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THE AVANT-GARDE OF CONTEMPORARY LIVING SPACE

AWANGARDA WSPÓŁCZESNEJ PRZESTRZENI ZAMIESZKIWANIA

Abstract

The individual emanation of creative beauty is an emotional synergy between the author and the work. Shaping contemporary architecture and living space in the eyes of a designer are conscious actions of the basic perspectives of the philosophy of art, i.e., essentialism and formalism. Essentialism as the essence of reality in which every being has a set of features that define this being and formalism in the context of emphasizing the meaning of content and form in art. The article deals with the aspect of the contemporary philosophy of architecture and beauty in the context of the influence and conscious importance of architecture on society. The Vitruvian triad: usefulness, durability and beauty, was confronted with the contemporary revolution in the art of architecture presented by Koons, Christo and Serrano, prompting to reflection on ideals of beauty and the direction of philosophy in the modern avant-garde architecture.

Keywords: interpretations of architecture, Vitruvius, living space

Streszczenie

Indywidualna emanacja piękna twórczego stanowi emocjonalną synergię pomiędzy autorem a dziełem. Kształtowanie współczesnej architektury, przestrzeni zamieszkiwania w oczach projektanta stanowią świadome działania podstawowych perspektyw filozofii sztuki, tj. esencjalizm i formalizm. Esencjalizm jako esencja rzeczywistości, w której każdy byt posiada zbiór cech określających ten byt, oraz formalizm w kontekście nacisku na znaczenie treści i formy w sztuce. Artykuł porusza aspekt współczesnej filozofii architektury i piękna w kontekście wpływu i świadomego znaczenia wywieranego przez architekturę na społeczeństwo. witruwiańska triada: użyteczność, trwałość i piękno, została skonfrontowana ze współczesną rewolucją w sztuce architektury prezentowana m.in. w pracach Christo, Koonsa, Serrano, skłaniając ku przemyśleniom nad ideałami piękna i kierunkiem filozofii w nowoczesnej awangardzie architektury.

Słowa kluczowe: interpretacje architektury, Witruwiusz, przestrzeń zamieszkiwania

Any ordinary, pre-predictive perception of something [...] is, in itself, already understanding and interpretation [...]. When we are dealing with something, just seeing the things that are closest to us carries within it the structure of interpretation.¹

Martin Heidegger

1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings try to interpret and materialize their thoughts, feelings, ideas by making abstract forms and spaces in their imaginations, they look for geometric patterns and com-

¹ R. Solik, *Sztuka jako interpretacja. Z problemów dyskursu artystycznego*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2012, p. 93.

parisons in nature. The result of such activities is an architectural, sculptural, pictorial, graphic, and larger-scale urban space created by people. "Place is an item type. Objects and places define space, giving it a geometric personality."² An architectural object is a place in a separate space. An object-place in space is shaped in various ways, but so that it can only be a framework for events, without a specific definition and method of implementation. The separation of space for a place is defined in two ways. The first relates to the shaping of the structure in the human mind, the second relates to a materially created structure, defined by time and people.³ Architecture is a form of separating space and constructing it from material and immaterial elements, just like painting, sculpture, graphics, it's the art of building and a combination of practice and theory.

Designing a living space is a conscious activity of a designer who maintains the basic perspectives of the philosophy of art, i.e. essentialism and formalism. Essentialism as essence, content, hides the actual reality under the surface of observable phenomena. In philosophy, essence has a similar definition that an idea. Each being has a set of features that define that being. Every being is made up of matter and an idea which shapes matter, gives it identity. On the other hand, formalism shows the way of procedure, compliance with previously defined rules in the context of emphasizing the meaning of content and form.

2. INTERPRETATIONS

Interpretations of architecture in the direction of philosophy of Vitruvius, for whom architecture consists of: *ordinatio* – ordering the building and maintaining the proportions of the entire work, *dispositio* – appropriate arrangement of the building elements, obtaining the result of the work, *eurhythmia* – the appropriate ratio of individual building elements, *decor* – the impeccable appearance of the entire composition of all building components, *distributio* – economic management of materials and space, material savings in construction and economic balance of construction expenses.⁴ The return of the aforementioned guidelines discovered the art of the Renaissance thanks to the work of Alberti, for whom architecture as an art of building consists in drawing and execution.⁵ The written definitions of building constitute the contemporary philosophy of the architecture of buildings and living spaces. G. Nawrot quotes the Albertian literary idea in the treatise on painting, the so-called *invenzione*, confronting architecture as a means of the aforementioned *invenzione*, as the meaning of a story about architecture, which is a medium and shaping space, influencing the behavior of people in the designed structure.⁶ Moreover, it moves the analysis of architecture as a language capable of transmitting meaning and influencing behavior, for which an architectural object is a specific place in a separate space, but beauty is not always an emanation of truth.⁷

² Yi-Fu Tuan, *Przestrzeń i miejsce*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1987, p. 30.

