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The issue of the designer's description of the appearance of their architectural work

Abstract

The aim of the article is to highlight the features that distinguish scientific texts from texts written by architects. The research is interpretative in nature and uses the method of logical argumentation with the use of analogy. The examples described are situations when: an architect may not understand his architectural work; an architect may lack the necessary theoretical knowledge; an architect may deliberately use argumentation in a dishonest way; an architect may wrongly evaluate the creative process.

Being sensitised to these elements and the ability to critically approach architects' statements can be applied to academic activities when working with architects' texts.

Key words: explicite aesthetics, theory and practice, project description, authorship, text criticism

Introduction

The appearance of a building may seem to be an arbitrary matter, resulting from the subjective preferences of the architect. Nevertheless, it is what appeals to the general public quickly and strongly. One instantly and effortlessly forms an opinion of a building simply based on its appearance. Because of that, in order to win the favor of residents and potential decision-makers, the visual aspect of the future building is presented as attractive and appropriate. Photos or drawings are used for this purpose, yet statements by architects, highlighting advantages and explaining the reasons for imperfections, are also very important. Contemporary designers often give interviews and publish texts in which they explain formal assumptions. What is interesting is the manner in which the architects use words to talk about the designed forms. Why and how do they argue for something that remains a matter of individual taste for certain persons? How do they describe the appearance of their projects? How do they outline the principles of their aesthetics? In publications aimed at potential

audiences of the buildings, they place great importance on explaining the inspiration for the building's form, describing the relationship with the context and the ideas according to which they create their works. Their statements, due to their personal relationship and non-scientific purpose, are of a different nature than the texts of scientists, and involve a number of difficulties, yet they are not completely devoid of scientific value for researchers dealing with architectural aesthetics. This article illustrates that matter with concrete examples.

Description of own research

Aim of the study

The article describes some recurring phenomena, and its goal is to name the problems (there are four of them emerging from the literature on the subject) burdening the author's descriptions of the appearance – and only the appearance – of the architecture, and then to broaden our understanding of their nature in order to improve our work process with them. This skill will find application in academic activities when analyzing texts, such as assessing the influence of the architect's personality on the text or evaluating the objectivity of the text.

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Research method and techniques

The research described is interpretive in its nature. I make the epistemological assumption that knowledge is the result of the interaction between intuition and reason; intuition acts as a tool of initial discernment based on the researcher's experience. The study was carried out by the method of logical argumentation using analogies between the visual arts (general approach) and architecture (special case).

The problems associated with descriptions of artworks from their creators have already been described. The article presents the search for them in architectural activities (architecture and urban planning are treated as artistic activities herein). General theorems are illustrated with precise architectural examples that verify the correctness of the intuitive phase. In this way, it was demonstrated that the listed problematic situations do occur in architecture. The findings have an academic focus.

The research used literature from the fields of art and architecture. The first group consists of works by aestheticians, dealing with the problems of the texts of artworks' authors – Maria Gołaszewska (1967; 1984; 1986) and Stefan Morawski (1973; 2007). The second group consists of scholarly articles introducing the statements of architects by Lech Niemojewski (1934) and Andrzej Klimek (2022).

Texts by creators vs. scientific papers

Among publications concerning architecture, one can distinguish between texts written by academics (especially historians), critics and architects themselves; sometimes the authors may belong to several of these groups. Texts written by architects seem to be the least reliable from a scientific point of view, although their presence is nothing new. Authors who had already written about their own works include Theodoros – who wrote about the Heraion of Samos, Chersiphron and Metagenes – about the Artemision of Ephesus, Iktinos and Karpion – about the Parthenon, Pytheos and Satyros – about the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus (Tatarkiewicz 1962, 317). Many later well-established architects described the aesthetic design principles that guided them, including Adolf Loos (Haus am Michaelerplatz in Wien from 1911 [Polish: Mój dom przy Michaelerplatz, 2013]) Le Corbusier (Vers une architecture from 1923 [Polish: W stronę architektury, 2012]), and also more contemporary ones – including Patrik Schumacher (The Autopoiesis of Architecture 2011 and 2012). Even if their texts describe only their personal approach to design, they conscientiously try to find a scientific basis for the instinctively perceived truths and principles of the visual aspect of architecture. Loos argues that the placement of his building's windows reflects function – the purpose of the housing units and the number of rooms (2013, 160, 161), Le Corbusier cites the use of the straight line as a necessity brought about by the economics of the modern construction site (2012, 262, 263), and Schumacher argues for an undulating parametric architecture, showing curvilinear forms as a natural result of the evolution of shapes and how they adjust to each other (2012, 619). Considerations of form and critical analysis of art and perception in order to establish general laws – how space affects our sight – allow to treat designers'

books as design textbooks. The fact that they are written by the creators themselves, however, has implications that academic works do not.

