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SPACE IN THE “DAU” PROJECT (DIR. ILYA KHRZHANOVSKY). CONTEXTS

The article is devoted to the analysis of space in the “DAU” project, directed by Ilya Khrzhanovsky in cooperation with Yekaterina Oertel, Alexei Slyusarchuk and Ilya Permakov, among others. Feature films and documentaries that constitute the project were shot in the years 2009–2012, mainly in Kharkiv, in a closed scientific institute, built exclusively for this purpose. The aim of the article is to examine selected spatial solutions in the project, to contextualize them, and, consequently, to link the film architecture with the behavioral sphere and the corporeality of the characters. The methodological tool, supporting the research of the text, is the category of the underground, embedded in the work *Notes from the Underground* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. In the process of interpretation, the author draws attention to the connections between the mechanisms of oppression functioning in the totalitarian system and the symbolic language of the body and architecture.

Key words: DAU, Khrzhanovsky, space, underground, totalitarian system

ПРОСТРАНСТВО В ПРОЕКТЕ «ДАУ» (РЕЖ. ИЛЬЯ ХРЖАНОВСКИЙ). КОНТЕКСТЫ

Статья посвящена анализу пространства в проекте «ДАУ», режиссёра Ильи Хржановского, сотрудничавшего между прочим с Екатериной Ортель, Алексеем Слюсарчуком и Ильей Пермаковым. Художественные и документальные фильмы, составляющие проект, были сняты в 2009–2012 годах, преимущественно в Харькове, в построенном специально для этого городе-

научном институте. Цель статьи — рассмотреть избранные пространственные решения, разработать их контекстуализацию, которая будет основой для анализа связей между сферой архитектуры и телесностью персонажей. Методологическим средством, поддерживающим рассмотрение пространства текста, является категория подполья, восходящая к произведению *Записки из подполья* Ф. М. Достоевского. В процессе интерпретации автор обращает внимание на связи с функционирующими в тоталитарной системе механизмами угнетения, закодированными в материи тела и архитектуры. Ключевые слова: ДАУ, Хржановский, пространство, подполье, тоталитарная система

The “DAU” project was first presented in January and February 2019 in Paris. At that time participants of this wide-ranging art and multimedia experiment were exposed to a series of related events, which could be discussed in many different contexts. The unique project as a whole consists of 13 feature films (each lasting from 1.5 to 6 hours), 3 movie series, scientific films and other materials with a total of over 700 hours, created in a specially built city-institute in Kharkiv. The feature films are loosely inspired by the published memoirs of Kora Landau-Drobantseva, the widow of Lev Landau, a Soviet theoretical physicist of Jewish descent, who in 1962 won the Nobel Prize. The first of the DAU feature films called *Natasha*, directed by Ilya Khrzhanovsky and Yekaterina Oertel, premiered in the main competition at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2020, where it received the Silver Bear award. The entire project, which was secured by a huge budget and — at least in theory — was not based on any script, was made primarily by amateur actors (with the exception of Radmila Shchegoleva playing Dau’s wife), representatives of various professions, including scientists, a conductor, service staff, former agents of security services (over 10,000 participants in total). The persons involved in the project were obliged to live on the film set for three years (2009–2012), suspend all contacts with the outside world and sign non-disclosure agreements for the period of filming and post-production, i.e. for a total of 9 years¹.

¹ Антон Долин, “‘Дау’ — это фильм или сериал? Как его смотреть? Правда, что на съемках было насилие? Антон Долин отвечает

This article presents research material obtained from six feature films, which are already available to viewers on the dau.com platform, i.e. *DAU. Degeneration* (ДАУ. *Вырождение*, dir. Илья Хрзжановский, 2020), *DAU. Katya Tanya* (ДАУ. *Катя Таня*, dir. Ilya Khrzhanovsky, Yekaterina Oertel, 2020), *DAU. Natasha* (ДАУ. *Наташа*, dir. Ilya Khrzhanovsky, Yekaterina Oertel, 2020), *DAU. Brave People* (ДАУ. *Смелые люди*, dir. Ilya Khrzhanovsky, Alexey Slyusarchuk, 2020), *DAU. The New Man* (ДАУ. *Новый человек*, dir. Ilya Khrzhanovsky, Ilya Permyakov, 2020), *DAU. String Theory* (ДАУ. *Теория струн*, dir. Ilya Khrzhanovsky, Alexey Slyusarchuk, 2020). The premiere of the remaining films has been announced for the coming years. *DAU. Brave people*, treated as *pars pro toto*, will constitute the major focus of this text, which is planned to examine the function of space in the project, space being not only an element building the plot line, but also an independent carrier of meaning to which the plot seems to be subordinated. This relationship appears to partly result from the very idea of the project, whose realization was almost totally dependent on its participants. The metaphor, which will be used to frame the research presented here, will be the category of the underground, derived from Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground* (*Записки изъ подполья*, 1864). The selected methodological tool should broaden the perspective of understanding the discussed films.

