

JUSTYNA KOBYLARCZYK

ORCID: 0000-0002-3358-3762

Cracow University of Technology, Poland

DOMINIKA KUŚNIERZ-KRUPA

ORCID: 0000-0003-1678-4746

Cracow University of Technology, Poland

ALIRZA MAMEDOV

ORCID: 0000-0003-4703-2694

Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, Ukraine

KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH IN ARCHITECTURE

WIEDZA I PRAWDA W ARCHITEKTURZE

Abstract

The article aims to show that knowledge about architecture allows us to see its truth. The lack of familiarity of composition and the principles of shaping the form may result in a misinterpretation of architectural work – a lie in architecture. In order to assess the knowledge on the above-mentioned issues of people interested in designing, an interview was conducted among students of the Faculty of Architecture of three universities – the Cracow University of Technology, the Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture and the Aviation University in Kyiv. As shown by the results of the research, the understanding of issues such as the construction of an architectural form, the preparation of technical drawings or spatial models among people considering architectural studies is at different levels. It allows us to believe that the assessment and analysis of architecture is not always objective.

Keywords: truth, lie, architecture, knowledge, interpretation, interview

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest wykazanie, że wiedza na temat architektury pozwala dostrzec w niej prawdę. Brak znajomości zasad kształtowania formy oraz brak wiedzy na temat kompozycji mogą spowodować błędną interpretację dzieła architektonicznego – kłamstwo w architekturze. By zorientować się, jak wiele osób zainteresowanych architekturą nie ma wiedzy na temat wymienionych zagadnień przeprowadzono wywiad wśród studentów Wydziału Architektury trzech uczelni – Politechniki Krakowskiej, Kijowskiego Narodowego Uniwersytetu Budownictwa i Architektury oraz Uniwersytetu Lotnictwa w Kijowie. Jak wykazały wyniki badań, wiedza osób planujących studia architektoniczne zarówno na temat budowy formy architektonicznej, jak i tworzenia rysunków technicznych czy modelu przestrzennego obiektu architektonicznego jest na różnym poziomie. Pozwala to sądzić, że ocena i analiza architektury nie zawsze są obiektywne.

Słowa kluczowe: prawda, kłamstwo, architektura, wiedza, interpretacja, wywiad

1. INTRODUCTION

Lies and truths in architecture are concepts the essence of which allows us to come closer to understanding architecture itself. Although there are many definitions, the discussions about how we can feel and interpret it still take place. Many researchers and practitioners – architects, have expressed their opinions about architecture.

A. Monestiroli noticed that there has never been a theory of creating architecture that was not related to its classical experience.¹ At the same time, he distinguished three problem groups connected with this notion: the relations between architecture and the city – typology of buildings, the problem of construction and the rules of the language of architecture. It is worth noting that these problems do not only fit into the ancient times but are also present today. Contemporary technological, material and construction solutions make it possible to implement the boldest architectural works, always, however, subdued to the surroundings. Although it does not always fit into the urban landscape, sometimes remaining in contrast, it is difficult to experience architecture without its environments. The relationship between architecture and the city, or rather the space in which it exists – the typology of buildings, cannot be ignored. The rules of the language of architecture are perceived by the Authors of this article as a means of expressing emotions, feeling architecture in which truth or lies may exist. Hence, it seems that the emotions evoked by the work and the sensitivity of the creator himself are vital. Moreover, we also observe the concern for man and his living environment.²

According to G.W.F. Hegel,³ classical architecture is realistic. It can be understood through the cognition process. Following this line of thinking, it is worth recognizing the value of feeling and experiencing through learning. Both definitions of these concepts were presented by J.K. Lenartowicz.⁴ According to the Authors, they are inseparable in striving to understand lies and truth in architecture. As stated by J.K. Lenartowicz, learning is a cognitive process; gaining experiences... and remembering them.⁵ If we accept Hegel's philosophy that architecture should be known and understood, then teaching and learning about it play a key role in this process. Feelings related to the interpretation of architecture may blur the objectivity, but on the other hand, they give understanding to its deeper meaning. Not only the architects but also psychologists who see the importance of the analysis of the protocol participated in the discussion concerning the methodology of teaching architecture. A. Bujacz, who also distinguished the verbal report⁶ as an important method writes more about this issue.⁷ Psy-

¹ A. Monestiroli, *Tryglif i metopa. Dziewięć wykładów o architekturze*, Wydawnictwo PK, Kraków 2009.

