

Emplacing Narrative: Affect and Performativity in Architectural Narratives¹

Introduction

As Vladimir Toporov indicated, there are two poles of correlation between space and text: 1) text is spatial, but at the same time, 2) space can also be textual, a message². The aspects of narrative and space can be approached in a similar manner (there are three of them this time around): 1) narrative is spatial, 2) it represents the space where the events are taking place, but at the same time, 3) space itself can become a narrative medium. In this study, I would like to take a closer look at the last relation (the narrativity of space) and attempt to demonstrate the way in which both architecture and landscape architecture can simultaneously pose a challenge and an assignment for transmedial narratology. My research material will consist of two monuments: one of them already built, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and one planned, the project of *The Forest* monument, which was supposed to be built next to the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Both monuments, while retaining their narrative character, challenge narratology with their characteristics such as: performativity, processuality, interactivity and affective potential. In this paper I attempt to find a place for these features, and for both architecture and landscape architecture, in the theory and practice of transmedial narratology.

The Parallel Histories

The existing monument is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC, designed by Maya Lin and built in 1982. The one planned, *From Those–You Saved*, was supposed to be placed next to the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in order to commemorate Poles who rescued Jews during the German occupation. The project has won a competition for the monument design in early 2015, but it remains to be seen whether it will actually be realized (as was the case with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial during its development). Both the construction of Lin's memorial and the competition in which *The Forest* was selected were objects of numerous controversies. Each dispute was centred around acceptable methods of commemoration, revealing changes both in how architecture and narrative are entwined, and the features of architectural narratives present in each of these monuments, which were hard to accept for some members of the audience. However, I shall begin with a brief history.

¹ Project funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education as part of the National Programme for the Development of Humanities between 2014 and 2016.

² W.N. Toporow, "Przestrzeń i tekst", in: *Przestrzeń i rzecz*, Kraków 2003, p. 15.

1981

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC is created out of two blocks of black granite, converging at an obtuse angle. Along them runs a pavement for visitors to walk on. As one processes towards the focal point of the monument, both walls grow higher – they start out at 20 centimetres and rise to a height of 3 metres in the very centre. 58,300 names of soldiers killed or missing during the Vietnam War are carved into the monument. The names are listed in a chronological order: the list starts in 1959 on the edge of one wall, it reaches mid-1968 on the opposite edge, and then continues from the top of the second wing towards the place where both walls converge. The victim list ends in 1975 – in the very centre of the installation.

The design of the monument was selected in an open competition, announced in 1980 and resolved in 1981. Its winner was Maya Lin, then an architecture student at Yale University. The winning design was controversial from the very beginning. It departed from the well-established methods of commemoration: it was neither figurative, nor did it display traditional ornamentation. Jan Scruggs, a war veteran and the initiator of the monument, describes his thoughts upon learning about the contests results in a documentary about Maya Lin: “This is going to be called a black hole in the ground. This is going to be a problem”³.

In the end, the architect and her opponents reached a compromise. The monument was supplemented with a sculpture of three soldiers, designed by Frederick Hart. The whole monument was erected in 1982. At a later date, a mast with a flag and a sculpture of women in Vietnam were added to it.

The addition of the three soldiers sculpture, heroic in a traditional manner, defused a heated argument, as this form of commemoration was expected by many people – including the war veterans. Tom Cahart described his opinion to the US Commission of Fine Arts:

“When I saw the winning design I was truly stunned. I thought it was the most insulting and demeaning memorial to our Vietnam experience that was possible. ... One needs no artistic education to see this memorial design for what it is. A black scar. Black. The universal colour of sorrow and shame and degradation. ... In a whole, hidden as though out of shame”⁴.

2015

The feud that took place during the 1980s in the United States is quite reminiscent of the controversies surrounding the monument commemorating Poles who rescued Jews, supposed to be built next to the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. The contest results were announced in April 2015. The winning project by Eduard Freudmann and Gabu Heindl was entitled *The Forest*. Its concept boils down to planting the square next to the museum with young aspen trees. 10,000 trees symbolising

³ F.L. Mock, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*, USA 1996.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust were supposed to be planted with the help of local residents. After the first stage of the contest and suggestions from the jury, the architects reformulated the project and proposed planting trees of various kinds, which would grow there for eighteen months and then would be replanted to different places where Jews used to live⁵. The jury took special interest in the simplicity of this gesture, and the new method of commemoration, that would happen “through initiating a process, and not a monumental architectural object”⁶.

It is interesting to note that, according to unofficial sources, Zygmunt Rolat, president of the Remembrance and Future Foundation that will fund the monument, preferred another project – by Mateusz Tański⁷. The idea of this alternative project was to raise part of the lawn at the western side of the museum, so that it resembled a tilted piece of paper. In the newly-created space a stone wall would be erected, with a text reading *From Those – You Saved*. The closer the wall would be to the raised corner, the higher it would rise, until it would reach 2.5 meters at its highest point⁸.

