

Prof. Beata Gibała-Kapecka, Anna Dettloff, PhD
Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków

PEREGRINATIONS... DEFINING (ONE'S OWN)* SPACE

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Abstract

The research issues undertaken concern the deliberations on whether the need for semantic designation of spaces, objects and places still exists. Do the form and matter indeed have to be filled with content, contain messages in the layer of significance? In the light of the formed architectural space of opportunities considered here, we superimpose ideas and interpretations, without any claim for them to be the only right ones. In confrontation and dialogue, the properties of space, objects and places disappear alternately, as they remain dependent on time – including the one of the recipient's location.

Keywords

peregrinations, design, semantic structures, process of associations, computer graphics, space semantics, cultural spaces of equal opportunity, personal construct

Peregrinations ... Defining ones (own) space

The process of socialisation and thus making the city more attractive stands a chance of succeeding, however – based on the examples completed – only if we propose socially desirable solutions, either by inventing services aimed at meeting new needs and performing specific functions, or by introducing objects of avant-garde forms.

By their nature, architectural objects create and foment the atmosphere by directing the perception of the recipient towards associations, often referring to the memory of primary spaces. As a result of the assigned formal features and their developed mutual configurations, the created architectural space of a given place is or happens to be filled with tensions and qualities, such as anxiety, satisfaction, drama, congestion, largely as a result of further interpretation – whether symbolic, iconic or resulting from the context. At the same time, the recipient acquires the ability to identify the place, to interpret its unique individual features within the consistency of communication codes.

The system of the introduced semantic structures and their interrelations with the existing functions of buildings and views, adapted or modernised towards the new needs, produces multithreaded references to be deciphered and relations to be experienced and interpreted. Not only are new spaces and viewing sites created, but also areas of interaction, as a result of which associative images are born by the power of activated imagination, enhanced by sensory sensitivity, accumulated experiences and acquired knowledge. Spaces that generate reactions engage fragments of the environment which, filled with emotions, give an excuse to confront one's feelings and sensitivity at the meeting point of the "historical" and the "contemporary", the "traditional" and the "modern"...

In such a context, the essence of space architecture of a place, its value, lies in usefulness, which results precisely from stimulating and inspiring, including provoking participants to visualise and "create" pictures in their imagination, each time developing new, individual relationships with the space. In effect of this imaginary interaction, subsequent meanings are added in the space formed. Its components and the space itself fulfil their social functions, inspire cultural processes and – importantly – create and establish an area/environment in which many times accumulate, stories overlay, eras permeate – contemporary, modern... postmodern...

The objects brought to life as formal and intellectual **constructs**, permeable in their nature – "openness to new phenomena¹" – together with natural and artificial light, have the possibility to change the connections between the created objects, open and closed interiors, urban and architectural, dispensing their mutual continuations, overlaps and intertwining. Constantly available owing to their close relationship with the recipient/user, they have the possibility of continuous activation. Therefore,

1 *Konstrukty osobiste*, [in:] *Słownik psychologii*, ed. J. Siuta, Kraków 2009, p. 417–418; *George Kelly*, [in:] *Słownik psychologii*, p. 128.

having alternative ways of building meanings in the theory of interpreting events constitutes their essence². The scenario thus created – the concept of spatial „representation” – abounds in plays of form with lines, spots of colour, contrasts of lights and shadows, determining the essence of the philosophy of space. It triggers the need to create commemorations in the sphere of each participant's associations, to the extent that they interpret things as similar or different, known and liked, depending on the events³. Their physical manifestation materialises when the recipients/users return to these places, objects and spaces for these desirable moods. As a result of conveying uttered meanings and content, as well as visualised images which complement them, we finalise readable layers for a given place in the form of images and associations for recalling. Thus, spaces, objects and places (stationary) take on a timeless character of anthropogenic values. The user applies the poetics of space, anticipating phenomena by structuring the repeatable⁴.

Thus, we are dealing with the machinery of art serving to shape the human environment as a *continuum*. Each time, the creator undertakes to design purposeful images, placing objects, elements, forms and, as a result, aesthetic qualities in the frame of these views, and, using them, composes culture-forming values which, from the social standpoint, must appear in the view of the future recipient. Based on the real, existing and available, spatial conditions, the creator works the assigned functional programs, i.e. the future real view of a given enclave, which is a sequence of the general scenario. Then she continues composing the space of interiors, places and objects, conducting conversion based on the use of exemplary concepts such as “merging”, “emphasising”, “limiting”...

The conceptualisation of space takes place in a premeditated manner, often based on scientific foundations, where each formal element is assigned a meaning that is not necessarily semantic and a role in the planned sequence of events. This attribution of meanings provides orientation and the hierarchy of importance of the emerging images, allowing for the correct perception of the designed architectural space of places, at the same time enhancing its exposure and thus the relationship with the recipient⁵, contributing to the creation of a cultural message marked by the poetics of everyday life.

