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STREET ART AND SPACE

To say that art usually depends on its context would be a truism. Nowadays there are fewer and fewer theorists who defend its absolute autonomy as if a work of art was a stand-alone being, entirely independent of place, time and even its author. Even if we tried to claim that, in the words of Clement Greenberg, a work of art is “something given, increate, independent of meanings, similars or originals” (Greenberg 1971: 6), and even if it is fully abstract, at the moment when it appears in the public space, it falls within an entire network of relations with the surface, space, time, motion and above all with the recipient. Whether it is a simple tag or a mural, a monument or an installation, regardless of individual intentions, the trace left by the artist in the public space will be always received in a particular environment. Street art is a particularly contextual type of art as its very source derives from interacting with a city, a street, a wall or a passer-by¹. Moreover, these contexts are always changing. Official art of a public nature – architecture, monumental sculpture, urban design – is supposed to intentionally build the public space in a certain manner and is usually created in the space provided. Street art – on the contrary – is created where it is not expected, it changes the existing space in an unpredictable way and surprises. This change, however, is usually not fundamental or permanent. For this reason, Alison Young uses the term “situational art” (Young 2014: 32–33)². Street art introduces minor changes

¹ For the purpose of this text, the term “street art” is widely understood as various forms of artistic activities, legal as well as illegal, in the public space, excluding architecture and traditional monumental sculpture. I am, however, fully aware of conflicting opinions and the difficulty in defining this type of art, especially if its boundaries are placed based on the sociological point of view, in which street art is derived from illegal activities aimed at reclaiming the public space (Compare: Gralińska-Toborek, Kazimierska-Jerzyk 2013: 19–20).

² Although I do not agree with the author that the main two reasons why street art “provokes affective intensities within the spectator herself” are: “the artist’s desire to make unauthorised images in the face of their prohibition” and “the fact of trespass in the transgression of lines drawing distinctions between »your« property and »mine«” (Young 2014: 32). The knowledge of the illegality of an image need not affect

in the form of interventions, modifications in meanings, small shifts, interjections and additions. It does not operate by means of the planned, professional, systematic organisation of space, but through slight modifications, adaptations, superficial transformations and combinations.

Street art is usually not a dominant message in the visual image of the city, it is a secondary but persistent and offensive element³. The presence of street art in major cities around the world makes us feel it is an integral part of their image. From the point of view of urban decorum understood as adaptation, coherence or functionality⁴, street art will not be included in this category. However, we can accept that, as Claude Perrault noted in the seventeenth century, “There are some things that ought to appear misshapen and offensive in light of reason and good sense but that custom has rendered tolerable” (Perrault 1993: 51). We are used to illegible graffiti, stickers and stencils appearing on walls, pavements and letterboxes. Even though we do not have to judge them positively, they are associated with life in the big city, with its good and bad qualities. Street art is part of the pulse of the city which is indicative of life: it is mobile (even ubiquitous), variable, surprising and expanding. In a word, it is full of energy. And although it is not a force capable of building space only by itself – such as urban planning rules or large architectural objects, street art affects it and changes its perception through continuous interactions with other elements of space. It helps to see that which we have not noticed before and to accept that which has offended us, to appreciate details.

THE ILLUSION OF SPACE IN THE REAL SPACE

There can be no doubt that 3D painting is the most spectacular type of art interacting with space. This is actually a traditional painting technique of *trompe l'oeil* (deceive the eye) that causes the illusion of space⁵. Currently, it has two

its reception, all the more so since given the current popularity of street art (including graffiti), hundreds of legitimate tags, which do not differ in form from illegal ones, are created. The situation is different in the case of JR's works that I will write about in the further part of the paper. They make an impression of a large art project supported institutionally, meanwhile, they were created illegally. This knowledge can enhance our interest and admiration, it does not detract, however, from the first impression.

³ As “a supporting actor”, in private photographs or in direct television reports, ruthlessly smashing the main narrative and introducing a sense that life goes on elsewhere.

⁴ Compare: Chapter I by Antonio Remesar.

⁵ One might be wondering if they should be called street art, especially when it is a form of officially painted mural (Grالیńska-Toborek, Kazimierska-Jerzyk 2014:

main varieties – painted on vertical walls, presenting the illusion of open interior or three-dimensional architectural elements, sometimes the whole panorama, as well as painted on horizontal surfaces – pavements and squares – anamorphoses that usually present various types of abyss and hidden underground structures. These two types of art create relationships with the existing space in diverse ways.

