

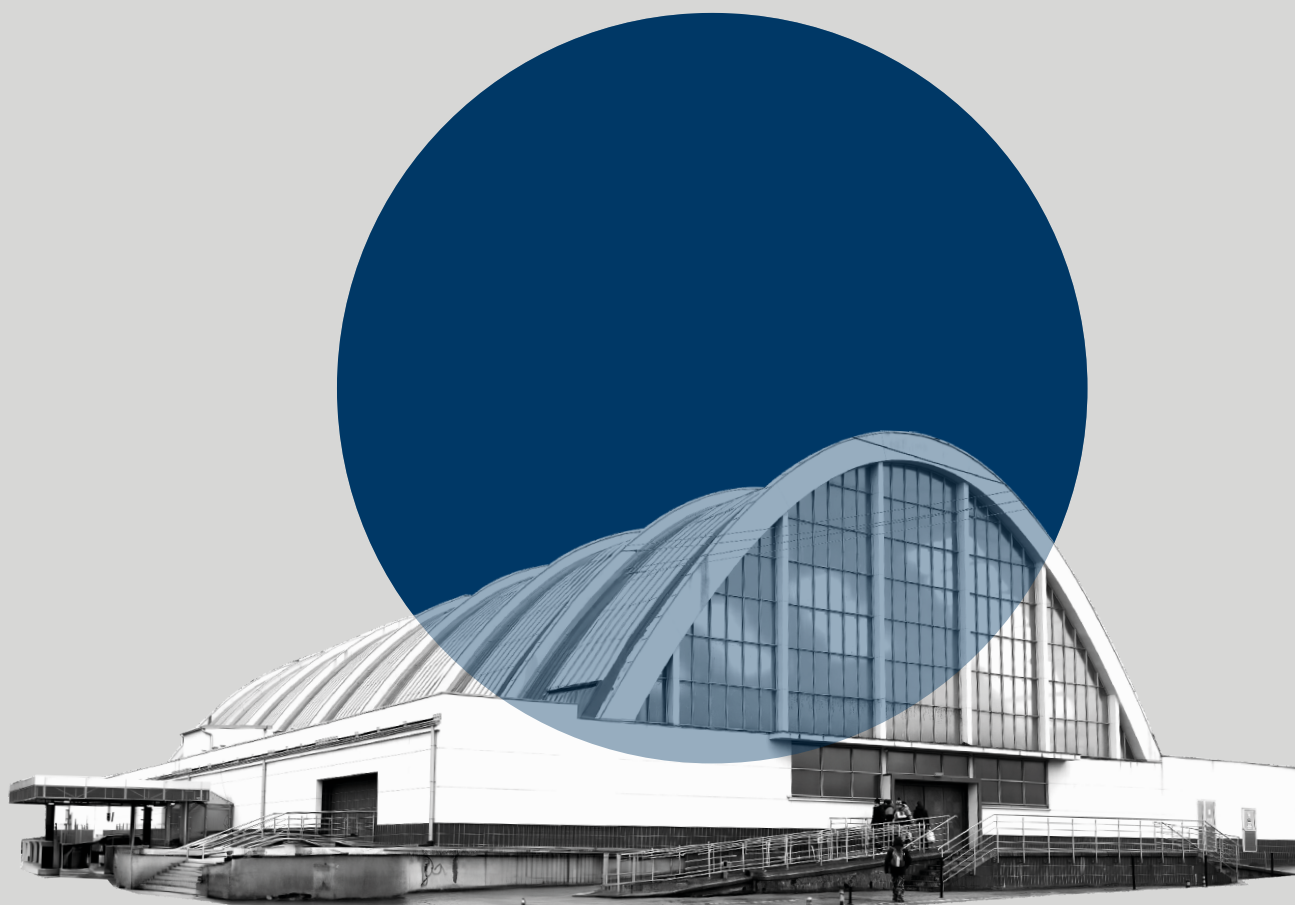
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Contact

Faculty of Architecture at Gdańsk University of Technology

Narutowicza 11/12

80–233 Gdańsk, Poland

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Ph.D, Eng., Arch. ANNA ORCHOWSKA

Editor in Chief | Gdańsk University of Technology

We are pleased to present the second issue of the scientific journal Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia. Journal of Heritage, published by the Faculty of Architecture at Gdańsk University of Technology in cooperation with the City of Gdynia.

This peer-reviewed academic journal, issued twice a year, is dedicated to interdisciplinary research on 20th-century architectural and urban heritage, with a particular focus on its protection, documentation, interpretation, and dissemination. The journal continues the long-standing publishing series Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia, initiated in 2009 by the City of Gdynia and developed in partnership with Gdańsk University of Technology. The mission of the journal is to foster critical exchange between academic, conservation, and design communities in Poland and internationally, while also raising awareness of the significance of modernist architecture as an integral part of Europe's cultural heritage.

The articles presented in this issue were originally published in Polish as part of the ninth volume in the Modernism in Europe – modernism in Gdynia conference series. In this second issue, we are pleased to offer selected texts prepared in English, specifically for the journal and its international readership. All contributions stem from the eighth and ninth international scientific conferences in the series, which took place in Gdynia in September 2021 and 2023, and reflect current directions in the research on public architecture in Central and Eastern Europe.

This issue includes five articles:

Uta Pottgiesser, in Dealing with Modern Heritage in Times of Crisis, reflects on the challenges faced by DOCOMOMO International in an era shaped by global inequalities and regional disparities. Following the relocation of the organization's headquarters to TU Delft in 2022, three thematic priorities were defined for the 2022–2025 period: sustainability, digitalization, and education. These themes – aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – underpin DOCOMOMO's mission and strategic actions across its 79 national working parties. The article emphasizes the importance of open accessed, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and context-sensitive approaches in shaping the future of modern heritage protection.

Małgorzata Rozbicka, in International Congresses of Modern Architecture CIAM. Architects, Events and Works through the Lens of Szymon Syrkus (1935–1939), presents a unique visual archive rediscovered in 2022 – a set of over eighty glass negatives taken by Szymon Syrkus, a key figure of the Polish architectural avant-garde and long-time CIAM participant. The collection includes rare photographs documenting meetings of CIRPAC and the Fifth CIAM Congress, as well as residential buildings designed by Szymon and Helena Syrkus in pre-war Warsaw. The article offers new insight into the circulation of ideas within CIAM and highlights Syrkus's contribution to the international modernist discourse of the 1930s.

Jadwiga Urbanik, in Hans Poelzig and the Problem of the Functional House: From Landhaus to the Modern Movement House in the Weissenhof Estate, examines the evolution of Hans Poelzig's architectural thinking on single-family homes. From early traditionalist designs in Wrocław, through experimental prefabricated houses developed in collaboration with Christoph & Unmack, to his participation in the influential Weissenhof Estate exhibition, Poelzig's trajectory reflects a complex and at times ambivalent engagement with modernism. The article traces this journey through key works, including his own residence designed with Marlene Moeschke, illustrating the interplay between regionalist roots and modernist aspirations.

Małgorzata Dolistowska, in Barbarians in the 'City of Poets'. The Modern Movement in the Public Architecture of Vilnius in the Interwar Period, explores the arrival and gradual acceptance of modernist architecture in Vilnius during the 1930s – a city long regarded as a bastion of Romanticism and historicist aesthetics. Initially met with resistance and accusations of 'factory-style' forms defacing the city's poetic landscape, modernism eventually gained a foothold in the public sector. The article highlights key projects such as the university dormitories, the Social Insurance Institution building, and the municipal cooling plant, revealing how functionalist architecture became rooted in Vilnius' urban fabric. The study underscores the pivotal role of young architects – graduates of Warsaw University of Technology – and influential figures like Romuald Gutt in advancing modernist ideals in the face of conservative opposition. Through built examples and unrealized conceptual projects, Dolistowska presents a nuanced view of how Vilnius' interwar public architecture became a contested but fertile ground for modernist expression.

Anna Orchowska, in A Post-War Chapter in the History of Architecture and Development of the Port of Gdynia, explores the transformation of Gdynia's seaport in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Originally built in the interwar period as a symbol of national revival, the port suffered significant wartime destruction. The article focuses on the years 1945–1947, when critical decisions were made regarding whether to rebuild existing structures or introduce entirely new investments. These choices marked a break from pre-war planning and ushered in a new architectural reality, opening a distinct post-war chapter in the development of this strategic industrial complex.

We hope that this second issue will further contribute to the growing body of knowledge on modernist architecture and inspire continued scholarly collaboration across borders.

Editor-in-Chief

Anna Orchowska



photo. Iza Skłatecka

ALEKSANDRA KOSIOREK

Mayor of Gdynia



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It is with great pleasure that I present to you the inaugural issues of the Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia. Journal of Heritage. This new academic journal, published by the Faculty of Architecture at Gdańsk University of Technology in cooperation with the City of Gdynia, marks the continuation and development of many years of shared commitment to the study and promotion of modernist heritage.

For over a decade, the City of Gdynia has partnered with Gdańsk University of Technology in organizing the international conference series Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia, which has brought together researchers, architects, conservators, and enthusiasts from across Europe. The launch of this journal is a natural extension of these efforts – providing a space for the permanent and open-accessed publication of high-quality research on 20th-century architectural and urban heritage.

These first two issues continue the mission that has accompanied our previous publications: to support the documentation, protection, and broader understanding of modernist architecture – in Gdynia, in Poland, and in the wider European context. I am especially pleased to see that the journal reflects a truly international perspective, with contributions from authors representing academic institutions in several countries.

Although Gdynia's architectural heritage remains a central reference point and source of pride, we firmly believe that it gains true value when placed in dialogue with other modernist cities and traditions. That is why we continue to support research that builds comparative frameworks and helps define Gdynia's place within the broader history of modernism.

It is also worth noting that the importance of Gdynia's heritage has been increasingly recognized both in Poland and internationally. The Early Modernist City Centre of Gdynia, after its listing in the national register of monuments in 2007, was designated a Historic Monument in 2015, and in 2023 it was selected as Poland's sole candidate for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List – a nomination we believe reflects the city's unique architectural and urban legacy.

I wish to thank all the authors, editors, and partners involved in the creation of this new journal. I am convinced that Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia. Journal of Heritage will become an important and inspiring voice in the international conversation on modernist heritage.

Mayor in Gdynia

Aleksandra Kosiorek

I Dealing with Modern Heritage in Times of Crisis

ABSTRACT

Dealing with modern heritage in times of crisis is addressing the global and local challenges that designers and planners and organizations like DOCOMOMO International have to recognize and analyze on different levels. When moving its headquarters back to TU Delft in 2022 the International Secretariat formulated three main areas of action for the running programmatic period until 2025: sustainability, digitalization and education. Those themes are inherently connected to each other and are at the core of DOCOMOMO's mission. But the organization is also challenged by divergent global shifts between the Global North and South. Documentation and conservation of modern heritage are understood not as luxurious intellectual goods but as a direct contribution to sustainability within the scope of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): saving resources, making cities better and providing education are main contributions. The current 79 national working parties are dealing with different challenges and priorities related to the documentation and conservation of modern heritage in each region that need to be addressed differently. In a comparative approach the International Secretariat is analyzing the strenghts, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the national working parties in order to draw conclusions for the future workprogram. It can be noticed that the open accessed to many materials and research during the last two decades has already made a difference and allows for a smoother knowledge transfer, in particular among the younger generation. We also notice the diversity in the composition of the national working parties, coming from academia, professional or activists background. This diversity in expression and the local character of each national working party guarantee for the development of individual and suitable approaches. A priority on DOCOMOMO International's agenda will be the provision of further material, including the digitization of old documents and the creation of new documents, webinars or online-courses related to historical, technological or societal aspects of modern heritage and aiming at the improvement of our built and lived environment. Of particular interest is to provide accessed to affordable housing, food and water.

Keywords: Global challenges, population growth, climate crisis, conflicts, natural disasters, alterations, conservation approaches, educational concepts

INTRODUCTION

We generally acknowledge that European cities as they exist today were given their shape first in the 19th century and later underwent significant change and growth in the inter- and postwar periods of the 20th century. Their legacy was a huge building stock often based on social ideas providing housing, health care and educational facilities to an extent that was not known in the centuries before. It has contributed significantly to the growth of cities in the Northern hemisphere in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Built according different stylistic and aesthetic principles and with innovative materials and technologies this legacy was only identified as heritage when attributing the social ideas of Modern Movement to them and thus extending the traditional value-framework of the heritage discourse. Organizations such as DOCOMOMO International played a crucial role in raising awareness and safeguarding original and iconic buildings in the late 1980s, and from there developed a global platform that today cooperates with 79 national working parties that engage in their countries and regions with and for this modern heritage.¹ During the more than 30 years of its existence DOCOMOMO International has contributed to increasing awareness and knowledge about documenting and conserving modern heritage worldwide, also made visible by the DOCOMOMO Rehabilitation Awards (DRAW) presented in 2021.²

Next to the academic and practical discussions on documentation and conservation further diversification of evaluation criteria have extended the discourse on modern heritage and its categorization, summarized in The Twentieth-Century Historic Thematic Framework.³ In parallel cities in the late 20th century evolved into megacities (cities with more than 10 million people) with uncontrolled growth and no planning – different from many developments in the early 20th century.⁴ Today globalization is characterized not only by the population growth a projected 9.8 billion in 2050 of which 70% will in cities.⁵ In its key findings The Ecological Threat Report 2022 identifies '27 hotspot countries have been identified that face catastrophic ecological threat with extremely low societal resilience' which are 'clustered in three regions: Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and South Asia.'⁶ These regions and countries face further ecological and societal challenges, 'highlighting the significant impact of high population growth, ecological collapses, weak societal resilience and their relationship to conflict'.⁷

¹ Altintas Kaptan, M., Ünlü, A., & Pottgiesser, U. (2023). Connecting the dots: A global exploration of local Docomomo inventories. *Docomomo Journal*, 69, 76–85. <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.69.09>

² Tostões, A. (Ed.). (2022). *Modern heritage: Reuse, renovation, restoration*. Birkhäuser.

³ Marsden, S., et al. (2021). *The twentieth-century historic thematic framework: A tool for assessing heritage places*. Getty Conservation Institute. https://hdl.handle.net/10020/gci_pubs_historic_thematic_framework_tool

⁴ Akkar Ercan, M., & Pottgiesser, U. (2023). Introduction: Public policies on middle-class mass housing in Europe and leveraging contemporary architecture interventions. In M. Akkar Ercan & U. Pottgiesser (Eds.), *Public policies on middle-class mass housing in Europe and leveraging contemporary architecture interventions: Working Group 3 MCMH Atlas* (1st ed.). Iscte-IUL.

⁵ Institute for Economics & Peace. (2022). *Ecological threat report 2022: Analysing ecological threats, resilience & peace*. Institute for Economics & Peace, p. 3.

⁶ Institute for Economics & Peace. (2022). *Ecological threat report 2022: Analysing ecological threats, resilience & peace*. Institute for Economics & Peace, pp. 4–7.

⁷ Institute for Economics & Peace. (2022). *Ecological threat report 2022: Analysing ecological threats, resilience & peace*. Institute for Economics & Peace, p. 2.



Fig. 1. Manhattan, New York, 2016 (source: Pixabay, Wiggijo, 2016, <https://pixabay.com/pl/photos/usa-manchattan-kontrasynowy-jork-1777986/>).

These developments illustrate the very diverse challenges that our modern built environment and heritage is confronted with globally, separating again the Global North and South, that are at the same time interdependent economically and using the same natural resources. But everywhere housing in metropolitan areas has become increasingly expensive due to the continuing influx into cities and the inability and incompetence of governments and communities to provide publicly financed housing versus return-driven private investments. As a result, concepts of space-optimized designs are becoming more important again, aiming to combine maximum quality of life in minimal space. They might be implemented into the historic and heritage layers of 20th century cities by adaptation and reuse of non-housing typologies. (Fig. 1)

GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Looking again at the global hotspot regions and countries it becomes obvious that to a larger extent space-optimized designs need to be newly built in line with current requirements of sustainability on ecological, social-cultural and economic levels. These conditions call for a new Modern Movement aligned with the SDGs, aiming for diversified neighbourhoods, implementing Nature Based Solutions (NBS), local economies and digital services, as well as fostering public transport and linked mobilities. The Global North might be a test bed for those new solutions – as supported by funding initiatives

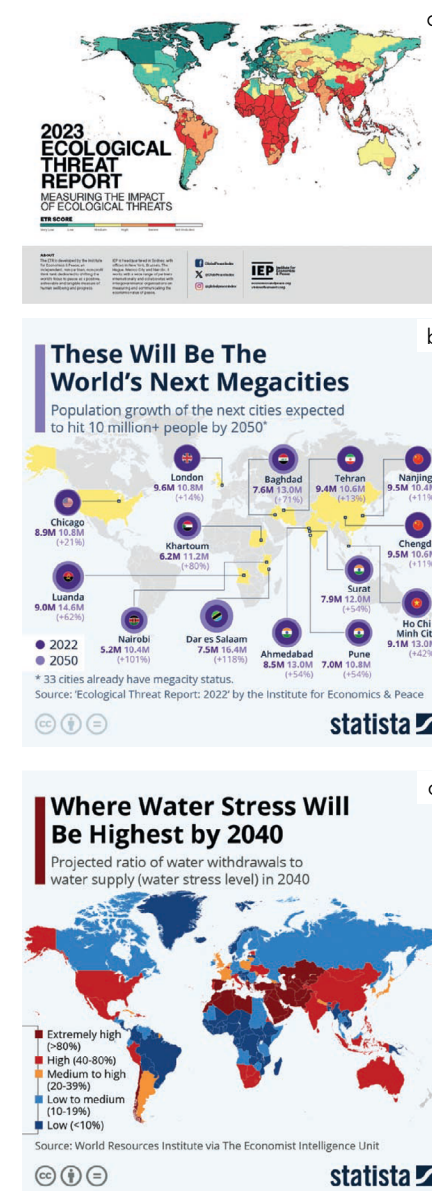


Fig. 2. Ecological Threat Report scores of ecological threats taking into account: a) natural disasters; b) demographic pressure; c) water risks (source: Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), 2023, p. 10-11).

of the European Union and the New European Bauhaus, but the urgent need of their implementation is the in the Global South.

The Ecological Threat Reports 2022 and 2023 describe clear scores of ecological threats taking into account food Insecurity, natural disasters, demographic pressure, and water risks. All of them ask for a new and different way of building and holistic town planning taking into account traditional and innovative principles. (Fig. 2).

New solutions can nevertheless learn from their modern ancestors dating from the 1930s-1970s in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), or South Asia as they were often role models in the implementation of climate-adaptive and low-tech strategies. The achievements of this so-called Tropical Modernism were well documented in the 1940s and 1950s and led to the first schools of architecture in the 1960s to educate 'a first generation of qualified African architects'⁸ as post-colonial architects involved into educational, governmental and residential buildings being part of the nation building after many African countries gained independence.⁹ Erected from the 1930s until the 1970s in many countries of the Global South, these modern remnants have been documented and described by architecture historians and experts and heritage organizations. We can see regional differences, and have some countries with a very active academic community, e.g. in some South American countries, but in general they have not received as much attention and care as their Northern counterparts. This is expressed in dispersed documentations, reduced public awareness, and the absence of maintenance and care. Only few examples have been systematically investigated, many of them supported by the Keeping it Modern Initiative (KIM) of the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) since 2014, among them the many projects in Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, India, Cuba and Brazil.¹⁰ Still, the conservation approaches and experiences cannot simply be transferred one to one, but specific and suitable structures and procedures have to be established, based on adequate modern architectural heritage education and programs.¹¹

Next to demographic pressure and accelerated real estate developments, natural disasters and man-made conflicts – and in particular if they occur simultaneously – are a huge threat to the built and lived environment, including infrastructure and cultivated landscapes that in consequence also can lead to food Insecurity. Facing so many disasters and conflicts during this last decades of the 21st century, it is difficult to imagine how the protection, maintenance and conservation of modern heritage can be organised properly. This challenge becomes all the greater when considering the sheer scale/size of the modern building stock that accounts for anywhere from 50% to

⁸ e-flux Architecture. (2024). *Tropical modernism: Architecture and power in West Africa*. <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/535520/tropical-modernism-architecture-and-power-in-west-africa/>

⁹ Kwabi, P. C. (2023). A tropical modern architect: Prof. John Owusu Addo. *Docomomo Journal*, 69, pp. 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.69.03>. See also: La Biennale di Venezia. (n.d.). *Applied Arts Pavilion*. Retrieved February 3, 2024, from <https://www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/2023/applied-arts-pavilion>

¹⁰ Getty Conservation Institute. (2024). *Keeping it Modern*. <https://www.getty.edu/projects/keeping-it-modern/>

¹¹ Pedroni, M., et al. (2020). *A global survey on education and training for the conservation of twentieth-century built heritage: Research report*. Getty Conservation Institute; DOCOMOMO International. https://hdl.handle.net/10020/gci_pubs_global_survey_education



Fig. 3. Destructions of the Skopje earthquake 1963 (source: Skopje1963_ plostad-sloboda@public domain).

Fig. 4. Destroyed cinema in Kabul, Afghanistan, c. 2012 (source: Jean Molitor_highres, 2012).

80% of the entire building stock in many countries – with a particular focus on residential buildings. History has shown that with joint international efforts, knowledge exchange and funding exemplary and unique solutions can be found and realized. This is the case with the redesign and rebuilding of the capital city Skopje, in Macedonia, which was completely destroyed by an earthquake in 1963. (Fig. 3). An international competition with the awarded masterplan of Japanese architect Kenzo Tange was the starting point of the rebuilding of the city centre based on ‘conceptual, ideological and social ideas of the time it was created.’¹²

It seems today that these kinds of initiatives reflected the long-lasting influence of World War II and its aftermath, when intergovernmental initiatives and organizations as the United Nations (UN) and their agency United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) were still in its early years and ambitious to present joint results. More than seventy-five years after their implementation, their management and impact has become more difficult due to diversified international power structures and stakeholders, and ongoing conflicts in several regions, in particular in Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Many modern ruins bear witness to ongoing destruction and neglect, in Afghanistan, Syria, Turkey, and also in Ukraine.¹³ (Fig. 4).

MODERN MATERIALITY AND THEIR CONSERVATION

With regard to specific conservation issues, we observe an increasing body of knowledge related to modern materials and assemblies and their construction principles since the early 1990s.¹⁴ These first publications are still valuable today and have been made accessible online by different organisations to be further disseminated for educational

¹² Korobar, V., & Siljanoska, J. (2023). The Skopje City Wall housing complex. *Docomomo Journal*, 68, p. 94. <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.68.09>

¹³ Smolenska, S. (2022). The heroic period of architecture in Ukraine: Early modernism of the 1920s–1930s. *Docomomo Journal*, 67, pp. 38–47. <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.67.04>

¹⁴ Jester, T. C. (Ed.). (2014). *Twentieth-century building materials: History and conservation*. Getty Conservation Institute. <https://www.getty.edu/publications/resources/virtuallibrary/9781606063255.pdf>; Docomomo International. (2024). *Preservation technology dossiers*. <https://docomomo.com/dossiers-isc-t-2/>

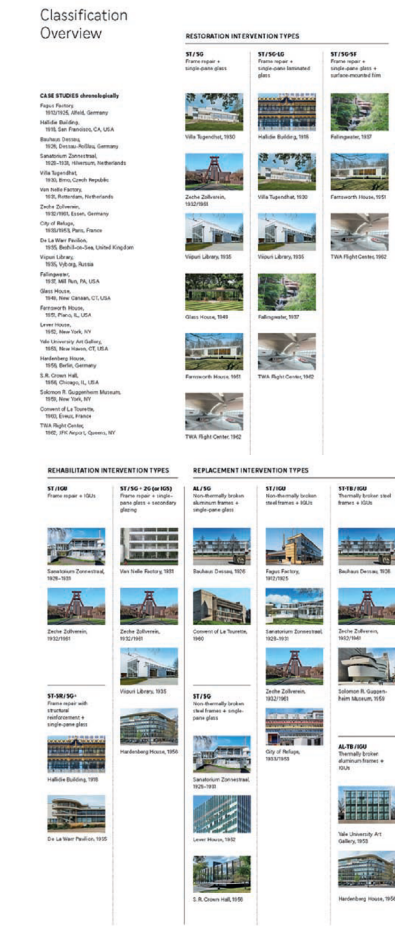


Fig. 5. Case studies and typologies for reglazing steel-glass-facades (source: A. Ayon, U. Pottgiesser, N. Richards, *Reglazing Modernism...*, 2019).

and professional purposes. Since then, many more specific technological and in depth-cases have been published, in particular related to concrete, metals, glass and compound materials. ‘Concrete is arguably the most commonly used building material of the modern era.’¹⁵ and current ambitions are to promote the mostly academic knowledge to practitioners in the field, such as architects, engineers, craftsmen, and also to administrative bodies and laymen. The same counts for interventions related to the modern light-weight building envelope as a significant part of modern heritage.¹⁶ It is important to systematically present intervention typologies and strategies and to cluster the single-case approaches into comprehensive and applicable manuals. (Fig. 5).

Many of the late modern construction typologies from the 1960s to 1970s – like all-glass-facades – still struggle to be conserved in a proper way due to their combination of bad energy performance and highly innovative details that aimed to reduce construction members to a minimum to create extremely light-weight, transparent building components. (Fig. 6(a-b)).

A further challenge is to raise awareness of the specificities of modern building construction among the public and users who often interfere into them without respecting construction principles or materiality. This might be due to inadequate knowledge, a DIY-mentality, or in order to save costs.¹⁷ In many places the holistic, functional and aesthetic character of modern ensembles is at risk of being lost, and as a result is even less likely to be acknowledged. (Fig. 7(a-c)).

¹⁵ Macdonald, S., & Gonçalves, A. P. (2020). *Conservation principles for concrete of cultural significance: Principles*. Getty Conservation Institute, p. 5. http://hdl.handle.net/10020/gci_pubs/conservation_principles_concrete

¹⁶ Ayon, A., Pottgiesser, U., & Richards, N. (2019). *Reglazing modernism: Intervention approaches for 20th-century icons*. Birkhäuser. See also: Croft, C., Macdonald, S., & Ostergren, G. (Eds.). (2019). *Concrete: Case studies in conservation practice*. Getty Conservation Institute; Flaman, B., & McCoy, C. (Eds.). (2021). *Managing energy use in modern buildings: Case studies in conservation practice*. Getty Conservation Institute.

