

Book Review. *Art in Urban Space: Reflections on City Culture in Europe and North-America*, edited by Tamás Juhász

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The concept of space as a social construction shaped by human actions has prompted the spatial turn in social sciences and humanities. Scholars now delve into spatial practices, place-making processes, and spatial representations within different cultural and historical contexts. This recognition has enriched our comprehension of various aspects of our life, including cultural practices, social processes, and historical sources. Centred around spatial perspectives, the anthology *Art in Urban Space: Reflections on City Culture in Europe and North-America* (2021) stands as a notable contribution to the Collection Károli series. Edited by Tamás Juhász and published by L'Harmattan, the collection of papers offers a broad view of the interaction between artistic endeavours and urban spaces. The volume encapsulates the recognition that space is far from being a passive backdrop, but rather an active and influential force that shapes and is shaped by human activities, artistic or otherwise. Through its eleven essays, it provides a lens into the complex relationship between art, the city, and the multifaceted nature of space. The contributors acknowledge that artistic expression and engagement with urban environments go beyond mere aesthetics. Instead, art becomes a vehicle for social commentary, cultural exploration, and an avenue to challenge existing norms and power dynamics within urban spaces. By exploring the manifold dimensions of space and the representations of space, the articles aptly acknowledge the agency of artists, artworks, and the audience in shaping the urban environment and exerting influence on our lived experience. The authors examine how artists actively engage with the city, responding to its unique characteristics, history, and socio-political factors. In doing so, the papers uncover the ways in which art can foster dialogue, challenge social inequalities, and contribute

to the formation of inclusive and vibrant urban communities. Moreover, the anthology emphasises that the relationship between art and the city extends beyond physical spaces. It discusses the intangible aspects of space, such as the emotional, psychological, and symbolic dimensions that art can evoke and provoke through its depiction of urban environments.

The volume is structured into three main sections, each focusing on specific aspects of art and its impact on society and urban spaces. Following the editor's introduction, the first section, "Public Art Considerations", features a collection of papers that share several similarities in their examination of different dimensions of site-specific artistic endeavours. The authors explore how art installations and projects are intricately crafted to interact with and respond to specific locations. This deliberate approach facilitates a connection between the artwork and its surrounding environment. Holly Lynn Baumgartner's analysis of Tyree Guyton's art installation project in Detroit, Gizela Horváth's exploration of street art, and Adrienne Gálosi's examination of public art all touch upon the significance of site-specificity in creating meaningful and impactful artistic experiences. The examined artworks exemplify their contribution to fostering dialogue within communities and engaging the broader public. The anthology's second section, "War, Travel, and Resistance", studies the complex evolution of societal dynamics within urban spaces. Ágnes Zsófia Kovács and Michael Collins discuss the historical and cultural legacies embedded within urban environments and the impact of external factors such as architecture, history, and war. Further contributing to the exploration of societal dynamics, Teodóra Dömötör and Jasamin Kashanipour scrutinise the power structures and manipulations inherent in society. Their examinations traverse various dimensions, encompassing the perception of gender roles, the dominance of consumer culture, and the delicate balance between individual autonomy and external control. The anthology encompasses a wide range of urban phenomena from the 20th and 21st centuries, yet it also delves into the historical city cultures, particularly focusing on the city of London. In the closing section titled "London: Word, Action, and Image", the authors adopt a historical lens to scrutinise urban spaces throughout different time periods. Whether it is the examination of Queen Elizabeth's coronation entry into London during the 16th century, the exploration of London's cultural landscape in the 18th century, or the analysis of the industrial revolution's impact on the city during the Victorian era, these papers illuminate the socio-political and cultural forces that shaped urban environments in various historical contexts. Erzsébet Stróbl's analysis of a royal procession, Dóra Csikós Janczer's interpretation of William Hogarth's prints, and Éva Péteri's exploration of Ford Madox Brown's painting map out the visual elements and the connections between art and society.

