

On the Need to Preserve Modern Architecture in Poland

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Now that the 20th century is over, it is the right time for reflection on the ways of safeguarding architecture then created, Polish architecture inclusive. The problem gives rise to a great deal of discussion, because 20th-century heritage is usually underestimated, even by professionals, as it is often considered not old enough in our cultural landscape and peripheral when compared with world achievements. Despite this, there is an ever-growing circle of its

1. *Cracow. Residential building for Jagiellonian University professors at 15, Słowackiego, Ludwik Wojtyczko, 1930. Corner façade. Photo by the author*



admirers, who have 20th-century architectural heritage etched in their sentimental memory. Therefore, it is important to analyse possible and effective ways of preserving this substance, which often falls into disfavour merely because its real value is not recognized. The main challenge is to find a formula for its adaptation to contemporary functions and to creatively transform it into new quality, while retaining the original technical solutions and conserving historical details.

There are places in Poland where the architecture in question is not even entitled to be kept in human memory. This refers, for example, to Evangelical churches in western Poland, where small towns often have two churches, of which the Roman Catholic is attended and cared for, and the other one is most often closed and deteriorates. Their historical value is not always the most important thing, because they have other features that make them special, such as well-preserved beautiful stained-glass windows, as is the case with a former Evangelical church in Prusice, Lower Silesia, erected in the early 20th century in historicist stylistics. Its stained-glass windows were designed by Karl Robert Pollog and made in Gottfried Heinersdorf's workshop, Berlin, in 1911. The four monumental windows depicting Christological scenes are the artist's most outstanding work. Their aesthetic and historical value is remarkable; what is amazing is the fact that they have survived *in situ*, which – given the devastating effects of WWII – is absolutely unique. Very few stained-glass windows like these have survived till today. They are fragile and time-sensitive, and those coming from German workshops are often received with hostility and indifference.

Stained-glass windows cannot exist



Apartment house for professors of Jagiellonian University
1930, Modern Movement

Poland, Krakow, 15 Juliusz Słowackiego

Architect: Ludwik Wojtyczko

The building was constructed along avenue that architectural image was created, in big part, during interwar period. Many representative buildings were situated along the avenue. Original shape of this building with cut off corner and in that place designed two high bay windows linking four levels, makes in that place a fantastic and original architectural dominate.

Listed: A 071. Also listed as a building in Krakow - city - monument of history. Recognized by DOCOMOMO-Poland working party, published in big number of research works in Poland and abroad.

From the beginning first owner: Jagiellonian University

Current condition is relatively good, but exterior decoration is permanently destroyed by climate. The windows have been framed with black ceramic tiles that, because of rain, snow, wind changing of weather, actually do not exist in former shape.

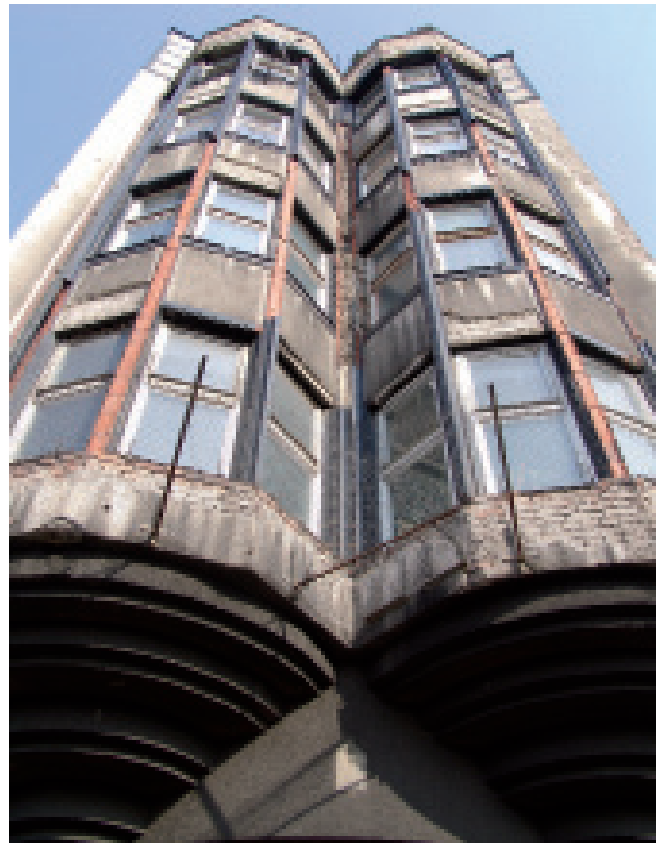
2.3. Justification of significance

This building is recognized as one of the most significant examples of Modern Movement architecture in Poland. In Polish case it represents typical Constructivist architecture which an important feature is specific decorativeness. This decorativeness was connected with local tradition to emphasize national, regional roots of the architects through repeating historical elements. Those tendencies were conducive to strengthening the position of the "architectures-of-the-middle" during interwar period. It caused an intermediate position between tradition and leading modern trends.

