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Art in the Public Space, Different Aspects of Artistic Activities in Architecture

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Abstract. Background: Artistic activity in the public space of the city has many important functions and, what is important, is universal. Everyone, regardless of status, views or beliefs, has unlimited access to it. Both residents and visitors to a given place can read and interpret the message that various manifestations of artistic activity carry with them. Art evokes important social feelings - it helps to identify with the place, remember them as a distinguishing element. Objects with specific features become a landmark in the area. Artists who create art in public space raise important topics related to various areas of life, gain new fields of expression, a wider audience and therefore reach more recipients. The themes realized by the authors of murals often refer to historical events, commemorate important social events, perform a propaganda function because they reach a mass audience. The paintings often depict images of famous people: musicians, footballers, writers etc.; tell various stories, refer to ecology, human rights, they are also a form of advertising etc. Purpose: The work discusses selected examples of murals and on this basis shows that artistic activities are becoming an important element complementing the urban landscape. Murals appear in neglected city districts, in housing estates and high-rise buildings areas, they often decorate empty walls of buildings, they are an element of space revitalization - they increase the aesthetic value of the surroundings and have a positive impact on the quality of life of the inhabitants. They change the face of difficult, neglected, forgotten and dangerous spaces. They help to improve the spatial and social situation, and thus lead to a better quality of life for residents. The article is based on literature research and its own observation in the public space in the cities. The main goal of the research is to determine whether and to what extent art manifests itself in modern cities and what is its significance for social perception. Conclusion: The analysis showed that newly emerging murals still perform socially engaged functions and have an impact on improving the space.

1. Introduction

Art in (urban) space has always coexisted with architecture, constituting its natural complement, affecting its appearance and function. Great attention to the aesthetic value of the environment is a prerequisite for improving the quality of the world around us. In addition to the aesthetic function, which is essential and determines the possibility of fulfilling other tasks, art also performs a variety of many other functions. Maria Gołaszewska indicates the basic semantic system including the Impracticality and multi-functionality of art.



Impracticality is the view that art is autonomous, independent, presents valuable values in itself, regardless of whether it is utilitarian. Its value and *raison d'être* is that nowhere else is it possible to make aesthetic values more vivid and clear.

On the other hand, the multi-functionality of art assumes that it performs many functions. Here are a few of them:

- Communicative i.e. artistic message of various contents. To read the artist's intentions, it is necessary to understand the language of the given field of art and the creator himself.
- Cognitive, by means of which a work of art provides knowledge about reality. Thanks to the language of art, knowledge can be conveyed more concretely and more fully than through scientific discourse, reaching a wider audience.
- Educational - art can shape the attitudes of recipients.
- Ideological - works of art convey specific ideological attitudes (political, social and ideological).
- Adaptive - art expands human experience and facilitates understanding social tendencies, adapts to conflict-free co-existence in a group, etc.
- Breaking stereotypes - through art you can perceive your life differently, gain the conviction that the world is different, and that reality hides many possibilities.
- Therapeutic - the art may be part of a therapy (color, shape, etc. can positively affect the health and well-being of patients).
- Cathartic since strong aesthetic experiences allow freeing yourself from intrusive thoughts, negative emotional states, etc.
- Humanization because art shows the true value of things. Thanks to art, things become closer to the recipients and more understandable to them.
- Expressive, because the work expresses the artist's experiences, it is an emanation of his/her creative personality. On the other hand, the recipient in the art can find similar emotional states [1].

At the same time, it should be noted that each artwork can fulfill several functions. In addition, any type of beauty can be perceived by the recipient in different ways, which is determined by many factors.

Nowadays, the largest and open gallery for all recipients has become public space, in which street art can be presented, including graffiti, mural, happening, installation art and more. It fulfills the above-mentioned functions as it teaches, educates, helps identify with the place, provides aesthetic experience, has an impact on the environment, humanizes it. It uses various codes, including symbolic, visual but also spatial. Thanks to its openness, it is a communication tool [2].

