the old, originally industrial Arsenale complex, into a theatrical space. This hall previously served for manufacturing ship ropes and cables before gradually losing its function. Since 1980, the Arsenale has become an exhibition venue for La Biennale [13]. The concept for "The Theatre of the useFULL" by Rural Studio (Auburn) is founded on the idea of design for the local community. This studio has a long-standing commitment to participatory design, actively involving communities in both design conceptualization and the design process itself. "The temporary theater was conceived using suspended spring mattresses and insulation panels, with cabinets creating a labyrinth leading into the theater, where benches are made of stacked insulation panels" [14]. The selection of materials and elements for the theater was not arbitrary; it stemmed directly from a list of needs provided by two local initiatives with which the studio collaborated: Assemblea Sociale per la Casa (ASC) and Cooperativa Caracol. These initiatives address issues related to homelessness, the renovation of abandoned social housing, and providing accommodation for the homeless. The collaboration generated a list of material items these two initiatives required. The project's authors noted: "The list we received was much longer, so we chose to include in our space only those materials needed to create it. For example, we decided to use spring-coil beds in their original packaging, considering them as see-through panels offering a glimpse of the inside from the hallway" [15]. No structural intervention was required for the creation of the theater in this space. The theater was created using spatial elements that defined its boundaries and provided functions such as seating for the audience. All elements were assembled from the aforementioned list. They were either placed independently within the space or stacked in a way that allowed them to be easily disassembled back into their basic components. The intervention necessary for the new function—a theater within an old industrial hall—can be characterized as the addition of reversible, demountable, prefabricated structures. Paradoxically, these were initially used as upcycled elements to create a temporary theater and then, after the Biennale concluded, were donated to the local initiatives Assemblea Sociale per la Casa (ASC) and Cooperativa Caracol, where they were repurposed for their primary use for the homeless. This case study exemplifies what can be considered the absolute minimum in contemporary 21st-century conversions. From its initial design phase, this project considered the implications of its temporary existence, which the authors managed to entirely eliminate, as all materials used for the intervention were subsequently reused. "The Theatre of the useFULL" stands as an example of an intervention that acknowledges its temporality and inevitable deconstruction, responding with an approach that represents the minimum while simultaneously supporting the local community.

4.3 The Exciting Mysterious Aquarium, Andrej Dúbravský, Bratislava (SR), 2013

The exhibition of Andrej Dúbravský's final university work, titled "The Exciting Mysterious Aquarium," took place in 2013, marking

a significant, albeit temporary, transformation of an unlikely space. The renowned Slovak painter chose to install his artworks within the vast, empty confines of a planned metro depot that was, in fact, never completed. The Bratislava metro system had been conceptualized as early as the 1970s, with initial construction efforts beginning in 1985. Following a necessary redesign of the original plans, construction resumed briefly in 1988 [16]. However, financial and political shifts led to the definitive halt of the project shortly thereafter [17]. During this short construction window, only fragments of the metro network were realized, and among them was the raw, unfinished shell of the planned depot located in the Petržalka district, a biggest residential area of Bratislava. More than 24 years after its construction was abandoned, this raw, unadorned depot became the unexpected setting for a unique art gallery. Dúbravský's intervention was subtle yet powerfully transformative. He introduced provisional lighting into the dark, cavernous space, strategically illuminating his paintings which were mounted directly onto the rough, exposed concrete walls. A characteristic of the depot at the time of the vernissage was its partially flooded state. Embracing this environmental element, Dúbravský thoughtfully provided visitors with rubber boots at the entrance, allowing them to wade into the depot and experience the artworks within this unusual, water-laden environment. This detail not only added to the immersive quality of the exhibition but also highlighted the raw, unfinished nature of the space itself.