¹⁷ Korobar, V., & Siljanoska, J. (2023). The Skopje City Wall housing complex. *Docomomo Journal*, 68, p. 94. <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.68.09>

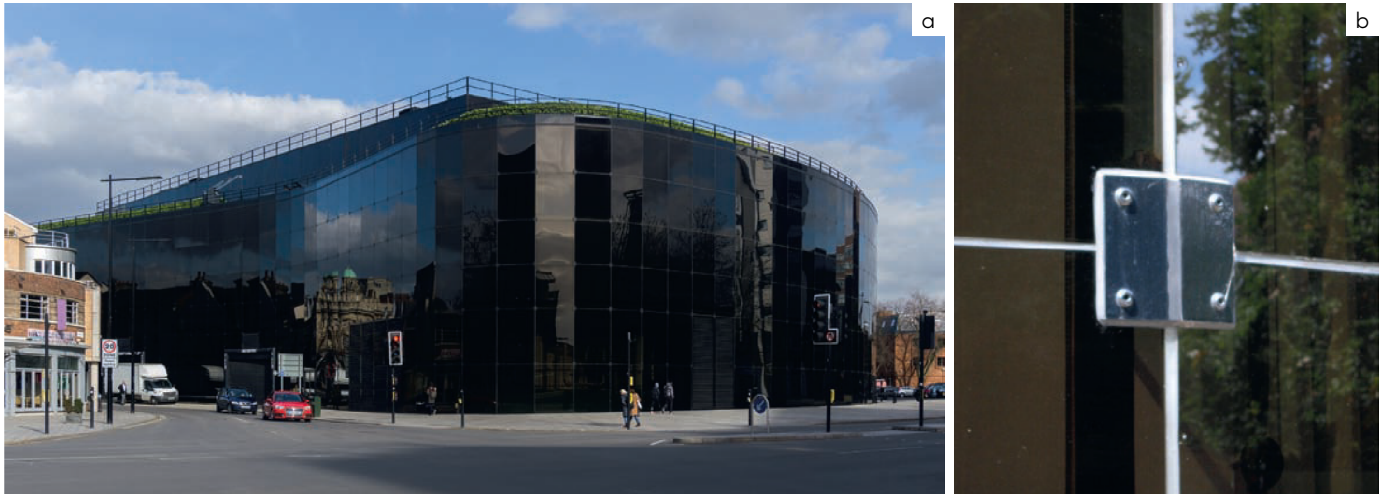


Fig. 6. a-b. Façade details of Willis Faber & Dumas Ipswich, Suffolk, UK, 1970–1975 by Norman Foster and Wendy Cheesman (source: file licenced by Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0, Sumit Surai, 2018 and CC BY-SA 2.0, Andrew Dunn, 2005).



Fig. 7. a–c. Alterations carried out by the dwellers, including sloped roof cover, enclosing parts of the terraces, adding new balconies, turning bay windows into balconies and other changes and additions to the facades. © Vlatko P. Korobar, 2023.

EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

Finally, we are challenged to include the knowledge about existing buildings and about modern heritage into the educational curriculum.¹⁸ Today the traditional architectural education is not focused on dealing with the already-built, despite increasing efforts to include conservation and design courses into architectural programs. The global survey executed by the Getty Conservation Institute and the DOCOMOMO Specialist Committee on Education & Training (ISC/E&T) show that the majority of higher education institutions are not dealing with preservation issues, in particular not with those of modern heritage.¹⁹

Increasing the lifespan of buildings is an efficient way to reduce the carbon footprint of the building sector and thus contribute to sustainability and the resource conservation.²⁰ Educational initiatives should expand the academic horizons to equip graduates to handle complex decision making taking into account a variety of interventions ranging from repair, to rehabilitation and to the replacement of material, components and entire buildings.²¹ A one-size- fits-all approach does not seem suitable anymore. It should also be mentioned that next to technological knowledge, historical and archival research in combination with social research is crucial to any intervention to preserve modern heritage – aiming to reinstall the societal and innovative character of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods shaped by the Modern Movement. DOCOMOMO International has fostered its outreach on a global scale through Open Accessed publications that



Fig. 8. Covers of educational books published by DOCOMOMO/Getty and TU Delft (source: DOCOMOMO/Getty, 2021, TU Delft, 2019, 2021).

helps to make knowledge available in those parts of the world that have less accessed to printed publications, archives and programs.²² (Fig. 8).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As a global organization, originally founded in the Netherlands and partnering with a large number of European national working parties DOCOMOMO International offers a platform that allows for knowledge exchange between different disciplines, professions, countries and regions worldwide. Being a community of interdisciplinary nature, it has grown to more than 79 national working parties in 2023 dealing with different challenges and priorities related to the documentation and conservation of modern heritage in each region. Since DOCOMOMO International’s founding in 1990 the digitalization of communication and knowledge has significantly changed the possibilities of outreach and dissemination, and hopefully it has increased its visibility, as well. Nevertheless, the organizations’ principle of low threshold personal relationship and networking has been maintained and serves as a basis for discussion and exchange. Originally based in academia, its goal is to extend the network further into the professional and educational domain by providing additional material and guidelines related to documentation and conservation beyond scientific publications by making use of digital formats with the aim of being accessible to all.

Dealing with modern heritage in times of crisis is addresses the global and local challenges that designers and planners and organizations such as DOCOMOMO International recognize and analyze on different levels. When moving its headquarters back to TU Delft in 2022, the International Secretariat formulated three main areas of action for the programmatic period hat would run until 2025: sustainability, digitalization and education. Those themes are inherently connected to each other and are at the core

¹⁸ Pottgiesser, U., Dragutinovic, A., & Loddó, M. (Eds.). (2021). *MoMove: Modern movement and infrastructure*. Technische Hochschule Ostwestfalen-Lippe. https://www.th-owl.de/elsa/download/5491/5492/090421_MIAD-MID_C5ConferenceandCommunication.pdf

¹⁹ Pedroni, M., Bagues Ballester, C., Canziani, A., de Jonge, W., & McCoy, C. (2020). *A global survey on education and training for the conservation of twentieth-century built heritage: Research report*. Getty Conservation Institute. https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/pdf_publications/global_survey_on_education_and_training.html

²⁰ Pottgiesser, U. (2022). Cultural heritage as a key resource for resilience and sustainability. In *Industrielles Welterbe: Chance und Verantwortung = Industrial world heritage: Opportunity and responsibility* (pp. 35–39). UNESCO. https://www.unesco.de/sites/default/files/2022-04/Industrielles_Welterbe_Online.pdf. See also: Abu Raed, A., Pottgiesser, U., & Quist, W. (2021). Sustainable development of high-rise residential architecture from 1970–2014: Dubai case study on modern heritage. In *LDE Heritage Conference on Heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals* (pp. 268–278). TU Delft Open. <https://books.bk.tudelft.nl/press/catalog/book/781>

²¹ Pottgiesser, U. (2022). Documentation and conservation of Modern Movement architecture in education. In *Modern heritage: Reuse, renovation, restoration* (pp. 40–45). Birkhäuser.

²² Pottgiesser, U., & Quist, W. (2023). Shared heritage Africa: Rediscovering masterpieces. *Docomomo Journal*, 69, pp. 2–3. <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.69.ed>

of DOCOMOMO’s mission. But the organization is also challenged by divergent global shifts between the Global North and South. Documentation and conservation of modern heritage are understood not as luxurious intellectual goods but as a direct contribution to sustainability within the scope of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): conserving resources, making cities better and providing education are major contributions.

In each region, the more than 79 national working parties mentioned above are dealing with different challenges and priorities related to the documentation and conservation of modern heritage. Each challenge needs to be addressed differently, each priority entails its own approach. It can be noticed that the open accessed to many materials and research during the last two decades has already made a difference and allows for smoother knowledge transfer, in particular among the younger generation. We also notice the diversity in the composition of the national working parties, coming from academic, professional and activist backgrounds. This diversity in expression and the local character of each national working party helps ensure the development of appropriately individualized, ideal and suitable approaches.

A priority on DOCOMOMO International’s agenda will be the provision of further material, including the digitization of old documents and the creation of new documents, webinars and online–courses related to the historical, technological or and societal aspects of modern heritage and aiming at the improvement of our built and lived environment. Of particular interest is to provide accessed affordable housing, food and water.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



<https://www.facadetectonics.org/people/uta-pottgiesser/58622>

Prof. Ph.D., D.Sc., Eng. Uta Pottgiesser

Professor of Building Construction and Materials at TH OWL (Germany) and Professor of Heritage & Technology at TU Delft (The Netherlands), member of the Institute of Design Strategies (IDS) and of the Section Heritage & Architecture. She deals with the protection, reuse and improvement of the built heritage and its environment. Since 2022 she is chair of DOCOMOMO International and editor-in–chief of the DOCOMOMO Journal.

ORCID: 0000-0002-8594-3168

International Congresses of Modern Architecture CIAM.

Architects, Events and Works through the Lens of Szymon Syrkus (1935–1939)

ABSTRACT

In 2022, glass negatives taken in 1935–1939 by Szymon Syrkus – one of the leaders of the Polish interwar architectural avant-garde, were found at the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology. As it was possible to determine, among the approximately eighty surviving negatives, more than twenty document the course and effects of the construction of three residential buildings, which were designed and completed in 1937–1939/1943 in Warsaw in whole or in part by Szymon and Helena Syrkus. A dozen or so photographs were taken in 1938 on the occasion of private, sightseeing and holiday trips of the Syrkus family and friends to Czersk and the vicinity of Kielce. However, the largest collection, comprising about forty negatives, consists largely of photographs published here for the first time, documenting the activities of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM) in the period of preparations for the Fifth CIAM Congress in Paris, which lasted from 1935 to 1937. The collection of negatives concerning the activities of CIAM is complemented by individual photographs documenting works of modernist architecture, which S. Syrkus visited in the years 1937–1939 on the occasion of his other official trips abroad. In 1937 he went to Budapest for the first meeting of the so-called Eastern Group of CIAM (CIAM-Ost), bringing together CIAM members from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and in the summer of 1939 to Stockholm for the 17th Congress of the International Federation for Housing and Urban Planning (IFHTP). The article, against the broader background of Szymon Syrkus' activity as a member and activist of CIAM since 1928, discusses documented in his photographs the works of architecture, places and participants of formal and backstage meetings that took place in July 1935 in Amsterdam and in September 1936 in La Sarraz in Switzerland, as part of the work of the so-called CIRPAC, i.e. the International Committee for the Implementation of Problems of Contemporary Architecture (a body of CIAM that brought together members of its board and delegates of individual national groups) and in 1937 during the Fifth Congress of CIAM in Paris, as well as during Syrkus's business trips to Hungary in 1937 and Sweden in 1939.

Keywords: International Congress of Contemporary Architecture CIAM, Szymon Syrkus

INTRODUCTION

Photographs from the years 1935–1939 were uncovered at the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology in 2022. Until then, they had been completely unknown to date. Most probably they were taken by Szymon Syrkus—one of the leaders of Poland's interwar Avant-Garde architecture. As of 1928 he was also an active member of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne – CIAM). It has been established that from among the approximately eighty surviving glass plate negatives, over twenty document three Warsaw residential buildings both under construction and when finished. These buildings were in whole or part designed and built by Szymon and Helena Syrkus over the years 1937–1939/1943.¹ Over a dozen photographs were made in 1938. They were private tourist and vacation pictures of trips made by the Syrkuses with their family and friends to Czersk and around Kielce. However, the largest set, encompassing about forty negatives, is made up of never before published photographs documenting the activities of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM) over the period from 1935 to 1937, including preparations for the 5th CIAM Congress in Paris. This part of the collection is supplemented by pictures taken by Syrkus during one of his official foreign trips in 1937 to Hungary as a part of the CIAM Eastern Group and in 1939 as the delegate of the Polish Housing Reform Association (PTRM) to Sweden.

The objective of this article is to stimulate a discussion on the broader background of the activities of Szymon Syrkus as an active member of CIAM starting with the year 1928 and crowned by his photographs from the years 1935–1939 of works of interwar Modern architecture as well as of the places and participants of formal and informal CIAM meetings that took place in Amsterdam during July of 1935 as well as in 1937 during the proceedings of the 5th CIAM Congress in Paris. They also portray the activities of Syrkus in September of 1936 at La Sarraz in Switzerland as a member actively participating in the work of the International Committee for the Resolution of Problems in Contemporary Architecture (Comité International pour la Réalisation des Problèmes d'Architecture Contemporaine – CIRPAC), a body of CIAM engaging members of its Board and delegates of the individual groups of countries as well as the outcomes of several official trips in 1937 to Hungary (CIAM-Ost) and in 1939 to Switzerland.

THE ACTIVATES OF SZYMON SYRKUS IN CIAM OVER THE YEARS 1928–1934

In 1928 Szymon Syrkus (1893–1964) and Józef Szanajca (1902–1939) were asked by Sigfried Giedion (1888–1968), the Secretary General of CIAM, to represent Poland in that organization and, at the same time, to organize the Polish group of CIAM. That was July of 1928, two weeks after the signing into force of the inauguration of the activities of CIAM—i.e. the La Sarraz Declaration.² Invited by Prof Karl Moser (1860–1936), the Chairman

¹ The negatives are preserved at the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology and date from 1938–1939. They were taken by Szymon Syrkus and show the Zagajski and Tauman tenement house at 71 Złota Street, the Heyman house at 7 Barcicka Street, and Piotr Bergman's luxury apartment building at 40/42 Belwederska Street.

² Syrkus, S. (1929). II Międzynarodowy Kongres Architektury Nowoczesnej [2nd International Congress of Modern Architecture]. *Mieszkanie, Dom, Osiedle* [Dwelling, House, Housing Estate], 6(2), 31–32.

of CIAM, Szymon Syrkus took part, for the first time, in the CIRPAC meeting in Basel in February of 1929 as the official delegate of Poland. That meeting was mainly devoted to developing a plan for the 2nd CIAM Congress in Frankfurt. Delegates from ten European countries, under the leadership of Karl Moser and Siegfried Giedion,³ participated. It is worth noting that it was thanks to this trip to Basil that Syrkus, accompanied by his wife Helena Syrkus (1900–1982), not only met Le Corbusier (1887–1965) in person, but also saw several of his projects with his own eyes, including the unfinished Villa Savoye in Poissy.⁴

In November of that same year, Szymon Syrkus took part in the 2nd CIAM Congress in Frankfurt am Main together with his wife Helena. He was the Polish delegate and was accompanied by Józef Szanajca, as his associate, and Teodor Toeplitz (1875–1937), who albeit present unofficially de facto headed the Polish delegation.⁵ The Congress was devoted to housing, specifically to the smallest dwellings and their mass production.⁶ It was there that the Polish group presented designs developed for Warsaw and Gdynia housing cooperatives as well as for the Łódź Workers’ Colony in Polesie Konstantnowskie.⁷

One year later, in November of 1930, Szymon Syrkus took part in the 3rd CIAM Congress in Brussels.⁸ It was under the leadership of Cornelis van Eesteren (1897–1988), the new Chairman of CIAM. Work on formulating principles for shaping a functional city was launched on the basis of Dutch experience.⁹ It was also at the Brussels Congress that Syrkus made his first public address. He delivered a team paper entitled ‘Le probleme d’habitation en Pologne [Housing Problems in Poland] within the framework of the ‘Tiny Dwelling Days.’ According to his wife Helena, it was well received by the international community.¹⁰ It may be added that she, too, had her debut as a rapporteur presenting, in the name of the architects of Praesens, designs for the Warsaw Housing Cooperative

³ Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. 75–77.

⁴ Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. 75, 79–83.

⁵ Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 86.

⁶ Syrkus, S. (1930). II Międzynarodowy Kongres Architektury Nowoczesnej: Frankfurt n/Menem, October 24–26, 1929 [2nd International Congress of Modern Architecture in Frankfurt am Main, October 24–26, 1929]. *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 2, pp. 27–30; Architectural exhibition in Frankfurt am Main. (1929). *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 7(3), p. 32.

⁷ Syrkus, S. (1930). II Międzynarodowy Kongres Architektury Nowoczesnej. Frankfurt n/Menem [2nd International Congress of Modern Architecture in Frankfurt am Main], October 24–26, 1929. *Dom Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 2, 27–30. Compare also Syrkus, S. (1929). *Architectural Exhibition in Frankfurt am Main. Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 7(3), 32.

⁸ Syrkus, S. (1931). III Międzynarodowy Kongres Architektury Nowoczesnej: Brussels, November 25–30, 1930 [3rd International Congress of Modern Architecture]. *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 2, pp. 24–26.

⁹ Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, p. 59. Compare also Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. 122–123.

¹⁰ Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. 108–109.

(WSM) housing estate in Rakowiec and plans for an eight-story residential building designed for the Polish Steel Mill Syndicate (SPH) by Stanisław Hempel (1892–1954).¹¹

In June of 1931 Szymon Syrkus took part in the Berlin meeting of members of the CIAM Presidium and the delegates of the nine countries forming CIRPAC. The topic of discussion was the guidelines and questionnaire developed by the Dutch group as headed by Cornelis van Eesteren entitled ‘The Functional City: Analytic Studies.’ Materials were proposed as a basis for preparing uniform graphic panels depicting questions relating to the redevelopment and expansion of thirty–three selected cities. They were intended for presentation at the 4th CIAM Congress planned for Moscow.¹²

It should be added that it was during the discussions in Berlin that differences of opinion made their appearance for the first time in the bosom of the CIAM. These differences pitted those in favor of limiting work to individual studies relating to specific cities—a view supported by the pragmatic Dutch, Swiss and Germans—against proponents of concentrating on research to develop a general theory of the ‘Functional City.’ The Syrkuses preferred the latter. It should be noted that as time passed, the latter view also found favour with both Le Corbusier and his colleagues and the Spaniard Josep Lluís Sert (1902–1983) as well as with Ernest Weissman (1903–1985), the delegate from Yugoslavia.¹³

The only significant event in which Szymon and Helena Syrkus did not take part prior to 1935 was the organizing convention of a CIRPAC in March of 1932 in Barcelona. That was the locus of activity of one of the most vigorous CIAM national groups that was headed by Josep Lluís Sert and Josep Torres Clavé (1906–1939)—the Group of Catalan Artists and Technicians for the Progress of Contemporary Architecture (GATCPAC).¹⁴

When at the end of March of 1933 it turned out that the organizing of the 4th Congress in Moscow will not be possible, representatives of the top management of CIAM, including Syrkus and his wife, met urgently in April in Paris and decided that the 4th CIAM Congress will take place on July 29 – August 13 of 1933 in part on the decks of the ship Patris II during its cruise from Marseille to Piraeus and back and in part in Athens. Fifteen national groups took part in the Congress. This included the group from Poland, which was made up of the Praesens group and the ‘architectural’ couples: Helena and Szymon Syrkus, Barbara and Stanisław Brukowski, and Anatolia and Roman Piotrowski.¹⁵

¹¹ Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. 112.

¹² Compare with Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, pp. 61–62; Syrkus, S. (1931). Międzynarodowe Kongresy Architektury Nowoczesnej [International Congresses of Modern Architecture]. *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 7, pp. 27–28; and Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. 130–131.

¹³ Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, p. 64. Compare also Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. 158–159, 179–180.

¹⁴ Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, p. 66. Compare also Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. 132–133..

¹⁵ Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. 134–135.

Syrkus described in detail the course and results of the 4th Congress on the pages of the *Architektura i Budownictwo* [Architecture and Building] periodical.¹⁶ For this reason they shall not be reiterated here. However, it is worth remembering that the Polish delegates were very active at the Congress. They took part in the work of four of the eight Congress Commissions as well as in the development of final conclusions and resolutions.¹⁷ It was at the review exhibition of the plans for thirty-three cities that Syrkus reported on the work of the architects of the Praesens group: panels picturing life, work, leisure, and traffic within the limits of Warsaw and the schematics of these functions within the region.¹⁸ He gave a lecture in Athens on ‘The Functional Wall: Experiences from Recent Years and Designs for the Year 1935.’ For their part, Barbara and Stanisław Brukowski gave a lecture on matters relating to dwellings for both manual labourers and white-collar workers¹⁹ during the return cruise.

A successive meeting of CIRPAC took place in May of 1934 at the London seat of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). This meeting was important for several reasons. Firstly, in the face of the developments in the USSR and Nazi Germany it was then decided that CIAM should take a neutral position with respect to current political events. Secondly, the program and venue for the 5th Congress was discussed. Thirdly, after familiarizing themselves with the designs for a Functional Warsaw as developed by Szymon Syrkus and Jan Olaf Chmielewski (1895–1974), who represented Poland, and the design for Barcelona developed by the Spanish representatives under the leadership of Josep Lluís Sert. The prominent participants in the meeting decided that urban plans developed by national groups for the 5th Congress must be considered in the context of general regional plans.²⁰ To a great extent, this was an achievement of the Polish delegation.

THE WORK OF SZYMON SYRKUS OVER THE YEARS 1935–1937 IN THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE 5TH CIAM CONGRESS

The CIRPAC meeting in Amsterdam (June 1935). The first photographs preserved in the collections of the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology were made by Szymon Syrkus in June of 1935 during the CIRPAC convention in Amsterdam. The organization’s leadership, preserved in the photographs by Szymon Syrkus over the course of the plenary meetings, includes Cornelis van Eesteren, the President of CIAM, his deputy Walter Gropius (1883–1969), who delivered the introductory paper, and Victor Bourgeois (1897–1962) as well as Sigfried Giedion, the Secretary General (Fig. 1). Syrkus’

¹⁶ Syrkus, S. (1933). Informacje o IV Międzynarodowym Kongresie Architektury Nowoczesnej [Information on the 4th International Congress of Modern Architecture]. *Architektura i Budownictwo* [Architecture and Building], 8, pp. 246–254.

¹⁷ Compare with Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, p. 85.

¹⁸ Syrkus, S. (1933). Informacje o IV Międzynarodowym Kongresie Architektury Nowoczesnej [Information on the 4th International Congress of Modern Architecture]. *Architektura i Budownictwo* [Architecture and Building], 8, p. 247. Compare also Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, p. 78.

¹⁹ Syrkus, S. (1933). Informacje o IV Międzynarodowym Kongresie Architektury Nowoczesnej [Information on the 4th International Congress of Modern Architecture]. *Architektura i Budownictwo* [Architecture and Building], 8, pp. 252–253. Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, pp. 94–95.

²⁰ Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, pp. 94–95.

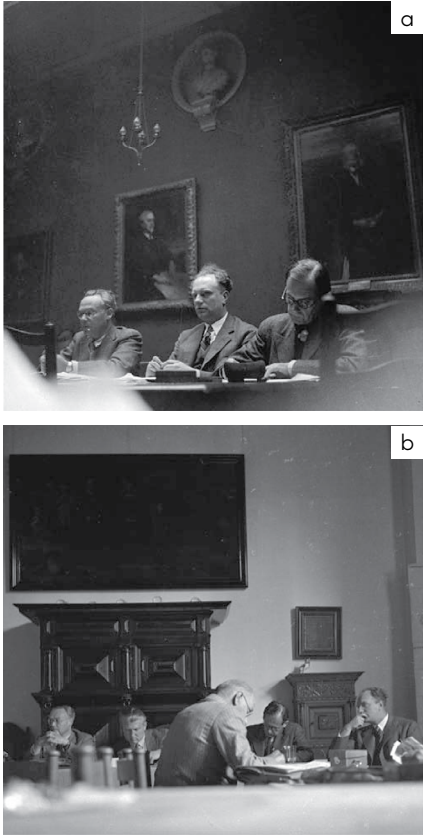


Fig. 1. Amsterdam, Netherlands, CIRPAC meeting, June 1935. Members of the Plenary Bureau: a) from left: CIAM Secretary General Sigfried Giedion and CIAM Vice-Presidents Victor Bourgeois and Walter Gropius; b) from left: CIAM Secretary General Sigfried Giedion, CIAM President Cornelis van Eesteren, an unidentified person, and CIAM Vice-Presidents Walter Gropius and Victor Bourgeois; photo: S. Syrkus; source: Scientific Collection of the Department of Polish Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Warsaw University of Technology, hereinafter ZAP WAPW collection.



Fig. 2. Amsterdam, Netherlands, CIRPAC meeting, June 1935. Secretaries of the plenary sessions, with Helena Syrkus second from left; photo: S. Syrkus; source: ZAP WAPW collection.



Fig. 3. a–b) Amsterdam, Netherlands, CIRPAC meeting, June 1935. Delegates of CIAM national groups during informal discussions; photo: S. Syrkus; source: ZAP WAPW collection.



Fig. 4. Amsterdam, Netherlands, CIRPAC meeting, June 1935. CIAM delegates on a tour of the Van Nelle Factory in Rotterdam, designed by Brinkman and Van der Vlugt with the participation of Mart Stam, 1925–1931; photo: S. Syrkus; source: ZAP WAPW collection.

pictures also show the CIRPAC secretaries, among them Helena Syrkus—invaluable translator, editor, typist, and proofreader.²¹ From about 1933, she became something of an ‘unofficial member of the CIAM Secretariat’ (Fig. 2).²² Szymon Syrkus also made a record of the participants of the behind-the-scenes meetings. It was during those meetings that discussions encompassed the preparing of the ‘Functional City’ publication and the venue and dates of the next Congress, which at the time was still planned for the spring of 1936 in some inexpensive location in Central Europe. Also discussed were its leading topics. It was ultimately decided that there would be four: regional planning, urban planning, the reorganization of urban complexes, and building codes. Szymon Syrkus, Josep Lluís Sert, Rudolf Steiger (1900–1982), and Wells Coates (1885–1958) were assigned responsibility for them (Fig. 3a–b).²³

For the sake of order it should be recalled that the Amsterdam meeting was accompanied by the ‘Housing, Work, Street Traffic, and Recreation in the Contemporary City’ exhibition at Amsterdam’s Stedelijk Museum—June 1–23. Presented there were thirty-two of the thirty-three panels depicting American and European cities, including Warsaw, that were prepared in a uniform scale and graphic treatment by sixteen national groups at the 4th CIAM Congress in 1933.²⁴

²¹ Tołwiński, S. (1970). *Wspomnienia 1895–1939*. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 426.

²² Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 80.

²³ Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, p. 103.

²⁴ Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 140. Compare also Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, p. 99.

The Amsterdam CIRPAC meeting also provided Dutch architects with an opportunity to show their latest projects. Being in Amsterdam, the delegates visited several buildings including the Cineac motion picture theatre (1934) and the Montessori school (1933–1936) as well as the Hotel Gooiland in Hilversum (1934–1935), the Parklaan residential block (1931–1933), the Bergpolder balcony-accessed block (1932–1934), and the Van Nelle factory in Rotterdam (1925–1931) as a part of a study trip. That last mentioned building was designed as a fragment of a future functional city by the Brinkman and Van Vlugt Design Studio with the collaboration of Mart Stam (1899–1986).²⁵ It was photographically documented by Szymon Syrkus (Fig. 4).