2. Index card edited as a response to the ICOMOS appeal for the registration of the 20th-century architectural heritage.

without the spatial tissue created by architecture. Displaying them in a museum or any place other than the one they were designed for is pointless, because they have always complemented a specific interior and enriched a specific décor. It is necessary to take up this issue, because there are still many temples in some regions of Poland which – derelict and neglected – fall into ruin. It seems that finding new functions for such buildings and new ways of using them may make investors interested.

One of the most remarkable Modernist monuments in Poland is the house of Jagiellonian University professors in Cracow. The building itself does not need a detailed presentation, but there are big problems with its preservation. For the last 77 years, it has been occupied by the University staff. Large, spacious flats are in the building that nobody seems to care for. I have been watching it since the 1960s. At first, lack of proper care caused damp patches and damage to plaster, but its real decline started at the beginning of the 1990s. This was not caused by the political transition, but by the usual process of ageing. It was then that gradual degradation started of black ceramic corner profiles, which created the essential outline of the façades. Zbigniew Beiersdorf, the outstanding city monument conservator at the time, got in touch with a private company, which was ready



3. Cracow. Residential building for Jagiellonian University professors at 15, Słowackiego, Ludwik Wojtyczko, 1930. Corner detail. Photo by the author

to make similarly shaped tiles, Unfortunately, these plans failed and degradation continued, in spite of the fact that it is a listed building. In 2007, professor Andrzej Kadłuczka initiated an application for funding to the Public Committee for the Restoration of Cracow Monuments (SKOZK) to save the building, but this initiative failed as well. In the meantime, two attempts were made for the building to be entered into the World Heritage List: the first in the 1990s within the DOCOMOMO¹, the other within ICOMOS². Neither was successful.

A well-known and reliable method of preserving a historical building in good shape should be mentioned at this point, i.e. using it so that it would live instead of being just a relic. A good example is one of Le Corbusier's well-known works: *La Tourette* monastery. Designed in the 1950s for eighty Dominican friars, the building soon became too large. Now there are only twenty friars living there, which means they occupy only one fourth of the space, but have to keep the whole building in good condition. Therefore, they started to promote the monastery among artists and scholars as an ideal place for seminars and conferences (it houses,

1. International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement.

2. International Council on Monuments and Sites.

among others, a centre of religious philosophical thought). The idea proved a success, and today there are often too many people interested in staying there. The monastery is visited by the most prominent figures of the world of art and architecture. Students of architecture are also welcome there. One-week-long Polish-German workshops³ are organised, to which Cracow students of architecture are invited.

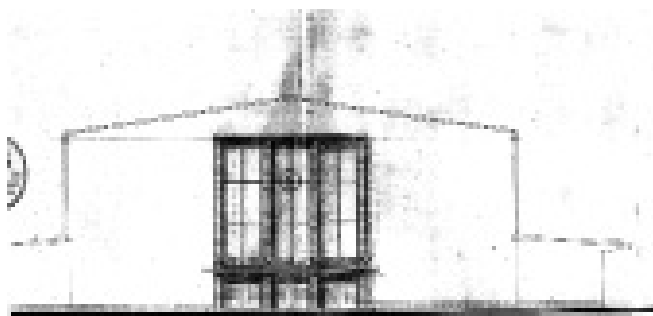
There are also other international academic meetings on the safeguarding of Modern Architecture, like the meetings of three university communities: the Münster Fachhochschule, Germany, Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands, and Cracow University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, Poland. They are organised as a contest for a set topic⁴. One of the meetings was held in Cracow and was devoted to the covered market complex in Grzegórzki.

The Municipal Market Halls⁵ at 3, Daszyńskiego were built on the initiative of the Municipality of the Royal Capital City of Cracow.

3. The workshops were first organized in 1998 by Prof. Wojciech Buliński – the Dean of Faculty of Architecture of Cracow University of Technology at the time, Janusz Barnaś PhD, and the Fachhochschule, Münster, as a German partner. The Polish-German cooperation also includes teacher and student exchange and seminars on the issues related to the restoration of urban complexes.

