

KATARZYNA SŁUCHOCKA\*

## A PAINTED IMAGE IN ARCHITECTURE

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### OBRAZ W RAMACH ARCHITEKTURY

#### Abstract

Perception of architecture, as a *spatial utility form*, lays foundations for encyclopaedic terms, which define the issues of the discipline that shapes space for the needs of man. Transposing the phenomena into a 2D artistic ‘comment’ may extend the field of perception of shapes, nature or quality of architectural forms or even sense of a particular definition of architecture as a discipline combining designing and artistic drawing. A painted image – an author’s commentary upon a selected part of reality – is a message intended for the continuation of the dialogue on the topic it features. It is an interpretation, which allows us to freely transpose typical elements of a composition into the world where their objective functions become the subjective ones. A painted image, similarly to a philosopher’s stone, adds magic to raw concrete, thus exposing its charm in a piece of art and enabling the viewer to see the unusual in something that is usual.

*Keywords: interpretative image, architectural idea, archidea*

#### Streszczenie

Odbiór architektury, jako *przestrzennej formy użytkowej*, stanowi podłoże pojęć encyklopedycznych, przybliżających problem i zagadnienie dziedziny zajmującej się kształtowaniem przestrzeni dla potrzeb człowieka. Przeniesienie zjawiska na płaszczyzny plastycznego „komentarza do” może poszerzyć pole percepcji w odbiorze kształtów, charakteru, jakości form architektonicznych, a nawet sensu konkretnego definiowania architektury, jako nauki łączącej dyscypliny projektowe z plastycznymi. Obraz – autorska wypowiedź na temat wybranego fragmentu rzeczywistości – jest komunikatem, stanowiącym pretekst do kontynuacji dialogu na temat podjęty w treści. Jest interpretacją, pozwalającą na swobodny sposób transferu stereotypowo traktowanych elementów kompozycji do świata, w którym następuje zmiana funkcji z przedmiotowej na podmiotową. Obraz, jak kamień filozoficzny nadaje magii surowości betonu, wydobywając z niego urok dzieła sztuki, pozwalając dostrzec nieoczywiste w oczywistym.

*Słowa kluczowe: obraz interpretujący, idea architektoniczna, archidea*

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## 1. Do we need a philosopher's stone to see quality in a material substance

Space is a number one asset; it is one's inspiration and purpose of the architect's work. It creates the interior and is created by the interior. It gives names to places and defines their nature. We have common space, private space, semi-private space, closed and open space, user-friendly space, developed space and disorganised space etc. Via a complex process of perception, we classify space into toxic, transparent and identical<sup>1</sup>. Most of us would be of the opinion that spaces created in concrete will be classified as toxic. The stereotypes suggest the way of deduction, which as per principle degrades concrete architecture. The studies, which combine the disciplines of design and fine arts, positively affect changes in the opinions well-established among the majority of the society on such issues as utility, beauty and variety of possibilities of the application of concrete because they introduce a guideline factor – a picture – which guides the viewer to free and open interpretation.

Space is omnipresent in our entire life span, triggering our positive or negative emotions as regards its use. It is a factor, which creates social interdependencies, thus, which indirectly shapes our social bonds. It develops and strengthens individual and local identity. It is the background of existence, the topic of scientific dissertations, elaborations, monographs, popular literature. It is a witness to past events, the genius loci and everyday life companion. Its *image* in the sense of values serves as a message in the language chain, where the nature of a given space is of crucial importance and frequently determines the quality of a painted image itself. The selection of the topic and frame translates into the nature of representation, which reinforces the relations between the recipient and respective space or its part. Irrespectively of the level of saturation of the emotional relationship of the addressee with the context, the painted image of the space often draws our attention to values, details or phenomena being inherent parts of particular places and their unique features that we would otherwise fail to see.

space ↔ **image** ↔ emotions

Interpreting space, we encounter its dual meaning. We approach space emotionally and we react to it as a result of its perception and experience gained when facing it; all this translates into the emergence of informative notation, which provides the recipient with the information on the nature of a given space. An informative notation is a set of data, subjectively selected by an individual, which makes part of the *interpretative image*. Via the accumulation of individual interpretative images, we arrive at a set of data, which, in the process of analysis, will render an objective assessment of the quality of the analysed space – *a cycle of interpretative images*.

