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THE IMAGE OF ARCHITECTURE

OBRAZ ARCHITEKTURY

Abstract

Dual perception and creation of architecture falls from the combination of intuitive and rational thinking. A thought, an image, an association based on a sensory and emotional experience, backed up with interdisciplinary research, all exert a multivalent impact upon the architect and their works and influence the quality of architectural forms that infill our daily life context. The sensitivity and insightful perception of the designer counterbalance the skills of mathematical analysis, respect for proportions, technological achievements and capacities, implying the coexistence of spirit and matter expressed through a variety of aspects of architectural structures, often trespassing the boundaries of imagination.

Keywords: senses, intellect, experience, conscious perception, image of architecture

Streszczenie

Dualistyczny sposób pojmowania i kreacji architektury zawiera się w kompilacji intuicyjnego oraz logicznego rozumowania. Myśl, obraz, skojarzenie, opierające się zarówno na doświadczeniu umysłowym jak i emocjonalnym, poparte interdyscyplinarnymi badaniami naukowymi, działając na różnych poziomach, kształtują sylwetkę architekta mającego wpływ na jakość form architektonicznych, będących kontekstem naszej codzienności. Towarzyszące projektantowi wrażliwość i umiejętność wnikliwego postrzegania przestrzeni stanowią równoważnię dla matematycznej analizy, szacunku dla proporcji, osiągnięć techniki oraz możliwości technologicznych, co implikuje obecność współegzystencji ducha i materii wielowymiarowo wybrzmiewających w niejednokrotnie przekraczających granice wyobraźni strukturach architektury.

Słowa kluczowe: zmysły, intelekt, doświadczenie, doświadczanie, obraz architektury

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*A place is a type of an object. Objects and places define space, imposing upon it a given geometric personality*¹. Thus, what is an architect and what role does he/she play in piecing our life contexts together? How are we to perceive and understand architecture in the era of the omnipresent transfer of data and the interdisciplinary discourse accompanied with deeply hidden feelings of alienation, disorientation or social exclusion? How to combine individual creativity with the needs and expectations of the masses? What in fact is a place, which raises ambiguous connotations and which is saturated with real and anticipated images, memories and associations? Who plays the role of object and who is the object in the specific spatial game?

Architect – critic, architect – author, architect – viewer Professional determination and continuous attraction to multi-layered conscious perception of architecture, which deepen and strengthen the identification of objects, places and space may imply that it is an optimum solution for the viewer – user. The need and the ability to establish a dialogue during the process of designing space between the parties representing the beginning (the designer) and the end (the user) of the sentence (here, sentence = architecture) condition the prevailing values – the sense of the process (its usefulness). Finding a common language by both parties, a code understood by both of them, openness to ideas and mutual respect facilitate a transparent definition of the purpose supported with arguments for a good function and form, thus, giving the foundations for effective cooperation, being the only prerequisite for concluding a statement composed of chapters, paragraphs, a variety of sub-plots, written by several authors under the supervision of an architect. As such the architect is fully liable, aware and above all obliged to act as a co-starring actor aspiring for an Oscar award for his/her interpretation of expectations and assumptions. The quality of his/her translation into the language of architecture may, or even should, each time meet the highest expectations of the jury composed of the user, an external expert and a renowned critic that is the lapse of time allowing for an objective opinion.

Both architecture and a sentence have their own beginning and end. Depending on the context architecture starts with the foundations formwork system and ends with the click of the key turned in the external door leading the investor to his/her new home. We may well pose a statement that architecture begins with a point emerging from behind the horizon which starts a chain of acts so smoothly composed as sheet music, clearly understood by the composer and offering an opportunity for an outstanding reception of others.

Analysing architecture, which commences with the first dot made in the schematic recording of the vision, and which then serves as a link in the chain of complex structures of layers interlocking at the level of multidisciplinary data carriers, and the last link being a not yet finished page of a review written by the most stringent critic (reviewer) – history – is a key issue in the analysis of the quality of created space and ways predetermining its actual, physical attire perceived by senses or *a priori*.

The architect, the chief editor of an undertaking, bonding the design into one final form, can fall back on his/her knowledge and professional experience, whereas the sensitivity, the sense of proportions, colours, texture, dogmas of composition set in unrestricted imagination nicely complement the entirety. Form and function are twins in defining the design purpose from the point of view of a perfect perception of a workpiece. Aspiring to reach the core

¹ Y-F. Tuan, *Przestrzeń i miejsce*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 1987, (30–31).

of the beauty and art we refer to the time modified theories of Antiquity which pursue the progress in the canons of civilisation, of which some rules are happily accepted while others are conditioned on the resultant of the decisions of the investor and external needs and conditions. Accounting for difficulties we gain the information underlying the visions and we progress towards the final conceptual version verified by a number of parties through individual mono-dialogue falling back on the tools facilitating the modelling of the analogously or digitally imagined reality.

