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THE ROLE OF SCULPTURE IN SHAPING THE STYLE OF GARDEN OBJECTS

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Abstract

When designing a contemporary garden, be it private or public, it should be remembered that it has to be not only functional and aesthetic, but it should also have some theme and unique atmosphere – this can be achieved through, for example, artistic objects. Properly selected and placed to catch the eye, they arouse emotions and engage the intellect. Every historical epoch and all types of garden have their own distinctive sculptural themes and materials.

Keywords: sculpture, style of garden, private garden, public space

Streszczenie

Projektując współczesny ogród, zarówno rodzinny, jak też użyteczności publicznej, warto pamiętać o tym, że musi on być nie tylko funkcjonalny i estetyczny, ale powinien zawierać pewną treść i posiadać niepowtarzalny nastrój, które można uzyskać przez m.in. obiekty artystyczne. Odpowiednio dobrane i ustawione dzieła rzeźbiarskie przyciągają wzrok, budzą emocje, angażują intelekt zwiedzających. Każda epoka historyczna i różne typy ogrodów posiadały własne charakterystyczne dla siebie tematy i surowce rzeźbiarskie.

Słowa kluczowe: rzeźba, style ogrodowe, ogród prywatny, przestrzeń publiczna

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1. Introduction

Sculpture is a feature of garden design that has the potential to be of particular impact. In historical gardens, it was a compositional element strengthening the style, spirit and the atmosphere of the garden. In modern private gardens, valuable sculptural objects are unfortunately quite a rare phenomenon. However, contemporary land art achievements are very interesting. With sculptures, designers trigger associations in the mind of the visitor, the need for contemplation, feelings of pleasure, relaxation, amusement, satisfaction, a sense of grandeur, power, authority or intimidation. Using the sculptures it is possible to create a new spirit of a place.

2. Material and methods

The aim of this work was to present the history and the role of the garden sculpture in past historical epochs and the present day, as well as to describe the materials used for creating artistic objects. This work includes a review of literature on the role of sculpture in the formation of stylish garden objects and our own observations made in the period 2011–2015 in the UK, France, Germany and Italy in addition to Poland.

3. Sculpture in historical gardens

Sculptures have been a common feature during all periods of civilisation and across all cultures in the world. Initially, they served religious and political purposes; the sculptures had to be impressive and serve to show the might of the ruling classes, e.g. the Great Sphinx or Moai statues on Easter Island. The human figure and animals were among the earliest sculptural themes. Animals were depicted realistically or in some cases, imaginary monsters were created, e.g. in China, where they were the traditional stone sculptural themes of tombs and temples. The creators of jewellery and reliefs, especially in the circle of Byzantine and Islamic art, found inspiration in the kingdom of plants – as a result of this, some motifs such as espalier and curving vines penetrated the art throughout Eurasia. Contemporary art has added a number of non-traditional forms of sculpture, e.g. light sculptures, kinetic sculptures (including aspects of physical movement), land art, and also small objects created specifically for the gardens of private homes, e.g. metal sculpture made of recycled objects.

The positioning of sculptures in the garden, their number, the material used and their themes have varied across different historical periods and they reflected the artistic trends fashionable at that time. In ancient Greece, statues of gods and kings were placed in some temples, on the lakes and in sacred groves. The Romans honoured their gods by placing sacrificial altars, temples, statues of deities, tombs and *nimfea* (a type of fountain decorated with columns and statues) in the gardens.

In medieval castles and monastic gardens, decorative pots and urns were used for the cultivation of flowering plants and herbs. In the monastic gardens were placed figurative sculptures of saints made of wood and stone. In the late Middle Ages, stone sculptures were combined with fountains [4].

In the Renaissance, sculptural elements were either combined with fountains, and various buildings or they were independent elements. Artists turned to the themes taken from Greek and Roman mythology. They also collected antique sculptures imported from Greece or Italy. Some figures could be found on the retaining walls, railings, staircases, terraces, caves, pools, fountains and cascades. The sculptures were of monarchs and princes, wealthy art patrons and the Medici family among others. The other themes of sculptures included nymphs, water and river gods, naiads, tritons, and animals.

The Monster Park is to be found in Bomarzo, Italy and is decorated in the Mannerist style; tuff rock was used in order to present an image of the terror and human struggle against the forces of nature. The sculptures in this park – giant monsters, gods, sphinxes, animals and mythical creatures tell the story of a man who must go through the pitfalls and passions of life [12].