Projections grasped in the form of a picture are subject to an assessment with respect to their composition, expression, selection of colours and gestures. The components constitute a specific type of the translation from the language of designing to the language of painting which is more understandable to all those from the outside of the construction industry.

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<sup>1</sup> Katarzyna Słuchocka, classification of space as presented [in:] *Architektura a styl życia* [Architecture and lifestyle].

The designed space features the unique nature of a composition of a picture. *An interpretative image* functions as a special filter for the most important contents of the assumption (aggressive space, depressing space, light space etc.) The language of artistic expression guides and enriches our way of perception of architecture. An object of a painting, a graphical object, an object of a drawing or a photograph inspired by architectural space is emotionally perceived via its formal structure as an object which is expressive, discreet, well-balanced, optimistic and which narrows down its interpretation, defining the characteristic features of a given facility or complex of facilities.

Verification of a selected concrete component renders unambiguous associations with a building material used for many purposes such as the shell structure, finishing elements or details. Its transposition into impact upon fine arts extends the scope of records, makes us familiar with foreign material substance and teaches us how to be open to changes in the perception of our daily reality.

Architecture grasped in pictures – an artistic comment on projections and cross-sections of particular buildings is part of the creation process and confirmation of inter-dependencies between the quality of a design and the quality of an artistic picture.

design quality ↔ quality of artistic picture = interpretative image

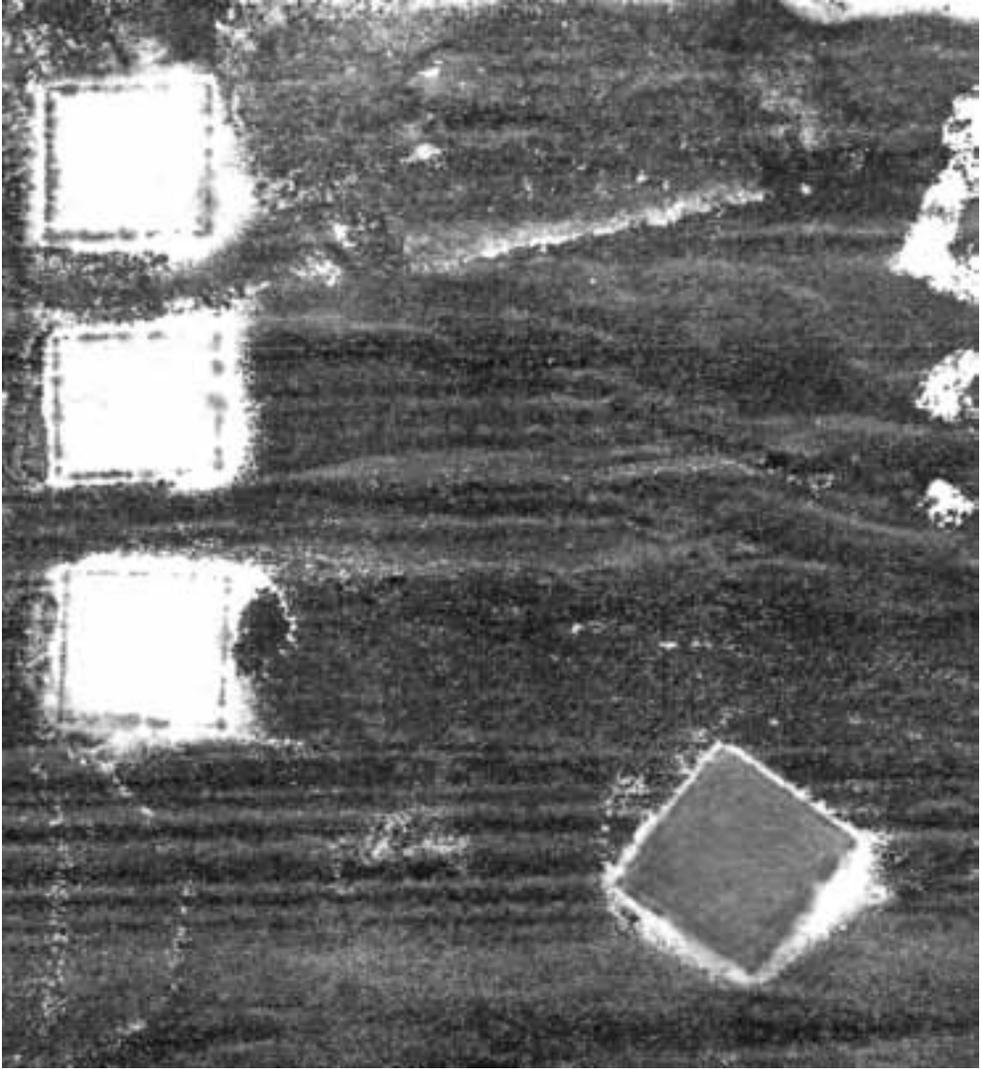
Artistic interpretation depends on the qualities of the design, in this case – on the utility qualities, aesthetics and ergonomics of the concrete structure. The unusual in the usual, quality that provokes us to continue the partly implemented intentions, stimulates us to transfer the technical contents into interdisciplinary planes of comments, aspiring to carry out the analysis in the selected area. A selective approach to architectural reality in the context of a frame discloses the positives and negatives of the overall design assumption, in this of respective components. It allows us to understand the idea of an architectural message, makes us aware of it, and above all, stimulates us to reflect upon it, thus fostering considerations and open discussions.