A pencil, a crayon, a paper or cardboard sheet, as per respective superiority level, allow us to carry out a particular auto-correction, rendering in a no time at all, an image of the designed body block. A drawing – a mirror² predetermines the development of conscious perception, offering a juxtaposition of the depicted idea with the purposefulness of the design. An experienced designer confronted with a sketch drawing (conceptual sketch, schematic design, autonomous drawing) of an imaginary structure, evaluates its quality, by taking advantage, in a controlled manner, of the coincidental circumstances that give rise to the preliminary concept, and then changes, transforms and improves the design assumptions.

architect ↔ author ↔ critic

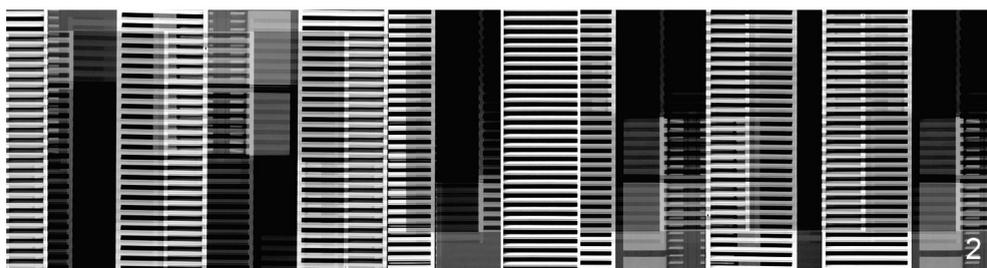
Work over a given body block and space compiles unrestrained energy of the network of design guidelines set against the restrictions and the vision of the author. Synergy rooted in the architect's experience combined with the time compression and catalysed reactions resulting thereunder translates into the optimization of the design sequences.

It is worth differentiating between conscious perception and experience which accumulates almost instantly via the generated multiplicity of confrontations in a given area of knowledge, encompassing the practice-related activity and passivity connotations, and via further reflections concerning particular phenomena arising in reality or their interpretations. Experience, classified into cognitive processes, as a set of intentions and emotions, is always accompanied with perception based on the senses. The two are complementary with respect to one another in the process of conscious perception. This unique dualism – senses and intellect – is the main driving force triggering the mechanism which allows us to feel that architecture is a form and function combined.

sensory perception + intellectual perception ↔ conscious perception

Conscious perception plays its role at the conceptual level, the design level, at the level of contractor's works and at the utility level. All these zones are strictly interrelated with one another forming links implemented into further required contents rendering the factual phenomena. Conscious perception develops at the level of awareness and the need to receive external stimuli and to process them into enhanced or totally new sensations.

² K. Słuchocka, *Drawing – the autograph of spatial sensivity*, Freehand drawing for students of architecture – educational issues, Technical Transactions, Architecture, Cracow University of Technology, 2015, p. 43–49.



- III. 1. Architectural impression I, Stary Browar [Old Brewery Arts and Business Centre] Poznań, photo by K. Słuchocka
- III. 2. Architectural impression II, A residential building at ul. Krańcowa in Poznan, photo by K. Słuchocka

Systematic classification of space, based on a set of accumulated beliefs resulting from the way of looking, comprehending, observing, and feeling, and from emotional perception, distinguishes three types of space, thus complementing the foundations of the profound knowledge supported with autonomous creative attitudes accumulated over the years. It stimulates and reinforces the process of conscious perception whereas cognitivism omnipresent in the methodology of modern design work as well as smooth exchange of ideas via the interdisciplinary communication tools accelerate the rate of work and simultaneously introduce a spark of mutual guarantee of quality. Necessity combined with sensibility of conscious perception allows us to transform the research into material forms and ensure stable quality of the product – the designed space.

Distinguishing and naming space – toxic, identical, transparent space – enables us to confront the expectations with the reality and to make adjustments at all stages of the designing process. The stimulus and stimulation, exchange of views, analytical conclusions underlie positive interference, and thus offer theoretical and practical opportunities.