The series of negatives from the Amsterdam meeting concludes with a photograph in which Syrkus preserved the parting of his wife Helena with Ramona Longas (1900–1985), the life companion of Josep Lluís Sert, as well as Carola Giedion-Weicker (1893–1979), the wife of Sigfried Giedion, an art historian and author of numerous articles on contemporary painting, sculpture, and poetry (Fig. 5).

The CIRPAC meeting at the castle in La Sarraz (September, 1936). The successive documentary photographs made by Syrkus depict the expanded CIRPAC convention that took place in September of 1936 at the historical castle in La Sarraz, Switzerland, the property of Helene de Mandrot (1867–1948). That was also where CIAM was constituted in June of 1928 (Fig. 6a–b). In this case, in as much as during the first Congress barely twenty architects from eight countries²⁶ took part, about fifty from eleven countries

²⁵ Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, pp. 99–101.

²⁶ Frampton, K. (2002). Foreword. In E. Mumford, *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, p. XII.



Fig. 5. Amsterdam, Netherlands, CIRPAC meeting, June 1935. From left: Ramona Longas, Helena Syrkus, and Carola Giedion-Weicker [?]; photo: S. Syrkus; source: ZAP WAPW collection.



Fig. 7. La Sarraz, Switzerland, CIRPAC meeting, September 1936: a) members of the Bureau in plenary session, from left: CIAM President Cornelis van Eesteren, Secretary General Sigfried Giedion, and Vice-President Walter Gropius; b) CIRPAC secretaries, with Helena Syrkus on the right; photo: S. Syrkus; source: ZAP WAPW collection.

arrived at La Sarraz in 1936, including Van Eesteren, Gropius, and Giedion. Poland was represented by Szymon and Helena Syrkus.

Plenary sessions primarily concerned with the program for the 5th CIAM Congress planned for July of 1937 in Paris²⁷ took place in a huge vaulted castle chamber made available by Helene de Mandrot. The individual commissions and secretariat operated in the ‘secluded’ alcoves and gardens of the castle (Fig. 7). Since, as noted by Helena Syrkus, the autumn of that year was exceptionally ‘sunny and warm,’ the most-heated discussions were conducted during long strolls²⁸ both around the castle and in its picturesque surroundings. The photographs taken by Syrkus show this perfectly. In addition to participants in the meeting and members of the CIAM Presidium photographed in the castle interiors, several other participants were recorded. Among them was Josep Torres Clavé of Barcelona, the ‘indefatigable and full of energy and faith’ delegate from the Catalan GATEPAC Group who, counting on the help of colleagues from CIAM, flew to La Sarraz from war-torn Spain²⁹ on the last day of CIRPAC deliberations. It was together with him that Syrkus preserved the Dutch representatives—Mart Stam, the ‘promoter of ‘New Frankfurt’ who together with Ernst May (1886–1970) spent several years in the Soviet Union and returned to the Netherlands in 1935, his colleague from Rotterdam,

²⁷ Syrkus, H., & Syrkus, S. (1936). Convention of the delegates for the International Congress of Modern Architects in La Sarraz. *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 10–11, pp. 74–75.

²⁸ Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 180.

²⁹ Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. 181–182.



Fig. 6. La Sarraz, Switzerland, CIRPAC meeting, September 1936, Hélène de Mandrot's château and its surroundings; photo: S. Syrkus; source: ZAP WAPW collection.



Fig. 8. La Sarraz, Switzerland, CIRPAC meeting, September 1936: a) Josep Torres Clavé; b) from left: Mart Stam, Josep Torres Clavé, Flora Crawford-Steiger, and Benjamin Merkelbach; photo: S. Syrkus; source: ZAP WAPW collection

Benjamin Merkelbach (1901–1961) and Flora Crawford–Steiger (1899–1991), the wife of Rudolf Steiger, a Swiss architect, furniture designer, and sculptor (Fig. 8).

The meeting of the Eastern Group of CIAM (CIAM–Ost) in Budapest (January–February, 1937). Successive surviving photographs were taken in January of 1937 during the Syrkuses’ stay in Budapest for the first meeting of the regional working group—the Eastern Group (CIAM–Ost)—that emerged within CIAM at the start of 1937 thanks to the initiative of Czechoslovak and Hungarian architects. It was created by CIAM members from Central and Eastern European countries who identified the necessity of close contacts and collaboration in solving problems that are particular to this part of Europe. Initially, they were represented by architects from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Austria, and Poland and subsequently also from Greece and probably Romania. Budapest was selected as the seat of the CIAM–Ost Secretariat with Farkas Molnár (1897–1945), Hungarian architect, painter, essayist, and graphic artist, as its head.³⁰

The Eastern Group of CIAM, facing an increasingly complex political situation in the Europe of 1937, only managed to meet three times. Its first meeting took place at the turn of January and February in Budapest,³¹ the second at the turn of April and May in Czechoslovakia’s Brno and Žilina. The third and the last that we are aware of was held in June on the Greek island of Mykonos.³² We also know that the aim of discussions centring on rural building and ‘agrarianization’ involved the group’s plans to meet again in Athens in May of 1938.³³ Most probably this did not happen, however.

Faced with numerous reservations regarding the initiative to establish what was known as CIAM–Ost, especially on the part of French and Italian CIAM members who were of the view that the activities of this group are not so much aimed at architectural and aesthetic matters as rather social and political ones, Sigfried Giedion, the CIAM Secretary General, took part in the Budapest meeting.³⁴ In addition to him, also present were representatives of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Austria, and Poland, including the Syrkuses.³⁵

In light of the fact that at that time it was the local specifics that found their way into the interests of the Hungarian group where matters relating to the reorganization

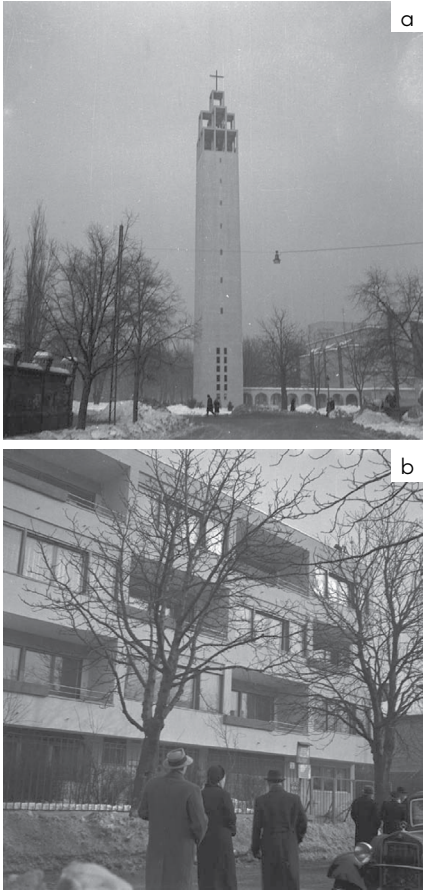


Fig. 9. Budapest, Hungary, meeting of the CIAM Eastern Group (CIAM–Ost), January–February 1937: a) bell tower of the Franciscan church and monastery in the Pasarét district of Buda, designed by Gyula Rimanóczy, 1937; b) CIAM–Ost delegates visiting an unidentified residential building, ca. 1937; photo: S. Syrkus; source: ZAP WAPW collection.

and development of rural land and its regional building³⁶ were questions that were particularly stressed in the final recommendations of the Budapest meeting. Members of CIAM–Ost hoped this would attract the attention of other CIAM members to the fact that contemporary spatial and housing planning should not exclusively be concerned with problems facing big cities, but also the planning of rural lands and communities, which according to CIRPAC ‘should also be undertaken [...] diligently and exactly.’³⁷

As was usually the case with CIAM conventions, an important element of their programs was always visiting the latest architectural projects. Thanks to the surviving photographs taken by Syrkus, we know that the participants in the Budapest meeting visited the Pasarét housing estate as designed by Gyula Rimanóczy (1903–1958) and the Modern Franciscan monastery and church with their complementary square encompassing a bus terminal and stores completed in 1937.³⁸ They also visited the Modern villa designed by Géze Radó³⁹ and the multi–family three–story residential building that current research has, unfortunately, not managed to identify (Fig. 9).

The CIAM–Ost meeting in Brno and Žilina (April–May, 1937). It should be noted that the Syrkuses were present at the Czechoslovak meetings in Brno and Žilina. The meetings were held at the turn of April and May of 1937. All in all, about seventeen delegates took part, among them Helene de Mandrot.⁴⁰ Although the surviving collection lacks photographs documenting that meeting, the Czechoslovak hosts should be mentioned. Among them were designers of Modern buildings in Brno and Žilina. These designers were already ‘known throughout the world’ and included Bohuslav Fuchs, Jindrich Kumposta, and Josef Polášek. However, the principal intention at that time was the presentation of achievements in the realm of ‘urbanism’ and regional planning. Of particular interest were the regional plans for Žilina and Hodonina as well as the mountainous districts⁴¹ that, in their view, required special trans–national coordination in planning works among Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland.⁴²

The 5th CIAM Congress in Paris (June–July, 1937). A successive event documented in the photographs of Szymon Syrkus was the 5th CIAM Congress in Paris.⁴³ According to

³⁰ Z działalności organów CIAM: CIRPAC [The activities of the bodies of CIAM: CIRPAC]. (1938). *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6–7, p. 56. Compare also Bericht über die CIAM-Konferenz in Budapest [Report on the CIAM Conference in Budapest]. (1937). *Tér és Forma* [Space and Form], 2–3, p. 58.

³¹ Minutes of the General Assembly of the Members of the PTRM on April 20, 1939: Program of Work of the PTRM for the Year 1939. (1939). *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6, p. 39.

³² Kohlrausch, M. (2019). *Brokers of modernity: East Central Europe and the rise of modernist architecture, 1910–1950*. Leuven University Press, p. 115.

³³ Z działalności organów CIAM: CIRPAC [The activities of the bodies of CIAM: CIRPAC]. (1938). *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6–7, p. 56. Compare also Bericht über die CIAM-Konferenz in Budapest [Report on the CIAM Conference in Budapest]. (1937). *Tér és Forma* [Space and Form], 2–3, p. 58.

³⁴ Kohlrausch, M. (2019). *Brokers of modernity: East Central Europe and the rise of modernist architecture, 1910–1950*. Leuven University Press, p. 118.

³⁵ Cirpac-konferencia Budapestén [The Budapest CIRPAC Conference]. (1937). *Tér és Forma* [Space and Form], 2–3, p. 48.

³⁶ Z działalności organów CIAM: Grupa Węgierska [The activities of the bodies of CIAM: The Hungarian Group]. (1938). *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6–7, pp. 69–70.

³⁷ Bericht über die CIAM-Konferenz in Budapest [Report on the CIAM Conference in Budapest]. (1937). *Tér és Forma* [Space and Form], 2–3, p. 58.

³⁸ Budapest uncovered: Bauhaus in Budapest. (2019, June 30). *Funzine*. <https://funzine.hu/en/2019/06/30/goodapest-en-2/budapest-uncovered-bauhaus-in-budapest/>

³⁹ Offbeat Budapest. (2025). *100 unique buildings in Budapest*. <https://www.offbeatbudapest.com/budapest-city-guide/best-architecture-highlights/>

⁴⁰ Compare with Ritoók, P., & Sebestyén, Á. A. (2018). Communicating ‘space and form?’: The history and impact of the journal *Tér és Forma* as the Hungarian pipeline of modernism. *Docomomo Journal*, 59, p. 23.

⁴¹ Z działalności organów CIAM: Grupa Czechosłowacka [The activities of the bodies of CIAM: The Czechoslovak Group]. (1938). *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6–7, p. 60.

⁴² Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 185.

⁴³ V Międzynarodowy Kongres Architektury Nowoczesnej w Paryżu: Przebieg Kongresu, rezolucje [5th International Congress of Modern Architecture in Paris: Congress program and resolutions]. (1938). *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6–7, p. 9.



Fig. 10. Paris, France, Fifth CIAM Congress, June–July 1937. Participants of the Fifth CIAM Congress resting “on the banks of the Marne”: a) Le Corbusier; b) from left: Carola Giedion-Welcker [?], Hélène de Mandrot, and Le Corbusier; photo: S. Syrkus; source: ZAP WAPW collection.

Helene Syrkus, it was the ‘apogee of CIAM activity.’⁴⁴ The Congress was held in June–July of 1937 in the IENA room, made available to CIAM by the Board of the ‘Art and Technology’ World Exhibition that opened in May in Paris. It should be added that almost in parallel—June 28–July 5—was the date of the meeting of the 4th International Congress of Architects,⁴⁵ while July 5–13 saw the deliberations of the unification congress of the International Federation for Housing and Town Planning (IFHTP)⁴⁶ in which about one thousand delegates took part, including many from Poland. Among these were representatives of the Polish Society for Housing Reform (PTRM).

The 5th CIAM Congress was devoted to ‘matters of housing and holidays within the broad reach of cities and their regions, with special attention of the rural countryside’ (Logis et Loisirs: Villes et campagne).⁴⁷ It was within the framework of the Polish group that Stanisław Tołwiński (1895–1969) and Helena and Szymon Syrkus took part. The former presented one of four program papers—‘Zastosowanie zasad ogólnych do regionów wsi’ [Applying general principles in rural regions], which was supplemented by a presentation entitled ‘Rural urbanism’ by Norbert Bézard, a French farmer.

⁴⁴ Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 185.

⁴⁵ Leykam, M. (1937). Przebieg dwóch kongresów [The deliberations of two congresses]. *Komunikat SARP* [Communiqué of the Association of Polish Architects], 9, pp. 4–6.

⁴⁶ Sprawa połączenia międzynarodowych organizacji mieszkaniowych [The case for unifying international housing organizations]. (1937). *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 9–10, p. 50. Compare also Międzynarodowy Kongres Mieszkaniowy i Urbanistyczny w Paryżu, July 5–13 [International Congress for Housing and Town Planning in Paris, July 5–13]. (1937). *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 2–3, pp. 36–37; and Leykam, M. (1937). Przebieg dwóch kongresów [The deliberations of two congresses]. *Komunikat SARP* [Communiqué of the Association of Polish Architects], 9, pp. 4–6.

⁴⁷ Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 182.



Fig. 11. Paris, France, Fifth CIAM Congress, June–July 1937. Participants of the Fifth CIAM Congress resting “on the banks of the Marne”: a) Le Corbusier; b) from left: Carola Giedion-Welcker [?], Hélène de Mandrot, and Le Corbusier; photo: S. Syrkus; source: ZAP WAPW collection.

An attraction of the 5th CIAM Congress was without a doubt Le Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux [Pavilion of New Times] as designed by Le Corbusier and located on the ‘Expo u Porte Maillot’⁴⁸ supplementary land. It was de facto a rather modest albeit in a way exceptional tent in which, according to Le Corbusier, ‘enormous photographic, graphic, and textual material’⁴⁹ was represented. In the view of S. Tołwiński it presented not only architecture and urban planning, but primarily the ‘social myth of New Times’ (Fig. 10a).⁵⁰

After seeing the ‘New Times’ pavilion, the Polish delegates were given a personal guided tour by Le Corbusier himself.⁵¹ It was perhaps then that Szymon Syrkus took the photographs that have been preserved by the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology. Among them, four pictures show Le Corbusier during his address. His ‘living word,’ as maintained by Helena Syrkus, had magical power: ‘Fostering complete endorsement among some while supplying others with the impetus for fierce polemics. It was impossible to listen to the speech with indifference’ (Fig. 10b).⁵²

⁴⁸ Hahl, N. G. (1938). Rozmowa z Le Corbusierem [An interview with Le Corbusier]. *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6–7, p. 45.

⁴⁹ Hahl, N. G. (1938). Rozmowa z Le Corbusierem [An interview with Le Corbusier]. *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6–7, p. 45. Compare also Tołwiński, S. (1938). Pawilon Nowych Czasów na Wystawie Światowej w Paryżu [The Pavilion of New Times at the International Exhibition in Paris]. *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6–7, pp. 43–44; and Tołwiński, S. (1938). Pawilon Nowych Czasów [The New Times Pavilion]. *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6–7, pp. 49–55.

⁵⁰ Tołwiński, S. (1938). Pawilon Nowych Czasów [The New Times Pavilion]. *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6–7, p. 43.

⁵¹ Tołwiński, S. (1970). *Wspomnienia 1895–1939*. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 428.

⁵² Syrkus, H. (1976). *Ku idei osiedla społecznego* [Towards the concept of a social housing estate]. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 66.

According to S. Tołwiński, Le Corbusier was ‘exceptionally, suggestively wise and aware of the potential inherent in modern technology and its revolutionary character, opening a road to the total reconstruction of Man’s environment.’⁵³ It was within the framework of the presented section of the collection that there were also photographs probably taken during the discussions and meetings of Congress participants ‘out in the fresh spring air on the banks of the Marne on the outskirts of the city.’ On them one can see a relaxed Le Corbusier as well as Helene de Mandrot, seen as well as mentioned several times, something of a guardian spirit for CIAM. She was a woman educated in the arts who in 1920 inherited a significant fortune from her deceased husband, including the mentioned castle in La Sarraz. She generously supported the activities of CIAM up to 1939 (Fig. 11a–b).⁵⁴

The 17th International Congress of the International Federation for Housing and Town Planning (IFHTP) in Stockholm (July 1939). The last of the preserved photographs documenting the organizational efforts of Szymon Syrkus are from the year 1939. They record a trip with Stanisław Tołwiński and Juliusz Żakowski (1893–1970) in their role as delegates of the Polish Housing Reform Association (PTRM) to Stockholm for the 17th International Congress of the International Federation for Housing and Town Planning (IFHTP),⁵⁵ already mentioned and unjustly underappreciated in research into interwar Modernism. Currently however, it is being seen as the de facto most important and most influential platform for the international discourse and the dissemination of new concepts in the realm of the residential architecture and urban culture during the interwar period. Its program is said to have served CIAM as inspiration.⁵⁶

In connection with the 17th IFHTP Congress held in Stockholm, which intended to discuss such topics as matters of the decentralization of residential policy and regional planning,⁵⁷ the PTRM had already developed and forwarded its answers to a questionnaire on the ‘Organization of Regional Plans’ and ‘Local Traffic’ to the organizers in the spring of 1939. Also planned was the preparing of other required reports and what was known as voices in the discussion.⁵⁸

Much points to the fact that PTRM delegates, at least those belonging to CIAM—i.e., Szymon Syrkus and Stanisław Tołwiński—intended to treat their participation at the Stockholm Congress purely as a formality. Approximately one thousand delegates



Fig. 12. a–b) Stockholm, Sweden, Congress of the International Federation for Housing and Urban Planning (IFHTP), July 1939. Unidentified apartment building in Visby [?]; photo: S. Syrkus; source: ZAP WAPW collection.



Fig. 13. Warsaw, Poland. Szymon Syrkus against the background of the ruins of the Old Town Square, 1945 [?]; source: ZAP WAPW collection.

registered for that Congress.⁵⁹ In spite of having submitted a paper for it,⁶⁰ Syrkus wrote to Van Eesteren, the CIAM head, that his and Tołwiński’s stay in Stockholm will be devoted to ‘mainly the practical study of significant matters rather than meetings’ and that they will complete the tasks entrusted by CIAM regarding which both were ‘ready to do everything [...] to complete them.’⁶¹

Ultimately, Syrkus was very pleased with the trip to Stockholm, especially the promotion of ‘the real work of CIAM.’ He maintained that thanks to Fred Forbát (1897–1972), a Hungarian permanently residing in Sweden as of 1938, he, together with Tołwiński, was successful in finally overcoming the ‘unfavourable atmosphere,’ regarding CIAM and even in convincing the Swedes to organize the next CIAM meeting in their country.⁶²

Unfortunately, at this point in the research it is not known which Swedish housing estates the PTRM delegates visited as a part of tours provided by the Congress as well as individually. The photographic collection found at the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology contains only negatives of a Modern, unidentified five-story residential building described as Visby (Gotland?) (Fig. 12a–b).

After Syrkus and Tołwiński spent time in Sweden, during their return they subsequently visited ‘achievements of Modern urban planning and architecture.’⁶³ They visited Finland as well as Tallinn and Wilno [Vilnius] on their way back to Warsaw. Zurich hosted a meeting of CIRPAC in parallel in an atmosphere of the growing threat of war. It was devoted to the finalizing of preparations for the 6th CIAM Congress planned for September 12–16, 1939 in Liege. The outbreak of World War II made it impossible to hold the Congress.⁶⁴

SUMMARY

The above-discussed activities of Szymon Syrkus as an activist and representative of Poland’s interwar avant-garde architecture in CIAM as of 1928 were disrupted by the outbreak of World War II. The architect was arrested in 1942 and found himself in the German Auschwitz concentration camp. He returned to Warsaw from captivity in August of 1945 and immediately became involved in the reconstruction of the capital and the building of new housing estates (Fig. 13). As the Polish CIAM delegate in May of 1947 he took part in the CIRPAC preparatory meeting in Zurich for the first time after the war. It was also his last time. That meeting was devoted to the organization of the 6th CIAM Congress, cancelled in September of 1939, and now planned for September of 1947 in

⁵³ Tołwiński, S. (1970). *Wspomnienia 1895–1939*. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 422.

⁵⁴ Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, p. 130.

⁵⁵ Compare with Minutes of the General Assembly of Members of the PTRM of April 20, 1939: PTRM Program for the Year 1939. (1939). *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6, p. 39.

⁵⁶ Among others, compare with Geertse, M. (2015). Cross-border country planning dialogue in interwar Europe. *SAGE Open*, 5(3), pp. 1–13.

⁵⁷ García González, M. C., & Guerrero, S. (2014). The National Federation of Town Planning and Housing, 1939–1954: A network for town planners and architects in Franco’s Spain. *Journal of Urban History*, 40(6), n.p.

⁵⁸ Minutes of the General Assembly of Members of the PTRM of April 20, 1939: PTRM Program for the Year 1939. (1939). *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* [House, Housing Estate, Dwelling], 6, pp. 33, 39.

⁵⁹ Geertse, M. (2015). *Defining the universal city: The International Federation for Housing and Town Planning and transnational planning dialogue, 1913–1945*. Globe, p. 172.

⁶⁰ Tołwiński, S. (1970). *Wspomnienia 1895–1939*. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 471.

⁶¹ Compare with Syrkus, H., & Syrkus, S. (1939, June 30). Letter to Friedy Fluck and Cornelis van Eesteren. In A. Kędziorek, K. Uchowicz, & M. Wirkus (Eds.), *Archipelag CIAM: Listy Heleny Syrkus* [CIAM archipelago: The letters of Helena Syrkus] (pp. 94–97). Narodowy Instytut Architektury i Urbanistyki.

⁶² Compare with Syrkus, H., & Syrkus, S. (1939, August 1). Letter to Friedy Fluck and Cornelis van Eesteren. In A. Kędziorek, K. Uchowicz, & M. Wirkus (Eds.), *Archipelag CIAM: Listy Heleny Syrkus* [CIAM archipelago: The letters of Helena Syrkus] (pp. 104–105). Narodowy Instytut Architektury i Urbanistyki.

⁶³ Tołwiński, S. (1970). *Wspomnienia 1895–1939*. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 472.

⁶⁴ Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, pp. 168–169.

Bridgewater, United Kingdom.⁶⁵ It was during this meeting that the decision was taken to entrust his wife, Helena Syrkus, with the function of Vice–President of CIAM,⁶⁶ a function she filled until 1954, when she began to represent the community of Polish architects at the CIAM forum, this time alone, without the participation of her husband Szymon Syrkus.

⁶⁵ Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, pp. 168–169.

⁶⁶ Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928–1960*. MIT Press, p. 173.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



<https://dzieje.pl/dziedzictwo-kulturowe/78-projektow-zrealizowano-w-ramach-programu-wolontariat-dla-dziedzictwa>

Prof. Ph.D., D.Sc., Eng. Małgorzata Rozbicka

Prof. Dr. Hab. Eng. in Architecture, head of the Unit of Polish Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture Warsaw University of Technology. Member of the Polish National Committee of ICOMOS. Author of many scientific and research papers, expert analyses and projects in the field of Polish Architecture and the protection of cultural heritage.

ORCID: 0000-0003-1311-4835

Jadwiga Urbanik | Jerzy Ilkosz
Wrocław University of Technology | Wrocław Museum of Architecture



Hans Poelzig and the Problem of Functional House

from Landhaus to the Modern Movement House in Weissenhof Estate

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to indicate the role played by Hans Poelzig in the first half of the 20th century in creating the way towards modernity and especially towards the modern, functional house. The article is mainly the result of literary and archival studies and shows the architectural activity of Hans Poelzig. At the beginning of the 20th century, Poelzig twice proposed a single-family house of the Landhaus type in Wrocław as a model of the solution that he considered the best at that time. These were: a model house of the ‘Atristic Craft Exhibition’ from 1904 and a single-family house in the Zalesie estate from 1906, its form related to the Heimatschutz movement, which promoted the use of regional forms in architecture. Thanks to cooperation with the company Christoph & Unmack from Niesky, in 1926, Poelzig designed a wooden single-family house using construction techniques introduced by this company. It is an Existenzminimum house, promoted in the second half of the 1920s. A truly modern approach to the design of a single-family house was presented by the architect in 1927, in the model experimental Werkbund estate – Weissenhof in Stuttgart. The house had a very modest form, consistent with the conditions of the exhibition, the most important of which was a flat roof. In 1928, Poelzig designed two traditional houses – a single-family house and a semi-detached house in Berlin in the Am Fischthalgrund housing estate. A truly modern one was the architect’s own house, designed with his second wife, Marlene Moeschke, between 1928 and 1930. The final statement on modern housing was the house presented at the exhibition entitled *Berliner Sommerschau 1932: Sonne, Luft und Haus für Alle ...*, where the architect presented a “growing house.” Hans Poelzig is considered one of the precursors of modernism, he prepared a new generation of architects to solve new tasks regarding modern apartments and their equipment, but he himself was not fully enchanted by the new style of Neues Bauen.

