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NEW POSTCOVID REALITY
_ THE WORLD VIEW OF ART AND SCIENCE

photo. Beata Cibała-Kapecka



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Agnieszka Hubeny-Żukowska, MSc
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GARDEN - A PLACE OF FULFILLMENT AND A SHELTER FOR ARTISTS

Review paper

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Abstract

There are places in the world that, with their beauty and atmosphere, can take the viewer (or participant) to another dimension. There are extraordinary people who can create such spaces around their homes. The magic of a garden made of passion, love, a desire to illustrate philosophy, or a desire to forget or escape reality turns the garden into a capsule separated from time and space. What do Claude Monet, Frida Kahlo and the cholera, flu and COVID-19 epidemics have in common? How do the design thought and the space of a garden, as a place of expression, change under the influence of various events and emotions? In the post-pandemic reality, can a garden become the “fifth room”, referring to the earlier garden salons and rooms - a modern safe place to work, find fulfillment, rest and live with nature and beauty?

Keywords

garden, gardens, garden art, Claude Monet, Frida Kahlo, Józef Mehoffer, Krzysztof Penderecki, the fifth room, CoViD-19

Garden as art

Just as an image of a garden can be art, so can be the garden itself. This approach to the problem is in line with the definition of painting and horticultural art presented by Kant in his *“Critique of Judgment”*.¹ Of course, it is logical that not every garden is a work of art, as not every object, building or sculpture is. A physically realized garden, alive and variable, can become a series of paintings, or a performance if we treat plants and nature as artists, or an open work of art given the variability of time and matter.

The relationship between art and gardens is very long, intimate and symbolic. Artists had a big influence on garden styles. Good examples include the landscapes of Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), the perfect landscapes of Claude Lorrain (1604-1682) and the romantic ones by Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), which inspired the development of the landscape movement at the end of the 18th century. Idealized or wild, wind-blown, landscapes of the artists of that time were eagerly collected by young aristocrats on Grand Tours. They eagerly transferred their inspirations from Italian landscapes, captured in paintings by artists, to their gardens where they built copies of classical civilization monuments, ancient temples or Palladian villas.²

On the other hand, as of around the early 19th century, it was the gardens that began to affect artists. At that time, urban backyard gardens began to become popular among, and accessible to, the middle class. Suddenly, an average person was given an opportunity to decide on their own space, the opportunity to design a garden and plant vegetation in it for their own pleasure and aesthetic value. Previously, gardens of the ordinary mortals were associated with the cultivation of vegetables and with the breeding of animals. Sometimes the relationship between man and garden was so serious that it turned into a kind of union. Gustave Caillebotte, Camille Pissarro, Henri Matisse, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky are just examples of the artists who mixed gardening tools with the painterly palette. Also David Hockney makes no secret of the importance of nature and his garden, which, moreover, often appears in the artist's paintings.³

1 “Painting (...) I would divide into that of the beautiful portrayal of nature, and that of the beautiful arrangement of its products. The first is painting proper, the second landscape gardening (...) The latter consists in no more than decking out the ground with the same manifold variety (grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees, and even water, hills, and dales) as that with which nature presents it to our view, only arranged differently and in obedience to certain ideas.” – I. Kant: *“Critique of Judgment”*

2 E. Kosiacka-Beck, *Angielskie ogrody krajobrazowe XVIII wieku i ich recepcja w Polsce*, Warszawa 2018, pp. 95–104

3 Museum Van Gogh, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/stories/hockney-van-gogh-two-painters-one-love>.

Garden as a place of self-fulfillment

"I spend all my money on the garden," complained Claude Monet. On the other hand, he wrote to his art dealer: "Now I am in the right place. I can capture color."⁴ The painter was fascinated by color. He filled his garden in Giverny with irregular stains of plants, which were sometimes monochromatic, sometimes on the contrary – full of contrasts, but always planned to be interesting at any time of the year. Tulips, pansies, forget-me-nots and daffodils bloomed in the spring and his beloved irises, roses, peonies, multicolored poppies, sword lilies and larkspurs in the summer. The autumn was the time for dahlias, sunflowers, asters and color-changing leaves of trees and shrubs. In the morning, Monet roamed the aisles, setting up easels to create several paintings at once. He loved to show a single motif in different light settings at different times of the day.

He developed his garden in steps for more than 30 years. The painter built a pond, among other things. Inspired by Japanese woodcuts, he designed the famous bridge and planted it with wisterias. He planted a bamboo grove and filled the pond with water lilies. At that time Monet became interested in botany and started to read books and articles on plant breeding and cultivation. He imported seeds from botanical gardens, bought plants not only in France and England. He imported peonies and water lilies from Japan. He also drew knowledge from water plant breeders and the pond and lilies became his obsession. For hours he was able to stare at reflections of flowers in water, watch leaves moving in the wind and admire their closing cups at dusk. During this time, he painted the Japanese bridge 45 times and the collection of paintings of water lilies consists of 250 canvases.⁵

"It took me a while before I understood my water lilies... I cultivated them with no intention of painting them. The landscape cannot be fully appreciated in one day... And then, suddenly, I experienced a revelation of the magic of my pond. I took my palette. Since then I have hardly had another model."⁶

At first, when the garden was small, the painter took care of it personally with his family. After some time, when the garden had grown, he employed six gardeners. His obsession with the pond and lilies became so intense that one of the gardeners was assigned only to work on the pond. Every morning he had to sail by boat and collect debris from water and remove leaves of plants that did not correspond to the artist's vision.

"I'm good only in two things," he used to say, "and these are gardening and painting."⁷

From an art history perspective, gardens of artists, including painters, are usually referred to as "art laboratories" for experimenting with color and form, rather than as works of art themselves created by means of gardening. A friend of painter Georges Clemenceau said that Monet's garden was his studio,

4 Fundacja Moneta, *Cytaty*, <http://fondation-monet.com/en/claude-monet/quotations/>.

5 *10 Facts You Might Not Know About Claude Monet's „Water Lilies”*, <https://www.claude-monet.com/waterlilies.jsp>.

6 Fundacja Moneta, *Cytaty*, *op. cit.*

7 *Ibid.*

while others claimed that the garden was a sketch for his paintings. The painter himself did not talk about painting at the end of his life but was obsessed with his garden until the end.

“My garden is my most beautiful masterpiece.”⁸



Figure 1. Monet's garden, photo. Agnieszka Hubeny-Żukowska

Garden as a place of refuge and inspiration

Frida Kahlo used to say that she painted plants so that they did not die. She carried in her hair flowers from her own garden and her library contained many books about botany and herbal medicine. The beauty and diversity of Mexico's plants and animals were an integral part of her works: from self-portraits and still lifes to provocative depictions of a female experience. In her paintings, she assigned cultural and spiritual ideas, as well as personal meanings, to plants in unexpected ways.⁹

Over the course of her life, Frida has created about 140 paintings, 55 of which are self-portraits. In the painting titled “*Roots*” (1943), Frida presented herself as the tree of life. The rising plants come out of her trunk and grow into dry land, nourishing soil. The image shows the author's frustration at not being able to give birth to children (due to injuries she sustained in the accident), as well as her belief that all life on earth is combined into one whole: plants, animals and humans.¹⁰

8 *Ibid.*

9 A. Zavala, *Inside Frida Kahlo's Garden: A deeper look at the iconic artist*, <https://womenintheworld.com/2015/05/18/inside-frida-kahlos-garden-a-deeper-look-at-the-iconic-artist/>.

10 D. Mainville, *How Frida Kahlo Used Flowers to Express Her Identity*, <https://floracracy.com/blogs/art/how-frida-kahlo-used-flowers-to-express-her-identity>.



Figures 2-5. Monet's garden, photo. Agnieszka Hubeny-Żukowska

From 1939 until her death in 1954, the painter's main residence was her family home, Casa Azul, in the town situated 10 km from Mexico City. Over the years, Kahlo and her husband rebuilt the house and garden, creating numerous collections of books, paintings, porcelain and plants in both, which densely filled the space of their lives. Interestingly, the painter herself designed her garden, planning in it a series of elongated courtyards filled with various native and foreign plants. In pots she planted agaves, cactuses, cactus pears, yuccas and flowering herbaceous plants. Orange, quince and pomegranate trees also grew in her garden. Her garden, which is now part of the museum, is an eclectic collection of plants, colorful pots, natural and worked fragments of volcanic stones and sculptures both valuable, pre-Hispanic and modest, made by Mexican workers. The whole garden clearly pays homage to the indigenous Mexican culture. "*The plan of Casa Azul*" drawn by Frida in 1940 can be seen in this museum. The drawing includes the plan of the building with the description of the interior and the arrangement of plants in the garden, as well as, interestingly, animals and laundry lines with clearly described colors of the individual parts of the wardrobe hanging on them.¹¹

The garden was both a source of inspiration and a creative refuge for the artist. Kahlo's works are full of colorful and fascinating depictions of flowers, leaves and fruits, most of which come from Mexico. Her botanical paintings reflect a view of the archetypal Mexican indigenous and natural elements that defined art in the decade after the Mexican Revolution.[#] Many of the plants we find in Kahlo's garden and in her paintings had great cultural significance: calendulas were commonly associated with Halloween, dahlias were Mexico's national flower, cactuses were used as living fences, and sunflowers represented the deity of the Sun. Fuchsias, monstera, bougainvilleas, zinnias and philodendrons are just some of the many plants grown by the painter.

The artist's studio was located on the floor of the house, from where she had a view on the garden. When Kahlo's health began to deteriorate and she could no longer walk freely in the garden with its numerous terraces, platforms were built for her, on which she could ride a wheelchair. The garden was certainly very important for the painter: chained to her bed before her death, she had the bed moved to the smallest of the bedrooms from where she could see the plants through the door.¹²

11 A. Zavala, M. D'Avanza, J. Groarke, *Frida Kahlo's Garden*, The New York Botanical Garden and DelMonico Books, Prestel, New York 2015.

12 S. Rose, *Famous painters and the gardens that inspired them*, <https://gardentherapy.ca/famous-painters-gardens/>.

Polish backyard

“I thank God for this patch of land of my own that gives me contact with nature, essential for creative imagination.”¹³

These are the words of Joseph Mehoffer's letter to his wife Jadwiga. He described in the letter the joy of the garden at their first home in Jankówka. The artist personally designed the garden by the manor house and then planted it and cherished with enthusiasm.

“This terrace, which now serves as a tiny observatory, almost entirely piled up by me, was still a modest, unruly slope a few years ago.”¹⁴

The artist created an idyllic scenery extending around the manor house, falling down in terraces towards the orchards. The composition was based on geometric forms referring to gardens in the French style, but the beds were filled with plants popular in Polish gardens. In the paintings “*The Mansion in Jankówka*” (1907), “*The Mansion and the Garden in Jankówka*” (1914) and “*The Red Umbrella*” (1917) depicting his beloved garden we can clearly see smooth hydrangeas, dahlias, roses, sunflowers and even corn planted on beds surrounded by low hedge borders and lawn strips. It was a dream place for creative thinking and for a quiet holiday with the family. An idyllic place full of characters from other worlds, which the painter repeatedly depicted in his genre scenes from 1913-1914.¹⁵

Another garden was established by Mehoffer at his family home at 26 Krupnica St. in Kraków, which he acquired in 1932 (now known as “The House of Józef Mehoffer”, a branch of the National Museum in Kraków). Due to its location in the city center, it is a space much smaller than the garden in Jankówka. The artist, as before, designed the garden himself, referring – even with the rose flowerbeds – to the previous one, with which he undoubtedly associated pleasant memories. The artist devoted a lot of time to this new space, brought a variety of plant species and took care of them himself. He created a place that became a refuge for his family and creative imagination. It was the place where the author painted the realistic landscapes with an idyllic aura in the last years of his life.

Certainly, nature was a great inspiration and source of motives for Józef Mehoffer. Having the garden and the need to create inextricably combined in his personality. The garden was an inspiration, field and background for the artist's imagination, as evidenced by the dissertation *on art and its relation to nature* published in the *Polish Review* magazine. Among other things, the author wrote: “Nature needs a sensitive and artistic soul in order to be reflected with dignity as in a mirror of silver”.¹⁶

13 J. Mehofferowa, *Rozwój myśli twórczej Józefa Mehoffera*, rkps w Bibliotece Zakładu Ossolińskich we Wrocławiu, nr 14039/ II, p. 257.

14 *Ibid.*

15 B. Studzińska-Kubalska, *Ogrody Józefa Mehoffera*, „Niezła Sztuka”, 11.10.2017, <https://niezlasztuka.net/o-sztuce/jozef-mehoffer-ogrody/> [accessed on: 25.03.2021].

16 M. Smolińska-Byczuk, *O stosunku sztuki do natury. Praktyka i teoria artystyczna młodego Mehoffera*, „Artium Quaestiones”, 2004, no 15, p. 81.

In the Polish backyard we can find many artists, not only painters but also composers or directors, for whom their own gardens become places of respite, rest, inspiration and creative work.

“I’ve been searching for this place on earth for a long time. A place that could become an asylum for me and my loved ones, which would allow me to realize the thought that has accompanied me since childhood: to build my own garden, just as you build a score, a note after a note.”¹⁷

This is what Krzysztof Penderecki wrote about his Lusławice gardens. Juliusz Machulski, on the other hand, when asked where he likes to work the most, answered:

“In my garden in Sopot I write my best. At the table on the terrace I can spend whole days immersed in work.”

Pandemic time

During periods of pandemic, the fear of getting sick, the desire to contain the spread of viruses and the longing for a “normal” life force many changes. Sanitary rules restrict but they are also a trigger of transformations. Evolution is visible at virtually every step of. Man is a being who can adapt quickly, which is why in such a difficult situation as a rapidly spread of a disease, many new solutions appear, including design ones.

Between 1810 and 1815, more than 25% of deaths in New York City were caused by tuberculosis which spread around the world as a result of overcrowding and poor living conditions. Entire neighborhoods were demolished in England for the purpose of erecting new residential buildings with gardens for workers. In the interwar period in Poland there was also a debate on the need to resolve, among other things, the issues of housing, air and good water.¹⁸ As a result of the sanatorium movement, the first Jordanian gardens, modeled after the parks of Henry Jordan’s idea, and sports gardens that allowed children and adults to stay outdoors, began to be built. The response to war-time diseases and destructions were the purity of the form, strict geometry and modern materials. Modernist designs of buildings with large windows letting sunlight into the interiors, easily washable flat surfaces, balconies and terraces with sun loungers, among other things, were the result of fear of tuberculosis.¹⁹

17 M. Tomaszewski, K. Penderecki, *Lusławickie ogrody*, t. 2, Wydawnictwo Bosz, Olszanica 2005, p. 7.

18 S. Władyczko, *Krytyka organizacji służb zdrowia publicznego*, [w:] *O gruźlicy jako największej klęsce społecznej naszych czasów*, Wilno 1927, p. 8.

19 Naglaa A. Megahed, Ehab M. Ghoneim, *Antivirus-build environment: Lessos lerned from COVID-19 pandemic*, „Sustainable Cities and Society”, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2210670720305710> [accessed on: 3.12.2020].

Garden as the “fifth room”

Now, in the era of CoViD-19, social isolation and fear of infection, the home garden’s own space is beginning to gain value. Especially urban residents locked together with their families in small apartments need outdoor space, for example in the form of a balcony or terrace. The backyard garden is becoming a rarity and the gardening movement around the world is experiencing a renaissance.²⁰ The perception of green spaces and backyard gardens has changed. Owners of gardens, until now often just neglected lawns, have now begun to adapt outdoor spaces for family life or work. Thanks to a greater amount of free time, horticultural hobbies and design work began to flourish. For some people, the functionality of the place – an additional space to expand the small living area – has become a priority. There came children’s playgrounds and work rooms in gardens. Others focused on the growing of vegetables, herbs and fruits to supply organic products to their kitchens. The slow-moving wave of biodiversity has suddenly accelerated and settled in the city gardens for good. Some owners, like Monet, began to appreciate the beauty of their plants and develop their interests and gardening skills. Others, like Frida Kahlo, began the building of their own safe havens.

According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, the most important for man are physiological needs, safety, belonging, recognition and self-fulfillment. The growing of vegetables and fruits is associated with physiological needs: satisfying hunger and thirst. Both for Frida Kahlo and for modern city dwellers living under the pressure from CoViD-19, the garden is a place to escape from dangers. It is an outdoor space, an extension of the house, the “fifth room”: own space giving a sense of stability and a kind of intimacy. Thanks to the belonging to a group of gardeners sharing knowledge and experience, the garden gives opportunities to contact other people, a sense of friendship but also, very importantly, recognition. According to Maslow, self-fulfillment is the highest and most important need of man. This is certainly what the aforementioned artists have experienced, also thanks to their gardens.

So, if you look closely at the garden, a paradise lost [an regained], it will turn out that this is an unusual place where man can find all the elements that meet his or her primal needs.

20 K. Dubow, *How will the future of gardening post COVID-19 look like?* *Garden Media*, „Florida Daily”, <https://www.floridadaily.com/article/9252195/how-will-the-future-of-gardening-post-covid-19-look-like/>.

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THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRIORITISATION OF NEEDS FOR PURCHASING EVERYDAY PRODUCTS, SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Review paper

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Abstract

This paper attempts to answer questions related to the impact of the state of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer behaviour, their hierarchy of needs, the state of environmental awareness, in the context of environmental protection in general and sustainable economy.

The author, when analysing a number of reports on the impact of the pandemic on human behaviour and the environment, exploring scientific sources on consumer behaviour and public sentiment in times of economic crises, seeks to answer the questions of what areas of human life have been most affected by the pandemic and whether the environment will benefit from these changes. In the paper, among others, the following questions are addressed: “Has the temporary halt in all activity associated with lockdown contributed to reflection and behavioural change in the context of the behavioural style of a consumer society?”, “Will the new post-pandemic reality be based on informed sustainable consumer choices?” and “Is the pandemic our salvation in an era of climate catastrophe?”.

By exploring scientific references in the field of consumer behaviour, the author concludes that the social response to pandemic effects and difficult economic events is a predictable mechanism. Supported by analyses of scientific research results on atmospheric CO₂ emissions and statements of experts in the field of environmental protection, as well as consumer behaviour, the author draws the conclusion that after a short-term improvement in the environment caused by the stoppage of the economy, the so-called retaliatory pollution effect may occur, which will significantly worsen the state of the environment compared to the state before the pandemic.

As a purpose of this study, the author constructed his own scenario of a post-pandemic reality in which the value and key to making decisions toward positive change will be in the motor of informed, sustainable economy-based, systemic solutions.

Keywords

ecology, sustainable economy, consumer behaviour, over-consumerism, COVID-19 pandemic, greenhouse gas emissions, environmental protection, economic crisis, climate catastrophe

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has determined the lives of people all over the world, it has become part of our lives whether we like it or not. Its negative impact on us, our psyche, our environment, our social interactions or our economy will be experienced long after the last inhabitant of our planet has been vaccinated. Significant events in human history, such as pandemics, wars or natural disasters, have significantly altered the course of events, caused a great deal of damage and casualties, but have often also contributed to dynamic development. Each of the industrial revolutions, which initiated enormous technological, economic, social and cultural changes, can be cited as an example. World War I and World War II fostered dynamic technological development and gave rise to new scientific explorations. The pressure resulting from the necessity to solve a problem or find an effective solution quickly becomes a driving force for creativity and resourcefulness. Focusing energy on a single problem gives results much faster than in case when there are many issues to be solved and each problem is characterised by diffuse dynamics and a lack of top-down pressure. It is worth asking whether the COVID-19 pandemic can drive positive change in people's lives and surroundings anyway.

Scientists already say that the great need to invent an antidote for Covid-19 will translate into major advances in the treatment of diseases other than Covid-19¹.

The temporary suspension of all social activity on global scale caused by the pandemic has forced us to rethink and exposed many fears and social anxieties. Evidence proving this fact can be noticed in the increased research of psychologists from many universities, who are studying the impact of the pandemic on thinking, behaviour, relationships or stress levels caused by the state of epidemic emergency².

For example, a group of researchers consisting of Maciej Karwowski, D.Sc., Professor of the University of Wrocław, Izabela Lebeda, Ph.D., and Aleksandra Zielińska, M.A., took up the subject of the influence of the pandemic on creative activities in their research paper. It turns out that lockdown can improve creative problem solving. People who thought intensely and talked to others about the consequences of the pandemic were more likely to engage in creative problem solving activities³.

In turn, a group of researchers at the University of Wrocław presented in their research that information about a pandemic can have an impact on underestimating the threat posed by COVID-19⁴.

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- 1 ¹L. Borkowski, M. Drag, A.M. Fal, R. Flisiak, J. Jemielity, J. Krajewski, A. Mastalerz-Migas, A. Matyja, K. Pyrc, P. Rzymiski, M. Sutkowski, K. Simon, J. Wysocki, J. Zajkowska, *Szczepienia przeciw COVID-19. Innowacyjne technologie i efektywność*, <https://naukaprzeciwpandemii.pl/> [accessed on: 1/03/2021].
 - 2 K. Serafińska, „Przegląd Uniwersytecki On-line” [accessed on: 21/04/2021].
 - 3 M. Karwowski, A. Zielińska, D.M. Jankowska, E. Strutyńska, I. Omelańczuk, I. Lebeda, *Creative Lockdown. A Daily Diary Study of Creative Activity During Pandemics*, <https://www.researcher-app.com/paper/6916790>.
 - 4 M. Karwowski, A. Groyecka-Bernard, M. Kowal, P. Sorokowski, *Does thinking about coronavirus impact insight and analytical reasoning?*, Uniwersytet Wrocławski.

We jointly participated in the global empathy full of compassion and care when we watched Italians taking coffins to neighbouring municipalities when the crematoria were inefficient, or when in Ecuador corpses were kept in homes or lay in the streets. We felt great solidarity, sewing masks, printing visors on home 3D printers, when doctors in uncomfortable uniforms, with no medical equipment, fought for hours to save every life.

We were suspended in idle mode for the whole global lockdown. As a result of the reduction in business for many industries, we were forced to limit purchases to the most important ones. This also reduced the demand for transport services. Most services were ceased, factories significantly reduced production, the streets, restaurants, pubs, theatres, museums and cinemas became empty. This enforced inactivity, though unpleasant, gave a brief respite to our planet, which is being devastated more and more every year by human over-consumerism. Has the economic downtime and global standstill affected us and the state of our environment in any way? What impact has the pandemic had on the hierarchy of consumer choices?

The premise of this publication is to reflect on and, by delving into various sources, find an answer to the question, “What impact does the COVID-19 pandemic have on the environment and consumer behaviour?”

Possessing beyond the need

The industrial revolution made a leap forward in civilisation. In just 250 years since the beginning of the great transformation of the economy from artisanal to mechanical to digital, human activity has generated a significant amount of CO₂ into the atmosphere. Technological development, to the rhythm of the Moore’s Law, has accelerated in the last quarter of a century, triggering a dynamic consumption of natural resources and thus drastically increasing the demand for fossil fuel consumption. This has a huge impact on man and the environment around him.

Since civilised societies have been developing dynamically, the availability of all goods is no longer a challenge for human. Satisfying basic needs such as food, shelter, hygiene, social contact, culture are no longer a priority. The availability of financial credit opens the way to unreflective acquisition. The result is often the purchase of things we do not need. The dynamics of civilisation changes caused by the rapid progress, in relation to human evolution, caused many undesirable effects in social behaviour. When we stopped controlling the level of consumption of goods and lost rationality in correlating needs with possessions, the problem of excessive consumerism emerged.

Marketing content through various media encourages us to replace products more often whether it is necessary or not. They inform our subconscious that if we don’t have a newer, faster, bigger model,

we are out of the system. This generates in us a state of unfulfillment and lulls us into a feeling of lacking something, while at the same time activating motives aimed at changing this state⁵.

So what should we do when everything we have aspired to for centuries as a society has already been achieved, when basic needs have been satisfied and irrational lusts for possessions have taken over instead?

We have stopped thinking about the essence of owning things; they have become freely available. The dynamics of an economy based on GDP growth further exacerbates the problem and contributes to promoting the idea of consumerism. In this way, we have set in motion a self-perpetuating demand mechanism that pays no attention to the environment and its resources around us, heading for disaster. We have put into move a great wheel that can be stopped by a crisis such as a global pandemic, but this involves an awareness of the situation in which we find ourselves and requires an effort that we must make in order to take conscious steps towards change at the right moment.

The new reality

The pandemic reality, referred to by some people as the “new normality”, has already penetrated our daily lives for good. Fear for our own safety, limited opportunities and conveniences have revised our needs. We have learnt a new way of communicating with our relatives, we have learnt new skills and, according to the IPSOS survey centre, we have even managed to find ourselves in it and like it⁶.

In the challenging conditions of the lockdown, we had the chance to review our lives and the relationships we have with people. We could look at our weaknesses, find our strengths or start a new life. Schools and universities were brutally deprived of the free process of empirical experience and exchange of ideas, which will certainly have an impact on the graduates of most universities. We have learnt that in the acquisition of knowledge everything depends on us, that only our commitment has an impact on our development.

We have been closely following world events. With one eye on our computer screen and the other on the television screen, we could not forget that something extraordinary was happening around us on a global scale. The media were scrupulously reporting the tragic statistics of the victims of COVID-19 every day. Looking at the situation reported by the media and observing the public mood around us, one could feel the anxiety about the situation of a global pandemic.

5 Ż. Ireneusz, A. Brelik, *Wybrane zagadnienia teorii zachowania konsumenta*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Ostrołęckiego Towarzystwa Naukowego”, R. 2007, no 21, pp. 207–231.

6 News and surveys of the international market and consultancy company, *Polski konsument w „nowej normalności”*, <https://www.ipsos.com/pl-pl/polski-konsument-w-nowej-normalnosci> [accessed on: 27/02/2021].

According to the IPSOS research agency, three quarters of the Polish population are worried about the future of the economy after the pandemic. Arkadiusz Sieroń from the University of Wrocław reassured by claiming that due to Poland's low dependence on exports and low economic ties with China we will not be too painfully affected by the economic crisis⁷. Economists from all over the world, however, spin disastrous economic, political and climate visions, which are not directly related to the pandemic. Nouriel Roubini warned in its publication published in the Project Syndicate not only of a human-made climate crisis, but also of a migration crisis caused by its consequences⁸.

A pandemic affects ordinary households. We have been forced to change our habits. According to *Nie marnuj jedzenia 2020* report prepared by the Federation of Polish Food Banks⁹, 27% of surveyed Poles have changed their grocery shopping habits. The percentage of people who tried not to waste food has increased by 12%, and the percentage of people who planned their shopping in advance has increased by 6%; 82% do their shopping less frequently, nevertheless 52% of people do more shopping than before the pandemic. The report shows that Poles have changed their food wasting habits during the pandemic.

During the Economic Forum in Krynica, the head of the Hungarian National Food Safety Authority reported that an average European throws away more food (92 kg) per year than they weigh. According to a report developed by the Warsaw University of Life Sciences for the Federation of Polish Food Banks, as many as 42% of Polish citizens admit to throwing food away¹⁰. Globally, one in three food products is thrown away, and this trend is increasing year on year. Wasting food, apart from its financial aspects, brings with it, above all, a moral problem, since the food wasted in the USA, Europe and Great Britain alone could feed over a billion starving people in the world¹¹.

Pandemic has contributed to popularisation of meals ordered online. According to a survey conducted by ARC Rynek i Opinia¹², During the pandemic, the ordering of meals via the Internet with door-to-door delivery increased by a third, and 40% of Poles do this at least once a week.

7 A. Sieroń, *Czy pandemia COVID-19 spowoduje zapaść globalnej gospodarki?*, „Przegląd Uniwersytecki on-line” [accessed on: 27/02/2021].

8 N. Roubini, Project Syndicate, *The Coming Greater Depression of the 2020s*, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/columnist/nouriel-roubini> [accessed on: 1/03/2021].

9 Federacja Polskich Banków Żywności, *Nie marnuj jedzenia*, <https://bankizywnosci.pl/ponad-53-polakow-przyznaje-ze-zdarza-im-sie-wyrzucic-zywnosc/> [accessed on: 02/03/2021].

10 D. Starzyńska-Rosiecka, *Badanie: 42 proc. Polaków przyznaje, że zdarza im się wyrzucić żywność*, Nauka o Polsce. Portal Ministerstwa Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, <https://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C79193%2CBadanie-42-proc-polakow-przyznaje-ze-zdarza-im-sie-wyrzucic-zywnosc.html> [accessed on: 02/03/2021].

11 <https://picm.pl/creditblog/efekt-pandemii-zalamanie-konsumpcji-czyli-szok-popytowy/> [accessed: 2/03/2021].

12 Badanie ARC rynek i opinia przeprowadzone w dniach 3–10 czerwca 2020, próba N=1066, <https://arc.com.pl/Polacy-boja-sie-o-dochody-i-ograniczaja-wydatki-blog-pol-1592379333.html> [accessed on: 3/03/2021].

As many as 94% of Poles say that shopping for food by delivery is the future, so it can be predicted that this trend will become an everyday occurrence even after the pandemic has passed¹³. Consequently, both the demand for packaging and transport services will increase. It will also be necessary to increase the number of couriers delivering food to customers. The sanitary rigour of food requires the use of plastic packaging that meets anti-viral and anti-bacterial standards. Increasing the amount of packaging will probably increase the amount of packaging waste, of which there is already too much in the environment. According to EuroStat research, total packaging waste increased by 6.7 million tonnes between 2008 and 2018 in the EU. This represents an increase of around 10% compared to previous years. EuroStat also indicates that the most common packaging materials are paper and cardboard (40%), plastics (19%), glass (18.7%), wood (16.1%) and metal (5%)¹⁴.

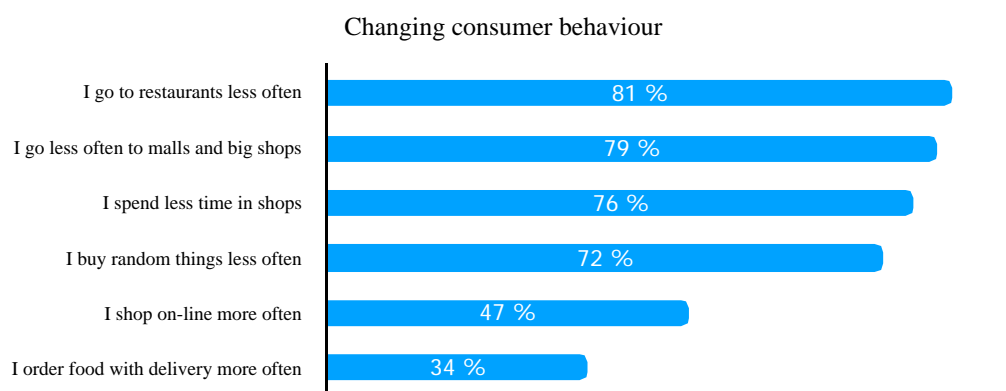


Figure 1. Changing consumer behaviour, data source: ARC rynek i opinia

Producing, packaging, delivering or processing a used product is a very heavy burden on the environment. Industry has to use huge amounts of energy, production material and water to bring us the finished product, and it is this industry that has the most negative impact on the environment, not households, according to some sources¹⁵.

According to *Jak epidemia zmieniła nasz stosunek do ekologii*¹⁶ survey conducted by Ipsos, a half of the Polish population is more afraid of climate effects caused by the pandemic and since the pandemic has started to pay more attention to accurate waste segregation.

13 A. Siwek, POSbistro blog, *Pandemia zwiększyła zapotrzebowanie na dowozy jedzenia, które trwa do teraz!*, <https://posbistro.com/blog/pl/pandemia-zwiekszylo-zapotrzebowanie-na-dowozy-jedzenia-ktore-trwa-do-teraz/> [accessed on: 3/03/2021].

14 Badania EuroStat, *Packaging waste statistics*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Packaging_waste_statistics#Waste_generation_by_packaging_material [accessed: 2/03/2021].

15 EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency, *Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions> [accessed on: 2/03/2021].

16 IPSOS, A. Mykowski, *Jak epidemia zmieniła nasz stosunek do ekologii*, <https://www.ipsos.com/pl-pl/jak-epidemia-zmieni-la-nasz-stosunek-do-ekologii> [accessed on: 1/03/2021].

The dynamics of consumer purchases of everyday goods also changed during the pandemic. This is probably due to the fact that most shops were closed due to the restrictions. According to a survey conducted by ARC Rynek i Opinia, 75% of the Polish population have limited their spending on non-food purchases due to anxiety about their income¹⁷. As many as 40% of those surveyed intend to reduce the number of things they buy, citing lack of need for more, spending time in malls, and the environmental impact of the things they buy and own as reasons.

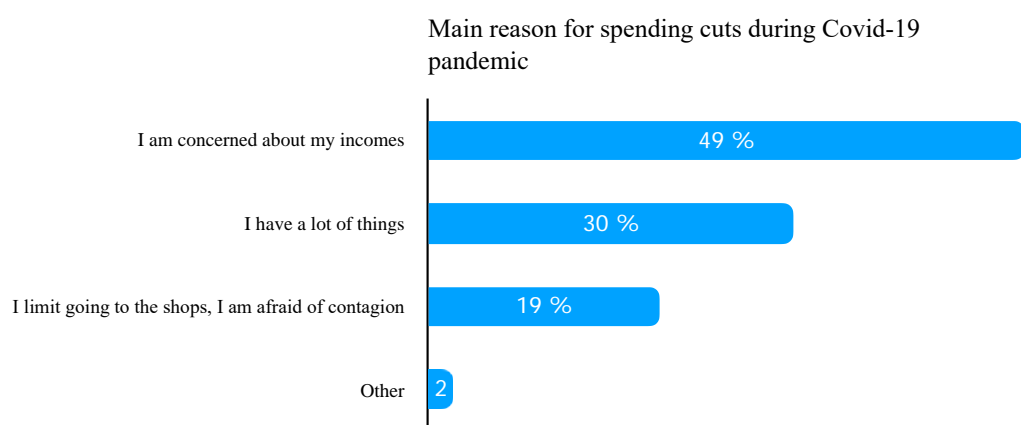


Figure 2. Main reason for spending cuts during Covid-19 pandemic, data source: ARC rynek i opinia

The most important thing, however, is the fact that one in five people say they intend to make more environmentally conscious choices after a pandemic. According to the survey carried out by Ipsos¹⁸, Polish society is concerned about the environmental impact of using masks and shield masks.

When we were confined within the borders of our own countries, the use of transport also declined. We moved less, using cars, and we did not use air transport services for travel. The slowdown in global production has also reduced the need for intercontinental and transoceanic transport. This has probably had a significant impact on overall CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere. Measurement stations of the Chief Inspectorate of Environmental Protection, which are located near transit routes, recorded a 30% decrease in pollution caused by road transport¹⁹.

According to the European Environment Agency, transport, despite its key role in the development of society and the economy, is a major source of environmental pollution and climate change²⁰.

17 Survey conducted by ARC Rynek i Opinia between 3 and 10 June 2020, op. cit.

18 Badanie IPSO, *Polski konsument w czasach koronawirusa*, <https://www.ipsos.com/pl-pl/jak-epidemia-zmienila-nasz-stosunek-do-ekologii> 9 [accessed: 21/04/2021].

19 Inspekcja Ochrony Środowiska, <http://powietrze.gios.gov.pl/pjp/current> [accessed: 1/03/2021].

20 Europejska Agencja Środowiska, *Transport*, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/pl/themes/transport/intro#:~:text=Jedno-cze%C5%9Bnie%20transport%20jest%20g%C5%82%C3%B3wnym%20%C5%BAr%C3%B3d%C5%82em,fragmentacji%20siedlisk%20i%20uszczelniania%20powierzchni> [accessed: 2/03/2021].

The impact of the pandemic on a consumer

The main mechanism of consumer activity is the subjective prioritisation of choices in relation to their needs²¹. Each person has their own individual set of values, which are suggested when making a choice. As Ewa Kieźel emphasises, consumer behaviour in the context of the choices he makes is a process that is characterised by certain dynamics²². It is characterised by an analysis of motives for making decisions and an assessment of their accuracy. The Modern Model of Consumer Behaviour Dynamics takes into account research from a wide range of sciences, such as psychology, economics, sociology and marketing. Researchers are observing the emergence of new phenomena in the consumer behaviour of developed countries, such as New Balance or Nomcore. These consist mainly in the selection of goods in relation to deeper values such as ethics, morality, normality, quality, comfort, durability, ordinariness or universality²³. The economic crisis resulting from a pandemic is a period of revision of consumption needs for consumers. As a result of variables such as the risk of loss of income, a sense of security or the duration of the crisis, consumer choices are radically rationalised. The previously mentioned phenomena or newly emerging consumer trends are reconstructed.