The end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first one outlined the need – recognised by the majority – to build community systems which provide space for symbolic meanings and identification. Therefore, communication competences in the field of understanding symbolic and factual connections, identifying cultural codes, in particular those that do not refer to the common heritage, are becoming relevant again. Parallel to it, a necessity arises of adapting in practice the accepted norms and hierarchy of values, with reference to various forms of cultural activity in different

2 See: *Słownik psychologii*, ed. J. Siuta.

3 A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, *Teoria konstruktów osobistych Georga Kelly'ego w doradztwie zawodowym*, [in:] *XVIII Ogólnopolska Konferencja Szkoleniowa SDSiZ RP*, Lubniewice 2008 (formacie ppt format presentation).

4 A. Paszkowska-Rogacz, *Teoria konstruktów osobistych Georga Kelly'ego...*

5 *Inne przestrzenie, inne miejsca. Inne przestrzenie, inne miejsca. Mapy i terytoria*, ed. D. Czaja, Wołowiec 2013.

social groups in order to build a network of connections and, consequently, social trust⁶. These new parameters of cultural change, dating from the turn of the century – such as “permeation”, “transparency” or „simultaneity” – often introduce prophetic features into the spaces designed. At the same time, an opportunity arises to assimilate differences and dissimilarities in a dialogue where ideas are confronted and attempts are made at forming cultural spaces of equal opportunities. In their structural character, such spaces and sites suggest and promote the creation of new needs through their function, they stimulate reflection and the achievement of the expedient, anticipated level of aesthetic awareness by exchanging socio-cultural activities.

Consequently, the goal seems to be to maintain the need for continuous releasing and familiarising spaces and places as a result of visualising associative images, building the history of places at the same time, so that it can be subjected to the process of identification and defined as one's own, as a result. Going further in such considerations, should the function – that is, the purpose of an **object** – be recognisable in its external form and internal space, or shouldn't it? Is it important that the message conveyed by its external qualities should translate into a clear suggestion of the function it serves, revealing the types of activities pursued inside the facility?

After a long time, problematic formal issues come back again, among others: are the cases when objects are allowed to possess their own spontaneous expression significant? Can the identification of an object remain suspended? Is there a need for a mutual interpretation of the outer and inner space? If so, what do our senses, culturally conditioned by semiosis, confabulate faced with the presence or absence of such relationships? To what extent and whether at all, the individual perception of the recipient's impressions and feelings constitutes own his risk as a user (both a sender and recipient)? After all, the outer space is a country, urban or domestic space... with each of these, the interpretation will stem from the awareness of things and meanings, a result of combining impressions, desires, feelings and thoughts in the process of associations it triggers.

The semantics of a space, object or place raises basic questions and reflections of the most important symbolic nature: in the view and context of “this aesthetic matter and its decor” can one “kill a carp?” – relationships and contexts, mutual references, chains of thoughts and the power of associations incapacitate or liberate thoughts, reactions – including important ones, – that are a consequence of our behaviour. Lack of sensitivity, lack of awareness, emptiness in place of reflection, relativism which makes life an existence without obligations and burdens... without consequences with respect of the inner critical voice. This is not a manifestation of **prophetism** in the sense of vision, but a reference to taking, each time, responsibility for the appropriate compilations of form and matter, together with the symbolism of the colour of the shapes, as well as the functions attributed to them

6

E. Mianowska, K. Walentynowicz-Moryl, *Konceptualizacja i operacjonalizacja kapitału społecznego*, <https://docplayer.pl/300172-Konceptualizacja-i-operacjonalizacja-kapitalu-spoecznego.htm> [access.: 17.04.2022].

– aesthetics – to some extent determined by the existing situation, dictated by necessity. The mutual context, together with the proportions and tensions triggered between the elements – objects – causes, creates, forces or suggests the abandonment of some or other behaviours and activities. It is still about pragmatics, rather than the sacralisation of space. It is about the appropriate selection of means to create a clear context for the specific desired activities planned, behaviours and reflections occurring between the signs and their users in human conduct, demonstrating the conjunctions of the elements of psychology, sociology and knowledge about culture.

An important tool that we can use to establish the contact between the creator and the recipient is undoubtedly the common scope of knowledge about the surrounding world, called a system of “shared experience” or presupposition⁷. Presupposition is a collection of information, *implicit* (classified, undisclosed) or *explicit* (disclosed, known) data, including knowledge of how to translate the use of references and meanings encoded in the constructed space and its structure, and to decipher them as a result of view or analysis. In the process of creation, the contextual-pragmatic presupposition is equally important, as it results from the assigned context and the existing conditions⁸. Social awareness and the scope of knowledge of the potential recipient directly affect the selection and reception of information, both of the expressed one, shaped and implemented, i.e. constructed, as well as the one encoded – sometimes deliberately not articulated. With these relationships, it becomes obvious that perlocution is yet another tool to implement purposes and plans connected with the intended meanings and forms. It provides us with the possibility to introduce and apply thematic leaps in the creation of space and its structures. In the light of the formed architectural space of opportunities considered here, we superimpose ideas and interpretations without any claim to be the only right ones. In confrontation and dialogue, the properties of space, objects and places disappear alternately, as they remain dependent on the time, including the one of the recipient’s location. Certainly, lack of recognition for unity and acceptance of the constant changes resulting from the dispersion of concepts, theses and thoughts combine to form the desired uncertainty...