2. Street art: graffiti, mural

More and more often appearing murals, which are a part of the street art as a kind of visual art, are important for the image of the city. The topic will be presented on the basis of examples of murals, which are usually large-format wall paintings and as such have a huge impact on the perception of the space in which they are located. Performing such painting work is very labor-intensive, requires craftsmanship, artistic and workshop skills. It is extremely important that it is a permanent work compared to performative forms.

Not only the visual side of the mural is important, but also the message it carries. Street artists are increasingly speaking on important social and political issues. Their works are an original statement on a specific topic, so the views expressed in them, reaching multiple recipients, lead to a broad public discourse. The significance of these activities for the space in which they arise, for its reception and functioning is also significant. This aspect will be discussed in more detail below.

The first murals were created in the early twentieth century in Latin America and most often commemorated events from pre-Columbian history. They touched upon the subjects of holidays, customs, traditions and rituals, they referred to the place, history and inhabitants. They raised the subject of war, poverty and human misery. The most famous works include Mexican murals, the creation of which resulted from the need to search for their own identity. The most famous artist of this period was Diego Rivera, whose expressive works were filled with symbolism and illusions. In addition to Rivera, outstanding artists included José Orozco and Alfaro Siqueiros [3].

3. Social statement

The involvement of graffiti artists and murals in social problems can be seen in almost all cities of the world. The resulting works were often and still are an expression of anxiety, dissatisfaction, and a response to social threats.

In the second half of the twentieth century, *street art* was an expression of rebellion against power and the regime, it expressed disagreement with prevailing social inequalities. Examples of such activities in the world are, among others the German Berlin Wall or "peace wall" in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In Poland, an example of this type of activity can be the Orange Alternative campaign, which began in the mid-1980s and became a turning point for the development of *street art*. It was a kind of fight with the authorities, with the hated communist system by means of signs painted on the walls of buildings. The founder of the Orange Alternative Waldemar "Major" Fydrych used dwarf figures in his activities [3].

The 70s and 80s of the 20th century in the United States, specifically New York, Manhattan, marked the appearance of the work of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring - America's major street artists. The activities of the artists coincided with the Cold War, the Reagan and Carter governments. Haring believed that art should be accessible to everyone, even if it would last only a moment. He took up difficult subjects, raised the issues of AIDS, a burning social problem affecting many people and spreading panic fear. His most famous work, "Crack is wack" was created in 1986 and was illegally painted on an abandoned East Harlem handball court in a fluorescent orange mural. The artist referred to drug addiction problems, specifically to the New York crack epidemic and the lack of a quick government response. Haring wanted to reach as many people as possible, so he painted the walls of children's hospitals and spaces in the subway. The radiant child he had created became his hallmark.

England and cities such as London, Sheffield, Brighton and Bristol were a cradle of British street art for many years. Templates are the most commonly used artistic form in Great Britain (this is due to applicable legal regulations). The templates are used by one of the most famous artists around the world, the British artist Banksy, whose works are a very apt commentary on the problems of the modern world. The author raises topics related to politics, social problems, ecology, etc. His works combine graffiti, templates, and the places he chooses to locate his works are often modest, surprising e.g. walls, fence walls, etc.

The mural created in the Welsh city of Port Talbot refers to the problems of environmental pollution. The artist created it in an interesting way on two walls of the garage. On one, he portrayed a boy in a winter scenery with snowflakes falling on his tongue, while on the other, he placed a burning garbage bin - snowflakes turn out to be a leftover waste. Only when watching both parts we read the full message. Banksy published this work with the signature "Merry Christmas" "Season's Greetings".

4. Case study - the work of Ignacy Bieńek

The creative activity of Ignacy Jan Bieńek had a very wide spectrum and territorial range in the Polish People's Republic. The most important projects come from the 1960s and 1970s and were created within the Śląskie Voivodeship. The artistic and functional values of the artist's works directly referred to historical themes and were directly identified with Podbeskidzie. The message about his origin strongly exposed by the artist directly pointed to the identity demonstration by displaying: roosters, goats, beboks, figures as well as historical and other events.

