



Modern ways of using urbanistic elements in shaping contemporary public spaces

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ABSTRACT:

This article presents how architects by designing creative and ingenious urban features with sophisticated forms and shapes participate in the shaping of contemporary public spaces. Examples of urban designs located in cities found in the United States and Poland were discussed. Efforts were made to show that urban complexes populated by various types of urban elements, with varied and properly selected colors, textures and materials can enrich a city's landscape.

KEYWORDS:

urban elements; public space; design

1. Introduction

Modern material and construction technology is becoming more and more indicative of large cities in shaping public spaces [1]. Innovative small-scale architectural design elements in the form of pavilions, terraces, platforms, bridges, footbridges, and promenades create representative and attractive urban landscapes and allow increased access to nature for city inhabitants. Diverse spaces are created using colorful and decorative elements such as sculptures, flowerpots, trellises, pergolas, gazebos, roofs, retaining walls and ramps. The geometry of surfaces can be emphasized by various types of fixed or portable benches. The creative use of light, optical fibers, glowing seats, lighting walls, motion lighting for roads, pedestrian routes and LED technology gives public spaces an extraordinary climate. Urban elements that clearly provide spaces with a specific character and attractiveness include fountains, gushing wall springs and the appearance of life-giving energy provided by water cascades [2]. Illuminated water surfaces and the sound of fountains or water cascades can enliven a space and enhance rest and relaxation.

2. Urban details in a city's public spaces





Urban details [3] complement the decor of urban space. In order to achieve the right effect, individual spatial elements must be stylistically matched to nearby buildings. The Kreielsheimer Promenade by Kathryn Gustafson in Seattle is a unique meeting place for opera-goers and visitors to the McCaw Hall. The numerous qualities of the project, where the interaction between various fields of art and technical elements can be observed, resulted in Gustafson receiving the American Society of Landscape Architects'² (ASLA) highest award, the „Award of Excellence”

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² The American Association of Landscape Architects (ASLA) founded in 1899, whose activity is aimed at shaping and developing the environment and public spaces

in 2005. The public promenade, with an area of 1765 m² and a geometrically designed layout, is an open space located between the two buildings. Benches with a wavelike design create a unique place to rest and socialize. In turn, the translucent metal mesh placed above the heads of passers-by functions as a kind of shimmering ceiling. The area is also decorated by a water feature, which thanks to the design of the metal mesh and the effect of night lights, reflects the sky. The feature consists of three thin sheets of water, each of which occupies an area corresponding to three diagonally arranged stone pavement panels. Water flows out of the stainless steel truss mounted in the pavement, slowly spreading over its entire surface producing a pleasant and calming sound. The architects, thanks to their innovation, talent and artistic sense have created a place filled with light both during the day and at night. The delicate green quartzite and the tinted concrete used to cover the surface creates a depth and contrast visible especially in rain, as well as on sunny days. The promenade draws attention to the innovative way of using urban features, thanks to which, provides pedestrians with an extraordinary impression (Table 1).





Table 1

Kreielsheimer Promenade	
Author: Gustafson Guthrie Nichol	
Realization: 2003	
Location: Seattle-United States	
	
	
Source: [4]	

Court Square Press' „Award of Excellence” (2006) by Landworks Studio Inc. is an exemplary example of how to design a feature in a public space. A 19th-century, six-story brick building adapted for residential purposes, adjacent to the study area, is known as the Court Square Press Building. Re-evaluation of the building revealed an empty space that inspired the developer to create a public green area. The post-industrial area has been turned into a unique, urban oasis. Lighting, winding paths and vegetation are all conducive to walks and evening meetings. Modern elements of small-scale architecture used in the design include: optical fibers, steel ropes, spot lighting, glowing seats in the form of boxes, paths in the form of „zigzagging” wooden and aluminium panels. By using these elements skilfully the neglected area has been

turned into a friendly place for both residents and tourists [5]. The exemplary design proves that architects can and do have an impact on modeling the beauty of contemporary urban spaces (Table 2).

