



inAW Journal
Multidisciplinary Academic Magazine

JOANNA ŁAPIŃSKA

FOUND IN THE LANDSCAPE – THE BEGINNING

**Chaos and order –
a search for a method and for sources**

ABSTRACT

*I could be myself, but without surprise,
and this would mean
being someone else.*

Wisława Szymborska, *W zatrzęsieniu* / fragment

The article and the research task, "Found in the landscape – inconspicuous / coveted – imagined spaces", in which this article is written, were inspired by Wisława Szymborska's poem "W zatrzęsieniu", which emphasized the value of an attitude rejecting schemes, seeking, focused on affirmation and positive surprise. This approach to the surrounding world allows you to discover new values, images, places, which can be the beginning of a creative process. The article is a prelude to the above research task: it explains the title, assumptions and introduces the first forms – imagined spaces found in the landscape.

KEYWORDS

Kōbō Abe; Rafał Borcz; Julian Charrière; Norman Foster; Piotr Gajewski; Herzog & de Meuron; Beata Gibała-Kapecka; Juliusz Kosin; George de Mestral; Ryūe Nishizawa; Patrycja Ochman; Elżbieta Pakuła-Kwak; Mick Pearce; Renfro; Fariborz Sahb; Diller Scofidio; Hasan Syed; Tetsuo Kondo; Transsolar; Julian Vincent; Leonardo da Vinci; Ai Weiwei; bionics; form; fragment; inspiration; rhizome; rootstalk; landscape; model; nature; beginning; research project; imagined spaces; space; written space; semantics; variability; Blur Building on the Neuchâtel Lake in Yverdon-Les-Bains; Cloudscapes (Architectural Biennial in Venice in 2010); Eastgate in Harare; Esplanade-Theatres on the Bay in Singapore; Grace Farms – River Building in New Canaan; Rolex Learning Center in Lausanne; Guangzhou Evergrande Stadium; National Stadium in Beijing; Bahaitów Temple in Bahapur; Velcro

Work shared under [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License](#).

Publisher: Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, Interior Architecture Department

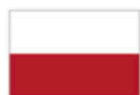
Editor: prof. dr hab. Beata Gibała-Kapecka, mgr Marika Wato

Graphic design: Marika Wato

Translation PL-EN: MSc Maciej Jęczmiński

Title page photograph: [Jeremy Bishop](#) / [Adobe Stock](#)

The 'inAW Journal' periodical was established owing to the subsidy under the project titled:
"Designing the Future – the Program for Development of Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in
Krakow in years 2018-2022"



**Rzeczpospolita
Polska**

Unia Europejska
Europejski Fundusz Społeczny



dr Joanna Łapińska

Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow

Found in the landscape – the beginning

Chaos and order – a search for a method and for sources

Hypothesis	6
Immersion – the beginning	6
Sand	7
Idea	10
The assignment of meaning – frolic of the moment, one word, image, thought	11
Notations of ideas – the research method	12
Trees, leaves, flowers...	12
Clouds	14
Mounds, rows and points – the thesis	16

Hypothesis

An order emerges from chaos. This also applies to research work which may start with the collection of seemingly unrelated elements that lead to the definition of research methods and the selection of sources.

Immersion – the beginning

Shreds, bursts, fragments, all this is looking for a new form, then the rhythm comes into play and I start writing in this rhythm, write for it, it is the rhythm that pushes me and not what we call ‘thought’ (...), immediately begins to swing.¹

Each beginning is an immersion in the endlessness of the Unknown, reaching into the depths of memory, collecting and rejecting incoming thoughts, flowing with and against current, drowning, jerking, reeling, searching for pearls until the loss of breath, catching all the pebbles in the hope that one of them is philosophical, stacking them in ranks, columns, mounds, dolmens ...

