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Designing not only for human. Animal in architecture as a determinant of the humanitarian education standard

According to the assumptions of Agenda 21, humanitarian education became a part of the canon of actions which have the purpose of propagating the principles of sustainable development directed not only at the desire of satisfying people's needs, but also connected with their life and domesticated environment.

In our times, sustainable development is becoming a form of shaping mutual relations of man and animal, which makes it possible to create particular patterns of social behaviours in the society where the animal becomes an equal partner of man. Owing to the civilisation progress, there is no need to objectify domesticated animals any longer and consequently man discovers in animals a different and lively creature whose needs should be respected.

Of course, the subject of animal in architecture constitutes a very wide notion. It includes any presentations of animals which perform a decorative role as well as the role of a carrier of ideological and symbolic meaning. This is also a problem of legislation connected with the development of buildings used by man for farming and raising domesticated animals. Moreover, this is a problem of the development and usage of zoological gardens which serve the purpose of recreation for human beings or finally the structures in which unwanted animals or those which need professional care as a result of 'meeting' man find appropriate man's protection there. We must mention here not only stables, paddocks, pigsties, cow sheds and henhouses, aviaries for birds or zoological gardens but also shelters and emergency service for animals. These are the topics which have been known and shaped for centuries on the basis of man's comfort and spatial requirements of different genres.

However, the problem of designing for animals also includes a number of newly created issues and forms which have appeared recently in connection with the interest in animal as a conscious recipient of the space. It happens so because of the growing awareness of the fact that an animal is not only 'a lively object' but also a creature that feels and thinks. The animal is a friend and member of a family for people living in cities. At the present pace of life, man often becomes 'a lonely island', an individual who is unable to establish good interpersonal relations. Therefore, man transfers emotions to an animal using a kind of auto-therapy completely unconsciously and at the same time he/she learns to function with respect for all patterns of social behaviours. Paradoxically, it is the man who starts to socialise through the contact with an animal. Establishment of the humanitarian education programme, which assumes respect for all living organisms, also has an influence on this situation.

However, such behaviours result not only from man's nobleness – a humanist and human being – ecologist, as everybody happens to consider himself/herself as such in secret. There is one more aspect of taking up actions of this type. This aspect is more down-to-earth, i.e. the western civilisations developed an attitude of blind consumerism beyond all limits. Along with a gradual process of the society getting rich, 'hunger' for novelties increases. If there is nothing new and surprisingly luxurious to come up with, people start to look for a luxury in making their pets' lives more attractive. An extreme example of this phenomenon can be the products for the clients' pets, which are already introduced as a standard offer of the biggest fashion houses or jeweller's stores. A jacket from Chanel or a diamond collar for a dog do not surprise any longer in some environments. We can only ask what next?

A trend of pattern-designing or a trend of art which uses the significance of wild animals living in a city environment should be discussed in the first place. Recently, there appeared many architectural and sculptural forms implemented in urban spaces as a form of a happening

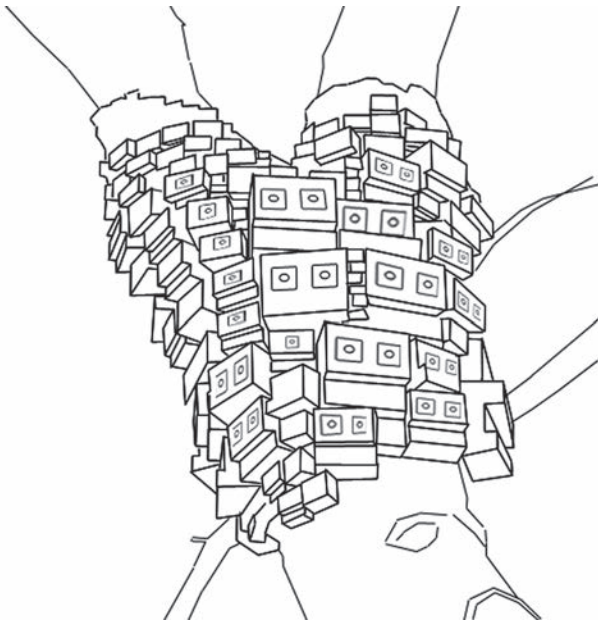* Wrocław University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, Institute of Housing Estate Designing.

