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UNBEAUTIFUL SPACE – APPEARANCE OR REALITY?

PRZESTRZEŃ NIEPIĘKNA – POZÓR CZY RZECZYWISTOŚĆ?

Abstract

The aspect of unpredictability is associated with human existence, each of us has different experiences, memories, history. Each field of art is characterized by its own essence and representatives of these fields create. It often happens that we cannot imagine certain places without specific buildings, such as Paris without the Eiffel Tower or New York without the Statue of Liberty. The opposite of the unfortunate, equally iconic works are the towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pruitt Igoe housing estate in Saint Louis. The aim of the work is to show what space is not beautiful. The work adopts the method of logical argumentation. The response of today's architecture and perceived non beautiful space is the creation of contemporary space in a junk way as a result of denaturization, artificial creation of baroque gardens, surrealistic mystification image of the modern idea of free, dynamic cities, going beyond all norms.

Keywords: non beautiful space, junk space, visions of the future

Streszczenie

Ludzka egzystencja wiąże się z nieprzewidywalnością, każdy z nas ma inne doświadczenia, pamięć, historię. Każda dziedzina sztuki charakteryzuje się swoją własną esencją, a przedstawiciele tych dziedzin tworzą. Bardzo często zdarza się, że nie wyobrażamy sobie pewnych miejsc bez określonych budowli, jak na przykład Paryża bez wieży Eiffla lub Nowego Yorku bez Statuy Wolności. Opozycją są dzieła nieszczęśliwe, równie ikoniczne: wieże World Trade Centre w Nowym Yorku i osiedle Pruitt Igoe w Saint Louis. Celem pracy jest wykazanie, czym jest przestrzeń niepiękna. W pracy przyjęto metodę logicznej argumentacji. Odpowiedzią dzisiejszej architektury i postrzeganej przestrzeni niepięknej jest kreacja współczesnej przestrzeni w sposób śmieciowy jako efekt denaturacji, sztucznej kreacji barokowych ogrodów, surrealistycznej mistyfikacji, obraz współczesnej idei miast wolnych, dynamicznych, wykraczających poza wszelkie normy.

Słowa kluczowe: przestrzeń niepiękna, przestrzeń śmieciowa, wizje przyszłości

The range and power of emotions is greater than is sometimes supposed. Emotions or feelings permeate all our activities – our considerations are never completely “pure”, just as action is never purely practical. Of course, in matters of affection we are always far from any free choice. Large areas of our emotional lives are determined by conditions beyond our control: the fact that we happen to be the kind of people we are, living in this or that in a different period. In this way, a fully integral culture produces a marked uniformity of feeling among its representatives¹

Sigfried Giedion

1. INTRODUCTION

For decades, urban space has been designed in a way that ignores the issue of humans or considers them as haphazard. The main aspects of designing urban spaces were vehicular traffic, greenery, public meeting places of little importance. The American journalist and author Jane Jacobs drew attention as early as 1961 to the huge increase in car traffic in cities and the theory of urban design segregating functions in the city². Showing modernist buildings – monuments as dominants. The sum of these activities has driven urban spaces to death, leaving the cities lifeless and devoid of people. Human dimension, safety, health and sustainability reflect a clear and strong need to create better quality cities. Modern architectural space, which is the sum of the achievements of modern architecture, shaping *smart cities* and *smart houses*, was called by Rem Koolhaas a *junkspace*. Because despite the greater development in the field of architecture compared to previous generations, the current design state is in the lower league of achievement. “In the 21st century, more junkspace is being built compared to the volume that originated from the 20th century”, and the effect of space modernization is non-modern architecture, comparable to space junk circulating in Earth orbit, the essence of which is continuity, continuous implementation of modern technologies. *Junkspace* is a punishment for architectural hoaxes of creators unable to explain the concept of space³.

2. INTERPRETATIONS

Fine arts include creative activities in the field of architecture, sculpture, painting, graphics and artistic craftsmanship. Each area initiated the result of an individual emanation of the author’s creative beauty, and forms an emotional inseparability between the author and the work. Art as an image of the creation of a thought idea is a message of shaped thought. Diversity resulting from social, economic, cultural, technical and technological changes is a characteristic feature of the direction of art development in a given period.

What defines architecture in a philosophical context was defined two centuries ago by Immanuel Kant as *architectonics*, the so-called art of creating systems, as the

¹ S. Giedion, *Przestrzeń, czas i architektura*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1968, p. 460.

² J. Jacobs, *Śmierć i życie wielkich miast Ameryki*, Fundacja Centrum Architektury, Warszawa 2015.

³ R. Koolhaas, *Śmieciowa przestrzeń*, Fundacja Centrum Architektury, Warszawa 2017.

transcendental aesthetics of the image of space in the philosophical reasoning of the human image. In reference to the observations of Martin Heidegger, architectural space is the being of a being in the context of the entire space that surrounds us. Designing is inseparable from living and thus the art of creating places of living and being⁴.