On July 31st 2015, the Remembrance and Future Foundation announced that it would be unable to build the winning design. The official statement explained this decision as follows: “Continuous allocation of additional maintenance funds, beyond those allocated to realization of the Commemoration, would be necessary to ensure its ongoing presence. Nor can the Foundation accept a commemoration limited in time”⁹. The jury stated that the project stood out as it is “[based] on notions of care, commitment, fragility and risk”¹⁰. However, in the end, the organizers deemed it too risky.

1981 and 2015

Two monuments – one endangered but eventually created, and another, that will never be built. Another two – one conceptualized as a more traditional addition to Maya Lin’s monument, another – rumoured by media to be the design preferred by the president of the foundation.

If one looks at Maya Lin’s monument and Łukasz Tański’s design, certain similarities arise¹¹. Both can be reduced to a simple spatial interference, a gesture of revelation, either through “cutting” or “raising”, and both prefer rather simple devices: in the first case it is listing the names of the dead, in the second, the placement of a short slogan: “From Those – You Saved”. In both projects the simple gesture primarily has an affective potential. This aspect of Tański’s project was noted by the jury: “the design calls for

⁵ T. Urzykowski, “Las pamięci Sprawiedliwych? Fundator niezadowolony”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2015, April 25, source: http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/1,34862,17812658,Las_pamieci_Sprawiedliwych__Fundator_niezadowolony.html [access: 08.09.2015].

⁶ Jury’s remarks, <http://www.raff.org.pl/en> [access: 08.09.2015].

⁷ T. Urzykowski, “Las pamięci Sprawiedliwych?”, op. cit.

⁸ *From Those - You Saved: Competition for the Concept of a Commemoration Honoring Poles Who Rescued Jews During the German Occupation*, Remembrance and Future Foundation, Warsaw 2015, pp. 78-79.

⁹ News, July 31, 2015 entry, <http://www.raff.org.pl/en> [access: 08.09.2015].

¹⁰ Jury’s remarks, <http://www.raff.org.pl/en> [access: 08.09.2015].

¹¹ I would like to thank Dr. Mateusz Salwa for pointing out these similarities.

a simple intervention on the ground of the park and has a clear potential to evoke a subtle yet strong affect (...). The design employs ... architectural qualities ... in accord with the competition's request ... in the sense of changing the given site in subtle yet powerful ways"¹².

During the thirty years that have passed since the controversies surrounding the building of Maya Lin's design, a lot has changed in the approach to creating memorials, commemorating historical events and landscape architecture. The Polish jury in 2014 did not expect a sculpture-memorial, but rather the creation of a place: "The Commemoration honoring the Poles who rescued Jews during the German occupation calls for a unique spatial solution, an innovative formula that would inscribe itself into the existing urban space, and engage it in a characteristic dialogue"¹³.

Projects similar to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial – unspecified in their symbolism, but at the same time capacious, provoking an emotional reaction – are no longer perceived as controversial. However, the project by Freudmann and Heindl turned out to be controversial, as it would not create a space in its final form, but rather "start a process" that would be difficult to fully control. This concept of commemoration turned out to be too hard to create, or – possibly – it is just as controversial and divisive as Lin's project was in 1981, when it was first proposed.

Illustrative Narrative

At the beginning of the article I asserted that both controversies exemplify changes in the contemporary approach to the relationship between landscape architecture and narrative. However, before we move forward, we need to precisely understand the definition of architectural narrativity and landscape architecture I postulate it here.

In Marie-Laure Ryan's terminology, both monuments produce an illustrative narrative¹⁴. The audience is unable to fully comprehend their meaning without the context of the historical narrative they refer to. Space becomes a specification, an illustration and interpretation of various aspects of the Vietnam War and the history of rescuing Jews from the Holocaust during the German occupation, respectively.

The monuments alone, without the context of the historical narrative, would be unable to provide the viewer with all the information necessary to create a narrative (i.e., to represent a depicted world – along with its heroes, their motivations, and changes in the state of the world)¹⁵. The projects in question remain dependent on some sort of historical narrative. However, in this context, these monuments are not simply narratives expressed in a specific medium, but rather versions of this narrative embedded in society, supported by media, with the ability to strengthen the elements vital for interpretation, such as the division between protagonists and antagonists.

¹² Mateusz Tański's project, Jury's remarks, <http://www.raff.org.pl/en> [access: 08.09.2015].

¹³ Press Release, Remembrance and Future Foundation, Warsaw, September 8, 2014, p. 2. Available for download on website <http://www.raff.org.pl/en> [access: 08.09.2015].

¹⁴ M.-L. Ryan, "Introduction", in: *Narrative across Media. The Languages of Storytelling*, Lincoln 2004, p. 14.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 8-9.

As such, architectural narratives are not independent, which does not mean that they are not an important form of narrative experience. It is characteristic that due to the lack of means that would enable the representation of all of the necessary narrative elements, architectural texts usually only indicate certain aspects. Architecture possesses the ability to engage all of the senses of the spectator in a greater way than any other medium – not only sight and sound, but also touch and balance. All the experiences of an individual are processed as a whole (i.e., what Bachelard refers to as a “polyphony of the senses”)¹⁶. Due to this multisensory experience architectural forms, such as gardens, are manifestations of the worlds depicted in narratives¹⁷. In the case of monuments, the abovementioned multisensory and immersivity are harnessed for different purposes – the narrative’s protagonists are moved to the front, as they are the ones to be commemorated.