Fig. 1. London Fieldworks „Spontaneous City in the Tree of Heaven"

or a permanent structure for 'wild' inhabitants of the city. They all aim at the attempt of humanisation – 'animalisation' of the unfriendly environment in such a way so as not only people would feel free in the city. The subject which has recently been brought up more frequently refers to the creation of proper conditions for animals in order to make them come back to the human settlements from which they once escaped to avoid the dangers of our mechanical world. On the other hand, some artists try to compare natural forms of settlements made by animals to unified residential estates which look as if they 'just left' a production line of a big residential houses panelák factory, giving the lie to the Le Corbusier vision of a machine for living. Is that really so? Don't the appearance and rules of functioning of beehives or bird nests constitute a natural confirmation of human behaviours and tendencies of standardisation within one group?

This year's gallery called 'Up Projects' took place during the Secret Gardens Projects Exhibition. Among the sculptures placed by different artists in some small, little-known or completely unknown gardens of London, there was also a design entitled 'Spontaneous City In the Tree of Heaven' by London Fieldworks group [1]. In fact, it comprised two spatial forms nested in two points – Cremone Gardens in Kingston and Duncan Terrace Gardens in Islington. Module living 'cells' for birds or bees were simply stuck onto trees creating in this way a miniature version of housing estates which surrounded both parks.

A similar initiative turned out to be this year's design by Ben Faga [2] who decided to persuade bees to come back to the area of London after they had left the city many years ago because of too heavy pollution of the environment. The design, which is still under development, consists in fixing a man-made box with a scent decoy inside within the distance of five kilometers from an existing beehive in order to encourage lured bees to settle in

this new 'breeding box'. In this way, the artist decided to give the bees their territory back.

In both of the described examples, animal became the motif of the designer's work because the animal's fate reflected the level of the conscious creation of the city space. However, it is not always so. Some designers treat animals in a subjective way or as a form of expressing certain social ideas and do not pay particular attention to their fate in the artificially created scenery.
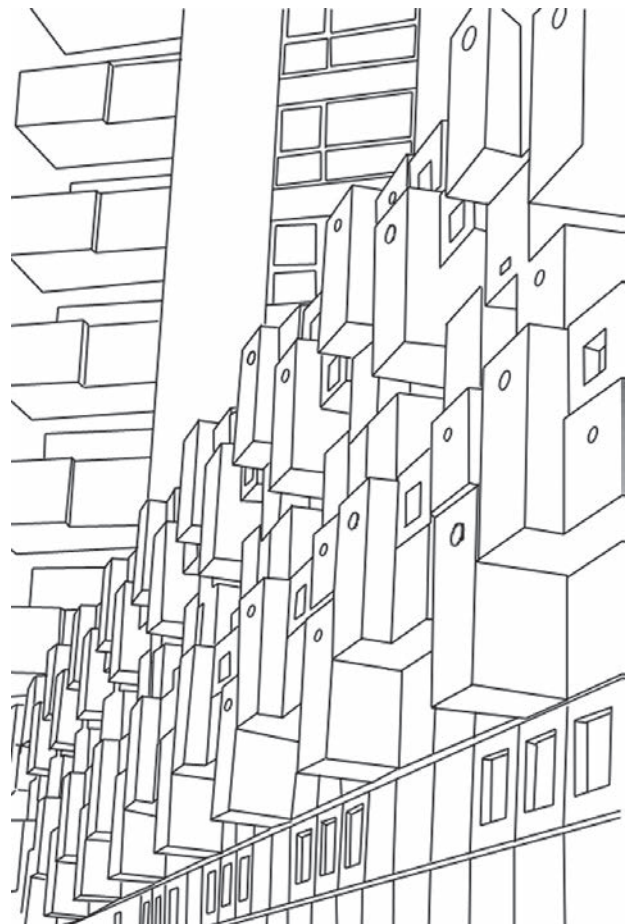