³ G. Nawrot, *Symultaniczność i kompilacja a obraz miejsca*, Budownictwo i Architektura, 2018, no. 18(2), p. 29.

⁴ Vitruvius, *O architekturze ksiąg dziesięć*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1956, p. 15.

⁵ L.B. Alberti, *Ksiąg dziesięć o sztuce budowania*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1960, p. 19.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

⁷ G. Nawrot, *Shades of interpreting the truth of architecture* [in:] Kozłowski T. (ed.) *Defining the*

We can look for beauty in all contexts and events of architecture.⁸ Referring to architecture and beauty, the Aristotelian trichotomous division of the types of life modes: theory, action, creativity, show a new meaning in the form of the beauty of theory, the beauty of action and the beauty of creativity. Theory relates to the project idea, action to professional skills, and creativity is the ideas of the project idea.⁹ Art becomes illustrated, it is the sense of creative thought in the form of an architectural record. Architecture, on the other hand, is a spatial mass media, a show in which there is a constant exchange of events between the arena and the cavea. Vitruvian triad – usability, durability and beauty are features that can be found in every building. Usefulness and durability correlate with theory and action, while beauty makes architecture an art. Usability varies, durability must be considered individually, while beauty is defined by harmony, proportion and brilliance.¹⁰ B. Tschumi uses the statement that there is no architecture without a concept, overarching idea, diagram, which give the building coherence and identity, and the concept and context are inseparable, often also contradictory.¹¹ A concept may negate or ignore the surrounding circumstances, while the context may blur or weaken the precision of an architectural idea. B. Zevie divided the interpretations of architecture and its space into three categories: content, physiological and psychological interpretations, and formalistic interpretations. The psychophysiological interpretation symbolizes the definition of the order of architecture in the context of the human body, quoting Vitruvius, for whom this interpretation is related to proportions and symbolism of shape and form. Contemporary architecture discovers and uses *ordinatio*, *dispositio*, *eurhythmia*, *symmetry* and *decor* anew.¹² The space created today crosses borders, constituting an archetype, meaning an irrational imperative rooted in us, constituting a form of unexplained pressure. Modern art exists by identifying itself with the contemporary modern world. Tradition and modernity denote the future of the created world. The return to classical forms undoubtedly constitutes the context of contemporary space. The contemporary avant-garde can be called the deconstructivism of our times, which is created by progress and technological development.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The method of logical argumentation was adopted for the research¹³. The interpretation of reality was carried out on selected examples in order to understand the existing conditions. The conducted analysis allowed to focus on the meaning and sense of the obtained data. The author's descriptions, explanations and logical interpretation were used as research techniques.

architectural space. The truth and lie of architecture = Definiowanie przestrzeni architektonicznej. Prawda i kłamstwo architektury, vol. 3, Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut, Wrocław 2020, p. 61.

⁸ G. Nawrot, *Architektura – sen o miejscu dla pięknych zdarzeń*, Czasopismo Techniczne, Architektura, 2007 no. 6-A, p. 355.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 355.

¹⁰ U. Eco, *Historia piękna*, Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, Poznań 2014, p. 48.

¹¹ B. Tschumi, *Event Cities 3 Concept vs. Context vs. Content*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2004, p. 11.

¹² B. Zevi, *Architecture as a space. How to look at architecture*, Horizon Press, New York, 1957.

¹³ E. Niezabitowska, *Metody i techniki badawcze w architekturze*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej, Gliwice 2014, p. 186.