Maya Lin’s monument foregrounds the individual victims of the war (e.g., the names carved into the marble), *The Forest* project indicates every rescued person, symbolized by the young trees. In Tański’s design there are two types of heroes (the Rescuers and the Survivors), however, Hart’s project proposes a realistic representation of soldiers serving in Vietnam and depicts a diverse demographic of ideal types (through the inclusion of a Caucasian, a Latino and an Afro-American).

Apart from Tański’s design, which distinguishes only particular types of heroes, the others create tensions between the indication of an individual hero and a collective one. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is build in such way that from a distance you can only see the darkness of black marble standing out in contrast from the green of the lawn, once you get closer, you can only see a cluster of illegible writing, and it is only after you approach the monument closely that the individual names appear. Likewise, the transition from collective to individual narrative is important in Freudmann and Heindl’s design, especially in the context of the projected dynamic life cycle of the monument. While each individual tree was supposed to represent a rescued Jew, the forest itself was meant to symbolize pluralism, a collective hero, and the reclamation of individuality was to come later, after the replanting of the trees to different places in Poland and former Polish territories in the east. The forest was supposed to be divided up into trees, so that each tree would connect with an individual place and its history.

All of the abovementioned designs engage in illustrative relations with commemorated narratives, but each one makes use of architectural methods in a different manner in order to enrich the narratives that function primarily as verbal and visual stories in society. Hart’s monument (i.e., as a classically heroic sculpture) is closest to a pictorial narrative – it depicts a group of soldiers in a battle gear. In the narrative context, it can be interpreted similarly to a painting, using, among other things, Lessing’s concept

¹⁶ G. Bachelard, *Poetyka marzenia*, trans. L. Brogowski, Gdańsk 1998, p. 14.

¹⁷ K. Kaczmarczyk, “Ogród i opowieść. Przyczynek do teorii narracyjności ogrodów”, *Prace Filologiczne* 2011, no. 61, pp. 41–58; “Walking the Story: Garden as Narrative Environment”, in: *Perspectives on Storytelling: Framing Global and Personal Identities*, ed. M. Ahumady, L. Moller, L. Brown, Oxford 2015.

of the “pregnant moment”¹⁸ – we can perceive the representation as a fragment of narrative, as a part of its potential continuation: the return home, following the enemy’s attack, or following death in a battle. In the early 1980s such a memorial was expected by many veterans. Hence the outrage directed at Lin’s design, as it introduced a highly visible affective aspect, modifying the experience of historical narrative – and it is exactly this relationship between narrative and affect that warrants a closer look. Meanwhile, it is not the affective element that currently raises concerns, but process, participation and performativity – the aspects of *The Forest* design that will be the focus of the next part of this article.

Affect, Rhythm, and Story

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is not a straightforward illustration of an historical narrative. The order in which the events are presented is quite distinctive. No matter the direction from which the visitor begins their journey along the walls, it always starts in 1968, in the middle of the war, and processes to the point where the walls converge, where the beginning and the ending of the war meet – 1959 and 1975. The narrative order (compatible with the base narrative; i.e., the history of war) is subjugated to the discursive.

Although the chronology is disturbed, the monument’s structure corresponds to the classic structure of a dramatic work, with its exposition, rising action, climax and resolution. The suspense-creating model is realised through architectural means (the wall of names keeps rising until it reaches its peak in the place where the walls converge, which is also the place where the beginning and the ending of the war meet) implying a certain movement of the visitors. Lin wrote about the monument in an essay that was part of her entry in the contest: “The memorial is composed not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition to be understood as we move into and out of it. The passage itself is gradual; the descent to the origin slow, but it is at the origin that the memorial is to be fully understood”¹⁹.

The visitor’s movement drives the developing experience and becomes the source of changing tension. The movement actualizes the structure of the monument, which initiates this movement. The close relationship between architectonic space and body, and the actions of the visitor is essential to the specificity of these narratives. As Juhani Pallasmaa writes, “it is this possibility of action that separates architecture from other forms of art. As a consequence of this implied action a bodily reaction is an inseparable aspect of the experience of architecture”²⁰.

The monument represents only one event, multiplied in a horrific fashion: death. The narrative of the Vietnam war that functions in American culture is the background

¹⁸ G.E. Lessing, *Laokoon, czyli o granicach malarstwa i poezji*, trans. H. Zymon-Dębicki, Kraków 2012.

¹⁹ Maya Lin – Library of Congress CALL NUMBER: ADE – UNIT 2228, no. 1. Accessible at https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Maya_Lin%27s_original_competition_submission_for_the_Vietnam_Veterans_Memorial [access: 08.09.2015].

