



**MODERNISM IN GDYNIA**

**MODERNISM IN EUROPE** ■

**20th CENTURY ARCHITECTURE  
UNTIL THE 1960s AND ITS PRESERVATION**



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**The book presents the effects of two international conferences on “Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia” series, held in Gdynia in 2009 and 2012.**

Conferences were organised by the City of Gdynia with the assistance of the Faculty of Architecture, Gdańsk University of Technology.

Polish National Committee of ICOMOS contributed as the academic partner of the conferences.

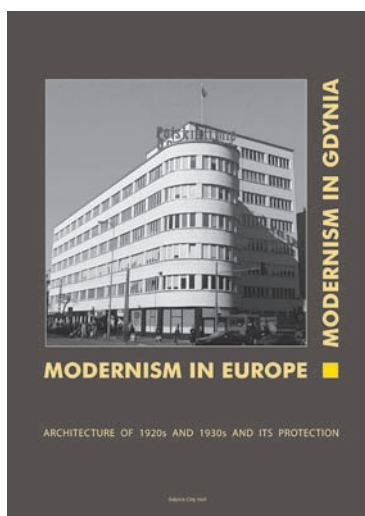
Both conferences were held under the honorary patronage of Minister of Culture and National Heritage of Poland



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of Gdynia



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Monuments and Sites  
Conseil International  
des Monuments et des Sites



The first book of the  
**“Modernism in Europe - Modernism in Gdynia”**  
series was published by the Gdynia City Hall in 2009.

It is available online at [www.gdynia.pl/modernism](http://www.gdynia.pl/modernism)



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# **20th CENTURY ARCHITECTURE UNTIL THE 1960s AND ITS PRESERVATION**

Gdynia City Hall  
2015

**Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia**  
**20th Century Architecture until the 1960s and Its Preservation**

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Published by



The City  
of Gdynia

[www.gdynia.eu](http://www.gdynia.eu)

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Cover and layout designed by  
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Gdynia 2015

ISBN 978-83-932299-7-0



*The volume you are reading draws on papers that were presented at the second and third conference "Modernism in Europe - Modernism in Gdynia". A careful look at the contents of this edition and two previous ones might suggest that "Modernism in the world – Modernism in Poland" would be an equally fitting title for the series! After all, our conferences so far have covered not only European examples, but American and African ones as well. Still, we believe that our main duty is to analyse the phenomenon of Gdynia's modernist architecture and confront it with the accomplishments of the cultural heritage that we can directly relate to, that is Poland and Europe. This is why the original title shall remain.*

*In this year's edition the reader will find articles on German, Swedish, Finnish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Soviet, Swiss, French, British, Dutch and Israeli architecture. If you are meticulous about the facts of geography, you could object at this point and say "But that's in Asia"! But once you have read about Tel Aviv's modernist architecture, you will know that ideas born in the cradle of Europe's modernism were put to work by people who were raised in that very cradle, all due to historical coincidence. There is no doubt that these works are part of the European heritage and the UNESCO World Heritage inscription provides solid proof of their excellence. The reader will also find a number of articles on Poland's modernist buildings and sites in Katowice, Kraków, Warsaw, Łódź, Białystok, Poznań and other towns. Obviously the largest number of texts refer to Gdynia.*

*We have expanded the time frame of our interest. We do not concentrate on the interwar period exclusively, as during the first conference. We observe the phenomena undoubtedly associated with the modern movement, which occurred many years after World War II, in the already changed economic and social conditions.*

*We want this conference to continue its role as a forum for presenting the results of research on the history of modernism and how its works are perceived today. Its purpose is also to discuss conservation and promotion, an area which we think has particular importance despite the occasional lack of sufficient attention. Indeed, historic buildings do not exist in a vacuum. In fact their existence depends on whether they are embraced by the public. Having the recognition of specialists is not enough for a building to survive. Only by becoming part of the local community and winning the interest of tourists, can a building hope for a longer life. We have included these topics in this volume and will ensure sufficient coverage in the upcoming fourth conference.*

*As usual, on the occasion of publication of materials from our conferences in Polish and English, I hope that the readers will find this book interesting whether they are modern architecture history and conservation professionals, fans of history, architecture history and monuments protection. I also believe that the book will be much appreciated by the fans of Gdynia living throughout the world.*

*Marek Stępa, Ph.D. Eng. Arch.*

*Deputy Mayor of Gdynia*

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## GDYNIA'S MODERNISM BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS THE STYLISTIC FACE OF THE EPOCH

Gdynia's architecture was born in the epoch of Modernism. As the city busied itself with intensive development, Modernism as a style formation was earning its place in the world's culture. Immensely interesting both historically and artistically, the period defined the face of all of the 20th century art and the entire great epoch. As a consequence, a major investment such as the construction of a new port and city had to struggle with all the problems that architects were facing in those days. The extent of the challenges can be seen in the transformations which the city's planning concept had undergone in a short period of 10 years. Gdynia's architecture was an incredible test site for new artistic concepts, new structures and technologies. All this has made it a very interesting example of the period's main architectural ideas.

