

Tanatoarchitecture / Rehearsing to mortality

The project „Tanatoarchitecture. Rehearsing to mortality“ reflects on the influence of architecture, its material and spatial organisation, on the body in the process of dying through artistic research. The research happens through artistic work and is done in relation to other studies like sociology, theory of architecture, proxemics or thanatology. Phenomenological reflection on the space surrounding the process of dying stems from dealing with the effects of the domination of sight in the perception of death.

With the development of medicine at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the process of dying was moved from houses and apartments to hospital rooms. The pattern of dying also changed. “Traditional death” had been replaced by the “modern death” – a model in which the very process of dying has been pushed out of the collective consciousness and thrust beyond the field of visibility.

An essential part of how we die is where we die. However, the architecture of the places associated with death seems to follow a spatial arrangement completely detached from emotions accompanying the crucial moment of departure. The results of scientific research in the area of proxemics prove that the surrounding architecture and its elements can strengthen or suppress emotions in humans. The psychology of architecture shows that the type of materials used, rhythm, spatial order, color and lighting co-create our attitude toward a specific space. The perception of space, sound, smell and tactile sensations (temperature, humidity, air flow) determine how comfortable we feel and affect our spatial and bodily involvement.

The mentioned research results may constitute the basis for extended research on the impact architecture has on the body, senses and feelings in the process of dying. The matter of death and the space dedicated to it is a universal issue that requires visibility. The lack of sufficient analyses, especially in the context of artistic research, opens up a wide field for artistic activities.

The cognitive value as well as novelty of the proposed project should be seen primarily in the interdisciplinary nature of the subject of research and the artistic-research approach to the research problem. The issue of research in artistic practice is a critically important direction in the development of the latest art.

The main hypothesis of my project states that artistic research as well as art is a type of discourse expanding our knowledge and developing anthropological reflection on the influence of architecture, its material and spatial organization on emotions related to the experience of death.

Detailed research hypotheses will be formulated on the basis of empirical as well as artistic research and in the course of the work on the artistic implementation. Ideas, concepts and methodologies will be selected in terms of the explanatory usefulness of specific phenomena and the possibility of confronting them with the methodology of artistic research; the research and artistic process will therefore be interdisciplinary.

Some of the methods implemented to the project include bibliographic query - working with archival materials, analysis of found images ; conceptual imaging of the ideas (drawing, digital image, visual commentary) and creation of visual databases; visual sociology - interview (qualitative research), field-work (photo and video documentation), visual study of the subject and surroundings, as well as the analysis of gestures related to the human body in a space; imitation as a method that allows for the simplification of activities, in-depth analysis and sensitization.