

JACEK KWIATKOWSKI

ORCID: 0000-0001-8221-2194

University of Warsaw, Poland

MARTA LANDOWSKA

ORCID: 0000-0001-8407-7803

SIMA (Studio of Architecture and Interior Design), Poland

NOT SOLIDS, NOT A CUBATURE, NOT A FORM – A NEW PERCEPTION OF COMMEMORATIVE SPACES

NIE BRYŁY, NIE KUBATURA, NIE FORMA – NOWA PERCEPCJA PRZESTRZENI KOMMEMORATYWNYCH

Abstract

The subject of the article is the concept of a new formula for commemorative space based on new technologies generating interactive space. The aim of the research is an attempt at intellectual discourse with the growing phenomenon of the disappearance of the symbolism of the *sacrum* in architecture and urban planning of spatial forms related to memorial sites. Working Methods is a critical analysis of sources relating to contemporary communities of commemorative spaces. The result of the analyzes and considerations is the functional and spatial concept of the Lost Children's Memory Park.

Keywords: commemorative spaces, memory architecture, theme of death in art

Streszczenie

Tematem artykułu jest koncepcja nowej formuły przestrzeni kommemoratywnej opartej na nowych technologiach generujących przestrzeń interaktywną. Celem badań jest próba dyskursu intelektualnego z narastającym zjawiskiem zanikania symboliki *sacrum* w architekturze i urbanistyce form przestrzennych związanych z miejscami pamięci. Metodą pracy jest krytyczna analiza źródeł dotyczących współczesnych zespołów przestrzeni kommemoratywnych. Rezultatem przeprowadzonych analiz i rozważań jest koncepcja funkcjonalno-przestrzenna Parku pamięci utraconych dzieci.

Słowa kluczowe: przestrzenie kommemoratywne, architektura pamięci, motyw śmierci w sztuce

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE LIE OF ART, THE TRUTH OF ARCHITECTURE

The bounds of truth and lie, both in the existential and intellectual discourse of a modern man are always very close and are always very difficult to define. The famous words by Pontius Pilate – *what is truth?* – have gone down in human history without finding an answer to this day. In the not so distant future avant-garde art claimed that the abstract

was supposed to be *the truth of art*, an answer to the lie of academism whose lyricism and subjective realism of genre scenes and landscapes did not speak with true feelings but through objects – symbols. When P. Picasso speaks his famous words “*Art is a lie that makes us realize truth*”, he wants to turn attention to the human being as the sole depositary of truth – art. The *truth of the material* promoted by the constructivists – *eye under the control of touch* – was the *body* of art, also within the absolutely non-figurative meaning. The suprematist architecture, in turn, was supposed to combine the Vitruvian triad of *utility, beauty, stability* with the quintessence of art that is forever alive, stemming from the *primal emotion feeling*,¹ one of the main axioms of Kazimierz Malewicz’s philosophy. Thus, it is the man, according to the creators of avant-garde, that is not only the creator of art, not only its critic, but also the environment in which it – the art – grows, the only one in which it can thrive. The death of an artist does not stop art, it does not take its life, it deprives it of one of its forms of expression – art may only die as a consequence of the total annihilation of humankind. Death, however, has become one of the most frequent topics of art since antiquity.

2. CONTEMPORARY COMMEMORATIVE SPACES

Death has always intrigued people, that is why it has appeared so often in art. During the Hellenic period, death in art developed into pathos and sympathy for the death of an enemy that is about to die. When Christianity entered the history of humankind, death *sacrum* appeared, through veneration for the *History of Salvation* personified by dying Jesus Christ – saving the world from eternal death through the sacrifice of his death on the cross. Since then, each death in Euro-Atlantic art has referred to that death and remains permanently enriched with the mysticism of transcendence after death into two metaphysical worlds: the world of good and the world of evil. The 20th century – which brought about the previously unknown notion of genocide, two world war hecatombs – caused that there is no language of symbols in the contemporary art that would be appropriate to depict both the scale and cruelty of killing. When determining our present day in the building of commemorative spaces, what you should notice is the escape from the religious symbolism (although, possibly, you can never escape it completely) towards the creation of universal rhetoric, connecting the human kind under the term *human being*. All of the most remarkable remembrance spaces of the last twenty five years have been established in this spirit. These are compositions speaking with the rhythm of repetitive systems of solids, affecting the imagination of the user of the space with the repetitive system of sense sequences. It is the multiplication of the message that builds the tension, the recurring motif acts like a nostalgic, repeated call for peace, brotherhood and freedom from the depth of our history. This is the spirit motivating the design of such spaces as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas), National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery in the state of Alabama, Memorial of the Victims of the Violence in Mexico, International Memorial of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, referred to as the “Ring of Remembrance”, devoted to

¹ J. Kwiatkowski, *Oko pod kontrolę dotyku duszy... Suprematyzm we współczesnym dyskursie intelektualnym* [*Eye under control form the touch of a soul. Suprematism in the contemporary intellectual discourse*], Wydział Geografii i Studiów Regionalnych UW, Warszawa 2013, p. 167.

the victims of World War I, or the National Pentagon Memorial 9/11 commemorating victims of the attack of 11 September near Pentagon.