Keywords: Hans Poelzig, one-family houses, modernism, Landhaus, Christoph & Unmack, Weissenhof, am Fischthalgrund, growing house

INTRODUCTION

Hans Poelzig (1860–1936) is not only one of the most outstanding architects of Wrocław, but also of Germany and Europe. He was an excellent teacher and an innovative architectural designer. Born in Berlin in 1869, the architect came to Wrocław at the turn of the 20th century to take up a position as a teacher of architectural drawing and carpentry at the Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts (Königliche Akademie für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe).¹ Poelzig was appointed to the Royal Academy in 1900 as a result of a bold act of patronage, as Wolfgang Pehnt writes.² Until then, the 31-year-old architect had no spectacular achievements of his own. His brief stint at the technical office of the Ministry of Public Works did not constitute any credible evidence of his qualifications for teaching at the school. This made it all the more surprising how boldly the young architect made his presence felt, gaining recognition and respect among his colleagues and students. By 1903, he had already become the director of the Wrocław school, which was then entering its ‘golden age.’

Poelzig was keenly interested in the problem of housing and residential development. In his article published in 1906 in *Das Deutsche Kunstgewerbe*, Poelzig wrote: ‘Today, the world is ruled by economics, and society demands that creators solve the growing problems of housing architecture, which are a particular challenge for artists designing urban development’.³ Already at the beginning of the 20th century, the problem of housing shortages became prevalent in large European cities. In his design work, Poelzig solved problems that became a life mission for many representatives of the younger generation. He was a proponent of the ‘total work of art’ (‘Gesamtkunstwerk’), which is the result of collaboration between artists from various fields of art, for whom architecture is the mother of the whole.⁴ However, did his proposals have a decisive influence on the development of housing at that time? We will try to shed light on this issue in this article.

The subject of the research was Hans Poelzig’s design activity in the field of residential architecture, and the aim was to show the role he played in creating the path to functional housing. The architect is called the ‘father of modernists’ in Germany and is the author of many outstanding works of architecture that reveal a preference for modern forms. However, his residential designs clearly show a lack of consistency in his choice of style. Unfortunately, most of them have not survived to this day.

¹ The Wrocław Academy was the successor to the Royal School of Construction, Arts and Crafts (Königliche Bau-, Kunst- und Handwerksschule), which had been established through the merger of the Provincial School of Art (*Provinzial-Kunstschule*) and the School of Construction (*Bauschule*). The former had been founded by the Prussian King Frederick William II on May 28, 1791, and opened on December 1 of the same year, while the latter was founded in 1800. In 1875, however, the School of Construction was separated from the School of Art, which was then renamed the Royal School of Arts and Crafts (*Königliche Kunst- und Kunstgewerbeschule*). In 1911, the Royal School was transformed into an academy, initially royal and subsequently state-run.

² Pehnt, W. (2000). Wille zum Ausdruck: Zum Leben und Werk Hans Poelzig. In W. Pehnt & M. Schirren (Eds.), *Hans Poelzig: Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler* (p. 19). DVA.

³ Poelzig, H. (1906). [Gärung in der] Architektur. In *Das deutsche Kunstgewerbe 1906: Zur 3. Deutschen Kunstgewerbeausstellung in Dresden 1906* (pp. 17–20). Verlagsanstalt F. Bruckmann.

⁴ Dobesz, J. (1998). Hans Poelzig i wrocławska Akademia Sztuki. In O. Czerner, E. Małachowicz, & S. Lose (Eds.), *Ten wspaniały wrocławski modernizm: Materiały z konferencji Komisji Architektury i Urbanistyki Wrocławskiego Oddziału PAN* (p. 14). Via.

In preparing this text, the traditional tools of the architectural historian were used. The main role in acquiring knowledge was played by the study of archives and literature, both pre-war and contemporary. In situ research was possible to a very limited extent, as most of the houses no longer exist.

STATE OF RESEARCH

Until the discovery of expressionism in the 1960s, Poelzig was given virtually no place in history. Leading architectural historians remained silent about his work. Nikolaus Pevsner, who knew Poelzig personally and interviewed him, we find only three mentions in *Pioneers of Modern Design*,⁵ from 1936. Henry Russell Hitchcock devoted one paragraph to Poelzig in his 500-page magnum opus *Architecture Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, from 1958.⁶

The change did not come until the early 1970s. Wolfgang Pehnt, in *Expressionist Architecture*,⁷ in 1973, in the chapter Introduction to the Theatre of the Five Thousand (pp. 13-22), describes Poelzig as an expressionist, and in the chapter Around 1910, he describes his works alongside those of Max Berg, Peter Behrens, Paul Bonatz, and Hermann Muthesius (pp. 65-72), and in the chapter Cinema (pp. 165-168), he describes the set designs for the film Golem in 1920 and Poelzig’s cinema buildings designs. The same author – Wolfgang Pehnt – in 1977, in his work entitled *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts 1880 – 1940*, which is volume 12 of the monumental *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte*,⁸ wrote the chapter Architektur, in which he describes Poelzig’s work. Another important author is Julius Posener, who published Poelzig’s texts and their commentary in 1970.⁹ This author’s subsequent publications on Poelzig date from 1979 – a chapter in a publication on Berlin architecture¹⁰ – and 1994 – a monograph on the architect himself.¹¹ Finally, the third significant author who developed research on Poelzig was Matthias Schirren, author of a monograph¹² from 1989 on the plans and drawings from the former Museum of Transport and Construction in Berlin.

Another change came in 2000, when a large collective monograph devoted to Poelzig was published – Hans Poelzig in Wrocław, architecture and art 1900-1916,¹³ edited by

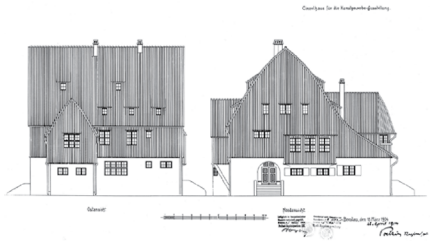


Fig. 1. Wrocław, then Breslau, model single-family house of the “Special Exhibition” of the Artistic Crafts Association at the Artistic Crafts Exhibition, no longer extant, design of the eastern and northern façades, Hans Poelzig, 1904; source: Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, Building Archive of the City of Wrocław.



Fig. 2. Wrocław, then Breslau, model single-family house of the “Special Exhibition” of the Artistic Crafts Association at the Artistic Crafts Exhibition, no longer extant, eastern façade, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1904; source: K. Masner, *Das Einfamilienhaus des Kunstgewerbevereins*, Berlin, 1905.

Jerzy Ilkosz and Beate Störtkuhl, concerning his Wrocław period, containing a catalog of works and source texts. The publication accompanied an exhibition organized by the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław. Another monograph describing Poelzig’s entire oeuvre, Hans Poelzig, *Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler*,¹⁴ edited by Wolfgang Pehnt and Matthias Schirren, was published in 2007. It contains a catalog of all the architect’s works and his correspondence, which can be considered source material. The publication accompanied an exhibition presented in Berlin at the Akademie der Künste and in Frankfurt am Main at the Deutsches Architekturmuseum.

In addition, some of the architect’s houses have been discussed in other monographic studies or scientific articles. These include: a single-family house at the ‘Arts and Crafts Exhibition’ (‘Ausstellung für Handwerk und Kunstgewerbe’) in Wrocław in 1904 and his own house in Wrocław at Chopina Street;¹⁵ a single-family house in the model Werkbund estate – Weissenhof in Stuttgart from 1927;¹⁶ and the ‘growing house’ presented at an exhibition in Berlin in 1932.¹⁷ An extensive and very interesting text on the interiors designed by Poelzig in Wrocław, written by Maria Zwierz, has just been sent to print.¹⁸

DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE AT THE ‘ARTISTIC CRAFTS EXHIBITION’ IN WROCLAW, 1904, NO LONGER STANDING¹⁹

The Association of Artistic Crafts for Wrocław and the Province of Silesia took part in the exhibition entitled ‘Ausstellung für Handwerk und Kunstgewerbe’ (‘Arts and Crafts Exhibition’), organized by the Chamber of Crafts in 1904 in Wrocław, presenting a ‘Sonderausstellung’ (‘Special Exhibition’), which featured a single-family house designed by Hans Poelzig (Figs. 1 and 2). In this design, the architect wanted to present ‘a program of fighting against luxury and appearances, as well as a protest against superficiality, pointlessness, the primacy of decoration, and waste of materials’.²⁰

¹⁴ Pehnt, W., & Schirren, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Hans Poelzig: Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler*. DVA.

¹⁵ Zwierz, M. (2016). Architektura i rozplanowanie terenu wystaw. In *Tradycje wystawiennicze we Wrocławiu w latach 1818–1948* (pp. 107–150). Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu; Störtkuhl, B. (n.d.). Die Pläne zur Breslauer ‘Ausstellung für Handwerk und Kunstgewerbe’ von 1904 in Bauarchiv Stads Breslau. In *Jahrbuch des Bundesinstituts für ostdeutsche Kultur und Geschichte* (Vol. 2, pp. 59–85). R. Oldenbourg Verlag.

¹⁶ Among the many publications on the Weissenhof estate, the following should be mentioned: Cramer, J., & Gutschow, N. (1984). *Bauausstellungen: Eine Architekturgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Verlag W. Kohlhammer; Gschwind, F., & Groke, K. (2008). *Weissenhof Museum im Haus Le Corbusier*. Karl Krämer Verlag; Joedicke, J. (1989). *Weissenhof Siedlung Stuttgart*. Karl Krämer Verlag; Kirsch, K. (1987). *Die Weißenhofsiedlung*. Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt; Kirsch, K. (1994). Die Weißenhofsiedlung: Ein internationales Manifest. In V. M. Lampugnani & R. Schneider (Eds.), *Moderne Architektur in Deutschland 1900 bis 1950: Expressionismus und Neue Sachlichkeit* (pp. 205–224). Verlag Gerd Hatje; Flüscher, Ch., Gaukel, I., Gschwind, F., Krämer, A., & Medek, H. (2016). Wzorcowe osiedle Weissenhof w Stuttgarcie (1927). In J. Urbanik (Ed.), *Droga ku nowoczesności: Osiedla Werkbundu 1927–1932* (pp. 42–83). Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu.

¹⁷ Urbanik, J. (2020). Dom rosnący w międzywojennych Niemczech. In M. J. Sołtysik & M. Stępa (Eds.), *Architektura XX wieku: Zachowanie jej autentyczności i integralności w Gdyni i w Europie* (pp. 71–78). Urząd Miasta Gdyni; Urbanik, J. (2020). ‘The growing house’: The way to solve the housing problem in interwar Germany. In J. Charytonowicz & Ch. Falcão (Eds.), *Advances in human factors in architecture, sustainable urban planning and infrastructure* (pp. 243–255). Springer.

¹⁸ Zwierz, M. (2022). *Projekty wnętrz mieszkalnych autorstwa Hansa Poelziga w czasie pobytu architekta we Wrocławiu w latach 1900–1916* [Unpublished manuscript submitted for publication in the exhibition catalogue from Wrocław to New York and Back: Hans Poelzig and the Style of Materials]. Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu.

¹⁹ Poelzig, H. (1904). Das Musterhaus auf der Ausstellung für Handwerk und Kunstgewerbe in Breslau. *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, 24, 547–548.

²⁰ Buchwald, C. (1904). Sonderausstellung des Kunstgewerbevereins für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien. In *Catalogue of the ‘Special Exhibition’* (p. 4). Kunstgewerbeverein für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien.

In the introduction to the exhibition catalog, Conrad Buchwald wrote: ‘We should develop a model of a German house that combines all the achievements of our artistic craftsmanship from its heyday at the end of the 19th century. Architecture that unites the decorativeness of art with the functionality of handicrafts poses a new challenge for our rapidly declining housing construction. The urban tenement house is not yet able to meet this challenge; only the detached single-family house can take on the challenge of the new era. We are hearing more and more about the hopes associated with this form of housing, and if we were to name its most prominent supporters, we would mention the names of Alfred Lichtwark and Hermann Muthesius. (...) The hope for a revival of housing culture has its source precisely in the single-family house.’²¹We read further: ‘It is easy to deduce what is meant by the term ‘single-family house’. It is certainly not a villa, often found in the suburbs of many of our cities, with a facade that pitifully imitates a medieval town hall or an Italian Renaissance palace. A simple and functional structure and well-designed interiors – this is how we understand a true single-family home, and this is how we want to show it to others.’²²

The house was intended for a wealthy family living in the suburbs of a metropolis. It was a so-called Landhaus, promoted in Germany by Herman Muthesius as a counterproposal to the large suburban villas of villa colonies established by private investors. In these houses, utility rooms, such as kitchens and servants’ quarters, were located in the basement, living rooms on the high ground floor, and bedrooms on the first floor. No connections between private rooms and the garden were sought; on the contrary, bay windows and verandas rather emphasized the location of the living room.²³

In Poelzig’s Landhaus-style show villa, on the other hand, the parents’ rooms and the dining room were located around the hall on the ground floor, covering two floors, while the first floor housed a living room for children with a place for the lady of the house and bedrooms for all members of the household. The attic housed a wardrobe, a bathroom, and a guest room. The height of the rooms was 3 m on the ground floor and first floor, and 5.50 m in the hall. The kitchen and servants’ quarters were located on the ground floor, from where a separate exit led to the vegetable garden. The entrance was directly connected to the kitchen by a corridor, which also served as a utility room; the laundry room, ironing room, mangle, etc. were located in the attic. The house was built with a solid frame structure, which was plastered on the ground floor and covered with brick on the first floor. The gables were covered with monk and nun tiles. Poelzig designed furniture for the hall, dining room, living room, study, parents’ bedroom, kitchen, servants’ room, and other utility rooms, thus realizing the idea of a Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art).

²¹ Buchwald, C. (1904). Sonderausstellung des Kunstgewerbevereins für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien. In *Catalogue of the ‘Special Exhibition’* (p. 4). Kunstgewerbeverein für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien.

²² Buchwald, C. (1904). Sonderausstellung des Kunstgewerbevereins für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien. In *Catalogue of the ‘Special Exhibition’* (p. 4). Kunstgewerbeverein für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien.

²³ Tomaszewicz, A. (2019). *Wrocławskie wille i osiedla willowe doby historyzmu*. Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Wrocławskiej.



Fig. 3. Wrocław, then Breslau, architect’s own house, F. Chopin Street (Leerbeutelstraße), no longer extant, view from the street, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1906; source: *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 15, 1907, p. 226.

In the introduction to the exhibition catalog, Hermann Muthesius wrote: ‘We certainly have a duty to support the social class that would initiate the process of settling in detached houses. There is no doubt that living in a single-family home provides the most valuable experiences and inspires spiritual and artistic development. For is there any chance at all of creating a real home in a rented apartment, which may become unaffordable for us as early as the next payment date, if only because of an increase in benefits?’²⁴ Poelzig certainly did not have in mind the social class – the workers – that his younger colleagues focused on after World War I.

DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE IN THE ZALESIE HOUSING ESTATE (LEERBAUTEL), CHOPINA STREET, 1906, NO LONGER STANDING

In 1906, Poelzig built his own Landhaus-style house (Fig. 3) in the Zalesie housing estate in Wrocław, similar to the exhibition house from 1904. The two-story villa with a gable roof and dormers revealed the forms of a Silesian country house, in line with the Heimatschutz reform movement.²⁵ The gable walls were covered with ceramic tiles on the first floor. The rest of the façade was covered with plaster in two colors – white

²⁴ Buchwald, C. (1904). Sonderausstellung des Kunstgewerbevereins für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien. In *Catalogue of the ‘Special Exhibition’* (p. 4). Kunstgewerbeverein für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien.

²⁵ Störkuhl, B. (2022). Między nostalgią za małą ojczyzną a typizacją: Koncepcje architektury regionalnej w pierwszych dekadach XX wieku. In I. Liżewska (Ed.), *Architektura regionalna: Rzeczywista potrzeba czy iluzja? O budowaniu zgodnie z tradycją i krajobrazem* (pp. 113–126). Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, during the emergence of national movements, the turn towards folk culture had significant social importance. At that time, one of the largest social movements, known as Heimatschutz, was established in Germany. It was not limited to nature conservation and the preservation of historical monuments, but also sought new forms in architecture, focusing on the adaptation of regional building styles. The idea of a return to regional style was promoted by the Deutscher Bund für Heimatschutz [German Association for the Protection of the Homeland], founded in 1904. Folk culture became a symbol of the small homeland. The new ideas were promoted in particular by the architects Paul Schultze-Naumburg (1869–1949) and Hermann Muthesius (1861–1927). The homeland preservation movement during the Empire and the Weimar Republic gained a large following throughout Germany.

and gray – to imitate a half-timbered structure. The whole building was set on a stone plinth. Inside, on the ground floor, around a large hall covering two floors, the architect designed a living room, dining room, kitchen, his own studio, and rooms for the servants. On the first floor, there were bedrooms, and in the attic, there were rooms for guests. The interior of the house was connected to the garden by a covered porch accessible from the dining room.²⁶ In Landhaus designs, particular emphasis was placed on connecting the house with the garden. The interior design resembled that of a model house from 1904. The architect designed similar furniture in 1905 for Oskar Brieger,²⁷ a professor of medicine in Wrocław (Fig. 4). Unfortunately, his own house in the Zalesie housing estate no longer exists, having been demolished in 1971.

In 1914, Poelzig designed a house in Brochów, Wrocław (never build) for the Gemeinnützige Gartenstadt Gesellschaft Breslau-Brockau, which, although much smaller, resembles the previous villas and is closer to tradition than modernity. The house was probably intended as a model for larger garden estates, which were very popular at the time.²⁸

DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE, KARPACZ, 1926

Thanks to his collaboration with the Christoph & Unmack company from Niesky (Oberlausitz),²⁹ Poelzig designed a single-family house using the materials and construction techniques promoted by this company (of which he was a member of the board in 1926–1927). Built according to this design in 1926, the wooden house in Karpacz, a single-story building covered with a slightly sloping hipped roof (Fig. 5), was no longer a luxurious pre-World War I villa, but an Existenzminimum-type house, promoted in the second half of the 1920s. Similar houses were also designed by Konrad Waxmann, who collaborated with the company, including for the director of Christoph & Unmack (Goethestrasse) and for Albert Einstein in Caputh near Potsdam.³⁰ These were intended

²⁶ Eysymontt, R., Ilkosz, J., Tomaszewicz, A., & Urbanik, J. (Eds.). (2011). *Leksykon architektury Wrocławia* (pp. 741–742). Via Nova.

²⁷ The furniture came into the possession of the Stern family when Professor Brieger's daughter, Käthe, married Dr. Rudolf Stern. It formed part of her dowry and was taken to New York in 1938, when the family fled Wrocław to escape the persecution of citizens of Jewish origin. The furniture returned to Wrocław in 2022, when it was donated to the Museum of Architecture by Rudolf's son and heir, Fritz Stern.

²⁸ Ilkosz, J., & Störckuhl, B. (Eds.). (2000). *Hans Poelzig we Wrocławiu: Architektura i sztuka 1900–1916* (pp. 504–505). Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu; Via Nova.

²⁹ Herbert, G. (1986). *The dream of the factory-made house: Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann*. The MIT Press; Wachsmann, K. (1930). *Holzhausbau: Technik und Gestaltung*. Ernst Wasmuth Verlag; Wurm, H. (1969). Die Industrialisierung des Holzhausbaues: 'Christoph und Unmack' Tradition. *Zeitschrift für Firmengeschichte und Unternehmerbiographie*, 14, 198–211. The company Christoph & Unmack from Niesky (Oberlausitz) produced building assembly systems from prefabricated wooden elements. Many architectural exhibitions from that period featured houses built by this company. In its catalogues, it offered a panel system for the construction of portable houses and apartment blocks, timber-frame structures, and so-called semi-portable buildings, in which wooden supports reinforced the structure and were either visible on the outside or hidden in the joints of the wooden panels. Before World War I, the company mainly produced portable buildings assembled from wooden panels, which were used in various European countries as military barracks and field hospitals. From 1899, this system was also used to build school pavilions, holiday homes, and children's sanatoria. Above all, it was used to build a new type of school: the Waldschule (Freiluftschule), an open-air school with outdoor classes, limited teaching time, and a reduced number of pupils, intended for sickly children. The first such school was established by Neuffert in Charlottenburg. This type of building was considered healthy because of its natural air exchange, or 'breathing walls' (*Meyers Lexikon*, Vol. 12, p. 967). In 1885, after receiving a large order from the Prussian Ministry of War, the company moved from Copenhagen to Niesky. Branches of the company were established in Austria, France, Poland, and England, but none of them survived after 1918. During World War I, orders for military barracks dominated production. After the war, the company sought new markets, focusing on the construction of residential houses and entire housing estates, whose shortage was particularly acute in Germany. The company established contact with architects such as Albin Müller, Hans Scharoun, Henry van de Velde, Gustav Wolf, and others. In 1926–1927, Hans Poelzig was appointed to the company's board of directors.

³⁰ Widera, B. (2023). Tradycja i nowatorstwo willi Alberta Einsteina w Caputh. *Architectus*, 3, 28–39.



Fig. 4. Wrocław, then Breslau, furniture for the Wrocław professor of medicine Oskar Brieger, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1905; source: exhibition Hans Poelzig and the Style of Materials, Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, 2022; photo: Jerzy Ilkosz.



Fig. 5. Karpacz, then Krummhübel, single-family house, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1926; photo: Michał Duda, 2002.

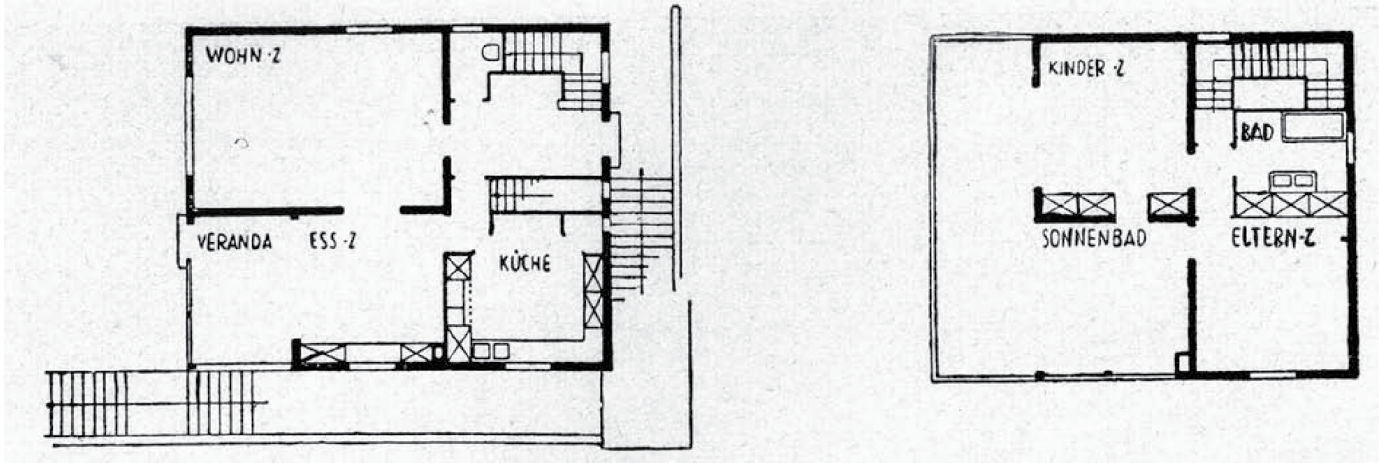


Fig. 6. Stuttgart, single-family house at the Weissenhof model Werkbund estate, Rathenaustraße 7, no longer extant, ground- and first-floor plans, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1927; source: *Die Form*, vol. 2, 1927, p. 281a.

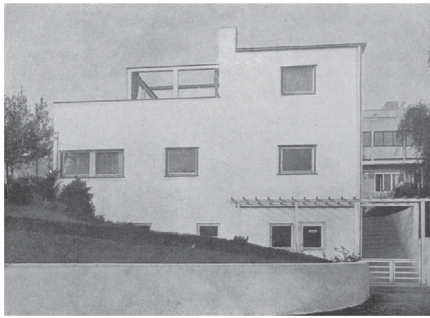


Fig. 7. Stuttgart, single-family house at the Weissenhof model Werkbund estate, Rathenaustraße 7, no longer extant, view from the street, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1927; source: *Bauen und Wohnen*, 1927, p. 100.

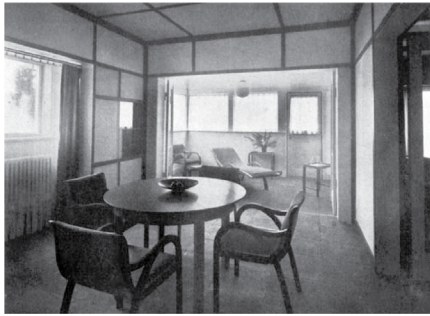


Fig. 8. Stuttgart, single-family house at the Weissenhof model Werkbund estate, Rathenaustraße 7, no longer extant, interior of the living room and veranda, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1927; source: *Die Form*, vol. 2, 1927, p. 282.

to be summer houses, but were used all year round. Poelzig's house in Karpacz has survived to this day.

In 1927, Poelzig designed another weekend house for the same company, as a model house shown at the 'Das Wochenende' exhibition in Berlin. The house had a square layout, with a veranda across its entire width, and the interior was arranged around a centrally located living room.

DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE IN THE MODEL WERKBUND HOUSING ESTATE – WEISSENHOF, STUTTGART, 1927, RATHENAUSTRASSE 7, NO LONGER STANDING

At this point, it is important to emphasize the unique role played by the Werkbund in the early days of modern architecture. Its leader and one of its initiators was Hermann Muthesius, who proclaimed the following program of modern architectural art: 'More content and less art'.³¹ It was he who defined the task of the Werkbund as follows: 'from making a small cushion for a sofa to building cities (vom Sophakissen zum Städtebau)'.³² The new principles of contemporary residential architecture were largely defined by the German Werkbund in the early years of its activity, when Muthesius warned: 'Those who seek artistry beyond pure necessity are embarking on a dangerous path'.³³

It was not until 1927 that Poelzig joined the European avant-garde represented by a young generation of architects and designed a house for the Werkbund's model experimental housing estate, Weissenhof in Stuttgart (Fig. 6, 7, 8), which was part of the famous exhibition 'Die Wohnung'. Built in 1927, the house had a very modest area and form, which was probably due not so much to the architect's beliefs as to the conditions set by the exhibition organizers, the most important of which was a flat roof. Unfortunately, the house was demolished during the war.

³¹ Muthesius, H. (1909). *Sztuka stosowana i architektura* (p. 40). Wydawnictwo Miejskiego Muzeum Techniczno-Przemysłowego.

³² B. A. (1930). Wystawa Werkbundu we Wrocławiu. *Rzeczy Piękne*, p. 70.

³³ Sławińska, J. (1991). *Architektura i ruchy społecznego protestu* (p. 8). Politechnika Wrocławska.