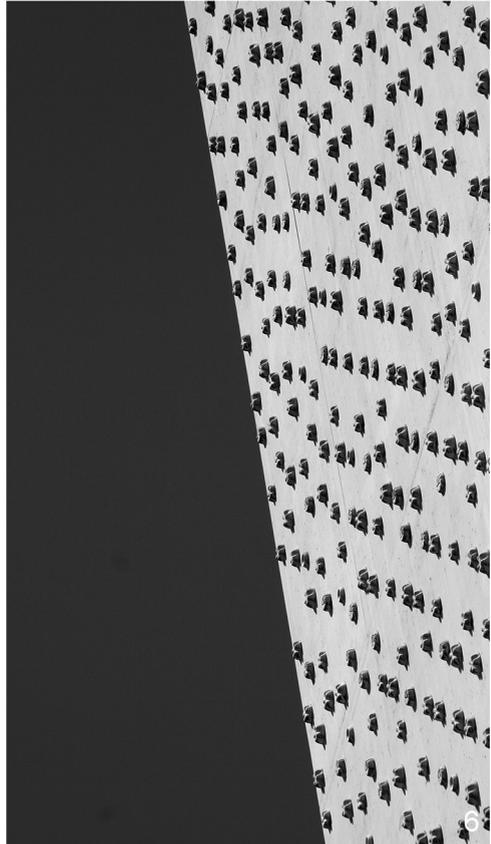
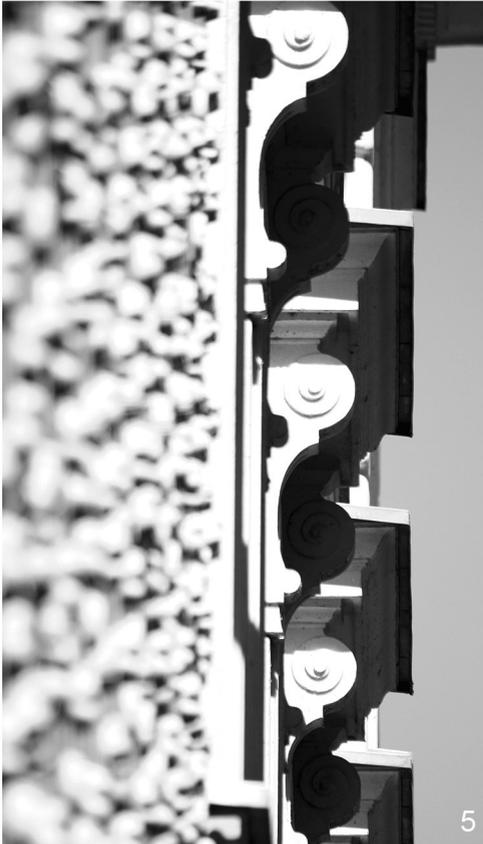
Designing activity, which is also demonstrated as interference in the shape of architectural expression by both the creator and the user, shall assume mutually respectful cooperation and creative freedom, accounting for a logical compromise, supported with fully grounded arguments. Understanding the needs of future users, their nature and preferences, specific use of the facility combined with the knowledge of mathematical interdependencies, technological solutions and modern technological innovations offered on the market will eliminate ill-matched decisions, which, despite the fact that they may be attractive from the aesthetic point

of view, may bring about toxic functional effects³ or disastrous collapses of constructions. An architect, via his/her individual sensations and observations also plays the role of the viewer (**architect-viewer**), and as such is able to reliably analyse the phenomena undergoing in the reality and in the anticipated design proposals. *Design as if you were designing for yourself* – a motto frequently repeated to students of architecture, represents the core of purposefulness of designing activity and above all largely facilitates the assessment of quality and nature of each stage of a building design. Imagination and philosophical attitude reinforced with their visionary nature, bound together with conscious perception of architecture, can trigger a mechanism that will render a fully satisfactory image of reality, image of architecture being the background of our daily activities and their stage.

Yet, it is the architect-author/creator who is fully liable for the quality of sensory and emotional perception as well as safety of all those to whom he/she has dedicated a given architectural form. This form puts all the sub-ideas together, forecasting, preventing or solving the hypothetical problems that cannot be avoided in a team of professionals engaged in design work, especially if they represent different sectors of industry. Investment problems as well as economic, technical and building problems do not eliminate emotional and social dilemmas and all combined together make up the background of the entire investment process. The extensive intellectual potential of the architect as well as the ability to perceive and create the complete artistic utility of forms acquired owing to a conscious and insightful perception of architecture, both implemented into the created spatial reality, directly affect the organisation of the newly designed architectural space in respect of the context, tradition and culture. This space, full of originality and compositional freedom, is at the same time efficient, durable and beautiful, and thus it is able to guarantee man good living standards in all areas of his activity, emanating the feeling of peace, safety and development opportunities.