²⁰ J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, Chichester 2005, p. 63.

for the monument's text. Versions of this narrative circulate in culture pointing to the causes and effects of the events and emphasizing various explanations concerning the identities of antagonists and protagonists of the story. What makes the monument so powerful, though, is the fact that it is not an independent narrative, as it is supported by one already operating. This gesture of self-limitation is the reason why visitors are affected by all the elements of history they know are connected, but are not "said out loud". This effect is described by Lin herself: "Walking into this grassy site contained by the walls of the memorial we can barely make out the carved names upon the memorial's walls. These names, seemingly infinite in number, convey the sense of overwhelming numbers, while unifying these individuals into a whole"²¹. And a similar observation was made by Frederick Hart: "I see the wall as a kind of ocean, a sea of sacrifice that is overwhelming and nearly incomprehensible in the sweep of names. I place these figures upon the shore of that sea, gazing upon it, standing vigil before it, reflecting the human face of it, the human heart"²².

In both descriptions, one's attention is drawn to the expressions such as: "impression", "overwhelming", "almost inconceivable", "barely recognize". Tension appears between the cognitive dimension – perceiving the monument as a narrative text recalling well-known events – and the affective dimension: the feeling of being overwhelmed, the impossibility of understanding large amounts of information, and extracting it from a sea of components. If we treat the "cultural text" as a semiotic object with definite boundaries, intended to be decoded and interpreted, then Lin's monument plays with its textuality, presenting itself as a text one cannot fully comprehend. In this way, war is interpreted as an enormity of suffering transgressing the capacity for intellectual understanding.

Affect

Narrative is a cognitive construct – a representation of characters, events and relationships between them. In both Lin's and Hart's descriptions there is a clear tension between the cognitive and the corporal and emotional. Affect is presented as pre-cognitive or even anti-cognitive. The size of the symbolized suffering is too big to comprehend through reason, so one is left with a corporal impression of an overload, of being surrounded and overwhelmed. The text functions as a vestige of an affective state, initiating the eventual intellectual reworking of the initial corporal reaction.

Affect is one of the key topics in modern psychology, sociology and cultural studies, but it would be difficult to find even the outline of a consensus as to its definition. One can choose from the psychological understanding, where affect is generally agreed to be a collective name for emotions, feeling and moods²³ – and from many psychological

²¹ *Ibidem.*

²² Cited after: J.J. Holland, *Black Men Built the Capitol: Discovering African-American History in and around Washington*, Guilford 2007, p. 39.

²³ *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, ed. G.R. VandenBos, Washington 2015, pp. 26–27.

theories that specify and modify the general meaning of the term, (e.g., the affective concepts of Silvan Tomkins²⁴, Joseph LeDoux²⁵, Antonio Damasio²⁶, and Paul Ekman²⁷).

The humanities have been particularly influenced by proposals by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari²⁸, and also Brian Massumi, who translated into English the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, which further develops the affective theory of the French philosophers, thus further deepening the questions of perception, movement, and the experience of art, architecture and new technologies²⁹. In his introduction to the translation of *Mille Plateaux*, Massumi defines affect as understood by Deleuze and Guattari: “*L’affect* (Spinoza’s *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act”³⁰. And from this point of view, affect is understood to be an intensity that predates the emergence of the subject and cannot reach awareness in its pure form as it resists representation.

In her analysis of the affective art, Jill Bennett describes experiencing it in such way that: “one inhabits – or is inhabited by – an embodied sensation: a sensation that ... is not anchored by character or narrative”³¹. The first part of this quote describes the impressions evoked by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, but in its second part it does not. In the case of the Washington DC monument, the affective experience seems to be anchored in the narrative, in its two levels: plot and discourse. It happens due to the experience of being overwhelmed and in the difficulty of creating an adequate representation, which is later noticed and assimilated on a conscious level.

When I am writing about the plot level – a system of chronologically and logically connected events depicted in the narrative – I do not mean the historical base narrative, but its elements that were selected and presented in the monument. Especially significant (esp. in case of the Washington DC monument) is the number of people and events represented: 58,300. Already on the plot level, then, there is a possibility of being overwhelmed and overloaded with information, which – in this particular case – carries a strong affective potential, strengthened by the gesture of repeating the same event (i.e., death).

On the narrative level, the architect decided to use a classic narrative trick in the depiction of the represented events – the trope of the achronological narrative. Thus, when

²⁴ S.S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition*, New York 2008.

²⁵ J.E. LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain*, New York 1996.

²⁶ A. Damasio, *Tajemnica świadomości. Ciało i emocje współtworzą świadomość*, trans. M. Karpiński, Poznań 2000.

²⁷ *Natura emocji. Podstawowe zagadnienia*, ed. P. Ekman i R.J. Davidson, Gdańsk 1999.

²⁸ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. B. Massumi, Minneapolis 1987.

²⁹ B. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham 2002; idem, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*, Cambridge 2011.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. xvi.