Gdynia was built in the 1920s and 1930s which are anything but homogenous as a period in the history of architecture. Despite its universalist assumption, the stylistics of Modernism between the world wars was very much a diverse phenomenon. This can be seen in Gdynia and in European architecture of that time. On the one hand, it would give in to the slogans of extreme avant-garde with its purist aesthetics of smooth and undecorated surfaces, and on the other to the influences of Expressionism with its visual emphasis on detail, texture and specific symbolism of composition. Classicism-like trends were also there, looking for the ceremonial and monumental in the modernist form.

Gdynia's Modernism in a general sense had as many as four faces. One related to Art Deco and was genetically still attached to early modernist tendencies; the second, was extremely avant-garde with emphasis on cubic forms, light blocks (cubic Functionalism); the third represented a "milder" avant-garde of the mid-1930s and curving forms combined with luxury (Streamline Functionalism); and the fourth face is moderately modernist, slightly on the monumental side and based on vertical classic composition. The first of these variations of modernism could be seen in Gdynia's architecture mainly towards the late 1920s, the second in the early 1930s, the third in the second half of the 1930s and the fourth had been there throughout the period with varying levels of intensity. There are no clear dividing lines here, some of the trends were developing at the same time and complemented one another with the occasional overlap to finally form a characteristic mosaic of forms from the period between the world wars.

### The architecture of the second half of the 1920s - Art Déco

From the early 1920s modernist trends in art were becoming increasingly stronger to eventually create around 1925 a specific and very original language of architectural forms – Art Deco. Despite its simplicity in how it delineates shapes and detail, the stylistics emphasised a desire for decoration and a strong expression of detail, both in how façades and interiors were composed. That could be seen in the new type of ornamentation, which, although far from traditional decoration, came as a cubist-like "crystal" interpretation of historic and regional forms. Art Deco architecture combined a specific ornament composed into triangles or polygons with a symmetric and slightly classicist arrangement of the space in a building. This kind of aesthetics seemed just right for the new late 1920s public buildings. Sufficiently "modern", it also boasted certain features of grand buildings, which obviously mattered, given the functions of the buildings. This explains its popularity in the architecture of government offices, banks and prestigious schools, whose façades featured rectangular and rhomboid-like ornaments and geometrized textures, with cubist turrets in the finials.

Gdynia's first example of Art Deco crystal and cubist forms is the Maritime Office in Chrzanowskiego 10 (Fig. 1). Built in 1927, it was presumably designed by Adam Ballenstedt, a well-known Poznań-based architect. The façade's main features are a shapely clock tower and vases at the top of the lesenes that crown the body of the building. Adam Ballenstedt was also the author of the Żegluga Polska building. Built in the years 1927-1929 in Waszyngtona 44, after the war it became the home of the Navy Headquarters (Fig. 2). The building's traditional and symmetric composition was combined with arcades and crystal and cubist stone details of the façade.



1. Maritime Office,  
Chrzanowskiego 10 St.



2. Żegluga Polska building,  
Waszyngtona 44 St.



3. Complex of Mechanical Schools,  
Morska 79 St.



4. State Institute of Meteorology,  
Waszyngtona 42 St.

Towards the late 1920s Gdynia saw the emergence of complexes of big city proportions. One of the earliest grand designs was the complex of Maritime Schools in Gdynia-Grabówek. Developed in 1928, the design was authored by Waław Tomaszewski, one of the most outstanding Gdynia architects in the period between the world wars. The complex's centrepiece was the School of Maritime Trade and Port Technology (today's Complex of Mechanical Schools, Morska 79) with a spacious and terraced courtyard. The building's front façade is brick-faced and opens up with a large arcade in a textural frame made of brick (Fig. 3). The brick, however, is not red, and is instead replaced with a new modernist grey cement brick, laid in an oblique textural pattern. Placed by the architect above the arcade are characteristic slot windows accentuated with trusses in the form of cornice sections and above that an extended plate of the crowning cornice supported on large cubist consoles. This repertoire of decorative forms will become a trademark of the work of Waław Tomaszewski in that period.

The nearby building of the Maritime School (today the Maritime University, Morska 83) was built between 1929 and 1930. While it is also richly decorated with Art Deco ornamentation, unfortunately its originally grey cement brick-faced façades were plastered in the central section in the 1970s. The façade's main accent is a tri-arcade crowning of the entrance, supported on geometrised consoles. Above that is the middle part of the façade, pushed to the back and accentuated with rusticated pillars between the windows. It has a low relief with the school's emblem on a large geometrised stone disc.

Waław Tomaszewski's next and highly original project was to complete the design and construction of the State Meteorological Institute in Waszyngtona 42 (Fig. 4) in 1929. The building's cubist shape was crowned by the architect with a system of measurement terraces and a steel tower. The main terrace towers above a prominent cornice supported on consoles. The light, openwork measurement tower is very impressive, even today, with a terrace at one third of its height. Below it in the axis of the façade is a balcony supported on massive cubist trusses. It is impressively decorated with a steel balustrade with pillars.

While Art Deco was coming to its end in the late 1920s, architects were still quite keen to use it in the grand interiors of public buildings. It can be seen inside three of Gdynia's major banks (former Bank Polski in 10 Lutego 20/22, Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego in 10 Lutego 8 and the former Państwowy Bank Rolny in Plac Konstytucji). The decorativeness of forms disappears quickly as the economic crisis deepens. This is evident in Gdynia and across Europe. After 1930 on the back of the ever more popular avant-garde slogans, architecture boldly moved into a world of new forms.