Fig. 2. "Animal Wall", by Gitta Gschwendtner

The example of this kind of activities is the design 'Animal Wall' by Gitty Gschwendtner [3]. In the territory of Cardiff Bay she created a monumental 50-meter-high wall which consisted of four types of breeding boxes for various genres of birds. This wall separated a new big housing estate called Century Harf with over one thousand flats from the wharf. Although the artist explains that by creating her work of art she wanted to give bird genres their original settlements on the wharf areas back, this curtain wall has little to do with conscious shaping of the place of living for birds and it only constitutes a form, in accordance with the idea that animals will simply start to defend their natural environment.

An extreme example of an ideological attitude in designing for animals is the auction organised by a pro-ecological organisation called Adventure Ecology and Phillips de Pury & Company [4]. This organization aims at

leveraging funds for endangered species protection in Great Britain. Each of the invited reputable designers (who were many) was supposed to design a habitat for one of such species from the recycling materials. A long list of the participants included, among other persons, Rolf Sachs, Michael Young or Peter Marigold. However, these designs – although designed for animals – will never serve their recipients. These designs reflect very simplified images of the designers only, for example, the appearance of a bird nest which is built by animals from elements that can be found in the natural environment.

In this way, the designers deal with the problem of wild animals' presence in the urban environment. Some small architectural forms are designed and they quickly become popular. Their authors attempt to harmonize nature and an artificial structure which is the city. This trend is continued, however, in form of permanent architectural structures which serve both animals and a local society. It is true that people who have been brought up in cities live in a state of permanent separation from nature without any awareness of the life outside the urban areas. The only source of knowledge referring to the animals' life and habits are the mass media or zoological gardens. However, the fact that a child brought up in this way shall know more about the life of wild African animals than about the native or even domesticated animals sounds paradoxical.
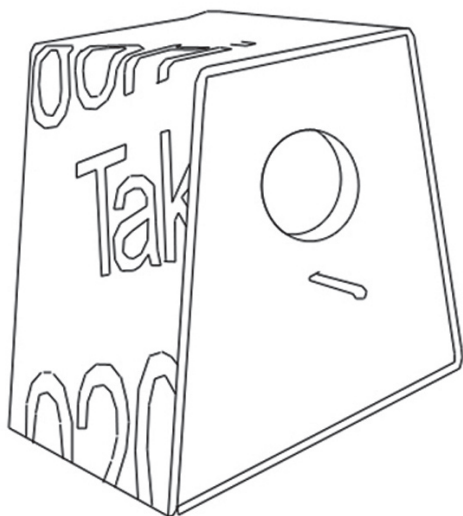

Fig. 3. The Birds, Bats and Bees habitat, by Peter Marigold

In order to cope with this problem, some miniature farms were created in the city parks where animals are raised for educational purposes and where a real physical contact with them is possible. 'Petting Farm' building, created by 70F study, is an example of such a structure. It was built in Almere (Holland). The building is not big and it fulfils the role of a shelter as well as a place for interaction for different genres of animals.

Along with the increase of social awareness regarding the role of animals in man's life and the significance of empathy in man – animal relations, people started to treat education and domesticated animals breeding in a more responsible way. The cases of non-humanitarian treatment of animals are condemned in public more and more often. Along with the problem, a social answer to it appears. When the mass media publicised the fact that in many houses dogs are kept on chains in horrible conditions, many companies which specialised in producing comfortable kennels appeared on the market. The example of this kind of designing actions is the activity of the German brand 'Best Friend's Home' in the European market, which refers to the humanitarian traditions of Bauhaus even in its ideological sphere. Although some of their works constitute an example of a skilful operation on the border of stylization and kitsch, their products – apart from the appearance – provide the maximum of comfort as well [5].
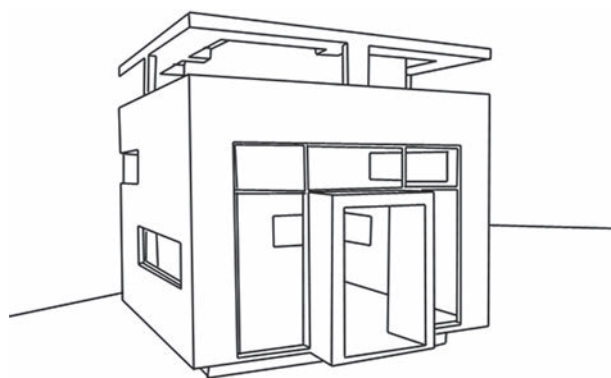

