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architektura twarzą kultury

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The Architectural Face of Culture

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Preface

This text intentionally has the form of an essay, for its content concerns matters that go beyond universal and specialist research methods. It encompasses the digital records of technical devices and digital software and paintings by Rembrandt or the record-breaking achievements of the Paralympics, or a cosmic black hole. The subject discussed here concerns problems customarily qualified as belonging to scientific, technical issues, which concern measurable problems and phenomena. However, it also refers to essential problems of man, who is the model and subject of humanist explorations. Architecture pertains to the art of building and shaping space, and therefore its very name indicates discrepancies and oppositions, for the pendulum that swings towards the most technical measure, that is construction, swings equally far towards aestheticization, artistry and art, while also dealing with such indefinable matter as space can only present.

Designers need standards and models. Architects are expected to possess knowledge, vision, creative innovation, and responsibility. Consistency, drive, but also righteousness, tact and sensitivity, combined with talent and ethical conduct, are strengths and assets that cannot be applied in a measurable manner. This range of values is best presented in a comparative analysis of phenomena that revolve around architecture.

A word of introduction

The essence of architecture is building. Its goal is to bring into existence a construct, appropriate to the comfortable safeguarding of man.

The essence of art is to touch the deepest reaches of feeling, to stimulate thoughts and emotions.

The essence of culture is to maintain balance.

It is not difficult to see the unity that connects these spheres, both human presence/being and psyche, which condition the existence of human life. The human body uses sensors to establish cognitive experience and direct psychological needs to in pursuit of joy and pleasure—that is the place for culture, art and architecture. And insofar as the first two (culture and art) concern the sphere of spirituality, architecture likewise stands firmly grounded in these concepts. Architecture is tied with art by ideational and technical bounds that are as strong as its tangibility is associated with construction technology. All human actions are linked with culture, for the dimension of man's survival depends on respecting its precepts.

Art as a free thought, bound by nothing save for the imagined possibilities of its recordation, is ahead of all other forms of creation. The more material in its form a branch of art is (painting, sculpture), the closer it is to architectural art (in conceptual work). Materialising a concept in the form of a bronze cast or a structure is already a work with an engineering dimension. However, it is not possible to delineate a clear-cut border that separates the two scopes. Undoubtedly, artistic fleetingness, which guarantees a boundless freedom of movement, shall always remain ahead of the increasingly measurable and demanding scopes of this movement, culminating with the total stability of architecture. However, both architecture and culture require cooperation with art—as the vanguard of all creative measures—and depend on it entirely in their shape and everything that is attached to them in the spheres of reception, reaction and human behaviour.

In the first phase of formulating an architectural proposal, both architecture and art demonstrate parallel creative efforts. They diverge only in the phase of the concept's materialisation: first in recording the proposal, then in preparations for execution and the execution itself. To be precise, one should define the scope, level of complexity and cost of this process (including the size and profile of the teams of people who engage in it) as dependant on the project scale, since large artistic projects can equal or even supersede the buildings and groups thereof in scale.

The artistic dimension of a work, namely good quality, introduced into a multi-dimensional value, the ultimately positive undertone of a work concerns—all artistic endeavours as an overarching goal.

Culture is the product of civilisation. The level of development of each discipline, and the dominance in the development of the humanities or engineering, economy and politics, define its shape and hierarchy of values. However, it is culture that always maintains the status quo within a community.

Yet it is architecture that is the most visible mark, the symbol of every consecutive epoch, an all-visible sign of its time, since it is size that is seen as its immanent characteristic—an observable, identifiable and image-forming shape of the culture of every period. This is what this book discusses.

Introduction

‘I think that one of the motivations for my essays was a feeling of inconsistency between the considerable limits of the significance and reach of my professional work and my continual striving to make philosophy an important matter in my life and my outlook on the world. Most probably, one of the reasons why I have gradually limited this work was that this gap in my philosophical personality [...] began to narrow’.¹

Georg Henrik von Wright

The author of this quote, the Belgian humanist philosopher G.H. von Wright who is considered to be the successor of Ludwig Wittgenstein, has been cited here due to his interdisciplinary pursuit of humanist values, which also underscore an analogous original argument in this text concerning the message of architecture as art, one that is comparable and equal to that of the humanities.

Apart from its obvious classification as an autonomous branch of science, philosophy organises knowledge; it constitutes the structure of everyday knowledge. However, in fact philosophy is not a science—it is knowledge and a language of interdisciplinary concordance. In turn, a humanist, from a broad perspective—searches for truth about life, in its holistic view outside of religion and politics. Humanism concerns the essence of man, right to the boundaries of transhumanism, yet excluding anthropomorphism (angels, beasts, artificial intelligence).

Similarly to art, an academic essay, a philosophical critical outline, while being a type of manifesto, is an autonomous formal method of popularising one’s views, also for polemic reasons.

Even if this book goes beyond the scholarly comfort accepted in technical disciplines, it is the fact of using a more affective perception of reality that should bestow more refreshing characteristics upon research methodologies. In the visual assessment of architecture—similarly to other arts—it is the completeness of sensual experience that brings the fullest intellectual satisfaction. Thus, the architect’s research toolkit should be extended to include the assets of empathy.

¹ Georg Henrik von Wright, quote in: Jürgen Habermas *Od wrażenia zmysłowego do symbolicznego wyrazu*, transl. Krystyna Krzemieniowa, wyd. Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2004, ISBN 83-88164-81-3, 160 pages, from a laudatio for the quote’s author – p.52.

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PART I:

ARCHITECTURE IN THE SPACE OF CULTURE

Referring to architecture as the face of culture can appear controversial, but only at first glance.

The face is an image of an ascribed personality, a type of showcase seen from outside, associating content with a symbol—the sign of a living person, an image—a shortcut-pictogram of a complicated interior of a different personality. It is about the superficial, sketchy, architectural shape of culture—about expressing culture through the medium of architecture. Architecture is visible everywhere due to its scale and function; it introduces and announces the residents' national character and social status from afar. It is architecture that expresses the state of culture. We often say 'show me how you live and I will tell you who you are', for the appearance and utility of architecture testify to the level and profile of civilisational development (including its entire intellectual superstructure). Or perhaps, in the broadest sense of the term, 'architecture' is the product of civilisation? Or maybe even its interpretation or exponent?

1. Architecture as the face of culture

Without a doubt, the shape and content (entirety) of built architecture bears testimony to culture, the level of cultural development and the directions of cultural growth. In turn, in the material sphere, the manner in which structures are used, denotes not only the level of development, but also the type and character of the utilitarian materiality of architecture. At the same time, an artificially created architectural shape bears testimony to its creators in the non-material sphere—to human, mental scopes of balance: between knowledge, skill and a sense of aesthetics. Architecture is not merely the result of a structural engineer's proficiency and courage in calculations; neither is it the effect of programmed virtual reality—a procedurally generated output of digital software, produced by using a 3D printer. It is the effect of the interaction of numerous components from the spheres of the humanities and engineering, including both measurable and non-measurable ones, which are also the effect of programmed and manual actions, with or without the necessary physical presence of people. The irreplaceable presence of people concerns both the phase of construction—the materialisation of architecture—and the phase of creation—the invention of a design and the creation of the record of the idea itself. An innovative design is the effect of deliberate actions and intuitive choice by architects, measures whose success is evidenced by objective utility and subjective acceptance or user satisfaction. The utility of a building is a testimony to its efficiency and beauty.

Beauty, combined with utility, usually automatically directs one's thoughts towards applied art. And indeed, the art of architecture is an applied art that combines the artistry of free creative art with the craft-like skill of the designer, in addition to the knowledge, experience and intuition of the architect. A good architect is a visionary, a philosopher and an enlightened humanist skilled in the complicated relationships and dependencies of different disciplines and branches of knowledge. The word 'architect' is not merely the name of a learned profession—it is a spectrum of strategic, multi-dimensional, multi-use, interdisciplinary actions which combine what is ordinary with what is potentially or downright impossible.

The term 'urbanist' is typically used to refer to architects who operate with a multiple number of architectural entities, and is not confined exclusively to planners who professionally delineate the directions of urban development, but it also extends to other professionals who seemingly appear to fit but poorly into this category. Urbanists also include all types of activists as well as enthusiasts, volunteers and interdisciplinarians, in other words, all who are involved in the processes that improve the life of cities. Through the accumulation of a diversity of buildings and users, the city becomes an expression of the most sophisticated architectural thought. The coexistence and harmonious cooperation of constructed units and complexes is the true goal of masterful architectural efforts. Following the contemporary understanding of the term, it is to architects that the power to heal convoluted urban situations is ascribed. Their skills are used to repair worn urban values, revitalisations, modernisations, reconstructions, the designs of new and innovative solutions. It is no coincidence then that the blame for all defects and errors in use, and even incompatibilities with the subjective mental images of perfect projects, is typically ascribed to architects. It is they who are also officially and financially responsible for most aspects of construction decisions.

This is why every design project begins with an in-depth analysis of the context; it starts with determining and assessing the existing environment. Before it begins to speculate on the possible answers that will be concordant with the needs and ambitions, before it looks into a given site's potential, size, character and expression, every properly conducted design first has to examine the surroundings and investigate the scope of current cooperation with the place as well as potential further relationships taking into consideration a full spectrum of use. The architect also possesses comprehensive knowledge of global civilisational tendencies and about the general state of the world. At least this is what is expected of an architect as someone who truly creates and acts as a responsible strategist in every process of development.

Expectations associated with the work of architects, with works of architecture, in proven utilitarian characteristics that solve the problems of everyday life, are measurable advantages of a technical, construction-related nature, which can at most be subjected to a visual stylisation following fashionable trends, or in a more unconventional manner if the goal so requires. Sometimes, they are shaped using completely unexpected spatial forms, which are surprising in their reception. Of course, the more surprising they are, the more varied the reception is. Typically, innovation, even if it is only utilitarian and makes use objectively easier, encounters resistance and disbelief. Forces of habit and the fear of change act with overpowering strength. Despite curiosity and the desire for refreshing change, emotions are kept at bay by the strength of comfortable stabilisation and the fear of the unknown. (Similarly, when we see a new human face in our surroundings, it rarely inspires unconditional trust; instead, it often puts us on alert. Even despite an overwhelming sympathy and a desire to meet someone, a stranger always causes uncertainty and makes us act with suspicion). Multi-sided criticism of new realizations ultimately allows one to verbalise the strengths and weaknesses of the project. The balancing of values ultimately leads to a safe acceptance of a work.

However, there is a broad margin of works that have not gained widespread acceptance, which have remained the sparks of conflict ready to erupt under any pretext, as arguments held in reserve in every discussion on improving the condition of cities. Typically, discussions concern the content and tasks carried over to works of architecture—instead of their appearance—image—face. Nonetheless, the notional *image* or the above-mentioned face, clearly brings to mind the entirety of information accompanying the said image. By analogy, a typical Smith is not only a formatted passport photograph, but also a popular surname marking one of many probable reactions. Above all, it is actually the one and only owner of the presented face, with his own history and life-story, linked to various persons and events that have occurred in specific circumstances.

It is a similar story with architecture. The face of architecture—its appearance—clearly subjects built structures to both the period of history of their construction, the conditions of the climate and geographical realities (the latter appear to be constant for architecture, as it is in essence immovable—yet they change in a manner that can be traced over time and is visible in the utilitarian characteristics of a building); appearance defines the building's hierarchy of importance, ownership, the affluence of the architect's client, the purpose of the structure. The functional layout testifies to the client's habits, possibilities and ambitions, his individualism, the ingenuity of design solutions or a deliberate departure from established patterns; it denotes the feeling of a specific local aura, the manner and culture of use, the artistry of the craftsman or the sophisticated sense of aesthetics of both; it testifies to the users' tidiness or carelessness; it reveals traces of successive modernisations due to the changing needs and ownership rights. All of this can be traced—recreated from the structure's history recorded in architectural materials—just like in a human face, on which we can see scars—traces of

medical procedures or injuries, blemishes that appear with age and are caused by the elements, calluses, musculature and contractures that result in distinct folds and grimaces, the face's harmoniousness or asymmetry, crookedness or deviations from symmetry caused by habits or long-time nervous tics, the tone of the skin resulting from genetics, nutrition, hygiene, behaviour control—all this is caused by living conditions that arise from the individual's history, which is in turn affected by general history, etc.

The face is a mirror of a given individual's being, of his complete profile, the essence of his 'soul' and body—the entirety of his life, which includes and outlines a life potential that can be used, as presented in a young face—while in an old one, it shows a record of life's trials documenting traces of individual choices and circumstances, marking a given individual's contribution to the vast fabric of historical fact.

One could also refer to the complete set of values that comprise the symbolic image of the sum total of traces left in architectural matter, as a face. This general image—codeword can be stripped into layers and subjected to analysis. By pointing out traces ascribed to individual measurable values, one may decipher specific fields of knowledge and document them in relevant disciplines. A skilled physician who specialises in internal medicine works in a similar manner; he is able to assess at a glance the type of patient he is dealing with as well as his health characteristics, in addition to his weight, his medical past and life history, his needs and troubles. On the basis of these observations, he or she can suggest the cause of illness and determine the course of treatment. By observing the patient's face, he can detect most information which points to the type of illness, or at least a group of possible disorders that result in a given set of symptoms. Even the first glance allows us to narrow down our search, which, over time and following a more in-depth analysis, leads to a more precise diagnosis.

The same indication for determining the specificity of architecture is provided by an even cursory glance at it, and its immediate and wider surroundings. The collection of urban artefacts is clearly discernible against the background of the urban fabric. Structural monuments are lasting traces of events. They are structures erected as a continuously growing, lasting legacy of their residents, or buildings created to specifically commemorate certain events. Those that serve standard functions are the structures that form architecture. Others, which are 'remnants' in their respective groups, act as places of memory. Those in the group of the lasting, exceptionally/artificially created, valuable and well-maintained, gain the name of monuments, and those in the group of living natural ecosystems are monuments of nature.

From here we are just a moment away from the justification of the title, which combines in it the words that belong to mutually distant senses. The titular 'Architecture', just like 'Culture', can be understood in various ways. However, all speculations as to the interpretation of the two concepts, correspond to the various aspects of their semantic context. Typically, the word 'architecture' is associated with built objects, but also with the product of the architects' creative thought or the structure of a complicated load-bearing construction; only then does it reach towards science and creativity. It is only at the very end of the entire qualification procedure that it is treated as applied art, one that is designed or recorded and built in a craft-like fashion to fulfil a specific commission or need. It is only on rare occasions, in cases justified solely by exceptional reception, that it gains an artistic significance and can be called art.

Culture, in turn, denotes cultivation, a crop that is artificially grown thanks to human effort. In its basic semantic meaning, it is cultivation of the soil—agriculture. In its current, contemporary and primary sense, culture signifies the overall body of civilisational efforts and achievements. It is progress, artistry, the fine arts, correctitude, status within a hierarchy, good

manners and education. High culture denotes sophistication and refinement, mastery of performance and professions, the pursuit of the greatest achievements and absolute beauty. High culture also signifies the art of diplomacy, style, an ability to get out of trouble in a proper manner that does not harm anyone's feelings; it is politeness and tact. It is a way of maintaining emotional distance, self-control and an unbiased outlook on things.

However, 'culture' is undoubtedly a product of civilisation. The degree of being civilised can easily be measured by the quality of contemporaneous architecture as a lasting legacy — an artificially produced structural substance. It includes buildings used by contemporaries in their proper manner, according to the contemporary need and the ability to build (construct); it also refers to the superstructure, i.e. arranging, equipping, decorating, innovative use — all of this denotes the motivations behind creation. The entire superstructure constitutes a record of the needs of the times and the colour of a given moment in history. Of course, the materials and technologies used assign the structure to its time of construction in the simplest possible manner. Materiality is also always accompanied by adequate intellectual development.

Thus, it can be said that contemporary architecture always becomes the face of the culture of its time.

2. The face of architecture

By treating a face as a pictogram—a symbol, a visual sign, a barely visible shortcut to the entire complex and complicated personality of the owner, one can transpose the same evaluation from the description of a person to the scale of a notion—from the description of an individual's personal characteristics to the complete overview of even such a broad term as culture. The term 'culture' includes in it legacy, tradition, custom, transformations over time, generational shifts and all civilisational side effects, with the progress of successive stages associated with development. At every moment of this process, new buildings and architectural complexes are created, for this is what is required by the continuing chain of replacements, modernisations and building new cities, overcoming new challenges and implementing innovation. Only a cataclysm can break this chain. Thus, every period in the history of culture can be ascribed visualisations of architecture that change in their image. As in a face, these images present variable expressions, adapted to the cultural changes of the given period that caused them. The grimaces of a face correspond to changes in architectural style, the use of new materials, innovative technologies and finally, innovative structural systems and surprising shapes. The image of architecture, just like a face identified in a crowd, immediately brings to mind an entire array of various types of data and information about the person who sports the face—it recalls entire clusters of linked data and descriptions in memory—characteristics assigned to images of architecture in a stylistically defined historical section. The closer the period of time, the quicker and more precise the connotations. The data read here are characteristics that arise from design procedures that correspond to standards and requirements of a given moment, the result of measures often forced by particular decisions, or, for instance, ideological or political directives, the effects of unexpected errors in construction or specific expectations and ambitions associated with exceptional works. Each individual history of every project is inscribed into the full history of the city just as every human life is dependent on the vagaries of a given country's history and its culture.

It can therefore be agreed that the architectural landscape, as well as a singular work of architecture, is a reliable witness to its time and a symbolic sign. It also explicitly testifies to its contemporaneous place-based history. We can also agree that by using a mental shortcut, the face is a full visualisation of a complete set of personal characteristics, linking it with a given individual's history and role played in the broad context of impressions. In the substance of architecture, all actions of contemporary people are recorded and can be read. As are practical improvements in satisfying essential needs, and the standards of contemporary life, proof of the application of exploratory and scientific thought, and the current state of knowledge and the sense of aesthetics of contemporaries, are documented through the shape and outward expression of the building. It can therefore be summarised that architecture can fully and explicitly testify about the development of a given period's civilisation and the state of its culture.

Even if the 'culture of life' appears to refer to a slightly different scope of measures, concerning the sphere of behaviours, functions and everyday habits of residents, then 'culture and the arts' are typically associated with the sphere of creation, innovation, actions that energise society, the abstract character of explorations that drive designer creativity and stimulate the desire to participate.

By analogy, using the symbolic 'face' as a shorthand for the entirety of a figure's characteristics—we can also use 'culture' as a shorthand for the entirety of a civilisation's matters associated with the functioning of man in a given historical period on Earth. Finally, qualified 'high culture' always denotes a degree of civilisational development. The word 'culture' includes the meaning of spiritual needs as practical measures, learned behaviours and expectations, imitation and study—it is thus a testimony and symbol to the level of human activity and the human sense of aesthetics.

Architecture, as an interpretation, can thus be the face of culture.

3. *The image of architecture*

One unquestioned and distinctive advantage of architecture as a discipline that applies both to creativity and craftsmanship (in terms of design and construction) is its durability. If it does not succumb to cataclysms, destructive terrorist acts and is properly used and maintained, it remains the most durable and, most importantly, the most visible testament to its time. Thanks to its size, its scale, which always exceeds human scale, it is impossible to conceal, it never goes unnoticed, and as long as it exists it explicitly reflects its origins. As its superficial layer changes along with time, it can freely speak of its contemporaries.

Architecture occupies a special place among disciplines of knowledge, as it does among crafts: be they construction-related or artistic, as well as the arts. It occupies a special place among all branches of all types of human activity beginning with the thought and creation of a work of architecture and ending with its practical, everyday use, that is essential for existence, for life. It does not clearly fit into the framework of any accepted divisions concerning academic branches and disciplines, nor does it fit into any utilitarian categories nor qualify entirely into any branch of services. Acting as the essential protective measure to the frailness of everyday biological human life, it is an object of the most complicated and sophisticated technical measures, which engage the latest cybernetic practices, chemical discoveries and the most advanced theories and often twisting meanders of thought, even

philosophy. It is a completely independent spatial value of a scale that is supernatural to humans, an entirely artificial creation, which on the urban scale damages the biology of Earth, while also being the essential condition for the comfortable existence of humanity. It is the pride and joy of human thought, as well as proof of a deep concern for tomorrow. It is the condition and reason for the emergence of successive mutations of creative thought that masters the natural forces of rebirth and renewal of life, subjecting nature to culture.

It is architecture that is the personification of usurpatory mastery on Earth. The human-architect is the coloniser that loots successively conquered territories as per their intent, which is unforeseeable in its consequences. To realise the lavish dreams of precursors, deeper and larger habitats of ecological biosystems are devastated. By causing the degradation of increasingly larger wildlife areas, we often leave increasing deposits of non-degradable waste. Today's proportions of the former and the latter are most alarming. We are already losing this battle.

The characterological diversity of communities gives us hope in both the desire to rise to challenges and the intent to overcome evil. Typically, the greater the amplitudes of the phenomena of destruction and renewal (philosophical good and evil), the greater the counter-reaction and the greater the intensity with which means to address the situation are sought, particularly concerning critical options. Even when the proportions of proponents and antagonists of each action are unconvincing, addressing objectively unfavourable phenomena is a matter that should be dealt with without regard to our divisions. Only biological diversity is capable of maintaining the necessary balance between destruction and the degree of renewal.

Meanwhile, studies and discoveries are increasing their pace and scale. Researchers and charlatans reach for novelties without regard for the boundaries of ethics, which are constantly shifted by knowledge and awareness. Studies of the possible directions of development are constantly ongoing, both those leading to biologically favourable applications and those whose outcomes lead to biological losses and human tragedies. It is not possible to foresee their effects and far-reaching consequences.

In this vicious circle of attractive innovations and long-term, oft-irreversible changes and incalculable costs, there stands the entirety of built infrastructure. Material architecture constantly reaches for new building materials and technologies, which are innovative and attractive to contemporaries, but that can become the reason behind illness and suffering for later generations (e.g. the use of asbestos or aluminum). Such is the price of development. One generation has no time to investigate all the side effects of a partial mistake. What matters is rapid progress in a given discipline and measurable economic growth.

4. Architecture and culture

After a period of Postmodern sculptural and monument-like architecture that was often defiant, that stood out from its surroundings and independently resounded with ambitions of domination and being different, there came a time of patient dialogue with the surroundings, of hiding in the landscape, of an austerity of form and protecting nature. Architecture, until recently fully exposed and visible, searches for all possible gaps and areas that could allow it to make maximum use of the already urbanised areas. It no longer wants to take over additional land for urbanisation, instead desiring to make full use of current resources. It enters the space between buildings and reaches above ordinary heights, but also explores the unknown, reaching underground, into an area typically used only for foundations or technical

connections, sporadically, for special types of transport solutions and exceptional goals. Contemporary engineering gives us full potential for building underground.² Tunnelling technology allows us to explore every type of soil through tunnels. Innovative methods of reinforcing tunnels allow us to create underground cities. There is probably no world capital, no large city that would be unable to display underground spaces made available for public use. The largest metropolises utilise entire underground circulation structures, complete shopping malls, exhibition spaces, as well as tanks that house gas, liquid biological and chemical reserves, drinking water and flood reservoirs, and finally, city defence structures and complete bunkers for the population, intended to protect from disasters, particularly in seismically active regions.

Paris, which is a centre of and a synonym for Old Europe, is also the best example of a modern centre of multi-level circulation³ comprising numerous systems and connections of the transport network carrying goods, people and media that simultaneously course across numerous levels both under and above ground. Underneath the historic city, a metropolis that teems with contemporary life, padded with a historical network of catacombs and old passages, modern vehicular and rail trunk routes and tunnels were built, housing a multitude of cables and pipes. Additional layers of underground networks are connected by inspection chambers and circulation shafts that allow us to enter and exit the depths of the system and get to the surface in the most comfortable place of the city. Modern information systems and smart technologies that border on artificial intelligence have been put to use here – they have allowed the need of the moment to be met and the ambition of the city’s imperial tradition to be satisfied. Other European capitals and metropolises are extended in a similar manner (London, Rome, Amsterdam, Berlin). State borders of Europe’s individual lands have become secondary, while cooperation between cities as urban organisational units has become more important. We all care for protecting the Earth to ensure survival, which is why it is important to preserve natural wildlife, at least in the extent found by our generation, and direct all of our efforts towards reversing the damage and adverse civilisational effects. We cannot let particular political and economic interests make the efforts of good-willed people towards our common survival go to waste. Activists and urbanists try to shift the role of urbanisation from that of a parasite upon the face of the earth to that of its co-host.

Architecture is a form of the deterioration of nature, its appearance reveals the level of this degradation, its image and structure (style and makeup) demonstrate the state of awareness of its builders and users, its trace within space is a testimony to the culture of its time.

Architecture is the face of this culture.

² Han Admiraal, Antonia Cornaro *Underground Spaces Unveiled. Planning and creating the cities of the future*, ICE Publ.(Institution of Civil Engineers) 2018, ISBN 978-0-7277-6145-3, 210 pages.

³ Małgorzata Mizia *Contemporaneity - Zakopane-ness – the heritage of Zakopane. Searching for Urban reserves. The potential of underground spaces Designing in a narrow and demanding location.*, Czasopismo Techniczne 2019, vol.12, DOI: 10.4467/2353737XCT.19.124.11449, pp. 63–78, ejournals.eu/Czasopismo-Techniczne/2019/Volume-12/art/15953

5. Searching for beauty

Architecture is tasked not only with caring for the image of, but also maintaining restraint in colonising Earth, care for the proper, correct and intended use of the already urbanised areas as the actual needs of survival dictate and for a scientifically controlled structure of both compact construction and filling it with non-aggressive tissue. Whilst biologists and humanist turn to nature as a force that structures the order of the world, rebellious architects, alongside explorers, researchers, conquerors and all manners of innovators try to nigh-forcibly make humanity happy by introducing an artificial one. Where can we find a healthy balance between expansion and conservative existence? A balance between natural beauty and the beauty of art?

Through its thematic freedom, art disturbs all manner of taboos, it carelessly searches for new directions in the pursuit of intellect, the biology of spiritual states, it pursues beauty and despair, minimalism in use as well as dispensable gadgets, it praises the rise and fall of heroes. Its responsibility for its conduct is minuscule. Art itself, as a field of exploration, also in the form of material creations, is, contrary to appearances, easily removable. In the face of catastrophic events, the value of contemporary art decreases almost immediately. If anything, it is the conservation of the oldest material objects that is fought for. Even a burning forest appears to be a primarily ecological loss, a disruption of the climate, the balance of flora and fauna, the loss of a resource of material for industrial products and fuel, and an essential asset used for rest and recreation. The natural aesthetic value of a forest is nearly the last item on the list of losses, despite the fact that aesthetic values are ingrained in each of the above-mentioned lost assets. Beauty contained in every image of nature and in every manifestation of life allows us to search for the sense of their existence and reasons for saving them and ensuring their survival. The same imperative directs our egoistic impulse to defend life and to intuitively search for beauty. The need for beauty is an immanent characteristic of every one of us, and its pursuit is an obvious element of every intuitive effort. The indispensability of the element of art manifests itself both in the intellectual brainstorm, in mathematical abstraction, in the pursuit of practical solutions and the selection of a tourist trail. The need for art stems from the asymmetry of our brain, while maintaining the appearances of its symmetry; the same concerns the rest of our body and entire nature. We constantly and at every step seek balance, starting with measuring the said step. By making the first attempted step, we try to improve the subsequent one. Every successive step is improved upon and more confident, thanks to the recruitment of a larger group of muscles and greater sensory control, and the instinctive application of aesthetic correction that leads to perfection. Even perfect walking is not satisfactory to us, for we continue to seek for an ever more beautiful, faster movement, right until it disappears, a movement that is so fluid that it overflows—that is ballet. We further seek steps that are extreme and disrupt the stable stop, which lead to critical figures recorded as dynamism in sculpture, or as symbolism of movement in a narrative. They are branches of art that are familiar to us, whose goal is to search for beauty, and the unconscious reason behind it lies in every one of us. To some, it is an unrestrained instinct that bids us to create, that manifests itself in talent, to others it is an intuitive search for order and pleasure, that commands us to derive these values from innovation, comfort, difference, bewilderment, fascination, delight, and ultimately outrage and the complete set of emotions offered by art. Its initiating role primarily boils down to provocation. But, what is most important, it first provokes us to think.

Artists are typically people either with an imagination and a lack of restraint, or who are sensitive and introvert. They are those who typically do not plan out their career paths, but rather choose a lifestyle, and typically do not speculate on the stock market or in business. Their career relies on a creative spark, on fertile ground and a stroke of luck. Most sell their talent short, becoming satisfied with odd means of earning a living. This situation's great flaw is the common misunderstanding of art, a lack of working conditions and the lack of drive in sensitive people. All of these reasons lie in society's lack of preparation for pursuing joy, pleasure, good and beauty. And this is precisely what enables one the experience of art and makes it easier. This is why, places where art is cultivated which provide an environment for its proper and continued existence, are so rare; that is also why, they are so moving and celebrated.

6. The Skłudzewo phenomenon⁴

Skłudzewo is the name and location of a palace and park complex in a small village between Toruń and Bydgoszcz. It is the main headquarters of Fundacja Piękniejszego Świata (A More Beautiful World Foundation) and a fragment of a phenomenal natural space dedicated to art, which lives through art and, through the art created here, gives us a feeling of a better, fuller and more valuable life.

The hosts of the palace are artists—a pair of ‘positively obsessed’ painters who, as animators of the region’s cultural life, have come to realise their dream of the beauty of everyday life at this location. They are wizards who enchant ordinary life into a fairy tale, spreading their vision not only to neighbours and their children, but also cultural activists and decision-makers among local and regional authorities. They have settled here for good and together with their children and grandchildren. Together, they continue to develop the concept of their elders and the potential of the place. Three decades of their activity have passed, during which the busy unconventional artists have not only amassed a sizable collection of their own work, but—having organised around a dozen interdisciplinary plein-air sessions for invited and carefully selected artists—have built a wonderful collection of contemporary artworks, presented in farm buildings adapted to act as exhibition spaces, in addition to a library and guest rooms. The hosts also offer professional educational classes for youth. Apart from housing an office and residential spaces in the attic, the halls of the manor feature spacious and comfortable studios and meeting spaces (for conferences), while its extensive and high-vaulted basement is equipped with tables and ceramic furnaces, allowing the organisation of sculpture workshops and working with stone, wood and metal. The material can also be worked outdoors and the entire space of the nearby park and forest is full of sculptures, surprising visitors with installations amidst the foliage, intriguing injections of artificial structures, unexpected metal, glass or wicker ornaments, it lives with the presence of traces of former owners, the tombs of former residents, it organises a time of reflection and relaxation among picturesque corners of a once-larger property, and even sanctifies the experience with its own chapel, entirely created with the artists’ own hands. It builds a separate narrative about the place and people.

⁴ Fragments taken (edited) from an original online publication entitled *W poszukiwaniu piękniejszego świata*, in: *Przestrzeń Społeczna (Social Space Scientific Journal)*, no. 2/2019(18), 200 pages, URZ, www.socialspacejournal.eu

Contemporary art has become pro-social; it has taken delight in the beauty of nature and the ordinary; it is co-created by both artists and users and cares not for durability and price—it simply improves the quality and value of life itself—of every moment on Earth. The aura of Skłudzewo allows us to feel the taste of existence and the sublime character of creation. The alliance of artists and the audience, artists and students, gives mutual satisfaction which is derived from the sense of creation. A more beautiful world becomes better. Beauty builds bonds. Everyone leaves here with a sense of lightness of being.

Skłudzewo needed such hosts to discover its hidden potential, the strength of its lush wildlife and, through its beauty, affect increasingly distant surroundings. Those who have had contact with the Warmbiers (Lech and Danuta Sowińska-Warmbier—the Foundation's founders and hosts), those who have experienced Skłudzewo, become 'marked' by the memory of this place, the haptic experience and feeling of creative drive, a feeling of the ability to act, a load of energy to spread a better life around themselves. The hosts, as artists full of creative ideas that they realise themselves and with their guests, bring with them an inspiring sense of strength and a belief in the possibility of achieving the impossible. This desire to act is contagious. The attractive wildlife engages scattered everyday thoughts, opens up hearts, discovers and nurtures traces of other artists' activities. Among them, one finds outdoor sculptures, whose number is increasing, works of art absorbed and adapted by nature which bring to mind abstract associations and a flow of inspiration, while the stimulating workplace provides the necessary drive.

Philosopher Friedrich Schelling described nature as a combination of philosophical ideas (infinity, transcendence and eternity), in which the human mind, which is its peak embodiment, recognises its own perfection.

The thus created *entourage* completely eliminates plain indifference. Those who come here, even if they have done so only once, do not leave without having felt the positive aura of this place. Even commercial meetings give random participants a feeling of participating in a different life within an aesthetically sophisticated, yet not too luxurious an environment. Without artificiality, yet being surrounded by Art added to the natural beauty of nature, art that extracts and highlights its beauty, one has the feeling of participating in a mystery, yet without the need for a chapel or holy images. The feeling of mystery applies to the sublime nature of art, attaining happiness and suffering in the act of creation, the feeling of illumination, its emanation upon the surroundings, the feeling of co-participation and co-creation, the joy of mutual experience, mutual understanding of ideas and a feeling of community, combined with the simultaneous discovery of the separateness-otherness of one's own style and specificity of vision.⁵

These are the experiences shared by artists whose works enrich Skłudzewo's art collection, decorating selected points of the grounds with capital marks-objects that puzzle explorers by the beauty of their otherness and humour, which act as prisms permitting viewers to form a new outlook on the ordinary, everyday appearance of these places, completely unlike the one in museums.

Heike Munder⁶ noted that exhibition spaces are marked with history, hierarchy and

⁵ Małgorzata Mizia *Architektura w przestrzeni sztuk*, OWPRz 2013, ISBN 978-83-7199-767-9, 186 pages.

⁶ Heike Munder *Uczucia w sztuce i architekturze*; in: Joanna Kusiak (ed.), Bogna Świątkowska (ed.), *SYNCHRONIZACJA. Sanative City. Architecture and programming senses (Miasto-Zdrój. Architektura i programowanie zmysłów)*. Warszawa: Fundacja Bęc Zmiana 2013, ISBN 978-83-62418-27-5, 368 pages, pp. 95–100.

knowledge, and this is why when we visit museums we behave calmly and contemplatively. In 'cathedral-like museums' such as the MOMA, faced with the spacious interiors, people become very small. This is why, to break away from the white cube effect, Munder creates spatial performances which, by entangling the audience into a specific narrative, remove the distance between them and art. Nature also has at its disposal every dimension of space.

Creation is also a type of game, of play; it is juggling with being accustomed to the standards of everyday reality. It is the discovery of the assets of this reality, presented in a new and uncommon way. Encounters with other explorers, conversations, confrontations, the currently so popular co-working, this is what interdisciplinary artistic plein-air sessions really signify. They attract artists from different disciplines and specialisations, facilitating mutual inspiration and departure from preset modes of thinking and acting.⁷ This is what artistic life in Skłodzewe looks like. The complex hosts poetry readings, collection of texts and thematic literature, organises meetings and debates, in addition to maintaining a professional botanist on hand, without whom the marking of species and surveying of wildlife objects and any interference in nature would be mere accidental and amateurish actions. Without informed decisions, running the property would be an act of a dilettante rather than an aesthete. Understanding the workings of nature, learning the dependencies of the coexistence of fauna and flora, focusing attention on the benefits and threats that stem from nature, even on the small scale of the property itself, are an extraordinary experience of a crash course in living in harmony with nature. They are an occasion to change one's habits, appreciate previously unnoticed phenomena and, as always, a creative motive.