³¹ J. Bennett, “Insides, Outsides: Trauma, Affect, and Art”, in: *Empathetic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, Stanford 2005, p. 34.

a visitor starts their journey along the wall next to the Lincoln Mausoleum, they move chronologically, from 1968 to 1975, but when they approach from the Washington Monument, the chronology runs “upstream”, from 1968 to 1959. From a narratological perspective, the centre of the monument is especially significant, as this is where the visitor is invited to reflect on the whole event, standing (physically) in the middle of the space that represents it, and being (psychically) in the middle of contemplating it. What we see in the centre, then, is a fusion of retrospection (from the perspective of the base narrative) and anticipation (from the perspective of the narration conducted).

This itself carries a momentous affective potential on the narrative level, realized through architectural means, rather than textual. The visitor’s reaction is shaped through a system of spatial forms, the slope of the land, closed and open spatial systems, which affect the somatic senses: touch, balance, and proprioception. Tension can be evoked by an unclear status of the place, which – partially hidden – on one hand carries the characteristics of a shelter, but on the other, opens the view towards the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Mausoleum. According to Jay Appleton, a fusion of a viewpoint and a shelter is the most attractive environment for humans, due to their evolutionary history³². This is different for the Vietnam War Memorial: the gradually descending pathway goes downwards, as if cut out of the ground, and this endows the memorial with characteristics not of an ideal shelter-prospect, but of a dead end, leaving the visitor vulnerable. At the same time these impressions are very subtle – the walls are not high enough to create a real sense of danger.

The ascending walls create a sense of submergence. The height of the wall gradually rises until the culmination point in the centre, only then do the walls decrease in intensity as one emerges from the other side. The rhythm of entering and exiting, of the rise and fall of intensity, equips the represented narrative with a distinctive affective aura³³. The affect, first awakened and then quieted during the experience, along with the act of interpreting the narrative, can perform a therapeutic function. Studies on the effect that describing traumatic memories has on the health of people who have gone through such an experience reveal that, apart from creating an opportunity to express negative emotions, the chance to create a narrative with its classical dramatic structure of exposition, rising action, climax and resolution can also offer a therapeutic opportunity³⁴. This consistent, closed structure of a story has a good influence on the health of the people actually creating the stories. The monument is – on the affective level as well – such a structure. The affect awakened in the visitor is an integral part of the experienced (though definitely not only “read”) narrative.

³² J. Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape*, London 1975.

³³ Intensified affect has a diffusive character, which means that it influences perception, attention and reflection of the subject outside of its consciousness. See: K. Imbir, M. Jarymowicz, “Dyfuzyjny wpływ emocji (automatycznych vs refleksyjnych) na formułowanie sądów”, *Psychologia Społeczna*, 2013, vol. 83 (26), pp. 251–261.

³⁴ J.W. Pennebaker, “Putting Stress into Words: Health, Linguistic and Therapeutic Implications”, *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 1993, vol. 31, pp. 539–548.

The subordination of affect to representation (because it indicates how it will be assimilated, or maybe even used to create a final narrative effect) is contrary to attempts by many scholars to create non-representative theories³⁵. I am personally of the opinion that while narratology must remain a representative theory, it should also make a place for affect. Extremely useful tools of description can be found in the theory postulated by Daniel Stern, who, although not considered to be a theoretician of affect, is inspired both Guattari³⁶, and later, by Massumi³⁷.

The Rhythm of Affect

Daniel Stern has explored the development of consciousness and intersubjectivity, as well as the mental representations of infants. The 1980s and 1990s developmental psychology distinguished four types of representation that could also be experienced by infants: percepts, concepts, sensorimotor operations, and event sequences³⁸. Stern noticed that another important area of life and, consequently, within the developing consciousness of an infant, are certain repeated rises and falls of arousal expressed in muscular tension, which is the basis for primal, pre-linguistic affective states. As noted by Stern, such affective states are characterised by certain temporal contours characterised by intensity, velocity, rhythm and shape. Stern suggests that infants develop a separate mental representation of such affective schemes – it is one of the ways in which they remember events and explore the world in the first year of their lives. Apart from affective schemes, he postulated another type of representation, which he has called a proto-narrative envelope (i.e., a type of representation that connects a variety of affective schemes and possesses a narrative character)³⁹.

What would constitute such narrative mental representation, according to Stern? It would have to consist of: 1) a motive or goal, the implementation of which happens in time and that entails, 2) a certain shape of a changing tension (e.g., the affective scheme). This motive can be a physiological or mental state, as well as an effort to maintain the homeostasis of the body. As the motive unfolds in time, the level of the child's arousal changes, as it is connected to the affective state. Proto-narratives are thus characterised by their shape, intensity, rhythm and their positive or negative tinge; they have a supramodal character – they can be expressed through many modalities (e.g., body movements, gestures, mimicry, and tone of voice). Stern especially noticed the infants'

³⁵ N. Thrift, *Non-representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, London 2007; J.D. Dewsbury, "Witnessing Space: Knowledge without Contemplation", *Environment and Planning*, 2003, vol. 11, no. 35, pp. 1907–1932; D.P. McCormack, "Geographies for Moving Bodies: Thinking, Dancing, Spaces", *Geography Compass*, 2008, no. 2(6), pp. 1822–1836.