3D murals painted on “blind” walls of houses typically create the illusion of another, more visually attractive space (photos 36, 43, 44). They operate on the principle of decorum: adapt to divisions and elements that exist in space, but also complement or become integrated in a much more complex and richer perspective. John Pugh, the artist painting this sort of murals states:

When developing a mural, I also respond to aspects of the location such as its architectural style or the natural surroundings. Often I like to play with the art’s contexts by contrasting these environments with another place and/or time. This paradox or juxtaposition of environments transports the viewer on a journey from local reality into a new space (Seckel 2004: 248).

Mur des canuts in Lyon’s Croix-Rousse imitates the wide “old-town” perspective – the wide stairs, façades of houses covered with greenery and weavers’ workshops in the lower section the guiding function of this mural is the commemoration of work done by silk weavers working in this district. It was painted on a flat side wall of a house with the surface area of 1,200 m², but standing along a large intersection and highly visible. The aim of the image is therefore also to embellish a blank wall and create an attractive view⁶. At the same time, it has to hide this “blind” wall, which does not show anything, does not direct us toward anything, and does not gaze at us through its windows. Painted over with a spatial image, the wall becomes invisible as a screen. This is a good example to show that a mural is just like makeup, a cosmetic patch, covering what we would like to hide. However, it is easy to expose it, simply by coming closer. It is then that its critical role is revealed to us, it says: this is what the real space could be like, but it is not. By creating the competitive, unreal space, 3D murals reveal the shortcomings of the real space.

21–22). However, taking into consideration the issue of the relationship between art and space, it is worth mentioning this type of urban art. The technique of applying such a perspective was used particularly in the seventeenth century, contemporary chemicals allow to paint permanent images on walkable surfaces.

⁶ On the website of Cité Création, we can see the presentation “before and after”, which is a good illustration of the idea of new space. See: <http://cite-creation.com/les-fresques-peintures-ville-de-lyon-france/>.

The other type of 3D paintings is anamorphosis painting created on horizontal surfaces, external and internal, for example, shopping arcades of large department stores. Anamorphosis is a picture that distorts the presented form in such a manner that it looks undistorted only from one particular point of view⁷. Painted on the floor or a pavement, viewed from a single point, it reveals immeasurable depths, abysses or deep, multi-storey interiors. It would seem then that the manner in which 3D murals and anamorphosis work is identical, except only for the surface (vertical or horizontal). However, they operate in a totally different way. In the definition of anamorphosis, distortion comes to the fore (Hocke 2003: 208), which is confirmed by the experience of the recipient. A passer-by sees first unspecified smear of colours, then a very distorted form and finally only after reaching a certain point she or he is able to see the content of the representation and the illusion of depth (photo 46). As noted by Gustav René Hocke, the anamorphic painting “destroys time and space” and turns all things around (Hocke 2003: 209). The recipient is a witness of the deformation, when something specific becomes an indeterminate smear. The trick here is visualised and appears to be more important than the space presented. 3D murals and anamorphoses surprise – in the first case when we discover that the space seen is just an illusion, in the other case when some sort of space emerges out of the incomprehensible, although we know in advance that it is only a trick (photos 45, 47). Anamorphosis focuses on the trick, less so on the surrounding space⁸. The disclosure of the trick lends anamorphoses primarily a ludic character. The viewers position themselves in the illusory space and take photographs, assuming different poses needed to authenticate the image. This sort of game is associated with the rejection of the passer-by typical behaviour and the involvement in creating the illusion. Moreover, it also requires the presence of a person who will be photographing the event, as for the participant the illusion is impossible to perceive directly. It can be seen only in the recorded image. Eventualisation is part of the reception of anamorphoses and their ludic nature leads to their recommendation as tourist attractions and use in the promotion of cities⁹, sometimes also as in advertising products or corporations¹⁰. However, their

⁷ It is also possible to read it by means of a convex polished surface, e.g.: a convex mirror, a cylinder or a sphere.

⁸ There are also anamorphoses using some part of the environment by annexing it into their space.

⁹ The huge mural by Ryszard Paprocki, in the market of the town of Wieliczka in Poland famous for its salt mine, is a good example here

¹⁰ Currently, the largest painting of this kind is Reebok CrossFit: 3D Street Art by “Joe and Max” in London.

participation in the creation of urban space is debatable. Only some refer to their surroundings in terms of form and content, they can actually appear anywhere where there is a bit of flat surface and they look the same everywhere too¹¹.