In Berlin, the design by Peter Eisenman in the form of a remembrance space, is located in the strict old centre of the capital of Germany, between Potsdamer Platz and the Brandenburg Gate, which has an important symbolic meaning. Nearly 2 ha (19,000 m²) of space is often the size of many European historic city and town centre districts which have been symbolically turned into a silent “cemetery” – in the case of P. Eisenman defined by the number of 2,711 concrete cuboids divided by narrow passages for visitors. The cuboids have a similar length and width, referring to the size of a human silhouette, however differing in height (from 20 to nearly 400 cm). The repetitiveness of these two dimensions helps give the entire composition an orderly communication system based on the orthogonal matrix. In several places it disintegrates purposefully as an intended move by the designer. The differences in height help create spontaneous interactions among the visitors, which is part of the intellectual message of this work of art. The initiative that was originally a grass-roots initiative in the intellectual circles focused around Lea Rosh and Eberhard Jäackel, started to crystallize after the unification of Berlin when the area of the future project has been regained after the removal of the border strip between the western and eastern parts of the capital of Germany².

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery in Alabama is dedicated to the commemoration of over 4,075 documented acts of lynch on Afro-American population in the years 1877–1950. Its author Bryan Stevenson admits that he has drawn the inspiration from P. Eisenman’s Berlin project. He situated his design (with the support from a non-profit organisation Equal Justice Initiative – EJI) in the place of a former slave market in Montgomery. The centre of gravity of the entire composition is directed at the main building on a rectangular plan, with open walls, in which – in the orthogonal order – 805 cuboid steles made of steel are placed, hanging down and swaying rhythmically on steel cables, each of them symbolising one of the US counties in which a documented lynch took place.

The Memorial of the Victims of the Violence located in the capital of Mexico and opened in April 2013 has a similar message. Formally, it is devoted to the huge number of victims of drug wars which are one of the main contemporary social problems in Mexico. It is estimated that over the period of less than 4 years 70,000 people lost their lives in this war³. The authors, Gaeta Springall Architects, used – just like P. Eisenman – a large area covering 1.5 ha. The scenery and significance, however, are different. The user of this space is in a park, a grove, among magnificent old trees, however a different forest enters this calm and nostalgic form – a forest of brutal cuboid steel pylons that are close to trees in size, symbolising the ceaseless and inevitable presence of death, this is a forest that surrounds to kill, similarly as in William Shakespeare’s play *Macbeth*, terror next to harmony, presence of killers next to the living, in the same society, among neighbours, acquaintances, friends (here also the use of steel as material for making weapons to kill). This dichotomy of life and death is additionally emphasised by the patina of rust – an equivalent of the patina of memory, and through the use of lighting elements in the surface of the path for visitors, the long, illuminating ribbons of

² It was not until 25 June 1999 that the Bundestag passed a resolution to build the monument, and the monument itself was unveiled on 12 May 2005.

³ *Mexico Drug War Memorial Angers Relatives* [in:] Sky News, <https://news.sky.com/story/mexico-drug-war-memorial-angers-relatives-10449506> (accessed 21.06.2020).

which resemble flashes of shots that end someone's life. The huge plaque – the only horizontal form among steel obelisks – plays also an important role: this is where families of victims may remember their loved ones, shout out their pain, refine this memory in the form of an epitaph written with white chalk on the patina of rust.

In “Ring of Remembrance”, on the other hand, the recurring motif is the plaque with names of fallen soldiers. The inauguration of the memorial took place on 11 November 2014. The plaques overlap, protruding from the inner side of a ring that is several dozen meters in diameter – just like books pulled out absentmindedly by their spines in a library. Nearly 200 plaques remind visitors about the huge number of 580,000 soldiers who lost their lives on the western front in the years 1914–1918. Philippe Prost's design assumed three main compositional elements with a minimal expression. These are: the completely raw, toned-down external body of the ring, devoid of any decoration or accents that would catch the eye. In opposition to it, the inner ring collects only golden plaques with engraved names of soldiers (each of them is uplit in the evening, creating additionally a ring of light). The third element is the narrow 1.5 m walkway accompanying the plaques, integrated with the ring, enabling the visitor to reach every plaque and every name.

The last of the examples selected in this group of installations is the National Pentagon Memorial 9/11 located on a square next to Pentagon in Washington⁴. The recurrent motif is also the leading element here, but at the same time it is the subtlest of all the examples. Designers Julie Beckman and Keith Kaseman from New York (Kaseman Beckman Advanced Strategies) placed 184 benches symbolising the number of victims of the attack on a nearly 2-acre square. Each bench is uplit, each is signed with the name of the victim it symbolises, the direction and place of inscriptions are correlated with each of the victims also in terms of the place in which it was located at the time of death. When visitors read names of victims that were on board the airplane at that tragic moment – they face skywards, and to be exact – the trajectory of the fated flight. The names of those who died in the building can be read when visitors face the building. The shape of the benches, their form is very understated. The seats themselves – all in the same rectangular shapes, in the form of strips that look as if cut out of the square surface, have no legs, they constitute a type of independent supports made of steel with the floor material in the upper layer, lifted to the usable height of park bench seats (410–450 mm, with slight tilt included). From a distance they resemble seating handrails on yachts or low waves dancing around the square, like dorsal fins of invisible dolphins. The water motif is not just intuitive here – under each bench, there is a small rectangular hollow filled with real water.