Philosophical language contains many architectural metaphors, among others, compiled in the works by Aristotle, Kant or Heidegger, which brings architecture and philosophy closer to the theory of art. Architecture in the context of beauty is shown in the works of Alberti, for whom architecture as the art of building consists entirely in drawing and execution. Grzegorz Nawrot cites the Albertian literary idea in a treatise on painting, the so-called *invenzione*, confronting architecture as a means of the aforementioned *invenzione*, as the sense of a story about architecture, which is a means of communication and shape of space, influencing the behavior of humans in a designed structure⁵.

We can look for beauty in all contexts and events of architecture. Referred to architecture and beauty Aristotle's trichotomous division of types of modes of life and activities *Theory, Action, Creativity* show a new meaning in the form of the beauty of theory, the beauty of action and the beauty of creativity⁶. Referring to the three levels of awareness of feeling and designing space, it is worth quoting Bernard Tschumi, who uses the statement that there is no architecture without a concept, an overriding idea, a diagram that give the building cohesion and identity⁷. Seemingly beautiful and unbeautiful are concepts that imply each other. However, an unbeautiful space is always a subjective feeling, a choice, a conscious assessment of perception.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The method of logical argumentation was adopted for the research. Interpretation of reality was carried out on selected examples in order to understand the existing circumstances. The analysis made it possible to focus on the meaning and meaning of the obtained data. The author's descriptions, explanations and logical interpretation were used as research techniques⁸.

4. RESEARCH

The main goal is to present the contemporary context of shaping the interpretation of the concept of unbeautiful space – as an appearance or reality. Based on the analysis of the structure of reality and the immediate environment, the study derives from a subjective range of selected iconic works by Gustave Eiffel and Minor Yamasaki.

⁴ M. Heidegger, *Bycie i czas*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2004.

⁵ G. Nawrot, *Invenzione – współczesna narracja w konstruowaniu przestrzeni architektonicznej* [in:] Z. Bujniiewicz (ed.), *W poszukiwaniu struktury przestrzeni*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej, Gliwice 2019, pp. 47–70.

⁶ G. Nawrot, *Architektura – sen o miejscu dla pięknych zdarzeń*, "Czasopismo Techniczne, Architektura" 2007, no. 6-A, pp. 353–357.

⁷ B. Tschumi, *Event-cities 3. Concept vs. Context vs. Content*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 2004.

⁸ E. Niezabitowska, *Metody i techniki badawcze w architekturze*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskie, Gliwice 2014, p. 186.

4.1 SEARCHING FOR THE UNBEAUTIFUL SPACE

Eiffel Tower. Erected particularly for the 1889 Paris World's Fair, it was designed to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution and to demonstrate the level of engineering knowledge and technical capabilities of the era. The openwork lattice structure designed by Gustave Eiffel, Maurice Koechlin, Emile Nouguier, the current symbol of the city, has organized the urban structure with its location⁹. As a height dominant and a symbol of the city, it gave rise to shaping urban structures in a futuristic way. The way of presenting very tall objects has changed, which has doubled since the times of Gothic cathedrals and the discovery of the Renaissance perspective.

Statue of Liberty. Neoclassical statue erected in 1884–1886, designed by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, Gustave Eiffel (structure) and Richard Morris Hunt (pedestal)¹⁰. The unofficial symbol of freedom is an in-depth study of the perception of monumental high-rise structures in the context of distance, atmospheric conditions, changing range of light and viewing from a bird's eye and human level. The slender, unified form of the steel skeleton in women's skin has become an unusual element of the landscape. The attractive mega structure shows the novelty of urban coherence with capitalist profitability.

World Trade Center Towers. The construction of glass houses, most often associated with the designs of Mies van der Rohe, has contributed to the creation of diversified high-rise landscapes in American metropolises. The construction of higher and higher skyscrapers caused, among other things, the breaking of height records and thus resulted in the construction of the World Trade Center. Two skyscrapers commissioned in 1970 became the tallest buildings in the world at that time. The complex of seven buildings in Manhattan, New York, designed by Minura Yamasaki and Antonio Brittiocchi, caused the introduction of dominant social panoramas of the metropolis¹¹. Revalorization of urban space, the aim of which was to introduce order to the spatial structure and protect the scenic values of the urbanized landscape and create attractive internal spaces. The landscape shaped in this way was a harbinger of the emerging garbage space.

Pruitt Igoe housing estate. Modernist housing estate in Saint Louis, designed by Minoru Yamasaki in accordance with guidelines of the CIAM International Congress of Modern Architecture, built in 1952–1955¹². The ideological modernist housing estate, considered a bad version of Le Corbusier's Marseille block for reasons related to social and racial segregation, gave rise to the decline of idealist modernist housing estates. Depopulation, a consequence of problems with crime and vandalism, began to become a symbol of the errors of modernism. Poor quality of space, degradation of urban space and underinvestment of areas valuable for the city, which deteriorated the condition of the natural environment, was a harbinger of the emergence of spaces that do not fulfill

⁹ R. Burton, R. Cavendish, *Cuda świata*, Multico Oficyna Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1997, pp. 70–71.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 168–169.