It is worth mentioning, however, that anamorphoses are often created in the chalk painting technique, which has a very long tradition. Such pavement painting accompanied religious processions in Italy in the sixteenth century¹², and itinerant painters travelled from festival to festival¹³. Currently this tradition is recreated (not necessarily by restoring its religious character) by organising worldwide chalk art festivals that become an important local event. This type of events affect, even for a short period of time, space, turning it into a large painting workshop, where every recipient can follow the process of creating paintings which, though often shoddy, are surprising in terms of their technique. It is a type of art that invites the recipient not to co-create or to “use” and authenticate the illusion, but to accompany, comment and admire. Graffiti jams, where one can see the creation of graffiti and murals live, have a similar impact on the audience, but the accompanying hip-hop music and the smell of spray lead to the situation in which not all pedestrians react to them with acceptance. In the case of chalk paintings, recipients are also fascinated by the ephemeral nature of this type of art, which requires considerable effort, yet lasts only till the first rain.

ENVIRONMENTAL ART

Street art is often called environmental art. This work applies to a certain place, uses and changes this place and is closely linked to it. Every artist devises his or her own strategy of operation in the urban space and there is no way one can enumerate all of these strategies (photo 23). Each example can thus be separately considered in terms of the relationship with the elements of space. At the same time, it should be added that street art artists do not have urban planning or architectural ambitions, they do not make momentous projects in order to cardinaly change space, their actions are marginal, trivial, mocking,

¹¹ Anamorphoses are often created on an artificial surface, possible to move to another location.

¹² Kurt Wenner traces the origins of this tradition to an even earlier period – to ancient celebrations and military parades in honour of rulers and victors. Compare: Wenner (2011).

¹³ The painters were called “madonnari” due to the Marian theme of their paintings. This tradition is still alive in some Italian cities. Compare: Nalin, Felice (2000).

even if in the topics of their works they take on socially weighty problems, their forms are impermanent and ephemeral¹⁴. The artist behind the alias of Fra. Biancoshock even calls his actions “ephemeralism”¹⁵. The scale of works created by street artists, however, may be very large, in the literal sense, as a format, as well as in the metaphorical one – as the scale of the phenomenon, measured by its popularity (brand awareness) of a given artist. In both cases we are dealing with the relationship to space. Large format works, murals or glued on photographs and graphics occupying large surfaces, dominate their surroundings. Minor works such as stickers, stencils and tags through their reproducibility and haunting presence in many areas of the world make the impression of shrinking space, characteristic of globalisation¹⁶. On the other hand, strategies of “interventions” are probably the closest to the surroundings, as they touch specific sites and insignificant, “single-purpose” items.

Let us look at the example of large format art. Another chapter in this book is devoted to the impact of murals on the urban space and their potential, I therefore

¹⁴ Their strength, however, is the Internet, where they lead a second life circulating among thousands of portals of artists and lovers of this type of art. It may even be said that through their intense existence on the Net, they create a false picture of cities. Accumulation of images and maps with marked locations of murals give the illusion that this type of art is everywhere, that cities are marked by it. On the other hand, when they are viewed on the Internet, there is no possibility of understanding their relationship with the place.

¹⁵ On Fra.Biancoshock’s website, one can read that: “Ephemeralism has the purpose of producing works of art that have to exist briefly in space but limitlessly in time through the photography, the video and the media”. And this is the real space in which these works function. See <http://www.biancoshock.com/about.html>, accessed 10.12.2015.

¹⁶ It is characteristic of the culture of convergence in which all over the world the same images appear, transforming our world view point by wandering through different media. By the way, it is worth noting that the paintings free themselves from the intentions of their creators circling between different types of media, primarily due to their recipients – media users. They become co-creators. It is worth recalling here the explanations provided by Henry Jenkins, a convergence culture theorist: “This circulation of media content – across different media systems, competing media economies and national borders – depends heavily on consumers, active participation. (...) convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content” (Jenkins 2006: 3). Street art images are not only circulated in the press, on television and on the Internet, but they become parts of applications and computer games (e.g.: “The Love Letter” by Aryz appears in the game called “Devil May Cry”).