Exhibition The Exciting Mysterious Aquarium demanded no permanent structural interventions to the existing floor or ceiling. The primary physical alteration involved merely the affixing of the paintings to the abandoned space's walls, an act that, in the context of the site's vastness and raw state, can genuinely be considered minimal. Beyond the installation of the artworks themselves, the only other necessary input was the provision of an electrical connection to power the temporary lighting. These lights were positioned within existing wall openings, strategically illuminating the exhibited pieces. From an architectural standpoint, this case study embodies the essence of the minimum, approaching "almost nothing" in terms of physical modification. The placement of the artworks within the abandoned, unfinished depot provided this previously derelict location with a new, albeit temporary, function as a gallery. The profound transformation of the space was driven entirely by its new programmatic content, demonstrating that minimal physical intervention can indeed lead to maximum spatial and conceptual impact. Following the conclusion of the exhibition, the space reverted to its unused and decaying state. Several years later, this unfinished depot was ultimately demolished to make way for the extension of the tram line, which now runs through the very site where the depot once stood. This final act underscores the transient nature of such minimal interventions and the continuous evolution of urban landscapes.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The concepts of "minimum" and "almost nothing" have been integral to architectural thought since its very beginnings, evolving significantly over time. Throughout history, their application has varied widely—from pragmatic crisis solutions addressing immediate needs to deliberate artistic and theoretical intentions. In the 21st century, these concepts are perceivable in diverse, nuanced forms, most notably within the increasingly critical domain of adaptive reuse of existing building stock. This paradigm shift isn't merely formal; it responds directly to pressing global challenges like climate change and resource scarcity. Continued research, innovative approaches, and the widespread application of minimal intervention principles will undoubtedly play a important role in shaping the future of the built environment on both European and global scales. The core principles of sustainability, recycling, circular economy, and the fundamental idea of reuse are now recognized as cornerstones of future architectural strategies, being directly and intrinsically linked with the philosophy of minimal intervention and non-invasive design. This connection emphasizes a shift from merely building new to intelligently leveraging existing assets.

Minimal intervention, in the context of architectural conversion, fundamentally distinguishes itself from more traditional, extensive conversions. Its essence lies in adapting a building for a new use by employing the least possible physical alteration, thereby honoring the existing structure's history and character. The selected case studies illustrate the inherent diversity in perceiving and applying minimal intervention. Their analysis reveals that this phenomenon can't be rigidly defined; rather, its specific manifestation depends profoundly on the character, existing condition, and genius loci (spirit of place) of the space, as well as the particular nature of the intervention introduced. For instance, in some cases, the new function is deeply informed by and draws extensively from the spatial specifics (e.g., Theatrical Play Electric Angel "Elektrický anjel"), while in others, the recipient space acts more as a pragmatic, neutral frame, with the new function operating as a largely independent element (e.g., "The Theatre of the useFULL"). Another distinguishing characteristic among these diverse approaches is the very nature of the intervention itself—whether it's custom-made for a specific space and its unique peculiarities (as seen in Theatrical Play Electric Angel "Elektrický anjel"), or if it possesses a theoretical versatility, allowing it to be deployed across various different spaces (like "The Theatre of the useFULL" and "The Exciting Mysterious Aquarium"). A notable commonality across all examined case studies, however, is the type of new function introduced: in every instance, it is cultural, involving the utilization of the space for various forms of art. Furthermore, another shared feature is the temporary nature of the new function. In all analyzed examples, the conversions were pre-planned for a specific timeframe, possessing a clearly defined beginning and end for the intervention within the space. Each case study, therefore, presents the "minimum" in its own unique, context-specific form, offering valuable lessons for future projects. The theatrical Play Electric Angel "Elektrický anjel" exemplifies achieving the minimum by maximizing the utilization of the old boiler room's intrinsic character, condition, and genius loci. By integrating a self-supporting, reversible structure for a provisional stage, the need for extensive new elements was significantly minimized, thereby reducing material consumption and waste. This minimal intervention strategy effectively reinforced the narrative of the existing space rather than attempting to overwrite its character, making the historical context an active part of the contemporary experience. The "Theatre of the useFULL" case study, on the other hand, represents a powerful social and environmental minimum, striving for complete waste elimination and full utilization of its components. The project's design inherently considered the impact of the conversion, ensuring that all materials used were repurposed for their primary function for the homeless after the Biennale concluded. This proactive approach to sustainability truly sets it apart, demonstrating a circular economy and reuse in action. Andrej Dúbravský's exhibition "The Exciting Mysterious Aquarium" showcases the concept of structural minimalism. This conversion emerged primarily from a new programmatic definition of the space, with virtually no structural alterations. The simple act of placing art and introducing provisional lighting transformed the abandoned metro depot into a gallery. This demonstrates that such architectural conversions can be understood more as programmatic shifts than as extensive construction projects, proving that significant cultural value can be created with extremely low physical impact.

A comprehensive comparison of these case studies strongly suggests that the minimum in adaptive reuse is a profoundly multifaceted and flexible concept. It encompasses a range of strategic approaches, including: minimization of structural interventions (prioritizing inserts, self-supporting, reversible, and interventions that are minimal in size and cost); extensive recycling and upcycling of existing structures, elements, or furniture, thereby extending their lifespan; fostering sustainability and circular economy principles for both the existing object and the new intervention, contributing to a reduced carbon footprint; optimization of existing assets (involving thoughtful