Children playing with white pebbles turn them into legions of soldiers in fierce battles that can change the image of the world. By giving meaning to things, they transform the world.²

This is also the beginning of the research project “Found in the landscape – inconspicuous / coveted – imagined spaces” which officially launched on September 1, 2020, with immersion in the Unknown, gathering, segregation, skipping, searching in different directions. Like a rhizome, it branches in all directions, catches various unrelated threads, building a rhizomatic network, a spatial labyrinth, so that, like a rhizome, it releases at least one knot with a bud from each fragment and becomes invincible. So I’m slowly picking up and collecting pebbles, small for now, but in large numbers, and segregating them, laying them in mounds, paths, not in dolmens for now because I did not fall into the cauldron, to move menhira, but, who knows, maybe someday? There is a mass of the pebbles, it is difficult to make selections at this stage, and there will be even more of them. Many will be rejected, some will crack into gravel, and the element will clean the sand.

¹ J. Cortázar, *Gra w klasy*, Warszawa 2006, p. 486.

² A. Oz, *Dotknij wiatru, dotknij wody*, Poznań 2011, p. 124.

Sand

Water washes the sand, moves one grain after another. Millions of grains in one wave move, swirl, collide, rub and die under an avalanche of others to be on top in a moment. They build hills, recesses, bulging strands and ditches, but only for a moment, to immediately wipe the form, melt into an apparent unity, a unified plane ready to accept each subsequent movement.

The sea and sand, photograph by Joanna Łapińska



Source: The author's archive

Everything that has form is an illusion. Only the movement of sand, negating all forms, is certain³...

³ K. Abe, *Kobieta z wydm*, Kraków 2007, p. 36.

Water helps the sand, makes it sticky and lasting longer in its form, but the water also destroys, putting the grains in motion, destroying what was built.

Streams of water and air cause restless currents. The smallest wavelength of such an agitated stream is roughly equal to the cross-section of the sand grain in the desert. According to this property, only such sand is sucked from the ground in a direction perpendicular to the flow of the current. If the cohesiveness of earth is low, even a light breeze snatches the sand into the air. Stones and clay remain unmoved, and sand, falling to the ground, accumulates on the leeward side. It therefore appears that the basic property of sand belongs to the sphere of aerodynamics.⁴

Sand is a loose sedimentary rock composed mainly of quartz. The cross-section of grains ranges from 1/16 to 2 mm, on average 1/8 mm. As Kōbō Abe's "The Woman in the Dunes" reads: "Sand never rests. It's slowly but definitely coming to the surface of the earth."⁵

The Woman in the Dunes is a delightful novel about the power of sand. The story begins when a man arrives at the sea side in search of a rare species of insect. Not being able to return home before dark, he reaches an unusual place.

He was surprised that only where houses stood the area did not raise. The road climbed uphill and the village remained on the same level. No, not only did the road rise but also the area between the buildings. In fact, the whole village lay on a rising slope, and only the houses stood on the same level. This impression deepened constantly, until it finally began to seem to him that all the houses were built in large cavities hollowed out in the dune slope. The sand hills through which the road ran were now above the roofs. And the houses were hiding deeper and deeper in the sand (...). The man looked towards the village and saw rows of huge cavities, which were the larger the closer they were to the ridge of the dunes. Facing the settlement, they formed several parallel layers and looked quite like cells in a decaying honeycomb. The village was imposed on the dunes or, rather, the dunes overlapped on the village.⁶

⁴ Kōbō Abe, *Kobieta z wydm*, Kraków 2007, p. 15.

⁵ Kōbō Abe, *Kobieta z wydm*, Kraków 2007, p. 16.

⁶ Kōbō Abe, *Kobieta z wydm*, Kraków 2007, p. 11–12.

A female resident of the village hollowed out in the sand takes the man in, which turns out to be tantamount to imprisoning him. From now on, he has to fight not so much with the villagers but with sand filling the cavity and tearing into every hole, ready to bury him alive. Numerous descriptions of the action of grains with a cross-section of $1/8^7$ build an atmosphere of horror, bring out the power dosing in something, it would seem, inconspicuous, which, however, in the mass poses a significant threat. The man comes up with the thought: “Or maybe not having a form is the best expression of strength?”⁸.