3. FAMILIARISING WITH THE PHENOMENON OF DEATH, EVERYDAY LIFE RHETORIC

As the great religious systems erode, the user of art space is becoming familiarised with the phenomenon of death. Generations X and Y are trying to cover up the creative void that followed the *baby boomers* generation with trivializing slogans which in fact take the symbolism

⁴ *Pentagon Memorial* – Arlington, Virginia [in:] 9/11 Memorial Sites on Waymarking.com, https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM4VWV_Pentagon_Memorial_Arlington_Virginia (accessed 07.07.2020).

of death outside the sphere of sacrum. *Is life a slow death?*⁵, writes Tatiana Jachyra in her book *Theatre of the Resurrected* – therefore death can be done in instalments, just like the payment for a fridge or TV. The commemoration of death includes today a context that is even grotesque, for example when we look at sculptures of Horses of Honour in the *Horses of Honor* public art and memorial in Chicago⁶ – although they are life-sized, they have been made of fibre glass in colourful designs, placed in different locations all over the city, and they are more likely to attract child's play than reflection on the death of police officers in the line of duty – to whom the monument is devoted. The contemporary architecture of the “last offices”⁷ does not warn you – *memento mori*, it does not scare you off, it does not make you fall in reverie, it does not build a climate to provoke reflection on death, but it is looking for friendly space. Ecological green roofs let you escape, forget, or even celebrate the sterility and culture of a unilaterally understood minimisation of the carbon footprint. The triviality of form may be found also, with some embarrassment, in *The Arch for Arch* (design: Indaba), by assumption – as we should assume – “triumphal” to honour the fight conducted by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, against apartheid, a structure located in the public space in front of the cathedral in Cape Town in South Africa. The structure resembles more a wicker basket frame than a model of glory, its purpose is to commemorate the struggle against racial segregation that was paid for with deaths of many people. Although the installation composed of 14 wooden arches refers very symbolically to 14 chapters of the constitution, however the openwork bowl does not form either a vault, or an arch, or even a gate, and unfortunately it does not generate even a grain of pathos⁸. Among the examples presented, the commemorative places and spaces of generations X and Y of the recent years, only the last one – although unusually cheerful and relaxing in reception – may be called intellectually justified. This refers to the *Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain* in London⁹. It is a form of water installation in a park, on a plan of a loop in the hybrid shape of a circle circumscribed around an equilateral triangle. The nodes of the former triangle that have lost its recognisable outline have been widened for a stream constantly circulating in a closed circuit. In other places narrower sections, small cascades also appear. This otherwise positive message about transiency remembers the serene figure of Princess Diana, her personal charm and the suddenly interrupted youth¹⁰.

⁵ T. Jachyra, *Teatr wskrzeszonych*, Wydawnictwo Replika, Poznań 2016.

⁶ The main monument is also located in Chicago. Each Horse of Honour is personally devoted to a specific police officer who died or was seriously injured in the line of duty.

⁷ Death in new aesthetics – Design of a new Gorzów crematorium with a green roof; Design by: architect Marcin Bartz, Pracownia Architektury Marcin Bartz in Poznań; *Na dachu gorzowskiego krematorium urosnie trawa* [in:] Gazeta Lubuska, <https://gazetalubuska.pl/na-dachu-gorzowskiego-krematorium-urosnie-trawa/ar/7870040> (accessed 12.07.2020).

⁸ *The Arch for The Arch: the story behind a tribute to Archbishop Tutu* [in:] Brand South Africa, <https://www.brandsouthafrica.com/people-culture/people/the-arch-for-the-arch-the-story-behind-a-tribute-to-archbishop-tutu> (accessed 12.07.2020).

⁹ *Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain / Gustafson Porter + Bowman* [in:] ArchDaily, <https://www.archdaily.com/803509/diana-princess-of-wales-memorial-fountain-gustafson-porter-plus-bowman> (accessed 22.06.2020).

¹⁰ Google search: Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain – London, https://www.google.com/search?q=Diana,+Princess+of+Wales+Memorial+Fountain+-+London&client=firefox-b-d&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewj9mojguc_qAhVixMQBHcyvAyMQ_AUoAXoECBkQA-w&biw=1920&bih=966 (accessed 22.06.2020).