### **The ethos of extreme avant-garde of the early 1930s – Functionalism with cubist forms**

Gdynia's adventure with avant-garde modernism began in the late 1920s. Commonly labelled as Functionalism, the trend was all about function. Funnily enough, Gdynia's Functionalism was mostly applied in industrial and residential architecture in its early days rather than in public buildings. The new aesthetics seemed just right for these uses. Simple compositions of geometric shapes, with varying heights and devoid of ornamentation left their mark thanks to a visually contrasting confrontation of cubist forms – hence the name of this variation of Functionalism.

The new avant-garde aesthetics' first port of call was the port where it established itself with a very unique and quite unusual for Gdynia "stripy" architecture of the 1928 Rice Mill on the Indyjskie quay (Fig. 5). The simple shapes of the port's first industrial plant were girded with red brick ribbons, divided by strips of smooth and light plaster which accommodated windows. Not far from the Rice Mill, on the Polskie quay, construction began in 1928 of the Port Cold Store, designed by a Belgian company Ateliers B. Lebrun, Societe Anonime, Nimy (Fig. 6). The façades of the red brick-faced building showcase a vertical rhythm of reinforced concrete divides and a delicately marked Art Deco brick detail. Yet the composition of the huge cuboid main block is definitely functionalist. The architecture of Gdynia's Oil Mill had a different yet avant-garde and modernist character. It was built on the Indyjskie quay based on the design by Wayss & Freytag. Construction began



5. Rice Mill, Celna 2 St.



6. Port Cold Store, Polska 20 St.



7. Houses of Gdynia Housing Cooperative, Okrzei 2/4 St.



8. The Pręczkowski family house with the Polonia cinema, Skwer Kościuszki 10/12



9. Opolanka house, Piotra Skargi 9 St.



10. The Hundsdorff family house, Starowiejska 7 St. / Abrahama 2 St.



11. The Orłowski family house, Świętojańska 68 St.



12. A residential building, Świętojańska 122 St.



13. Apartment building, Słupecka 9 St.



14. FE BGK residential building, 3 Maja 27/31 St.

in 1930. The main body was given a symmetric and geometrised layout and a light plastered façade.

Towards the end of the 1920s the stylistics of Functionalism made its way into Gdynia's residential architecture. This is credited mainly to young designers from Warsaw who came from there to build a new city. Several of them were working for private investors who commissioned residential buildings in the city centre. The first of the architects were graduates of the Faculty of Architecture, Warsaw University of Technology - Włodzimierz Prochaska and Stanisław Odynec-Dobrowolski. Their earliest work was the Grażyna House in Świętojańska 81-85 (1927-28) but it was the Zygmunt Peszkowski's house in Skwer Kościuszki 14 (1927-1929) that was their trademark design. What is most striking there is the offset corner accentuated with asymmetrically shaped and cubist balconies and light plasterwork with no additional divides. The layout became a local model of sorts. Many other Gdynia architects were keen to use it, among them the authors of the house in Plac Kaszubski 1 and in Świętojańska 78a. There were many others. An important point is that the probable cause of the fast growing popularity of the austere aesthetics of Functionalism was the economic crisis of the early 1930s.

Simple and cubist forms of extreme Functionalism were also typical for housing cooperative estates, a newcomer to both Poland's and Gdynia's architecture. The city's first such investor was the Gdynia Housing Cooperative, which in 1930 built its first two homes in Okrzei 2/4 in Grabówek (Fig. 7). Excellently designed by Adam Paprocki and Juliusz Żakowski, Warsaw architects, the complex had a nicely designed big garden with a backyard, community house, library and communal laundry room. To this day it may serve as an example of a modest yet very functional workers' housing estate. Larger scale housing cooperatives' homes were also designed by the White Collar Workers Insurance Company (later the ZUS). Several projects were designed for Gdynia by a very well-known Warsaw architect, Bohdan Lachert. This set includes a complex of white collar workers' homes in Marszałka Piłsudskiego 50 and in Świętojańska 139. They all have the shape of simple block buildings with communal grounds.

### Streamline Moderne and the luxury trend in the 1930s

From the first half of the 1930s the architecture of Functionalism sees an increasingly stronger influence of expressionist trends creating more dynamic shapes and a more confident take on curving forms. The trends became more evident halfway through the decade leaving their mark on Gdynia's architecture. Clearly, this stylistics fitted in very well with the landscape of the seaside town. Its nautical symbolism carried the essence of its genius loci. It is part of Streamline Functionalism also referred to as Streamline Moderne. Its forms strongly influenced the imagination of the people of Gdynia. So much so that some of the buildings were referred to as "ships on the streets of Gdynia" by the press.