The sand of the Baltic Sea, photograph by Joanna Łapińska



Source: The author's archive

The sand on the beach on the Baltic Sea is one of the more pleasant ones in Europe: fine, yellow, in a warm shade, completely unlike that of the deadly threat in the Japanese novel. It accepts all

⁷ Metonymy concerning sand used by Kōbō Abe.

⁸ Kōbō Abe, *Kobieta z wydm*, Kraków 2007, .p 29.

traces: feet, paws, palms, is servile to the sea, moistened resists winds, dry is carried by every blast. He lacks a form, is in constant motion and this instability delights. Wave-painted images and reliefs drilled by air currents will form part of the basis of this research project. Imagined spaces will be derived from them, from their views.

Idea

The idea of the project came about during the pandemic, a time of isolation from landscapes, from nature, when imagination had to keep up with the lack of stimuli, when art was one of the many ways to escape madness. This is a response to the issue of the “Nature in Art” exhibition which was staged in MOCAK in 2019, where, in addition to the stunning paintings by Rafał Borcz or Juliusz Kosin, depicting nature in a very subjective way, from an unexpected point of view, there were “Panoramas” by Julian Charrière – high-mountain landscapes artificially created by the artist using flour and firefighting powder on heaps of land on Berlin construction sites. The Swiss artist “finds” beauty hidden in inconspicuous wasteland, nevertheless constituting the landscape, and sees in them “imagined spaces”, an alternative world hidden under the shell of everyday life.

This is also the idea of the research project titled “Found in the landscape – inconspicuous / coveted – imagined spaces” in order to extract from a fragment of the actual landscape another space, unusual, not necessarily associated with a given place, with the original, which is also close to the painting of Rafał Borcz who builds his synthetic landscapes from selected motifs cleaned of unnecessary elements.

Dr. Patrycja Ochman gave a lecture at the International Biennial of Interior Architecture in 2018 on possible space, built from fragments, from scraps of reality, of which, as she emphasized, we are able to build new, countless territories.

When we see a city or a house we don't see what it consists of, what it's made of, but we see signs – shapes that we assign a certain meaning to. We read spaces with one glance, a scan, we capture images that we know. Yet one city and one house contain an infinite number of characters, such as the infinite number of cities that Venice contains in Italo Calvino.⁹

⁹ P. Ochman, *Intro. Przestrzeń możliwa*, [in:] *Publicspace re/in/venting*, ed. Beata Gibała-Kapecka, Kraków 2018, p. 77.

Let me paraphrase Dr. Patricia Ochman's statement for her own project in this way: seeing a tree or a heap of earth, we do not see what it is made up of; we see fragments to which we can assign any meaning. We read the images with a single scan but sometimes the eye deceives, plays a prank, and for a moment we see something completely different, unexpected. Each part of the landscape – a cloud, fog, tree, leaf or flower – can contain an infinite amount of imaginary spaces which manifest themselves to the recipient as the foundation of the thought model, as the foundation of future spatial actions in the process of the assignment of meaning.

The assignment of meaning – frolic of the moment, one word, image, thought

Giving meaning when experiencing space consists usually in an unrealized reading of written values or in assigning new ones. It is a complicated process involving different parts of the brain and, basically (...) the whole person and their surroundings. However, it does not burden the recipient, because they, living in a certain culture, practically from the beginning of their existence are introduced into the existing code – the alphabet of meanings and signs – and on its basis they build the world around them.¹⁰

Let's look at how to give meaning to a group with a limited number of elements. In the Polish alphabet there are 32 letters (characters), which gives 263 130 836 933 693 530 167 218 012 160 000 combinations. There are about 150,000 words in the dictionaries. When we add diminutives to this, we can reach millions, but not quintiliards¹¹, of meaningful words. And, interestingly, 1,200 words are enough to communicate. The average Pole knows several thousand words, and every day he or she uses about 2,000 chosen from over 263*1033 possibilities¹². And yet the number of combinations of a point, line and plane is countless!¹³ The only limitation in this case is the recipient, which will be called into question in the research work described, in activities at the interface of literature, art and architecture.

