

Piotr Kudelski

Summary of the doctoral dissertation

**"Contemporary commemorations in Poland, a study of the semantics of sculptural forms"**

Contemporary realizations of monuments and commemorations in Poland are subject to social evaluation, which causes a dispute between critics and apologists of these works. However, the two sides do not seem to be striving to understand each other. The author of the text suggests the need to find a common denominator for the creator and recipient of the work, regardless of their age, origin or views. The key question to be asked concerns the basics of the perception of the message conveyed in commemorations. According to the author, the most important thing for creating and understanding the message conveyed by monuments is to refer to the basic, common to all primary associations. Therefore, the study of the semantics of monument forms, apart from the analysis of known parameters defining a sculpture, such as its body, composition, texture or expression, also focuses on the perspective of the creator, referring to associations related to the perception of a child when he built his ideas about the world and shaped his picture. A child is an important recipient of cultural heritage and, although it is not always fully aware of the meaning of individual works of art, it is very important that it is able to read the message conveyed by the commemoration.

Monuments and commemorations are an important form of telling about the history of societies, nations and cultures. The aesthetic quality, shape and sculptural form as well as the readability of the content of these monuments reflect the state of mind of the society that creates them. The aim of the presented work is to examine the condition of sculptural creativity, its communicativeness and the way of conveying content. The work is a theoretical supplement to the author's previous activities as an architect. The basis for defining the criteria and the conducted research are the empirical experiences of the author-architect, which took place during the design and implementation of his own monuments and commemorations.

The doctoral dissertation discusses the readability of the monument-commemoration and the semantics of the sculpture, which may depend on the

ideological assumptions adopted at the design stage, referring to the simplest and primary associations shaped at subsequent stages of human-child development. The author notes that a mature and shaped artist, if he takes into account the emotional states of childhood in the design process, has a chance to reach both the child-recipient and the older recipient, in whom "a child from years ago" is stuck.

The research conducted as part of the work focuses on the latest monuments and commemorations implemented in Poland in urban spaces and towns in the 21st century, i.e. in the period from 2000 to 2021. The method of analysis adopted in the work was to examine all 378 monuments in terms of the semantics of sculptural forms, elements of the child's perception in the message of the monument, the readability of the message of the monument in the context of the child's perception, and the interpretation of the meanings contained in the message of the monument. A semantic analysis of each monument was also performed.

An element of the research was also a comparative analysis. 20 monuments and commemorations selected on the basis of a research experiment conducted among students of the Non-Public Model Primary School in Nieporęt.

After collecting the material - 378 - monuments erected in the Republic of Poland in the 21st century and drawing up their characteristics, the criteria for the selection of these commemorations were specified, which were subjected to a detailed analysis and supported the assumed thesis.

The percentage share of all sculptural forms in the entire examined material was as follows: seated figures 26%, benches 21%, standing figures 18%, boulders 8%, busts 6%, obelisks 6%, equestrian statues 2%, columns 1%, other 12 %.

Research has shown what children are guided by when choosing the most readable monuments, according to them. The conclusions from the research confirmed the thesis that the legibility of the commemoration monument results from the ideological assumptions adopted at the design stage, referring to the perception of a child who will always choose the obvious association of a dog, cat, horse, a bench with a figure. For a child, the most attractive form of a monument will be a literal quote from reality: a dog, a kitten, a knight on a horse... but should all memorial monuments take this form?

In the second stage of the research, new criteria were formulated based on the research of R. Arnheim, V. Lowenfeld and A.A. Stern. Forms that are obvious quotations have been rejected. The new percentage share of the research material

was as follows: sitting figures 37%, standing figures 24%, boulders 11%, busts 9%, obelisks 8%, columns 1%, other 10%. The final result of the selection was 20 of the aforementioned monuments, which were subjected to a comparative analysis according to the old and new criteria.

It was found that there is a need for a deeper understanding of the meaning of monuments and commemorations, which should not only be the execution of the commission, but also the expression of the heart and soul of the creators. The canon of art and architectural styles are rooted in primal experiences and perceptions. The author hopes that the work will be an invitation to discuss design methods - how architecture should be treated and whether it can also be considered art.

The work proves that the presence of an "inner child" in an adult artist can affect the quality and legibility of the message of monuments and commemorations. The ability to create based on the emotions of our "inner child" may depend on the creator and his life experiences. Some creators do it unknowingly.

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