Art manifestos constitute another expression form for artists, after books. They are no longer as fashionable as they used to be; nowadays, the short literary forms created by architects often take the form of an interview or an author's description explaining the reasons for their decisions. They also do not require the *credo* to be supported by sound arguments, therefore – in my opinion – they do not cause confusion when expertly analyzing scientific texts. Furthermore, they often focus on social, technological and engineering aspects rather than aesthetics (although Friedensreich Hundertwasser and Pierre Restany's *Mouldiness Manifesto Against Rationalism in Architecture*, 1958/1959/1964 can be mentioned here), which is what this article is about.

Relationship of theory and practice

Appearance is an aspect that is difficult to describe in words. Even ancient terms such as “harmony” and “proportion” have frameworks rather than rigid definitions. Description is combined with the experience of feeling, therefore it is reasonable that not only scientists, but also artists are considered competent in this domain. Morawski treats artists' statements about the appearance of plastic works as full-fledged sources of knowledge about art, pointing out that [...] *aesthetics aiming at the scientific rationalization of aesthetic aspirations, assumed a limine and unquestionable, is forced to rely on all levels [...] of the rationalization process – from average tastes through artists' manifestos to philosophers' statements* (1973, 29). Contrary to the complicated theory associated with the concept of beauty, practice has been excellent in dealing with it. Determining the rules of how to bring beauty into existence, on the other hand, borders on the impossible. It is therefore worth exploring the texts of those for whom practice is the starting point for consideration. Meaning: those who often create in a similar way to how the rest of the people perceive art – intuitively.

In *Historia estetyki* [History of Aesthetics], Władysław Tatarkiewicz distinguishes between *explicite* aesthetics (treatises, theories, artists' declarations) and *implicite* aesthetics (artistic practice, fashion, customs of the era) (1962, 12, 13). He justifies this, writing that there is often a clear rift in these fields in history. Wassily Kandinsky even clarifies the direction of the influence of practice on theory and it is a flow from practice toward theory (1969, 261). Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger echo Kandinsky in diagnosis that reflection on art cannot develop as rapidly as creative abilities (1969, 104). All three mentioned analyzed the latest trends emerging in art at the time – Kandinsky chalked up the principles of abstractionism, Gleizes and Metzinger – cubism. However, the priority of practice over theory is not unanimously recognized, as exemplified by a number of conceptual art artists. Conceptualism is an activity in which, by definition, the idea, and not the work, is the most important thing. Such work, however, is far from architecture, very much growing out of utilitarian motives. The architect devises not only how the building will look and what it will convey as a work of art, but also its functionality and design.

The message of an architectural work – its artistic side – is combined with the practical dimension of the building. According to American pragmatism as interpreted by John Dewey, values do not come from some absolute world external to man, but are discovered by the individual in the world. They are not imposed from above, but achieved empirically. They are part of man and grow out of his needs. Dewey calls them *a permanent phenomenon of human life* and does not recognize the possibility of deriving them from non-experimental sources (Dziemidok 2014, 41). The art of construction, the intended result of which is the commissioning of a physical object, should refer to empirics as often as possible. Developing theory without juxtaposing it with the realities of the real world, without listening to what practitioners have to say, can bring undesirable discord between the two. It is necessary to make such a confrontation, even if artists' statements do not reach scientific status in many fields.

The role of the creator's statement in the reception of an architectural work

One of the questions that arises when dealing with the text of an architect describing his building concerns the basic purpose of his statement. Is guidance necessary to understand or fully experience the work? Or are they needed to notice its beauty? Some do not comment on their work, considering it sufficient and the only possible voice articulating their intention. Paul Gauguin disliked explaining his works and stigmatized his colleagues when they explained theirs.

