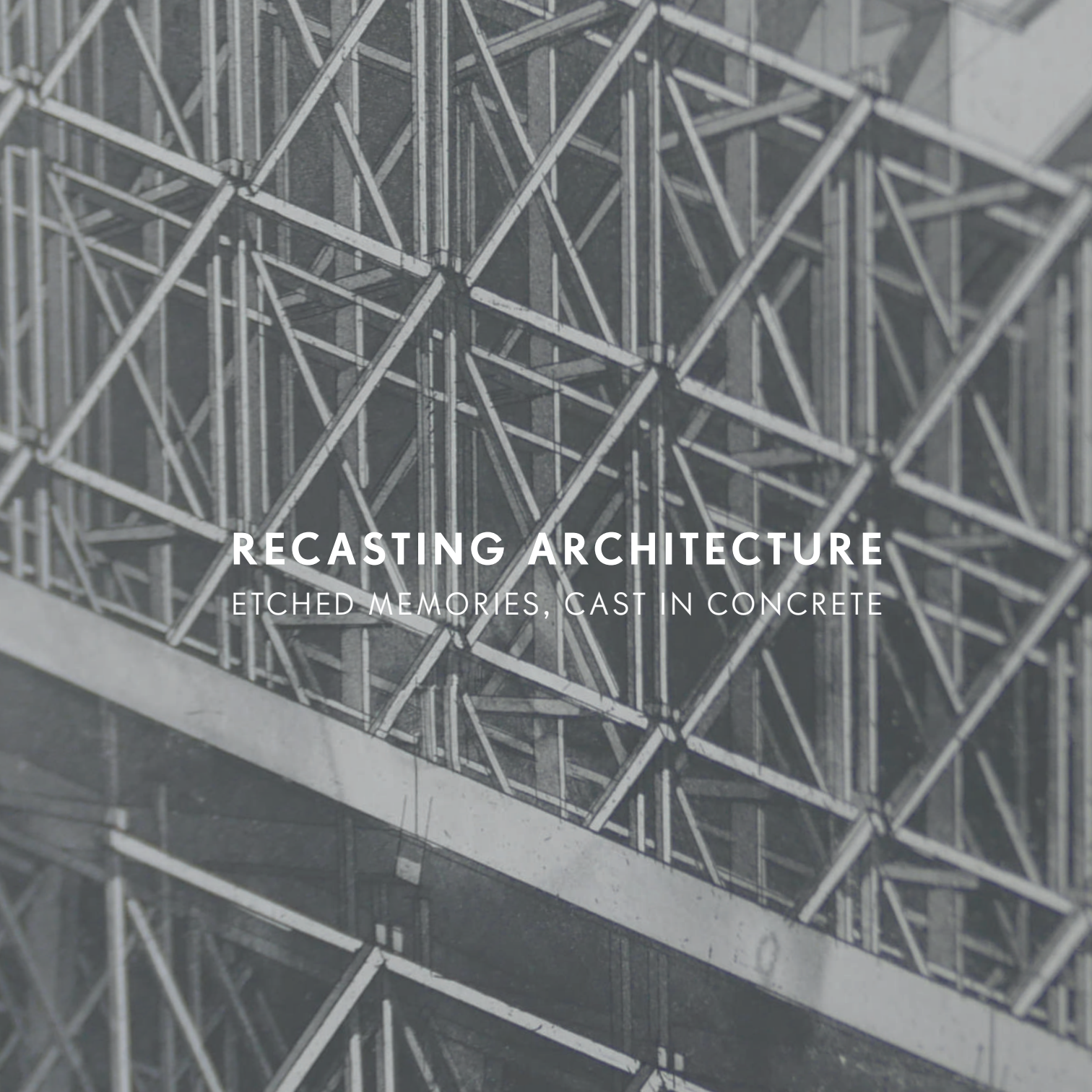

RECASTING ARCHITECTURE

ETCHED MEMORIES, CAST IN CONCRETE

THE EUGENIUSZ GEPPERT ACADEMY OF ART AND DESIGN

FACULTY OF GRAPHICS AND MEDIA ART

DOCTORAL THESIS IN THE FIELD OF THE ARTS,

IN THE DISCIPLINE – FINE ARTS AND ART CONSERVATION

RECASTING ARCHITECTURE

ETCHED MEMORIES, CAST IN CONCRETE

V I N I C I U S L I B A R D O N I

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For all we have lost.

Abstract

This doctoral thesis provides a tool for readers to understand the motivations behind carrying out the practical body of work it accompanies. It starts with my journey with architecture and then details my introduction to printmaking and the significance this process holds regarding the methods employed. Finally, it tells the stories of eight modern buildings that have been recently destroyed and used as inspiration for the realization of this doctoral work. Through eight case studies, this practice-based research seeks to analyze the causes and consequences of the recent and ongoing erasure of modern architectural structures built in the time of the People's Republic of Poland. Recasting a material record of these lost architectures through the creation of printed objects brings them back into the circuit of existence, thus allowing them to be physically experienced again. This research contemplates the discussion of the importance of this process and my subsequent development of etched concrete printed sculpture.

The practical work combines etching techniques with material exploration of the architecture and construction industries as a way to answer questions about the role of architecture and memory. By memorizing lost architectures in print, it explores the tactile characteristics of the materials and values common to architecture such as mass, weight and gravity, pushing the field of printmaking beyond its boundaries and thus establishing a new artistic practice and field of study. Finally, it explores how these tectonic objects can be a tool to reconstruct the narratives of these buildings and empathetic aesthetic experiences. The outcome of this doctoral work is a series of eight etched concrete printed sculptures which combine the aesthetics of craft, the tactile characteristics of the materials, and the constructive solutions themselves.

Acknoledgements

I lack words to express my gratitude to all the people that somehow collaborated with the accomplishment of this doctoral work. First, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Przemysław Tyszkiewicz, whose role has extended beyond that of a mentor to a friend. I want to extend my most profound appreciation to all the other teachers, employees, colleagues, and students at the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wroclaw for warmly embracing me as one of their own from the very first day.

I am also grateful to the Director of the Wroclaw Museum of Architecture, Michał Duda, for opening its doors to me, for having believed in the potential of this work when it was still just an idea, and for the unique opportunity to present it to the public in a context that further reinforces its relevance. Many thanks to my curator Kuba Żary, for his keen eye and giving this exhibition an even more concrete meaning. Additionally, I could not fail to mention the generous support of the City of Wroclaw for the many incentives provided throughout my stay in this city that I have learned to call home.

This journey would never have been possible without the support of my dearest and most beloved friend Maggie Middleton, who crossed an entire ocean to help me find the strength to complete this work at the moment I needed it the most, for the endless early morning feedback sections, for her immeasurable editing help, for the consistently accurate comments and suggestions that made this text far deeper and more meaningful, and finally, for the emotional support and unconditional friendship without which I would never have made it this far.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

The doctoral thesis *Recasting Architecture: Etched Memories, Cast in Concrete* is a tool for readers to understand the motivations that led me to carry out the practical body of work, *Memento*. Developed within the framework of the Doctoral School of the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wroclaw, *Memento* is an artistic project that aims to promote a more comprehensive overview of the current condition of the modern architectural heritage built in times of the People's Republic of Poland, which has been subjected to constant and progressive devastation over the past decades. As remarkable examples of post-war Polish architecture continue to be systematically removed from urban landscapes, any effort to highlight the relevance of preserving these objects can be considered crucial.

I decided to undertake the challenge of carrying out doctoral work at the confluence of the fields of art and architecture as a way to answer questions about the role of architecture and memory. I combined etching techniques with material exploration of the architecture and construction industries as my tools for research. Within this framework, this doctoral work seeks to analyze, through eight case studies, the causes and consequences of the recent and ongoing erasure of modern architectural structures built in the time of the People's Republic of Poland. This research promotes the potential of the unfolding of the image in space through the creation of printed objects, which recast a material record of these lost architectures, bringing them back into the circuit of existence and thus allowing them to be physically experienced once again.

While there are still several obstacles and difficulties to be overcome when it comes to effectively protecting modern Polish architecture, the importance of this doctoral work lies in the capacity of the image as artistic expression to promote empathy between different groups of people and thus build a dialogue that can inspire change within society. In casting the image of lost structures in concrete, by combining the aesthetics of craft, the tactile characteristics of materials, and architecture's constructive solutions in an entirely novel artistic experiment, I seek to unearth these buildings and their stories and keep them in the circuit of existence even if only in the realm of the imagery.

This document is organized into three sections; the first narrates my journey with architecture, the origin of my interest in it and the reasons that led me to this path, the second section detail my introduction to printmaking and the significance this process holds regarding the practical work, culminating in the third section that tells the stories of each of the eight modern buildings that have been destroyed and that I have chosen to memorialize in print. In the process of creating this document, I found that research became more than a tool to uncover the stories of the individual structures chosen and reconstruct the narratives of their disappearance; it also became a method

to reflect on the origins of my interest in architecture. Far from home, while reflecting on the spaces and buildings of my youth within my memory, that I conceived the possibility of experiencing architecture through imagination; it was this remoteness that taught me that specific structures, even when unreachable in their materiality, can be revisited in our sensory experience, which is an integral concept to the construction of the prints of *Memento*.

The first section details my initial encounter with architecture during my youth and how this relationship evolved throughout my life. As a timid child, I spent most of my time imagining things. With pencil in hand, I first found in drawing, a tool to build bridges between reality and my interiority, and over time it became my primary tool to unveil and understand the world around me. In its ability to bring to light things that, at first, are invisible to the eye, drawing is much more than just a mere tool for representing reality. From my point of view, drawing is an invitation to prophecies and daydreaming. Taking into consideration the importance of drawing in my journey as an architect and later in discovering myself as a visual artist, I decided to begin the narrative of this text by recalling from memory key moments from my childhood and youth. Firstly as a method to rediscover and understand the origins of my interest in art and architecture. Then, to offer the reader a glimpse of my intimate relationship with the object of study of this doctoral thesis.

Traveling through the geography of my familiar and personal journey with architecture, I touched on some of the ideas and concepts that guided the practical work and that I consider of fundamental importance to understand its processes and outcomes in greater depth.

The vast majority of the authors referenced in this written work are architects, architectural critics and historians. Considering this a practice-based research situated at the confluence of the disciplines of art and architecture, I sought not only to build a dialogue with these authors, but most importantly, to present evidence to support the concepts and questions outlined throughout the narrative. Furthermore, acknowledging the fact that as an outsider, I am not the authority could never reach the proper dimension of many political, social and cultural aspects related to these buildings and the historical period in which they were built, I sought support from in the voice of authors and experts of Polish political and architectural history for whom this territory is like their home garden.

The second section describes the discovery of a new context and a new language and how I approach architecture once again through printmaking. When I moved to Poland in 2017, having never visited the country before, I quickly realized the complexity of the historical, cultural, and social context in which I was immersing myself. Impressed by a reality utterly dissimilar to where I was coming from, isolated in a new environment alien to me, I was seized by a desire for understanding. I wanted to make this place my own, a place where I could navigate and feel a sense of belonging. The prospect that this would be my new home for the next few years propelled me to learn all about the place where I arrived.

Upon leaving my home country, I decided to leave behind my past as a skilled architect and to start over from scratch - giving up a professional practice that seemed to me at the time to have run out of meaning and to then learn a new artistic language that would allow me to rediscover my sense of joy. A pleasure that I had rediscovered in the art of printmaking. The creative satisfaction found in my brief experience with printing techniques was the motivation I needed to cross an entire ocean in search of a dream of becoming an artist.

Although I was looking to move away from architecture into the world of art, ironically, it was in exploring and mastering etching techniques that I rediscovered my fascination with my former profession. In the pleasure found in tracing precise lines on the varnished surface of the metal plate, I rediscovered my passion for drawing. In traversing the territory of the etched plate with my hands, in feeling the roughness of the engraved drawing with my fingertips, I regained the enthusiasm found in materiality. The mirroring of the matrix on the paper's surface reflected the unlimited potential of architecture's representation. I finally found my way to make architecture through the art of printmaking.

This second section also examines the importance of the process of printmaking and my subsequent development of etched concrete printed sculpture. This discussion of process reveals how these tectonic objects can serve as a tool to reconstruct these buildings' narratives and empathetic aesthetic experiences. Unlike images printed on two-dimensional surfaces such as paper, these prints cast in space through the use of constructive materials such as plaster-cement, explore the tactile characteristics of the materials and values common to architecture such as mass, weight and gravity, pushing the field of printmaking beyond its boundaries and thus establishing a new artistic practice and field of study.

The third and final section is divided into eight subchapters that are named after a specific building built during the People's Republic of Poland and demolished over the past few years. The buildings chosen are: Międzynarodowy Dworzec Lotniczy Warszawa-Okęcie, Supersam w Warszawie, Dworzec Kolejowy w Katowicach, Rotunda PKO w Warszawie, Dom Meblowy „Emilia" w Warszawie, and Hala Widowiskowo-Sportowa „Urania" w Olsztynie. As case studies, these buildings and their histories were used as inspiration for the realization of the practical work *Memento*, composed of eight graphic experiments that will finally be presented to the public during the final exhibition at the end of this education course.

Against this background, this doctoral research developed on two fronts, one speculative and the other practical, resulting respectively in this doctoral thesis and the collection of printed objects presented in this paper. While the writing helped me to approach and understand in more depth the reasons that led me to undertake this work and the context in which it was produced, the realization of the graphic experiments served as a mechanism to emulate the exercise of my previous profession and thus re-approximate myself to it. While this desire to approach architecture through artistic practice guided me to explore different materials and constructive solutions and adapt them to printmaking, the eagerness to discover and learn discover new things and learn from this new context led me to dive headlong into research that revealed so much more about the sociopolitical landscape of Polish architecture than I ever could have imagined.

FIRST SECTION

Learning to See

During the last visit to my hometown, while I was thinking about starting the final draft of this doctoral dissertation, I came across something that made me reflect for the umpteenth time on the reasons that led me to do this work. The machines were still roaming over the flat surface of the now utterly empty demolition zone where the city Theater once stood. Through the dust raised by those heavy vehicles, no trace of the enormous building that once occupied that plot could be seen—a building that was very close to my heart, a place that I used to frequent often. Having been very present for much of my childhood, a place associated with countless memories, was nowhere to be seen.

Although I feel that these memories will always remain within me, they now seem more fragile. Its disappearance had forever broken the bond that associated them with that building of complex shapes and vibrant colors. On the occasion of my last several trips to the city, this was a place that I liked to revisit. It was the way I reconnected with those memories. As if the existence of this somber building validated my memories.

I was not yet ten years old when I started visiting that building. My mother had enrolled me in the first drawing class, a previously unheard activity in the city, which was being offered by the city hall as part of the educational program to bring life to the newly opened Cultural Center.

As a somewhat introspective child living in a small town where there was not much to do, I found drawing, both a refuge and a distraction. Likewise, my mother also thought it would be an excellent idea for me to attend drawing classes, which I enthusiastically accepted.. As the youngest in the class, it was to be expected that I would encounter specific difficulties with some of the tasks, especially with life drawing. Human anatomy seemed to me to be something unsuitable. I couldn't translate those forms onto the surface of the paper.

On the other hand, I had an enormous facility for drawing inanimate objects, especially those with geometric shapes. There was something almost natural in the two-dimensional representation of those forms. To these, it was simpler to apply the rules of perspective, everything seemed to make sense and I experienced immense pleasure in what I was doing.

Of all my recollections of that time, I remember the first day we left the classroom to draw outdoors. The decision about the choice of theme was also free. I don't know precisely why I chose to draw the building while most of my colleagues were more interested in flowers or people walking their dogs or strollers. Such a choice has to do fundamentally with the way we observe the world around us. It has to do with what catches our attention, the things that attract us and preoccupy our minds. In this

sense, the best tool for drawing is the eye. To be able to represent, we need first to size things up. And to be able to measure something, we need to compare, to confront them with our bodies. To design a building is to take it apart and put it back again, manipulate and connect each of its components, and feel each of its materials in our hands. Ultimately, translating its form onto paper is a way to learn it and, from this understanding, embed it in our intimate universe.

From that exercise, I realized that drawing is a way to see, or better, a way of making things be seen. When I got home and proudly showed my mother the drawing, she seemed surprised. Not for the general quality of the drawing itself, which was as good as a drawing made by the hands of a child of only nine years old could be, but for a peculiar detail of the roof. After a while of looking at the drawing, she asked me, "is this part of the roof really like this?" "I think it is," I answered, "at least that's what I saw."

A few days later, she came back to me and said, "Son, you know, I walked by the theater this morning, and the roof is just the way you drew it. I never noticed it before. You have a good eye for these things. Well done." That remark made me sit up and take notice. It struck me that she had seen something she had never noticed before in that building, not because she had never looked at it, but because she had never seen it that way.

That magical effect I discovered in drawing, of being able to reveal something about what is seen but not perceived, took hold of me. Something was fascinating about this mechanism. It is as if, through the representation of things, they could be seen more clearly. In this regard, I discovered that drawing was more than a tool for expression but a mechanism for understanding the world around me. Following this first discovery, I observed things with more curiosity, especially the buildings I came across along the way. The act of drawing became an exercise to educate the eye, learn to see, and understand what one sees.

After a few years of assiduously attending drawing classes, my teacher convinced me that I should move on from drawing to painting. She said that this was the only way for me to keep improving, that I should think about pursuing a career, studying seriously, and maybe one day becoming an artist. Until then, I had never thought about what I wanted to aspire to become one day. It was enough for me at the moment to attend those drawing classes—that was the only thing that interested me.

When I look back on the painting classes I started taking that summer, perhaps the most pleasant memory I can remember is of the smell of that studio. That oily smell. The smell of fresh paint permeated the whole atmosphere of that place. Apart from that, I remember very little of my first contact with the canvases and brushes. It took only a few meetings to entirely lose interest in what I was doing. There was something about it that didn't work, that didn't reach me, or perhaps, was just too far out of my reach. And although my mother keeps the few canvases I painted hanging on the wall at her home to this day, every time I revisit that house, I try to avoid them, knowing she will never take them down. If that was the only way to become an artist, this was not an option. So, if ever such an idea had occurred to me, after that experience, I had buried and locked it away once and for all.

