

„A“ profession.

In my bachelor program, if a student was not performing well, they might hear during a tutorial a sentence, that became sort of iconic: “many other professions are starting with A”, that suggested that maybe the person should revisit the idea of becoming an architect and pursue a less demanding career. Lately, I started wondering, what was the real value of having the title of an architect before one’s name. Wouldn’t it be better to quit in time, in order to become part of the other “infamous” professions?

That question brings me to the collection of artifacts, connected with the work of Matta Gordon Clark that CCA has in their archives. As Hila Peleg mentions in her lecture, opening the exhibition “Rough Cuts and Outtakes: Gordon Matta-Clark” author of the famous building cuts and movies that documented the process and outcome of his work, himself has refused to be called an architect. In fact, I would say that becoming an outcast of his education and its commodified purpose, has given him a chance to not only, produce spectacular and relevant work but also, as I see it, create something that transcends the homogeneous production of architecture. Support of a group of passionate and driven collaborators, a movement, gave him a voice that could question the existing paradigms.

Gordon Matta-Clark was not only an artist, but he was also an actor (starring in his film productions), he was an activist, an associate to other artists, an advocate for destruction, and author of numerous poems. Clearly, he was an an-architect. The abundance of this one title allowed him to have many. Or to remain undefined at all.

When in 1976 a duo of artists, Christo and Jean-Claude, proposed their artwork called “Running Fence” to be realized in the state of California, among many legal limitations they faced, their proposal was also questioned to be an artwork at all. It took “42 months of collaborative efforts, 18 public hearings, three sessions at the Superior Courts of California”¹ for them to be allowed to realize the piece that they invested from their own budget. Maybe instead of defending it as an art piece, they should have named it a piece of architecture. In the definition provided by Hans Van der Laan in his writings, a wall that divides space in two already is architecture. It makes one wonder then if in this case would they even have to provide a 400-page long environmental impact report, while such reports are only lately becoming a necessity for architectural investments.



In my university work, more and more I refuse to use the actual works of architecture as references in the research phase. To be inspired by an existing building of a similar purpose only shuts the doors of my imagination rather than open more ways worth investigating. What has replaced the analysis of plans, details and material compositions, are pieces of art and their explanations. Interviews with artists, movies or photos that I take in galleries during exhibitions and fairs happening in Copenhagen and other cities I visit. Among many site-specific art pieces by contemporary international artists such as Do Ho Suh, Robert Irwin or Rachel Whiteread, I also frequently look upon artists from my own country. The approach of sculptors such as Monika Sosnowska, Miroslaw Balka or Paweł Althamer gave me a chance to understand better the social situation and complex problems I'm dealing with in my master thesis project. At the same time, I find fulfillment in presenting their work to foreign professors at the school. But what I also find, extremely interesting in their projects is, how emotional are spaces they create. And how the intention of the artist is translated into a spatial arrangement, how materials come together to speak of the idea, memory or feeling.

I remember, at first, how shocked I was to find in one of Tom Emerson's lectures for ETH, a reference that was a screen from a movie. It was the scene when the main character of Jacques Tati's film *Playtime* enters the modern office, built as a large open plan room with square cubicles that ironically divide the space into very small separate offices. This one scene opened a large inner discussion in my head. It was precisely grasping the essence of how the modern movement has become its own contradiction, how it became a parody of its intentions. The message behind the movie due to the commonly understood medium of the cinematographic image, is more informative in my opinion, than any diagram made by an architect I've ever seen. It opens a dialogue rather than give a limited answer.

By posing questions and undermining the established ways of doing, we can start a conversation on how to tackle the crisis of architecture of our time: the climate crisis. The proactive attitude and participatory character of work of artists such as Gordon Matta Clark or Christo and Jean-Claude from the 70s might be a reference on how to aim for the re-invention of values commonly accepted among the architectural practices. While the establishment of anarchitecture group and many other similar movements, criticizing the modernist architecture along with capitalism as its economic drive was strictly bound with the time of their uprising, the approach they presented seems increasingly relevant in the light of the socio-economic problems we are facing today. The next wave of destructive consequences of the commonly accepted way of living, based on philosophy driven by consumerism and instant fulfillment has left us striving for new meaning. Are architects today even able, within the structures of corporate offices, speak a new voice or ask bold questions?

I don't know the answer. What I can do is to agree with Giancarlo de Carlo, and re-state that "*architecture is too important to leave it to architects*"². We shall not forget, there are many other professions which name starts with "A".

[ref. 1] statement from Christo and Jean-Claude website, retrieved on 08.03.2020

[ref. 2] Bouman, O., & van Toorn, R. (2005). Architecture is too important to leave to the architects, a conversation with Giancarlo De Carlo. Volume, 20(2), 21-26.

[fot. 1] *Running Fence* (1976), Christo and Jean-Claude, [fot. 2] 190 x 90 x 4973 (2008), Miroslaw Balka, [fot. 3] *Playtime* (1967), Jacques Tati