In spite of the fact that not all the films are already available to the audience, the state of the art concerning the project is quite broad to date. The authors of both scientific publications and reviews usually use the huge scale of the experiment as the starting point for their discussion. This feature of the phenomenon simultaneously becomes the subject of fascination and frustration due to the inability of the individual viewer to get to know the entire material. Anton Dolin, a respected Russian critic, a former editor-in-chief of *Iskusstvo kino*, since 2022 living in exile, describes the project as

на главные вопросы о проекте Ильи Хрзжановского,” *Медуза*, January 24, 2019, <https://meduza.io/feature/2019/01/24/dau-eto-film-ili-serial-kak-ego-smotret-pravda-chto-na-s-emkah-bylo-nasilie>.

both “irritating” and “overwhelming”². He is astonished by the fact that such an enormous budget was obtained by such a little-known artist, once an Artistic Director of the Babi Yar Holocaust Memorial Center. Ilya Khrzhanovsky, for many years residing outside Russia, has been known mainly as the son of Andrei Khrzhanovsky, a recognized director of animated films. Khrzhanovsky Jr., before he got involved in the “DAU” project, had had only one feature film to his credit, i.e. *Four* (*Четыре*, 2004), the screenplay of which was written by Vladimir Sorokin.

Mark Lipovetsky, in turn, focuses on the relationship between the content and the form of the films, which present predominantly table conversations, abstract scientific arguments, the course of laboratory experiments, scenes of sex, violence or interrogations, taking place in the 1930s, 1940s and 1960s in one of Soviet research centers. According to the literary scholar, the “DAU” feature series is easier to discuss than to watch, because its approach to the Soviet reality is full of *clichés*, the dialogues, which are not supposed to be embedded in the script, come out as artificial, only struggling to be spontaneous³. To some researchers, Khrzhanovsky’s attempt to recreate the mechanisms of the Soviet apparatus and its ideology seems to evoke associations with kitsch and Disneyland nostalgia⁴. It is worth noting that on the project’s official website the director himself announces that his work is the first film project “about isolation, filmed in isolation, for people in isolation”, which was inspired by the juxtaposition of the idea of free love advocated by Lev Landau and the restrictions of living in the regime of total control⁵. Besides, it is worth mentioning that despite a great number of critical comments, the project continuously stimulates

² Антон Долин, “Призрак свободы: Антон Долин — о страхах по ‘Дау’ Ильи Хржановского и самом проекте,” *Искусство кино*, January 29, 2019, <https://kinoart.ru/opinions/phantom-of-dau>.

³ Mark Lipovetsky, “DAU. Dir. Ilya Khrzhanovsky. Paris: Phenomen Films, 2019. 330 minutes. Color,” *Slavic Review*, no. 2 (2021), accessed August 1, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2021.98>.

⁴ Alexandre Zaezjev, “From Dusk till DAU: The Rise of Heterotopic Cinema in the Times of Pandemic,” *Baltic Screen Media Review*, no. 8 (2020): 69–80.

⁵ “DAU,” accessed August 1, 2023, <https://www.dau.com/en/about-us>.

a dynamic intellectual discussion in popular media and literature. Decoding its hidden meanings goes far deeper than the initial associations with the phenomena such as *Big Brother* or *The Truman Show*. Film studies present the reflections of authors who managed to recognize in Khrzhanovsky's text a total work of art, Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*⁶. In their interpretations they found connections with the idea of the montage of attractions by Sergei Eisenstein, artistic achievements of Michelangelo Antonioni, Ingmar Bergman, works of Franz Kafka, and Michel Foucault's category of heterotopia, among others. The project was also contextualized in relation to the assumptions of Dziga Vertov and Russian formalists, debates on documentary cinema, experiments of Italian neorealism, *cinéma vérité* or the Dogma 95 manifesto, to name just the most important directions of its analyses⁷.