There is also a friendly musician on hand, who adds an even more fleeting dimension to all actions taken by the artists, as much as his instrument allows. It is not only the pleasure of listening, it is a musical score to every work that is created, an added value to every new creation. It is a mental trace that combines work and every creation to form an audiovisual whole. The varied composition of the professional community gathered at the site is also a set rule. The multi-genre character of creative activities becomes even more important when one considers that persons with disabilities are often among the guests-students, to whom a multi-dimensional, polysensory experience of art is fundamental. People who combine different fields of art are truly special participants of the plein-airs. Sometimes they are singing sculptors who divide their time between a philharmonics and a workshop where they work with saws and picks, painting architects, poets who paint, visual artists who are musicians, etc. It is a directly felt affirmation of the unity of art and the mutual affinity of arts, along with the necessity of their mutual complementation (Mizia 2005, 2013, 2018). It is an expansive experience of mutual interconnectedness and interdependencies between the arts, which give rise to new pursuits, fashions, trends and styles. It is a gateway to contemporary innovation, making change sustainable, and to eco-friendly, non-invasive thinking.

Contemporary art, which often has a non-object character, leaves a fleeting trace, one that is often illusory and disappears after a performance is no longer played and remains solely in the memory of the audience, or recorded on visual and audio media, or a trace in the form of material works that, over time, succumb to decay and destruction. Of course, when properly maintained and conserved, art extends its existence, yet requires special procedures to ensure

⁷ Małgorzata Mizia *O kompozycji malarskiej w projektowaniu architektonicznym*. Kraków: ARCANA, Kraków 2005, ISBN 83-86225-50-05, 142 pages.

its survival. Conserving works of art is the cultivation of beauty, it is a goal in and of itself, that builds everyday joys despite the adversities of life. Meanwhile, creating new works, discovering new avenues for experiencing beauty—this is the creative task placed before artists and places such as Skłudzewo.

7. Artistry of perception⁸

From among Earth's inhabitants, only humans are interested in the humanist dimension of nature's beauty. Through his psyche, it is only a living human being, who is able to register and translate beauty into specific shapes of matter. It is matter that is more or less tangible and is perceived in a polysensory manner—in various ways—both haptic and experiential. Of all living beings, only humans have this skill and characteristic—at any rate, at our level of understanding the secrets of flora and fauna. This is why contact between people, the contact between the audience and the artist as well as interpersonal relations, require an exchange of impressions, the conferment of expressive values and creating illusions in specific spaces—this guarantees the fullest sensation of fleeting values. Only in the active experience of the beauty of nature and beauty created by people—by artists—as mediators, only in direct contact with artists and in an environment arranged by them can we 'understand' the beauty of the world.

Sensitive people enrich nature. They notice, they feel, they predict and see more than others. They have a gift—a talent. Talent is a property and a distinguishing feature of only a few among us who can see what is beyond the veil, see the unobservable, read between the lines, hear the melody of not only nature, but of labour, cataclysms, the tone and colour of a dispute, whose presence either calms or energises. The uncommon dexterity of such people's fingers allows us to access the spectacle of a performance's masterful execution. Searching for such excitation, higher sensations and the feeling of stimulation or inspiration, we occasionally visit theatres, concert halls or museums. Here, we are able to experience the above sensations surrounded by nature.

It should be noted that the singular value typically requires a specific 'framing', cropping, freeing from context, a commentary, a hint, which can bring a given value closer to the average or random member of the audience. Skilfully exposed, it shall be noticed and appreciated. Similarly, an observed and exaggerated grimace can alter the perception of a person. Various socio-technical 'tricks' exploit these phenomena. By analogy, a sensitive translator can transform a work into a masterpiece or, should they perform poorly, ruin the author's reputation among readers. Talent and personality are values that turn artists into guides and their compatriots and those who listen to them into the initiated.

This is how the intellectual potential of Skłudzewo materialises itself. The beauty hidden in this place, even if it remains unnoticed and avoided by visitors and local residents who have grown accustomed to it, shall ultimately be discovered, domesticated and documented by artists. Each shall note the experience of the genius loci in their own individual way. Blind (both literally and figuratively) members of the audience, previously unaware of this potential,

⁸ Certain fragments are based on the original online publication W poszukiwaniu piękniejszego świata, in: Przestrzeń Społeczna (Social Space Scientific Journal), no. 2/2019(18), p 200, URZ, www.socialspacejournal.eu

are guided by materialised objects of art to new values that had previously been unknown to them. They experience them with all senses regardless of their preference or ability, regardless of their own self-taught alertness of their singular sensor. The blind touches with the hand, feels the warmth of colour, the structure and elasticity of matter, senses the smell, hears a rustle or creaking of the floor. The blind hear more, they have a keener ear for music, they sense the harmony of sounds and silence, they feel and translate tactile experiences into music. They can communicate the beauty of an object by music, play out their experience on an instrument, whatever it may be. They can reflect their experience and stimulation by means of art—using melody or a story composed of sounds or words. The deaf, on the other hand, see images, but also register sounds with sensors attuned to vibrations. This is how an intellectual, informative truth about beauty, advantages, deficiencies and even heroism and tragedy of beauty contained in a given place, is built. The beauty of a place is enclosed in its physiognomy, recorded in its image. It is bound to its artistic representation. All it takes is to attune, or rather develop, sensitise and train all the senses to be able to experience more, to be able to register the fullness of stimuli; or else, to update the database in question that informs the private user about the world. Common knowledge about beauty is typically highly superficial. We typically go over the most valuable properties of places dispassionately, blankly, unknowingly. We strip ourselves daily of the most desirable and beneficial experiences of excitement and joy that drive us to action and prepare us to face the adversities of life, that propel us to discover the new, towards improving imperfections, facilitating and bringing order to the surrounding mess. We strip ourselves of a powerful dose of the most readily available stimulant, serotonin, enabling a positive everyday attitude.

To feel the entirety of experiences, it is not enough to mechanically train—to thoughtlessly experience. Intellectual engagement is required. *Art is a creation of the mind*. It is a shape created by an idea inspired by the experience of a place. The shape, in turn, is an illustration of an experience. The more one feels, the deeper one experiences, the better one translates, and the better one speaks with images, sounds or words.

Art is a creation of the intellect, while beauty is encapsulated in the intellectual potential of a place. The magi of Skłodzewe search for talent. Led by their own creative intuition, choosing the ‘temperature of artefacts’ by their own senses—they hunt for artists at exhibitions, by perusing catalogues and websites, and invite them to join their activities. As is the case with every plein-air session, newly invited participants come here as well, always introducing an air of change. Some form a one-off atmosphere of commotion around them, which, if it is hard to bear during intense work, shall never repeat itself. Others, by providing a model of genuine skill and measurable work outcome, become a foundation for further meetings. Each and every one of them contributes and leaves behind a ‘creative trace’, which, via proliferation, directs further action. Skillfully directed by participant selection, the plein-air sessions gain a unique atmosphere, which also affects the profile of the works; in this way, the collections become different than a random stylistic clusters, typical of many an exhibition hall. The collections maintain a generally intended effect which affects the local cultural climate. Here, this policy is successful, as the place’s hosts are true visionaries and artists who know their work and are cultural activists. To them, it is not only the character of the collection that is important, but also the social side of the meetings. What really counts for them, is the far-reaching effect of their activity and the impact of the model that the Skłodzewe Foundation has created, on the cultural and educational activity, all of which deserves imitation. Here, people create art, build humanist values, learn and teach, preserve and modernise, cultivate tradition and deal away with stereotypes, nurture good and multiply beauty. All of this becomes

possible thanks to meetings with artists.

In a standard social setting, individual artists are usually treated marginally. Typically oversensitive and thus lacking drive, with too little assertiveness, they lose the career-focused race and are sometimes completely ignored. Ultimately, as unproductive from the standpoint of market supply, they are cast to the bottom of the social ladder. Gifted with exceptional abilities, they suffer from being overshadowed by their more industrious colleagues—instead of providing society with the best parameters of the reception of everything that is new and that has not yet been assimilated. It is they who, while typically being free of the obligation to adapt to canons, provide the de facto ability to become free of the ossified rules that bind the mind. However, they also need interested people to cooperate with: sponsors, arts dealers, activists, educated organisers of artistic life.

In Western countries, where art has its established market value, artists can more readily find support and sponsorship for their ideas among businesspeople interested in cultural development. Financial shareholders, sensitised to the progressive development of the market, more readily appreciate the contribution of the artistic world to the rise in stock prices. Gifted with an intuition to foresee the developmental tendencies of the economic and financial market, they are more eager to invest in culture, which is an unpredictable but nevertheless powerful force that moves the masses in a typically irrational fashion. Following an almost subconscious vision of success, acquiescing on instinct to the suggestion of the moment, they benefit from apparently even the most risky ideas.

It is difficult to compare these speculations to the reality of Skłodzewo. Operating within the sphere of culture, the Foundation itself, has to fight for survival. Its success must be based on the ability to convince, on the words and efforts of its founders themselves, without counting on the high artistic awareness of decision-makers and sponsors. The hosts of Skłodzewo nevertheless have at their disposal an extraordinary internal force and a gift for persuasion, which has positively proven itself in the region and its cultural life from the perspective of many years and the hosts' own work. In the course of their activity, they have gained numerous friends as well as supporters of their cause. They cultivate contacts in every field. Their actions are visible and appreciated by all who have come into contact with the problems of artistic life and its role in the national culture.

However, the most important thing is that they share their passions with people who are similar to them, with whom personal contact always results in satisfaction with work, an uplifting of the spirit and enrichment of one's interior, the pleasantness of contact and simple joy gained from immersing oneself in nature, which was once easily accessible and is now, all things considered, difficult to come into contact with, particularly for city dwellers. Skłodzewo is a place that, on the one hand, cultivates an unchanged architectural, urban and landscape character of the complex, but on the other, is adapted to current needs of the time, in a manner that minimises interference with the existing state of things, limiting interventions primarily to structuring, attuning them to the requirements of contemporary living comforts—following the principle of taking only what will not dwindle with time and giving all one can.

The main principle to follow is to make use of self-renewing nature, leaving behind only an artistic trace, and making the area more beautiful.

All artists always follow exploratory curiosity. Searching for inspiration, they investigate nature; they observe people and reflect their character in their works in their own specific way; they are interested either in details or in a holistic expression; they search for new ways to express their delight, criticism and ideas. In the interpretation of phenomena, the thought flows undisturbed, easily overcoming the meanders of ingenuity, yet translating thoughts into objects, a record on canvas, documenting imaginings in an actual shape—that is the true effort

of the artist. The material shape is a way of recording one's impressions; it is a language of communication in a given material in which the artist expresses and records his thought. Sometimes, at a moment of creative stimulation, the artist hits the mark without fail in a single try, while at other times, he does so through a laborious working of the shape, amid struggle and suffering, with a feeling of the form's inadequacy. The feeling of creative emptiness or impotence is a frequent spiritual state artists find themselves in; this often leads directly to burnout, resignation, and merely a struggle for survival. In turn, the feeling of ordinary existence is perceived as being equivalent to failure. The stronger individuals are able to organise around themselves surroundings that support their work environment, and encourage them to pursue a given goal, while others must resign themselves to accepting other artists' goals.

All artists are more or less documentalists, interpreters of reality, who base their work on the cosmic world of nature.

The more literal they are, the easier it becomes for them to be praised for their technical skills. The matter becomes more difficult when they use a language of metaphors and symbols. Their struggles end with outcomes with a varied force of impact. Some are immediately considered interesting, others are merely accepted, not to mention those that are rejected or ridiculed. Although being the effect of completely different creative paths, the outcomes of their actions, may be equally alien to the audience (everything that is new typically appears incomprehensible and weird), despite the fact that the message behind the works may be different. The more skillful, sensitive and advanced in the pleasure of experiencing art the recipient is, the more value he is able to extract from distinguishing artefacts. Superficial appearance of a work of art, followed by in-depth observation, allow one to separate specimens that emanate with a wealth of content from poorer versions of similar attempts, just as they allow one to distinguish the best copies of the same painting. Even in the case of photographic versions and their successive reprints, that differ only in light intensity, colour saturation and vividness of outline, a good operator and stage designer is always able to select the most appropriate copies suited to the specific atmosphere, the uniqueness of the frame or the dramatism of the content.

Delight in nature always calms disrupted thoughts. Ultimately, we are all a part of it—we are a part of nature. We react to all of its changes. We react to climate phenomena, cataclysms that we try to protect ourselves from, natural phenomena that terrify and paralyse us or command us to flee in terror, while there are also moments of delight when all we can do is say 'may this moment last', in addition to moments when we come to a standstill in a feeling of nirvana that flows from the bliss of existing in a 'non-time'. Oftentimes, such moments merely arise from a simple feeling of victory over weakness, of overcoming the inability of our eyes to pierce through the veil obscuring our goal, of breaking away from torturous struggle; while at other times, we become overjoyed at the site of a gleam of morning dew in the sun which has bidden us to lift ourselves up from under the covers. The feeling of beauty's boundlessness can also be accompanied by satisfaction at overcoming a physical weakness, for instance climbing a rocky, inaccessible peak, from which one can see a distant panorama, that gives us a proud sense of lording over a territory—an extensive landscape, the successive planes of peaks, hills and forests, more remote views slowly obscured by the distance. This is also a feeling of victory over the merciless power of nature's vital forces, as it jealously permits us to use only fragments of its resources and quickly reclaims them if we do not meticulously maintain them. Only a massive invasion of urbanisation effectively destroys nature's rejuvenating powers and disrupts the balance of its existence.

The feeling of the boundlessness of beauty can also be brought about by a discovery, a surprise that we randomly come upon, or by bewilderment, even during a simple search, perhaps even for something stimulating. The joy of discovery shall always accompany an artist who is involved in his work.

Oftentimes, the mere memory of this joy, recorded in a work, is available only to the artist. The value of the work can be the greatest and legible *de facto* only to its author. Sometimes, the values featured in the work may manifest themselves, or rather become legible to the audience at a different date, after many years and in different circumstances; often without familiarity with the entourage and the conditions in which the work was created. However, the mere act of creation and its later rediscovery and participation in this experience make it a separate, independent value, and require random witnesses to experience an equally great joy, associated with mere participation.

The act of creation itself can become a work of art. Experiencing beauty is accessible to everyone and applies to all aspects of life.

8. The case of Barlinek

The name of another locality associated with artistic life is *Barlinek*. Barlinek is 'little Berlin' – Berlinchen as the German occupants called it. They used to come here to rest from nearby Berlin, and as its then hosts they built an urban beach with a European standard on the beautiful Barlinek Lake—they felt good here. The area has beautiful surroundings, replete with charming lakes and forests, and many of its German visitors and residents continually return here looking for traces of their ancestors, identifying old photographs and recognising traces of the past. The local Regional Museum is full of old photographs on which one can identify their roots and read the entire complicated history of a land that changed hands repeatedly every couple of generations. This is probably also a seed for the further activity of the community that supports the development of the area's culture. But modern-day Barlinek does have some luck concerning people. The person who defined the profile of the local cultural activity was Romana Kaszczyk—a painter, ceramic artist and activist who fought for the quality of the town's Polish history. Born in Podolia, after graduating with a visual arts degree from Wrocław, she found fertile soil for cultivating culture and art in Barlinek after the war. She established the Unique Ceramics Studio, as well as painting, drawing and stage design studios, whilst she herself, apart from practicing the visual arts, also engaged in poetry and writing, creating legends and fairy tales that have become a continuously cultivated local tradition. Her angels and demons have written local history as if they had been here since prehistory. She died recently, having received the highest distinctions for service to culture, leaving behind not only her legacy and a new tradition, but also her students, who continue her work. They include numerous artists, both from the area and other parts of Poland, including well-known Polish ceramic artists, as well as Brygida Liśkiewicz, director of the regional Culture Centre, who has occupied her post for many years. It is a person with a unique charisma. While she herself is not a certified visual artist, she works with ceramics, which she has learned at the source—at Romana Kaszczyk's studio. She is most of all a trustworthy guardian of the Culture Centre, which has beautifully grown and continues to bloom under her stewardship, bringing its hosts fame and an excellent body of work. By

profiting from the organization of conferences and providing accommodation—she organizes educational and artistic activities in comfortably furnished studios. Every year, the Centre hosts artists from across Poland and abroad in painting and ceramic plein-air sessions, while during the school year, it accommodates and trains youth groups via artistic workshops. With excellent equipment at its disposal, in addition to reliable staff and an extraordinarily friendly atmosphere, the Centre has acquired an excellent modern art collection—the contribution of visiting artists. Sculptures and paintings now decorate the entire building and the surroundings of the Culture Centre, constituting a significant building complex within the city which towers over the old town section, providing it with a background on a nearby hill. The place offers its guests hospitality and provides a carefree stay in comfortable conditions. Freed from everyday struggles, artists work twice as effectively, leaving their artistic trace. The beauty of wildlife, the attractive surroundings and care of the hosts who are sensitive to their guests' talents, doubles the energy for creative work. Artists appreciate the comfort that allows them to be carefree. In everyday life realities, not everyone can allow themselves to become totally immersed in their work. Multi-disciplinary plein-air sessions are an intellectual and ethnic melting pot, a mixture of temperaments, genres and creative techniques, exploratory trajectories and modes of thinking. They are an exchange of borrowed elements, mutual hints and confirmations. They are a speeding up of artistic development and an obvious benefit to culture. The artists' works are shown at exhibitions that travel between friendly galleries in the region. The works increase the Centre's assets and form one of the area's attractions. It requires no explanation how much such places improve the quality of everyday life and contribute to augmenting cultural wealth that is based not only on collecting and discovery, but also on educating and nurturing communities. That is precisely why the Centre's work should be cultivated and its tradition continued, so that measurable growth can last and enhance the assets of local places.

9. Artists and literary men

Changes and a spiritual renewal take place in all walks of life; artists look for uplifting values in everyday existence, so as to improve the quality of life.

Michał Nogaś, in an interview with Olga Tokarczuk,⁹ said: 'The Academy granted you the Nobel for "narrative imagination, which, with encyclopaedic passion, represents crossing borders as a form of life"'. The work of Olga Tokarczuk is exceptional, but a similar imagination that tells stories in any of the artistic languages is characteristic of every artist. A narration can be conducted both with words—the material of a writer or poet—and the image, in the material of painting, or a spatial object—a sculpture or an arranged action—or a performance.

(from:) TOKARCZUK¹⁰

Olga Tokarczuk responded: 'I understand it very broadly, metaphorically, as a ceaseless extension of the field of our consciousness. This is why I like the figure from *Flammariion* so

⁹ Olga Tokarczuk – prior to the conferment of the Nobel Prize, interview with Michał Nogaś, p. 22–25. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Saturday-Sunday, 7–8 December 2019, no. 285.9261, 1, Agora SA, index no. 348198. Interview performed on 19 November 2019. Wrocław.

¹⁰ The names on the margins announce content that follows the thought of the persons referenced, in terms of the sum total of their academic/creative attitudes (quotes are referenced in footnotes).

much, which I have printed on a dress for my Booker Prize acceptance—a pilgrim reaches the edge of the world, extends his neck and perceives the wonderful harmony of the cosmos. A beautiful vision, full of hope'. The harmony of the cosmos is also the harmony of our earthly world, of every individual life, of the fate of every one of us. Each of us requires a balance of knowledge and upbringing, and, in equal measure, a dose of empathy and mysticism. General development requires both *the ratio* and *the psyche*, likewise in equal measure. Turning off one's reason (knowledge and experience) results in irrational behaviour, which fundamentally degrades an individual in the eyes of the community. Even while maintaining reliability and precisely complying with rules and requirements, turning off sensitivity leads to losing one's balance, towards unhealthy, inhumane actions, which are ultimately criminal (ranging from the model of the strict parent, to the case of Eichmann).

Nogaś continued: 'Commentators noted that the award was granted to a writer who, earlier than others—had crossed the borders of understanding the contemporary world. You were even called a prophetess, for already ten years ago you had noticed mechanisms and phenomena that the entire world has only just now started to openly discuss, such as nomadism, uprooting, ecology, empathy towards the world of animals and plants'. Tokarczuk responded: 'Artists are often like that. They perceive, note, name, exaggerate, warn. First everyone laughs at their ideas—then they become outraged and, finally—at first with reserve and subsequently with enthusiasm—they admit that the artists were right. Perhaps this is about a different scale of sensitivity, which allows us to register something earlier? This ability should become an element of the definition of art, for it is not only writers that have it'. *Being a visionary is a trait shared by all artists, though to a varying degree*. It is associated with talent or a particular predisposition for artistic endeavours. It can come in the form of an ease in presenting one's ideas in a selected material, a highly specialised, super-craftsmanlike skill, enhanced with a clear or implied message, or a visionary thought, which is ahead of the current method of reasoning. Artists have always been ahead in this regard. It is through this precursory flash that their paintings, artefacts and actions are able to move and impress their audiences. This is why the unconventional behaviour of artists and their often informal appearance is generally tolerated. An artistic air is an oft-desired trait, as using an artistic style in clothing or conduct adds expressiveness and character to a person. To be 'arty' or to be a member of an artistic community is fashionable. To feel good, each of us requires the acceptance of the community, or else, one needs to stand out from the crowd, to feel special, irreplaceable, to be appreciated for one's service. In the contemporary equalised commonality of everything, the accessibility of media and the ease of sharing opinions, it is ever harder to achieve and at the same time so easy to make public.'...the world has become completely different. Through its focus on information technology, the rapid transfer of information, the fact that one can be visible everywhere, that people want selfies, photos, films, images, streaming, that the media send drones above yourhouse and that you are recognised in the street by people who have never read what you havewritten,' continues Tokarczuk. Of course, other artists are not under the threat of such wide recognisability, as the character of their art does not give them enough of an audience. In the best of cases, the audience recognises the image of the artefact that a given award applies to. It recognises the author much less frequently. Typically, one knows either the artist or recognises the work without being able to ascribe it to one. Very often, the association of the work with its author leads to dissatisfaction in the audience, as the oft-visionary character of the work is not usually ascribed to artists of average appearance or of advanced or even old age. *The traditional audience associates modernity and novelty with youth*. It is at a young age that people are most bold and courageous, even if

this courage means merely a lack of imagination that could warn them of imminent peril or failure. However, the ability to foresee things often comes with age and is not necessarily associated with physical or even mental sanity understood in terms of health standards. There are artists who, as geniuses, intuitively blend into precursory trends in the arts at an early age. There are also those who, through talent, as well as work and experience, achieve mastery and move ahead of their time as they age. There are also those who despite having always been considered 'out of their minds', bequeath priceless discoveries to mankind. However, there can be no doubt that all of them stand out through a peculiar sensitivity, which allows them to discover the world in a non-standard, innovative and highly individual manner. This is why even an academic pictorial 'still life' scene is painted differently each time and a typical member of the audience would not hang each and every one of them on their wall.

Contemporary art departs from the tasks of old. It is no longer used merely for decoration; it does not serve architecture as its ornament; nor does it depend on the architecture that protects it and provides it with an opportunity to exist in the media. Today's art has gone beyond interiors; it has moved past the previous scale and has begun to use the landscape or cityscape as its material; it uses city panoramas as its background, or peaks and hills as plinths. It blends in with nature, natural volcanoes, hills, thickets and deserts, just as modern architecture that meets the special wishes of architects' clients. *We are entering a period when the phenomenon of transgression in all fields of life and in-between, is becoming more and more common.* There arise new fields that require previously unknown techniques and work methods, ones that rely on new materials to create innovative works. However, life has also changed fundamentally. From the elite circles which practised art and participated in cultural life, which typically constituted the domain of the talented or educated, the practising of culture has spread on a massive scale—whatever that means. (quote from O.T.) 'Organisers started to switch venues to larger ones, as thousands of people wanted to come. Always in the car, travelling from city to city, then returning. Two phones with incoming calls at the same time. An office in the car. Writing statements for foreign media on my lap, then searching for a printer at stops. Everything on the go, in images, text messages, emoticons. Like the Flights.

Of course, the mass scale of practicing culture contributes more to the superficiality of its media layer, i.e. to the feeling of participation in events, being popular or achieving the status of an informed person, who knows the latest news, etc. Knowledge of and feeling the essence of art's message pertains to a different layer of information. It requires initializing one's sensibility and polysensory experience, instead of merely knowledge and an awareness of existence.

Contemporary artists often seek dialogue with the audience, whom they treat not only as the target of their art, but as co-creators of the message their work conveys. By provoking behaviours in the audience, the artist engages cooperation, which leads to further impact and often widespread social reactions. This is how all artistic interventions into public space operate. Associations brought in by artistic actions or objects placed in this space, if they strike a nerve due to sensitive content, are able to lead to a landslide of reactions, ranging from increasingly critical commentaries to direct action that violates the work itself, and sometimes even the author's self. More explicit and direct associations lead to the assignment of meanings which are linked to taboos, issues that are sensitive to a given community, or direct political or cultural allusions.

Artistic actions or events that are considered iconoclastic—be they images or other works, whose content is seen as interfering with the sphere of religion—encounter the most severe

reactions. These are spheres of content that are some of the most sensitive, as they touch on the deepest, personal, even intimate beliefs, a personal spiritual interior, the personality that directs one's own type of mysticism, shame and faith in the purpose of existence. Everyone wants to defend values they consider sacred, such as honour, beliefs and property. Their scope is different for everyone, yet all it takes is to create a feeling of these values being threatened to provoke an instant reaction. This reaction, confirmed with similar feelings of the entire group, provokes increasingly bolder counteractions.

(from:) SZCZYGIEŁ

Works of art and all manner of artistic actions, by definition different from standard everyday activities, always meet with both praise and acceptance by some onlookers and an opposition, condemnation and even sharp criticism by others. The more these works differ from established standards, the greater the emotions they arouse. Such is often the artistic intent of the author, to stimulate the audience, but sometimes the scope and type of reaction exceeds his expectations. Strong emotions in a crowd often lead to the toppling of monuments. Often erected to commemorate events and deeds, as an expression of gratitude and honour by entire communities, in situations when policies change or when the unsavoury background of these deeds come to light, after years of adoration and praise they are torn down and desecrated as an expression of dissatisfaction, outrage and punishment. All to restore a sense of balance. To some, the monument symbolised heroes, while to others, miscreants and tyrants. As a semantic and associative symbol, a monument (a work of art), particularly when placed in public space, is the finest measure of public attitudes and a local aura. While enclosed in a private gallery, it touches only a narrow group of invited guests. In generally accessible urban space, which is a forum for sharing thoughts, information, appeals and advertisements, it becomes more suggestive; it becomes a challenge, an obstacle, a sore, a question that demands an answer. *Currently, the public space has become a place of debate.* Oftentimes, it turns into a religious, political or class struggle, a place of presentation of one's views, agitation, demonstration; it becomes an arena for shows of force, a field of trade or even an execution place. At present, various forces fight for the right to take over public spaces. Owing to their name, they should nevertheless remain a public domain, a space for everyone, a space that is free. *Meanwhile, urban space has become a space of an urban game.*¹¹ A game of influence, the ability to announce specific messages and ideas, a place of distribution and profit. By the nature of its mission, created in an urban environment, it was called into existence to provide freedom of discussion, as an opinion-forming sphere, a place that calls to action, that energises, that initiates abstract modes of thinking and releases the dormant potential for activity in its users. This is why it has become the most desired exhibition space for artists to present their work, actions and express their ideas. However, just like everything that is urban, the urban game is subject to market rules.

One example of this game-debate is the work of Tomasz Górnicki (born 1986), excellently described by Mariusz Szczygieł in *Nie ma* (Nike 2019 Award and Reader's Nike Award).¹² His sculptures, which appear in city space (Warsaw), in places selected by the author himself, purely to highlight their dramatism, are often damaged; they disappear from their plinths or are removed entirely from their sites. Just as if the participants of this dialogue—the

¹¹ A term discussed in note 27, concerning 'playing the city'.

¹² Mariusz Szczygieł, *Nie ma*, Warszawa 2018, Dowody na Istnienie, ISBN 978-83-65970-31-2, pp. 178, 179, 180

audience—were clearing their common space from manifestations of wayward actions; as if they wished to remove traces of reprehensible behaviour that manifests itself in nakedness or in the mere placement of the sculpture in-between the balusters of a bridge's railing—which suggests the possibility of a jump or fall. On another occasion, a work placed at the height of a second-story niche of a viaduct suggests perhaps a form of domination, of a usurpation of power or an unwanted warning to drivers. Sometimes, the reaction of audience members who move a sculpture into a bush or place it along the roadside, possibly merely expresses an aversion to otherness, or perhaps a protest against the author's forcing of his images upon the audience—such as an image of Christ who seemingly randomly accompanies a pilgrimage and whose appearance departs, even though slightly, from the traditional depiction found in religious symbolic patterns. However, sooner or later, the sculpture of a crouching, rain-drenched boy affixed to the edge of a bridge and two pairs of hands in a gesture of blessing and care mounted to the walls of a tunnel, and the naked form of a young man levitating high up on a shaded wall of a viaduct, which probably reminds its detractors of a crucifix, were all destroyed. They served as warnings to many drivers and pedestrians who passed beside them; others failed to notice them, while still others saw in them calls for reflection and improvement; yet every time they were destroyed or damaged, “endowed” with cigarette butts inserted between their fingers, significant pieces of them would go missing or they would be defaced.

Without a doubt, this is a manifestation of dialogue between parties. It is, undoubtedly, justified. Certainly, the sculpture dematerialises in an analogous manner to every artistic action, performance, event, street art or other sign of urban or land art. The sculptures have also appeared without warning, without any special official announcement and approval by the authorities; hence they gave a pretext to clean the area and restore order, to remove an unwanted object. However, they have always inspired specific emotions and to some they were a moving sign, a warning, while to others an irritating caution that stirred them from a state of unfounded contentment, of shallow stability. Insofar as the actions are designed to be fleeting, then thanks to the intent they become so, without leaving a specific material artefact; but Górnicki's sculptures were complete, actual sculptures and despite their unsanctioned placement, they formed a deliberate, yet harmless or even socially beneficial injection into common space. Why then, were they completely annihilated each and every time? Szczygieł defended and explained the reactions of both parties to the dialogue: (p. 178) 'FIRST OF ALL, it is clear that man will not ask anyone for permission for what he intends to do. He leaves traces of what he does in the city wherever he pleases. He inserts into its crevices what he wants. LABEL. Of course a male sculptor will not confirm that what he wants is to emphasize his masculinity. He will call it an urban intervention, or perhaps, more interestingly, a sculptural guerrilla combat. [...] LAY THEMES. When a man hears an opinion he does not agree with, he sets it right'.¹³ There simply exists a deeply rooted belief in society in the right of the macho, which, just like the law of God, is inviolable. It is not about being right, it is not about a message that serves an idea. It is about the freedom to be oneself: 'a man's home is his castle', in a community home that is the territory of a mutually supportive neighbourhood. This is how local gangs, precepts of partnership, codes of conduct, or territorial laws are formed. It is an unwritten privilege of mutual protection against outside intervention. For everything that is foreign is a potential threat. And if it is unknown, then it is potentially evil. Górnicki also argued that (p. 180) 'turning away from evil is reprehensible. This is why, on another occasion, he intervened exactly at noon on 1 January 2016. On a wall in the passage

¹³ *Ib.* p. 178.

between Constitution Square and Koszykowa, he placed the heads of three Asian fatsos. One had protruding ears for listening, the second one had bulging eyes, and the third one a wide-open mouth. On the skulls, alongside, it was written: LISTEN, LOOK, SCREAM'.¹⁴ In this case, it was the date, apart from the implied content, that defined the work as a political intervention and mandated its immediate removal.

This taxonomy is legitimised by the male ego to highlight a swift action and physical driving force, but it concerns the anonymous participants of an action, whoever they may be. Likewise, the person of the sculptor can analogously pertain to every person from among an array of similar artists, regardless of sex, orientation and sympathy. In general, the principle that lies behind referring to phenomena by male terms traditionally and effectively deepens and strengthens the impact of every action—they become more credible and framed in an actual situation. Everything with a female suffix is traditionally weak and frail—inexpressive. Many an exhibition has revealed cases of expressive female painters (Boznańska, Stryjeńska, Lempicka, Jarema and others) or sculptors (Kobro, Szapocznikow, Abakanowicz, Rajkowska, who are still active) who predominated with their respective creative individualities and excellent legacies, but nevertheless remained underappreciated and unnoticed during their lifetimes. Often, the discovery of unexpected authorship leads to disbelief or even disappointment, for traditionally the power of expression is associated with masculinity. The habit, reinforced by upbringing and education, has become a pattern, which although sometimes convenient, is in most cases harmful and besides it tends to flatten the reception of art.

(from:) DUKAJ

We perceive and describe the world following pre-learned patterns, a tradition which everyone is being accustomed to from childhood. We learned to communicate by naming things in the same way for centuries. We want to be modern and progressive, but we use a mentality which carries over patterns that were developed across centuries. And this does not concern the issue of breaking away from entrenched customs or canons of beauty, but rather that of deliberate tolerance for diversity. We have no right to blindly defend our way of thinking by merely referring to the cultural tradition. In cultural separateness, even cannibalism should be seen as a manifestation of a unique and, thankfully, alien tradition.

'Where is the true beginning of the process that has re-evaluated art and almost all fields of human activity? What is the process that we first deliberately described in novels, openly admitting that art had turned towards the realism of life? What is real, then, in the image of man presented to another human being?'¹⁵ We educate the youngest generation by always following patterns proven by tradition, in a manner unchanged for generations, and in accordance with tribal rules, on the basis of similar reading matter. Dukaj, as a writer and visionary, envisioned an end of the age of writing and the advent of a post-scriptural era. This new age uses not only text, but also images, comics, emoticons—which are also an alternative description of reality—but that is a message-transfer of sensory experiences felt by all our senses. Since the period of cave paintings, through myths and legends, ultimately through literature, words and writing—we have moved on to informative and experiential messaging. "'We'", does not mean, as used here, each of us separately, but refers to the cultural

¹⁴ *Ib.* p 180.

¹⁵ Jacek Dukaj, *Po piśmie*, 2019, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, ISBN 978-83-08-06874-8, 415 pages, p. 317.

background, in which each individual was born and raised. Without reading, you are still a reader in this wider, civilisational sense, for you use notions, reasoning and standards developed over centuries of using writing and its various forms. You live among people who think and feel with fictions of writing'. At present, we read less and less and use the art of writing increasingly rarely. Apart from books, we operate with other forms of description of the reality around us; the latter allow us much faster, compact communication of the same or equivalent experiences. *We probably do not care as much about shortening the time for reflection and musings about values, but rather we wish to quicken decisions about change, to improve the state of affairs as much as possible, to instantaneously iron out defects, no matter the issue. Of course, it is a crucial matter for effective progress and deliberate action to ensure the fullest social awareness and the greatest possible extent of knowledge about the context of a given matter, the wellbeing of the entire globe, about the achievements of science, medicine, the principles of politics, etc. — all this for democratic public participation, for improving life, for the safety of nature and the planet.*

In achieving an optimal status quo, indeed, traditional messaging no longer meets all of our expectations. Reading with understanding is regarded as too engaging and slow to meet today's needs. In addition, it requires sophisticated orientation in picking one's reading material. It is difficult to critically navigate the information we are fed. Contemporary communicators are no longer reliable, serving entirely different goals and speculations. Although transmitters can be easily switched to different channels, often creating entirely new stories, our own version of reality, yet despite this 'infoglut' and the diversity of its transfer, it is difficult to shut oneself off from this incessant flood of information. Even provincial centres or peripheral settlements adapt to the locally available comfort, making everyday life in them easier and thus acquiescing to imposed systems. *It is difficult to find a place on Earth that would allow one to live an uncontrolled, independent life deprived of civilisational influence.* In turn, the leading, pulsating and progress-driving centres of contemporary life concentrate in cities, particularly large metropolises, where the flow of information, services and all manner of essential contacts accumulate to form a single conglomerate. Without losing time for transport and commuting, it is there that one is able to participate in even the most niche spectacles of life, which also find a suitably numerous audience and demand precisely in such centres. It is only there that the most sophisticated thoughts can find willing listeners and continuators. In such an environment one also seeks all manner of otherness, as it no longer causes fear or disapproval; here all departures from cultural standards are tolerated and it is possible to openly demonstrate one's views. Amid this torrent of information and a brainstorm of opinions, novelty multiplies the quickest and is immediately used to 'spruce up' economic performance, paying no attention to the far-reaching consequences of their use. Creativity is pursued at all costs and within all fields, even in areas such as economics or accounting, which are so fundamentally conditioned by material effects.

