

Painting in the exhibition space, interactions

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Abstract: The article is based on the author's search for the relationship between painting and architecture and experiencing the space in the context of using its potential for painting exhibition. This is a summary of research carried out in 2017–2019 at the Faculty of Architecture of Poznań University of Technology, entitled "Artwork in architecture".

This project aimed to explore the relationship between art and architectural space. Participation in the collective exhibitions, as a part of the first research stage, and the implementation of individual exhibitions in the second stage of the project, have become the basis for author's decisions in this field. The research findings were included in two monographs by a two-person research team, made up of prof. dr hab. Andrzej Maciej Łubowski and dr hab. Joanna Stefańska, titled "SPACES, artwork in architecture" and "RELATIONS, artwork in architecture", PUT Publishing House 2019, 2020. Searching for the best means of recording meaning and emotions connected with the theme of landscape undertaken by the author as well as the thoroughly analysed issue of the functioning of paintings series in the context of the exhibition space, translate into the process of exploration a relationship between artwork and architecture. The exhibition of paintings and selection of proper exhibition space affect an artwork's reception. The exhibition's design should exhaust the relationship between contemplation and dialogue in both the painting space and the broader architectural context. It can be stated that the mutual relationship of the artwork and the architectural space surrounding it affects the artwork's meaning and aesthetics as well as the architecture's perception.

Keywords: painting exhibition, artwork, architecture, site specific, interaction

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the problem of space has been crucial in both architecture and the visual arts. The awareness of the mutual relations between art and architecture can positively influence the design of architectural objects as well as artistic creativity in visual arts [1].

The article summarizes the two stages of research carried out as part of the research cycle entitled "Artwork in architecture" carried out in the Department of Drawing, Sculpture and Visual Arts, currently the Institute of Interior Architecture and Industrial Design in the Faculty of Architecture of the Poznań University of Technology. Guidelines have been developed to insert a painting work into an architectural space with interiors of originally different functions than for exhibiting. The research demonstrated how the adaptation of such locations to host exhibitions could affect the perception of art and transform the perception of space.

Implementation of collective exhibitions as a method of searching for the relationship of artwork and architecture

As part of the first stage of the research, three exhibitions in the interiors of various types were organized: modern – in commercial spaces of the Skalar Office Center Gallery in Poznań, in a post-industrial space which is the former potato processing plant Zakłady Przemysłu Ziemniaczanego Lubanta S.A. and historical – in the interiors of the “U Jezuitów” Gallery of the Cultural Integration Center in Poznań. The staging of exhibitions under the common title of “Spaces” in selected architectural objects assumed exploring of the relationship between artwork and architecture in essentially different spaces, where artists’ paintings, drawings, graphics and sculptures were presented. Academic teachers from the Department of Drawing, Painting, Sculpture and Visual Arts in the Faculty of Architecture of University of the Arts Poznań and The Szczecin Art Academy were invited to participate in the exhibitions. Participation in the collective exhibitions as part of the first stage of research, and the implementation of individual exhibitions in the second stage of the project, became the basis for the author’s decisions. The research findings in the form of analyses and conclusions together with photographic documentation of the completed exhibitions were included in the monographs by the two-person research team of prof. dr hab. A.M. Łubowski and dr hab. J. Stefańska, titled “Spaces, artwork in architecture” published by the PUT Publishing House in 2019 and “Relations, artwork in architecture” published by the PUT Publishing House in 2020.

The search for the relationship between an artwork and the architecture and experiencing an exhibition space by using its potential represented the basis for the original interpretation of the interaction between an art object and the exhibition space. The two-dimensional painting has become a model example of a spatial and aesthetic reference to architecture [2].

The first exhibition, entitled “Spaces I”, was held in April 2017 at the PBG Skalar Office Center Gallery in Poznań. The office building’s exhibition space occupies a large part of floor, constituting a standard open space usable volume, initially designed for future office use. The adjustable flow of natural light from outdoors through the installed roller blinds system indicated intentional decisions related to the selection and method of displaying the paintings. Four pictures hung freely and against the background of the roller blinds, acting as movable screens, created an installation that matched the exhibition’s backdrop in their colours. The interior architectural elements interacted directly with both the composition of the paintings and the exhibition arrangement of the painting cycle. This functional and technical procedure and the colours of the paintings, narrowed into gray and white, determined their position in the exhibition and incorporated architectural elements of the space found in the arranged exhibition [3]. The office space’s physical features made it possible to transform the perception of the space through the exhibition of artworks and a multi-directional analysis of this phenomenon in the context of changing the original function of the interior into an exhibition premise.