The society of the new post-pandemic reality is forced to construct new rules of consumer behaviour. We are forced to adapt to the new situation, accept it and learn to live with that. After a crisis and a period of depression, we reach a lower turning point where the transformation begins²⁴. A consumer, in the conditions in which he suddenly found themselves, became more cautious in the context of such values as the content of the wallet, convenience, safety, quality, trust. According to a report by KPMG, as many as 70% of Poles have refrained from major purchases as a result of the pandemic²⁵. It is possible to see a return to concern for the satisfaction of basic needs connected with securing one's livelihood.

Before the pandemic had broken out, the factors that consumers paid most attention to were value for money, ease of purchase, trust in the brand, the range of products and services offered, and the personalisation of the product, service or attitude. During the pandemic, other values, including personal safety, ease of purchase, support for local communities, the brand's relationship with the environment and the brand's approach to employees increased²⁶.

21 J. Szczepański, *Wydajność pracy a konsumpcja*, „Nowe Drogi”, no. 11.

22 E. Kieźel, *Zmiany zachowań a racjonalność w postępowaniu polskich konsumentów*, Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Akademii Ekonomicznej im. Karola Adameckiego w Katowicach, Katowice 2001.

23 M. Rzemieniak, *Nowe tendencje w zachowaniach konsumentów – perspektywa marketingowa*, Wydział Nauk Ekonomicznych i Zarządzania, Politechnika Lubelska, Lublin 2016.

24 A. Śleszyńska-Świdorska, *Zachowania polskich konsumentów w warunkach globalnego kryzysu gospodarczego*, rozprawa doktorska pod kierunkiem dr. ab. Jerzego Borowskiego, prof. UwB, Wydział Ekonomii i Zarządzania, Uniwersytet w Białymstoku, 2017.

25 KPMG, report entitled *Nowa rzeczywistość: konsument w dobie COVID-19. Jak zmieniły się zwyczaje zakupowe Polaków w czasie koronawirusa?*, <https://home.kpmg/pl/pl/home/insights/2020/09/raport-nowa-rzeczywistosc-konsument-w-dobie-covid-19-jak-zmieniły-się-zwyczaje-zakupowe-polakow-w-czasie-koronawirusa.html> [accessed: 2/03/2021].

26 KPMG, report entitled *Nowa rzeczywistość...*, op. cit.

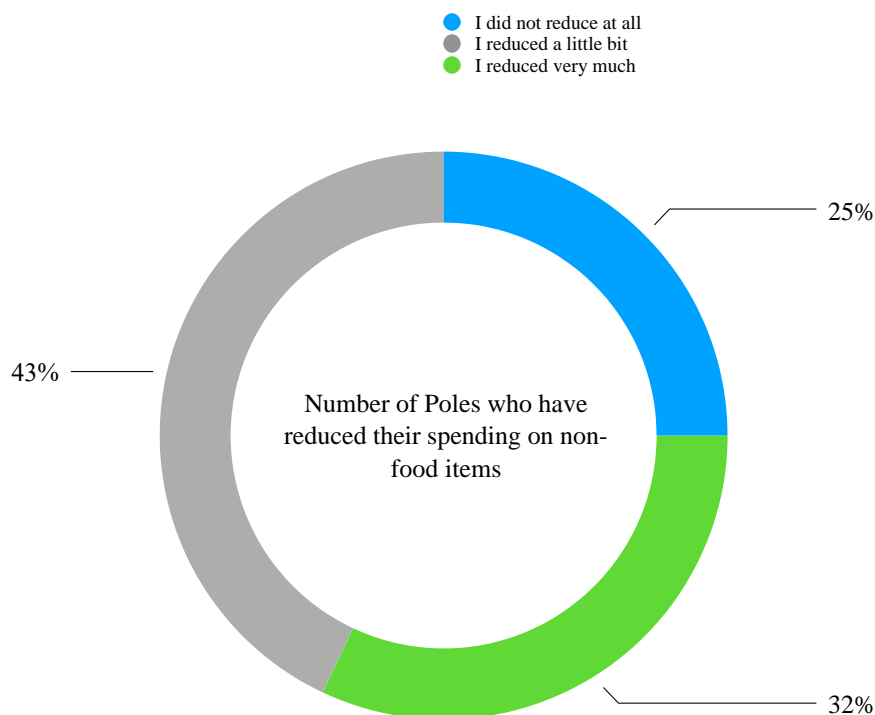


Figure 3. Number of Poles who have reduced their spending on non-food items, data source: ARC rynek i opinia

The difficult situation and the uncertainty associated with it have forced us to review our needs in terms of consumer behaviour. As a result of the pandemic, not only have the quantity and type of goods purchased changed but also the method of their purchase. The way of purchasing has also changed. The KPMG report shows that during the pandemic, 71% of the respondents abandoned traditional methods of purchasing non-food products in favour of purchasing these via online shops. 34% of Poles admitted that the pandemic encouraged them to buy products online that they had not bought before. Interestingly, 91% of the respondents confirmed their willingness to continue using this method of purchasing goods²⁷.

The situation is different when it comes to doing grocery shopping, as 66% of Poles have not abandoned traditional way doing shopping. Key factors for these people were the location of the shop (70%), the ability to see the product in person (63%), convenience (53%), and price (50%). As inconveniences of buying traditionally, respondents cited mainly inconvenience related to hygiene rules followed by other customers or personnel, difficult access or lack of means to protect against contamination, and the possibility of contamination through contact with product packaging.

An important aspect is the fact that 70% of Poles are able to spend more on food products that come from local suppliers. 60% of Poles pay attention to environmental issues, and 33% consider it

important to support local communities when choosing everyday products. The pandemic will certainly have an impact on the purchasing decisions of the Polish consumer in the new, post-pandemic reality. However, one cannot be sure whether this will not be only temporary or whether there will not even be an increase in purchases once the SARS-Cov2 virus threat and the economic crisis have passed.

The hope may lie in systemic solutions that help to consolidate consumer change. The European Union, responding proactively to Europe's pandemic situation, has prepared a Consumer Agenda which sets out a vision for consumer policy for 2020-2025. This vision sets out issues in five areas of:

1. ensuring consumers have access to sustainable products and better information about them;
3. protecting against the dangers of digital trade;
4. improving the enforcement of consumer rights;
5. taking into account the specific needs of special groups of consumers, such as the elderly, children, persons with disabilities;
6. improving international cooperation.

Is the pandemic a rescue for the environment?

Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are formed by natural processes as well as by human activities. Those resulting from human activity have been the most important indicator of observed climate change since the mid-20th century. Each of the gases, i.e. water vapour, carbon dioxide, CFCs, halons, methane, nitrous oxide, ozone and other gases, have the so-called *Global forming potential*. This is an index which tells us about the effect on the formation of the greenhouse effect. The contribution of different gases to the greenhouse effect depends on the degree of absorption, i.e. the ability of a given substance to absorb infrared radiation, and the lifetime of the gas in question. Of all the gases, water vapour has the greatest impact on the greenhouse effect, independent of man (as much as 95%). The best known greenhouse gas, second only to water vapour, is carbon dioxide CO₂.

Obviously, most of unmentioned coexisting gases also play an important role in greenhouse processes, but CO₂ as the main gas resulting from industrial activity and the burning of fossil fuels has become a universal indicator of environmental performance²⁸. According to a report by the World Meteorological Organisation, in 2019, the average CO₂ level reached another record - 410.5 ppm.

28 Muzeum Geologiczne Państwowego Instytutu Geologicznego, *Co to są gazy cieplarniane*, <https://www.pgi.gov.pl/muzeum.html> [accessed: 3/03/2021].

Similar concentrations of carbon dioxide occurred 3-5 million years ago. At that time, the temperature was 2-3°C higher and the sea level was 10-20 m higher than in our time²⁹.

The pandemic has affected many industries, which have been forced to slow down or even cease their operations altogether. The grounding of aircraft, the reduction in global production, the stopping of tankers in ports or the reduction in road transport have all had a significant impact on temporarily reducing CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere.

According to a study carried out by Nature Climate Change, global atmospheric CO₂ emissions at the peak of the lockdown on 7 April 2020 have decreased by 17%, the bulk of which (as much as 10%) relates to air transport. Only a small increase was observed in households³⁰. The CREA report states that production in China has decreased by 15-40% depending on the industry, resulting in a reduction in CO₂ emissions of 100 million tonnes, roughly the amount that Poland emits in three months³¹. According to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment in China, between January and March 2020, 337 cities saw air quality improve by as much as 84.5%³².

However, the pandemic has shown us that we are dependent on products made from plastics. According to the National Library of Medicine - National Institutes of Health, an organisation focused on combating the effects of the pandemic, 469 tonnes of medical waste are generated per day in China, 8,055 tonnes per day in the US, 2,160 tonnes per day in India, 2,774 tonnes per day in Brazil³³. Karina Szafrank-Braś, Vice-President of the Board of the Union of Employers of Plants for Thermal Transformation of Industrial and Medical Waste for Health and Environment Protection, estimates that the amount of medical waste in Poland is at least 50% higher than before the pandemic³⁴.

Medical waste obtained from medical units is a waste with specific sensitivity, as it is contaminated waste and therefore mainly subject to incineration³⁵. It is worth noting that disposable masks and gloves used by the public to protect themselves against infection with the SARS-Cov2 virus do not fall under the European packaging recycling collection standards, as they are not disposable packaging

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- 29 World Meteorological Organization, *Greenhouse gas concentrations in atmosphere reach yet another high*, <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/greenhouse-gas-concentrations-atmosphere-reach-yet-another-high> [accessed: 3/03/2021].
- 30 Nature Climate Change, *Temporary reduction in daily global CO₂ emissions during the COVID-19 forced confinement*, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-020-0797-x> [accessed on: 3/03/2021].
- 31 CREA – Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, *China Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and Domestic 14th Power Five-Year-Plan (FYP)*, <https://energyandcleanair.org/publications/draworld-china-climate-five-year-plan/> [accessed on: 3/03/2021].
- 32 *Koronawirus odkaża powietrze i mnoży śmieci*, „Business Insider”, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/koronawirus-wplyw-na-srodowisko/dvgdfsh> [accessed on: 3/03/2021].
- 33 M.S. Haque, S. Uddin, S.M. Sayem, K.M. Mohib, *Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) induced waste scenario*, PMID: 33194544, 7 November 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7648514/> [accessed on: 3/03/2021].
- 34 *Czy pandemia to Eldorado dla spalarni odpadów medycznych?*, „Teraz Środowisko”, <https://www.teraz-srodowisko.pl/aktualnosci/odpady-medyczne-szpitalne-spalarnie-pandemia-Szafrank-Bras-9711.html>.
- 35 Esbud Zakład Przetwarzania Odpadów, *Odpady medyczne – jak wygląda ich utylizacja?*, <https://esbud.pl/odpady-medyczne-i-ich-utylizacja/> [accessed on: 3/03/2021].

and are therefore not covered by the recycling scheme³⁶. We can therefore expect the waste associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to be a huge environmental problem that will raise the statistics on the amount of pollution lying in the streets, rivers, seas and oceans.

The decrease in the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere, cited in sources as the optimistic effect of a pandemic, may in fact be offset by the impact that will be generated by the waste associated with the production and disposal of direct antiviral protection products, the increase in manufacturing activity for food and hygiene packaging, or the impact associated with the increased need to transport products ordered online.

According to scientists, there will be so-called retaliatory contaminations just after the pandemic has ended. These will be the result of the problems mentioned above and an intensification of all activities that were stopped under pandemic conditions³⁷.

Summary

According to EU environment spokesperson Vivian Loonela, it is too early to assess the environmental impact of the pandemic. The decrease in CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere will probably have a positive effect on the environment, but unfortunately it will be short-lived. And it does not mean systemic change, according to Zbigniew Karaczun, Climate Coalition expert at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences³⁸. A more significant impact will have a manner, in which people in power decide to stimulate the economy in the aftermath of a pandemic. A key aspect will be a strategy for the post-pandemic future, incorporating actions related to social responsibility and sustainable development in various areas.

Society, like a living tissue, reacts to changes in its environment, adapting to the freedoms and restrictions currently in place. The pandemic has reminded us that it is important to look at ourselves, take care of our health, well-being and fitness. According to the PWC report³⁹, almost all Poles consider caring about the environment to be important. A part of society has given up reflecting on its needs, its consumption choices and its possessions. Awareness of remote working and education has changed significantly. This is probably the area where most changes will occur in the post-pandemic future.

36 N. Apostolou, *Pandemia i plastikowy śmietnik 2020*, „Deutsche Welle”, <https://p.dw.com/p/3bQmL> [accessed: 3/03/2021].

37 M. Wandas, *Emisje CO₂ w Chinach spadły o 100 milionów ton. Przez koronawirusa*, Smog Lab, <https://smoglab.pl/> [accessed on: 3/03/2021].

38 Z. Karaczun, *Koronawirus ogranicza emisję CO₂. Kryzys po pandemii może jednak zepchnąć ochronę klimatu na drugi plan*, „Newseria Biznes”, <https://biznes.newseria.pl/news/koronawirus-ogranicza,p46255587> [accessed on: 3/03/2021].

39 I. Wisłocka, K. Bandowski, report entitled *Nowy obraz polskiego konsumenta. Postawy i zachowania Polaków w obliczu pandemii koronawirusa*, <https://www.pwc.pl/pl/publikacje/nowy-obraz-polskiego-konsumenta.html> [accessed on: 3/03/2021].

It is clear from the reports analysed that the problem does not lie solely in the attitudes of consumer society, but mainly in the awareness of business, industry and the management of a system which, unfortunately, still uses the mechanisms of the previous industrial era. In order for there to be a smooth transition, systemic principles need to be built that will help the global transition to a new, post-pandemic reality.

In the wake of the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, it can be expected that there will be a gigantic increase in all productive activity in the world. Therefore, when planning for a post-pandemic reality, it is imperative to prioritise environmental aspects in order to anticipate and plan each step wisely and sustainably. The hope is that, as a result of reflection on the pandemic and the crisis, all areas of industry, business and government will recognise the significance of the negative impact of people and their behaviour on the ecosystem and step up systemic action to accelerate change. There is an opportunity for this to be a turning point for an environment strained by over-consumerism. This is the time to define a new reality based on new values that will decisively help transform the future.

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ON THE DISSEMINATION OF CULTURE DURING THE PANDEMIC. METHODS OF ACTION IN THE EXHIBITION SECTOR

Review paper

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Abstract

The transformations of our everyday lives resulting from the global pandemic caused by the CoViD-19 have greatly reorganized many of the areas of our lives to which we had become used. The issue of this problem is also clearly visible at the artistic level. Through the inability to organize events or join cultural meetings, the ways of popularizing culture have much changed, bringing out new methods of action often falling into a strong digression with the original goal of creativity, which is direct contact between the recipient and art. The article attempts to answer the question: “How have we dealt with this?”.

The study focuses on a retrospective and current analysis of selected activities involving the dissemination and promotion of art of various kinds, taking place in the face of remodeling of the reality caused by the government-enforced epidemiological restrictions. The analysis is supported by examples of activities of the sector of popularization of culture and art, resulting in reaction to the sudden lockdown, among others also activities taking place in the Fashion Start-up Gallery existing at the Department of Interior Architecture of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, established thanks to the implementation of the project titled the “Design of the Future – the program for development of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow in the years 2018-2022”. The analysis has identified changes and tools that were used to remodel culture dissemination activities, consisting of multiple exposures of audiences to works of art.

Keywords

exhibition, expositions, changes, CoViD-19, immersion, digitization, transmission, online, Web, dissemination, new media, new technology, needs, thoughts, transfer, new reality, networking, online viewing room, connection, cyberspace, interface, access, isolation, progress, space, fog, time, virtual

Introduction

The pandemic has completely reorganized the way culture is used. At the time of writing this article, it was almost a year since we had been trying to face the new reality at almost every level of our lives. We have certainly become used to some aspects, we have assimilated them, but indirectly we are still building a number of responses to the situation. In the first reflex, uncertainty often arises in us, caused by a new, unknown, threat on this scale, often turned into a growing fear. As a result, uncertain what tomorrow will bring, we will obey new restrictions. We stay at home. Expecting, we still cannot be sure of anything that the future will bring in the near future. We should not assume any long-term stability. We mostly close our entire lives in four walls. We must learn to control emotions every day. This gives rise to a feeling of powerlessness, sometimes causing reflexes of panic or rebellion in the face of the new situation. Nothing is like before, we begin to take everyday life in a completely new form.

In response to the sudden lockdown, there was a drastically rapid exclusion from the functioning of institutions that promote culture and art. Artists have lost opportunities to present their works in stationary settings to wider audiences. We have moved away from the pre-pandemic notion of authenticity, which influences the way we react to art. By distinguishing reality from virtuality, authenticity and value as intangible parameters have become very important¹.

Cultural institutions during the pandemic

The closure of art galleries or museums has taken away the opportunity to experience culture on site, thus taking away from us the most important value of interacting with the work: the opportunity to experience it **here and now**, in contact with the original matter of the work in an authentic structure. However, it cannot be denied that the subject of the global pandemic is, on the other hand, at a later stage, also a wide area for exploration reflected in works of artists, thus summarizing the experience of seclusion, resulting also in an arousal of internally concealed fears or aspirations². According to the "Culture Report", as many as 59.1% of institutions showed that they were affected by the pandemic as early as in the second quarter of 2020³.

1 Michael Bird, *100 idei, które zmieniły sztukę*, TMC, Raszyn, 2012, p. 198.

2 Alain de Botton, *Architektura szczęścia*, Czuły Barbarzyńca, Warszawa, 2010, p. 103.

3 *Raport Kultura*, Fundacja Gospodarki i Administracji Publicznej, Kraków 2020, p. 11.

Closed galleries, open exhibitions – remodeling how to reach the recipient

The entry of art into the digital sphere was inevitable in this case. It often became the only way to present creativity. It should be noted that galleries are no longer constrained to surfaces containing different types of display spaces. We often find in such facilities also rooms for theatrical or other performances, auditoria for meetings with artists, for film screenings or for concerts, and a number of other functions that make the commercial gallery a kind of conglomerate of creativity. Noticing and adequately identifying the emerging difficulties caused by the pandemic makes it possible to choose adequate methods of reaching audiences in new ways.

Despite the large exhibition space, the most important physically (and often the only available) media of content, Web sites or portals have turned into communication channels between the institution and the recipient during the pandemic. In the first actions, they were the main medium for transmitting content. Dependence on the characteristics of a given exhibition space ceased to be important, as it could not be physically used⁴.

However, the rapid diagnosing of certain strategies meant that, despite the closure of institutions, events stayed alive, rearranging themselves in new forms or new techniques in the new reality. During the pandemic, technology and how we use it have progressed much faster than it could have normally happened.

Perhaps, in some cases, the excessive desire to arouse interest by reaching the audience on many new levels gave an impression that art was becoming more commercial or more focused on marketing. However, this has undoubtedly maintained the effect of influence and reputation of institutions which had to remain closed for some time, achieved in a slightly different form. We realized the importance of **presence**.

Dissemination of culture – new methods of action

Technology came to our aid. Thanks to progress we were able to continue our work, hobbies, passions to the extent that we could continue our basic activities.

In the last decade, as a result of the increase in the wealth of society, art gained a status of a luxury merchandise and the demand for art increased as a result of which all kinds of fairs or auctions significantly gained on popularity. Unfortunately, in the face of the restrictions, most auction houses, fairs or art festivals, which had become a popular medium for buyers of works of art, have gradually shut down. Already in the first quarter of 2020, global events such as the Tokyo Art Fair, the Art Dubai event and the world's largest contemporary art fair Art Basel were cancelled. As a result of

4 Maria Hussakowska-Szysko, Ewa Małgorzata Tatar, *Display. Strategie wystawiania*, Universitas, Kraków, 2012, p. 19.

the impossibility of holding a stationary event it was proposed to place works of art in a new digital platform, the so-called “online viewing room”⁵. It is a three-dimensional digitized version of the physical place where we would eventually see art in its original form. It gives the buyer a substitute for the real event. The online viewing room is an apparently programmed room, virtually housing one or more works, so that their exposition also becomes more individual and attractive than in the standard settings where there is usually a large exhibition space bringing together all the works⁶.

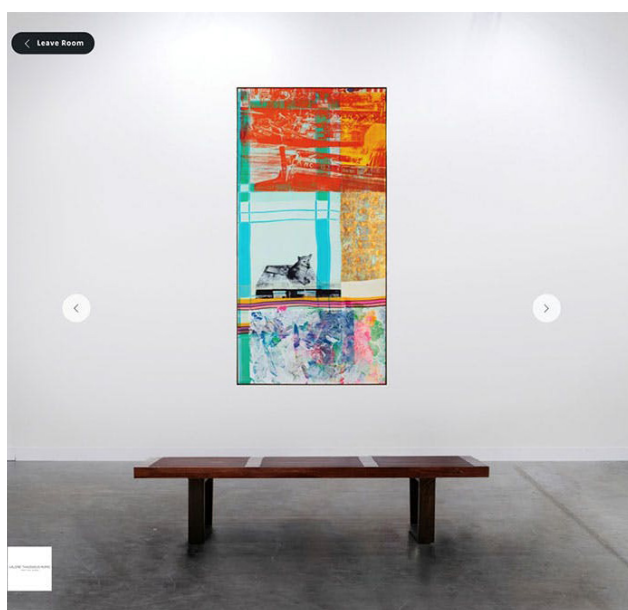


Figure 1. Screenshot of Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac's online viewing room, Art Basel Hong, March 2020, courtesy Art Basel Hong Kong, <https://apollo.imgix.net> [accessed on: 21.05.2021].

To date, the technique of presenting art in line with the idea of the online viewing room online viewing room has developed to the level of online designing of entire virtual exhibitions. In some auctions, such as the Asia Week held in March, traditional and online forms of sales were combined. The auction of South Asian contemporary art organized in this way was a success: the value of works sold exceeded the original estimate by 100 thousand dollars, achieving 4.8 million dollars. 33% of the works in this auction were sold online⁷. It turned out that this kind of diversification, hybridity of activities, allowing us to combine traditional methods with those allowed by the technology, is becoming increasingly common and will certainly remain accepted as a standard. This is also evidenced by the fact that, as the research carried out in 2020 showed, the sales of art works in Poland were 30% larger than in 2019⁸.

5 <https://rynekisztuka.pl>.

6 <https://www.quora.com>.

7 <https://rynekisztuka.pl>.

8 <https://artinfo.pl>.

(...) the market achieved a record result of PLN 380 million. 467 auctions were held, many online, during which almost 22 thousand properties were auctioned. In December, the sales record in the modern art segment was broken: Wojciech Fangor's painting was auctioned for the highest ever price of PLN 7.3 million⁹.

Not only the time of the pandemic but years before its onset show that an increasing number of prospective buyers of art are choosing to buy online. Although many auctions have taken place outside the event also in the case of conventional auctions, the dissemination of such online activities will certainly become the norm in the future. Improving the possibility of acquiring various works online is becoming an additional alternative for the buyer who often could not have participated personally in such events, if only because of the need to move. It is also a benefit for galleries, auction houses and artists themselves who can promote and sell their works.

In order to meet the sudden constraints, art galleries, museums, cinemas, theatres, operas and philharmonics have started a series of experiments using new technologies, allowing the audience to virtually explore exhibitions and participate in events, shows or lectures. Because of the decline of the hitherto ways of acting many disciplines have been reclassified as a new way of accessibility for the recipient, deprived of the possibility of physical presence.

The lockdown of institutions is no longer an obstacle to visiting exhibitions, despite the total or partial limitation of visits, it is not a time of stagnation. Today we often have an opportunity to see an exposition on many levels. The arrangement of the event on the Web can be carried out in many ways and include not only Web sites, but also social media or instant messaging. The event can take place without the participation of the public but with full access to it for all who want to see it online.

Photorealistic mapping in the form of virtual walks has been known for years, if only thanks to the Google platform, but their specificity has recently begun to deepen. Thanks to the opportunities they bring, we already visit not only exhibitions but also other places bringing a certain value to the recipient. The virtual tour designed in this way creates a predetermined structure of information and ensures preservation of a specific chronology and proportions of the explored space. Control over the viewer's navigation is very precise. A similar principle of operation is adopted by the idea of scanning exhibitions, consisting in the embedding of panoramic photos in a specific location of the virtually scanned space. Both the online walking and the 3D scanning tour allows you to get acquainted with the presented object very carefully. Being able to expand pieces of information at any time we get an opportunity to get acquainted with everything that concerns the object in different digital formats. This is an unconstrained way to provide information about an object or place. One of the richer presentations in Poland made available online in this way is the collection of the National Museum in Krakow that offers access to more than 130,000 works¹⁰.

9 <https://biznes.newseria.pl>.

10 www.zbiory.mnk.pl.

Some spaces can also be viewed using the virtual reality (VR). For example, after putting on the Google VR glasses we can digitally move to a different environment. This is another very extensive way to learn what we cannot actually come into contact with. The VR technology gives you an opportunity to manipulate space, change it according to our needs, recognize it.

The time of the pandemic is the time of acting through screens, that is, pictorially. A progressive form has also taken up by various types of events: private viewings, lectures and conferences. The live streaming technique allowed the conduct of an almost intact form for speakers, without the participation of observers who had only virtual access to the content.

New forms of private viewings, sightseeing through virtual walks or the scanning of space are only some measures aimed at improving availability of expositions to the recipient. All these are accompanied by associated events, usually equally easily accessible online: interviews with authors, arrangement of entire events online, access to various types of lectures, workshops or conferences. We can analyze and measure, among other things, viewings and their area.

As the way we communicate have changed, emotions that accompany us in the perception of art have also changed. Art has come closer to us, becoming more accessible. The sense of the sublime caused by a series of stimuli aroused in response to the designed exposition spaces was sometimes reduced to the availability on the screen.

It is only in its approach to real human life outside of studios, art galleries and auction houses that art can become something alive, alluring and fascinating¹¹.

More and more diverse ideas about presenting life during the pandemic are coming into effect. In October 2020, the National Museum in Krakow took the initiative to collect pandemic-related artifacts for a planned exhibition on this difficult time in the history of the city and its inhabitants. The Victoria and Albert Museum came out with a similar initiative and established its virtual exhibitions, “Now Accepting Contactless” and the “Pandemic Objects”, illustrating how the value, purpose and importance of the objects around us have changed, elements of everyday life in the face of the urgent need to respond to the new threat¹².

The way art was popularized during the pandemic has become almost a trend, a program or a medium presenting the then, how specific, course of reality¹³.

The following are two examples of exhibition activities directly affected by the CoViD-19 pandemic. The events took place in the Fashion Start-up Gallery, which operates at the Faculty of Interior

11 Alicja Rybkowska, *Humor a współczesna kondycja sztuki*, Universitas, Kraków, 2016, p. 33.

12 <https://www.vam.ac.uk>.

13 Małgorzata Litwinowicz-Droździel, Iwona Kurz, Paweł Rodak, *Ekspozycje nowoczesności*, Neriton, Warszawa, 2017, pp. 167-168.

Architecture of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, established as part of the project titled the “Design of the Future – a program for the development of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow in the years 2018-2022”.



Figure 2. The “Aberrations” project by Patrycja Ochman-Tarka and Paulina Ochman presented at the Fashion Start-up Gallery as part of the KRAKERS Krakow Art Week festival, the “Fringe” section (presentation from Oct. 21 to Nov. 3, 2020).

As part of the annual KRAKERS Cracow Art Week festival at the Fashion Start-up Gallery, held in October 2020, a presentation of the “Aberrations”, a multimedia installation by Patrycja Ochman-Tarki and Paulina Ochman, was planned. This project was a multisensory creation combining elements of video projection, interaction with the recipient through reaction to movement, which gave an opportunity to manipulate, stretch, defragment and replicate space. However, the government-imposed restrictions did not allow for full implementation of the plan in its original form. The limit on the number of visitors, or even a complete ban on entering the gallery, created the need to rearrange the idea and adapt it to the new reality. Finally, all activities intended to take place in the physical space after the interaction caused by the movement of the recipient were effectively presented with multimedia projection in three parts.

The “Aberrations” project combines fibers of the real reality, which visualize the experience of space through the senses, with networks of sensations and fragments of the world accessible to sensory cognition¹⁴.

Another example of implementing a new activity in the Fashion Start-up Gallery activity structure is how authors communicate with the audience through a new form of the organization of events. Restrictions controlling the number of people in a given room do not allow the free organization of even private viewings or finishes of exhibitions in a hitherto known form. The very idea of the private viewing as a form of opening an exhibition or event, which is an opportunity to meet in order to

contemplate creativity, has been greatly violated. The opening of the private viewing of color drawings by Stanislaw Tabish, the “Unicorn Moods’ Outfits”, scheduled for mid-November 2020, could not take place with the participation of a wider audience due to the restrictions. In response to this problem, thanks to the video streaming generally available already at that time, an online broadcast of the private viewing was organized, which took place physically with the smallest possible group of people, thus complying with all the restrictions. The possibility of streaming through a number of channels, along with the video recording, enabled the opening of the exhibition and the author’s tour to those who often would not even have the opportunity to visit the exhibition on the spot. The recording gives people who were not able to participate in it the event at that time an opportunity to get acquainted with the coverage. This way of presenting the event will certainly weave for good into the ranks of activities promoting cultural events. More than 70 drawings were presented at the exhibition, as a result of which a virtual gallery containing high-resolution scans of each of them was established.

Theatres, among others, have taken numerous measures related to the restrictions. In this case, however, the situation is much more serious, because with the inability to play performances there is a lack of work for those involved in the realization of art at every level. An interesting example of how to allow viewers to experience theatrical art in the face of the pandemic is the initiative of the Japanese Moonlight Mobile Theater. As Nobuyoshi Asai, the theatre’s artistic director and choreographer, explains, viewers have an opportunity to see avant-garde art through a mail delivery slot in a symbolic door, sitting in separate boxes around a circular stage where actors present their performance. The installation allows a new experience of viewing the performance by 30 people at the same time¹⁵. Of course, it is impossible to make profit in this way, as with the standard format of the performance but, on the other hand, such an experiment is the only way to maintain professional activity not only by actors but also by choreographers, screenwriters, directors, as well as an unusual opportunity for advertising their activities on a large scale: tickets for all the theater’s performances sold out instantly.

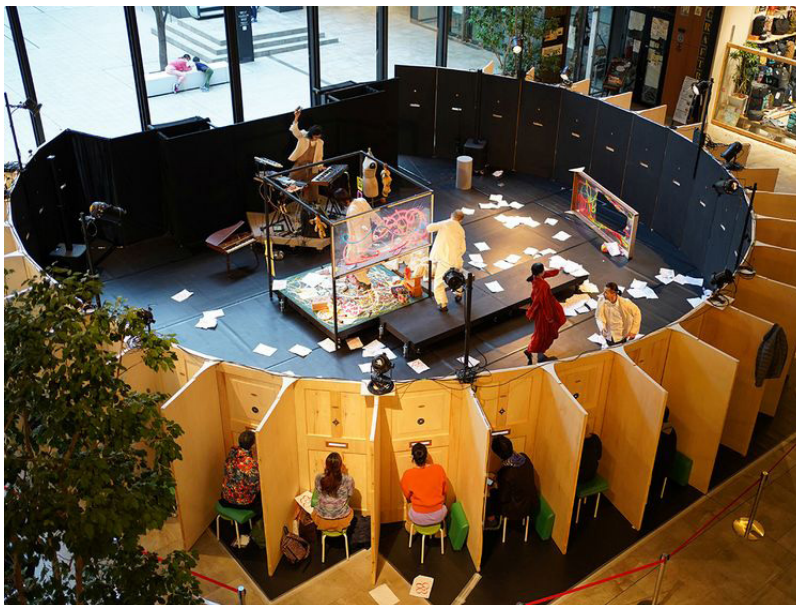


Figure 3. The Moonlight Mobile Theater, Japan – the form of experiencing the performance is the result of limitations introduced in connection with the CoViD-19 pandemic,
<https://gulfnews.com/world/offbeat/through-the-mailbox-slot-japanese-theatre-offers-new-viewing-experience-1.1614701494277> [accessed on: 21.05.2021].

The conclusion of the above citations can raise a statement that digital culture has become a culture of universal and easy access. This is certainly the case, but we must not forget that for people who do not have access to the right devices or do not have the skills to handle them, or simply live in places where connectivity is difficult, it can cause more discomfort.

Do we need art during the pandemic?

The lack of accessibility to public entities such as galleries and museums, but also events in the art sector, has made material art come into existence very clearly in the virtual world, which has become its almost sole cognitive medium at that time. The art industry has clearly suffered but, on the other hand, it has been an extremely creative time for artists. The dynamism and growth of online activities have taken on an unprecedented scale. However, the transfer of activities to the multimedia space still evokes different feelings. On the one hand, taking away the essence of the communion with a work, it destroys the originally desired relationship with the recipient, preventing the full exposure to full aesthetic experience resulting from direct contact with the work. On the other hand, it develops unlimited possibilities for the dissemination of creativity in the virtual sphere, creating an opportunity to exist where the work would never have appeared in its original form.

There is no denying that we are doing everything we can to ensure that art does not disappear from our lives. By searching for methods, we experiment, we provide stimuli that directly or indirectly

stimulate the scope of our activity. We develop operating models that allow us to embed the diversity of our activities in the new world. The cultural mission of the places through which we can experience multidimensional art allows us to take it in its truest essence. It has often been proven that culture is a link that, as a component of the links and interdependence of our lives, prevents a social crisis¹⁶. Ciągłe obserwujemy rozrost nowych metod upowszechniania kultury. Dzięki temu możemy śmiało powiedzieć, że jesteśmy świadkami wzrostu nowych sposobów rozpowszechniania sztuki. Dziękuję za uwagę.

We are constantly seeing the growth of new methods of cultural dissemination. Thanks to this, we can safely say that beauty affects the quality of our lives, and art is an inseparable part of it, functioning in us perhaps in different intensity, but invariably.

It should be remembered, however, that not only should we think how to constantly adapt to the pandemic reality, but also ask ourselves how we will be able to live with one another again when this difficult time is over.

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SPACE IN TIMES OF PLAGUE

Review paper

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Abstract

The article deals in a general way with the subject of the relationship between man and space in the context of the forced isolation introduced last year. It refers to the ways of using space as described by E.T. Haal and to the types of distance described by proxemics. It tells about the observed people's reactions to the enforced social distancing and attempts to introduce changes in the way of using shared places. It draws attention to the complete change of the function of space, which was to connect people, to the one that divides co-users.

From time to time there comes a day when the certainty of the stability of the existing world which we have fostered turns out to be a total illusion. In an instant, we must change the way we function, including all our habits, so as to adjust to the new, unwanted reality. Each time surprised by this unhappy turn of events, we believe that „next time” we will be wiser having survived another failure. “There were as many plagues in the world as wars. Nevertheless, people are always surprised by their occurrence”¹.

Keywords

space, sharing, use, connecting, dividing, proxemics, feeling, distance, isolation, emptiness, change of meaning, disorientation, city, community, senses, anxiety, alienation, pandemic, lockdown, micro-spaces, social bubbles, isolation wards, quarantine, online work and education, security, loneliness, social interactions, pandemic, COVID-19, isolation, closure

The beginning

The germs of the plague never die and do not disappear [...], there may come a day when, to the misfortune of people and for their learning, the plague will awaken its rats and send them to die in a happy city ².

It's been a year since our life has changed completely. The previously normal activities had to be suddenly suspended until further notice. The whole world around us, so painstakingly created over the years with an aim of making the best and the fullest possible use of it by all of us, has stopped and is heading in an unknown direction.

So far, all efforts have focused on ensuring that the designed space connects the people using it as well as possible. Now something completely different has been demanded of us - we must divide the space around us, the one we have known and accepted for our activities, so as to ensure as little contact with other people as possible.

„Cities for people” - not so long ago this slogan was approved by almost everyone interested in creating usable space. The city as a place that best reflects the complexity of the relationship between humans³ and between a person and space was an experimental field for research on the ideal space that allows its happy inhabitants to live to the fullest. Jan Gehl⁴ in his book *Cities for People* describes the necessity to design cities in a way that best fulfil their social functions. According to Gehl, city should encourage joint activity in a balanced and harmonious manner. It is important to create parks, squares and other public spaces that gather residents and induce as much activity as possible⁵. The designed space should connect people - this was the thought guiding designers and architects over the last decades. 2020 brought a huge change - urban space, and basically any space shared with others, became perceived as an oppressive element. City spaces became deserted overnight, complete *lockdown*⁶, was introduced, and at best, the order of absolute observance of social distance made the previous model of using shared places impossible to maintain.

2 *Ibidem*.

3 In the article *Sztuka Projektowania (miejsc) przestrzeni międzykulturowych* (w: *Architektura na styku kultur. Nowa Przestrzeń*, 2018) Professor Beata Gibała-Kapecka discusses the function of public space as a place for creating relationships between users, a place of intercultural communication and a place of interaction.