On the other side... ambiguity, elusiveness of actions aimed at undermining the ingrained beliefs and habits as a result of critical reflections which open up new spaces of different experiences resulting from the discovery of the new. The gradual reconfiguration of the functioning codes perpetuates the depravation of meanings. In this situation, places, spaces and their architecture remain open to the reception of various activities, which, more and more frequently, are of a fluid nature, often on the verge of contractuality, and subject to permanent change. At the same time, consent and, thus, the permission for the users to perform many functions at the same time, results from the fact of a universal, therefore total and irreversible process of networking taking place between everyone, all the time.

7 See: http://is.muni.cz/th/13299/ff_d/09_Presupozycja.pdf.

8 http://is.muni.cz/th/13299/ff_d/09_Presupozycja.pdf. 88.

In such realities and in virtual view, is there still a need for a semantic distinction of space, objects, places and non-places? Do the form and matter indeed have to be filled with content, carry messages in the layer of significance? Is it just “pure energomatter”?

Frequently, it is the structure which gives unity to the whole and constitutes a superior value for the space of the architecture of places, as it refers to the search for universal – owing to their abstract nature – forms of communication

Continuum. PEREGRINATIONS_ Sequence II**

Moment, order, organisation, image, geometry – so many seemingly Cartesian figures⁹.

Pierre Soulages

The set of an **image**, **installation** and **object** created, through interconnections and derivations, an interior full of tension, full of symbolism and ambiguity of relationships, thus giving the opportunity to create new interpretations

The painting *Zamieć (Blizzard)* constitutes a definition of one's own space, world order and rules, the elements of which, called “chips” by the author, determine the continuum in real time.

The installation *Kamienie (Stones)* comprises three-dimensional tangible objects of intended meanings and forms.

As a structure subject to spatial configuration, the object *Chmura (Cloud)* is an attempt at designing, through the physical space, also the mental one for oneself and for others. Filled with images, saturated with emotions, it creates the opportunity to enter the zone of new experiences.

9 A.L. Gołąb, *Przestrzeń powiększona*, „Art Papier”, 130 (2009), no. 10, <http://artpapier.com/index.php?page=artykul&wydanie=84&artykul=1930> [access:: 17.04.2022].



Fig. 1. Exhibition *Peregrinations II – Defining (One's Own) Space*, Beata Gibała-Kapecka, Kaja Czajczyk



Fig. 2. *Zamieć (Blizzard)*, Beata Gibała-Kapecka, painting on canvas, the artist's own technique.



Fig. 3. *Kamienie (Stones)*, Beata Gibała-Kapecka, instalacja, technika własna.



Fig. 4. *Chmura (Cloud)*, Kaja Czajczyk, glued fabric.



Fig. 5. *Chmura (Cloud)*, Kaja Czajczyk, glued fabric.

On the margins of the exhibition by Beata Gibała-Kapecka and Kai Czajczyk *Peregrinations*, March 2022 [Anna Dettloff]

Plan, scenario, predictability – the basic assumptions of many exhibitions and shows we visit, watch, “celebrate”. The presentation *Peregrinations* by Beata Gibała-Kapecka and Kaja Czajczyk in the Fashion Start-up Gallery also had its “scenario” – however, it is understood as a concept of a spatial “presentation”. Adopting such a form of space philosophy makes each participant of the event create his or her own “commemorations” tailored to their own interpretation, determined by events¹⁰. Owing to this, in a tiny gallery at ul. Piłsudskiego 21, a true poetics of space was born – it is a specific interior filled with objects which “familiarised” its neutrality and, at the same time, made it a place of a character universal and timeless on the one hand and strongly involved in the “here” and “now” on the other.

The “here” and “now” of the artists was marked by the date of 24 February 2022 – the beginning of the war in Ukraine, which coincided with the planned commencement of the exhibition. It will not sound overly lofty to say that this day changed our reality. There was a moment of doubt – is it worth creating and writing about art in the face of such events? There was a certain drama, some tension in our – the artists and mine – first meeting at the gallery. We began to talk, looking at the exhibits, at the place with the eyes that had previously seen the war reports of death, blood, indescribable suffering. This network of images of the present influenced the perception of the exhibition. Under the new perspective, art began to bud, an artistic vision was shaped by the reality that we experienced. Therefore,

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I refer here to the text of Beata Gibała-Kapecka *Peregrination... defining (one's own) space* which is the word accompanying the exhibition, and the related article by A. Paszkowskiej-Rogacz *Teoria konstruktów osobistych Georga Kelly'ego w doradztwie zawodowym*.

doubt lasted only for a short time and the only answer was a brief: YES! It is worth creating art and it is worthwhile writing about it!