suggest to examine another example, but equally significant¹⁷ – the work by the artist hiding behind the alias of JR. He specialises in black-and-white portrait photography, which in large format is pasted on buildings and other objects (e.g.: bridges, warehouses, trains, lorries), completely changing their meaning. Socially sensitive, similarly to many artists working in the urban space, through his art he touches upon the most sensitive social issues. One of the most moving projects is the one called *Women Are Heroes*, which was implemented in six of the poorest places in the world¹⁸. In Brazilian and Korean slums, staircases, on house walls, roofs and on crumbling walls, he pasted huge photos of women living in these neighbourhoods.hovels cobbled together out of nothing suddenly became transparent, revealing their inhabitants. Cropped faces, sometimes only the eyes, the size of entire houses or ten-meter-long stairs meant that space had been personified. In the slums that look like organic creations of insects, an anonymous man gets lost in narrow streets without any geometric order, among small houses sprouting one of the other, without any distinguishing features or free space. The portraits turned the whole area into a person. The scale of the relationship between man and space changed. In the case of JR's projects, the images are so dominant that we actually lose a sense of space, distance and scale.

The opposite strategy has been adopted by the artist with the alias of Evol: he decreases the scale of space and deprives it of human presence. His monochrome stencils representing the architecture of East Berlin housing estates¹⁹ create, as in the park of miniatures, buildings, streets and even whole neighbourhoods – deserted spaces made of concrete, in the form of outdoor installations as well as works displayed in galleries²⁰. As noted by Tristan Manco, Evol's art is "inspired by

¹⁷ Compare: W. Kazimierska-Jerzyk, *Aesthetic Energy of an Ordinary Place*.

¹⁸ Sierra Leone (Bo City), Liberia (Monrovia), Kenya (Kiberya), Brazil (The Moro de Providentia – favela in Rio de Janeiro), India (Jaipur), Cambodia (Phnom Penh). The project ended with the launching from Port of Le Havre (France) of a container ship pasted with huge photographs of women's eyes. As we can read on the website of the artist, it was a response to the request of the photographed women: "make my story travel with you". *Women Are Heroes* is ending with a ship leaving a port, with a huge image, which turns microscopic after a few moments, with the idea of these women who stay in their villages and face difficulties in the regions torn by wars and poverty facing the infinity of the ocean". See: <http://www.jr-art.net/projects/women-are-heroes-le-havre>.

¹⁹ In 2012, he also created a work in and about Warsaw (Compare: *Warsaw Climate*, <http://evoltaste.com/works/warsaw-climate/category:Studio%20Works>).

²⁰ Thus, he is reluctant to call himself a street artist. Compare: *Interview with Evol by Ana Finel Honigman*, . See: http://evoltaste.com/content/3-press/4-interview-magazine-blog/evol_interviewmag_2009.pdf, accessed 10.12.2015.

architecture, which he sees as a mirror for society” (Manco 2014). In contrast to JR, Evol neither humanises the created space nor “warms its image” by covering its with the portrait of a “human face”, but rather reveals its soulfulness. The actions taken in the urban space, such as the transformation of electric boxes and other technical elements into blocks of flats, underscore how we disappear in the space planned according to utopian or pragmatic ideas. Quite often he creates by repetition mini spaces in the real space of housing estates. He calls his own art site-specific²¹.

My work on the street is site-specific. When creating art on the street, you are putting your work in a surrounding your “audience” is familiar with, but wouldn’t expect to have function as an art space. The downside is that you’re excluded from the reactions. The only feedback you get is when learning whether a piece was destroyed. And you are very limited in materials that you can use. You are especially limited with time. Time is what I have when working on a piece for a gallery. Then I can use a different language because I am liberated from the limitations on the street, and because I know that my audience is already primed and focused. This enables me to direct attention to different things (Honigman 2009).

However, most artists operating in the urban space do not create such consistent and systematic works oriented towards showing the macroscopic perspective of space (a kind of city landscape) but instead devote his or her attention to detail, usually insignificant. On the official website of the artist called Oakoak, we can read: “His work consists essentially in finding the imperfections in the streets or on the walls and try to play with them”²². It is a strategy characteristic of street art, which brings to mind, on the one hand, child’s imagination reaching freely beyond the real world of things with their established forms, functions and meanings, and on the other hand, the technique recommended by the greatest artists and used to exercise the imagination, consisting in seeking out real images in spots on the wall²³. Having fun with forms – such “pranks” as painting

²¹ Miwon Kwon distinguishes between site-specific art and site-oriented art. The first type of art “initially took the site as an actual location, a tangible reality, its identity composed of a unique contribution of physical elements”. The latter is related to “spatial extension” and refers not only to the physical place but also to “social condition” and “knowledge, intellectual exchange or cultural debate” (Kwon 2014: 27, 29).