There were also literal representations of the resident supernatural being of a given site, e.g. in the garden of the villa Colocci in Rome, there is a sleeping nymph – a supernatural guardian of this place [10].

A Baroque garden also expressed the idea of the subordination of nature to man. Baroque gardens showed the social status, power and wealth of their owners. Fountains and sculptures enhanced the prestige of their owners and manifested by social rank. The atmosphere of glamour and richness was achieved by the use of huge spectacular architectural elements and solutions, e.g. gardens in the Aldobrandini villa, Frascati and in Garzoni, Collodi were full of theatricality and illusory effects. The Aldobrandini villa became famous for its water theatre, with a statue of Atlas ejecting a high stream of water, a monster blowing strange sounds on the horn and the imitation of a storm with violent rain, wind and thunder [3].

The spirit of a place in the Baroque epoch was initiated in the gardens of Vaux-le-Vicomte, and continued in the Versailles garden of Louis XIV. Versailles showed dominance over nature and at the same time, illustrated the dominance of France in the contemporary world. Fountains and sculptures depicted a powerful monarchy, the same is found in the 16th-century Italian gardens that showed the power and wealth of cardinals and princes. The rich iconographic programme referred to classical mythology where in the centre was Apollo, the personified Sun King [12].

The Baroque epoch was similar to that of the Renaissance with regard to the garden being a place for contemplation and the home of a collection of works of art. Figures, putti, hermaphrodites, sundials and obelisks were set on the ground floor, in niches of tree rows and avenues; they were also used as elements of fountains. Building entrances, courtyards, entrance gates, lounges, main promenades, squares and crossroads were adorned with them. Vases were set on the abutments and parapets of palaces.

In the Baroque epoch, sculptures located in the main avenues of parks, geometric quarters and they often closed perspective. The main sculpture materials used for fountains and pools were bronze, lead, and copper, which were often gilded. Others were made of stone (marble, granite, sandstone), cast iron, terracotta (often gold-plated or painted white with oil paint) [4]. Topiary played a significant role in three-dimensional elements of design – this is an art form in which plants are pruned to human figures, animals and geometric shapes.

The landscape gardens of the first part 19th centuries there were almost no sculptures. They were only ever presented singularly and required compositional integration with the vegetation. Sculptures were set either on pedestals or directly on the ground and the basic sculpture material was stone. The equipment used in the gardens was lattice under vines, garden furniture, sundials, buckets, flower pots, decorative borders of flowerbeds and so on [4].

Works of sculpture, due to their emotional expression and themes referring to symbolism and history, created a mood of mystery. All kinds of monuments and memorial stones played this role. Decorations referred to ancient, medieval, Chinese and Islamic art. They were mainly set up in less visible places, giving the impression for a strolling person that he encountered them incidentally. Their unusual locations (e.g. in a thicket of plants) was designed to surprise and delight the viewer. And the natural environment was far from the rigidity of the Renaissance and the Baroque periods.

Characteristic of the romantic trend were ruins, hermitages and grottos. In the early 19th century, the main task was to create a garden atmosphere full of romantic undertones for their visitors. Special spiritual significance was places dedicated to the storage and display of accumulated architectural elements – statues, tombstones and monuments from the historic buildings. Duchess Helena Radziwiłł and Szymon Bogumił Zug managed to complete Arcadian topic in Arkadia Park [12]. Sculptors commissioned by prominent families include John George Plersch, Francis Pinck, and some international artists such as Guglielmo della Porta, André Le Brun and Giacomo Monaldi.

In the parks and gardens that are subject to revaluation, sculptures create the unique atmosphere and restore history. Today, there are opportunities to use modern materials without affecting the colour of the place [9]. A good solution is to use modern materials such as lightweight special concrete mortars on a frame with wire mesh and fibreglass for making copies of sculptures (Ill. 1, 2).



Ill. 1, 2. Lightweight and durable copies of sculptures of lions (the originals were made of stone) prepared for installation during the park restoration at the Wilanow Palace Museum (photo M. Dudkiewicz, 2011)

4. Sculpture in contemporary landscape architecture

According to Charles William Eliot, Snr (1834–1926): “landscape architecture is primarily the art, and its most important function is the creation and protection of beauty surrounding human settlements and more broadly – the natural scenery of the country” [1]. With the given definition, one of the tasks of landscape architecture is to create domestic, private space, as well as city parks, squares and streets. Contemporary landscape architecture, as in previous centuries, involves the achievements of arts and engineering. Decorative elements appear in various forms including free-standing sculptures or extensive installations of land art.