² J. Kobylarczyk, *Architektura czy sztuka?* [in:] Flizikowski J. (ed.), *Integracja sztuki i techniki w architekturze i urbanistyce*, vol. 2, Wydawnictwa Uczelniane Uniwersytetu Technologiczno-Przyrodniczego, Bydgoszcz 2014, p. 230.

³ W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, 1838; Polish edition: *Wykłady o estetyce*, PWN, Warszawa 1966, p. 372.

⁴ J.K. Lenartowicz, *Słownik psychologii architektury: podręcznik dla studentów architektury*, Politechnika Krakowska im. T. Kościuszki. Pracownia Architektury Środowiskowej, Kraków 2005.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ R.J. Curther, *Telling what we know: The Use of Verbal Report Methodologies in Psychological Research*, Psychological Science, 1994, vol. 5, no. 5, pp. 241–244.

⁷ A. Bujacz, *Wykorzystanie analizy protokołu w badaniach nad projektowaniem* [in:] Paluchowski W.J. et al. (eds.), *Nowoczesne metody badawcze w psychologii*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Społecznych Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań 2012.

chologists base their experience in this area on observations of the work of architects and engineers. Eisentraut and Günter,⁸ among others, conducted observations of the design work focused on the project of the table. They were able to distinguish three stages of work: stage I – preparatory work, stage II – work on the concept, stage III – work on the proper design. They also noticed that each stage was characterized by a certain sequence of activities and a different amount of time was needed to complete individual tasks.

Architecture changes as well as the manner of teaching about it. New trends set new directions in terms of creating its image, with regards to visual, spatial and functional values. It motivates us to explore it through learning and experience. Today, architecture is closely related to technology, the style of “life” and preferences dictated by modernity. But due to its flexibility, it is a response to the changing needs of future generations. The common denominator of the cognitive process of architecture in different periods of history is its perception always in the surroundings and space. E. Rewers,⁹ who understands architecture as an event in space, writes about the influence of the environment on architecture itself. Another, according to her, experience of architecture is perceiving it through the prism of the events taking place in its presence. It seems that they give a deeper meaning to the interpretation of architectural form. Can they also decide about truth in architecture? It seems that realistic events cannot be a lie, but the way they are perceived and interpreted may not be true; then it is obvious to witness a lie in architecture. Or is it the other way round – architecture that is an event in space is always an expression of truth? Also, in this case, our emotions, attachment to architecture and place have a decisive influence.

The main assumption of the work was to present the analysis of the theory of understanding architecture through studying the views of researchers. Moreover, the Authors have carried out own research based on an interview conducted among first, second and fourth-year students of the Faculty of Architecture of the Cracow University of Technology, the Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture and the Aviation University in Kyiv. Based on the assessment of the state of the current knowledge on the indicated topic, it can be argued that truth and lies in architecture depend on the emotions connected with its interpretation and feeling. Another factor is the awareness of the issues related to architecture.

In order to measure it, an interview was carried out among people interested in the topic of architecture. The Authors assumed that knowledge about architecture allows us to see its truth. Without knowing the rules of composition or shaping the form, we can misinterpret architecture; then a lie in architecture may be inevitable. Similarly, when we do not know how to interpret technical drawings, there is a high probability that we will misread them – the image of an architectural work will be tainted with a lie.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Two research methods were used in the work – the analysis of the theory of understanding architecture by getting to know the cited views of researchers on this issue and an interview allowing for a preliminary analysis of the state of knowledge about architecture among

⁸ R. Eisentraut, J. Günter, *Individual styles of problem solving and their relation to representations in the design process*, Design Studies, 1997, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 369–383.

⁹ E. Rewers, *Post-polis*, Universitas, Kraków 2005.

people interested in it. The Authors decided to conduct it among first, second and fourth-year students of the Faculty of Architecture: Cracow University of Technology, Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, and the University of Aviation in Kyiv. Students answered the questions contained in the questionnaire forms. Four of those questions related to the state of knowledge before they began their studies.