engagement with the genius loci of the space, which in turn minimizes the need for new elements and enhances authenticity); and programmatic conversion, where the function of a space is transformed purely by its new programmatic content, thus approaching "almost nothing" in terms of physical change. These strategies collectively point towards a more resource-efficient and environmentally conscious architectural practice. Ultimately, minimal intervention, as a method for reusing spaces in 21st-century architecture, can be understood as a powerful design strategy. It consciously moves away from radical transformations, instead focusing on a significant, yet restrained, engagement with the existing context to enhance its inherent qualities and prolong its utility. This philosophy isn't confined solely to physical changes; it critically embraces aesthetic and conceptual approaches that foster a deeper, more empathetic understanding of the environment and its potential. Each such intervention demands an individualized solution, necessitating careful consideration and rigorous analysis before any action is undertaken. The case studies demonstrate that a minimal physical intervention can indeed lead to a maximum spatial and conceptual impact, offering a sustainable, responsible, and highly creative path forward for architectural practice in a world increasingly valuing preservation over demolition.

References

1. New European Bauhaus. NEB Compass V 4 [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2025 Jul 22]. Available from: https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/system/files/2023-01/NEB_Compass_V_4.pdf
2. Gregor P, et al. OBNOVA PAMIATOK. Bratislava: PERFEKT, a.s.; 2008.
3. Enia M, Martella F. Reducing architecture: Doing almost nothing as a city-making strategy in 21st century architecture [Internet]. 2019 [cited 2025 Jul 24]. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333039805_Reducing_architecture_Doing_almost_nothing_as_a_city-making_strategy_in_21st_century_architecture
4. Mertins D. Modernity Unbound. London: AA Publications; 2011.
5. Savin, A. New National Gallery building (west and south facade; sculpture «Têtes et Queue» by Alexander Calder) in Berlin, Germany [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2025 August 20]. Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neue_Nationalgalerie#/media/File:Berlin_Neue_Nationalgalerie_asv2021-11_img1.jpg
6. Lucius Burckhardt. Biography [Internet]. [cited 2025 Jul 22]. Available from: https://www.lucius-burckhardt.org/English/Biography/Lucius_Burckhardt.html
7. Lovich P. Mestský apartmán ako špecifická forma bývania na slovensku. Konverzia administratívnych budov na mestské apartmány [City apartment as a specific form of housing in Slovakia: Conversion of administrative buildings into city apartments]. Bratislava; 2009.
8. Plevoets B, Van Cleempoel K. Adaptive Reuse of the Built Heritage: Concepts and Cases of an Emerging Discipline. Springer; 2013.
9. Zemánková H. Tvořit ve vytvořeném, Nové funkční využívaní uvolnených objektu [Creating in what was created, New functional utilization of released objects]. Brno: Vysoké učení technické v Brne; 2003.
10. Australia ICOMOS. The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance [Internet]. Burwood, Vic: Australia ICOMOS; 2013 [cited 2025 Jul 20]. Available from: https://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-download/
11. Bujdáková K, Schleicher A. CONVERSION: ONE SPACE, MULTIPLE FUNCTIONS / KONVERZIA: JEDEN PRIESTOR, VIAC FUNKCIÍ. In: Multilingual Proceedings of the 15th International Conference Architecture in Perspective 2023. Ostrava, Česká republika: VŠB - Technical University of Ostrava, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Department of Architecture; 2023. p. 112-115.
12. Krupka, D. ELEKTRICKÝ ANJEL [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2025 August 20]. Available at: https://www.novascena.sk/podujatia/elektricky-anjel#cgal-2542-6
13. La Biennale di Venezia. Arsenale [Internet]. Venice: La Biennale di Venezia; [cited 2025 Jul 25]. Available from: https://www.labiennale.org/en/venues/arsenale
14. Bujdáková K, Schleicher A. Impact of temporary conversion on the community: Categorisation and current case studies from Europe. Architecture Papers of the Faculty of Architecture and Design STU. 2024;29(4):42-6.
15. Zorzetto A. The theatre of usefull: How can an important event be installed without wasting resources? Rural Studio explains and shows us how, with its design for the Venice Biennale. domusweb.it [Internet]. [cited 2025 Jul 25]. Available from: https://www.domusweb.it/en/authors/z/zorzetto_alessandro.html
16. Sme.sk. V útrobách petržalského metra bývajú výstavy a koncerty [Exhibitions and concerts are held in the bowels of the Petržalka metro] [Internet]. 2017 [cited 2025 Jul 22]. Available from: https://bratislava.sme.sk/c/20441868/v-utrobach-petrzalskeho-metra-byvaju-vystavy-a-koncerty.html
17. Immocap.sk. Takto stavali bratislavské metro popod Dunaj až na Trnavské mýto [This is how the Bratislava metro was built under the Danube to Trnavské mýto] [Internet]. [cited 2025 Jul 22]. Available from: immocap.sk/takto-stavali-bratislavske-metro-popod-dunaj-az-na-trnavske-myto/