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BEAUTIFUL LIES OF MEXICAN MURALS

PIĘKNE KŁAMSTWA MEKSYKAŃSKICH MURALI

Abstract

Architectural painting is an art that can change compositional relationships and the perception of architectural space. Starting from the 1920s, numerous murals were created in Mexico on the walls of architectural interiors and on facades of buildings. The article discusses the most important projects of this type. The analysis of selected examples refers to forms of projection of space on a plane and ways of integrating painting images with a building structure. Mexican experiences can be considered as local cultural specificity. However, the visual, artistic and aesthetic effects of these “beautiful lies” prove the great influence of painting on architectural space.

Keywords: architectural painting, illusion in architecture, Mexican architecture, space perception, spatial composition

Streszczenie

Malarstwo architektoniczne jest sztuką, która może zmieniać relacje kompozycyjne i percepcję przestrzeni architektonicznej. Począwszy od lat dwudziestych XX wieku, w Meksyku powstały liczne murale na ścianach wnętrz architektonicznych i na elewacjach budynków. Artykuł omawia najważniejsze tego typu realizacje. Analiza wybranych przykładów dotyczy form projekcji przestrzeni na płaszczyźnie i sposobów integracji obrazów malarskich ze strukturą budowlaną. Meksykańskie doświadczenia można uznać za miejscową specyfikę kulturową. Ale efekty wizualne, artystyczne i estetyczne tych „pięknych kłamstw” dowodzą wielkiej siły oddziaływania malarstwa na przestrzeń architektoniczną.

Słowa kluczowe: malarstwo architektoniczne, iluzja w architekturze, architektura Meksyku, percepcja przestrzeni, kompozycja przestrzenna

1. INTRODUCTION

At the border of architecture and art, there are a number of phenomena which can be considered in terms of truth and falsehood. This study is focused on presenting the relationship between architecture and painting, which relate to the authenticity of visual sensations.

Architecture is a three-dimensional phenomenon. Paintings are usually two-dimensional artifacts. In both cases, perception of a work constitutes the source of information and emotions. However, in the case of an architectural work, its perception should provide users with true information which will enable them to use such a space properly and safely. Art images, however, are not burdened with such an obligation because painting is not always about the truth of a message, which can be boring, obvious, or deceptive. Therefore, to

create artistic tensions, expressions of the form, and dynamics of the image, artists reach, among other things, for different ways of projecting space on a plane. They use them to attract the viewer's attention, arouse interest and influence their emotions.

An example of such artistic endeavors is represented by murals which were painted in Mexico. In the second decade of the 20th century, the movement of muralism developed here (*Movimiento Muralista Mexicano*). Architectural painting was created in historic and newly constructed architectural objects. These paintings, due to the methods of imaging space, the narrative character of representations and the scale of interference in building structures, change compositional relationships and modify perception of space. The unusual expression of Mexican murals, regardless of individual painting techniques of particular artists, lies in the power of illusion. In this case, however, this is not an excessive reference to realism, but rather 'drawing' a viewer into a fictional space which is built by using painting and poetry means.

The analysis of selected examples will make it possible to show how painting structures of murals influence the composition of space and its perception.

2. ILLUSION OF SPACE IN ARCHITECTURE AND ART

The process of space perception is connected with optical phenomena and psychology of vision. It may be subject to disturbances resulting from conditions of observation as well as misinterpretation of the observation. Sometimes an observer is also under the illusion of being deliberately misled by the author of the space or image shaping.

As early as in ancient times, constructors discovered methods to modify shapes of real space so as to obtain a desired effect in the process of perception through optical illusions, e.g. entasis and fluting in the construction of a column or bulging of the stylobate. Baroque implementations such as the square at the Capitoline Hill or St. Peter's Square in Rome. Nowadays, apart from modifying the geometry of space, there are also optical phenomena which are connected with the widespread use of glass in construction and new information technologies in the implementation of façades (e.g. LED screens).

Illusion as erroneous perception is used in art in various ways.¹ There are many examples in history, i.e. illusionist painting in Pompeii, Renaissance frescoes on the walls and vaults of churches, trompe l'oeil and quadrature.

It can be assumed that each painting image which depicts a fictitious space and is consciously incorporated into real space is a kind of 'lie' – an illusion of another reality. The collision of these two worlds – the reality of architecture and fiction of art – may result in optical and artistic consequences.