²² See: <http://www.oakoak.fr/oakoak-street-artist/>, accessed 10.12.2015.

²³ “As our friend Botticello remarks [...] by throwing a sponge impregnated with various colours against a wall, it leaves some spots upon it, which may appear like a landscape. It is true also that a variety of compositions may be seen in such spots according to the disposition of mind with which they are considered. Such as heads of

a moustache on the face of an aunt in a family photo, is the easiest way to explore space and accentuate one's own presence. Witty and sometimes coarse, original and sometimes not very sophisticated, trivial activities involving the painting or pasting of images on typical, "single-purpose" items such as handrails, stairs, road signs and poles, streetlights, litterbins and fire hydrants change these objects into slides for dwarfs or toothed monsters. Encountering such simple jokes, a passer-by, briefly thrown off the routine use of urban space, sees surreal, alternative spaces. Oakoak catalogues his work under such slogans as: Fiches industrielles, Life Is a Game, Alive, Animals, On the Road, which indicates not only the places where he leaves traces of his interventions, but also strategies of action. The frivolous nature of most street art results in the situation when the space in which they are located loses its seriousness, is deprived of coherence (objects with specific functions become something else). At the same time, however, the site where this kind of joke – prank – appears becomes familiar and closer, trivial objects take on individuality²⁴. It is worth quoting the words of Ewa Rewers, who compares the person of bricoleur in *The Savage Mind* of Claude Levi-Strauss (Levi-Strauss 1966: 19–22) to the researcher of urban cultural spaces:

The lack of centre, the prerequisite of a free play, establishes all sorts of tensions between the bricoleur and the history of the city. On the one hand, it prepares a repertoire of resources and useful tools used by the bricoleur. On the other hand, the bricoleur's action consists in rejecting its order, narrative, continuity and privileged points of reference, without any particular justification. Plunging constantly in the warehouses of the history of urban space, the bricoleur borrows exhibits considered useful at a given moment but uses them in accordance with his or her own idea. In other words, he or she does not care about maintaining coherence of the historical story about the city, to which the said exhibits belong in their own actions, or about proposing his or her own pattern of their use, an equivalent of the centre (Rewers 2014: 64).

Doesn't a street artist act in a similar manner? Not caring about the coherence of space, taking from it what has just caught his or her eye and processing it in the free play of imagination? Fra.Biancoshock paints garbage golden, makes

men, various animals, battlers, rocky scenes, seas, clouds, woods and the like. It may be compared to the sound of bells which may seem to say what ever we choose to imagine" (Leonardo da Vinci: 199).

²⁴ According to the survey which we conducted in 2014, residents of the city of Lodz often talk about the townhouses on which murals are painted that they become more familiar (Gralińska-Toborek, Kazimierska-Jerzyk 2014: 268). Probably also smaller forms of street art can cause the place to be more recognised and internalised by people.

fountains out of litter, uses helium to inflate garbage bags and distributes them as balloons and creates small installations out of discarded toys. Interestingly, works of this type are not set on perfection of workmanship, often seem very amateurish, almost childishly simple, temporary, provisional, so that we feel that everybody can create them with just a bit of courage and imagination²⁵.

SPACE FOR ALL?

Street art therefore makes not only a visual but also mental difference, which makes us perceive the public space differently. This is obviously a matter studied by sociologists who see in street art, especially graffiti, a strategy to reclaim space (Duchowski, Sekuła 2011). The political potential of art in the public space has been used in many places in the world where strong ongoing conflicts exist: in Northern Ireland (McCormick, Jarman 2005), in Spain and Latin America (Chaffee 1993), Turkey (Aksel, Olgun 2014), Poland during the communist era (Rutkiewicz, Sikorski 2011) or Palestine (Parry 2011)²⁶. From the point of view of aesthetics, one can talk about democratisation of art which happens through street art. Graffiti and then street art have developed on the margins of mainstream art and even in opposition to it (Gralińska-Toborek 2009). The increasing popularity of street art means that space is no longer limited only to presenting official or commercial messages but also opens to competing beliefs, attitudes, emotions and ways of expressing them.