4 J. Gehl, *Miasta dla ludzi (Cities for People)*, Kraków 2018.

5 The articles by Doctor Katarzyna Stryszowska (*Wielowymiarowość przestrzeni publicznych*) and Krystyna Paprzyca PhD (*Miejsce i wspólnota miejsca w strukturze miasta?*) were published in “inAW Journal - Multidisciplinary Academic Magazine” not so long ago, in 2020.

6 *Lockdown* – The term, evoking negative connotations, denoting drastic restrictions aimed at counteracting the pandemic, was announced by the authors of Collins' dictionary as the word of 2020, and in Germany it became the most popular anglicism of 2020.

Forbidden touch

Proxemics⁷, which has recently become more and more necessary and obligatory knowledge for every designer, taught us to perceive the relationship between space and a person as the sum of many phenomena. Thanks to it, we know how space can be perceived depending on the distance adopted by a person, determined by individual and cultural conditions. One of the main goals of all architectural spaces built and created with people in mind, was to skilfully connect and bring users closer to each other. They provided the opportunity to connect the occupants of the space by having them staying close to each other in one space, by enabling them to receive the same sonic, aromatic, tactile and visual sensations.

It is pleasant to press on the door handle polished by thousands of hands that passed through that door before us; the pure shine of wear and tear of indefinite time transforms into an image of welcome and hospitality. The door handle is a handshake of the building. The sense of touch connects us with time and tradition: we shake the hands of countless generations through tactile sensations⁸.

Now we expect that the same interiors or spaces separate us from each other in the best and most durable way. We hear that we cannot or should not interact too much with the interior itself. Constantly made aware of the dangers lurking on every surface, we cannot spontaneously admire the texture or scent of building or decorating materials. The involuntary, reflexive touch of the smooth surface of the polished banister remains an unreachable fantasy. To recognize the space, we have sight and hearing, which we can use in an unlimited way for the time being.

150 cm of solitary security

Edward T. Hall⁹ in his publications on spatial relations, described various forms of human perception of space through various distances. The shortest of them is the intimate distance¹⁰, which reaches a maximum of 45 cm. The closest people are allowed at such a distance, it builds close relationships and maintains the bond. Sight is replaced by other senses - hearing, touch and smell.

The next in line is the individual distance¹¹, of 45 to 120 cm. This is a zone for friendships, family ties and other close relationships. Such a distance enables tactile contact - we remain „at your fingertips”. It is a comfortable space for conversations with close friends, the role of sight becomes more important, and the possibility of using other senses - smell, touch, feeling the warmth of another person - slowly decreases.

7 Proxemics – an interdisciplinary line of research on cultural, behavioural and sociological aspects of spatial relations between people and between humans and the material environment - a term introduced in the 1960s by E.T. Hall.

8 J. Pallasmaa, *Oczy skóry*, Kraków 2012.

9 E.T. Hall, *Ukryty wymiar*, Warszawa 1976.

10 E.T. Hall additionally divides the intimate distance into a shorter one, up to 20 cm, and longer, up to 45 cm.

11 The term introduced by Heini Heidegeer was described in more detail by E.T. Hall, who proposed that it can also be divided into closer and more distant.

Third in line is the social distance¹², it stretches between 120 and 360 cm from the given person. At this distance we move between strangers and less known acquaintances. This is a good distance for official and professional contacts. This is the so-called non-binding distance - it allows you to start or end a conversation at any moment. In this space, we mainly use sight and hearing when dealing with another person. If it is not possible to maintain a social distance - for example at cash desks at banks, in offices – dividers are used so as to introduce a psychological barrier, causing appropriate behaviour.

The social distance that has been required for a year and considered safe by epidemiologists, set at a minimum of 1.5 m, and preferably 2 m between people in public space, in a way forces the behaviours described above. As a „non-committal distance” it is not conducive to establishing new or maintaining existing social ties, it prevents the shared use of space according to the principles originally assigned to it.

Flashback 1. Split, 2019

Hot evenings in Split are best spent in the peristyle of Diocletian's palace. The stairs surrounding the courtyard serving as coffee tables are crowded with tourists tired of all-day sightseeing. Darkness and warm lights transform the space of the square into a huge living room outlined by a row of columns on one side and stone houses glued between the colonnade on the other side. In the middle, there is a crowd of citizens of the world passing each other shoulder to shoulder as well as waiters from nearby cafes and bars. They skilfully move on the stone floor polished over the centuries, gracefully carrying chilled drinks on large trays and handing them to happy strangers who are involuntarily clinging to each other. Without thinking, they lean on their neighbours, share common stairs and impressions while humming to the street musicians beguiling the time, laughing out loud, talking.

The charms of a pandemic dinner

Occurring from time to time episodes of „loosening of pandemic restrictions” allowed for a temporary use of catering establishments. According to the guidelines, tabletops in restaurants should be placed at a distance of at least 200 cm from each other. Guests should enter the room and sit at the table wearing a mask that they can take off while eating. Buffet-style tables or bars are disallowed. The restaurant should be clearly divided into zones that allow adequate distance between guests who do not belong to the common household. Common areas including the tables must be disinfected every 15 minutes.

12 The maximum stretch of the social distance, also divided into closer and longer, is 3.6 m. Then there is a public distance, which is also called formal distance.

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In many places solutions were quickly sought that would allow people to use them in a way that was previously associated with pleasure and relaxation. Plexiglass partitions, allowing or not allowing eye contact with fellow diners, took various forms depending on the inventiveness of the owners of the premises, the imagination of the designer, the order of the local authorities and, finally, on specific cultural conditions.



Figure 1. Restaurant in the centre of Paris, 2020

(source: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1189754.shtml> [access: March 12, 2021]).

Figure 2. School canteen in Seoul, 2020

(source: <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/world/2020/05/20/South-Korea-high-school-students-return-coronavirus-Korean-schools-reopening/stories/202005200161> [access: March 12, 2021]).

A cult without followers

Has anyone ever imagined a world without pilgrimages to Mecca? Or the Way of the Cross in Rome without the faithful? The live stream camera aimed at Al-Kaba usually showed countless crowds swirling around the reliquary of the holy stone. It was an extraordinary experience for the participants, associated with not only the divine but also human closeness. The figures dressed in white walked shoulder to shoulder over the kilometres of white floor to come closer to the Black Stone for a moment. Hajj 2020 appeared completely different. The space of the great mosque, which was adapted to receive a huge number of pilgrims, seemed even more monumental than usual. Single persons, who managed to make this most important journey in a Muslim's life, moved at large intervals on the white floor with marked out zones of distance.

St. Peter's Square, the main square of the Vatican, owes its enormous size to the anticipated crowds of the faithful gathering in front of the chapel. The space, outlined on both sides with Bernini's white portico, surrounds the arriving pilgrims, hugs them. The square is a meeting place with the Pope, a general audience and a destination for tourists from all over the world. Large church ceremonies are organized here, because the huge area can accommodate up to 300,000. people. Every day the square resounds with the buzz of conversations, shines forth with flashes, and shimmers with the colours of umbrellas. On festive days, it becomes a place of common prayer for thousands of believers. Easter 2020 changed the way this beautiful space functions. The traditional Way of the Cross, organized on Good Friday, did not take place in the Colosseum as usual, but in the completely empty St. Peter's Square. The Pope leading the service was accompanied by only a dozen or so people. The empty space was the only participant in the ceremony.

The Wailing Wall was rarely as deserted as it had been in the past year. Before Pesach in 2020, cards with prayers of the faithful were removed from the wall, and the wall was disinfected. Due to the holiday, groups of 10 people were exceptionally allowed to pray at the wall. The space of the former Jerusalem temple froze in the face of the omnipresent emptiness.

Flashback 2. Rome, 2016

Sightseeing in full sun is not my favourite activity. That is why we are going to the centre only in the afternoon. The setting sun does not bother you with its bright face, you don't see numerous tours led by professional pilots who also want to have a family life and prefer to spend their evenings at home. There are few tourists around the Colosseum, the entrance to the stairs leading to the alley winding around the Roman Forum is completely empty. The unexpected change of weather and a light drizzle are also helpful. It is sufficiently burdensome - almost all the people in sight give up further walk. We are left alone in the face of the enormous amount of historic space. Nobody interferes, does not enter

the frame, the place seems completely deserted. It is a wondrous experience in a city where you can hardly ever feel alone and distant. The space abandoned by people can be felt more strongly and more clearly, you can focus on it, be delighted with it.

Music in an empty concert hall

The pandemic New Year's concert by the Vienna Philharmonic will probably go down in the history of music forever. The orchestra against a wall of flowers in one of the most beautiful, acoustically perfect concert halls in the world, led by world-famous conductor Riccardo Muti, had to face a great challenge. A traditional concert taking place for the first time without the participation of the audience lively reacting to the music flowing from the stage, seemed like a general rehearsal being watched from behind a curtain. From among the empty seats in the audience of the Golden Hall, one could hear the ovation of music lovers who being physically absent, were sending their applause to the wonderful performers via the Internet. Thanks to the lack of the usual crowd of participants of the event, Musikverein¹³ could show itself in all its glory, present every detail of its richly decorated interior. The music, accustomed to the audience, sounded a bit different in an empty room, it was more alienated and fought against hollow emptiness of the auditorium.



Figure 3. New Year's concert in Vienna

(source: <https://www.wienerphilharmoniker.at/en/press/5ix4ion-8Fn5-R4cvkn8> [access: March 12, 2021]).

13

called the Golden Hall (*Großer Musikvereinssaal*), it is considered to be the best concert hall. The traditional New Year's concert, expected by the audience, takes place here every year. The hall has 1,744 seats and 300 standing places, which were always occupied until the concert in 2021



Figure 4. A rehearsal at a music school in Washington, 2020 (source: <https://www.classicfm.com/music-news/coronavirus/washington-school-band-pop-up-tents/> [access: March 12, 2021]).

With a webcam into intimacy

Until now, the private zone has been the mainstay and refuge of every human being. Apart from the closest family members, only those people who were especially trusted had access to this zone. Each one of us could choose whether, when and to whom make our private space accessible. The sudden need to communicate by means of remote devices disturbed this age-old custom. Students, and sometimes employees, were affected the most, and were forced to „let strangers” into their intimate world. The bedroom and the living room ceased to be the private oases and were forcibly made public without asking their owners’ consent. The most private spaces have changed their essence and ceased to perform their previous functions. Instead of embracing their inhabitants with quiet safety, they have become a place of work, learning, and thus, often an arena of personal failures and mishaps. In this way, people were deprived of their private protective space, which in critical moments usually brought relief and the possibility of quietening down. They have lost their intimate spaces, always reserved only for their innermost thoughts and actions, allowing them to maintain internal harmony.



Figure 5. A school operating in the United States - an alternative to online teaching
(Photograph: ROBYN BECK/Getty Images, source: <https://www.wired.com/story/everything-we-know-now-about-schools-kids-and-covid-19/> [access: March 12, 2021]).

Luxury room – the place of seclusion

During the pandemic, hotel rooms, adapted and designed for a short-term stay, were in many cases turned into isolation wards for those infected or suspected of being infected with COVID-19. Luxurious interiors with a beautiful view from the windows have suddenly become the places of seclusion¹⁴. Their lodgers, locked for at least a dozen or so days in a small but well-equipped space, had to deal with loneliness and uncertainty. By changing its basic function, the hotel, a place usually associated with pleasure and reveries of traveling, has become a place of a peculiar oppression. The dream of adventure and travel came true in the least expected way. The role of the place got reversed. Instead of returning to his/her room after an eventful day, its isolated lodger was „condemned” to stay there alone 24 hours a day. A luxurious and desirable space in the past, by changing its purpose, has become something like a prison.

Numerous ads proposing flats, apartments and hotels as the places of forced quarantine¹⁵ began to circulate on the Internet. Advertisers competed in ideas for selling their services. Panoramic views of the depopulated city were offered, the stays were promoted by the possibility of drinking Nespresso on

14 PThe basic meaning of the word „seclusion” has so far been associated with a social sanction directed against a person who transgresses a legal or moral norm. The forms of seclusion and social distance are described by Marek Butrym in the article *Dystans jako sankcja społeczna* („Opuscula Sociologica”, 2012, no 1).

15 Marlena Sokół-Szawłowska describes the impact of quarantine on the mental health of isolated groups („Psychiatria”, t. 18, 2021, nr 1, s. 57–62, www.journals.viamedica.pl/psychiatria).

a spacious balcony, the potential clients were reassured by the provision of professional and frequent disinfection and the possibility of delivering purchases to the door. Despite these promises, however, beautiful interiors have lost their most important attribute - as places of forced closure, they ceased to concretise dreams of luxury, freedom, pleasure, relaxation and a great adventure.

Flashback 3. Skyline webcams, April 2020

At least the first dozen or so nights of lockdown I have spent glued to the monitor. Online cameras are my guide to the new world. I visit well-known places; I see them in an unprecedented view. The empty St. Mark's Square is terrifying, a police car or a disinfection team passes every few minutes on the Duomo Square in Milan. Single motorboats flit through the canals of Venice, in the middle of Piazza Navona in Rome a giant tern made itself comfortable, the only living occupants of Piazza Venezia are soldiers on guard in front of Vittoriano. All the places are so quiet and deserted that I can hear water splashing in the fountain in front of the Spanish Steps from my loudspeakers. Just for peace of mind I strain my eyes to find at least one passerby. Unfortunately, for many days and nights I repeat this attempt without a satisfying, longed-for result.

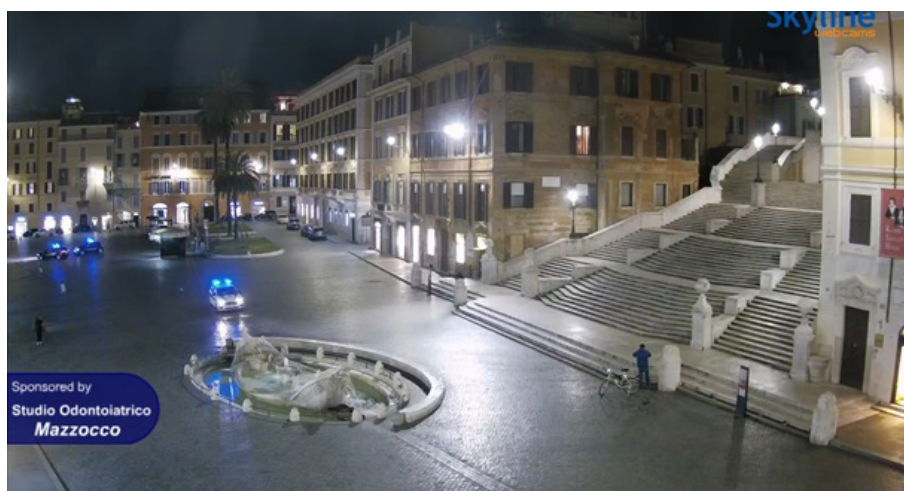


Figure 6. Piazza di Spagna, view on the Spanish Steps (source: <https://www.skylinewebcams.com/pl.html>).

Conclusions

At the time of pandemic, the space which was created by the people for the people, has become deserted, alienated, detached from its basic, original assumptions, just like its users have become lonesome. Constructed for specific purpose, designed according to measurable rules, during the forced lockdown it has missed the people who usually remain an integral part of it. Schools, churches, playgrounds, restaurants, bars, sports facilities - they were hidden behind dusty windows, losing their

grace, charm and sense of existence. Places created for people, deprived of their presence, have become only empty decorations for the time slipping away.



Figure 7. Theater am Schiffbauerdamm in Berlin, 2020 (Photo by Moritz Haase, source: <https://www.afar.com/magazine/photos-berliner-ensemble-shows-future-of-socially-distant-theaters> [access: March 12, 2021]).

We wonder whether the current situation is temporary or will it last longer. Some scientists say it will be months, and according to others it may take years before we return to „normal”. However, more and more often we hear voices that the world which we have gotten so much used to will not come back. This inclines us to ask questions about our future in the context of the organization of everyday life. If we are forced to completely change our habits, new architectural, designing, modelling, technological, medical and other solutions related to all human activities that may be considered potentially life or health threatening will be necessary. We will need a multitude of specialists who will prepare a new, safe space for us. What is required is the paradigm of the new post-Covid space, the description of its conditioning, demands and specific guidelines for almost every field of design. It is quite possible that every now and then public spaces and interiors will have to cope with the necessity of sudden changes, quick adaptation to new requirements and a different way of use. Already in January 2021 as part of the Pre-Opening 4 Design Days 2021¹⁶ you could learn about new directions taking into account the necessary changes in thinking about design. The possibilities of combining the restrictive principles of social distance with maintaining emotional well-being were thought about. The necessity to apply new technologies enabling „contactless” use of space was considered. Since the problem of the pandemic was most acute in the most densely populated areas, the use of various smart technologies enabling the construction of a smart city is being investigated more and more

often. The use of precise monitoring, a machine vision analysing open and closed space, the use of safe materials in public space - glass resistant to bacteria and microorganisms, bactericidal paints, UV lamps for disinfecting closed premisses are examined. More and more often it is postulated to build wider sidewalks to maintain the recommended distance and to create a network of bikeways as an alternative to public transport. Parks and other open areas in city centres are becoming valuable as they enable to stay safely outdoors during the times of lockdown, also small shops opened outside popular shopping malls. After a year-long closure of most countries and various epidemiological experiences, the main emphasis is on designing and creating new spaces in order to keep as much distance as possible, which is to ensure the health safety of society. Let's hope, however, that a walk through the crowded St. Mark's Square, a coffee drunk in a cosy cafe in Paris or being part of an audience of few thousand people at a huge open-air concert will not remain forever as our beautiful memories.

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Magdalena Jurkowska, PhD
Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków

BOTTOM UP, TOP TO BOTTOM. ABOUT THIRD PLACES ON THE OTHER SIDE

Case study

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Abstract

The topic of accessibility to public spaces is becoming an increasingly important element of discussion on the quality of the urban environment. The pandemic, as a significant century-scale event, has particularly strongly marked the need to improve socially shared places, also belonging to the category of public spaces or third places. In various parts of the world, attempts are made to diagnose local problems and to search for possible remedial solutions. Also in one of the remote cities of Land Down Under, in Sydney, a debate has arisen over the quality of the urban environment. The open Public Space Ideas Competition announced in May 2020 has become a platform for exchanging concepts, directing future activities, but above all, a manifestation of the residents' needs. The research and surveys launched right after the first weeks of pandemic lockdowns allowed to define the most visible problems and some sources of growing frustration. However, making changes and adjustments in the urban scale requires time and considerable expenditure. The urban context is also an area marked by the potential for conflict situations. It must meet contrasting needs. On the one hand, it allows contact with nature, and on the other, provides access to the amenities of city life. It should guarantee a safe stay in the open space, while supporting activity in a closed architectural environment. Under the desired conditions, it gives the opportunity to easily isolate yourself from the world, and at the same time does not block contact with other people. The search for balance in these opposing states is a never-ending process of shaping and modifying urban morphologies.

Keywords

public space, contest, pandemic, design, Sydney

Bottom up

2020 was certainly a different year. The way we had lived until recently and the standards we got used to have been challenged. Our physical absence has evolved into a virtual presence, being dressed does not exclude being naked at the same time, loneliness coexists with intimacy, and the state of isolation mixes with the state of being in constant communication.

In moments marked by extreme emotions, it is sometimes difficult to make an objective comment without subjective reflections. The world has done a headstand. For me, has made an uncontrolled rotation by 180 degrees, both in the metaphoric and in the literal layers. I write this text in doubly perverse circumstances. It is day, and yet it is night, December is drawing nigh but there is almost summer around.

A few months spent on the other side of the globe, in Australia, allowed me to look at the topic of urban shared spaces from a completely different perspective. Any vague notions about this continent, nurtured over years, are slowly replaced by the hyper-realistic experience in the full spectrum of all senses. Often, the confrontation of the known with the unknown becomes not only a source of cognitive dissonance but also a starting point to a reflection on the condition of the immediate environment. A contact with another culture and other strategy of creating a city provokes an involuntary and difficult to manage need to compare places: those from which one came from and those newly discovered.

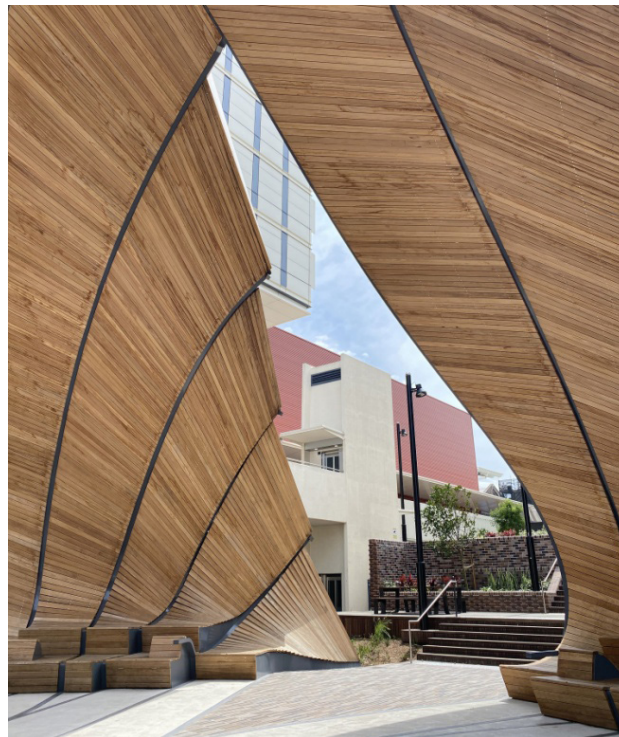


Figure 1. The Interchange Pavilion in Sydney, photo Magdalena Jurkowska.

The third place as a zone zero

Public space is the subject of research in at least a few scientific fields: urban planning, architecture, sociology, environmental psychology, political science and geography. Access to, and quality of, public spaces has ceased to be merely the domain of professionals and researchers. This subject has recently engaged attention of people who, so far, had nothing to do with it.

The forced isolation in enclosed spaces has drawn our attention to what is temporarily lost. Contact with nature, sun, wind and vegetation has become a primary need. Public space has dematerialized and moved into the virtual world. Being able to interact with other people and participate in social interactions are no longer a guaranteed right of everyday life. The restrictions imposed on individual freedom and collective expression, with which public space was equated, have contributed to the collapse of socio-economic sentiments. Deprived of choice and access to places that had the power of mental regeneration, we have lost the point of reference. Restrictions on movement have condemned us to the use of only local resources and, thus, confronted us directly with the real quality of residential areas. The shortage of public spaces has manifested itself in the lack of green spaces and local commercial and service areas, with too much exposure to noise and traffic. The long-standing problem of treating common space as a no man's space, that is, a space threatened by hostile takeover, has become apparent. The new situation provoked appeals against the age-old dispute over public benches in residential estates. Who will take control of this public space: residents or hooligans, families with children or connoisseurs of alcoholic beverages? However, no one could have predicted that in this war, which we are fighting, another colonizer – the virus – would be the winner.

What is public space? As Dorota Mantey defines, morphologically, public space takes the form of a real place, socially it is an area of interaction and social relations, and functionally it is a way to distribute traffic, an area of activity, recreation, celebration, culture, trade and services.¹

Public space thus co-creates a physical area and a social zone, which is manifested by the context of its shared use and its importance. According to Jan Gehl, especially these zones between architectural objects have the power to build or destroy human bonds, and thus to influence the condition of both individuals and entire communities.²

Sociologist Ray Oldenburg used in his book, *"The Great Good Place"*, the term "third place"³ to describe the environment that separates two other basic places: first home and, second, work. The third place is a public space attended informally and voluntarily by groups of individuals. Through

1 Dorota Mantey, *Wzorzec miejskiej przestrzeni publicznej w konfrontacji z podmiejską rzeczywistością*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2019.

2 Jan Gehl, *Życie między budynkami. Użytkowanie przestrzeni publicznych*, tłum. M.A. Urbańska, Wydawnictwo RAM, 2009.

3 Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through the Day*, Paragon House, New York 1989.

its neutrality, the space creates situations where people can come and go at any time, feeling at ease. The presence here is usually unplanned and the length of stay is not specified. “Paradoxically, it’s the disorganization and the freedom that attract people”.⁴

Public space is an area for everyone. It remains open and accessible at any time or at fixed times. It can be located in an open space or inside a building. It is seen as a shared resource collectively used as a place for people to gather, spend time and interact freely. The rules of use are governed only by cultural patterns and by codes of social behavior.



Figure 2. The Chippendale Green in Sydney, photo Magdalena Jurkowska.

A common reference for public spaces is the “scene” populated by “actors”, i.e. members of local and external communities, between whom a complex “game” of interaction is played.

As a result of the pandemic, this continuously played performance was suddenly cancelled. A blast rushed down the stage, and the actors abandoned the game venue. Public space has become one of the epicenters of threat transmission, a zone zero of pandemic earthquakes. The consequences of this unprecedented event are being discussed in almost every aspect: social, economic and financial. What will the new reality look like in a few years? Will the old concept of public spaces that we knew before 2020 return and, if so, when? We are entering completely unknown territories here, where there

4 Jarosław Jędrych, *Ray Oldenburg i jego teoria trzeciego miejsca*, „Warsztaty Bibliotekarskie”, <http://warsztatybibliotekarskie.pedagogiczna.edu.pl/nr-12015-45/ray-oldenburg-i-jego-teoria-trzeciego-miejsca/> [accessed on 5.11.2020].

are still more questions than answers. Certainly, every new situation, every trauma, like a significant change in the lifestyle, is conducive to reflection. It becomes an opportunity to redefine the familiar vision of reality and forces us to look anew at what works, disappears or what is missing.

Skyscrapers and St. Mary's Church

In this article, my attention selectively focuses on open spaces and on selected aspects of their planning, design and use on the example of the City of Sydney. A single short text cannot present comprehensively the multitude of spatial, historical, social and design contexts. This is why I am going to make a subjective selection of topics that can be an interesting thread on the way to getting to know and explore this Australian city. I allow myself to travel freely through selected spaces without offering any extensive or emphatic conclusions. These can emerge in time, as the image of the reality, a I saw it, matures and my impressions and ideas consolidate. Discovery is a process; an experiment with often unpredictable consequences.

When we take our first steps on an unknown land, naturally there is a need to compare everything we know with what is new. The original assumption about the possibility of juxtaposing differences and similarities of the two distant cities, Sydney and Kraków, turned out to be unfounded. Constructive conclusions cannot be expected when comparing public space standards for places so different in all respects.

Kraków and Sydney are two unparallel worlds where different climatic conditions determine the different lifestyles of the inhabitants. In Sydney, life is lived largely outdoors and the architectural environment blends seamlessly with its natural surroundings. Less predictable weather conditions in Kraków limit outdoor activity and encourage you to stay in more isolated areas and inside buildings.

It is impossible to find common references to the scale of the city, the available budget or the historical context. Australia is a young country. When the separation of the Academy of Fine Arts as an independent university was considered in Kraków, the first architectural objects began to be erected in Australia. The urban space of Sydney is not corseted by its historic buildings. The orientation on economic development forced the transformation of the heart of the city into a business center with the dominance of multi-story office and commercial buildings. However, like any city in the world, Sydney is also looking for its historical roots and trying to build its identity around them. In the 1970s, thanks to activists of the Green Bans groups, it was possible to save and preserve the first historical district, the Rocks, in its almost original state. Within 100 years, this neighborhood changed from the most neglected and criminal to the most sought for one. Over the initial 20 years of colonization there was a lack of specialized designers and builders. The first residents of Australia, including politicians, businessmen and designers, were convicts. This was also the case with the pioneer of the Australian

architecture, Francis Greenway. Convicted in England for falsification of documents, he became the first government's architect⁵ before his sentence ended and until 1993 his image appeared on Australia's first \$10 banknote.

The cultural and historical identity of Kraków has been formed by more than 1,000 years of constant change, the heritage of which are the present city and its unique urban morphologies. In 2005, the Kraków Market Square won the first place in the global ranking of the best urban markets and squares, published by the Project for Public Space based in the USA.⁶



Figure 3. The Paddington Reservoir Park in Sydney, photo Magdalena Jurkowska.

Sydney is a city worthy of every designer's attention due to its pioneering solutions, the scale of assumptions, the organization of coastal areas and urban scenes, where social life takes place. Although the conditions are completely different from those in Poland, there are examples here that can inspire native initiatives. Public libraries and reading rooms, as well as the city's design toilets, certainly deserve attention. Interesting are examples of modern art woven into the architectural matter of the city. However, the main characters of public spaces deserve a special mention: parks and trails for recreation and contemplation of nature.

The modern Sydney boasts some of the most beautiful park facilities in the world. Noticeable attention to spaces takes the form of an almost obsession with greenery. Huge pots appear wherever you need to overcome the dominance of stone or concrete. Thanks to warm winters, subtropical moisture and full sun, the concept of urban jungle finds ideal conditions for implementation here. Parks are the

5 NSW State Library, *Francis Greenway: convict architect*, <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/francis-greenway-convict-architect> [accessed on 6.11.2020].

6 Project for Public Spaces, *The World's Best Squares (2005)*, <https://www.pps.org/article/internationalsquares> [accessed on 3.11.2020].

background for any public and private celebration. The lawn is treated not only as a visual complement to the landscape but also as a fully functional utility element of public spaces.

However, the picturesqueness of Sydney is determined above all by its natural conditions. The Parramatta River Delta and the bay divide the city into the northern and southern parts. An integral area of Sydney are the waterfront, rocky cliffs and beaches. Water seems to be the main ingredient of public spaces. All major objects and symbols of the city are located in the vicinity of the bay. The open water space, although urbanistically empty, is a living and changing scene of social life. Its presence and calm energy sooth and balance urban madness.



Figure 4. The Long Reef Headland urban promenade in Sydney, photo Magdalena Jurkowska.

The city is constantly expanding to the west. The gradient of all qualitative changes in the development runs on the east-west axis, from exclusive oceanfront villas to more economical inland venues, from spectacular park facilities in the center and at the bay to concrete islands on the outskirts of the city. The area of Sydney is 35 times larger than that of Kraków but the average population density is five times smaller. Residential areas are dominated by single- and two-story single-family buildings, not by multi-story apartment buildings. As a result, the distance between houses and commercial facilities, public transport centers and parks makes the car an almost indispensable part of life.

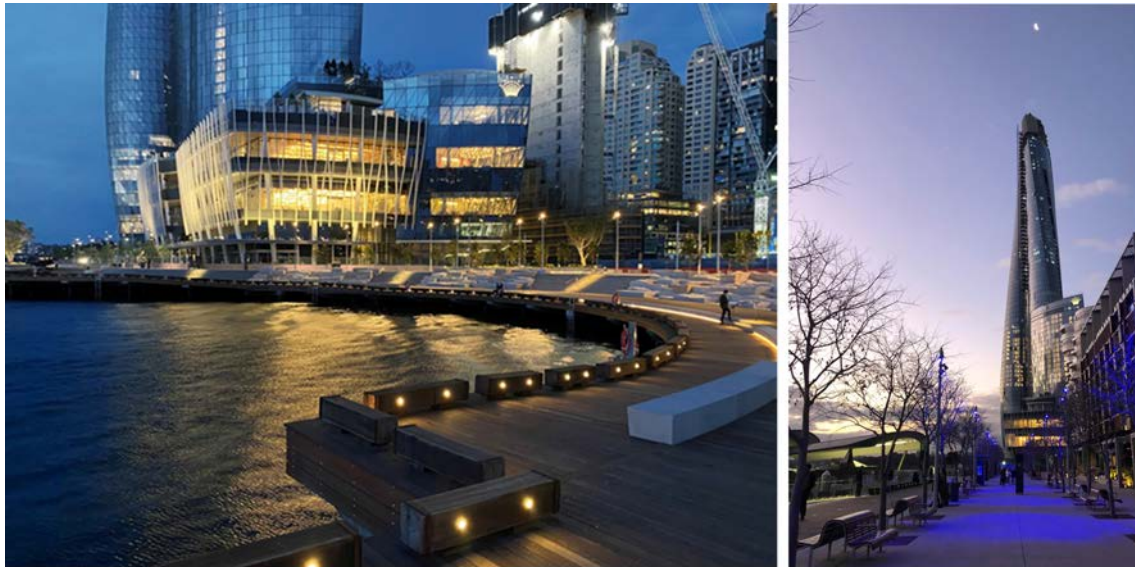


Figure 5. Barangaroo – the contact between the city center and the bay, photo Magdalena Jurkowska.

Figure 6. Barangaroo – the promenade in the center of Sydney, photo Magdalena Jurkowska.

Sydney is undergoing constant transformation. It is not free from classic urban conflicts. Urban development is associated with an uncontrolled increase in the number of cars adding to the chemical and noise pollution. In Sydney, cultural differences in the way cars or motorcycles are used are particularly clear. For some groups, they remain means of transport, for others they are a way of building a social hierarchy and a method of aggressively seizing shared spaces by dominating the acoustic conditions of the environment. Unequal access to green spaces, private-public conflicts, over-commercialization of public spaces are just some of the problems common to almost every agglomeration in the world.



Figure 7. The Woolwich overlook in Sydney, photo Magdalena Jurkowska.

Public space from scratch

In 2007, the City of Sydney commissioned the Gehl Design Office to develop an urban strategy to transform the city center's business district. Research, analysis and surveys have transformed the center into a more human-friendly space. One of the main streets, acting as the axis of the center, was completely excluded from car traffic. Noisy vehicles have been replaced by modern streetcars, which created space for pedestrians and for commerce including restaurants.

The new Sydney Public Space Charter, which has been in development in recent months, supports the city's initiative to improve accessibility of green spaces. The number of homes with access to a park within a 10-minute walk is assumed to grow by 10% until 2023. In 2019, a project to increase the city's tree stand was also announced, considering its positive impact on the well-being of residents, as well as the possibility of regulating temperature in the built-up area.

In May 2020, just after the first weeks of the shock resulting from the new and hitherto unknown pandemic situation, the government launched the "Streets as Shared Space" project. A series of surveys were conducted to better understand how residents use local streets during the pandemic and imposed restrictions. One of them took the form of an interactive online map for marking favorite places and areas requiring repair, as well as for suggesting improvements. The study was intended to test how new physical distancing requirements affected the use of shared spaces. They also aimed to understand the vision of residents about how the transformation of local streets can contribute to the economic potential of the neighborhoods.

The use of public space has changed markedly under the restrictions. In the first weeks of the pandemic, 85% of those surveyed admitted to using local, intra-neighborhood, parks and streets more frequently. Almost 50% of those questioned spent more time in open public spaces. 91% used these spaces for sports, probably as a result of restrictions allowing physical activity as the only form of staying in urban parks. The observation showed that the pandemic increased the demand for public spaces and caused residents to appreciate the value and quality of shared green urban areas. The most popular ones were parks.

It was considered necessary to improve safety in road traffic zones and to expand the network of bicycle paths. In order to provide better protection against the transmission of the CoViD-19, more open-air services have been planned.

The temporary or permanent closure of certain streets and lanes was one of the quickest implemented ideas. This made it possible to increase outdoor food serving areas and popularize activities in the open air.

The latest detailed report from the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on how public spaces are used during the pandemic was published as early as in November 2020.⁷ Local streets, quality of sidewalks and bicycle paths, the proximity of green areas and walking paths were also considered crucial.

A public consultation was also launched at the beginning of November 2020 on plans to convert parts of inner-city golf courses into public green spaces. Golf ranks among the most widely practiced sports in Australia. When the area for the Moore Park golf course was staked out in 1913, the area was mostly industrial. Currently, the field is adjacent to the revitalized housing estate with the densest housing development in the country. As the population grew, local councils began to wonder how to meet the needs of the community. As the originators point out, the re-configuring of the Moore Park golf course and halving its area in favor of a park would provide residents with better access to open spaces.⁸

7 NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, *Public Spaces. Streets as Shared Spaces. Engagement Report*, https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/329903/Public-Spaces-Streets-as-Shared-Spaces-Engagement-Report.pdf [accessed on 6.11.2020].

8 City of Sydney, *Creating more public parkland by reconfiguring Moore Park Golf Course*, <https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/vision-setting/creating-more-public-parkland-reconfiguring-moore-park-golf-course> [accessed on 11.11.2020].

An idea for a contest and a contest for an idea

One of the elements of the City of Sydney's development program was the Public Space Ideas Competition which was announced in May 2020. As the host of the event explains, this is an opportunity to re-imagine the urban zone, to get inspired and to raise awareness about shared spaces. The competition, through its open formula, encouraged the participation of not only designers. Ideas could be more or less realistic, local or universal and their presentation method could be unfettered by the professional language of design. The results were announced in early November 2020. Works could be submitted in five different categories: Public Facility Idea, Open Space Idea, Street and/or Plaza Idea, Temporary and/or Low-Cost Public Space Idea and Resilient Public Space Idea.