Paintings on the walls 'pretend' that something exists as a continuation or alternative space behind the plane on which they are painted. This peculiar transparency of the painting has the power to modify perception of space, especially when there are strong direct formal relations of the image with the real spatial context or when the realism of imaging fictitious space competes with reality.

¹ The topic of perception and visual illusions has been dealt with by many authors, even in classic works such as R. Arnheim's *Sztuka i percepcja wzrokowa* (*Visual Art and Perception*) or E.H. Gombrich's *Sztuka i złudzenie* (*Art and Illusion*).

3. MURALISM IN MEXICO

The phenomenon of the Mexican muralism has its roots in a special socio-political situation which developed in that country after the revolution in 1910–1917. The new progressive government decided to carry out big reforms aimed at rebuilding the state. Ambitious plans required acceptance and support of various social groups. Therefore, integrating people around the progressive program was an important task. At that time, the vast majority of the Mexican population was illiterate. The image was an effective way of disseminating information. The newly appointed Minister of Public Education José Vasconcelos recognized that the society can be educated through ideas and pictures placed on the walls of public buildings. The idea was justified because this form of social narrative had a centuries-old tradition in Mexico, both in pre-Hispanic and colonial times. In public spaces painting works began to fulfil an educational mission whose aim was to shape the national identity and support the ideas promoted by the state. Murals were recognized as an important communication tool by the state authorities, as an attractive means of creative expression by artists, and as an element of enriching visual arts of architectural and urban spaces by architects.²

The main representatives of this movement were three painters: Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, who developed the characteristic art and poetics of Mexican murals. Apart from them, murals were also created by many other painters who joined the mission of this type of creative activity. In their works they took up subjects related to the history of the nation, its struggle for independence, social justice, and civilization development. But the most important aspect of this artistic phenomenon was the scale of implementations, the number of works and the strength of artistic influence on architectural and urban space.

4. EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION

Over the past hundred years, dozens of murals painted on walls of architectural interiors and building façades have been created in Mexico as individual works, as cycles of works by one author or as collections of paintings by many authors. A large number of murals was painted in the most representative buildings of the capital city – the city of Mexico, such as the presidential palace (Palacio Nacional), Chapultepec Castle, Bellas Artes Palace, or the Supreme Court building (Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación).

4.1. MURALS PAINTED IN PRE-EXISTING HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The movement of muralism began in the 1920s with images painted on the walls of existing historic buildings in the centre of the city of Mexico, i.e. palaces, churches, and other colonial buildings. High walls of staircases, long sections of the cloister walls and vaults were best suited for this purpose.

The first collective manifestation of a new trend in architectural painting was created in Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso. The building was constructed at the turn of the 17th

² More about the intellectual revolution in Mexico in: X. de Anda Enrique, *Historia de la arquitectura mexicana*, Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona-Naucaupan 2008.

century as a Jesuit school. At the beginning of the 20th century, after the revolution, the building which served as high school at that time became the cradle of muralism. In the years 1922–1940, six painters made their paintings in its interior, including protagonists of Mexican muralism – Rivera and Orozco (Ill. 1).³

Rivera was one of the first to paint the ‘Creation’ mural (*La Creación*, 1922) in a large hall – Amfiteatro Simón Bolívar. The scale and spaciousness of the image filling the entire front wall with an apse ‘draw’ a viewer into the metaphysical space of the painting. Orozco, who in 1923–1926 created expressive paintings on the northern walls of the cloisters on three floors, put the most work into the creation of murals. Long strips of murals contain dramatic and grotesque scenes which refer to the socio-political situation of Mexico. The images which are connected in a continuous painting composition create a dynamic series of scenes containing figures, elements of architecture and landscape with variable depth of background.⁴

In the whole complex – in the halls, corridors, and staircases – murals representing different painting styles and illustrating the painting space in different ways were created. Their common feature is the influence on the composition of space and the perception of real architectural space.

Another important realization comprises murals which were created in the very centre of the city in Palacio Nacional. Author Diego Rivera combined scenes and figures connected with the history of Mexico, revolution, and class struggle all over the world (Ill. 2). The monumental work was created in a representative staircase leading from the courtyard to the first floor and the cloisters. It completely occupies three walls and fills the space of the staircase up to the vault. Pressed and dense scenes virtually push the frames of the paintings apart. Admittedly, subsequent layers of the painting are developed deeper creating the impression of a spectacle viewed from a certain height, however, multi-level scenes in the prevalent part of the work resemble theatrical decorations without any natural depth.