The first architect to introduce streamline forms into Gdynia's architecture was Tadeusz Jędrzejewski, an architect from Warsaw. He created the corner house of Stanisław Pręczkowski with the Polonia cinema (later the Goplana) in Skwer Kościuszki 10/12 from the years 1928-1931 (Fig. 8). The corner is the main accent with its cubist offset softened with a curving form and terraced balconies, a reference to nautical symbolism. Tadeusz Jędrzejewski also authored the Opolanka house built in Kamienna Góra in Piotra Skargi 9 (Fig. 9). It is a detached house with expressionist curves that have dynamically shaped curving balconies protruding on both sides of the house. The early stylistics of Streamline is continued by the city's architect Marian Maśliński in his 1932-35 construction of Juliusz Hundsdorff's house in Starowiejska 7 (Fig. 10). Its wide and rounded frontage is a trademark accent in this part of the city.

With the end of the economic crisis in the mid-1930s, Gdynia's construction industry was booming. By that time Functionalism had already established itself as a style and reached maturity. This was largely possible thanks to what Polish literature quite rightly refers to as the luxury trend designed to "soften" the purist slogans of the avant-garde and seek comfort and elegance in architecture. This period saw Gdynia's top examples of Functionalism providing the "softened" version of the trend. They were the designs that defined the face of Gdynia's Modernism in the period between the world wars.

The main theme of the trend was to combine modernity with a high standard of finishing and fittings. As regards the technical and utility functions, the skeleton structure and the resulting Le Corbusier famous 5 points of modern architecture were quickly gaining popularity. In the area of forms, the curving lines – streamline – continued their success and were commonly associated with modernity and luxury. The favourite decoration was stone cladding or textural façades with the interiors enhanced with terazzo or terracotta mosaic or panelling.

The most interesting examples of “luxurious” Functionalism can be seen in Gdynia’s city centre. Impressive compositions of cubist and streamline forms combined with elegant cladding, meticulous interior design and great attention to detail can be found in the luxurious city centre houses from the 1930s. The best works of this type include the designs by Zbigniew Kupiec (Armii Krajowej 9, Skwer Kościuszki 16, Świętojańska 68 and 77, Fig. 11) and expressive corner houses designed by Stefan Koziński and Leon Mazalon (Świętojańska 122, Fig. 12), Stanisław Ziółowski (10 Lutego 35/35a, Słupecka 9, Fig. 13) and Jerzy Müller and Stefan Reychman (Świętojańska 23).

The most excellent architecture of the mid-1930s, however, was commissioned by public investors rather than by private ones. Two large-scale and prestigious residential and office complexes were built at the junction of 10 Lutego and 3 Maja. The first one was a complex of offices and flats for the White Collar Workers Insurance Company in Poznań (later the ZUS) in 10 Lutego 24 and 3 Maja 22/24. Designed in 1934 by Roman Piotrowski, a Warsaw architect (Fig. 29), it had its main accent in the form of a sweeping cylindrical corner of the office building. The dynamics of the shape, light and ribbon glazed façades created the quite obvious association with nautical stylistics, an element that Gdynia valued as a symbol. The resemblance to a ship can also be seen in the second building across the street – a house of the Pension Fund of the Workers of Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (1935-1937). It was designed by Stanisław Ziółowski, one of the outstanding personalities Gdynia had in the period between the world wars. Both were, however, quite different in how they were shaped. The tall and stepwise retreating corner of the BGK house continues in a ribbon-like manner further into the street of 3 Maja (3 Maja 27-31) and climbs up on the cylindrical quasi-spire crowned with a flagpole placed above the entry gate (Fig. 14). Supported by pillars with a glazed in ground floor accommodating services, and Gdynia’s first ever underground garages, the building seems to hover and float expressively. With their original form, high standard of finishing and layout, both buildings were immediately pronounced a new page in Gdynia’s architecture.

The leading examples of Gdynia’s Modernism also feature several very characteristic public buildings. These include the District Court building erected in 1936 in Plac Konstytucji (Fig. 15). A very big building, it is designed on a mild curve with ribbon-like lines and emphasis on the corner of the square. The main accent is along the axis in the centre. The design was selected in an architectural competition which was won by young Warsaw architects: Zbigniew Karpiński, Tadeusz Sieczkowski and Roman Sołtyński. The middle part of the building was given a vertical composition with narrow reinforced concrete small pillars in the full length of the façade placed in vertical windows. Behind the entrance is a spacious hall with a carefully planned modernist design.

A slightly different and definitely constructivist nature can be seen in the architecture of Gdynia’s covered market (Fig. 16). This outstanding project was authored by Jerzy Müller and Stefan Reychman (1936-1937) who based the building’s spatial idea on an arched steel structure. Refined yet simple, outlined with a bold parabola and with a lot of glass, the “arched hall” has a span of 33 m and height of 16 m. It is visually contrasted with a set back cuboid suspended structure of a “plane hall”, an innovative structure.

Another outstanding example of Gdynia’s public architecture in the period between the world wars is the Polish Sailor’s House (today the Faculty of Navigation, Gdynia Maritime University) in Jana Pawła II 3 (Fig. 17). Erected on pillars and divided into parts, the building has a glassed-in cylindrical core which is the tallest and boasts an expressive roof over the terrace. Designed by Bohdan Damięcki and Tadeusz Sieczkowski, the Sailor’s House (1938-1939) was to be an important element of the seaside “Premiere District” comprising the South Pier and adjacent areas.