Staring at that empty space, trying to remember the exact place where the theater used to stand, I realized that I ended up not going to that place as often anymore because of the painting classes. Something made me realize that perhaps this experience was the root of my bad relationship with painting, because it had taken away the pleasure I had discovered in that place.

It was only a matter of time before I would want to withdraw from painting classes. And it happened precisely during the height of my teenage years—so that letdown only further fueled the identity crisis that, like every human being at this stage of life, I was bound to go through.

A few years later, I stumbled upon that building again, but in a rather unexpected way. I was at my best friend's house, who had recently moved from across town to the same street where I lived. As I loved spending time with him, I felt I spent more time at his place than at mine after he moved closer. Moreover, his was a truly fantastic house. It had a monumental roof composed of two sloping planes that seemed to go from the ground to the sky, and although this is the correct term, to say that it was a *gable house* seems entirely out of place.

Further enhancing its surreal character, that gigantic roof seemed to be suspended, delicately resting on a light wooden structure. It was as if something had been consciously left incomplete in the construction of that house. As if whoever built it didn't want to finish it. Or rather, it was as if the builder didn't want to leave. Not that the house looked unfinished, quite the contrary. It was just a simple complementary structure, which subtly gave the impression that its builder was still around. Something that did not seem to bother the new residents in the least, as if they were even proud of that fact.

Below that roof, a house full of nooks and crannies revealed itself, surprising spaces that ran through it, that unfolded horizontally and vertically. It also had an observation tower, from which one could see the entire panorama of the city and beyond. However, to get there, we had to go through the office—so we could only go there when my friend's father was not working at home. And it was precisely on one of these days that I entered that room for the first time. The space was precisely under the roof ridge so that it seemed much higher than it was so that I felt I was entering a kind of chapel. Indirect light filled the space, giving it an almost sacred atmosphere. A large drawing board was next to the huge floor-to-ceiling window, leaning like a flower toward the sun. On it was a sheet of paper that took up almost the entire length of the table's surface. Precisely drawn lines, angles, joints, horizontal and vertical surfaces, numbers and textures. There was a world to be discovered. Fascinated by so many details, I didn't realize that my friend was calling me to climb the tower by the door. As if guessing what was going through my mind, he said: "it's one of my father's projects. It's the city Theater."

The world stopped turning for a moment. Yes, I knew that building; I recognized those forms. But it was written in a strange language, something I had never seen before. I felt something strangely familiar, as if this drawing was telling me something, a secret that needed to be unraveled. I knew that there was a message to be deciphered. However, it was very far from my understanding. Even today, decades later, that memory remains very fresh in

my mind. That feeling of discovering something without knowing exactly what. Every element, and every line, detail, section. A text, but written through images, indecipherable codes and strange symbols-and even though I could not understand them, everything I saw seemed to make complete sense. So that's what my friend's father did. He spoke the language of the buildings. He communicated with them and through them.

I couldn't think of anything else for days. That drawing was the most fascinating thing I had ever seen. Such a thing was what I wanted to do. I had to discover that mysterious language, learn that vocabulary, all its codes and symbols. I wanted to know how to read and write in that language. I wished to speak the language of buildings to hear what they had to say. I wanted to tell the world their secrets and mysteries. Nothing else excited me more than the idea of one day becoming this kind of person.

Finding the Way

The decision to choose my profession was a very natural one. Above all, I felt that it was a choice that made sense, not only considering my skills and interests but also taking into account the place I came from. Especially since I had already rejected the idea of becoming an artist—something that could never have been considered a real option.

From the start I had a taste for drawing, and what's more, I liked to draw. Additionally, I always had a facility with numbers; mathematics was always my favorite subject in school. The ease with which I learned physics even earned me a mentoring job the year before college. Geography and history were subjects I took great pleasure in. Aside from that, I loved to build things. I also destroyed them—though I was never proud of it. Deconstructing things was my way of discovering their secrets and mechanisms. On the other hand, building them came from a desire to understand how things were made.

From a very early age, construction has always been present and tangible in my life. I was born and grew up in a city under construction. It was as though practically everything was still missing, it also meant much was yet to be done. Construction was not a choice. It was a need, or rather, a condition. Buildings under construction were everywhere. It was impossible to avoid them. The city my parents lived in had just celebrated its 35th anniversary on the day I was born. And when it comes to an urban structure, it is like it was being born with me. The fact is that throughout my childhood, I witnessed the construction of a whole new city. I quickly became older than the vast majority of its buildings.

As with the school building, which didn't even exist when the long-awaited first day of classes arrived. The situation compelled my parents and other friends with children of the same age to get together, found a school and build it themselves so that their children would have a place to go when they were working. I don't remember much about that time. What I do remember is what it was like to dwell in a building under construction. I also recall an immense concrete wall in the backyard, from which a whole set of exposed rebar was sticking out, pointing in the direction that the building was to grow in the next few years. And it did grow and develop. I remember the enormous sandbox with which the workers were always busy and that it was forbidden for us to go there. I will never forget the vast openings with red iron frames divided into hundreds of small square glass panes. I can even smell the fresh putty that permeated the atmosphere of the classroom in a very special way when I think of that building.

I loved that place. Not that the building itself was a masterpiece of whoever designed it. In fact, like that one, most of the buildings in that city were very simple. It seemed

that nobody wanted to complicate their lives by building complex structures. There was no time for such a thing. It was necessary to build so that people could live. It was about creating spaces so that the city could carry on growing. And in fact, it was growing at a much faster pace than it was feasible to build under those conditions. As a result, buildings had to be inhabited before they were complete. So it all seemed to me that everything was in constant motion; I inhabited a shape-shifting place where decisions had to be made along the way. My impression was that I was living on an endless construction site. Which, from my point of view, was something fascinating.

It seems like just yesterday that we moved out for the last time. Although my parents had long announced that we were going to "the new house," when we unloaded the moving truck, it didn't look new at all—or rather, not even ready. There was still a lot of work to be done before it could be called home. Its walls were still unpainted, and since the newly sown grass had not yet shown signs of existence, the house seemed utterly inaccessible, isolated in the middle of that dark black mud yard. On the driveway next to the street, there was a massive pile of used timber formwork, and next to it, heaps of paving stones which were supposed to connect the road and the front door. But it wasn't the appearance of the house that caught my attention. It was more about what wasn't there that intrigued me the most. Like the doors that were supposed to divide the interior spaces but had not yet been installed. Between the empty doorways, only a single continuous space flowed from the kitchen to the bathroom, which unfolded down the stairway joining the attic to the basement. It was hard to leave or hide, and I could feel the presence of everyone in that house. We were finally all together all the time. For me, that house was a place full of life, and this was an experience that brought me a great deal of joy.

As one of the first people to settle in the neighborhood, I was able to closely follow the construction of each of the nearby houses, from the ground leveling to the arrival of the new residents. It became common for me to get to know the places before the people who were supposed to live in them. I used to spend most of my free time exploring those buildings. Houses under construction provided the perfect backdrop for any game a child is capable of coming up with. What I liked best was to imagine what life would be like for the people who would inhabit those still empty spaces one day. And in a certain way, by imagining them, I could feel that they were already there. It is as if that exercise of imagination granted that imaginary experience a real dimension when associated with a physical space. So as soon as the real people arrived, and we occasionally bumped into each other in the neighborhood, I always had a feeling that I had known them before.

Experiencing Architecture

That's because the imperfection of those structures, still empty of life, was a laboratory of possibilities, an invitation to my imagination. Building a mental image of what could be was a way to give a future to that experience of the present. In this, there was a desire to perpetuate that experience. Sooner or later, I knew that they would finish those construction sites and that, sooner or later, I would be unable to access their spaces. As the buildings advanced in time, the more they became inaccessible. In this sense, a structure under construction was not only an appeal to the imagination but a standing invitation to experience its spaces.

While leaving those buildings for the last time, I used to keep something of theirs with me, an object that would serve as a keepsake of that experience. Something that I could return to, that would keep that experience, in some way, forever present with me. A kind of souvenir. An object to which I became attached, hopping that it could keep that experience, and all the sensations and images it triggered, in the circuit of existence—so that it would not be forgotten, and that I could revisit the emotions and feelings that stem from the physical encounter with the materiality of the built space.

I might say that, first of all, that was an intuitive choice because my interest in drawing and construction was something that could have led me to become an engineer. It turned out that architecture was not within my vocabulary; it was not something I heard about very often, or rather, I had no idea what defined the work of an architect. I considered it to be a profession that was the process of designing and constructing buildings. Period. Drawing and construction. Two closely related things in my life. The architect's work was what bound these two things together, what made them inseparable. And this suited me because these two things brought together everything that was most intimate to me.

As time went by, drawing had become more than a mere subterfuge, more than a pretext. Drawing was the way I had found to express myself. It was something that defined me, from which my being had become inseparable. And through this, I understood things. Buildings had also become something more than a place to hide, a home for introspection, a retreat. Buildings had permeated my entire existence and therefore held a very special position in my life. Moreover, structures under construction operated as the main driving force for my imagination. As if one thing fed another, a cycle that gave a sense of meaning to my existence—a sense of place in the world.

From this standpoint, I realized that architecture was not only a way to bring these two things together but to endow them with another meaning. It operated as a mechanism to translate ideas into reality—to make visible the invisible. A way of doing that would transform drawings into blueprints. In this light, architecture was the key that would allow me to access a still unknown world, where I would find the answers to many of the questions that inhabited my mind. Finally the time had come to experiment with architecture.

My first significant discovery was understanding that architecture is both a science and a form of art. A discipline both objective and subjective. architecture is not only limited to the conceptualization and materialization of concrete structures made of materials such as brick and stone.Even the simplest hut carries a meaning that goes far beyond its four walls and a roof.

Architecture is the built space as a conveyor of meaning. It has its roots in the primitive human need for shelter, and in this sense, architecture goes far beyond the merely visual, and therefore cannot be reduced only to its formal and objective features. The subjectivity of architecture lies in the fact that it is informed by life, by the lives of the people it shelters. What's more, architecture, as the space of life, is mainly about what one feels, about the sensations, associations and memories that the encounter with its physical materiality awakens in us. Therefore, architecture not only answers questions of objective character, such as need or necessity, but it also materializes people's desires, their most intimate wishes and their most precious dreams. It is a kind of reflection of these longings, the built expression of the essence of human life, not only as individuals but especially as a society. And so to say, its presence covers a much broader time than it is possible to experience from an individual point of view, so through architecture, we transcend our existence.

The second and perhaps most pivotal discovery was that there is no beginning and no end in architecture. This is because it is impossible to pinpoint a defining moment. The dynamics of its existence are embedded in how it reverberates in and through people's lives. The built space and its experience will never be disassociated because architecture is bound with life. Only through the complete absence of human life would architecture one day cease to exist.

The fact that it is impossible to determine time, or duration in architecture, also has to do with the form in which it is established. As a consequence of the architect's work—like every creative activity— the process through which architecture comes into being is by no means linear. In this sense, architecture is constantly in the process of transformation. It is born from a simultaneous tuning between the hand and the mind. In this way, design is a circular system, it means that architecture does not begin with the first line drawn on paper, nor does it end with the last finial topping the finished building. Design and construction are not two opposite extremes in a work of architecture; on the contrary, they are elements that continuously succeed each other all the time, contaminate, intertwine, and affect each other.

In my understanding, the gesture from which the architect's trace is born, there is a deep knowledge of the spatial experience that he tries to express through the line marked on the paper's surface. In this sense, the architect's drawing is permanently engraved with sensorial content. Either as a representation or as a design. While the latter establishes a way to project sensations into space, the former absorbs them into itself, and while this sensory experience is present in both things—the drawing as a blueprint and as a representation— the designed space encloses them as in a casing, the image imprisons them as in a vault.

Architecture materializes when this sentimental content is finally embodied, when it becomes tangible, either in representation or through space. In this sense, the idea of embodied experience goes far beyond a merely visual understanding—in the case of the images—and a physical perception—when it comes to space. To immerse oneself in the sensory content embodied in architecture involves becoming familiar with the sensations it awakens. My fascination for drawing as a form of representation and the built form as a vehicle for this content lies in this compelling desire to understand the origin of this sensorial substance that imbues architecture with meaning.

To learn how to see is to dwell on what you see. To find our place in the world is to inhabit it. It is how you discover architecture: by getting used to it. This is what the drawing and experience of space stand for. Making architecture dwell in me became more than a necessity and urgency, but a way of being.

A restlessness and yearning had grown in me. I would say that getting used to things is a way of forgetting them, and forgetfulness is a form of knowledge. To become accustomed to things is to make them disappear. But it doesn't mean losing them or making them inaccessible, impossible to find again. To dissipate through habit is to make it natural and familiar. It is to forget because one knows. It is the embodiment of knowledge in our being. In this sense, the habitual is that which is always present, deeply rooted. It is what becomes invisible through repetition, through daily practice.

This eagerness to make architecture familiar led me to deliberately choose one of the subjects that most students in their first year tried to avoid. While most of my classmates decided to join the class of the young professor, who proposed to design a small family house, I was perhaps the only one who was more interested in the proposal of the other professor, a grumpy old man who had immigrated from a neighboring country a long time ago. His honesty during the introductory class probably motivated me to make this decision. As soon as we had settled into our chairs, he said with straightforward language and a heavy foreign accent that we were not prepared to develop a new design. He said with a pitied expression on his face: "you don't know anything." You can't come up with ideas without being aware of the exact distance between your butt and the ground at this moment. He said that we were not yet familiar with the measurements of things, and that is why the assignment he had proposed for the semester was to redraw, on a 1:20 scale, the apartment in which each of us lived.

After this brief introduction, he opened the door and said we were free to leave. He would proceed only with those interested in following his course that semester. After most of the students had left the room, without expressing any surprise and sounding almost satisfied

with the effect of his words, he told the very few who remained to come closer, and in a soft tone, began to talk about architecture in a very passionate way. I'm going to teach you architecture, he said. With a twinkle in his eyes, he said that architecture was fascinating. Because it had to do with people, with people's lives, in dealing with the lives of others, doing architecture was a serious thing. To build a building was to assume an enormous responsibility. The school of architecture should be concerned with educating competent professionals, people capable of understanding the needs generated by life, and building structures capable of making these people's lives better.

He compared the figure of the architect to that of the craftsman. An architect is like a good shoemaker, he said. Only someone who knows the art of shoemaking is able to create the best shoe. It is by knowing each of the materials with which he works, and it is by understanding how to join each of its components, by getting to know the importance of each element, that he can put all this together and give shape to a shoe that only he is able to picture. In this sense, for the shoemaker as well as for the architect, it is the habit of making that leads to excellence. Like a shoe, a building is also composed of small pieces and components that fit together. Before knowing how to construct a building, it is necessary to understand the dimension of each of its features, understand how to represent them accurately, and understand the reason why they exist and the purpose for which they are intended. To make decisions, one must develop criteria. Learning to have criteria about things, according to him, would be our mission in that course.

I found this to be a useful experience. Drawing an entire apartment on a scale that serves more for the exercise of detail was a task that taught me how to finally best represent architecture. It required mapping the space, measuring and locating each component and object, and then tracing them accurately on paper. Every week, when we sat down to look at the drawing of my apartment, no matter how hard I worked on the task, there were always dozens of corrections to be made, small imprecisions that I couldn't see at that point. Everything had to be millimeter by millimeter according to reality. Although he had never visited my tiny apartment, it was as if he knew better than I what was inside. As if he had been there before. I was impressed that he could instantly identify any inaccuracy, anything out of place. Because things are what they are, they have a reason for being that way—and we architects should respect them for that. When he pointed to a poorly designed door handle, he invited us to go to the door, hold it, open it, and close it again and again. And then repeat the movement of the hand in the air with our eyes closed. He wanted us to feel things in our hands, experience their mechanisms, and understand them just as they were. For him, to represent the reality of things, we had to experience them consciously. It was not just a matter of knowing the actual dimension of things but measuring them with our bodies, getting used to each of them, and incorporating them into our personal vocabulary

Since the times when I attended drawing classes during childhood, I had not felt such satisfaction in what I was doing. And somehow, perhaps he saw something in that ken interest. Because one day, out of the blue, he asked me if I would like to come along with him on his site visits. Something that, albeit surprised, I accepted with great enthusiasm. Although he had designed hundreds of buildings in the city, he was not a famous architect. It turned out that, seen from the outside, the buildings he designed were elementary. In contrast, the interiors held bewildering amounts of details, and the quality of these details were astounding; how different materials met, how the spaces suggested themselves in different highs and depths, the quality of the light, and how its openings framed the landscape with perfection. Having attended his classes, it all seemed to make sense. For him, doing this had become a habit long, long ago.

At the end of one of these visits, I felt that I finally understood why he was doing this. He made it a point to follow his construction sites on a daily basis, not only to make sure that the work was being carried out according to his specifications, experiencing the construction served as an instrument of critical analysis of his design and methods of doing things. Strolling beside him on the way back, I asked if he was satisfied with the particular building we had just seen, and if he would do something different. "Certainly," he replied, "every building teaches us something, just as every other architect's design has something to tell us about how we conceive and construct our buildings."

At that moment, I felt that I had finally understood the circular nature of the architect's work, something that completely transformed my interest in what I was doing. Suddenly I wanted to rush out and visit all the different buildings I found interesting; I wanted to dive into their stories, experience their spaces, become accustomed to their sensory content and finally understand them. Reflecting on my professor's words, I finally understood how to make my way back as we followed our route home—from construction to drawing, coming back around and through the experience of the sensory part of architecture. I had finally completed the circular process of understanding. While the design is a mechanism that takes us from idea to construction, the physical experience of space is a way to embody the idea—to get used to it. This was what I learned from Santiago.[1]

1 Alberto Julian de Santiago (1941–2012).

Working with Reality

That first experience with architecture outside school made me realize for the first time that there was a considerable gap between what I was being taught in school and what I had observed in practice. While the academic environment was governed by ideas, the construction site was a territory determined by actions. From this perspective, between thinking and doing, there was a gulf that seemed to me at the time insurmountable. I felt overwhelmed. We were often given endless tasks that, from my point of view, proved meaningless.