In the following years, Rivera also painted a series of murals on the walls of cloisters of the first floor, on which he depicted scenes from the lives of inhabitants of Mexico before the Spanish conquest. In this case, the paintings are not as dense as in the staircase and the significant share of landscapes in the background makes the painting space draw a viewer more into the world of illusion. This is further helped by the convention of illustrative narrative characterized by clear visuals.

An example of completely filling an architectural interior with one single artist’s murals is the chapel at El Hospicio Cabañas in Guadalajara. The neoclassical complex was founded in the 19th century as an orphanage. In the inner chapel in the years 1937–1939 Orozco painted 57 paintings. Stylistically homogeneous and in similar colours, the paintings occupy all internal surfaces, i.e. walls, vaults, telescopes, and the dome. The paintings adhere tightly to the construction elements of the object’s structure such as wall plinth strips, arches, pilasters or window and door stonework. The result is an impression of a transparent openwork structure open to the near and distant plans filled with expressive city landscapes and figures (Ill. 3). The most dynamic artistic form of the chapel is mural ‘Man in Flames’ (*Hombre en llamas*)

³ *El nacimiento del Muralismo Mexicano en San Ildefonso* [in:] Antigua Colegio de San Ildefonso, <http://www.sanildefonso.org.mx/acervo.php> (access: 7.12.2018).

⁴ Long paintings which can be seen gradually while moving along the cloister resemble the idea of emakimono – the Japanese art of creating handscrolls with story-paintings.



- Ill. 1. Mural by J.C. Orozco, Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, Mexico City (photo: L. Maluga)
 Ill. 2. Mural by D. Rivera, Palacio Nacional, Mexico City (photo: L. Maluga)

which was painted on the internal surface of the dome. The main character, who is depicted in a foreshortening perspective, surrounded by flames and a circle of rotating silhouettes, makes the space rise above the physical boundaries of the building.

4.2. MURALS CREATED FOR NEWLY CONSTRUCTED ARCHITECTURAL OBJECTS

From the beginning of the 1930s, there was an intensive development of construction in Mexico, which was supposed to meet new social needs. Schools, hospitals, and administrative buildings were constructed.

One of the first artists heavily involved in social changes was Juan O’Gorman, an architect and painter who designed several primary schools at that time in the spirit of functionalism.⁵ In the composition of architectural interiors he planned murals which were supposed to play an educational role. For their implementation, he invited young painters who created paintings presenting social and patriotic themes. The murals were made in vestibules and staircases.⁶ Their vividness and spaciousness were adapted to the sensitivity of children and their ability to understand images. In turn, Diego Rivera along with his students filled with murals the entrance halls and staircases of the newly constructed market hall ‘Abelardo L. Rodríguez’ in the city centre (1934). In this case, also the forms of projection of the painting space were adapted to the didactic needs, so clarity of the message took into account the sensitivity of simple people (Ill. 4).

At the end of the 1930s, the practice of combining new architecture with visual arts was referred to as ‘artistic integration’ (*integración plástica*). The main propagator of this idea Enrique Yáñez was a designer of, among other things, the building of the Trade Union of Mexican Electricians, in which the mural by D.A. Siqueiros entitled ‘Portrait of the bourgeoisie’ (*Retrato de la Burguesía*, 1938–1940) was made.⁷ In this case, the picture was painted on the walls of the staircase. It was supposed to be watched gradually when climbing the stairs. The composition structure of the work which blended in with the rigid geometry of the staircase optically broke the tectonic structure of the interior. Many points of convergence, many plans and many elements in various scales and different sizes created together a dynamic system which significantly limited perception of physical frames. It is especially the strong perspective of chimneys and energy masts on the ceiling that make the staircase ‘explode’ and stretch the space upwards.⁸

⁵ V. Jiménez, *Juan O’Gorman, vida y obra*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México Facultad de Arquitectura, México 2004.

⁶ The first implementations were published in the following books: *Escuelas Primarias 1932*, Mexico. Secretaría de Educación Pública, México 1933 and C. Mérida, *Frescos in Primary Schools by various artists*, Frances Toor Studios, México 1937; cf. J.M. Heredia, ‘*Integración plástica*’ o el problema de la orientación (I) [in:] Arquine, 21.08.2014, <https://www.arquine.com/integracion-plastica-o-el-problema-de-la-orientacion-i/> (access: 20.11.2018).

⁷ Yáñez defined the term in this way *integración plástica*: “... artistic integration in a nutshell means enriching architecture through the participation of other visual arts, which requires specialized artists.” M. Rodríguez Viqueira, *Arquitecto Enrique Yáñez de la Fuente, Memorias*, Noriega, México 1994, p. 56.