Art (interventions) in urban space created on public facilities as well as in areas and in industrial facilities has a long tradition in Poland. One example of such activity are the works of Ignacy Jan Bieńek, an artist, designer from Bielsko-Biała (Śląskie Voivodeship), who at the end of the 1960s and 1970s made designs of mosaics and wall paintings in urban and industrial space, and in many public buildings. Most of them, unfortunately, have not survived to this day, because in the 1990s, after the system transition in Poland, urban architecture facilities underwent profound changes. The most important works of Ignacy Bieńek include mosaics created in the urban space of the cities of Bielsko-Biała and Kęty. His flagship realization was a mosaic created on the wall of the WELUX Wool Industry Factory in Bielsko Biała, at Leszno street. The work survived many years and was reportedly "accidentally" destroyed in 2000 during the construction of a shopping center. "Ignacy Bieńek for four years, from 1966 to 1969 worked on his monumental work. The mosaic consisted of eighty-six compositions depicting historical events and the mythology of Podbeskidzie, stories of Bielsko and Cieszyn. The work was carried out as a part of a social act for the society of the region on the 700th anniversary of the city's founding as well as the anniversary of the Millennium of the Polish State. There is, among others, a scene of giving Bielsko weavers craft rights, there are thrilling episodes from the tragic September 1939 and the fighting of the units of the People's Army and the Home Army in Podbeskidzie. On the plate of the Oświęcim monument, there is 66641, the authentic camp number of the artist's deceased mother, who died in the death chamber at Auschwitz Birkenau. "After completion of the work, the mosaic was 76 meters wide, 8 meters high, in total over 500 square meters of stone, glass, ceramic waste, metal etc".

The artist has made many realizations in the urban space of Bielsko-Biała, Kęty and other surrounding cities. It resulted not only from the prevailing fashion for beautifying the urban space at the time, but also the need for a creative expression of the artist. Krzysztof Groń in his book writes "Mentioned mosaic from Leszczyńska street was not the only one that Bieńek made in Bielsko. The other was a ceramic composition located on the road leading to Szczyrk". Only this work, out of many realizations of Ignacy Bieńek, has survived to this day.

The city's inhabitants are constantly trying to preserve the remains of the work of Ignacy Jan Bieńek, who designed and created not only for the city but also for Polish culture.

"The leading field of work of Ignacy Jan Bieńek was a mosaic. The artist during his life realized a number of wall compositions. Unfortunately, during the changes taking place in Poland since 1989, many of them - mosaics, paintings, stained-glass windows, went under the patronage of private entrepreneurs, together with the buildings, and they were not always looked after properly. The lost projects of Ignacy Bieńek include, among others, a mosaic that adorned the stone fence of the factory halls at ul. Partisans in Bielsko-Biała"[4].

The artist has created dozens of wall paintings which character directly refers to the art of modern murals. "Bieńek's achievements in Welux" were widely known in Poland. Similar decorations as in Bielsko were also desired by the management of the Wool Industry Plant "Kentex" and offered the artist cooperation. "Bieńek realized the management's dreams of embellishing the plant - he arranged the interior design of production halls, corridors and offices "[4]. The artist's activity was appreciated by the city community and the then state authorities. Among the works of Ignacy Bieńek was also a

"painting with floral ornaments on the facade of one of the blocks of the housing estate in Kęty [4]. The artist had been preparing the project in the form of charts in a 1: 1 scale for a long time, which he later transferred to the facade of buildings. Wall paintings made with various painting techniques, using paints and stucco techniques, e.g. sgraffito, presented topics related to the history of the region and country. They could also be found in holiday centers (e.g. on the walls in canteens), on the facades of factory buildings, offices, kindergartens, and schools. In Krzysztof Groń's book "Devoted to art. The life and work of Ignacy Bieniek "the author describes that" ... the artist developed the colors of industrial halls, designed the facades of factory buildings ".

Bieniek's responsibilities also included arranging the surroundings and decorating the company's holiday homes, among others in Godziszka near Szczyrk, Julina near Rzeszów, Łeba, Zakopane, Kołobrzeg, in Wisła Czarno (holiday house "Gronik"), in Mechelinki near Gdynia and Mielno. Unfortunately, none of these works have survived to this day, only documents and photographs remained. Hence, it can be presumed that contemporary artists draw inspiration from the past. If this is not the case then perhaps this text will inspire them to do so.