4. The topics always refer to Modernist buildings that lost their functional values and cause maintenance problems. The first contest held in 1997 referred to a work of Mart Stam, an architect with Bauhaus background. The second edition included the design issues of the Rotterdam port building *Wilhelmina*, designed by Jacob Bakema in 1953. The subject of the 2000 edition was a trade and warehouse building with arch and shed structure in Frankfurt-on-Main, designed by Martin Elsaesser in 1928.

5. Municipal Covered Markets (Miejskie Hale Targowe), 3, Wiślisko (now Daszyńskiego); Employer: Municipality of the Royal Capital City of Cracow, Market and Supply Department of the City Board; Designer: City Board of the Royal Capital City of Cracow, Building Department, Urban Building Unit, Juliusz Dumnicki; Contractor: „Spójnia Budowlana”, Architect Franciszek Mączyński & Co; Project Engineer: architect Franciszek Mączyński; earthwork, masonry, concrete and woodwork: „Spójnia Budowlana”; Commencement date: 1 July 1938 – a building plot allocated on former Augustinian grounds. Plans and specifications were completed on 7 June 1938. The building permit was signed by Czesław Boratyński on 12 July 1938.



4. Cracow. Municipal Covered Market at 3, Daszyńskiego, Juliusz Dumnicki, 1939. Front façade (fragment of design documentation preserved in the State Archives, Section of Cartography and Specification Sheets)



5. Cracow, Covered Market at 3, Daszyńskiego, Juliusz Dumnicki, 1939. Entrance. Photo by the author

The complex was designed by Juliusz Dumnicki and constructed by „Spójnia Budowlana”, Architect Franciszek Mączyński & Co.; F. Mączyński was also the site manager. Construction works started on 1 July 1938 on the plot given by the Augustines. In 1937, before plans and specifications were made, Juliusz Dumnicki and Edward Kreisler went on a tour of covered markets in Poland, i.e. in Katowice, Chorzów, Warsaw and Gdynia; they also visited a cold storage facility at the Gdynia port. They wrote a report which can still be found in the Cracow Municipal Archives; each of the markets was described in detail, its functionality characterized and supplemented with photographs. Plans and specifications for the Cracow market were completed on 7 June 1938, and the building permit was signed by Czesław Boratyński on 12 July 1938. According to plans, the shopping complex was to consist of 4 parts: the main hall, a cold store, administration building and saltwater fish stalls. The surviving construction site logbook contains many notes referring to changes in some fragments of the project introduced during construction works. There were problems with the foundations – water appeared in the excavations and a caisson structure was mentioned. On 28 February 1939, plans for a saltwater fish shop were delivered, and a little later – for accessories stalls. The site logbook was kept till the end of August 1939. At that time, the hall, the administration building and the cold store had already been completed. During WWII, two projects were executed: the hall entrance and fencing of the space between the hall and the administration buildings. The interior of the hall remained intact till 1979. After 1990, „Konsart” company made plans for the upgrading of the market.

A few words must be said here about Juliusz Dumnicki – the architect who co-designed the market halls in Cracow. He graduated from the Warsaw University of Technology, Faculty of



6. Cracow, Covered Market at 3, Daszyńskiego, Juliusz Dumnicki, 1939. Entrance detail. Photo by the author

Architecture. Between 1933 and 1939, he took part in 15 architectural contests, winning the 1st prize five times, among others for the design of the Cracow National Museum building in 1933. He made these designs together with engineers B. Schmidt and J. Juraszyński. At the same time, in 1934-39, he worked for the Building Department of Cracow Municipal Board. Apart from designing the covered market, he also designed the tram depot and a block of flats as part of his job. At the end of the war, in 1944, he returned to Cracow and again took a job in the Building Department of Cracow Municipal Board. However, a year later he moved to Warsaw, where he got a job at the Faculty of Architecture of Warsaw University of Technology as an assistant lecturer at the Department of Spatial and Economic Design, headed by Prof. Bohdan Lachert⁶. After

6. Juliusz Dumnicki was a reviewer of Krzysztof Bieda's PhD thesis *Klasyfikacja, kryteria, oceny i ogólne zasady projektowania parkingów w osiedlach mieszkaniowych*, Cracow 1973, Biblioteka Politechniki Krakowskiej. The thesis supervisor was Prof. Witold Cęckiewicz, and the other reviewer was Prof. Bohdan Lisowski.

7. Cracow, Covered Market at 3, Daszyńskiego, Juliusz Dumnicki, 1939. Rear view. Photo by the author



WWII, the war-devastated Warsaw offered architects various jobs. The Bureau for Postwar Reconstruction of Warsaw (*Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy – BOS*) was one of the most prestigious places where prominent Polish architects and engineers planned the future face of the city. Dumnicki also worked there, collaborating closely with architect Roman Piotrowski. At the same time he carried on both research and teaching at the Faculty of Architecture of Warsaw University of Technology.