4. RESEARCH

Durability is best demonstrated by ancient and historical building designs made of solid materials that have survived to our day, such as the Pyramids of Giza. Usability is often defined by functionality, this aspect is strictly determined for what purposes the object is to be designed for, whether in antiquity or nowadays, for example, the Centennial Hall in Wrocław has become useful and functional. Beauty, on the other hand, is perceived subjectively because artists give their own definition of beauty. A beautiful object is one that satisfies the senses with the power of its form, especially the eye and the ear¹⁴. An example of a symphony of the senses built as a result of sincere affection is shown by the Taj Mahal in Agra. Contemporary living space hides many philosophical meanings and symbolism in the perception of architecture and the philosophical interpretation of *durability*, *utility* and *beauty*. Permanence in shaping space through an attempt to achieve unintended radicalness, existence, being, shaping the literalness of the object, revealing the so-called literality of architectural space is demonstrated by the philosophy of J. Baudrillard, which is reflected in the Paris Pompidou Centre. Usability encourages to build and live responsibly, while the architecture itself determines care for being, allows to create an atmosphere through interiors, openings, materials used, stimulating the senses, bringing peace, acting in harmony with nature. It is the architect who is able to bring out a fragment of space that will receive its unique appearance and colour. It is the architect who gives the possibility of existence and determines the shape of reality. Inhabited places become spaces with individual expression. The space perceived in this way is expressed as the poetry of emanation, rhythm, bringing peace and blending with its structure and material into the surrounding landscape. An example of such a useful architecture inseparable from the surrounding landscape are the P. Zumthor thermal baths in Vales, a specific emanation of Heidegger's philosophy.¹⁵ An example complementing the triad, showing a significant coherence between architecture and philosophy in terms of the beauty of architecture, can be found in the Wittgenstein house.

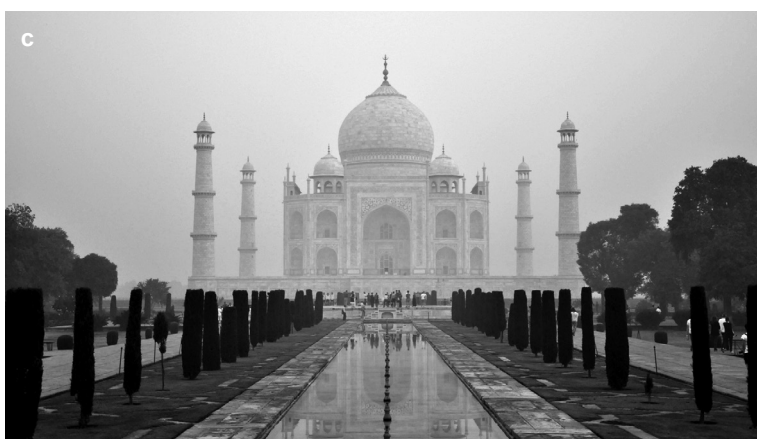
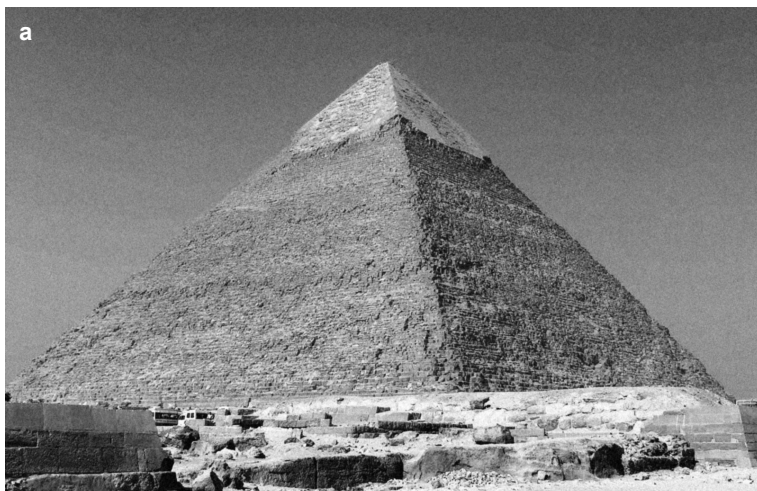
Viennese residential buildings reflect the discursive path of material structuralism of philosophical ideas translated into form. Uniqueness, sensuality, simplicity of form, expression and beauty reveal an atypical image of the structure, the creator of which cognitively treated the process of implementation and reflected the system of his mental philosophy.