⁸ J.M. Heredia, ‘*Integración plástica*’ o el problema de la orientación (III) [in:] Arquine, 16.10.2014, <https://www.arquine.com/integracion-plastica-o-el-problema-de-la-orientacion-iii> (access: 20.11.2018).



Ill. 3. Murals by J.C. Orozco, El Hospicio Cabañas, Guadalajara (photo: L. Maluga)

Ill. 4. Market hall 'Abelardo L. Rodríguez', Mexico City (photo: L. Maluga)

Another small but unique implementation in terms of the spatial concept of placing the painting in a new building is the mural by Diego Rivera in Cárcamo de Dolores Pavilion. The building was part of an emerging aqueduct supplying the city of Mexico with water. Inside, the artist made a painting entitled 'Water, source of life' (*El agua, origen de la vida*) occupying four walls and the bottom of a square basin in the plan of the pool through which water was to flow. Appropriately applied paints made it possible to flood the painting with water.

Scenes on two opposite walls are combined into a continuous story illustrating the role of water in human life in a typical way for Rivera. The variable scale and size of the characters as well as a depth of the scenes shown result in the fact that the images are characterized by the specific author's spatiality. Only one wall with four sluices has a belt in the upper part which shows the architectural interior with a group of characters – designers and investment implementers. The perspective of the table, at which the characters stand, places the whole scene exactly under the ceiling on which an observer stands. The container floor imitates the bottom of the sea with numerous sea creatures. The basin which as a whole is deepened below the observer level creates the impression of the underground or underwater world – illusory spaces created in the artist's imagination (Ill. 5).

One of the great investments in the mid-20th century was a new campus of the largest Mexican university – Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) – University campus (*Ciudad Universitaria*). The complex consists of buildings which were designed by a group of young architects, supporters of functionalism.

The architecture of these objects is characterized by simple geometry of forms and the dominant orthogonal order. In their facade structures there are large flat walls that were suitable for placing painting compositions on them. Designers in the spirit of the idea of artistic integration invited artists to create murals on some of these walls. In the years 1952–1956, ten murals of different sizes made in different techniques were created on the campus.⁹

Most of the paintings cover the entire gable walls. They cut out from the real space of the building the surfaces that constitute their geometry, and introduce a different spatial reality instead – painting and narrative. Different artistic conventions of different artists create the illusion of materiality of the depicted scenes in a different way. In each case, however, a strong contrast is created between the dynamic layouts of the painting composition and the harsh simplicity of architecture (Ill. 6). This type of expression draws the attention of the public and enlivens the perception of the entire campus space.

The UNAM Central Library is a special object in this complex. All four facades of the rectangular building are covered with murals. The author of the monumental mosaic made of colorful natural pebbles (about 4,000 m²) is Juan O'Gorman.¹⁰ A picture that was created on the walls shows the history of Mexico from pre-Hispanic times to the present day and a vision of its civilization development. The composition of the mural has nothing to do with the internal structure of the building and makes up a compact arrangement of individual scenes and narrative elements of including architectural objects. The main southern façade with two huge wheels has a unique character. These forms, as well as the whole block with a small superstructure, represent the simplified head shape of the Aztec god of rain Tlaloc,

⁹ *Murales, Campus Central Ciudad Universitaria*, <http://www.comitedeanalisis.unam.mx/murales.html> (access: 28.05.2020).

¹⁰ Cf.: V. Jiménez, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–61.



Ill. 5. Mural by D. Rivera, Cárcamo de Dolores, Mexico City (photo: L. Maluga)

Ill. 6. Mural by D.A. Siqueiros on the UNAM building, 1952, Mexico City (photo: L. Maluga)

whose stone images adorn the ancient pyramids of Mexico (Ill. 7). The library mural depicts the architectural form. Its art creates an independent visual structure, which admittedly fits into the spatial layout of the campus although it maintains autonomy and is governed by its internal order and specific spatiality.