Amid such chaos, all branches of art tend to develop well. The mixture of different views and associations makes it easier to think abstractly and undertake risky decisions; this applies not only to animators, arrangers and artists, but also to the crowd, the observers, investors and financiers looking for inspiration. All businesspeople interested in the stock market, in speculating on growth, driven by curiosity and the pursuit of profit and stimulation, find the best soil for their experiences here.

That very same soil is fertile ground for art and artists. Diversity in all of its forms feeds the imagination of artists and aids them in their search for new answers to both familiar and artificially generated queries. Human experiences and thoughts are reflected in every type of art. The measure of a work's successful reception is the number of interested individuals and the acceptance of the audience that finds in it their own transformed reflections and feelings.

Filtered through the personality of the artist, transformed into a shape, a genre of art appropriate to its author, the works of art find the audience-attracting form and widespread acknowledgement that lead to success. According to popular opinion, the measure of success is the achievement of financial prosperity. However, the financial success of a given work is not always equivalent to a good financial position for its creator. Oftentimes, a work achieves material success over time, often after its author's death. *On principle, art is ahead of its time; it defines development.* It requires an audience to be fully mature to broadly accept avant-garde content. Typically, measurable benefits are not the mark of success for an author. Also on principle, avant-garde art is typically only appreciated by a narrow elite.

(from:) SONTAG

Operating with caricature is a distinct characteristic of art. Caricature is an exaggeration of non-standard features. It applies both to overly exaggerating the property of an object or person depicted, as well as an enhanced image of reality or a given phenomenon. The need to paint caricatures of reality was best described by Susan Sontag (*On Photography*).¹⁶ The essence of photography is copying which extends to authentic situations and digitising frames of reality. To contemporaries, this form of photography has primarily a documentary value. *To achieve artistry, it must document 'impossible' images that depart from standard frames* observable in everyday experience. Just as the sculpture of a figure appears to be more interesting in gestures that are uncommon in typical behaviour, or in exaggerated dancing moves, postures that are almost unattainable by average dancers, or compositions that are exceptionally dynamic and dramatic. A photographic frame must capture the exceptionality of the moment, a flash of uniqueness, so as to draw attention, to captivate, to charm, or—conversely—terrify, hurt, or painfully affect the viewer. This is why it is so easy to dazzle the public with photographs of accidents and use war photography and scenes of torture, suffering and misfortune for various purposes.¹⁷ Such photographs play a particular role due to their mediational function. By pulling on the strings of shame or pain, the feeling of injustice, the need for revenge, for aid or, conversely, assertiveness, they influence public efforts and reactions to a given matter. The essence of the message is to stimulate reflection and thinking. Even if it is a standard advertisement photo for a company campaign, such as for Benetton or Adidas. Companies of this class have already produced brands and trademarks that affect lifestyle,¹⁸ influence the choice of not only clothing, but also, irrespective of their mainline products, the choices of complete lines of daily goods or even the entire organisation of life. These brands and trademarks build style and model the behaviour of their dedicated followers. The manner of use of a photographic artefact is in fact limitless. It is subjected solely to moral constraints. As

¹⁶ Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, (1977) 2002, Penguin Modern Classics, London, ISBN 978-0-141-03578-9, stron 207.

¹⁷ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (2003) 2004, Penguin Books, London, ISBN-13: 978-0-141-01237-7, stron 117.

¹⁸ Naomi Klein *No logo*, Świat Literacki 2004, ISBN/EAN 9788388612770 indeks 20207, stron 510

a work of art, it is able in the quickest way possible to stimulate thinking, expose wrongs and move towards reparative, preventative measures, by making others aware of the potential of possible reactions. All this thanks to the realism and explicitness of the photographic medium that operates through actual images—frames of reality.

Photography does not question the reality of its medium. The photographic frame forever remains a fragment of the actual relationships, yet in accordance with the selected shot, it can transport, depict, mark, name and stigmatise all sorts of content. Oftentimes, a single photograph becomes not so much a document, but a spark, a symbol, sometimes even a harmful shortcut that is highly reductive. Being an ambiguous record of a moment in time, it sometimes becomes the only association with a significance that is selectively highlighted for a specific reason. Thanks to these entrenched associations, some pictograms as signs-images are formed, whose task is to exploit these explicit user associations. Likewise, emoticons, which are a reduction of a simple character or image, are intended to communicate a specific emotion.

10. The culture of art

Contemporary avant-garde art, by being a part of contemporary 'culture of rejection'¹⁹, or rather 'cancel culture'²⁰, is based on the idea of rejecting traditional reflexes that condition modernity. However, it is this novelty and modernity that can exist due to familiarity with tradition and traditional habits. Innovation is the pursuit of new solutions, which are different and better than the previous ones, by adapting them to current needs. Cancel culture began simultaneously with the industrial revolution. Modernism in the arts, both in painting, architecture and sculpture, began with the application of new materials which provided previously unattainable possibilities of application, and previously impossible mass production, which ensured its accessibility and popularity. New technology made new structural engineering achievements accessible and thanks to successive technical and scientific mutations made it possible for innovative technologies to emerge. To put it simply, due to the rejection of the frameworks that restrained them, the increasingly fast-paced changes, led us to Silicon Valley and cyber art, and ultimately to *transgenicity*. The threats to nature described in parallel in the period of the industrial boom have become reality. Today, we are dealing with an ecological catastrophe associated with the consequences of industrialisation. Overpopulation, the mass character of phenomena, the pace of changes and the resultant lack of awareness among the public, along with a lack of information and the unpredictability of the long-term consequences of innovative measures, the equally hard-to-verify torrent of information and misleading *fake news*, the randomness and excessive freedom that is unbridled by editorial culture and concealed behind the veneer of the freedom of speech, political populism, the disappearance of professional ethics and morality, all of this has affected the state of degradation of not only culture, but also nature, and has irreversibly damaged the environment or caused a substantial risk of cataclysms that can despoil the earth.

Oswald Spengler (*The Decline of the West*, London 1921) warned us of the degradation of culture already at the beginning of the twentieth century. By culture he understood a legacy

¹⁹ Roger Scruton, *Kultura jest ważna. Wiara i uczucie w osaczonym świecie*, transl. Tomasz Bieroń, wyd. ZYSK i S-ka, Poznań 2010, ISBN 978-83-7506-474-2, stron 134.

²⁰ Inny przekład hasła cancel culture wyjaśniający zjawisko lekceważenia autorytetów w debacie publicznej - wg Agata Bielik-Robson *Jednostka niczym, jednostka zerem*, GW, 1-2.08.2020., p.9

of values and a set of aesthetic patterns developed across generations and perfected by the tradition of craftsman-like use—the good and beauty—which constitute a separate form of awareness. Meanwhile, in practice, great artists such as Eliot, Mann, Camus, Schönberg and many other excellent thinkers and artists, attested to completely different artistic trajectories, leaving behind monumental works of their times. The position of high art, which had up until now been inaccessible to the general public, has changed. Artists entered the stands and addressed their work to the crowds. They began to seek inspiration and acceptance among the masses and the working class. Culture was to become democratic and democracy was to attain value and achieve the status of culture. Today, art itself does not care for the survival of material artefacts, as what counts is the planting of an idea, stirring emotions and attracting attention. All everyday routine and material activities are to be accompanied by excitement, empathy, prevention of thoughtlessness and soullessness. The development of one's personality and mentality runs parallel to spiritual development. Spirituality in the contemporary consciousness is no longer understood merely as a traditional mysticism associated with religious worship or creed. *Spirituality is sensitivity, tenderness, paying mind to differences, alternatives, sensory and multimedia experiences—it is a depth of feeling. Spirituality is shaped by upbringing and education, regardless of faith and religion.* The entire legacy of tradition is typically linked with one's faith and religion, which is why religious confines imposed on one by society have been rejected, just as censorship. At the same time, such high values that have been tried and tested by generations and that form a part of the canon of global holistic culture, are what art pursues. It does so democratically, although it always remains elitist and is conveyed to the wider audience by the elites. It is no accident therefore that pop culture enjoys the greatest popularity as a sphere of art that walks a fine line between kitsch and qualified culture. Understandable to the masses, it allows them to remain active in the sphere of culture while requiring neither significant engagement nor intellect. Meanwhile, to those who are eager and curious to explore the peripherals of art, it is made available and explained via various forms of education and participation, and even co-creation.

Work in popularising culture requires significant determination. It is a field that requires one to feel that working in the sphere of culture is man's mission, that it requires considerable energy and a belief in one's cause. Seemingly, the need to work in support of culture is well understood, needed and desirable overall. Cultural activists are typically tolerated as idealists who brighten up the local colour and as harmless enthusiasts. Seemingly, no one doubts the purpose and utility of any and all activities that 'soothe the savage beast', which keep the bored or mistakenly involved youth, the elderly and the lonely occupied, giving them something to do in place of the costly state-sponsored social services. Accustomed to a hierarchy of needs and an imposed sequence of satisfying them, culture should be affordable so that it could be generally accessible. It should be subsidised by the state. This is a correct and popular belief, for ensuring the quality of education and culture belongs to the competence of ministries and is a key long-term task of the state. However, low public awareness concerning the costs of organising and maintaining high-quality efforts in support of culture is problematic. Few people know what competencies and measures are required for such activity. The costs usually exceed those that are associated with a typical production of consumer goods, as they always require high qualifications, practice and significant talent, and often the involvement of advanced materials and equipment. However, *talent is the most difficult to put a price on and remunerate, which is why so much of it is wasted and squandered due to ignorance or poorly understood carefulness.* Cultural efforts, particularly those that are intended to bring profit, are difficult to conduct in a programmed way. In most cases, their success escapes direct control and

planning. It is thus very difficult to convince business owners and financiers to invest in the culture market, which, contrary to expectations, can surprise many with the progression of profits. In as far as it is possible, one can find proof in intense tourist traffic to areas that are not only historical, but also regarded as cult places, e.g. birthplaces of pop culture, the places where idols were born or died, places considered either holy or stigmatised, mass events such as rock concerts, conventions, tournaments and games. The undertaken risk of investing in a well-prepared visual design and management of an event, ensuring effective and accessible transportation and carrying out an advertising campaign and the subsequent further development of a successful project, can ensure long-term profits. Of course, every event bears a risk of failure for unforeseen reasons. Ideas that are truly innovative and valuable do not always translate into 'smash hits'. Apart from substantive qualities, one also requires a catchy phrase that promises a load of new energy, one that attracts attention and piques the curiosity of the audience. Artists, supporters of culture and art and art dealers are tasked with searching for ever newer means of attracting the interest of the audience in high culture. Contemporary art has largely gone beyond the field of studio-confined technical activity—it has opened up to the audience as a subject and object of artistic efforts. It is not the work, but the action, including that which is undertaken jointly with the audience, that has become a field for experimentation. Art has become involved in social and even political processes. It also inhabits housing environments, accompanying dwellers in their everyday struggles, as well as isolated environments; it cooperates with nature and creates and enriches the landscape. It shows the alternative sides to all human activity. It constitutes a strength that raises the society's awareness and enhances its empathy. It enters discourse with hard reality, soothing and explaining painful, dramatic and taboo phenomena. It is a catalyst for tension and a driving force of change. *Well-understood and supported artistic activity becomes an excellent accelerator of desired changes not only in the sphere of culture, but also the economy and the general development of society.*

In a period of general *consumerism*, art is also treated merely as a source of pleasure and entertainment in the service of enhancing our everyday experiences. Its actual creative potential fails to be appreciated. It is treated equally to similarly stimulated culinary pursuits that are eagerly used in dozens of different events, festivals or various profit-oriented television programmes. There are attempts to reduce all manner of artistry, which typically requires cognitive effort and a stimulation of a sense of the aesthetic, to a superficial, purely utilitarian role. Art is treated solely as a craft, as a smoothed-out version of every utilitarian object; like culinary recipes, it serves as a source of satisfying ever new whims created for consumers' pleasure. Hardly anyone discusses the significance of the aesthetic sensation, the spiritual impression left by an artistic event hosted by an artist or an intellectually/artificially provoked non-standard phenomenon. In a world that nervously searches for innovation, discussions about values have become an obvious waste of time. Discourse itself does not bring profit. *What is desired is immediate material effect that contributes to progress. The parallel spiritual progress of a community is not cared for, pushing people into a thoughtless mode of merely utilising technological achievements*, and reduces man to the position of an addressee that is 'processed' in a programmed manner. This is done step-by-step, by taking away an individual's right to independent thinking and expressing sovereign opinions. We are generally afraid of artificial intelligence, but we slowly and passively strip ourselves of agency over change in the world of people. For ease of consumption, we sacrifice humanitarian reflexes and abandon the joy of experiencing pure, unobjectified beauty. In its common meaning, beauty is typically ascribed to the superficial layer of utilitarian objects and not to

values. We are interested in the beauty of a person due to his/her athletic figure or attractive facial features, rather than the inner beauty, one's views, deeds and thoughts. We do not want to waste time on exploring invisible matters that are difficult to prove or impossible to record in 3D. What counts is the possibility to program something and run it for our own use. Meanwhile, the more we delve into virtual reality, the more eager we are to search for missing values. Our avatars require feelings, nobility, codes of conduct, faith in justice and laws, even if they apply only to small communities. We build a parallel reality that includes enhanced qualities that are not present in the real world—the values of culture. Hidden behind a mask that allows us to assign our most hidden dreams (both noble-constructive or damaging ones) to virtual characters, which are intangible creations of the imagination, we live in a world that is tailored to our actual real-world needs. All of us beautiful in our own fashion, we dictate conditions to others with whom we form accords, based on new conditions. These agreements last as long as we can afford to observe them. Afterwards, we return to the real-world—also to the extent that we can afford. It is good when we can find ourselves as complete personalities in one world or the other. If we do so in the real world, then we will survive. If we do so in the unreal one we will die, but if we believe in it unreservedly, we may die happy.

11. The architecture of art

Even architecture gives way to the influence of parallel worlds. To satisfy the needs of consumers, stage sets of populist images of architecture are built. Architecture, procured to provide experiences of imagined situations from the world of virtual-reality dreams, draws heavily on the distant past and on the history of building timber castles and fortifications. The worlds that are currently invented for games are based on the prehistory of Europe, on its culture going back five thousand years ago, which, while not being primitive, neither socially nor technologically, offered seemingly simple social rules based on physical might, the power of the community, wit and familiarity with nature. The world of today no longer offers nature untouched by civilisation and interpersonal relations require knowledge of not only culture, but also multiculturalism. Elaborate sections of the economy and politics require interests to be subjected to the good of the planet, and individuals have taken on the appearance of a diverse mixture of races, deformations caused by nutritional habits, the accessibility of different living and working conditions, etc. Spiritual life has been subjected to the interests of groups, an accessibility conditioned by financial and cognitive means, but in fields that would appear unconditional, a creativity was admitted that endows deeds with the features of cons and crimes. The average individual has become lost in a sea of choice. He needs a model, a leader, a coach, a mentor or, to make it easier, idols chosen in accordance with his own taste, on whose lives he will model his own and whose choices he will copy. But still, the individual is irritated by authority figures that operate in areas that require good education, in-depth knowledge and experience. *Contemporaneity does not like to exert itself; it prefers to consume what is already there. Culture, on the other hand, requires work and cultivation.* It requires generations of experiencing. Even what we proudly call multiculturalism or social inclusivity is more of an aversion to express judgement,²¹ aesthetic or evaluative critique, and manifests itself in a lack of experience and education. This is why culture is simply inconvenient and often avoided.

²¹ Roger Scruton, *Kultura jest ważna. Wiara i uczucie w osaczonym świecie*, seria Antropos, transl. Tomasz Bieroń, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2010.

Contemporary everyday reality is generally characterized by a lack of culture, namely an inability to live in harmony with others, engage in a debate with them, to respect their privacy; moreover, it is characterized by an indifference to harm done to others, the crudeness of language, the ever-present opportunism, political submission, a lack of compassion, strangeness as well as alienation. Varying behavioural amplitudes have always been observed, but maintaining the proportionality of deviations conditions balance that defines intervals seen as either standard or conservative. Currently, there is an observable lack of manners and higher culture, which leads to divisions and deepens social differentiation.

Meanwhile, architecture, as the art of shaping space, undergoes successive transformations and continually develops, spurred on by technological novelties and technical and digital potential. It has become incomprehensible to users who are not up-to-date with technological development. Brought up traditionally, they search for means to ensure their survival, preferring building-homes domesticated by tradition to sterile, glass, steel and transparent towers with drawers and boxes prefabricated for use. Even the poetic and picturesque 'urban arcadias' attract little trust, and the artistic ambitions of architects carry over to criticism for non-functionality and technical defectiveness. The gap between the leaders of science and technology that have moved to the bleeding edge and those who live in amid a feeling of helplessness or seclusion, who are slow and maladapted, who are not tolerated by the free-market economy and are burdened with the rapid pace of life, has become ever more widespread. However, we would not know the value of champions without those who fail. Without experiencing measurable poverty, we would not know satiety and wealth.

In spite of everything, architecture does not come ahead of other progressive fields of life. It shall certainly never be more avant-garde than art. Architecture is a mirror for civilisation and the most symptomatic illustration of how cancel culture affects the life of the common man.²² Roger Scruton explained cancel culture as a current of Modernism present in architecture and art and, as a result, in all of design and lifestyle. Corbusier rejected façades, the Modernists cancelled the previous street frontage lines, the lines that drew harmonious silhouettes against the sky, that blended unimposing buildings into their context. They began to throw in constructs stacked as high as possible, without face or individuality, identical in every place on earth. The big-city working class was chased out of friendly streets and packed into hygienic towers as per Corbu's instructions—an ingenious idea that destroyed the city as a home, killed the spirit of its inhabitants and generally sent the population to a brave new world of alienation.²³ However, it was the only constructive answer to the leaping technological development that resulted in a sudden multiplication of housing and technological demands. This also does not detract from the fact that the crisis and degradation of our cities were not the inherent consequences of cultural decline, but a deliberate gesture of rejection.²⁴ The sudden leap in development of industry and the market economy was seen as a potential source of disaster that could lead to the planet's demise already at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, technological progress is a force that fascinates scientists and is attractive to new technology consumers to a degree that makes any rational voice of opposition unable to stop further attempts, even if they are constantly rebranded. Architecture, as a design service, has always answered market needs. The added aesthetic value sets it apart from typical utilitarian construction that is to satisfy the need of the moment.

²² *Ib.* p. 118.

²³ *Ib.* p. 119.

²⁴ *Ib.* p. 119.

12. Architecture as art

Architecture conveys not only a practical and utilitarian functionality, not only the measurable value of property, but also aesthetic value that is included in architectural forms. The new urbanists showed that aesthetic values are necessary if cities are to survive, for if withdrawn as the most important element of urban life, the city ceases to exist. Scruton claimed that when aesthetic values are ignored, the cityscape ceases to elicit positive emotions and the population flees to the suburbs to live in a private and neighbourly space, while the city itself is degraded to a merely functional structure²⁵, which ultimately leads to a complete devaluation of urban space—a devaluation of its cultural significance, of its humanist value understood as purely human values—and its cognitive, psychological, utility to seniors, visitors and posterity. The scale of the industrial revolution and the growth of cities that followed, the qualitative and quantitative replacement of infrastructure and changes in the functioning of cities, which takes place after changes in lifestyle models, habits and needs, on the one hand, and on the other a lack of coherent spatial planning, all immediately became reflected in the sudden growth of agglomerations and a sense of general urban chaos. The scale of completely mismatched local measures in various places was also varied, and the needs were non-identical. This diversity merely deepened the sense of overall spatial disorder. The young academic discipline that is urbanism and slowly enacted planning laws and rules constantly strive to bring order to the state of affairs and rein in the urbanisation boom that has become bloated by lawlessness.

Art is the quickest to react to change in life, expressing itself through new artistic messages. Architecture, specifically avant-garde architecture, also reflects the changing times. The chaos—as we currently refer to the present state of architecture—failing to understand the civilisational change that is contained in newly-recreated architecture, finds its reflection in culture. Culture is expressed through artistic achievement, but also in its broad sense through its influence on society. In the public eye, culture has stopped its development, but in the perception of those who pay particular attention, it has even gone back from a leading position in the hierarchy to average standards that satisfy the broadest audience. It has become not only public, but mass-oriented; it has become popular, easily digestible, non-educating and average. What has become so visible in architecture is a magnified expression of everything that has analogously affected each art. Innovation, exploration and creativity have become the domain of a very narrow elite. Artistic efforts have become difficult to digest for the wider audience—hence they are rarely noticed, seen as insignificant or even absent. Architecture, due to its scale, cannot be left unnoticed. As it affects every passerby, opinions about it are formulated by almost everyone and they tend to be extremely diverse. The audiences of other qualified arts are the only groups that are directly interested in them, while other incidental audience members can be counted among mere armchair critics, malcontents who are dissatisfied with any and all change that disrupts *the status quo*. Those who are well-versed in the latest artistic changes and who trace these events are few and far between. It is also because, at present, it is new, formerly unknown *arts-fusions* that truly triumph. The innovative combination of various fields, as well as borrowings and transpositions, result in extraordinary effects that do not always have much in common with academic art. And yet, they are some of the most resonant messages concerning contemporary dilemmas, tragedies and problems,

²⁵ *Ib.* p. 126–127.

depicted by using a non-verbal language. Contemporary art merges with real and virtual reality. It is an art-interpretation of our life, although it does not embellish it. There is no need for it in the contemporary vision of art. Mass production, common availability, the rapid pace of life and the pursuit of an unbound comfort and a culture of consumerism, the rejection of things that weigh down mobility, the cult of disposability, the pursuit of novelty and the unknown (and also a fear of otherness that induces intolerance)—all this minimises the value of objects, even beautiful ones, in favour of hasty experiences and emotions. This is why the irrational, unreal, virtual world, especially when it is created for our own needs, is slowly becoming more important than the actual everyday reality, which wears us down so mercilessly and inevitably. Contemporary sybarites, or rather their unsuccessful incarnations, live a life that is not only comfortable and carefree, but also thoughtless, tasteless and without preparation for the future, for it is without sophistication in choice, and merely based on following a promise, a catchy slogan, an advertisement and the ‘crowd mentality’ of those alike.

However, despite the fact that it is the common opinion that shapes the public consciousness, and that it is the majority that dictates what is right, we are probably not under threat of general nihilism. **Throughout history, the suppression of some generated the resistance of others and, if sufficiently** convincing, it released forces that toppled religions, doctrines and governments. It is a similar story with culture. An excess of certain measures results in a desire for others and leads to pursuits that spawn movements inspiring entire nations. Practices, messages and records of new experiences form a reliable source of knowledge, which, when disseminated, shapes general culture. Scruton argued that, as any form of knowledge, knowledge included in culture bestows its benefits even upon the ignorant and those who pursue this knowledge do something not only for themselves, but are also saviours of their communities.²⁶ It is this knowledge that protects the common man and his values. The elite that creates it does not stand over the grey masses to ridicule and humiliate them. The art created by them supplies a wealth of culture that is needed for sustainable sustenance of the human masses. Without culture, even the grandest civilisations must perish. Even the long-lasting legacy of civilisations can be erased, or even fall to self-destruction (see the culture of Islam). However, the continuity of transferring this knowledge is also important, as otherwise a situation that was described at the start of the twentieth century by Oswald Spengler can occur,²⁷ wherein there can be a potential lack of understanding, the proverbial ‘eye and ear’ for the reception of historical values, such as the last surviving portrait of Rembrandt or the notation of Mozart’s music.

Culture is much more than traditional values—it is not only what is recognised, what has been tested and successfully copied by generations and what structures reality. Culture progresses along with changes in life, or can be considered to initiate these changes. The matter is similar with, for instance, learning to paint. Today we no longer have to rely on learning painterly techniques, namely the successive techniques and principles of paint mixing, pigment preparation, canvas stretching and investigating the various personal approaches employed by painters. The laborious process of mastering technique is often deliberately cut short or even ignored in favour of the pursuit of innovative approaches and cases of artistic fusion. It is sometimes believed that natural, innate talent should not be stifled with the study of constraining manners and unnecessary habits. Primitive art (naïve, unprofessional,

²⁶ *Ib.* p. 125.

²⁷ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, London 1921.

authentic), or the works of persons with personality disorders who often compensate for insufficiencies or defects in other abilities with exceptional artistic talent, enjoys an equal interest. A 'different' form of world perception is generally held in high regard. The desire for surprise, shock and recognition is equal to the nervous hunt for innovation in technology and discovery in science. Today, learning to paint is more about learning how to look, see and perceive. To perceive essential values and ignore elements that are less significant or important. One such superfluous or distracting element could be colour or its intensity, the density of elements or shapes, an arrogant contrast or a lack of contrast, etc. It is important to skillfully highlight evaluative features, which, presented in an original manner, produce the desired impression in the viewer. The perception of the visible world is an ability that is entirely different from looking at photographs or watching images on a screen. Perception is a multi-sensory experience, unlike looking at flat frames of captured moments. Frames devoid of the entirety of experiences associated with encountering space that changes as the cognitive experience unfolds. The eye, equipped with tools trained by a painting course, rapidly reflects a given reality. The viewer can identify a more or less skillful hand that paints in a true, excessively kitschy or artistically deepened way, with added effects that produce aesthetic contentment. An untrained artist, when looking, conveys their knowledge about the object and the emotion they feel towards it in a manner unpolluted by trained ability. This is why we view children's drawings with such sympathy, even differentiating the authors' intellectual level, character and stage directions. Psychology and psychiatry also draw on the analysis of similar artefacts—even those of adults and patients.

Contemporaries appear to value good artistic craftsmanship higher than innovation. We praise the mastery of the old masters on historical paintings and often buy small works of understandable landscape art by contemporary artists, but we maintain a safe distance from surprise caused by novelty and a conservative lack of acceptance for the unknown that we see in 'incomprehensible' works. Perhaps they fascinate with their novelty, perhaps they inspire rebellion, but they certainly cause an unease that prevents us from formulating our own opinion, even a critical one. This is why what is universally approved of always stands at a position of immaturity that prevents us from rational, authoritative reception. One requires the experience of artistic initiation to face the need to disseminate culture and develop it. Scruton illustrated this problem by analysing our relationship with music. He stated that by placing the idealised teenager at the centre of a communal celebration, pop music constitutes an attempt at bending music to this new state—the state of a motionless crowd that is constantly on the threshold of maturity but never crosses it. It shows youth as the goal and fulfilment of human life and not a transient phase that must be abandoned when we are called to the task of social reproduction. To many young people, pop music forms a barrier to musical culture. It seals them off from an individual adult world and all the benefits of music—singing, figure dancing, playing instruments, listening—arouse their suspiciousness. Scruton therefore argued that musical education had a considerable role to play in ensuring the survival of culture.²⁸ Music has always been a social binder. The most solemn event or fun gathering has always been associated with an appropriately sublime musical score or popular, integrating 'party' songs, or other proper music. It is precisely this specialised music dedicated to specific events, the unique pieces commissioned from composers which constitutes the high art that requires 'passing into adulthood'. It is an elite task for the exceptionally gifted, those who have a vision for developing and perfecting the field of creativity to which they have devoted their

²⁸ *Ib.* p. 83.

careers. A professional Rubicon is also crossed by listeners who do not professionally create music but who derive pleasure and spiritual growth from participating in concerts and listening to music that is more difficult than the popular variety. It should also be noted that popular music is not merely devalued due to being ascribed to a specific current or group of people for whom it has been written. It is always disqualified by the same audience, uncomplicated in its tastes. Every type of music can give pleasure through its performance, and every genre has good and bad pieces. However, merely due to the scale of the phenomenon, the tastes of the crowd are always average.

Music also occupies an exceptional position among the arts due to its absolute fleetingness. It is the only art that cannot materialise in any permanent form. And although it is so fleeting, it is the most difficult to subject to any modification. It is and shall remain a sign of its time. Written down using symbols, it must always be based on patterns from its period. Any reinterpretations shall always retain original traces of the interpreter and shall never distort the original. Although the original is always priceless, even literature allows for a new, contemporary reading of its content, for giving historical lines a new meaning; it allows one to find a new truth in forgotten texts. Music requires complete genuineness of behaviour, but it surrenders to the listener's mood, and has a repertoire for every occasion. Even a momentary moodiness of a listener can be fully satisfied. Both historical and contemporary music includes innumerable genres, types, dedications, rhythms, melodic lines, solo and group voices, vocal and instrumental performances, etc., as well as an entire array of citations, experimental tones, compositions and structures. This multitude is even extended by images that subject it to events, films, special actions, our memories, favourite melodic sequences, etc. And all this speculates in the immaterial space of our thought and perception.

Architecture is at exactly the opposite end of the artistic spectrum to music. Exceptionally material, inseparable from building technology and craftsmanship, bound with the site-soil, which gives it an expression of being untouchable, architecture operates with a scale that is gigantic in art. It is scale and utility that give buildings a powerful image and a compelling character; they give architecture the power of persuasion that ruthlessly dictates the conditions of use. Designed as a utilitarian construct, it in fact imposes the scope and manner of how its assets can be used. This is why designers—the creators of such complex machinery—see themselves as the engineers of life, as not only builders, but also the administrators of our cities and private lifestyles. Designers are the actual authors of the respective layers of this structure. It is the architects who are the true creators and strategists who operate with all manner of communication both inside and outside the structure and throughout the entire period of its construction and later occupancy. The construction of a work of architecture often takes a very long time; it takes many years and sometimes even exceeds the lifespan of its chief designer (e.g. the case of Sagrada Familia and Gaudi). It is the architects who are responsible for the most essential part of the work, namely for functionality which is an answer to expectations, as well as the most impressive part of the work—the shape of buildings, their colour, texture, the entire external appearance, placement in the existing context, the relationship with the surroundings, including visual harmony, and blending in with the landscape and the urban setting. The architect is also responsible for selecting the structural system, materials, furnishing and equipment, which clearly impacts not only a project's costs, but also its use and ecological footprint. Every new structure must therefore be thoroughly modern. A traditionally built building already becomes obsolete at the moment of completion. Like a physicist, the architect must follow the current, constantly educate himself and be aware of the latest achievements in technology and engineering, in addition to being familiar with all sorts

of scientific novelties and being able to think in an abstract and creative manner, he must also be able to adapt to new achievements in his field.

An architect may sometimes behave like a king. However, in addition to a high dose of presentability, civility, the ability to convince one's listeners and persuade them to cooperate, this profession does require a truly royal courage, knowledge, responsibility and dedication. In other words, it requires an exceptional personality. In exchange, an architect may sometimes attain the satisfaction of being a true lifestyle creator.

The architect is always among the elite of restless explorers. By the very nature of his profession, he constantly searches for innovation. He breaks down barriers of habit and, perpetually educates himself; he tries to lecture others. It is a role that is worse than that of a teacher, whose words can ultimately be ignored, rejected, unabsorbed and left without acceptance. An architect's cautions, during the process of construction, take on the form of obligation. For better or worse. It is no wonder then that, sometimes, in a feeling of being subdued, users not only criticise or complain about architects, but even curse them for solutions that are unlike their individual visions of the effective functioning or beauty of architecture. Architecture, like any applied art that serves a community—social groups with varying user numbers—is always averaged so that it ergonomically adapts to common possibilities of use. Averaging, by its very name, may be unfit for persons with non-average dimensions, special needs or extraordinary expectations. Architecture is an applied art, one that is publicly useful. It is a social art that organises the life of a community. Design solutions are to enable a community to organise its life comfortably, to create conditions suitable for all types of needs and all potential uses, with a minimum of adaptive efforts from all of a project's addressees. It is subjected to the same customary and social regulations as any manifestation of human communal life. It is based on the social culture of the group for which it is created. Of course, this is about public, semi-public, and, at most, semi-private architecture. By assumption, architecture dedicated to a private individual accounts for the exceptional needs and expectations of the client, while its averaging and conditioning is limited to areas that are of significance to the environment in which it is built and that arise from laws and superior regulations. This, of course, potentially solves client-designer conflicts at the very moment when doubt appears.

13. The architecture of culture

The culture of using community assets is created on the basis of community experiences. Culture is shaped around a certain canon.²⁹ Every new user searches for hints that he quickly discovers and learns, as they are already included in the pre-existing and already functioning place-based culture. All it takes is to follow the established norms. However, not everyone, especially a newcomer, is able to fully accept behaviours imposed by place-based tradition. In turn, ever newer lifestyle models should lead to a modernisation of patterns, adapting them to progressing change. A mere acceptance of tradition could equal ossification or backwardness that is unfit for the very idea of creating architecture. Architecture is, on principle, always designed ahead of time, so as to ensure its modern character and maintenance of full functional capacity for as long as possible. Otherwise, it loses its market

²⁹ *Ib.* p. 77.

value, which is always of interest to both owner and user, until a property becomes a monument, which contributes another cultural aspect as a factor added to its market value.

Contact with architecture is therefore something that teaches and adapts even the most passive of its users to civilisational progress. At the same time, by using urbanisation's achievements and facilities, none of us are able to avoid its presence, even if we do not make direct use of its services. Architecture, in the form of successive spatial projects, is always commissioned by an individual or collective client, so that new challenges required by current needs can function. However, it is also built by public commission and funded by communal means, also for ensuring even the most modest survival of those less fortunate: the ill, the helpless or the incapacitated.

Wherever we see *urbanisation*, architecture is also present. Wherever man is present, there also begins *culture*. Initially, culture manifests itself in agriculture and concerns the artificial structuring of wildlife. Later, increasingly advanced man introduces buildings, successively converting them into architecture. Expanding areas subjected to human activity by architecture, agriculture and economic activity are structured by urban planning and culture in the broad sense of organizing, cooperating and mutually compensating systems regulated by principles of social conduct. This denotes a wide range of mutual obligations, concessions and adhering to the rules of the 'city game'.³⁰ Culture, as a set of principles of conduct within a community covers practically all fields that require contact with another person, the use of common property, mutual services, as well as the parallel enhancement of qualifications and expanding one's horizons. All branches of science, education, socialisation, artistic activity, sports, entertainment, exploratory activity and even global economy and politics, require operational culture. It is not possible to communicate and negotiate terms without adhering to contracts and fundamental canons of propriety. Propriety exists in every culture, although it may mean different things to different ethnic groups because of slight differences in behaviour that mark membership in ethnic groups. However, the word 'propriety' is typically associated with culture or manners.