5. The roles of murals in the city space

In public space, murals have become an important element complementing the urban landscape. Themes raised by the creators are very diverse: they commemorate important social events, resemble historical events, present images of famous people (e.g. musicians, footballers, writers, scientists). They also play an educational role, refer to ecology, human rights and many other issues. They also play a propaganda function because they reach a mass audience. They express their views and attitudes to the creators. In the city space, in the aspect of its functioning and reception (in the social aspect), paintings that are created in neglected city districts and housing estates are very important. They decorate the empty walls of buildings, bringing them to life. They are an important element of space revitalization because, among other things, they improve the aesthetic value of the surroundings. As an example, the activities carried out in Berlin's Kreuzberg. In Poland, for example, the revitalization of urban space is served by Galeria Mur in Warsaw, which was built on the facade of the Frito Lay factory .

Many new works have been created in Polish cities in recent years. The "capital" of the Polish mural is undoubtedly the Tri-City, where the street art community has been thriving since the mid-1990s. The Zaspas housing estate in Gdańsk, like many others, was created according to modernist principles and was to be a friendly place for residents. For many years it was considered a gray, overpopulated block of flats. This image was changed after the Monumental Painting Festival organized in this place, which took place in 1997. At that time, eight large-format works created by both Polish and foreign artists were created. Among them is the famous mural „The Colosseum" of Paweł Karczewski, which refers to the monumentality of the housing estate. Since 2009, the festival has been a cyclical event called Monumental Art. The ongoing activities are aimed at creating the largest gallery of monumental painting in Europe. Buildings built of large panels were covered with murals referring to several significant anniversaries, including 70 years of the outbreak of World War II. Due to the great interest, special tours are organized in the footsteps of murals, during which you can learn about the history of the creation of paintings and their creators .

In Katowice, the Katowice Street Art event has been held for eight years. It changes the character of the city and it allows the works of the most interesting representatives of world street art to be found on the streets. Learning the history of created murals enables us to gain the knowledge not only about contemporary art, but also about the history of Silesia and its tradition [5].

6. Examples of murals that have been created in recent years

6.1 The airship

The airship is a three-dimensional picture painted on the wall of a tenement house at 1 Maja Street in Katowice. The work was created by artists from the Good Looking Studio in Warsaw.

Zeppelin flying south, towards the Three Ponds Valley, catches the eye; a waterfall that flows straight onto 1 Maja Street; a man climbing a ladder toward a woman sitting on a bridge above the waterfall. The whole is crowned with the underwater world. The image is surprising by conducting an illusion, the perspective treatment changes the flat surface of the wall into a spatial form, building a strange, fairy-tale world, completely different from the environment in which it was created. Joanna Zabawa-Krzypkowska and Krzysztof Groń write more about visual perception [6]. The mural is a tourist attraction of this part of the city (Figure 1, 2).



Figure 1. Katowice, Mural „The airship Good Looking Studio”



Figure 2. The context of the place where the mural was created

6.2 Wojciech Korfanty

In the neighborhood, at Reja 6 Street near the intersection of Dudy-Gracza and Korfantego streets, there was created a work by Wojciech Walczyk, depicting the figure of Wojciech Korfanty, the greatest Silesian politician, dictator of the Third Silesian Uprising (Figure 3, 4). This image also has an educational character. It is an element commemorating the historical figure associated with Silesia, which helps in building an identity with the place of residence. The work refers to Korfanty's speech in the Reichstag, in which he claimed Upper Silesia as a region that should belong to the reviving Polish state. The author of the work said in an interview with PAP (Polish Press Agency): "I was fascinated by this place because I knew it and I know that every day thousands of people will see this mural" [7].



Figure 3. Katowice, Reja str. 6, portrait of Korfanty by Wojciech Walczyk



Figure 4. The context of the place where the mural was created

6.3 Tenement house at Mariacka street

An interesting series of murals was created in the courtyard of buildings located at Mariacka street (Figure 5). Formerly sad, empty, gray walls in the backroom gained a new face, and the whole quarter a new image. Together with the newly created cafes and brewery, he created a place that has a specific character. The new climate meant that from the dull, dangerous space, this place changed into a friendly and eagerly frequented part of the city.

