

Summary

The Games Between Art and Architecture: Modern Affinities and Contemporary Integrations

The book *The Games Between Art and Architecture: Modern Affinities and Contemporary Integrations* addresses the problems of art theory with a particular emphasis on the place of architecture in modern systems of the fine arts and contemporary classifications of the visual arts. The inspiration to take up these studies stems from contemporary artistic practices within which can be distinguished a marked interest in architecture and methods of architectural representation. Contemporary integrations are shown against a background of old affinities, especially against the backgrounds of eighteenth-century criticism of the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine, of modern systems of the fine arts, often marginalising architecture, of the nineteenth-century postulate of the synthesis of the fine arts and the concept of the integration of the arts from the 1950s and 1960s.

In the first part, “The History of Art, Architecture and Contemporary Art Practices”, some of the problems associated with the displacement of certain methodological paradigms within the discipline of art history are outlined. One of the key issues emerging in this part of the book is the question of the extent to which the history of art, which in recent decades has seemed to be a discipline aimed principally at exploring the image in its extended field of significance (for example, as Hans Belting’s anthropology of images or visual culture studies), has preserved and developed capacities for interpreting the arts of actual space, to which architecture, sculpture and its contemporary variants belong. The activities of contemporary artists that have drawn inspiration from architecture emerge against a background of a discord between the history of art and the history of architecture, hence a few voices critical of the divergence of these research disciplines are recalled. The first part of the book also highlights the issue of how experiencing visual arts and architecture are dependent on the medium – we look at paintings,

but we walk around a sculpture and enter a building. In the project of the renewal of the history of art as a science of space, the practices of looking and “going around” play an important role; in this context I return to the promising topics of the image theory presented by the art historian and philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman and to Martin Heidegger’s concepts of *Umgang* (“dealing”, or a “going around”) and the “aroundness” of the environment. The history of art as a research discipline does not only stand in relation to images and the possibilities of their intertextual reading. The proposal for the renewal of the history of art as a science of space is also confronted with the contemporary demand for a “spatial turn” – presented in the 1990s by the American geographer and urban planner, Edward W. Soja – and taken up by many contemporary geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, cultural theorists and media researchers. The spatial turn, as was also the case for the linguistic and pictorial turns, refers to a change in research perspectives. The renewal of the history of art as a science of space contains a postulate for a balanced proportion in the study of image, language and space within our discipline.

In the second part of the work, “Architecture and Art: Modern Affinities and Limitations”, I develop some of the topics outlined in the essay *Architecture’s Expanded Field* by the architectural historian Anthony Vidler, dedicated to blurring the boundaries between the visual and architectural arts. Vidler’s reflections are also a criticism of the autonomy of architecture, which he considers to be one of the consequences of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s determination of the boundaries between poetry and painting, thereby inflicting a blow to the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine. Following in the footsteps of this reflection, I see the contemporary integrations of the visual arts and architecture not so much as a phenomenon of the beginning of the twenty-first century, but as a consequence of a realignment in the history of the affinity of art’s two main currents, defined by the literary scholar Edward Balcerzan as “Horatian” and “Lessingian”. The main problem considered in this part of the book is the changing position of architecture in the systems of the fine arts outlined by Charles Batteux and Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century. Following the path designated by the “Horatian stream”, i.e. seeking kinship between the arts, rather than their autonomy, I analyse two concepts: *architecture parlante* and *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which in a very distinctive way determine the status

of architecture in relation to other arts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The idea of *architecture parlante*, elaborated at the end of the eighteenth century among others through the concept of architectural character, was born at a time when architecture, oscillating in aesthetic systems between the fine arts and the mechanical arts, aspired to the status of fine art and thus claimed proximity to the arts of eloquence (*l'art de parler*), poetry and painting. Contemporary scholars and critics engaged in closing the gap between the visual arts and architecture highlight the importance of the nineteenth-century concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* for the designation of the paths of synaesthesia and the integration of arts, or even for determining the contemporary post-medium condition. *Gesamtkunstwerk*, just like the notion of *architecture parlante*, is a concept that undergoes continual transcriptions, i.e. it is ascribed to various areas of the arts. This concept, initially functioning in relation to Richard Wagner's musical drama, also came to encompass modern concepts of art integration, especially those led by architecture. An example is the view of the nineteenth century metropolis as a total work of art, as well as the Bauhaus program from 1919, in which Walter Gropius stated that "the ultimate aim of all visual arts is the complete building". Examples of the transcription of *Gesamtkunstwerk* to contemporary artistic and architectural practice are Harald Szeemann's exhibition "Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk", a criticism of the "Wagner effect", or the excessive monumentalisation of contemporary art and museum space as undertaken by the artist Robert Morris, or the citing of ideas of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in contemporary theories of art installations.