¹⁰ J. Łapińska, *Przestrzeń zapisana*, praca doktorska, Kraków 2013, p. 49.

¹¹ In English: decillions

¹² See Piotr Komander, *Czy język polski jest bogaty?*, 10/01/2016, <http://secundum.pl/czy-jezyk-polski-jest-bogaty/>.

¹³ See Kandinsky Wassily, *Punkt i linia a płaszczyzna* (Łódź 2019) i Adrian Frutiger, *Człowiek i jego znaki* (Kraków 2010).

Notations of ideas – the research method

„In architectural design, the thought model is the basic model for the creation of the project. This model can be transferred to a project by writing an idea (...). There seem to be six ways to write ideas in architecture.”¹⁴ These are not, of course, methods assigned exclusively to architecture, so it is worth recalling them at this point. These are description, scale drawing (technical drawings), spatial drawing (showing space), film, digital model and physical model¹⁵. Professor Piotr Gajewski further divides models into three categories: the homologous model, which duplicates the principle of the construction of the original – “Observation of nature or natural phenomena is the source of countless models used for homologous solutions”¹⁶; the analogous model, in which you can find features of construction or function – “Analogy is also associated with inspiration. A creative architect builds novel things but they are also embedded in the existing reality, that is, they are inspired by existing beings”¹⁷; as well as the isomorphic model mimicking the form. These methods will be used as a research method to extract the spaces imagined in the project “Found in the landscape – inconspicuous / coveted – imagined spaces”.

Trees, leaves, flowers...

Trees, leaves, flowers have always fascinated artists and architects. In ancient Egypt, a land devoid of forests, where wood, imported from distant countries, was a luxury, a prototype of a structure supported by a stone colonnade was developed, in which today we see a resemblance to evenly growing forest nurseries. The columns were topped with a head in the shape of a lotus or palm tree flower. The form of the column, developed by consecutive civilizations, gained attributes that brought it closer to the natural world: the acanthus head in ancient Greece, the slender Gothic column with a carved head in the form of leaves, or the Baroque stem braided with a stone bindweed.

¹⁴ P. Gajewski, *Model*, Kraków 2019, p. 59.

¹⁵ See P. Gajewski, *Zapisy myśli o przestrzeni*.

¹⁶ P. Gajewski, *Model*, Kraków 2019, p. 73.

¹⁷ P. Gajewski, *Model*, Kraków 2019, p. 85.

The use of the image of the Mediterranean plant, acanthus, from which the decorative motif itself took its name, was not limited to the ornamental motif in architecture. It was also used in vase painting and in relief, and later, in the Middle Ages, in the decoration of manuscripts. In the Renaissance, acanthus flower appeared as an ornament next to the acanthus leaf.

The lotus flower, in turn, present in Egyptian ornamentation, today became the inspiration both for the Bahait temple in the village of Bahapur near New Delhi, the project of Fariborz Sahba, denying the traditional form of the dome-vaulted structure on the set of the rounded nonagon, and for the newly built soccer stadium of the Guangzhou Evergrande team, designed by American architect Hasan Syed, which is to become the third largest stadium in the world. The structure of petals of this plant, with numerous processes that do not retain water, and also cause surface cleaning, allowed scientists to develop self-cleaning surfaces, e.g. roof coverings.

Bionics, also called biomimetics and biomimicry, is a science that translates nature observations into technological solutions, using the achievements of nature to improve human life, converting what is discovered in the landscape into artificial, usually useful creations. There are many examples of this, including the hull structure of the boat imitating the thick skin of a dolphin, the use of ultrasound “borrowed” from bats in medicine, or the cochlear implant for the hearing-impaired. In 1941, the fruit of burdock, which got stuck to a dog’s coat while walking, became the basis for the invention of the synthetic velcro by the dog owner, George de Mestral. British biologist Julian Vincent, the world-renowned biomimetic specialist, developed, yet as a student, the design of smart clothing that adapts to ambient temperature, inspired by the principle of the construction and operation of the cone, the scales of which open under the influence of heat. Similarly, the façade of the “Esplanade - Theatres on the Bay” complex in Singapore, designed by the local DP Architects (DPA) office, is covered with aluminium panels that open and close under the influence of light. In the field of architecture we should also mention the design of the Eastgate office and commercial complex in Harare (Zimbabwe) by Mick Pearce, in which the ventilation system solution is modeled on vertical ducts in termite mounds, and of course the London office building designed by Norman Foster, called Gherkin, which was inspired by the light and very durable construction of the skeleton of a primitive ocean sponge from the *Euplectella aspergillum* species, called “Venus’ flower basket”.