15. Court building,  
Plac Konstytucji 5



16. Covered market,  
Wójta Radtkego 36-40 St.



17. Former Polish Sailor’s House, today  
the Faculty of Navigation, Gdynia  
Maritime University, Jana Pawła II 3 Ave.



18. Countess Łosiowa’s villa,  
Korzeniowskiego 7 St.



19. Villa, Sieroszewskiego 1a St.



20. BGK building, 10 Lutego 8 St.



21. Marine Terminal Station, Polska 1 St. – during restoration and adaptation



22. Garrison Church in Oksywie, Żeglarzy 9 St.



23. Paged house, Świętojańska 44 St.



24. Krenski's house, Świętojańska 55 St. / Żwirki i Wigury 4 St.

The legacy of Gdynia's modernist avant-garde includes some remarkable luxurious villas which add an interesting touch to the city's architectural landscape. The most prominent are villas and pensions in Kamienna Góra, especially the former villa of countess Magdalena Łosiowa (today the Navy Court, Korzeniowskiego 7, Fig. 18), the villa of captains Antkowiak and Prokulski in Korzeniowskiego 25/25a, Villa Ala in Sienkiewicza 27, Marian Piotrowski's villa in Sieroszewskiego 1a (Fig. 19), and the expressive residential and office building of the company Polskarob in Korzeniowskiego 8/10 (today used by the military). All of them had modernist gardens around them which were designed as an extension of the superbly arranged interiors.

### Moderate Modernism and New Monumentalism

In the period between the world wars the avant-garde movement was accompanied by a more conservative direction in the ideological sense, called Moderate Modernism. Its modern structures and materials and the guarded form went hand in hand with a search for some grandeur and solemnity of architecture, which are two features that the avant-garde rejected categorically. This particular desire nudged the trend almost naturally towards some elements of classic tradition, with the inseparable alliance with symmetric and vertical composition. In the late 1930s the tendency to monumentalise form became quite distinct which explains why the aesthetics of the final years of the period between the world wars is often referred to as New Monumentalism.

The earliest and fairly consistent examples of the style of Moderate Modernism can be seen in the façades of the Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego built between 1928 and 1929 in 10 Lutego (10 Lutego 8). The author of this magnificent building was a young Warsaw architect Konstanty Jakimowicz. The building's architectural layout is made up of a cuboid with a symmetrically composed façade which features a rhythmic sequence of stone pillars that go all the way up and support the substantially extended simple plate of the cornice (Fig. 20).

Moderate Modernism made its way into the port as well. The first example is a reinforced concrete and brick Long Term Storage Facility H (Polska 17). It was built in two stages from 1931 to 1934 based on a design by the engineering company Brygiewicz & Jaskólski (Fig. 36). The façades of this grand building emphasise a plastic contrast between the framework reinforced concrete structure and the red brick filling of the wall. In addition, both main façades, the south and north façades, accentuate three symmetrically distributed communications zones. Given the form of wide vertical accents, they are drawn in the wall as three quasi-pillar porticos. Placed within this layout, between light reinforced concrete pillars of the wall, are vertical strips of glass going all the way up – there are five strips in the central axis and three in each side axis. From the south side facing the city centre the elements are harmoniously crowned with rectangular attics.

Symmetric, vertical composition can also be seen in other important port buildings. With growing emigration in the early 1930s, the city authorities were forced to build a prestigious public building between 1932 and 1933, the Marine Terminal Station (Polska 1). It was given a very characteristic and ceremonial visual setting, both in terms of the façade layout and the interiors of the grand main hall. Placed above the reinforced concrete entrance arcade, along the storey is a strip of narrow, densely distributed lesenes. They are flanked on both sides by symmetric pylons, decorated with an eagle low relief and flagpoles. The Marine Terminal Station became one of Gdynia's most important sites in the period between the world wars. This was Poland's "window on the world"; and this was where the MS *Batory* and MS *Piłsudski*, Poland's legendary liners, would set off on their journey to America. For years the façade and north part of the building had clear marks of the damage of war and it was not until recently that it was rebuilt and brought back to its original glory (Fig. 21). The monumentalised form, however, was best seen in the architecture of places of worship. A flagship example of a Moderate Modernist trend was the design of the Marine Basilica by Bohdan Pniewski, one that was never built. The Basilica was to be part of the Grand District, by the sea, at the base of the Basen Żeglarski. Its concept resembled that of the Church of Divine Providence in Warsaw, Pniewski's earlier project, which was not built either. Both temples had a very impressive shape, rising up with

a rhythm of dense reinforced concrete ribs. The Marine Basilica had a special symbolism. The architect placed three symbolic spires in the finial with three slender "masts" of a three-masted ship at the top, a sign of unification of Poland after the partitions. Designed in Gdynia, a church that was actually built is the neo-classical yet more thrifty with its means of expression, the Garrison Church in Oksywie (Fig. 22). Although designed in 1933, the church was not built until the late 1930s. Its author was the renowned classicist Marian Lalewicz. The lofty and symmetrically composed façade had three parts, with the central one higher than the others and framed with slender, identical lesenes, in between which there were three vertical strips of glass. The sides are slightly lower and have stone cladding at the base with wide strips of smooth plasterwork above (plant sgraffito was only placed on the walls in contemporary times). The monumental and ceremonial composition is accentuated with a long line of stairs running axially towards the entrance.