A significant aspect of these papers is their utilisation of visual analysis to unravel the symbolic and allegorical meanings that are embedded in artistic expressions found within urban environments, both in their physical manifestations and depictions. While distinct in its approach, Sarah Butler's paper similarly highlights the complexities of urban life and further expands upon it by scrutinising the notion of home and sense of belonging as presented in her own writings.

The initial analysis presented gives an examination of Tyree Guyton's site-specific art installation, *The Heidelberg Project* in Detroit. Holly Lynn Baumgartner's investigation uncovers the social, political, aesthetic, and narrative dimensions inherent in Guyton's community-led artwork. The study unveils Guyton's ability to metamorphose his childhood neighbourhood into a dynamically evolving, immersive art museum that seamlessly merges indoor and outdoor spaces. The analysis elucidates how *The Heidelberg Project* serves as a catalyst force, drawing attention to the pressing challenges faced by marginalised and forgotten neighbourhoods of Detroit. Furthermore, as Baumgarten argues, the project itself stimulates a much-needed discourse on the themes of public engagement, education, urban regeneration, and community building. Having blossomed into a community-led art village, the project functions now as a vital hub for arts education and fostering social dialogue. Baumgarten highlights the transformative power exhibited by this alternative historical narrative stands as a testament to its enduring impact on the fabric of society. The project holds the potential to resonate most profoundly within the future generations, as it actively engages them. Through this influence the project will shape their perceptions, values, and aspirations, ultimately contributing to their cultural and critical development.

The site-specificity and ephemeral nature of art is also reflected in the following analysis. In her exploration of street art, Gizela Horváth undertakes an investigation, aiming to discern whether this artistic form truly accomplishes the revival of art. By referencing Banksy, Horváth brings to light the concept of a "battle for visibility" (p. 44), which paradoxically emerges within the domain of street artists in the new millennium, who adamantly advocate for anonymity. Furthermore, Horváth undertakes an examination of Dan Perjovschi's artistic projects and Gabriel Miloia's *Muian project* recognising their shared attributes of being timely, critical, and popular. Perjovschi's works, renowned for their social and political commentary, resonate deeply with contemporary issues and garner widespread recognition. Similarly, Miloia's *Muian project* captivates audiences with its relevance and critical insights. Both artists effectively utilise their platforms—the public walls of streets—to engage with societal concerns and to foster meaningful dialogue that resonates with a wide audience.

In “Normal City with Normal Art”, Adrienne Gálosi conducts an analysis of public art, encompassing its historical context, interpretive dimensions, and impact on both communities and urban development. By exploring the ramifications of the decline of traditional industries and the advent of globalization, Gálosi highlights the transformative effects that ultimately gave rise to the discourse surrounding creative cities. Within the context of gentrification, Gálosi’s critical inquiry offers valuable insights into its multifaceted manifestations. With a keen focus on the interplay between commercialization, popular culture, and the art world, Gálosi exposes the underlying processes that contribute to the “aesthetisation” of cities. This phenomenon, characterised by the prioritization of visual allure and the infusion of artistic elements, often comes at the expense of other vital urban considerations. To support her arguments, Gálosi presents compelling case studies, notably Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc* and John Ahearn’s *44th Police Precinct* in Bronx. These site-specific public art installations faced removal due to their disruptive and disquieting nature, failing to align with the intended goal of normalising the urban environment. Like Baumgartner and Horváth, Gálosi underscores the capacity of street art and public art to engender significant dialogues, stimulate critical perspectives, and leave a lasting impact on urban environments. The research conducted on endeavours of this nature holds immense significance, as it has the potential to provide valuable insights into the transformative capacities of street art and public art. By exploring these artistic interventions, the papers in this section not only address significant societal issues but also have the ability to stimulate contemplation and active engagement among readers. They tackle the crucial role of public engagement in the creation and appreciation of art.