4.1. Private space

A garden is a reflection of its owner’s personality, it is the owner who determines the feel of the space by means of the garden plants, stones, elements of sculpture and other objects – all signs of territoriality. Furnishing a space around the house, the owner is associated with the place [6, 11]. Often, a pair of ‘guards’ are located at the entrance to a building or property, these are decorative elements such as sculptures or pots of clipped evergreen shrubs [5]. Sometimes unfortunately, as a phenomenon highly negative in recent decades. Badly chosen sculptures such as dwarfs, animals, or characters from fairy tales can destroy the beauty of the garden and their excessive numbers can lead to an impression of kitsch.

Modern urban home gardens do not usually have the extensive compositional scheme. Due to the small plot sizes, most space is usually taken up by the residential building, which dominates and divides the space into individual zones. The area is clearly divided into the front and back garden of a house. The front garden of the house plays a representative role and marks the entrance to the house; its main compositional axis is the entrance path and the other axis is the entrance to the garage. The fence is usually openwork or it has appropriate holes to allow observation of the interior of the front garden. It is in these areas where there are mostly located sculptural objects – gnomes, animals or windmills, often accompanied by decorative plants, a rock garden or a pond.

Usually, the area located behind the house is designed for recreational purposes for the inhabitants – it is a lawn with some plants arranged around its edges. Sculptures tend to be set both along the walking path and the road leading to some buildings in the garden. Among the flowerbeds, garden figures also often appear which focuses the attention of visitors and closes the composition to create the character and mood of the interior garden. The owners often decide on an ‘English’ style of gardens surrounding the house – a relaxed garden composition style, full of diverse combinations of plants and scenic views, crowned with sculptural decorations and varied with gentle hills or valleys with a pond [8].

The choice of sculpture depends on the personal tastes of the owners, the character of the house and garden, and the aesthetic of its environment – sculptures are chosen with regard to subject, size and material. The character of the sculpture and its style should fit with the natural elements of the environment in which it is presented. The material of which it is made must be used in the whole garden. The type of background and its colour and texture determines that the composition is perceived in the right way. Openwork carving should have a clear background in order to make it visible – this may be, for example, a hedge. Similarly,

in the case of colour, dark sculpture is nicely presented on a light background, and of course it will be more visible if it is on a background of a strong, intense colour. A different effect is achieved in the summer, among the abundance of leaves and colourful flowers, and another in the harsh monochrome landscape of winter.

Emphasis should be placed on the size of sculptures and the space that is available. It would be a mistake to place a large sculpture on a small patch of green. In cases when it turns out that the sculpture dominates the whole environment too much, one should set it to one side of the garden and try to balance it with, for example, an impressive group of plants or put it opposite a large tree. Located on the side of the garden clearing, it would blend in with the garden, or if there was another distinctive element it would give an impression as if the garden space surrounded it. The proper size of the sculpture to its surroundings is very important as the right proportion creates a sense of harmony and order. Use of a pedestal would make the sculpture remote and inaccessible, and the lack of a plinth would make contact with the work of art more intimate and personal. Sculptures surrounded by water look particularly interesting. In addition, one should take into account the height of the sculpture and its location in relation to the world and the direction of the shadow, which may constitute the original element of the composition.

Kamiński's research carried out in 2009 in the city of Lublin shows that placing sculptured objects in home gardens is quite a rare phenomenon. Gardens with such elements can be considered as an interesting accent of the monotonous landscape of the city streets. Overall, there were surveyed approximately 1,500 gardens, and sculptural objects were found in only around forty gardens. The largest group were statues made of plastic which were dyed in diverse ways and can be bought in shops and horticultural fairs both in Poland and abroad (Ill. 3, 4). This group included not only dwarfs of different sizes and forms, but also figures of animals (deer, wild ducks, storks, swans, squirrels).