The metaphor of the underground, which this research treats as a background to discuss the elements of space, has already been interpreted in many ways in the scientific discourse. The original title of the aforementioned work by Dostoyevsky consists of the Russian word *podpolje* (подполье), meaning a place under the floor, hence the hero of *Notes from the Underground* is often referred to as "the man from under the floor", "the man from the dungeon" or "the man from the underground"⁸. The underground is seen as a pathological condition associated with the enjoyment of destruction, "a sphere of shadow", where nothing is sacred, chaos and a sense of alienation govern people and places, which mentally goes in pair with Khrzhanovsky's quoted statement about the meaning of his project. According to Lonny Harrison, the underground is a metaphor for the subconscious, for hidden impulses of the human nature, the state of mind when the sense of existence and the feeling

⁶ Alexandre Zaezjev, "Gesamtkunstwerk Khrzhanovskiy? The Project DAU and the Legacy of Moscow Conceptualism," *Apparatus*, no. 14 (2022), accessed August 1, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.17892/app.2022.00014.309>.

⁷ Philip Cavendish, "DAU: Outside and Beyond History," *Apparatus*, no. 14 (2022), accessed August 1, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.17892/app.2022.00014.304>.

⁸ Adrian Wanner, "The Underground Man as Big Brother: Dostoevsky's and Orwell's Anti-Utopia," *Utopian Studies*, no. 8 (1997): 77–88.

of completeness of the world is lost⁹. Dostoyevsky's hypersensitive character contests the reality, tries to create an alternative world, which would satisfy his own needs and desire for unlimited freedom, leading in consequence to split personality disorders (creations of doubles), lack of stability, mental and spatial separation from the world, rejection and misunderstanding. It is quite easy to note in the scholarship that the man from the underground more often than not is the starting point for a discussion about contemporary heroes, who are deprived of privileges, unable to define their place in a society, family, or group of peers¹⁰.

Moving on to the analysis of space in the DAU project it is also worth mentioning that the filming location was designed on the site of the former outdoor pool "Dynamo", which was built in the 1950s in Kharkiv. The original idea, which had to be abandoned on account of different reasons, was to create the film Institute of Physics and Technology on the spot of an unused quarry. The authors of the concept wanted the institute to be architecturally inconsistent, its appearance was to give the impression of being designed by several architects, who were gradually deprived of the possibility of implementing their full artistic vision due to subsequent arrests.

According to Khrzhanovsky, "DAU" is a process not a project closed or defined by time or space¹¹. Such a statement in the context of the film *DAU. Degeneration*, ending with the destruction of the buildings and objects belonging to the film set gives

⁹ Lonny Harrison, *Archetypes from underground. Notes on the Dostoevskian self* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 74.

¹⁰ Isra Daraiseh and M. Keith Booker, "Jokes from Underground: The Disintegration of the Bourgeois Subject and the Progress of Capitalist Modernization from Dostoevsky to Todd Phillips's Joker," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2020), accessed August 1, 2023, https://lfq.salisbury.edu/_issues/48_3/jokes_from_underground_the_disintegration_of_the_bourgeois_subject_and_the_progress_of_capitalist_modernization_from_dostoevsky_to_todd_phillips_joker.html.

¹¹ Eugénie Zvonkine and Anatoli Vlassov, "'DAU is a process.' A Conversation with Director Ilya Khrzhanovskiy," *Apparatus*, no. 14 (2022), accessed August 1, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.17892/app.2022.00014.299>.