The objectives of organizing the ‘Die Wohnung’ exhibition in Stuttgart, combined with the model Weissehof housing estate,³⁴ were formulated in a manifesto and program for the entire project, published in December 1926.³⁵ This document pointed out that the most important issue in housing construction was the design of the building plan, i.e., adapting it to the housing needs of contemporary people. An apartment should be comfortable and practical, with the smallest possible floor space.³⁶ Therefore, the functional design of a small apartment had to be rethought, as the financial resources allocated for its construction had to be used optimally.³⁷

The architect designed a two-story house. On the ground floor, he placed a living room, kitchen, and dining room connected to a veranda, and on the first floor, he placed the parents’ and children’s bedrooms, a bathroom, and a large roof terrace. The interiors, which were open to the public during the exhibition, were furnished with furniture designed by the architect himself, in accordance with the principle of Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art).

Detached and semi-detached houses in the Am Fischtalgrund housing estate, Berlin, 1928

Just one year after the Stuttgart exhibition ‘Die Wohnung,’ Poelzig designed two traditional houses – a detached house and a semi-detached – in Berlin in the Am Fischtalgrund housing estate for the GAGFAH (Gemeinnützige A.G. für Angestellten Heimstätten) company on the 10th anniversary of its existence (Fig. 9). They were built in 1928 and had a rather traditional form, with their white facades varied by brick gable frames and brick plinths (Fig. 10).

The housing estate was built in 1928–29 under the direction of Heinrich Tessenow. It was designed by 16 architects³⁸ with the aim of presenting apartments and houses for low- and middle-income families. Five of them (Heinrich Tessenow, Paul Schmitthener, Alexander Klein, Paul Mebes, and Gustav Wolf) were members of the RFG research society (Reichsforschungsgesellschaft für Wirtschaftlichkeit im Bau- und Wohnungswesen

³⁴ In 1927, the exhibition Die Wohnung and the Weissenhof housing estate were organized in Stuttgart. Seventeen architects from five countries, representing the European avant-garde, were invited to participate in the project: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Adolf G. Schneck, Walter Gropius, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Bruno Taut, Max Taut, Hans Poelzig, Richard Döcker, Adolf Rading, Peter Behrens, and Hans Scharoun from Germany; Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud and Mart Stam from the Netherlands; Victor Bourgeois from Belgium; Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret from France; and Josef Frank from Austria. The urban concept was designed by Mies van der Rohe. The estate comprised both multi-family and single-family houses, including terraced and detached buildings.

³⁵ Cramer, J., & Gutschow, N. (1984). *Bauausstellungen: Eine Architekturgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (p. 124). Verlag W. Kohlhammer. The document was signed by the main organizers of the project: Peter Bruckmann, first chairman of the Werkbund; Mies van der Rohe, second chairman of the Werkbund; Gustav Stotz; and Geh. Hofrat.

³⁶ It was pointed out that the size and number of rooms are determined by the basic needs of the residents, which must be met. These were: housing, food, sleeping, washing, laundry, and cooking.

³⁷ It was suggested that the condition for a proper solution for a small apartment was to take into account elements such as built-in wardrobes and a complete kitchen. The simplification and functionality of the interior design of the apartment, the removal of the unnecessary, was to facilitate and simplify housework.

³⁸ Kirschbaum, J. (Ed.). (1985). *Siedlungen der 20er Jahre (Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Nationalkomitees für Denkmalschutz, Vol. 28, pp. 142–143)*. Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Denkmalschutz; Lampmann, G. (1928). Neue Siedlungen in Berlin: Die Gegfah-Siedlung im Fischtalgrund. *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, 48(47), 753–759. The Fischtalgrund housing estate was designed by Hans Gerlach, Ernst Grabbe, Wilhelm Jost, Fritz Keller, Aleksander Klein, Arnold Knoblauch, Paul Mebes and Paul Emmerich, Hans Poelzig, Erich Richter, Emil Rüster, Fritz Schopohl, Paul Schmitthener, Georg Steinmetz, Karl Weißhaupt, and Gustav Wolf. From September 1 to October 31, 1928, the estate, comprising 75 single-family houses and 40 apartments in multi-family buildings, was presented as an exhibition entitled ‘Building and Living’ (Ausstellung Bauen und Wohnen).

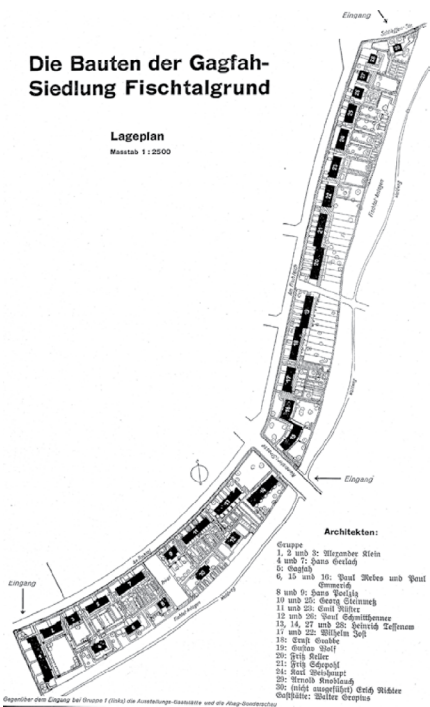


Fig. 9. Berlin, plan of the Am Fischtalgrund model housing estate, GAGFAH, 1928, designed by Heinrich Tessenow; houses nos. 8 and 9 designed by Hans Poelzig; source: *Bauwelt*, vol. 19, 1928, no. 34, p. 772.



Fig. 10. Berlin, two-family house at the Am Fischtalgrund model housing estate, GAGFAH, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1928; photo: Jerzy Ilkosc, 2015.

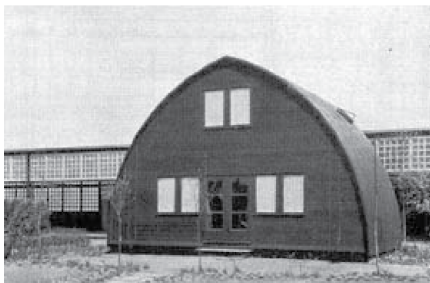


Fig. 11. Berlin, “growing house” presented at the exhibition Berlin Summer Show 1932: Sun, Air, and Home for Everyone. Exhibition of Growing Houses, Small Gardens, and Weekend Houses (Berliner Sommerschau 1932: Sonne, Luft und Haus für Alle. Ausstellung für Anbauhaus, Kleingärten und Wochenende), no longer extant, first and second day of house assembly, view from the garden, and interior of the living room, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1932; source: M. Wagner, *Das wachsende Haus, Berlin*, 1932, p. 56.

– State Research Society for the Economics of Construction and Housing), whose aim was to study the optimization of living space. This means that the organization’s guidelines on the cost and size of houses were probably taken into account. New technological advances were used, although the form of the houses did not fit into the Neues Bauen trend. The estate was intended for people with traditional views on architecture. All houses were covered with gable roofs.

Hugo Häring compared the cost per square meter of houses in the Weissenhof housing estate in Stuttgart and Fischtalgrund in Berlin.³⁹ However, the Stuttgart proposals turned out to be the cheapest: Hans Poelzig (detached single-family house, 173 RM), Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (multi-family house, 200 RM), Johannes J.P. Oud (terraced single-family houses, 206.85 RM) and Ludwig Hilbersheimer (detached single-family house, 219 RM). The only competition for these came from the Berlin proposals – Alexander Klein (multi-family house, 215 RM), Hans Gerlach (single-family terraced houses, 230 RM) and Hans Poelzig (two-family house, 287.75 RM).

The Am Fischtalgrund housing estate was located in the immediate vicinity of Bruno Taut’s Onkel Toms Hütte housing estate, which was a manifesto of Neues Bauen. The houses Am Fischtgrund were a kind of reaction to modernism – in this context, it was even written about the ‘roof war’ (‘Zehlendorfer Dächerkrieg’).⁴⁰

His own detached house, designed with his wife Marlene Poelzig, Berlin – Charlottenburg, 1928–1930, Tannenbergallee, no longer standing.

The architect’s own house, designed with his second wife, the young sculptor Marlene Moeschke, was truly modern. The house was built between 1928 and 1930 in the Charlottenburg district, but it has not survived to this day. It was a two-story house with a flat roof and a strongly protruding eaves, the only decoration of the smooth, light-colored facades being simple windows adapted in size to the function of the rooms.⁴¹

‘THE GROWING HOUSE’ – EXHIBITION, BERLIN, 1932, NO LONGER STANDING

One of the most interesting proposals of the interwar period was the so-called ‘growing house’ (das wachsende Haus) promoted by the most important architects of Neues Bauen, including Hans Poelzig. In 1932, Martin Wagner, Berlin’s city architect (Stadtbaurat), published a book entitled Das wachsende Haus. Ein Beitrag zur Lösung der städtischen Wohnungsfrage (The Growing House. A Contribution to Solving the City’s Housing Problem), presenting a new concept of a smart house – ergonomic, ecological, economical, and flexible. The book presented the results of a competition initiated by Hans Poelzig. Over a thousand architects took part in this competition in November and December 1931. Wagner published 24 proposals, which were presented at the Berlin

³⁹ Häring, H. (1928). Bauen und Wohnen: Bemerkungen zu der Ausstellungssiedlung der Gagfah. *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, 48(47), 759–761.

⁴⁰ Kirschbaum, J. (Ed.). (1985). *Siedlungen der 20er Jahre (Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Nationalkomitees für Denkmalschutz, Vol. 28, p. 142)*. Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Denkmalschutz.

⁴¹ Pehnt, W. (2000). Wille zum Ausdruck: Zum Leben und Werk Hans Poelzig. In W. Pehnt & M. Schirren (Eds.), *Hans Poelzig: Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler* (p. 47). DVA.

exhibition grounds (Messegelände) at an exhibition entitled ‘Berliner Sommerschau 1932, Sonne, Luft und Haus für Alle. Ausstellung für Anbauhaus, Kleingärten und Wochenende’ (‘Berlin Summer Show 1932, Sun, Air and a Home for Everyone. Exhibition of Growing Houses, Small Gardens and Weekend Homes’) from May 7 to August 7.⁴² The designs of the exhibition houses took into account the possibility of their expansion in accordance with the changing needs of the residents. They could be enlarged in several stages according to the architect’s guidelines. This concept was probably related to the so-called Lebensreform, a reform focusing on improving the health conditions of society (among other things, by promoting a new way of life in new, hygienic homes).

Hans Poelzig designed a house with two floors under a high, curved roof (Fig. 11). The structure consisted of wooden trusses placed next to each other. A characteristic feature of this type of solution was the almost complete absence of external walls (only gables). The roof was covered with zinc sheet metal and insulated with cork boards and plywood on the inside. This resulted in a maximum living space of over 90 m². In the minimum version, the architect proposed an area of 27.53 m². The house could be assembled in one week,⁴³ and the assembly process is shown in figure 11. It should be noted that this type of roof construction had previously been used by Ernst May in Wrocław when he collaborated with the Schlesische Heimstätte construction company between 1918 and 1925. At the ‘Die Wohnung’ exhibition in Stuttgart, on the exhibition grounds near the Weissenhof housing estate, a curved roof structure was displayed. However, it never went into mass production.

SUMMARY

Hans Poelzig is considered one of the precursors of modernism and one of the most important architects of the 20th century. He was actively involved in the design of functional housing and was also a proponent of total work of art (Gesamtkunstwerk), which is the result of collaboration between artists from various fields of art, for whom architecture is the mother of the whole. He prepared a new generation of architects to tackle new tasks related to modern housing and its furnishings. They took part in Werkbund exhibitions and designed modern housing estates as part of urban construction programs. Hans Poelzig was their master and teacher. But was he himself enchanted by the new Neues Bauen style? His single-family houses testify to his moderate enthusiasm for modernity. Wolfgang Pehnt wrote that Poelzig did not allow a definitive break with the past, as his avant-garde colleagues from Neues Bauen did after 1920.⁴⁴ Poelzig did not want to be dependent on history, but he also argued that its standards and lessons should not

⁴² Urbanik, J. (2020). Dom rosnący w międzywojennych Niemczech. In M. J. Sołtysik & M. Stępa (Eds.), *Architektura XX wieku: Zachowanie jej autentyczności i integralności w Gdyni i w Europie* (pp. 71–78). Urząd Miasta Gdyni.

⁴³ Wagner, M. (1932). *Das wachsende Haus* (pp. 53–56). Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong & Co.

⁴⁴ Pehnt, W. (2000). Wille zum Ausdruck: Zum Leben und Werk Hans Poelzig. In W. Pehnt & M. Schirren (Eds.), *Hans Poelzig: Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler* (p. 18). DVA.

be rejected. ‘I also hate history insofar as it wants to constrain me, and I love the past insofar as it awakens my artistic instincts’.⁴⁵

From 1933, all architectural work in Germany was controlled by the Reich Ministry of Propaganda under the Act of September 22. The Reich Chamber of Fine Arts (Reichskammer der bildenden Künste) was established, bringing together architects under the control of the NSDAP. Membership in this section was a prerequisite for architects to obtain a work permit. Hans Poelzig could no longer find his place in the new era. He planned to leave for Turkey, but his plans were interrupted by his untimely death in 1936.

⁴⁵ Pehnt, W. (2000). Wille zum Ausdruck: Zum Leben und Werk Hans Poelzig. In W. Pehnt & M. Schirren (Eds.), *Hans Poelzig: Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler* (p. 18). DVA.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



<https://pwr.edu.pl/uczelnia/aktualnosci/nagroda-witru-wi-usza-dla-prof-jadwigi-urbanik-12037.html>

Prof. Ph.D., D.Sc., Eng. Arch. Jadwiga Urbanik

Prof. at Wrocław University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Landscape, member of Docomomo since 1990. Main areas of interest: theory, history and restoration of architecture and urbanism, especially of the first half of the 20th century, model experimental settlements of the Werkbund.

ORCID: 0000-0003-0042-6813



<https://wroclaw.wyborcza.pl/wroclaw/7,35771,28712123,zmia-na-w-muzeum-architektury-po-22-latach-odchodzi-dr-jerzy.html>

Ph.D., D.Sc., Eng. Arch. Jerzy Ilkosz

Dr. Hab. Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, 2000–2022 – director of the museum, since 2003 – member of Docomomo. Main areas of interest: history of architecture and urbanism, especially concerning the 20th century. Awards and distinctions: Das Verdienstkreutz Am Bande – awarded by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany Horst Köler, 2006; Kulturpreis Schlesien des Landes Niedersachsen (Silesian Prize of the Government of Lower Saxony), 2009

ORCID: 0000-0003-4537-368X

Małgorzata Dolistowska
Białystok University of Technology

Barbarians in the ‘City of Poets’

The Modern Movement in the Public Architecture of Vilnius in the Interwar Period

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to present the process of penetration of modernist avant-garde ideas into the public space of interwar Vilnius and the role played by the architects of the younger generation – the graduates of the Faculty of Architecture of Warsaw University of Technology. Vilnius gained independence as part of the Second Polish Republic. It was perceived as a mysterious ‘city of poets’, the cradle of Polish Romanticism and a picturesque ‘city under the clouds’ whose enchanting landscape included numerous historical buildings. This somewhat mythical image of Vilnius, captured in Jan Bułhak’s mood-setting photographs, has influenced a rather conservative attitude towards modern architecture. The community of architects, formed around the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Stefan Batory University and supported by local art historians, represented a current of conservative traditionalism promoting the idea of following historical patterns. The first modernist projects aroused vehement objections and people spoke of a so-called ‘factory form’ spoiling beautiful Vilnius. Despite the critical approach of the local community, the ideas of the modernist movement found resonance mainly in Vilnius’ public architecture in the 1930s. The most important projects included the halls of residence of the Stefan Batory University, the building of the Bank of National Economy, the headquarters of the Social Insurance Institution, the primary school in Lipówka, the complex of buildings of the municipal cooling plant, as well as the new pavilions at the Northern Trade Fair. At the same time, the preserved designs of buildings planned for construction in the coming years indicate that the forms of functional modernism became firmly rooted in the architecture of Vilnius in the 1930s. They show ambitious and interesting urban concepts, including the buildings of the bus station, the Social House, the school complex at Tartaki Street in Vilnius, and the public school at Subocz Street. Those projects were mostly created by the graduates of the Faculty of Architecture of Warsaw University of Technology (e.g. A. Forkiewicz, I. Heilman, K. Biszewski), many of whom decided to pursue their careers in Vilnius. An important role in promoting the idea of modernism in Vilnius was played by Romuald Gutt who headed the newly established Urban Planning Studio. He created a team of co-workers, with S. Bukowski, J. Kobzakowski and L. Dąbrowski to name a few, who quickly became involved in the city’s social life. The paper presents selected works and also non-implemented conceptual projects that show the process of penetration of the ideas of the modernist movement into the public architecture of Vilnius in the 1930s.

Keywords: Vilnius, interwar architecture, modernism, functionalist architecture

INTRODUCTION

The architecture of the interwar period in Vilnius creates a multifaceted, diverse image, in which the modernist narrative is not a dominant thread, but is crucial for a full understanding of the direction of changes taking place in the urban space. The subject of the article is to show the Modern Movement’s the gradual penetration of the idea of the public architecture of the city, and the participation in this process of the designers of the young generation, mostly graduates of the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology, who came to Vilnius in the 1930s. This issue, considered in a broader socio-cultural context, reveals the inevitability of the modernization changes taking place in interwar Vilnius, regardless of the distanced attitude of the local artistic community. The deliberations adopted an interpretative and historical method, making a critical analysis of source materials: newly acquired archival materials and printed sources. The research covered both architectural objects and the environment of Vilnius architects in relation to local opinion-forming bodies (artists, historians, monument conservators).

In recent years, the issues of architecture of the interwar period in Vilnius have been the subject of numerous studies by Polish and Lithuanian researchers. These publications are of a review or synthetic nature,¹ or concern selected issues in the field of urban planning, monument protection, housing architecture and public utility architecture.² The subject of the mythologized image of Vilnius and its confrontation with the realities of the present, has been taken up twice so far – in an artistic and urban context.³ This work is an extension of the issue with a strictly architectural aspect.

DEFINING IDENTITY

The first years after the end of World War I were difficult and turbulent for Vilnius. The city’s fate was determined by the oppressive experiences of the Russian partition, the changing status and uncertainty of national affiliation, and the turbulent events of the Polish-Bolshevik War. From the first moments of regained independence, despite the complicated political conditions and many social and economic problems, Vilnius

¹ Drėmaitė, M., Leitanaitytė, R., & Reklaitė, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Vilnius 1900–2012: Naujosios architektūros gidas*. Baltų lankų leidyba; Architektūros fondas; Dolistowska, M. (2017). 'Mile miasto' między tradycją a awangardą: Architektura Wilna w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym. Zarys problematyki. In W. Walczak & K. Łopatecki (Eds.), *Stan badań nad wielokulturowym dziedzictwem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* (Vol. 8, pp. 87–149). Instytut Badań nad Dziedzictwem Kulturowym Europy; Butvilaitė, R. (2019). Vilnius 1919–1939 metais: Naujo architektūrinio tapatumo kūrimas. *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, 94, 84–119.

² Stravinskienė, V. (2016). The territorial expansion of Vilnius: Plans and their realisation (1916–1940). *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 20, 127–150; Povilaitytė–Leliugienė, E. (2020). Architectural heritage investigation in interwar Vilnius: Problem and methods. *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, 98, 212–261; Butvilaitė, R. (2020). Tarpukario Vilniaus visuomeniniai pastatai: Institucijų, funkcijų ir architektūros įvairovė. *Acta Academiae Artium Vilnensis*, 98, 180–211; Drėmaitė, M. (2022). Housing-based urban planning and new housing standard in Vilnius, 1919–1939. *Architecture and Urban Planning*, 18(1), 139–147; Drėmaitė, M. (2023a). Rozwój urbanistyczny. In G. Jankevičiūtė & A. Szczerski (Eds.), *Wilno, Vilnius, Vilne 1918–1948: Jedno miasto – wiele opowieści* (pp. 129–135). Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie; Drėmaitė, M. (2023b). Architektura mieszkaniowa. In G. Jankevičiūtė & A. Szczerski (Eds.), *Wilno, Vilnius, Vilne 1918–1948: Jedno miasto – wiele opowieści* (pp. 141–147). Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie.

³ Konstantynów, D. (2023). Międzywojenne Wilno w sztuce: Wyobrażenia i rzeczywistość. In G. Jankevičiūtė & A. Szczerski (Eds.), *Wilno, Vilnius, Vilne 1918–1948: Jedno miasto – wiele opowieści* (pp. 189–194). Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie; Dolistowska, M. (2023). Wilno wyobrażone: Romantyczna wizja 'polskich Aten' a proces modernizacji miasta w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym. In W. Walczak & K. Wiszowata-Walczak (Eds.), *Stan badań nad dziedzictwem wielokulturowym dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* (Vol. 16, pp. 83–123). Instytut Badań nad Dziedzictwem Kulturowym Europy.

revealed a great determination to build a new city space and restore the identity of places.

Vilnius entered the borders of the Second Polish Republic, shrouded in the legend of the ‘city of poets’, perceived as the cradle of Polish Romanticism and a picturesque ‘city under the clouds’. The memory of the past splendour of the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the ever-present Romantic legacy – created the foundation of the Vilnius genius loci. The cultural code of Vilnius was defined earlier, at the beginning of the 20th century. Ferdynand Ruszczyc and Jan Bułhak played a key role in this process. Ruszczyc’s activity has restored to public consciousness many places and buildings important for the city’s heritage, while the atmospheric photographs of Jan Bułhak encoded them in the collective memory.⁴ An extremely suggestive image of Vilnius was then created – captivating with the beauty of its historic architecture, picturesque alleys and the beauty of its natural landscape. It was accompanied by a deep conviction about the uniqueness of the city, ‘which is scarred by wars and fires, disfigured by the barbarity of invaders (...) has as much specific expression as probably no other Polish city, except for ancient Krakow.’⁵ This image, fixed by the narration of the popular sightseeing guide authored by Juliusz Kłos, became a ‘heartfelt key’ to the interpretation of the city.⁶

Restoring the former splendour of the historical space, reclaiming the historic heritage, and – as was particularly emphasized – shedding the ‘foul shell’ of the Russian gubernatorial Vilnius, were considered priorities. This position was of fundamental importance in consolidating a conservative attitude towards contemporary architecture and was decisive in determining the future directions of urban development.

In the initial period, the main role in shaping the urban space of Vilnius was played by the architectural community centred around the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Stefan Batory University (USB). It was a small group (Juliusz Kłos, Ludwik Sokołowski, Otto Krasnopolski, Jan Borowski, Stefan Narębski), but with strong support from art historians and conservators (Marian Morelowski, Jerzy Remer, later Stanisław Lorentz, Ksawery Piwocki). In light of the huge needs of the backward region and the chronic lack of specialist staff in state and local government institutions, inaugurating an extensive programme of architectural education was seen as apriority task.

Architectural studies commenced in the 1920/21 academic year as one of the two fields of study at the Faculty of Fine Arts. The Department of Architecture was to promote young artists who, ‘brought up in the tradition of Polish art, illuminated by the beauty of Vilnius architecture’, would carry out the mission of ‘reviving Polishness in architecture in the Borderlands.’⁷ The education program emphasized that graduates are to receive extensive knowledge in the field of architectural history as well as thorough technical

⁴ More on various aspects of the activation of cultural memory in Vilnius on the threshold of independence: Krupowies, W. (2018). Rok 1919: Pamięć Wilna – pamięć w Wilnie. *Acta Baltico-Slavica*, 42, 90–94.

⁵ Kłos, J. (1921). Żywotność inwencji w architekturze Wilna. *Południe*, 3, 18.

⁶ Bułhak, J. (1937). Przewodnik po duszach ludzkich: Przedmowa. In J. Kłos, *Wilno: Przewodnik krajoznawczy Juliusza Kłosa* (p. VIII). Wydawnictwo Oddziału Wileńskiego Polskiego Towarzystwa Krajoznawczego.

⁷ Krasnopolski, O. (1927). Felczerstwo w architekturze. *Alma Mater Vilnensis*, 6, 9.

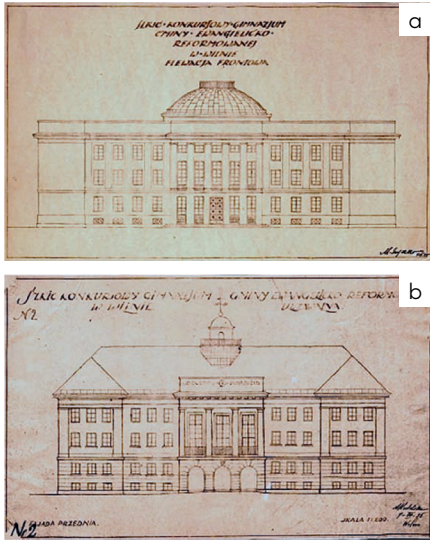


Fig. 1. Two versions of the competition design for the front façade of the Evangelical Reformed community gymnasium in Vilnius, 1925: a) design by architect Mieczysław Szyszko; b) design by architect Anna Kodelska; source: LMAVB RS, ref. nos. F 229–579 and F 229–562.

and practical preparation. In the future, this will enable them to design activities and work in building supervision in state institutions.⁸ Students actively participated in the life of the region, among other things by participating in architectural competitions announced by local governments. Few preserved works reflect the attitude of conservative traditionalism on which the education focused, but also show formal diversity, alternating between academic classicism and native historicism⁹ (Fig. 1). Bold spatial solutions, with the use of modern reinforced concrete structures, are presented in two published projects from 1926: by Ignacy Widawski (Department Store) and Aleksander Kodelski (Vilnius Railway Station)¹⁰ (Fig. 2).

The architectural studies at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Stefan Batory University were not the disapproval of the ministerial authorities, and its curriculum based on the integration of science and the arts was not approved. As a result, the recruitment of new students in the academic year 1926/27 was suspended and the field of the study was gradually phased out.¹¹ In 1929, the Department of Architecture was finally closed – thus

⁸ Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas [Lithuanian Central State Archives], LCVA, ref. no. 175-1(1)A-110, fols. 31–32.

⁹ Kronika. (1926). *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 7, 31–35.

¹⁰ Kronika. (1926). *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 7, 33–34. Aleksander Kodelski’s design was a diploma project prepared under the supervision of Professor Ludwik Sokołowski and defended in 1927 at the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology.

¹¹ In 1926, a total of 77 students were enrolled in architecture at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Technology. In order to obtain a diploma, final-year students had to transfer to Warsaw or Lviv, or change their field of study. By 1931, six students had received diplomas from the Warsaw University of Technology and three from the Lviv University of Technology.