³⁶ F. Guattari, "On the Production of Subjectivity", in: *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. P. Bains, J. Pefanis, Bloomington 1995, pp. 1–32.

³⁷ B. Massumi, "Arts of Experience, Politics of Expression: In Four Movements", in: *Semblance and Event*, pp. 105–126.

³⁸ See: D.N. Stern, "The Nature and Formation of the Infant's Representations", in: *The Motherhood Constellation: A Unified View of Parent-Infant Psychotherapy*, New York 1998, pp. 79–98.

³⁹ See: idem, *The Motherhood Constellation*, op. cit., pp. 85–86.

aptitude for remembering proto-narrative schemes and the subsequent manipulation of their certain set⁴⁰.

In his later works, Stern described the affective state, the shape of a changing tension as a “vitality contour”. He thought this element to be a global entity that represents experience in its physical (e.g., behaviours, movements, statements) and mental (e.g., affective, intellectual reactions) dimensions⁴¹. Thus, his postulate combines affect and representation, through acknowledgement that affect has its own mental representation in the form of a scheme of the intensity variable or, as we could say, a rhythmic scheme. In *Forms of Vitality* Stern shows how the rhythmic schemes that start in the body and develop during the earliest infancy, are explored by artists and used to shape an aesthetic experience⁴².

If affect is an intensity, then experience is a variable intensity. One can think of rhythm as a residue of what is unspoken, corporeal, affective, also in narrative. One can also speak of representations (i.e., Stern’s “vitality contours”) as a remoulding of pre-representative affect into a picture of intensity that changes as time progresses. If we define rhythm as a regular variability of elements in time or space, then variable intensity – in the reception of a given text – can be perceived as a representation of this rhythm. One can also theorise that rhythm as one of the forms of encoding the affective experience and one of the forms of modelling the affective experience of the person interpreting the narrative.

Mieke Bal writes that, “narrative rhythm, although quite characteristic and effective, will remain the most elusive aspect”⁴³. Bal points to the means of manipulating it through techniques of presenting the events (ellipsis, synopsis, scene, slow-down, pause), and clearly alludes to the temporal relations between story and narrative, as described by Gérard Genette⁴⁴. Neither Genette nor Bal are interested in the features and abilities of different media to shape the rhythm of their perception, even though the linguistic means (e.g., the length of sentences and level of their complexity, euphony, length of words, relationship between description and dialogue) can slow down or speed up the process of reading, while in film one can change the rhythm of frames and takes. Narrative media, however, possess their own means of creating rhythm, either in the text itself (e.g., in music or film) or in the process of experiencing it.

Among the architectural means that can be used to manipulate rhythm are the size of architectural forms, their relations and angles, proxemics or the movement of the visitor, which is already implied by the spatial form. Such were the means that Maya Lin used, transforming affect into a rhythmic part of the narrative.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 90–97.

⁴¹ *Idem*, “Vitality Contours: The Temporal Contour of Feelings as a Basic Unit for Constructing the Infant’s Social Experience”, in: *Early Social Cognition: Understanding Others in the First Months of Life*, ed. P. Rochat, Mahwah 1999, pp. 67–90.

⁴² *Idem*, *Forms of Vitality. Exploring Dynamic Experience in Psychology, the Arts, Psychotherapy, and Development*, Oxford 2010.

⁴³ M. Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, Toronto 2009, p. 98.

⁴⁴ G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. J.E. Lewin, Ithaca 1980.

Performativity of Narrative

It seems that Freudmann and Heindl's design, similar to Lin's, found an audience unprepared for the type of commemoration that it postulated. Just as was the case with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the narrative presented in *The Forest* project is mostly illustrative. In order to fully occur in the minds of the viewers, it requires a base narrative already established in culture. The individual trees represent the rescued people, who were able to live on and further develop thanks to the help they received. The monument represents the characters of this narrative, both in a collective dimension (the forest) and in an individual one (the individual trees). It is not, however, a constant thing, as it keeps growing and developing.

The very essence of narrative is related to change. It is usually a representation of change – events described in literature, depicted in a film or in two different comic book panels. In the case of Lin's monument and other architectonic or garden narratives, the drive behind the perception of change is the visitors' movement – walking from one place to another, reading inscriptions, viewing paintings, getting acquainted with the place's topography. In this context, *The Forest* project is different as it only uses plants as a semiotic material; the process of change is a biological one, connected with the growth of the trees. It is not a spectacular change; and the re-enacted event is not spectacular either, the viewer is encouraged to remember that the slow growth is supposed to be reminiscent of the original event that allowed for the future development, and this development represents the very act of rescue.

After a period of eighteen months the trees that would initially grow next to the museum, would be moved to various locations where Jews used to live. At this point, individual plants would gain even more individuality, connecting with specific places and their histories. Their concurrent growth, apart from constantly referring to the history of rescued Jews during the occupation, would also be the enactment of the lives and development of the rescued people. Just as with human life, it would not be possible to strictly control the life of a tree.