Sleepless nights became a rule for those who wanted to make it to the end of the semester alive. We had no time left, much less, energy to do things beyond what was demanded. “Architecture is supposed to be a creative profession,” I thought. And how were we supposed to be able to create something different if we didn’t even have time to think about anything else? We were always going around in circles, getting close to the real issues but not really touching them or facing them head-on. An approach that was too theoretical and every day took us further away from reality as if we were being trained to have authority over something outside our expertise.

For me, the academy seemed to be trying to prevent us from confronting the main practical issues of the profession, and to some extent, it was as if I was living the experience halfway through. I felt that something was missing that I would need to seek out on my own. I wanted to learn things by doing them; I didn’t want to avoid confronting the practicalities of architecture. I wanted to go through them directly and thoroughly. And in fact, doing is a way of learning.

It was this longing to do things, to engage myself with the craft of architecture, that led me to look for a job as an intern in an architecture office long before I saw the end of my degree that I still had ahead of me. On the one hand, leaving the classroom meant that I would need more time to finish my studies, on the other hand, I did not want to wait until the end of college to find out what the outside world would be like. To a certain extent, I felt that this practical work experience would do more good than harm to my future career as an architect.

In real life, the environment of an architecture office could not be more different from that of a school setting. If, on the one hand, in college, I was at a lower level concerning theoretical subjects, on the other hand, my performance in practical issues was decisively above average. Inside the office, the situation was reversed. Compared to my co-workers, I quickly found myself far behind in technical and practical matters and too idealistic. When I started working, I soon realized that I had a vast vocabulary of ideas and concepts that no one was interested in listening to and that I lacked the solutions and technical skills

that everyone was keen to point out. The years in the architecture office were undoubtedly times of intense apprenticeship, exchange, and growth on both a personal and professional level.

While in the academy, emphasis was placed on the figure of the individual architect in an office's day-to-day life; the collective character of architecture stood out. Since the days of the old masons' guilds, no one carries out an architectural undertaking alone from the beginning to the end. In this sense, recognizing the collective nature of the craft of architecture was the first excellent learning experience in the context of an architecture office. It was necessary to delegate functions, collaborate, and work as a team. Much of the design process in an architecture office revolves around proposing solutions and putting them to the test. Discussing, designing, and then verifying. And then often starting all over again. Only those who have experienced the development of an architectural design, from the idea to the details, knows how many versions, advances and setbacks one must go through to reach completion. Each blueprint line that goes to the construction site incorporates infinite other attempts, mistakes and successes, solutions that could have been and that, although invisible, inform the building yet to be born.

In this sense, an architectural design does not embody just a specific solution but the combination of infinite other proposals put to the test. It is to say that the drawing that informs the construction contains innumerable previous decisions, which have a reason for being. Construction drawings, when unfolded on a building site, carry within them the sensibility and knowledge of the architect's mind and hand. The drawing marks the architect's presence even when he is not there because, among all the phases from design to construction, many of them take place without his direct participation. That being the case, a blueprint is primarily a tool for communication, a kind of text which needs to be easily read and understood, without margins for too many interpretations and questioning. Therefore, an architectural drawing incorporates more than just lines and numbers; it carries with it decisions and justifications that, above all, should speak for themselves.

One of the most fascinating things about architecture is that once it is materialized in the world, its presence in the city is inevitable. The final building is a way of establishing dialogues and relationships between the built space, the environment and the human landscape. Thus a building is never alone in the world. To design is to try to understand all that can inform architecture design, all that must be considered when rooting a building in the world; how relationships with other structures are established, and how distances and perspectives from and to a building are controlled. How people approach and access a given facility. It relates to its neighbors regarding its forms, volumes, and materials.

Of course, the architect's job is to be a mediator between the various actors involved in the materialization of a particular building. It is the work of a facilitator between all that already exists and what is yet to come. The architect's work begins with careful observation of reality. In the context in which he finds himself, he finds his primary source of inspiration. An excellent architectural design can blend into the landscape in such a way as if it had always been there. Moreover, good architecture can reveal something about the landscape in which it sits, making us see and perceive something that was not previously evident. Good architecture adds something new to the experience of space, whether built or natural.

In turn the materiality of a given building plays a central role in how it is established and fits into its specific context. It is the materials that resonate with the historical substance of a particular place. It is to say that they not only represent the physical substance of architecture but also embody the human processes involved in its production. Through its materiality, we can understand how architecture establishes itself. As I see it, there is a magnificent beauty when materials are treated with genuine honesty in a building.

If, on the one hand, it is in the care of the materials that we can glimpse the hand of the builder; on the other hand, it is in the details and joints that we see the architect's touch. In these encounters, the dialogue between the builder and the designer becomes more evident. In the physical substance of a building, these two figures find the opportunity to merge into one just as it was in the beginning. Every day, they find themselves further apart and, consequently, farther from the essence of architecture itself.

There are few architects today, in my opinion, capable of revealing the simplicity of materials through elaborate construction details. Because as more technologies are incorporated into the design and construction processes, the more sterile architecture becomes in its materiality. However this is not the case found in the vast and inspiring work of Renzo Piano, whose highly technological solutions enrich the material quality of architecture rather than undermine it. This is due, above all, to a deep knowledge of the materials with which he works, a know-how that is born from a process of collaboration and continuous development between the work of the architect and the craft of the builder - so well represented and embodied in the genius of the Italian master.

Renzo Piano, who suggestively chose to practice architecture under the name *Renzo Piano Building Workshop*, also defends that it is in this engagement with materiality and through direct and daily contact with the materials that the creative process establishes itself: "It involves a circular process that draws you from an idea to a drawing, from a drawing to an experiment, and from a construction back to an idea again."[2] For me, this was the main reason why I chose architecture as a profession. Nothing was more compelling to me than to engage in this continuous cycle of experience between the office and the building site, between design and construction. If designing buildings was a fascinating idea, experiencing them materialize in the world was extraordinary. The building is the moment for which most architects wait so long. It is the embodiment and also the reward of teamwork. It is when the cycle finally completes and then when they can start over again.

Moreover, for Piano, teamwork is a fundamental aspect of the creative process in architecture. By seeking to re-engage the creative practice of construction with the intellectual exercise of the architect in the daily life of his Building Workshop, Renzo Piano has sought to expand and also update to modern times the idea of craft in architecture, incorporating the notion of continuous creative exchange between intellectual and manual labor, and

2 Renzo Piano, "Renzo Piano Building Workshop: In Search of Balance" In *Process Architecture* (Tokyo), nr. 100 (1992): 14.

between design activities and the praxis of construction. The final realization of architecture as a material practice is where all the magic is revealed. When the idea is transformed into matter, when the drawing becomes concrete.

During my first years of practice, I hardly ever left the office. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to work from scratch on several small projects. So when I finally completed my studies, I had already realized some solid experiments in practice. When the construction of the first house I designed started, I visited it frequently, always in the morning before going to the office. Although I was not building it with my own hands, being able to follow each of the construction stages, and checking all the measurements and details was something that brought me indescribable pleasure. To be present at those moments, when the foundations were laid or the first walls erected, was for me the confirmation that I had made the right choice in becoming an architect. From my point of view, there is nothing more rewarding for an architect than to witness the implementation of each of the elements and components that he or she once drew on paper.

It turned out that as construction started to get off the ground, leaving the office to go to the site became a problem as I was not being paid to go on site. This was something I did for my own pleasure. The office where I worked had chosen not to be involved in the construction processes, a position I had great difficulty understanding. It made no sense to me to sit down to design a new building at the very moment when I felt I should be involved in the construction of a previously designed structure. With each day of construction that I missed, my disinterest in what I was doing became greater. Designing buildings and not being able to closely follow their construction process made no sense to me. I felt as if I was denied the most critical part of the creative process.

At this point, I realized that the craft was giving way to the business. Architects are not as concerned with establishing a continuous creative process from idea to materialization, from building to the drawing board, as they are with making money. Ultimately, as in any business, an architecture firm needs to be efficient and profitable at the end of the day. With few exceptions, the creative process embodied in the notion of craftsmanship in architecture has long been lost. As architects engage less and less in building the very structures they design, the more the practice of architecture seems to me to be stripped of meaning.

That's what was at stake when I moved to the biggest city in the country in search of better opportunities. After all, that was the place where game-changing projects had a home. I was resigned to not participating in the building processes as long as I knew I was working on designs that could contribute to improving people's lives. But my regained interest in what I was doing and the meaning I saw in performing my profession again did not last long. As more and more of the projects I worked on were archived, interrupted, or abandoned, I became increasingly disenchanted with the practice of architecture. The harder I tried to believe that what I was doing was relevant, the more meaningless my life as an architect became.

When I pictured myself working in the field of architecture, I dreamed of transforming the world, designing structures that could change people's lives, of building a better world. In practice, the reality was something else, which proved to be the opposite of what I had envisioned. Little by little, architecture was deprived of its materiality, and I no longer saw any of the buildings I designed. Materials were turned into data and drawings into digital files. Buildings stopped being thought of for people, but instead to become instruments of investment and profit. In my eyes, by being deprived of its human dimension, architecture lost all its charm. I needed to change, to start over. Either I needed to build my own way, or maybe it was time to change direction.

I had nothing to lose. In fact, like most of my colleagues by that time, I had worked almost ten years without a labor contract, health insurance, employment rights, or retirement entitlements. Architecture is no longer seen as the result of collective and collaborative work. Architects today are seen more as lone wolves. Autonomous professionals yet deprived of any autonomy. In all those years wandering alone, I had learned important lessons, and if necessary, I knew exactly how to make my way back.

It was a typical late winter afternoon when I left the office for the last time. And although it wasn't cold, it wasn't exactly an inviting day to be outside. The sun, which used to be high on the hottest summer days, bathing the facades of the neighborhood buildings in vibrant shades of yellow and orange, had long since retreated by the time I descended the only step that detached the building from the sidewalk. The huge iron door closed behind my back with the metallic sound of the metal plate hitting the door frame and then the sound of the key turning in the lock barrel. Perhaps that was the first time in years that it was not me but someone else closing the door behind my back. It was also the first time I had left the office without carrying my personal copy of the door key with me.

I felt light, and it wasn't just because I wasn't carrying anything with me that day, but the calm awareness that I was making the right decision. I was leaving, which meant that this was the last time I would walk through that door of an architecture office.

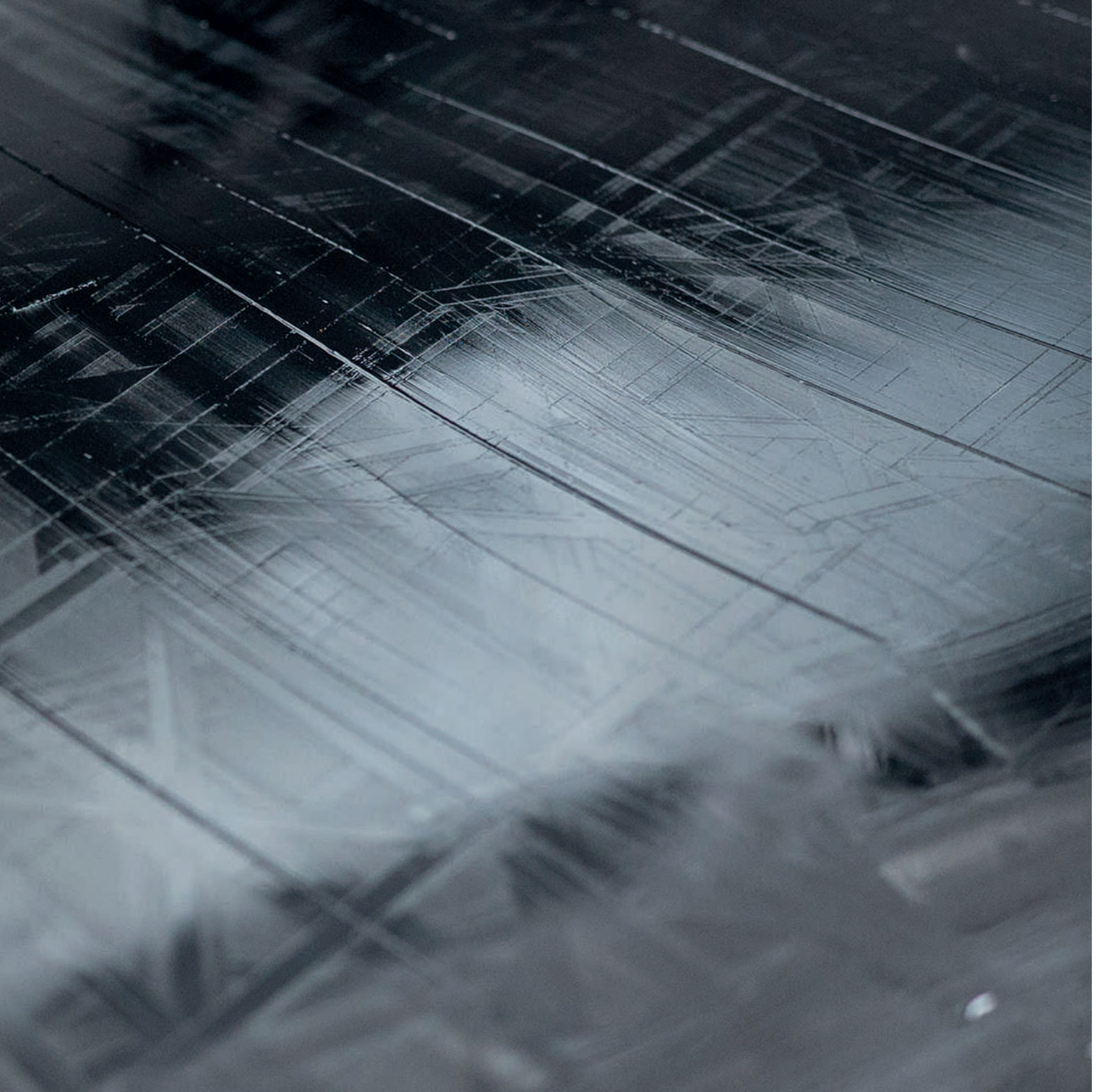
Over nearly a decade, I had worked for five different companies. While this may seem like a relative success story for a young architect, officially, I never had any employment relationship with any of these firms. Of the almost ten years that I had dedicated to the practice of architecture, there is not even a single formal record of my contribution as an architect to any of the dozens of projects I have participated in over all these years.

In fact, looking back at it today, it's as if I never existed as an architect. Professionally, my very existence has been denied. Not that I felt unique or irreplaceable in my skills because, at the end of the day, no one is. I was also not bothered by the absence of my name on the list of authors of the projects I worked on (just a bit). On the surface, inside the architectural firms I worked in, we were all friends and colleagues. We formed a team or several teams at a time, depending on the project's size or the office's structure. In this sense, everything that resulted from the daily practice within the office was the fruit of collective work and the engagement and harmony between the different actors involved. At first glance, everything seemed annoyingly perfect, like a photograph of a living room printed on the cover of a home décor magazine.

However, underneath this supposed perfect work environment of an architectural firm lurks an unmistakable feeling that the employer is doing you a favor by allowing you to work for his brand. When you finally reach a reputable office, my dear, you must give your best. You are expected to be grateful for the opportunity to work for them. You have to be willing and able to put in the hours, to forget about your free time, even on weekends. In my opinion, too much was demanded of me for too little in return. It was unacceptable that architecture was a profession largely unregulated when it is responsible, among other things, for bringing a little more human dignity and social justice to this world.

It was time to leave. And on that winter afternoon, I left without ever looking back.

SECOND SECTION



Diving into the Unknown

Leave the door open for the unknown, the door into the dark. That's where the most important things come from, where you yourself came from, and where you will go.

Rebecca Solnit, 2005.

As that heavy door closed behind my back in the winter of 2017, another door opened in front of me—an entry into the dark, open to the unknown.

When I first came to the city of Wroclaw in the fall of that same year, having never visited Poland before, I immediately realized the dense complexity of the historical, cultural, and social context in which I was immersed at that moment. Overwhelmed by a context that could not be more unfamiliar to my existence, my background and previous experience as an architect, I could not rest even for an instant. I was constantly absorbed by the city that was revealing and unfolding itself at every corner. Between the already settled locals and the unwary tourists, I drifted through the streets and sidewalks, always attentive to my surroundings. The prospect that this would be my new home for the next few years made me want to discover, understand, and connect with this city, make it my own, a place where I could feel a sense of belonging.

As I found myself alone in an environment utterly alien to me, I was first driven to look inward. Within this context, intuition was my primary navigation tool as not being familiar with the language limited my ability to commu-

nicate. Even though I was unable to read signs and follow directions, street names were just a jumble of scrambled letters, and the monuments I encountered along the way celebrated characters and events I was completely unaware of, there was something in this landscape that was accessible to me, as if the built space reverberated in me at every moment like an intimate inner voice. A voice that did not let me forget who I was. I had traveled more than ten thousand kilometers for a reason. I had made a choice.

And in fact, being in a place where you cannot understand and speak is like living in the absence of daylight. A temporary state of deafness and muteness that pushed me to look outward, paying attention to everything and everyone as an exercise to see myself from the outside and understand how others saw me. How did I get here and what was I looking for? Why?

To walk in the dark, one needs courage. To find the path, one must first get lost and to accept being lost, because it is not knowing that makes us want to transform the unknown into the known. Hence, to find oneself is to go back through that same door into darkness and realize that it remains as dark as ever, but now one feels just fine with the complete absence of light. Because that once unknown territory is now incorporated into the boundaries of the self.[3]

When leaving my home country, my primary intention was to escape from my past as an architect and start over from scratch— to walk away from professional practice and get closer to the art world. Ironically, I ended up reconciling with the former through the latter. But to do that, I had to first lose myself completely and experience a life-changing experience to find myself again elsewhere.