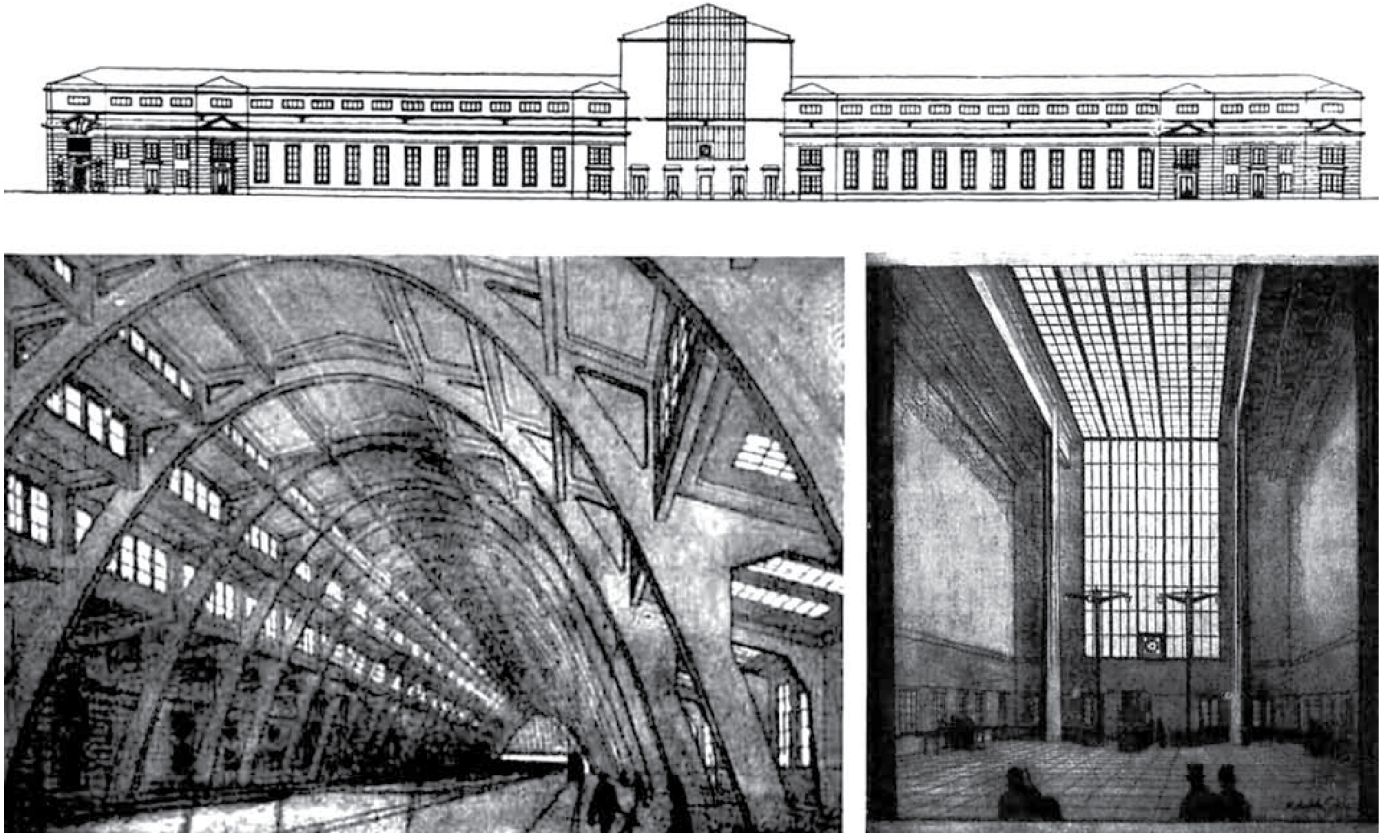


Fig. 2. Design for the Vilnius railway station, architect Aleksander Kodelski, 1926; source: *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 7, 1926.

the ambitious project of creating a new architectural ‘Vilnius school’ based on the city’s historical heritage ended in failure.

FACING CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

In the popularized vision of Vilnius as an inspired ‘city of poets’ and the inheritor of the grand-ducal legacy, the urban space was a set of picturesque, atmospheric frames abstracted from the real context. The actual image, however, as it emerged in reportage and many memoirs, was far more prosaic. ‘Vilnius, a beautiful and gloomy northern city,’ wrote Czesław Miłosz in 1933. ‘Through the window you can see bumpy cobblestones, puddles and heaps of manure. Further, a chipped wall and wooden fences (...) Poor capital!’¹² At the beginning of the 1930s, Vilnius was a neglected city mired in apathy, about which it was written that ‘it bears the burden of its splendour with difficulty.’¹³ Despite its status as a regional capital and an important university centre, it was devoid of all the attributes of modernity and urgently required modernization in many fields. Meanwhile, the city’s conservative community of ‘old residents’ resisted any kind of innovation, irritated by ‘every little house even slightly tainted by the influence of Le Corbusier’.¹⁴ In addition, the hostile attitude toward av-ant-garde art and architecture was intensified by the belief in its extreme left-wing character. The Dziennik Wileński reviewer, describing the Constructivist exhibition opened in June 1923, called it ‘Bolshevising’, bluntly commenting: ‘And it will not help to exhibit a few French or German books about Picasso. This is not the 'decadent West'. It is the eastern wind that brings us this barbaric clownery’.¹⁵

The first modernist housing estate erected in Vilnius aroused an equally critical reaction. The residential colony of the cooperative of employees of the Ministry of Public Works was built in Antokol, in the immediate vicinity of the church of Sts Peter and Paul. The design signed by architect Franciszek Wojciechowski was approved in 1928; three years later, the first houses were handed over to the users. The modernist, Bauhaus-inspired form of this small-scale estate, composed of minimalist cube-shaped, arranged in terraced buildings, aroused great controversy. Commentators wrote explicitly about the ‘disfigurement of Vilnius’ and the lack of reference to the manor-house tradition of the district, stating that the estate fit into ‘the Antakalnis background like a factory chimney added to a palace. (...) Beautiful Antakalnis is being defiled with ugly things, and no one in authority will defend the charms of the district. Where is the government conservator? Where is the city architect?’ a *Słowo columnis*^{#6} asked rhetorically.

Until the mid-1930s, most of the public buildings erected in Vilnius represented the trend of native historicism, simplified classicism, or displayed no clearly defined stylistic

¹² Miłosz, C. (1933). Wilno czeka. *Żagary*, 1, 3.

¹³ Wyszomirski, J. (1934). Miasto kontrastów. *Wiadomości Literackie*, no. 33, 8.

¹⁴ Jasienica, P. (2007). *Pamiętnik* (p. 104). Prószyński i S-ka.

¹⁵ Wystawa 'nowej' sztuki. (1923). Dziennik Wileński, no. 125, 2.

¹⁶ Mikoluszek, A. (1930). Szpeccenie Wilna. *Słowo*, no. 215, 3.

features. The few early modernist forms and modern constructions that appeared were concealed beneath classicizing facades, as in the Collegium Anatomicum building (architect Konrad Kłos, 1928) or were mitigated through the addition of simplified historical elements—such as arcaded porticoes in the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (architect Zygmunt Tarasin, 1931–1932) and the Health Centre at Kijowska Street (architect Stefan Narębski, 1930). Exceptions were two buildings located on the outskirts of the city—the broadcasting station of Polish Radio at Lipówka and the Civil Airport at the airfield in Porubanek. The broadcasting station was designed by Antoni Dygat and the airport building was designed by Józefa Mrówkowa-Ochmańska; both men were members of the Warsaw architectural community. However, due to the buildings’ considerable distance from the city and the specific functions of both facilities, their functionalist architecture did not, however, become the subject of broader discussion.

The first modernist building in Vilnius to be positively evaluated in the local press was the Academic House of the Stefan Batory University. The decision to entrust the project to Aleksander Kodelski was symbolic – it was one of the first projects of the young architect,¹⁷ one of the first graduates of the architecture department at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Stefan Batory University. For financial reasons, the investment was divided into several stages; the first part of the building was opened on February 21, 1932, with the remainder of the project schedule for completion over the next eight years. During the construction, the original concept of the building's form was corrected, resulting in a modern building with a high standard of utility. In 1935–1936, the extension by a second, symmetrical part, designed by Irena Heilmanowa and Franciszek Wojciechowski gave the architecture its final modernist form. The housing conditions of university students, particularly those of limited means, had hitherto been very difficult. The new dormitory building, equipped with all modern amenities – where ‘one could even wash in hot water several times a week’ – was therefore received with great enthusiasm.¹⁸ The modern form and interiors of the building were positively assessed and were the subject of considerable attention in the press: ‘The power of wide large windows’, lyricised a reporter for The *Kurier Wileński*,‘ shiny doors. The grey colour of the smooth construction. Straight lines, right angles. You open the doors, walk up the wide stairs, lean against the smooth handrails (...) You don't even want to leave the divine locum.’¹⁹

The Academic House quickly became part of the landscape of Vilnius and became an outpost of modernist architecture; a few years after its opening, it was written about with pride and a certain exaggeration that ‘at first glance it resembles a miniature of a

¹⁷ After graduating from the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology, Aleksander Kodelski (1898–1972) settled in the capital. Together with his wife, Anna Kodelska (1901–1944), who had also studied architecture in Vilnius and later graduated from the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology, he pursued architectural practice. Both entered the history of twentieth-century Polish architecture as the authors of numerous modernist projects, most notably the cable car station on Kasprowy Wierch and the High Mountain Meteorological Observatory.

¹⁸ Bujnowski, J. (1932). Dom akademicki. *Kurier Wileński*, no. 42, 2.

¹⁹ Bujnowski, J. (1932). Dom akademicki. *Kurier Wileński*, no. 42, 2.

skyscraper in Warsaw. Maybe that’s why it was built on the Bouffalová Hill (...) so that it wouldn’t get lost among the average Vilnius buildings?’.²⁰

THE VILNIUS ARCHITECTURAL COMMUNITY

The architectural community of interwar Vilnius was relatively small, considering the size and status of the city as well as the region’s vast needs. In the 1920s, only a dozen or so architects were professionally active, often combining their private practice with work in government offices and institutions, as well as with academic teaching.

Many public building designs were created in the design office of the District Directorate of Public Works, headed by August Przygodzki and his team (Franciszek Wojciechowski, Wilhelm Markiewicz, Władysław Pietraszewski, Stefan Siestrzeńcewicz, and Jerzy Paprocki). Railway facilities were designed by Hipolit Hryniewicz and Henryk Genello from the Vilnius Directorate of State Railways, and Wacław Syrtowtt was employed in the technical office of the university.

The educational activities, in addition to the previously mentioned individuals associated with the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Stefan Batory University, were also conducted by, among others, Wacław Hołownia and Leon Dubiejkowski, lecturers at the Marshal Piłsudski Technical School in Vilnius. In 1928, Stefan Narębski from Włocławek was appointed to the position of urban architect by the Vilnius city council, a position, he held until 1939. Most of the architects graduated before 1914. The deans, Tadeusz Rostworowski (1860–1928) and Antoni Filipowicz-Dubowik (1865–1930), had already passed the peak of their professional activity. The generational gap was further deepened by the closure of the Department of Architecture at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of St. Andrews. The development of the community was also not helped by ‘the chronic reluctance of architects to settle in the provinces and the use of unqualified labourers by the clientele’.²¹

This difficult situation slowly began to change in the mid-1930s. At that time, a group of graduates of the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology and the Faculty of Architecture of the Lviv University of Technology (from 1932 to 1936) began their professional activity in Vilnius. Irena Zatorska-Heilmanowa, Antoni Forkiewicz, Tadeusz Jasiński, Bogusław Świecimski and Kazimierz Biszewski were from Warsaw, and Wacław Hołownia and Przemysław Grodzki were from the Lviv University of Technology. The young architects quickly made their mark in the social and cultural life of Vilnius, especially through their active participation in the work of the local branch of the Association of Polish Architects.²² The second group of young architects from Warsaw appeared in Vilnius after the Municipal Urban Planning Office was established in May 1936 as part of the Technical and Construction Department of the Vilnius City

²⁰ Bodak, W. (1935). Dom akademicki. *Słowo*, no. 85, 6.

²¹ Oddział w Wilnie. (1938). *Komunikat S.A.R.P.*, no. 6, 8.

²² The Vilnius Branch of the Association of Polish Architects was founded in 1931. Its first chairman was August Przygodzki; after his death in 1932, he was succeeded by Professor Ludwik Sokółowski. In 1938, the Association of Polish Architects (SARP) had 25 members active in Vilnius.

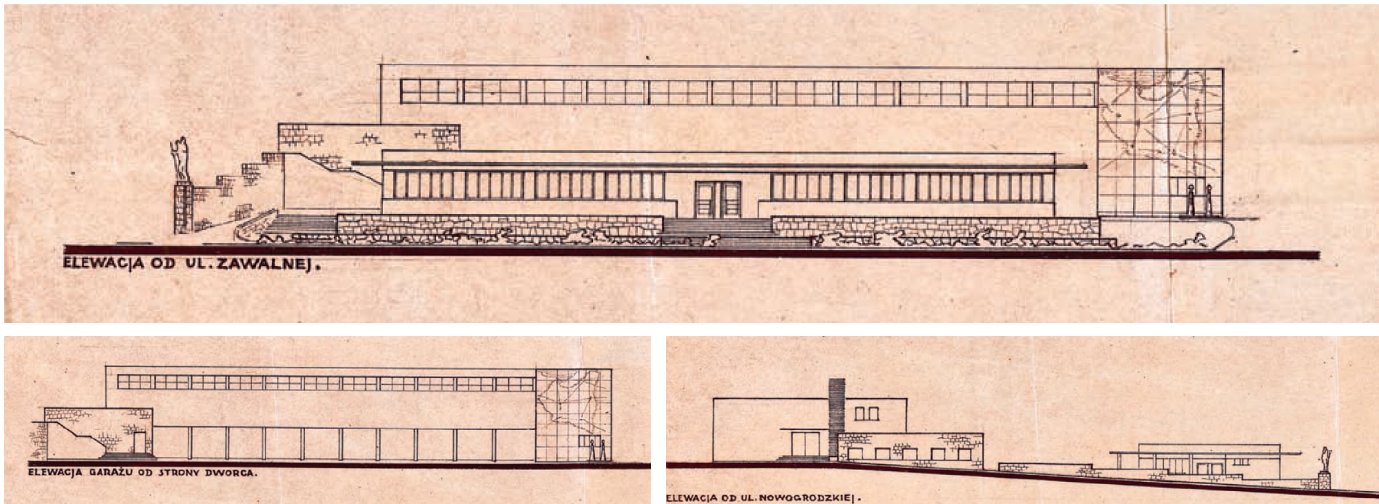


Fig. 3. Design for the bus station on Zawalna Street, undated, architects Antoni Forkiewicz and Stefan Narębski; source: LCVA, ref. no. 154-1-2651.

Administration. The organization and management of the office were entrusted to Professor Romuald Gutt, and the team consisted of graduates of the Warsaw Faculty of Architecture: Jerzy Kobzakowski (deputy head of the office), Stanisław Bukowski, Leszek Dąbrowski, and Jan Peksza.

CITY MODERNIZATION PROGRAM

The establishment of the Municipal Urban Planning Office was fundamentally important for the future development of Vilnius and marked the end of a long-standing stalemate, especially in the face of the city’s new challenges. In 1936, the Vilnius municipal government submitted to the voivode of Vilnius what in essence was a modernization program for the voivodeship’s capital. The office’s primary task was to prepare a general spatial development plan for Vilnius and to create detailed specifications for key sites: Cathedral Square and Łukiszki Square, the banks of the Neris River, the area surrounding the railway station, the reorganization of the Timber Market, and the construction of a Sports Park. The city also planned the construction of schools in every district, a network of community centres, and numerous smaller projects that required cooperation between architects, investors, and the Urban Planning Office.

Between 1936 and 1939, three prestigious buildings were built on the main thoroughfare, Mickiewiczza Street: headquarters for two banks, PKO Bank and BGK Bank, and the Social Insurance Company building. Their creators were architects from the circle of Warsaw modernists: Juliusz Żórawski, Zbigniew Puget (PKO), Stanisław Gałęzowski, Jerzy Pańkowski (BGK); and Jerzy Sołtan, Stanisław Murczyński (Social Insurance Company). Modern buildings became a visible sign of the changes taking place in Vilnius, and their style confirmed the inevitability of the transformation of the city’s architectural iconography.

This tendency is confirmed by projects that ultimately remained unrealized. In 1936, the City Board announced a competition for the reconfiguration of Cathedral Square

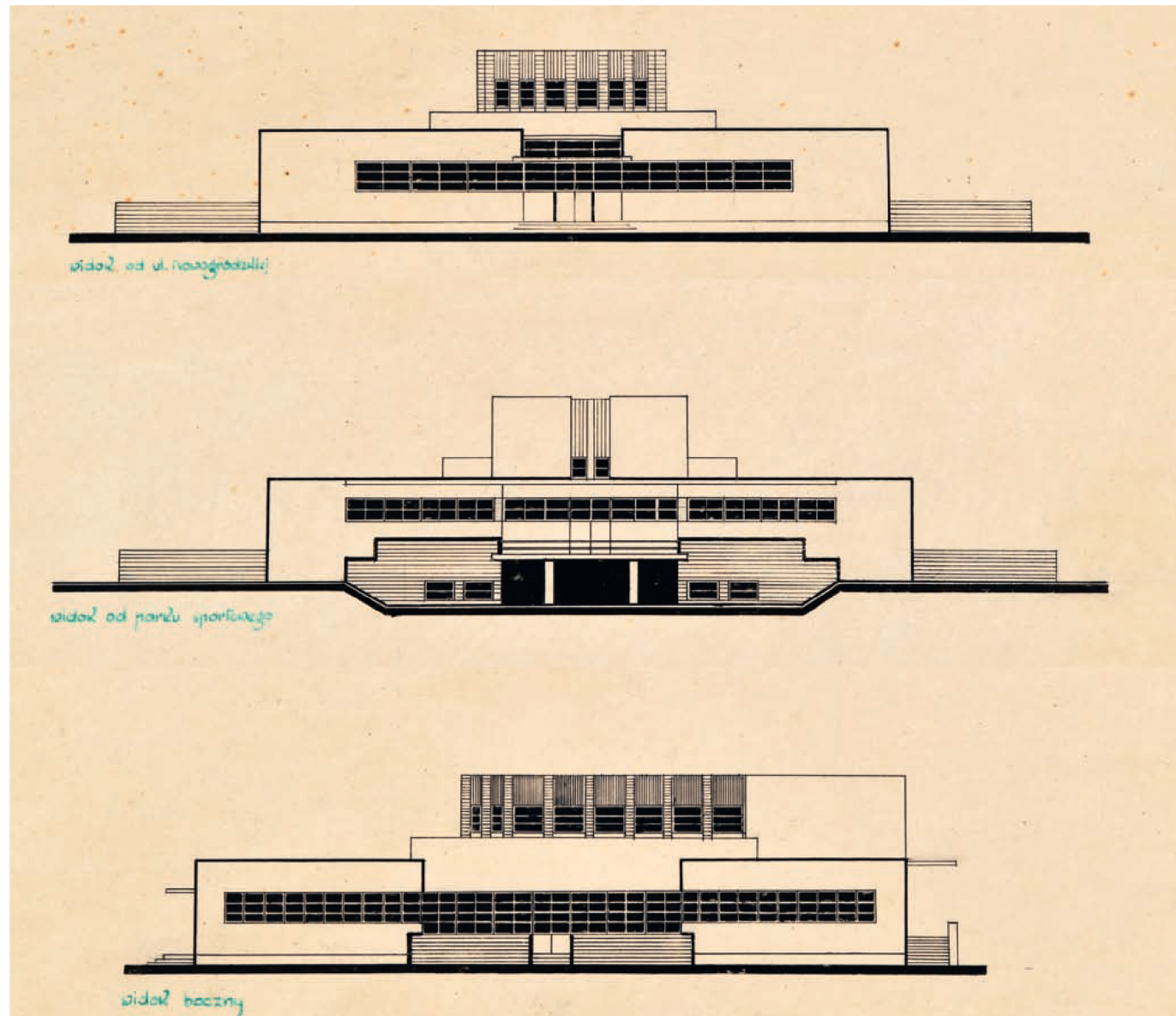


Fig. 4. Design for the Social House in Vilnius, architect Michał Sławiński, undated; source: LCVA, ref. no. 154-1-2657.

and the Timber Market.²³ At the Timber Market, located on Zawalna Street, the plan was to build a long-distance bus station—an investment that had long been a priority and whose location had been changed several times. Presumably as a result of this competition, a preserved preliminary design of a bus station and market hall, signed by Stefan Narębski and Antoni Forkiewicz, has survived (Fig. 3).²⁴ The collaboration between an experienced architect, who had previously favoured conservative forms of the national style, and a young advocate of functionalism, produced a well-planned concept in a modern form. The proposed architecture maintained the street's scale, while its character was enhanced by varied materials (stone, concrete, glass, and mosaics).

²³ Konkurs urbanistyczny. (1936). *Kurier Wileński*, no. 71, 9.

²⁴ Lietuvos centrinių valstybės archyvas [Lithuanian Central State Archives], LCVA, ref. no. 154-1-2651.

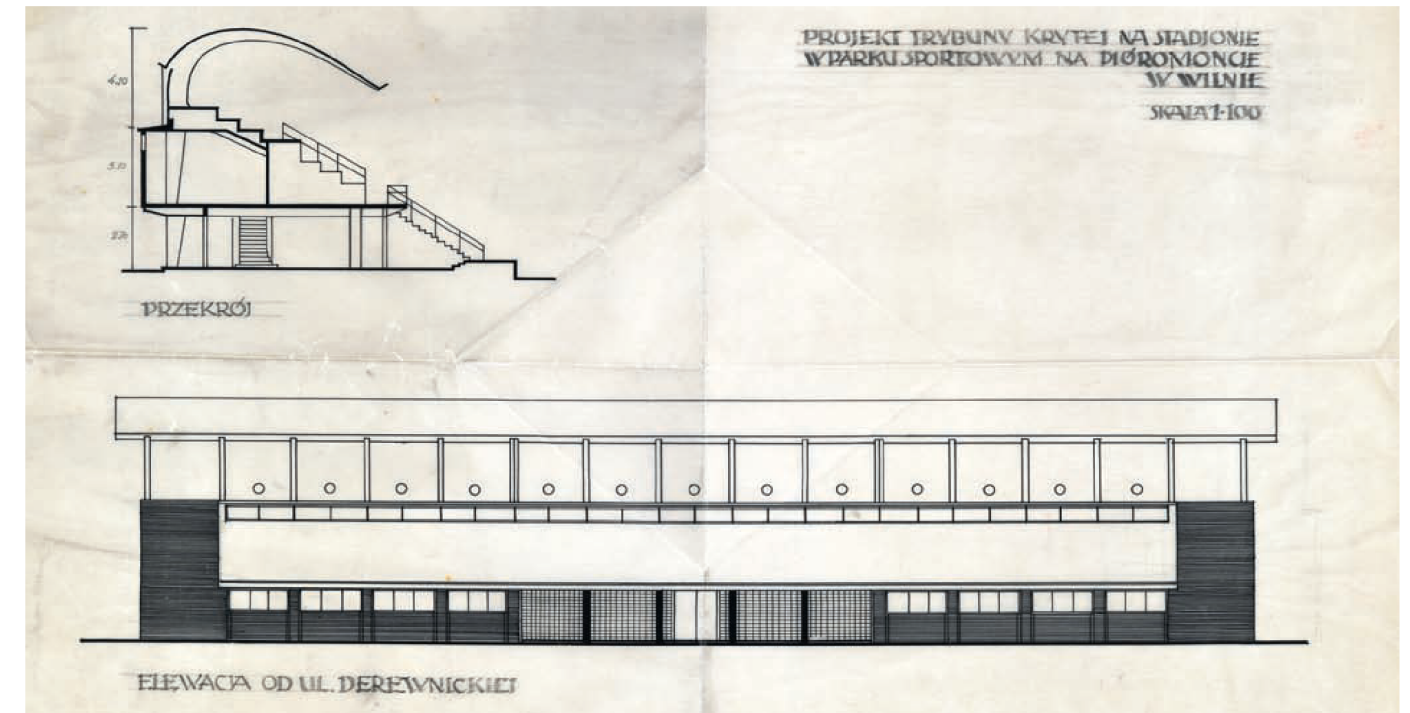


Fig. 5. Design for a grandstand at the stadium in the Sports Park in the Pióromont district of Vilnius, architect Romuald Gutt, 1938; source: LCVA, ref. no. 154-1-2580.

Another unrealized project, prepared as part of the investment plan, was the Community House in the New Town, located on Nowogródzka Street (Fig. 4). Michał Sławiński's project demonstrates the expanded functions of a community centre, including a large auditorium, a reading room, a dining hall, and smaller rooms for various functions.²⁵ Modernist architecture is characterized by a regular composition of stacked blocks, extensive glazed facades, and a pure, geometric form. These features can also be found in another work by this architect: the design of a twin elementary school at Subocz Street, whose construction was planned to begin in the autumn of 1936.²⁶ In the same year, the construction of a large complex of trade schools on Tartaki Street in Vilnius, designed in the spirit of functionalism by Bohdan Lachert and Józef Szanajca, was also set to begin.²⁷

In August 1939, the only completed modernist school building in Vilnius was put into use: the elementary school on Beliny Street, Romuald Gutt's flagship project in Vilnius. Less well-known is the fact that Gutt was also the author of the new concept for the Sports Park in the Pióromont district, which he developed at the request of the Municipal Committee of Physical Education between 1937 and 1938. The new, two-level stands of the stadium he designed could accommodate two thousand spectators, while the ground floor housed the entire training facilities and offices of the Physical Education

²⁵ Lietuvos centrinių valstybės archyvas [Lithuanian Central State Archives], LCVA, ref. no. 154-1-2657.

²⁶ Dolistowska, M. (2017). 'Miłe miasto' między tradycją a awangardą: Architektura Wilna w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym. Zarys problematyki. In W. Walczak & K. Łopatecki (Eds.), *Stan badań nad wielokulturowym dziedzictwem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* (Vol. 8, pp. 87-149). Instytut Badań nad Dziedzictwem Kulturowym Europy.

²⁷ Lietuvos centrinių valstybės archyvas [Lithuanian Central State Archives], LCVA, ref. no. 154-1-2621.