The beginning of the war cleared the minds covered with a thick shell of illusions. The memory brought out events and works from the past, from among which I would particularly like to recall two: Karolina Lanckorońska's *Wspomnienia wojenne (War Memories)* and Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*. Once again, I went back to that difficult book and that terrifying painting. I will quote a passage in which Lanckorońska describes the period of imprisonment in the concentration camp in Ravensbrück, where she stayed from January 1943 until the end of the war, secretly conducting "lectures" for her inmates:

In this torment, one symptom was puzzling. The denser the crematorium smoke got, the closer and more directly each of us looked death in the eyes, the more the need for spiritual goods increased, simply intellectual hunger. The demand was impossible to satisfy, orders for "lectures" multiplied. Every afternoon, there was a lesson at the „rabbits' place"¹¹ in the third block. A group of girls returned to the block at this time, pickets were stationed and a lecture on the history of culture from the times of Charlemagne began, or a lesson on Gothic style. The listeners, who never knew whether this was not the last day of their lives, listened with great focus and real interest.¹²

With great simplicity, these words describe an extreme situation demonstrating that talking and writing about art is significant and valuable. Lanckorońska's lectures in Ravensbrück brought at least a moment of comfort to the women locked within the walls and barbed wire perimeters of the camp, which can only be compared to hell on earth.

A few years earlier, in 1937, *Guernica*, a huge painting by Pablo Picasso was created – one of the most powerful artistic expressions of opposition to the war in the 20th century, which has remained valid to this day. The painting is a reference to the events of 27 April 1937, when Hitler's air force, supported by the fascist opposition led by General Francisco Franco, bombed Guernica, a town in northern Spain. It was the first carpet raid on civilians in history, aimed at intimidating the population and causing terror. Battle planes fired at the defenceless civilians running for their lives. The destruction was terrifying – 70% of the city was turned into rubble, and one third of the population, that is, 1,600 people, got injured or killed. We had never thought that we would see such scenes in reality in the 21st century. Picasso's painting, executed with a dark, monochrome palette of grey, black and white, has an incredible power of expression. It is filled with death and suffering. The impact of this painting is powerful, as evidenced by the events of several years ago. In February 2003, when the United Nations delegation in the Security Council opted for the US to initiate military intervention in Iraq, a copy of Picasso's *Guernica* was covered with a dark cloth during the press conference. After all, the enormity of suffering shown in this painting is a summary of every war, which is always evil

11 In the Ravensbrück camp, this was the name given to young girls subjected to cruel 'medical experiments'.

12 K. Lanckorońska, *Wspomnienia wojenne. 22 IX 1939 – 5 IV 1945*, Kraków 2011, p. 324. Descriptions of secret lectures can be found on other pages of *Wspomnienia Wojenne*, among others, on p. 243, 277, 312.

and an accumulation of unimaginable suffering. Picasso's work shows the unique power of art, especially in the face of such events.

In this context, the question returns: what should art be like? Neutral, self-centred, indifferent to the turbulences of life and history? Or, perhaps, involved, responsive, commenting on the reality? These questions have arisen in various forms and are very common. Probably, first of all, it should be sensitive, empathic, co-creating our world, the reality – simply, present.

Such “presence” determined the space of *Peregrinations* to a great extent. The formal play of lines, of flatness and three-dimensionality, of blankness and spots of colour, of white and colourful, light and shadow, darkness and brightness, leads us along the threads of a poetic narrative. We cease to feel the micro-scale of the room – the narrative builds new, infinite spaces, pulling us out of the constraints imposed by the wall. A small physical space becomes a boundless space of our thoughts, feelings and experiences. The lines of narration go beyond the barrier of physical enclosure and enter the space of events – the suffering of people torn out of their places of residence, stripped of their identity, lost and lonely among the crowds at Kraków Central Station and in the darkness of the night in Ukraine. Thus, spontaneously, the exhibition space became the presence, *continuum* of reality. The installation was supposed to tell about art, about man, about philosophy, about space from an existential and metaphysical perspective – however, the intense experience of the present events overlapped with the original thought, carving new lines of narration in them. The nature of human experience is the path from vague feelings to clear concepts. The human mind strives to read and name the reality. The idea of a story, a narrative is inscribed in our nature, as it guarantees understanding, and, as Olga Tokarczuk rightly points out in her Nobel prize ceremony speech, the awareness of oneself and one's fate. The simplicity, clarity of form, and even a certain severity, which determined the principles of the *Peregrinations* exhibition allowed, at the same time, for the peregrination of our thoughts and associations to various traces of memory, opening new spaces of experience.