The familiarisation of death is also brought by new designs of cremation urns for human ashes which increasingly follow the standards of applied art taken from the format of kitchen gadgets¹¹ more than from the solemnity of cemeteries. The words of Laura Pawela, an artist and author of the sculpture installation entitled “Satan”, made of wooden elements of seats and backrests of chairs, i.e. furniture that accompanies us through our lives, emphatically prove that the barrier of desacralization of death has been broken. She perversely points out that “Death is a rewarding subject (...). Hearing the sound of this word, everyone quails, they look down with sadness... and they run quickly to share their nostalgia on Facebook in the form of necro-self-promotion.”¹²

Contemporary art is no longer the same art it was even 100 years ago. You have to look for new means of expression when, as Alvin Toffler writes, “elitism and permanence are dead (...) when the astronomical number of artistic facts is mass-produced, released into circulation, and consumed (...) they are used up to a various degree, they are easily replaced, and they do not have any unique value or inner truth contained in them.”¹³

We are currently entering the post-art era which lacks transcendence, because as Donald Kuspit mentions in his book entitled *The End of Art*, quoting E. Fromm: “transcendence requires ‘acquiring specifically human skills’ thanks to which individual leave the role of only having been created this way by nature and by the society. Post-art lacks such features and it does nothing to promote them and this way help to humanize.”¹⁴

4. EVENTS AND SEASONAL SPATIAL INSTALLATIONS – AESTHETICS OF THE “MIDDLE”

Temporary solutions and seasonal events play quite an important role, the role of a link between generations as well as a unifying force for both main trends in the design of commemorative spaces today. The two main trends discussed earlier that we refer to here, although they do not officially function in the literature on the subject under independent names as yet, may be characterised in the following way: the first one – as a conservative, or a classical trend, and the second one – as a trend of progressive aesthetics (seeking friendly space) or, in other words, *panta rhei* aesthetics.

The most interesting examples of the aesthetics of the “middle” include undoubtedly the spatial installation entitled “ComingWorldRememberMe” by a Belgian artist Koen Vanmechelen in Ypres in Belgium, devoted to 600,000 soldiers fallen when nerve gas was used in this place during World War I¹⁵. This installation, created to commemorate 100th anniversary

¹¹ *Ghost Urns project – Project by Anna Marinienko 2018*, https://ladnydom.pl/wnetrza/1,101999,10960109,Z_designem_w_ostatnia_podroz.html?i=0 (accessed 12.06.2020).

¹² L. Pawela, *Atrakcyjność wizualna śmierci [Visual attractiveness of death]* [in:] A. Warnke, *Igranie sztuki ze śmiercią [Art dicing with death]*, <https://culture.pl/pl/artykul/igranie-sztuki-ze-smiercia> (accessed 12.06.2020).

¹³ A. Toffler, *Szok przyszłości [Shock of the future]*, Zysk i S-ka Wydawnictwo, Poznań 1998, p. 177.

¹⁴ D. Kuspit *Koniec Sztuki [End of Art]*, Narodowe Centrum Kultury; Muzeum Narodowe w Gdańsku, Gdańsk 2006, p. 166.

¹⁵ *Huge art installation commemorates victims of Ypres battles during WWI* [in:] Deutsche Welle, <https://www.dw.com/en/huge-art-installation-commemorates-victims-of-ypres-battles-during-wwi/a-43499818> (accessed 12.07.2020).

of the struggle, carries a number of deeply moving meanings. Over the space of over two hectares, exactly on the line of the former trenches of the belligerents, a surface appeared, “paved” with clay figurines of hunched up soldiers with their heads leaning against their arms with which they were hugging their knees. At the same time, each figurine resembles a clenched fist – both due to its shape and size. The number of figurines matches the number of soldiers killed. Each of them bears a new identification tag corresponding to a real soldier who lost his life there. Students and artists from all over the world were involved in the work – they left their details next to the given soldier on the new identification tags embossed on the clay figurines. This is why the huge commemorative reach of this initiative should be appreciated. This “paving” of human existences is pouring out from an open, burst edge of a cocoon – an egg measuring 7–8 metres along its longer axis, made of the same material as the figurines, an equivalent of – as it can be surmised – a contemporary version of the *Pandora’s Box*. In order to visit the entire exhibition, you must step onto this “paving” with your own feet, which has an additional dimension of obligation and interdependence of generations between the living and the dead.

In similar rhetoric of shocking with large numbers, we can find grouped small items showing the full number of victims in *Boot laying memorial*¹⁶. It was a temporary installation showing over 7,500 soldier boots with small US flags stuck in them, arranged in neat rows in a stadium in Fort Bragg to commemorate over 3,000 heroes from different services who died during the 9/11 attack. The boot motif also appears in another temporary exhibition of ISIMSIZ in Turkey, designed by a local artist Vahit Tuna, presented by Kahve Dünyası and the Yanköse group. In the centre of Istanbul, on two elevations of a high-rise office building that have been excluded from natural functioning, 440 pairs of women’s footwear appeared as part of an event, equally spaced on the white surface of a display board, which from a distance suggests a regular, repetitive building ornament. The number and the shoes are a protest against the huge scale of domestic violence in Turkey, as a result of which 440 women lost their lives at the hands of their husbands and partners – all just in 2018. The artist himself admits that he noticed this deep problem in his country due to – as he described – an unimaginably high number of appeals for help that appeared on social fora¹⁷. Domestic violence is a daily occurrence in Turkey and as many as 40% of women experience it according to official statistics. In his message, the author refers to the old Turkish tradition of throwing out the shoes of someone who has died as a sign of mourning. There is also a different message here, most of the footwear fits in the so-called *dress code* in force in large corporations, therefore alluding that the shoes were owned by women who were working and were financially independent of their husbands.