architectural idea ↔ archidea

In the so constituted conditions of perception, the recipient has a chance to become a conscious user of the dedicated space. The interference of the artistic presentations that is the *interpretative images* will initiate another stage of association process, as a result, we will feel like accepting the space.

The cognitive factor in the approach of man to the surrounding space is an important factor determining the type of bonds between them and their strength. The total lack of bonds is most often due to ignorance, fear of newness, alienation. Once the basic information on the context of existence has been acquired, the process of identification with a selected part of space begins. The user starts adapting by naming particular space and gradually annexing (mentally and physically) its further and further parts.

Inter-environmental correlations facilitate the control over the maintenance of common exterior areas (the space surrounding us) and public property starts to be perceived as true common welfare once we start to identify with its components. Such correlations include: man, his property and physically pertinent material goods as well as intangible assets, which predetermine the mutual relations between the users. Respect and care for our common environment trigger and strengthen the accumulation of the dependencies resulting from the



III. 1. Computer graphics, Katarzyna Słuchocka

feeling of identity and responsibility for a group and place. Complex identity works the social bonds and improves social relations, thus fostering the development in the atmosphere of respect and care for the present as well as the future condition of our place of relaxation, work or recreation.

Creating opportunities and conditions in which a potential user – recipient – will spend time together with an *interpretative image* will indirectly improve his social sensitivity and consciousness, and as result will improve the quality of the external environment. A message expressed by means of an *archidea* affects the changes of functions of a given component – be it a concrete wall or part of foundations – from objective into subjective functions. By this turning point in the consciousness of the recipient, another link of interrelations, which supports a multicultural dialogue of people with different interests, is activated. This offers a wide range of selection in the area of interdisciplinary research.