In Beata Gibała-Kapecka's words in the author's comment on the exhibition, an extremely capacious and accurate term “claim” is used in this context. If Beata Gibała-Kapecka and Kaja Czaczyk had had claims against the *Peregrinations* exhibition, if they had carried out only their own, preimposed plan, this exhibition would not make any sense today, in the circumstances in which it is now presented. This exhibition gained its greatest value by existing in a specific time and space, in which objects themselves imposed new, unforeseen forms of interrelations, flows and meanings. The narrative threads weaved in the original vision, merged with the events and experiences of the reality in which we had to find ourselves again. I remember my first conversation with Beata Gibała-Kapecka in January and then the doubt, the sense of meaninglessness and the process of installing the exhibition, which began to live its life in the process of creation from 24 March 2022. At this point, there were no more claims – I saw both authors standing next to their work and observing with amazement what happens

when something more emerges, when the work begins to create the script itself, speaking in words that have never been entered into its “database”. It is in this lack of claim that true art is born, which, especially in the face of war and barbarism, takes on an additional meaning and sense.

In the presentation *Peregrinations*, symbols and codes deeply rooted in our consciousness appeared. These include: word, whiteness, stone, bull, cloud. Identifying their meanings becomes a condition for understanding the narrative recorded by means of the object and form – and, especially, their mutual relationship and the way of communicating the content.

In the *Word* accompanying the installation, Beata Gibała-Kapecka tells a parallel narrative about her own scientific, philosophical and artistic peregrinations around the space, place and object – their relationship towards the recipient, user. She enters into a dialogue with the world of concepts, meanings and discourses surrounding man and space, their mutual ways of communication. She deals with an important aspect of the awareness of things and meanings in the process of associations in both the sender and the recipient. The artist poses a question about the risks this process entails. This key question can only be answered in the affirmative – yes, there is risk associated with any relationship, which, in its essence, must be at least bilateral and always associated with freedom. Encroaching on the liberty of another being is always subject to risk. She writes about responsibility – an issue extremely important in the process of creating new spaces, places, and objects which always leave their mark on the initiation of behaviours resulting from the created contexts, proportions or tensions. As a basic tool for establishing contact between the creator and the recipient, she mentions a common scope of knowledge about the surrounding world – the so-called “shared experience” or presupposition. Unfortunately, the recent tragic events of the war in Ukraine and various ways of reacting to the beastly behaviour have broken our optimistic belief in the possibility of agreement and dialogue. The world is just as big as it was tens, hundreds or thousands of years ago, and the achievements of the last industrial revolution – digitisation and rapid information transfer – have given us a sense of the “global village” and unity in multiplicity only for a short time. The way of perceiving reality, including artistic reality, is entangled in a network weaved of many mental, cultural, geographical¹³ or political interdependencies. The artist asks about the reasonableness of determining the constructed spaces, objects, places and “non-places” by imposing on them preconceived definitions, meanings, ideas and interpretations.

In the small space of the gallery at Piłsudskiego Street, what was described by Beata Gibała-Kapecka in the word accompanying or, rather, co-creating the exhibition, took place:

In this situation, places, spaces and their architecture remain open to the reception of various activities, which more and more frequently are of a fluid nature, often on the verge of contractuality, and subject to permanent change.

13 Geographical, especially in the sense of the so-called humanistic geography represented by, among others, American geography professor Yi-Fu Tuan (b. 1930), author of many books devoted to this issue.

The message that the installation conveys becomes universal, but not uninvolved. Elsewhere, we can read:

Not only are new spaces and viewing sites created, but also areas of interaction, as a result of which associative images are born by the power of activated imagination, enhanced by sensory sensitivity, accumulated experiences and acquired knowledge.

Our experience, multi-sensory perception of reality, the knowledge we possess, always determine the act of recognising, or even noticing, the new. In the context of artistic creation, the author touches upon the most basic issues – the cognitive process, the development of the human brain, which, despite the progress of neurobiology and other sciences, is still more mysterious than the space around us... We still have more questions than answers.

So what is the word that determines our perception of reality in general? The word is not our tool, it is a part of us – a piece of our humanity. Without the word we are helpless – naming and verbalisation are the conditions for understanding the reality. I remember Professor Jan K. Ostrowski's lectures during the first year of art history at the Jagiellonian University, when he spoke about the importance of describing a work of art, because without translating what we can see into a sequence of logical verbal statements, we are never able to get to know a work – not only of architecture, sculpture or painting, but also of art whose means of expression is acting, becoming, changing, or, for example, conceptualism, where language is the basic and often the only medium of communication. To this day, I am faithful to this basic action of a historian, a critic of art. Verbalisation of visual experiences in research on art is always the primary instrument and no shortcut is possible here. The word describes experience, but it also has the power to create reality. Both these functions are revealed in artistic activities, for which philosophical reflection is an extremely important, even indispensable, tool.

The primitive man began "artistic activity" 40–30 thousand years ago, decorating the first stone tools, creating ornaments, geometric signs and impressive engravings as well as rock paintings. He used the first symbols, which are evidence of emerging thinking in terms of language¹⁴. The subsequent, very long stage of this process is recording words, statements, finally stories. The written language marked the end of the millions of years of prehistory. It seems that it was one of the key moments in the development of civilisation. Also because "written language had power over time and the unique power of creating reality"¹⁵.