How is the contemporary living space shaped? The main goal is to present the contemporary context in the shaping of the interpretation of the concept of a space. An additional goal is beyond the formal and non-technical context of the space intended to be inhabited. By analysing the structure of reality and the human immediate environment in it, the research was based on subjectively selected works by Christo, Koons and Serrano.

Christo's projects prove that existing architecture can become a material for exceptional works of art, changing the view of buildings and inhabited space, changing traditional perceptions. In wrapped buildings everyone can find their own content and meaning. Christo's works undoubtedly reflect the beauty of space, the depth of Wittgenstein's thoughts, revealing an atypical image of the structure and multidimensional reception. Wrapped Reichstag has become a symbol of the contemporary avant-garde of space. Koons controversial

¹⁴ U. Eco, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹⁵ A record of the context of the basic aspects of human existence, the ways of existence of a distinguished being, being-here as understanding, Heidegger M., *Bycie i czas*, p. 183

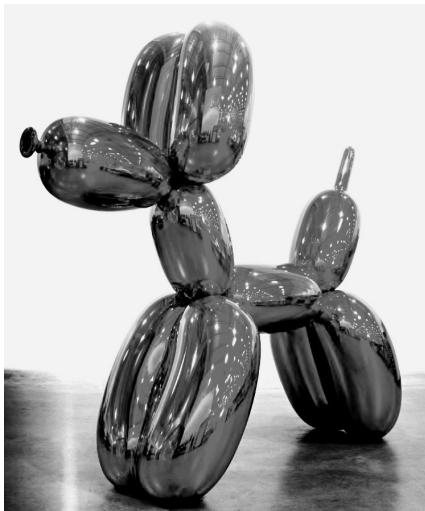


III. 1. Vitruvian Triad: a – Durability – Cheops Pyramid, Giza, b – Usability – Centennial Hall, Wrocław, c – Beauty – Taj Mahal, Agra; photo credit: author's archive.

works incline to rethink usability and durability, leaving the beauty to subjective judgment. Koons introduces freedom of artistic expression, creative freedom, rejecting all canons, becoming a continuator of the ideas of pop-art and Dadaism. He uses everyday objects, advertising, ready-made toys as objects of the contemporary avant-garde. On the other hand, Serrano's works are a contemporary creation of artistic provocation. They are an expression of a contemporary interpretation of utility, durability and beauty, in which the idea and intention are more important than the effect, while the effect itself is always better than it is true. Serrano uses photography to portray a world full of contradictions, dichotomies, and conflicts, in which symbols, archetypes, beauty and ugliness, life and death come together.



III. 2. Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin, photo credit: Holz Erlend [in:] Christo, D. Bourdon, M.S. Cullen, W. Volz, *Christo and Jeanne-Claude: Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin 1971–95*, Taschen, Köln 2001.



III. 3. On the left – Jeff Koons' balloon dog, photo credit: Holzwarth Hans Werner, *Koons*, Taschen, 2016; right – Andres Serrano's photo on the cover of Metallica's "Load" album; photo credit: author's archive.

The living space shaped by contemporary artists is the result of subjective feelings and interpretations. The dynamic, progressive technical, technological, social and cultural changes are not so much evolutionary as revolutionary. Durability, utility and beauty take on a new meaning, unchanging and timeless forms change their interpretation, breaking with tradition and heading towards modernity.

5. SUMMARY

Space does not at all imagine the properties of things of any kind, or in themselves, or their relations between themselves, [...] Space is only and exclusively a form of all phenomena of the external senses, that is, the subjective condition of sensuality, by which only external viewing becomes possible.¹⁶

Architectural space is the existence of being in the context of the entire space that surrounds us, we live not only in our apartment, but also in the city, on the street, in the workplace, in the sense of being in a space close and well known to us for a long time.¹⁷ Designing is inseparable from living and thus the art of creating places of living and being. The philosophical language contains many architectural metaphors that bring philosophy closer to the theory of architecture. Although the presented examples do not always show functionality, the topicality of Vitruvian triad sets the direction of shaping the image of modern architecture.

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¹⁶ I. Kant, *Krytyka czystego rozumu*, Wydawca Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska, p. 46, <https://wolnelektury.pl/media/book/pdf/krytyka-czystego-rozumu.pdf> (access: 30.09.2021).

¹⁷ M. Heidegger, *Bycie i czas*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN SA, Warszawa 2004, p. 130.

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