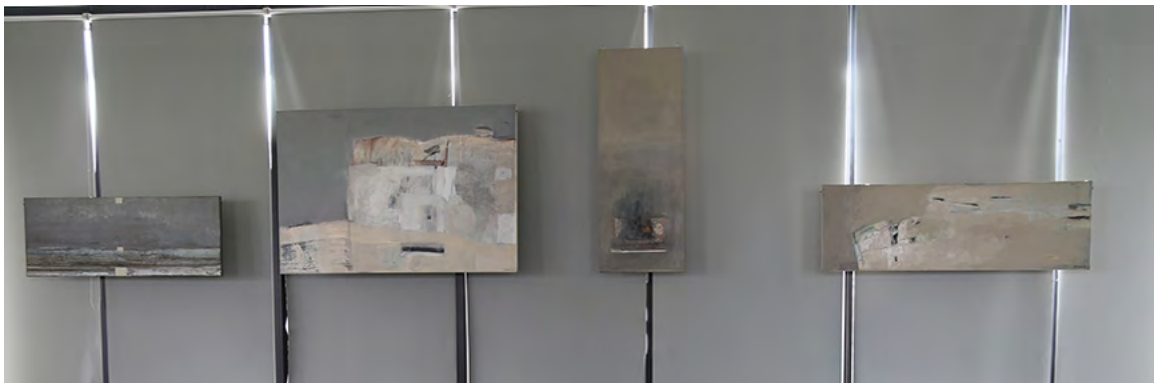


Fig. 1. Part of exhibition *Spaces I*, Skalar Gallery, 2017 J. Stefańska

Another exhibition within the “Spaces” series entitled “Spaces II” was held in July 2017 in a post-industrial facility, adapted for exhibition purposes [4]. The installation of paintings against the brick wall and partial covering of the windows enabled to take advantage of diffused light that emphasized the texture of the wall and

could capture a cohesive colour effect of the presented painting objects and the background. The alternative beauty of the post-industrial space with its unique, consummate colour pattern pushed the visitor to seek a coherence of the painting and its surroundings, the integrity of the language of painting and the exhibition space[6]. The interior space's abstract landscapes replaced the landscape outside the window, and the search for compositional, colour and graphic resonances, the closeness of a trace on the canvas with a drawing of the background, made it possible to obtain an exhibition effect appropriate to the place [7].



Fig. 2. Part of exhibition *Spaces II*, Lubanta SA, 2017 J. Stefańska

The exhibition entitled "Spaces III" realized in the "U Jezuitów" Gallery in September 2017 became another exhibition challenge. Two paintings from the "Landscape spaces" series were presented at the exhibition, and the exhibition approach took their presentation to a more intimate space, the former monastery library. The space divided by pilasters creates successive exhibition niches. The rhythmic repetition of the divisions allows the autonomy and distinctiveness of the interior fragments, which favours the display of artistic objects of various authorship and is particularly important when implementing the assumptions of the collective exhibition. The apparent autonomy and hermetic nature of the painting is not an obstacle in creating formal, compositional, ideological, or even more symbolic relationships resulting from its juxtaposition with architecture [7]. Painting allows one to enrich the architectural space through the narrative layer and painting means, therefore; it changes the space's semantics, and its perception is deepened on the conceptual and symbolic levels [9].



Fig. 3. Part of exhibition *Spaces III*, U Jezuitów Gallery, 2017 J. Stefańska

The realization of individual exhibitions as a method of searching for the relationship between an artwork and architecture

An individual painting exhibition titled “Joanna Stefańska – Painting” organized in “Gallery 33” in Ostrów Wlkp. in 2018 was a part of the assumptions of the second stage of the research project entitled “Artwork in architecture”. This was another attempt to confront an artistic work – painting with the exhibition space [9]. The presentation of a set of ten paintings from the “Landscape spaces” series in the interiors of the former granary, currently “Gallery 33” in Ostrów Wlkp. was the next step in the search for the relationship between the presented painting and the exhibition space. The architecture of the interior, where the structural elements define the main axis of space division in terms of the diversity of the background for the exhibition of art objects, into the white and black parts, favoured the exhibition arrangements, enabling the appropriate selection of images to the background colour. The black wall constituting the background for the exhibition of paintings in relation to the colours of the presented works favoured the intensification of colour in the painting, changing the perception of the level of colour saturation.



Fig. 4. Part of exhibition *Joanna Stefańska. Painting*, Gallery 33, 2018 J. Stefańska