As an outstanding expert in his architectural and research specialities, Dumnicki was often invited to various consultative committees. He was a highly-regarded expert in architecture related to transportation. His postwar Warsaw projects include, e.g. the department store at 15, Jagiellońska. This project, together with many others (e.g. the garage complex at 15, Marchlewskiego street), have either been largely altered or demolished altogether.

At present, there is an ongoing discussion in Cracow whether or not an open marketplace, being part of the Covered Market complex, should be developed, because a new, big mall is planned to be erected there. The idea seems rather controversial, because the new building would irreversibly dominate the existing historical buildings. People using the place, both stallholders and shoppers, are against the development. It would be a pity, if this complex, a piece of decent and interesting architecture, an inherent part of the district's trading tradition, disappeared "overpowered" by the looming bulk of the new structure.

The most important element in the process of historical architecture protection seems to be conscious maintenance and sensible use of buildings. Repair works, if properly done, will keep the building in good technical condition for dozens of years. It is obvious that such buildings cannot be left in their original state, as standards, needs, technical requirements and, above all, their occupants' aesthetic preferences are constantly changing. The same applies to urban areas developed years ago in line with the needs of the time, for example elegant residential districts constructed in the early 20th century, consisting of narrow streets for a small number of cars and single-family villas surrounded by their own rich gardens. This short description illustrates the situation of several historic villa estates in Cracow.

The history of residential development in the area of *Aleja Grottgera* dates from the early years of the 20th century, when Cracow's first residential estate of cheap flats was built in order to provide decent dwelling conditions for the working class. The estate was called *Modrzejówka*. The main building of the site was



8. Cracow. The Weinsberg family villa at 2, Grottgera, Waclaw Krzyzanowski, 1927. Photo by the author

a wooden villa with flats for unmarried male workers, a cheap canteen and a reading room. Then eleven single-storey houses were built, the first two completed in 1900. Designed by Karol Knaus, they had 8 flats each, and every flat had its own small garden⁷.

The settlement in Kazimierza Wielkiego street was developed a little later⁸. The construction of this garden estate started in 1910-1911, on old fortress grounds, at the same time a villa estate close to the Holy Saviour church was being built. The first houses, designed by J. Peroś, were erected for professors of the Jagiellonian University along the present Wyspiańskiego street. Further development of this area was undertaken up after WWI. In order to meet the huge housing demand, the Office for the Reconstruction of Poland made a decision to build 15 timber semi-detached houses in the area, for junior office workers mainly; each of the houses consisted of 4 flats. They were designed by Waclaw Krzyzanowski who made them resemble old suburban manors. Regrettably, they were all marked by temporariness – a fact deplored already in 1925.

This development originated a residential settlement of a higher-standard. The streets, 28-30 m wide, a little too wide at that time, ran from a green square – the site of a church built in the 1930s by Franciszek Mączyński. A number of villas were designed by Waclaw Krzyzanowski.

7. The houses were constructed for the Association for Constructing Cheap Flats for Catholic Workers, established by its first chairman, Dr Henryk Jordan, in 1897. It was registered as a joint-stock limited liability company and financed by Count Andrzej Potocki, Savings Bank and the Seym. After: Purchla J., *Jak powstał nowoczesny Kraków*, Cracow 2000, pp. 31-32.

8. Frysztak A., *Zespół mieszkaniowy w Krakowie. Zarys rozwoju*, PhD thesis, Cracow University of Technology, Cracow 1985.

Each villa was set on a 600-square-metre plot, but because the ground floor plan was excessively large, there was not much space left for gardens. Despite these inconveniences, until recently the estate was regarded as one of the most attractive residential areas in Cracow. There are some interesting houses there, e.g. the house at 11, Wyspiańskiego, in simplified Classicism, built in 1920 for Dr L. Macharski. The adjacent plot, at the corner of Wyspiańskiego and Grottgera, is occupied by a Polish-manor-like villa built in 1922 for Marian Krzyzanowski. A year later, another house was erected at 4-6, Grottgera – a two-family villa for Bolesław Macudziński and Gaertner, a compilation of Classicist architectural details and a massive Polish mansard roof.