Many works from other art fields are received more consciously than architecture. People go to see a collection of paintings by a particular artist whose biography they know, or to an exhibition of a period in painting whose tenets they are familiar with. Between the work and the viewer, there is often the person of the creator, who influences the reception process. In the case of architecture, the person of the creator most often remains unknown to the audience. Buildings, unlike literature or painting, are rarely signed with a name. The work must defend itself. It is received in passing, without focus. The ubiquity of architecture and its nature do not allow their users to explore the pedigree of each building.

Some defend the assumption that knowledge of the artist's thoughts is essential for a complete and "proper" reception of the work. Maria Anna Potocka expresses an additional objection in such a situation regarding the proper experience of contact with art: *A work detached from the artist is an "abandoned entity" that requires theoretical legitimacy. Art detached from the artist loses its justification and closes the way to its essence, whose only clue is the relationship between the work and the artist. This road requires rebuilding* (2007, 58). Therefore, Theodor Adorno believes that the truth hidden in a work of art can remain forever forgotten, and without philosophical reflection – never undiscovered (Potocka 2007, 58, 59).

The position presented in the foregoing paragraph refers to the idea of the work of art as an egoistic creation, not created with the viewer in mind, as a completely individual record of the artist's thoughts. In my opinion, this is incompatible with architectural art, which puts the viewer (user)

at the center. The need to respect them is already apparent at the stage of presenting the concept. In this phase, words carry an exceptionally high weight. Numerous architects, who must curry favor with residents and decision-makers (who depend on residents), have mastered the ability to persuade effectively. A large part of their arguments are aimed at the community at large, so they may not be very expressive – they are based on emotions, not facts, as they are meant to spread a vision of the future, not the status quo. Architects can use emotion-based persuasion techniques for this purpose: the principle of reciprocity (asking for a deviation from conditions argued by balancing this with other benefits of the project), social proof of rightness (citing analogous projects in other cities; noticeable in the case of iconic architecture), moral persuasion (touching on ecological and safety aspects). These techniques do not have to be used fraudulently. Unfortunately, such statements are sometimes duplicated later and can uncontrollably make their way into industry speeches and beyond (a learned speech, but also participation in a public consultation → a citation in the industry press without marking the citation → a scientific article about the building). Texts by architects published in layman sources are intended to deepen the architectural awareness of citizens, popularize currents in architecture or present a public building in an accessible way, among other things. Texts aimed at industry insiders, on the other hand, should be as reliable and objective as possible and advance architecture and urban planning.

Problems related to architects' texts about their works

Presented below are four problematic situations that can occur in a text written by a creator. The order of the subsections is based on a pattern that follows from the detail to the whole: work on the project, that is, the as yet unfinished minor elements of the project → interpretation of the idea of the finished project → architectural thought beyond a single building (concerning the architect, trend, style, philosophy). Subsection 4 is the only one that deals with the potential dishonesty of the writer.

1. The architect may misjudge the impact of the process on the work.

One of the problems of authorial descriptions is the case when the artist gives a lot of facts about the process of creating the work when evaluating it. Reproducing the course of the creative process can be subject to many errors. The order of the phases, or even the very choice of experiences and thoughts that contributed to the execution of the project may be disturbed (Gołaszewska 1986, 176, 177). A personal attitude to the work can distort its fair judgment: the architect's memory is clearly imprinted by the long hours spent on bringing the idea to its final form, meanwhile, the inconvenience associated with it does not translate into the reception of the work. The author may wrongly exaggerate the importance of difficult moments in the creative process, belittling those that came to him, as it were, on their own (Gołaszewska 1986, 189). The role of rejected ideas in developing a mature, albeit different, form may also remain underestimated (Gołaszewska 1986, 179).