Finally, the architect as an author/creator and critic, aspiring to reach absolute beauty, appealing to the majority of the senses – to sight, hearing, smell, touch – absorbing external stimuli of the foundations of his/her brain, balances between meanders of structures immobilised in frames, which boldly display their vivid modern attire, with their feet on the historical ground, and hybrid effects of anonymously created events. The intuitive manner of the review of artistry in the design arts authorises the architect to voice strict criticism of emerging stacks of more or less geometrical forms and in effect to actively participate in the discourse bordering on the semantics of architecture and the philosophy of genius encased therein, and to criticise their impact on men's daily lives. The abilities of harmonious matching of components of forms designed in space which successfully harness the urban and architectural chaos up to the expectations of a majority, permit the architect to voice their own creative opinions demonstrated via extensive light and shadow effects on the carved façade screens or via an elegant and mysterious frugality of body blocks revealing to us the glazed planes of the interior, occasionally covered with glamour of steel or giving off the smell of sun-heated bricks and giving the feeling of smooth wood texture. Omnipresent depicted beauty. Planned, well-thought over, uncompromising in its expression, expected and desired in the greyness of everyday rhythm of steps. Tamed, friendly, named beauty, the viewer of which becomes its co-author and integral part by sheer participation therein. Throbbing with life,

³ K. Sluchocka, *The plan, that is the game goes on*, Technical Transactions, Architecture, Cracow University of Technology, 2015, pp. 331–335.



with the memory of the minutest details cherished as a personal diary, it has its own history not directly attributable to all the users. This image of architecture, left behind in the process of walking across space in time, accumulates in our brain adding up to our experience and widening its range.

Irrespective of the canons of beauty binding at a given moment and regardless of the individual preferences of the designer, architecture shall itself represent a work piece saturated with multivalent perfection. From the very beginning i.e. the design idea notation, via visualization of a designed body block in the form of a painting or a drawing, to the very end, i.e. the completed 1:1 scale mock-up (in the eyes of the investor – the viewer, in the eyes of the passers-by or neighbours positively or not so positively assessing the construction) – the completed building shall be pure pleasure for the senses. Bearing in mind the words of Le Corbusier: *the engineers of today still remain in accord with the principles that Bramante and Raphael applied long ago*⁴, we discover the timeless truth that shall convince us that the actual differences in the methods of shaping space will always be related with the professional condition and intuition of an architect, his/her skills, abilities, imagination and sensitivity. Let us thus remain in this zone which in particular affects the feelings and which offers a vast range of solutions that link impressionist visions and innate instinct, guiding architecture towards hermeneutics as a discipline of autonomous interpretation, which escapes any rigid educative borders. There is no prior worked out designing method, there are no defined paths leading to efficiency of the design and no encyclopaedic entries with formulas for precise principles propagating timeless design values, which if breached would prevent an architect from practising. *The knowledge of the counterpoint, harmony, colours, the golden ratio and the motto 'form follows function' are insufficient*⁵. To the contrary, there are many authors' own coined theories, that can be freely selected by any architect depending on his/her preferences and any of them can contribute to the set with their own, coined theories. The overall conscious perception, perception which falls back on the know-how and hermeneutics of architecture, is based on all types of depicted signals. Memorable images from the past and those not yet defined underlie a workpiece, binding it with the cover of time and place. Retrospective analysis of past events conditions the quality of modern phenomena and the customized modernity to the degree falling from the personality of the author/creator. The cyclicity of activities determines the directions in the development of architecture, allowing for ambiguity and creative freedom, and opens the way to the creation of further symbols – images, interpretative excuses.

Symbols – images represent a timeless cultural transfer of the past into the future, which largely reinforces the underlayer of spiritual and cultural richness, indirectly strengthening the individual and communal identity. It is the architect-user, critic and author/creator, skilfully using the relevant engineering expertise and craft skills, who by the synthesis of

⁴ Le Corbusier, *W stronę architektury*, Fundacja Centrum Architektury, Warsaw, 2012, pp. 88–93.

⁵ P. Zumthor, *Myslenie architektura*, Karakter, Cracow 2010, pp. 73–81.