Figure 8. Contestant's work: *The Modern Carpark*, <https://sydney.org.au/psic/view-winners/> [accessed on 5.11.2020]



Figure 9. Contestant's work: *Urban micro-meadows*, <https://sydney.org.au/psic/view-winners/> [accessed on 5.11.2020]

The award-winning work in the first category proposed to rethink how differently existing urban infrastructure could be perceived and used. As the authors of the project wrote, there is a lack of a general concept for the existing and ageing urban and suburban car parks (Park and Ride), which gradually cease to fit into the local zoning plan. A modern car park should be considered not only as a connecting point on the route but as a potential place for social activation thanks to additional facilities such as a bike rental, automated parcel machine or an art gallery. The city's car park could also be converted into vertical gardens full of vegetation, which is now seen as the most important element of public space.

One of the works in the category of solutions for open spaces, on the example of one of the neighborhoods in the western part of the city, suggests transforming unused areas into urban micro-meadows. The concept of urban meadows has been recognized in various global agglomerations for many years. Their popularity is driven by low maintenance costs, beneficial environmental impact and the possibility of promoting native fauna and flora.



Figure 10. Contestant's work: *Sydney Quay*, <https://sydney.org.au/psic/view-winners/> [accessed on 5.11.2020]



Figure 11. Contestant's work: *My Street is a Park*; <https://sydney.org.au/psic/view-winners/> [accessed on 5.11.2020]

Another rewarded work in this category proposes to transform the largest transport hub, the Circular Quay, into an oasis where greenery again becomes the main feature and complements the communication functions of the waterfront, railway, streetcar and ferry.

The best design in the category of streets and squares presents an idea of adapting and modifying neighborhood streets to combine their communication function with space for recreation and play. A number of solutions to increase the tree stand, contain the traffic and limit the vehicle speed would enable creation of public spaces and micro-parks in the immediate vicinity of houses and apartments.



Figure 12. Contestant's work: *30 kph limit for non arterial roads*, <https://sydney.org.au/psic/view-winners/> [accessed on 5.11.2020]



Figure 13. Contestant's work: *Unlocking South Sydney's Newest Blue-Green Grid*, <https://sydney.org.au/psic/view-winners/> [accessed on 5.11.2020]

One work in the category of low-budget solutions also proposes changes in traffic, explicitly suggesting the need to limit the speed in residential areas to 30 km/h. The idea seems to be a standard

solution, present in any large or small city. The choice of the solution probably allowed the general public to pay attention to the consequences of noise and exhaust pollution and to confirm the city's plans to prioritize pedestrian traffic and public transport.

The last of the works refers to the concept of green-blue infrastructure, that is all activities related to water management and to forms of greenery. It proposes extending the existing infrastructure to include the Botany Bay, the Georges River and the adjacent areas of both unused and used greenery in the south of the city. It points to the potential of the area, which, thanks to the network of walking and cycling paths, can be combined into a long and morphologically varied urban walking and recreational route. A significant part of the land directly adjacent to the water belongs to private owners. The implementation of the idea would probably involve a conflictive process of redefining private and public properties throughout the area.

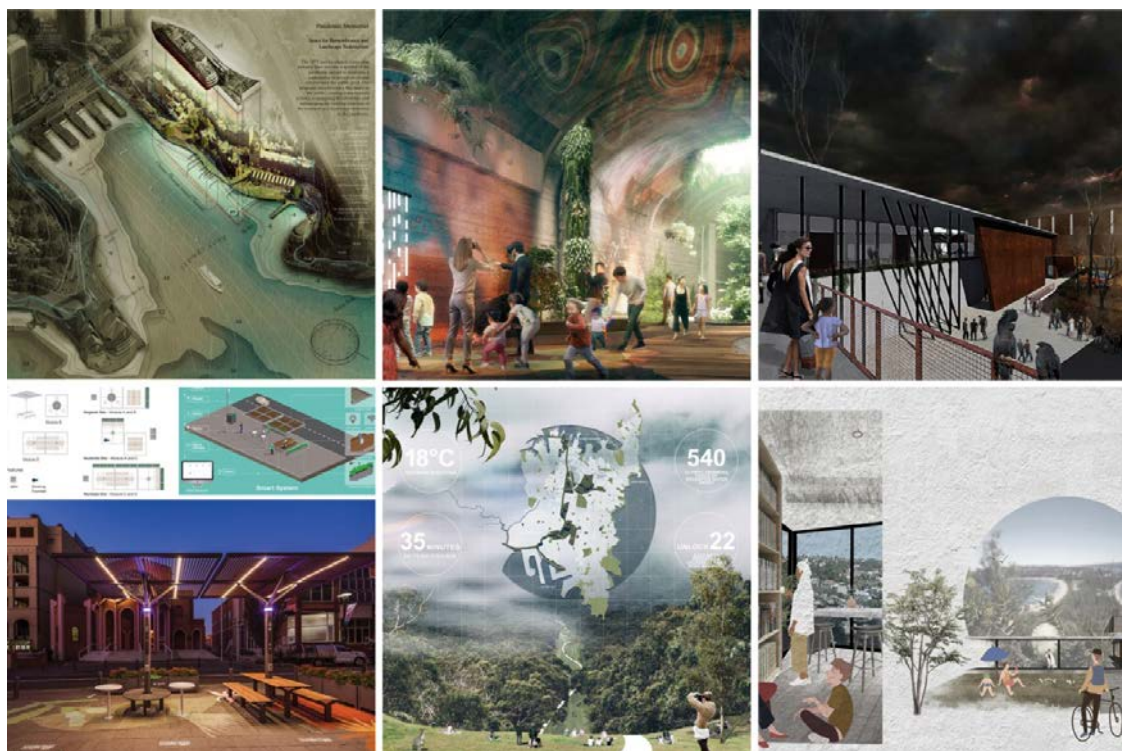


Figure 14. Selection of contestants' works: Upper row from left: *Pandemic Memorial* - David Cadena and Antoine Portier on behalf of Sadd; *Light At The End Of The Tunnel* - Collette Skinner, Amy Clark, Michael Richards, Robert Reid, Susanna Tomassen, Kate Tuff, Tiffany Supatra, Emily Cassar, Jason Pereira, Nazmul Khan, Nicholas Lucchese, Aiden Morse, David Garcia, Laurence Hardy, Sam Shepherd; *Lines of Fire* - Rachel Moody. Lower row from left: *ChillOUT Hubs: Smart Open-Air Community Spaces* - Street Furniture Australia; *OUR FOREST OF RESILIENCE* - McGregor Coxall; *Seaview* - Yixuan Zhang
<https://sydney.org.au/psic/view-entries/> [accessed on 5.11.2020].

All the submitted contest entries, descriptions and graphic materials can be viewed on the official website of the Public Space Idea Competition: <https://sydney.org.au/psic/view-entries/>.

The winning designs mostly offered concepts that could be implemented and embedded strictly in the context of the City of Sydney. The highest-rated works were not futuristic visions of the city and had little to do with ambitious concepts of architects and urban planners. They referred, in a way, to proven and existing ideas and to a set of good practices accepted in the world. Perhaps the key to the selection of works was their degree of reference to the current plans and efforts of the city itself. Certainly, the formula of the event as an open competition influenced the final selection of the winning works. This has enabled all members of the local community to be included in the debate on the quality of public spaces. Regardless of the background in the design work, everyone could speak on the most important issues, i.e. on how to build and improve the immediate environment.

Perhaps the results of the competition suggest the direction of the future transformation of the city. They point to the common good as a buffer for the development of local communities. They point to the potential of neglected or forgotten spaces. Their more informed management can provide better access to physically larger public spaces, so much desirable in the time of the forced distancing.



Figure 15. A sign encountered in Sydney

With a healthy distance

This year one sign (illustrated above) prevailed in the landscapes of parks, offices, stores and public transit stations of Sydney. The concept of social distance has taken on a new meaning. It is not only the distance between people staying in formal relationships but a measure of physical security. Perhaps the descriptions of the spatial behavior of man from “*The Hidden Dimension*” by Edward Hall⁹ have lost their relevance. The naturally maintained distances analyzed by the author have ceased to be due only to the social situation. Another factor appeared, both biological and psychological: the virus and, equally infectious, the fear of it. The both change the way we perceive and create architectural spaces and force us to redefine our sense of comfort in public spaces.

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THE VIRTUAL REALITY AS TEACHING TOOL IS BECOMING A NORM.

THE VIRTUAL REALITY (VR) AS PART OF THE OUTFIT DESIGN PROCESS IN THE EDUCATION PROGRAM OF THE TEXTILES AND FASHION DESIGN STUDIO OF THE FACULTY OF INTERIOR DESIGN OF THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN KRAKÓW – A CASE STUDY

Case study

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Abstract

The article raises the increasingly popular topic of using the virtual reality as a teaching tool, especially in design. At a time when face-to-face contacts are hampered, the “real” reality is severely limited by a system of prohibitions and regulations, and the functioning of the digital reality (the VR or AR space) is necessarily becoming the new norm. The Fashion Start-up of the Textiles and Fashion Design Studio of the Faculty of Interior Design is introducing a new teaching tool: the VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0. The Studio, as the first academic unit specializing in fashion design in Poland, and one of the first in Europe, is digitalizing the process of designing clothes in cooperation with Context Retail Design. The virtual fashion illustration, virtual showroom and Virtual Fashion Show are the effects of the implementation of the “digital sewing” program and of the virtual fashion presentation. In this article I will present the method and results of working in the virtual reality space of the Textiles and Fashion Design Studio from the practical side against other international art universities specializing in the fashion design.

Keywords

virtual reality, augmented reality, creativity, outfit design, process, teaching tool

1. VR as part of the outfit design process – the case study

Fashion and the VR (Virtual Reality) seem to be made for each other. The virtual reality with a highly graphical user interface is the ideal environment for the process of designing clothes, prototyping and presenting collections.

The VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0 as an outfit design process using virtual reality technology with specialized hardware and software, designed and prepared specifically for the Textiles and Fashion Design Studio (T&FDS) of the Faculty of Interior Design of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków is subjected to a detailed analysis in terms of the method and work results. The implementation of the teaching tool allowing for the use of virtual reality for the creation of outfit designs and the position of T&FDS as a pioneer in the introduction of this field of expertise to the teaching program among a number of prestigious international academic units specializing in outfit design is a key topic in this analysis.

The virtual reality is defined as a computer-generated simulation system that detects user behaviors, providing a sense of presence and embodiment in the virtual space based on multisensory feedback.¹ I will use this short definition at the outset for the introduction of the problem in question.

The virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and mixed reality (MR) have necessarily gained the momentum of development, absorbing ever larger areas of our lives. They have long since gone beyond the domain of computer games, to which they were initially dedicated. They have become inevitable. The pandemic caused by the CoViD-19 and its associated real limitations gave only an additional boost that released the safety pin. This fact has led to the invasion of the latest technologies on the present reality.

The basic concept of differences between virtual technologies is the level of immersion. The VR as the most immersive one, with a highly graphical interface and with the all-encompassing inner world gives you the opportunity to completely immerse yourself in the abyss of the virtual space.

In the age of acceleration of technology by the pandemic, the long expected entry of the VR/AR technology and robotics into the everyday life is becoming as real as possible. The post-humanism will combine culture with industry. Virtual worlds will become more expansive and sophisticated, driving culture and design, and enabling new ways of expression and experience.²

Metaverse as a collective virtual shared space, covering the sum of all virtual worlds, augmented reality and the Internet will become a fact. The term is usually used to describe the concept of a future

1 Understanding Virtual Reality—Interface, Application, and Design; William Sherman, Alan Craig; 2003

2 Future Innovations 2023, WGSN forecast team, online: <https://www.wgsn.com/en/>, accessed on 25.02.2021

iteration of the Internet, consisting of persistent, shared, three-dimensional virtual spaces connected to the perceived virtual universe.³

What are the benefits of using virtual reality tools in the outfit design process?

How do they affect creativity? Are we able to shorten the process by using the VR technology in design? Skip unnecessary intermediate steps and, thus, save time, material and human resources?

To answer these questions, we will follow step by step the design process using the VR technology as a form of a new working tool of the “lockdown generation”.⁴

The basis of this study is the VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0 workshops prepared and conducted by Context Retail Design with students of the Textiles and Fashion Design Studio (T&FDS) of the Faculty of Interior Design of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków.

Another point of the analysis is the presentation of selected international academic units specializing in fashion design and a brief description of examples of their projects. The paper ends with a conclusion on the use of the VR in the fashion industry, in the process of designing and presenting collections, shown on examples of specific global brands.

2. New technologies and their implementation

The VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0 was created in 2020 on the initiative of the Fashion Start-up of the Faculty of Interior Design of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków for students of the Textiles and Fashion Design Studio by Context Retail Design as part of the project titled “Designing the future – the program for development of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków in the years 2018-2022”, funded by the National R&D Center (NR&DC). It presents a method where the Tilt Brush VR and the Marvelous Designer applications work together, as well as the proprietary procedure for systemic inclusion of the VR and CAD 3D technologies into the design process, tested by Context Retail Design during their R&D work. It presents ways how to make, using a VR suite, a conceptual 3D model on a clothes dummy, transfer the VR model to the CAD system and to 3D model viewers; produce a digital outfit prototype in the CAD system, in the form of a 3D model, fitting the outfit to an avatar, simulating the physics of fabrics, virtual presentation; add and remove in the VR space multiple 3D models made in the CAD system, perform adjustments and make design versions, record work stages, record photo and video directly from the VR space.

3 FORBES, online: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cathyhackl/2020/07/05/the-metaverse-is-comingits-a-very-big-deal/?sh-26d62e2c440f>, accessed on 07.03.2021

4 The global crisis caused by the CoViD-19 pandemic will have a long-term impact on careers of young people under the age of 25, which prompted the International Labor Organization (ILO) to define this demographic as the “lockdown generation”.

The Virtual Fashion Showroom application and the Virtual Fashion Show are the outcomes of the VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0.

The design process of the VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0 method starts from the Tilt Brush VR application and a fashion illustration placed in the virtual space.

The place of work is a designer's virtual workshop, the Fashion Design Workshop, a three-dimensional model of the scene designed and created specifically for the purpose of this program.

The designer's virtual workshop is used for conceptual design work, where three-dimensional sketches of silhouettes are created – fashion illustrations in the virtual reality in the scale of 1:1. Working at this scale is most similar to working in a real studio; allows you to see each element of the design in the real size. The Fashion Design Workshop is also a space for testing objects and prototypes created in CAD, for presentation of collections and the whole design process.

The scene model includes a cylindrical space sized 600 x 300 cm, walls and floors. The scene has a grid with a 10 cm line spacing, helpful for scaling and leveling objects. There are also four clothes dummies. The advantage of working in the designer's virtual workshop is the ability to work with any scale. The 1:1 scale is the default size that can be freely transformed in the design process, depending on the requirements for the view of the scene, object, or detail.

With an extensive palette of brushes and other drawing tools of the Tilt Brush VR, the creative space is practically limitless. The fashion illustration, which is created in three dimensions, opens the boundaries of thinking about the design, allows it to be viewed from any side: outside, inside, top or bottom. Re-scale the scene to compose in more detail and zoom out to evaluate the composition as a whole.

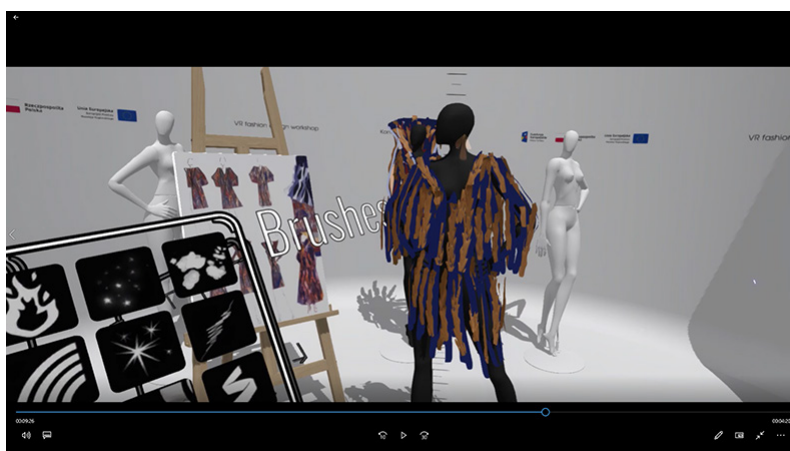


Figure 1: VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, designer's virtual workshop; source: the author's archive

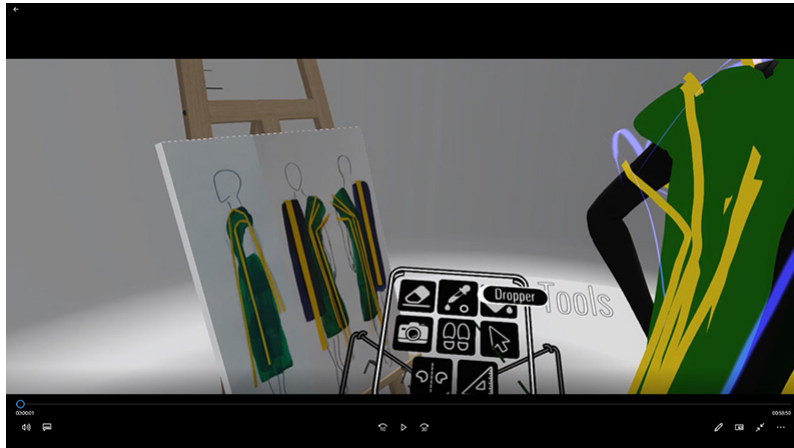


Figure 2: VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, designer's virtual workshop; source: the author's archive

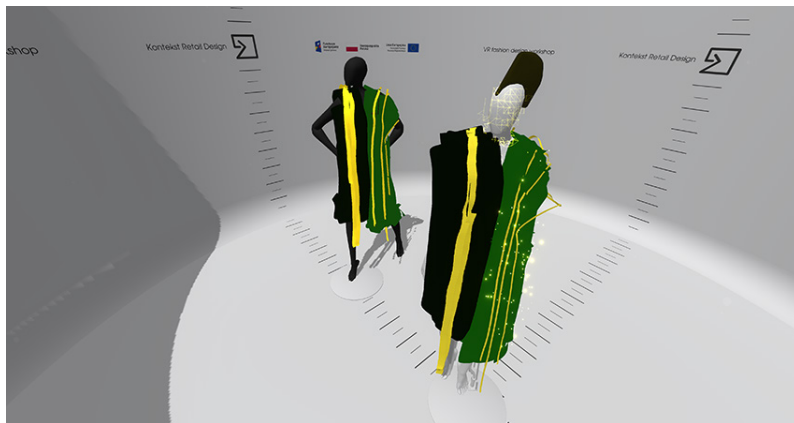


Figure 3: VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, designer's virtual workshop; source: the author's archive

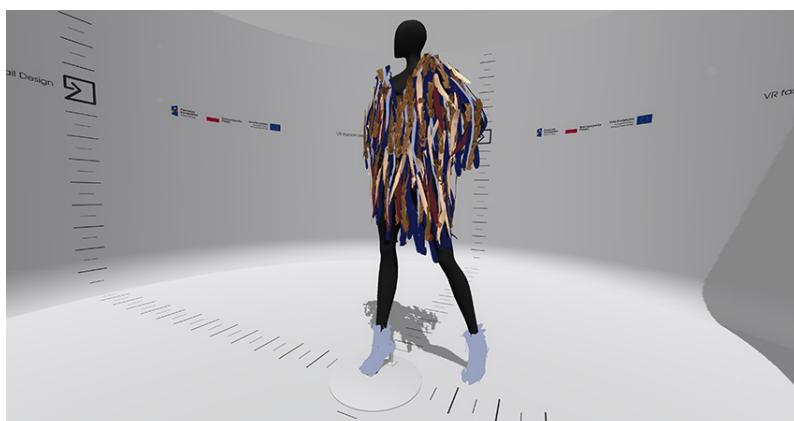


Figure 4: VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, designer's virtual workshop; source: the author's archive

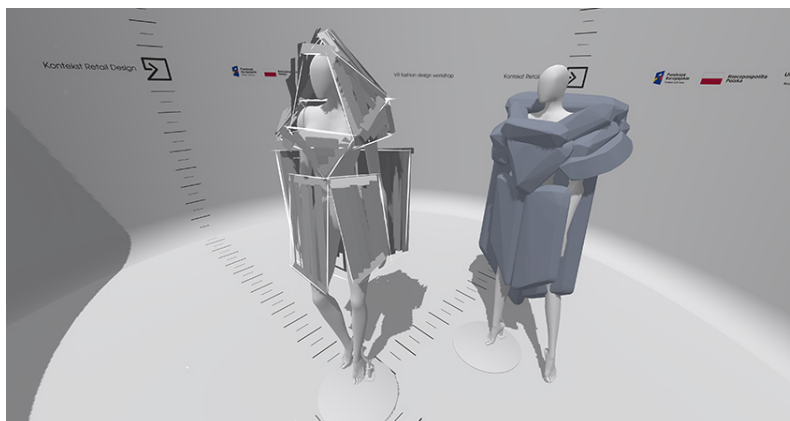


Figure 5: VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, designer's virtual workshop; source: the author's archive

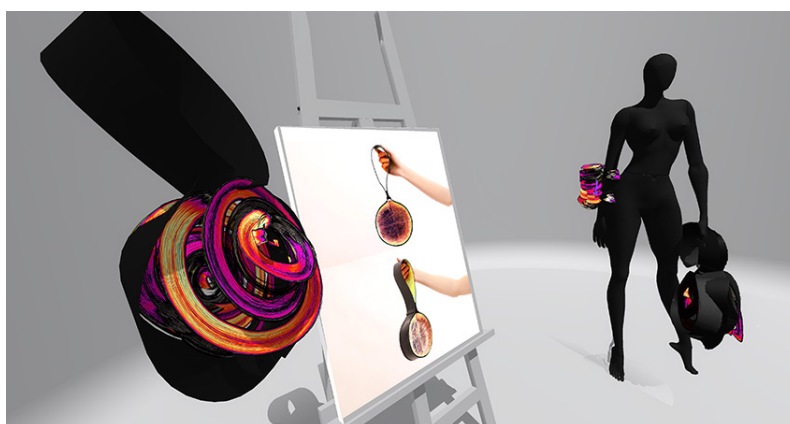


Figure 6: VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, designer's virtual workshop; source: the author's archive

Features such as undo, copy, delete, erase, lines, grid – as those offered by many graphic applications – also apply generally here.

The model created in the Tilt Brush VR, the virtual fashion illustration, can not only be viewed in space with a VR headset but also exported to commercial software suites featuring 3D model viewers, such as POLY or SKETCHFAB. Making the model available in a 3D viewer is an important link in the design process because it allows you to preview a 360-degree sketch on a display outside the VR, facilitates remote correction and allows group work on the design.



Figures 7 and 8: VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, the Schetchfab platform; source: the author's archive

The next step of the VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0 design process is the 3D modeling of clothes directly on the avatar. This process takes place outside the VR area.

The Marvelous Designer, a real-time CAD application, is dedicated to this method. The Marvelous Designer simultaneously combines 2D template designs with 3D modeling on the avatar and allows you to change the avatar's poses, see the model on the catwalk and simulate the physics of the fabrics.

The imported 3D fashion illustration, made earlier in the Tilt Brush VR application, in the first step of the design process is the sketch (the mapped model). After modeling the object in the 3D CAD system, the design is re-imported into the designer's virtual workshop.

The model developed in the Marvelous Designer application becomes a "virtually real" object, combining digital and real aesthetics, moved into the VR space of the Fashion Design Workshop, Virtual Fashion Showroom or Virtual Fashion Show. It is a digitized prototype, digitally stitched, with all details of fabrics, needlework and other details. It becomes a finished project realized in the virtual world.

The virtual reality technology as a tool suddenly removes a number of moves and steps which are unavoidable in the physical designing to get the final prototype. The VR makes the design process more flexible and spontaneous, and allows users to view their creations in different dimensions. The user can bypass the clothes dummy step, evaluate the shape, colors and textures.

The Virtual Fashion Showroom & Fashion Show application is a virtual presentation space: an exhibition of completed designs. Objects are displayed here on clothes dummies the layout of which is arranged in space on mobile platforms. The scene offers opportunities for various ways of presenting objects: from catwalk arrangements, through exhibition boxes or display cases, to a photographic multi-studio. The background of the Virtual Fashion Showroom space is transformed depending on

the ambience of the scene and the nature of the fashion collections. The user selects from a predefined palette types of animation or fixed image to fill the scenery of the virtual showroom. It is possible to add any moving image, such as a background projection or mapping, also onto the presented objects of the collection. You can be anywhere in the space, whether you're a viewer, watching the scene from a distance, or a participant staying in the center of the scene.

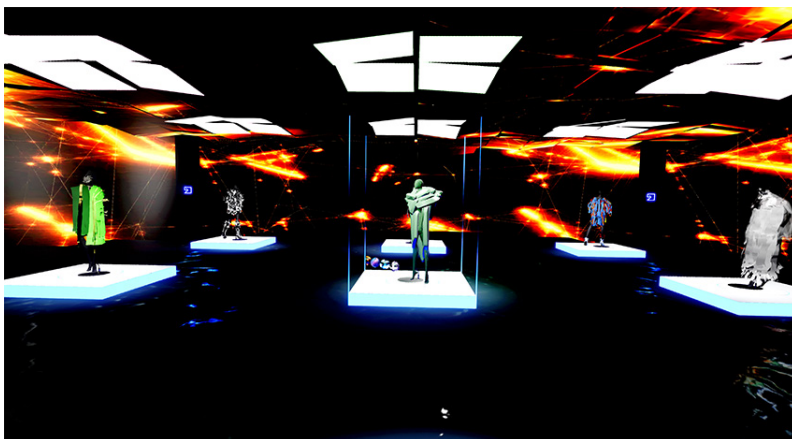


Figure 9: R Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, Virtual Fashion Showroom; source: the author's archive



Figure 10: R Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, Virtual Fashion Showroom; source: the author's archive



Figure 11: R Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, Virtual Fashion Showroom; source: the author's archive

There are few educational approaches that promote discovery and creativity using VR design environments. This type of tool is not yet widely available and widespread in outfit design curricula. T&FDS is the first Polish and one of the few academic units specializing in fashion design, which already applies and widely promotes the use of this tool in the design process.

The VR teaching tool in clothing design is used individually by some prestigious universities, including the London College of Fashion (LCF), the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and the Parsons School of Design in New York. However, it is not yet a widely used tool or a standard in curricula. In most cases, the method and program of specific application of VR environments are developed through R&D programs by special entities appointed by these universities. Among others, the London College of Fashion has introduced the VR technology into the curriculum through the Digital Anthropology Lab (<https://digital-anthropology-lab.arts.ac.uk>) and the Fashion Innovation Agency (<https://www.fialondon.com/projects>), the Parsons School of Design thanks to the XREALITY Center (<https://xcenter.newschool.edu>), the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign via the IDEA Lab in Illinois (<https://tec.illinois.edu/resources/granger-idea-lab>).

According to Sarah Byfield-Riches, the head of business development at the London College of Fashion, the VR technology is part of the curriculum and a fast-growing area.

Nowadays it is more timely than ever. The Digital Anthropology Lab, by introducing new technologies, such as the VR, facilitates collaboration between fashion, aesthetics, craftsmanship and society, into a range of tools to help prepare for the increasingly connected mixed reality (MR). The Fashion Innovation Agency at LCF is using new technologies to move fashion and design beyond physicality into a new era of digital experience. Several virtual reality projects of the Fashion Innovation Agency worth mentioning include: the Fashion Metaverse held during the London Fashion Week; the creation of the virtual showroom by designer J.W. Anderson using the augmented reality (AR); the Fabric of

Reality, an Immersive VR Fashion Show, a virtual show presenting the work of three designers from LCF showing the history and narration of their collections; and the AI Catwalk, a virtual fashion show where the catwalk was created from an archival footage from a LCF show (students experimented with artificial intelligence, 3D design and animation to generate new and inspiring ways to present the collection).⁵



Figure 12: The Fabric of Reality – an Immersive VR Fashion Show; source: <https://www.fialondon.com/projects>,



Figure 13: The Fabric of Reality – an Immersive VR Fashion Show; source: <https://www.fialondon.com/projects>,

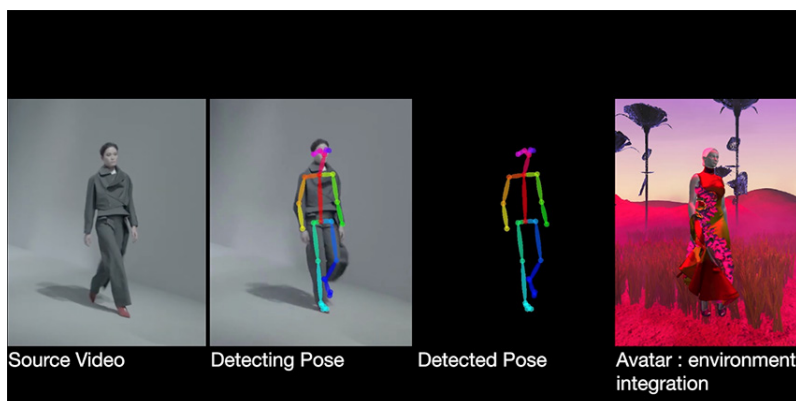


Figure 14: AI Catwalk; source: <https://www.fialondon.com/projects>,

The goal of the XREALITY Center, the research center of the Parsons School of Design in New York City, is to advance research and design innovations with new technologies in the area of virtual, augmented and mixed realities and artificial intelligence. The project for the modeling of a cloak designed in the 1920s by Paul Poiret in the virtual reality, in collaboration between the Parson School of Design and the XREALITY Center, being a part of the Parsons Fashion Study Collection, focused on creating an immersive experience that allowed students to come close, study the design from the inside, learn how it was made, and learn about its historical significance. The project is a demonstration of how VR technologies are changing the learning process.⁶



Figure 15: Parsons Fashion Study Collection – Paul Poiret’s cloak in VR; source: <https://xrcenter.newschoool.edu/projects/parsons-fashion-study-collection-virtual-reality/>

Students of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Arts and Humanities, also use the virtual reality as a work tool. With the IDEA Lab, the R&D center of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, a special VR program called Komodo has been developed that allows you to design your

⁶ The New School XREALITY Center, 10.09.2018, online: <https://www.xrcenter.newschoool.edu/projects/parsons-fashion-study-collection-virtual-reality/>, accessed on 07.03.2021

outfits in the VR space. Like the VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, this program uses the Tilt Brush VR software and allows users to import existing 3D contents and view them in the virtual reality.⁷

The VR technology and its use as a tool are becoming increasingly common not only in teaching but also in the work of designers of global brands, in fashion houses and in the presentation of commercial collections.

Does using the VR as a design tool in the fashion industry minimize inputs? Is the presentation of a collection in the virtual reality more spectacular than a real show?

In the days of the “lockdown generation” is a necessary alternative. The CoViD-19 has only accelerated and disseminated the need for the VR to function as a work and presentation space. When constraints and top-down precepts do not allow traditional presentations, virtual worlds are a lifesaver.

In addition, the VR technology brings other real benefits that are not insignificant in the face of progress that is constantly accelerating.

The most spectacular ones are the speed of presentation, the shortening of the design process by the skipping of many of its steps which were necessary in the physical implementation of projects, and the reduction of production costs and waste with the associated environmental benefits. Unlimited availability, and thus fascination in the audience: every viewer is in the center of the presentation; moreover, they can freely “teleport”, they are distinguished, always in the first row. There is no selection, no division into zones for the audience. The user can become a participant in the presentation, can be at the center of it, can even look inside a particular object or observe the scene from a distance. The use of this type of tool in commercial design and presentation of clothing is increasingly present.

The fashion industry has long ago found a number of applications for augmented and virtual realities: the virtual fitting, VR mirrors and virtual fashion shows. Already in 2017, at New York Fashion Week, the show “Dreaming of Italy” moved viewers directly to Milan. With VR headsets and special software we can enter showrooms of leading fashion brands without any time or space limits, or get an absolutely realistic impression of being present at some of the greatest shows of our time.

A strong and very topical example of this is the last campaign of the Balenciaga autumn/winter 2021 collection. This French brand used VR tools to create a virtual fashion show, lookbook and a campaign to promote collections in the form of computer game “AFTERWORLD: The Age of Tomorrow”.⁸

7 Virtual Reality Provides New Tool for Fashion Design Class; Illinois News Bureau; 21.12.2020; online <https://news.illinois.edu/view/6367/1329212207>; accessed on 07.03.2021

8 Online: <https://videogame.balenciaga.com/en/>, accessed on 07.03.2021



Figure 16: Balenciaga. The Game; source: <https://videogame.balenciaga.com/en>



Figure 17: Balenciaga. The Game; source: <https://videogame.balenciaga.com/en>

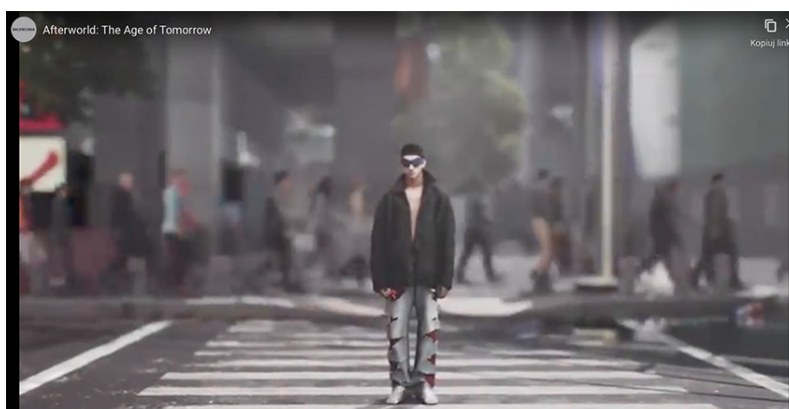


Figure 18: Balenciaga. The Game; source: <https://videogame.balenciaga.com/en>

Balenciaga, instead of traditional invitations to the collection show, sent Oculus glasses to 330 guests around the world, inviting them to the virtual reality show.⁹

The video game, which serves as a showcase for Balenciaga's autumn 2021 collection, was custom designed by Unreal Engine, the world's most advanced 3D creative platform.

Designer Demna Gvasalia imagined a mythological space adventure set in 2031, where players explore five levels, from a virtual store of the brand to a dark forest and a picturesque mountain top at sunset. The 50 avatars are dressed in neo-medieval outfits and the surrounding visuals depict future worlds that have been destroyed by political unrest and climate change. Despite the drama of the script, Gvasalia's end message seems to be optimistic.