The word, placed closest to the entrance, simply written on white paper, introduces us into **whiteness**. Initially, a piece of paper is always white. Although cut into equal sheets, it feels to be infinity,

14 The basic role of language in human development, both in terms of phylogenesis and ontogenesis, is repeatedly emphasized by Prof. Jagoda Cieszyńska in many books and articles, including in: *Na początku było słowo, Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis*, ed. B. Faron, Kraków 2009 (Studia Historicolitteraria 9).

15 J. Cieszyńska, *Metoda krakowska wobec zaburzeń rozwoju dzieci. Z perspektywy fenomenologii, neurobiologii i językoznawstwa*, Kraków 2013, p. 24.

nothingness, beginning – a *tabula rasa* that will become the beginning of a story, an event. It is the place where the word begins to exist in time and space. “Something that happens, and is not told, ceases to exist and dies.”¹⁶ Also, a word – only spoken – exists for a short time and vanishes into oblivion. It used to be recorded in various ways, today we associate its specificity and “tangibility” primarily with the whiteness of the paper or the computer screen. Whiteness has the power to preserve, but also the energy to absorb. It is enough to observe what happened to the suprematist figures of Kazimierz Malewicz – eventually absorbed into the infinity of whiteness in *White on White*. When, in turn, the white of the fog comes, we do not see the shape, the colours.

Whiteness is associated with a new beginning, empty space, openness, purity (primarily moral, but also sterility), innocence, with submission (white flag), but also with victory. It is also a symbol of sadness, grief and death (especially in Asian cultures). Whiteness denotes goodness, neutralises and calms. Also, whiteness came to be traditionally perceived as classical with respect to ancient art (which, *nota bene*, used to be very colourful) but also the one that somehow referred to it. It is rich in meanings. From the technological and scientific point of view, white is not even a colour – it is a shade, it complements other colours. Colour is an expression of light, the result of reflecting and absorbing light waves – it is not a substance, it is rather an “accident” of a substance. White reflects almost all the light. Sometimes it seems transparent (for example, after submerging a white fabric in the water, we obtain a semi-transparent effect).

The walls of the gallery, the paper of pages written on, the large image that hangs opposite the entrance, and, finally, the cloud suspended in the centre are dominated by white. It seems that, together, they create a homogeneous clean space in which stories and messages leading us along the narrative path are recorded – preserved by means of the word, a painterly and sculptural form, as well as a digital message presented on the cloud.

When we enter the gallery, we are absorbed by whiteness (behind the glass door, there is already darkness), our eyes have to get used to it, our senses slowly calm down. We can see the painting, with the three-dimensional cloud overlapping it. On the side, at the height of our faces, from the corner of the eye, we can notice strings of black words, resembling abstract images. We are not able to interpret them as yet, because it takes a moment to familiarise with the captivating white interior. They act more like the “encrypted” numerical paintings by Roman Opalka. The word is still a visual abstraction. We move on and stand in front of the submerged in whiteness forms of the painting entitled *Zamieć* (Blizzard) which seems suspended in a vacuum. As a result of the movement of the air, the surface of the image trembles slightly. It is like the surface of water in its flatness and dominance of

white in the painting. The layer of white is applied thickly, sometimes with circular movements of painting tools. It creates a subtle, chiaroscuro texture, somewhat foggy in appearance.

Out of the whiteness of the image, various rounded shapes emerge, in shades of grey and foggy blues, reminding **stones**. Fine, subtle touches of the brush on their surfaces are suggestive of simplified shapes of people, or maybe angels. One of these forms clearly dominates – located on the left, similar to a large boulder, it reminds an animal form – a bull. As we go further, it turns out that the painting has not ended, but it is continued by its “chips” – this time in the three-dimensional form of stones – embedded in the wall, arranged in an irregular strip, as if thrown in there with great force. The author, Beata Gibała-Kapecka, called this work – painting and installation – *Zamieć (Blizzard)*.

We live in a climate in which we sometimes have the opportunity to experience a natural phenomenon called a blizzard – i.e. a strong bitterly cold wind accompanied by a widespread heavy snowfall (as we can read in the Collins English Dictionary). Because I love words, I'll go even further. We can also use the related verb “zamiatać” (sweep) when thinking about the wind, and, as we can read, it means: “to remove from a surface with or as if with a broom or brush” (Merriam Webster Thesaurus). Talking about a blizzard, we also sometimes use the term “snow storm”. Well, a storm is, first of all, a “disturbance of the atmosphere marked by wind”, and, secondly, a “tumultuous outburst” (Merriam Webster Thesaurus), as in the term “storms of history”.