Culture, as a term, has a much broader semantic range. Apart from its extreme sense referring to the cultivation of the soil and the practise of the arts, it also extends to emotional knowledge that is directly tied up to a feeling of morality. Emotional knowledge is shaped by compassion and empathy. Once trained in empathising, e.g. with a person who is suffering, we are able to feel compassion towards it, and consequently our actions should be morally pure; namely, they should lead to moral conduct towards people, in other words, one that is not harmful to them but brings aid or relief. Culture understood in this manner brings not only relief to those who suffer, but also joy to the one who brings aid, sometimes even a sense of happiness or fulfilment (Aristotle's *eudaimony*). It is something more than a 'good deed', a useful gesture that is easy to forget and that does not even have to contribute towards long-term improvement. The culture that accompanies all human activity is a complex of virtues and strengths that should be cultivated. These can be learned or developed by means of proper upbringing, which can instruct us how to behave at a given moment so as not to hurt or insult the other party of a dialogue, regardless of the subject. These precepts shall tell us how to get out of every troublesome situation with dignity. To save one's face means to defend oneself

³⁰ A term that denotes the sociological, planning, political and cultural structure in the life of cities; it is also used in the title of both strategy games (including board games) and research reports, e.g.: Czesław Bielecki *Gra w miasto*, Fundacja Dom Dostępny, Warszawa 1996; Jacek Purchla, *Gry w miasto*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2011.

with word or deed (without resorting to the use of force) in an extreme situation that has 'no way out' – that is considered to be a lost cause.

The titular symbolic face of culture must therefore confront the most difficult of dilemmas that stand before architecture. Its *physis* is responsible before millions of users with different views. The degree of its acceptance is typically proportional to the culture of the community. Unfortunately, culture does not constitute a separate subject of teaching, for with clear-cut divisions into humanist and scientific knowledge, engineering and artistic science, fleeting culture applies to them all. Culture encompasses the ethic of every profession, work ethic, the manner of interpreting and adhering to the law, the ability to tell apart and apply historical truths, and ultimately, common decency that requires us to remove solutions that avoid responsibility. Furthermore, the weight of its application and evaluation falls on everyone, both those who dictate the rules and the contractors, and subsequently, those who take advantage of the common assets. For 'lacking culture', we can either be reprimanded or answer before a court. The punishment is often meted out by means of force, without wasting time for negotiations if we happen to encounter the more impetuous interlocutors. Culture is the ability to harness diversity into qualities that are attractive to the parties of a dialogue, bringing beneficial effects of calming conflicts, including differences in views, effecting positive changes in unexpected situations. This is the face that architecture should have so that it can reflect the virtues of society. Such should be the face of architecture if it is to be accepted by society despite its assumed and engrained innovative veneer and an interior conditioned by the need to improve and change habits to alleviate everyday problems.

PART II:

THE CULTURAL AURA AROUND ARCHITECTURE

1. Cultural upbringing

Contemporaneity imposes upon architecture increasingly severe requirements associated with human mobility. The number of meetings, intersections, accumulations and efforts to attain one's goals, requires extraordinary determination, agreeableness and civility. Architecture, in itself being rather stable, as it is tied to its base, must meet the needs of allowing users various forms of movement. So-called mobile architecture concerns the possibility of moving it and placing it in new conditions, and is associated with a lightness of the structural system, ease of adaptation, etc. Meanwhile, today people are increasingly mobile due to ease of travel and global communication. Thus, architecture has been entrusted with the responsibility to organise space not only for the various places where people can be present, but also 'non-places', where people only stop for a moment or merely walk past, barely registering the surroundings in the hasty cycle of travel. The most essential element of this architecture is to ensure an effective flow of traffic and information. The weight of architectural values is shifted towards organising user traffic and information systems that synchronise all elements with traffic data into clear, legible and reliable information for travellers. This type of architecture, contrary to appearances, is significantly affected by the visual architectural layer. It is the form of the building and its décor, the suggestiveness of its shapes and colours that invigorates the passersby and raises their spirits; it stimulates the psychologically conditioned desire to cooperate, calms nervous reactions, helps to focus one's attention and ultimately provides contentment from a different state of being, while also providing comfort almost on a par with housing. Providing these qualities is a new challenge for contemporary architecture. Undoubtedly, such architecture, as it is addressed to all users without distinction, merely structuring individuals, must be based on cultural considerations. Global culture is an acceptance of otherness, and its basis is mutual friendliness. Marine and airports, train stations, all sorts of transfer points and destinations, which are regarded as places, or rather 'non-places' of cultural clashes, impose on architecture an obligation to provide assistance not only in transport-related issues, but also all manner of adaptation problems. Despite a strictly utilitarian character, this dynamic, flow-focused 'non-place' becomes an architecture-icon of the city, with the value of a lay cathedral, similar to that of sports stadiums, which attract all the greatest events, not only sports events, but also music concerts and other mass gatherings, including those of global significance. It is therefore permissible to design any non-standard architectural form, to make sure it is remembered and always associated with the place or date of an event. The extraordinary appearance of such architecture often allows users to forget about minor inconveniences; it allows one to lose and forget oneself during a performance while experiencing a special moment. Such experiences are contained within those elements of the interior which increase the attractiveness of the architectural offer. The significance of such an experience justifies the cost of the project, allows it to attract potential users, brings greater profit, allows it to interact, boosts prosperity, but most importantly, ensures constant movement.

At present, it is constant movement that ensures economic development in practically all of its aspects and sectors. Change, the constant rapid pace in the pursuit of the new, the constant motion of images, the desire to move ahead in decision-making and risk-taking, ingenuity in anticipation, the agility of the body, the mind and wit, flexibility in place of rigid regulations, divisions, forms, the combination of the incompatible, the construction of the

impossible, the adaptation of the incomplete—this is what contemporary architecture must face, as it is a visible expression of change that takes place in the world, in life and in culture.

(from:) SCRUTON

Scruton argued that Schiller perceived culture as a sphere of ‘aesthetic upbringing’, and play as an archetype. By combining these two ideas, Schiller wanted to demonstrate that the loss of significance of religion did not leave humanity without intrinsic values. By ‘aesthetic upbringing’—by culture—we can return to the primal experiences of awe and joy that demonstrate to us the lasting sense of our life on earth. Scruton claimed that this is why culture is so important—it acts as a vessel that stores and conveys values to subsequent generations.³¹ However, we must distinguish the contemporary meaning of these two terms, as aesthetic upbringing, which signifies acquiring sensitivity, shaping a sense of beauty and practical experiencing of beauty, as well as practicing the arts and familiarity-knowledge-orientation in this field, merely constitutes one of the groups of values that comprise the full scope of phenomena that are currently described as ‘culture’. The often referenced ‘good upbringing’ includes in itself an entirety of developed strengths: it is both aesthetic upbringing and general civility, multidisciplinary education, personal attractiveness based on the ability to engage in discourse and convey information, rhetorical skills, the ability to present knowledge, personal charm, moderate and purposeful gestures and body language. The concept of culture includes in it many qualities, among others, diplomacy and even politics. Diplomacy is a separate branch of knowledge about the canons of behaviour and negotiating under even the most difficult circumstances, which require achieving specific goals in a manner acceptable to all parties of an accord. Diplomats who are obligated to represent their respective parties-countries are trained in special schools. These schools should be obligatory for all politicians, as the duties of both groups differ but little. However, all conversations, both those in public forums and behind closed doors—including private conversations that are of little significance to everyone but the interlocutors—should obligatorily follow the rules of cultural dialogue. It should be a personal quality attained by cultural upbringing and developed by every one of us.

Scruton argued that both Aristotle and Schiller highlighted the active nature of free time and its link to contemplative forms of intellectual life.³² Both thinkers agreed that the goal one should strive for in life is to gain free time after well-performed work. It is not work itself, or a career, as it is contemporarily called, that is the true goal in life, but the free time that can be achieved through it. The latter is the most valuable time that Aristotle spent contemplating, it is an experience of the highest rank which provides a sense of happiness as a goal in and of itself. On the other hand, Schiller devoted this free time to play, or, in other words, recreation. It should be noted that the time of play is also understood here as time spent on various physical activities that bring a feeling of fulfilment; it is a time obtained not only by passive withdrawal from work. The philosophers differed in formulating the exact specific goal of obtaining free time. To Aristotle, it was the contemplation after work that ennobled him and allowed him to study; while to Schiller, the goal was the solemnity of a wise man attained through work, while withdrawal from work, namely play-recreation, brought aesthetic reflection, contentment, a feeling of fulfilment. To him, the paradigm of fulfilment was the aesthetic experience devoid of the burdens and conditions of everyday professional occupation, namely a free

³¹ *Ib.* p. 34, concerning Friedrich Schiller—a German philosopher.

³² *Ib.* p. 25.

contemplation of polysensory impressions, primarily the visual. The ultimate goal of work was free time.

Perhaps here it would be proper to define the meaning of work as an activity which is not confined to the physical exertion of a labourer's work, as in the popular sense of the term, culture is predominantly the product of a class that performs mental work, without the use of bodily strength. It is the domain of the so-called non-working class, which works without 'dirtying its hands'. It is, after all, a broadly accepted direction to be pursued in life, which promises less toil, easier advancement, better living conditions and drawing satisfaction and even pleasure from one's work. Intellectual work, made possible by talent and education, is associated with a higher social status, and most importantly it allows one to deliberately provide oneself with free time from work, that can be spent on pursuing one's own pleasures and broadening one's horizons—by absorbing countless experiences that perfect us and satisfy our spiritual needs, thereby allowing us to achieve psychological balance and elevate our overall level of empathy and consciousness.

Culture teaches us to evaluate values. When we discuss play—the polysensory intake of all new forms of messages, artistic intrigue, risky and iconoclastic arguments—we refer to opening up towards novelty, a propensity and inquisitiveness towards all that is new, while also mobilising ourselves to critique. Laughter, humour and mockery are the same type of reactions as the seriousness of reception. Culture teaches us to think. The matter is not to merely consume new performances, but to be open to previously unknown stimuli and evaluate them by means of a skillful critique. Critique does not necessarily have to denote a pejorative phenomenon. A well-versed and highly regarded art critic either has an innate gift of a penetrating and critical outlook, or has developed this outlook by practicing, experiencing and enhancing his knowledge. A skillful dialogue between the artist and the audience, engaged in by a proficient critic, can significantly speed up civilisational progress. When proficiently commented on by a critic, the artistic problem-project presented by the artist, guides the thoughts of the audience and introduces significant alterations to an entire group's mentality. If it concerns taboo subjects, it can weaken the power of this phenomenon and can soothe the savage breast. The critic becomes a mediator between art, which is always at the forefront of progress, and the audience, the addressees of civilisational change. We do not question nature, but art is a human creation and, as 'unnatural', it builds our civilisation and culture.

It is a similar story with architecture. Architecture, like art, is an interdisciplinary, artificial human creation (largely related to engineering). It shall never be as avant-garde as boundless art, but it has an overpowering impact due to its superhuman scale and utilitarian/protective function. Just like avant-garde art, without an intermediary who can guide the audience along the authors' artistic intentions, it is sometimes misunderstood and rejected; similarly as avant-garde architecture it can do but little to defend itself without a good critic. Architecture can only be critiqued by another architect, an expert who is proficient at both the artistic design and construction craft. An architect must also be sensitive to all matters relating to utility, ranging from ergonomics and comfort, to impact on the psyche and the senses. He must also be a sensitive urbanist and ecologist, as architecture cannot be stripped of its natural surroundings or built environment. Of course, we are referring here to a proficient critic-expert, not an armchair critic, who often describes what some of his audience likes without an in-depth analysis of the problems solved by architectural design. *The situation would certainly improve if we increased the number of mediators who, being well acquainted with their field, would be able to introduce the public into the meanders of the subject of each design, and through more frequent debates on such cognitive topics, we would be able to improve the overall understanding of architecture*

and attain a greater acceptance of its form. This is of course a task for the architects-authors themselves or their advocate-architects. Art historians often become successful critics of architecture, but as regards the newly built contemporary architecture it is difficult to authoritatively classify the value and utility of architecture in the context of the latest technological currents and in confrontation with the leading currents in art. This is linked with the necessity of translating the various languages of technical, design and artistic specialisations, which is closer to the profession of the architectural community.

2. Upbringing through art

Upbringing includes, among others, learning to discern intent. Contrary to appearances, in both art and architecture, as well as in the entire creative sphere, there is always room for humour, jest and even ridicule. Art does not need to be 'deadly serious' or solemn and monumental to move its audience. The intent of the artist always includes a purposeful disruption of habitual perception. However, this does not mean that a singular emotion or act of ridicule or even humiliation of established judgments degrades and negates the value of art or culture in their entirety. This is precisely what happened with the seminal fountain by Marcel Duchamp, which manifested itself as a toilet bowl and later recurred as a primary motif of hundreds of less exploratory or outright repetitive concepts by other artists. The above concept has appeared dozens of times as an obvious proof of the total disgrace of art. Nothing can be further from the truth. The singular use of an argument in the form of an ordinary everyday object procured for the most earthly of functions, had as its intent to redirect established associations; it undermined the existing standards that had automatically been brought to mind by the image of the toilet bowl. It moved the normally unused capacity for imagination and abstract thinking; it simply stimulated thinking, which all art constantly strives to do. Contemporary art has done away with the obligation to merely decorate contemporaneity; its main goal is to raise interest among the public and attract the audience to stimulate the senses and induce a critical outlook on established patterns.

Currently, we mostly work in interdisciplinary teams so as to stimulate innovation; we work in intentionally random places, among all manner of diversity so that we could mutually inspire and borrow from one another. This is how art, on principle unbound by restrictions, is created. It is for its carefree fleetingness that it is always at the forefront of exploration. In every case, there is a stimulation of the desire to speculate with an image, a different pairing of experience and thought, the stimulation of the imagination that is the cooperation of the intellectual and sensual sphere. This is how virtual reality and the entire imaginary 'other' world that exists side by side with the material, operates. We still separate everyday reality from engaging fiction, but we constantly search for states of carefree transgressions between these worlds. Roger Scruton cited the words of Wallace Stevens: 'Let be be finale of seem' – which testify to the inseparable community of the arts.³³

Here we can reference the work of Salvador Dali, who, while primarily a painter with a highly specific outlook on reality and an ability to go beyond art into the different states of consciousness, also boldly forged his visions into the form of architecture. Of course, this always concerned his own property and the satisfaction derived from fulfilling his own

³³ *Ib.* p. 27.

peculiar personal needs. Buildings appeared to be an extension of imagination grasped as images, surreal sculptures of superhuman scale, often completely devoid of utility. The projects by Friedensreich Hundertwasser (Friedrich Stowasser) went in a similar direction of making the simplicity of utility surreal and blending painting with the material of architecture. We know many cases of architecture with biomorphic forms, including purely artistic forms from other fields of art that blend utility-dictated boundaries and contours of objects and the functionality ascribed to utility.

Curiousness as to the blending of real and unreal worlds and the very aesthetic interest, namely the desire to come into contact with a work of art, the pursuit of challenges, novelties and change, requires the existence of art as a sphere of human activity, and consequently also culture, within which both artists and the audience and all mediators-intermediaries will be able to engage in a discourse. A discourse that results in progress.

All of the phenomena that are described and play out in art also concern architecture as an alternative branch of art.

We are accustomed to a stable architecture that is subjected to safety-providing gravity, one that is moderate and conforms to average tastes, i.e. is acceptable to all. Everything that goes beyond this pattern is subjected to the age-old argumentation about creating inconvenience and a lack of taste. Meanwhile, similar to the case of free art, in architecture there is a place not only for risky formal diversity, but also for humour and even ridicule. Projects that intentionally disrupt our stabilisation-related habits are designed as architectural humour, and take on the form of projects such as the Dancing House in Prague or the Crooked House in Sopot and tens of others all around the world. One form of ridicule of architecture's stability principles and laws of physics is the entire Deconstructivist movement, which disproves the immense scope of structural limitations. Without infringing on the laws of nature and by using other natural laws in an innovative manner, we are able to circumvent many constraining canons. Man's creative ability often appears to have no boundaries. At present it is also the calculation technique that comes to man's aid as it accelerates progress. We think about artificial intelligence as a worrying sign for the future. It is difficult to foresee its potential and equally hard to limit its possibilities. In the most general sense, we are motivated by a basic fear of the unknown and that is the only reason why we strive to defend our familiar *status quo*.

Acceptance for architecture is largely forced upon us by its large scale and unmoving presence in its functionally assigned place. It is much easier to criticize or ignore the works of other arts. We can simply exclude them from our field of perception. When we do subject ourselves to their impact, it is because of our own free will, out of a desire to change our focus and relieve stress. The initial state of relaxation after work and the time of play that generates activity, curiosity and aesthetic interest, is transformed into a state of aesthetic experience under the impact of a work of art. It is a state of multisensory experience art. Such experiences can be either similar or different in people; they may differ in intensity and character, yet individual reactions and assessments depend on the sovereign sphere of individual sensitivity of every member of the audience. In the assessment, acceptance of content, messages or decisions about the rejection of values, we are aided by mediators who outline alternative means of reading them. However, the final verdict depends on the receiver.

Culture regulates the principles and boundaries of the acceptance of novelties in all creative fields, including art. For even in art which is the least risky field of creation, events or images that are excessively drastic may leave not merely traces, but in fact vast areas of unhealed and constantly reopening wounds in the psyche and even in collective memory.

Culture is an assessment of phenomena and their value, and this assessment is of great importance to human communities. It is culture that maintains balance and soothes/evens out the impetus of surprise and the capacity to absorb new things, which always brings with it both good and evil. Culture is, after all, a product of the assessment of contemporaries, accounting for their upbringing in their respective tradition. Due to generational shifts, changing experiences and circumstances, the canons of beauty and the importance of acclaimed masterpieces continue to change over time. Nevertheless, an aesthetic assessment of works of art in any period is always performed as a part of the so-called culture and is fully within the boundaries and principles imposed by it. It is culture that allows us to peacefully live in communities; it regulates the balance of values. It also regulates the balance of ideational surges in the face of unforeseen crises in the world of nature, politics, science and religion. What sets apart the fleeting sphere of culture from the equally immaterial yet nevertheless applied thought (specific projects/materialisations) in the sphere of science, religion and morality, is aesthetic judgement as a philosophical measure of polysensory stimuli.

This is why, despite all pejorative signs and outrageous cultural phenomena, it is not possible to state that culture is in decline—only that there is a counterculture or a cancel culture. Within cancel culture, a culture that negates the elite status of art, there is a place for high culture, that is accessible solely to the elites. It appears that civilisational progress always belongs to those in the lead, who, by their very nature, are a minority and belong to a narrow and relevant group of artists, academics or explorers. This small group of specialists can easily be referred to as a professional elite and their likewise narrow audience, oriented towards specific fields in which they operate, can be called an elite audience. Whatever a given attempt concerns, novelties always first appeal to the elite group of enthusiasts, and only then do they convince the majority. If they are immediately accepted by the majority, then they typically turn out to be either populist or less ideologically advanced, and thus less valuable from the point of view of civilisational development.

3. The architecture of upbringing

To quicken the pace of civilisation's progress so that the largest possible group of people can enjoy its achievements, and so that life can be as beneficial to both physical and psychological human health, to avoid the destruction of wildlife and even out the damage caused by human activity and the disasters that undercut its achievements, we should successively domesticate progress and popularize its outcomes. Education and upbringing are the foundation of social culture that must not only function, but also constantly evolve alongside progress and adapt human awareness to progress. The more a person experiences, the more he is able to do and know, the more intensely he should feel and perceive (synergy and polysensory nature of impressions). As knowledge itself can be specialised and abilities can be specifically focused, it appears that experience has the greatest significance for holistic perception. Just like permanent contact with nature, wildlife, the earth, cultivation of plants, listening to the sounds of the forest, observing the life of animals provide a completeness of experience and an uncommon sensitisation to natural beauty, so does experiencing and practicing art enhance the depth of experiencing beauty as conceived by humans. The greater the interdisciplinarity of one's interests, the deeper and richer shall be one's experience of beauty. As always, a necessary condition for one to explore noble pleasure, to find joy in beauty and feel spiritual satisfaction (happiness), is a rational willingness to do it. There is also

a danger in indiscriminate fascination with a work, becoming lost in reflection, drowned in its aura, which leads to forgetting about reality, demonstrating weakness and lowering one's defensive capabilities—'lowering one's guard'. Revealing sensitivity is often treated as showing that one is physically weak, which tellingly lays bare the level of culture. A particular personal sensitivity does not denote weakness; it shows that one has a rich interior, which, combined with physical strength and unrelenting character, or conversely, with a complete weakness of the body, can truly impress with the strength and capabilities of the spirit. It is the immaterial ideas that can move crowds and overcome conventions. It is the masses of people that can trample and tear down walls, it is a spirit of defensive or patriotic struggle that can defy an attack by a numerically superior enemy. As always, human imperfection also calculates the level of possible collateral damage or gain. All speculations as to someone's defencelessness and the exposure of their interior or ordinary greed often accompany the most noble of actions as a side effect. These are deeds that are generally morally reprehensible and parasitic. They also obviously align with the negative dimension of the phenomenon of culture.

(from:) BAUMAN

Consumerism is also a negative form of culture, which has currently captivated the people of the West. It is a type of narcissism,³⁴ which directs all creative activity towards one's own use and comfort and perceives beauty only in one's own idealised features and seeks it in the consumption of goods. Beauty without selflessness deteriorates the nobility of its experience, makes emotions shallow and dulls the senses. Insofar as we are still quite traditional and are in agreement as to experiencing biological beauty,³⁵ i.e. that of the face and the proportionality of the body and beautiful landscapes, artificially created beauty is highly debatable to us. It is consumerism and the marketisation of most human products that have made people abuse the basic division into fundamental values—the more essential material values, and the more superfluous, as if additional ones; that is, spiritual and aesthetic values. This division simply leads to the exclusion of some individuals and even entire social groups from access to aesthetic values and the ability to experience beauty—from access to generally necessary spiritual values that give everyone a sense of their existence. All this in a period of widely postulated inclusivity of cities and societies. The imposition of a consumerist mode of thinking almost completely closes off the ability to have unrestricted contact with goods that shape spirituality and sensuality and that refine our perception of everyday reality, the harmony of the world, building social ties, with art. There are few things that are more misguided than the so-called dedicated programmes for specific groups: seniors, special needs persons, those who live on their own or are destitute. Everyone chooses while following their own sense of ability, taste, pace of perception and independence. Culture tells us to treat members of society equally, and ensures a fully democratic dialogue that evaluates resources and shapes, structures hierarchies and values, identifies authority figures and canons, creates patterns and criteria. When we do not actively participate in culture, when we do not partake of the performances offered by artists and artistic institutions, we forget about one of the basic public

³⁴ Zygmunt Bauman saw the bipolar character of contemporary culture in the story about Pygmalion and Narcissus: 'The cult of beauty in Pygmalion's version spurs us to make the world more beautiful. Narcissus' reform makes the cult of beauty self-centred'—Dominika Kozłowska, *Piękni wykluczeni*, "Znak" September 2016, no. 736, *Zrozumieć piękno*, p. 1.

³⁵ The division into biological and 'artificial' beauty as proposed by Samir Zeki—the creator of neuroaesthetics.

rights; that is, access to applied culture. Oftentimes, the activity of cultural or educational institutions is distorted by a local interpretation of documents, one that is often self-serving, and the institutions themselves are constrained by pathological regulations concerning employment or working conditions, the imposition of directors, politicisation, wastefulness, a thoughtless pursuit of funds, putting up appearances of working in a community's favour, such as actions catering to the media or grant sponsors. *The true success of pro-public cultural programmes stems from those who they target*—grassroots activists and the employees of the institutions themselves.

(from:) ZEKI

At the same time, science tells us through increasingly explicit evidence that the types of emotion, their depth, talent and any other component that participates in perceiving the world and affects individual behaviour, is conditioned by our brain structure. This means that the manner of determining and selecting assessment criteria depends on social diversity and its objectivity increases proportionately to the diversity of a given community. This is why those cities whose character is shaped by ethnically diverse communities are so interesting, dynamic and avant-garde. In all of nature, biodiversity ensures the best living and survival conditions. It is in a diverse society that all 'invisibles' have an opportunity to shine. Only when we have the support of a group of like-minded individuals—and it is easier for one to obtain such support in a large community—can we emerge from the shadow and manifest our uniqueness, a different outlook, pique the interest of and inspire others who do not yet know the strengths of this uniqueness. Thus, on the basis of diversity, a wide range of cultural and sustainable development, can we build a true capital of all types of values, that gives society the ability to develop intellectually and release its creative potential—which carries over to economic growth.

(from:) ROTTENBERG

Few economists observe and attach significance to dependencies between, on the one hand art in general, and avant-garde and high art in particular, and economic growth on the other hand. The greatest problem of art in any period is its measurability, understood chiefly in terms of its profitability. A given period's creative canons are not always compatible with avant-garde art. Typically, the latter is not liked, due to established habits and continually prevalent canons of fashion. Only frequent contact with modern art and becoming accustomed and involved with it, allows one to develop new tastes, stimulate an evolution of canons and a competitive appraisal of works, which is reflected in economic growth. When asked about the criteria of beauty,³⁶ art critic Anda Rottenberg stated that beauty is a migrant category. Typically, people believe that beautiful things are those that are understandable and acceptable. Of course, to be understandable, something must be domesticated, traditional and local. But we can even see beauty in things that have not been made with beauty in mind. Contemporary art, which often presents just motion, noise, and generally reflects the messiness of the world, is satisfied with provoking the audience to react, to attract its attention, make it think, even if there is no acceptance for it. Contemporary art is to move the audience and not necessarily induce its delight and a feeling of happiness; it is also expected to elicit outrage and disgust. It is to stimulate thoughts and feelings. In academic discussions, the mission of art can surprisingly appear as closer to proving the existence or non-existence of

³⁶ Anda Rottenberg, *Należy sobie zaufać, rozmowa Łukasza Białkowskiego, "Znak", September 2016, no. 736, Zrozumieć piękno, pp. 24–31.*

God rather than establishing criteria and measures for its canons. In the evaluation of artworks, it is much better to arrive at a consensus by referencing not rigid formulas or patterns, but an expert sum of intuitive convictions built by many years of contact with works of art. The assessment of contemporary artworks is also more complex, as it evolves towards comparisons and the measurability of the conveyance of its message, or merely its ideas, which are non-aesthetic values; therefore, what counts is not only the artist's talent which is visible in the ease of operating with a selected material and the technical proficiency of working it, but on equal terms, the work's intellectual content and the psychological depth of its message. In many assessments of art's revelatory characteristics and innovative values one can even see a certain disregard for artistic talent which was previously seen as an indispensable element that allowed one to capture signs of beauty in artistic products. To find true consensus, achieve sustainability in development and balance out new canons of beauty, one would probably first have to define the extreme effects of one's work and the most divergent of opinions. However, manipulation, as ever, remains a threat. When speaking of manipulation, it is also worth drawing attention to the phenomenon of mismanagement of funds through government institutions associated with the ministries of culture and art; the latter ones often grant funds directly to those who support them, being selective and undemocratic and acting to the detriment of the essence of art. If one also takes into account the level of perception of contemporary art, this can be said to take place much too often.

4. Beautiful upbringing

Beautiful upbringing denotes following the idea of beauty and being surrounded by beauty. What is characteristic is that when hearing the term 'beauty', the average person automatically reacts by assessing the beauty of a person's face; on rare occasions the assessment extends to the person's silhouette, an element of clothing or a practical object (a car or gadget); sometimes the view from a terrace or an aeroplane. This is proof of a consumer-like approach to fleeting values borne by beauty, as it is rationally assessed by academics. According to the latter, all attempts to rationalize beauty serve as more of a tool to create successive social divisions, alienation and splits, instead of bridging gaps and integrating the audience in a common joy of reception. Instead of serving as a guideline of democratisation, morality turns towards privatisation and an 'egotisation' of society. It does so despite the fact that the true essence of humanity is communality, sharing joy and sadness that are typically unbearable and degrading when experienced alone. Often it is simply much easier to face these adversities either with someone else or with a group. The alternative to communal experience is doing evil—experiencing emotions at the cost of others. To reach such a conclusion, one does not need to involve here either religion or differences in outlook. There is a psychiatric hypothesis³⁷ that the feelings of fear, sadness and helplessness, which usually accompany depression, are a state that represents reality. Perhaps this is why we think so highly of paintings executed by schizophrenic patients, especially their abstract depictions. One requires spiritual stimulation to feel better and to look optimistically at the world. Such stimulation can be attained through spiritual stimuli which is largely provided through art. These are all

³⁷ Drenda, Mąciaciele o dwóch głowach, rozmowa z Bartłomiejem Dobroczyńskim, "Znak" September 2016, no. 736, Zrozumieć piękno, pp. 76–77.

manner of spiritual raptures and experiences, such as: delight, fright, paralysing terror, fear, disgust, despair.

The best gauge of culture, its honesty, authenticity and strength, is contact with prison inmates. Sometimes we hear about rehabilitation through culture. But it is only the actual contact with inmates and being able to experience the therapeutic power of art on their autonomous territory³⁸ that can truly make us realise and prove the actual potential of culture. In their prison environment, which is, by its very nature, ruthless, but also painfully honest and requiring complete openness, without regard for criticism—after all, the worst has already happened to the inmates, both outside and inside the prison walls—they are further enriched by the wealth of experiences of their fellow inmates and are conditioned by their driving force. It is here that culture and art have the opportunity to be presented most explicitly and to thrive. The matter is not about art of the highest quality, but in its authenticity that arises from a genuine need for it, conditioned by nothing besides a burning, internal imperative and ruthless criticism. Poetry written by prison inmates has a rare force—it is genuine. Art that is born in seemingly the most adverse conditions must arise from an actual need of the spirit. Under conditions of mandatory confinement, it is the freest of thoughts that is born, one that has no need to charm, as it flows from the necessity of formulating actual phenomena that are inaccessible in ordinary reality, that are regularly unnoticed and underappreciated in ordinary conditions outside prison walls. Searching for means of expressing oneself and finding an outlet for releasing one's emotions in a manner other than aggression, physical force and violence, is the best proof of art's driving potential and its rehabilitative powers. Naturally, art is not a panacea for everything, but it provides an excellent alternative for escaping one's predicament and rising up from the bottom of society after the ordeal of prison experienced by those who have become victims of a lack of imagination as to the consequences of their erroneous actions. Not everyone who leads a standard life has the conditions, strength and will to fight the adversities of life, as not everyone appreciates the value of art and culture sufficiently to trust them until he/she is able to experience their beneficial properties.

High culture and art participate in education and upbringing too rarely and on too small a scale. They are underappreciated in a world dominated by the pursuit of innovation and profit. This is why they are treated as scarce and are reclaimed only in hopeless situations. Sometimes, due to their fleeting rationales and non-measurable values, they are quite groundlessly treated on a par with religion or a cult.

Few people can remember the practical capabilities of art and are able to use its full potential. Thus, those who do appreciate it—artists, patrons, sponsors and artworks dealers—are all the more valuable. It is so because they all in fact perceive beauty in the same intense manner, in the same categories, equally rationally and sensually, and in response to all stimuli. Brain researchers have confirmed³⁹ that the similar reactions affecting the same receptors that take place in the brains of artists and art critics assessing works of art, occur in the case of mathematicians who marvel at the beauty of various types of mathematical formulas. The bond between artists and mathematicians is therefore real, and the fascination with beauty in the world of science is not a metaphor. Artistic and mathematical beauty are two extremes, but they induce the same brain reactions and emotions and both serve to explore the world and expand knowledge. Due to neurobiology we can now digitally record such fleeting values as

³⁸ Wojciech Brzoska, *Zaproponować nowe światy*, "Znak" September 2016, no. 736, *Zrozumieć piękno*, pp. 98–103.

³⁹ Semir Zeki, *Piękno jest najważniejsze*, "Znak" September 2016, no. 736, *Zrozumieć piękno*, p. 6–11.

beauty, desire, love, colour and its changes, depending on the times of day, illumination, humidity, etc. The newly created branch of science, known as neuroaesthetics studies the brain, beauty and art, and its scope is expanded by scholars primarily from Japan, the US and Europe. It is considered as a branch of cognitive neuroscience. Thanks to this, it has for the first time become possible to study human imagination and man's emotional states; it has also become possible to study values that were previously considered non-measurable, subjective and mutable. New studies have demonstrated that even facts cannot be fully believed, as the only facts we find reliable are the subjective ones; the latter are the only ones we can fully trust. What we can be certain of are only our own feelings, e.g. love for our partner, while we cannot be sure whether this feeling is reciprocated. The matter is similar with the permanent colour of material objects, which, while remaining factually the same, changes when perceived under the influence of changeable environmental conditions. Neuroaesthetics studies the logical, inductive-deductive system of the human brain. It allows one to confirm that despite being two different cognitive disciplines, art, similar to mathematics, serves human accord regardless of culture.

From a holistic perspective, one can say that the phenomenon of experiencing beauty is a truly human domain.

5. The culture of modernity

In light of the current landslide development and the emergence of ever newer branches of creativity, the array of pursuits relating to contemporary new media art is equally broad as it is difficult to pin it down and define it in an unequivocal way. To fully present the diversity of these pursuits, all one has to do is cite the list of new media that was drawn up for a book⁴⁰ published as recently as in 2015, and which has already become outdated. The term 'new media' itself refers to an artistic movement that was initiated towards the end of the 1950s (Nam June Paik, Roy Ascott, Edward Ihnatowicz); nonetheless, an art exhibition known as New Media presented in 2005 at the Walter Phillips Gallery in the Banff Centre in Canada, was defined by various and often competing names: electronic art, digital art, multimedia art, technological art, technical media art, cyber art. Since the publication of the first edition of a book by the Medialab Katowice team, an expanded list of new art media has been drafted. Thanks to new technologies as well as new forms of communication and human behaviour, these media take on various hybrid forms that often blur the lines between each individual medium. Artists make use of an ability to cross over the established boundaries of these arts, either convergently, or inter- or transmedially. The newly created media take on the form of projects with increasingly unclear hierarchies. The very name 'medium' can be understood in a multi-layered way and may refer both to the essence of an idea, as well as the means and technique of conveying it. Projects have a generally experimental and conceptual character and concern diagnoses of contemporary society and culture. The recipients themselves increasingly become co-creators of such performances. The list of media names relating to the new art is long; the one drafted until the year 2015 (the date of the first publication by Medialab Katowice) includes the following media categories: cybernetic art, robotic art, sound art,

⁴⁰ Piotr Zawojcki (ed.), *Klasyczne dzieła sztuki nowych mediów*, Instytucja Kultury Katowice – Miasto Ogrodów, Katowice 2015.

generative art, interactive videodisc, video art, telematic art, net art, interactive art, video sculpture, virtual activism, interactive real-time environment, Artificial Life (AL), Artificial Intelligence (AI), interface art, software art, activism, virtual reality, responsive environment, CAVE art, CD-ROM art, multimedia art, bio art, transgenic art, location art, Mixed Reality art, performance, walking-based art, biotechnological art, Second Life performance, open-source literature, body art, video games, artistic social activism, immersive art. Today, we could most certainly expand the above media list, but the diversity already presented demonstrates the highly fluid boundaries of the applied means of expression and their definitions. Even the editor of the book *Klasyczne dzieła sztuki nowych mediów* (Classical New Media Artworks, Medialab, ed. Piotr Zawojski) compares them to the elusive and shape-shifting mythological Phoenix.