The problem of domestic violence concerns not just Turkey, a similar protest took place in the Netherlands in Amsterdam and was aimed at commemorating 520 children who indirectly or directly lost their lives as a result of domestic violence, with such a difference, however, that this number, close to that from the previously mentioned installation,

¹⁶ R. Riley, *7,500 boots are on display at Fort Bragg to honor US service members killed since 9/11* [in:] Task & Purpose, <https://taskandpurpose.com/unsung-heroes/7-500-boots-are-on-display-at-fort-bragg-to-honor-us-service-members-killed-since-9-11> (accessed 02.07.2020).

¹⁷ K. Judita, *There’s A Haunting Memorial in Turkey to Commemorate 440 Women Killed by Their Own Husbands Last Year* [in:] Bored Panda, https://www.boredpanda.com/440-shoes-in-turkey-memorial-for-women-killed-by-men/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic (accessed 02.07.2020).

here concerned the whole decade and not just one year as it was in Turkey¹⁸. The creator and coordinator of the project exhibited in 2016 are Saskia Stolz and Power of Art House. The creators used here simple formats in the shape and size of white T-shirts with names of dead children written on them and a sign of a cross on each – referring to an obituary. “T-shirts-obituaries” are hanging on lines like freshly laundered clothes. The symbolism is enhanced by the location – you cannot get close to them or touch them because the lines on which they are hanging have been extended over an axial layout water reservoir in front of the museum of contemporary art (The Museumplein in Amsterdam). In the next example, it is impossible not to notice the far-reaching inspiration through virtual repetition of the same idea with simplified T-shirts hanging on lines, this time for an event devoted to victims of road traffic accidents in Kazakhstan in 2017¹⁹. To conclude the series of examples of temporary forms, it is worth stopping on a Paris example inspired by the Statue of Liberty by Jeff Koons of November 2016.²⁰ We can see just a hand here, but through its arrangement we can correctly read the inspiration mentioned above. Instead of a torch, as in the case of the original, the hand is holding a bouquet of huge plastic tulips, resembling children’s balloons in shape, but much larger (34 x 27 feet). The installation is dedicated to victims of terrorist attacks in France and its title is *Bouquet of Tulips*. The inspiration drawn from the Statue of Liberty as a form of timeless gift is not an accident here – this time the *Bouquet of Tulips* is a gift of a young American artist to Paris and the whole of France.

5. NOT A SOLID AND NOT A FORM – SPATIAL CREATION TO REPLACE THE PATHOS OF REMEMBRANCE

In the master’s thesis at the Wrocław Academy of Fine Arts that has received an award for the best diploma in 2019, entitled *There is no death*, its author, a graduate from the Faculty of Graphics and Media Arts²¹, Anna Szalwa, presents her own recipe for “elimination” of the notion of death. For this purpose, she shocks directly with the new space taken from our individual imagination. She abandons the form, abandons the solid and the pathos of a rhythmic composition. She builds an intermedia performance composed of a compilation of three spatial forms, the space of imagination, the space of memories, and the space of reality, the linear path of a user following within the space of her exhibition – in the space of art. She reaches into the space created *postmodum molitione* almost in the same way as constructivists and suprematists from 100 years ago did, maybe using slightly different media. In her work, she illustrated among other things 11 dreams told to her by invited persons, creating a new

¹⁸ M. van Gurp, *Small Victims, Large Numbers: the raw truth about child abuse* [in:] Osocio, <https://osocio.org/message/small-victims-large-numbers-the-raw-truth-about-child-abuse/> (accessed 02.07.2020).

¹⁹ *Activists launch art installation of 938 victims of road accidents in awareness raising campaign* [in:] AKI-press News Agency, https://m.aki-press.com/news/598889:Activists_launch_art-installation_of_938_victims_of_road_accidents_in_awareness_raising_campaign/ (accessed 08.07.2020).

²⁰ R. Donadio, *Jeff Koons is Giving Sculpture to Paris to Remember Terror Victims* [in:] The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/arts/design/jeff-koons-gift-to-paris-bouquet-of-tulips-terror-attacks.html> (accessed 08.07.2020).

²¹ A. Szalwa, *ŚMIERCINIE MA!* [in:] VTV [YouTube], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tde7B7rd10E> (accessed 27.06.2020).

space of imagination²². This is where, in the human imagination, similarly as in the works of Hieronymus Bosch who the author consciously conducts an artistic correspondence, her new immortal world is crystallized – the world of good and evil. Dreams bring out new places. They expand the “nominal value” of the existing space, adding the new proclaimed space, discovered like the new lands discovered at the threshold of Renaissance. It is hard to resist an impression of certain intellectual similarity with the *Proun Room* by (Lazar) El. Lissitzky of 1923²³.