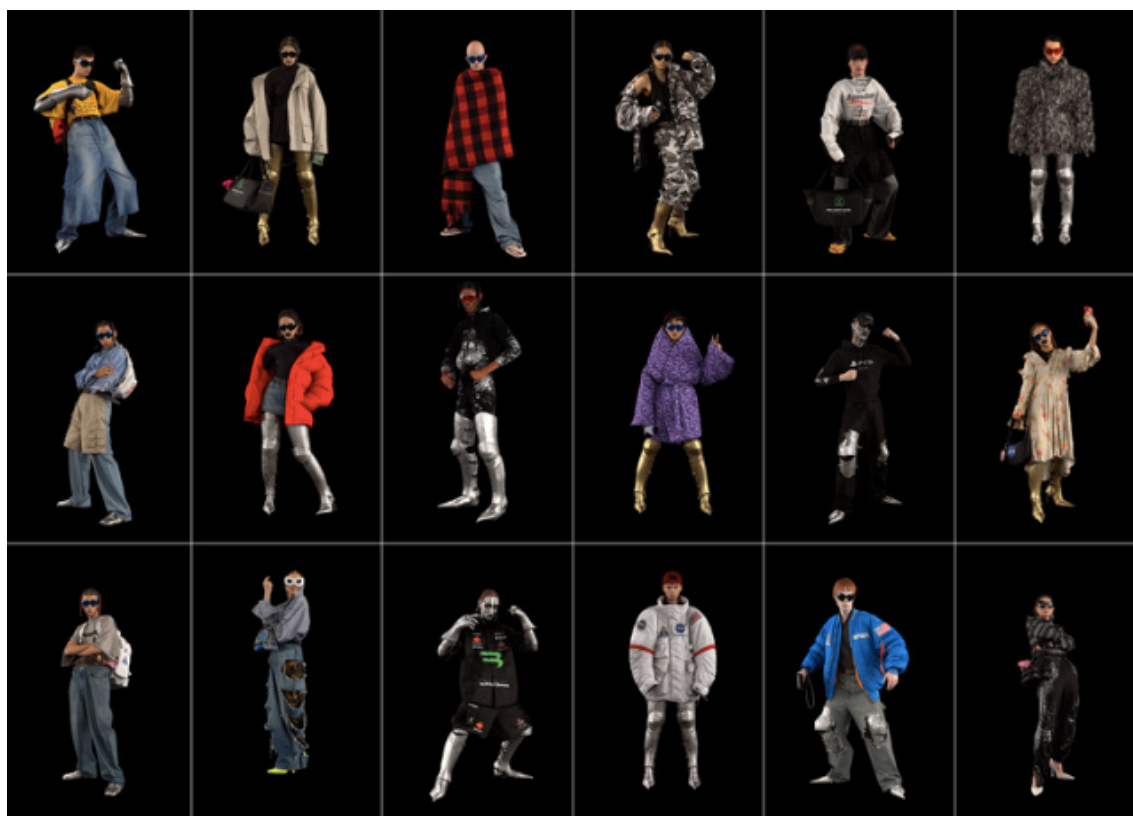


Figure 19: Balenciaga Lookbook; source: <https://videogame.balenciaga.com/en/looks>

9 VOGUE, <https://www.vogue.co.uk/news/gallery/balenciaga-autumn-winter-2020?image=5fcd17bc94cc0b65da0f151f>; accessed on 07.03.2021

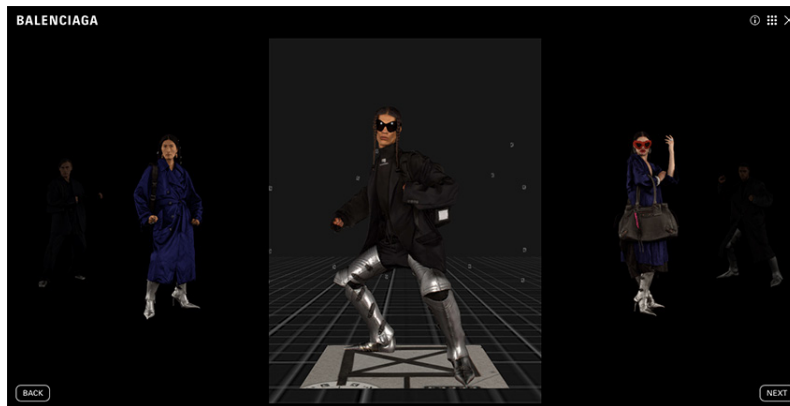


Figure 20: Balenciaga Lookbook; source: <https://videogame.balenciaga.com/en/looks>



Figure 21. Balenciaga Lookbook; source: <https://videogame.balenciaga.com/en/looks>



Figure 22: Balenciaga, autumn/winter 2021 collection show; source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ge-DRIGuKt50>



Figure 23: Balenciaga, autumn/winter 2021 collection show; source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeDRI-GuKt50>

Brands such as Gucci, Tommy Hilfiger or Dior have been long implementing the VR in a range of their tools, mainly marketing ones. They started to present their collections in the VR space a few years ago.

In retail commerce, virtual worlds expand user experience by opening digital playgrounds for the presentation of products. Tommy Hilfiger and Burberry rely heavily on the VR and AR technologies in the creation of not only virtual boutiques. Burberry's physical showroom in Shenzhen uses the WeChat Mini augmented reality program to share virtual content hosted by a digital fawn. However, no brand other than Balenciaga has treated the entire process of designing, creating and presenting collections so holistically.

But soon the avalanche will rush down. Future designs will be unleashed, coming directly from the imagination, without physical restrictions on virtual fashion shows, so that audiences leave with a "sense" that these are the best outfits they have ever worn – even without putting them on.

The impact of digital design processes will be transferred to hyper-expressive physical products that will combine digital and real aesthetics, as if they were created in a dream.¹⁰

3. A new space for imagination

The ability to design in the VR is a real breakthrough that opens up completely new perspectives. From the first stage of work, we can view the solid inside and outside in space, check the proportions, layout, fit and make changes on the fly in real time.

The use of the VR technology as a tool is becoming a norm. Both in teaching and in the fashion industry. Applied as early as at the learning step, the technology allows you to get to know the present workshop in depth. By training future designers in the VR technology, we give them an additional,

now precious, skill which becomes a strong asset. It will allow them to function freely in the modern commercial world where digital technologies are increasingly replacing the physical workshop and the conventional creative process.

The fashion industry sees the potential of immersive technologies that will revolutionize every element of creation and communication.

And not just because of the CoViD-19. The pandemic has caused the whole process of implementing such tools to go a little faster, but it was not the main cause. The project to implement the VR technology into the curriculum of the Textiles and Fashion Design Studio appeared much earlier, long before the pandemic chaos started to reign. The idea was brought to the world on the initiative of the Fashion Start-up already in 2017. The plan – then visionary, designed by Anna Pyrkosz, the head of T&FDS, and by Anna Hanysz, the leader of the Fashion Start-up – to integrate new technologies as teaching tools in the design process has positioned the Studio among the pioneering implementers of the VR technology in the outfit design process.

A recent study in fashion design education, conducted in the first half of 2020 at Yionsei University in Seoul, at the Faculty of Human Environment and Design, focused on potential benefits of the immersive VR environment used in fashion design.¹¹

The research presents an instructional process for designing and developing an educational program for fashion design, which promotes creativity in the VR environment.

In addition, a multidimensional assessment was carried out to obtain more educational information and to develop an instructional model based, as in the case of the VR Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, on the Tilt Brush VR software. The assessment brought to light a new perspective on the possibilities of using the VR to promote creativity in future fashion design education.

The impact of the immersive VR environment, as a design education tool, on designers' cognitive activities and increased creativity has been noted. One of the basic conclusions was the huge contribution from the VR technology on flexible thinking and ingenuity of designers.

T&FDS students also repeatedly pointed out during the workshop program that the tool gave a strong stimulus to their ideas. Often the previously assumed design of a silhouette, underwent a complete transformation after its introduction to the VR space, opening up to new possibilities and variants.

11 *The Use of VR for Collaborative Exploration and Enhancing Creativity in Fashion Design Education*, Jee Hyun Lee, Eun Kyoung Yang, Se Yeong Min, Zhong Yuan Sun, Bai Jiao Xue, 15.12.2020, online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17543266.2020.1858350?scroll=top&needAccess=true>, accessed on 07.03.2021

4. Digital fashion is becoming a norm – digitizing processes

Fashion reflects its times. What it represents, how it is worn, how it is offered and presented. And, finally, whether it is physically present or not; or is only in the space of imagination, game, dream. The ability to design in virtual space, digitize fabrics, “sew” digital clothing, create virtual samples, simulate, animate, show virtual fashion or “play a game” helps you optimize work, save on fixed costs, speed up processes, be part of the “sustainable development” and tell the story that builds the community. Demand for digital clothing continues to grow, forcing a contactless environment in educational and industrial applications.

Being a fashion designer nowadays is not just about making clothes. To be a good “player” in this super-league, you need to be a multimedia platform. You need to create videos, powerful lookbooks, simulations and digital models. You have to be able to think virtually.

The possibility of presenting designs that have not yet been physically produced is becoming more and more desirable. Designers no longer send physical clothes to influencers, only digital prototypes of them, and not only because they pay more and it is healthier for the environment and sustainable design but also because influencers are already Computer Generated Imagery (CGIs). The virtual space is increasingly consuming us.

The question then arises whether clothing is still the most important, or will it become a side effect of the content of the virtual cross-platform outfit design process?

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Anna Pyrkoš, DSc
Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow

VIRTUAL REALITY - REAL BENEFITS

Art research paper

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Abstract

Fashion design, as an interdisciplinary field of industrial design, is associated with the use of varied means of expression. Throughout the centuries, it has always been a mirror of its times using the then-available tools to describe them. Contemporary advances in digital technology encompass a whole range of new possibilities available to designers and accompany them throughout the design process, from the recording of the concept to the design of the clothing display space. This is particularly evident nowadays when the pandemic has accelerated certain processes, in fields such as *Virtual Reality* (VR) and *Augmented Reality* (AR) or *Artificial Intelligence* (AI). There is another “other reality” that we need to prepare for - the post-COVID reality, which the types of technology mentioned earlier will “co-create” together with, in a certain sense, us. The scale and scope of the pandemic have set in motion a mechanism of transformation almost simultaneously around the world and in all areas, which is why politicians, scientists and artists are asking questions: “What will this new world be like?”, “What values will survive?”, “What phenomena will disappear and what will rise in their place?”. As we plan for the near future, along with our expectations and hopes for new solutions to old problems, we also become aware of the threats posed by the digital world in particular.

In this article, I will present selected opinions of representatives from various fields, not only fashion design, on the consequences of the ongoing transformations having influence on the future of applied arts. An important aspect will be the significance of creativity in the design process and the protection of any values that may be at risk in the face of the digital revolution. Especially as teachers of design art, in addition to equipping young designers with the necessary up-to-date technical knowledge, we must remember to shape their artistic attitudes in relation to the changes taking place.

Keywords

trends, new technologies in design, creativity, virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, clothing design, artistic creativity

The new megatrend¹ - Fifth technological revolution

In the academic handbook prepared at the Faculty of Interior Design of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków entitled *Projektowanie Ubioru*, prepared thanks to funding obtained from the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBiR) (the “Designing the Future” project), in one of its chapters entitled *Analiza i prognozowanie trendów w modzie*, the author Marlena Woolford provides different interpretations of the term trend: direction, style, aesthetics, popularity in the media, and novelty, evolution and change². In order to analyse the phenomenon of trend, let us focus on one of the concepts - the notion of change as a paradoxically constant driver of the development of the society, of paramount importance at the present time. For Henrik Veilgaard *The Anatomy of a Trend* argues in his book that: “Whatever the term means to specialists and professionals in different fields, part of its definition always remains the concept of change”³. For any change to occur, several factors are required, in succession. These are: observation, analysis, and reaction as an effect. The first impulse is always curiosity or questioning the status quo, which results in a search for non-obvious solutions. This was one of the key aspects covered at the Master & Robots conference, organised by Digital University⁴ in September 2020. This time, although only online, the organisers have managed to invite prominent representatives of the humanities and sciences to participate. Names such as Yuval Noah Harari, Scilla Elworthy, David Gram, Daniel Hulme have appeared. An unusual participant, co-presenting with David Hanson, was also The Sofia-Robot⁵, a representative of artificial intelligence.

Predictions and forecasts about our foreseeable or distant future made by participants covered a wide range of areas, but concepts such as changes in thinking, the importance of data, openness to non-obvious solutions, and creativity were mentioned most frequently. This direction of research, focusing on non-obvious thinking, communication in search of innovative solutions was examined by Rohit Bhargava (professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), founder of Non-Obvious Company⁶. He enumerates the following factors concerning the prognosis of upcoming trends: assigning more value to the human aspect when it comes to technology, the need to protect our personality, and abandoning mastery in favour of rapid learning and information acquisition. He

- 1 Megatrend - a social, political or technological change affecting all areas of life for a period of time (after: <https://sjp.pwn.pl/slowniki/megatrend.html> [accessed: 10/01/2021]).
- 2 M. Woolford et al., *Projektowanie ubioru. Analiza i prognozowanie trendów w modzie*, Kraków 2021, https://bg.asp.krakow.pl/bg/images/bib/e-zasoby/podreczniki_k_projektowania_ubioru [accessed: 10/01/2021].
- 3 H. Veilgaard, *Anatomia trendu*, Wolters Kluwer Sp. z o.o., Warszawa 2012, p. 42
- 4 Digital University is a leading educational organisation in Poland, offering market leaders world-class educational experience and in-depth knowledge in digital transformation and digital mindset building (after: <https://digitaluniversity.pl/about-us/> [accessed: 02/01/2021]).
- 5 Sophia - a humanoid robot manufactured by Hong Kong-based Hanson Robotics. She is endowed with artificial intelligence to learn, adapt to human behaviour and work with people. She has given many interviews around the world. In October 2017, she became a citizen of Saudi Arabia, becoming the first robot to receive citizenship of any country (after: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophia_\(robot\)](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophia_(robot))).
- 6 <https://www.nonovious.com/trends-standard> [accessed: 15/01/2021].

presents observations and analyses on his website, dividing them into categories such as culture and consumer behaviour, economics and entrepreneurship, economics and social media, marketing and social media, media and education, technology and design. We note that each category listed is linked to the previous one. But always, as he emphasised in his speech at the conference, the basis for a proper reading of upcoming trends is a proper understanding of other people's attitudes, i.e. acquiring data of potential customers.

David Gram is another conference attendee, an innovative thought leader and co-founder of Diplomatic Rebels⁷ and former Head of Ventures, EMEA at LEGO Ventures. Although the basic element, the brick, was created in 1958 and has been a symbol of creative play for many generations, LEGO designers are still looking for new solutions to suit the modern audience. They rise the following questions: "How can physical tangible creativity compete with the digital world?". In his presentation, David Gram emphasises that new conditions, tools, and needs are always associated with a different way of thinking. It is difficult not to mention at this point the historian, philosopher Yuval Noah Harari. In his bestselling book entitled *Homo Deus. A Short History of Tomorrow*, when referring to the future, writes that: "If we think in terms of decades, then global warming, growing inequality and the disruption of the job market loom large. Yet if we take the really grand view of life, all other problems and developments are overshadowed by three interlinked processes:

1. Science is converging on an all-encompassing dogma, which says that organisms are algorithms, and life is data processing.
2. Intelligence is decoupling from consciousness.
3. Non-conscious but highly intelligent algorithms may soon know us better than we know ourselves."⁸

Yuval Noah Harari, as a participant of the Master & Robots conference, draws attention to the loss of values on which our civilisation is built and the devaluation of authorities. He also touches on topics such as increasing confidence in science, the need to develop a community between countries, moving away from politics in a local sense and, of course, the climate crisis as a major threat to the system. When asked about the importance of the technology, he replied that he assumed that artificial intelligence would change the economic and political system, disrupting the equilibrium, deepening the differences between countries. He compared advances in digital technology to the industrial revolution of the 19th century, which contributed to the disappearance of many professions, but also to the emergence of new professions. It draws attention to the ethical dimension of technology and the need to ask the question: "What is of greatest value to us?". In his view, the essence of business is not

7 <http://www.diplomaticrebels.com/#story> (accessed: 20/01/2021).

8 Y.N. Harari, *Homo Deus. Krótka historia jutra*. Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2018, p. 504.

business itself, but the shaping of reality, and our problems will not be solved by any technological gadgets, and the antidote will be an ethical social system.

Peter H. Diamandis⁹, founder and chairman of the XPRIZE Foundation¹⁰ and Singularity University (a higher education institution in Silicon Valley), gives a very comprehensive account of his predictions for the coming changes in technology and science over the next decade. He outlines 20 metatrends in technology and science for the next decade, claiming that “thanks to developments in artificial intelligence and science, human health will be extended by as much as 10 years, there will be the possibility of a complete cure for many diseases, including congenital defects and genetic disorders, or people recovering from spinal cord injuries. Ubiquitous and low-cost communications and gigabit connectivity will enable widespread space flight, and autonomous vehicles and flying cars will redefine our travel. In the years ahead, global prosperity will improve and the proportion of people living in extreme poverty will decrease. There will be a greater emphasis on sustainability and the environment, and, therefore, on renewable energies. Stem cell agriculture will be strongly developed. Collaboration between artificial intelligence and humans in the workspace will increase exponentially, with the creation of a platform using artificial intelligence technology as a service: AIaaS - *AI as a Service*. Devices will become smart and the combination of AR and 5G networks will change the way we live, affecting all industries. 100 billion sensors (the Internet of Everything) will monitor every aspect of our environment. As the functionality of Alexa, Google Home and Apple Homepod, among others, expands, these services will eventually move beyond the home and become a kind of 24/7 cognitive prosthesis.”¹¹. The thoroughness and comprehensiveness of the study by Peter Diamandis, the portrayal of the interdependencies between the various areas and the attention paid to the importance and impact of technology on the purely human aspect give us a very real picture of a not-so-distant reality.

This is where another term comes into play, which is used in all cases by technologists, IT specialists and designers alike, namely creativity. This extremely valuable human ability, which is involved in all creative processes, regardless of their nature, takes on particular significance today. The confrontation of the physical world with the digital world raises questions for observers about the dangers of surrendering many aspects of our lives to the realm of digital functioning. The benefits of speed in processing data in the context of its proper use are among the more frequently discussed topics at the aforementioned conference.

9 P.H. Diamandis, recently named one of the “World’s 50 Greatest Leaders” by Fortune, is the founder and chairman of the XPRIZE Foundation, which is a global leader in designing and running large-scale incentive competitions. He is also the executive founder of Singularity University, a Silicon Valley university that advises world leaders on exponentially growing technologies (after: <https://diamandis.com/about> [accessed: 10/01/2021]).

10 XPRIZE Foundation - a world leader in designing and running large-scale incentive competitions.

11 *20 metatrends in technology and science for the next decade by Peter Diamandis*, [https:// digitaluniversity.co.uk/](https://digitaluniversity.co.uk/) 20 metatrends in technology and science for the next decade by Peter Diamandis - Digital University [accessed: 15/01/2021].

Another conference participant, Daniel Hulme, a leading expert on artificial intelligence and its applications and social, commercial, economic and ethical implications, says that whoever learns to use it well will rule the world. Referring to threats, he said he saw danger in the possibility of AI recognising us as a threat. At the same time, he points out that although AI performs computational operations faster than we do, it is not the one making the decisions (for now). Hulme gives two definitions of AI. The first one goes as follows: “when computers do things for us (e.g. calculating)”, and the second one is: “these are the systems that adapt to reality”. Daniel Hulme strongly emphasises the importance of creativity as a factor that continues to give us an edge over technology. It is creativity, he stresses, that drives innovation. Hulme cites Steve Jobs’ definition of innovation as “creativity that produces results”. His thoughts on creativity raise issues such as digital creativity versus human creativity, where he defines the former as the best, effective use of data and the latter as the ability to combine data in innovative ways. There is also the aspect of consciousness, the reception of emotions and widely understood ethical dilemmas. Certainly, all the examples of forecasts cited, their consistency and high probability and scope give grounds for describing the coming changes in the field of technology as a megatrend. “Metatrends last longer and affect many different aspects of human community life: we are dealing with a complex process often embedded in political, economic and technological contexts. Metatrends often have lasting effects on communities and are difficult to predict”¹².

Uneven competition

A subject that is becoming present in many areas of our lives is artificial intelligence and the emerging dilemmas regarding the positive sides of its use as well as the potential risks. An example is the aforementioned robot named The Sophia. As the first AI presenter to co-host programmes, she forces us to ask questions: “Won’t the ever-better animation of her face lull us to sleep and lose the advantage we have precisely because of our ability to think creatively?” Will a machine that achieves a level of human feeling, equipped with unlimited data processing capabilities, as an artificial but still intelligence, change our world for the better? We can create systems that complete tasks faster than humans, we can construct brains with greater potential than those of all of us, but we must bear in mind the need to transform the structures of our organisations, and most importantly: we must not forget the philosophical issues and ethical dilemmas.

A doubt arises: if we can program its gestures, facial expressions (facial architecture), is it possible to create a superintelligence that makes ethical choices? The Sophia is on the make in many fields. It engages with current social issues and its media presence is used, in addition to the AI research promotion, at many prestigious conferences. She has spoken to members of the UN, ITU and NATO. She was also awarded the honour of Champion of Innovation for the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) to promote sustainable development using technology and innovation in developing countries. She was recently named as the new ambassador and tutor for iTutorGroup, the brand new online learning platform and the largest English language teaching institution in the world. In 2018, The Sophia was awarded the Gold Edison Award™ in robotics. Another media achievement was her presence on the cover of Cosmopolitan magazine. This robot with a magnetic gaze offers styling for the modern woman. It is so convincing that we are not even glaring at the clearly artificial limbs. Her natural features, facial expressions put us to sleep. We believe in what she presents, looking us straight in the eye. We can identify with it.

Will our canon of beauty now be a black Shudu Gram, the world's first digital model who is the product of James Cameron Winson, or Lil Miquel, a virtual influencer and singer (2.4 million followers)? Lil Miquela was included in Time magazine's 2018 list of the 25 most influential people online. She appeared in a Samsung Galaxy campaign, covered the 2018 Prada fashion show and interviewed artists for YouTube at the 2019 Coachella festival¹³.

Virtual influencers, especially post-pandemic, can be particularly attractive to the fashion industry for a number of reasons. Firstly, because of their complete control over the image, virtual influencers are less risky for brands from a socio-psychological point of view. Secondly, by 2030, Generation Z will be the main consumers of goods. And as the results of a survey conducted by HypeAuditor indicate, it is among Generation Z that virtual influencers are most popular. So brands, in order to satisfy the new consumer, will be obliged to test new, purely technological solutions. Marissa Rosenblum, vice president of New York department store Barneys, emphasised in an interview with CNN that the company did not choose to work with Lil Miquela just because he is CGI [*Computer Generated Imagery* - author's note], but to reach out to Generation Z. Thirdly, CGI creators themselves, such as James Cameron Wilson, are encouraging brands to dare to experiment because the current level of technological advancement makes it possible. This allows designers or developers to work on improving the tools. And fourthly, virtual influencers and thus virtual clothes, in the long run, can contribute to real environmental impact by digitising them and consequently: reducing production¹⁴.

Data - new value, new currency

Unlimited access to information on the latest trends through IT channels is the norm today. The fashion industry is undergoing a revolution on many fronts. Every social movement, every global event trigger immediate change in this sector. This area, which has always been nourished by creativity, registers every little current in innovative thinking, especially those that enable us to gather information about our potential audience more quickly, more precisely. The needs and expectations of this potential audience become a set of data. The observation of changes taking place, their analysis and processing have so far been carried out thanks to the collective work of the intellectual elite, philosophers,

13 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival - an annual music and arts festival held at the Empire Polo Club, Indio, California, located in the Coachella Valley in the Colorado Desert (after: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coachella_Valley_Music_and_Arts_Festival [accessed: 12/01/2021]).

14 N. Tokarz. *Nowa generacja influencerów. Kim są i czy czeka nas rewolucja w wirtualnych mediach?* <https://www.fashionbuisnes.pl/nowa-generacja-influencerow-kim-sa-i-czy-czeka-nas-rewolucja-w-wirtualnych-mediach/> [accessed: 15/02/2021].

sociologists, artists and scientists of many branches. It is now possible for this collection of processed data to propose, predict (perhaps not yet decide) and fundamentally influence upcoming trends. Steve Brown, in his TED Talk platform talk on trends and artificial intelligence, wondered whether if the future of fashion design is dedicated to data, does this mean the death of true creativity. According to him, quite the opposite, as more efficient, faster production cycles will allow designers to focus on what is most important to them, namely creation.

Online art, or its creation, and how to sell and use virtual exhibition spaces - these are just some of the topics discussed by Bernadine Bröcker Wieder, CEO and founder of the Vastari Group, an online marketplace safely connecting private art collectors, exhibition producers, venues and museums for exhibition rental and tours. Bernadine Bröcker Wieder sees a threat in the blurring of the boundary between the virtual and the real. Observing the emergence of new forms of communication resulting from the need to translate real meanings into digital language, he compares this phenomenon to the emergence of new languages that we will have to learn. What is still ahead of us is the need for legislation, including on copyright. Activity on the borderline between technology and art generates the need to look for new business models, enabling easy communication between the creator and the recipient.

The possibility of enjoying virtual contact with art is appreciated now more than ever. The mobility constraints associated with the pandemic have turned our attention to the possibility of a wider, more intuitive use of virtual tools. Virtual visits to museums and the organisation of exhibitions are already standard fare, but are now taking on a greater dimension. A virtual tour of the Louvre, the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, the Uffizi Gallery in Florence or the Salvador Dali Museum will never replace face-to-face contact with works of art, but we increasingly appreciate the on-line form. The virtual world of art is not only about museums, exhibitions and displays. There we can only admire the effects of the artists' work, and this is just the tip of the iceberg. Technological tools accompany creators from the very beginning of the design process to the final stage of reaching the customer.

One of the leading portals dealing with widely understood "fashion" (it is a pity that there is no synonym for the word *Fashion* in the Polish language), Fashion Biznes.pl, has recently published *Witajcie w modzie przyszłości. Jak technologie zmieniają branżę?* report on the latest trends in the fashion sector and reviewed technological trends in fashion - from the virtual dressing room, to doing shopping by voice, to AI algorithms predicting trends and designing clothes. The report was compiled by experts in the field: Katarzyna Gola, Łukasz Rzepecki, Jakub Jasiński and Rafał Reif. Highlighting the importance of technology in fashion, an industry estimated to be worth \$2.4 trillion and employing 75 million people worldwide, the authors point to the tangible benefits of using AR, "which are based on the assumptions of the so-called 3 CS of Camera Market: 1. *Conversation*,

2. *Commerce*, 3. *Customers*. AR in fashion therefore helps optimise operations, reduce fixed costs, speed up processes”¹⁵.

The report includes examples of companies that are testing virtual forms of interactive activity, these include Charlotte Tilbury, Tommy Hilfiger, Farfetch and American Eagle. Sustainable fashion and environmental protection are terms that already come up obligatorily when the topic of new technologies is raised. It is no longer just about recycling, although the authors report that “at the BFE Summit, Robert van de Kerkhof, CEO of Lenzing, indicated that, by 2024, the vast majority of brands will need to be able to produce things from recycled materials”, but about the use of virtual tools from the beginning of the design process to virtual showrooms. The cited example of a virtual showroom established in 2017 - Brandlab as a fully digitised shopping platform - is proof that new solutions for merchants and department stores are proving themselves in the age of the pandemic.

When discussing the process of trend formation, it is important to highlight the specific role of AI in this field. The question arises: if AI, based on the data entered, makes a forecast, predicts our expectations, does it program our future in some way? This in turn becomes a data set, constituting the basis for subsequent analyses. I find it quite disturbing to replace creative thinking, a conscious choice made by humans, with cold digital analysis at the very beginning of the design process chain. Progress, though accelerated, proceeds chronologically, i.e. one event causes another. Will not the initiation of a certain cause-and-effect process right now take us in a completely unpredictable direction? Will we be following a self-fulfilling prophecy scenario? Unfortunately, increasingly, as Marlena Jankowska noted, “the fashion sector (Textiles, Clothes, Leather and Footwear; TCLF) operates amidst so many technical, legal, organisational and consumer conditions that it has little in common with the vision of a small atelier where a sophisticated creative process takes place¹⁶. And it is no longer just about supporting the artist’s intuition with the analyses carried out by AI, but about making the whole design process dependent on a database, which gives them a special value, creating, in my opinion, a kind of new currency.

Progress is an innovative use of creativity

What does “progress” mean? Faster, simpler, more accessible - that is effective data use in order to meet customer needs. Data, as the most powerful driver of progress, will power the digital world to forecast the future for us. Does this mean that it is the collection of processed information that will generate our most likely expectations and at the same time help us to satisfy them? This blending of

15 K. Gola, J. Jasiński, R. Reif, Ł. Rzepecki, *Witajcie w modzie przyszłości. Jak technologie zmieniają branżę?*, <https://www.Fashionbuisnes.pl> [accessed: 20/01/2021].

16 M. Jankowska et al., *Moda i design w świecie COVID-19*, Instytut Prawa Gospodarczego Sp. z o.o., 2020, <https://forbes.pl/raport-forbes> [accessed: 12/01/2021].

two worlds can also be seen when comparing e-commerce and traditional trade. Will the pandemic change our consumer behaviour forever and will on-line shopping become more popular than before? The analyses and reports carried out show very clearly the multifaceted processes occurring in the fashion market as a result of the pandemic. They concern both changes in consumer attitudes and the reaction of clothing companies to the situation. According to a report published in Forbes, it is the clothing and luxury goods market that will be most affected by the pandemic. "This is the conclusion of a study by the Boston Consulting Group, which looks at how consumer behaviour is changing as a result of the epidemiological crisis. Apparel and luxury goods market due to COVID-19 pandemic could shrink by \$ 370 billion"¹⁷. Also on Forbes, we can find *Raport o stanie biznesu w czasie kryzysu epidemiologicznego* report, where one can read that: "Retail and service chains after the 'pogrom' of malls. The closure of shopping centres has meant that revenues of major clothing companies have fallen by three quarters and sales at retail chains will not return to former levels this year. So business is moving on-line, some sales will stay there for good."

Are we to resign ourselves to the idea that interactive stationary shops will be the future of commerce? Jakub Jasiński from CCC company claims that: "There is no product display on the sales floor, but there are tablets. The offer is not just a few, but tens of thousands of products located in large warehouses 'behind' a shop, which are also mini logistics centres for a given region. Modivo is also an interactive dressing room. And we see that customers react very positively to this type of novelty"¹⁸. Accustomed to using technological advances on a daily basis, we increasingly overlook the contribution of our creative potential to the entire design process. Is it not the tool that sets the limits of our possibilities? What is our position as an initiator and creator? In which fields can we assist with technology and which fields must we guard against technological interference? Can we already talk about use, application or, rather, cooperation? If we engage artificial intelligence to identify trends, algorithms to determine the likelihood of our colour or fabric preferences based on data, where is the dangerous line beyond which sensitivity to beauty will be determined by an algorithm? Forecasts show that around 40% of occupations will disappear in 10 years' time. As designers, can we fear that we will also find ourselves in this group? Do we need to decide which alternative is closer to us: Creativity-Innovation-Access or Creativity-Awareness-Development?

Programmed for the future

Generations Y and Z are another young people to enter life, just like their parents and grandparents wanting to take advantage of their time and make their mark. Recently, the concept of COVID-19

17 F. Kowalik, *A Raport o stanie biznesu w czasie kryzysu epidemiologicznego: Sieci handlowe po pogromie w centrach handlowych*, <https://forbes.pl/raport-forbes> [accessed: 12/01/2021].

18 N. Tokarz, *RAPORT: Witajcie w modzie przyszłości. Jak technologie zmieniają branżę?* <https://forbes.pl/biznes/sieci-handlowe-i-uslugowe--skuti-i-koszty-epidemii/qevlik> [accessed: 15/01/2021].

generation has emerged. For them, functioning in new conditions becomes imperceptibly normal. Should the ease with which they cross the boundaries set by the outline of screens, entering the virtual world, feeling safe there, make us worry? Will the real world eventually lose out to the digital world? Will we be able to protect the feelings, the emotions, the lack of which we experience so acutely during a pandemic? The post COVID-19 world will not be the same. We are as humanity in a time of global transformation. Change is happening simultaneously on many levels, but it starts at the level of our consciousness. COVID-19 has not yet said its last word, it continues to expose our weaknesses, proving its superiority on all fronts. It accelerated certain processes and, like a catalyst, made them possible. Will the incoming generation be prepared for any similar event in the future?

We educate future designers without knowing with what the tomorrow will surprise them. They will have to solve problems that we do not now suspect exist. With technology advancing at a tremendous pace, how are we likely to win against time? The answer is not simple. We must try to convey curiosity about the world, attentiveness to its needs, and make them aware of their responsibility to shape our future. On the one hand, to preserve their sensitivity to beauty, and on the other hand, to teach them to describe it as well as possible, also using programs and codes, because this is the language with which we increasingly communicate. For design faculties students, space is the most frequently used concept. It defines an area of creative activity. This is where vision meets reality. The realisations confront imagination with reality. The ambiguity of this concept, especially nowadays, is obvious. It is most evident at the interface between space in the traditional real sense and virtual reality. The latter, thanks to the tools it uses, allows us to transport us into a world where everything is possible. For an artist, a designer, the possibility of using them for a faster, more complete rendering of their creative ideas is priceless. It shortens the path of tedious work by offering a whole range of technical possibilities. The latest VR software feeds our creativity, making it easier to picture our thoughts. As if by magic we connect the non-obvious, create a new reality, moving in this space without the constraints of the real world. We transfer our thoughts effortlessly into a coded world. It is only our mind that imposes limitations on us, which quickly disappear if only we can clarify them as challenges, and the willingness to accept challenges is, after all, the basis of any development.

Fashion Start-up - an undertaking implemented within the NCBiR project under the name "Designing the Future", a development programme of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków for 2018-2022 - attempts to provide students of the Textile and Fashion Design Studio with skills that will prepare them to find their place in the labour market after graduation. One of the activities of Fashion Start-up is organising workshops (in cooperation with the KONTEKST Retail Design company) giving students the opportunity to carry out their own projects using VR technology, from concept to recording the effects of the design process. Thanks to the knowledge and experience of KONTEKST Retail Design employees, the Fashion Show Room application was developed together

with an application for the realisation of a virtual fashion show. Young designers move between the two spaces, learning methods for transforming visions into digital images. Virtual space, like our imagination, has no boundaries, but you have to learn its language in order to find your way around it and work in it. Testing the methods used in VR-enabled design on their own and obtaining more or less advanced design work will allow future designers to gain valuable experience.



Figure 1. Fashion Start-up, R Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, Virtual Fashion Showroom, student project: M. Nowak, photo by: K. Tuszcz, Faculty of Interior Design, J. Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, 2021.

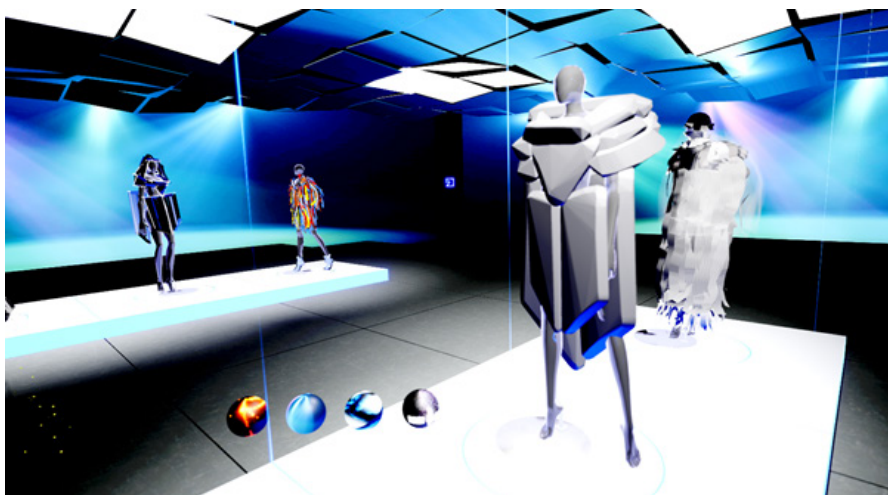


Figure 2. Fashion Start-up, R Fashion Design Workflow 1.0, Virtual Fashion Showroom, student project: A. Bochar, photo by: K. Tuszcz, Faculty of Interior Design, J. Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, 2021.

While preparing and equipping their potential for creativity and artistic sensitivity with tangible knowledge and practical skills, we should also make the young generation aware that programmes and applications are only tools. For true creativity happens in the imagination of an artist, which needs to be constantly fuelled by drawing on the real world and our sensitivity to it. Only then will the real world and the virtual world function in one common space and inspire each other.

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FOUND IN THE LANDSCAPE - INTRODUCED TO THE INSIDE. BIOPHILIC SPACE IN THE CONTEXT OF ISOLATION

Art research paper

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Abstract

The article written as part of the research task „Found in the landscape – inconspicuous / desired – imagined spaces” focuses on the residential space, that was most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It characterizes the negative effects of confinement and isolation, for which biophilic design may be a solution. It shows the similarities between the patterns of biophilia and the Japanese aesthetics focused on contact with nature. The article gives examples of architecture that may positively influence the user thanks to its relationship with nature. This problem has been investigated on the basis of scientific publications and analysis of projects, including studies.

Keywords

biophilia, isolation, dwelling, home, architecture, interior design

Introduction

The CoViD-19 virus, which took over in 2020, has made significant changes in people's behaviors and, therefore, had and continues to have an impact on the shaping and reception of space. The ubiquitous Perspex partitions, the social distance determined by the flight range of infectious particles and the prohibition of meetings were the main factors of isolation leading sometimes to social phobia. The forced seclusion, on the other hand, had good sides, such as slowing down life and strengthening ties among loved ones. It is difficult to talk today about the post-CoViD era while the virus still controls the lives of millions and there is no end to this situation. However, the impact of the pandemic on human space – especially the closest, present and future (post-CoViD) – is already visible. This is related to the dissonance that has arisen between the quality of space and the conflicting emotions and needs of isolated people, such as fear of people and the need for contact, its digitization and the need for intimacy, the need for open space and privacy. This gap leads interior architects to revise their existing approaches to the design of living space (currently over-exploited) and to look for new design routes.

The pandemic

The CoViD-19 epidemic has paralyzed the whole world. For how long? No one can predict this: now the first year of its reign is over. The emergence of the rapidly spreading virus in December 2019 and its global expansion, starting in February 2020, came as a big surprise to everyone.¹ The overly confident society of the early 21st century did not expect an assassination attempt on its own well-being. However, it was not the very fact that the epidemic appeared that was so surprising, but rather the level of change that the state of the pandemic brought to our lives.