The elements appearing on the walls of the paintings are made at different scales. We will find here both large-format birds and small colorful elements in some courtyards, as well as tiny works made with the help of templates. Large birds, visible on the facades of buildings, are visible from the windows of passing trains, they form a great urban gallery. The first one shown below is called Mural with an egg and was made by the Spanish artist ARYZ. It presents the egg inside the hen divided into parts.

Two more are works of ROA - a well-known Belgian artist painting mainly animals. In Katowice, he painted two birds: one with a visible interior, and the other traditional (Figure 6).



Figure 5. Katowice, Mariacka Tylina str, ARYZ, Mural *Fried Egg*



Figure 6. Katowice, Mariacka Tylina str, ROA, cycle of murals *Bird*

The examples cited to confirm the thesis *that street art* is increasingly becoming a tool to support the image of cities, successfully joining in non-standard promotional activities.

6.4 "Tame" the neighborhood

Particularly noteworthy are murals that arise in less spectacular locations, e.g. in underground passages, overpasses, walls, in sad and forgotten places. The importance of such activities in space cannot be overestimated. Murals help to "tame" the area, change its perception, introduce color and content, making the lives of residents and passers-by more enjoyable, making them more enjoyable.

In 2011, in Katowice, a number of works by Silesian artists were created, which took a total of 190 m² of walls of the underground passage, on one of the busiest streets opposite the train station. The next example is a surreal mural co-created by Raspazjan and Mishmash (Figure 7). Fairytale story diverts the viewer's attention away from the neglected surroundings.



Figure 7. Raspazjan and Miszmasz, Damrota Street, Katowice

Another interesting example is the black and white image depicting scenes of power struggle. The author of the mural, which covers the entire length of the tunnel at Damrota Street, is originally coming from Los Angeles Cleon Peterson. A work of stylistics reminiscent of ancient Greek paintings is very characteristic of the artist's work (Figure 8). And one more example of an interesting initiative in Katowice, at 12 Andrzej Street, the gray, dirty gate was turned into an art gallery. Silesian artists have made this sordid place one wants to see. Nobody is afraid of this neglected entrance anymore. The artists patronized the Silesian Museum with the title *Ajnfart story* [8].



Figure 8. Cleon Peterson, Damrota Street Katowice

7. Conclusions

Murals become an important element of public space, enliven and complement the urban landscape. The environment in which they arise is their context. Decoration using images is also spreading as part of the newly created urban space objects. It is worth mentioning Wojciech Fangor, who in 2007 created a visual design for the II line of the Warsaw metro. First, he designed the entrance, and then the decorative assumptions of the walls with congestion at seven stations. The newly created buildings that were created along with the murals include, among others, Spark office buildings in Wola or Atrium 2 in Warsaw. The educational and social role of murals is also significant. Due to the fact that they reach a mass audience, they can commemorate important social events and perform a propaganda function. By referring to historical events, they build a sense of national pride, depicting the images of famous people remind them of their merits. Murals reach a diverse and very mass audience because the picture is the simplest kind of a message. They are created using various techniques and materials. Their authors are graphic designers, painters, directors, artists, but also people professionally unconnected with the world of visual arts. It can be seen that this type of activity has recently gained in importance, and the works of some artists achieve fabulous prices at auctions and are exhibited in world galleries (Banksy, Haring). The authors of the article use the issues of visual arts in the city space in the process of educating future architects at the Faculty of Architecture of the Silesian University of Technology in Gliwice [9, 10].

Murals are often associated with the identity of the place, often help to identify with it again. At the same time, they activate space and introduce people to it. They undertake a dialogue with the environment. Sometimes, they become a tourist attraction. They draw attention to the object, change the building into a symbol. They introduce color, make the surroundings more attractive, increase the aesthetics, and build the atmosphere of the place. They allow us to commune with art, send a message to the viewer whom they inspire and stimulate thinking and action. They care about every recipient every day.

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