After years dedicated to the practice of architecture and the umpteenth disappointment in the professional sphere, all this coupled with a similar frustration on a personal level, I felt that the time had come to change something in my life, if not everything. The creative satisfaction found in my then brief experience with the art of printmaking was, at that moment, the sufficient motivation I needed to throw myself in without fear of losing track. The decision to leave everything I had and move to Wroclaw to pursue a Master of Arts degree at the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design, thus giving up my place of comfort and abandoning a brief but promising career as an architect, came very naturally and spontaneously. I was not just looking for a new challenge that would restore my lost enthusiasm in architecture, there was also a strong desire to regain purpose in a profession that seemed to me at that moment utterly devoid of meaning.

Yet deep down, I knew I could never give up architecture. I never really wanted to fully separate from it. Much because I knew that I would be unable to get rid of something that had become an integral part of my own being. I was always meditating about what it meant to be an architect. However what I had experienced within the office environment could not have been any further from my convictions about the very meaning of "architecture." In that context, it had been reduced to the mere process and outcome of the actual activity of designing buildings. It was too narrow an idea for me to simply accept it silently and pretend that I wasn't bothered. It was not the exercise of making and thinking about architecture that I wanted to step away from, it was the professional practice I had known that I had decided to give up. Maybe, once and for all.

The day I left the office for the last time, I wasn't sure if I was making the right decision. Obviously, I had my doubts and also a fear of failing and having to come back with my tail between my legs. However, I felt that this was something I had to do. I needed to instead give up that architecture to perhaps find it again in another way and another place. And it was from this detachment that I finally realized I could resign from my professional practice without giving up architecture as a whole. Getting away from the dull routine of being a designer but taking with me the experience I had, freeing myself from the restrictions of the architecture market, I was finally free to dedicate myself to it with heart and soul, to experience it in other ways, to reflect on it and to rediscover that old enthusiasm that it had awakened in me many years earlier. Above all, I felt I had something to say. I was interested in thinking not only about how architecture is built but also how it is deconstructed. I was fascinated by the idea that cities are living organisms, that they not only grow and transform but also decay and collapse. Buildings awaken love and hate and make us think about the past and future. Once vibrant built spaces are today now rotting away.

In a world where everything changes all the time, "it is better to live in a state of impermanence than in one of finality," as Gaston Bachelard states in his book The Poetics of Space. He suggests that one never passes by the same street twice because time transforms the reality, just as the childhood home one revisits after so many years will never be the same again.[4] Bachelard compares the childhood house (oneiric) with the dream house (idealized) to establish the final departure of imagination with the triumphant arrival of reality: "Maybe it is a good thing for us to keep a few dreams of a house that we shall live in later, always later, so much later, in fact, that we shall not have time to achieve it."[5] Thinking about it, I feel that my decision to withdraw from practice came from difficulty in accepting that architecture was, in reality, something other than what I had dreamed it to be. Somehow I wanted to preserve it as an idyllic craft, which I had dreamed of for so long and was not yet ready to renounce.

By now, it is evident that I have always been a dreamer. And maybe it was because I idealized architecture so much that I ended up renouncing my career as an architect. The fact that architecture came to an end was something I could never fully digest. Not having control over the future of the buildings I designed, especially not being able to build them myself, made me feel like architecture was being ripped away from me. In the impossibility of realizing what I imagined, architecture stopped being architecture and became something else. Something I could very well live without. It's as if I could only accept architecture in its totality and never in its incomplete form. As though I wanted to protect it from its own demise. By moving away from the practice and denying what architecture was— I started to focus on all that it could be.

And in this sense, it was like rediscovering the magic of the thing.

3 Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide for Getting Lost* (New York: Viking, 2005), 5.

4 Gaston Bachelard, "House and Universe," in The Poetics of Space (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 62.

5 Ibid.

Confronting architecture with renewed curiosity, I realized that all the other issues with which architecture is connected beyond the constraints of an architectural office were no less important than those related to the construction of structures. Quite the contrary. As an architect who had decided to withdraw from the official discourse, I felt compelled to speak out on behalf of the many peripheral phenomena to which architecture is concerned. Moreover, I was free to design without the obligation to build, and the result of my work would not have to carry the burden of time. My architectural works would not be in danger of growing old. They could disappear without leaving any trace. They wouldn't need to deal with the force of gravity to keep standing, my architectures could be as light as the ideas that generated them, and they could be instruments to question some of the values taken as absolutes like permanence and stability, to name just two.

Since the myth of the Tower of Babel, unbuilt architecture has always been a very present theme in the story of humankind. Fantastic architecture often pushes the field beyond its boundaries through purely theoretical or impossible structures. It provides an essential source of inspiration for provoking questioning and transformation within the discipline's main paradigms. Moreover, freeing oneself from the constraints of the practice of architecture as an end offers a unique opportunity to readjust the forces that impose upon it, emphasizing the architect's social responsibility and the city's civic function, for example. Considering this, unbuilt structures can also be relevant and inspire potential transformations in the field and society.

With this newfound artistic pursuit of architecture, I jumped head first into my next educational journey.

The two years following my arrival in Poland, which culminated in completing my Master of Arts degree in 2019, were of fundamental importance for my re-engagement with architecture through art and validating my work as an architect through artistic practice. Operating as a bridging process, this first experience marks the beginning of a *continuous journey in search of meaning* that is not limited to the window of this three-year doctoral education course, nor is it part of the two years that preceded it; in this investigation process, there is implicit an idea of continuity, a retroactive pursuit in search of the origin of my interest in architecture. It implies a displacement back and forth in time, all the way to my early years and and from there, back to the present, conscious of the decisions that made me get here, so far from home and in a place so different from everything I knew.

At the same time, living in such a different place from where I came from seemed to me a unique and fascinating adventure. Moving from Brazil to Poland was like diving into the unknown. And if, on the one hand, the years of my master's degree represent the first stage of this search, a first attempt to understand the context in which I was living, the last three years of my doctorate represent the second part of this adventure through the unknown, a search to find the answers, to understand why.

Having been born and raised in a city founded in the second half of the 20th century and in a country where the vast majority of its built structures were erected over the last hundred years, it is undeniable that modern architecture occupies a central place in my own intimate universe, not only as an architect but also as a human being. Modern architecture, from my point of view, is a vital element of my own heritage and history. It is something that informs who I am and where I come from. It is something that validates the way I perceive the world around me.

As an architect seeking to familiarize myself with this new context, I carefully observed the buildings and spaces around me. I was struck by how multiple temporal layers revealed themselves through the urban space, sometimes overlapping and coexisting in perfect harmony and sometimes imposing themselves over each other, competing for space and attention. Cities like this one hide infinite secrets and stories. It is as if they continue to unfold and reveal themselves at every moment, like an open book constantly being rewritten and adapted.

But the process of constructing history can often be very selective and mysterious. For as much as I had the necessary tools to analyze and understand the world around me, I felt that I was being challenged at every moment. I noticed a range of phenomena that I couldn't quite identify or name, but that kept triggering me. It seemed as though there were dozens of other towns, invisible cities inside this city. And it was by seeking to reveal these hidden stories that I first re-approached and re-engaged with the exercise of architecture. By experiencing these unknown cities, digging into the history of their buildings and archives, and using architecture almost as an archaeological tool, I restored my enthusiasm for what I was doing. I was especially fond of some buildings I came across along the way, decaying and relegated to oblivion. Why had they ended up this way? Why didn't anyone seem to care about their fate? In seeking to understand their stories and background, each of these buildings was important to me as crucial pieces in a giant puzzle that only when complete, would allow me to reach the full extent of the historical substance of this city's past.

From this encounter with reality, in the context of my master's work conducted on-site in the city of Wroclaw between 2017 and 2019, I developed my first printmaking experiments, which were accompanied by a written reflection entitled *Expired Futures: A Personal Collection of Wroclaw's Architecture*. As a result, I created six large-size intaglio prints depicting actual buildings in a state of disrepair in the city of Wroclaw, images that reflect an interest in the theme of ruin and the suspension of time. *Expired Futures* are the futures that could have been but will never come to pass, the possibilities never lived, or a prophecy of a future that can never come to fruition. The printed images of these buildings deal with temporal inaccuracies; they are portraits of a past in the present time without the possibility of a future.

Later that same year, in search of unfolding and deepening the questions that emerged with the conclusion of my master's work, this experiment was then adapted as the basis for my doctoral project *Expired Futures: Time and Memory in Architectural Spaces*, which now has developed into this doctoral thesis. In the beginning, my intention was to keep working with the representation of forgotten, abandoned and decaying structures as a tool to reflect on the transitory nature of architecture and to include a warning about the culturally destructive forgetting of the past.

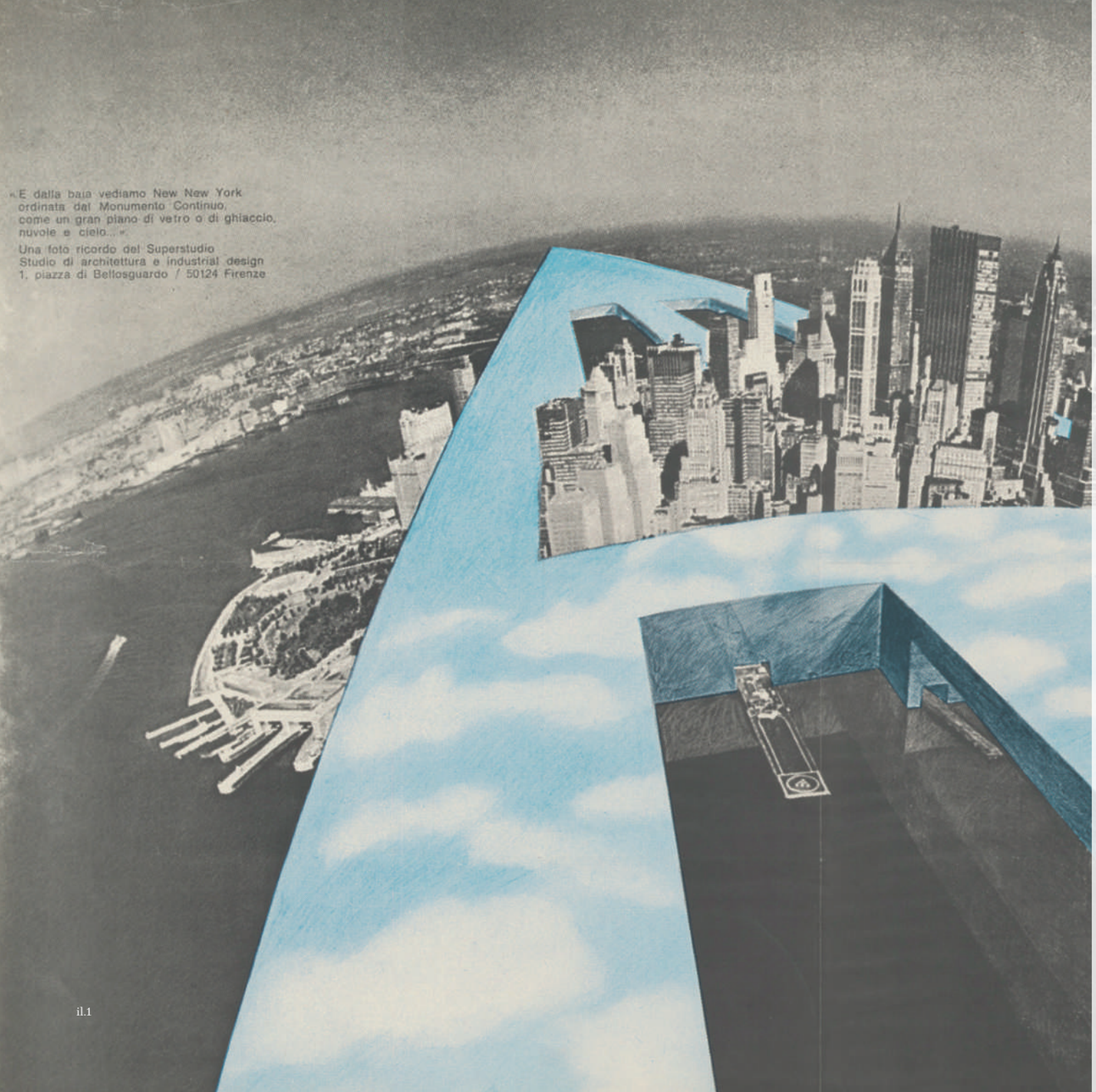
Beyond that, in the proposed body of work, my primary intention was to explore new forms of representation to endow these images with an extra dose of fantasy, more than just a faithful representation of reality.

The more data I collected and the more information I found on the historical background of this place, the more gaps that were revealed, and the more unanswered questions kept emerging from this exercise. It was when I realized that the buildings around me were insufficient to explain the actual context in which I was placed. Browsing through archives and old photographs I realized that many buildings were missing, from historic to not-so-old structures. Driven by this feeling that something was missing, I dove headlong into the unknown. But I didn't have to dig very deep to find the missing piece of this puzzle. In fact, it was just below the surface of the present time. In this still malleable past where memory finds itself, still far from the hard core of history. To my surprise, the most significant discovery was to realize that the idea of an expired future that I had coined during my first years in Poland was already gone. Because a considerable number of buildings, similar to those decaying structures I had observed in my earlier years, had already disappeared, sometimes years, perhaps decades, prior.

What was beginning to stand out in my eyes was a process of complete denial of recent past phenomena, especially the achievements of modern architecture built over the second half of the 20th century. The systematic erasure of post-war buildings in Poland after the turn of the 21st century became an obsession for me. In a way, the process of transformation that the country was going through seemed too fast. So much so that the recent past instantly fell behind, disappearing like a lost time. That time being the People's Republic of Poland. Or rather, the process of erasing memory by architectural ruination was, in my understanding, an attempt to move past a time that was already considered lost time.

For the present to become part of history, it is necessary to slowly settle and distill itself until it becomes part of the past, bound to history. For this to take place, it is first required to operate a withdrawal, a temporal detachment, so to speak. It happens that nowadays, there is such a great desire to move forward into the future, stretching ahead of time, that the past becomes exceptionally compressed, causing what we witnessed yesterday to be propelled to an already remote time. In this compression of the past, however, it seems that there is not enough room for all the occurrences of the recent past. As a result, some of these former days are then squeezed out, and disappear without a trace.

In rendering these lost buildings my subject of research, tearing these architectures out of their freshly sealed graves, my main goal is not to recover their already lost materiality nor has my intention to save these buildings or to bring them back to life, instead what moves me is to reveal the temporal inaccuracies still tangible in their surfaces and, from that, to reconstruct the narratives of their disappearance. Above all, this work intends to allow people to meet again with these buildings, to physically confront their images in the present with their own bodies, and from this encounter, to reflect on the reason and consequences of the erasure of the memories attached to them.



il.1

If design is merely an inducement to consume, then we must reject design; if architecture is merely the codifying of the bourgeois models of ownership and society, then we must reject architecture; if architecture and town planning [are] merely the formalization of present unjust social divisions, then we must reject town planning and its cities until all design activities are aimed towards meeting primary needs. Until then, design must disappear. We can live without architecture.

Adolfo Natalini, 1971.

Discovering a New Language

In the inspiring lecture[6] on the role of the architect and the problems in architectural education Adolfo Natalini gave at the AA School of Architecture in London on March 3, 1971, the Italian architect co-founder of the *Superstudio*[7] was not only interested in reaffirming the group's exodus from design practice, he had accepted that invitation to speak in front of young architecture students to present alternatives to an architecture that, from his point of view, did not fulfill its primary purpose. By outlining new possibilities, Adolfo Natalini tried to show his audience that it was possible to think and make architecture even if abdicating building structure exercises. One of the main fronts explored by the Superstudio, the "architecture of the image"[8] was being used to promote awareness of the harmful impact of construction on the natural environment, as the "architecture of the monument," perhaps the group's most representative work, incorporated a critique of urban planning at that time.

6 Adolfo Natalini, "Inventory, Catalog, Systems of Flux...a Statement," in *Superstudio: Life Without Objects* (Milan: Skira Editore: 2003), 163.

7 Superstudio was a radical architecture collective, founded in 1966 in Florence, Italy by Adolfo Natalini and Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, later joined by Gian Piero Frassinelli, Alessandro and Roberto Magris, Alessandro Poli.

8 Adolfo Natalini established in 1967, three categories of research or fields of action for the Superstudio, named "architecture of the monument," "architecture of the image," and "technomorphic architecture."

Through its films and collages, Superstudio proved that architecture, in its unbuilt form, not only preserved its ability to provoke social transformation but that was enhanced.

In his article "Superstudio and the 'Refusal to Work,'" the architectural historian Ross K. Elfline clarifies that despite being absent from the official discourse of architecture, the radical architecture collective was hard at work all the while, "as the immense profusion of images, domestic furnishings, essays, and films over their relatively brief career attests."[9] It was not from the professional practice that Superstudio's architects had decided to disengage; quite the contrary, it was from the craft of building structures that they had given up. A critical, political and ideological positioning. On this subject, Natalini states that the only helpful thing he learned at university was "that an architect is a man who ALSO, among other things, operates in the field of architecture." In other words, in this rebellion, or refusal to carry out the first and foremost attribution of the architect—designing and constructing buildings— Superstudio highlighted the importance of critical thinking in architecture and its stripping away of the *process of designing and constructing buildings*.

Superstudio's radical position was an attempt to reclaim control over the practice from a critical reflection, or what Natalini calls a *double movement*: "one must leave everyday activity to be able to control it critically, and then return to reality itself in a different situation. Only thus criticism can become action."[10] Like Natalini's approach, I felt I needed to get rid of that architecture I had known through professional practice to make way for other possibilities. My rediscovery of architecture also started from rejecting the act of designing. I felt that architecture, when reduced to the mere process of design oriented to the construction of buildings, had been depleted of critical thinking, as Natalini puts it so well.

Of the dozens of projects I have worked on from conception to execution, only a few have ever been built. Fewer still were those I had the opportunity to experience as they were being brought to completion. And almost none could I really engage with once they were completed. Although I was devoting all my time and energy to designing structures that were to be built, my contribution was limited only to creating them on paper. It was precisely this break in the creative process, in this specific case, between design and construction, between imagination and realization, thinking and doing, that led me to seek other ways to re-establish this creative cycle.