6. ARCHETYPE OF A HOUSE AS SEMANTIC NARRATIVE

According to the authors of this article, on the basis of rhetoric similar to the work *There is no death*, construction of commemorative space can be assumed also on the basis of the imagination space, not a form and not a solid. The message is justified as it refers to an important problem that still does not have its remembrance space, and namely – a memorial to children that have been lost, their premature death, combining all types of death, those for which someone is to blame and those for which no one is. The UN report of 18 September 2018 states that in 2017 alone 6.3 million children under 15 died worldwide²⁴. This means a shocking global perspective of one child dying every 5 seconds. If you add all the deaths during the prenatal period, this number becomes truly astronomical and must reach tens of millions of children every year. Not many realise that currently (2016) the total annual number of deaths of children above infancy, i.e. those aged 1 to 18, is still as much as 2,500 in Poland²⁵. Deaths in infancy account for an additional 2,200 (2010). And although the situation is improving, for example in 1990 the percentage of deaths of children just in infancy (until the end of the first year of their lives) reached 20% of all births annually. This number has been decreasing successively,²⁶ however, it still draws behind it the huge, much higher number of children lost from the previous years – the burden of suffering of parents who – now older – also have no commemorative space for the pain of their premature separation with their son or daughter.

The idea of a new semantic narration, in consequence the idea of creation of a new type of a remembrance site is an answer, an attempt at meeting all those challenges mentioned above. The new imagination space would be based on the archetype of space closest to man, one known for centuries – the space of the home of your dreams. Each of us grew up in a home.

²² *Sztuka Przejścia. Najlepsze Dyplomy ASP we Wrocławiu 2019* [in:] BWA Wrocław Galerie Sztuki Współczesnej, <https://bwa.wroc.pl/events/najlepsze-dyplomy-asp-2019/> (accessed 02.07.2020).

²³ S.O. Han-Magomedov, *Suprematizm i architektura (problemy formoobrazowania)*, Arhitektura-S, Moskva 2007; pp. 294–296.

²⁴ *Raport ONZ: Co 5 sekund na świecie umiera dziecko poniżej 15 roku życia* [in:] UNICEF Polska, <https://www.unicef.pl/Centrum-prasowe/Informacje-prasowe/Raport-ONZ-Co-5-sekund-na-swiecie-umiera-dziecko-ponizej-15-roku-zycia> (accessed 22.07.2020).

²⁵ M. Wojtasik, *Umieralność dzieci i młodzieży*, Dziecko Krzywdzone. Teoria Badania Praktyka, 2011, 11(3), pp. 33–45, http://fdds.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Wojtasik_M_2011_Umieralnosc_dzieci_i_mlodziemy.pdf (accessed 02.07.2020).

²⁶ In 2010, 2,200 deaths of children aged under 1 were recorded in Poland (around 100 fewer than the year before). The infant mortality rate, i.e. infant deaths per 1,000 live births was 5.2‰ – nearly 3 points lower than at the beginning of the 21st century when it was around 8‰, which confirms the continuing trend of decreasing infant mortality rate. *Ibidem*.

This time of childhood is determined precisely in our memory, creating the picture of our family home, but it also shapes our imagination in us, which paradoxically enables us to free ourselves from the memory of the world around us. For example, Ch. Alexander writes about it in *A Pattern Language* when he differentiates, and even dichotomizes the reception of memories of the family home from childhood, built through the angle of one's own room, from the perception of the family home in which there is no such room and it has never been there²⁷. The memory of our home, even if positive, does not change the fact that we create our own model of our dream home in our imagination, as a rule different from the one we live or used to live in²⁸. For example, it is worth noting that although still most of residents of towns and cities (particularly in Poland) live in flats built during the period of modernism and older, the synonym of a dream home, as interviews conducted by psychologists with children show, is a single-family detached house, with a sloping roof, surrounded by a garden full of flowers²⁹. And what is interesting here, all of its attributes mentioned are just as important. At the moment, we have more and more opinions that negate the arbitral modernity of modernism, and more those that expose its uncompromising attitude which did not pay any attention to the opinion of an average consumer³⁰, and the latter treated buildings constructed in the modernistic style as unfinished structures. The rejection of the form of a flat room, or asymmetry of the plan, i.e. in fact two dogmas of modernism, has been present for centuries in the tradition of Chinese *Feng Shui* and nothing indicates that it is to change during the times of prosperity in the *Middle Kingdom*.³¹ The existence of an archetype of a home that does not bow down to the architect's tastes was expressed among the contemporaries by e.g. Leon Krier³². In his opinion, modernism, despite all of its force – both in media and the dominance in nearly all academic centres dealing with shaping of space worldwide – was able to disturb the perception of this archetype that is key for man only for “a while” (for a period of mere three decades). Therefore, if each of us has their own vision of a home and it is a vision,

²⁷ C. Alexander [et al.] *Język wzorców = A pattern language: miasta, budynki, konstrukcja*, GWP, Gdańsk 2008, pp. 679–681.