Fig. 4. Residence for a dog Cubix, by Best Friends' Home

Similar actions were taken up when the mass media started to criticize a wave phenomenon of throwing out pets before holidays. At present, there are more and more hotels for animals, which – apart from the basic care during the period of stay – provide pets with additional attractions. On the whole, if a dog or cat is a family member, it also has the right to have a rest on holidays.

The environment of man's life, which is more and more degraded, causes numerous civilization diseases. They also trouble animals which live together with human beings in the same environment. Similarly to man, dogs and cats also face problems such as obesity, asthma or allergies more often. Therefore, these problems are remedied by creating health or rehabilitation centres, biological regeneration or even fitness centres for pets. Such institutions combine also the hotel function and in this way the pets' owners can plan the whole holiday for their animals [6].

In the standard of this hotel we can find separate rooms with a comfortable bed for each dog, a nursing room for animals, play room. Pets go on regular walks and have individual diets. Many hotels, like for example the Elmtree in London, provide places for pets whose owners work and the transport of those pets to their owners' houses. At first glance, it all may seem a bit bizarre, but if we compare the way of functioning of such an institution with similar institutions in the United States of America we can drive at the conclusion that Europe has still a lot

to do. Chateau Poochie in Pompano Beach in Florida is an example of one of the most luxurious centres where – apart from normal care – the best dog and cat stylists look after pets. On the owners' request animals can use a botanic spa or have a peat bath. Visiting a pet manicure salon or a senior's corner every day is a standard. The fitness centre is furnished and equipped with sport equipment which makes the animals keep fit at the same level as their owners do. In this situation, we are forced to ask a question about possible limits of luxury that a human being can reach [7, 8].

The presented issues constitute only a small part of the problem with regard to designing for animals. Along with the analysis of the presented examples, we must ask a question about the rightness of these directions duality in which this sphere remains. On the one hand, animal became a determinant of luxury – an easy form of manifesting a social status, on the other hand, the role of animal in man's life and functioning, not only as a beast of burden and a source of food, was noticed at last. In this situation, humanitarian education performed a significant role by teaching humans a humane approach towards animals.

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Projektowanie nie tylko dla człowieka. Zwierzę w architekturze jako wyznacznik poziomu edukacji humanitarnej

Równocześnie z pojawieniem się idei rozwoju zrównoważonego narodziła się konieczność wprowadzenia tej myśli w życie poprzez edukację społeczną. Jedną z form jej przejawu stała się postawa wobec zwierząt. W świadomości projektantów pojawił się inny od człowieka użytkownik architektury. Związane to jest również ze zmianą pozycji zwierzęcia w krajach zachodnich. Wraz z systematycznym odchodzeniem od przedmiotowego – czysto użytkowego podejścia, możliwego dzięki znacznemu postępowi technicznemu, zwierzęta stały się częściej towarzyszami-przyjaciółmi człowieka. A skoro wprowadzamy je do silnie przetworzonych przestrzeni dostosowanych do potrzeb konkretnego gatunku, to automatycznie rodzi się problem konieczności dostosowania ich do odmiennego typu użytkownika. Czy jednak mamy problem ten traktować jako fanaberię, czy wynika on z realnej potrzeby ciągłego udoskonalania otaczającego nas świata?

Key words: animal in architecture, humanitarian education

Słowa kluczowa: zwierzę w architekturze, edukacja humanitarna