The research was conducted in 2020. Its course was carried out in accordance with a scenario that assumed introducing students to the subject of the research and the principles of its conduct.

In the beginning, the students were thoroughly informed about the purposefulness of the research and were given the possibility to ask questions to clarify any doubts.

The survey forms were filled in during the classes. It can, therefore, be assumed that the answers provided were completely independent. The test time did not exceed 15 minutes.

The students were asked whether they knew the principles of creating and interpreting technical drawings and the spatial model of an architectural object before starting their studies at the Faculty of Architecture, and the knowledge of the principles of building an architectural form and composition also before starting their architectural studies.

31 students participated in the study at the Cracow University of Technology, 23 students at the Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture and 63 students at the Aviation University in Kyiv.

The aim of the study was to obtain information on the level of familiarity related to architecture among people interested in it – associating their plans with the profession of an architect. The Authors assumed that knowledge of architecture allows for its understanding and objective interpretation. In the future, it is worth extending the research to include information that would allow obtaining information on the emotions accompanying the experience of architecture and the differences in its “live” perception and through the project. An interesting supplement to this research would be to compare their results with the results of the study carried out among people whose current professional ambitions and plans for the future are not related to architecture.

3. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The results of the theoretical material allowed to formulate the aforementioned thesis that the truth and lies in architecture depend on our emotions that accompany its interpretation and feeling. Another important factor is the state of knowledge about architecture. It can be assumed that the bigger it is, the closer we are to the truth about architecture. Determining the state of knowledge among people interested in architecture has become the main goal of research based on prepared questionnaire forms.

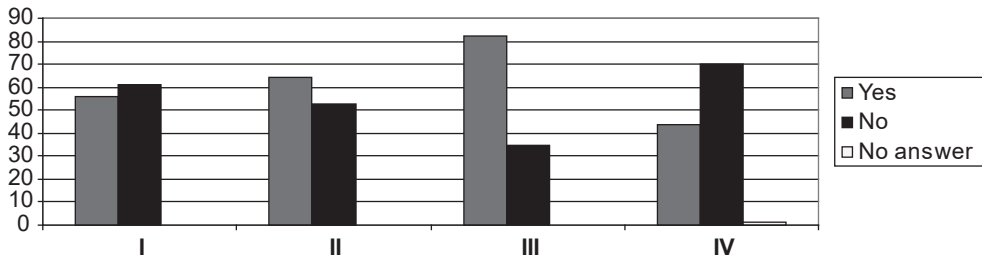
The first question (I) concerned the familiarity of the principles of creating and interpreting a technical drawing. It seems that the lack of knowledge on this subject does not allow for a proper understanding of the architectural work. Its image may not be true. Then, a lie in architecture – in its perception, is a consequence of a lack of knowledge.

In total, 117 students took part in the study; 61 of them did not know the above-mentioned principles before starting their studies in architecture. In order to compare the state of knowledge among the students of three different Universities, it should be noted that at the Cracow University of Technology only 11 out of 31 students knew the rules of creating and interpreting

a technical drawing, in the Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture 15 out of 23 knew this subject, while at the University of Aviation, out of 63 students participating in the interview, 30 indicated that they were aware of the principles mentioned. The second question (II) concerned the knowledge of the principles of building an architectural form. Of the 117 students who replied, 64 indicated they knew the rules. At the Cracow University of Technology, out of 31 students, as many as 22 knew this subject before starting their studies, at the Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, 14 out of 23 students showed knowledge in this field, and at the University of Aviation – 28 out of 63 students.

The third question (III) concerned the knowledge of the rules of composition. The same number of students (117) answered this question and the next one, but 82 indicated that they knew the rules of composition before starting their studies. The proportions of answers (yes, no, no answer) were similar at all three Universities.