The list of parallel architectural works is not as simple, free and abundant. Although we cannot withhold praise and positive opinions adequate to the innovative formal, technical and utilitarian changes, architecture is, in extenso, burdened by a considerable load of constraints. The author of thus far the only Polish project displayed at the MoMA, the so called Keret House, declared that it is not easy to align a work of architecture with 'experience programming'.⁴¹ It seems that Polish architects in particular lack the tools to do so, and eliciting emotions is alien to the engineering tradition and is treated as pretentious or even downright undignified. 'It is easier for us to design or present our buildings as the outcomes of project requirements, the budget, the law and rational considerations, as a witty synthesis or as circumvention of restrictions, for which our clients praise us so much'.⁴² All activity aimed at uncommon beauty and utilitarian distinction, or poetic adoration of nature, is treated as an extravagance addressed at developers' wives, who have been bewitched by 'the pretty words of a fanciful aesthete'. And still, works of architectural art have traditionally been beautiful and luxurious when commissioned by the wealthy to realise their fantasies and act as their representation. As Szczyński said: 'architecture is a metaphor, as it operates with abstract means that some fill in with their own content and others perceive as a sum total of contexts and a collage of subconscious associations'.⁴³ A work of architecture can only truly become a success for its non-commercial author when there occurs a case of existential similarity, an acceptance of argumentation and similarity of views, when the artist and the client reach an understanding, while in the case of divergent visions, the design project is bound to share the fate of the majority of projects, whether private or commercial. Out of an ambition of metaphor, architecture becomes merely an amphora—a functional vessel, maybe even beautiful and sophisticated, but still merely a vessel for somebody else to use. Once taken over for merely placing and securing the property of a possessive client, it becomes suffused with his style, smell, and works for his sole benefit. In the case of private property, it becomes a representation of the host, a continuation of his ego, which merely supplements the image of the proprietor. In the case of public or commercial ownership, it becomes yet another meeting place, one of many that are needed but forgotten (insofar as they fail to become associated with some exceptional private history); one that does not pretend to be a memorable cultural event. The discovery of such a place is rarely a surprise and visits are planned more for advertised performances or the value of the collections exhibited inside. Visitors can enjoy an exciting

⁴¹ Jakub Szczyński, *Architektura jako amfora*, "Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni. Architektura i Metafora" 2019, no. 2[65], pp. 94–96.

⁴² *Ib.* p. 96.

⁴³ *Ib.* p. 96.

place-based aura that attracts the curious—built by the mutually supporting strength of ‘content and package’—the artistic value of architecture reinforced by the fulfilment of expectations and deepened by a feeling of satisfaction derived from the entirety of the performance. *Only then can a visitor feel fully satisfied with his sensory and intellectual reception. By participating in a cultural event, he may experience happiness and it may be an experience known as high culture. The architectural envelope, the visually attractive shell of the construct, combined with ever-attractive technical and material innovations—becomes an icon, a static and eternal advert of not only the place, but the entire city, region or even the country. It is a well-remembered and clearly associated face of a given place. Iconic architecture becomes a virtual icon, a significant image on a computer, a marker and meaning in the language of online communication, achieving global coverage. Such architectural realizations convey an entire array of new content and are linked to an unimaginable amount of all types of information, processed by their creators, owners, hosts, employees, users and all others in all manner of configurations, aspects and problem groups that they tackle every day. But as an icon and pictogram, a visual marker, a hologram, it shall always remain an architectural face of these meanings: cultural meanings associated with significant social, historical and artistic events, politics, the memory of a nation. Ever since then, the icon shall restore the memory of content (even if the memory is slightly different in the case of every individual), of the life of a nation, of pride in one’s own culture, regardless of whether this takes place in actual reality or in simulacrum. To others, it shall announce familiar references associated with the culture of a given country - legible and understandable to all.*

Architecture is the face of culture.

6. The modernity of architecture

Architecture becomes the face of culture also due to its overbearing scale. The latter is always visible and the first to impose an image of man’s activity. The size of an individual building multiplied by the number of townhouses that form a city, as well as their uncommon height and metropolitan density, on an apparently superhuman scale, further magnified by the development of Manhattan as a model, have become the face of urban, metropolitan culture, particularly in the case of world capitals such as New York, Paris or Tokyo. The latter are constantly joined by successive metropolises, presently mostly from the Far East. Such images of cities, of which New York has become an artistic symbol in the West, have been given various names: ‘city of evil’, ‘after-hours hell’, Gotham City, the ‘machine city’, the ‘war-city’. These ‘world’s largest tombstones’⁴⁴ and narrow windows that cause ‘visual frustration’ have excited and terrified people through ‘Saturday night fever’, drug gang wars, people’s neuroses and failure to take advantage of various opportunities and hopes, as well as crime and death due to a lack of endurance. As Rem Koolhaas concludes, New York is a delirious city. Manhattan has at the same time become an icon of a city of progress and civilisational decline. As an urban vision of multiplied architecture, Manhattan has become the face of the culture of the twentieth century. Its central part and chief marker is Times Square, an eternally busy theme park that bustles with a ‘never-sleeping’ pace of life—a gigantic substitute for an architectural Disneyland, where blinking billboards pretend to be old skyscrapers that

⁴⁴ A.L. Huxtable, Who’s Afraid of the Big, Bad Buildings? “New York Times” 29 May 1966, by: Michał Wiśniewski, W głąb piekła. Nowy Jork w „Po godzinach” Martina Scorsese, “Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni. Architektura i Metafora” 2019, no. 2[65], pp. 90–91.

camouflage ordinary worries and everyday lives, where music and urban noise continually mix and where everyone is to be at ease and feel the 'drive'. This is revitalised Times Square, a not so distant symbol of the city's decline in the 1970s and 80s, when cultural life, theatres and cinemas moved away from the townhouses of Broadway and Seventh Avenue. Ruined historical buildings that had been bought for proverbial peanuts were given a new face. For instance, the now-symbolic Trump Tower was built at the site of a historical department store.

Changes that erase the characteristic 'facial features' of architecture—namely its clearly recognisable ethnic, temporal and political affiliation—are perfectly known to us due to modernisation, remodelling, and renewal projects combined with the removal of traces of unfriendly and even shameful past. In Poland, we clearly remember images of Soviet *urawnilovka* (levelling), which aimed at producing dwellings for all, after a period of reconstruction from the ruins left by the Second World War. Although standardized housing blocks had been raised from ruins with the hands of old master craftsmen, they already represented uniform mass buildings, perforated with identical window openings and doors. All that mattered was the number of additional housing units, dwelling assignments, as people happy with having their own 'M2' moved into identical, hastily put together and faceless dwellings, without any character. All that mattered was to have a minimum of one's own living space in the building. Those who supported the communist regime were given a bonus in the form of a few additional square metres. The craftier citizens took advantage of various privileges that were typically best left concealed from others. At the time, it was about anonymity, so that nobody could feel different. The culture of that period began to flirt with the masses which were considered to be the strength of the nation, so all goods were to serve the masses. As contemporary posters claimed, the state of workers and peasants, which previously had kept the two classes out of the cultural limelight and subjected them to repression, returned the reins to the sovereign. Of course, it did so only to an extent that was acceptable to those in power in Moscow. Independent culture fared relatively well, but it had to go underground and develop on its own, without funding and in a narrow circle of art. This is why it produced uncompromising art whose message was unrestrained—for the enemy and evil were clearly defined; it was different, because it was based solely on its own self-developed materials and means and contrary to the everyday reality that inspired it. It was optimistic in its message. Meanwhile, architecture was constrained by layers upon layers of prohibitions. The face of architecture was deliberately bland and indistinct so as to reconcile tastes, standardize requirements and speed up production. As the bulwark of the West, Poland strove to gain a little distinctiveness, or perhaps the expectations of inheritors of the pre-war tradition were more ambitious, but the Iron Curtain fitted snugly to the political borders, which is why few people even dreamt of a better life. Indoctrination and purges stifled dreams. It was only the advent of the political thaw that loosened the brakes of construction prohibitions, bequeathed a fortunately brief period of building fantasies, particularly in the sphere of religious architecture, which had always been ambitious and grand, and as it later turned out, had been stifled for too long. Traces of these manifestoes can still be seen as a visible document of that time. Pretentiously sophisticated buildings testified to a burning desire for beauty, which was pursued thoughtlessly and without preparation. Architecture, as always, conveys information about its times. Architecture is the face of culture.

Fashionable trends shape the general image of contemporaneity. An iconic cultural equivalent to New York, as a *symbolic city of its time* in the West, is Chernobyl in the East - a symbol of a threat and doom, that, more than the war, the holocaust and the bombing of Hiroshima, has left its mark in the mentality of ordinary people around the world. They know

little and have next to no interest in the politics of distant countries, which do not significantly affect the quiet resident on the far side of the globe. *War games*, trials and effects of military dominance, shows of strength and extortions that are deliberately conducted and controlled wartime operations, are the domain of politics, economic relations, pressures exerted by multinational corporations—a sphere of inaccessible influence that is also little understood by common citizens. Whereas an unexpected and unsupervised radioactivity leak which impacted relatively distant areas and led to terror and a feeling of helplessness among all communities, put all of the world's residents in a state of alert. An invisible, undeserved threat hung over everyone, for the range of its impact could be deadly even after many years, even in the following generation and not only close to the leak, but also much further away, due to subsequent waves of radiation remaining in the atmosphere and in the contaminated wildlife; all of this compounded by fear that stimulates the imagination built the feeling of helplessness in the face of the threat. Chernobyl became the symbol of the East as poorly protected, defectively secured, backward, where one's life was of little value and living itself was difficult and living conditions primitive. What became the face of the architecture of this phenomenon for the *Chernobyl* television series⁴⁵ (a joint American-British production), a construct symbolising this time and place and an image of Soviet aesthetic, was an almost perfectly preserved *mikrorajon* (housing complex) in Vilnius. Located in an area far away from Chernobyl itself, it is nevertheless a manifestation of an urban landscape common for all post-Soviet countries. Its unaltered state is merely proof of a lesser sensitivity or dynamism of Vilnius residents, or perhaps it shows they can do little to change the state of affairs; it may also point out to the lesser inconvenience caused by the system there and a transient character of their residence. Following the example of Eastern Germany, most of the post-communist housing estates are deliberately renovated, insulated with styrofoam and given a new coat of paint; parking lots are provided and the surrounding areas are remodelled to follow Western standards. 'Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, this prefabricated landscape constitutes the norm. On the other hand, following the year 1990, the architecture of mikrorajons began to suffer also in another manner: in most areas of Russia and the Ukraine, air-conditioning units appeared on the housing blocks and every apartment separately has been thermally refurbished; garages have been built and everything has been subjected to a disorderly, organic destruction'.⁴⁶ This is seen as a distortion of the original, for fascination with the former Communist Bloc countries is still very much alive in the West and it is constantly used as a fashionable, austere background for many artistic projects. When seen against the background of Western affluence, its otherness revealed in the form of constantly re-emerging Marxist conceptions, the pursuit of a different face of democracy, fashionable minimalism, and the art of Socialist Realism that stimulates the imagination, is still very much desired. What is most attractive is the surprise that in an extremely oppressive system and the most nightmarish of surroundings, people may nevertheless be happy and find the drive to survive the worst disasters. Regardless of the utopian image of real-world events, as presented in the above-mentioned *Chernobyl* mini-series, the discovered 1980's architecture, unchanged since that period, reflects the aura of that time and place. Architecture has become the best narrator of the content of the series' script as a background for its plot. It has become the face of Soviet

⁴⁵ Kuba Snopek, Nieco przejawiona sielankowość Prypeci, rozmowa Marty Karpińskiej, "Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni. Architektura i Metafora" 2019, no. 2[65], pp. 76–81.

⁴⁶ *Ib.* p. 77.

aesthetics, the regime's culture, an image of its time. Architecture has become the face of that culture. It has selectively imposed a unilaterally common shape to all of Eastern Europe.

7. The architecture of globality

Contemporaneity that brings with it globalism, previously unheard of global interconnectedness, is automatically carried over to all facets of human activity, including architecture. Apart from distinctive local construction traditions, dictated by climate conditions and the stylistic tradition that followed, which primarily applies to small-scale residential buildings, architecture has achieved a global dimension. Architects design without limitations practically all over the world. City authorities and private clients who ambitiously perceive themselves as cosmopolitan citizens of the world, commission architects to come up with projects, featuring clearly recognisable artistic forms or out of trust for their respect for a site's aura. All this is done so as to ensure that a given place is recognised within global culture; or else to engage modernity and the best solutions for one's own cause and so as to attract the world's attention. Sometimes, it is a desire to transfer values seen elsewhere onto home turf, as an acknowledgement of internationalist, supralocal content. At other times, it is a desire to highlight unity and accentuate friendly relations with the world. Architecture always creates an atmosphere, which, when it is friendly—ensures greater openness towards the otherness of the surroundings. It is due to this openness and friendliness that the idea of the McDonald's franchise was first formulated and then developed; its goal was to make the traveller feel relaxed and at home at every step of the way wherever he happened to find himself. Tourists can find restaurants belonging to this chain in the largest and sometimes even the smallest cities of the world. However, this may be a somewhat false assumption, as typically people who travel so far usually search for the distinctiveness of other countries; they do so for cognitive purposes or out of a pure wish to experience something different. Otherwise they would not travel so far without a clear need to do business or engage in a diplomatic mission. Therefore, transplanting complete models can have a purely mercantile dimension.

The pursuit of new aesthetic models and the introduction of architectural novelties must be governed by a desire to create new canons of beauty and the need to catch up with even the most advanced economies. Wide-ranging exchange of technological achievements and scientific thought also bids us to successfully apply them in different parts of the world. At present, the above exchange is not confined to quantifiable goods, scientific and engineering thought or artistic and social cooperation; today, in the face of multiple common global threats, including the greatest one of all, i.e. climate change, this exchange has taken on a particular significance. It is in the interest of all nations to prevent the worst consequences of human activity, which is collective, after all. Global interests lie at the very root of the global consequences of wildlife destruction. Solidarity and cooperation between nations and communities are the only elements that may provide a basis for success in all manner of reparatory measures. This is why visually uniform architecture acts as an intermediary in cultural mediations and is currently encountered on all continents; it is gaining a neutral, communal, global and universal aesthetic. Today cultural exchange concerns many disciplines; their stakeholders and activists cooperate achieving better outcomes than the economy. Cultural exchange has made ethnic cultures come closer, as common interests blur

differences and make contact easier. Ignoring anarchic extremes that are largely based on religion, different and even distant communities are now closer to one another than ever before.

Contemporary architecture is becoming the face of an international, cosmopolitan, universal and global culture. This is expressed in a pursuit to tear down formal barriers so as to enable a free flow of thought and travellers, retaining borders only so as to administratively confirm one's territorial affiliation. We have utopian dreams of eliminating all forms of armed conflicts, which is in the interest of everyone alive, particularly when facing the probability of disaster. Restoring the stability of life and balance to nature is a global interest and task. Universal values are the share of all of us and are our joint responsibility. This is why cultural community also appears justified.

The universalism of architecture is reflected in the face of global culture.

It is also difficult to ignore architectural sign-symbol-places of globally significant collective memory, which—such as the 9/11 monument—have left their mark on global memory as a warning sign and a gloomy reflection. The words that describe a different tragedy, namely the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, can also be used to describe a universal situation of this type, with architecture in the background: '[...] architecture is both a tool which causes trauma and enables one to overcome it. In this [movie] love story,⁴⁷ the human-forming character of space, which is a framework necessary for experience, can also be seen like in a lens. Both [lovers] have become themselves in August 1945: She by leaving Nevers for good, He by temporarily leaving Hiroshima only to return to its ruins. The significance of a place for being who one really is remains incontestable and inalienable, as constellations of places are inscribed into every one of us'.⁴⁸ Constellations of places and events—experiences marked on the characterological profile of every individual—are encoded in people. People, along with their own unique histories, constitute the content that fills the framework of interiors created by architecture. As artificially constructed matter, motionless and lifeless architecture, comes to life through the lives of its users. Architecture lives and flourishes together with its users. It takes over their habits; for doors that are continually slammed either sag or cease to close properly, and a constantly damp wall changes its colour or gains the texture of colourful fungal growth; a window shattered by a stone is agape in a wall as if an open wound. What irritates people who live there becomes modernised in time. If they leave this place, the architecture deteriorates and dies. What remains is only a dead, reinforced-concrete skeleton. What still temporarily retains its shape, rapidly cracks and crumbles, is absorbed into the environment and later bursts with living ecosystems; ultimately, it is covered by a layer of soil and the most expansive mutated greenery. Every stage of architecture's life attests to its condition and utility; it constitutes the face of local culture—of the condition and cross-section of the community that utilises the bulk of the built structure.

However, as long as architecture is alive, in every phase of its construction service, it absorbs the holograms of its users, becomes suffused with their smell, takes on their habits. Along with the changing tenants, it gains new records, new layers, traces; it builds its memory and history. The phenomenon of the addition of the different performances that play out in the interior of a given building is a sizeable

⁴⁷ Kamila Twardowska, Znam temperaturę słońca na placu Pokoju. Architektura, pamięć i zapomnienie w filmie „Hiroszima moja miłość”, Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni. Architektura i Metafora” 2019, no. 2[65], pp. 70–75.

⁴⁸ *Ib.* p. 75.

thematic section in art. If we confine ourselves exclusively to domestic cinematography, it is particularly worth drawing attention to Zbigniew Rybczyński's short film *Tango* (1980) or the cult television series *Alternatywy 4* by Stanisław Bareja (1983) or else *Czterdziestolatek* by Jerzy Gruza (1974). These are specifically local works, but we can find their cultural counterparts everywhere. *Tango* is a literal illustration of the layering of phenomena that make architecture come alive, while the two television series depict the complexity of social problems, the immensity, variety, contradictions and even mutual exclusion, the complexity of performances that play out in architectural interiors. An austere Modernist exterior which is anonymous, soulless, motionless, and cold, looms as a repetitive, prefabricated concrete shell of architecture bursting with a multitude and variety of human problems that teem inside. The hard and indifferent material shell maintains the intangible and fleeting volatile mixture of needs, ambitions, moods and passions of its users in rigid confinement. The cold architectural skin is the face of the communist culture of suppression.

Architecture, as an obvious background, can be a witness to many events that, as they go by, leave memories of actors, observers and addressees of these memories in students and scholars. Even if these memories differ from one another, the mute and most durable witness of these events—that is architecture—preserves in its fossilised memory the greatest tangibility of events, as we can reconstruct events based on an enduring structure. Architecture accompanies us throughout our entire lives, as it is the most reliable and verifiable source of information regarding past events. Multiplied into block housing estates that are, as housing complexes, almost complete autonomous cities, it hides the histories of communities, layered and complicated to a degree similar to Venice or Rome. Only the character of those complexes and their anchoring in time and place sets them apart from those already acknowledged as milestones of civilisation. Architecture is the face of the culture of its time and place.

The poetic dimension of architecture can differ considerably. As architects, professionals and self-proclaimed technocrats, we would probably state that it is significantly exaggerated and unreal. However, all of us keep in our memory the image of the imaginary glass houses featured in Stefan Żeromski's illusory and unreal vision—an image that has become realised during our lifetime. Our world is now full of glass houses. To some, it is a 'world in a bottle', enclosed by walls all around, the 'Big Brother's house', visible and observed from everywhere, an oppressive building with an impenetrable glass ceiling, and whose only exit, only way out, is a narrow, too narrow bottleneck. To others, it is a city-machine with glass walls. Corbusier's 'machine for living in', which is not only structured in accordance with the Modernist fashion but also effective; it has been given glass walls that do not block our view of the outside, creating an illusion of close contact with nature, an impression of the reality of the world, while at the same time being a comfortable, isolated and protected home. It is a perfect machine to which we can owe the sense of a different, better living space. Glass in architecture is associated with light, shining, illumination, daylight, visibility, brightness, being seen and visible, with transparency and clarity of action. Glass is the purity of offices and bureaucracy. There is probably as much truth in this purity as one requires, depending on one's mood and on how much feeling one is able to instill in an ordinary piece of construction glass. The power and quality of perception lies in the mind of the beholder.⁴⁹ 'The passage from homely to unhomely, now operating wholly in the mind, reinforces the ambiguity between real world

⁴⁹ Anthony Vidler, *Nieudomowione domy*, "Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni. Architektura i Metafora" 2019, no. 2[65], pp. 4–17. This text is a part of A. Vidler's book, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, MIT Press, Cambridge-London 1992, pp. 17–20, 27–44.

and dream, real world and the world of spirit, consequently undermining even the sense of security'.⁵⁰

It is Kant—the aesthete of terror—who pointed to the phenomenon of deriving increased pleasure from experiencing fear under conditions of complete safety. It is precisely this secure closure that intensifies one's feeling of terror while experiencing frightening imaginary situations and thus makes them even more horrible. Fencing oneself off from nature has indeed increased our sense of fear (drawings by G.B. Piranesi, the poems by A. Rimbaud). This is why, a household has always been accompanied by a fire that produced smoke. The fire warded off lurking threats, and the smoke made the actual contours of reality blend in with dream-like visions; the real world fluidly mingled with dreams and the safety of the place fuelled dream-like visions; the relief of waking up from a nightmare in a soft nest assured one of the home's stability. The fire and the hearth at the centre of the house traditionally denoted a household and the presence of an owner, and thus made death even more real (F.L. Wright's houses, H. Melville's stories). The fireplace created the feeling of continuity and built the place's history. It was a household's bastion, protecting tradition from the dangers of the new. It was a central place of a home that required others to constantly go around it; it dominated and tyrannised residents. Wherever a chimney stood in a home, it constituted a spine that upheld not only the vertical rigidity of the illusory idea of a protective umbrella, but it also contributed to the maintenance of life with its flames of fire and flying unruly sparks. Maintaining the hearth clearly pointed to the continuity of life. Apart from utilitarian considerations, the fireplace has always been an object that provoked spinning fantasies, directing one's thoughts towards the sky, to memories, rituals, to eternity. The hearth was a treasure trove of transferred knowledge and a source of romanticism of a sort. 'In its bulk almost incommensurable, irreducible to the mathematical calculations of an architect (contemptuously referred to as a "Scribe"), it could not be cut down to size. Its inner recesses hid unknown mysteries and its external walls were impermeable and silent. It was, as Hegel would have characterized it, the perfect type of symbolic architecture, an object not yet separated from the magical world of demons or the projected fantasies of men. The home deployed itself around this pyramid-tomb '... as a system-labyrinth of successive rooms that seemed to lead somewhere, but actually led nowhere. The system of entrances, a complex network of relationships, is like getting lost in a forest; 'round and round the chimney you go, and if you arrive at all it is just where you started and so you begin again and get nowhere'.⁵¹ Along with abandoning the fireplace, contemporaneity has deprived itself of mysteriousness and the mystery of places. Laymen have uncovered secret deposits and exposed them to the void. The comforting and hidden forces of the house have been replaced by glass walls that provide an illusion of genuineness. Modesty and dignity have been replaced by transparency and exhibitionism. The architecture of the home is always the face of the time of its owners.

⁵⁰ *Ib.* p. 14.

⁵¹ H. Melville, *Ja i mój komin*, transl. K. Majer, "Literatura na Świecie" 2019, no. 5–6, pp. 5–42, from: *ib.* p. 16.

8. Faces of icons

Icons are encoded images of saints. In their symbolic sense, they are windows to a different space, which open up a view of immortality.⁵² An icon is ultimately an image that incites the faithful to worship. Which of the face-icons of contemporary architecture should become the symbol of our present-day culture? No doubt everyone would probably be right by selecting an icon he believes to be the most significant. Many opinions would probably confirm each other and many would have completely divergent assessment criteria, resulting in highly different proposals. Undoubtedly, they would all be representative in their own right.

Let's assume by subjective choice that the symbolic face of culture represented by contemporary architecture, is the Fondation Louis Vuitton. The building of the French temple of modern art founded by a Parisian financial tycoon appeared at a site that has been well-known to Parisians for centuries—Bois de Boulogne; one would go there for Sunday walks or to attend various social and family gatherings. A most Deconstructivist and imagination-provoking building in the form of a ship was built for the gallery and museum of contemporary art, a multi-mast corvette with full sails, which carries the unimaginable building mass above the water. The water flows around the ship, and with its reflections, as it were, elevates the hull from the surface; the building-ship is designed to be constantly in motion; it flows down a ramp like a waterfall, like a sea wave; the water flows under the hull, where the ship turns out to have multiple hulls; it shimmers and darts, reflecting the squall-distorted image of a corvette sailing downwind. This unimaginable weight appears to levitate in zero gravity. It is a masterpiece of illusion and a contradiction of all laws of physics—or perhaps is it merely an attempt at shaking up our habits, which themselves are a consequence of traditional indoctrination and disbelief in the impossible? The author of the sailing ship had been criticised regarding his previous projects for his distinctive formal sculptural references, in which the form appeared to compete with the building's use. The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, which he also designed, was criticized for its formal opulence and controversial appearance, that strikes the visitors with views that appear to be out of this world. Sophistication and sculptural levity in treating the capacity of the masses that were to provide not only properly enclosed volumes, but also meet conditions of utility and safety as well as ensure adequate exhibition space for artworks, have themselves become an artwork that surprised the entire world. And it is for this reason that the quality of the museum's architecture began to attract enthusiasts of cultural novelty, fans of modern architecture and not merely those of contemporary art; everyone from all over the world. From a small, uninteresting industrial town, Bilbao turned into the 'world's bellybutton' for connoisseurs and achieved the rank of a tourist icon, spurring on local prosperity. Despite earlier projections, the various strengths of this project are now proficiently used, including the sculptural character of its architecture—to host light performances that produce continuously new and unexpected impressions. The centennial anniversary of the Guggenheim Museum was celebrated with a wonderful performance that could be deemed almost theatrical. An hour-long light and fireworks show with a specially written musical score was displayed on the panorama of the Bilbao museum. *This spectacle delighted the audience not only thanks to the diversity of its means of expression, but also due to the polysensory effects it produced. This biomorphic architecture appears to have its own life,*

⁵² Michel Quenot, *Ikona. Okno ku wieczności*, Orthdruk, Białystok 1997.

and when further stimulated, it comes to life, winds up and emanates with emotions animals to the excitement of the audience; it radiates a continuously new cognitive energy for its observers to absorb. The impression of an exotic underwater organism that moves within the ocean, as it is reflected in the water, through spritely solar reflections and shimmering of waves, leads to delight and a feeling of illumination in onlookers. Such is the delight inspired by the view of an iconic building—a slightly different one for every individual, and differently named.

What is symptomatic is that architects regard such performances with a cool and down-to-earth attitude. Such observations can typically be made among groups of professionals. Architects usually try to adopt a level-headed outlook on the specificity of the building against relevant standards, comparing it with the established, correct and up-to-date solution, i.e. one which is oriented towards averaged local capabilities. The excitement experienced by other members of the audience, which is the outcome of the superimposition of various types of impressions, aggregated stimuli produced by the reactions of all senses, is typically reduced by architects to assessing the value of the architecture itself. The latter is, of course, unconventional, but refers merely to the material engineering construct as the only rational and therefore significant value. Architects regard themselves and are perceived as half-artists, thanks to their own ambitions and aesthetic experiences, as well as the obligation to aesthetise their designs. As professionals, they use means of expression borrowed from artists, and similarly as other artists, search for impossible creations merely using a technical and construction-based material and—which is surprising—are highly restrained in all emotional reactions as a trade group. Their narrowly (yet highly) prized professionalism limits their design assessment to that of a construction product, which leads to architects' conduct being perceived exclusively in the light of design performance. The architect's professionalism is often reduced to a craftsman's proficiency in operating with design tools, the ability to fulfill a developer's needs, and the skill to functionally compose the value and quality of a programme; it is limited to an architect's ability to visualise spatial masses dressed in a legible model and also perhaps his managerial industriousness. What counts is the measurable value of an engineering product. And yet, acclaimed works of the art of architecture continue to be built. What then, is the subject-matter investigated by architecture critics, or rather art critics who specialise in this branch of architectural art? It is, after all, a branch of art, and not only architecture as a construction craft. What criteria do they use to differentiate a work of architectural art from an ordinary tenement house that often turns out to be a historical site and sometimes even a similar work of architectural art? Of course, some of these criteria can be measured, but most of them shall always remain in the sphere of polysensory assessment—whether *based on experience, sensitivity or the intuition of expert-visionaries.*

At the same time, we know perfectly well how important the harmony between ratio and psyche is for every person. Is it really pure rationalism that should shape architecture? Most certainly not. Even by trying to separate the driving potential of restless and non-measurable artistry from technical concreteness that is necessary for the stability and reliability of architecture and shift the artistry factor exclusively to post-construction measures, or to the assessment of a work already built, so as to *enable it to exist in the form predestined for this type of critique, one requires a certain vision, a dose of artistic madness, a sense of form and aura of the place, and finally talent and sensitivity. One cannot create architecture without regard for its right to striking beauty that is surprising, penetrating and attractive to onlookers. And this is a value that is completely non-measurable in technical categories.*

Why is it then that architects typically react with such reservation to the excitement induced in every average viewer of F.O. Gehry's work in Bilbao? Is their level of empathy, as

representatives of a technical discipline, lower, or is it constrained by professional education? It may be so. Keeping one's emotions at bay is a consequence of categorising architecture as a technical field, which regards architects as specialists in technical disciplines, and classifies architecture schools as technical universities. At the same time, it is the non-technical characteristics which determine a designer's professional competence; in other words, it is sensitivity to human needs and the comfort of a building's use dedicated to specific professional profiles of addressees that are of utmost importance in the architectural profession. In addition, as in the case of any utilitarian object, the utility of an architectural product, must include a certain charm so that the user would want to familiarise himself with it, spend time with it, derive a sense of relaxation and comfort, or even satisfaction with the most productive moments of one's life, and consequently befriend it for nearly one's lifetime. These are the qualities possessed by architecture that is liked, not necessarily the architecture that is awarded prizes for its individual features, structural or innovative hi-tech characteristics. Utilitarian qualities belong to a category of the correctness of functional solutions, while to a user who is bound with the building due to the necessity of having to be in contact with it for significant periods of time, it is its interior that is of key importance; the latter is the counterpart of the human soul, the aura of the space that is created by the generally perceived beauty of the composition of all non-technical elements and components of architecture. It is the dose of beauty that characterizes every work of art, including a work of architecture. This is what sets architecture apart as a professional field from other technical professions. When set against other technical disciplines, it is only architecture that must go to such lengths to ensure the necessary degree of representativeness, namely its external appearance, a proper presence that corresponds to the rank of an event, and which is always a little 'extra', so that the user can feel completely at ease. It is architecture that, through its décor, creates a proper atmosphere for events—the setting of every performance that plays out around it.

ILLUSTRATION BLOCK:

Paris, Fondation Louis Vuitton,
contemporary art museum and culture centre – author: Frank Owen Gehry, 2014
(All photographs of iconic architecture are the work and property of the author).

The author of the above-cited works is the same Frank Owen Gehry, a world-famous Canadian-American architect, whose works constitute a source of pride for countries of all continents, including our neighbouring Czech Republic which prides itself on having the world-renowned Dancing House (Ginger and Fred) in Prague. Due to his avant-garde imagination and lack of structural restraints in the pursuit of uncommon formal effects, Gehry is was invited to create iconic architecture in significant places all over the world. Gehry's architecture is always exceptional and universal; it always clearly brings to mind the specific place which it was designed for, irrespective of the country, or local political objectives, the race of local residents or their faith. It is not without reason that his architecture is used to give forms to cultural institutions of an avant-garde use. The forms he creates always symbolise a pursuit of the new. A surprising spatial form also signalises avant-garde content found inside.

These are often museums and galleries built for art or creative work—which is always exploratory—and often for contemporary, avant-garde art. The original shape given to a form, the manner of deforming traditional architectural matter, is always recognisable. It is difficult to mistake its authorship, although the author's flair inspires many to follow in his footsteps.

All great and significant architects find imitators. It is a similar story with the works of other architects, just to mention the charismatic designer Zaha Hadid. She was an exceptional figure in architecture, especially as she had been the first one to break free from the male dominance of architects and managed to reach such a high position. The profession of an architect forces one to sacrifice one's free time and subordinate one's private life to professional duties; as such it has traditionally attracted men due to their relative freedom from household chores and family duties which ensures greater mobility and financial independence. In this context, Zaha Hadid, an Iraqi-born British architect, can be considered an even greater figure, and is among architecture's brightest stars. To a layman, her projects represent a highly recognisable style of biomorphic or apparently chaotic, Deconstructivist shapes that pay homage to and add splendour to significant buildings of varying size, including cultural institutions around the globe. Unfortunately, she is no longer among the living—a departure the world of art agrees was truly premature.

9. Poetry of architecture

Poetry denotes a sublime, delightful use of words and poets are masters of symbolic, iconic speech. Perhaps this is why F.O. Gehry's work, which is still creatively fertile and is inscribed into a period covered by the memory of a single generation of his contemporaries, is so fascinating. This generation of now retired architects, have had the chance to trace his achievements that inspired them in their younger years as students in architectural schools and continue to do so to the present time of their shared old age. As young architects, we studied his innovative ideas as models of modernity, which inspired ambitious visionaries to design unconventional, groundbreaking architecture. An entire generational lifespan has passed and the architect, as an almost ninety-year-old man, in a manner suggesting youthful imagination, brought to life a work of architecture that is not only another incarnation of his sculptural visions, but also pure, fleeting artistry—a thought forged into a material shape. The form of the flying ship that escapes all construction logic is an actual building that houses the Parisian Gallery of Modern Art. Frank Owen Gehry came to be known to the world at large much earlier through the controversial forms of his contemporary art museums. Even if this Parisian project had been his last realization of this class, it would have crowned his career in a similarly spectacular manner as the realization of another excellent architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, whose last great work was also a Guggenheim Museum—in New York.

The New York Guggenheim Museum is an extraordinary mass that opens towards the top via a spiral of multiple cylindrical storeys. The once-dominant shape, now absorbed by the dense, tower-based urbanisation, was criticised because of its numerous flaws, ranging from a considerable loss of space that had non-functional shapes, to uncomfortable ramp-corridors, but with a fascinating staircase 'with a soul'. This distinctive volume has embedded itself as an icon into the reality of New York, serving many other artists as a background or inspiration for their own artistic efforts (including several films).

Let us once again go back to the nowhere-to-be-seen form of a corvette that glides above the water and has come to anchor at Bois de Boulogne, as if in shallows, and has come to be suspended amidst trees, strolling peacocks and people. It has stopped in the immediate proximity of a traditional amusement park, a village common filled with music and relaxation, and the perspective of the modern district of La Défense that closes off the Grand Axis of the great imperial city—the city that has always alternated between being and aspiring to be the capital of Europe. The above view looks equally proud and brimming with the potential to explode as it is light, transparent and delicate. The multi-curved glass and individually shaped sails, are transparent and appear to be non-existent in their construction goal. It is a view which is full of contradictions as regards the aspect of stability and fleetingness of form. It is the image of a contradiction between hard matter and challenging and inspiring emptiness of space that flows between the wings and imagination-spurring content in the interior. It is the image of a cruiser at full sail, gliding effortlessly along the waves, armed with steam smokestacks that carry completely contemporary vertical structural bracings as well as towers of elevators and lifts that transport viewers to an open deck and the ship's successive levels. It is a contradiction between the visionary drive of engineering towards unknown destiny, burning modernity and the ageless dream of a lightness of being and floating on nirvana. It is here that situationism with *flâneurs* drifting in urban life, was born; the latter group were none other but hooligans, anarchists and rebels who opposed the banalisation of life, searched for extraordinary yet everyday common experiences, by going against the stupefying desire to curry favour with money and prosperity. In the same aura almost a century later, a similar thought that anarchises the traditional notion of architecture had found a visible form in Gehry's corvette.