Elements of distinct vertical composition were also introduced to several of Gdynia's residential buildings. In this case, however, apart from motifs that draw on the classic composition, we can see frequent influences of the aesthetics of Functionalism. References to avant-garde stylistics in the second half of the 1930s were typically made with asymmetric composition of the entire design. Cubist and cuboid shapes were aligned asymmetrically with their corners accentuated with lesenes or small pillars running all the way up. The first time this solution was used was in a residential and office building of the company Paged in Świętojańska 44 (1933-34), designed by Jan Bochniak (Fig. 23). Vertical elements were placed in the asymmetrically composed corner. Designed by Zbigniew Kupiec, the Marian Krenski House in Świętojańska 55 (Fig. 24) offers a very interesting way to shape a townhouse where the entire corner is accentuated with small slender pillars.

A similar aesthetics that combines a drive towards Monumentalism with elements of functionalist composition can be seen in the architecture of a few government buildings built in the second half of the 1930s. The building of the Customs Office in Rotterdamska 9 is an excellent example (1936, today the seat of the Port of Gdynia Authority). It was designed by Stanisław Odyniec-Dobrowolski. The architect contrasted a dynamically shaped structure with a strongly monumental-like rhythm of the stone pillars that accentuate the entrance part of the façade (Fig. 25). Commenced in 1937, the extension of the Government's Commissioner's Office (today the Gdynia City Hall) to add a new wing from the side of Marszałka Piłsudskiego street, eventually created a building with distinct vertical visual divisions. The windows are framed with vertical recesses divided by lesenes with the top of the building crowned with a prominent plate of the cornice (Fig. 26). The design was made by Jerzy Müller and Stefan Reyman.

The vertical lines of reinforced concrete structure became the main architectural motif of the 1938 Cotton House in Derdowskiego 7 (Fig. 27). It was the last of Gdynia's big office buildings in the period between the world wars, the work of the architect named above, Waclaw Tomaszewski.

However, the best example of Modernist Monumentalism in Gdynia is clearly the Grain Elevator in the port of Gdynia (1936). Authored by Bolesław Szmidt, the structure was designed by an engineer Michał Paszkowski. The powerful elevator towering above the Indyjskie quay still displays certain echoes of avant-garde stylistics, but the entire structure is taking distinct strides towards ceremonious asymmetry that accentuates the middle part with sweeping monumental rings to it and vertical alignment (Fig. 28). Yet the structure of the building is thoroughly modern; it is reinforced concrete and pillars. The façade is decorated with a delicate texture of cladding made from light grey cement tiles. The huge structure of the Elevator continues to be the port's landmark and the destination of numerous boat trips on sightseeing tours of the port of Gdynia.

*Maria Jolanta Sołtysik*



25. Gdynia Port Authority building, Rotterdamska 9 St.



26. Gdynia City Hall, Marszałka Piłsudskiego 52/54 Ave.



27. Cotton House, Derdowskiego 7 St.



28. Grain Elevator, Indyjskie quay

## THE CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION OF GDYNIA'S MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE

Gdynia's 1920s and 30s architecture, especially modernist architecture, is the city's trademark. The legal protection of its modernist architecture heritage goes back several decades. Protection measures are often introduced in combination with the restoration of buildings and other features of the urban space. In Gdynia, heritage conservation is pervading the city's natural development and the needs of today. This process is continuous but several events were of key importance in the history of Gdynia's heritage conservation and they are worth revisiting here.

The symbolic beginning of the legal protection of Gdynia's modernist architecture was 1972 when the first modernist building was inscribed in the heritage site register: the ZUS Social Security Agency office building in 10 Lutego 24 (Fig. 29). Designed by Roman Piotrowski, the ZUS building is an outstanding and widely known example of avant-garde architecture completed in 1936. Immediately after World War II, the building was taken over by the PLO Polish Ocean Lines. Its legal protection took place in response to the attempts to make adverse changes to it. The difference in height between the two parts of the building tempted the user to line up their height with the addition of an upper storey. The building's new user had applied for a vertical extension of the building's lower part already in the 1950s. What had accounted for the building's uniqueness was to become the reason for its deformation. The building has retained its original structure until today owing to the determination of conservation officers and architects. The then regional heritage conservation officer in Gdańsk, Tadeusz Chrzanowski, began a crusade to stop the extension. He was supported by an expert report from the Gdańsk University of Technology's Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning which stated that a vertical extension of this outstanding building was unacceptable. An additional argument was that the register of the Gdańsk Voivodship's heritage architecture and buildings, compiled by Lech Krzyżanowski and published in 1972, included 8 heritage assets from Gdynia. The only 1920s or 1930s item listed among them was the ZUS building in 10 Lutego 24. The decision to recognise it as a heritage asset was issued already that year. This involved strict conservation measures to end any ideas to deform the structure. This was the third item from Gdynia, in all, introduced to the register after World War II.

Since 2008, the building has been used by the Gdynia City Hall. The purchase of the building by the Municipality of Gdynia was a conscious decision of the city authorities who wanted to have control over the city's symbolic landmark.