The individual exhibition of paintings entitled “Voices”, realized as part of the second stage of the research project, took place in June 2019 at “U Jezuitów” Gallery in Poznań. “U Jezuitów” Gallery has spacious exhibition interiors, and the total exhibition area is 370 m², so it was reasonable to present a set of thirty paintings, which consisted of works painted over the years 2014 to 2020, from a painting series inspired by landscapes. The scale of the architectural object and the height of the interiors require well-thought-out exhibition concepts. The painting exhibition was divided into three parts, and the selection of paintings for the interior determined the amount of space for the exhibition, the colours and size of the paintings, as well as the quality of light in the exhibition space. The appropriate distribution, type and quality of artificial light were conducive to the perception of painting and enabled its most favourable reception. The smaller exhibition space, its intimacy and the divisions resulting from the interior architecture dictate the presentation of the paintings. Each of the exhibition niches becomes an autonomous space that creates a specific frame for the painting, and the plane of the walls divided by pilasters favours the presentation of paintings requiring a clear separation, so that the more complex in colour and narrative layers have optimal conditions for their undisturbed, autonomous reception within the exhibition. The impressive scale of the space of the main exhibition interior of “U Jezuitów” Gallery, the former chapel of Saint Jack (kaplica Św. Jacka), turned out to be an ideal place to display a set of paintings with a similar narrative and colour scheme. The main wall, several meters high, was the background for the painting exhibition. Paradoxically, it turns out that images require an appropriate architectural object that will complement their perception and that will enable their appropriate perception, building a new dimension of space [10]. The montage of paintings, while maintaining a distance from the background, spatialised

the exhibition. The pictures cast a shadow on the wall, which additionally strengthened the spatial character of the arrangement.

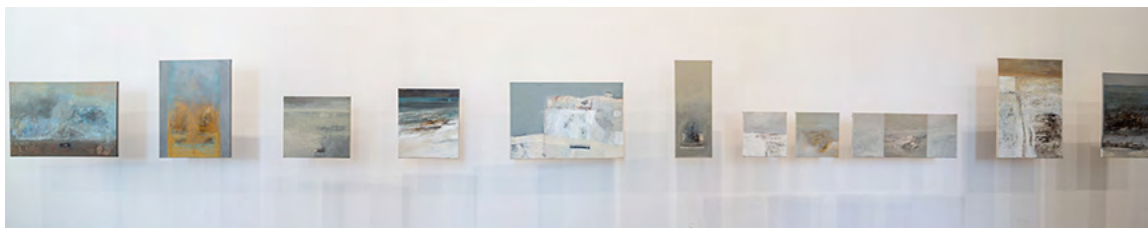


Fig. 5. Part of exhibition of paintings *Voices*, U Jezuitów Gallery, 2019 J. Stefańska



Fig. 6. Part of exhibition of paintings *Voices*, U Jezuitów Gallery, 2019 J. Stefańska

Architecture and fine art are close to each other, guaranteeing a harmony of forms. Elements of art and architecture, when appearing, create relations conducive to the reading of a visual work [11]. The arrangement of exhibitions together with the selection of specific paintings, the number of works presented, the type of installation and the choice of the place of exhibition in the interior made it possible to find two different aspects of the relationship between a painting and architecture, depending on the nature of the exhibition space. The monumental architecture of the “U Jezuitów” Gallery, its contemplative dimension and historical status gave special prestige to the exhibitions organized, while the intimate interiors of “Gallery 33” with a relatively small exhibition area and the height of the rooms, and the division of space through the presence of structural elements delineating zones in the interior, favoured building a direct relationship between the recipient – and the painting.

Conclusions

A painting requires an architectural object that complements it and enables its proper perception. Paradoxically, the reception of the same painting is fundamentally different depending on the interior in which it is located [12]. The space and light in an interior, its architecture, scale and character influence the perception of an artwork. The reception of a painting depends on the context in which it occurs, and both natural and

artificial light are the factors that define architecture. The perception of an artwork depending on the place of its presentation undergoes a full transformation. The exhibition space always determines the reception of a painting; similarly, an artwork influences the perception of space, becoming its integral component, bringing emotional content into the interior affecting the quality and character of the space. Both the classic space and that adapted to exhibition needs are transformed, and the presence of objects of art contributes to overcoming the neutral character of the surroundings and changes the perception of the space, the original function of which was not used to display art. The presence of objects of art influences the individualisation of space and assumes that the space is subordinated to the presented art objects. The space in which the picture functions may be an extension of the painting narration. Both the architecture of the building itself and the elements of interior architecture, along with its equipment, interact with the art object presented here. In the adaptation of non-obvious spaces, from the exhibition point of view, to the presentation of art, the use of the play of light, planes and the richness of structures creates new opportunities for the exhibition of an artwork. Changing the function of interiors, the original purpose of which did not assume their use for exhibition purposes, and their adaptation to the needs of art exhibitions, initiates exhibition projects that are surprising in their form, where the dialogue between an artistic object and space gains momentum. A painting in a space expands the scope of its impact, becoming a part of the architecture, a component, whereas the architectural space finds its continuum in the painting. The nature of the space influences the perception of a painting, enriching the painting narrative with new content. The tool that creates architectural space is light, and its proper distribution and quality affect the nature of the exhibition and the perception of art, revealing the new potential of space and creating opportunities for the visual reception of exhibitions.

Summary

The fields of art and architecture interact with each other, in which there is a harmonization of mutually complementary forms [13]. In conclusion, the mutual relations between the work of art and the surrounding architectural space affect not only the meaning and aesthetics of the work, but also the perception of architecture. Being aware of the above-mentioned relations gives the opportunity to enrich the reception of art and architecture.

References

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