In the description of the Plato Contemporary Art Gallery project, the architectural firm KWK Promes writes extensively the following, which can be found on their website: *Originally, the plaza around the building was to be concrete. However, subsequent reports of climate change and environmental catastrophe made us decide to react and change the project. Instead of concrete, we used natural water-permeable paving, and introduced a lot of greenery, flower meadows and natural retention. Currently, despite the ongoing construction, we are also working to increase greenery to the building's roofs with extensive vegetation in the shade of distressed brick on*



Fig. 1. CCTV building designed by Rem Koolhaas, Beijing, 2012 (photo by Colin Charles, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, source: flickr.com/photos/byte/35966604971, accessed December 3, 2024)

II. 1. Budynek CCTV zaprojektowany przez Rema Koolhaasa, Pekin, 2012 (fot. Colin Charles, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, źródło: flickr.com/photos/byte/35966604971, dostęp 3.12.2024)



Fig. 2. Centraal Beheer building designed by Herman Hertzberger (Apeldoorn, 1972). According to the designer – democratic answer to the modernistic monolithicity. For Jencks – modernism in different guise (photo by Punt, W. / Anefo, Nationaal Archief, CC0, source: <http://hdl.handle.net/10648/abfb5e10-d0b4-102d-bcf8-003048976d84>, accessed November 24, 2025)

II. 2. Budynek Centraal Beheer projektu Hermana Hertzbergera (Apeldoorn, 1972). Według projektanta – demokratyczna odpowiedź na monolityczność modernizmu. Według Jencksa – modernizm w innej szacie (fot. Punt, W. / Anefo, Nationaal Archief, CC0, źródło: <http://hdl.handle.net/10648/abfb5e10-d0b4-102d-bcf8-003048976d84>, dostęp 24.11.2025)

the façade. We believe that it is now necessary to fight for every square meter of greenery in the city (KWK Promes, slide 8). The description of the unrealized concrete version may indicate a strong attachment to it, a sense of the need to mention it in the author's commentary. Justifying water permeability by taking care of rational water circulation seems sufficient. The last two sentences are another indication that the KWK Promes firm considers it important to report on the course of its work.

Overinterpretation of the design process itself and a personal attitude can affect an architect's statement. A similar selection of facts according to their significance should be carried out by the critic – instead of the artist's experiences, their creative abilities should be examined. To understand a work of art and admire it, it is not necessary to know the history of its creation or the life of its creator.

2. An architect may not understand their own work.

The situation in which one interacts with a work without description or explanation does not necessarily impair its reception at all. Authors are not always good interpreters of their works. Golaszewska believes that this is often seen at author meetings, where the artist learns new things about the work or hears an apt take on things only felt by themselves (1967, 37, 38). In another place, the researcher notes that the artistic level of a work of art and the abilities of its author can be incommensurable: [...] *the creative possibilities [of the artist] are more extensive than those realized in this one creation, and at the same time, what is realized in the work often surpasses their intentions, arouses surprise in themselves* (Golaszewska 1986, 181).

A similar situation can occur in architecture. Sometimes a critic can see a positive aspect of a building that the designer was not aware of. Charles Jencks – a critic and also a juror of the competition to select the design of the new headquarters of Chinese television – compared the CCTV building in Beijing, designed by Rem Koolhaas (Fig. 1) to, significant for this country, the symbol of the moon gate (Deyan Sudjic points out the friendly relationship between Jencks and Koolhaas [2015, 145–147]). In this case, the critic's ability to connect seemingly distant things highlighted a feature of the building that the architect himself probably did not plan. The symbolic dimension, understood by the Chinese, was not Koolhaas' intention, however, at the stage of presenting the project it had already become visible, it was part of the work.

Not understanding one's own work does not always mean not realizing its positives. According to Jencks, architect Herman Hertzberger with the Centraal Beheer building (Fig. 2) sought answers to the monolithic nature of modernist office buildings. The designer said he was creating *democratically*, designing *architecture for the people* (Jencks 1988, 32, 33). Jencks denies this in a remark that the design leaves no room for different preferences (e.g., those of traditionalists), and despite a step in the right direction, it is still an architecture of repetitive modules devoid of character. The appearance of this construction project is also subordinated to one distinct aesthetic. The modernist program was simply dressed in a different garment here. The thing that constituted a paradigm shift for the architect was merely a new quality within the paradigm according to the critic.