It is in this city, which had stood against the winds of history and defended the most rigorous urban order that is the Grand Axis of Paris for centuries, that there arise the strongest revolutionary movements. Constantly structured and ultimately grasped and documented by the urban (Georges) Haussmann Plan, the city's bowels are constantly subjected to innovative architectural revolts. If the city becomes too crowded one goes underground. Previously untouchable catacombs are now having to compete with spaces freed up underneath formal historical squares and are ripped apart by multi-level underground and railway lines that connect the city's more distant peripheries. Traditionally, the Halls of Paris that have lived off the local trade for centuries, are now being given a new life which distributes urban traffic underground through their multiple stories. Disturbing the greatest national treasure—the Louvres—was also not off limits, as a platform that offloads tourist traffic was dug underneath it and the building itself was extended so as to reduce the density of museum exhibits and displays in its massive collection. Ultimately, a fire consumed the Notre-Dame de Paris, a symbolic place to the Church and global culture. It used to be the holiest place for the practicing faithful of Paris, and now it will probably receive a new glass roof covering, a most controversial development for monuments. The traces of grand imperialism, conserved for posterity, clash with the multi-racial intellectual community. The city is the centre and cradle of Western culture which remains open to the stimulating currents of the Far East and the ever absorbing Eastern otherness. In this atmosphere, in this mixture of cosmopolitanism and ever-inspiring local identity, invariably competing with insular London for the laurel of the European global metropolis-capital (London, New York, Tokyo), the extraordinary Fondation Louis Vuitton has found a place for itself.

Intercontinental cultural exchange allows creative thought to limitlessly transplant ideas and models, at a pace equally regulated by intellectual and market absorptivity. The American designer found a proper language to reflect his vision of artistic response in this specific

atmosphere. He was not the first architect to have been born and raised in a country that operates with a much greater land scale on his home continent to find himself in the reality of a European city scale and rise to the challenge. The Parisian Grand Axis and the Mall in Washington are comparable large urban axes and both layouts are ideologically significant, while in urban planning terms, they impose a scale and significance upon a place. However, the urban material from which one and the other were built are completely incompatible. Paris's fabric, dense and layered with centuries of struggle, redevelopment, ruination, fires and modernizations, on the one hand, and on the other a grand axis which is designed from scratch with visionary impressiveness and open to further development into the open space of a capital of the largest global power that continuously grows in strength and is territorially unrestricted, in a country the size of half a continent and a trapper-like attitude towards reality. Coming from the American world, the designer managed to use his sensitivity and architectural philosophy to find a construction solution and technological expression to select the proper scale of the building and embed it into the completely different reality of Paris. He was not the first one to realize his projects in Europe. Many had done it before, including starchitects. They successfully transplanted their style into the lacy European urban layouts marked with small elements. But it is Gehry's projects that stand out from the surroundings and shine brightly against the background; they shine as truly extraordinary against an architecture with completely different roots and tradition. Both the museum in Bilbao and the one in Paris are like diamonds set in the delicate filigree bezel of the city. Similarly, as rough diamonds, the buildings do not conform to the local urban and construction rules; they intrigue us with their otherness and alien beauty while at the same time, they fit perfectly into the surrounding context. The visible, bold shapes that completely fail to be concealed by the local colours, do not dominate in an ordinary manner but instead enhance and sculpt the place, adding splendour to the site. The museum building emerges boldly in the landscape, but without being imposing.

(from:) VON WRIGHT

Is it liked? Everyone seems to be impressed. Some are delighted; others are sceptical; still others remain doubtful. One's likes and dislikes belong to the category of freedom of choice. However, what is this freedom? To what degree is one's decision actually free and not subjected to any influence or pressure? Georg Henrik von Wright always distinguished the internal from the external motivations of every decision, such as individual preferences and goals from signals and demands. The latter include orders, questions, promises, regulations and all sorts of rules. These types of norms can be combined into an intentionalist mode of conduct only when the sanctions associated with them are the deciding reason for the decision-maker to behave in a standard manner. Generally there is a set of social interaction norms that are comprised of a varying number of habitual standards which we adhere to for we have always considered them implicit or we see no reason to deviate from them.⁵³ The very existence of a standard is quite constraining to independent judgement and imposes a framework of propriety on free reflexes. We can also distinguish legal and moral frameworks. The former are defined by law, and the latter, by custom and upbringing. To define the arbitrary freedom of judgement stemming from the free judgement by a subject, von Wright 'starts from intuition,

⁵³ Jürgen Habermas, *Od wrażenia zmysłowego do symbolicznego wyrazu*, reNAL. Krystyna Krzemieniowa, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2004, P. 57.

that we act freely when, in a given situation, we would also be able to act differently'.⁵⁴ This means that our actions are not influenced by anybody but are the sole consequence of the reason for which a person acts. The action is linked solely with the cause behind it, without any constraining influences, be they legal or moral.

(from:) HABERMAS

To shed light on Kant's understanding of freedom, we would have to add a distinction between autonomy and arbitrary freedom. For the good of the community we live in, as well as the humanist considerations of human activity, it appears justified for people to obey the rules—to tie freedom with understanding (of constraints) and emancipation (avant-garde) with extending our horizon of understanding. 'Human activity which is directed by standards is always the action of community members integrated by values'.⁵⁵ This conceals a general acceptance and common interest, which facilitates universalisation, and in the case of art assessment, is not in the interest of progressive and exploratory efforts. Of course, the avant-garde often makes use of normative frames so as to transcend them, precisely to stimulate the viewers' imagination by playing on their moral feelings. The amplitude of feelings that defines one's sense of morality determines the reaction to a work. The same amplitude, whose extremes are typically farther apart in the case of artists, due to their greater sensitivity, determines the temperature of impression-provoking artistic actions. Thus, when tying autonomous freedom with understanding, we gain the type of freedom that allows the artist to create and provoke, and guarantees viewers a sovereignty of judgement and the right to defend moral standards. The only condition that constitutes the basis of evaluating art is the will to understand and grasp the artist's motivation behind a work of art. The essence of contemporary art is to stimulate reasoning, which in the present era of consumerism has receded into the background of public values.

⁵⁴ *Ib.* p. 58.

⁵⁵ *Ib.* p. 60.

PART III

ICONICITY OF ARCHITECTURE IN CULTURE

1. The realism of architecture

Regardless of whether it operates with a singular, sculpturally exposed volume or a complex that forms an entire layout of properly designed interiors and relationships, architecture, as the art of arranging urban space, ruthlessly imposes its conditions for contact with it upon all users. Art typically appears in enclosed or non-invasive spaces, and even if it does exist in a highly visible manner, typically it does so temporarily; architecture, on the other hand, imposes its presence permanently. Once it has come into existence it must remain where it is. Even if it irritates and angers viewers with its appearance, it will rarely be changed for merely aesthetic reasons. Additional causes of considerable significance must be present to be worth it to introduce changes. Architecture, as any art form, is subject to copyright, which ensures that a work is preserved intact, as originally designed or else altered, with changes authorised by its living creator. This is precisely why the construction process is preceded by the responsible preparation of a conceptual proposal and a long path leading towards the design's final approval by both engineering and administrative specialists, as well as through confrontation, discussion and mediation among all stakeholders. Material architecture always remains an original work, but on conditions negotiated with its owner, who is a specific client, which is why architecture is always tailored to someone's wishes. Its beauty depends on the ingenuity and talent of the designer, but to materialise, it requires a complete acceptance and understanding of design motivations. This ensures consent to works of architecture a positive reception by at least those with vested interest in its construction.

Art always surprises, but does not require prior assurances, and sometimes receives no acceptance to interfere with someone else's space; it may not receive approval for exhibition, but no one is capable of preventing an artist from making his work. This is particularly so when the size of the object and the manner in which it interferes with someone else's space is either minimal or harmless. It is also rare for works of art to be funded a priori, as typically they have to wait for a potential owner, and can do so for a long time, or perhaps never get one.

Architecture is therefore built according to the wishes and with the approval of a community. It is never a manifesto of total public opposition. Even if we take into consideration the relatively few architectural pranks in the form of spatial jokes or kitschy construction creations of one's own amateurish authorship, they are rare cases, small in size and hidden on private properties and typically known only to the closest neighbours. If the wayward act is disruptive the neighbouring community will legally enforce the relevant demolition or remodelling order. Public and commercial architecture always requires prior social acceptance, or at least the approval of local community representatives. The degree of emancipation of these people and their aesthetic sophistication governs these choices. Their selection is a testimony to the tastes of a given community. Architecture can therefore be easily called the face of the said community's culture.

Every work of contemporary art requires a separate description that places it in the time and circumstances of its origin. *Didaskalia condition the reception of values.* This is most evident in literary works. Ancient artworks are typically identifiable due to their specific classical beauty and particularly due to the identified signs of a given culture and canons of craftsmanship that define their age and area of origin and can even precisely point to a period of history based on distinctive ornamentation or stylistic differences. Works of past periods are typically interpreted in accordance with the previous descriptions, and other, formerly

unknown facts that affect the earlier assessment of a work are rarely found. However, contemporary art, including that of the twentieth century, is constantly gaining a new face due to the emergence of new facts associated with modern, interwar and post-war history, as well as the discovery of archival materials that may supply us with new facts relating to both general and art history. These can include corrections of authorship, causes for creation, extraordinary circumstances in which famous works were created, new light cast on previously unknown facts, a new reading of manifestoes, testimonies of previously ambiguous artistic messages, discoveries as to the fate of works that changed hands, and works sometimes found in unique and sometimes insignificant places. Many artworks that we obviously interpret as belonging to their times and whose didaskalia had already been deciphered have to be reinterpreted. The established image of a work's previous interpretations, the theoretical framework that art history has already placed it in, including the image of the author himself, must be amended. For instance, after many years of being forgotten or perhaps erased from Polish memory, Katarzyna Kobro, almost all of whose work failed to survive the war, was restored to fame by young contemporary art champions who discovered her anew and who do not even remember the war experienced by the previous generations. Kobro was the daughter of a musically trained Russian mother and Mikołaj von Kobro, a German (Lusatian) trader and sailor who had come from Denmark and settled in Russia (and later Latvia). He later lost his property and even his life, a lesson that made his daughter cautious. She married Władysław Strzemiński, a painter tied with the artistic avant-garde of the Moscow Academy, escaped the wave of revolutionary anti-Polish (and later anti-Jewish) sentiment, and fled to Poland where she settled in Łódź. Władysław Strzemiński joined the circles of Polish avant-garde artists, who quickly came to regard him as a leader. As a lecturer on new fundamentals of art, Strzemiński became the patron of the Academy of Fine Arts founded in Łódź. Despite exceptional sculptural oeuvre that was ground-breaking in modern art and architecture, Strzemiński's wife, whose artistic manifestoes had had no time to properly echo in the world of art before the outbreak of the Second World War, fell out of favour and was ultimately forgotten. Speaking broken Polish, perceived as an outsider, living in conflict with and in informal separation from her star husband, she remained unaccepted as a struggling woman artist. Together with her husband, she accepted the status of a Russian immigrant and later, to save her life and that of her daughter, the Baltendeutsche volkslist. To keep warm, she burned her wooden works in a fireplace; finally, consumed by a ravaging disease, she died alone in an institution. During this time, Strzemiński, a war-invalid and a hero with an ethically ambiguous attitude, a well-liked painter and excellent speaker and theorist of the new art, enjoyed widespread recognition within the art community, although war and Socialist Realism did not spare him their cruelty. It was only fifty years later that the two great artists, so unfairly misjudged by art, achieved their well-deserved status. Fifty years after the war, a portion of Katarzyna Kobro's spatial compositions was recreated and a chamber dedicated to her memory established in Łódź. Despite the lapse of many years and the progress of contemporary art's evolution, these works are still perceived as fresh and revelatory. With the brilliant accuracy of their forms, basic colours used in the context of grey, emptiness as a building block of material shapes and their mutual and intriguing relations, they fascinate sculptors, painters and architects. Until today, hardly anybody has looked at Kobro's artistic manifestoes that were to define the laws and messages of contemporary art and that remain relevant today despite the passage of many years and history's many twists and turns. Strzemiński's legacy, on the other hand, has survived the tumult and continues

to inspire youth. Luiza Nader,⁵⁶ the authoress of a new interpretation of Strzemiński's cult text *Teoria widzenia*, casts a new light on its meaning. 'By referencing studies by psychologists and neurobiologists, including Joseph LeDoux and Antonio Damasio, as well as culture scholars, Luiza Nader postulates creating an "affective history of art". She argues that the notion of the affect gives a new perspective in studies of history, culture and art'.⁵⁷ In any way, this previously unaccounted aspect could considerably expand the previous interpretations of the significance of artworks and the motivations of their creators, in addition to the manner of perceiving their art in extenso.

In this context, the evaluation ascribed to architecture appears to be much more permanent and stable. Qualities that are once ascribed to it typically remain with it for good; at least until its utilitarian value deteriorates, usually due to material and equipment wear and the improvement of living standards. This stability of architecture, including its permanent anchoring with the site, further justifies its title as the face of culture of its time.

Architecture not only gives a place its face, but it also affects the entirety of actions that take place in its vicinity. Architectural space—space created by architecture—defines the consciousness of its community. This architectural space, internal to the building and external around it, imposes a certain mode of behaviour upon society; it serves and shapes its rituals, routines and ultimately the mode of thinking and perceiving the world.

(from:) BOURDIEU

Pierre Bourdieu was a French sociologist and philosopher who, as a structuralist, performed an analysis of dependencies between built-up space and social practices and beliefs on the basis of ethnographic diversity. He introduced the notion of the habitus⁵⁸ as a complex of conditions (dispositions) that build the mentality and behaviour of individuals within every community. The habitus also encompasses complementary groups of relationships between the subject and built-up space: the former states that spatial form is a tool by means of which people define identity and express social relationships, while the latter assigns buildings a permanent ability to uphold, protect and enhance these identities and relations.⁵⁹ Architecture perceived as a specific building, complex, spatial configuration or layout of built-up space, is typically reserved for a specific community, social class or sex. It may reflect the full cosmology of this community. It reflects and enhances the entirety of this community's culture. It is architecture as built-up space that becomes a point of reference which constitutes and naturalises social identity. The shapes of space created by architecture directly affect human appearance and behaviour. Following Bourdieu's thought, it should be stated that the opportunities and constraints created by architecture form and reinforce the habitus and vice versa. The set of modernised behaviours developed by it stabilises the built-up environment. All impacts by political and economic forces or new technologies that enforce a remodelling of buildings may revise the habitus, adapting it to new conditions. New circumstances that

⁵⁶ Luiza Nader, *Afekt Strzemińskiego. „Teoria widzenia”, rysunki wojenne, Pamięci przyjaciół – Żydów, Nowa Humanistyka, Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, Warszawa-Łódź 2018.*

⁵⁷ Piotr Kosiewski, recenzja książki L. Nader *Afekt Strzemińskiego*, "Szum" autumn-winter 2019, no. 26.

⁵⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Physical Space, Social Space and Habitus*, lecture from 15.05.1995, delivered at the Faculty of Sociology of the Oslo University.

⁵⁹ John Archer, *Spółeczna teoria przestrzeni*, transl. Michał Choptiany, "Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni. Przestrzeń Jako Taka" 2013, no. 2[41], p. 76.

make the system maladapted can (but do not have to) lead to a transformation of the habitus. Against this background, Marxism developed a theory of the changing nature of capitalism and Henri Lefebvre argued that '[...] by producing space by design and everyday practice, people introduce ecological and ideological imperatives into their lives. As these imperatives evolve over time, so does the fundamental nature of space produced by people'.⁶⁰ Active people always want to change and adapt their environment, regardless of categories, genders and races.

(from:) DELEUZE

There is an important division that differentiates space around man which was introduced by two French nationals, philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst, philosopher and activist Felix Guattari. The division introduces the concept of smooth space, which denotes areas that are naturally uniform, and folded—urbanised—space. Folds, i.e. urbanised areas, are necessary for society, but they can also constrain or discourage, while smooth spaces are not sufficient. Following their survival imperative, people constantly 'fold' space, building successive barricades, facing challenges, delineating streets, boundaries, erecting towers and icons. Folded urban space created by architecture articulates human differences, expresses satisfaction with the fulfilment of social needs, the needs of the economy and the government. It shapes human awareness and identity. The built-up environment imposes, consolidates or subverts the beliefs of its residents; it is directly involved in the historical and critical analysis of cultures.

2. The reality of architecture

Architecture is an integral component of human existence, whether material or spiritual. It is both a tool and the means to achieve various human goals—changes in social relations or the cultural landscape. It plays an active role in shaping all cultural parameters. Architecture is undeniably the face of culture.

(from:) KOOLHAAS

In its common understanding, space typically denotes emptiness. However, to artists and all those with a sensitive imagination, it is an infinite intellectual resource for the pursuit of new content and new expression. Rem Koolhaas introduced the concept of junkspace⁶¹ to the architectural lexicon, a word that describes the reserves of unused void, unexploited spaces enclosed by architecture, corners lost to use, that cannot be entered, but also spaces that are either corrupted or those that destroy an ideal design intent. Junkspace can include post-industrial ruins, decayed slums, layers upon layers of ancillary buildings, stacked extensions and random additions. Mediocrity is also a form of junkspace. However, what is most harmful is the psychological burden of space wasted by the consumerist social dictum and capitalist economy. Insofar as degraded architecture or a junk landscape permit the introduction of standard reparatory measures, emptiness constitutes a specific field of action that easily

⁶⁰ Ib. p. 77.

⁶¹ Rem Koolhaas, *Śmieciowa przestrzeń. Teksty*, selected by Andrzej Leśniak, transl. Marcin Wawrzyńczak, Fundacja Centrum

escapes evaluation. Many artists, architects included, search for a new interpretation of emptiness and new means of expression to subjugate it in semantic categories.

(from:) TURREL

Intellectual art, one that is often intangible, has become one of the ways of contesting the status quo of our increasingly commercialised world. The first signs of artistic rebellion were the ready-made objects by Marcel Duchamp. Later, exhibitions began to feature empty rooms and closed galleries. Sometimes galleries were locked up with viewers inside who were treated as exhibits. Empty space replaced material works of art and itself became art (Yves Klein). The means used to signalise the emanation of the void included water, mist (Robert Morris), wind (Hans Haacke), the magnetic field, gasses (conceptualists from Art & Language), radiation, radio waves and sounds, all artificially set in motion so as to present their force of expression (California minimalists with James Turrel).⁶² Light and darkness were used to form a rainbow effect, sudden brightness (Hiro Yamagata) or to express helplessness and horror of being engulfed in total darkness (Miroslaw Bałka). All this was to demonstrate that emptiness can be interpreted in many ways and by means of different senses, in the sphere of 'non-material pictorial sensitivity' (Klein). Artistic reflections concerning space were exhibited in the form of works of art. Ever since the moment that art took on a measurable character (Mel Bochner, *Measurement Room*), including multi-dimensionality (remote transmission of paintings), it has also become architecture. Works of art were also arranged by architects, for instance for the Architecture Biennale events in Venice (Swiss nationals Philippe Rahm and Jean-Gilles Décosterd, as well as Americans Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio), proving the existence of space as an independent entity. Gordon Matta-Clark, a holder of a degree in architecture, cut a house slated for demolition in New Jersey in half, surprising the audience with the danger of using a mutilated house, deconstructing what had been intended as safe. The potential to transfer artistic concepts into architecture shall probably grow, and having reached a specific social and technical level, innovative art is already becoming an architectural standard right before our eyes. 'The new type of illusion, the shutting off of orientation points in space that had never previously been taken away from users, speaks much about the human reaction to space'⁶³, stated architect Piotr Winskowski, who attempted to transpose the phenomena of art into architectural values. In fact, we are dealing here with the phenomenon of transgression, for it is difficult to separate the assignation of the viewer's polysensory impressions from architecture or art. It is difficult to artificially set apart multi-sensory impressions from formalised divisions. A failure to experience fully even a single one of the ignored dimensions that situate objects in space deprives man, accustomed to architectural (urban) barriers/folds, of the full, multi-dimensional orientation in space. Even the earth's gravity, to which we are unconditionally subjected, is not able to fully provide a sense of stability and confidence. The entire built-up/folded environment, namely the artificial systems that form our sense of safety in every psychological dimension, give us comfort of use in our everyday life/survival. We need a sense of safety in our daily existence, one that not even life-giving nature is able to fully provide us with (smooth, boundless deserts, salt flats, oceans, even jungles that teem with life).

⁶² Małgorzata Mizia, *Between architecture and art. The Space of acquaintance, "ACEE" (Architecture Civil Engineering Environment) 2016*, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 21-33 (phot. bibl. 7).

⁶³ Piotr Winskowski, *Brakujące parametry "Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni. Przestrzeń Jako Taka" 2013*, no. 2[41], p. 63.

By imposing constraints on living space and giving it form, architecture has been providing a period-suitable 'armour' for human survival for centuries. It is both a witness and face of its time. It gives a face/expression to successive periods of culture.

3. The neuroticism of architecture

When we follow the trace of the sensual perceptibility of space, we cannot ignore Peter Zumthor, a Swiss architect who operates primarily with metaphor in his conceptual proposals. Some neurobiologists believe that the essence of architectural thought in the designer's brain is to combine information obtained by means of a single sense with perception performed by a different sense.⁶⁴ This could serve as an explanation as to why architects always seek inspiration in various phenomena, objects or processes.

(from:) ZUMTHOR

As he had written already in the introduction to his book *Thinking Architecture*⁶⁵, devoted to the essence of the sphere of creation, the aforementioned architect Peter Zumthor thinks about architecture in terms of images. In his design path, he highlights the process of meditation, which is always a source of metaphors that bring him closer to a design concept. A similar manner is used to describe speech as a translation of stimuli from all around, including gestures, into sounds. The ability to speak using words, due to mirror neurons, reflects our process of sensory – polysensory – engagement of our body with the surrounding world. It translates stimuli into feelings and impressions into actions. Neural imaging allows us to create a new reality based on expectations and experiences that are completely incompatible with it. As a result of a design project and construction process, the act of visual thinking is transcribed into a living sensory experience that is the practice of architecture. This use is not merely limited to taking advantage of services that can satisfy a specific need. Use also denotes satisfaction gained from experiencing and tasting the aura of a building created in the frame of an exceptional place. This aura is formed by all elements of architecture used in the design, the traces of other users, histories and deliberately selected materials.⁶⁶ This aura is created by the author's inventiveness and imagination, which transposes visual thinking into modelling using a selected craft technique. 'It reflects the spirit of its inventor and gives its own answers to the questions of our time...'⁶⁷ Everything counts: a rational structure, the form of the detail, corners and joints, points of contact between materials, the entirety, from the smallest divisions, rhythms, to a greater scale and proportions of the whole. The same process applies to every art. 'The music draws me in. It is a space. Colorful and

⁶⁴ Harry Mallgrave, *Kultura architektury*, "Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni. Przestrzeń Jako Taka" 2013, no. 2[41], p. 27.

⁶⁵ Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture*, Birkhäuser, Basel 2006.

⁶⁶ '[...] it is the ballroom with its tiled floor and its paneling, the stairs in the background, and the lion's paw at the side that creates the film's dense, powerful atmosphere. Or is it the other way around? Is it the people who endow the room with its particular mood? I ask this question because I am convinced that a good building must be capable of absorbing the traces of human life and thus of taking on a specific richness', ib. p. 24.

⁶⁷ Ib. p. 23.

sensual, with depth and movement. I am inside it. For a moment, nothing else exists'.⁶⁸ 'A painting by Rothko... Other sensual impressions like smell or sound, materials or the sense of touch don't play a role. You enter the picture you're looking at. [...] It is like meditation, but not with an empty mind. You're fully alert and aware. Concentration on the picture sets you free, she says. You reach another level of perception. [...] Feelings of joy. Happiness'.⁶⁹ Coming into contact with beauty, excitement, the joy of experiencing higher states of spirituality, can be achieved equally with the intent of being charmed by various manifestations of art. Beauty does not have a specific shape for each branch of art. It can delight with an image, music, dance or architectural form or the atmosphere that architecture creates around itself. Insofar as the liberal arts go, all that is required is a breath of genius and the artist's technical proficiency; whereas, in contact with architecture, full satisfaction is guaranteed when one experiences the magic of wholeness.⁷⁰ This means that all conditions relating to a work of art, including both aesthetic, technical and functional ones, have to be met. Translating an ingenious vision into an actual shape within space is a long and arduous journey of cooperation of many people and the effective employment of a considerable array of means. Achieving an ingenious outcome for a work completed at a specific site, one that would be concordant with the vision of the design project, truly shows the mastery of the author and demonstrates not only his artistic talent, but also determination inspired by the correctness of the a priori devised structure.

Among the hindrances that are associated with the difficult process of creating architecture one should also mention the fact that it is always initiated by a specific commission—a private or social need, supported by actual financial resources assigned for the realisation of this always costly endeavour. This process is associated not only with the initiative itself, but with the approval and support of many stakeholders, including their involvement during the preparatory stage of the project and then the complex, multi-phase, and costly process of a rather long project realization.

While discussing the reception of a work of architecture, we typically forget about the complicated path of arriving at its materialisation, focusing instead on the model of the construct itself. We analyse the motives behind the design project and the spatial outcomes achieved. Meanwhile, the form of spatial response is typically affected by many additional factors that are usually associated with a given historical period with its own layers of problems. To reach for a familiar example—'We once again discuss ideology, but we should also remember that architecture often happens due to very pragmatic reasons. The cult of the Marshall [Piłsudski]—which was not that obvious [to the Poles], as Piłsudski, both while alive and after his death, was a controversial figure and was not universally liked—was not the sole reason for building the government district. There was yet another factor at play, which was ideologically significant for the modernisation of Warsaw, namely the progressive militarisation of society. As military expenditure was the most sizeable item in the state budget, civilian projects would often be initiated only because one was able to prove their military utility'.⁷¹ This is how architecture critic Grzegorz Piątek explains the phenomenon of

⁶⁸ *Ib.* p. 71.

⁶⁹ *Ib.* p. 72.

⁷⁰ 'Can beauty be designed and made? What are the rules that guarantee the beauty of products? Knowing about counterpoint, harmonics, the theory of color, the Golden Section and «form follows function» is not enough. Methods and devices – all those wonderful instruments – are not substitute for content, nor do they guarantee the magic of a beautiful whole', *ib.* p.78.

⁷¹ Architektura wydarza się najczęściej z bardzo pragmatycznych pobudek, rozmowa Małgorzaty

the so-called 'sanation' architecture in an editorial on the development of Poland's capital. He highlighted the role of mythologising historical facts, one-dimensional memory about significant figures, upholding the legend of cultural phenomena—all to fulfil social needs. The effectiveness of cultivating myths increases as the number of their living witnesses decreases. Architecture created in specific conditions, due to complicated actions, both technical, administrative, political, ideological, and in the face of struggles against the adversities of the time, and often for incomprehensible reasons, can be fully interpreted only through the lens of an in-depth exploration of history and familiarity with relationships and specificity of its time. *The myth simplifies and aids us in structuring memory. It allows us to use shortcuts—symbols. The reality is much more complex, and sometimes becomes obscured. However, the materiality of architecture, which is difficult to destroy, records a certain truth about its conflicted times. It is a permanent witness to history, in spite of the flow of time and ceaseless global change. Untouched, it continues to remain the face of culture of its times.*

Examples of *national styles* are an evident and recognisable architectural testimony that explicitly defines the period of a given structure's construction and characterizes local specificity and tradition. After the destruction and measurable losses caused by the First World War, the interwar period saw a fevered pursuit of an architecture that would highlight the statehood of nations, underscore national identity, territorial separateness, and mark its ethnic traces. It is easy to identify as it makes use of details, especially elements of ornamentation, that are taken from regional, rustic elements, transformed and processed via a contemporaneous modern stylisation. Such a model of architectural pursuits in the national style, with an explicit link to place-based culture, undoubtedly supports the argument about the recognisability of historical reality by means of architecture's image.

Of course, there is also architecture that is a face of not only the dictum of the state, but also that of politics, or even ideology. What is worse, it sometimes affirms ideologies that, from time to time, plague humanity with wars, upheavals, ethnic purges, cruelty and genocide—such ideologically motivated architecture as the fascist and Socialist Realist one.

4. The architecture of emptiness

Against this background of explicit association of space marked by national identity, in relation to terrain configuration, and even climate zones whose shape is independent of administrative divisions, contemporary hi-tech architecture has conquered the world irrespective of political boundaries. 'Does exploration in the sphere of steel and glass dissociate the materiality of architecture? Do forms introduced primarily by Deconstructivist architecture dislocate orthodoxy from architectural space? What are we dealing with here: a loss of places, a pursuit of being 'nowhere' or building architecturally possible in-between spaces?'⁷²

(from:) REWERS

This formulation of in-between space is a product of encountered values embedded in a given space. It is architecture designed on the basis of material, mystical, cultural traces,

Jędrzejczyk i Marty Karpińskiej z Grzegorzem Piątkiem i Jarosławem Trybusiem, "Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni. Narracje Architektury Dwudziestolecia" 2018, no. 3[62], p. 14.

⁷² Ewa Rewers, *Post-polis. Wstęp do filozofii ponowoczesnego miasta*, Universitas, Kraków 2005, p. 171.

memories and myths, structures and emptiness. Ewa Rewers refers to the process of construction of a new building as a node/key at the point of contact between the ontologies of trace, events, light and space in-between. The divisions into scales of architectural or urban planning have long since been blurred, as have distinctions into the open or the semi-open, the private and the generally accessible, the old and the new; the physical environment blends with invisible telecommunications systems. It happens so because European design projects of new architecture are currently largely concerned with remodelling, revitalisation, modernisation of space that has previously been used. These designs do not colonise new areas but transform those already owned. Architects are interested in the puzzling, indeterminate values of the in-between, between what lasts and what is invisible, between the stable and the useless, in the gaps, the remains, the waste, on the margins—in junkspace. This undefined space opens up limitlessly towards the sky revealing a further unlimited field for events and paraarchitectural dislocation. If we also add the potential of controlled telecommunications that uses both material screens to project images and holograms that divide and create virtual places and other useful and increasingly sophisticated digital technologies, city space appears not to have measurable boundaries and its structure/architecture/aesthetics become universal. *Real space becomes inseparable from simulations of urban spaces.*

Commonplace *hybridisation* concerns not only architecture, but also multiculturalism, the combination and mixing of different aspects of urban and social life. It typically concerns the parallel occurrence and the simultaneous participation of many equally valuable cultural phenomena in urban life. At present, hybridisation softly turns into transculturalism, as sequences of archipelagos without a centre, where the balance of the social structure, the existing divisions and extremes are blurred (citadel-ghetto, boundaries and margins). This also runs counter to Castell's concept of the *Dual City*, a city divided into economic work sectors: a formal one, of information technology, and an informal one of degraded work. It also runs counter to the conception of the network, based on the social and cultural relationships and dependencies within the city. Saskia Sassen proposed a concept of a model of space networks that connects sectors with similar types of development and similar neighbourhood community cross-sections with specific districts. The city that served for this model, New York, presents three mutually layered network layouts: 1: the luxury offices, towers and apartment buildings of Manhattan, 2: old, industrial districts, low development, outskirts, and 3: poor, decayed, underground spaces of poverty scattered across the entire city.

Hybridisation that refers to neutral spaces (connected, mixed in-between), also called 'third spaces' (Bhabha)⁷³ or 'everyday space' (Welsch⁷⁴), leads to a new space of representation and negotiation of meanings, to a new form of communication. Hybridisation leads to changes that destabilise space, deforming canons, erasing the centre, blurring cultural values and territories, tearing down established standards. Hybridisation turns into transculturalism. For Welsch, it was immensely interesting to observe the degree to which hybridisation transforms urban imagination, starting at the technological imprint, the dystopia of contemporary urban space, slowly and inevitably turning it into cyberspace.⁷⁵ Real space and simulations of urban space are slowly becoming inseparable.

⁷³ Homi K. Bhabha, an Indian philosopher and author of postcolonial theory and so-called third space that contrasts the territories of imperial and binary divisions (the zone of dominance and creolisation)

⁷⁴ Wolfgang Welsch, *Estetyka poza estetyką: o nową postać estetyki*, transl. Katarzyna Guczalska, Universitas, Kraków 2005.

⁷⁵ *Ib.* p. 207.

The previous architectural face is turning into its silicon thumbnail—a testament to the culture of our time.

(from:) CLÉMENT

Following the ‘third space’, which denotes the zone of mixing, functional, architectural cultural diversity, the notion of the ‘third landscape’ was formulated and defined (Gilles Clément⁷⁶), which references land reserves, or abandoned, post-use areas that became a wildland of random diversity, third areas that followed: 1) natural areas (natural, untouched) and 2) urbanised (under the influence of anthropic pressure). Abandoned areas, typically called wastelands, can have different origins: they can be post-industrial, post-agricultural, post-tourist. They can also be reservations, namely areas that are not used and excluded from anthropic pressure, naturally cordoned off (difficult to access) or administratively restricted. The third landscape is shaped in a diverse, non-descript manner, marked with spaces without function—without a planned structure. At the point of contact between used land with a specific function, we shall always find either large peripheries or small patches of wasteland, where farming or gardening machinery does not reach. They remain a bastion of biodiversity that is pushed out from around them. The borders of the third landscape are those of a global garden, as Clément called the Earth’s biosphere, which we have mercilessly colonised. It features habitats, non-cultivated and non-husbanded organisms, which have been pushed out from farmland. Primal groupings are almost non-existent and reservations try to maintain a climax, while the flora of abandoned areas is not confined to domestic species, as it is enriched with the diversity of all pioneering species that fit its biome. Unfortunately, even this diversity is conditioned by demographics. Humans, armed with the achievements of civilisation, reach ever further and deeper to obtain natural resources and have almost led to their depletion. By modifying biological abilities, we have decreased the strength of the ‘biological drive’ of diversity that conditions the evolution of living matter. The activity and size of populations as well as consumer practices lead to a consistent shrinkage of not only reservations, but wastelands as well, which threatens diversity and life in general.

To a landscape architect, the third landscape means almost the same as an ‘*in-between*’ space. These are peripheries, areas outside of places and non-places of urbanisation, relics of utilitarian and economic regimes, backfills, ruins, peripheral areas unused by man—the spaces between them. In-between spaces appear to be freed from subject dependency, created as a result of cultural collapse, the pushing of the boundaries of urban junk and waste. To humans, they are useful only as something to look at, but gain a new function in a non-human context. It is good when, as a consequence of the passage of time and lack of human intervention, due to their re-naturalisation, they gain the consistency of a bog, so distinctive of our geographic location. In such circumstances, they can slowly even out the losses. Unfortunately, in our everyday race for goods to exchange for the right to a better existence, we forget about the global extent of the damage caused.

When discussing higher matters, we at most notice the problems of peripheries as the wandering flâneurs who cross the boundaries of zones with a feeling of a state of transience outside of time, with a feeling of nostalgia and alienation. The traveller goes beyond the paradigm of the city, outside the urban zoned conveyor belt that is available to the successive privileged who are permitted to explore the urban environment; the latter is becoming

⁷⁶ Gilles Clément, Manifest trzeciego krajobrazu, “Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni. Nieużytki” 2019, no. 3[66], pp. 2–15.

increasingly spoilt by being saturated with new colours, smells, a different consistency, successive layers, instability, the diversity of environments, being constantly on the move. The suburban melancholy appears an inconsistent city structure from the borders of dreams.

The same phenomenon occurs on the microscale at every urban and architecture edge. Every angle, corner, point of contact with built-up space, every line in the pavement, every edge of a well-made path, fill with dust and mud bursting from crevices, parasitic in their irregularity, irrationality, growing into a weed. In an uncontrolled manner, what is shapeless, undisciplined, anarchic and, most importantly, useless to most, deprives architecture and urbanised landscape of beauty. The greater a city's discipline, the more functional it is perceived to be. The normative rigidity runs counter to the vitality and desire for polymorphism. In fact, it is that randomness of the tangle of inputs into the austere context of architecture that highlights its order and enhances it, contrasting with the coolness of the technical design.