Center (Fig. 5).²⁸ Although work on the project began, it was interrupted by the war construction.

Beginning in 1938, the Northern Fair was held in a new location and with a modified exhibition format, and it subsequently underwent a complete reorganization. Rościśław Kapliński and Kazimierz Biszewski, young architects from Vilnius, won the nationwide competition for the design and construction of the exhibition grounds announced by the Association of Polish Architects (SARP).

Their bold, expressive designs for the three pavilions remained only in the realm of concept. The outbreak of war in 1939 meant that only the main Pavilion of Industry and Trade saw any use.²⁹

Other modernist projects for public buildings in Vilnius, designed in the last years before the outbreak of the war, also remained unrealized. These included projects as important for the city as the new headquarters of the Department of Combating Cancer of the University of Vilnius (architect Irena Heilmanowa) (Fig. 6) and the building of the Central Fire Brigade on Rydza-Śmigłego Street (architect: Jan Borowski).³⁰ Borowski was also the author of the design for the church in Porubank, which, if built, would have been the only modernist sacral building in Vilnius constructed in the interwar period (Fig. 7).³¹

Symptomatic indication of the definitive implantation of modernist forms in the public architecture of Vilnius were three successive versions of the design for the building of the Provincial Directorate of State Forests, developed in the construction office of the Regional Directorate of Public Works. The first was built in the 1920s, and the next two a decade later. Their author was probably Jerzy Paprocki (Fig. 8).³² The stylistic evolution visible in these projects, running from academic classicism through monumentalism to modernist stylistics, is a reflection of the path taken by public architecture of interwar Vilnius went through.

NEW FORM IN VILNIUS PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE: OPINIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

The reactions to the modernization of city spaces wavered between cautious support, distrust, and strong criticism. These attitudes led to the establishment of the Social Urban Commission in January 1936 within the Association of Friends of Vilnius, serving as an alternative body to the Municipal Urban Commission.³³

The Commission was only an advisory and opinion-giving body without decision-making power. It was composed of the university's Faculty of Fine Arts professors L.

²⁸ Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas [Lithuanian Central State Archives], LCVA, ref. no. 154-1-2580.

²⁹ *Targi północne w Wilnie: Czy były – czym są – czym mają być.* (1939). Towarzystwo Targów Północnych w Wilnie. Retrieved July 8, 2025, from <https://polona.pl/preview/302ff5a4-2c33-4b7e-82ba-b8fcb1c78aa8>

³⁰ Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas [Lithuanian Central State Archives], LCVA, ref. nos. 51-10-965; 154-1-2604.

³¹ Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka, Rankraščių skyrius [Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Manuscripts Department], LMAVB RS, ref. no. F 229: Jan Borowski, *Projekt kościoła na 700 osób (...) na Porubanku pod Wilnem*, 1936.

³² Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas [Lithuanian Central State Archives], LCVA, ref. no. 154-1-2586.

³³ *Komisja Urbanistyczna Towarzystwa Miłośników Wilna.* (1936). *Kurier Wileński*, no. 13, 6.

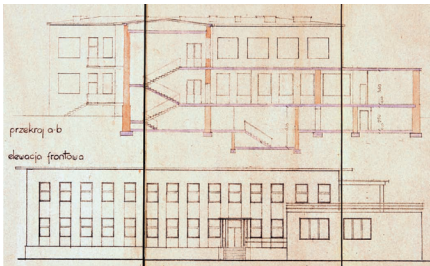


Fig. 6. Design for the Cancer Control Department of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius, architect Irena Heilmanowa, undated; source: LCVA, ref. no. 51-10-965.

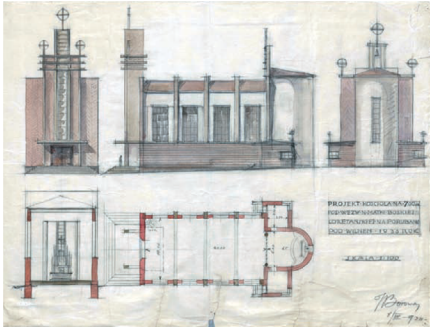


Fig. 7. Design for the Cancer Control Department of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius, architect Irena Heilmanowa, undated; source: LCVA, ref. no. 51-10-965.

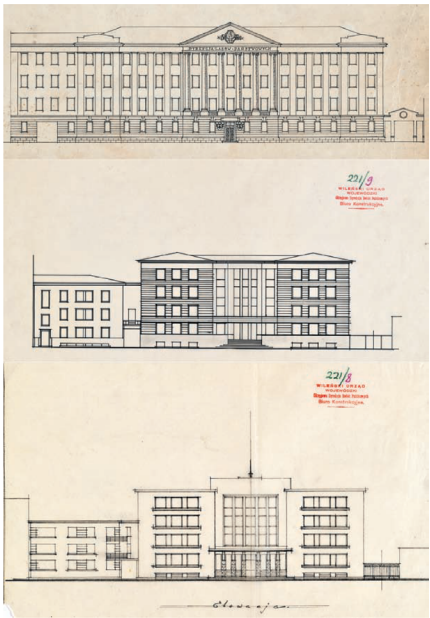


Fig. 8. Designs for the State Forests building in Vilnius on Wielka Pohulanka Street, architect Jerzy Paprocki [?], undated; source: LCVA, ref. nos. 154-1-2586 and 154-1-2587.

Sleńdziński, M. Morelowski, J. Hoppen, and M. Limanowski, the provincial conservator Ksawery Piwocki, and I. Heilmanowa, J. Borowski, J. Paprocki, T. Jasiński, A. Forkiewicz from the Vilnius branch of the Association of Polish Architects.

The members of the Commission, together with representatives of another important body – the Council of Vilnius Artistic Associations – often participated in the public debate, frequently criticizing the spatial solutions proposed by the city. They also issued declarations about the unsuitable transformation of the historical image of Vilnius, which they believed was ‘a bastion of the Republic of Poland and had a duty to proudly represent the tradition and role of the capital of vast lands’.³⁴

One of the most active members of the Social Commission and a strong opponent of modernism in Vilnius's public architecture was the art historian and Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Vilnius, Professor Marian Morelowski. A distinguished researcher of Vilnius Baroque art. He expressed his emphatically negative assessment of the BGK bank building, which he described as having the appearance of a ‘factory depot’. He wrote directly about the confrontation of two architectural communities: ‘Vilnius is a city with certain social ambitions and an artistic life led by a group of artists and architects who (...) closely observe how Warsaw artists are entering the framework of local life. The construction of buildings in Vilnius by the capital's forces, when not only bread is taken away, but also the field for the local forces to perform, must be combined with an outstanding artistic result.’ After a detailed analysis of the architectural form of the BGK building, he concluded unequivocally: ‘I express a serious concern that the building will provoke critical questions, so this is the creative thought of the architects of the capital?’.³⁵

The decisive confrontation, which determined the further direction of Vilnius's development, took place in 1937 in the heart of the city, at the cathedral square. Two diametrically different concepts of the square were proposed: a modernist project prepared by a team from the Urban Office and signed by Romuald Gutt, and an alternative, ‘pathetic’ vision of the ‘Jagiellonian Forum’ proposed by Professor Ludomir Sleńdziński, supported by the Social Urban Commission and the ‘artistic circles of Vilnius’.³⁶ Despite numerous protests expressed in the press, the City Council approved Gutt's project and forwarded it for implementation. Jan Bułhak bitterly summarized it: ‘The people of Vilnius have already become accustomed to having no decisive voice in matters concerning their city, and that Warsaw will do whatever it wishes.’³⁷

³⁴ W sprawie niebezpieczeństw grożących Wilnu na polu urbanistyki: Deklaracja Nadzwyczajnego Walnego Zgromadzenia Rady Wileńskich Zrzeszeń Artystycznych. (1936). *Kurier Wileński*, no. 101, 6.

³⁵ Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas [Lithuanian Central State Archives], LCVA, ref. no. 51-10-258, fols. 37–40.

³⁶ The regulation of Cathedral Square in Vilnius has been discussed in numerous publications; see: Dolistowska, M. (2020). Upamiętnić Marszałka: Wilno i Kresy północno-wschodnie w hołdzie Józefowi Piłsudskiemu. In W. Walczak & K. Wiszowata-Walczak (Eds.), *Stan badań nad wielokulturowym dziedzictwem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* (Vol. 12, pp. 383–420). Instytut Badań nad Dziedzictwem Kulturowym Europy. The article includes a bibliography on the subject.

³⁷ Nasza ankieta urbanistyczna: Odpowiedź Jana Bułhaka. (1937). *Kurier Wileński*, no. 123, 5.

SUMMARY

Rather than a real city, Vilnius, the ‘city of poets’, was a construct of collective imagination woven from romantic tradition, picturesque photographic frames, Baroque architecture, and atmospheric backstreets. The inevitable confrontation with the challenges of modernity was bound to result in a polemical debate, especially since the new solutions originated elsewhere and met with Vilnians’ deeply ingrained distrust of outsiders – in this case, newcomers from other regions of Poland. Yet the dispute over the form of Vilnius’s urban space transcended such simple animosities; it was a significant and profound conflict between the idealized vision of the city as a depository of the past and the concept of building a modern centre for a large region.

The modernists, with their pragmatic and arbitrary approach to space, were initially perceived as intruders — invaders who oppressively entered the subtle urban fabric of Vilnius. Their activity, however, accelerated the process of modernization, which was an unquestionable necessity for the further development of the economically underdeveloped city. The examples of unrealized projects presented here indicate that Vilnius’s architects actively participated in these actions. It is noteworthy that they were not only young graduates of the Warsaw school but representatives of all generations of architects.

The long-term investment program adopted in the second half of the 1930s remained mostly in the planning phase, and its implementation was interrupted by the impending events of World War II. We do not know today to what extent the ‘city of poets’ would have been modernized and to what extent the ambitious and wide-ranging plans of the ‘barbarians’ would have changed the city.

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W sprawie niebezpieczeństw grożących Wilnu na polu urbanistyki: Deklaracja Nadzwyczajnego Walnego Zgromadzenia Rady Wileńskich Zrzeszeń Artystycznych. (1936). *Kurier Wileński*, no. 101, 6.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Prof. Ph.D., D.Sc., Eng. Arch. Małgorzata Dolistowska

Professor at Faculty of Architecture at Białystok University of Technology. Research area: the specificity of cultural landscapes and architecture of the previous North-Eastern lands of the Republic of Poland in the 19th and 20th centuries: artists community, migrations of ideas, architects.

ORCID: 0000-0002-6704-8303

Anna Orchowska
Gdańsk University of Technology

IV

A post-war chapter in the history of architecture and development of the port of Gdynia

ABSTRACT

The port of Gdynia, considered one of the largest civil construction projects of the 20th century in Europe, was built at an express pace for only a dozen or so years from the mid-1920s to the end of the 1930s. Unusual solutions from the construction period in the port engineering category, as well as outstanding architectural works The industrial area quickly became architectural symbols of economic growth and the general rebirth of Poland after 1918. In April 1945, the Poles took over the property of the port after the war found a picture of the ruins and destruction of the port, mainly the result of deliberate plantings carried out on the orders of Adolf Hitler in the last 10 days before the capitulation of the Germans. The devastation of individual elements of the port infrastructure and buildings was assessed at the level from 25% to 100%. Post-war reconstruction of the port from damage, in the years 1945-1947 not only the losses were inventoried, but also significant decisions were made as to whether the building was to be rebuilt or a new investment was planned in its place. Studies on this subject show that the investment reconstruction of the port did not continue the boldly outlined pre-war development plans, but from the point of view of its architecture, a new page in its history definitely opened up for this team.

Keywords: modernism, Port of Gdynia, 1945–1989, rebuilt after war damage

PORT OF GDYNIA – CONDITION UP TO 1939

In 1939, the port of Gdynia was a modern artificial port on the open coast of the Bay of Gdańsk, whose leading marine and land structures were constructed over a short period between 1924 and 1935. The design and implementation followed clearly defined plans, resulting in a transparent and functional port layout.

Eighty-five per cent of the port quays were built using modern prefabricated reinforced-concrete caisson structures, which were ideally suited for handling deep-sea vessels with, for that time, significant draughts of 8–12 meters. The adequately broad basins and the port channel provided favourable conditions for manoeuvring even the largest ships entering the Baltic Sea basin.

The land-side development, including port–hinterland transport links, ensured efficient preparation and handling of goods. Gdynia also had large, well-equipped warehouses, arranged according to the functional zoning principles of a modern port.

The period of port construction (1924–1937) was also the time when the most architecturally interesting buildings on its grounds were erected.¹ Bold forms characterised the designs, a modern approach to structural solutions, and, above all, exceptionally functional spatial layouts. Thanks to these qualities, many buildings gained the status of 'anticipated' symbols already during their construction, which we would today call iconic structures.

The approval of the contemporary architectural community for the monumental port buildings is illustrated by Jerzy Müller's statement that 'each of them possesses architectural character and expression, is well executed, is matter-of-fact, and determines the overall appearance and impression of its part of the port'.² Among the interwar projects of this kind one should mention buildings and complexes such as: the Rice Mill (1927), the Port Cold Store (1928–30, 1933–34), Warehouse No. 3 (1930), the Gdynia Oil Mill (1930–31), the Fish Hall and Cold Store (1930–31), Warehouse No. 5 (1931, 1934), the Maritime Station (1933), the 'Fruit Auction' and 'Warta' Warehouses (1933), the Customs Office Building (1936), the Grain Elevator (1935–37), Warehouse No. 10 (1937–38), and many others.

The reason for the coherent perception of these buildings—despite their diverse functions—in terms of their aesthetic expression and character lies in their dating from a period of only ten years, as Müller emphasised. This circumstance gave rise to the unified architectural expression of the interwar port of Gdynia.

¹ For a broad treatment of the topic, see: Orchowska-Smolińska, A. (2013). *Architecture and spatial layout of the Gdynia Port in the interwar period as cultural heritage* [PhD dissertation, University of Gdańsk]. See also: Sołtysik, M. J. (1993). *Gdynia: A city of the interwar period: Architecture and urban planning* (pp. 56–65, 110–118, 192–195, 293–294). Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN; Hirsch, R. (2016). *Protection and conservation of the historic modernist architecture of Gdynia: An outline of issues*. Wydawnictwo Politechniki Gdańskiej.

² Quoted in: Müller, J. (1936). The architectural approach to the port of Gdynia. *Architektura i Budownictwo* [Architecture and Construction], no. 5, 166.

The outbreak of the Second World War and the subsequent years of German wartime occupation left a profound mark on what had been one of interwar Poland’s most significant achievements—the port of Gdynia. The most important sources of damage to the port’s infrastructure and buildings, compared with their pre-war condition, were:

- (1) alterations related to adapting the commercial port buildings for use as a naval base of the Third Reich’s navy (Kriegsmarine) during the war,
- (2) the air raids of 1943 and 1944, and
- (3) deliberate destruction carried out by retreating German forces in March 1945.³

Shortly after seizing the port in September 1939, the Germans began rebuilding and modifying individual structures, adapting them to new purposes and preparing for the transfer of the Kriegsmarine arsenal from Kiel to Gdynia (renamed Gotenhafen by the occupiers).⁴ Most buildings previously used as warehouses, industrial facilities, or offices of the maritime administration were repurposed for military use.⁵

Examples of such changes include the Passenger Hall together with the Transit Warehouse of the Maritime Station, adapted to house offices of the Kriegsmarine arsenal,⁶ and the Customs Office building,⁷ which was converted into a wartime hospital. The entire free-trade zone of the port—covering the Second Inner Basin, named after Minister Kwiatkowski, and the adjoining quays (American, Czechoslovak, Romanian, and Yugoslavian)⁸—was transformed into a vast storage area for weapons and ammunition.

Warehouse No. 6,⁹ located in the northern part of the American Quay and initially intended for storing imported cotton, was subdivided by a grid of reinforced-concrete walls into compartments for storing torpedoes.¹⁰ Warehouse No. 8,¹¹ situated at the

³ Małkowski, K. (2010). Damage to Gdynia caused by bombing, artillery fire and combat from the first to the last day of the Second World War. In M. Gawron & H. Głogowska (Eds.), *Cultural-civilizational identity of Gdynia: Gdynia in the context of contemporary cultural-civilizational unification and diversification* (Zeszyty Gdynskie, no. 5, pp. 77–84). Wyższa Szkoła Komunikacji Społecznej w Gdyni.

⁴ Wagner, H. (1947). Gdynia yesterday. *Technika Morza i Wybrzeża* [Sea and Coast Technology], no. 11–12, 61.

⁵ The military use of the former commercial port buildings predominated over the areas of the port occupied by German entrepreneurs. Merchants involved mainly in the overseas coal trade and the fishing industry were located on the former Fishing Pier and Coal Pier. The remaining areas of the Port of Gdynia were taken over by the German military.

⁶ Sołtysik, M. J., & Orchowska-Smolińska, A. (2010). *Preliminary conservation guidelines for the functional-spatial layout of the Maritime Station and transit warehouse in Gdynia for their adaptation into the Emigration Museum* [Unpublished manuscript]; Sołtysik, M. J., Orchowska-Smolińska, A., Kriegseisen, A., & Huk-Malinowska, I. (2011). *Conservation documentation of the Maritime Station and the upper floor of the transit warehouse in Gdynia* [Unpublished manuscript].

⁷ Sołtysik, M. J., & Orchowska-Smolińska, A. (2005). *Concept for the conservation revalorisation of the interior décor of the Port Authority building in Gdynia at 9 Rotterdamska Street, together with general recommendations for the revalorisation of the entire complex* [Unpublished manuscript]; Orchowska-Smolińska, A. (2013). *Architecture and spatial layout of the Gdynia Port in the interwar period as cultural heritage* [PhD dissertation, University of Gdańsk] (pp. 153–154).

⁸ The interwar free customs zone within the port was delimited by a designated boundary on the water side and separated from the rest of the port on the landward side by a dedicated fence.

⁹ Orchowska-Smolińska, A. (2013). *Architecture and spatial layout of the Gdynia Port in the interwar period as cultural heritage* [PhD dissertation, University of Gdańsk] (pp. 130–131).

¹⁰ The construction of 2.5-metre-high reinforced-concrete walls of appropriate thickness inside the spacious warehouse was intended to minimise the effects of a potential explosion.

¹¹ Orchowska-Smolińska, A. (2013). *Architecture and spatial layout of the Gdynia Port in the interwar period as cultural heritage* [PhD dissertation, University of Gdańsk] (pp. 139–141).

southern end of the same quay and formerly part of the free-trade zone, was adapted to serve as an artillery workshop.¹²

The rebuilding of the port to meet the needs of the Kriegsmarine base was overseen, from 1941, by the Marinehafenneubaudirektion Gotenhafen (Port Construction Directorate in Gdynia), while the subordinate Marinehafenbauamt Gotenhafen (Port Construction Office) designed and supervised these projects. In addition, between 1941 and 1944, numerous new structures were erected within the port and the Gdynia shipyards (the Old and the New Shipyard), including warehouses, production halls, workshops, air-raid shelters, and barracks for forced labourers and prisoners of war.¹³

Although the first air raids on the Gdynia region by Allied aircraft began in 1942, it was only in the second half of 1943 that the port was subjected to heavy bombing. The most

¹² Orchowska-Smolińska, A. (2013). *Architecture and spatial layout of the Gdynia Port in the interwar period as cultural heritage* [PhD dissertation, University of Gdańsk] (pp. 39–141).

¹³ Inside the warehouse, a portal-crane structure was erected, while one-third of the space was occupied by a three-storey internal block of auxiliary rooms, including offices, washrooms, bathing facilities, and sanitary spaces. The remaining area housed workshops equipped with various types of machinery, including lathes.

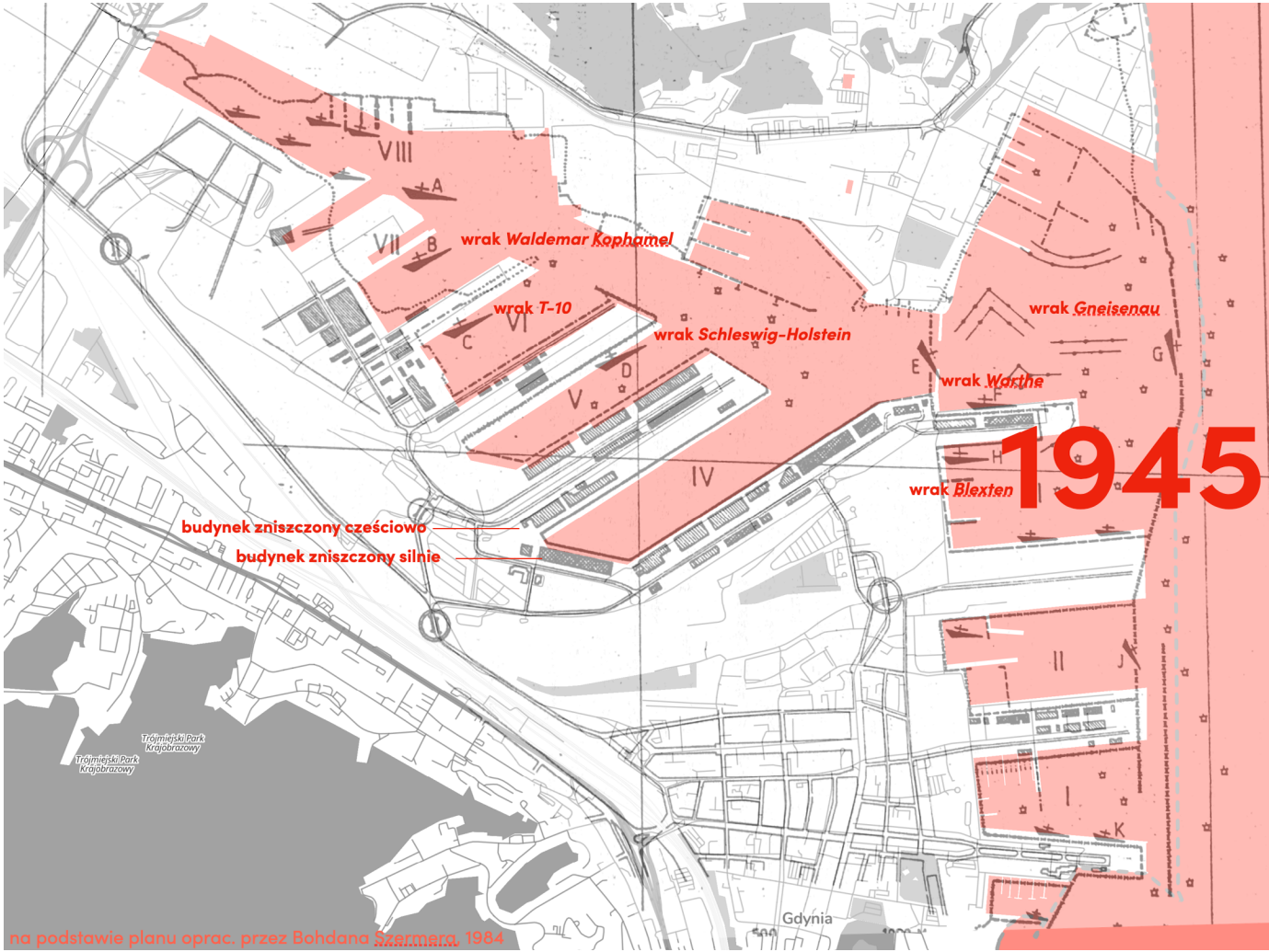


Fig. 1. Plan of the Port of Gdynia as of 1945, author’s study based on a contemporary map of Gdynia and materials compiled by Bohdan Szermer in 1984.

tremendous destruction in the city—and even more so in the port—occurred during the raid of 9 October 1943, referred to for this reason as the 'great raid'.¹⁴ During this attack, the Passenger Hall at the Maritime Station was damaged, ranking among the most severe wartime losses to the port's architectural fabric. Other damage within the port and shipyard areas was significant, though not substantial enough to halt the continued operation of the Kriegsmarine base or the repair and production facilities functioning there.

By March 1944, temporary reconstruction of the bomb-damaged buildings had been completed, and operations resumed. However, later that same year, on the night of 18–19 December 1944, another raid took place, causing similarly extensive destruction and sinking many of the vessels moored at the Gdynia naval base (Fig. 1).¹⁵

The most serious wartime losses within the port of Gdynia, however, occurred at the very end of the war as a result of deliberate, organised destruction of port property by retreating German forces. The aim was to prevent the advancing Soviet army from using the port infrastructure for military purposes.¹⁶ According to contemporary accounts, the Germans formed demolition and barrier units within the port, with headquarters located in the former 'American Scantic Line' warehouse at the Polish Quay and in the central part of the port.¹⁷ The destruction targeted various port structures and equipment (viaducts, cranes), but above all, its quays and breakwaters. The method of damaging the reinforced-concrete caissons involved blasting them with explosive charges placed in holes drilled along the quay line. Although the buildings themselves were not the direct target of the demolition, the blowing up of the quays caused severe collateral damage. This included the destruction of the Harbour Master's Office at the Port Quay and the Fish Hall and Cold Store at the English Quay, rendering them eligible for demolition. In other cases—less severe for the structural system but still critical—buildings were demolished due to significant structural weakening, such as the 'Fruit Auction' and 'Warta' warehouses at the French Quay.

Summarising the wartime destruction, Stanisław Hückel and Witold Staniszkis noted that every structure in the port had suffered damage—'there was not a single one that did not require repair!—and that as much as '50% of above-ground structures (...) had been burned down or bombed'.¹⁸

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION AFTER WARTIME DESTRUCTION

¹⁴ State Archive in Gdańsk, Gdynia Branch, Directorate of Port Construction in Gdynia, files 1038/1010, 1043–1052, 1939–1945.

¹⁵ Komorowski, A. (Ed.). (2001). *Underwater objects and military relics of the Gulf of Gdańsk* (p. 65). Impuls Plus Consulting.

¹⁶ State Archive in Gdańsk, Gdynia Branch, Directorate of Port Construction in Gdynia, section: Damage Caused by Air Raids, files 1038/1053–1059, 1939–1945.

¹⁷ The decree issued to military commanders on March 19, 1945—known as the Nero Order (Nerobefehl)—required the destruction of anything 'that the enemy could use to continue fighting.'

¹⁸ Wagner, H. (1947). Gdynia yesterday. *Technika Morza i Wybrzeża* [Sea and Coast Technology], no. 11–12, 64.



Fig. 2. Gdynia, demolition of the damaged Cukroport III/IV warehouse at the Polish Quay in 1946. Through the large breach visible in the warehouse wall, the façade of the Cukroport I/II warehouse can be seen. The works were carried out using temporary rails; source: State Archive in Gdańsk, Gdynia Branch.