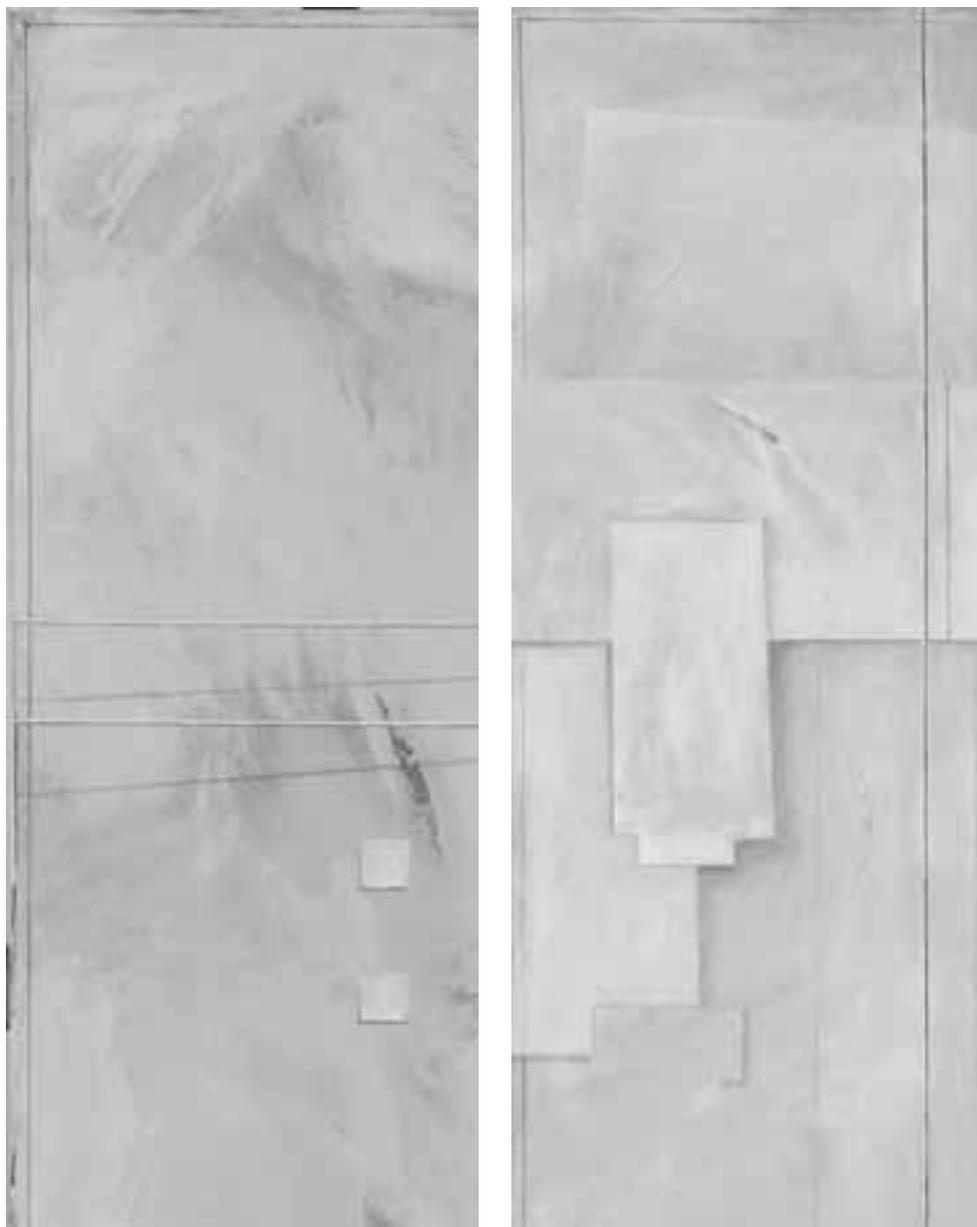
## **2. A painted image as a spatial utility form – spatial utility form as a painted image**

The typical and widely used in Ancient Rome building material has reappeared at the end of the 18th century. In its sincerity and simplicity, it has become a unique causative factor for the creation in architecture related disciplines. Ordinary concrete, heavy concrete, sprayed concrete, vacuum concrete, fibre-reinforced concrete, self-consolidating concrete, translucent concrete, papercrete, self-cleaning concrete, expanding concrete ... Concrete walls, concrete cladding, façade panels, floor panels. It is obvious concrete is everywhere, this does not, however, elevate concrete to the rank of components of artistic values.