Table 2

Court Square Press Courtyard	
Author: Landworks Studio Inc.	
Realization: 2005	
Location: Boston-United States	
	
	
Source: [6]	

The Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve in Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming is a featured work by the American Society of Landscape Architecture at Hershberger Design. The preserve is a nature reserve located on an area of 448 ha, located in the Grand Teton National Park, at the southern tip of Lake Phelps, Wyoming. Visiting the reserve is done on foot, consequently every tourist has a unique opportunity to „immerse” themselves in the authentic natural landscape. It is possible to feel the texture of the leaves and trunks of the trees there, cup your hands in the water, climb the rocks and finally observe the wildlife. The design also contains unusual elements of small-scale architecture such as: footbridges (they are constructed of metal mesh, thanks to which plants grow through them), seats made of massive wooden logs set on large stones, a bridge, terraces, roofed information boards and places to eat. Carefully designed tracks guide walkers past streams of flowing water, allowing a direct, full experience of the surrounding nature. Work on the project lasted over five years and involved various specialists: architects, landscape architects, designers and engineers. Every year, Grand Teton National Park is visited by 3 million tourists, making it one of the most popular parks in the United States. The intention of the creators was to design an environment that brings visitors closer to nature and provides rest, recreation and education. The use of modern materials and the harmonious combination of elements with the surrounding landscape certainly succeeds in this aim (Table 3).

Table 3









Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve	
Author: Hershberger Design	
Realization: 2008	
Location: Wyoming-United States	
	
	
Source: [7]	

Table 4

NAWA - architectural sculpture	
Author: Oskar Zięta	
Realization: 2017	
Location: Wrocław-Poland	
	
	
Source: [8]	

One of the most spectacular urban constructions that can be found in a public space is Nawa³ - an architectural sculpture erected on Daliowa Island in Wrocław designed using the latest steel processing technology by Polish architect Oskar Zięta [8]. The sculpture with bionic forms, is 7 meters high and 15 meters wide and impresses with its extremely light construction. The construction based on 35 steel arches, made by metal blowing, sits in perfect harmony with the nearby monuments: the tower of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Sand, Wrocław Market Hall and Ostrów Tumski. All of which is reflected in the polished surface of the sculpture. The bionic form and its characteristic polished surface gives an unusual effect in the form of reflected colors and changing light depending on the time of day. The surrounding landscape adds charm, with alleys, groves, green areas, hills, old fruit trees, and colorful plants (Table 4).

3. Conclusions

Well designed urban elements help create the unique character and atmosphere of manmade public spaces, constituting a kind of complement to their decor. Modern material and construction technologies create bionic harmonious forms connecting urban buildings with the surrounding space. Properly selected patterns and colors of paving, lighting and seating places, as well as properly designed water features have allowed for greater diversity in a given urban space [9]. Various types of seats, gazebos, pergolas, correctly located, have become a central viewpoint from which the beauty of the landscape can be admired and the color change of the seasons observed. Various forms of vegetation were also used in composing elements of street furniture [10]. Often, these areas also become a friendly place to rest and relax.

Innovative design solutions, effective urban elements and properly selected plant cover combine the architecture of an urban space with nature [11]. Its attractiveness is conducive to the faster development of cities that is expected by residents. Currently, computer programs are used in the design process. Buildings and their surroundings can be presented as a three-dimensional model as well as used for the appropriate selection of materials, urban elements and spectacular greenery, thus allowing a unique and original design [12].

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³ NAWA Sculpture - was nominated for the architectural European Union Prize Mies van der Rohe 2019

Nowoczesne sposoby wykorzystania detali urbanistycznych w kształtowaniu współczesnych przestrzeni publicznych

STRESZCZENIE:

Zaprezentowano sposób, w jaki architekci, projektując kreatywne i pomysłowe detale urbanistyczne o wyrafinowanych formach i kształtach, uczestniczą w kształtowaniu współczesnych przestrzeni publicznych. Omówiono wybrane przykłady zrealizowanych wewnątrz miast położonych w Stanach Zjednoczonych i w Polsce. Starano się pokazać, że zespoły miejskie nasycone różnego rodzaju detalami urbanistycznymi o urozmaiconej i właściwie dobranej do otoczenia kolorystyce, fakturze i materiałach wzbogacają krajobraz miasta.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:

detale urbanistyczne; przestrzeń publiczna; projekt