Another painting work that appropriates the architectural space completely is also the last great work of D.A. Siqueiros in the Polyforum Cultural Siqueiros cultural center realized in 1966–1971.¹¹ The building in the form of a twelve-sided body is covered with murals outside and inside (Ill. 8). As many as twelve expressive relief paintings related to culture, nature and religion were created on the facades, whereas inside the main space of the building, Siqueiros made a monumental mural named ‘March of Humanity’ (*La Marcha de la Humanidad*) covering all side walls and the ceiling (altogether approx. 3,300 m² of the painting). The theme of the painting, like the murals outside, has political and philosophical overtones. It is devoted to social revolution and human struggle for a better tomorrow although attention is drawn primarily to the artistic spectacle. The structure of the paintings joins individual planes into one dynamic composition creating a total painting space. The painter’s specific style gives the space movement and depth. At the wall level it is dominated by dozens of characters interspersed with biomorphic forms. All that crowd seems to be moving and pushing against the spatial frame of the room. On the ceiling, in turn, the formal structure loosens and “rises” visually increasing the height of the room. The scale and completeness of artistic creation is an example of a strong influence by means of painting on the perception of architectural space.

The latest collection of murals is the seat of the Supreme Court (*Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación*) in the center of Mexico City.¹² The building was erected in years 1936–41 and it was then that the first murals were created. In the year of inauguration, four murals in the main vestibule were made by José Clemente Orozco, including ‘National riches’ (*Las riquezas nacionales*) and ‘Workers’ struggle’ (*La lucha de los trabajadores*) and in 1945 in the next lobby American painter George Biddle painted a picture consisting of three parts separated by pilasters ‘War and peace’ (*La guerra y la paz*).

The collection of murals grew significantly in the first decade of the 21st century by the work of six artists. The new works were created in two halls and four three-story staircases. All the works of individual artists are multi-element, i.e. they are made of a series of paintings whose divisions result from the structure of the interior.

Of the two sets of works placed on one level of the walls, Santiago Carbonell’s murals stand out. They surround the lobby area with a series of realistic representations. Instead, they change the scale of imaging in individual parts or introduce painting plans, visually separating fragments of murals from the building structure (e.g. window frames).

Four works carried out in staircases (three-flight broken stairs) consist of three strips corresponding to three floors. One strip between floors forms a more or less continuous image structure within one story. The bends of the walls on the platforms by 90 degrees sometimes constitute a border between the next segment of the composition. Sometimes, certain narrative elements or compositional divisions pass through these bends, and sometimes the image flows smoothly onto the next sections of the walls.

¹¹ *Historia* [in:] Polyforum Siqueiros, <http://www.polyforumsiqueiros.com.mx/conocenos/historia/> (access: 15.11.2018).

¹² M. Sánchez Lozano (ed.), *Murales de la Suprema Corte de Justicia*, Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación, México 2010.



- III. 7. Biblioteca Central UNAM, Mexico City (photo: L. Maluga)
- III. 8. Polyforum Siqueiros, Mexico City (photo: L. Maluga)
- III. 9. Mural by R. Cauduro, Suprema Corte de Justicia, Mexico City (photo: Benjamin Flores, <https://www.proceso.com.mx/557157/restauran-los-murales-de-la-justicia>, access: 2020.06.10.06)

Among these four complex murals, a certain staircase stands out, in which two works by Rafael Cauduro were carried out, namely 'History of justice in Mexico' or 'Seven crimes and one more' (*La historia de la justicia en México* or *Siete crímenes más uno*, 2010).¹³

The artist on three levels in ten paintings showed a series of drastic scenes related to the police crossing the borders of law (torture, kidnapping, killings, rape, terror, etc.). In order to enhance the expression of the situations shown, he manipulates the projection geometry of individual interiors relative to the actual staircase geometry. The space of the staircase has been virtually expanded with a number of interiors forming a kind of labyrinth. They are shown in various perspective projections. Some images combine with the real context with a similar arrangement of interior space and a similar perspective. Most have their own perspective layout. Tilted horizon lines and changing vanishing points disturb the stability of perception of staircase geometry, verticality, level, and balance. The paintings on the walls by their nature have a fixed perspective geometry. However, for the viewer moving up the stairs, the perspective of the real context changes. As a result, the same image seen from different floors between balustrades is perceived differently each time in the relation between real space and fictional space (Ill. 9).

In addition to the realistic reproduction of elements of the scenery (*trompe l'oeil*), murals are enriched with elements of staffage (brick wall fragments, wooden joinery, glass fiber skulls). All in all, the entire three-story series of paintings is an extraordinary perceptual experience both in terms of perceiving the structure of space and finding the boundary between reality and illusion.

5. SPACE IMAGES ON MURALS

Analyzing the relation of the mural to the spatial context, two main mediation elements can be identified, such as the way in which space is depicted in the painting and the painter's painting technique.