Precisely these concepts: “sweeping”, “shifting”, “power” and “shock” are key for understanding the artwork. A stone, especially a large one, cannot be easily moved. Perhaps, it even should not be moved – according to the philosophy of the Far East, every stone, as a part of nature, has its own pace in the universe, intended for it. In various philosophies, a stone is a symbol of power and strength of survival. In a film story from 1990–2000, Andrzej Strumiłło, an artist and philosopher, talks about the journey of granite boulders from the ice age from Scandinavia to the Suwałki region, stating:

What I can say about a stone is – it lives long, it has seen a lot and keeps silent, while what can be said about man is that he lives briefly, knows little and speaks a lot.

In the history of the Earth, huge forces moved mountains, stones and carried boulders (called erratic rocks). A stone is a part of the earth, it is a natural element, it underwent a long path of transformations before becoming stable solid matter. Often, the process of shaping it has taken millions of years. Ultimately, it rested in a particular place – like a man. Therefore, the stones in the painting can be perceived as symbols of people – settled down, inhabiting specific spaces, creating places and habitats. According to Yi-Fu Tuan:

“Space” is more abstract than “place.” What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value.¹⁷

Stones in the painting are framed – limited by the rectangle of the image. In a way, they are “settled” in this place. Those thrown into the wall are forcibly torn out, devoid of context, lost in the boundless whiteness of the wall, lonely despite sticking together. This is not their natural environment. Looking at these stone forms, I can see images of people fleeing war, ripped from their places, wandering on foreign soil. The author calls them “chips” of the image transferred into the third dimension. They are real, tangible and yet ambiguous and elusive. They force our thoughts and ideas to go beyond the familiar, “settled” area.

There is great power and hope hidden in the stone. We can look at the stone from the perspective of the philosophy of the Asian cultures, in which the contemplation of emptiness dominates – in the Zen gardens, spaces between stones are the most important, the equivalent of which is “not holding on” to any thought in meditation, getting rid of discursive thinking. However, in interpreting this painting, the European tradition of the “cornerstone”, which was once laid at the quoin of the house, seems to be more adequate. Originally, it had a structural significance, it was a support. Later, it became primarily a ceremonial element, a beautiful custom. But, to this day, the term “cornerstone” remains to be used in the meaning of the basis, the foundation of something – also in a metaphorical sense. In one of the Old Testament psalms there is the following passage: “The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone” (Ps 118: 22). This is about Christ – the stone, which was first rejected and then accepted as the chosen stone. This beautiful metaphor describes the process of rejection that gives rise to a new transformation. This biblical message gives hope, like the words of Christ to Peter: “You are Peter [or Rock], and on this Rock I will build my Church” (Mt 16: 18). The symbolism of the stone plays a huge role in the Bible. St. Peter even uses the term “living stones” with reference to his listeners (1 Peter 2: 5), and at the time of his entry into Jerusalem, Christ turns to the Pharisees: “I say unto you, If they be silent, the stones shall cry out” (Luke 19: 40). The biblical symbolism revives the stone, gives it a word – the power of speaking. The stone ceases to be a dead shard of earth, it gains life and energy.

In our culture, stone is a unique symbol, and its deep metaphorical layers can be read on various levels. The wealth of the meanings in the Biblical symbolism of the stone seems to be closest to the essence of the message contained in the painting and the installation *Zamieć* (Blizzard). Perhaps both meanings – the Far Eastern philosophy of emptiness and the Christian philosophy of fullness and life - have merged here? The symbolism of the stones in the painting and the “chips” in the wall opens for

17 Y.F. Tuan, *Przestrzeń i miejsce*, Warszawa 1987, p. 16, https://www.academia.edu/19846369/Yi_Fu_Tuan_Space_and_Place access: 8 May 2022

us the space of experiencing the painting and installation as a metaphor of the storm of war endured by Ukraine – being torn, scattered, full of uncertainty and questions about the possibility of return.

Among the stones, however, another symbol appears – a **bull**. At the beginning, I referred to Picasso's *Guernica* and we can interpret this figure according to this key. The bull holds a huge number of meanings. It can symbolise the Sun, fire, sacrifice, death, silence, abundance, masculinity, fertility, strength, power, energy, courage, fury, savagery – and these are just some of the wide range of its meanings¹⁸. In the painting *Zamieć*, the bull-shaped stone may be understood as strength, energy, perhaps even dangerous savagery, enclosed – rendered harmless – in a stone. In this situation, the bull is not able to wreak the havoc present in *Guernica* – it will not hurt anyone anymore, its energy has frozen in the matter. But we can also read it as a sacrifice resulting in fertility, rebirth, the chain of life. In Sumerian beliefs, both meanings are combined – god Enlil, transformed into an unbridled bull, throws himself at a wild cow symbolising the Tigris River and fills it with fresh, life-giving water¹⁹. The circle of life is thus closed.