Using an organic matter would mean accepting this risk. It is hard to control a living matter: a tree can get sick, or wither. The element of risk is additionally emphasized by plans to move the trees at a later date, which might very well equal a loss of control in some locations. Not every tree would likely be cared for by the residents of each area, some trees might fall victim to acts of vandalism and environmental threats. At the same time, such a form of monument would constitute a perfect re-enactment, a repeat of the history that it is supposed to refer to: human life is saved and life goes on, carrying its own risks, both in case of a person and of a tree. The projected monument would repeat the gesture of rescuing Jews: protecting life, allowing it to flourish and finally letting it go (in the first version of the project, perhaps intentionally, there were plans to create a forest out of aspens, which only live for about 100 years).

The features of the monument pose a challenge for art theorists and narratologists alike. Although clearly related to the historical narrative, the monument is far from

a classical representation. The monument, had it been created, would not have been an immutable text. In contrast, it would have been evolving, and this change would be a re-enactment of history, which would functionally bring the project closer to the performative arts, such as theatre, dance or performance. A living monument would testify to the event – the moment of rescue – while at the same time remaining a process and a representation of one: life after the Holocaust and the memory of it. It is important to remind the reader (and reformulate the concept) that Linda Hutcheon's distinction between the *mimesis* of a product and the *mimesis* of a process, which she postulated in order to differentiate between realistic narrative (i.e., a text representing a depicted world and the events happening there) and a metafictional one, specified that the representation of the process and the creation of narrative are equally important⁴⁵. *Mimesis* in *The Forest* would, therefore, mean two processes: life after rescue and the aptitude to both remember and forget history.

The project is reminiscent of a performance because of features such as involvement of the viewers, dependence on environment (i.e., the spatial surroundings), difficulty in drawing the boundaries of the text, and the effacement of the difference between the creator and the matter through the usage of a living medium. The people who create the monument are, in a way, directing a kind of a narrative starting point and can, to a degree, predict how it will develop, but they cannot be certain. The risk of a disturbance is far too great, as this disturbance comes either from the environment or from the "spectators".

Spatial Narratives: An Attempt at Systematic Conceptualization

It seems that both in the case of *The Forest* project and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the performative dimension is especially important for the reception of the narrative. In Freudmann and Heindl's design the performative aspect is not only emphasised by its very matter, but also in the relationship between the monument and its audience, who participate in planting the trees and who keep the trees safe later.

In the case of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, to "read" it according to vision of the architect, one has to walk along the granite wall. This act of the visitor (in a way provoked by the manner in which the monument is built) allows signs to be interpreted in the right order and the rhythmic structure to be actualized, as it remains an immutable part of the narrative. It is clear that as an architectural text it is an unfinished piece. In a previous article, I have proposed the term *narrative prompt* to emphasise the fact that architectural narrative is eventually realized through a corporal engagement with the public⁴⁶. This stimulates the viewer to create a narrative, but at the same time it shapes the narrative through a constraining of the visitor's movement that influences his behaviour.

The nature of spatial narrative does not fit into the classical distinction between the plot level and the discursive level, yet this is not the only case where the subject

⁴⁵ L. Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, New York 1984, pp. 36–47.

⁴⁶ K. Kaczmarczyk, "Walking the Story", op. cit.

of narratological analysis forces a change of the analytical tools. The need to emphasise the performative aspect of the story has already appeared in narratology, especially in texts that have considered aspects of narrative in drama and theatre. Manfred John, for example, postulated a division of the narrative texts into written or printed forms and performed forms⁴⁷. In the first category he included a novel and a short story, in the second, a movie, a theatre play and an opera. The most valuable aspect of John's theory seems to be the acknowledgement of the dual functioning of the screenplay, which functions as a narrative text (written narrative), while remaining close to performed narrative; it can be either an object of reading or have an ancillary function in the creation of a play or a movie.

On one hand, one could think of the spatial arrangement of an architectural piece as a kind of screenplay (a narrative script different from how Ryan understands it) that allows the narrative to be played out. This would let us look for similarities between architecture as a script and theatre as a screenplay. On the other hand, it is important to emphasise the differences between the screenplay and the architectural "narrative prompt" as semiotic entities. The former can be understood as an independent narrative text, without a need to actualize it on a stage or a movie set. The latter should engage the viewer corporally while being watched, through movement, partially constricted by the object. The former is usually much more precise, as it is an independent narrative, while the latter is usually an illustration of stories that function in culture and is more of an incentive to the creation of meanings rather than a precisely encoded meaning in itself. At the same time, both the screenplay (as an independent narrative) and the architectural piece as a "narrative prompt" remain suspended between the discursive representation of the plot and the performative process of re-enactment.

It seems that these objects require not a two-step, but, rather, a three-step model. This kind of model has already been developed by Monika Fludernik to meet the demands of dramatic narrative. Fludernik distinguishes between the plot level, the narratorial level (i.e., the level of discourse), and the performance level⁴⁸. On the plot level, she places the depicted world, characters and events, and she equates the narratorial level with a dramatic text (here we can see the narrator's intrusion), furthermore, she forwards the performance level as the domain of an actor and the audience. At the same time, Fludernik points out that in different media any given level can either be actualized or not:

In this model, the performance level can be regarded as an optional level. In drama, there is a real performance involving actors; in a performance of narrative, the performer and audience 'take over' the roles of narrator and narratee.