Positive transfer of the image of concrete onto the plane of artistic commentary becomes an artefact generator, which popularises the form of concrete as such, and the architectural facility, which features it. “Every object – picture, architecture – represents its own value, absolute value, which is independent of what it portrays.”<sup>2</sup> Any activity in the sphere of pure art shall be based on an assumption of analysis and artistic risk or otherwise an architect, as an artist, and finally as a human being, will not be able to properly interpret it nor express his opinion. Such an activity shall each time involve fighting the problem and coming up with new solutions suitable to the observations and conclusions thereof, deriving from the in-depth studies and analyses of respective architecture. The proposed thesis maintaining that *art is a platform for the understanding of the reality surrounding us in the context of architectural space* is confirmed with the idea of analytical approach and evaluation of architecture in relation to the picture, which represents an autonomous approach, expressed in new creations of the emotional image of architectural facilities. An artefact created on the basis of already existing artefacts brings to life another one, enriches the range of stimuli for the perception of space, and at the same time expands the frames for the acts undertaken in the areas of cognition, association and other social activities. The evaluation of the utilitarian aspect of the designed space can be defined at the stage of conception and its ‘value in use’ converges with the quality as indicated in the design assumption. This may become a starting point for

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<sup>2</sup> F. Leger, *Funkcje malarstwa [Functions of painting]*, PIW, Paris 1965, *Architektura nowoczesna i kolor albo kreacja nowej przestrzeni życiowej [Modern architecture and colour or creation of new living space]*, p. 122–126.



III. 2. Designated, My Place, acrylic, 130 cm x 50 cm, Katarzyna Słuchocka

bringing to life interesting representations in the sphere of pure art. The interpenetration of the two disciplines – technology and fine arts – allows the objects which so far have not aspired to the rank of a piece of art to interact with the recipient in a manner different than ever before. Arts has a number of embodiments and each is a separate entity whereas its multi-dimensionality lets us trespass the symbolic borderlines, thus bringing to life new cognitive means. A concrete plane, as a well-prepared painting canvas, makes up the basis for the composition games played by the artists. The artist himself and the material substance/matter he interprets predetermine the work structure and its substantive values. The colour of concrete, its texture and function it performs in the architectural facility determine its nature of an autonomous artistic expression. The set of data – *cycle of interpretative images* – transposes the imagined worlds on a plane, registered on cardboard paper or canvas, whereas their existence in different contexts and environments gives rise to the new quality of sensual impression.