²⁸ M. Piotrowska, M. Kacprzak, A. Ładyżyński (eds.) *Dom rodzinny w doświadczeniu (auto)biograficznym [Family home in (auto)biographic experience]*, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Pedagogiki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2017, pp. 20–36 and 40–52.

²⁹ M. Piotrowska, *Obraz rodzinnego domu a wyobrażenie własnej przyszłości w narracjach dorosłych dzieci rozwiedzionych rodziców [Picture of the family home and the idea of own future in narrations of grown up children of divorced parents]* [in:] M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz (ed.), *Doświadczenia rodzinne w narracjach: Interpretacje sensów i znaczeń [Family experiences in narratives: Interpretation of senses and meanings]*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2002, pp. 76–88.

³⁰ S.E. Rasmussen *Odczuwanie architektury [Experiencing architecture]*, Karakter, Kraków 2015; pp. 110–111: “When Le Corbusier designed his houses in the nineteen-twenties there were many people who could see nothing in them. They saw that something had been built but were not able to perceive it as an articulated form. They expected architecture to form either masses or cavities and [a]s they saw neither one nor the other in his buildings...”

³¹ J. Kwiatkowski, Ł. Kryśkiewicz *Przestrzenie aktywnych społeczności. Problemy urbanizacji i ekonomia współdzielenia [Active society spaces. Problem of urban development and economics of sharing]*, Wydział Geografii i Studiów Regionalnych. Uniwersytet Warszawski, Warszawa 2018, pp. 92–94.

³² L. Krier claims that human imagination and needs develop regardless of the vision of the designer architect, and often they can be completely contrary. These visions are closer to one another, although they are created by different entities, than to arbitrary opinions of specialists L. Krier, *Architektura. Wybór czy przeznaczenie [Architecture. Choice or destiny]*, Arkady, Warszawa 2001, pp. 65–82.

just like we ourselves remember from our observations and from our own experiences, well established with numerous drawings of subsequent generations going through nursery and early school years where it was required of us as part, for example, of art classes – drawing our own vision of a home – it is a huge treasury of our internal imagination.

The archetype of a home therefore develops, crystallizes, in the man's imagination, not in designs of renowned artists.

It is this very thesis that lies at the foundations of the new formula of commemorative space devoted to lost children. It would be an intermedia formula. On the one hand – relying on possibilities offered by new data collection technologies – creation of multilevel new generation database, on the other hand, using capabilities of simulation and auto-creation programs for the visualisation of architectural designs.

The database would collect thousands, and eventually, should the experiment succeed, even millions of accounts by children from all over the world. These data would be broken down into 8 to 12 cultural macro-regions, based on the place of residence, and data of individual children would be placed in datasets of specific macro-regions. The children would speak anonymously, with only sex and age remaining disclosed. For the purpose of the database, children would be asked to draw a picture of themselves and their surroundings, talking about their world, what they like, what they don't like, what they would like to wear, what school they would like to finish, what job to get, who they would like to become, how and where to spend their holidays, they would describe their best memories, family celebrations, great festivities and events, the experience of their first school, nursery, first top grade and first fail in their life, whether they have siblings and what siblings they would like to have, what friends they have or would like to have, what pet they have or would like to have, what colours they do and do not like, what is their favourite dish and what they hate eating or never eat, what is their favourite spot in the surrounding area, where they want to go back to even several days a year, their favourite game, team game, subject at school they love and one they hate, etc. This way a database of many personality traits, specific characteristics would be created, full of numerous descriptions of various weights and importance.

In the second part of the project, the same children would be asked for a detailed description of the very home of their dreams, how many floors would the house have, how many bedrooms, how many rooms overall, where the entrance would be, what the garden would look like, would there be stairs, and if so – where, would it have one or several staircases, a garage for one or several cars, where their own room would be located, whether next to other rooms or maybe next to a bathroom, colours of walls, wallpaper, halls, loggias, balconies, form and colour of the roof, what the materials and texture of the elevation would be, finally the location – where the house would be located, at the seaside, in the mountains or on lake shores, or in a big city maybe or maybe rather in a small town, or in the countryside, etc. The information would be recorded by child psychologists and then processed by professionals – designers, architects.

Finally, in the third phase of the project – the execution phase, the fragmentary information from the child's vision of themselves would be connected with the fragmentary information on the vision of the home of their dreams, and thus finally the full image of themselves and the full vision of the house of their dreams would disintegrate for an individual child, while at the same time the basic divisions into information sets within macro-regions would be retained. Recalling each even the smallest, the most modest partial information overlapping with the statement provided by any child would result in the triggering of an application generating

the message of a 3D simulation showing the visualisation, however only a fragment of that child's dream home, using the *Virtual Reality* goggles. The vision of the home would fill up with details as more complementary information was delivered, regardless of which children's statements the information was recognised it, because the only rigid connection would be the linking of a single piece of information from the picture of oneself with the corresponding single piece of information about the fragment of the vision of a home. A growing number of details, even if consistent with many statements by different children, would be correctly completed on the part of the visualisation with the appropriate number of partial spatial visions. The key novelty of the entire idea would consist in the triggering of the law of large numbers, which – with a very large number of accounts – would create a practically unlimited number of correlations of individual fragmentary pieces of information in the sphere of the child's picture and a similarly unlimited number of details concerning the dream home.