As it was mentioned in the introduction, one of the important elements of the illusion of space in a picture is the method of its projection on a plane. Mexican painters in their representations used different ways of showing spatiality depending on an individual form of expression and the need to convey specific content.¹⁴

Therefore, the following solutions can be found:

- images of space are constructed in accordance with the principles of perspective,
- various kinds of perspective projection deformations, especially in the work of Orozco,
- compression of the image depth referring to theatrical scenery or even to a relief, e.g. murals by Diego Rivera at the Palacio Nacional,
- the spatialization of the flat composition with elements of relief and staffage, e.g. a series of paintings on the walls of Polyforum Siqueiros or the murals of Cauduro in Suprema Corte de la Justicia, and

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 136–157.

¹⁴ A broader discussion of the formal aspects of the relationship of murals with architecture and urban space is provided in: L. Maluga, *Mural jako forma plastyczna w przestrzeni architektonicznej i urbanistycznej Meksyku*, Architectus, 2019, no. 3 (59), pp. 41–56.

- flat compositions whose spatiality (thanks to visual restitution) is a matter of attitude and imagination of the viewer, e.g. two huge paintings by Siqueiros displayed in the entrance area of La Tallera in Cuernavaca.¹⁵

A dominant feature of Mexican murals is the vividness and poetics of images that create mirages more or less expressive but in each case strongly affecting perception. Of course, the content of the images – pathetic, dramatic or allegorical scenes – justify reaching for very diverse forms of artistic expression. The visual effects are important in this case.

We can notice that in the early murals the artists used a clear language of imaging addressed to the uneducated recipient. The illustrative and narrative character of the paintings made it easier for the recipient to surrender to the illusion of the scenes depicted, and thus to "enter" into the depth of the painting. At the same time, the spaciousness of the murals, especially in the historic interiors, did not affect the tectonics of the building. This is the case, for example, in Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso and in El Hospicio Cabañas, where building and structural elements have turned into an openwork structure whose clearances have allowed artists to achieve wall transparency.

Later, however, the painting language becomes more expressive and the geometric context of functionalist architecture is more "attacked" by the internal dynamics of painting compositions and forms of space imaging. Giving in to the illusion of a picture requires a greater aesthetic awareness and attitude from the viewer. The exception among the latest works is the series of Carbonell murals in Suprema Corte de Justicia. In this case, the artist uses realistic images, even approaching hyperrealism.

It should be noted that a new generation of muralists has grown up in Mexico over the past 20 years.¹⁶ The images created by them are often devoid of the depth of perspective representations and narrative situations flattened to one layer of painting. Ornamentation and formal solutions referring to graffiti play a big role in such murals. The illusion of painting spaces from an earlier period is replaced by the literal character of applied graphics, such as found on book covers or in press illustrations.

6. SUMMARY

The analyzes carried out above were to show how the illusion in the architectural space created by means of painting turns into "beautiful lies." Disturbances and modifications of spatial relations as a result of mixing real space with painting space were made consciously by Mexican muralists. Their achievements allow us to enrich our knowledge about the spatial and artistic effects of art interference in architectural structures.

Mexican murals, due to their size and connection with the structure of the building, have a much greater impact on the architectural space than a simple picture which is hanging on the wall. As a result of blending the painting with building tissue, formal integration takes place, which leads to a modification of compositional relationships in space

¹⁵ La Tallera, studio-museum in the former studio of Siqueiros in Cuernavaca designed by T. Escobedo (2010).

¹⁶ A new trend in young artists' painting in Mexico's public space is called neomuralism. Cf.: C. Arvide, *Muros Somos: Los nuevos muralistas Mexicanos*, La Cifra Editorial, México 2017.

and affects the perception of the interior and architectural form. The presented examples show various visual effects of such artistic activities.

An important feature of modern Mexican murals is their spatiality. This feature distinguishes them from earlier paintings in architectural objects. In pre-Hispanic and colonial architecture, flat and ornamental performances prevailed. In the twentieth-century murals, the narrative role of the image required greater suggestiveness of the representations and "drawing" the viewer deep into the fictional painting space. That is why the artists paid great attention to displaying three-dimensionality and depth of representations, regardless of the space projection technique, artistic transformations and painting methods used.

It is worth emphasizing once again the artistic awareness of architects who integrated the movement of muralism with the development of modern architecture. The unique coincidence of the socio-political situation in Mexico and the emergence of a generation of outstanding painters resulted in such rich artistic achievements.

Mexican experiences can be considered as local cultural specificity. On the other hand, however, the visual, artistic and aesthetic effects of these "beautiful lies" show the universal value of art co-creating architectural and urban space.

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