The beginning of the 21st century in western countries was a time of prosperity. The spirit of war had gone away – the struggles in the East concerned us only in the context of the inflow of, or rather the decision to accept or reject, refugees – which has become a tool in the hands of politicians, thereby discouraging many people from taking up the subject. Hunger and poverty were niche topics – living standards were equalized by the European Union's funds. Open borders have resulted in an unprecedented increase in tourist traffic, resulting in the emergence of low-cost airlines and low-budget accommodation – the tourism industry started to make a lot of money. New opportunities were opening up: the long journeys, the compulsive acquisition of goods and the development of abilities and self-awareness. The absence of problems caused the center of gravity in the perception of the world to shift to the ego and people were often even over-focused on themselves. New concepts have entered

1 Some still do not believe in it today.

the vocabulary – slow-living, slow-food, mindfulness – and bookstore shelves carried items titled: “*How to think less*”,² “*The art of simple life*”,³ “*How to attract good things*”.⁴

When television reported on a new virus in China in December 2019, no one in Europe considered it a serious threat. This message aroused sympathy among some, and in others taunts from another media escalation, as with the previous epidemics with limited extent. Two months later, there was a belief that the virus was transmitted by Asians, which resulted in fear of people with slanted eyes. In the first days of March, however, we understood the magnitude of threat which, in the next two months, reached its apogee. Locked in our own homes, we came out only of necessity. We were holding our breaths while passing by another person. The forced isolation begun and has been continuing for more than one year.

The isolation

Isolation, in general, consists in keeping people at a distance one from another to restrict interactions.⁵ In the case of the pandemic, the obvious benefit is a containment of the transmission of the virus but the absence of “interaction” also applies to other aspects of life, which are nevertheless negatively affected. Detachment of an individual from the society for a long time can lead to mistrust and fear of people, which can turn into a phobia. Japan has been experiencing a morbid withdrawal from society since the 1990s, referred to as *hikikomori*. It is manifested by a person’s staying closed in one room. In extreme cases, the sick person does not even use the toilet, and meals are delivered to them at the door. Until now, this phenomenon affected mostly young people entering adolescence and sometimes persisted in them throughout their lives. It had a family background, it was associated with social pressure and a contrast between one’s own feelings or desires and the expectations of others. It was the choice of the so-called “easy life”: no commitments, no responsibilities, no relationship with others. This begs the question: will the current isolation cause an increase in the incidence of this and other mental illnesses? Or will the fear of getting infected lead to the paranoid situation described in Michel Houellebecq’s novel “*The Possibility of an Island*”, where people replaced by clones – successive, improved versions of themselves – live in complete isolation, dealing only with learning and interpreting the events of the life of their predecessors and with preparing their version for successors, and the few “old-time people” – those who had not undergone cloning and isolation – fight for survival like wild animals outside the mighty walls of safety?⁶ The question arises: which ones are happy?

2 The series of books by Christel Petitcollin also includes an offer for children.

3 Author: Shunmyo Masumo

4 Author: Marian Rojas

5 The most general, yet most relevant, definition I found in Wikipedia

6 We witnessed similar events at the beginning of the pandemic, when store shelves in some countries were empty.

The lack of “live” contacts results the silencing of their social needs in people with introverted tendencies. It can be said that isolation serves them. For extroverts, on the other hand, the need to suppress emotions, the inability to throw them out of themselves when meeting people, increases the need for socialization. Other problems resulting from isolation have affected more singles or those living alone than families. On the one hand, the lack of compulsion to go to work or school has seemingly slowed down time. Life has become more lazy and peaceful. Many people have finally found time for themselves. On the other hand, families had to contend with a great deal of responsibilities, excessive burden and the need to introduce a hitherto unthinkable organization of time and space. Until March 2020, parents and children spent most of the day separately: some at work, others at school and in extracurricular activities. They met in evenings and on weekends. After the closure of schools and the introduction of remote work and learning, their apartments, until now used mainly as bedrooms, suddenly became too multifunctional: they began to function simultaneously as an office (or two offices) and a school, sometimes comprising more than one grade or even a kindergarten and or nursery. Such build-up of people in one small space, even those close to, and loving, one another, led to excessive concentration. E.T. Hall, after R. Calhoun, referred to this phenomenon in *“The Hidden Dimension”* as a behavioral swamp, describing experiments in rats, carried out in the 1950s, which led to a conclusion that too many people per square meter cause them to experience an increase in stress levels.

The deficit of space

It is no coincidence that this year’s Pritzker Prize was awarded to Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, founders of the Lacaton & Vassal office, designers of very modest buildings, inconspicuous yet very thoughtful and serving the well-being of their users. Their designs are characterized by extraordinary flexibility of space, understood as extensibility, physical instability. Latapie House (Floirac, France) of 1993 and La Tour Bois le Prêtre of 2011 are examples of successful revitalizations where the usable space was enlarged with the addition of glazed balconies and loggias. Another such building is Grand Parc in Bordeaux, after the metamorphosis of which the social housing space almost doubled.

In Poland, in the second decade of the 21st century, on average, there were about 28 square metres per person while the average in Europe was close to 40. According to Eurostat, in 2018, the overcrowding troubled approximately 40% of homes in Poland (2018 data).⁷ Such conditions are not conducive to mental health.

7

According to Eurostat, the definition of a overcrowded housing sets out the following conditions: one room for each couple, each single adult, two children under 12, two children of the same sex aged 12-17, one child aged 12-17 who cannot live with a child of the same sex.

The need for contact with nature

The forced isolation and the ban on leaving the place of residence, except when necessary, imposed in Poland for two months was aggravated by the closure of green areas – parks, squares, but also forests and beaches. This situation has highlighted the importance of contact with nature in life, especially for inhabitants of large cities. The innate passion for life and all its forms was attributed to man as an immanent trait, called “biophilia” (as the opposite of “necrophilia”) in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Erich Fromm. The taking the subject from a sociobiological perspective allowed the German philosopher to call this trait based on the physiological, anatomical and neurological predispositions of man. This thought was propagated and expanded by American biologist Edward O. Wilson⁸ who looked for its genetic grounds. S.R. Kellert is the most contemporary proponent of biophilia but B. Modrzewski and A. Szkołut⁹ point out evidence of the presence of biophilia in human life throughout the history of our existence. Their work is an in-depth study based on extensive literature on the subject. It is interesting to see in the table fourteen patterns of biophilia identified by Terrapin Bright Green, which Polish scientists translate into the language of architecture.¹⁰



Figure 1. Photo Joanna Łapińska

8 E.O. Wilson published “*Biophilia*” in the 1980s.

9 In the article: “*Biofilia – teoria i praktyka projektowa*”.

10 The characteristics of the patterns have been expanded in the “*Biofilia*” article placed on the website of Global Compact Network Poland, the Polish branch of the United Nations Global Compact.

The three groups of biophilia patterns

The patterns are divided into three groups due to their different nature. The first group contains specific sensory elements of nature that can be placed in space. The second group contains features of nature elements, such as their construction and quality. The third group concerns quality of natural space, it contains situations encountered in nature. Biophilia is currently the leading trend in thinking about space in the world. It is practically a responsibility to include these patterns in projects,¹¹ which will have a positive impact on quality of the space in which the user is or will be forced to stay for a long time. Interestingly, many of the assumptions that have recently been named and classified in the group of 14 points have been used for a long time in Japanese aesthetics, which will be shown below.

	Pattern	Japanese aesthetics feature	Impact on man in pandemic times
Group I Elements of nature that affect the senses	1. Visual contact with nature	Proximity to nature as the basic principle of the existence of space Zen gardens, experiencing natural transformations, ikebana, <i>shakkei</i> , internalization of the exterior	Soothing effect on the psyche, vision Substitute for inaccessible green areas Apparent expansion of space
	2. Other than visual contact with nature		
	3. Non-rhythmic stimulation of the senses	Outdoor passages between rooms	Healthy air – friendly climate Escape from stagnation
	4. Thermal variability and air flow		
	5. Presence of water	The sliding walls (<i>shōji</i>), the understanding of the shadow (<i>kage</i>), the	Soothing effect on the psyche
	6. Dynamic and diffused light		
	7. Inclusion of natural systems		

Group II Features of elements of nature	8. Biomorphic forms and patterns	Irregularity and simplicity, <i>wabi, sabi</i> .	Soothing effect on the psyche
	9. Natural materials		
	10. Complexity and order		
Group III Quality of natural space	11. Perspective	The passion for darkness, the open space of the house, <i>engawa</i> .	Stimulation of the senses, integration of users
	12. Shelter		
	13. Mystery		
	14. Threat		

Table 1: Biophilia patterns, analogous features of Japanese aesthetics and their impact on the user of space in pandemic times

The contact with nature

The first of the patterns of biophilia concern the sensory¹² contact with nature, not necessarily visual, also auditory.



Figure 2. Photo Joanna Łapińska

12 I use the term “sensual” here for all the senses.

They are translated into the language of architecture as green walls or plants in pots¹³ seemingly randomly arranged in the designs of Ryūe Nishizawa's houses; a window into the world, a patio, but also a simulation of nature in the form of an artificial view or sounds played (forest noise, water). In Japan, the proximity of nature seems to be the basic principle of the existence of space (Zen gardens, the common experience of natural transformations – cherry blossoming, ikebana), not only in terms of interiors, but even urban planning. In Tokyo, there are points, each with its own name, from which you can admire Mount Fuji. *Shiomi-zaka* is a term meaning “slope from which you can admire the sea”.¹⁴ *Shakkei*, in turn, is a design strategy that means “borrowing scenery from outside the garden”.¹⁵ According to this principle, the city of Edo was designed: with a view of Mount Fuji, Mount Tsukuba and the sea. In architecture (interiors) the introduction of nature into the interior through a large glazing has a long history, dating back to the glass houses of Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson. From the end of the last century comes the *Water / Glass House* of Kengo Kuma, which is distinguished by the quality of its environment. Placed on the sheet of water, the edge of which apparently recedes in the ocean, the house is a complete environment in which boundaries between the interior and the outside, between the water and the house, have been blurred. Such interior also appears on the top floor of the headquarters of Z58 in Shanghai, a Japanese design, where water has also been introduced to the atrium (the entrance hall), sheltered from the main street by a “blind” made from plants in mirrored pots. Another example of the approach to space as containing both the interior and the exterior is *House N* (2008) *House N* (2008) by Sou Fujimoto, in which the façades of the building surround the space on the boundary of the garden and the patio, inside which is placed the thermally sealed, though glazed, block of the apartment. These are perhaps utopian projects from the point of view of many users of Polish apartments where the view of trees, and not the window of a neighbor, is already a luxury. However, they have at least an educational function: a positive impact on the perception of space and, consequently, on the experience of it. The inclusion in the living space of the outside, or artificial nature in the form of well-placed potted plants, green walls and, in extreme cases, borrowed images, sounds or smells, has a soothing effect on users, a positive influence on their sight and psyche, can be a substitute for an inaccessible park, and also enlarges the space visually: the house reaches where the sight does.

13 Research in British and Dutch offices has shown that space users with live plants work 15% more efficiently than their peers in spaces devoid of plants.

14 “*Estetyka japońska. Antologia.*”, ed. K. Wilkoszewska, Universitas, Kraków 2008, p. 229

15 *Ibid.*

The variability

Subsequent patterns of biophilia refer to movement, variability of images and stimuli, but also air flow and temperature variation.



Figure 3. Photo Joanna Łapińska

Currently, with the help of technology, it is possible to control the temperature and humidity in the interior, as well as introduce moving elements of façades, for example, adapting to the position of the sun. Older buildings provided this variability due to technical imperfections. Leaky windows allowed for natural ventilation, in cold winters the windows filled with icy images, and uneven glass with blemishes sometimes distorted the view. By comparison, in traditional Japanese houses thermal insulation was not important and passages in the open air between rooms were not surprising, so this variability of air and view was unforced. In a modern apartment, instability can be introduced both indirectly, through previous patterns, that is, a view of nature, and through the use of moving and perforated elements of interior design (e.g. moving partitions, panels or blinds). It is a method that allows us to escape stagnation through the experiencing of the variability of the world.

The use of the forces of nature

The last biophilia patterns of the first group concern the use of water, light and the forces of nature.



Figure 4. Photo Joanna Łapińska

Interior architecture combines with landscape architecture, organizing space with walls, bodies of water and the differentiation of light: the introduction of a daily cycle of changes in, or zoning of, the intensity and color of light. The paper-glued Japanese sliding walls (*shōji*) uniquely transmit light, allowing the daily rhythm of light to penetrate rooms. They are characterized by the softness and warmth of Japanese paper which “behaves as if it embraced and absorbed light just like the fluffy surface of the first snow”.¹⁶ In turn, thanks to natural crevices, “frail, twinkling light, flashing here and there, once it flows on the mats in pale blurred streaks, once it is poured with luminous spots in the likeness of water taken in a pond, it again embroiders patterned embroidery, as if adorning the night with a painting of powdered gold”.¹⁷ It is a completely different understanding of lighting than the western one, oriented to its function: scattered, directional, focused. Also different is the notion of shadow (*kage*) which has several meanings in the Eastern culture.¹⁸ This approach is evident in the experimental *Même* house designed by Kengo Kuma: “wrapped” in a light-transmitting membrane that allows for

16 “*Estetyka japońska. Estetyka życia i piękno umierania.*”, ed. K. Wilkoszewska, Universitas, Kraków 2009, p. 83

17 *Ibid.*, p. 87

18 Shadow is a flashing or non-refracted light, dimly radiating light from the sun, moon, or lamp (old Japanese); “an indeterminate and dissuasive shape in the circle of radiation, like an image in water or in a mirror but, at the same time, an image imagined or remembered by a person”; but also an unlit place or one where light barely reaches; outline of shapes in the dark, e.g. mountains. More in “*Estetyka japońska. Estetyka życia i piękno umierania.*”, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

soft transitions between dawn, day and dusk. The effect of soft light has also been achieved in the Yeti office building in Liszki (near Kraków), designed by Group_A, the façade of which is built from cellular polycarbonate panels. An extremely modern and unique project on a global scale, corresponding to these patterns, is the Hansen house in Szumin. The interior design and applied colors correspond to the variability of daily use and differentiation of light. White spots and lines reflect even a small amount of natural light, allowing you to move safely during the long hours of Polish dusk and dawn.

Features of natural forms

The second group of biophilia patterns introduces features of natural forms into the interior, such as the principle of construction (irregularity, biomorphism, fractals) and materials (stone and wood changing in time). Irregularity, simplicity and impermanency characterize Japanese aesthetics. Consent to the slow ageing of materials is included in it. The categories of *wabi* and *sabi* confirm the conviction of representatives of Eastern culture of the importance of destruction which gives value to objects. The formation of space according to nature is also characteristic of architects of the East. Contemporary developments include “liquid” SANAA’s designs about which I wrote in my previous article,¹⁹ Kengo Kuma’s projects,²⁰ such as the Lucien Pellat-Finet boutique, the interior of which is covered with a wooden honeycomb structure, and the two extremely different designs by Sou Fujimoto inspired by the anatomy of the tree: the apartment building in Montpellier L’arbre Blanc and House H, the single-family house in Tokyo, about which the architect writes:

To live in a multi-storey dwelling in a dense metropolis like Tokyo is somehow similar to living in a large tree. Within a large tree, there exists few large branches, of which endows numerous qualities: pleasant places to sit, sleep, and present places for discourse²¹.

19 “Found in the landscape – the beginning”, in *inAW Journal – Multidisciplinary Academic Magazine*, 2020, vol. 1, N° 1

20 J. Łapińska: “The colors of the ephemeral world”, [in:] “Color. Culture. Science.”, ed. M. Godyń, B. Groborz, A. Kwiatkowska-Lubańska – Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, 2018

21 “Living in a multi-story building in a dense metropolis like Tokyo is, in a sense, like living on a large tree. Within a large tree there are several large branches that provide: pleasant places to sit, sleep and discuss” – transl. by J. Łapińska; https://www.archdaily.com/188814/house-h-sou-fujimoto?ad_medium=widget&ad_name=recommendation.



Figure 5. Photo Joanna Łapińska

Irregularities, impermanency and other features of natural forms bring peace of mind to the users and calm to the interior, which is invaluable in the tense situation surrounding the pandemic.

Spatial configurations

The last four biophilia patterns of the third group concern specific spatial configurations immanent to natural environment. Being in the forest, we see different perspectives: from the immediate surroundings to the sky through the branches, we feel a threat while, finding shelter, we discover mysteries of nature. An architectural space should also be like that: diverse, non-obvious, evoking emotions.

To my feeling, the set of immanent features in nature and desirable in architecture, identified by Terrapin Bright Green, lacks the ownership of an indefinite space with no specific features, ready for use it in a variety of applications. The flexibility of space – the openness of the meadow, the possibilities of the tree – is supported by designers and manufacturers of interior fittings, including Vitra. The multi-functional space was tested by, among others, Sou Fujimoto in the *Final Wooden House* installation: a structure with designated planes and minimal functionality.



Figure 6. Photo Joanna Łapińska

Living space designed as not fully defined, with designated necessary zones (kitchen and bathroom determined by the plumbing) can provide a full-size base for the whole family. It resolves the problem of the lack of space for extra activity, it can be used in turns by different family members, does not allow boredom and does not allow the isolation of an individual.

The designs of these Japanese and European architects are original, individual and, at the same time, adapted to modern conditions. The space in them is diverse, both in terms of utility and senses (sight), flexible, combines the interior and the outside, and has designated places inside. It responds to biophilia patterns and contains important features of the contemporary space with a potential to counteract the effects of seclusion.

Personal configurations

Formal changes may not be sufficient for single or isolated persons. Being separated from the community is incompatible with the nature of a person who needs interaction to grow and live in mental health. Housing that separates people from the environment, which has already been proven, is an unfavorable solution, especially in the present situation. It seems necessary not only to change the design itself but also to revolutionize the whole thinking about habitation, including, among other things, openness to the world (nature and people). In the old days, such qualities were given by multigenerational houses, where contact was maintained but not through a forced relationship of only

two people. A more contemporary approach is to design space for a collectivity, a group of friends, people who have something in common. The space they use is less traditional but allows for greater independence, where intimacy and social life are combined by separating private areas (bedroom, dressing room, bathroom) and semi-private ones (home office, resting place) from the common space (kitchen, dining room, living room). This form of sharing of the living environment includes single people, enabling them to be a part of the society even in the time of the pandemic.

Conclusion

The biophilia patterns described above, in conjunction with the characteristics of Japanese aesthetics, form the basis for the claim that the relationship between man and nature is a basic need, regardless of place and time. Thus, the design of interiors, especially residential ones, has to take into account the merits of nature.

Quality of the space in which a person resides is one of the most important factors influencing their well-being. A well-designed space can positively affect not only mood but also work efficiency, attitude to others or even physical condition. On the other hand, a wrong design (inconsistent, not meeting the needs and character of the user) has a destructive effect on all of the above mentioned areas. In this work I focused on the architecture of residential interiors because they have become centers of our lives in the last year. I believe that changes in the contemporary thinking about the structure of the house or apartment, consisting in the shifting of highlight from homogeneous spaces, i.e. fully open or segregated rooms (cells), to a more diverse and flexible tissue also containing semi-open and enclosed spaces, shared and fully private, the use of biophilia principles by combining the interior with the exterior and direct references to the natural world will become a positive stimulus for a new, better, quality of life.

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Research task DS-PB 516: Found in the landscape – inconspicuous / coveted – imagined spaces. Project leader: dr Joanna Łapińska

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UNREASONABLE USE OF MOBILE PHONES AND LEARNING EFFICIENCY IN CHILDREN. PROPOSAL OF A PROPRIETARY DESIGN SOLUTION USING THE OFF DESK AS AN EXAMPLE

Art research paper

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Abstract

The article presents a description of the negative implications of using mobile phones as well as the process and description of the original project which is a response to the problem of unwise use of smartphones in terms of the effectiveness of childrens' learning and work. The article is a synthesis of the author's observations and conclusions from her own observations and analyzes as well as the cited studies and reports. In line with socially responsible design, it answers a number of questions that arise. Does the problem of unreasonable use of mobile devices really exist and does it pose a threat? Who is most at risk of it? Do mobile devices affect the effectiveness of learning and work? Which step in tackling the problem is appropriate - ban or rationalization? What solutions and design scenarios can be used here?

Keywords

socially responsible design, school desk, smartphone, digitization, efficiency, rationalization, Faraday cage, digital children, "always on" generation, phonoholism, FOMO syndrome, cyber society, interaction, new technologies

Introduction

Smartphones, which are almost constantly at hand, play an important role in shaping human attitudes and behaviors. In the modern world we cannot imagine life without them. We reach for them almost every day, unwittingly using their functions. There is no denying that they improve our living comfort and are a source of knowledge and entertainment. Despite the multitude of benefits they bring, they generate risks to many aspects of life. Delving into the subject, reviewing Polish and international reports and studies, and making my own observations and analyses, I noticed that digitization entails serious problems requiring rationalization. The topicality, prevalence and seriousness of the problem of the negative impact of the smartphone on man motivated me to take on the challenge and face this problem in my thesis project. I highlighted the aspect of reduced learning and work efficiency due to unreasonable use of mobile phones. As an interior architecture student passionate about innovative design that is socially responsible and uses new technologies, I paid special attention to children who start to live in the digital world. Given their openness and mental absorption, they are a target group that can be properly oriented to prevent problems related to unreasonable use of smartphones in their adult lives. I have designed an interactive school desk for them to rationalize the use of mobile phones. I present the detailed context and processes accompanying the implementation of the design in my thesis titled “The role of design in the education and rationalization of the use of mobile phones by children”. This article is a kind of synthesis of my observations and conclusions resulting from my basic research. In the article I will try to answer a number of questions that came up during the work on the thesis project. Does the problem of unreasonable use of mobile devices really exist and does it pose a threat? Who is most vulnerable to it? Do mobile devices affect learning and work efficiency? Is the ban or, instead, rationalization the right measure to combat the problem? What solutions or design scenarios can apply here?

Socially responsible design

Social design is nothing else than designing things that are not only nice but, above all, needed. It is based on empathy and higher goals to offer benefits and solve existing problems. The responsibility of the designer lies in using design as a tool to improve the world, paying attention to the real needs of people, especially groups excluded and overlooked in commercial design¹. Socially responsible design is equally necessary, especially in the today's world, where technological progress and the environment are generating problems we have never seen before. I believe that the role of the designer should be, first of all, to take action to help directly or indirectly, by paying attention to a problem or trying to shape the right habits that build awareness in the audience, which have a positive impact on their life.

1 <https://www.designbiznes.pl/2020/07/social-design-czyli-design-odpowiedzialny-spolecznie/>.

The dark side of the smartphone in terms of efficiency

Mobile phone features are a treasure trove of almost limitless possibilities. However, on the other side of the coin there are dangers: visual and auditory distraction in the context of learning and work, disruption of sleep and health, cyber violence in the area of social relations, or excessive attachment to the device that can affect quality of interpersonal relations. The context of learning and work has turned out to be the most common in my environment. The problem of distraction by the smartphone in this case translates into impaired concentration, less precision of activities performed, difficulty in assimilating knowledge and reduced efficiency. The latter is a desirable value in modern times in both education and work. The problem concerns children and adolescents but also adults. Living in rush and the constant lack of time force us to be able to carry out individual tasks efficiently. Research carried out in the UK confirms that the smartphone-induced distraction in the office work reduces employees' IQs by up to 10 points, which can be compared to the effect of a sleepless night or of marijuana abuse. According to researchers, an employee pulled away from their tasks by a notification on a smartphone needs about half an hour to get back to the right level of concentration. In addition, employees are used to being distracted by mobile devices subconsciously distract themselves from work².

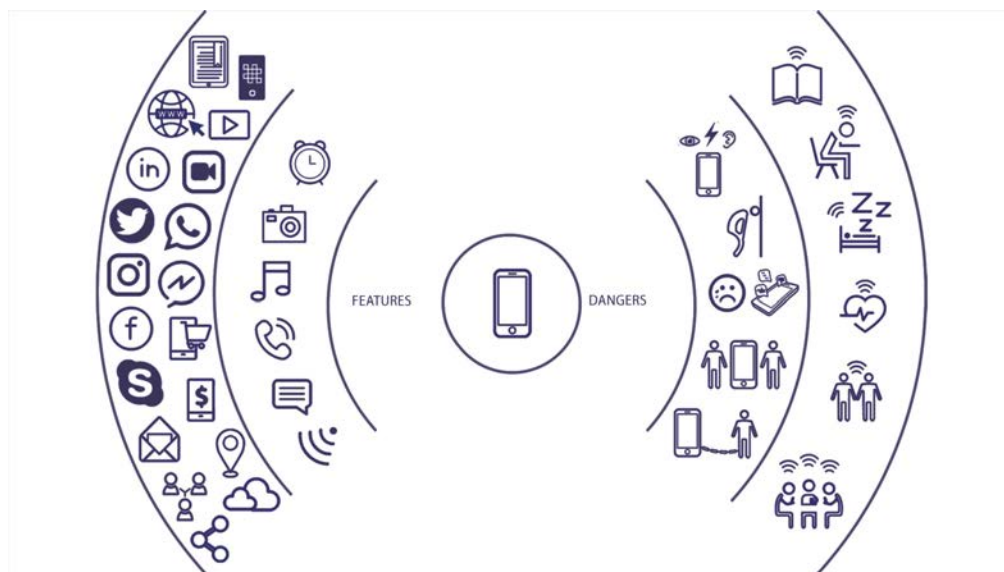


Figure 1: Features and dangers of the smartphone; proprietary design using pictograms
(sources: <https://www.flaticon.com>, authors: <https://www.flaticon.com/authors/freepik>)

The above observations and data indicating how much negative impact the smartphone has provoked me to look for the cause of this phenomenon, consequently pointing to the problem of unreasonable use of smartphones.

Digital childhood – the “always on” generation

Children born in the 21st century do not know life without the Internet. There is a reason why we call them “digital kids” or the “always on” generation: they are constantly online. It is not surprising, therefore, that they are the group most vulnerable to the dangers of using mobile devices. The smartphone and the tablet moved their childhood from social life in the backyard to a virtual world closed behind the “black mirror”³.



Figure 2. The backyard generation / the „always on” generation (source: <https://www.flaticon.com>, authors: <https://www.flaticon.com/authors/freepik>), author’s modification

This world, despite its great potential, is, unfortunately, explored by children unproductively, often even destructively. Children follow one another on social networks, share touched up photos and misleading posts, while commonly doing the cyber bullying. It turns out that smartphones, although attractive to them, cause a decrease in their life satisfaction, as evidenced by studies showing an increase in depression and suicides among teenagers since 2012. Research conclusions point to mobile technology as a source of relationship crises, sexualization, depersonalization of people, adulthood impairment, depression, obesity, and even an increase in ADHD instances among children⁴. The importance of the problem is depicted by the following illustration which shows results of nationwide surveys conducted among people aged 12-19 years⁵.

3 “Black mirror”: smartphone screen; a borrowing from the „Black Mirror” TV series

4 <https://magazynpismo.pl/cykle-pisma/jak-naprawic-internet/zombie-fonoholizm-dzieci-smartfon/#>.

5 M. Dębski, M. Bigaj, *Ogólnopolskie badanie „Młodzi Cyfrowi”*, Fundacja Dbam o Mój Z@sięg, Uniwersytet Gdański, 2019, p. 11



Figure 3. The “Digital Young People” study (source: <https://dbamomojzasieg.com/mlodzi-cyfrowi/>)

The seriousness of the problem is also demonstrated by the introduction into the dictionary of the concept of **phonoholism**, that is, dependence on a mobile phone⁶ consisting in an inability to function normally without a smartphone, in particular because of the lack of access to the Internet. The addiction manifests itself in the need to be online at all costs due to the fear of being overlooked⁷, the so-called “fear of missing out” (FOMO) syndrome, characterized by constant activity and by tracking other Internet users and by frequent sharing of content on social media for the purpose of boasting and feeling excited about likes and positive comments⁸. About 14% of the Polish youth suffer from it⁹.

It cannot be denied that the problem of irrational use of smartphones by children and young people actually exists. There is no doubt that it is worth talking about and trying to overcome its negative implications.

6 M. Dębski, *Nalagowe korzystanie z telefonów komórkowych. Szczegółowa charakterystyka zjawiska fonoholizmu w Polsce. Raport z badań*, Fundacja Dbam o Mój Z@sięg, Instytut Filozofii, Socjologii i Dziennikarstwa, Uniwersytet Gdański, Gdynia, 2016, p.19

7 M. Dębski, *Uzależnienie od smartfona – najważniejsze symptomy*, <https://siu.praesterno.pl/arttykul/562>, Instytut Filozofii, Socjologii i Dziennikarstwa Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2017.

8 M. Dębski, *Nalagowe korzystanie z telefonów komórkowych...*, op. cit., p. 19.

9 M. Dębski, M. Bigaj, *Ogólnopolskie badanie „Młodzi Cyfrowi”*, op. cit., p. 13.

The child's first steps into the world of mobile devices in the context of family and school

In the age of digital childhood it seems important to look at the moment of entering the digitized world. Children start exploring it very early. The school plays an important role here while the first contact of a child with new technologies is usually decided by parents by making their own smartphones available to the child.



Figure 4. Smartphone as an „education” method

(source: <https://www.flaticon.com>, authors: <https://www.flaticon.com/authors/freepik>), author's modification

A study conducted in Poland by the No Man's Children Foundation in 2015 found that 64% of children aged from 0.5 to 6.5 years used mobile devices. 30% among one-year-olds, over 50% among two- and three-year-olds and 84% among others. The results for the youngest children raise concern. Of the daily users, the most, as much as 35%, are two-year-olds. The motivations of parents sharing smartphones with their children are of particular concern. These include addressing one's own affairs, not having an idea of taking time out for children, rewarding them for good behavior, manipulating them to force the child to eat a meal, or make it easier to fall asleep¹⁰. The commonly used system of punishment and reward is often disproportionate and recklessly used by parents. It leads to a lack of comfort and emotional instability in children who, in fact, achieve higher scores on the scale of phonoholism. Moreover, it turns out that this is determined by the fact that parents motivate their decision to equip their child with a mobile phone by the need for control. This leads to the child's development of a sense of duty to reach for the smartphone frequently. About 40% of families do not set rules for the use of mobile devices and in many cases the rules are not set with children but imposed by parents. More than half of parents do not talk to their children about the harm and dangers of irrational use of the smartphone. They usually think that this is the role of the school. The research also shows that quality of family relationships has an impact on this problem, especially the lack of a parent's presence in the child's life, as well as high expectations regarding the child's performance at school¹¹.

The issue of unreasonable use of smartphones is also evident in the school environment. Children at early school age are forced to submit to new rules and discipline while establishing new social relationships. At the same time, they enter the digital world the immeasurable potential of which can reasonably be used to benefit them but, otherwise, can cause many problems and have a negative impact

10 M. Kowaluk-Romanek, *Cyfrowe dzieciństwo. Nowe technologie a rozwój dziecka*, „Edukacja – Technika – Informatyka”, 2019, nr 1/27.

11 M. Dębski, M. Bigaj, *Ogólnopolskie badanie „Młodzi Cyfrowi”*, op. cit., p. 33–34.

on their lives. The school is where they spend most of the day. At this point, parents who have so far hidden the Internet and mobile devices from their children, realizing the dangers, are almost forced to introduce the children to the digital world. The reasons for this are different, more or less reasonable, such as that the child does not feel inferior to others.



Figure 5. Smartphone in the context of the school

(source: <https://www.flaticon.com>, authors: <https://www.flaticon.com/authors/freepik>), author's modification

Unfortunately, education and support for general development are not the top motives for buying a smartphone, especially that the Internet is used in school education usually only for communication between teachers and students or parents through social groups and parental control applications. Mobile devices are used in the teaching process sporadically while the vast majority of children use smartphones on breaks, thus communicating with one another without establishing face-to-face relationships. Students also use their phones during lessons, unfortunately not only for learning purposes. Children's self-confinement in the digital world is detrimental to their social skills which are so important during this period of their lives. Teachers, aware of the problem, feel incompetent about this topic. The lack of regulation and school prevention programs in this area make them helpless¹².



Figure 6. Traditional lesson / Lesson using E-learning

(source: <https://www.flaticon.com>, authors: <https://www.flaticon.com/authors/freepik>), author's modification

The conclusion is that home and school environments do not exploit the educational and development potential of mobile devices. The lack of parental control, their unawareness of their own educational mistakes perpetuating bad habits in children and the unpreparedness of schools to combat phonoholism show the need for taking an action to address this problem.

Prohibition or rationalization?

The use of mobile phones in schools remains an unresolved and controversial issue that divides the society into two groups: supporters and opponents of the ban. The proponents of the ban motivate their attitude by the distraction of children during classes, the deterioration of their learning outcomes,

12 Ibid, p. 35–36.

difficulties faced by teachers or the breaks spent by students in isolation with their eyes fixed on phone screens. For example, the ban was introduced in France in 2018. Children are not allowed to use Web-enabled devices, especially smartphones, on school premises. The steps taken are intended to combat phonoholism among children and young people. The proponents of the ban cite the research carried out by the London School of Economics, which shows that limited use of smartphones increases concentration in students, resulting in higher exam scores. The restriction also contributes to reducing educational inequalities and the phone theft in schools. The law enforcement relies on the teachers' right to confiscate smartphones. In practice, however, it appears that it is impossible to enforce the ban on children's activities at school throughout the day¹³.



Figure 7. Prohibition or rationalization

(source: <https://www.flaticon.com>, authors: <https://www.flaticon.com/authors/freepik>), author's modification

In Polish schools there are no top-down rules governing the use of the Internet and mobile devices. Sometimes these issues are determined by school statutes. The views of Polish teachers on the introduction of the ban are divided: 17.5% positively against the ban, 17.4% "rather" against, 56% in favor and 9.1% undecided. Interestingly, 23.7% of teachers admit that they happen to use their smartphones for private purposes while teaching¹⁴. Opponents of the ban believe that it is the school's duty to harness the potential of mobile devices in the education and development of students and, at the same time, to teach students how to use such devices appropriately. This view is shared, among others, by Achim Berg, the head of BITKOM, who stresses the role of schools and parents in introducing children to the digitized world¹⁵.

These diverse opinions made me reflect. Is the ban an appropriate educational method? Undoubtedly, it brings immediate results but they satisfy only the person who is its initiator, and this satisfaction often results from a sense of comfort and control over another person. Therefore, the ban seems to be a half-measure giving an illusive sense of proper upbringing. It causes frustration, rebellion and aggression in the child, plus an undoubtedly justified sense of being kept under surveillance. It should be noted that the problem of unreasonable use of mobile phones affects not only children but also their parents and teachers. The observations suggest that children should not be patronized but should be treated as equals and the practice of rationalizing the use of smartphones should be implemented

13 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexledsom/2019/08/30/the-mobile-phone-ban-in-french-schools-one-year-on-would-it-work-elsewhere/#131c1e575e70>.

14 M. Dębski, *Nalogowe korzystanie z telefonów komórkowych...*, op. cit., p. 116

15 <https://www.dw.com/pl/ankieta-smartfony-s%C4%85-dla-dzieci-oczywisto%C5%9Bci%C4%85/a-48937970>.

in collaboration. In addition, problems with obtaining parental consent to a total ban on the use of mobile devices on school premises, and legal complexities associated with this issue, tip the scales at the rationalization side. The above-mentioned studies justify the claim that such measures will have beneficial effects on children in their future lives, such as reasonable and responsible use of new technologies, and will help children develop mental maturity by activating cognitive processes teaching independent thinking and responsibility.

Undoubtedly, the unreasonable use of smartphones has an impact on children themselves: their effectiveness and psycho-social needs. I believe that, at this stage of technological development, we cannot remove smartphones from children's lives. Given their large potential, rationalizing their use seems to be a good step.

Personal conclusions and insights

The methodology of socially responsible design and the foregoing facts support my argument that unreasonable use of mobile phones reduces the efficiency of learning and work. The exploration of the topic motivated me to take on the design challenge and pushed the idea of developing a new school desk function for children in grades 1-3, rationalizing the use of the smartphone.

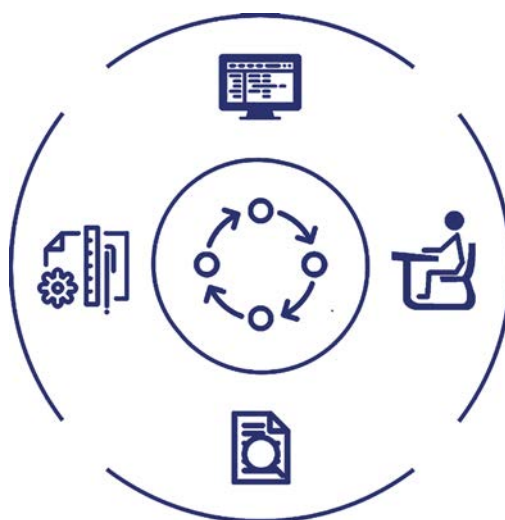


Figure 8. Methodology of author's design process, author's design with the use of pictograms
sources: <https://www.flaticon.com>, authors: <https://www.flaticon.com/authors/freepik>

The methodology of the desk design process consisted of a basic research, technical design, electronic and programming design and prototyping. The basic research (based on user-centered design)

user-centered design)¹⁶ consisted of experimental verification of hypotheses resulting from the defined idea.