My first contact with the art of printmaking came from a desire for action. To get out of that moment of inertia, to engage with the essential materiality of the things around me. I needed to exercise my creativity, go back to the drawing board, and sketch. To think about architecture with my hands. To restore the materiality of the trace on paper not only as a nostalgic desire but mainly a need to stand back. A longing to lose control over things, to let that architecture go, to lose it and then lose myself along with it. To be inspired by other ways of thinking and building, to come back to reality from another place. To make architecture again in a *different situation*, as Natalini himself said.

9 Ross K. Elfline, "Superstudio and the 'Refusal to Work'," Design and Culture, 8:1, 55-77, 2016, https://doi.org/10.1080/17547075.2016.1142343.

10 Adolfo Natalini, 163.

il.2

And I was not alone in this quest of mine. Obviously, I would not be the first architect to try to walk a different path from the majority of my fellow colleagues at the firm. In this sense, I had no shortage of successful examples from which to draw inspiration. The representation of architecture has always fascinated me, and in equal measure, printed art. A prime example of these two art forms collide in the work of Giovanni Battista Piranesi[11] who was perhaps the most virtuoso architect to ever build in the entire vast history of architecture. A man that triggers insightful commentaries as with by the writer on architecture Darran Anderson for *The Architecture Review* magazine in 2018: "The latter was an artist and an architect; a Venetian and a Roman; the last of the Ancients and the first of the moderns; a visionary who studiously documented imperial ruins while predicting (...) the coming Industrial Revolution; a prophet who spent his days recreating the past; a designer of heaven and hell."[12] Piranesi's extensive pictorial work ranged from studies of Ancient Rome to inventing imaginary and fantastic architecture. In his first significant undertaking, the Venetian architect presents a detailed archaeological and topographical description of Imperial Rome. In the more than 250 etchings that make up *Antichità Romane*, Piranesi gives not only a comprehensive overview of the vestiges of Ancient Rome in a visually impressive manner but also offers detailed explanations and reflections on neglected aspects of antiquity, such as the achievements of classical Roman architecture. Printed in 1756 and compiled in four volumes, *Antichità Romane* represented a milestone in the history of archaeology, a newly established field of study in the mid-eighteenth century.

11 Giovanni Battista Piranesi was an Italian archaeologist, architect, and artist, famous for his etchings of Ancient Rome and the series of imaginary and fantastic architectures called "prisons" (Le Carceri d'Invenzione).

12 Darran Anderson, "Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778)", *The Architectural Review*, July 2, 2018, https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/reputations/giovanni-battista-piranesi-1720-1778.

From this obsession with archaeology and inspired by the possibilities found in etching techniques, Piranesi began to explore the medium to imagine fantastical architectural scenarios. In this first version of the *Carceri*[13] (Prisons) Piranesi detaches himself from reality to explore new potentialities of representation as he pulls the medium beyond its limits, working and reworking his matrices to highlight different aspects and sensations triggered by his fantastic architectural images. As a specific exercise of imagination, Piranesi manipulates reality, hiding and deforming constructive elements to create images that, most likely, should be deeply unsettling to his audience. Later, the author reworked this series of prints and republished them under the title *Carceri d'Invenzione*.[14] The images became darker, more dizzying and theatrical. In his clever distortion of the rules of perspective, Piranesi explores impossible spaces outside extant architecture, provoking a sense of doubt and leading the viewer to question what is being observed.

Observing Piranesi's approach to printmaking, architectural representation depicted in traditional graphic processes becomes more than the mere objective description of its nature but it becomes a tool for critical analysis of architectural structures and spaces. In his book, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, Manfredo Tafuri, an Italian architect, historian, theoretician, critic and academic, provides a comprehensive overview of the influence and unfolding of Piranesi's work in the field of modern and contemporary

13 The first edition, consisting of 14 plates, had been published in 1749, under the title, Invenzioni Capric di Carceri.

14 The second edition of the Carceri, heavily reworked and with two additional plates (pl. II and V), dates to the early 1770s.

il.3

art and architecture. Like Superstudio's withdrawal from practice in the 1970s, the imaginative spirit of Piranesi's architecture in the mid-1700s is laden with ideological content, as Tafuri states: "What might at first seem a lull or a refusal, on the contrary, reveals itself in all its worth as anticipation."[15] The ability to reveal something about reality brings Piranesi's utopian architecture closer to the dystopias of the 20th century brought about by the radical architecture collective. In the work of groups like the Superstudio, we can perceive the influence of the inventiveness of the architecture conceived by the Venetian printmaker: "The *invention*, fixed and circulated by means of the etching, renders concrete the role of utopia, which is to present an alternative that departs from actual historical conditions, one that *pretends* to be in a metahistorical dimension – but only in order to project into the future the bursting forth of present contradictions."[16] In his masterful reading of Piranesi's work, Tafuri praises the artist's inventive capacity to create images that allow us to reflect on the (im)possibilities of the future as we confront the contradictions observed in the present.

15 Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1987), 29.

In the radical positioning of the Superstudio architects concerning the everyday, traditional practice of architecture, as well as in Piranesi's influential and inventive pictorial work, I realized that there was a light at the end of the tunnel. I understood that if I seriously engaged with what I was doing, the art of printmaking could offer me more than just immediate creative pleasure. In the radicalness of Superstudio's proposals and the genius of Piranesi's imagery, I became aware that there was an alternative. Just as the artistic practice could be a way to validate my work as an architect, unbuilt structures could be just as relevant and meaningful to people's lives and society as structures made of steel and concrete.

16 Ibid.

By discovering this new language, I found a way to direct all my previous knowledge into a new way of thinking and making architecture capable of restoring meaning to my professional practice as an architect. Along with this new way of doing, I found a means to combine criticism with action and the world of imagination with my inner universe, finally reestablishing the creative cycle between design and construction. Through this, I could finally get back to practicing, experimenting and transforming my ideas into matter. Then start over again. Again and again.

Drawing: An Expression of Understanding

Drawing is a process of observation and expression, receiving and giving at the same time. It is always a result of yet another kind of double perspective; a drawing looks simultaneously outwards and inwards, to the observed or imagined world, and into the draughtsman's own persona and mental world.

Juhani Pallasmaa, 2009.

For Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa, the ability to translate the mind's imagination into concrete images makes drawing the first materialization of an idea.[17] In light of this, rediscovering drawing through etching techniques represents the first step toward reconnection with my professional practice. In the activity of designing, drawing had become merely a virtual datum. As I returned to drawing as a process of observation of reality, I realized that it was in its physicality that the origin of my interest in architecture was found. The discovery of the new language of printmaking, where the drawing is then unfolded through a laborious and physical, yet also reflective process, became a mechanism to look inward into my interiority.

Pallasmaa suggests that to draw a specific object is to touch it with our hands. By tracing its contours, one feels its shapes in contact with the skin's surface, thus internalizing its characteristics. The drawn object is incorporated into the boundaries of the self through the deliberate exercise of drawing. Aware of this and the inability to physically experience the buildings I intended to portray in this

17 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 17.

artistic project, I started drawing and redrawing each of them, all their nooks and crannies, as a way to feel them in my own hands. With this in mind, the act of drawing invisible buildings turned into a powerful exercise of the imagination. Much because there was an abundance of missing information in the few images I could find. After all, the reverse of a photograph is an empty space, a void that I began to fill by engraving my own story. In these images that were yet to be realized, our stories would be forever bound, cast in a single image.

Etching an image is a process of double perspective, reflection, and mirroring. It goes without saying that there is a lot of me in the images that I create. It has to do with the fact that by drawing these buildings on the plate's surface, I also deal with my memories and the associations awakened by the image that emerges. I have the feeling that to draw is to pull out of myself something from my inner self. It is then, through the inverted image drawn on the plate, that I see reflected in it the sensations and emotions that the represented object awakens in me. And by bringing this sensitive content to light in the defined image, it is as if the drawing finally allows me to understand not only *what the object is* but, above all, *what it means.*

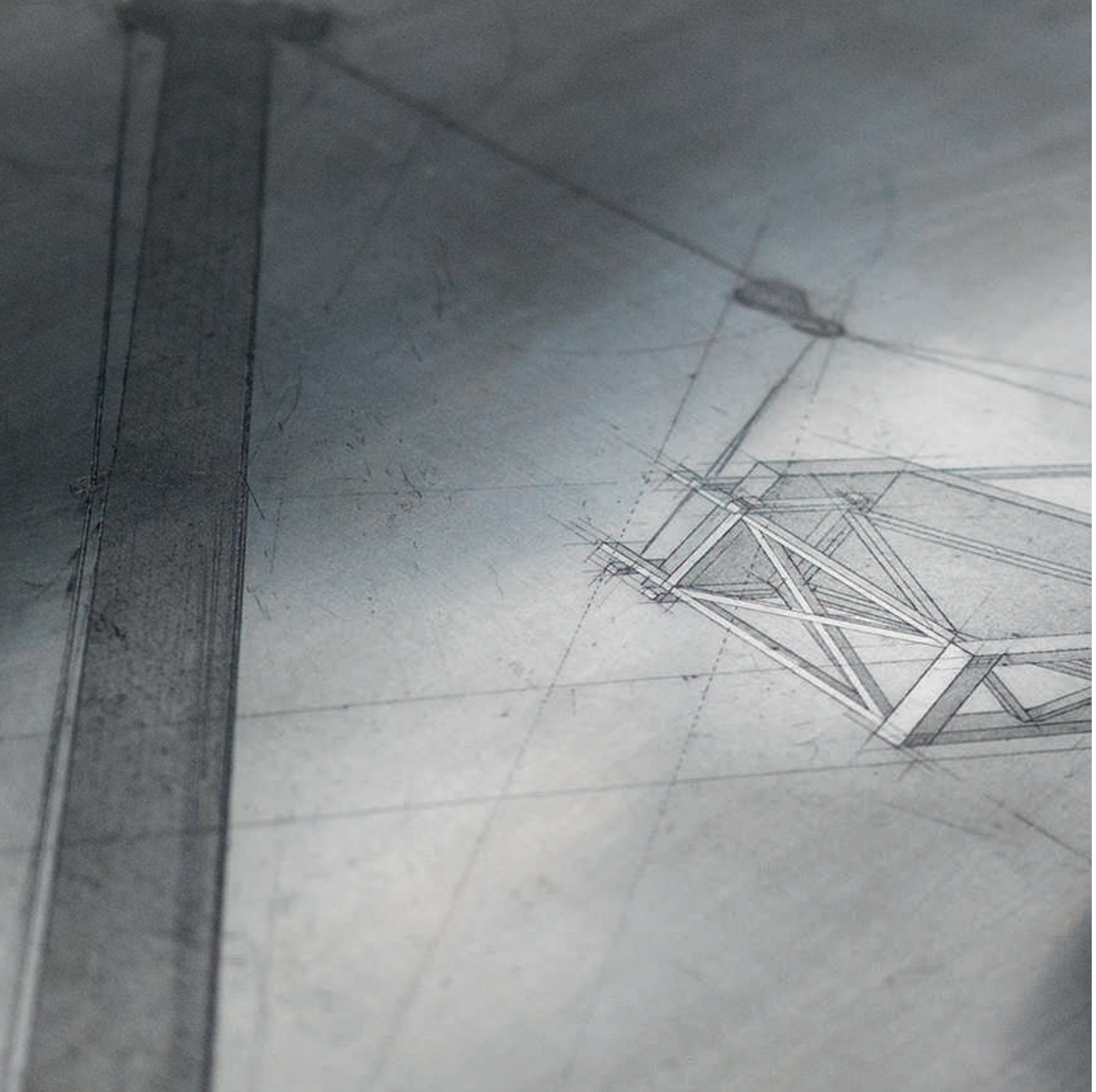
The printed image, in my opinion, is always imbued with a double meaning. What strikes me about the engraved drawing is not so much its expressiveness but its content. As a result of an indirect and time-consuming process, etchings always lead me to wonder about the reasons behind the image. What makes the artist choose one technique over another, and how does it contribute to what he or she is trying to say? So when it was my turn to choose a technique and a subject, to begin with, it was Piranesi's images that immediately came to my mind. What technique could be better suited to the precision of drawing and the representation of architecture than etching?

Obsessed by the pictorial oeuvre of the Venetian architect, I also began my explorations with etching by documenting structures from the past. But in this new context of mine, the ruins I found were not structures from antiquity but buildings with relatively recent history. If in 18th century Italy, Ancient Rome structures were primarily neglected, in 21st century Poland it was the buildings of the 19th and 20th centuries that proved a state of utter disrepair. While Piranesi systematically collected the ruins of Ancient Rome, seeing values and historical relevance where everyone else saw only rotting structures, in creating my personal archive of Wroclaw architecture in the framework of my masters diploma, I was also concerned with the uncertain future of those decaying structures that, although largely forgotten, in my eyes were crucial elements to understand the history and memory of the city. Following in Piranesi's footsteps, I, too, began to depict crumbling buildings out of fear that they would disappear without a trace. Drawing, etching and then exposing their images was the way I found to get them to be seen, to speak out in their defense with the hope that it might help preserve their matrices from being lost.

il.4, 5

From this first practical experiment and inspired by the new range of representation possibilities found in etching, I decided to venture into this doctorate with the primary intention of exploring the medium, taking it beyond its traditional limits, and bringing it closer into my field of expertise: the realm of architecture. By dealing with modern buildings that had already disappeared, stripped of their materiality, I was now entering a territory that was no longer alien to my experience but deeply rooted in my personal memories. From this perspective, the absence of concrete materiality to refer to and the lack of a physical space to experience and feel with my own body only further fueled my capacity for imagination. Even if I could not experience their spaces and material substance, I could use my previous experience as an architect to recreate them, to re-enact them with all the tools I had at my disposal.

Against this backdrop, the scarcity of images and documents relating to these buildings would not be a limitation but a catalyst for my artistry. The fewer materials I had at my disposal, the more I became interested in their stories and the deeper I dug into it. An old postcard, an out-of-focus photograph, or the lost image of a building section would suffice. A small, almost invisible detail. A vehicle parked in front of the building. A person passing by on the other side of the street. Compared to my body, I deduced from these elements all the necessary measures to reconstruct their architecture in three-dimensional models— allowing me to navigate through their spaces and see them also from the inside. The drawing exercise then became a mechanism to incorporate them into my most profound mind and reconstruct their architectures from out there. The role of this work is to bring these buildings back to the surface and keep them in the circuit of existence for a little longer. Etched into the roughness of the plate, these buildings would have more than a second chance, an afterlife.



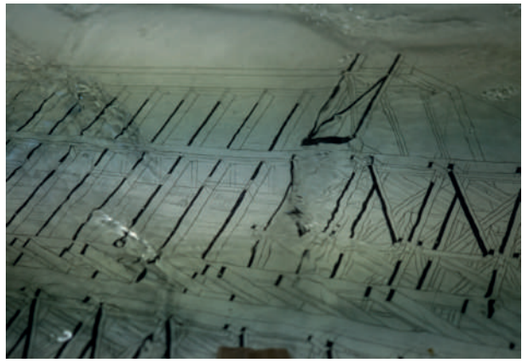
Matrix: The Topography of Print

Let's call roughness what remains of the past as form, built space, landscape, what remains of the process of suppression, accumulation, superposition, with which things everywhere replace and accumulate.

Milton Santos, 2006.

Drawing alone is the work resulting from the creative act responsible for mediating between the outside world and the artist's inner universe. However, in etching, there is always the presence of an object interrupting these two domains: *the matrix*. Its mere presence as an intermediary between imagination and reality imbues the printed image with meaning. It informs the image as not only drawn but etched, engraved, and sculpted with depth. In its most elementary definition, the graphic matrix is born from the action on a surface that creates different depths and roughnesses capable of holding ink, which is then transferred by pressure to another medium such as paper or fabric.

In printmaking, the drawing is never only two-dimensional. Because the action on the matrix surface implies a first unfolding of the drawing in space. Either on the matrix or the support. Otherwise stated, the emergence of the matrix suggests that the picture is not only traced on it but inserted into it. The surface can be incised by direct action, forming depressions on the plate, or indirectly, etching the drawing into the metal's surface through using a caustic acid. The transformation of the surface of the matrix by corrosion can be compared to the erosion



il.6, 7

processes, which wears away the earth's surface. It is not by chance that the concept of roughness,[18] borrowed from the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos, seems so appropriate to refer to the grooves engraved on the matrix by the corrosive effect of the acid. It is even more significant that in the new geography of the etched plate, the images that reveal themselves over the territory of the matrix invite us to reflect precisely on the processes of erasure and layering of the buildings they depict.

For Milton Santos, roughness is an essential part of the built and especially human landscape and, as such, bears particular marks on the specific context of a given territory. In other words, they are carved out of space by the action of daily life, by the engagement of bodies with the place they inhabit. As the footprints left by human life, roughness is a form that survives the succession of time and attests to memories of times past. Likewise, the effect of the caustic acid upon the surface of the metal engraves records from the past, containing them within the roughness of the plate, which then becomes a new source of possibilities. This process mimics life within a city as populations of people go about their lives; they erode the land around them, thus engraving and etching their histories within the landscape like on the rough surface of the intaglio plate.

Among the several poetic readings inspired by Milton Santos' concept, perhaps the most appropriate is that roughness is an absence that attests to presence and creation through subtraction. By corroding the plate and etching images of buildings deprived of their physical form, however, the loss of matter marks the materialization of the idea in space, which is revealed via the printed image. In the geography excavated into the metal plate, these images then become a kind of reliquary, containers of the remains and remnants that attest to the previous existence of these buildings. The matrix, therefore, can be seen as a relic and thus embodies a duplication of what it contains.