What was also found were extremely diverse objects made as a result of the imagination and the creative passion of the owners of the properties, which are often unique objects, e.g. a life-sized statues of dinosaurs close to Łęczna. There are also some essentially utilitarian objects, or their fragments which, when moved into a new space, no longer fulfil their original function. These are often items associated with farming or animal husbandry, for example carts, cartwheels, buckets, agricultural tools or wheelbarrows. Losing their former function and placed in urban gardens, they are an expression of longing of their owners for the ideal rural and peaceful life.

Sometimes, the owner of a garden may choose to express their religious beliefs by placing objects of religious theme in the front garden, e.g. a statue of the Virgin Mary, stone angels, wooden saints, or a rock with the greeting "God Bless You" (Ill. 5, 6). Religious objects are decorated with plants, mostly in the form of flowerbeds, or edged with hedges or adorned with artificial flowers.

Cieślak (2014) reported that after several years of garden gnomes being the dominant 'aesthetic' addition, Polish gardens are now becoming places exhibiting true art. This trend is visible not only among private collectors of sculptures, but also among developers of modern residential complexes and architects of public institutions. One of the developers cooperated with the well-known Krakowian sculptor, Bronisław Chromy. On over two-thousand square meters, four bronze and stone sheep will be placed and a bronze peacock will take pride of place on the patio. The most famous Polish sculptors are Mirosław Bałka, Bronisław Chromy, Igor Mitoraj, Tadeusza Łodziana and Tadeusz Kantor. Some private art



Ill. 3, 4. Garden sculptures in home gardens made of corten steel (a type of low alloy steel, the surface of which automatically turns to a protective coating which resembles rust upon exposure to the air and rain) at a horticultural fair in Zweibrücken, Germany (photo M. Dudkiewicz, 2013)



Ill. 5, 6. Religious ornaments in the private garden of Mr. Lucjan Kurowski in Końskowola (photo M. Dudkiewicz, 2012)

collectors exhibit their works of art in greenery, for example, in the garden of the private museum of Villa La Fleur, founded by Mark Roefler. The garden of this villa near Warsaw delights with a sculpture *Les Femmes de Carthage* by Xawery Dunikowski [2].

4.2. Public space

Sculptures located in urban green spaces can function as didactic, educational and decorative objects. Sometimes they have a particular religious or artistic significance. A special type of garden is the sculpture garden – works made of durable materials are exhibited in these in picturesque landscapes adorned with plants. Garden sculptures can be private, owned by a museum and viewable by paying an entrance fee, or they can be public and available to be enjoyed by everyone. In the list of the most important sculpture gardens is the National Gallery of the Art of Sculpture Garden in Washington, USA, the Luxembourg Gardens in Europe, and the Tuileries Gardens and the Garden of Auguste Rodin in Paris, where outdoor sculptures are set among two thousand roses (Ill. 7, 8).



Ill. 7. 'Three Shadows' (bronze, 1902–1904) fragment of 'Gates of Hell' – triple vision of Adam banished from paradise, the Rodin Museum, Paris (photo M. Dudkiewicz, 2013)



Ill. 8. The Rodin Museum is one of the most popular museums in France (after the Louvre, Versailles and the Musée d'Orsay). The museum holds the most significant works by Rodin. Many of the artist's sculptures are exhibited in the museum adjacent to the garden (photo M. Dudkiewicz, 2013)

Land art is artistic work which interferes with the natural environment by creating changes in the landscape. Land artists realise their creations on the ground, on the water and in the air, using a variety of biological, chemical and meteorological processes. This art involves creating temporary or permanent paintings or sculptures in the landscape. The most common works are created using rocks, sand, soil and terrain, for example, trenches or paths. The first works in this trend were created in the 1960s and the most famous is the work of Robert Smithson, who in 1970, created a 500 metre spiral causeway with 6,000 tons of earth and stone on the Great Salt Lake in Utah.

One of the world's leading contemporary artists creating outdoor art objects is Patrick Dougherty, the author of over 200 works of woven wicker. His most important projects include: *Call of the Wild*, Museum of Glass, Tacoma, 2002; *Close Ties*, Dingwall, Scotland 2006; *Monks' Cradle*, Colledgeville, USA, 2012. His sculptures are composed mainly of willow shoots. Each sculpture takes around three weeks to make. The sculptures are made of biodegradable organic matter, which, after a few years, decay and becomes part of the environment. A completely different material is used by Patrick Chihuly – a sculptor who creates monumental works of glass art. Chihuly's sculptures also tend to be integrated into the natural environment, e.g. glass elements suspended in a real tree branches, purple glass canes, or glass flowers floating in a boat on a pond. Chihuly also creates sculptures for smaller and closed spaces. Chihuly's fixed museum installations include *Olympic Tower* Salt Lake City 2002; *DNA Tower* Indianapolis 2003; *Lime Green Icicle Tower* Boston, 2011.