Among the three major ports that, after the Second World War, found themselves within the borders of Poland—Gdańsk, Gdynia, and Szczecin—it was the port of Gdynia that suffered the most severe destruction. Owing to its location, it was equipped with an extensive system of quays and breakwaters, which, together with the supporting infrastructure, were particularly vulnerable to wartime damage. Consequently, investment activities in the port of Gdynia in the first years after the war (1945–1950) focused primarily on clearing wartime destruction and creating appropriate port-handling conditions for vessels arriving in Gdynia. Immediately after the end of the war, knowledge of the expansions and transformations of individual maritime industrial facilities carried out by the Germans for military purposes was highly incomplete in Gdynia, as was the assessment of war damage to buildings and their infrastructure.¹⁹

To illustrate the efforts to reconstruct the port of Gdynia, briefly outline those undertaken in the first years after the war. The earliest fieldwork in various coastal areas was undertaken by the Maritime Operational Group,²⁰ whose task was to collect and prepare information on the state of the port and to take over its assets. The group was formed as early as March 1945, and among its priority tasks were the initial assessment of destruction, securing buildings and equipment, and preparing some of them for urgent recommissioning. One such facility was the oil-production plant located at the Indian Quay, whose buildings formed part of the Gdynia Oil Mill complex established in 1929 and, from 1932, operated as the 'Union' S.A. Fat and Oil Industry Works. Other urgent actions included the recommissioning of the municipal waterworks, the partially damaged power plant, the 'Paged' timber works and its carpentry shop, the dairy cooperative, and the printing house. The activities of the Maritime Operational Group, directed by engineer Władysław Szedrowicz, were completed on 30 April 1945 (Fig. 2).

Under the direction of the same expert, one month later—in the second half of May²¹—the Port Reconstruction Office in Gdańsk (BOP) began its work. Technical leadership of the BOP²² was entrusted to engineer Witold Tubielewicz,²³ who had many years of experience supervising the construction of the port of Gdynia. Unlike the Maritime

¹⁹ Hückel, S., & Staniszkis, W. (1946). Guidelines for the reconstruction of Polish seaports. *Technika Morza i Wybrzeża* [Sea and Coast Technology], no. 1, 6; Hückel, S., & Staniszkis, W. (1947). Guidelines for the reconstruction of Polish seaports: Continuation. *Technika Morza i Wybrzeża* [Sea and Coast Technology], no. 1, 6–8.

²⁰ Misztal, Z. (1974). *Reconstruction and development of the maritime economy in Poland, 1945–1973* (Part I; B. Gębski, Ed.). Wyższa Szkoła Marynarki Wojennej im. Bohaterów Westerplatte.

²¹ The Maritime Operational Group was established in Bydgoszcz on March 13, 1945, although preparations had already begun in February, when the recruitment of experienced personnel started in Warsaw. Initially numbering several dozen members, the group eventually grew to more than 600 volunteers.

²² The official legal act establishing the Port Reconstruction Office (BOP) was the Decree of the Minister of Shipping and Foreign Trade of May 28, 1946, on the creation of the Port Reconstruction Office in Gdańsk (Journal of Laws, no. 26, item 171). In practice, work had begun less than two months after the occupiers' withdrawal. See: Two years of activity of the Port Reconstruction Office. (1947). *Technika Morza i Wybrzeża* [Sea and Coast Technology], no. 6, 14–15; Kwiatkowski, E. (2009). The reconstruction and development of the Polish Coast in the years 1945–1947: Warsaw, November 1968. In M. M. Drozdowski (Ed.), *The maritime archive of Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski: On the 90th anniversary of Poland's return to the Baltic Sea* (pp. 397–409). Wyższa Szkoła Administracji i Biznesu im. Eugeniusza Kwiatkowskiego w Gdyni; Fundacja Gdynńska Inicjatywa Akademicka; Szermer, B. (1984). Concepts and spatial structure of the Port of Gdynia: An outline of transformations. Part 2: 1939–1965. *Rocznik Gdynski* [Gdynia Yearbook], no. 5, 91.

²³ Parallel to BOP's fieldwork in 1945–1946, the Ministry of Industry established the Maritime Compensation Commission within the Maritime Department. Its task was to assess losses and determine wartime damage suffered between 1939 and 1945 by the state and private owners in ports, including coastal areas, maritime transport, and fisheries within the borders of the Polish state at that time. The results were presented in a formal loss report at the conclusion of the Commission's work.

Operational Group, which provided emergency protection of assets and restored only the most essential port functions, the BOP was assigned a much broader scope of responsibilities,²⁴ which can be summarized as follows:

- (a) reconstruction of wartime damage in seaports and along the coast;
- (b) clearing port waters and shipping routes of wrecks and other navigational hazards;
- (c) other port and coastal works commissioned by the Ministry of Shipping and Foreign Trade.

The reconstruction plan included not only repairs but also the construction of several new warehouses and administrative buildings.²⁵ The ease of reconstructing warehouses in Gdynia was assessed positively, mainly because modern skeletal structural systems had been used there, in contrast to, for example, Gdańsk, where many warehouses still relied on, by then, obsolete timber construction.

In Gdynia, priority was given to rebuilding structures located on the outer port piers, in the areas of the Fishing Pier, Coal Pier, and Passenger Pier, as well as in the western part of the Polish Quay, the Indian Quay, and the American Quay. The changes in the built fabric of the port of Gdynia, associated with its transformation in the maritime economy after the Second World War, are clearly illustrated by figures. In 1938, the seaport had warehouses with a total floor area of 316,000 m², whereas in 1946–1947 this dropped to 71,000 m². In subsequent years, the warehouse area increased (105,000 m² in 1950;

²⁴ As early as 1930, the Ministry of Industry and Trade appointed engineer Witold Tubielewicz as construction manager at the Maritime Office in Gdynia. He first served as Head of the Above-Ground Construction Division and later as Head of the Technical and Construction Department.

²⁵ Polish maritime authorities prepared the so-called 'Small Reconstruction Plan,' whose primary aim was to meet the urgent need to restore maritime transport, which was essential, for example, for receiving deliveries from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). A particularly important task was the removal of sunken German ships blocking access to the port. The wrecks were gradually cut up and lifted, steadily increasing the usable area of the harbour. The largest obstacles in Gdynia were the wrecks of the cruiser Gneisenau and the battleship Schleswig-Holstein. Alongside the clearing of the port basins, work continued on restoring transshipment equipment and warehouses intended to receive the first UNRRA shipments. On September 3, 1945, the first American ship carrying UNRRA aid arrived in Gdynia. The plan also included demining the port, both on land and in the water, as well as general cleanup work, consisting of rubble removal in areas where damage did not prevent normal port operations. The Small Plan was completed by the end of 1946.



Fig. 4. Gdynia, 1 Polska Street, southern façade of the Maritime Station in 1945: a) visible alterations to the original layout in the form of window openings made by the Germans during the occupation; b) visible row of windows bricked up during renovation, with blinds left in place; these were removed in 2015 during the conversion of the building into the Emigration Museum; source: State Archive in Gdańsk, Gdynia Branch; photo: W. Glasko.



Fig. 3. Gdynia, 1 Polska Street, Maritime Station in 1946. The damage visible in the north-western corner of the building was caused by the Allied air raid of 1943 and was repaired only in 2013–2015, during the comprehensive conversion of the building into the Emigration Museum. After the war, until 1963, the Harbour Master's Office was located in the Maritime Station; source: Gdynia City Museum; photo: Jan Bułhak.



Fig. 5. Gdynia, English Quay, Cold Store No. 1 in 1949, erected in 1948–1950 on the site of the interwar hall and a surviving fragment of the Fish Cold Store, visible in the rear part of the building. The photograph shows the building before plastering; source: Gdynia City Museum.

151,000 m² in 1960; 169,000 m² in 1970),²⁶ but it never again reached the level achieved in the late 1930s (Figs. 3, 4a, 4b).

Considering only the losses of architecturally valuable structures in the port of Gdynia, one must conclude that these losses were not substantial in the post-war period. Among the buildings not reconstructed after the war, only two are noteworthy from an architectural standpoint: the 'Fruit Auction' and 'Warta' Warehouse at the French Quay (1933, designed by Wacław Tomaszewski) and the 'Pantarei II' Warehouse located in the second row of the Polish Quay. Both warehouses featured expressive forms in a modernist style—the former distinguished by vertical accents and Art Déco elements, and the latter by functionalist architecture.

POST-WAR ARCHITECTURE OF THE PORT – SELECTED NOTABLE EXAMPLES

Cold Store No. 1

Shortly after the end of the war, in July 1945, the remains of the destroyed Cold Store and Fish Hall at the English Quay (also referred to as the Auction Hall)²⁷ were almost entirely demolished. Although cold storage appeared first in the building's name, before the war it had, in fact, been an auxiliary function to the primary purpose of the Fish Hall complex, designed in 1930 by engineer Juliusz Mrozowski. The dominant element of its massing was the tower section, over 18 meters high, and the conception of the whole form was based on a striking contrast between the smooth, light-coloured plaster façades, the horizontal strip windows of the residential floor, and the vertical openings in the upper part.²⁸ This bold and most recognisable feature of the pre-war Fish Hall remains today the oldest preserved structure of the former architectural complex of the pre-war Fishing Pier.

During the post-war reconstruction, the surviving tower section was incorporated into the new cold store (Cold Store No. 1) built between 1948 and 1950 on the site of the demolished Fish Hall. The authorship of the design of Cold Store No. 1—built at the English Quay and placed into operation in 1952—is unknown.²⁹ Its imposing mass fits perfectly within the architectural principles expressed by its older neighbours: the Herring Cold Store to the east (constructed 1935–1936, extended 1960–1965), and the aforementioned preserved fragment of the former Fish Hall.

²⁶ The second stage of reconstruction, undertaken after the most urgent needs had been addressed, was carried out under the 'Three-Year Port Reconstruction Plan.' Its overall objective was to adapt the ports to new economic conditions. The investments covered the years 1947–1949. More labour-intensive tasks, such as the reconstruction of quays and breakwaters in Gdynia, were postponed to this stage because of their scale and complexity.

²⁷ Data based on the Statistical Yearbooks of the Maritime Economy in: Misztal, Z. (1974). *Reconstruction and development of the maritime economy in Poland, 1945–1973* (Part II; B. Gębski, Ed.). Wyższa Szkoła Marynarki Wojennej im. Bohaterów Westerplatte.

²⁸ For a broader discussion, see: Orchowska-Smolińska, A. (2018). Port cold stores in Gdynia: A case study of interwar industrial port architecture. In M. J. Sołtysik & R. Hirsch (Eds.), *Modernism in Europe: Modernism in Gdynia. 20th-century architecture: Its protection and conservation* (pp. 92–93). Urząd Miasta Gdyni; Orchowska-Smolińska, A. (2013). *Architecture and spatial layout of the Gdynia Port in the interwar period as cultural heritage* [PhD dissertation, University of Gdańsk] (pp. 123–125).

²⁹ The longitudinal openings covered with a louver system ventilated the drip-condenser unit located on the top floor of the building. See: Stokowski, B., & Dadlez, J. (1933). *The cold store and fish hall in Gdynia*. Morski Instytut Rybacki.

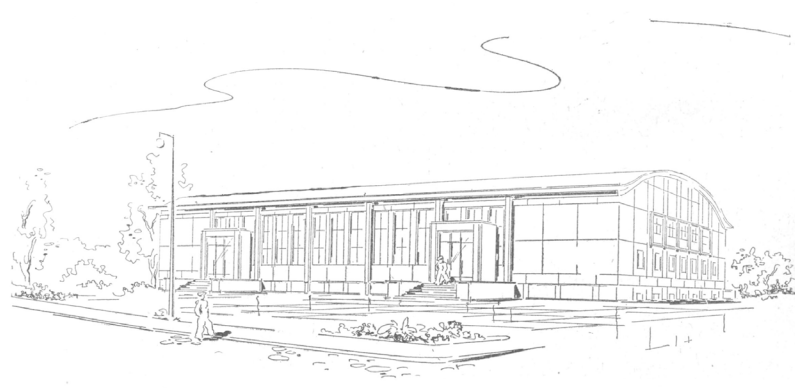


Fig. 6. Gdynia, 32 Polska Street, Portorob port workers' distribution point, architects Kazimierz Biszewski and Romuald Połujan, Maritime Construction Design Office in Gdańsk, 1951: a) conceptual perspective published in the Bulletin of the State Office of Maritime Construction Designs; source: Technika Morza i Wyrzeża [Technique of the Sea and the Coast], no. 3/4, p. 46; b) the building in the 1950s; source: Facebook, Gdynia – plan miasta, miejsca..., accessed September 22, 2021.

In the case of the post-war Cold Store No. 1 (Fig. 5), we may speak of a masterful use of the structural language of architecture, dominated here by a monumental vertical rhythm of pilaster strips. Centrally placed on the main façade is a risalit containing the principal staircase. It features rounded corners as well as a dome-like half-cupola crowning. Remarkably, the roof covering of this element was made of sheet metal imitating fish scales—an unusual solution for industrial buildings. Considering the fish-processing purpose of the cold store, this appears particularly original.

Equally interesting is the interpretation of historical architecture apparent in the building's crowning, executed in the form of a modernised attic or crenellation. Along the side façades, protruding overhangs supported by decorative brackets appear, evoking the character of medieval machicolations with walkways and openings in the floor. These architectural elements—drawing from Polish Gothic and Renaissance traditions—lend the cold store's mass a distinctive and refined character.

In summary, this bold post-war cold store exemplifies the architectural 'transitional period': no longer pre-war modernism, though clearly rooted in its tradition, and not yet under the influence of socialist realist doctrine.

Building of the Port Workers' Dispatch Centre 'Portorob'

After the Second World War, the participation of architects working within independent studios and private design offices in projects carried out within the port significantly decreased, as private companies were no longer permitted—as they had been before the war—to lease industrial lots within the port area or to undertake investments there. Design work within the port, now subordinate to the Ministry of Shipping, was instead entrusted to the state-run Office for Maritime Construction Projects in Gdańsk (established in 1948 at the Ministry's request, later known as Projmors). Its responsibilities included the comprehensive preparation of technical documentation in the fields of hydraulic engineering, architectural and building design, structural engineering, mechanical and electrical installations, cost estimation, and functional and spatial planning of ports.



Fig. 7. Gdynia, 43 Polska Street, "Baltona" warehouse and office complex in the 1960s; source: Facebook, Gdynia – city plan, places..., accessed September 22, 2021.

The multifunctional auxiliary building for port workers, known as 'Portorob' (figs. 6a, 6b), was erected in 1951 at 32 Polska Street, on a large plot bordered by Czechoslovak, Polska, and Celna streets. The design was prepared within the Maritime Construction Projects Office by two pre-war graduates of the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology—Kazimierz Biszewski and Romuald Połujan—both of whom were associated with the Gdańsk University of Technology after the war.

Located near a central transport hub, the building was intended to support port cargo-handling operations by organising and dispatching port workers to various tasks. To this end, the design included a large assembly and dispatch hall for 600–700 people, served by a suite of office rooms with service windows, as well as a buffet hall, a standard room, and sanitary facilities.

The building employed an interesting structural solution combining brick walls with a roof formed as a reinforced-concrete shell supported by tension rods. Its streamlined shape, along with the façade treatment featuring a grid of vertical and horizontal plaster profiles imitating stone slabs, made it stand out among other contemporary projects.

In subsequent decades, the building housed, among other functions, a library and an auditorium for events organised by the Cultural Centre of the Gdynia Maritime Trade Port Authority, as well as a large retail store. The building was demolished around 2010.

'Baltona' Warehouse and Office Complex

The company Baltona's building complex, designed in 1958 (Fig. 7),³⁰ was constructed in the western part of the commercial port at 43 Polska Street, between the street and the port railway station. The ensemble consists of a six-storey warehouse block and a three-storey administrative block, connected by a low linking structure. Architecturally, the complex exemplifies the pronounced shift 'towards modernity' that took place in the second half of the 1950s.

In this project, the warehouse portion — a rectangular, remarkably restrained volume — clearly dominates. Its most distinctive feature is the horizontal articulation of all four façades, emphasised by continuous horizontal window bands flowing smoothly around the perimeter of the building. Functionally designed structural canopies shelter the loading ramps, located both on the railway side and at the vehicular entrance.

Facing Polska Street, the building's front is accentuated by the administrative block attached to the main volume, marked by the vertical rhythm of inter-window piers and a recessed entrance sheltered by a column-supported canopy. These elements — which appear visually freestanding — are tied together by the single-storey link.

The shape of the plot, defined by railway tracks on one side and the street on the other, dictated the layout and mutual arrangement of the complex's volumes. Within

³⁰ The new postwar fish cold store in the Port of Gdynia appeared as the only example of postwar Gdynia architecture in a publication on the urban and architectural development of the Gdańsk-Sopot-Gdynia complex. See: Stankiewicz, J., & Szermer, B. (1959). *Gdańsk: Urban and architectural development and the formation of the Gdańsk-Sopot-Gdynia complex*. Arkady; Chrzan, A., & Tomaszek, S. (1964). *Port architecture of the Gdańsk Coast. Architektura* [Architecture], no. 12, 487–497; Szopowski, Z. (1959). *Seaports: Design and operation*. Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.

the C-shaped plan, a small trapezoidal courtyard is formed. Particularly striking are the architectural elements projecting above the roofline: the lift machinery room with rounded corners, and a dynamic, yacht-bridge-like raised structure.³¹

The design of this Gdynia-based Baltona complex – strongly influenced by Bauhaus principles – was created by architects Józef Kopeć and Czesław Maciuszewski, together with structural engineer Jerzy Jamroz. The project was prepared at the Gdańsk Office for Industrial Construction Projects.

Warehouse 'W'

The complex of general-cargo warehouses forming the second row behind the Polish Quay, shaped in the 1930s, was supplemented—and partly replaced—during the 1950s and 1960s by bold architectural projects that continued the achievements of interwar designers. Among the interesting post-war port reconstruction projects was the now-demolished Export Enterprise for Fruit and Vegetable Products in Gdynia, known as Warehouse 'W' (figs. 8a, 8b), constructed in 1962–63 at 19a Polska Street. The project was prepared by the Warsaw Office for Fermentation Industry Projects, headed by engineer A. Urbankowski; the architect responsible for the design was Janusz Pukaczewski, and the structural engineer was Józef Stępkowski.

The warehouse, eight storeys high, had a relatively compact footprint measuring 40 × 20 meters. The southern, eastern, and western façades were marked by characteristic horizontal bands of glass-block strip windows. These glazing bands were divided by small ventilation windows with protective hoods arranged in an alternating pattern. The north façade, facing Polska Street, was smoothly plastered, accented in its central section by a vertical strip of glass-block glazing flanked by small loggias.

A striking architectural feature at the ground level was the trio of V-shaped columns supporting an overhang above the ramp area. The main entrance was highlighted by vertical glazing along the staircase and a reinforced-concrete, accordion-shaped canopy supported by steel tension rods. The upper part of the building was adorned with a distinctive attic composed of diagonally arranged panels.

The building served its intended function until 1988, when it was taken over by the Gdynia Port Authority. At that time, thermal insulation works were carried out on the façades (1989), and subsequent use involved storing raw wool. The warehouse was demolished around 2015 to make way for new investments in the port area.

The New Harbour Master's Office

One of the most important buildings for the functioning of the port of Gdynia that suffered severe wartime damage was the Harbour Master's Office, located at the base of the Port Channel. Built in 1927 to a design by engineer Jan Broda of Toruń, the building displayed a traditional formal aesthetic and a massing composed of steeply pitched

³¹The limited liability company Baltona, established in 1946 to supply ships and operating from 1949 as Baltona Ship Supply, primarily served the maritime sector.



Fig. 8. Gdynia, Polska Street, Fruit and Vegetable Industry Export Products Store, known as Magazine "W", architect Janusz Pukaczewski, Fermentation Industry Design Office, 1961–1962: a) eastern elevation according to design documentation; source: archival collection of the Port of Gdynia Authority; b) view of Magazine "W" in 2015; photo: Anna Orchowska-Smolińska.

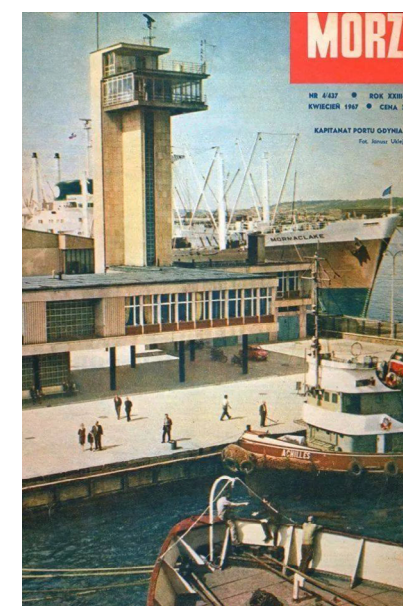


Fig. 9. Gdynia, Polska Street, New Harbour Master's Office in the mid-1960s, architects Lech Zaleski and Janina Roszak: a) view of the eastern façade from the French Quay; source: *Morze* [Sea], no. 4, 1967; b) view of a fragment of the Harbour Master's Office from the south; source: postcard entitled Gdynia. *Monument to the People of the Sea*, published by RUCH, 1965–1966, photo by A. Stelmach.

roofs. It featured a six-storey tower with a viewing terrace on the north side. The facility functioned as the Harbour Master's Office until the end of the German occupation.³² Damage inflicted by the retreating Germans on the two neighbouring quays—the Finnish Quay³³ and the Port Quay—compromised the building's structure, leading to a decision to demolish it with explosives; the structure was dismantled entirely in July 1945.

For the next eighteen years, the port of Gdynia lacked a suitably representative building for the prestigious function of the Harbour Master's Office. The design guidelines for a new headquarters, prepared by the Gdańsk Maritime Office based in Gdynia, were approved as early as mid-1959,³⁴ and the completed building entered service in 1962. Two alternative solutions were initially considered: a building raised on pilotis with an open ground floor and a footprint of 520 m², or a compact three-storey structure with a 275 m² footprint. Both variants included a 24-meter observation tower. Ultimately, the version with an expressive cantilevered volume—providing an open view toward the outer harbour and the breakwater—was selected for execution.

The design of the Harbour Master's Office was prepared by architect Lech Zaleski together with architect Janina Roszak, both working under the direction of department

³²A pokładówka (deckhouse) is a low deck superstructure on a yacht, raising the height of the interior space below deck. It usually has narrow, fixed porthole-type windows on its sides and skylights or other openings on top. In the Baltona building, the slanted wall of the superstructure incorporated an impressive ribbon-shaped window.

³³From 1945 (when the port resumed its function) until 1963, the Harbour Master's Office operated from the Maritime Station building. However, increasing passenger traffic in the Gdynia port required the Harbour Master to vacate these spaces by the late 1950s.

³⁴The Finnish Quay was called the Pilot Quay until 1939. After 1945, the name Pilot Quay referred to the western side of one of the wartime-added breakwaters.

head Alfred Chrzan at the state design office Projmors in Gdańsk.³⁵ Construction was carried out by the Gdańsk Industrial Construction Enterprise.

The design of the New Harbour Master's Office (Figs. 9a, 9b) had to respond to complex functional requirements, divided into three principal zones: representative-administrative, service, and observation-control. This functional triad was reflected in the Z-shaped composition of the volumes. Particular attention was devoted to the interior design, which included detailed furnishing and layout solutions for multiple rooms of the building (the Harbour Master's office, the secretary's office, entrance hall, cloakroom of the club annexe, and numerous rooms for pilots, boatswains, duty officers, traffic controllers, port officers, security staff, and others).³⁶

The façades were finished with small-format sandstone slabs resistant to harsh maritime conditions, while some walls incorporated glass blocks. The entire building was characterised by a strong aesthetic expression and a sophisticated interplay of textures and colours, resulting from the quality of the materials used both externally and internally.

The boldly articulated three-dimensional form of the Harbour Master's Office, however, did not withstand the test of time. In the early 21st century, the expressive cantilevered volume—initially elevated on pilotis, giving the impression of the building 'hovering' above the ground—was infilled with an additional mass, eliminating this distinctive visual effect. Likewise, the elegantly finished façades were altered and clad with contemporary materials (aluminium panels) in two dominant colours: yellow and blue.³⁷

Studies of post-war developments within the port of Gdynia show that, in terms of investment policy, reconstruction after the wartime destruction did not continue the boldly defined pre-war development plans. Formally, however, this period opened the port to new architectural ideas that harmoniously aligned with the modernist stylistic explorations of the interwar era.

The architectural examples presented in this article represent only a small selection from a much larger group of port buildings constructed up to 1989, all of which are firmly rooted in modernism. The issues outlined here aim to contribute to a better understanding of the architecture of the port of Gdynia in the second half of the 20th century—an essential component of modernist heritage.

³⁵ Documentation of the sessions of the Expert Committee for Investment Project Evaluation at the Ministry of Shipping and Water Management on the Concept and Preliminary Design of the Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia; based on archival research by Bartłomiej Ponikiewski for the exhibition Lech Zaleski. Designing from the Sea; in the collections of the Gdynia Maritime Office Archive.

³⁶ Project engineers: structural design — Eng. Jerzy Grabowski; water-sewage and heating installations — Eng. Ryta Chrzczonowicz; electrical installations — Eng. Marian Witecki; communications — Eng. Maria Młynarska; radio-radar systems — Eng. Henryk Redzinski. See: Architecture. (1964). The harbour master's office in Gdynia. (12), 496–497.

³⁷ Gdynia Maritime Office Archive. (n.d.). Technical-working design of the interior of the Harbour Master's Office in Gdynia—Port; Architecture. (1964). The harbour master's office in Gdynia. (12), 496–497.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



photo. Iza Skłatecka

Ph.D, Eng., Arch. Anna Orchowska

Architect and Assistant Professor in the Department of History of Architecture and Monument Conservation at the Faculty of Architecture, Gdańsk University of Technology. She specializes in 20th-century architecture and the preservation of modernist heritage, as well as in 19th- and 20th-century industrial architecture. She is the author of the monograph *Facing the Sea: Plan, Construction, and Architecture of the Port in Gdynia* (2023) and co-author of the nomination dossier for Gdynia's Modernist Centre for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Her research focuses on documenting and safeguarding the authenticity of modernist architecture and protecting post-industrial sites, including through the National Science Centre-funded project *Dangerous Heritage: Harmful pollutants and their identification in the substance of an industrial monument versus a model of its conservation*.

ORCID: 0000-0002-9930-3655

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