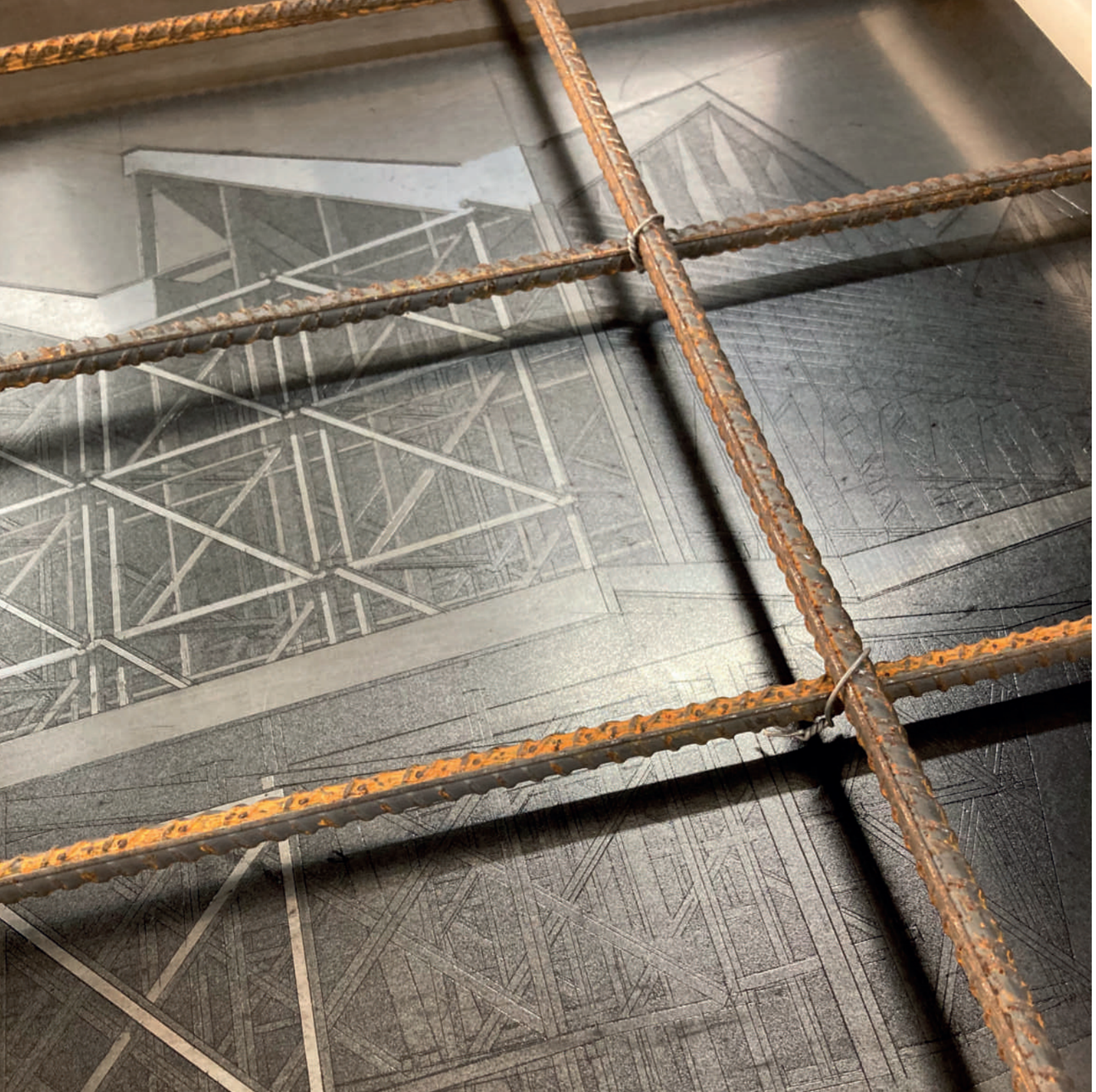
18 Milton Santos, *A Natureza do Espaço: Técnica e Tempo, Razão e Emoção* (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2006), 92.

il.8, 9

Here, the concept of roughness contributes to shedding light on the consequent unfolding regarding the approach to the technique in the development of this practical work. Exploring the matrix as a topographical and spatial construct, I began to wonder about ways to stress and unfold in space this micro-geography etched into the surface of the plate. With this in mind, I turned to architecture to find a solution capable of revealing the full potential of the matrix as a *mold*.[19] Because all formwork in architecture and construction is a type of a cast and consequently a matrix for reproducing tectonic forms and objects. The matrix assumed as a mold would allow me to cast the geography etched into the plate onto a printed object that is, by nature, three-dimensional.

The transformation of the image into sculpture, as an unfolding exercise through shaping rather than by printing, represents a subsequent and even more crucial step towards the consolidation and establishment of a new artistic practice situated at the confluence of printmaking and architecture disciplines. Moreover, this mold-making method corroborates the deepening of this work's subject of reference, which is architecture, its materiality and the duality of its presence-absence in space. The transformation of the engraved matrix into a cast finally unveils the projection of the drawing into three-dimensional space. The roughness of the image engraved on the plate goes from duplicated and printed to being built, made flesh, and brought back to life.

19 [mold], a container that you pour a liquid or soft substance into, which then becomes solid in the same shape as the container, for example when it is cooled or cooked.



The Built Image

What on earth is it that moves me? How can I get it into my own work? How could I design something like the room in that photograph – one of my favorites icons, a building I have never seen, in fact I think it no longer exists – a building I just love looking at.

Peter Zumthor, 2006.

Why am I drawn to the things that attract me? Why do I like buildings like this? What is there that I like about it? It feels like some structures can talk to us. For me, it's as if they have a kind of aura of their own. What the Swiss architect Peter Zumthor[20] calls *atmosphere*. Something that encompasses everything that moves us when we encounter a building or experience a particular space.[21] It is the search for this immaterial quality that moves us in the experience of architecture that drives Peter Zumthor's architectural practice. Similarly, it is the search to understand why these particular buildings, which have disappeared in recent years, move me so profoundly that I feel I need to do something *with* them. That I think I need to do something *for* them.

For me, these buildings encompass the architectural quality that Peter Zumthor calls atmosphere. It is simply there. Or rather, it *was* simply there. The moment I come across the image of a building that draws me in but is no longer there, it moves me even more. It's something

20 The son of a cabinetmaker, Peter Zumthor worked as an apprentice carpenter before becoming an architect. Starting his career as a conservationist, it was working on historic restoration projects that he first understood the qualities of different building materials.

21 Peter Zumthor, *Atmospheres* (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag GmbH, 2006), 11.

il.10, 11

il.12

difficult to explain at first, a feeling of distrust and disbelief that little by little gives way to doubt and a hunger for understanding. A trigger that fires and drives me to want to discover, unearth, and reconstruct their stories. It is seeking to accept that I never could, nor will ever be able to experience these structures that move me to do what I do, looking for answers to understand the reason behind their collapse and demise. Starting by digging into their stories, collecting shreds of evidence of their past existence and then recreating the narratives of their disappearance. First, I do this for myself because it is complicated to accept something without understanding why, just as it is impossible to experience the aura of a building without physically confronting it with our body. In an attempt to retrieve something of this lost atmosphere, I return to the exercise of drawing; I reconstruct their spaces in virtual models, engrave their images in metal plates, and build formworks to cast them back to life. It was by seeking to rescue something of its atmosphere and thus re-engage with the materiality of architecture and the materials that are applied to it that I embarked on the path that brought me here.

Since my first experiments with printmaking, there was a latent desire to re-engage with the materiality of things, with constructive materials and the exercise of building objects and spatial structures. Specifically, research with materials plays a central role in this doctoral project and my personal quest to validate my work as an architect. Indeed, my first experience with printmaking came from a desire to re-engage with the materiality of things. As I discovered this new language, I felt the need to incorporate constructive materials into the practice until I regained control over the building exercise through printmaking. Materials and building systems were then adapted from architecture to construct images, endowing them with body mass, weight, and gravity.

Within this framework, the technology of large precast concrete panels was an essential source of inspiration for developing the technological solution applied in this body of work. Concrete panels are a ubiquitous and symbolic element which embodies the modern movement's main assumptions, such as functionality, lightness, fast construction and low cost. An important symbol of the architecture of this period, large precast panels were commonly applied without cladding in raw concrete. In addition, the panel-wall solution implied prefabrication, industrialization and typification. As a ready-made solution, large-panel walls incorporated various functional systems and installations and hooks for transport and mounting using cranes. A similar solution was also incorporated into the pieces as an alternative for displaying the artworks. Due to this, they can be arranged and rearranged in space in various ways, configuring environments, enclosures, intervals, passages, and paths.

As I gradually transformed traditional constructive elements of architecture into unusual print supports, the more I found meaning and reflected on what I was doing. The further I experimented with the materials, the more information I had to work with so that the conclusion of each experiment marked the beginning of a new adventure in a continuous cycle of refinement and development. As I acquired more control over the process, I found the materials uncontrollable. Because, when it came down to it, that was not the purpose for which they had been created. I did not get them from art supply stores. I got them from construction suppliers. I do not use the decorative plaster of Paris but the Jack-of-all-trades cement plaster employed at the construction site. On top of that, I add even more cement, sand and rocks to build an actual concrete slab. Steel reinforcement and materials found along the way, such as bricks, glass and wood. Given all this, raw materials are the genuine content of these images; what fills them with meaning and carries them with significance.

For me, it is in the primitive materiality of these printed objects that the stories of these buildings find resonance in the present time. Because the materials insist on not receding into the image, they refuse to be contained within their construction. If plaster seeks to absorb the ink, cement tends to tear it out of the roughness of the plate. Concrete damages the matrix, it leaves marks and alters the etched image. It feels like the building materials insist on not taking on the new purpose that is imposed on them, as if these materials were always shouting that this is not their place. But I insist. Because the reason they are there, imprisoned in these images, is because they are no longer where they should be. It is because these depicted buildings have been deprived of their original materiality.

I keep insisting. Materiality is where the most important things come from, and where they will return.

Buildings may serve to mark the events of history, but more often than not, history is marked by the narratives of their disappearance. You don't know what you've got until it's gone.

Reinier de Graaf, 2017.

THIRD SECTION

Narratives of Disappearance

Memory is life, always embodied in living societies and as such in permanent evolution, subject to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of the distortions to which it is subject, vulnerable in various ways to appropriation and manipulation, and capable of lying dormant for long periods only to be suddenly reawakened.

Pierre Nora, 1996.

In architecture, almost nothing is said about what might have been or what never came into being. What no longer entrusts the entire weight of its existence to the frailty of memory. Because memory only materializes in the instant of lived experience and is retrieved in the lapse of remembrance. Even so, memory is absolute. For the simple fact that it is, because "memory is rooted in the concrete," Piere Nora situates the construction of the past between memory and history.[22]

It takes time for the instant of the lived experience of the present to cross into the past and establish itself in history. For the immediate occurrences to settle in the depths of history, the action of an external agent is required. It is to say that history is always constructed. As a building of bricks made of memories, once manipulated, they are no longer what they were but what they are intended to be. Therefore, the material substance of history is constructed through the sensitive matter of memory. In other words, the founding of history takes place through a long process of sedimentation, like the layers of dust that slowly accumulate on the surface of an old piece of

22 Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," in *Realms of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 3.

furniture in an empty house. And the deeper buried in the substance of time, the more rooted an event finds itself in the abyss of history.

As a human construct, history is selective. It is like an archaeological discovery, where the surface layers are swept away, one after the other, as one deliberately chooses which to preserve and which to remove. Given this, Pierre Nora suggests that there is a constant tension between these two domains in discovering history: "Memory is always suspect in the eyes of history, whose true mission is to demolish it, to repress it."[23] As history needs to be unearthed, memory, on the other hand, is constantly on the surface, delicately resting on a thin layer called the present. Therefore, it lives in a state of constant impermanence, threatened to be blown away. It is to say that memory, as a phenomenon of the present, can even be preserved for a short period, but it can never sink into the depths of the other. Memory emanates from a physical experience, as when one smells fresh paint from a recently painted facade. And although one can never recover that original experience once the paint dries and the smell disappears into thin air once and for all, when we look at that wall, touch it with our hands, it is as if we can feel it present within us.

It is in space, and through it, that memory materializes. "Now space is a reality that endures: since our impressions rush by, one after another, and leave nothing behind in mind, we can understand how we recapture the past only by understanding how it is, in effect, preserved by our physical surroundings,"[24] writes Maurice Halbwachs seeking to position space concerning memory. For the author, no memory is possible outside the frameworks built to accommodate social life, outside the places we revisit to determine and recapture our memories of past times.[25] The demolition of a house, for example, affects the habits of the people who once dwelt in it, just as the ruination of collective spaces forever spoils the stability of the collective memories associated with them. This vital but extremely fragile bond between space and memory is why the erasure of material structures as a place of everyday life determines both the effacement of collective memory and the selective concretization of history. But the only way to preserve memory is not through the physical presence of the objects to which it is bound. Because memory is lived, it remains engraved above all in the images that emanate from this physical encounter between being and place. It is precisely these images that allow us to retrieve the past in the present.[26] The significance of the image in preserving memory lies in its ability to recreate the experience of space through our senses.

To this end, by digging through the debris of the past, diving between the layers of memory and history, reflecting on what is no longer and chewing on the causes and consequences of its disappearance, I am trying to build my historical narrative to become closer to a memory that was denied its past. This exercise is, above all, a quest to understand the historical processes that led to the demise of a significant part of the modern heritage built during the times of the Polish People's Republic, a phenomenon that, in my view, at first seemed utterly unreasonable and nonsensical. Why would buildings of obvious technical, technological, and formal value disappear, one after the other, with almost no resistance, leaving no traces behind?

Edifices and built spaces are like anchors for memory, physical objects that give them weight and substance, instruments through which they can navigate from the present to the past. The systematic ruination of architecture, in this sense, is a way of breaking the vital bond that ties memory to the past and thus averts present phenomena from being given a place in history.

Nevertheless, these two conditions, present and history, have never been closer than they are today. We are witnessing an unprecedented compression of past time that results from a manifest obsession with the future—a desire to move the tape forward, to skip a part of the movie, as if we were all rushing to make up for lost time. And the more we stretch the present forward, the more compact the recent and still malleable past becomes. Constricted in time, a part of this past is squeezed out, dissipating into another time, one that finds no place anywhere and therefore disappears without a trace.

It is precisely this process of obliteration of memory that troubles me and provokes a sense that there is something more to be discovered in the stories of buildings that no longer exist. So it is by reconstructing their stories that I seek to understand what these objects were and what they meant, the reasons and consequences of their present absence in the city, and how I can incorporate this information into the development of the practical work that is emerging. From this perspective, the following passages are a kind of record of this research, in which I document the memories I found along the way and the reflections that come from this process of discovery and understanding. By retelling these narratives in my own way, I try to reassemble part of this past and thus fill in the gaps left by the removal of these structures.

23 Pierre Nora, 3.

24 Maurice Halbwachs, "The Insertion of the Collective Memory into Space," in *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1950), 139-140.

25 Maurice Halbwachs, "Language and Memory," in *On Collective Memory* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43.

26 Maurice Halbwachs (1950), 156.

il.13

1969 – – 1998

Międzynarodowy Dworzec Lotniczy Warszawa-Okęcie

Well, at last! After long years of waiting, Warsaw has finally got an airport, which passengers will no longer confuse with the train stop in Garwolin. Opened at the beginning of May, the modern airport, designed by Mr and Mrs Dobrowolski, has all the facilities a respectable European city should have. From the observation deck you can wave a handkerchief to the taking off and landing planes, Boeings and Caravels. The new Warsaw-Okęcie Airport is expected to receive one million passengers a year.

It is with these words that the voiceover narrator Włodzimierz Kmicik introduces the opening of the new Warsaw-Okęcie International Airport Terminal to the general public in a promotional video recorded on April 27, 1969. "The new terminal replaces a temporary shack that looked more like a rural train station than an airport," found written in a webpage called *e-kartka z Warszawy: Wiadomości Trochę Wczorajsze*,[27] which translates to "e-card from Warsaw: The news from a bit of yesterday."

Traveling in those days was no simple task, especially on an airplane. Airplanes were luxury items that few people could afford to experience in person. For the vast majority of the population flying was an abstract idea, something out of reach, and it would remain so for many years to come. Yet flying is something that allows us to dream; it is a synonym for freedom. In the context of the first years of the Polish People's Republic, there was probably nothing more attractive to an ordinary citizen than dreaming of being free. And architecture has the potential to open doors to the imagination.

27 "Nowe Okęcie - e-Kartka z Warszawy," ekartkazwarszawy.pl, July 29, 2021. http://ekartkazwarszawy.pl/kartka/nowe-okecie/.

When laying the foundations of their proposal for the new Warsaw-Okęcie International Airport Terminal in 1960, architects Krystyna Król-Dobrowolska and Jan Dobrowolski were very aware of the symbolic significance of such a building. And this may have made all the difference in the jury's final decision on the winning design. Because while most of the proposals were based on aerodynamic forms, employing reinforced concrete shells, the duo of architects opted for a less ambitious but no less surprising built form.

As stated by Maciej Czarnecki[28] in his article for the magazine *Architektura Murator*,[29] the consistency among most of the proposals presented in the competition was very much in line with what was going on in the international architectural scenario at that moment. The construction of the TWA Flight Center in New York, designed by Eero Saarinen a couple of years before, was under construction by that time—reflecting the significant influence of the Finnish-American architect on the emerging scene of modern Polish architecture at the beginning of the second half of the 20th century.

While Saarinen seeks to capture the feeling of being in a plane on the built form of his terminal, thus creating "a monument to the airline and to aviation itself,"[30] Krystyna and Jan seemed more concerned with shaping a building that could provide an experience that was closer to their reality. A monument capable of inviting people to daydream. The new International Airport Terminal in the capital was not only meant to fulfill in a highly efficient way all the technical and programmatic demands specified in its regulations, but they also envisioned a building loaded with symbolic meaning, ready to take its leading role as one of the city's main attractions and tourist destinations. That building would become a place that people from the four corners of the country would dream of visiting at some point, to see with their own eyes those giant iron birds defying the force of gravity and carrying their most intimate dreams with them.

The architects conceptualized a structure to be seen and admired, both from the outside and the inside. A backdrop for everyday life or a weekend destination. A setting for daily stories of people who would never be able to catch a plane—a postcard to display on the counter. The Airport Terminal did not serve exclusively to facilitate passenger boarding or accommodate arriving travelers comfortably. Despite its highly functional character, Warszawa-Okręcie was a building intended for people and, more importantly, it was a design also intended to accommodate people who would not be flying from it.