Using the law of large numbers, any parent, through a memory in the form of a quoted, remembered statement or fragment of a statement by their deceased child about the picture of themselves, would be able to initiate one unique spatial vision of a dream home built from the combination of the collective multi-message from the living children. Nearly every feature of the child's picture would not be enclosed in an account from one person but would be a product of several, a dozen or several dozen accounts. This way each final, full account would be most likely unique.

Similarly, each full visualisation of the dream home would be a visualisation composed of several or even several dozen accounts recorded in the second part of the project. This anonymous dream home would, however, have its identity, resembling the identity of a specific deceased child. The unifying force between these identities would be the similarity of partial quotes from the picture and from other – living – children.

At the moment we are already at such moment of development of computer technologies that we are able to select and at the same time create images drawn from many sources, to combine databases in real time and to trigger, initiate and advance an application using the parent's voice.

The last phase, i.e. determination of specific spatial constraints, actual space for the project in question, is a very difficult thing. It seems appropriate, however, that the intellectual meeting (if you can say that) between the parent and their deceased child could happen with the solemnity due to such moment and perfection only offered by the natural environment. This is how a Park of Lost Children could be created. As to 3D forms, a reservation should be made that the place for initiating the application should offer such opportunity only one on one (one parent, one child, one 3D form). The external form of structures, according to authors, should be minimalistic, based on one of perfect solids, such as a cube or sphere, and its size – suitable for its virtually generated function, i.e. close to the size of a single-family house, whereas the material used on the elevation – the colour and texture contrasting with the character of green areas.

7. SUMMARY

To sum up, the new formula of commemorative space is worth noting as in many aspects it meets the hallmarks of a remedy for the depressive states after the loss of a child. This helps initiate the slow process of healing of the open wound which – in the parent's psyche – is the loss of their child. This kind of *catharsis* takes place on three planes:

- 1) (breaking the inner blockade) – forces the parent to break the barrier of returning to talking about the lost child,
- 2) (breaking the barrier of pain) – forces the parent to talk in quotations taken from the statement of their child, quoted in the first person – which helps them measure up to the pain of separation.
- 3) (generation of new space, a new meeting axis, hope for the future) – allows an intellectual meeting with the lost child in the place that objectively does not exist – their dream home – which has previously been impossible.

Currently (since 2000), one of the world bestselling games entitled *The Sims* is present on the market – its main hero or heroine, among other activities, accepts the burden of numerous decisions to build the image of their own dream home. Its creators – the *Maxis* company and the publisher *Electronic Arts* – addressed it to teenagers in the age category 12+. It should be noted here that the game partly fits a certain creative formula of looking for your dream home, but it also contains quite significant differences: firstly, it is the player who builds the home for the fictional hero *Sim*, and therefore theoretically it does not have to be the player's home, secondly the player does not necessarily have to build, they may use already existing homes, thirdly the player has significant, imposed limitations, including a number of constraints arising from the game, for example the size and location of the plot, which is supposed to simulate actual conditions of living in a city.

However, assuming even partial similarity between both projects, one can believe in the success of the new formula of commemorative spaces presented here, having noted the avalanche of visions of Sims' own homes entering the *YouTube* platform, placed there by players who want to make them public and show them off to other users.

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Authors' Note:

Jacek Kwiatkowski, Assoc. Prof. D.Sc. Ph.D. Arch.

Assoc. Prof. at the Chair of Urban Geography and Spatial Planning of the Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies at the University of Warsaw. Expert in new urban concepts and space theories in contemporary urban planning. One of the few contemporary world experts on the Suprematist movement of the 1920s and 30s in the USSR, and its founder Kazimir Malevich. He wrote numerous publications on the development of modern cities, served multiple times in the bodies of Program Councils or as an expert of numerous international conferences and congresses. He participated in seminars, symposia, gave lectures in numerous foreign centers. He is a member of the Scientific Council for the Discipline of Socio-Economic Geography and Spatial Management at the University of Warsaw.

jacek.kwiatkowski@uw.edu.pl

Marta Landowska, M.Sc. Arch.

Leading Designer in SIMA (Studio of Architecture and Interior Design). Awarded with 3rd prize in the international architecture competition ARCHMedium with “Sydney” project created in a three participants group (2017). Her project “Tachion – office building built with light” received a prestigious distinction in “Office building of the future” competition from Infuture Hatalska Foresight Institute and Skanska Sp. z o.o. for coherent vision of the direction of world development, adjustment to new social needs and climate and economic challenges for contemporary architecture (2018). Took part in recreation of historical axes and viewpoints project – “Spojrzenie na Gdańsk” (“Look at Gdańsk”), under the supervision of the landscape architect, professor of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Barcelona, W.P. Burkiewicz (2016). Working in SIMA (Studio of Architecture and Interior Design).

marta.landowska.arch@gmail.com