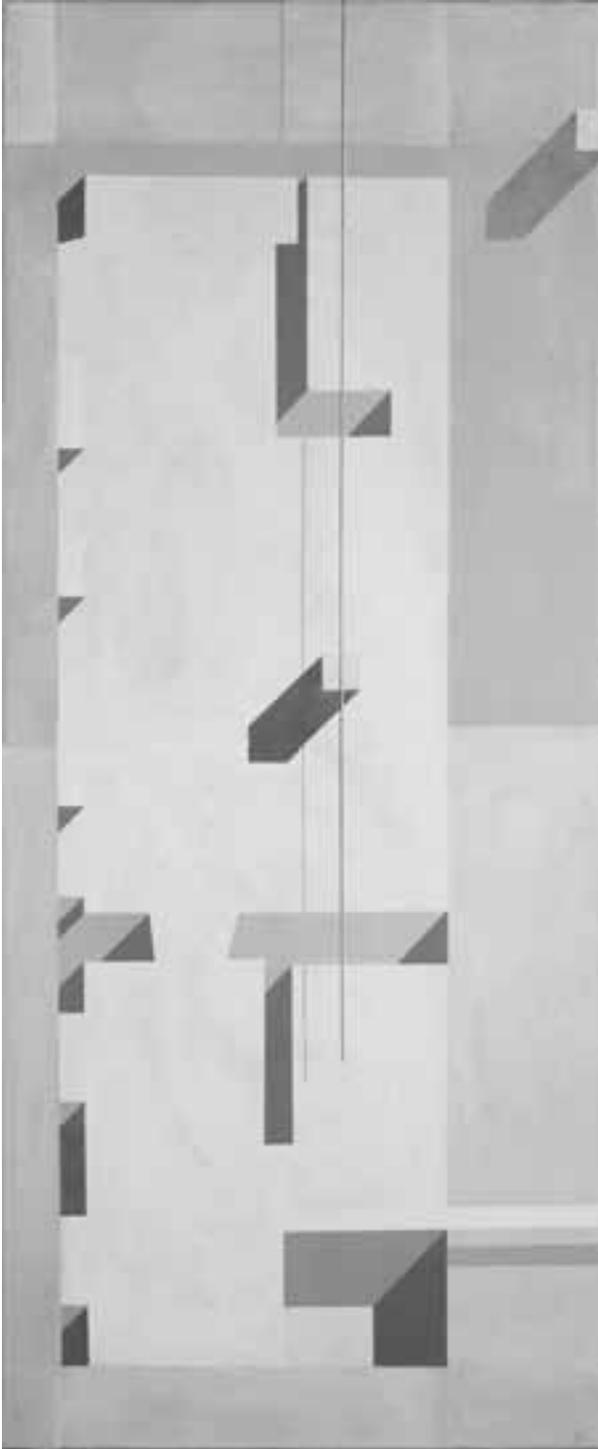
An embodiment of research underlying the relations between fine arts and design works – painter's brush stroke and ascetic nature of concrete – was published in Rezerwat Archeologiczny *Genius loci*, a branch of the Archaeological Museum in Poznan. The arrangement conception of the exhibition *Interpretacje – zapis malarski* [Interpretation – a painting record] (2013) referred, with its vertical forms of *interpretative images*, to the shape of interiors. Expression of modern subjection – concrete, glass, steel – represented a perfect background to display contents included in the paintings and constituted the core of the research. The topic of the paintings featured projections of a facility, thus gently spinning a story leading us through vertical canvas – which we could compare to the vertical direction of visiting) from bottom to top (the facility is a building dedicated to the presentation of archaeological sites and the structures of the defence walls of Mieszko I). Showing the process of birth and development of an architectural form – from foundations to the roof, the paintings, which hang on the concrete walls of Rezerwat Archeologiczny *Genius loci*, looked as if they had always been there. Simultaneously they introduced a new value of perception. The varieties of greyness reflected an interesting 'face' of concrete, which was in some parts full of subtle lines of shadow and light seeping through the omnipresent glass, would organise both spaces. The real one and the imagined one. The one seen and the one presented. Semiotic designation of a message was to guide us to the thematic correlations embodied in the form of 2D architectural projections, which served as real objects enclosed in concrete a framework of space.

Following the clues of the visual grammar, the main motif of the painter's commentary would not trespass the nature of a given space. Transparency – common denominator of architecture and a painting – loyally speaking of an object, creating a friendly atmosphere for the employees and visitors, via the *interpretative image* expressed the emotions opening the viewers to the freedom of reception and data processing. Concrete slabs, similarly to exhibited pieces of art, corresponded to the contents added in the notation of the painting whereas the synaesthesia of the situation delimited the direction for the continuation of interpretative and cognitive processes.

The monochromatic cycle of interpretative images *Miejsce i czas- ratusz* and *Parter-ratusz* [*Place and time – town hall and ground floor – town hall*]<sup>3</sup> – presented selected frag-

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<sup>3</sup> Paintings displayed at the exhibition *Od czerni do bieli* [From black to white] – Rawickie Mosty Sztuki, Rawicz-Rokosowo, 2015.



III. 3. Place and Time – Town Hall,  
The Ground Floor – Town  
Hall, acrylic, 120 cm x 50 cm

ments of Rawicz town hall space, with the structure founded on concrete foundations and with the shape constituting an attractive topic of a work piece. The range of greyness varieties symbolised history recorded on the faded photocopies whereas complete historiography was a unique trigger activating the imagination, provoking the dialogue between the past, the presence and the past. The designer's intention in the *archidei* has put together the structural, compositional and artistic spheres in one piece of art, being at the same time a document.

Such an assumption implies that we shall view architecture and pure art from slightly a different perspective, creating the grounds where engineering technology and emotions can meet.

concrete substance ↔ interpretation ↔ art piece

Direct comparison, which coins new conclusions, broadens the range of factors contributing to the modelling of subjectively perceived surroundings. The mechanism of static stereotype, as a conditional association, under the influence of a new stimulus, namely the type of material, the basic topic presented and manner of its implementation, changes the principles of its operation. Due to the available association links – concrete – art piece – our consciousness recognises a representation of all the linked engrams, which render the image of a new perception of reality. This new perception may constitute another factor developing the prior commenced dialogue between the material substance, form and quality of representation.