recipients particularly broad opportunities of its interpretation. The physical annihilation of the institute, on one hand undermines the credibility of the very idea of the powerful and indestructible state, embedded in the history of the USSR, on the other, however, motivates the viewer to examine the fate of film architecture as a symbolic story. Consequently, the obliteration of the aforementioned scientific institution reminds us of the destruction of Orthodox churches, which, in Soviet Russia, were turned *en masse* into warehouses, orphanages or, more sophisticatedly, into swimming pools, as it was in the case of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. The visual representation of this process (up-down direction), overlapping with the historical replacement of the category of the sacred (the sanctity of the Christian temple) by the profane of the buildings serving the recreation of an atheistic society, in the “DAU” project would therefore mean a return to the point of departure. In the process of interpretation, the bottom of the pool would become almost literally the space of the underground, the sign of the system’s ambivalence and ruthlessness. The institute, playing the role of the temple of science, would become only a fake double, a kind of provocation, a tool used to annihilate those, who, by showing independence, could threaten it. Khrzhanovsky, encoding such an ideology in the elements of space, in a sense also touches upon the second pillar of the foundation myth of Russia, i.e. the mythology of the war. The death of the institute’s employees shown in the movie *DAU. Degeneration* can be read as an easily justifiable sacrifice of individuals, which — in terms of ideology — is beneficial to all, as it helps to strengthen the state mechanisms of protecting and caring for its citizens.

Particularly interesting elements of the “DAU” set design are its liminal spaces, places of roads crossing, passages, paths and images that evoke borderline or extreme behavior of the characters, changing the course of the narrative. One should not forget about the soundscape playing an important role in the film, especially the repetition of certain motifs, assigned to specific locations in the institute. Denis Shibanov himself, the author of the stage design, in an interview with Michal Murawski, confirms that the environment of the institute possesses its own subjectivity, it is capable

— as intended — of influencing the behavior and emotions of its inhabitants, the architecture is an active participant of the events, not to say that it even provokes or determines them¹².

The most striking example in this context is probably the path to the director's office, very monotonous, characterized by a large number of stairs leading up and down, various passages between the parts of the maze-like building. The camera for a long time accompanies the protagonists who are obliged to go there, usually being summoned to testify, although some of them do so of their own free will to receive absolution, as if during a confession (e.g. a waitress Vika), which certainly contributes to the growing atmosphere of fear and nervousness. It is not without reason that the term "stairway to God" appears in the conversations, reflecting the character of the discussed space, the mood translated on screen into the clearly marked and emphasized sound of footsteps. The audial and visual motif of monotonous, synchronized steps repeats in each of the feature films of the DAU series. The rhythm of these steps can probably be associated with the movement of a collective body, united by a common goal of serving the state, striving for the most efficient performance.

The movement of the agents of the security service, who regularly appear in focus, is also peculiar, bringing about chaos, fear and panic. Their steps are usually accompanied by the sound of black cars rushing up to the entrance, the sound of doors slamming, the apartments being searched and then suddenly abandoned. The pace of individual characters is distinct, slower and not spectacular at all, on the contrary, it often functions as a sign of their lack of ability to fit into the expectations of the system. A good example of such a phenomenon is the symptomatic scene in the film *DAU. Brave People*, showing Semyonich's return home after his refusal to denounce his colleagues. The protagonist's depressive mood is reflected in the sound of his walking in the mud, trying to omit puddles. The culmination here is reached in the image of the car leaving the institute, almost pushing the physicist off the road, to

¹² Michał Murawski, "Pearls Before Swine. An Interview with Denis Shibarov, the Architect of DAU," *Apparatus*, no. 14 (2022), accessed August 1, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.17892/app.2022.00014.295>.

the side, which, in the process of reception, may evoke associations with the offensive officer's gesture in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*. Although the meaning of both situations is different, the common factor in both texts is certainly the feeling of alienation of the characters, a kind of naivety and self-esteem, which are not compatible with the outside reality.

The engaged reader of Khrzhanovsky's text can find more connections between his film and Dostoyevsky's work, starting — on a rather superficial level of analysis — from the clearly marked low-key of lighting, and finishing with the dominant male gaze (“heteronormative fetishising male gaze”)¹³. The authors' attention is focused on the female body, but it is mainly men who have the energy to act and influence the course of events. Even in Khrzhanovsky's *DAU. Katya Tanya*, whose main characters are two women mentioned in the title, their ultimate fate depends on the decisions and power of men. The most poignant example of this kind of hierarchy can be found in the already mentioned film *DAU. A New Man*, in which Vika, one of the waitresses, who is in a romantic relationship with Maxim, a young communist fascinated by eugenics and body discipline, eventually dies together with other employees of the institute. Her body, previously exposed on screen in intimate situations, is thrown together with the others into the car, resembling some redundant luggage. This gesture reduces her human body to the level of an object, a tool that is used by Maxim and the people in charge of the institute for their own purposes. Referring to the terminology of Michal Januszkiewicz, one could say that we are dealing here with manipulative reification, as a result of which a person is turned into a Heideggerian “thing at hand”, a preparation created by the subject to fulfil cognitive and utilitarian objectives¹⁴. At the same time, we could note that, paral-

¹³ Rachel Morley, “The Grinding of Sand on Tiles...? Forms of Female Subjectivity in ‘DAU. Katya Tanya,’” *Apparatus*, no. 14 (2022), accessed August 1, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.17892/app.2022.00014.293>.