Next, Ágnes Zsófia Kovács researches Edith Wharton’s intriguing travel writings focusing on Italy and France. Kovács unravels Wharton’s keen observations of visual culture, architectural spaces, and the historical and cultural legacy embedded within them. Within the analysis, the exploration extends to the influence of John Ruskin’s architectural methodology on Wharton’s travelogues, with particular emphasis on her deep connection to the emotional and ornamental Baroque forms. The interwoven threads of visual culture, architecture, and the artistic continuum are underscored throughout the article. Wharton’s profound engagement with the interconnections within art history resonates strongly with Virginia Woolf’s own contemplation of literary continuity expressed in her seminal work *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) as well as with T. S. Eliot’s insights in his essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919). As Kovács notes, “Wharton argues that artistic modes and styles evolve organically from one another and should not be solely judged in isolation” (p. 88). This comprehension contributes to Wharton’s investigation

of the relationship between the Renaissance and Baroque stylistic elements within the realm of garden art, as well as the inherent interconnectedness of garden compositions with classical Italian garden art. By means of Kovács' comparative analysis, readers are invited to engage deeply in Wharton's and Ruskin's notions regarding the significance of perception, architectural observation, and the intrinsic relationship between architecture, its surroundings, and its inhabitants.

Teodóra Dömötör presents an analysis of Ernest Hemingway's short story, *A Very Short Story* (1925), specifically examining its narrative depiction of New York as a personified city with a notable feminizing influence. By undertaking this examination, Dömötör unveils the interactions between urban spaces and gender, unravelling the ways in which the city—and its dwellers—shape the notion of masculinity. Going beyond the boundaries of Hemingway's literary work, Dömötör incorporates insights from the author's biographical background to provide a contextual analysis. This approach offers a nuanced perspective on the relationship between Hemingway's personal experiences and the narrative representation of urban spaces. Through the examination of these diverse examples, the author identifies recurring themes that involve controlling and dominating maternal figures, as well as the struggles surrounding male power within Hemingway's oeuvre. Dömötör scrutinises the profound impact of 1920s New York's social history on Hemingway's work, emphasising its role in the gradual erosion of masculine constructs after World War I. The author sheds light on the relationship between urban spaces, social dynamics, and the ever-changing concept of masculinity, contributing to a deeper understanding of this complex evolution.

Michael Collins's contribution presents a thought-provoking exploration of cities during wartime, highlighting the interconnections between seemingly disparate urban centres such as Berlin, Paris, London, La Havre, Port of Spain, and Saigon (known today as Ho Chi Minh City). With a focus on the historical, political, social and economic dimensions of these cities during World War II, Collins investigates their transformation into anti-cities that deviate from peacetime cities characterised by vibrant intellectual life. Collins takes a fascinating approach by centring his argumentation around the experiences and perspectives of influential intellectuals. By drawing upon the insights of prominent figures such as Walter Benjamin, Albert Einstein, Jean-Paul Sartre, V.S. Naipaul, Bernardine Evaristo, Yusef Komunyakaa, Eric Williams, and Derek Walcott, Collins uncovers the narratives woven into the fabric of the urban spaces. These intellectuals' personal encounters, life tragedies, and reflections contribute to a multi-dimensional understanding of the cities' metamorphosis into anti-cities. Collins's paper stands out as an associative and imaginative piece of

writing, painting a picture of the creative freedom fostered by intellectual cross-fertilisation. Through his engaging approach and broad perspective, Collins provides valuable insights into the interconnections between urban spaces, the psychological conditions imposed by wartime circumstances, and the enduring and vital role of open-minded creative synergies.