Architecture, as an artificial element, separates what is inside from what is outside, leaving minimal spaces between them—slits in-between, microgaps left between zones of use (interior–structure–exterior), which demarcate divisions, places for markings, microvoids to be developed. The potential created after introducing a division (condition–architecture–effect) results in an abundant effect of 'wild grasses' or 'wildflowers'. These are biologically active areas that allow the polymorphic life of the third landscape. As a reversal of traditional architectural practice, this effect creates a transgressive possibility to live in a non-standard house, in a garden-city, in a global garden. The previous conception of architecture was equivalent to cutting, setting apart, putting up a barrier, a division; it was an artificial intrusion into nature, into wildlife. *The newly-defined morphogenetic entropy of the 'in-between' can be regarded as architecture.*

What is momentarily obsolete, what is redundant and regarded as waste-matter, what is inert, what sets in, attaches itself or loosely falls and descends following the laws of gravity, does not necessarily have to be looked upon as useless waste. Marginal areas can have their own identity; they are places where otherness that enhances uniformity is cultivated. It is a space that is seemingly dirty and obsolete, such as the commonly understood waste dumps or ruins; all that allows one to stop and allow the fleeting properties of urban life to take root outside of artificially created 'theme parks' that are pre-designed urban zones. Even urban biocenoses, together with allotment gardens as enclaves of individually developed plots, are exposed to the threat of ruthless anthropic pressure. Freed from it, covered in weeds, they freely build their own world, as cosmopolitan spatial-cultural bridges. They are both intruders and a value in and of itself. It is up to the subjective user to distinguish between them. Just like a romantic ruin, they can become a fashionable zone of the most desirable beauty and urban adventure.

Motion is an essential component of all change. It appears that it is difficult to assess architecture in the categories of motion, but, contrary to appearances, every structure is subjected to minimal motions of setting, deformation, and the taller it is (a skyscraper), the more it reacts to wind and earthquakes. Insofar as it maintains stability due to technology, it is not absolutely static. These minimal motions lead to slight changes in form, which are also augmented by changes in the surroundings or inside the volume. They generally lead to overall changes in the image of a given structure. But motion is also an element of perceiving a singular image/view of architecture. A series of photographs taken from the same place can differ depending on the weather, momentary aura, the angle of the sun (time of day), climatic

phenomena or incidental events; the latter may introduce unexpected and dramatic changes to the image. Some lead to permanent changes in form. However, in general, architecture, just like the entire universe, is subjected to constant movement of mutual impacts, a motion that is the driving force for life. Rhythmic motions keep the Earth, its flora and fauna, as well as man, alive. Cracked by setting or ruination, a structure becomes filled with dust and damp; penetrated by roots and shoots, it becomes absorbed by greenery, and when flooded, it gets covered by aquatic flora, and so on and so forth; it becomes a decaying base/substrate in the chain of biological life.

5. The culture of emptiness

Motion, particularly a rapid, vibrating one that excites, induces euphoria, a feeling of one's vitals quickening, of catching up with the future, constitutes the contemporary drive for innovation, changes to market economies, comfort and new technologies. Its symbol is the fast car and the American highway. Speed, fuelled by sense-stimulating music from hi-fi sound systems and the feeling of a brotherhood of the road shared with other left-lane *highway* drivers produce a vision of crossing distant, impossible borders. The scattering in motion, the nirvana of speed, the illumination of acceleration are all active states that architecture, as a tool/means, attempts to achieve. The recurrence of architecture is always defined by its own static character, whatever shape it may have.⁷⁷ Mass movement, intensified in relation to the slow pace of traditional life (maintained in places somewhere in peripheral zones), shall remain an unchanging need to search for the most comfortable and fastest possible travel, both on the shortest and longest distances. This is demonstrated by civilisational development, globalisation and thus the need for mobility dictated by the parallelisation and simultaneity of tasks. Regardless of the pace of life and despite the various facilitations and encouragement, in the sphere of private life, people prefer privacy at the cost of the community. They prefer to build even remote relationships, based on their own mobility; they prefer to isolate themselves from the local communities, so as to remain free individualists. The car and motorisation have imposed not only a different form upon the global economy, but have also imposed a different cultural lifestyle. Despite health-related and rational arguments for sustainability, New Urbanism, which restores calm traffic tailored to man's physical capabilities, remains more of a model idea than a reality. We are constantly searching for a compromise between economic interests and the pursuit of unconstrained mobility, as well as between the consequences of the mass presence of cars and restoring greenery and pedestrians to public spaces throughout the entirety of urban areas. We do not want to discard any civilisational achievements while at the same time we also wish to reclaim the values that we apparently perceive as lost or at least threatened. We want to be ever-present (tele-transmissions), all-knowing (Wikipedia on our phones), operative and directive (smartphones with applications); we wish to feel the world and affect others (avatars and VR, blogs and social platforms). The all-powerful smartphone has become the magical item of our century. It has found its way into the hands

⁷⁷ Marcin Szoska, *Mistyka amerykańskich autostrad*, "Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni. Ruch" 2014, no. 2[45], pp. 30–35—the text recollects the gallery-dormitory of the architecture school of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science & Art in NY, by Thom Mayne and Morphosis at 41 Cooper Place, inspired by motion and highway morphology as an example of dreams about architecture in motion.

of almost every person, regardless of age or financial means. In the mass consciousness, it has become a personification, a charming transmutation of cold, attractive digital beauty, a post-modern creation of communications technology. Humans need gestures, energies, another living being to an increasingly lesser extent; what they need is merely the autonomy of their own consciousness, the power of control, and an expanded ego. The smartphone has become an electronic prosthesis, an accumulation of thoughts and emotions, our memory, an external hard drive without which we ourselves seem to be an object without personality or identity, for the latter have already been uploaded into the cloud. We become a subjectless entity induced to a pre-funerary state of cold, inorganic stupor. The smartphone has become a third eye of the Cyclops for each of us, adding in real-time all information that verifies the scope of our perception just as it was previously done by stereoscopic (both eyes) vision. This observation of reality is supported by a third, independent transhistorical perception of things, enabling one to have access to complete knowledge at a glance. This is how Google Glass smart glasses already operate; the latter are currently being used for special purposes and tested for ever-wider applications. It is yet another prosthesis that enhances biology and extends the distance between us and traditional society.

Humans are similarly, if not identically, affected by beauty; the latter is amorphous, fleeting, indefinite yet perceptible, feelable and personalised; it signifies the need to pursue improvement, a journey into the unknown, towards perfection. For the most perfect action is one that precedes reflection.⁷⁸ The need to 'reach out beyond reality [...]—is beautiful in and of itself regardless of outcome'.⁷⁹ It is an internal, individual cognitive need, a curiosity about the world, a desire to make use of time, realise dreams, experience a depth of emotion. For beauty is created between the artist and the work. The artist creates the work. But to experience its beauty, one does not need an artist's talent. The ever-same desire to know allows one to feel the same emotions of illumination that are triggered by experiencing an act of discovery, regardless of whether it concerns a new electronic gadget or an artistic phenomenon. Beauty can soothe the obsessive cognitive fever.

Can the small screen of a cellphone or the sense of a message be beautiful? 'No, beauty is determined by the context. The same skyscraper can be beautiful in a city, but ugly in the mountains. There is no beauty without the context. And there never was. To art, the context is culture. There are always certain cultural canons that allow one to interpret various symbols, such as: the swastika, St Sebastian, the Pieta. We have grown up within these canons and we know what they mean'.⁸⁰ Art is read like a text, as an entire sequence of events—just as every view can be read by means of Google glasses—with a complete overview of both the context, the artefacts and the connotations.

In art, it is content that is presently beautiful, which is why architecture eagerly becomes invisible in favour of solely fulfilling its functions, obscuring utility, exposing context, blending in and coexisting with nature. It gives way to values by moving out of sight, allowing nature, landscape and place to dominate, without consuming resources and destroying biosystems. Beauty is a moral category; it does not need beauty itself to exist. It is created thanks to the (designer) artist, as a result of an interaction between him and the work. It can also be a disaster to him, and then the evolutionary instinct wins the struggle with culture.

⁷⁸ Anda Rottenberg, *Co jest piękne w życiu, rozmowa Jacka Żakowskiego*, "Polityka" 2019, no. 2, *Niezbędnik współczesny*, pp. 98–106.

⁷⁹ *Ib.* p. 106.

⁸⁰ *Ib.* p. 105.

Cultural conformity takes the upper hand, and the pursuit of prestige tells us to follow the tastes of the majority to feel safe. The awareness of following the tastes of the better part of society, of anticipating what will be liked, gives us a sense of our own beauty—this is how we create fashion. Fashion satisfies vanity, even if it concerns a recognised and influential part of society. Culture does not need to follow fashion. People are beautiful when they are ethical and moral. The value that counts is the perceptible, but not necessarily the physical. In art, this role is played by mission.

This mission can be to induce delight, as in historical, classical works, but in contemporary art it is to stimulate empathy; it is a mission of art conveyed by its essential messages. ‘The truth of existence is often more important than the truth of appearance. The beauty of the essence of existence can be more important than aesthetic beauty. People who see beauty in various disgusting things can see the beauty of essence’.⁸¹ It is almost impossible to draw a line between beauty and ugliness. There are people to whom evil is beautiful in and of itself. There are those who delight in what others find horrid, intolerable and unacceptable. Sometimes, art touches these strings to rouse emotions and stimulate speculative thinking. The effect of moral good can be achieved via different means. Art is one of the ways of arriving at culture. Architecture remains a permanent trace of this path. It becomes the face of the culture of its time.

To appreciate the value of the charge which remains at art’s disposal, one has to be both a philosopher and a comedian. One must appreciate the attitude in which knowledge blends in with everyday life. One ought to become acquainted with a multitude of views on a given matter without searching for a single objective truth. This is made possible by multiculturalism, which allows a variety of uses, taking advantage of scientific knowledge while remaining constantly naïve. Naivety denotes a pursuit of freshness of outlook without prejudice, a holistic and unconditioned perception. It also denotes a pursuit of dialogue and discourse instead of confrontation and indoctrination. We must popularize education so as not to have to build prisons (as is stated in Victor Hugo’s motto about building schools). Art can inspire various emotions, from feelings that touch the most sensitive strings of love and devotion, to despair, anger and rebellion that can rile up crowds of ideological believers and provoke them to assault, combat and killing of enemies. However, the message that art communicates remains merely a subconscious spark until it falls on a proper place-context and until it is read in the spirit of the relevant local canon. It is only then that it will find sufficiently intolerant supporters or opponents. Art has an immense force of expression at its disposal, one that is comparable to monotheistic religion. Both function in the same spheres of the spirit, mind and brain, using the same means of expression, and both occupy similar positions in the lives of their believers-followers. Neither has to necessarily aid itself with the entirety of the actual icon-symbols, to achieve its intended, contestatory objectives.

In this comparison, architecture is always visible, even exposed; it dominates its surroundings and is significant in its context, always occupying a key position regardless of tastes, as it is impossible to shift it from its dominant position, irrespective of the emotions at play. It is even difficult to destroy/ruin/demolish, as it has been built slowly, before the eyes of onlookers and at least with their partial approval. It often arises out of the onlookers’ own will, either with their active or financial support. Not infrequently, it is also significant to influential groups of the initiated, and it is memorable; it is often monumentally significant, despite its ordinariness, aesthetic mediocrity or outright ugliness. And it is so because of its

⁸¹ *Ib.* p. 104.

cultural face. Its significance can sometimes even be poorly described, fleeting, blurred and ambiguous, but it is a significance that consolidates, unifies a community in understanding the sublime symbolism of an artefact. Experiencing the sublime character of spiritual meanings fits in the categories of morality, ethics, aesthetics and therefore philosophy more than sociology or psychology.

The philosophy of everyday life, or rather knowledge and life – this juxtaposition of words sounds as if they defined two opposing sides of a debate. Similarly, the figure of the scholar, the philosopher-thinker, by definition opposes mediocrity. These notions appear not to match each other, since they come from completely different spheres of human feeling. Intangible knowledge is derived from science, while everyday life that denotes ordinariness stems from material scarcity or a lack of intellectual needs. Without a doubt, this ordinariness arises from a lack of: ability, experience, taste and resources that ensure peace of mind; it turns living into a permanent struggle for survival, a fight with adversity, a defence against the oppression by those who are stronger and, in the best of cases, into attaining a minimum level of one's basic needs. At this point, it should be added that the term 'basic needs' denotes a completely different scope of services and possessions to every person; the philosophy of everyday life begins with the differentiation of perspectives, which in turn builds the wealth of communities and creates alternative worlds. It is therefore beneficial when a community remains under the influence of both philosophers and comedians, which helps to maintain a proper harmony.

6. Hedonistic culture

We respect philosophers for their knowledge and ability to meditate, but everyday life also requires a certain dose of philosophy to determine our attitude. We are accustomed to associating philosophers with dignity, but not necessarily with an abundance of beautiful objects. Even an image of a hedonist is linked with neither collecting beautiful objects nor with simple everyday pleasures. 'It is not my role as an artist that makes me live slightly differently than most people, but education, thanks to which I know who I am, I have political opinions, I understand why some time must be spent on pondering on certain matters [...] I deplore the mythologisation of the artist [...] just because he lives in his own world which is specific only to himself [...] I am interested in other people and the world I live in. I do not walk with my head in the clouds, I do not shut myself in an imaginary reality, alone with my work. Simply speaking, luxury – in my opinion – is based on the ability to organise one's life in such a way that duties and unpleasant things do not outnumber the pleasant ones. I use the principle of pleasure in every facet of my life, instead of merely in my work'.⁸² Juliette Noureddine's upbringing convinced her that every person has a right to take advantage of everything, and education gave her the tools to use this right. However, she said that instead of teaching art, schools should give people the means to practice it; nonetheless, in creative moments of adult life, anything that one's memory is able to recall, may come in useful. It is only then that each and every time, people are able to experience a wonderful fullness of pleasure. 'Those who

⁸² Juliette Noureddine, singer, guest of the People's University in Caen, in: Michel Onfray, *Manifest hedonist* (*Manifeste hedoniste*, Paris 2011), transl. Magdalena Kowalska, Wyd. Czarna Owca, Warszawa 2013, p. 149.

wish to savour delight, must themselves be flexible and prepared to experiment'. For 'to have a body is to blend into the world'.

(from:) ONFRAY

Art gives one the possibility to suggest senses without enforcing subordination, a readiness to give a fullness of content, without indoctrination. 'Is it not a means of presenting eternity on a scale appropriate to that which passes?'⁸³ 'It is not life, but a bad life that is a disaster. [...] hedonism encourages expansion, Baroque grandeur, placing demands and boldness. [...] fictionalizing pleasure instead of immediately satisfying one's needs gives a certain "before" and a certain "after", but most importantly—continuity of existence'. It is important to distinguish pleasure from happiness, for the art of living is not always tied with the art of being happy. The art of living is based on expenditure and investment in the life we lead, share and consume while being open to others; we leave a part of ourselves, without fear of investing in ourselves, in a world in which we want to mark our presence. Humanity finds its fullest expression in the pursuit of pleasure. One should never feel guilty for just seeking pleasure. For instance, tasting wine, searching for its good taste, cultivating sophisticated methods of growing rare species of grapes, celebrating rituals and the careful storage of products are condemnable to some. 'Wine is a food product that is worth thinking and talking about, and spreading among communities that attach value to pleasure and culture. Wine is not merely an object of consumption [...] it has a cultural dimension and serves pleasure...'⁸⁴ The concern here is about culture in general and slow food culture in particular. French philosopher and activist Michel Onfray is the originator of the People's University of Taste. The University was established to teach taste in the face of the condemnable wastage of vegetables and other natural taste components that are so important to sophisticated French cuisine. The rehabilitation and resocialization centre he had visited did not attach much significance to good, healthy food, and specifically to the culture of taste. Hence there arose an idea to establish an outdoor sculpture park, plant fruit trees, set up a vegetable garden, build a greenhouse and ultimately an integrative restaurant, whose guests, invited to special public meetings, would be enthusiasts of life and representatives of the world of culture. Nature and culture found themselves within a single space, and thus what was pleasant and beneficial, the earth as the bringer of sustenance and an ambitious project, were all of a sudden within arm's reach. The rehabilitation plan primarily carries over to healthy nutrition. Even if the combination of organisation and improvisation can sometimes appear chaotic, it is so because chaos is always an inseparable condition of creative work. The University began to attract ever more interesting and significant guests. The place of kitchen vegetables was taken over by philosophers, writers, artists, who gave flavour to intellectual sustenance. Words, music, paintings, reading, meals began to be composed of literary inspirations. Molecular meals are devised; themes, guests and works are paired. The critical University of Caen in Normandy was established half-way between reality and utopia, under the motto 'elite for all'; its core message was based on mutual friendship and the ability to conduct unhampered debate. Its creator, Onfray, claimed that transferring knowledge should not be an occasion to show off one's status and make a name for oneself; it should teach solidarity and fraternity, encourage sharing and moulding one's character.⁸⁵ In turn, art is not a means to address the ailments in

⁸³ *Ib.* p. 141, Ingrid Astier, a text by another guest of the People's University of Caen.

⁸⁴ *Ib.* pp. 112–114, conversation with Jean Lhéritier, a guest of the People's University of Caen.

⁸⁵ Michel Onfray, *Manifest hedonist*, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

the sphere of education. Art is, indeed, a tool that opens one's horizons towards history, literature, even mathematics, which is later remembered in the form of images throughout one's entire life (for instance as a trigonometric image or a beautiful, harmonious drawing of a mathematical formula); all this contradicts high school exam scores that place artistic subjects in the lowest ranking positions.

Just how significantly art can aid us in stimulating the imagination, instilling creativity and industriousness, in restoring confidence, making us aware of our own potential, gaining confidence in contacts with peers and the community, in facing adversity, finding a responsible place within society, is demonstrated by the work of La Source⁸⁶, an artistic and educational facility. This facility, which rehabilitates youth from excluded communities and reintegrates them into society, is based in the department of Eure, in the north of France. It was established by painter Gérard Garouste, in his home country, where he himself had searched for his 'place on earth' before becoming a recognised and later famous and acclaimed artist. Now he gives others an opportunity to shape their personality using art and artistic activity. While gaining practical experience and specialising under the supervision of active artists, teachers and social workers, using various available artistic techniques, young people find their pleasures, hobbies, professions, and future occupations. Most importantly, they regain a respectable place in society, faith in their own abilities and a perspective for the future. All this through art. Art that builds values and emanates with beauty, develops culture in the most explicit manner.

If we wish to participate in cultural life, we typically think about the theatre. Of course, the feelings of joy and delight in beauty can also be experienced in the theatre, where even ordinary content grows to gigantic dimensions, due to the artistry of the drama and the actors' performance that elevates the spirit to the heights of emotion. The theatre creates an illusion that is experienced even more intensely than the one present in the world of painting. Dramatic art surrounds and involves us; it engages, dominates and subjugates us and later causes, even induces emotions that have to be faced long after the performance has ended. To those who are sensitive to words, all that is necessary is to create the right atmosphere and then delve into poetry. A set of properly used words can open up a depth of meaning and a palette of nuances 'read between the lines', which are interpreted absolutely individually. Interpretation can differ radically, and the more diverse it is, the more it signifies that a given phrase is communicable and the poetry itself more interesting and engaging.

(from:) MISRAHI

Philosophers often speculate on the feeling of happiness (St. Thomas Aquinas, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Robert Misrahi). It is to scholars of ethics and aesthetics that we owe the meditation sequence which explains the importance of happiness for defining the sense of existence. By following Misrahi's thought, we are able to discover a simple logical sequence, which assures us that preventing crises and cultivating culture as a guarantee of a community's well-being, depends exclusively on our own free will. Every moral crisis carries with it a portent of doom (the holocaust, a pandemic, a global climate or biological catastrophe). It is thus a germ of future developments. The desire to survive is a natural reflex, which is why, in the name of a better future, we engage in a struggle for a better world. A certain percentage of activists always seeks adventure, merely to engage in a non-ideological

⁸⁶ www.associationlasource.fr (Accessed on 20.04.2020).

struggle, but this does not change the overarching goal of the majority, namely to experience a better tomorrow. Their struggle is an answer to the question about the sense of life. This is where philosophical reflection on becoming aware of one's own subjectivity, of distancing oneself and stating the sovereignty of one's individual existence, comes into place. Sometimes, there appears an acknowledgement of independence of similar, parallel existences of others, who have a similar desire for subjectivity. They feel the same dynamism of striving to achieve goals, satisfaction and joy; these strivings express the essence/nature of a person who is aware of his desires. Here, a reflective turn must take place, that conditions the direction of the quest and the process of the attainment of joy in compliance with a code of conduct. The reflective conversion argues for a freedom of opinion, or one's own potential to create new senses and values, thanks to which the subject moves from passivity to autonomy. We move to an attitude of a mirror-like mutuality of giving-taking and returning. We can then easily abandon tragic, catastrophic thinking that leads to death and destruction in favour of creative thinking that allows both us and others to satisfy our desires. Instead of meditating on death, we search for delight in life. The affirmation of the lives of others is the basis of the individual's sense of life. True joy, which is an absolute act, functions best amidst beauty (the philosophical triad concerns the unity of beauty, truth and good). We can thus conclude that the first step to informed joy is the good of our own existence, while the second is acknowledging the value of the good of others—those like us—while the third concerns culture (accepted canons, habits, laws), acknowledging the pleasures that stem from contemplative and active action, the joy flowing from the mind and the body. The better and more desirable the joy, the greater the happiness. The latter flows from a free combination of several substantive joys experienced by every one of us. Likewise, it constitutes a sense without which life becomes useless. Culture gives life a meaning. Culture makes happiness possible and happiness is contained within culture—it is a component of culture. Thus, by transposing the philosophy of hedonists to contemporaneity and the realities of present-day social policies and a market-based economy, Onfray, a contemporary anarchist-philosopher, has formulated his manifesto⁸⁷ in which he criticizes capitalism that has entrenched itself on the obsolete and spent categories of human exploitation. Capitalism is a mechanism for producing and distributing goods whose fundamental law is the free market. The people who continue to support it are bound solely by a nearly religious faith in a better tomorrow and an acceptance of domination and subservience. Political hedonism *a priori* assumes a revolutionary principle: the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest number of people—immediately, here and now. We all observe how pseudo-virtual digital community, with electronic and media-based supervising systems, is gradually becoming a contemporary form of fascism that enslaves the masses. It is a power that is more effective as it is dispersed and concealed, and its currents are of varying intensity.

Contemporary hedonism strives to free the body and eliminate unpleasantness by reinforcement with cultural artefacts, enhancement via ever bolder technical achievements, happiness through the heuristic pursuit of pleasure; it opens up perspectives of Promethean bioethics and cultural progress, which consequently leads to a consummate joy of existence.

Similarly to Duchamp who put a porcelain urinal on a pedestal, the contemporary *anartist*, namely an artist that anarchises the established order within art, searches for new values. The *anartist* refers to the philosophy of astrophysics and multi-dimensional space rather than to idealist metaphysics. He relies more on the theory of relativity and the space-time curve, and

⁸⁷ Michel Onfray, *Manifest hedonist*, op. cit.

less on a hypothetical image of the Architect of the Universe. Opening up towards the universe and being close to nature leads to a sense of the sublime. The spectacle of the seas and oceans, permafrost, storms, experiencing the cathedrals of nature leads to a sense of finiteness of the minuscule human existence, not as a germ of religiosity, but of communal spirit—of one's own participation in the continuity of nature. Hedonist philosophy sees the psychology of man as an art of living, constructing, artistic sculpting of the self and a constant striving for a recurrence of the experienced happiness. *The hedonist ethic* assumes non-orthodox, atheist stances, freed from the duress induced by indoctrination devoid of the toxic qualities of morality, enforcement and subterfuge. The hedonist ethics—rejects the habit of associating morality with theology and transcendence, whether divine or mathematical. It requires one to respect all forms of life, types of material and waste product—including the existence of the artist. Ethics signifies sculpting oneself—a solipsism. Everyone constitutes the centre of the universe and everyone creates reality, beginning with himself. He enters into relationships with others, choosing them in an ethical manner, namely one that is concordant with the hedonist ethics, i.e. by rejecting negativity, destruction, perversion and hurt. Hedonist ethics assumes discarding hatred, contempt, antipathy and grudges that result in sadness and depression.

Hedonist aesthetics rejects—pre-existing canons that codify widely recognised beauty. Rejecting aesthetic limitations in artistic pursuits is equal to rejecting deep faith, worship and monotheism. Everyone who looks at a painting becomes its creator. But if a work of art is not to be perceived as simply humorous or ugly in the eyes of an uneducated intellectual radical, what is required is *an aesthetic initiation*. At present, our museums are filled with the genuine matter of the world (refuse, faeces, clothes, stuffed animals, dead bodies); they are full of artefacts which are by-products of biotechnology and transgenesis—thus provoking all onlookers. The effect of this acceptance is the current art market, which is replete with trash paintings and masterpieces standing side-by-side. Hedonist aesthetics pursues—positive characteristics that allow us to go beyond the circle of the psychopathological symptoms of our times. As a hedonist, Onfray, recommends in his manifesto that artists take the following steps towards a positive aesthetics, which he formulates as follows:

1. Do not overuse conceptualism.
2. Treat catharsis as a means, not an end.
3. Go beyond autistic egoism, reject polite solipsism that exposes triviality.
4. Go against the fetishisation of goods.
5. Do away with the cult of the ordinary object to criticise consumerism and hoarding.
6. Tear down the dominance of kitsch made prevalent by market-based choices that entrench poor taste.
7. Fight against the cult of Thanatos—the desire for death, pain, martyrdom and cannibalism.

A positive aesthetics will allow:

1. A return to immanence, a recovery of contemporaneity.
2. The dechristianisation of the body through teaching the art of a good death and a good life.
3. Introducing irony and humour as an antidote for conceptualism (intellectual ascetic idealism).
4. The promotion of the anti-Platonic body (transgenicity).

5. Creating a communications system (user manuals for interpreting artworks, relationships with the audience).
6. Restoring intellectual value to art, instead of promoting rivalry for acclaim.
7. The promotion of sublime perception (high art).

Even after tearing down of the previous canons of beauty, art can and should pursue the sublime. It should exist not only as widely accessible, but also as an elite high art that must be learned through self-improvement. Duchamp's revolution, which has turned the member of the audience into an artist, should now teach the audience how to be an artist. Co-creating with artists as equals, co-influencing the work of art, imposes on one the obligation to maintain high standards.

7. The hedonism of architecture

Contemporary hedonism has an analogous approach to architecture. It primarily obligates designers to teach viewers and users the alphabet of their art. Architecture, by its very nature, is participatory. It is co-created not only with the public, but with the help of entire teams of people involved in the processes of its design and construction. However, there is a great gap between an architectural proposal and its acceptance, even as regards the nearest successive development phase. The novelty of the idea, the innovation of a previously unapplied solution, always forms a barrier of doubt between a conceptualist-designer and his associates who first implement a complete design record (technical and specialist), and later turn it into a material and spatial reality. Whereas the designer-audience confrontation looks similar as in the case of any other artwork, a new and surprising image is always perceived as being out of place in a familiar context, which causes opposition or, conversely, the joy of a successful breakthrough, a sense of a sensible step towards the better. It is obvious there will be conflicts between parties that exchange arguments of mutually exclusive positions and express doubts concerning aesthetics, utility, technical performance, not meeting expectations and social requirements or habits which employ comparisons to familiar traditional solutions or modern and unconventional ones that have been tried elsewhere. The arguments concern potential solutions that create development perspectives, etc. This is what usually happens in the case of innovative solutions. There are sometimes heated discussions, which often go beyond the standards of cultural dialogue and try to reinforce the position of the building in a new reality. The final argument that tips the scales is the size and mass of the building and the finances invested that are expected to produce a return in use. Architecture that is built in space cannot be removed or filed away in an archive. It must work to justify its existence and produce earnings as per expectations, and yet, over time, we become accustomed to it. All exceptional cases simply tell an individual story, confirming the rule they intended to break. Not infrequently, there are excellent conceptual designs, fully finalised and accompanied by complete technical documentation, with spatial visualisations in various visible forms that are filed away in a cabinet. These are completed works of architectural art, artistic works created in a material similar to that of paintings (graphics) or other visual arts. They can be presented as paintings and sculptures, but unfortunately they are not exhibited in art galleries, since they are perceived as technical creations—such as for example a technical drawing of a screw and a nut designed for a specific purpose—a mere description that illustrates an object, the type of material used, the length of the pin, the diameter, the head, etc.

It is necessary to involve the visitor—the future user—in full participation in the process of creating architecture. He must be able to read the designer's intent. He must be taught the language of architecture in a friendly manner. The designer knows of many ways in which to convey his thoughts briefly and communicatively. It is important to accustom the public to viewing architectural drawings as a type of forecast, an image of the future, a new reality which they can participate in, contribute to, introduce changes in and make themselves remembered in a creative manner as a vision of our common new world.

Not all passersby enter galleries. Few even choose to view recognised works of art. We have a long way to go to recognize qualified culture as being common. However, it seems that in this particular respect, architecture does have an advantage. Every average resident of a large or small city is interested in what is about to happen in his neighbourhood or on the marketplace of his city. Ordinary meetings with residents have a rather discouraging effect on designers, as social discourse typically boils down to complaints or, what is worse, heated arguments intended to bring about harsh criticism or, at the very least, individual gains stemming from changes to the project's shape. This state of affairs is an obvious consequence of the rarity of such meetings and their poor organisation. We are not accustomed to discussing future projects as, up until now, we have not been asked for an opinion. We are not used to making decisions about our own fate. Since our school years, we have been stripped of the habit of 'losing time on fruitless discussions', as we have been taught neither how to conduct discourse, nor rules of rhetoric, or logical formulation of arguments and reasoning. Meanwhile, the entire progressive world was consumed by a brainstorming craze and emphasized the need for abstract cognition. Nobody taught us how to listen attentively to arguments, to make concessions, to compromise and mediate. Instead, it was the motif of struggle which was typically presented, in various sociological, psychological, historical, political and even aesthetic configurations. Thus, we try to participate in this struggle with dedication and competence, and are greatly successful in various spontaneous, grass-roots efforts. This has a wonderful, reassuring effect on society at large and restores hope for a better world. However, we could achieve so much more at a much smaller cost, without wasting our precious time on treading water which slows down overall progress, or without continuing to maintain a purposeless state of social conflict that is rooted in simple ignorance.

Architecture requires society to be knowledgeable and aware of the principles of its use; it requires society to know stories of utopia, of potential, of the impossible that becomes possible, of speculations of creative thought, of reaching for the stars. It is then that the human discourse will be able to move our collective dreams forward, and the feeling of mutual support will become truly inspiring. The drawing boards, or rather computers, which have definitively replaced ink and tracing paper at architectural offices, will return better and more understandable drawings of an imagined material future.

Every art requires an introduction, a story, a justification, a legible phrase and thesis, a summary and conclusions. Every new technical appliance which has been freshly purchased at a store has a user manual. Every model that requires assembly also requires instructions. The more motivated the buyer, the more familiar he is with the object of purchase; the more talented and dextrous, the more eager to familiarise himself with the purchase and the better equipped with general knowledge, the faster he can enter into a relationship with an architectural realization, before he decides to sign a relevant sales contract. Architecture is for sale. It is a kind of craftsman's service that is realised in actual dimensions. And in this form, it is being criticised a posteriori. However, before this happens, it experiences the most vital process of formation, that is a spatial response; the author's creative work is a process that is completely inaccessible and unintelligible to the recipients of architecture.

What may be of great use here is the Dutch experience, known as an urban game called *Play the City* and described by architect and planner Ekim Tan⁸⁸. As a graduate and doctor of TU Delft, and earlier a resident of Istanbul, a city at the point of contact between different cultures, she greatly appreciates a diverse approach to urban transformation, which she refers to as a game. Despite its centuries-old history and highly monumental and colourful legacy, Istanbul is a city that is transforming itself primarily as a result of grass-roots efforts by its residents and in accordance with their current needs. Despite technical difficulties, the utility of the accepted solutions and the satisfaction experienced by residents is observable, although the above transformations are completely different to the ones adopted in the Netherlands, where attempts are made to transform cities following the best urban planning models. Both *top-down* and *bottom-up* planning directions turn out to be mutually necessary and corrective, but also complementary, as theoretical knowledge and specialist abilities (e.g. relating to infrastructure) are layered with incisive current observation and direct experiencing of needs. The idealistic vision of planners and designers can be painfully verified by the everyday experience of shortages, by practical place-based experience and a natural continuity of the local tradition. Playing the city is not the same as playing *Monopoly*, a game in which the urban territory is seen as a set of development plots of different economic value. Instead, it constitutes the shared concern of residents, activists and stakeholders – each group representing equal interests as users - to obtain the best image-related, practical and social outcomes.

Of course, the greater the number of individuals interested in the workings of their city and the greater their awareness of the nuances of its problems, the easier the cooperation, mutual understanding and actual aid. Such cooperation is both inspiring and educating. Thanks to the residents' multigenerational family histories and their in-depth familiarity with the city, models and repetitive solutions are not used (as in another game, *Sim City*), but actual defects, which are unique to a given situation, are repaired. Likewise, due to the fact that the rules of this casual game were implemented during the initial meetings, accompanied by the knowledge of psychological principles enabling one to conduct a narrative and address conflicts, the meetings that provided the basis for change were not burdened with the consequences of poor decisions and did not force through solutions perceived as the only appropriate choices. However, it is important for the game's participants to include decision-makers who will make the ultimate decisions concerning the success of the project. *All parties gain a clear overview of the situation, which allows a specific design to be optimised and prepared for implementation. Typically, any differences in positions stem from a mutual unfamiliarity with the specificity of attitudes and a lack of knowledge.*

⁸⁸ Ekim Tan, *Gramy w miasto, rozmowa Agaty Twardoch*, "Architektura. Murator" April 2020, no. 307, pp. 92–94.

8. A return to the source

Untouched nature has been a source of art since prehistory. Without a doubt, nature provides a natural stimulus for survival to all of us, regardless of our sensitivity to beauty and the ability to experience its direct influence. Nature is an environment that soothes the senses of even those to whom the city has become a natural living space⁸⁹—a space almost entirely exempted from the laws of nature, that disrupts the principles of the day and night cycle, of illumination, daylighting, the seasons of the year. The city implants substitutes of nature, artificially inoculated mutants, so that they can survive in a plastic pot, in a place sparingly delineated for their survival. There are also mutated people, for whom the urban cage is enough in which to survive. Introverted, alienated from the crowd, they traverse their shortest paths in fear, in terror of losing their tiny bit of property, out of fear of the unknown, out of a lack of confidence and faith in their abilities.

Sometimes it is a helplessness born from a lack of opportunities, resources, strengths or imagination—ordinary ‘bad luck’. There is a growing number of people who are lost in the imposing, excessively hasty, noisy and destructive reality. It is to them and health in general that *slow cities, slow life and slow food* are dedicated—to ease the stress of hurtful experiences, to return to a rhythmic existence, to calm, systematic development, the building of a worthwhile tradition and cultivation of health. It is for them that support groups are organized and special meeting places and various attractions are built as places of entertainment; whereas for the more spiritually inclined, temples are erected.