Located no more than thirty minutes from the city center and easily accessible by train and bus, the new passenger terminal was intended to be more of a meeting and social place than a departure point. To this end, on the opposite side of the loading and unloading area, the building had a 230-meter-long panoramic walkway that twisted between the runway and its modern glass façade. It was as if the best part of that building experience was restricted to

28 Maciej Czarnecki is an architect, and assistant professor at the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology, who conducts research on Polish post-war architecture at the Studio of Architecture and Contemporary Arts.

29 Maciej Czarnecki, "Dworzec Lotniczy Okęcie Projektu Dobrowolskich," in *Architektura Murator*, no. 9 (April 2012), 28.

30 Luke Fiederer, "AD Classics: TWA Flight Center / Eero Saarinen | ArchDaily," AD Classics: TWA Flight Center / Eero Saarinen, www.archdaily.com, October 21, 2018. https://www.archdaily.com/788012/ad-classics-twa-flight-center-eero-saarinen/.

il.14, 15

those who could never really enjoy the thrill of boarding an airplane. Walking over that footbridge provided a unique spectacle for those people—an experience that would most likely be etched forever in their memories.

In its essence, it was an airport terminal designed to be experienced without the haste of a traveler—a straightforward structure composed of subtly different façades. A building to be wandered around, seen at ease, over and over again. Commenting on the role of the building at the time, Maciej Czarnecki wrote that "in the years when air travel was not as common as it is today, it was quite an attraction."[31] In some ways, that terminal was the opposite of what one expects from an airport these days. A place often far removed from the town center, disconnected from its surroundings, a non-place to which we usually arrive in a hurry and with only one thing in mind, to leave as soon as possible. The Warsaw-Okęcie terminal designed by Jan and Krystyna was a different one, an airport designed to be lived-in daily, to be frequented and inhabited by people who had nothing to do there.

On the inside, the absolute modernity of the building suggested a spatial experience that was supposed to be overwhelming. The architects' idea to design the terminal as an open-plan pavilion is noteworthy. In this one integrated interior space, the zones were separated by the imaginary line drawn by its massive, sculptural columns, upon which a complex roof structure rested with a striking lightness. Like an incredible origami structure of concrete and glass, the terminal's roof was planned to block the direct sunlight but allow even the most hidden nooks and crannies to be generously lit. Additionally, the roof's successive voids allowed light to flow naturally into the interior. Its multiple openings fulfilled yet another purpose: that of making people daydream. By directing countless perspectives towards the sky, as if constantly guiding the visitor's gaze upwards to the infinite immensity of the blue sky, the roof was an invitation to wonder, to imagine what it would be like to fly, to be free.

31 Maciej Czarnecki, 29.

il.16

What it would be like to see the world from above. In fact, an airport terminal is also a building to be seen from the sky, and as such, its roof was designed as a fifth façade. As with the other four, the architects did not skimp, and turned it into a real spectacle.

One of its most significant advantages, or values, is that it had been designed not only to adapt internally as programmatic needs changed over time. The structure, created using a simple and highly prefabricated modular system, was planned so that it could expand continuously without having to interrupt the flow of passengers within the existing terminal. This solution would allow the airport to grow, adapting to a possible and predictable increase in the number of travelers over the years.

The architects used a system of light walls to divide and separate the different program spaces. This strategy allowed quickly rearranging the interior space according to different needs. An ultramodern terminal, completely free, accessible and adaptable, an unpretentious structure that imposed nothing as definitive, aware of the transience of the requirements to which it was subjected. A decent, honest and reliable construction, prepared to welcome the changes it was inevitably bound to go through, a building, in my understanding, future-proof.

However, perhaps it was the overconfidence it exuded, a kind of naïve optimism about the future, that led to its demise. Looking back today, the international airport terminal designed by Krystyna and Jan was perhaps too modern for its time, too transparent, and too embracing. The fact that it still looks exceptionally stylish today, even though it ceased to exist thirty years ago, makes me wonder how ahead of its time it was at that very moment. However, after the initial fascination of the early years, that building became a complex problem. It was like having in your hands a fantastic machine from the future, but without a user guide.

After observing a considerable annual increase in the number of passengers since 1983, the authorities decided to start the airport expansion project three years later. Preparatory work on the site began in 1987, and construction finally began in 1990. However, disregarding Krystyna and Jan's original draft, which foresaw a plan for continuous, linear expansion of the airport terminal, the authorities instead chose to build a new structure, completely unrelated and independent of its predecessor. I lack factual data to confidently say the reason behind this decision. Still, given the historical moment when the cornerstone of the new terminal was laid, I have plenty of reason to believe that there was, above all, a blind desire for change— followed by an absolute denial of the recent past, and the architecture built in times of *PRL*.

In the eyes of the architects, the terminal was to be expanded continuously and linearly by adding new modules to the existing structure, thereby addressing, above all, the expected increase in passenger flows without ever interrupting the operation of the functional modules. On the other hand, the new terminal presented a definitive answer, solving all the problems at once and for good. It would be large enough not to require any future expansion, enough to last forever, and, most importantly, its architecture would not be timeless. The new international airport terminal would mark the beginning of a new era.

And indeed, it did. But in a very negative way. It became a symbol, in fact, a landmark of a short-lived and fleeting epoch. The recently completed terminal quickly became obsolete and dysfunctional. Ten years after its completion, it proved entirely unprepared to accommodate an ever-increasing number of travelers and, worse, wholly devalued in its aesthetic qualities, as Czarnecki attested in his 2012 article.[32] Less than twenty years after the original terminal was reduced to dust, he adds, replacing it with a new terminal in the early 1990s seems a tremendous missed opportunity today.

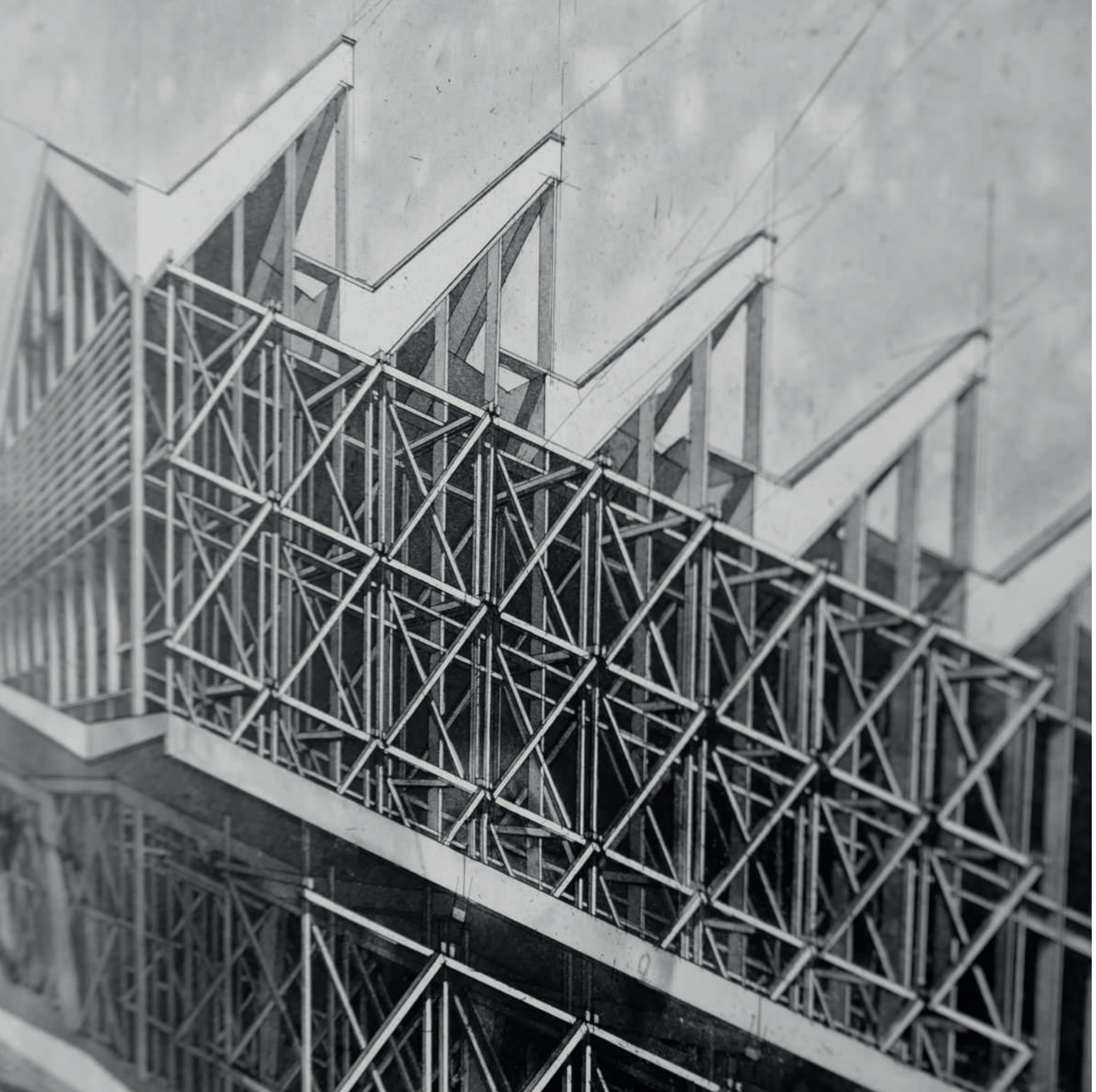
As Anna Cymer, art historian and journalist, states in her book *Architektura w Polsce 1945–1989*, the demise of the Terminal, most unfortunately, simply happened because "the airport management did not appreciate the quality of its architecture."[33] Such a harsh reason could be enough to tear down such a fascinating structure reveals much about the context in which this decision was made. Or rather, it explains why no one objected to it back then.

To put it somewhat poetically, the original Warsaw-Okęcie terminal designed by the Dobrowolskis departed along with the last of its passengers. Its story likely ended because the building was conceived more as a starting point than a final destination for the architecture itself. Through its modular, expandable and replicable structure, the terminal was a kind of *gate to the future*, a building many miles from being fixed in time and space. Its architecture would not age, and as Czarnecki himself comments, "one can only imagine that it would also be very popular nowadays."[34] And ruminating about this, I believe that for architecture to remain relevant, it must be able to detach itself from the building on its own, establishing itself in and through people's lives. In this sense, the old terminal was a place where architecture could come and go, along with its visitors and passengers. Through this engagement with human life, it settled and renewed itself every day, remaining forever present, even if only in the memory of those who experienced it. That the experience of architecture, like a space for life, punctuates every moment of our existence. In the same way, when it disappears, a little bit of us also departs with it.

32 Maciej Czarnecki, 29.

33 Anna Cymer, "Powrót do Nowoczesności," in *Architektura w Polsce 1945–1989* (Warsaw: Fundacja Instytut Architektury, 2019), 259.

34 Maciej Czarnecki, 29.



When I landed at Warsaw Chopin Airport for the first time in September 2017, I had no idea that the building designed by Krystyna and Jan Dobrowolski had once existed. I didn't know that the first place I set foot upon when arriving in Poland had been erected on the rubble of the former Warsaw-Okęcie Airport Terminal. It seems to me a happy coincidence that in organizing the narrative of this artistic project in chronological order of the year of its disappearance, the first building depicted is also the first built space that I would have experienced if the fate of these buildings had been different. From the current airport at which I disembarked, I have no memories at all. I recall only a generic building, a structure that could be anywhere in the world and which, consequently, told me nothing about where I was arriving. When I came across the old photographs of the former Terminal, on the other hand, I immediately realized that this was a unique building. I was immediately moved by what I saw in those analog images. In this context, when the browser insists on showing only old pictures of a specific building, it is a bad sign. I scroll and change the search tools endlessly to find it, to no avail. The images are few. They repeat and repeat. There is no way to recover its existence in the present time. I must then imagine what it would have been like.

In the constructed image of this building, it seems inaccessible, isolated amid a terrain of uncertain characteristics. On the one hand, there is no ground, and the architecture has been deprived of its elementary connection to the soil. Indeed, it is no longer there. On the other hand, the building and the wooden planks scattered around it seem to contradict this immaterial surface. A deep black hole that sucks in every source of light and turns it into shadow, enhancing the feeling of gravity. The roof, in turn, contradicts the sensation of weight and darkness because it remains intact, light and bright. In this image, made concrete and cast in space, this building remains hovering over this unstable and undefined surface. Made flesh and matter, it is through its constructed representation that this building remains in the circuit of existence, hanging over the surface of memory and refusing to surrender to its tragic end when it finally disappears into oblivion.

Goods of Modern Culture

Unless we bring about systemic action, spontaneous movement in this area will diminish the prestige and ultimately the effectiveness of conservation efforts. The time has come to add another chapter to the current set of conservation doctrines: "On Architecture and Art of the 2nd Half of the 20th Century."

Andrzej Siwek, 2011.

The second half of the 20th century was undoubtedly one of the most interesting, prolific, and disruptive times in the history of architecture. Within this framework, the 1990s was perhaps the most remarkable decade, mainly due to the tremendous social, economic, and political transformations that followed the fall of the Iron Curtain. For Poland, as a former Soviet Socialist Republic, the 1990s "was a time of great changes"[35] says journalist Piotr Lipiński, co-author of *Niepowtarzalny Urok Likwidacji: Reportaż z Polski lat 90*. A book in which, together with his fellow journalist Michał Matys, Lipiński compiled a series of published reports written by the two of them over the early years of the transformation. As if justifying the need to bring these news reports back to the fore at a distance of just over twenty years from the events they describe, the authors comment that: "The Poland we write about in this book has not been widely acknowledged. It got lost between the People's Republic of Poland and the contemporaneity. And in this turmoil

35 Piotr Lipiński. "Zagubiona dekada. Nie bardzo chcemy wspominać Polskę lat 90," Onet Kultura, Ringier Axel Springer Polska sp. z o.o, 26.11.2018, https://kultura.onet.pl/ksiazki/zagubiona-dekada-nie-bardzo-chcemy-wspominac-polske-lat-90-mowi-piotr-lipinski/4be4yhz.

it has remained lost."[36] For the author, not only the 1990s that remained in the past, but a country no one feels like remembering.

However, the 1990s were not only a period of significant turbulence, of doubts and uncertainties but also of great dreams and expectations. And although the collapse of the Soviet Union was a long-awaited event, even pre-announced, I would say, when this moment finally arrived, nobody knew exactly what was happening or what to expect from this time. One of the leading and most urgent challenges in the political landscape of the Third Republic of Poland, which was emerging free after more than 40 years of Soviet occupation, was the need to establish a new constitution that would be in line with the social demands of a country "which recovered, in 1989, the possibility of a sovereign and democratic determination of its fate."[37] Against this backdrop, following the radical changes in the political processes that had taken place in the country since then, the new constitution was finally approved and came into force on October 17th of the year 1997. In its set of political and legal premises, the new constitution pointed, above all, to an apparent decentralization of public management in the country.[38] In what refers to the context of the Polish People's Republic, the cultural sector was strictly centralized and tightly supervised by the regime. While in communist Poland, the majority of built structures were owned by the state, after 1989, the responsibility for their conservation shifted from being a state's duty to becoming a responsibility of its new owners.

Regaining possession of what was rightfully theirs, which the regime had denied them for more than forty years, was something the country could hardly wait for. With this came a broad privatization process of former state enterprises, further accelerated by the arrival of a new ingredient: access to credit. In the free market scenario launched in the country at the turn of the 1990s, there were goods to be consumed and things to be owned. With the establishment of the new capitalist Poland, the real state had come to be regarded as a means of revenue, thus, treated as an investment.[39] The awareness of the cultural value of architecture was quickly eclipsed by its market value.

Today "we prefer not to remember that Poland,"[40] of the 1990s, as Lipiński says, back then, there were other decades that everyone made sure to erase from memory: those associated with the communist years. Marked by a naïve fascination for everything new, the period of transformation was characterized by a renewed rejection of the things of the past— mainly associated with the East. Modern architecture stood out among the goods inherited from the old regime. And although architectural production in the second half of the twentieth century was quite diverse, both technologically and stylistically, it was the architecture built in the 1960s and 1970s that everyone began to point their fingers at in disapproval as soon as the occupants were gone. There was no longer anyone to blame. As if born under a bad sign, late modern architecture, a universal symbol of an unsightly period, went from being ignored and neglected to being opposed, attacked, and finally, erased from the map.

Across the four corners of the country, countless built structures passed into the hands of new owners and capital investors. It was necessary to adjust the city to the rhythm of the most recent western trends, create the conditions for progress, and adapt an entire country to the new times. Popular restaurants gave way to new fast-food chains, commercial halls gave way to new shopping malls, and thus, little by little, the gray concrete was replaced by new and brightly colored mirrored glass facades.

With the injection of foreign capital into the country's economy, the more the cities grew, especially vertically. In search of the best opportunities to capitalize on the territory, it is evident that the most attractive and sought-after locations were those in the most central areas of large cities. In the eyes of the entrepreneurs, the cities of the former Soviet republics represented an unexplored territory of great opportunities.

Indeed, until the late 1980s, these cities had been planned to be efficient structures, especially from a social point of view. They sought to distribute programs and services evenly across urban spaces. In this regard, the most accessible and central locations were intended for public use: such as squares, pavilions, theaters, and cinemas. Structures aimed at goods trade also enjoyed a privileged position at that time. And this is somewhat curious because commodities always seemed to be in short supply on the shelves, as Klaudia A. Obrębska and Maciej Bartos commented in their article about commercial architecture in Warsaw during the People's Republic of Poland and its fate after the transformation for the *Architektura Magazine* in 2019:

> Provisioning basic goods was a difficult part of everyday life in the People's Poland Republic. Empty shelves, gigantic queues and lucky people with rolls of toilet paper hanging around their necks became the symbol of the period for a long time. However, despite goods rationing, various shopping facilities were built all over the country.[41]

One reason for us to better understand this phenomenon is brought by renowned art historian and former Minister of Culture Małgorzata Omilanowska. In her article entitled "Narodziny Metropolii – Warszawskie Hale Targowe" (The Birth of the Metropolis - Warsaw Trade Fair Halls), Omilanowska states that just as in the 19th century, the construction of large central public markets was perceived by the society of the time as a synonym of progress, granting a city a metropolitan status, in a similar way in the 20th century, investing in often innovative in design or detail commercial buildings had propagandistic overtones,[42] as if the regime was trying to obfuscate the apparent shortage of available products through surprising built forms. Interestingly enough, while the 19th-century metropolis began to establish itself with the arrival of the Trade Fair Halls in the city, in the 21st century, it is brought to an end with its final departure. There was no better way to announce the arrival of the new metropolis

36 Piotr Lipiński and Michał Matys, *Niepowtarzalny urok likwidacji: Reportaż z Polski lat 90* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2018), 8.