Jasamin Kashanipour's scholarly work appears as a natural progression of Collins's concluding thoughts, as in her opening thoughts she delves into an exploration of the diverse benefits that urban inhabitants derive from their urban surroundings. Central to her analysis is the concept of "ratification", which Kashanipour draws primarily from the works of Finnish scholars such as Levanto, Naukkarinen, and Vihma. These scholars posit that "ratification" manifests when non-artistic entities or phenomena are influenced by artistic processes, without necessarily undergoing a transformation into conventional art forms as traditionally understood. Adopting an anthropological perspective, Kashanipour employs an ethnographic approach inspired by the work of Clifford Geertz. Within this framework, she engages in an examination of two individuals referred to by the pseudonyms Toni and Doris. Her ethnographic approach captures the narratives of the two individuals who actively resist dominant cultural forces. She discusses the lived experiences of Toni and Doris who consciously reject to lead a life dictated by commodity culture and "faceless and unrecognizable" (183) neoliberal systems. By examining the repressive aspects of Metternich's regime alongside the contemporary consumer society, Kashanipour provides a reading of the continuities and transformations in power structures, revealing how mechanisms of control persist and evolve over time. Kashanipour's analysis of both Metternich's repressive regime of the nineteenth-century and contemporary consumer society denotes the enduring—and evolving—nature of power structures. Ultimately, the paper departs from its initial focus on "ratification", yet it continues to provide a thought-provoking exploration of the manipulations inherent in the capitalist system. However, in contrast to many critics of the capitalist system, the paper presents compelling alternatives through real-life examples and case studies. In this way, the study offers pathways for reclaiming our autonomous self and pursuing lives free from the confines imposed by unyielding economic growth.

The third section of this anthology is dedicated to the vibrant urban space of London, offering intriguing cultural and historical insights and perspectives. Erzsébet Stróbl's paper focuses on Queen Elizabeth's notable coronation entry into London in 1559. Stróbl analyses this unique public procession, shedding light on its symbolic and allegorical meanings. Through an examination of contemporary documents and written accounts, Stróbl demonstrates how London transformed into an open-air stage for performances,

music, and theatrical spectacles during the event. The paper vividly portrays the communal effort behind organising such a grand procession and emphasises the collaborative nature of the undertaking. Stróbl's attention to detail is commendable as she provides a description of the pageant, including the scenic design, ephemeral music, captivating sounds, and the pivotal roles played by actors and the audience. By exploring the artistic expressions within this event, encompassing both pre-designed and improvisational elements, the paper successfully bridges the realms of performance and public art. Furthermore, Stróbl hints at the Queen's strategic self-representation through the analysed procession. This final note adds an intriguing layer to the exploration of the performative nature of royal authority, as well as the political implications embedded within urban spaces.

In the subsequent article titled "The Bad Taste of the Town" by Janczer Csikós Dóra, the focus shifts to the mid-eighteenth-century London and its reputation as an uncontrollable "monster" metropolis. Janczer contextualises the debates around contemporary theatre within the broader socio-cultural and aesthetic shifts, thereby offering insights into the connections between art, society, and national identity during the period. The author begins by delving into the works of William Hogarth, primarily examining *The Bad Taste of the Town* also known as *Masquerade and Operas* from 1724 and later expanding the analysis to include *The South Sea Scheme* from 1721. Through careful analysis, Janczer Csikós argues that Hogarth's satirical depictions serve as a cultural topography of the city rather than a direct portrayal of criminality and moral poverty. The two prints, according to the author's interpretation, presents a visual narrative of the theatre-going and culture-consuming public, shedding light on the changing social activities and cultural practices of the time. The Italian opera's supposedly corrupting effects is subjected to detailed analysis, exploring its perceived influence on the religious, social, and moral aspects of its viewers. The examination looks into the material details and design of the opera and masquerade performances, while also considering the contextual factors that contribute to the comprehension of the depicted cultural practices. With an inter-art approach, Janczer Csikós presents the connections between artistic expressions, societal values, and material manifestations. By branching out from the initial focus of *The Bad Taste of the Town* to encompass a broader sociocultural context, Janczer Csikós offers a novel perspective on London's cultural dynamics during this transformative period in the city's history.