(from:) MARCUSE

City life is governed by the law of the stronger. To be able to make his mark in the world, the urban yuppie must remember that it is business which constitutes the chief determinant of every choice in life; and that supply is always conditioned by demand. This is why, despite all the achievements of high culture, we are currently flooded with mass entertainment that has little in common with culture, as the key here is to satisfy the mass audience. The mass numbers guarantee success and multiply profits. All authority always desires profit, even if only to ensure the liquidity of the market.⁹⁰ This is why a demanding, low-profit culture automatically becomes the domain of the elite. It is good if it is fortunate enough to find enlightened decision-makers who want to provide a balanced market for social needs—but in most cases, it loses in the race to the highest profit.

Taking part in an economic race is not the ultimate goal of culture. It is also not the goal of culture to lord over novelty. But it is precisely this complete independence of art that predestines it to such a

⁸⁹ Herbert Marcuse, *Człowiek jednowymiarowy* (One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society), PWN, Warszawa 1991.

⁹⁰ ‘The principles of modern science were a priori structured in such a way that they could serve as conceptual instruments for a universe of self-propelling, productive control; theoretical operationalism came to correspond to practical operationalism. The scientific method which led to the ever-more-effective domination of nature thus came to provide the pure concepts as well as the instrumentalities for the ever-more-effective domination of man by man through the domination of nature. Theoretical reason, remaining pure and neutral, entered into the service of practical reason. The merger proved beneficial to both. Today, domination perpetuates and extends itself not only through technology but as technology, and the latter provides the great legitimation of the expanding political power, which absorbs all spheres of culture’. Herbert Marcuse, *Człowiek jednowymiarowy*, op. cit.

position. Free thought reaches the furthest into the future and the deepest into the painful insufficiency and empathy for suffering. Art is an emanation of emotion and an explication of discovery. Art documents progress and development trajectories the fastest, doing so in an aesthetic manner. This is why it pays to learn how to experience it and be able to trust it.

Art is also uncompromising; it is independent and entirely free, even if it is commissioned or serves to present the interests of someone else—as in the case of a film score or an advertisement poster. Art is always the germ of creative, exploratory thought. It is artists who break conventions, taboos, create abstract compositions, unconventional situations, music or concrete poetry. Modernity is always based on doing away with habits that constrain thought. *The freedom of art, including freedom of speech, ensures progress.*

Conveying knowledge and ability through art is difficult, and sometimes appears to be slower, but is incomparably more effective. This can be seen over the long term. Generations brought up without instruction in civic knowledge see no need to participate in electing their own authorities; a generation without instruction in the visual or musical arts does not experience beauty and cannot sing.

Our domestic schools have also tried to introduce the Waldorf school method. However, the program requires highly qualified teachers with a true charisma and artistic preparation. Art gives one a sense of play, of relaxation during the process of creation or becoming acquainted with it. In a way that is imperceptible and non-stressful, it allows one to acquire knowledge and learn values. It becomes an obvious regulator of behaviours and gives a feeling of communal bond without empty rivalry.

Nothing stands in the way of ensuring that the mass audience has better taste.

It is a long and arduous process, but it pays off tremendously and on a massive scale in mutual understanding and aid, and not only in the sphere of informed choice of a better-quality qualified entertainment, but also in the everyday application of better, healthier, and less nature-invasive practices. It is only by raising the general awareness, through a mass educational effort that we should be able to stop the destruction of the Globe, of man's mentality and stall the degeneration of man. We can stop self-destruction by applying in practice the philosophical triad of values and using healthy proportions between the world of nature and the urbanisation of the earth—that is, if we genuinely want man to have a chance to survive. In practice, pristine nature no longer exists. The earth has been dominated by cities, plantations and decayed post-industrial areas. The species of fauna and flora that are beneficial to man are dying out, while dangerous weeds proliferate and disasters caused by climate change become common. Greed and a consumerist lifestyle rapidly add to the destruction.

Skłudzewo and *A More Beautiful World Foundation* have currently such a non-verbal offering, which due to its reach, can even be regarded as an interesting option for tourists. However, with all the openness of the Kuyavian-Masurian region to cultural tourism, Skłudzewo categorically conditions access to its grounds by introducing strict principles of mutual treatment for visitors. Entry will be granted only to those who want to hear and listen to artists speak, discover the artworks they had created here before, trace and follow artists in their work, artists who are open to shared experiences the transfer of values. It is not just one of many entertainment destinations in the voivodship. It is a temple and a school of masters from which one derives wisdom and sensibility, appreciates the beauty of the surrounding world and lives a more beautiful life.

While the entirety of contemporary life revolves around free-market capitalist games

based on supply and demand,⁹¹ as well as consumption and advertisement, artistic life in Skłudzewo appears to contradict the 'common sense' of marketing. An immense amount of high quality artistic goods are produced here; the latter are highly valued, perhaps even priceless in their uniqueness and novelty, yet their price is often contractual, non-negotiable, and they rarely find their way to auctions, or have no place to do so since we do not have a culture of auction houses. We do not even have true art markets that could be visited by connoisseurs of beauty ready to take advantage of opportunities and compete for buyers. We have no contemporary art catalogues, as no one in the financial world has ever heard of a 'Kuyavian-Masurian Sotheby's'. It takes years to develop a sellable brand on the art market. However, with no such market, it is a lost cause, or a struggle that can last generations. Despite the ability to create a unique collection that ought to be treated as capital which grows with geometric progression, relative to the number of accumulating artworks, the collection is used solely for singular exhibitions or to educate groups that are willing to partake of the experience.

Experiencing art as unconditional beauty shall forever remain the domain of the elite. The masses care but little for beauty, good and truth as philosophical and spiritual values. For it is difficult to imagine that entire communities would unanimously opt out of foregoing one of their daily meals just to build a local contemporary art gallery or opera. And yet, there were moments in history that could be described as rationally unexplainable outbursts of mass sacrifice motivated solely by a grand idea. In critical situations one could come across 'stirrings of passion', deeds and gestures of solidarity in difficult moments or merely concessions to the needy.

Concessions mean acts of humanism. *The irrational 'higher need' is a human reflex, a beautiful gesture.*

The 'creative fever' acts in a similar manner in moments of artistic excitement. A work of art is made in a natural manner; it is selfless and unconditional, without engaging any external, artificial forces outside the human mind and the innate psyche. Perhaps treating all the world's evil with art, is not the only means of salvation, but until the creation of artistic (artificial) objects, creating situations and values is so closely tied up with nature, as in the case of Skłudzewo, it cannot be a mistake. Artistic creation which is linked with nature operates comprehensively and without limitations.⁹² The case of Skłudzewo is a zero-waste and socially useful product. It is a place where, by using the treasures of nature, we multiply and consume them—transforming them into new enriching added values. There is little refuse in the form of useless waste. Standard waste is a material for further processing.

If we learn to perceive and feel beauty unpleasantness it can even become the object of a transaction, and not only a share of happiness. If we make beauty an essential everyday item—for what is essential in our everyday lives can also be beautiful—then artistic professions shall also be properly appreciated. Artists are typically good at bearing and tolerating discomfort,

⁹¹ Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England* (1937), Cambridge University Press, London 2011.

⁹² 'Żmijewski argues that the result of 'bubble teaching' is work on a model of reality instead of reality itself and, consequently—the alienation of art. This in turn also leads to a weakening of negative emotions—anger, spite, leaving the process without an element of risk' (Karol Sienkiewicz, *Patriota wszechświata. O Pawle Althamerze, Karakter, Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie*, seria Mówi Muzeum, Kraków-Warszawa 2017, p. 145). Jacek Adamas states: 'there is no good and evil, we should not admonish sinners. Evil—watch out!—spreads like a disease, via droplets. We are helpless against it' *ib.* p. 146.

but no doubt they are more creative and productive when they do not have to worry about a lack of materials or their own livelihood. The depth of experiences and the sense of human tragedy that stimulates work are inscribed into their artistic genome anyway. And as particularly sensitive people, they attach great importance to the beauty of everyday life. There is an immense potential and energy in this madness,⁹³ which may spread to others so that life may ultimately become better and more beautiful.

⁹³ N. Pevsner on the role of beauty in a century of 'mass production': 'Personally I have no doubt that beauty both of nature and of things made by man, [...] expressing itself [...] helps to make our lives fuller, happier [...]. The fight against shoddy design of [...] goods by which most of our fellow-men are surrounded becomes a moral duty', N. Pevsner, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

PART IV:

CODA

The case of Skłodzewe proves the need for close cooperation with architects. At the current point of the foundation's development and its perspectives for the future, there has emerged a need for introducing architectural improvements. The facility's long-term operational strategy imposes a vision of potential development strategies for the entire community. The relevant urban and architectural design should include a protective buffer zone for artistic activities—an artistic silence zone which forms a green wildlife buffer resembling an open-air museum, rich with various types of greenery (thickets, ponds, forest areas, gardens, vegetable gardens, meadows, orchards, etc.). In cooperation with the municipality, architects should design a local multifunctional distribution and service centre complete with a conference and hotel section that, by serving both visitors and residents, should benefit the entire community.

Here and now is a place for urban and architectural activities as well as for architects. There is a need for a professional design project of a functional distribution centre that would be responsible for the entire service sector in the municipality of Zławieś. The main objective of the design project would be to ensure comfortable conditions for the Foundation to operate in, but at the same time, in cooperation with the local authorities and to the benefit of the residents. This mediatory role of architects, which is to ensure the final aesthetic outcome of mutual cooperation between architecture and nature which benefits the site, rests in their hands. It is an immensely responsible task, as it may either ensure a rapid flourishing of the Foundation or else fritter away its achievements. Even if it is a multi-stage and costly venture—as it is a project that reaches far into the future—it would be prudent to prepare competition conditions that could help select the most appropriate development concept and choose a suitable design team that would fully comprehend the specificity of the task.

(from:) SEJIMA & NISHIZAWA

Where should we search for answers and what answers should we expect? As a product of an architect's creativity, every design project focuses on man and his experience of space. A design's aesthetic value lies in the synthesis of sensory qualities and structure. It is a harmony of proportions and coherence of all individual elements, each of a proper size and in the right place. 'Beauty in postmodern architecture is transcultural and creates a close relationship with the surroundings',⁹⁴ argues Maria Porębska while commenting on the work of the SANAA Japanese duo, who respond to postmodern notions of fluidity and a return to living in harmony with nature via references to mathematical topologies and fractal geometry. The simplicity of form, geometric purity and the rawness of materials, create an impression of lightness, transparency, brightness—an intangibility. To Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, the content of architecture is a defined space and inter-spatial relationships in the form of connections, buffers, the 'in-between'. All lines that mark divisions in space are merely a trace

⁹⁴ Maria Porębska, *Poszukiwanie piękna w architekturze ponowoczesnej*, in: *Estetyka pośród kultur*, ed. Krystyna Wilkoszewska, Universitas, Kraków 2012, p. 39.

of topological boundaries, linkages that allow space to flow and continue. All axes and classical divisions have been removed so as to obtain an appearance of randomness and indeterminacy. There is no observable hierarchy, as even the light is scattered. 'SANAA's architecture is representative of our time, as it is seen as a reflection of virtual reality in which contemporary society lives'.⁹⁵ The extreme thinness of the architecture's elements, transparency and fleetingness, reflect the world of virtual reality. The cutting-edge technologies and materials tell a narrative about a postmodern space, associating it with a computer-generated idea of an immaterial image. The Japanese architects, who build all over the world, draw on Japanese tradition and combine it with the achievements of Western culture. Transculturalism is one of the characteristics of contemporary architecture. Transcultural architecture is the face of the global culture of our VR era.

(from:) WILKOSZEWSKA

In the contemporary global world, the awareness of multiculturalism has increased and it manifests itself in dialogue, human interactions, alternativity and exchange of views. All of these contacts have a bilateral character. Meanwhile, contemporaneity has replaced multiculturalism with transculturalism; the latter replaces binary interactions with transactions and relationship networks (nomadism, ecosystems, rhizome-addition). The transcultural perspective as presented by Wolfgang Welsch is based on far-reaching syncretic relationship networks formed by heterogeneous and hybrid elements of cultures. The existence of monolithic, comprehensive cultures is a myth. In a postmodern, pluralist perspective, it is multitude and not comprehensiveness that plays a primary role. In an era of globalism, referring explicitly to any cultural traces as identity, tradition and ethnic membership can be perceived as mere superficiality, which obscures differences and internal contradictions that are present in every culture. The greatest number of similarities that manifest themselves as transcultural can be found along the borderlines, in transition spaces—in the in-between zones, in gaps between spaces, at the joints, in flow spaces. Analogously, in architecture it is the entrance zone to the grand (sanctified) interior that is particularly visible and palpable and is experienced as a transition zone. Whether in Western or Eastern culture, this zone is associated with solemnity, monumentality and manifests itself through symmetry of composition, a culturally distinctive rhythm and collection of forms and colours. It affects those who enter with an eurhythmy, excitation, a feeling of joy and seriousness. The aesthetic of classical proportions works in a similar way in every home and garden, regardless of geographical location. All of this testifies to the universality of nature and aesthetic canons and that all human needs are similar. This similarity allows architects to successfully build all around the world while following an artistic sense that is traced back to their own culture and at the same time adhering to universal utilitarian patterns. Transcultural understanding⁹⁶ allows one, while using the prefixes of one's own language, to understand and name the essence and nuances of modernity that reflect intangible virtual reality. Transgression is a sign of modernity. It does not matter whether what is misleading, illusory, unreal, transparent and fleeting has a superficial significance that refers to the surface of an object or to its depth. Likewise, it is of no significance in aesthetic studies, which refer to the surface due to the very nature of aesthetics itself. Both philosophy and culture allow us to discover, explore and

⁹⁵ *Ib.* p. 32.

⁹⁶ Krystyna Wilkoszewska, *Transkulturowe studia w estetyce*, in: *Estetyka pośród kultur*, op. cit., p. 205–211.

correct the problems of our own cultures—while at the same time acquainting us with the superficial characteristics of others. Even when it only operates on the surface, transculturalism can deeply affect a community's taboos.

The culturally unifying and universally understandable image of contemporary architecture, adapted solely to the local geographical conditions, serves equally all of the world's inhabitants. Thus, while being the captive of progress, it reflects civilisational development in a multi-aspect manner and can justifiably be referred to as the face of contemporary culture.

However, we live in a *post-global era of transgression*—in an age of unlimited flow of consciousness—in transition zones. We are no longer satisfied with tourism as a means of exploring the otherness of the world. We have embraced cosmopolitan aspirations, international economy, cultural dialogue, but we are slowly ceasing to perceive otherness in external superficial signs, such as: the local specificity of flavours, language differences and place-specific ornamentation. The symbolic signs that belong to different geographical zones all conceal a similarity; they all serve the same subject. Today, virtual travel is enough to satisfy our desire to explore. However, the true differences lie in the gaps 'in-between'. It is not the place where we are and the genuine experience of our lives that are of importance; what is truly important is what is beside us, in-between worlds, between parallel worlds. In our everyday lives, we fail to notice people whom we do not know either from home, work, business, group meetings, areas of interests, etc. We can even live in the same building without knowing other residents and their completely different, alien, other worlds. Even if it so happens that the above worlds are hostile to each other, we may never get to know about it, in spite of living side-by-side. The true differences are 'in-between'—in normally invisible areas of experience.

Tracing the map with his finger, without as much as moving from his home city of Königsberg, even Kant confidently referred to everything from outside Western culture as either wild or primitive—something that was inferior, and seen from the perspective of a coloniser. The dialectic of universality and locality does not distinguish these notions so simply. Typically, a theory is seen as universal if it has been validated under specific geographical conditions; if it turns out to be a fiasco under different conditions, it is immediately branded as misguided and underdeveloped. For instance, the American notion of freedom did not prove successful to Native Americans who 'did not understand' the good that stemmed from it. Aboriginal Australians appeared similarly 'unreasonable', as did many other colonised cultures. By countering locality with universality in an artificial way, we produce marketable tourist products; even when we do not explicitly call them primitive but merely different (inferior). We are the only ones who call our world, the one we know best—civilised. True diversity occurs in the void 'in-between', 'in the gaps of a familiar world, between mutually superimposed spatial regimes [...] truly interesting travel does not mean being present in a distant and exotic "place", but rather being present between spaces, it is traversing "through" space'.⁹⁷ At present, Kant's stereotypes no longer apply. The shape of our living space differs considerably from the colonial one. Likewise, the established American empire of the US has become the first truly global power. A geography that relies on the past notion of a world that must be conquered, has ceased to exist.

Likewise, the city is no longer treated as merely a place, and instead is understood more

⁹⁷ Kacper Pobłocki, *Palcem po mapie. Manifest antropologii rowerowej*, "Czas Kultury. Podróże z Sensem" 2012, no. 32, pp. 32–43, quote on p. 32.

as urban space—urbanity or urbanisation—and since rural lifestyle differs but little from urban lifestyle, we can now state that the level of urbanisation in both is similar. It is the life of a nomad or cyclist that differs more from urban life. The latter live on the road, on the street or in the steppe, where everyday needs are governed by other realities than those offered and imposed by the urban lifestyle. The first ‘visualisation’ of these differences in parallel lives, in a common space, where the city-dweller’s problems look like those of any other animal, was presented to us by George Orwell in his novel *Animal Farm* (1943, published in 1945), written from the perspective of a tramp. Kant’s way of perceiving the world is still quite widespread nowadays, but the various terms used by him are more and more often referred to as notions in space, as the greater ability to travel teaches us dynamism. Our lack of attachment to places arouses within us a desire to explore via travel. At present, it is not even necessary to travel to an actual, specific, exotic place, as we increasingly often visit virtual reality.

There is also no objectivity in the singular, individual world. Each of us perceives reality differently and lives in his own slightly different microcosm, created in accordance with his own perception. A person (body) and its personality are built via experience and individual perception—our own perspective. The density and intensity of experiences and interactions affects all our senses. It builds a clear image of every man, one that is easy to distinguish and characterise even on a photograph. It is especially unposed, spontaneous photographs taken in the context of places and events that provide a particular wealth of data for anthropological description. Similarly to photographs of human figures, also conversations, interviews, one’s work and all the artefacts and phenomena that accompany a person (clothing, body language, behaviour, likes, etc.) tell us much about a person and outline their profiles. However, their culture, their interior, are reflected in their faces. A visible face is an image of the ego of a person who travels merely to cross the boundaries of cognition.

(from:) MALRAUX

We have been travelling in search of inspiration for years. First the artists, then Modernist-architects detached art from the place-based context, from its roots; they placed the fine arts in opposition to the applied arts and locked up Western culture, the one that was ornamental and completely detached from everyday human activities, in museums. While pursuing otherness, we must appreciate values that are different from those universally acknowledged and we must also revise our understanding of the fine arts in the European sense of the word.⁹⁸ Recognising culture that is different than our own, leads to changes in understanding our native culture, and consequently to changes in the assessment of domestic culture and the creation of new standards (Charles Taylor, Howard Morphy). The Euro-centrism described by André Malraux has become obsolete. The ‘third culture’ that develops on the basis of observing the distinctiveness of other cultures, no longer describes contemporary aesthetic changes. After multiculturalism and interculturalism, contemporary aesthetics describes transculturalism (Welsch⁹⁹) in the form of culture networks. Richard Shusterman argues that contemporary people build their identity by integrating different transcultural components. It is ‘nativity’ that is sometimes simulated for tourism-related purposes or the artificial continuation of local traditions. The contemporary great multicultural conceptions, with a

⁹⁸ Krystyna Wilkoszewska (ed.), *Estetyka transkulturowa*, Universitas, Kraków 2004, p. 7–16.

⁹⁹ Wolfgang Welsch, *Tożsamość w epoce globalizacji – perspektywa kulturowa*, in: Krystyna Wilkoszewska (ed.), *Estetyka transkulturowa*, op. cit., pp. 31–45; Richard Shusterman, *Estetyka pragmatyczna oraz myśl azjatycka*, in: Krystyna Wilkoszewska (ed.) *Estetyka transkulturowa*, op. cit., pp. 47–61.

fascinating power of expression, which have charmed us despite an unfamiliarity with the context of their origins, must, as it appears, possess such a wealth of transcultural potential. The Museum of Imagination, which talks about a one-way transmission of exotic cultures to Europe, has lost its appeal. Existentialism and references to history no longer suffice. Openness to phenomena 'without history' brings a different dimension in understanding art. The avant-garde has provoked new questions about aesthetic values, about a new expression of religious images and feelings. It has brought about a metamorphosis of the gods. The 'third culture' has become dominant. People with a transcultural identity are much more tolerant and their personalities have a greater capability to blend with each other than monocultural personalities have ever had.

(from:) WELSCH

A return to monoculturalism appears impossible, although such strivings do come to the surface occasionally. We are witnesses to a search for national identity that reaches levels bordering on fascism - a trend which is spreading as a result of cultural policy. However, it appears that it is motivated by a simple fear of novelty and the inability to grasp and understand the multitude of problems and the complex character of the subject matter they contain. Meanwhile, diversity breeds multiplicity. We should treat this multiplicity as a developmental perspective for the avant-garde in a broad cultural dimension, a field for stimulating reflection, questioning man's role in the world. Various bottom-up alternative movements emerge in a most natural way; there also arise various subcultures, including the entirety of pop culture, and even qualified counterculture. The essence of their operation is a symbolic or even magical resistance to falling in line with the official dictates of the imposed culture. The above subcultures are an expression of an opposition of a minority against a monolithic identity. They constitute everyday forms of resistance against the cultural mainstream, which has lost the values that testify to its group affiliation, including high art and culture, which is not accepted by the dominant, averaged model.

Alternative culture uses the method of cautious struggle, one that is invisible to those in power; by touching the strings of dignity, reputation and honour as forms of 'small-scale' resistance, it is able to achieve small-scale successes. Cultural resistance, in combination with artistic actions that comply with the forms of artistic expression, is based on raising awareness about problems and calls for empathy and justice.

Against this background of the observed cultural phenomena, French historian Pierre Nora created an atlas of places associated with cultural memory: places that are topographic, monumental, symbolic or even functional. His goal was to map such places in collective memory. Place maps are to be used in interdisciplinary studies focused on the symbolic dimensions of culture.¹⁰⁰ Altermodernity, analogously to alterglobalism, are parallel structures formed by counterculture. On the map of urban functional, symbolic and monumental places, we can find urban objects—icons of architecture. City places and specific architectural realizations are linked with concrete groups of activists, artists and their distinctive art and activities, to mention only the Kulturhauz Social Cooperative that had been marked as a significant point on the map of Toruń. The above example has been mentioned deliberately, so as to reference 'thinking about counterculture proposals by Kulturhauz as a semi-periphery

¹⁰⁰ Waldemar Kuligowski, *Miejsca oporu. Wprowadzenie do praktyk oporu kulturowego*, in: idem (ed.), *Miejsca oporu. O kontrkulturach kultury polskiej*, Biblioteka Czasu Kultury, vol. 48, Poznań 2018, pp. 7–23.

of culture, which mediate and act as intermediaries between actual peripheries and the centre. Categories of resistance and rebellion would then be far more significant as they would shed light on the possibility of semi-peripheries affecting the cultural mainstream, in which they would not be included, thus avoiding incorporation and unification with the system they wish to remain counter to'.¹⁰¹ Toruń was also chosen due to the previously discussed case of Skłudzewo, which is located in the same district and characterised by comparable fundamental activity. The two places differ exclusively in respect to areas of creation. While Skłudzewo hosts artists, Kulturhauz is a group of activists who create a new social cultural space in the city. This space is to activate Toruń's creative community, especially those of its members who remain outside the institutional cultural circuit. Kulturhauz is an independent artistic centre that intentionally has no specific formula, its principle is to attract all those who are interested, regardless of age, education and type of creative passion.¹⁰² This social culture centre is located in a distinctive part of Toruń, which is popularly and tellingly referred to as Little Berlin, due to its openness. It is a specific place, which hosts Toruń's so called second market. It gathers and unites hipsters, artists and local indigents. Together, they renovate, maintain and run a club in an adapted townhouse; they also cultivate the adjacent garden. Little Berlin (similarly to the previously mentioned Barlinek—Berlinchen) is witness to all kinds of musical, electronic and laptop concerts by artists from all over Europe and is open to the weirdest artistic media. The culture is shaped by organisers and culture animators through an innovative creative laboratory. Within this formation, they transfer their own energy and the creative potential derived from the place; they do so without a hierarchy of dependency, within a horizontal community structure, and are funded solely from the Civic Initiatives Fund Programme 2014–2020.

Architecture actively participates in this culture-creating work - both locally as a static building, and virtually as the participant of every artistic or civic event. It embeds itself into the image of the city through its material shape and image, it takes root in the consciousness of both local and distant event participants, it incorporates itself into the mental space of both Polish and global culture in a period of globality and transculturalism. Even though it was not dedicated to its function and social role during its creation, the image of Kulturhauz can be referenced anywhere in the world due to the Net, as an artistic vehicle of the Cooperative's concept.

Thus, in accordance with their legislative frameworks and historical assignments, buildings constructed to meet a specific order, which constitute a practical and functional solution to housing problems, ensuring technical and social comfort, as well as an aesthetic shape concordant with the urban context, become the face of their time. They are a reflection of the culture of their period. But even the buildings that have been built to satisfy other needs, intended for other purposes and thus in a different aesthetic form, can, due to culture, become its face as well. Culturally significant artistic actions that take place in different architectural surroundings improvised for the needs of an event can also gain significance and remain in collective memory as the face of the culture of a given phenomenon at a given moment in time. Both phenomena are recognisable to those who are informed about their mission. To some, it is merely the iconic, unique shape that matters, while to others it is a completeness of style and

¹⁰¹ Michał Pranke, Jakub Osiński, Kulturhauz: centrum na peryferiach, in: W. Kuligowski (ed.), *Miejsca oporu*, op. cit., pp. 93–100, quote on p. 100.

¹⁰² Paweł Tański, *Opór nad Wisłą – Kulturhauz: Toruń, Ol. Poniatowskiego 5/2*, in: W. Kuligowski (ed.), *Miejsca oporu*, op. cit., pp. 81–91.

structural details that is of importance; still others are interested in detailed connotations in the relevant areas of signs, symbols and associated content. However, there is no doubt that both the image of the city as a whole and as a fragment of its development, or else a singular building, immediately direct the observer to an appropriate temporal, climatic and structural zone, along with the reading of each detail bringing him into ever closer territories, down to a precise topological and historical location, together with a detailed specificity of the case.

Culture is a record of human thought and activity, of tastes and achievements, abilities and dependencies. It is artificially called into material existence and concealed in its material shape. By engaging the most advanced technologies, it creates the most visible and Earth-burdening *urban trace*. While constituting an inalienable everyday necessity associated with providing shelter and protection, it builds not only a sense of safety, but also that of comfort, joy, satisfaction and pride; it constitutes the greatest threat to man; namely, a loss of the sense of existence. It is enough to exceed a certain population threshold for uncoordinated actions, uncontrolled activities, insubordination of communities, legal chaos and individual disobedience to trigger a landslide of consequences that lead to self-destruction. We are already on the cusp of the earth buckling under a lack of balance, whose visible sign is the transfer of microorganisms from the animal world. Excessive interference in the world of flora and fauna has caused mutations of animal-borne diseases that we may fail to contain or that may cause large portions of our population to die.

The image of the pandemic is also reflected in architecture. Warned by numerous science fiction films, we have finally experienced empty streets and deserted cities, even those the size of New York or London; we may witness abandoned cities like Detroit, that are ruined, having been taken over by weeds and absorbed by wildlife that rebuilds itself in successive generations, becoming ever richer and more diverse as in the cities of the Incas or in Indochina. *Nature does not need man*. He is the earth's greatest explorer but at the same time its greatest exploiter and pest.

One vision of a better tomorrow is associated with maintaining global balance, whereby every local action has global repercussions. We should not measure GDP growth by fertility rates, as otherwise the bulging image of architecture shall be reflected in the mirror of the catastrophe. To maintain a stable image of urbanisation, informed architects must protect life through non-aggressive architecture that conceals its ubiquitousness behind an aesthetics that does not compete with nature's beauty and hides its form behind the back of its neighbour in a democratic dialogue; this should also ease the burden of transportation issues in public spaces while at the same time applying smart-facilities to improve infrastructural service quality.

We have so far been unable to foresee what the architecture of the successive visions of the world will look like. However, undoubtedly every period leaves a recognisable architectural trace. Whatever fate shall befall humankind, it shall be carved into the artificially created architectural face of its future culture.

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Abstracts

The Architectural Face of Culture

Translated by Piotr Mizia

The essence of architecture is building.

It is the calling into being of a construct which is most suited to ensuring man's comfortable existence. The essence of art is the arousal of the deepest registers of feeling, inciting thoughts and emotions. The essence of culture is the preservation of balance.

One cannot fail to notice the unity which joins these spheres, both on the level of man's very presence, as well as his psyche, which condition his conscious existence. Wherever biology resorts to the use of sensors so as to rely on their cognitive experience and direct its mental needs to the search for joy and pleasure, there arises an area which calls for the operation of culture, art and architecture. And if the former two (culture and art) relate to the sphere of spirituality, architecture appears to stand firmly on the ground. Architecture is bound up with art by strong ideological ties to an equal degree as reality is linked with the construction technology. All human activity is associated with culture as the dimension and extent of human survival depend on respecting its rules.

Art as a form of free thought, unbounded by anything apart from exclusively the imagined possibilities of its preservation record, precedes all other forms of creation. The more material in its form a given branch of art (painting, sculpture), the closer the distance that separates it from architectural art (in conceptual work). But the realization of a concept in the form of a bronze cast or a building, should already be looked upon as an engineering work. Yet it is impossible to draw a clear-cut boundary line which would separate their respective spheres of operation. Undoubtedly, however, the artistic elusiveness which guarantees unbounded freedom of movement, will always remain in the vanguard and will precede the ever more tangible and demanding scopes of this movement, up until the total stability and static quality of architecture. Nonetheless, both architecture and culture call for cooperation with art as a vanguard of all creative activities and they totally depend on it in their shape and entire superstructure relating to the sphere of reception, reaction and human conduct.

In the first phase of formation of an architectural conception, both architecture and art display a certain parallelism of creative activities. They go their separate ways only in the phase of the realization of the conception: initially in the phase of making a record of the conception and then during the preparations to the realization and the realization itself. To be precise, one has to define exactly the scope, the degree of complication and the costs of this process (including the number and professional profile of the teams of people engaged in the project), as the latter ones depend directly on the scale of the undertaking; large-scale artistic undertakings may equal or even surpass with their scale many architectural realizations.

The artistic dimension of a work, that is, its quality, multi-dimensional value, the ultimately positive resonance of a work—concerns all artistic activity and should be regarded as an overriding goal.

Culture is the end product of civilization. Its shape and hierarchy of values depend on the degree of development of the individual disciplines that make it up, the advantage of the development of humanistic disciplines over technology, the status of its economy and politics. It is always culture that maintains the status quo in a given community.

Yet, it is architecture that constitutes the most visible sign and symbol of every successive period as well as the most noticeable and prominent mark of its time, chiefly due to the fact that sheer size is an inherent, immanent feature, as well as the most noticeable, recognizable and prestigious element of the culture of a given era. And that is precisely what this book is about.

Architektonisches Kulturgesicht

Übersetzt von Stefan Gomółka

Das Wesen der Architektur ist das Bauen, die Schaffung eines für komfortable Sicherung des Menschen geeigneten Konstruktes.

Zum Wesen der Kunst wurden das Ansprechen von tiefsten Fühlregistern und das Er wecken von Gedanken und Emotionen.

Das Wesen der Kultur ist es, für Gleichgewicht zu sorgen.

Man kann sich nicht des Eindrucks erwehren, dass diese Sphären eine Gemeinschaft bilden, durch ihr Dasein/ihre Existenz die Psyche des Menschen beeinflussen und somit dessen lebendiges Fortbestehen bedingen. Dort, wo die Biologie Sensoren zu verwenden beginnt, um diesen ihre Erkennungserfahrungen anzuvertrauen und psychische Bedürfnisse auf die Suche nach Freude und Vergnügen zu richten, ist Raum für Kultur, Kunst und Architektur vorhanden. Beziehen sich die Kultur und Kunst auf die geistliche Sphäre, so steht dagegen die Architektur fest auf dem Boden. Zwischen der Kunst und Architektur bestehen ideelle und werkstattmäßige Bande in dem Ausmaß, wie stark die Realität der Architektur mit der Bautechnik gebunden ist. Mit der Kultur sind alle menschlichen Aktivitäten gebunden, denn von Respektierung deren Regeln ist die Dimension des Überlebens abhängig.

Die Kunst als freies Denken, an nichts gefesselt, bis auf gedachte Möglichkeiten deren Erfassung (Aufzeichnung), ist allen anderen Kreativeformen voraus. Je materieller in dessen Form ein Kunstzweig (Malerei, Bildhauerei) ist, desto näher steht er zur architektonischen Kunst (Konzeptarbeit). Dabei ist die Realisierung eines Konzeptes, sei es z.B. ein Bronzeguss oder Bauwerk schon als Ingenieurarbeit einzustufen. Allerdings lässt sich zwischen diesen Bereichen keine deutliche Grenze ziehen. Zweifellos wird diese Flüchtigkeit der Kunst, welche die grenzenlose Bewegungsfreiheit garantiert, jedoch immer an vorderster Stelle, vor immer mehr messbaren und anspruchsvollen Bereichen dieser Bewegung bleiben, die bis hin zur vollen Statik und Stabilität der Architektur reichen. Dennoch ist sowohl die Architektur als auch Kultur auf Zusammenarbeit mit der Kunst als Vorreiterin sämtlicher schöpferischen Aktivitäten angewiesen und abhängig von dieser in ihrer Gestalt und in ganzem Überbau, der sich auf Wahrnehmungssphäre, Reaktionen und menschliche Verhaltensweisen bezieht.

In der ersten Phase der entstehenden architektonischen Konzeption weisen sowohl die Architektur als auch Kunst Parallelität schöpferischer Aktivitäten auf. Sie gehen auseinander erst in der Realisierungsphase der Konzeption, zunächst bei Erfassung eines Konzeptes, danach in Vorbereitungen für dessen Realisierung und schließlich in dessen Realisierung selbst. Handelt man präzise, so muss man den Umfang, Kompliziertheitsgrad und die Kosten dieses Prozesses (darunter Anzahl und Profil von dafür eingesetzten Personalteams) als vom Umfang des ganzen Vorhabens abhängige Faktoren bestimmen, denn bei großen künstlerischen Projekten kann der Umfang des entstehenden Objektes dem mehrerer Gebäude gleich sein oder diesen sogar übersteigen.

Das künstlerische Ausmaß eines Werkes, d.h. gute Qualität, eingebrachter mehrdimensionaler Wert und positiv geprägter, endgültiger Ausklang der geleisteten Arbeit beziehen sich auf alle schöpferischen Aktivitäten und stellen ein übergeordnetes Ziel dar.

Die Kultur ist Resultante der Zivilisation. Vom Entwicklungsstand der einzelnen Lebensbereiche, davon, ob in einem Entwicklungsprozess humanistische Disziplinen oder aber Technik, Wirtschaft und Politik überlegen sind, sind deren Gestalt und die Rangordnung der Werte abhängig. In einer Gemeinschaft ist es aber immer die Kultur, die Status Quo aufrechterhält.

Das markanteste Anzeichen, das Symbol eines jeden neu beginnenden Zeitalters, das von allen Seiten gut sichtbare Zeichen aufgrund dessen immanenter Eigenschaft, d.h. der Dimension, die bemerkbare, erkennbare und imagemäßige Gestalt der Kultur einer jeden Zeitepoche ist aber ihre Architektur. Davon handelt das Buch.