Bionics, however, is not a contemporary invention. Already in the 15th century Leonardo da Vinci, using the sense of observation and knowledge of various living organisms, designed machines, which to this day delight millions.

There are many successful architectural implementations which not only drew technological solutions from the natural world but are also themselves, in a sense, a tribute to natural beauty. They re-scale minute creations of the animal world into the impressive size of urban structures. Examples include the Beijing National Stadium, “The Bird’s Nest”, built for the 2008 Olympic Games by the Herzog & de Meuron team project in collaboration with Ai Weiwei, or the transposition of the landscape found into the language of construction, as can be seen, among other things, in many works of Japanese office SANAA. “The Rolex Learning Center” built in Lausanne (Switzerland) in 2010, consists of two undulating layers of a 37,000 m² surface, with air between and penetrating through the holes, alluding to the soft mountainous Swiss landscape. In New Canaan (USA), Kazuyo Sejima and Ryūe Nishizawa designed the new “River Building” for the Grace Farms Foundation – a glittering ribbon meandering like a river in a valley, reflecting the blue and gray of the sky.

Clouds

The activities of the SANAA office, due to the sensitivity of its staff, should be located on the borderline of architecture and poetry. Their buildings, using modest resources, are delicate, ephemeral, emanate peace and knowledge of generations, blur boundaries between the outside and the interior, between dream and reality. Owing to their reflective planes, such as polished sheet and glass, they change depending on the weather conditions: sunlight, cloud cover and environmental influences. Just like the clouds in Wisława Szymborska’s poem:

I would need to be in a hurry
with describing clouds –
after a brief moment
they cease to be the ones, they begin to be different.

Their property is
to never repeat

their shapes, shades, poses and composition¹⁸.

They are variable, unstable, they pay no attention to anything, to us, to those watching them, to the life under them.

Clouds do not need to be seen to flow¹⁹.

Here it is worth to mention two clouds artificially created, fascinating, astonishing and at the same time silencing, moving the audience into a different reality, allowing for the experience of being in the cloud, thus closer to poetry than architecture.

The first cloud floated on the Neuchâtel Lake in Yverdon-Les-Bains, the wind carried the cloud, stretched it, revealing fragments of the steel structure, 35 thousand nozzles. This is the “Blur Building” designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, built for Expo in Switzerland in 2002.

The other cloud hovered over the floor of the hall in the Venetian Arsenal, just above the visitors’ heads, dissolving the columns visually, blurring the view above. This is the “Cloudscapes” by Transsolar + Tetsuo Kondo. produced at the Venice Biennial of Architecture in 2010.

Both were merely momentary emanations, changing in time, trapped, assigned against their nature to the place, the materiality of which had passed with the end of events, while the idea remained in those who were fortunate enough to experience them. As Professor Beata Gibała-Kapecka writes, “the quality of interior space (architecture) is also measured by its ability to go beyond its own assumptions, creating ‘meaning-forming’ illusions that turn the object into a message and a stimulus, while creating a different reality”²⁰.

¹⁸ Wisława Szymborska, *Chmury*, [in:] Wisława Szymborska: *Chwila / Moment*, Kraków 2003.

¹⁹ Wisława Szymborska, *Chmury*, [in:] Wisława Szymborska: *Chwila / Moment*, Kraków 2003.