The Polish Sculpture Centre is located in Orońsko, attractions include the works of Magdalena Abakanowicz, Władysław Hasior, Maria Jarema and Katarzyna Kobro. The works of here art are placed outdoors, in the old manor buildings and the new pavilion. Similarly, in the historic park of Królikarnia in Warsaw, history blends with modernity. Surrounded by trees and shrubs is the Sculpture Park – here, selected works from the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw are displayed (Ill. 9, 10).



Ill. 9. Marble 'Portrait of Marina Bakulewa' by Yekaterina Bielaszowa, 1965. Bielaszowa has been called 'the folk artist of the USSR' in the monographic exhibition catalogue from 1967, which was held at the Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions in Warsaw (photo M. Dudkiewicz, 2010)



Ill. 10. In the 19th century were popularity of images of animals in art. The marble sculpture of Eduardo Leon Perrault's 'Dog' 1887 belongs to a realistic sculpture of French (photo M. Dudkiewicz, 2010)

5. Carving materials

Popular materials which are used for sculptures in contemporary gardens are wood, stone and metal. In Poland, the wood most widely used in sculpture is lime. Sometimes, uses better and expensive species of trees, characterised by greater hardness and durability, e.g. oak, ash, walnut, chestnut (used for sculptures exhibited under a roof) are also used. Outdoor sculptures are mostly made of poplar; sculptures are not made of pear, locust and conifers. Stone sculpture gardens are formed mostly of marble, sandstone and more rarely, granite. Metal sculptures are made of bronze or brass by hollow casting.

A typical material for the modern industrial style is glass (Ill. 11, 12). Glass can be crafted with a wide variety of possible textures from smooth surfaces to satin and sandblasted finishes; furthermore, sandblasting can be applied selectively to create an infinite number of possible patterns. Glass is shaped and sculpted through heating it to high temperature so that it becomes flexible. The method of glass fusing makes the glass easy to bend and combine with other glass elements of different shapes, colours and types. Glass sculpture gardens include the desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, where they are surrounded by rocks and cactuses, or in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, London (glass forms like flowers fill the boats floating on the pond) [7].

Nowadays, access to new technology allows the creation of giant sculptures decorated with flowers and patches of turf. In the market, there are specialised companies constructing animals and logos using a similar technology to that which is used in green walls. The artists build their "living sculptures" around a wood and wire frame, inside which they place a plant that would grow quite large. Over time as the plants grew they are trimming and pruning.



III. 11, 12. Installations of metalwork and glass – London exhibition of gardening.
Chelsea Flower Show (photo M. Dudkiewicz, 2011)

These sculptures, set on water and forming, for example, a flock of flying birds or jumping dolphins tend to be a huge attraction at horticultural exhibitions or temporary exhibitions in the botanical gardens around the world. The irrigation and manuring of such sculptures is hidden, for example, in the case of dolphins, in the columns of water springing up the fountains – this is located underneath each animal. Such objects leave lasting impressions on visitors.

It is worth pointing out that some modern photobioreactor installations designed by Charles Lee are good examples of how art can be utilitarian and at the same time, serve to protect the environment. In the structure of the sculpture there are algae which, when exposed to light and CO_2 , produce bio-diesel used to power vehicles, lighting or air-conditioning.

6. Conclusions

Everything created by mankind originates in a specific historical period and is the product of the prevailing canons of art, architecture and culture. From the very beginning of sculpture, artists paid special attention to the realism of their work, with particular emphasis on the fact that they reflect reality. During the Renaissance, the ideal of the sculpture was one that reflected detailed elements of the human body. Stone and bronze were the main materials used in sculpture. In the 20th century, sculptors began to seek abstraction, building their works with glass, metal or organic materials. The essence of the design of various types

of garden is strengthening and enriching their impact on observers, or bestowing on them the characteristic features of a particular style. These objectives can be achieved by, among other strategies, the display of sculpture.

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