⁴⁷ M. Jahn, "Narrative Voice and Agency in Drama: Aspects of a Narratology of Drama", *New Literary History*, 2001, no. 32, pp. 659–679.

⁴⁸ M. Fludernik, "Narrative and Drama", in: *Theorizing Narrativity*, ed. J. Pier, J.Á. García Landa, Berlin 2008, pp. 353–381. The scholar controverts with theories that postulate distinction of narrative into plot and discourse and with considering as narrative solely the plot, which is communicated through the instance of narrator (understanding perpetuated by Stanzel's theory of mediatization).

What the model allows one to argue is that in drama, the narrative level is optional and the performative level is constitutive, whereas in epic narrative, it is the performance level that is optional.⁴⁹

This three-level narrative scheme might be a basis for creation of a model describing spatial narratives (e.g., architectonic, garden, museum). The narrative level would be jointly constructed by the base narrative, because the space as a whole refers to narrative elements that are encoded in a semiotic code that lets us identify the base narrative and points us towards its most important aspects. As the discourse level is a spatial arrangement of the elements, it can come close to a painting, where a whole image is presented at once (though it is known that the very process of perception, even when we cannot perceive it, is sequential), or a movie presentation, where the spatial object (a monument, a garden, or a museum exhibition) requires moving through it and is experienced as a sequence of scenes, frames or places. The performance level is an act of physically moving through space. Whether it is constitutive or optional, the narrative depends on the design of the piece – not every object requires a sequence to actualize the dormant narrative potential. This level is important in architectural works, especially where the project pushes the boundaries between watching and enacting the narrative. In previous articles that I have written about garden narratives, I emphasised the fact that a visitor often pictures himself as the main character in the narrative, and, as such is implicated as moving through the space, enacting events of the narrative. In case of *The Forest* project, the viewer is implicated as an actor planting the trees, taking care of them, or destroying them.

While presenting the division of the levels of narrative, it is important to note that narrative itself cannot be reduced to the plot level, rather, it emerges “across” the levels. The emerging mental picture is a result of experience (intellectual, emotional and corporal) and is an effect of cooperation between three described levels (every one of which can be a separate object of consideration and have its own mental representation). Describing the nature of narrative as a mental representation, Ryan describes five dimensions of narrative: 1) the spatial dimension (the image of the world), 2) the temporal dimension (changes caused by events happening in the course of time), 3) the logical dimension (cause and effect), 4) the mental dimension (linking the events to the mental states of the agents; e.g. their goals, motivations, emotions) and, 5) formal the dimension (linking all of the element into a coherent whole)⁵⁰. Depending on the specific architectonic project, different dimensions of the narrative can be encoded on different levels (e.g., the image of the world is very often materialised by the object itself, as often happens in gardens); the change or the passing of time can be written into the architectonical object (e.g., *The Forest* project moves through different stages

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 365.

⁵⁰ M-L. Ryan, “Narrative”, in: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. D. Herman, M. Jahn, M-L. Ryan, London 2005, p. 346.

of life, from planting to death), but they can be also emphasised by the movement of the visitor on the performative level; the mental dimension can belong to the plot level, but it can also be performed by the visitor through the projecting of their own mental states. The performative level with its rhythmic dimension, can also change the global meaning of the narrative, just as is the case with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, where the rhythm of the walk through the space is inscribed into the narrative structures of survival and acceptance, recreation and closure.

Between the distinguished levels there are continuous connections. The level of discourse allows for the base narrative to be recognized and for the plot to be reconstructed, which makes it easier to identify the relations between different semiotic codes at a later point. Both the discourse level and the plot level influence the performance level. In the first case the way the space is planned and allows for certain ways of exploration sometimes restricts them. In the second case the knowledge of the represented plot can convince a visitor to move in a certain way that also influences the perception of their own activities⁵¹. The spatial extension of the monuments (or any other narrative environment for that matter) allows us to manipulate movement and proxemics, and the corporality of re-enactment of the narrative makes it possible to introduce a rhythmic element to the experience.

This characteristic of spatial narratives makes the dynamics of the creation of narrative meaning in both monuments more comprehensible. For example, it lets us identify how the performative and the affective dimension of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is projected by its layout and how it translates into a narrative that is constantly under construction. Distinguishing the level of performance allows us to recognise how the body and the mind of the viewer cooperate in creating the narrative. This model also allows us to precisely point towards the specific narrative potential of architecture, which – as a medium – is apt to affect and manipulate the use of proxemics, the manner of movement, rhythm and perception, and weave them into the experience of narrative meaning.

The ability of architecture to foreground the bodily experiences of the audience and use them as part of the narrative seems to be a crucial element of its narrative specificity.

⁵¹ It should be noted here that the meaning of extradiegetic messages, e.g., designs of gardens or museums, can additionally define narrative's plot or even point towards the right way through the space.

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