Simone Brott believes that another misunderstanding appears in the description of the Dr. Chau Chak Wing Building in Sydney by its designer, Frank Gehry, as *humanized modernism* (Brott 2012, 57, 58). The “crumpled” façade is meant to make modernist architecture more human, according to the architect. Even to the layman, the warped, crooked walls – which look as if they were created by a hostile force that crushed the smooth plane – do not create the impression of humanizing, giving dignity, increasing the humanistic aspect of the architecture. In addition: in this image, Brott finds a clear reference to the photograph of the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe complex, which is well-known to architects: the Sydney building looks like Pruitt-Igoe frozen in the middle of the demolition process (Figs. 3, 4). Modernism is thus petrified in the image of its symbolic demise. The architect does not seem to consciously refer to the media space that accompanies architecture, which is more visible to the critic or a scholar.

Today, buildings exist not only in material reality, but also (sometimes even more strongly) in imaginary space. Photographic reproductions, video recordings, even notes are now almost an integral part of architecture analysis. Whenever it occupies the public's attention, so many times its presentation techniques gain relevance. Such an example is provided precisely by the symbolic end of modernism, as the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe has been defined as such. Thus, if Gehry did not notice the similarity described here, then his building “spoke” in a discussion outside the designer's intent.

3. The architect may not always know the theory.

The problem of interpretation can extend to a sphere broader than the individual creator. Artists can misinterpret their own actions and create theories that, upon deeper analysis, bear the mark of a mistake. Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz draws attention to such examples and, in his style, waspily criticizes them: *It would seem that the confessions of a very sincere artist, and at the same time: one capable of self-analysis, could shed some light on the process. However, judging by the works and comparing the statements of the artists, one comes to a complete hopelessness in this matter. Often as a result of inaccurate analysis, a great number of subconscious processes of duration, that is, changes in the background of mixed quality, as well as due to the intellectual under-education of artists, their declarations can be very misleading. [...] And how many artists there are who have false theories of their work, which then become the cause of monstrous schools of mindless imitators of them, who, not being able to experience the analogous evolution process of a given artist and the process of purely individual creation itself, [...] helping themselves with theories begotten by the often sick and degenerate, as in these days [1919], brains of such artists, who no longer have the strength for theoretical thinking. How many artists there are and have been who did not know what they were creating, having no conceptual form to describe [...] (1969, 189, 190).* Witkiewicz blames the unconsciously inconsistent theories on the insufficient knowledge of artists. Władysław Strzemiński, in his book *Teoria widzenia* [Theory of Seeing], accuses the weak Impressionists of being unable to understand why the outstanding painters of the movement painted the way they

did (2016, 242, 279), which ultimately led to degeneration in the field of form. The irrational nature of creating and finding new relationships does not allow theorizing it. As Cicero said: issues of beauty are easier to comprehend than to explain later (Tatarkiewicz 1962, 245).

Benedetto Croce believes that the artist, taking on the role of critic, becomes a completely new character (Morawski 2007, 16). Unfortunately, not all creators are predisposed to this new role. No matter how interesting their judgments



Fig. 3. Demolition of Pruitt-Igoe housing complex on March 16, 1972. Simone Brott notices the similarity in the form of the Dr Chau Chak Wing building to the moment captured in this photo (photo by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pruitt-igoe_collapse-series.jpg, accessed November 24, 2025, cropped by T. Omieciński)

Il. 3. Wyburzenie kompleksu mieszkaniowego Pruitt-Igoe 16 marca 1972. Simone Brott dostrzega podobieństwo formy budynku Dr Chau Chak Wing do momentu z tego ujęcia (fot. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, domena publiczna, za Wikimedia Commons, źródło: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pruitt-igoe_collapse-series.jpg, dostęp 24.11.2025, przycięcie fot. T. Omieciński)



Fig. 4. Dr Chau Chak Wing Building designed by Frank Gehry (Sydney, 2015). Instead of the human side of architecture declared by the author, Simone Brott sees the resemblance to the moment of demolition of the Priut-Igoe (photo by Brickworks Building Products, CC BY-SA 2.0, source: <https://tiny.pl/0y5kgd0x>, accessed December 3, 2024)