To explain how aesthetic expressions compete with each other in the urban space, I wish to recall very specific views of two places in Lodz – the city of my birth and residence (hence I know the places very well and often look at them from different perspectives). The first is the view dominated by the mural by Morik, painted in 2014 on the wall of a revitalised townhouse (photo 5). The photo of the building is taken from above, from the opposite townhouse, hence it is visible how the mural is surrounded by other images and inscriptions, which is not seen so clearly from the perspective of a passer-by or a driver. The tasteful mural shows a girl sitting in a room, next to her there is a classic phone with the handset set aside and bottles in the background, as in a purist still life, similar

²⁵ There are also extremely complex and aesthetically sophisticated works in the streets, requiring skill and time. This is not, however, a prerequisite for them to be classified as art.

²⁶ In the political context, Lyman G. Chaffee recognised street art as a mass medium (Chaffee 1993: 8).

to works by Ozenfant. Her face, however, causes anxiety, as it is half distorted, with an unseeing eye²⁷. Brown and green colours harmonise with the renovated tenement house, its composition repeats the shape of the wall. That is all we can say about the image as a separate representation. It does not remain on its own in this space. At the back, on the higher side wall of the adjacent building, we can see graffiti in the classical silver style²⁸, but it is not an incomprehensible tag but the inscription: “poverty fights”. The message, quite unusual for graffiti, is so clear that it needs no explanation and in the context of this particular street where not all the buildings have been revitalised, it begins to reveal the masking function of the mural by Morik. On the left side, on the adjacent wall, there are also illegal tags, each in a different style. They are, of course, smaller and primitive in form, but in some ways they are superior to the legally executed mural as they are called “roof tops”, graffiti painted in an inaccessible place, so they are worthy of the community’s admiration. From the perspective of a passer-by, often looking at his or her feet and not on the façades of buildings, one can see next to the mural on the wall an electrical box with a red spray painted stencil – showing the façade of the building²⁹. It is one of the works in the framework of the project called *Small Lodz Townhouses for Tuwim (Małe kamienice Łodzi dla Tuwima)* organised by the For Black and Red Letter Days Alike Foundation (Fundacja Na co dzień i od święta)³⁰, which uses street art strategies for educational and commemorative purposes³¹. There are about a dozen such colourful stencils in the city centre and although they may resemble the works by Evol, they do not have a critical potential, rather a decorative one. Beside all these paintings, there is another message, readable only for residents of the city. On the metal fence next to the wall with the mural, one can see an inscription – an emblem – a composition of three letters LKS, which is an abbreviation of the name of Lodz Sports Club – typical graffiti made by sports fans, performing a function similar

²⁷ This deformation is typical for street art, which – signalling its subcultural origins also in the field of aesthetics, makes transgressions. Hence, the term “trespass” is related to street art (or urban art), though this trespassing is usually seen in the sphere of law and society rules (McCormick, Schiller, Schiller, Seno 2010).

²⁸ The most classic graffiti style, simple lettering, a silver-filled black contour.

²⁹ Specifically, the building situated at 42 Struga.

³⁰ The project is based on painting on the boxes stencils presenting façades of Lodz historic buildings, this work was created in the framework of the Year of Tuwim – the Polish poet who lived in Lodz. Compare: <http://nacodzieniodswieta.pl/>, accessed 10.12.2015.

³¹ Portraits of children from the Lodz ghetto based on war photographs painted on the walls are another project of the Foundation.

to the American gang graffiti, marking the site and warning who the boss is. And it is this inscription that makes us realise that we deal not only with surfaces that are painted over by different types of images, but that we are in the space that is inhabited, appropriated and fought for in the struggle in which aesthetics is also a weapon.