Éva Péteri's analysis, akin to Janczer's approach, embarks on a multidimensional exploration by commencing with a visual artwork: Ford Madox Brown's Victorian painting, *Work* (1852–65). Péteri's interpretation explores the social layers of contemporary society.

By drawing inspiration from Hogarth's series of plates titled *Industry and Idleness* (1747), she establishes a framework centred around the contrasting concepts of industry and idleness. In her analysis, Péteri discusses the thoughts of Carlyle, who highlights the virtues of diligence and ascribes sacredness and ennobling power to work. An intriguing parallel emerges between Carlyle's belief in the transformative potential of work and its capacity to ennoble the individual, and Jasamin Kashanipour's scrutiny of neoliberal ideologies that prioritise economic growth at the expense of other aspects of human well-being. In Péteri's research we can discern the traces of such attitudes in the context of the industrial revolution, where the seeds of the work-centric mindset were sown. To strengthen her argument, Péteri turns to Ford Maddox Hueffer, the grandson of the painter, better known as Ford Madox Ford. This interconnection between historical context, artistic interpretation, and critical commentary deepens the understanding of the complexities inherent in Brown's *Work* and its relevance to the wider socio-economic landscape of the Victorian era. With a detailed analysis of the different dog breeds depicted in the painting, Péteri alludes to the diverse social hierarchies and roles within contemporary society and the importance of class distinctions prevalent during the period. The dogs, like their human counterparts, exhibit varying degrees of obedience, assertiveness, and control. Their actions mirror the power dynamics that govern human relationships and social interactions. In this way, the painting becomes a microcosm of society, encapsulating the class hierarchies and power imbalances that governed the era. By recognising the interconnectedness of individuals and their social positions within the painting, Péteri contemplates the lasting impact of class divisions in society at large. Through the visual narrative presented in *Work*, we are not only confronted with the stark realities of the Victorian era but also called upon to engage in a broader dialogue about social justice.

Sarah Butler's final paper weaves together extracts from her novels *Ten Things I've Learnt About Love*, *Before Fire*, and *Jack and Bet* with theoretical considerations on the concept of home and the city. With this approach, Butler presents the reciprocal relationship between fiction and theory and sheds light on the multifaceted nature of forming and being formed by the urban environment. In her theoretical discussion, the author goes beyond conventional notions of home as a private space, contrasting it with the public realm outside. Instead, she embraces a comprehension of home as a complex and fluid concept, drawing on insights from sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and literary studies. By mentioning the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in our relationship with the city, as it both nurtures and challenges us, embraces and isolates us, liberates and constrains us, Butler highlights the enduring power of the city to transform our sense of belonging.

Drawing on an extensive theoretical background that appears to have deeply influenced her fictional writings, Butler offers a unique approach by presenting extracts from her own works alongside insightful analyses. This creative fusion of fiction and analysis encourages introspection and self-reflection. It allows readers to connect with the characters and their stories on a personal level while simultaneously considering the wider societal and cultural significance of the urban environment.

Focusing on the various connections and links between art, literature, and urban space, the volume takes stock of the many points of contact between art and the city, from site-specific installations to literary and visual representations, through analyses of performative practices and community engagement initiatives. Through the various examinations, the anthology reveals how art influences not just the physical landscape, social structure, and cultural identity of the city, but also our personal experiences, memories, and emotions. The reader is consistently confronted with the reiteration of the importance attributed to artistic agency in influencing our perceptions, interactions, and engagements within the complex urban milieu. The subtle yet recurring emphasis placed on this notion serves to reinforce the critical understanding that artists hold the inherent power to actively shape and reshape our experiences of the urban environment.

The book's interdisciplinary approach and its comprehensive exploration of the intersections between art, artistic practices, and urban environments make it a valuable resource for scholars, students, and practitioners alike in fields such as art history, literature, urban cultures, cultural geography, urban studies, and contemporary art practice.

References

Juhász, T. (eds) (2021) *Art in urban space: Reflections on city culture in Europe and North-America*. Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, L'Harmattan.