¹⁴ Michał Januszkiewicz, “Człowiek jako rzecz albo oblicza reifikacji,” in *Człowiek i rzecz. O problemach reifikacji w literaturze, filozofii i sztuce*, ed. Seweryna Wysłouch and Bogumiła Kaniewska (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1999), 52.

lently, we observe a process of losing character's individual identity, their transformation into a collective body of a herd, a human material who is deprived of freedom and subjectivity, as it was described in *Demons* (*Бесы*, 1871–1872), Dostoyevsky's vision of the mechanisms of a totalitarian regime.

A surprisingly different function seems to be given by Khrzhanovsky to the material dimension of the architecture in his series of feature films. Mikhail Yampolsky calls DAU complex of buildings “a sarcophagus”, a place of explosion of body energy (“On a symbolic level, the building can be read as a strange sarcophagus, from which the arms of some gigantic body burst out”¹⁵). The researcher refers to the metaphor of a gigantic body, reminiscent of a hyperbolized, grotesque vision, created by François Rabelais in his novel *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. One could say that this energy is released, first of all, from the bowels of the body, which is translated into two areas that seem to elude official control of the state. One of them is the sexual life of the institute's inhabitants, presented to the recipient of the films relatively often and with many details, which gave rise to Khrzhanovsky's being constantly accused of disseminating pornography, not only in Russia¹⁶. The other field is architectural solutions that definitely disregard the official mission and understanding of the Soviet construction, whose main function was to glorify current state leaders. The authors of the analytic publications and reviews tend to perceive the “DAU” location design as a kind of play with convention, an ironic manifestation of a distance to official requirements, an erotic phantasmagoria, as evidenced even in the names given to some elements of the interior or building design — “vagina wall”, “nipple wall” — confirmed or laughed at by Shibanov himself: “Architecture that does not exude life juices is puritan bullshit [херня]!”¹⁷. The project architecture

¹⁵ Михаил Ямпольский, “Дау. Эксцесс, истерия, разрушение,” *Сеанс*, January 23, 2019, <https://seance.ru/articles/dau-yampolski-fragmentum/>. Translation into English — BWO.

¹⁶ Evgeniya Makarova, “Soviet, Sacred, Sexual: The Carnivalised Architecture in Khrzhanovskiy's DAU,” *Apparatus*, no. 14 (2022), accessed August 1, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.17892/app.2022.00014.308>.

¹⁷ Murawski, “Pearls Before Swine.”

as a whole — dominated by horizontal, circular and semicircular lines — is clearly read by researchers as the one saturated with the elements of femininity, eccentric, reflecting the spirit of Bakhtin's carnival, i.e. remaining clearly in opposition to the official program of an asexual building form.

The metaphor of the sarcophagus, bursting with life-giving energy, proposed by Yampolsky — as it seems extremely accurate — may be used as a link contributing to the recognition of the contrasting vision of a water-flooded grave of a prostitute, found in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*. One could say that in this context the focus of attention is turned to the other direction, for the recalled image of the grave brings to mind a pathological lack, degradation, corresponding to the description of the devastated, ailing female body. Referring to this literary figure makes it easier to note the corporal excess, emphasized in Khrzhanovsky's project, to see the sphere of freedom exercised in the manifestation of sexuality as well as in the consumption of alcohol. In both examples the category of the underground acquires its spatial dimension. The claustrophobic image of the sarcophagus-grave, the closed rooms of the warehouse, illuminated by a weak candle flame in Dostoyevsky's works, are comparable with Khrzhanovsky's institute, operating in isolation from the rest of the world. They both create the vision of pathological suppression of the human being, which — in the literary world created by the Russian writer — will never be overcome. The palimpsest nature of the "DAU" space, which does not change significantly over the course of the project — the colors are subject to minor retouching and the interiors are filled with new props — can also be perceived as a kind of code, hiding a sad future of the state founded on the condition of permanent captivity and enslavement. The proposed interpretation can be confirmed by the film *DAU. Brave People*, among others, in which, despite the fact that it takes place after Stalin's death, the surveillance and persecution of employees of the "wrong" origin continue unhindered. It is worth adding here that for some participants of Khrzhanovsky's three-year project the boundaries between reality and fiction began to blur after some time, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder appeared next to the states diagnosed as