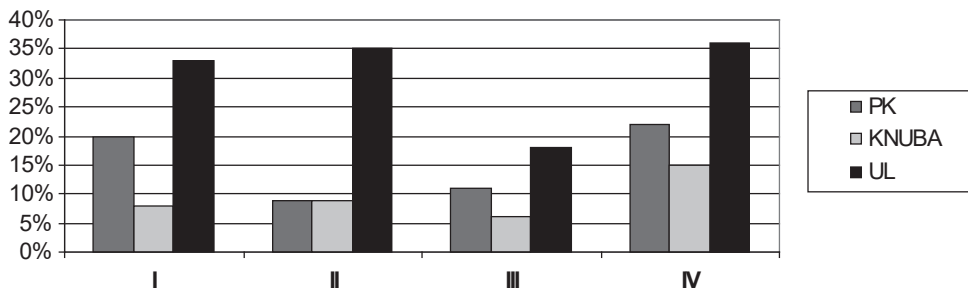
The last question (IV) was related to the presentation of an architectural work using a spatial model. This method was known by 9 students at the Cracow University of Technology, 8 at the Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, and 27 at the University of Aviation.



Caption:

I – first question, II – second question, III – third question, IV – fourth question

III. 1. Cumulative results of an interview conducted among students of the Universities – PK Cracow University of Technology, KNUBA – Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, UL – University of Aviation



Caption:

I – first question, II – second question, III – third question, IV – fourth question

III. 2. The results of the interview conducted among students of the Faculty of Architecture of the PK – Cracow University of Technology, KNUBA – Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, UL – Aviation University, depicting the percentage of answers showing the lack of knowledge on the topics indicated in the questions among students of individual universities before they started their studies

The research has shown that the knowledge of the principles of creating and interpreting a technical drawing and a spatial model, building an architectural form and composition is not an obvious phenomenon. The least known form of presenting the idea of an architectural work is a spatial model. Most of the students participating in the study could not construct and interpret technical drawings before starting their studies but knew the rules of composition. Less than half of the responding students knew the rules for building a form.

The knowledge among people interested in issues related to architecture varies. Most probably, the awareness among people who do not practice the profession of an architect and do not bind their plans with this occupation is even smaller. It allows us to believe that since knowledge allows us to discover the truth in architecture, its lack may lead to lies.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Lie and truth in architecture are concepts that contradict each other. They can be defined by confronting them – showing the contrast between them. However, the confrontation itself does not explain the deep meaning of the phenomena that determine mutual exclusion. To truly get to know them, it is necessary to experience them accompanied by emotions. Although they do not always allow for an objective assessment, they certainly give the phenomenon a deeper meaning. Deliberation over architecture evokes two research questions:

What is architecture in general? What makes it an expression of truth or lies?

Knowledge and experience in this field are necessary to answer these questions. Knowledge gained by striving to explain phenomena that are still not obvious.

As shown by the results of research, its condition varies even among people interested in the issues of architecture, which proves the necessity of sensitizing and educating the society on issues indicated in the work.

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A u t h o r s ' N o t e :

Justyna Kobylarczyk, Prof. D.Sc. Ph.D. Arch.

Author of books and numerous articles on the subject of assessing the quality of the housing environment, sustainable development, the impact of climate change on the way architectural structures are shaped and functioning, as well as the role of architecture in public spaces of cities. She has also developed her scientific interests in other areas of activities which include a didactic, scholar and creative work (in the field of project activities).

jkobylarczyk@pk.edu.pl

Dominika Kuśnierz-Krupa, Assoc. Prof. D.Sc. Ph.D. Arch.

Architect and Landscape Architect, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, Head of the Chair History Architecture, Urban Design and Art, Cracow University of Technology. Author of 5 monographs and about 100 scientific articles. Member of Association of Monument Conservators, ICOMOS, International Planning History Society and Urban History Association. Topical Editor (history of urban design, cultural landscape) of *Wiadomości Konserwatorskie – Journal of Heritage Conservation*. Expert of The Minister of Culture and National Heritage (protection of historic urban layouts and cultural landscape).

dkusnierz-krupa@pk.edu.pl

Alirza Mamedov, D.Sc. Ph.D.

Dean of Faculty of Urban and Spatial Planning, Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, the author of numerous publications on the subject of the cities, sustainable development and the role of architecture in public spaces. He has also developed his scientific interests in other areas of activities which include a didactic, scholar and creative work (in the field of project activities).

ali.mamedov@mistobuduvannya.net