In the years that followed, more than 20 other Gdynia modernist buildings were inscribed in the heritage register. The protected heritage list includes buildings of very diverse functions: port structures, public and residential buildings of various size, including townhouses and villas.

The next important stage in the process of preserving Gdynia's heritage was to recognise the entire Gdynia centre urban layout as a heritage asset (Fig. 39). The inscription of this almost 90 ha, intensively built-up area was preceded by long preparations. The project was initiated by Gdynia's local authorities but the procedure was carried out in close partnership and collaboration with, among others, the municipal and voivodship conservation authorities, 1920s and 1930s architecture experts and local associations. This made it possible to prepare the required documentation efficiently and to follow through with the complex administrative procedure. The project culminated in the decision on centre of Gdynia's inscription in the heritage register being presented by the then Voivodship Monument Conservation Officer Marian Kwapiński to the Deputy Mayor of Gdynia Marek Stepa at the opening of the first International Conference entitled Modernism in Europe - Modernism in Gdynia in September 2007.

The conservation coverage of a large central complex was also a result of efforts to protect not just individual heritage items but whole areas of cultural value. The protected area includes about 450 buildings with a population of over a dozen thousand. The conservation of such a large area is a huge challenge which should be regulated by specific and clear principles.

The conservation principles have been developed and adopted in the local zoning plans which cover the heritage centre area. Equivalent and uniform planning provisions on heritage conservation are being introduced in other parts of the city as well. These unified principles have introduced three heritage conservation groups, corresponding to the buildings' cultural value. Each of these three conservation stages is related to a different degree of permitted interference into the protected building. This particular valorisation is the result of collaboration between urban planners, architects and heritage conservation authorities. It is an example of how heritage conservation principles can be shaped at the local government level.

Legal protection for the most outstanding examples of the 1920s and 1930s architecture is no longer cause for major debate. However, the conservation status of post-World War II buildings remains controversial. Even the good architecture of that period can trigger political associations in some. In Gdynia, a heated discussion accompanied the granting of heritage status to the Gdynia



29. The ZUS building, later the PLO building, today Gdynia City Hall, 10 Lutego 24 St.



30. Gdynia Railway Station, Plac Konstytucji 1



31. Gdynia Railway Station, Plac Konstytucji 1 – a mosaic depicting a seaport



32. Gdynia Railway Station, Plac Konstytucji 1 – detail of a hall with a mosaic

Główna Railway Station complex. History repeated itself and, much like in the case of the ZUS building, there were ideas to significantly transform or even partially tear down the ensemble. This would have been an irretrievable loss. The complex's most important long-distance railway station building from 1950-55 was designed by Waław Tomaszewski, an architect connected with Gdynia since before World War II. Inconspicuous on the outside, its interior conceals veritable works of art created by outstanding artists and architects (Fig. 30-32). There is magnificent stone flooring, elegant wooden panelling, stylish lanterns and doors, multicoloured mosaics and an impressive ceiling with a zodiac motif painting. The greatest priority is to preserve the building with its original interior. In 2008, the Gdynia Główna Railway Station complex was inscribed in the Pomorskie Voivodship Heritage Register. This had been initiated by Gdynia's Local Government. Concerns that conservator protection would fossilise the building's disrepair proved to be unfounded. Despite this protection, or perhaps even owing to it, the station's refurbishment and adaptation became one of the major projects in the run-up to the 2012 European Football Championships. After the refurbishment and restoration, the railway station showed its new face, resembling that from the 1950s. It should be considered a success that, after the project had been completed and the railway station opened, the criticism subsided. Today, the new railway station inspires general interest, in fact even awe and admiration.

The railway station's newly gained heritage status and the good results of its restoration have caused a certain change in public attitudes towards post-World War II buildings. It has been appreciated that this group of buildings also includes uniquely valuable historical monuments. Time has somewhat eroded their appeal but they are a relic of a certain period in Poland's history which also had outstanding architects, builders and craftspeople. The heritage status granted to the railway station began a trend to protect other post-war buildings. Legal protection for selected valuable structures is now set forth in the new local master plans developed by the city of Gdynia.

Conservation coverage is a closure to a certain stage of review and selection. In many cases, it also opens a new stage which includes preservation and restoration. Assorted restoration projects on modernist buildings are something completely natural in Gdynia today. Very often, they are performed by specialised restoration companies, along with experienced craftspeople who are familiar with the building techniques used in the 1920s and 1930s. Each year, at least a dozen valuable modernist buildings undergo restoration, most often of their façades. This is contributed to by the City of Gdynia budget subsidy system for projects that include buildings with heritage status and those located in heritage areas. Especially good results are yielded by collaboration with the owners of the buildings located in the heritage area of Gdynia's centre (Fig. 33). The restoration programme for heritage area buildings provides subsidies of 30, 50 or 75% of the total project budget, depending on the building's heritage status group, which in turn follows from its cultural value assessment. Restoration very often targets stone clad façades, grey cement brick façades and traditional redbrick façades. It also includes modernist architecture's typical façades faced with ceramic and cement tiles or rendered with various types of plasterwork. Ceramic or terrazzo flooring, windows and doors or even building furnishings are also being restored. As the owner of several listed heritage sites, the city of Gdynia also runs various restoration projects on them. The most important ones include the commenced comprehensive restoration and modernisation of the former ZUS building, now Gdynia City Hall in 10 Lutego, and the Municipal Market Halls complex. This work will continue for several more years.