the Stockholm syndrome, which forced a number of them to resign from further taking part in the film experiment.

Before reaching the conclusions of these reflections, it is worth returning for a moment to the issue of the relationships between the body and space. Mark Lipovetsky is certainly right when he proposes that sex scenes best show the oppressive power and violence of the Soviet system, because the closeness of another person reveals true emotions, serves as a trigger of real reactions, suspends the control apparatus, both the internal and the official one¹⁸. Hence the body becomes a participant in the culture of pleasure, not the culture of labor, as recommended by the Soviet ideology. It seems that in most film shots Khrzhanovsky presents corporeality in its naturalistic, not idealistic athletic version, known from the sculpture *Worker and Kolkhoz Woman* (1937) by Vera Mukhina or paintings by Alexander Deineka.

Deineka's athletic bodies are idealized and, so to say, formalized bodies. Looking at them the spectator cannot imagine them becoming ill or infirm, transforming themselves into the vehicles of obscure desires, decaying, dying. [...] Deineka understands the athletic body as mimesis of a machine¹⁹.

However, in the world of science the institute's employees are interested in efficiency and achieving results, the world of physical contacts brings the audience the images of the body, which is not always young and fit. This observation can be easily confirmed by the Semyonich's body language in the film *DAU. Brave people*, after his refusal to cooperate with the authorities of the institute, among others. Hunchback posture, crying, seeking comfort in the arms of his wife are certainly the evidence of the behavior, remaining far from the automatically working body-machine of the new man of the communist system.

It seems that by aesthetization and eroticization of the architecture as well as bringing into view the imperfect corporeality, the creators

¹⁸ Lipovetsky, "DAU. Dir. Ilya Khrzhanovsky."

¹⁹ Boris Groys, "Aleksandr Deineka: The Eternal Return of the Athletic Body," in *Aleksandr Deineka (1899–1969): An Avant-garde for the Proletariat*, ed. Erica Witschey and Erika Wolf (Madrid: Fundación Juan, 2011), 84.

of the project draw attention not only to the subconscious impulses that Lonny Harrison wrote about while defining the category of the underground. An engaged recipient of the films can also notice that they may create intellectually provocative links to forbidden topics, such as the analogy between the functioning apparatus of the Soviet state and Nazism. It is quite easy to identify similarities in this area:

Fascism never meant release of sexual drive, at least the conscious release. On the contrary, it appealed to the moral rigor, rules of decency, vigour gained through physical exercise and military training, etc.(.). None of these things was particularly Nietzschean, so sharing with everyone the views that Nazism was a real volcano of loving generosity, was, on Madame Cavani's part, a real tour de force. But it does not take much effort to see that Hitler and Goebbels could have hardly been the object of wild desire²⁰.

The presented analysis shows that the space in the "DAU" project plays a very significant role. It determines the behavior of the characters, who remain in isolation, both fictional and real. The category of the underground used as a methodological tool in this article helped to see that the claustrophobic space of the institute hides the almost orgiastic energy of the architectural form and uncontrolled human behavior, manifested in the formal solutions exposing the erotic elements. Disregarding the political dimension of the Soviet architecture, the authors of the project pay attention to the areas of pathological tension encoded primarily in the body, its sexuality, and even carnivalesque vulgarity. The images we are exposed to constitute a commentary on the oppressive reality of communism, and reveal its mechanisms of regulation. The space appears to be a place of ritual, suspending the regime of everyday requirements.

²⁰ Pascal Bonitzer, "Le Secret derrière la porte," *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 251/252 (1974): 33. Citation from: Saul Friedlander, *Refleksje nazizmu*, trans. Marcin Szuster (Warszawa: WUW, 1982), 80. Translation into English — BWO.

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