²⁰ B. Gibała-Kapecka, *Rzecz o kształtowaniu przestrzeni. Wzory związków pomiędzy ideą i formą, treścią i strukturą*, [in:] *Trans-formacja lokalnej tożsamości. Forum. Cracovia. NOT*, ed. B. Gibała-Kapecka, Kraków 2013, p. 19.

Mounds, rows and points – the thesis

This text, like any beginning, turned out to be a collection of thoughts touching the subject, taken out of the abyss of the Unknown and arranged in mounds, rows and points, as confirmed by the hypothesis set at the beginning of the article.

Thesis: An order has emerged from chaos.

As a prelude to the artistic and research project, this article allowed the idea to become clear and to define research methods (literary writing, drawing, photography, ways of recording professor P. Gajewski's ideas, giving meaning, working on construction mechanisms and principles of operation). The inspiration was fragments of the landscape, which are an expression of variability and momentary phenomena in nature (clouds, sand, water) "found" in the course of writing and captured by a photo camera (they will become sources, from them I will draw in my research work – the artistic project) and numerous works of fiction, always present on my artistic path, from which, among other things, I drew during my work on the "Written Space" dissertation. Literary threads of experiencing the space in which I characterized the threads of experiencing space found by me in numerous works of fiction, which I then translated into a space design for the book. The promoter of the work was Professor Elżbieta Pakuła-Kwak with whom we also conduct research. As we write about our activities:

The literary text is an integral part of our research. It is subject to transformations and adaptations dependent on the confluence of inspiring phenomena and insight of observation. Words and images stratify, combine into a rhizomatic network, exceeding the system-defined language of architecture. This is how the processual network of words and images with countless connections was created to activate the design process. It allows you to see more, know more, feel more²¹.

The project "Found in the landscape – inconspicuous / coveted – imagined spaces" is non-constant, variable, flowing like clouds, is a process consisting of an unlimited number of fragments which, like grains of sand, are in constant motion and in this instability of form lies its strength.

²¹ E. Pakuła-Kwak, J. Łapińska, *Otwarte / zamknięte – warsztaty. Aneksy*, [in:] *Aneksy kultury. Dziedzictwo, współczesność, wirtualność*, ed. Jacek Siwczyński, Patrycja Ochman-Tarka, Kraków 2019, p. 50.

REFERENCES

Abe Kōbō, *Kobieta z wydm*, Kraków 2007.

Cortázar Julio, *Gra w klasy*, Warszawa 2006.

Eco Umberto, *Nieobecna struktura*, Warszawa 1996.

Frutiger Adrian, *Człowiek i jego znaki*, Kraków 2010.

Gajewski Piotr, *Model*, Kraków 2019.

Gibała-Kapecka Beata, *Rzecz o kształtowaniu przestrzeni. Wzory związków pomiędzy ideą i formą, treścią i strukturą*, [in:] *Trans-formacja lokalnej tożsamości*. Forum. Cracovia. NOT, ed. Beata Gibała-Kapecka, Kraków 2013.

Kandinsky Wassily, *Punkt i linia a płaszczyzna*, Łódź 2019.

Komander Piotr, *Czy język polski jest bogaty?*, 10/01/2016, <http://secundum.pl/czy-jezyk-polski-jest-bogaty/>.

Łapińska Joanna, *Przestrzeń zapisana*, praca doktorska, Kraków 2013.

Natura w sztuce, ed. Delfina Jałowik, Maria Anna Potocka, Kraków 2019.

Ochman Patrycja, *Intro. Przestrzeń możliwa*, [in:] *Publicspace re/in/venting*, ed. Beata Gibała-Kapecka, Kraków 2018, p. 77–86.

Oz Amos, *Dotknij wiatru, dotknij wody*, Poznań 2011.

Pakuła-Kwak Elżbieta, Łapińska Joanna, *Otwarte / zamknięte – warsztaty. Aneks*, [in:] *Aneksy kultury. Dziedzictwo, współczesność, wirtualność*, ed. Jacek Siwczyński, Patrycja Ochman-Tarka, Kraków 2019, p. 47–62.

Szyborska Wisława, *Chwila / Moment*, Kraków 2003.