Depending on the level of interpretation of an object, we distinguish two areas where the phenomenon takes place: micro and macro scale. The structure of the artistic expression may be based on the indicated fragments of the architecture, (as above), in the external attire of a facility or full architectural form. In the context of the overall assumption, which is on the macro scale, the building block recorded as the basic motif, represents the actual condition of the existing development. Figurativeness of a painting or a drawing representation supplements the artistic and cultural heritage collections and makes up a rich source of the information on architecture. Original *interpretative images* are part of the documentation of implemented and non-implemented designs; they, furthermore, confirm the high quality expertise and individual standings of the most recognised artists in the world. Concrete – today an extravagant form of the implementation of modern structural and architectural solutions – is the topic of many photographic recordings, those of the inventory nature and the artistic ones.

In reference to the records in the form of paintings – it also plays a role there, though not always the foreground role. *An interpretative image* uses all the assets of concrete to come up with respective comments of a painting, thus, measurably demonstrating the values of concrete as regards its variety of applications. Conscious use of the image of concrete in the artistic expressions will extend the sources of information on its characteristic features and a wide range of applications. Via the activities within fine arts, the popularisation of the material substance of concrete looks more like an academic search, gaining new circles of recipients, extending the range of experiences and increasing the number of studies carried out in different academic institutions.

It makes the potential recipient realise that a structure of an artistic work, based on the analysis of the properties of concrete facilities, determines its format, composition and selection of colours.

Structure, space, respective sequences, components, which in a technical drawing or in an actually constructed facility may look as raw concrete, owing to their transfer onto the canvas assume the attire of an interesting motif in a painted image. Frames, modelling, the light

and shade, the selection of colours, texture, dynamics – the faces of concrete – in a small and large format glazed with interpenetrating greyness and whiteness, texture of unevenly spread paint, light and shadow around the shapes, which reflect the sophisticated network of structures, systems, technical designations and the designer's marks. The industry specific code when translated into the language of painting changes this stereotypical perception of concrete as a building material only. The geometric world of concrete architecture transformed into the sequence of autonomous abbreviations, requires from us the pursuit of the sensuality and sense identity<sup>4</sup> to decipher its message. In this way, we are faced with newer and newer possibilities of interpretation thereof. This way of defining art, directed at revealing the humanist face of the engineering side of architecture depends on the perception based on the imagination, knowledge and consciousness. The controlled stimuli determine the approximate sensory nature, the identification of the contents contained in an art piece and prepare us for the right reaction. Interactivity triggered with this process engages into the discussion further and further voices, which might potentially have an impact upon the shape of space and our daily life. The ability to see the usual in the usual lets us pursue newer and newer records in the limitless imagination, transforming us into people with an open approach to the shaping of our future, where each new discovery of a material substance/matter can assume any unconventional attire. An interpretative image, as a philosopher's stone, transforms the unimaginable into the imaginable and real. Considerations over its role and sense can be classified somewhere between a metaphor, meaning, interpretation and sensual feelings and as a multi-faceted voice provide us with new opportunities of understanding and practical use, depending on a particular recipient, in which case such new opportunities will be specially dedicated to the very recipient.

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- [2] Leger F., *Funkcje malarstwa [Functions of painting]*, PIW, Paris 1965, *Architektura nowoczesna i kolor albo kreacja nowej przestrzeni życiowej [Modern architecture and colour or creation of new living space]*, p. 122–126.
- [3] Młodkowski J., *Aktywność wizualna człowieka [Visual activity of man]*, Publishing House – Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa Łódź 1998, (p. 90–94).
- [4] *Rawickie Mosty Sztuki, Rawicz-Rokosowo, Od czerni do bieli [From black to white]* Muzeum Ziemi Rawickiej, Rawicz 2015.

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<sup>4</sup> Młodkowski J., *Aktywność wizualna człowieka [Visual activity of man]*, Publishing House – Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa Łódź 1998, (p. 90–94).