My visit to a primary school resulted in unrecorded informal interviews with teachers, which confirmed that mobile telephony has an adverse negative impact on efficiency and behaviors of students. According to the interviews, the problem was manifested by the use of mobile phones by students during classes, contributing to both individual and collective mind-wandering caused by sounds coming out of active devices. In addition, students often used smartphones to cheat in tests. What is more, the teachers noted that students also spent time on their smartphones during breaks, mostly playing games, destructive to their development, or becoming active on social media, which negatively affected their direct interpersonal relationships and often fueled cyber bullying. Citing long-term observations of school teachers and educators reporting the problem, I can conclude that the use of smartphones by students requires rationalization.

I conducted an experiment with seven-year-old Dominica during which I observed the girl's behavior and measured time she needed to complete a task requiring concentration in two settings: without the smartphone in sight and with the smartphone lying on her desk. In the first case, Dominica, focused on the task at hand, completed it in 16 minutes. In the second case, the smartphone clearly distracted the girl from the task. She finished it within 22 minutes. The experiment requires more children to follow certain procedures to provide reliable data, while informal conversations with parents of early school age children have strengthened my belief that the mobile phone in sight undoubtedly causes distraction.



Figure 9. Dominica focused on the task,
photo by Magdalena Konior



Figure 10. Dominica distracted by the smartphone,
photo by Magdalena Konior

16 *Projektowanie zorientowane na użytkownika*, https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projektowanie_zorientowane_na_u%C5%BCytkownika.

Conversations with parents show that using mobile devices is more attractive for children than the performance of any other task. Smartphones in sight of children doing homework cause distraction, especially when someone nearby is using them.

The next step of the design process was the technical design of a school desk based on ideological assumptions, anatomy of children aged 6-9 years and basic guidelines for ergonomic design of desks, taking into account the principles of selection of the student's workplace depending the user's height, according to the applicable Polish Standard. Following the idea, the basic details of the project consisted of a mobile phone pocket located in a place out of sight of the child working at the desk and an attractive element of persuasion urging the child to put away the smartphone. I provided for four desktop height settings fitting the ages and anatomies of the target group and I designed a functionality for convenient work and storage of school supplies.

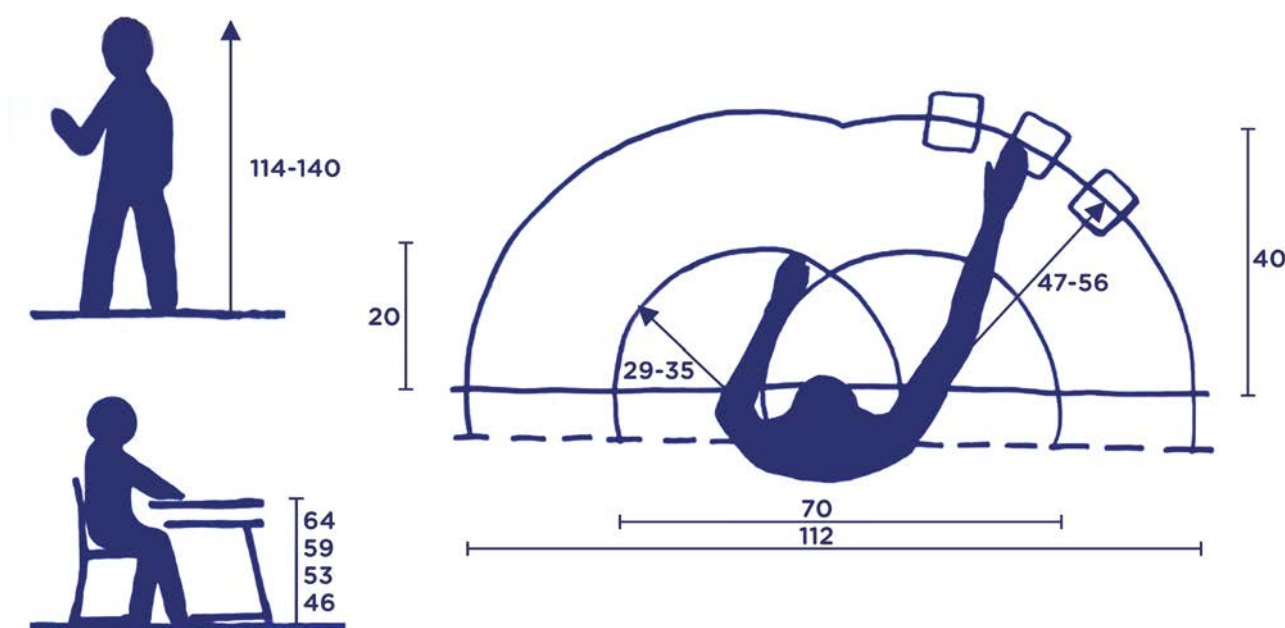


Figure 11. Analysis of the anatomy of 6-9-year-olds in the context of a desk, (design by the author)



Figure 12. Exploration and analysis (photo by the author)

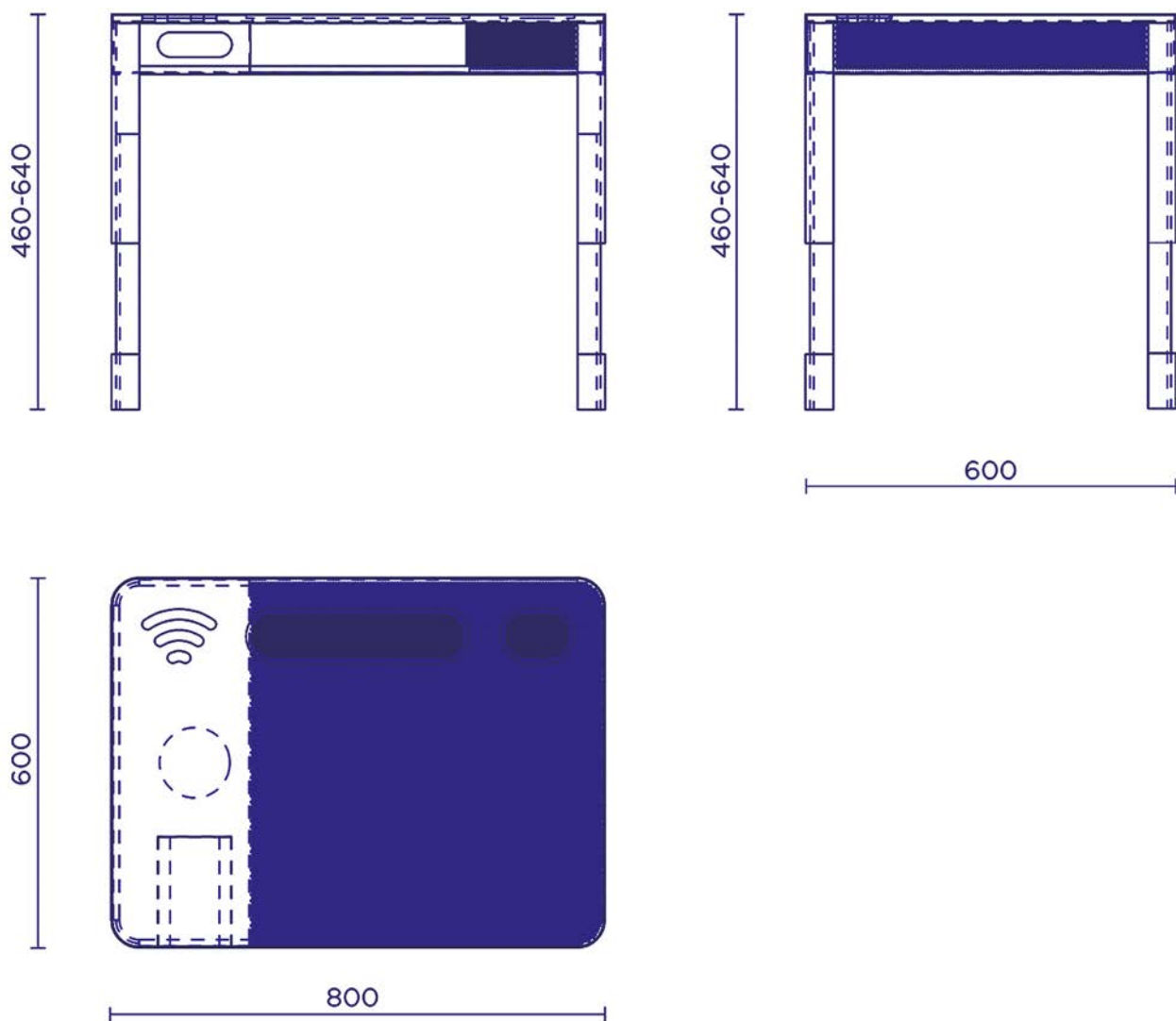


Figure 13. Overall desk dimensions (photo by the author)

Równolegle rozwijanym etapem było projektowanie elektroniczne i programistyczne zakładające interaktywność jako atrakcyjny zabieg tworzący więź między użytkownikiem a produktem oraz wzmocnienie przekazu idei, którą niesie ze sobą projekt.

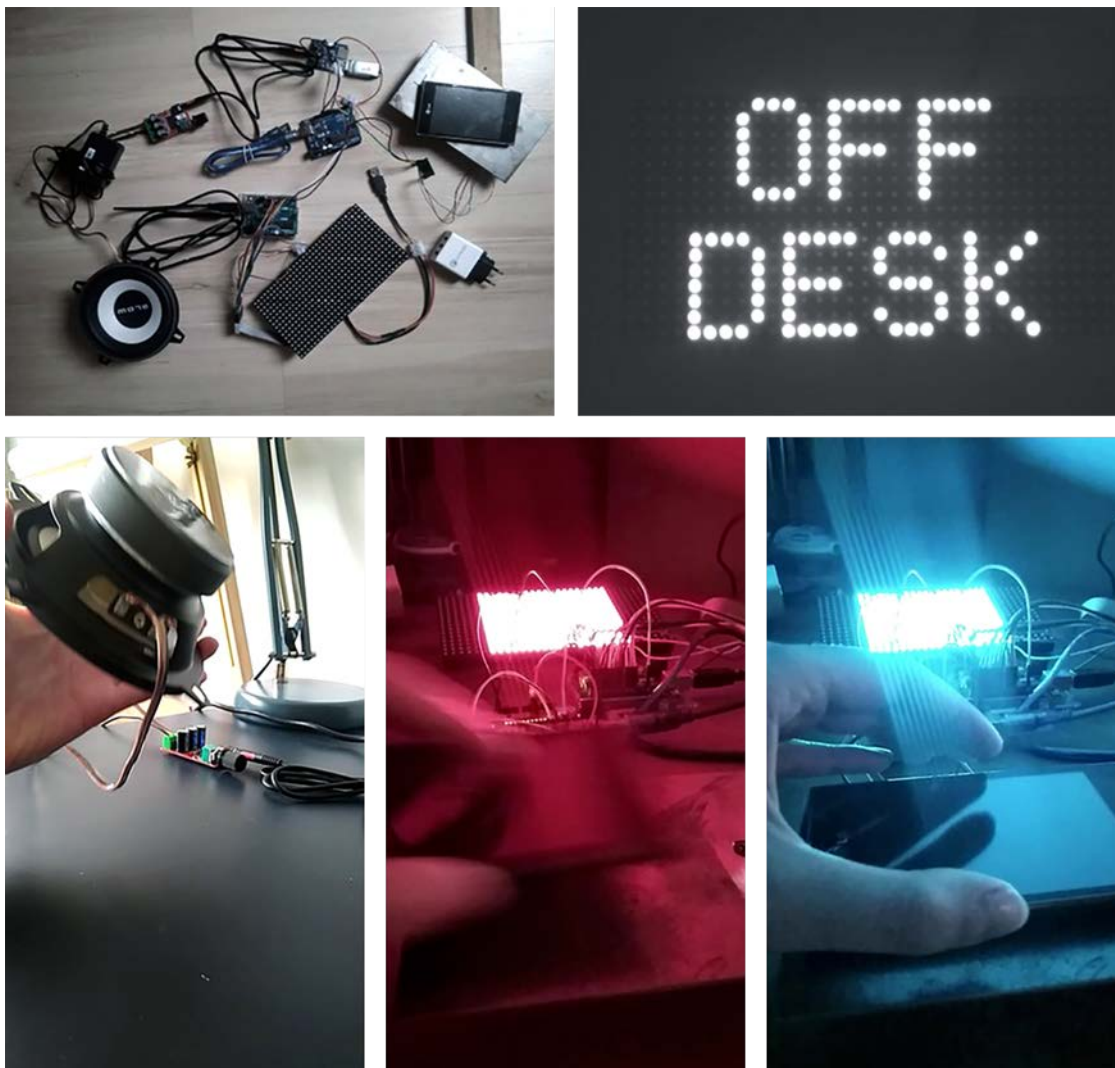


Figure 14. The electronic and programming side of the project – experiments and tests (photo by the author)

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The final phase of the design process was the execution of a prototype: a tangible result of the above-mentioned steps.



Figure 15. The prototyping process (photo by the author)

A desk for the youngest to rationalize the use of the mobile phone

I named the completed prototype the “OFF DESK”. It is an interactive school desk for the youngest students intended to help them rationalize the use of their mobile phones. The desk is equipped with a **Faraday cage**¹⁷ designed to store a smartphone during classes and stimulate the child visually and aurally to learn and work.



Figure 16. The OFF DESK in use (photo by Magdalena Konior)

The name of the desk refers to the switching from online to offline activity and, thus, taking a break from the digital life in favor of experiencing what is here and now, focusing on the learning and work.



Figure 17. The “OFF DESK” logo (design by the author)

17 The Faraday cage is an electrostatic shield made in the form of a closed metal vessel or a dense metal mesh, mainly used to protect electrical equipment from interfering external electrical fields (...). Inside the cage the intensity of these fields is zero (...). Applied for the first time by M. Faraday (source: <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/klatka-Faradaya;3922729.html>).

Although the problem of irrational use of mobile phones affects all age groups, the project is dedicated to the younger group: children 6-9 years old (students of grades 1-3) who start their education and who are receptive and prone to agitation. Making them aware of this problem, forming rational habits and teaching right behaviors is an attempt to prevent the formation of the so-called “cyber society”¹⁸.



Figure 18. Illustration of benefits of using the desk (design by the author)



Figure 19. OFF DESK – details (photo by Magdalena Konior)



Figure 20. OFF DESK – technology details (photo by Magdalena Konior)

The functionality and materials

The OFF DESK is designed for use by one person because it assumes the awareness of putting away the smartphone, the efficiency of the performance of tasks and the concentration in the assimilation of knowledge. It has the four-step height adjustment provided in the legs made from steel tubes, allowing the student to adjust the desk to his or her height. The desktop, made of PVC, is designed to fit the user's anatomy, takes into account the whole range of both precise and more relaxed work and has a comfortable milled space at the back of the tabletop designed for desk organizers, writing utensils and a tablet, the latter supposed to facilitate mobile learning during classes. The organizers are mobile, which facilitates cleaning and makes their functionality future-proof. They are made using the 3D printing technology and the new MJF technology¹⁹. In the line of the organizers on the left side there is a place for a light point in the form of the Wi-Fi symbol milled in the tabletop, obscured by milky Plexiglas. Under the table top there is a shelf designed for storing school supplies, such as books, made of perforated steel plate. On the left, at the height of the shelf, there is space for electronics using the entire depth of the desk. In addition, in the front there is a magnetically lockable aluminum pocket for the smartphone, acting as the Faraday cage. The powder-coated structure and the desktop are white. This combination provides a neutral background for the performance of school duties. The motive of this design decision is the symbolism of whiteness which calms emotions, relieves stress, does not burden the mind and allows for focus²⁰. The mobile and functionally and conceptually important components of the design (the organizers, smartphone space and lower legs) are grey, which is an accent that enriches the significance and appearance of the desk, making it easier for children to use the piece of furniture. The form of the desk, referring to the shape of the smartphone, encourages use and makes the desk safe and user-friendly.

The electronic and programming side of the project

The electronic and programming part contributes much value to the design. The space for electronics includes a scale made from a strain gauge beam (which is also the space for the smartphone), two Arduino Uno microcontrollers, a LED matrix, an MP3 module, an amplifier, a speaker and power supplies and connecting wires for the individual components. The whole thing is powered by a cable coming out from the back leg of the desk.

19 <https://www.materialise.com/pl/manufacturing/technologie-i-materialy/multi-jet-fusion>.

20 *What colors are conducive to learning and motivating employees?*, <https://www.edukey.pl/blog/psychologia-kolorow/>.

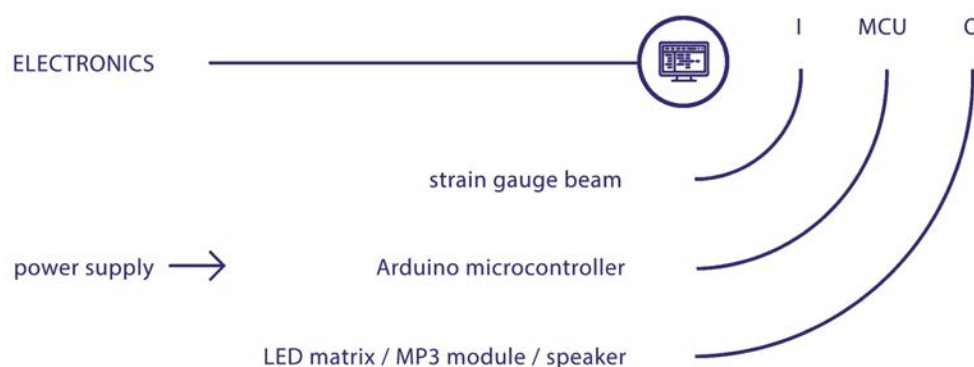


Figure 21. Simplified electronic design (design by the author)

Interaction

The OFF DESK is designed for use in the classroom during classes. The student, taking up the seat at the desk at the start of the classes is mobilized with a visual stimulus provided by the red Wi-Fi symbol located on the tabletop to put the smartphone away to the side pocket. The Wi-Fi symbol indicates online activity and highlights its key importance in the context of the problem of unreasonable use of the smartphone. The red color of the light sends an intuitive message to the user: “put your phone away”. It is based on the symbolism and importance of using the red color accent in the design, which draws attention, stimulates, motivates, signals and warns²¹.

The user’s first response to the red light is to place the smartphone in the magnetically lockable Faraday cage which attenuates electromagnetic signals from GSM and Wi-Fi networks and from satellite navigation systems. As a result, the smartphone is “dead”. In addition to eliminating the possibility of disruption of work by incoming notifications, messages or calls, this procedure has an additional symbolic meaning of the operation of putting away the smartphone: the getting disconnected from the digital world.

Based on programmed appropriate weight thresholds of standard mobile phones, the OFF DESK responds to the placement of the smartphone in the Faraday cage and generates a discretionary sound from the speaker hidden under the tabletop and changes the lighting color of the Wi-Fi symbol from red to blue. This color calms, stimulates the work of the brain and increases concentration²². Therefore, it then sends a message to the user: “now you can focus your mind on absorbing knowledge and performing tasks”.

21 <http://blog.michalgosk.com/psychologia-kolorow-kolor-czerwony/>.

22 <http://blog.michalgosk.com/psychologia-kolorow-kolor-niebieski/>.

When the phone is taken out from the Faraday cage, the Wi-Fi symbol lights up again in red and the speaker generates another, now unpleasant, sound which acts as a warning to the child and informs the teacher that the student has taken the phone out from the dedicated place.

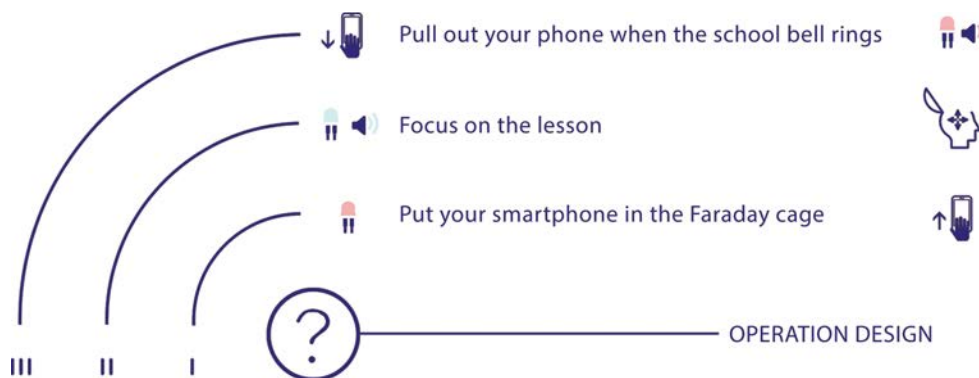


Figure 22. Desk operation design (design by the author)

The idea of using sound effects in the design is based on *sound studies*²³. This science emphasizes importance of so-called sound landscapes operating in scientific disciplines as mental landscapes in which sound stimuli alongside visual ones play a very important role²⁴. An important element of the sound landscape are sound events which can perform certain functions, emphasize context, arouse associations or emphasize symbolism. They can also be a sound signal that attracts special attention²⁵. Since sound is one of the most intense stimuli and causes associations with visual memory, its reception is an essential component of emotional sensations and creates the atmosphere of a given place²⁶. The sound effects used in the prototype are therefore intended to make children put their phones away while they are studying and working. The amassing of sounds from a dozen or so desks will not produce cacophony because the sounds are inspired by nature²⁷. Taking into account the age of the users, they desks add a fun element to the interaction, arousing in children engagement and good and bad associations based on, for example, the chirping of “friendly” birds or the croaking of crows or ravens (as currently used in the prototype). The software aspect of the desk provides flexibility in the selection of sounds that can be changed depending on the season or the type of the class.

In addition, the prototype hardware allows easy introduction of various technical solutions. The OFF DESK can also be considered as a universal desk for use at home, in the after-school club or in other educational environments.

23 *Sound studies* – is a broad interdisciplinary field of sound science, which emerged in the early 21st century, based on Theodore Adorn’s thesis on “listening regression” and on evaluations of R. Murray Schafer’s changing acoustic environment (or sound landscape) (source: <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002258177>).

24 S. Bernat, *Kierunki kształtowania krajobrazów dźwiękowych*, [w:] *Dźwięk w krajobrazie jako przedmiot badań interdyscyplinarnych*, „Prace Komisji Krajobrazu Kulturowego”, t. 11, Lublin 2008, p.100, 102.

25 Ibid., p. 104.

26 Ibid., p. 102.

27 Cacophony is an unpleasant-sounding mix of sounds (source: <https://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/kakofonia;2562525.html>).

Conclusion

The content cited demonstrates that the problem of unreasonable use of mobile devices actually exists and poses a threat, especially to children who are exposed to the dangers of the digital world from an early age. A common negative implication of the smartphone use is the reduced learning and work efficiency, which affects all age groups. Given the high impact of the issue, children should be the target group for an action to combat the problem, which can be shaped to prevent problems in their later lives. To do this efficiently, rationalization is an appropriate step that raises awareness and develops responsible behaviors. This provides a spacious creative room for designers who, according to the idea of socially responsible design, have the opportunity to drive human attitudes and behaviors. The OFF DESK aims to combat the problem of the reduced efficiency caused by unreasonable use of mobile devices. By shaping children's good habits of putting down the smartphone for the duration of school and work, it builds awareness in them, which is a big step towards rationalizing the use of mobile phones. I trust the implementation of a school desk in this form would have long-term positive impact by alleviating the bad effects of the smartphone on people and by addressing the use of mobile devices in schools.

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THE POWER OF URBAN VOID

Art research paper

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Abstract

“In the time of the plague” the life of the city goes on, changing its rhythm and adapting to difficult circumstances and limitations. It retreats to the private zone, to interiors hidden behind thick walls. Balconies, like connectors between the interior and the outside, become invaluable spaces. Just like façades, stairs, niches, arcades, and the whole architectural layer that allows to consider the city space to be friendly because it is possible to touch, feel, stay sit and relax. Even when it does not offer attractions, does not flicker with the lights of cafés, does not invite you to the art gallery or for evening theatrical performances. The city affected by the pandemic closes meeting places – restaurants, art galleries, theaters. At the same time, the crisis exposes the power of urban void, the space of streets and squares formed by façades of buildings, and reveals the potential of open meeting places, spaces for walks and urban wanders. If they are not inspiring, do not move, the city quiets and dies: the inhabitants have nowhere to go, they cannot meet and feel like “being in the city”. However, there are such spaces that, without offering anything other than their form, are still visited, do not lose their lives, attract people. What is the secret of their extraordinary quality? How does the architectural layer of public spaces affect the behavior of residents? Without “events” and commercial attractions, can space encourage you to be in it?

The article takes up the topic of space as a meeting place and provides an analysis and interpretation of observations of several selected urban spaces in terms of their potential to serve as meeting spaces.

Keywords

city architecture, public space, place, experience of architectural space, feeling of architecture

Introduction

When the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic in Europe was declared in early 2020, I had to cancel my plans. I already knew that I would not go to Rome to go around the city once again without a plan, and that I would not be able to “disappear” in the bustle of Rome’s space, to feel once again how wonderful places it offers. It was there, in Italy, which was the first country in Europe to stand on the front line of the fight against an unknown virus, that the epidemiological situation was most difficult. Travel bans have been introduced, flights were cancelled and borders were closed throughout Europe.

However, I then took a series of tours of my city, Warsaw. I wanted to see what a deserted city looks like, to experience a space I did not know before, and to explore where I would find places to walk in the city: the only activity that could be indulged in public space. I walked through streets and squares of my city, choosing those formed by buildings with living interiors and pulsating exteriors. I avoided spaces filled with lifeless buildings which at the time of the pandemic restrictions were looked after only by security personnel and whose façades had nothing to offer me as an urban wanderer and observer carefully looking for relationship between buildings and between me and them.

Moved by the impossibility of traveling, I began virtual wandering around Rome, using Web cameras aimed at squares and streets of the city. In parallel, therefore, although using other “tools” and methods, I looked at the two cities, Warsaw and Rome. I tried not to compare them but only to save observations and describe my own experiences based on memories of being in real spaces, video recordings, scraps of images in the form of screenshots¹. I started looking from a distance at the space of the city that I could not travel to. I watched Rome using access to Web cameras which broadcast images from the city’s streets and squares 24 hours a day. I saw a city I had never known before: devoid of tourist buzz and depopulated. The lives of the inhabitants retreated for a time to the private zone, beyond the façade of tenement houses, to interiors hidden behind thick walls. Watching Rome’s space through the cameras, I saw how streets deserted as a result of administrative decisions started to fill with people over time, when it became possible, even though they seemingly had nowhere to go and their favorite restaurants and cafes were closed. I watched the movement of the locals in the tourist-free city. I had an impression that the architectural potential of the city, its planes of façades, stairs, niches, arcades and arcades make the city space friendly because it is possible to touch, feel, stay, sit and relax.

1 Screenshot – in English, screen dump, a record in the form of an image of data displayed on the computer screen



Figure 1. Campo de' Fiori, Rome, <https://www.skylinewebcams.com/>.

I wrote a short text in which I shared my first observations:

During the plague, the city's life tries to move on, changing its rhythm and adapting to difficult circumstances and limitations. It retreats to the private zone, to interiors hidden behind thick walls².

The realization that this life nevertheless “takes place” has never before gained such importance. My wanderings, real and virtual, confirmed my belief that a street or square can become a place or a non-place, that they can be a form filled with a moving atmosphere, or just a non-space to travel through. The time of the pandemic still brings out the **truth** about the quality of space.

Feeling

The concept of space in colloquial discourse is often used interchangeably with the concept of place. However, it is worth recalling here, perhaps, the key difference between the concepts of **space** and **place**, which in terms of reflecting on the city during the pandemic is of great importance. In an architectural context, space is an open and abstract area, not clearly defined. A place is part of that space, a specific location, with a special identity and meaning resulting from the factors that construct it. The place can be “seen, felt and heard”³ and is therefore a combination of sensations, narrative and memory, framed in a material framework. The place is also defined by specific events for which it is the background and which events build the identity of the place.

2 Iwona Kalenik, *Miasto w czasach zarazy*, wpis na blogu (źródło: <http://www.lekturyarchitektury.pl/miasto/miasto-w-czasach-zarazy/>).

3 Bohdan Jałowiecki, *Miejsce, przestrzeń, obszar*, „Przegląd Socjologiczny”, 2011, vol. 60, no 2–3, s. 23 (źródło: <http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-1f86f0a0-c77e-4cec-a249-480c459fd646>).

Space as a “practiced place” or a “practice of places” appears in analyses carried out by Michel de Certeau who understands space as a place filled with traffic or an “urban interior” filled with passers-by. This “**practice of places**” thus becomes a collection of views, events and landscapes, a sequence of experiences, a journey in which one can participate or in which one can only be a spectator.

While, according to de Certeau, space should be produced based on experience and with this experience in mind, spatial planning makes it the subject of speculation, classification operations and bureaucratic administration aimed at eliminating all randomness⁴.



Figure 2. Via Monterone, Rome, photo by Iwona Kalenik.

Participation, understood as **being in**, experiencing, going deep, can therefore be a criterion that distinguishes places from non-places. According to Marc Augé, these differences mainly concern the category of social experience, which is not possible in non-places. Places, therefore, defined by the three elements: locations, meanings and activities, allow participation in relations both on a human level and in a human-space relationships, as opposed to non-places which are transitional and do not allow development of such relationships.

Being in

Street as a basic element of urban space is considered in different contexts. As a component of the architecture of the city in the past, it was an intimate “small world” shaped by the history of the

4 Konrad Miciukiewicz, *Miejskie strategie i taktyki. Wokół koncepcji praktyki życia codziennego Michela de Certeau*, „Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny”, 2008, R. LXX, z. 2, s. 188.

inhabitants of the city, events, enriched with architectural variations on the same “theme”. And although it was never a “goal” in the sense of a square, it was a space of outstandingly public character, conducive to meetings, an “interior” that could accommodate both the intensity of events and the delightful intimacy of peace.

Modern streets have ceased to favor being on them not only through the huge scale of new objects forming the street image, but also by the loss of their superficial character. Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Schulz, the author of “Existence, Space and Architecture”, draws attention to the figural nature of buildings which is destructive to the street space. The street loses its walls and its role is “reduced to a subordinate land”⁵. This subordination can be seen in the Polish language in the designation of street addresses. A building stands “on” a street, rarely “at”. Unlike in English, there is no form of being “in” a street at all. Modern streets are therefore often streets only by name, with regard to the administrative address. A street does not constitute a place conducive to staying, an “urban interior”, but only an area defined by the roadway, where there are separate buildings marked with numbers. Norberg-Schulz notes that it is the street, not the buildings, that should be figural in order to become a real form. This is possible through the existence of a clear boundary: the façade constituting a continuous surface, with an intense density, as well as a kind of unification, which, however, is based on subtle variations on the subject, not monotony.

He touches on an extremely important issue, which is the continuity of the surface of the façades of buildings. The touch they share, considered in terms of a kind of “urban emotionality”, proves crucial in producing street coziness and perhaps even intimacy. “The local community of façades is built not from identical, but only from similar, façades without which there would be neither the street nor the city”⁶. Without the tightness of frontages, the street falls apart, ceases to be the interior, and becomes a ground with a designated roadway and sidewalk. The interfaces between buildings, seen as the boundaries between them, “paradoxically become connecting devices owing to which a frontage can be more easily grasped as uniform or coherent”⁷. It therefore appears that the degree of close-up of the urban interior, in this case the street, depending on the tightness of the frontages, has a significant impact on the type of urban energy and on the nature of the place. For an urban walker, it is also important how walls touch the sky and the ground of the street – the upper and lower edges of the street frontage⁸. The former can only be seen, up to a certain height, while the latter are more tangible in their touchability and owing to the movement along the line of contact with the ground.

5 Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Bycie, przestrzeń, architektura*, Warszawa 2000, p. 83.

6 Monika Zawadzka, *Fasada wrzeszczańska. Kamienice pierzejowe*, Gdańsk 2017, p. 16.

7 Monika Zawadzka, *Miejsca-zetknięcia-fasad jako zagadnienie spójności i dynamiki formy urbanistycznej*, praca doktorska, Politechnika Gdańska, 2013 (źródło: Pomorska Biblioteka Cyfrowa: <https://pbc.gda.pl/publication/40321>).

8 Zob. Monika Zawadzka, *Fasada wrzeszczańska...*, op. cit.

A street, or a city square, can be considered as a figure, a mass of air of a certain shape, and therefore also an interior formed by integral and homogeneous frontages, which becomes a kind of container of activity and events just like the interior of a building. In my urban pandemic observations I asked myself if and how this material, the inanimate part of the urban space, affects the quality of being in urban interiors – streets and squares. I noticed that the spaces I observed, featuring tight, continuous and clearly outlined containing surfaces attracted not only me but also other residents, even though they offered only their bare walls.

It can therefore be said that, in the urban context, a street or square can become a space, a place or a non-place. Thus, the street or square where life takes place, filled with the movement of residents, is primarily a space, a part of a larger urban system. It becomes a place when being in its spaces involves sensory experience, activities, being, participating. Empty, devoid of a potential for presence and participation, it turns into a non-place, marked with an information system, roadways bounded by sidewalks. The square or street “is therefore not only traffic, but an accumulation of events”⁹, a multiplicity of activities embedded in the particular space.



Figure 3. Piazza della Rotonda, photo. Iwona Kalenik.

„In the commercialized space of the city only places are able to restore the balance of dismembered, chaotic and devoid of value urban space”¹⁰ – writes Małgorzata Dymnicka, analyzing the issue of places and non-places in the urban context. She refers to the thought of Yi-Fu Tuan who took the perspective of understanding the place as a “humanized space” divided into public places and fields

9 Bohdan Jałowiecki, *Miejsce, przestrzeń, obszar*, „Przegląd Socjologiczny”, 2011, vol. 60, no 2–3, p. 22 (source: <http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-1f86f0a0-c77e-4cec-a249-480c459fd646>).

10 Małgorzata Dymnicka, *Od miejsca do nie-miejsca*, „Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Sociologica”, 2011, p. 36 (source: http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.hdl_11089_320/c/35_dymnickaFolia_Sociologica_36.pdf).

of care. The latter seem to be more important and better due to their potential to generate both human-human and human-city experiences. Yi-Fu Tuan mentions the house, garden, market square and café: places where the rhythm of urban life is clearly slowed down, where you have to stop to fully experience their potential.

In the context of art, so also architecture, a very interesting perspective is that referring to the formal characteristics of space as having an important, if not crucial, influence on the perception of street space as a place. Christian Norberg-Schulz believes that the *genius loci* is created by the meanings of buildings that collect (within themselves) the characteristics of the place and make them close to man”¹¹. This very interesting perspective recognizes the key role of buildings in creating a spirit of space, atmosphere and aura that promotes or not the recognition of a street or square as a place that offers much more than the space it occupies. Following this consideration of the issue of *genius loci*, as also created by the form of buildings, it can be argued that it is the architectural framework, as the most tangible element of the street, that has a crucial influence on the recognition of a given space as a place. It is the externality of architecture that defines the shape of public space, the layer between the interior of the building and the urban interior that turns out to be extremely important. During the pandemic, it reveals its power to catch the eye and to encourage to touch, come closer, **be in**.

Coming to a stop

While browsing Jan Gehl’s book, “Life Between Buildings”, I came across the chapter title: “Spaces for walking, places to stop at”. I was moved by its significance. I find in it, perhaps inadvertently devised, another category of distinction between space and place. In this chapter, Jan Gehl lists different ways of being in urban space: walking, standing, sitting, but also seeing, hearing and talking. He writes that “it is not enough just to create spaces and allow people to move around in them. There must also be adequate conditions for moving and staying in spaces [...]”¹². He touches on the subject of landscapes for conversation which will not happen without meeting, slowing down or stopping. He looks in detail at the conditions of urban space, which favor different types of activities. What draws my special attention is the “edge effect”, so called by Gehl, associated with the build-up of activity from the edge of a given space to its center. He cites the words of Christopher Alexander: “If the edge fails, the space will never be animated”¹³. The multitude of forms facilitating static presence of people in the edge zone seems completely unused in modern buildings which sometimes reduce their simplicity to shocking mediocrity, offering nothing more than a cool mirror image.

11 Citation from: Krzysztof Bierwiaczonek, *Miejsca i nie-miejsca w perspektywie badań nad przestrzeniami publicznymi polskich miast*, „Acta Universitatis Lodzianis. Folia Sociologica”, 2018, 64, p. 57; the text refers to: Ch. Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, New York 1980.