¹¹ K. Jędrzejewski (ed.), *Najwyższe budowle świata*, Bellona, Warszawa 2013, p. 105.

¹² A. Gąsowska-Kramarz, *Pruitt Igoe vs City of the future*, "Architecture, Civil Engineering, Environment" 2019, vol. 12 no. 4, pp. 15–21.

basic life functions, space that loses social good and conditions that are incapable of living.

4.2 DETERMINATION OF PHILOSOPHY AND BEAUTY IN THE LIVING SPACE – THE ARRIVAL OF GARBAGE SPACE

The contemporary image of the idea of a city, as well as free, dynamic cities, going beyond ethical, aesthetic, social and cultural norms, evokes an image of a non-modern space, resulting from the modernization of architecture in a disorderly manner. Garbage space is the result of the relationship between the organism and the environment, which occurs, among others, in the quoted Pruitt Igoe, in which people are necessarily locked inside their bodies.



III. 1. *Eiffel Tower*, Gustav Eiffel, Maurice Koechlin, Emile Nouguier, source: R. Burton, R. Cavendish, *Cuda świata*, Multico Oficyna Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1997, p. 71.



III. 2. *Statue of Liberty*, Gustav Eiffel, Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, Richard Morris Hunt, source: R. Burton, R. Cavendish, *CUDA ŚWIATA*, MULTICO Oficyna Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1997, p. 168.



Ill. 3. *World Trade Center Towers*, Minourę Yamasaki, Antonio Brittiuchi, source: K. Jędrzejewski (ed.), *Najwyższe budowle świata*, Bellona, Warszawa 2013, p. 105.



Ill. 4. *Pruitt Igoe housing estate*, Minoru Yamasaki, source: M. Banach, *Pruitt-Igoe – nieudany amerykański projekt urbanistyczny* [in:] Smartage.pl, <https://www.smartage.pl/pruitt-igoe-nieudany-amerykanski-projekt-urbanistyczny/> (access: 14.06.2023).

The space created in this way is identical with Bateson's theorem, as well as the assumptions of the systems theory of communication, in which living organisms autonomously create information. The Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty and the World Trade Center Towers are a source of information for which the mind, as a phenomenon present in all living nature, shows the ability to create symbolic descriptions of events. This is how the space we know is created. Living organisms create it themselves. And the internal interpretation, the needs of the changing world shape the space inhabited in a *junk* way that threatens future existence leading to inevitable destruction.

5. SUMMARY

Junkspace is an image of the contemporary idea of the city, free, dynamic urban spaces, going beyond ethical, aesthetic, social and cultural norms. It is a non-modern space, resulting

from the modernization of architecture in a disorderly manner. Waste space is a global problem, analyzing the pollution aspect of the world where half of humanity produces and half consumes.

Architects, as creators of the living space, engage in the products of their imagination, painters evoke emotions using pictures, and sculptors reflect individual beauty with a sculpture. Each field of art is characterized by its own characteristic and representatives of these fields create. It often happens that we cannot imagine certain places without specific buildings, such as the analyzed Paris without the Eiffel Tower or New York without the Statue of Liberty, works by the same artist Gustave Eiffel, with very positive connotations. The opposition of the unfortunate, equally iconic works are the World Trade Center towers in New York and the Pruitt Igoe housing estate in Saint Louis, designed by Minoru Yamasaki. The Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty are undeniably a semblance of an unbeautiful space, their function, form, construction are symbols of new ideas and cultural changes, they show how architecture affects emotions and technical development. The World Trade Center Towers and the Pruitt Igoe housing estate, on the other hand, as unhappy works, are an undoubted example of an announcement of spaces incapable of working and living, they are real unbeautiful spaces. The towers in Manhattan showed how dangerous it is to work in high-rise buildings in the context of unforeseen events. On the other hand, the Housing Estate in Saint Louis showed how, as a result of cultural habits, the living environment changes and space can become garbage in a very short time.

The research offered the means to identify shifts in forming the contemporary living space. Junkspace, the space of the changing landscape of modern cities is heading towards global junkspace – e-space, intelligent space, where care for human good is lost in favor of the profit of corporations and developers. Research shows synergies between economy and ecology. The economy becomes Faustian, while ecology turns into eco-space. The conclusions show a subjective picture of spatial changes on selected examples. The creation of contemporary space is eco-fascism among two hundred pairs of Chanel shoes and Armani suits, an artificial creation of baroque gardens and Renaissance facades, a surreal mystification, a momentary flash on TV screens to satisfy internal needs related to having a logo of the colors of the most popular food, clothing, automotive companies, advertised and already at the moment of issuing the passe, forgetting about the care for the natural environment.

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