The modernist heritage is associated with very ambitious and comprehensive projects. There is the widely publicised example of the already described railway station which, soon after receiving heritage status, underwent comprehensive restoration, but also the development of its underground section, completed in 2012. A lesser-known but also spectacular project from recent years was the conversion of garage halls from 1939 into the Pomeranian Science and Technology Park. With three reinforced concrete barrel roofs, they were built as part of a public transport depot (Fig. 34). After 2000, they lost their function but a new purpose was found for them. Today, they are part of the Pomeranian Science and Technology Park and help develop new technology start-ups. The conversion design emphasises the bold reinforced-concrete structure of the building.

The disappearance of historical functions and the necessity to look for other uses pertains to modernist buildings in the same way as to other historical structures. The advanced structural solutions and functional design standards applied in the 1920s and 30s buildings certainly make such conversions easier but the most important problem remains: to find and adapt a new purpose to the nature of the building. This direction of thinking and action is exemplified by the currently ongoing conversion of the Maritime Terminal (Dworzec Morski) in Polska 1 into the Museum of Emigration (Fig. 35). This 1933 modernist landmark symbolically combines the aspects of the seaport and the city. In the 1930s and after World War II, it set the scene for the transatlantic liners MS *Piłsudski*,



33. Townhouse in Świętojańska 89 St. after restoration



34. Bus depot, Zwycięstwa 96/98 Ave. - after conversion into the Pomeranian Science and Technology Park



35. Maritime Terminal, Polska 1 St. - project launch ceremony: Conversion of the Maritime Terminal into the Museum of Emigration



36. Long Term Storage Facility H, Polska 17 St. - after restoration





37. Mini-museum in the FE BGK townhouse, 3 Maja 27-31 St. – reconstructed bathroom



38. Signs on Gdynia's Modernism Route

MS *Batory* and TSS *Stefan Batory*, which moored right next to it. It would also come alive during the city's various celebrations and events. In recent years, however, the building has not had any leading or permanent function. Its conversion into the Museum of Emigration will ensure its long-term use, with free access to the public. The design also includes the reconstruction of part of the building destroyed during World War II, including the reconstruction of the Polish eagle reliefs on the façade which had been removed by the Nazi. Before the war, the Terminal was visited by high ranking officials including Poland's President Ignacy Mościcki. In January 2012, the Terminal hosted President Bronisław Komorowski, who explored the idea of the Museum of Emigration. The opening of the Maritime Terminal after its conversion took place in May 2015. It gives an opportunity to visit this attractive Museum and also to see outstanding modernist architecture in its revived version.

The city of Gdynia would not have come to be without the seaport and its infrastructure. Therefore, it is worth restating that several 1920s and 1930s port buildings are listed as heritage sites and still successfully fulfil their functions. Such outstanding examples of architecture as the Rice Mill (Łuszczarnia Ryżu, Fig. 5), the Port Cold Store (Chłodnia Portowa, Fig. 6), the Grain Elevator (Elewator Zbożowy, Fig. 28) or the Long Term Storage Facility (Magazyn Długoterminowy) are veritable symbols of the Port of Gdynia. They also prove that industrial development also had its particular architectural appeal. These buildings need to remain operational and are technologically upgraded as necessary. On the other hand, however, they also undergo restoration. The recent façade restoration of the Grain Elevator at Indyjskie quay or the Long Term Storage Facility in Polska (Fig. 36) was a huge project undertaken by the Port of Gdynia Authority. The size of these buildings and the huge surface of these façades cause the project budgets to count in millions of zlotys.

Many positive measures related to Gdynia's heritage are made possible by the involvement of the local community who identify with their city. A remarkable example of community action is the house museum established by the Bankowiec Homeowner Association in their building in 3 Maja 27-31 (Fig. 37). This non-commercial project is the initiative of the owners and residents who feel strongly connected to their place of abode. The mini-museum is open to the public and attracts a significant number of visitors. This example shows that heritage conservation is becoming more and more of a community task.

The city of Gdynia carries out a variety of education and outreach programs, with many publications, exhibitions, lectures and conferences. The "Modernism in Europe - Modernism in Gdynia" conference cycle organised by the City of Gdynia inspires much interest among experts and enthusiasts alike. Each year, the tourist offer is also expanded (Fig. 38). The Gdynia's modernist heritage measures are comprehensive in nature. Within the existing legal framework, which is imperfect, cultural heritage conservation and restoration are successfully implemented, with active participation from all stakeholders. It is a cohesive system in which all the partners work together, in which conservation restrictions imposed especially on private homeowners are noticeably compensated by public funding. In February 2015, Gdynia's historical city centre was given, by the President of Republic of Poland, a status of the Historic Monument and it has become one of the sixty monuments of national relevance. The Gdynia example shows the direction to be followed in our cultural heritage preservation.

*Robert Hirsch*



39. Bird's eye view of the Gdynia's centre urban layout

Photo by Maciej Bejma

■ Part I

*Examples and Icons of Modernism in Architecture  
and Town Planning*