Il. 4. Budynek Dr Chau Chak Wing zaprojektowany przez Franka Gehry'ego (Sydney, 2015). Zamiast deklarowanego przez autora ludzkiego oblicza architektury, Simone Brott widzi podobieństwo do momentu detonacji budynku Pruitt-Igoe (fot. Brickworks Building Products, CC BY-SA 2.0, źródło: <https://tiny.pl/0y5kgd0x>, dostęp 3.12.2024)

about their own work may be, the critic has a broader perspective and knowledge of parallel currents, and sees correlations between art and other areas of human life. It is not the artist who explains his work, but vice versa – we can understand the artist through the work (Morawski 2007, 127). As Tatariewicz writes, for the artist, styles [...] *are a necessity, because they correspond to the way of looking, imagining, thinking of their time and environment. They are mostly unaware of them; the critic, especially the historian, is more aware of them than the artist* (1982, 204–206). Hence, it is usually the critics who can more accurately describe the influences and causes of a particular work.

An example from the world of architecture is the description of the deconstructivism trend created by Mark Wigley and Philip Johnson. The *Deconstructivist Architecture* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1988, which they curated, featured the works of seven architecture studios or architects. Similar in aesthetics, they were brought together under one banner – deconstructivist architecture. The artists themselves had operated without awareness of the existence of such a community until then, and most of them, despite following similar intellectual paths in places, rejected the common designation of “deconstructivists” (McLeod 1989, 43, 44). To this day, Peter Eisenman maintains that deconstructivism in architecture, as described on the occasion of this exhibition, did not exist, and that some of the major assumptions of Wigley’s reasoning are wrong (Eisenman 2022). After more than 30 years have passed, it must be acknowledged that architectural criticism has adopted Wigley’s outlook – the term “architectural deconstructivism” and the selection of its representatives are widely recognized and understood according to the 1988 exhibition catalog. The division between “deconstructivism” and “deconstructionism” emphasized by Eisenman, which stems from philosophical assumptions, does not seem to be as strong a demarcation as the aesthetics of buildings.

Not only are the sources of architecture’s aesthetics evaluated differently by critics and architects, but also its social effects. Norman Foster believed that an architect must be an optimist. In a speech he gave after receiving the Pritzker Prize, he said his office had always tried to ask the right questions with insatiable curiosity and believed in social context – that buildings are created by people and their needs (Foster 1999, 1, 2), both material and spiritual. He devoted the last paragraph to the responsibilities and challenges faced by architects. Jencks, however, considers high-tech architecture as performed by Foster, seen as an end in itself, to be nihilistic, while stressing that the architect himself do not recognize this (Jencks 1994, 261). The affirmation of technique for its own sake leads to emptiness and meaninglessness. Jencks claims the architecture profession as a whole seems to have missed this. Increasing warnings about the dangers caused by the impact of technological devices on society show that it was probably Jencks, a critic with a broader view of civilization, who was able to make a more accurate simulation of the future.

Correctly understanding one’s actions can also be disastrous for an artist. According to Gołaszewska, structuring reality binds us: later, it is not we who use our thoughts, but they subjugate our lives (1984, 23). The same may be

true of the analytical texts of authors who, from the moment they announce their *credo*, refuse to deny it. Francis Edward Sparshott believes that if artists describe their own mannerism, they themselves risk over-intellectualizing their artistic activity (Morawski 1973, 18). In order not to betray their own “manifesto”, the architect can adapt the solutions they create intuitively under a previously written doctrine. This situation can result from a new look at the work when it is completed (Gołaszewska 1986, 181). When it does not require work from the artist, it becomes a different object than before – a work that is, as it were, alien, further from personal involvement.

For the creator, becoming aware of the creative processes can be downright harmful. It is mainly the work that expresses the artist’s views, but, as Potocka vividly described it, [...] *it is a witness [...] most often outlandish and, in addition, very imprecise in his testimony* (2007, 157). What problem for the researcher arises from this? Well, just as an artist adapts a work to earlier guidelines, they can bend later guidelines to them. Content written after one text gains popularity can be rebuilt along its lines. However, such situations are very difficult to detect.

4. An architect can use argumentation in a dishonest way.

It is an exceptional situation when an architect does not act decently. Their argument is deliberately disingenuous because it increases the chances of success. Such a description is no longer a professional explanation and turns into persuasion using manipulation. In each of the examples cited below, without being sure of the creator’s bad intentions, only the creator’s opinion was confronted with that of the critic.