In the adjacent street of Sienkiewicza, at No 25, there is Waclaw Krzyzanowski's own house built in 1926. The house is worth a closer look, because designing his own place, the architect was free to choose forms and modes of artistic expression. The interior, once arranged meticulously, is now different from the original due to the fact that the villa was divided into two separate flats. The façades, however, remained intact. They differ from those in the neighbourhood, although they were all built at the same time. Krzyzanowski gave up all the Classicist motifs and created a simple, 2-storey cuboid volume with a slightly sloped roof. The layout of windows is irregular, which makes the building look informal and romantic. The building may be regarded as the architect's personal artistic expression, a form of his self-reflection expressed through this structure.

Another architecturally interesting building is a nearby villa at 2, Grottgera, built for the Weinsberg family in 1927. It was also designed



9. Cracow. Semi-detached villas at 22/24, Grottgera, Waclaw Nowakowski, 1936. Photo by the author

by Waclaw Krzyzanowski. The building was composed in such a way so that the corner with the entrance would create a distinct vertical decoration of clinker brick.

Further down the street, at No 22/24, two semi-detached villas were designed by Waclaw Nowakowski in 1936. The Modernist houses successfully complemented the tissue of this block. Although their sizes perfectly matched the nearby villas, their style differed. They consisted of two adjacent cuboid main bodies, and at their side walls there were two lower, symmetrically attached extensions covered with sloped roofs.

After WWII, when due to the new political system the State became the owner of real estates, once-large villas were transformed into tenement buildings, which meant they were divided into a number of separate dwelling units. In the 1990s, the political system changed again, but most of the buildings remained divided. The lack of living space in individual flats resulted in uncontrolled extensions, and these often led to the degradation of the villas' architecture. The alteration of the villa at 22/24, Grottgera turned out to be particularly devastating; the works were going on forever, and gradually the initiators' destructive ideas were revealed. The final effect was a bland building, stripped of its original stylistics. One may wonder how the investors managed to get the design approved by the Department of Architecture of the City Hall and by the monument preservation officer.

The block in question is a kind of an open-air museum of 20th-century residential architecture, with distinct character and original layout preserved⁹. Devastation of individual buildings is

only one of the threats to this area of the city. What ruined its character was the new head office of Radio Cracow. At the exit of Łobzowska street, on the other side of avenue Słowackiego, there was an empty plot, for a long time used as a car park. It was always full, because of the nearby Cracow City Hall and the local office of the Supreme Chamber of Audit (*NIK*). And it was just on this plot that the radio building was constructed in 1999. From the architectural point of view, the building (designed by T. Mańkowski and P. Wróbel) matched the surrounding built-up environment perfectly; however, apart from the radio functions, it has a number of others as well, and therefore its parking space is too small. As a result, all the narrow streets in this quiet residential area have become car parks, which makes driving almost impossible. This unfortunate location of the building ruined the character of this area irretrievably.

Given all this, it is difficult to be optimistic about the future. It is true that architecture and urban developed areas, beautiful and already

to provide water supply from the Rudawa River to water mills situated in the area of present-day street Dolne Młyny. In the 18th century, the Młynówka Canal was adapted to provide water for the Royal Gardens in Łobzów. The urban sprawl of Cracow caused the scrapping of green areas and the Młynówka River. In 1974-75, the canal was ultimately filled in and asphalt and concrete pavements were laid along its course. Old structures were demolished, e.g. a water-level-raising chamber at the corner of today's Gzysików and Grottgera streets. Considering the historical nature of Młynówka and the need to save the stand of trees, the Department of Monument Preservation at the Cracow City Hall ordered a study to determine *Zones of Conservator's Protection of Młynówka Królewska*. The study was carried out, but it has not been approved so far. According to the study, two zones should be determined, i.e. fully and partially protected areas. *Strefy ochrony konserwatorskiej Młynówki Królewskiej*, Bogusław Górecki, source: www.zb.eco.pl/zb/70/mcrower.htm.

9. The old canal-bed of the Młynówka Królewska River is a historic site requiring safeguarding. It was built in the 13th century



10. Cracow. Semi-detached villas at 22/24, Grottgera, Waclaw Nowakowski, 1936. Photo by the author

of historical value, will not remain intact in closed enclaves, unavailable for new or altered functions. Life goes on, and the city as a dynamic and living organism will not leave secluded places in its centre, museums of 20th-century architecture. This particularly refers to Cracow, where even relics of more remote times are often underestimated and unattended. There is no point in covering heritage buildings with

a protective bell jar, because in order to survive they have to live their own lives, like the Wawel Cathedral which is beautiful, because it is an aggregate of relics of many epochs. However, it is essential to balance the necessity to preserve authenticity with present-day needs, so that original aesthetic values would not be destroyed by ill-considered administrative decisions and by callous ignoramuses.

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