In the third part of the book, "Architecture and Art: Contemporary Integrations and Transformations", I take as a starting point contemporary reflection on "the expanded field" of sculpture and architecture, drawing again on Anthony Vidler's essay *Architecture's Expanded Field* and Rosalind E. Krauss' article, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*. In the comparison of these two texts, a striking act of substitution emerges when, at the beginning of twenty-first century, it is architecture and not sculpture that becomes the reference point for other visual arts. Moreover, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the distinction between architecture and the visual arts undergoes a weakening. Both architects and artists define architecture as art. In comparison with modern classifications of the fine arts, defining architecture as art

indicates a significant revaluation of architectural practice. Moving architecture in the direction of art, and particularly its entry into the space of galleries and museums, has contributed to the “expansion of the field” of architecture. The huge role of exhibitions in shaping the contemporary image of the integration of the visual arts and architecture is also emphasised by new trends in curatorial practices, such as the art of architectural exhibitions in which importance is attached not only to the presentation of photographs, models and mock-ups, but also to the form of architectural installations, and to virtual and real walks around the city. One of the main directions in the contemporary dialogue of the arts are sculptural-architectural activities. As an art historian Sigfried Giedion states, in the 1960s “architecture approaches sculpture, and sculpture approaches architecture”. The problem discussed in the third section of the book is that of architectural sculpture, a term whose definition underwent a significant change in the 1960s. In the traditional view, the concept of architectural sculpture is defined in the history of art as the sculptural decoration of buildings, and is strictly subordinated to architectural structures. However, in the twentieth century a radical redefinition of the term can be seen. Architectural sculpture comes to refer more often to the works of artists, installations, site-specific works or works/interventions in the public space. For scholars of the modern dialogue between sculpture and architecture, the trend of minimalism is particularly interesting. The term “architecturalness” in the interpretation of sculptures by the minimalists of the 1960s is, for example, introduced by Michael Benedikt in his review of several New York exhibitions “Sculpture as Architecture: New York Letter”. At the same time, Robert Morris published in *Artforum* “Notes on Sculpture”, in which he determines the relationship between the sculptural object, the experiencing subject and space. The monumental scale of the sculptures of the 1960s and the 1970s, which could compete with the scale of architecture, was also the subject of a reflection by artists such as Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen who undertook collaboration with the architect Frank O. Gehry. Redefining the concept of architectural sculpture in the contemporary discourse about the visual arts is not the only trace showing a special proximity of sculpture and architecture. Phenomena such as environments, installations, site-specific art and art in public spaces also suggest a blurring of the boundaries between architecture as the art of real space and other spatial artistic activities.

A significant moment of the blurring between these boundaries is site-specific art and art in public spaces. These are notions whose meaning has significantly changed from indicating simply “a sculpture in the open air” inserted in a town square to revive city spaces through artistic and architectural interventions. In search of the territory common to contemporary visual arts and architecture, promising threads can be found in the texts of Tom Finkelpearl and Rosalyn Deutsche who present the problems of public art against a background of changes in post-war urban planning and architecture. Particularly interesting is the moment of crystallisation in the 1980s when public art came to be determined as an art of architecture. Architecture, in this context, was related to useful projects in the city created by artists. However, Deutsche draws a distinction between architectural art and critical public art. Architectural art means the “insertion of useful furniture in the space of the city”, while the essence of public art is political intervention. In other words, in the context of debates about public art, a drawing together of art and architecture was criticised as an example of the reduction of art to utilitarian purposes. In this work, the proximity of art and architecture is considered primarily from the perspective of the visual arts, which, while retaining a critical potential, plays with architecture.

The fourth part of the book, “Visual Arts and Architecture: In Search of Common Ground”, is devoted to the interpretation of selected examples of contemporary artistic practices in the light of the preceding sections on various aspects of the affinity and integration of the arts. In the fourth part, I go back to the concept of a play between the visual arts and architecture. The concept of a “play” is not used by accident: I refer to the term *Ineinanderspiel* (“interplay”), which appears in Martin Heidegger’s essay *Kunst und Raum* devoted to sculpture, as well as to Georges Perec’s book *Espèces d’espaces* encouraging the idea of playing with space in everyday life. This part of the discussion contains an analysis of selected works by Gordon Matta-Clark, a celebrated figure of New York art scene of the 1970s. The works of this architect, educated at the Cornell School of Architecture, not only challenge the boundaries between architecture and art, photography and film, performance and installation, but also establish a particular direction of affinities, from architecture to art. Matta-Clark’s interventions criticise modern functionalism, post-war American urban planning and the autonomy of art which is cut off from everyday life. In the fourth part of the book,

there is also an attempt to show some of the specificity of the Polish inspiration on architecture. On the one hand, the activities of Polish artists entering the field of architecture are part of a noted interest in contemporary architectural modernism or make reference to traditional modes of architectural representation, such as the model or mock-up. On the other hand, the specificity of the architectural inspiration in Polish art is connected with Poland's particular architectural landscape, defined by block-housing as an unwanted legacy of modernism. The making of a catalogue of works by artists drawing on architectural inspiration or the classification of the modern varieties of visual arts is not the aim of this work. Rather, the purpose of the descriptions of projects realised by Katarzyna Józefowicz, Alicja Karska, Aleksandra Went, Jarosław Kozakiewicz, Maciej Kurak, Monika Sosnowska or Julita Wójcik is to raise questions about the extent, source and nature of the relationships between the contemporary visual arts and architecture. These questions are grouped around three major themes: art's games with architectural modernity, art playing with architectural scale and games with the depiction of architecture and the revitalisation of public spaces.

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