When we turn away from the painting and stand in the middle, we find ourselves in the space of the suspended “cloud”. A **cloud** is one of the transient states of water. Sooner or later, it will change. After all, it is an element – variability, fluidity, transition from one state to another constitutes its identity. Water, seemingly unstable, does not cease to exist – there is always the same amount of it, although each time we see it in a different form. The author Kaja Czajczyk chose a cloud – condensed water vapour – a kind of fog that blurs shapes, limits the spaces seen, strives to float high. You can hide, “disappear”, find peace in it. Two presentations are simultaneously projected onto the white of the cloud – a moving, flowing crowd of figures and graphics by the artist, in which colourful abstract forms are doused with pulsating grey disappearing in a vibrating black circle, reminding the eclipse of the sun. The elongated irregular form of the cloud is made of delicate material fixed in a rigid, lightweight form. The slightest movement of the air makes it move. It seems elusive, “airy”. Its form is open, we can stand under it and feel as if we were in its interior, which is also the screen for presentation. The space of the cloud becomes a projection of reality. Images that we see inside the cloud go almost completely dark for a short moment – it brings the association with the blackout, terribly dark map of Ukraine at night, observed by satellites. This comparison is, in our opinion, extremely real, because the shape of the cloud resembles the elongated shape of the Ukrainian country. But the cloud is also an attempt to define one's own space, its boundaries in the physical and mental sense.

Each place creates a network of connections with the distant spaces we know, in which we were, which have left a permanent mark in our memory. Viewing the exhibition, we transfer our experiences into the exhibition space. In this context, a fragment of Professor Karolina Lanckorońska's

18 W. Kopaliński, *Słownik symboli*, Warszawa 1990, p. 37–39.

19 W. Kopaliński, *Słownik symboli*, p. 38.

memories is poignant, who was detained in darkness for seven days following her arrest by the Gestapo in 1942. This is how she describes this time:

I was alone, and I was calm. [...] Soon I got used to the new situation and invented a pleasant way to spend the day. Every day, I moved to one of the great European galleries in my imagination and viewed the paintings. Naturally, I started with the Viennese gallery I had “grown up” with. Then it was Prado, Louvre, Uffizi and Venice. I sometimes achieved an astonishing intensity, and I can assure you that the Venetian colour tone never seemed as fiery to me as it did in the dark cell. [...] I moved back to the world that once used to be mine, and I felt fine²⁰.

How to define space and place in this context? As Beata Gibała-Kapecka rightly points out, entering into any interior, man transforms it, interprets it anew, bringing his knowledge and memory to it, destroying its limitations with his mind. Owing to the images stored in her memory, feelings and experiences acquired in various spaces, as well as to the incredible power of the human mind, the limited place of Lanckorońska's imprisonment, narrowed down to the very limit, turns blackness, nothingness – “non-place” – into a new space: an intense, almost real one, allowing her to survive.

In this respect, much is also explained by humanistic geography, which perceives man as the creator of the world of values, including spatial ones. Perhaps it is worth recalling the words of Yi-Fu Tuan here:

Enclosed and humanized space is place. Compared to space, place is a calm center of established values. Human beings require both space and place. Enclosed and humanised space becomes a place. In contrast to space, a place is a peaceful centre of fixed values. Human beings need both a place and a space.²¹

As he points out, human life is a dialectical movement between safe shelter and adventure, between attachment and freedom. A healthy being eagerly accepts both restriction and freedom, the limitation of a place and the openness of space. Space, according to the concept of humanistic geography, is a projection of various values created by diverse human cultures. In space, there are not only material structures, but also codes allowing to interpret and find the meaning of human life in both the purely biological and metaphysical dimensions²².

Creating a place saturated with artistic, cultural and emotional message, the authors of the exhibition gave it a deep meaning. They allowed the original concept – a theoretical construct, a planned sequence of events – to undergo a spontaneous modification, which resulted from entering into a relationship with the reality. As a result, a network of multiple threads was created.

20 K. Lanckorońska, *Wspomnienia wojenne...*, p. 161–162.

21 Y.F. Tuan, *Przestrzeń i miejsce*, p. 75 https://www.academia.edu/19846369/Yi_Fu_Tuan_Space_and_Place access: 8 May 2022

22 D. Jędrzejczyk, *Geografia humanistyczna miasta*, Warszawa 2016.

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** Exhibition *Peregrinations II – Defining (Ones Own) Space*

Painting/installation: Beata Gibała-Kapecka

Object *Chmura*: Kaja Czajczyk

Fashion Start-Up Gallery, ul. Józefa Piłsudskiego 21, 33-332 Kraków

<https://fsug.waw.asp.krakow.pl/>

The exhibition was held from 18 March to 7 April 2022 at the Fashion Start-up Gallery at the Faculty of Interior Design of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow as part of the project „„Projektowanie przyszłości – program rozwoju Akademii Sztuk Pięknych im. Jana Matejki w Krakowie na lata 2018–2022, umowa nr POWR.03.05.00-00-Z217/17””.(Designing the future – the development program of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow for the years 2018-2022, agreement no. POWR.03.05.00-00-Z217/17)”.

On the margins of the exhibition by Beata Gibała-Kapecka and Kaja Czajczyk *Peregrinations*, March 2022, ***

Anna Dettloff

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