In the modern world, as market mechanisms take over increasingly more areas of life, art has also become a large-scale stock market. Like any commodity for sale, it has received extremely effective advertising. Myths are growing around works of art to change the perception of the object – from mediocre to a masterpiece of genius. Michael Baldwin even says that modern art is more a result of the discourse on it than the creation of its artists, whom he harshly calls vulgar (Cottingham 2017, 69). Therefore, it is natural that artists try to raise the price of their works with their own image and statements.

Such a phenomenon also occurs in the case of architecture – an art that requires winning the favor of a wealthy investor to get a project built. Many architects’ explanations of their concepts are closer to persuasion than translation. They are trying to convince an alleged thought process, which is very questionable upon further reflection. Tom Dyckhoff accuses Daniel Libeskind of making his statements about architecture seem like random thoughts pasted together *post factum* (Dyckhoff 2018, 324). The architect explained the Graduation School building in London (Fig. 5) as inspired by the constellation Orion, which appeared to him above the plot of land intended for the building, but he also said bluntly that he did not want to make a big deal out of it (Dyckhoff 2018, 324). Hearing about this correlation prompts the thought of an absurd “logic” by which one tries to put incompatible elements of reality together – instead of intellectual satisfaction, a sense of interacting with something original, something that is obvious but required the intervention of a genius to make it appear to us. It is worth

remembering, however, that the train of thought of eccentric people is sometimes unique.

Jencks, on the other hand, alleges that I.M. Pei, when advertising his design for a glass pyramid in front of the Louvre as transparent, knew full well that this was not what the glass would look like (Jencks 1990, 187). The critic is convinced that the architect must have been aware of how the two sloping planes of glass, supported by a dense frame, will not allow the eyes to enjoy the view of the historical part of the palace establishment located behind the designed pyramid (Fig. 6). Jencks might not have been so critical of the misguided predictions about the new material, but glass has been around for so long that someone who deals with the material must be aware of the falseness of the argument about its complete transparency. Convincing of the “invisibility” of a glass building is similar to the opposite command of the perfect reflection in a glass façade of the view from the opposite direction. Such suggestions may indicate an attempt to complete a building in an architecturally valuable setting by invoking respect for the context – which is not really planned at all.

From the beginning, modern materials have been used by architects in a less than honest way. Leading modernists of the early 20th century designed buildings from a then-new material: concrete. Finances did not allow for their realization, so the buildings were eventually built of brick, which was later covered with plaster to achieve a uniform, smooth surface imitating concrete. This was done by Erich Mendelsohn with the Einstein Tower in Potsdam, and Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud with the Kiefhoek Housing Estate in Rotterdam, among others. In this way, they completed their visions without major changes or compromises of the visual side. However, this contradicts their stated rule of “directness” of architecture with the use of new materials (Hitchcock 1932, 93; Charciarek 2020, 104, 105). Some modernist

designers may have overestimated the possibilities of the construction process in the reality in which they had to create, and perhaps that is why they allowed themselves concessions in the area hidden from the eyes of users.

Conclusions

Bohdan Dziemidok writes that [...] *artistic norms are extrapolations of implicit aesthetics contained in works that have achieved success and recognition by experts and audiences in a particular culture and era* (2012, 28, 29). According to the philosopher, aesthetic norms eventually yield



Fig. 5. Graduation School Building designed by Daniel Libeskind (London, 2003). The designer points to the constellation of Orion as the inspiration for the building (photo by Artur Salisz, CC BY-NC 2.0, source: <https://tiny.pl/9m1j6b8y>, accessed December 3, 2024)

Il. 5. Budynek Szkoły Wyższej zaprojektowany przez Daniela Libeskinda (Londyn, 2003). Autor za inspirację do jego zaprojektowania podaje gwiazdozbiór Oriona (fot. Artur Salisz, CC BY-NC 2.0, źródło: <https://tiny.pl/9m1j6b8y>, dostęp 3.12.2024)

Fig. 6. The glass pyramid – the new entrance to the Louvre designed by I.M. Pei (Paris, 1989). Jencks believes that the architect must have been aware of the opacity of glass in that design (photo by T. Omieciński, 2006)