Ill. 3. 4. Image of architecture I, II, Valetta, Malta, photo by K. Słuchocka

Ill. 5. Contrasts, Vorarlberg Museum, Bregenz_K. K. Słuchocka

Ill. 6. Multiverse, Vorarlberg Museum, Bregenz_K. Słuchocka.jpg

individual preferences, designates the selected frames of architectural genres, imposing upon them the prevailing importance in formulating the artistic expression in response to the external requirements (function, context, material, etc.) The skills of associations, linking ideas together and fishing ideas from the archive files recorded on external discs, introduce order into the complexities of reality, inducing portrayals of architecture. Subsequent reinterpretations of architectural images, which lead to aesthetically perfect material form, often exceed the borderlines of the narrow definitions of the concept of art. We may observe a certain regularity in this interdependency which constitutes a motivation driving force. An internal imperative, reliability, responsibility are demonstrated in new, surprising forms that often go beyond the aesthetic zone of immanence. The borderlines of aesthetization are negotiable and largely depend on the context of the place, external conditions, formal constraints, instructions, and the needs of the investor. The architect, balancing between the compromise and the consequences, between engineering construction and the art of creation and risking ambivalent feelings in response, enjoys unrestrained rule over the said borderlines. And similarly to a separately created piece of art, which *exists outside of any space and time, in the temporariness of an aesthetic sensation*⁶, architecture aspiring to the status of a timeless masterpiece shall be carried through time via associations and references, freezing the images of the future in retrospective dimensions. This unique homage, consciously referring to the styles of other designers, that at the same time is an expression of respect and tribute paid to a master demonstrated in the creations of modern architects, offers eternal life to architecture. Elegant, subtle homage, far from an uncompromising copy or abuse resulting from excessive borrowing. A new image of space. An image recorded as a notation of harmonious composition of body blocks, colours, proportions, framed with functions, assumes real dimensions. Image as a spatial utility form, depicted architecture. The relative existence of mutual influence of the interdependencies of the form and function is encompassed in the magic of architecture. Layers of accumulated thoughts, conscious or random observations, sub-consciously recorded events that expand the internal zones of aesthetic and interpretative reflection, become the author's own experience stimulating him/her to pursue new findings governing the newly written rules for the genres. Artistic ingenium together with the applicable norms give birth to a new material form, each being a unique phenomenon, as if a picture outside a picture, effectively evokes 'in plus' (positive) impressions recorded in the language of different media.

The transformation of autonomous reflections into e.g. a pure expression of fine arts, recorded in the form of conceptual sketches, schematic designs, drawings of an imaginary architectural structure or portrayals of architecture, reinforced with cognitive aptitude, which frequently define the signage of the author/creator, effectively presents the purposefulness of the application of the cognitivist methodology; thus, offering a double-sided change for auto-corrections during the complex and long term designing process. It, furthermore, finds surprising reflections in different disciplines of engineering sciences and fine arts – architecture and painting – demonstrating positive, mutual relations. If you move around one of them, you at the same time master your skills in the other (discipline of fine arts ↔ discipline of design arts). The fact that certain images exist conditions the creation of further images

⁶ G. Boehm, *O obrazach i widzeniu, Antologia tekstów*, – TAIWPN Universitas, Cracow, 2014, pp. 108–115.

and at the same time the artistic and iconic punch lines, predetermined with external circumstances, which can each time change the way a piece of art is received, will each time reveal its different assets. Moreover, the recorded images of architecture that, as a rich source material, integrate the autonomous thoughts of the author with the outline of the form that builds external context of our lives, complement our cultural and artistic heritage. The author's notations of architecture are part of documentation evidencing completed and uncompleted designs as well as a confirmation of high-quality professional skills and individual attitudes characteristic of leading artists. They, furthermore, prove the interdisciplinary of the profession of an architect, whereas their communicative and educative values shall be subject to particular protection and shall be displayed to others and moreover, they should be ranked much higher both in the designing process and in the national archives of cultural heritage. The issue of evaluation of the beauty of a picture is purely subjective and similarly, it is impossible to unambiguously define the phenomenon of architecture.

Skilfully harnessed emotions flowing to the rhythm of a melody, symmetry, contrast, tempting with an open perspective, topped with heavenly dome or gentleness of poetic gust, create the visions that are materialised on daily basis in architectural studios – all of these make up the architecture of the world of senses interpreted in abstract terms.

With free space left for a continuous play of spiritual symbols, motifs, vibrancy and subtle elegance and the reasons for existence built up with experience, we shall feel all the charms of architecture with all our senses available. *Time has shown again that certain things are unpredictable, at least if we are talking about the form*⁷. Why don't we thus write architecture that is honest, authentic, sometimes baffling and sometimes predictable in its means of expression, why don't we make sure it is provided with peace and quiet so that it could be analysed in peace and with full understanding, and finally why don't we allow the architect to enjoy the creative freedom so that he could start and finish his/her workpiece in a substantial, detailed and authentic manner.

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⁷ A. Osęka, *Spojrzenie na sztukę*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warsaw 1987, p. 10–16.