The other view revealing space as a field of competing images is the photograph of the intersection of Kosciuszki and Wigury (photo 22). There are two townhouses there with exposed side walls filled with paintings. On the left, we can see a wall with the old mural painted by Andrzej Feliks Szumigaj³² in 1986. It is a typical mural of the communist period, when state-owned enterprises commissioned avant-garde artists to create quasi advertising in the form of murals (Stępień 2010; Gralińska-Toborek, Kazimierska-Jerzyk 2014: 162). Hence, we can see an abstract painting in the op-art style with the inscription: ZPB (Zakłady Przemysłu Bawełnianego) im. Armii Ludowej (People's Army Cotton Industry Plant)³³. Today no-one can read the message of these ads, the factory is long gone and no-one cares about the old murals, believing them to be a relic of the old regime, though now they have started to enjoy certain popularity³⁴. On the wall, we can also see billboards the function of which does not need to be explained and the ground floor part of the wall is occupied by clashing signboards and advertisements of the shops and service companies contained herein. There also appear graffiti inscriptions here painstakingly painted over by the owners of the premises. This view is a good example of the metaphor of the palimpsest, often used by city researchers (Knox). This wall is the real palimpsest, the recovered, multi-layer plane, whose first text can be seen under the other texts. The wall of the townhouse on the other side of the street, where a mural in the graffiti style was painted during the Outline Colour Festival in 2010, completes the view. The image is a fake wall which bears the obverse and reverse of a postcard from Lodz, with elements of its architecture, the city flag and the inscription: TATS CRU THE MURAL KINGS SOUTH BRONX, NY USA instead of the address. Actually, however, this mural can be rarely seen in its entirety as it is often covered

³² See: http://www.murale.mnc.pl/m_020.htm, accessed 10.12.2015.

³³ The political nature of this mural manifests itself in the fact that the only clear message is the name of the patron of the production plant (sic!) – the People's Army. It was the army fully controlled by the Soviet Union, operating on the Polish territory since 1945.

³⁴ Currently there is a discussion on what to do with the murals, which often have high artistic quality. Bartosz Stępień founded the online portal which seeks to catalogue the nearly 200 murals that were or still are in Lodz. Compare: www.murale.mnc.pl, accessed 10.12.2015.

up with large-format ads. Thus, we have a visual phenomenon so characteristic of the post-communist Poland, where the old mixes with the new, the commercial covers the political, the legal mural imitating the wall absorbs illegal graffiti and competes with it, and all of this together results in the impression of chaos, not democratisation of visual space but a kind of anarchy. A sort of urban *horror vacui*, as if the fear of empty space tires the eye, makes one stop seeing the space, especially when we do not perceive any connection between the images and any reference to the place, i.e. architecture, spatial divisions or even urban greenery³⁵.

Art in the public space can therefore, depending on the scale and its relation to the site, contribute to the development of space and its better reception as well as to its concealment and interference with its reception. The relationship between art and space also depends on the physical point from which a viewer looks at it. It is worth remembering that the majority of urban landscapes can be seen only from a specific vantage point. Large format works (e.g.: works by JR or murals) look completely different in the pictures on the Internet than during the immediate experience. Murals or other large format works seen from afar, from above or from a broad perspective seem to fill the space, cooperate with it or even build it. Photographs taken at the request of artists and various organisations, sometimes even municipalities, show panoramas in which works of art seem to be an integral part of space, complementing it in places which remained unsaid, visually poor, for example, blank side walls of houses. It should be noted, however, that a user of urban space, constantly mobile, even if temporarily sitting in a café chair, does not see as much as a well-prepared photographer who finds the best viewing angle on high floors of houses or on hoists. Kinaesthetic experience is associated with moving away and drawing nearer, obscuring and uncovering, fragmentation and foreshortening. The urban space cannot, however, be identical to the gallery space, as some of the promoters of street art would want³⁶. Large format art can help in exploring space though as it invites us to come closer or move away. Small formats, on the other hand, force us to focus on detail, distracting us from the surrounding space and drawing attention only to themselves. Apart from this purely visual sphere, street art also encourages deeper reflection on the

³⁵ The works of the artists (e.g.: Vinnie, Zoltron, Oakoak) that include in their works trees, bushes or tufts of grass are very interesting. Every time, apart from evoking a smile, they bring the awareness of the presence of nature in the urban space.

³⁶ The idea of urban gallery was created, among others, in Lodz (Urban Forms Gallery) and in Gdansk in the housing estate of Zaspas (Murals Gdansk Zaspas Monumental Painting Collection. Compare: <http://culture.pl/en/article/muralopolis-how-lodz-became-the-promised-land-for-spectacular-street-art> or <http://muralegdanskzaspas.pl/the-collection/>, accessed 10.12.2015.

city which is inhabited, used and appropriated, forcing us see its space as social, political and cultural. Street art is in fact a distinctive trace of very individual human activity.

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