Il. 6. Szklana piramida nowego wejścia do Luwru zaprojektowana przez I.M. Peia (Paryż, 1989). Jencks uważa, że projektant musiał zdawać sobie sprawę z nieprzezierności szkła w tej sytuacji (fot. T. Omieciński, 2006)



to artistic norms. New artworks are finally breaking through the barrier of incompatibility with the old way of thinking about aesthetics. People open up to it, begin to analyze it, understand it, eventually accept it. In this sequence, there must be someone who starts to analyze it, and before that, someone suggesting material for analysis. It can be harsh and factual, but it can also have one of the flaws described in the article. Therefore, the listed shortcomings of the author's descriptions of buildings should be made clear to researchers, and they should analyze and review the merits of such texts. When a particular aesthetic becomes popular, it is useful to know the reason behind it.

Potential directions for further research

Academics interested in analyzing the author texts of architects can expand on this topic. In my opinion, promising and interesting directions could include:

1. Describing the relationship between the way of writing and the progressive popularity of the architect. As architects consciously recognize their rise in popularity, are they beginning to write about their architecture differently? Are they more adventurous or even more reserved?

2. Analysis of the statements of architects in the current times of transition from the culture of writing to post-writing culture. Does new media, using audio and video techniques, have an impact on forms of human expression? In the beginnings of direct experience transfer culture (augmented reality), does the architect communicate their ideas differently, more directly (in the sense: without the mediation of words)? Is architecture in virtual reality a better way to present a project? Are thoughts communicated in this way more effectively protected from the influence of the media vehicle: words?

3. An in-depth study of the writing activities of specific recognized names from the world of architecture.

Summary

A large part of the texts read by architecture students are those written by architects. Nevertheless, these works are

not peer-reviewed for their scientific quality. A student facing the task of reading a book by a building designer in an architectural course at a university may suspect that it is equivalent in this respect to an article from a scientific journal on the Ministry's list of ranked journals. A person reading a lot is bound to notice the dissimilarity between Le Corbusier's approach and that of Peter Zumthor, and begin to approach them more critically themselves. Nevertheless, their workshop should be constantly improved. Skillful use of texts outside the scientific circuit should be a prerequisite for reading them. They constitute valuable sources that can uncover aspects of an architectural work that are unavailable by any other means (including the course of the creative process, rejected versions of the design, previously unpublished accounts of the collaboration of those involved in the creation of the project). In order for anyone preparing to become an architect to confront the designer's text, architectural colleges at the second level of study can introduce mandatory work with them in seminar classes into their programs. Such lessons could boil down to discussing them, with the need for cultural argumentation based on evidence in case of disagreement with the content.

Being aware of the potential dangers of reading architects' texts, the bibliography can be expanded to include a very important group of readings. Awareness of the complex interrelationships and dissimilarities of such sources will allow one to work reliably with this, nowadays very common, source of information. In architecture, as one of the arts, not everything can be clearly described in words, and limiting oneself to this way of conveying content would impoverish it in terms of the humanities. I would like to conclude with the words of Lech Niemojewski (1934, 113): *Corbusier, even when he is wrong, is more interesting than many, many others who, like an exemplary cashier, are never wrong, who forget, or do not know, that the qualities of a cashier are good, are very valuable, but... in the banking window, while the dimension of value in the field of art – is a mute chimera!*

*Translated by
Bartłomiej Matulewicz*

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Streszczenie

Problematyka odautorskiego opisu wyglądu dzieła architektonicznego

W artykule zwrócono uwagę na cechy odróżniające teksty naukowe od tekstów pisanych przez architektów. W badaniach natury interpretacyjnej posłużono się metodą logicznej argumentacji z użyciem analogii. Opisano przypadki, kiedy: architekt może nie rozumieć swojego dzieła; architekt może nie mieć niezbędnej wiedzy teoretycznej; architekt może świadomie używać argumentacji w sposób nieuczciwy; architekt może błędnie oceniać proces twórczy.

Uczulenie na te elementy i umiejętność krytycznego podejścia do wypowiedzi architektów mogą znaleźć zastosowanie w działalności akademickiej podczas pracy z tekstami architektów.

Słowa kluczowe: estetyka explicite, teoria a praktyka, opis projektu, autorstwo, krytyka tekstu