12 Jan Gehl, *Życie między budynkami*, Kraków 2009, p. 129.

13 *Ibid*, p. 150 – reference to: Christopher Alexander, *Język wzorców. Miasta, budynki, konstrukcja*, Gdańsk 2008.



Figure 4. The Savior's Square, photo by Iwona Kalenik.

When I visited the Savior Square in Warsaw in another month of the pandemic, I marveled at the opportunities it offers in the area of its edges. The stratifications of façades in the form of arcades, hollows, columns, stairs and niches, sometimes dressed in awnings or curtains, allows me to feel safe as an observer of urban life. I can stay in this place, stand, sit, lean comfortably against the walls of a building. The exterior of architecture invites me to contact it and stay in the space of the square. Its proportions and the variety of building forms encourage observation, do not overwhelm with size, allow to look at the edge between them and at the sky, feel the warmth of sunlight, hide in the half-shade and stay rather than just “traverse”, even though it does not offer any activity from the period of the so-called “normality”.

In the pandemic reality I also look at Piazza di Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome, through a Web camera. It is one of my favorite squares in Rome. I spent many hours in it during several trips. It is a medium-sized square, measuring about 60 by 40 meters, in the central part of which there is a fountain. The eastern and northern frontages of the square are formed by buildings with cafes and restaurants on their ground floors, with wide umbrellas protruding deep into the space of the square. In the western frontage there is an arcade entrance to the The Basilica of Our Lady in Trastevere. It is these frontages and fountains that play a huge role on sunny days, when sunrays appear like resting on them, leaving coffee drinkers in the umbrella half-shade. In the peace of the morning they can look at life that takes place on the outskirts of the square, as well as in its central part. Seeing, hearing and talking are activities to which Jan Gehl devotes several pages to his aforementioned book, considering the possibility of doing these things as crucial for considering the space to be conducive to being “pleasant in all respects”¹⁴.

14 Jan Gehl, *Życie między budynkami*, op. cit., p. 171.



Figure 5. Piazza di S. Maria in Trastevere, photo by Iwona Kalenik.

I recall my experience of this place and, with the eye of the Web camera, I look closely at how Romans use this square at the time when the only thing it offers is the exteriority of architecture. I see that there is still a kind of the performance of shutters being opened and closed, which is a signal that life is taking place among the architecture. I watch people stopping in the square, sitting on the steps of the fountain and leaning on the stone pillars around it. I do not hear what they talk about but I remember that the inside of the square is conducive to talking, and it does not take much effort to hear one another. Conversations muffled by the sound of the fountain can be more intimate here. Their intensity does not give rise to noise because sounds diffuse on numerous corneas, niches and caved-in walls of the square. How different from short messages shouted by passers-by on noisy, windy, busy roads.

The inhabitants of Rome continue living in the space of their streets and squares, although social life largely takes place online. And although even the ritual of *aperitivo* has found its form online, grouping friends, the good space of the city still plays a significant role and attracts. Balconies and windows have become filters between the interiors of the apartments and the public area, peculiar scenes of manifestos of the power of survival.

Meeting

„In the concrete reality of the modern world, places and spaces, places and non-places, mingle with each other and penetrate each other. The possibility of a non-place depends on places”¹⁵ – writes Marc

15

Marc Augé, *Nie-miejsca: wprowadzenie do antropologii nadnowoczesności: fragmenty*, „Teksty Drugie. Teoria Literatury, Krytyka, Interpretacja”, translated by Adam Dziadek, 2008, no 4 (112), p. 127–140.

Augé who contraposes the notions of **place** and **non-place**. In this way, it juxtaposes different or even opposite realities: transit and residence, the reality of a “collision-free intersection” and the reality of a meeting, or the experience of a passenger and the experience of a traveler. How much concepts related to non-places have penetrated into the language of design can be felt in the vast majority of discussions on urban issues. It is significant that modern cities still find meaning in the language of extreme functionality, drawing patterns from production lines. “Fast transport”, “easy communication”, “clear signage” have become symbols of a modern efficient city which resembles an airport in its way of functioning – one example of a non-place given by Marc Augé. The pandemic reality reveals the weakness of such understanding of issues related to the space of a city. The pandemic removes from the space of the street and square all layers of apparent attractions, events, events and tinsel, leaving only architectural frames.



Figure 6. Piazza della Rotonda, <https://www.skylinewebcams.com/>.

I look at Piazza della Rotonda, the Roman square in front of the Pantheon. I recall that being inside it was tiring due to the number of tourists trying to capture only themselves and the historic building in the pictures. When I watch this square during the pandemic, through the eye of the Web camera, I see that it is a place of completely different activities. It moves me how much the time of the pandemic “gave a breather” to this space which is now visited only by inhabitants of the city. It is really theirs now. The owner of a small shop, located in the eastern frontage of the square, goes out to play football with random people staying in the square. The floor of the square becomes for a while a kind of arena, a place of unfettered fun filled with cheers of joy. Saunterers, who for a moment become spectators, sit on the steps of the fountain located in the center of the square. They look at the game, but also at details of the façades of the tenement houses. The façade painting depicting Madonna, located above the entrance to the shop, catches the eye. Again, I see an irregular rhythm of tilting and closing shutters. Above, closer to the sky, there is the dynamic edge of the cornices and overlapping

images of closer and more remote frontages of as many as nine streets opening to the square. It is the homogeneity of façades, delicate curves of the frontages and small-angled deformations that allow you to feel inside, in the enclosed intimate space of the square. I have the impression that I observe the real life of this place, penetrate into this relaxed atmosphere, almost participate in this very real and spontaneous performance of urban activities.

I am wandering around my city. I want to be an urban traveler, a *flâneuse*¹⁶. I am looking for places where I can stay during the pandemic, even though seemingly nothing happens in them. So I am looking for intimate urban interiors that are difficult to find in Warsaw. The inner-city, dense pre-war system of streets and squares does not exist, and the modern space still remains degraded, shattered by planning decisions. But somewhere I find streets that attract me. Like small Kozia Street connecting Miodowa and Trębacka Streets. The beginning of Kozia Street is difficult to notice from Nowy Świat Street which is wide in this place because Kozia Street is like a “stratification” of this layout, and its width only subtly makes you know about its presence. When inside the street, you can feel the extraordinary proximity of buildings, this measurable physical small distance, but also the homogeneity, consistency and tightness of the both frontages. They are diverse and rich in details, hollows, faults and bumps. Looking at the street plan, it is easy to notice that about a half of its length is missing the western frontage. However, this is just a misperception. In fact, this section has a “façade” of the wall with arched “windows”, through which you can see the huge tree-covered courtyard, instead of building façades. The slightly wavy shape of the interior of the street does not allow you to see the both ends at the same time. My walk is an experience of a constant overlap of views or images of this place, continuous visual play between the first and second plan, observations of delicate deformations of the shape of the street testifying to its uniqueness. Both the frontages are connected in a half of their lengths by a small building called the “Warsaw’s Bridge of Sighs”. Walking down the street during the pandemic, I enjoy its peace and quiet but I also see two people who sit on the low window sill of one of the tenement houses. In the window niche they talk and expose their faces to the spring sun.

Dialogue

Peter Zumthor cites a very detailed note¹⁷ of his stay in the space of one of the European squares he wrote in his notebook on the Holy Thursday in 2003. In terse sentences, he accurately describes his observations and impressions. He writes about the sunken walls of the tenement houses and about the façade of the church, with a pleasant bluish shadow on the other side of the square, a mixture of the sounds of conversations, the gentle tapping of shoes on the pavement and the voices of birds. He writes about what moves him in this place, listing in turn: people, air, sounds colors, materials, textures,

16 *Flâneuse* – franc., żeńska forma słowa *flâneur* – miejski włóczęga, spacerowicz, postać *flâneura* zaistniała w twórczości Charles’a Baudelaire’a i od tego czasu termin ten obecny jest w dyskursie dotyczącym zjawisk kultury.

17 Peter Zumthor, *Atmospheres*, Bazel 2009, p. 17.

forms. He looks in detail at every detail of this urban interior. But he also writes about his feelings and mood. And he shares the observation that he “could never have had those feelings without the atmosphere of the square”¹⁸. Thus, he refers to the sensory characteristics of the place where he is located, and which he recognizes through his own sensitivity. I have an irresistible impression that Peter Zumthor was sitting at a restaurant table in one of Rome’s squares while writing this note.



Figure 7. Rome, photo by Iwona Kalenik

In my dissertation I used the concept of the **space of a void** in relation to urban interiors. “You cannot design a void but you can design its boundaries”¹⁹ – writes Peter Zumthor whose design thought is very close to me, especially in the context of urban space. He draws attention to the extremely important role of surfaces forming urban interiors – façades of buildings, edges and floors – which determine their sensory characteristics and personal experience of space. Considering the space of streets and squares as a void of a certain shape, which can be read with the help of the senses, having its smells, sounds, colors and light, extends the understanding of the city with an additional layer based on non-functional aspects. Public space, such as a street or square, becomes truly an urban interior when it creates an opportunity to meet and reside in it, regardless of the purpose of the buildings that form the space. It becomes a place when it has its own, hard-to-measure but clearly palpable, atmosphere conducive to slowing down, noticing details, meeting. The atmosphere is an abstract concept which, like beauty, is reluctant to be taken up in the discourse on the shaping of urban spaces. However, it arises as a result of interaction between the matter of the city, architecture and man. It is therefore

18 Ibid, translated by the author.

19 Peter Zumthor interviewed by Barbara Stec, *Trzy rozmowy z Peterem Zumthorem*, „Architektura & Biznes”, 2003, no 2.

connected with existence, presence, “being in”. “However, the multitude of buildings does not speak only through the image. Its strength lies in the possibility of actually experiencing this multitude and, the same time, and the space of void that the multitude forms”²⁰. The externality of the architecture that forms urban interiors seems crucial in building the power of urban void. The smooth and difficult-to-determine contact between the outside of the building and the interior of the square or street contains a potential for attractiveness of the public space of the city. It is on this border, in the space of the façade of the building, that the architectural dialogue is played out, which professor Jacek Dominiczak writes about:

Here is when the inner wall of the façade is the boundary of the “inner” of the building and is designed from inside to outside, the exterior wall of the façade is the boundary of its “exterior” and is designed from outside to the inside. The space between the layers of the façade is a phenomenon of dialogue: in it the ethical dimension of the architectural encounter is physically realized. Not only because something happens in it but because its form creates a possibility of being without a clearly defined purpose. Being in such an interior in itself is a rewarding process²¹.



Figure 8. Piazza della Rotonda, photo by Iwona Kalenik.

My observations of the streets and squares of Warsaw and Rome confirmed my belief that the city’s streets and squares can strengthen the real, haptic experience of the city’s architecture. Following Gordon Cullen’s idea²², I am almost certain that the atmosphere of the place, its architectural quality and the potential to participate are responsible for building the character of the space and, consequently, for stopping and staying in it. It is not without reason that the interiors of streets and squares of old towns are so attractive. Their phenomenon lies not so much in the history of the places but in a kind of mixture of their atmosphere, geometric proportions and visual expression.

20 Iwona Cała (Kalenik), *W objęciach miasta. Architektura jako emanacja bliskości*, doctoral thesis, the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, 2018, p. 54.

21 Jacek Dominiczak, *Miasto dialogiczne i inne teksty rozproszone*, Gdańsk 2016, p. 80.

22 Gordon Cullen, *Townscape*, London 1961.

A city in the pandemic, but also in the so-called “normal”, time can become a non-place that more often traversed than occupied and in which time as if it does not exist. Its space may resemble a kind of **portal** used only to move from one place to another. Wide streets, without the buzz of conversations, filled with traffic noise, become routes or transit arteries. However, the pandemic city still combines historical, identity, familiar and previously tamed threads. These are still streets and squares, which are spaces of communities, places of encounter, bearing traces of human joys and dramas, events, rooted in the history of the city and the collective memory of the inhabitants. It is still a framework of human existence in which life must take place, regardless of the circumstances.

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ISOLATION VERSUS THE OPENING PARADOX. SPACE IN HUMAN LIFE AND VARIOUS ASPECTS OF ITS CLOSURE

Art research paper

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Abstract

A safe comfort zone is the basis for a sense of security and stability. It provides people with optimal conditions for development, ensuring them freedom of choice, removing barriers to personal success or development. This statement is self-evident and is almost treated as dogma. At the same time, however, it is worth paying attention to the phenomenon of paradox that appears when the lack of challenges reduces the motivation to self-fulfillment. Natural ambition is stimulated by the gradual achievement of new thresholds. Isolation, a disturbance of the mental and physical comfort zone during a pandemic, triggered two different reactions. The first consists in passive resignation and vegetative expectation of change coming from the outside, while the second is in taking active action aimed at facing the situation, taking up the challenge it brings.

Keywords

art, visual art, space, isolation, Janusz Przybylski, Edward Hopper, Krzysztof Ślachciak

Space in the context of human life

Space is phenomenon which is obvious, on the one hand, and extremely important, on the other hand. However, while the impact of managing this space on man attracts great, and just, interest because of real and clear effects on the functioning of ourselves, the very fact of its existence no longer raises much reflection. This truism, as something obvious and indisputable, usually remains on the margins of research and reflection.

The pandemic reality, which has a huge impact on all aspects of our lives, has at the same time aroused interest in issues that have hitherto been overlooked. The world, previously relatively predictable and, it would seem, known, suddenly turned out to be a place completely different and exposed us to new problems. They were also followed by new questions. The very concept of space has become interesting, gaining further meanings and references.

Space in the context of human functioning can be seen in an external sense, as a set of conditions and physical realities of its existence, but also in an internal sense, as a certain self-defined sense, a sense of consciousness of a certain, own, zone in which we enter into relations with ourselves and with the outside world. Last year, together with the CoViD restrictions, raised the issue of closure to the surface of our collective everyday life, while at the same time inextricably binding it to the space in question in both aspects. The need to change the routine that had been known so far, to give up many habits, mobility and, above all, direct social contacts on the earlier scale, has influenced the perception of this small personal world in which we have come to function. Its borders have not only have become tighter and restrictive but, more importantly from our point of view, more felt. What we had not even fully realized so far has initially become a shocking and, in the next stage, extremely demanding reality, often forcing us to take certain actions or adopt a certain position.

Four aspects of lockdown

In the context of the above thoughts, it is possible to distinguish not only two basic views on the space itself, internal and external, but also, above all, different aspects of the idea of its closure. It is worth taking a closer look at them, both against the background of current events and works of art coming from more distant moments in history.

Institutional isolation is the most obvious and pervasive today. This happened many times in history, as it is now, in connection with plagues, but never on such a large scale in territorial terms and not for such a long period. It is not surprising, therefore, that the current isolation has become a catalyst for change and for reflection on ourselves, our environment, local and global problems.

Much more universal and timeless are other forms of closure, for the purposes of this analysis assigned to four different phenomena and behaviors. The first two aspects refer to the concept of inner, spiritual space, that is, the cut-off from the outside world, its stimuli and correlation. On the one hand, it is a voluntary closure, arising from one's own need, positive or negative – from the desire to focus on, calm down or find oneself, or from fear, or from a sense of inadaptation. On the other hand, there is the age-old problem of self-containment, which is somewhat imposed from the outside and involuntary. The repeatedly raised so-called “loneliness in the crowd” is the result of a lack of understanding, isolation from the rest of the community. In this case, the closure occurs somewhat from outside, by leaving a person to their own fate.

The issue of physical closure, consisting in real isolation in an enclosed space – house, prison, hospital room – can be considered differently. Its existence is not the result of spiritual needs or relations with the world but has its origins usually in institutional decisions, random events, unfortunate or punishable events. It is a physical cut-off, imposed more or less arbitrarily. Its impact on man, however, is huge, albeit diverse. Two more views on the closure can be extracted on this plane.

In the history of art we meet works that relate to all the above aspects but those that refer to spiritual isolation will definitely dominate. To illustrate this division, examples of current works and phenomena will be discussed.

Self-closure

An extremely accurate view of the first of these aspects, resulting from the dilemmas and fears of men, is the graphic of Janusz Przybylski, “So many birds to catch”, from 1969. It is an etching in the colors of white, black and red, showing three figures in the symbolic indefinite interior, to which light flows down through the low and wide hole placed high under the ceiling. The lower edge of the window is uneven, jagged, as if unstable, not entirely material. On the visible fragment of the sky soar birds of restless shapes. On the floor, half-kneeling, sits the man. He looks on the wall with absent sight, his arms tied up or tightly interlinked are invisible. Only the protruding elbow is seen against the background of the wall on which the shadow falls – unusual, corresponding to the sitting man, but showing not his body but the bird figure, standing on emaciated human legs, with limply hanging wings. Only one eye shines among the pale red. The other two figures are small, occupied by their own affairs, sunk in their world. Both contain an element of understatement, pure, unfilled white. One of them, facing the whole scene, supports the block, as if an incompletely polished rock, and seems fully reconciled, even satisfied, with his fate. The second, leaning low above the ground, presses to the ground the bird's silhouette with a long beak and a dead gaze, a shape similar to that visible in the form of the shadow.



Figure 1. Janusz Przybylski, *Tyle ptaków do złapania*, 1969, etching, <https://zacheta.art.pl/pl/kolekcja/katalog/przybylski-janusz-tyle-ptakow-do-zlapania-2> [accessed on: 30.05.2021]

Crucial is the light coming from the outside: red, disturbing, but also reviving the silent emptiness of the cell. It brings out the essence of who we are and what gives real meaning to existence. However, nothing is obvious or easy. Self-realization is a challenge that requires strength and courage, sometimes giving up safety and comfort. The cramped basement space is a tempting asylum, it promises calm – dead, voiceless, but finally demanding nothing more. The main character's fight for himself is still ongoing, he is still in part in the light spot, although the light no longer reaches his face. It flows down the buttocks, forming a small puddle at the feet. It is significant that the shady birdy echo of his soul remains in a cage formed by the cube of light. His companions have long forgotten about his shining, there is barely a glare on the tops of their heads. The bird lying on the ground and the rock lump are now their small reality. Close, interim, safe. The deceptive comfort of stabilization kills in them the desire to counteract, they fall into semi-lethargy, vegetative continuance, solidified in anticipation of, and hope for, an impulse or a change that will occur on its own, without their participation. So many birds to catch and so little strength to reach out for them.

Exclusion

In contrast to the peculiar freedom of choice of this spiritual isolation, an undefined coercion characterizes the isolation imposed on, and equally difficult to combat by, man, experienced from the rest of the society. It involves the feeling that the whole world is closing in on itself, like in an anti-cage,

and only the individual has been thrown out of the bracket. It surrounds the person from all sides, can even be touched, but its pulse is indiscernible. The Man is alone, invisible, left behind. The story of such isolation resonates in works of many artists and in the hearts of most of us – at least once in the lifetime, though temporarily.

Edward Hopper is a master of these stories¹. In his paintings we see a reflection of ordinary scenes from our lives – these are simple, everyday stories. The realism of depictions, the excellent plasticity and the game of light enliven them extremely suggestively. On his canvases come to life cafes, bars, cinema halls, gas stations. But each of these spaces at the same time emanates a void in which it is so easy to get lost. The strength of these depictions lies in their authenticity. Their fullest being is felt not in the image but in the matter between the canvas and us². We see ourselves in them, we are overwhelmed by sadness or grief but, at the same time, we realize again and again that in this loneliness, paradoxically, we are not alone. This is not reassuring, does not bring comfort, but it is easier for us to understand that this is the principle of the world in which we live. Each of us, though in part, remains alone. A part of us will always remain alien, incomprehensible, considered from the sight of others and often of ourselves.

You can't escape such closure in your own loneliness. It is discernible not only in seclusion but especially among other people. It is significant that Hopper in his works so rarely shows scenes from outside the city. A kind of metropolitan imperative of pace and participation in a heterogeneous unsociable community reinforces the feeling of detachment from the original unity of man with the environment³. Then you can most often feel your own otherness and inadaptation hidden behind the absent gaze and polite indifference. A young attractive woman sitting at a café table in the "Automat" (1927) is located in one of the most crowded and anonymous types of restaurants. In this scene, however, there is no one but her. Seemingly focused on her cup, she looks at it mindlessly, suspended in a vacuum, semi-conscious, as emphasized by her gloves, of which she put on only one. In a huge window, infinite rows of lights reflect, suggesting space. It is filled with the same silence as the sounds of buzzing appliances in an abandoned kitchen – we hear them but, in fact, they only strengthen the feeling of separation from actual manifestations of life. The woman seems calm and tense at the same time, embarrassed, as if she felt that this is not a place intended for her. As if she were at a party to which she was not invited.

1 J. Stasiek-Harabin, *Samotność w wielkim mieście. Edward Hopper*, „Niezła Sztuka”, <https://niezlasztuka.net/o-sztuce/samotnosc-w-wielkim-miescie-edward-hopper/> [accessed on: 15.03.2021]; see also, *O mistrzu malarzkiej izolacji, czyli dziś wszyscy jesteśmy jak z obrazów Edwarda Hoppera*, „Minerva”, <https://www.laminerva.pl/2020/03/hopper-mistrz-malarzkiej-izolacji.html> [accessed on: 15.03.2021].

2 Cf. F. Lipiński, *Widzące obrazy. Motyw postaci w twórczości Edwarda Hoppera*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań 2007, s. 151–191, https://repozytorium.amu.edu.pl/bitstream/10593/11114/1/04_Filip_Lipi%C5%84ski_Widz%C4%85ce_obrazy_151-194.pdf [accessed on: 26.03.2021].

3 T. Slater, *Fear of the city 1882–1967: Edward Hopper and the discourse of anti-urbanism*, „Social & Cultural Geography”, Vol. 3, 2002, No. 2, p. 140–143, <https://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/~tslater/assets/Hopper.pdf> [accessed on: 27.03.2021].

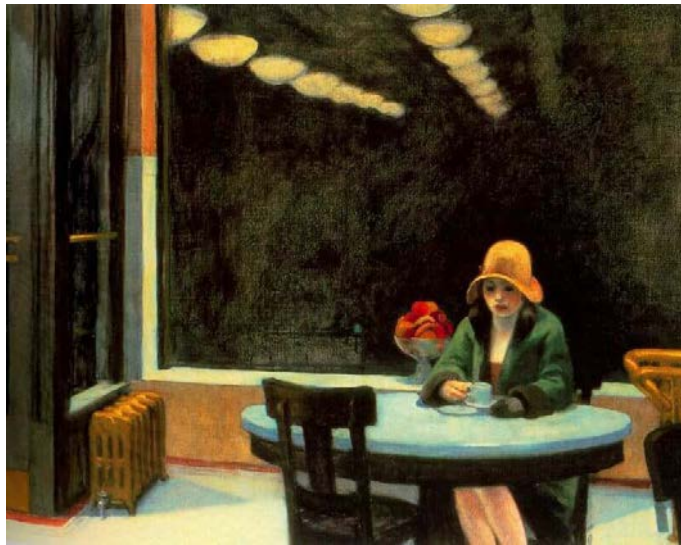


Figure 2. E. Hopper, Automat, 1927, <https://www.anodine.org/pl/zapiski/sztuka/sztuki-wizualne/malarstwo/edward-hopper-2/> [accessed on:20.05.2021]



Figure 3. E. Hopper, Chop Suey, 1929, https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Hopper#/media/Plik:Edward_hopper_chop_suey.jpg [accessed on:20.05.2021]

She is not always alone. In the Chop Suey café (1929) she is accompanied by another young woman and behind her back at the table there are another couple. In fact, this does not change anything; on the contrary. Her loneliness is now even more intense, more like a blow. Her pale, heavily made-up face catches our eyes irresistibly, even mesmerizingly. It distracts our attention from the rest of the interior as if it were the only point in the vastness. Maybe the red lipstick is supposed to give corporeality to the woman who feels almost absent? The companion says something to her but she doesn't seem to hear. Words fly away as if they were bouncing against a glass wall. The light of sun, falling from behind the half-painted windows, strokes her on the face gently, warmly and affectionately. Nevertheless, the woman does not feel either warmth or this silent consolation. Among the light, the tables and, above all, the people she has fallen deep into herself, held her breath, focused on the pain enclosed in her.

Jonathan Jones wrote at the beginning of the pandemic: "We choose modern loneliness because we want to be free. But now the art of Hopper poses a tough question: when the freedoms of modern life are removed, what's left but loneliness?"⁴. But do we really choose this solitary freedom ourselves, in the name of self-reliance and independence? Is it not that we are confronted with an accomplished fact? It seems that the actual choice is largely imposed on us, leaving only an illusion of influencing our relationship with the world. With excess stimuli and too rapid pace, we do not have time to take root and fully feel and accept who we are.

Hopper's paintings are filled with a huge melancholic immobility. The gesture has cooled down, time has stopped for a blink of the eye. In a moment everything will move forward but, for this short moment, we stop pretending. Social haste, polite smiles and conversations come to a break to allow those emotions, which are so easy to push away, to surface for a while. His works, contrary to appearances, are saturated with the emotions, trembling from internal tension. The silence in them is almost tangible, burdensome, as if in anticipation. The question of the purpose of waiting is fascinating. Do the characters, and we with them, hope that something will ever change? Or would we like to be able to accept this void, come to terms with it, and get rid of illusions at the price of inner peace?

Destructive isolation

The other two aspects of the closure are closely related to its physicality and most strongly relate to the specific situation of the last year. Outdoor space, non-domestic, has become something special – appreciated, almost luxurious, but also a source of elusive threat. Last summer (2020), the National

4 J. Jones, „*We are all Edward Hopper paintings now*”: is he the artist of the coronavirus age?, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/mar/27/we-are-all-edward-hopper-paintings-now-artist-coronavirus-age> [accessed on: 30.03.2021].

Museum in Poznań held an exhibition of posters by Michel Quarez⁵. His works, devoted to the vast majority of outdoor events and social relations, are strongly linked – especially those on the first of the subjects – to the relevant group of people of Saint-Denis near Paris. Crucial in them is the reference to the community and its functioning. In posters informing about local events, the space shown in them units, invites people to be together. At the same time, it is relatively confined (to the city, district or a defined area) and accessible, but also tame. The colors, forms and cheerful folk symbolism contained in the projects create a friendly, open and integrating world. Its essence is the formation of bonds. This world encourages contact with one's own surroundings, with people but also with places. The places define people and contribute ingredients for building one's own identity.

The dozen or so months of restrictions have changed our perceptions. Querez's "celebrating" posters have also been affected by an unusual phenomenon. In the face of the current situation, they suddenly seem both alien, anachronistic and almost exclusive in their subject matter. We watch them with nostalgia, longing and affection as if they came from another world. The last aspects of the closure relate to the difficulty in accepting this condition. The public reaction to the first introduction of the restrictions, as well as changes in their perception in this context, are significant. In parallel, two attitudes develop, sometimes at different times, interfusing or exchanging each other. The first reaction comes from the destructive effect of isolation. The overwhelming by the imposed conditions can put out the enthusiasm for action, daily joy. It is an aspect of closure that physically cuts ties with the outside world, creating a barrier that is hard to overcome. The second attitude, on the other hand, involves the opposite. The closure within one's own circle, often within the four walls, has changed not only the perception of the outdoor space but also the home space. It has forced a confrontation with the image of oneself. Paradoxically, however, this coercion has in many cases proved to be a constructive impulse, stimulating search and alternative activities.

Isolation, associated with an imprisonment, illness or other life-affecting factors, is a demanding stimulus. It resonated in the art of the times of totalitarianism and in works of rejected or disabled artists: Egon Schiele, Frida Kahlo, Edward Munch, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Ludwig Heckel, Agnes Martin, Tehching Hsieh, Gülsün Karamustafa, Yayoi Kusama and many others.

The beginning of the fight against the pandemic was almost immediately reflected in art. There were numerous projects and Web sites or portals devoted to art created during isolation and showing its impact on the author and on the recipient. The British Tate museum has responded by collecting and showing inspirations from isolation over centuries⁶. The "Document Journal" has launched the "Art from Isolation" series, presenting works of contemporary artists, in response to the current situ-

5 *Michel Querez. Plakaty*, exhibition in National Museum in Poznań, 7.06.–30.08.2020, https://mnp.art.pl/wydarzenia_i_wystawy/michel-quarez-plakaty/ [accessed on: 20.03.2021].

6 *Making art in isolation*, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/talking-point/making-art-isolation> [accessed on: 15.03.2021].

ation⁷, magazines have begun publishing lists of artistic events accessible online⁸, and museums and galleries around the world have opened their virtual doors. Caroline Campbell, the director of the National Gallery in London, compared the institutions' activities to those during World War II, pointing them out as an inspiration⁹. The issue of art and society during the pandemic was also addressed by scientists from different fields¹⁰.

Works showing loneliness, loss and emptiness are an obvious and very personal artistic response. Rashid Johnson illustrates the drama and instability of this period. In a series of works, the "Anxious Red Drawings", showing the rhythmic restless pulsation of red spots¹¹. In his drawings, the individuality of individual emotions is combined with the ubiquity of the phenomenon of confusion and disorientation.

Xenophobia, intolerance and, above all, indifference comes from works of Matsuyama Miyabi who watched the beginnings of the epidemic in China. Her "Wandering Ghosts" series is filled with ethereal female characters with empty eyes and spectral bodies¹². Despite their weirdness and deadness, we equate with them. In the world saturated with resentment towards others, alienation and distrust, we are just like them. Half-alive, lost in the reality of being re-discovered but disappointing and fearful. The author observes the surroundings with us, mentally coming out of the body as a "wandering spirit". She looks from a distance at space which has unexpectedly become too tight to accommodate all the human diversity.

In her short cartoon-like comments, Emily Bernstein tells about the burn-out and the lack of motivation in the face of being isolated from the daily circle of friends and colleagues. The tenants of her cartoon houses, closed in their apartments, try to establish a substitute for the relationship based on residual one-sided ties. She herself struggles with discouragement, anger, loss, care and boredom.

7 L. Blum, *Art from Isolation: 11 Illustrators visualize our new dystopian reality*, „Document Journal”, 4.05.2020, <https://www.documentjournal.com/2020/05/art-from-isolation-11-illustrators-visualize-our-new-dystopian-reality/> [accessed on: 30.03.2021]; cf. L. Buck, *Coronavirus lockdown creativity continues with Grayson Perry's art club and the isolation art school*, „The Art Newspaper”, 17.04.2020, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/blog/coronavirus-lockdown-creativity-continues-with-grayson-perry-s-art-club-and-the-isolation-art-school> [accessed on: 5.04.2021].

8 *Art of isolation*, „Chrom-Art Magazine”, <https://www.chromart.org/the-art-of-isolation/> [accessed on: 15.03.2021].

9 M. Johnson, *The art of isolation: we speak to the artists and galleries finding ways to bring great works into our homes*, „Tempus Magazine”, 12.06.2020, <https://tempusmagazine.co.uk/news/the-art-of-isolation-we-speak-to-the-artists-and-galleries-finding-ways-to-bring-great-works-into-our-homes> [accessed on: 3.04.2021].

10 E. Marandet, H. Barratt, A. Fotopoulou, *Sztuka w izolacji – artystyczne odpowiedzi na Covid-19*, „The Polyphony”, <https://thepolyphony.org/2020/06/16/art-in-isolation-artistic-responses-to-covid-19/> [accessed on: 20.03.2021].

11 <https://www.vip-hauserwirth.com/online-exhibitions/rashid-johnson-untitled-anxious-red-drawings/> [accessed on: 5.03.2021].

12 J. Mayal Khanna, *How the global art world is responding to the COVID-19 lockdown*, „Architectural Digest”, 11.04.2020, <https://www.architecturaldigest.in/content/how-the-global-art-world-is-responding-to-the-covid-19-pandemic/> [accessed on: 7.03.2021]; Cf. artworks on: <https://matsuyamamiyabi.tumblr.com/post/183470901883/%E5%AD%A4%E9%AD%82the-wandering-ghost-2-follow-me-on-instagram> [accessed on: 7.03.2021].

The challenges posed by the world around and by her own expectations overwhelm her strength¹³. She admits with surprise: “I never knew an introvert could have these kinds of feelings!”¹⁴.

Very accurate in his observations is Krzysztof Ślachciak whose works, the “Separate Worlds. The Community in the New World.” series, show a man locked in a bubble of his own isolation but wishing to stay in touch with others at the same time. He presents works that combine photography and graphics. He pays attention to the specific one-way relationship, the ostensible nature and selectivity of his own image presented to the world. “Looking straight into the eyes has gained a new strength and meaning. After all, during a video call you can look at the monitor or at the camera, but never [at the both] at the same time,” noted the author. “These are words worth stopping at”¹⁵. By interacting via the Internet, often the only channel that connects us and our interlocutors, we create our image much more consciously than it would be the case in a direct relationship. Moreover, we are also reached by a highly processed image. The need to get out of the actual closure prompts the use of illusory opening, unfortunately its authenticity is questionable, or at least incomplete. The presented actions and emotions are reduced to sections of reality, difficult to verify in the face of the inability to transfer this to the sphere of physical presence.



Figure 4. K. Ślachciak, *Światy odseparowane*, 2020, photo courtesy of the artist

13 E. Bernstein, *Mario. To ja*, <https://www.emilycbernstein.com/comics#/mario/> [accessed on: 7.04.2021].

14 L. Blum, *Art from Isolation*, *op. cit*

15 K. Ślachciak, *Światy odseparowane. Wspólnota w Nowym świecie*, https://impurephotography.eu/world-s-separated?fbclid=IwAR1InTHz_UWCLZ26L19MzmUyvC7ULm-zlOsi0fjMWHwK-B8eLA35_JV2Q5E [accessed on: 5.04.2021].

Stimulating isolation

Recent observations of the media and the art market clearly show the strong mobilization of many social groups which used to be disorganized. Social media are pulsing with grassroots initiatives, support groups and activities designed to enable, inspire and connect through art. For example, on April 7, 2021, the “Culture in Quarantine” group had over 96.6 thousand members on Facebook and 46.7 thousand posts with the #artinisolation hash tag on Instagram (compared to 16 thousand 10 months earlier, on May 6, 2020)¹⁶. The issue of isolation is still topical, although with each month and with successive “waves” of the pandemic, social attitudes, diverse from the beginning, anyway, change.

These reactions point to the last, fourth aspect of the closure, which is, apparently paradoxically, linked to the process of opening up. Any, even forced, cut-off from the previous rhythm of life forces you to confront yourself. This alone is extremely valuable, especially when it affects the elevation of self-awareness. Left to our own devices to a degree hitherto unknown, we have a chance to redefine our personal myths. The drama of the situation motivates us to find alternative solutions with regard to our own daily lives and expectations. Already at the beginning of the pandemic isolation there were voices highlighting the potential inherent in the isolation. Without detracting from the trauma of seclusion and its consequences, Olga Tokarczuk, in a column published in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (on April 1, 2020), spoke aloud the thought that comes out of the described artistic explorations and activities. The dizzying pace of life and the demands placed on man do not allow people to reflect on the proper meaning of their own existence, character or direction of decisions. The new state of inhibition made us realize that “our hectic mobility threatens the world” and raised the same question that we rarely had the courage to ask ourselves: “what are we actually looking for?”¹⁷. In the numerous summaries of 2020 posted on social media platforms it is surprisingly often repeated that, despite adversity and abnormality, it was a good year in the context of reflecting on ourselves and reevaluating our own lives.

Initial thoughts have undoubtedly evolved with the prolonged time of the suspension. Fatigue, frustration, concern for survival, in the context of both the disease and the economic standing, introduced new hues and voices. Whether the next year will end with similar self-reflective summaries is hard to predict. It seems more likely that, after at least a partial euphoria of returning to ourselves, further destabilization will become increasingly difficult with the gradual exhaustion of our abilities to live through the crisis and in the face of obstacles in create a lasting reality under new but still indeterminate conditions.

16 E. Marandet, H. Barratt, A. Fotopoulou, *Sztuka w izolacji, op. cit.*

17 O. Tokarczuk, *Nadejść nowe czasy*, „The Fad”, <https://thefad.pl/aktualnosci/nowe-czasy/?fbclid=IwAR2hg-znUEYdifDE-FVwFXE1vnyO4E5cPtO3MdhkOIVMIjoDVIfhPNAh2Eww> [accessed on: 2.04.2021].

Space, endlessness and closure are concepts the connotations of which with human existence are numerous and diverse. The four aspects of the closure discussed above can certainly be translated into other situations, new planes and a multitude of instances. However, it seems that this very basic division between the physicality and metaphysicality, and the destructive and constructive influence, of the closure is an interesting foundation for further considerations. The inner space is shown in the works discussed through externality; what remains in the soul and mind gets an embodiment. Although we have seen this ploy in art since its onset, in this case the translation of physical space into this intangible one is particularly relevant and significant. Under the global isolation, the two begin to interfuse and combine in an inseparable way, affecting the whole of our perception of ourselves, the world and its individual elements, as well as changing their interaction with the advancing tightening of the pandemic regime.

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