37 Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2 April 1997, Dz.U. 1997 nr 78 poz. 483 z późn. zm.

38 Samanta Kowalska, "The System of Cultural Heritage Protection in Poland After 1989," in *Cultural Heritage in Poland – The Background, Opportunities and Dangers* (Poznań–Kalisz: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 2012), 70.

39 Samanta Kowalska, 70.

40 Lipiński and Matys, Niepowtarzalny urok likwidacji: Reportaż z Polski lat 90, 8.

41 Klaudia A. Obrębska and Maciej Bartos, "Architektura Handlowa Warszawy w Czasie Polski Ludowej i Jej Losy Po Transformacji na Wybranych Przykładach", *Przestrzeń/Urbanistyka/Architektura*, nr. 1 (2019): 160.

42 Małgorzata Omilanowska, "Narodziny Metropolii – Warszawskie Hale Targowe", *Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni*, nr.2 (2006): 28–31.

than to superimpose its symbols over the ashes of the advertisements of the abolished system.

With the arrival of the consumer culture, modest commercial structures that occupied great locations in the capital became easy prey for new developers. Besides being easily dismantled and offering no resistance to demolition, their high symbolic significance and low associated economic value only contributed to their disappearance as if by magic at the turn of the 1990s. There was the impression that the new owners favored the population by getting rid of them. The sense of urgency to set up the new was a means to legitimize the dilapidation of the heritage built in the times of the People's Republic of Poland in the early years of the transformation– to begin by tearing down the commercial halls.

At the dawn of the third millennium, a new century and stage was beginning, comments the polish philosopher Piotr Witwicki in his book *Znikająca Polska*: "The world had become more brutal, and the 2000s had no mercy on the symbols of fledgling capitalism."[43] For the new consumer culture to be institutionalized and thus reach its full potential, the first obstacle was, in fact, trade and the old ways in which it was established in the cities. "Trade was about to become civilized. In addition to consumer needs, there were also aesthetic ones. The old, dirty marketplace(s), full of rats and rusting bristles, was no match for the new times," Witwicki adds.[44] One after the other, commercial halls were systematically shut down.

43 Piotr Witwicki, "Nowy Początek, Nowy Kapitalizm," in *Znikająca Polska* (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka Wydawnictwo, 2021), 132.

44 Piotr Witwicki, 132.

The most frequented ones, whose loyal clientele refused to retreat, were invited to relocate or forcibly moved to other adjacent areas. Gradually the circle was closing in, constricting not only the ancient forms of commerce but trapping their built structures in a dead end.

Dozens of small commercial pavilions that once punctuated the capital's urban landscape found themselves off the cuff disconnected from the life of its inhabitants. Unable to adapt to the new times and to face the competition of the new chains and products that landed in the country at the hands of the experienced entrepreneurs from the West, these simple structures fell into oblivion, lost their clients and finally, their relevance and reason for existing.

Writing about the fate of Commercial Architecture in Warsaw after the transformation, Klaudia Obrębska and Marcin Bartos state that the country's population growth at the beginning of the 21st century highlighted the inadequacy of the old forms of consumerism in this new setting: "In 1950, a year before the first department store opened in Warsaw, almost 650,000 people inhabited the capital. In 2016, almost three times as many. The stores and commercial pavilions built in the People's Republic of Poland were not planned to serve many consumers and receive many goods."[45] It so happened that, in the new context, these small trading halls were not very functional. They had been conceived in a time gone by, which, although not long ago, had suddenly become a thing of the past. In the new times, fed by the profusion of consumer goods, the country's population had also grown, and so had its hunger to consume.

45 Klaudia A. Obrębska and Maciej Bartos, 163.

At the very beginning of the transformation, in Poland a first round of devastation of the modern architectural heritage took place. Primarily due to the climate of indeterminacy and deregulation in the political and economic landscape of a country in an overall process of change. While on the one hand, after the political transformation, these new practices and programs, bringing their brands and products, gradually took over the urban space of Polish cities, "the architecture created after the war began to consistently and imperceptibly disappear from the city space."[46] In this increasingly scary scenario, the awareness of the actual material value of architecture was undermined, highlighting the urgent need at that time to develop methods and criteria first to identify and then systematically protect the built heritage of a bygone era.

Since the approval of its new Constitution, it took almost six years for the Minister of Culture and Cultural Heritage to release the first legal act related to protecting and conserving historical monuments and cultural heritage in Poland. The Legal Act on Planning and Urban Development,[47] released on March 27, 2003, was supposed to be a significant breakthrough towards the safeguarding of the country's threatened modern heritage – and not just to improve the protection of those categories that already enjoyed conservationists' attention, as everything built before the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the effect caused was precisely the opposite.

46 Ibid, 159.

47 Journal of Laws 2003, no. 80, item 717, as amended.

The most significant contribution of the above mentioned Legal Act was the introduction of a status called *Dobrych Kultury Współczesnej*, which meant that after its publication, modern architecture could only – at most – be categorized as *Goods of Modern Culture*. In article number 2, point 10 of the aforementioned Legal Act, goods of modern culture are to be understood as "cultural goods, and therefore, should not be considered monuments (...) which are to be acknowledged as achievements of modern living generations, and only if they are of high artistic or historical value."[48] The protection of this category of buildings was bound to their inclusion in so-called Local Spatial Development Plans or *Miejscowym Planie Zagospodarowania Przestrzennego*, shifting from a centralized to a decentralized process, which in itself should not be a problem. However, as Jakub Lewicki points out in his essay "Ochrona Architektury z 2 Połowy XX Wieku w Polsce. Teoria i Praktyka Konserwatorska" for the ICOMOS Conference held at the "Denkmal 2010" in Leipzig, Germany:

> The basic problem in the protection of contemporary cultural goods, apart from the lack of defining the methods of their selection and evaluation, is the lack of spatial development plans themselves. This situation undermined the sense of protection of modern culture goods contained in The Legal Act on Planning and Urban Development.[49]

48 Ibid.

49 Jakub Lewicki, "Ochrona Architektury z 2 Połowy XX Wieku w Polsce. Teoria i Praktyka Konserwatorska," in *Konservierung der Moderne? Über den Umgang mit den Zeugnissen der Architekturgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts – Conservation of Modern Architecture? How to deal with the legacy of the 20th Century*, ICOMOS Polska; ICOMOS Deutschland; Krajowy Ośrodek Badań i Dokumentacji Zabytków (Warszawa – Berlin, 2010), 149-150.

As a result, the publication of the act served to strengthen the categories of buildings already covered and to further question the need for protection of modern buildings. Filip Springer, a Polish reporter and photojournalist, in his original and direct way of writing, clarifies for us the practical significance of the passing of the first legal act related to the protection and conservation of modern architectural assets in Poland:

> For those who knew how to read these words, the letter sounded like the opening of hunting season. The status of "contemporary culture asset" is as much an honor for buildings as it is useless. With minimum effort and in compliance with the law, such an asset can be turned into a pile of rubble.[50]

So, if the situation was not already serious up to this point, after the enactment of the Urban Planning and Development Act, it became a real catastrophe. It is to say that after 2003, countless prominent examples of modern architecture were instantly deprived of legal protection under the status of a monument, making it even more challenging to protect a category of heritage that was under obvious threat. Even though no interesting details went into the previously mentioned Act, with no other document, at that moment containing additional provisions to identify and evaluate such structures in its regulations, these specifications would finally come sooner or later. At some point— and the community of architects and conservators had started to move in this direction– they would eventually begin to act on behalf of modern heritage and protect it more effectively.

What was supposed to be a milestone for the protection of modern heritage in the country became a carte blanche for those seeking opportunities to capitalize on the built stock of the old east. If until 2003, due to the lack of legal provisions regulating the identification and preservation of modern architecture in Poland, the dismantling of structures from the recent past could still be seen as a bump in the road by granting it the dubious title of *Goods of Modern Culture*, the ruination of modern heritage in the country was finally standardized.

On March 27, 2003, a traumatic and long-term period of witch-hunting began, in this case, the modern architecture of the 1960s and 1970s. One of its victims was the Super–sam trade hall in Warsaw, built in 1962 and destroyed in 2006.

50 Filip Springer, "Pięć Lat," in *Źle Urodzone: Reportaże o Architekturze Prl-u* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Karakter, 2017), 332.

1962 – – 2006

According to the conservation doctrine, these buildings are too young to be monuments. Therefore, an amendment to the protection of historical monuments is needed. Otherwise, in another 50 years, when the buildings from the communist times will be suitable for protection, there will be nothing left to preserve.

Wacław Zalewski, 2013.

Supersam w Warszawie

In the late 1950s, more than ten years after the end of the Great War, the country was still experiencing severe problems in the supply and distribution of essential goods. Queues increased as products became scarce. Basic commerce almost always operated in the open air, and all it took was a pack of parsley in hand and someone looking for seasoning for their soup to establish a so-called street market. "To sell parsley, you don't need to build anything. A square bearing the name Farmer's Market is enough. But if you do build something, you should build it as interesting as possible, on a grand scale, in other words, 'to suit our times.'"[51] With these words, Maciej Krasiński, one of the designers of the Supersam Commercial Pavilion in Warsaw, sought to introduce the need to build a unique building to sell primary essential products when apparently, even a plastic shack seemed redundant. More or less, this was how commerce operated in the capital at that time. The lack of essential consumer goods was an urgency to be solved for yesterday; the population had had enough. The evident lack of spaces dedicated to distributing consumer goods was also glaring. But most likely, this was what mattered least.

51 Maciej Krasiński, "Supersam w Warszawie", *Architektura*, nr.9 (1962): 343.

What point would it be to build a place to hand out goods if there were no such thing as goods available for consumption, and furthermore, if what there was already got into the hands of the final consumer anyway?

After more than a decade dedicated to rebuilding cities from the ashes, recycling bricks, plugging holes, and plastering walls, it was to be expected that a whole generation of architects would be hungry to establish new forms, thirsty to work with new materials, and to solve the major issues of their time: "For the architects who survived the war, the possibility of building the city basically from scratch fired their imagination and allowed them to try out modernist solutions on an unprecedented scale,"[52] wrote Klaudia Obrębska and Marcin Bartos. It was precisely this desire to rebuild a country and, above all, people's lives that motivated a whole generation of architects to create unique buildings such as the Supersam Trade Pavilion in Warsaw.

"That is why, from 1962, parsley in Warsaw was sold in one of the most beautiful post-war pavilions in Poland,"[53] elaborates Filip Springer in his book-reportage on the architecture of the People's Republic of Poland entitled *Źle Urodzone. Reportaże o Architekturze PRL-u* (Born Under a Bad Sign. Reports on the Architecture of the People's Republic of Poland). It was this appetite for establishing a new kind of architecture while still having to deal with a constant lack of resources and means that moved a whole generation of architects to shape some of the most fantastic examples of late modern and modern architecture that Europe has ever seen, and even more, that the entire world would eventually come to admire with great appreciation and devotion.

Considering the names involved in the Supersam design team, such as the young and promising duo of architects Ewa and Maciej Krasiński, led by none-other than Jerzy Hryniewiecki, one of the most prominent and celebrated figures in the architectural context of postwar Poland, as well as the experienced builders Wacław Zalewski, Andrzej Kuś, Andrzej Żurawski and Józef Sieczkowski, it was to be expected that this trade pavilion would not be just any ordinary structure, quite far from it. And it was precisely this experienced old guard that the auspicious architects drew on to propose something that had seemed unthinkable until then: a structure "without a doubt, unprecedented in all of Europe, adds Filip Springer.[54]

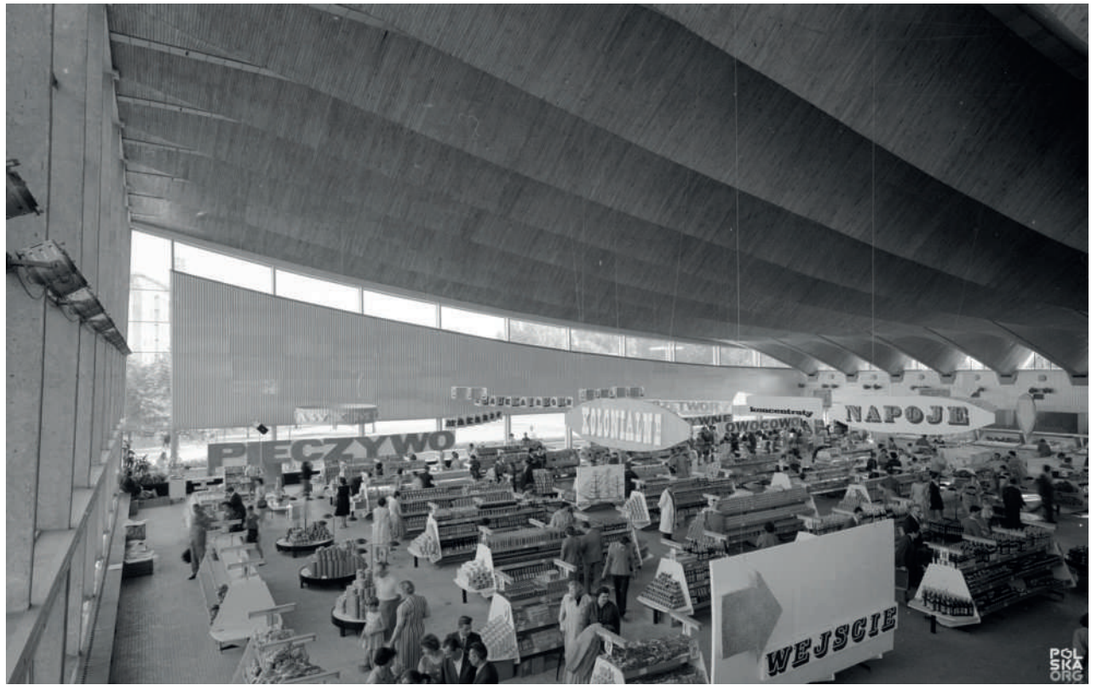
When Maciej Krasiński invited Wacław Zalewski to join the design team, he was clear as to why he had turned to the experienced builder: Jerzy Hryniewiecki had been invited to participate in the architectural competition for the capital's newest business pavilion, and they needed Zalewski on the team in order to win it.[55] An eye-catching structure had to be designed, and there was no one better on the market that could imagine such a building. So when Zalewski received the program requirements for the competition, which called for the construction of

52 Klaudia A. Obrębska and Maciej Bartos, "Architektura Handlowa Warszawy w Czasie Polski Ludowej i Jej Losy Po Transformacji na Wybranych Przykładach," *Przestrzeń/Urbanistyka/Architektura*, nr.1 (2019): 160.

53 Filip Springer, "Rozwiązanie Tymczasowe," in *Źle Urodzone. Reportaże o Architekturze PRL-u* (Kraków, Wydawnictwo Karakter, 2017), 103.

54 Filip Springer, "Rozwiązanie Tymczasowe," 104.

55 In an interview conducted by Maja Mozga-Górecka in 2013, Zalweski said that Krasiński came to him and said: "listen, Hrynio was invited to the competition for the Supersam in Warsaw, we have to win." Maja Mozga-Górecka, "Intuicja Inżyniera – Rozmowa z Wacławem Zalewskim," *Architektura Murator*, nr.4/2013, https://architektura.muratorplus.pl/krytyka/waclaw-zalewski-intuicja-inzyniera_7027.html.



il.18

a commercial hall, a warehouse, and a self-service restaurant, he proposed a single building with all three spaces integrated, covered by a huge suspended roof composed of compression and tension elements, which, although weighing more than one hundred tons, did not even have a single intermediate supporting point. Not even a single column, no obstacle to stand between the avid Varsovians consumers and the many products that were rumored to arrive with the new building.

The day the capital's inhabitants would have their commercial hall finally open, a modern pavilion adequately stocked with the products that everyone expected to find, until then, they only had unfulfilled promises. The expectation was so high that the structure could not let them down. That is why Zalewski proposed constructing a single pavilion; the architects and engineers could not miss the occasion to impress their audience. That building would be a new symbol for the city and a landmark for its inhabitants, and as such, its structure needed to be free,

light, modern and innovative. Likewise, its spaces needed to be fluid, elegant and democratic. And since Supersam would occupy a pivotal position in the heart of the capital, right on Unii Lubelskiej Square, the building would have to be spacious, accessible, open, welcoming, and appealing.

The roof proposed by Zalewski was intended to fulfill all these expectations, or rather, to create a space where they could take shelter. To this end, he developed a structural roof system composed of cables and compression elements, thus overcoming the building's total length of over 80 meters. The enormous weight of the roof would naturally create a slight curvature on those wires as a clothesline loaded after laundry. In this sense, the momentum that the two opposed façades needed to bear was tremendous for the roof to withstand its weight. But Zalewski did not want these to be two blind concrete walls. So he devised a column-wall solution, allowing the building's facades to be completely transparent. Hundreds of tons land delicately on fragile glass surfaces—a pavilion made of air. The absolute lightness captured in concrete. The lightness of living in a world where mustard and vinegar would not be missing on the shelves.

Filip Springer gives us a hint of the magnitude of the expectation in the city weeks before the official unveiling of the Supersam: "for several days, the press had been heating the atmosphere, announcing that the store would be the best-stocked place in the capital."[56] And for years, the Supersam maintained its reputation as the best-stocked store in the capital, "If something was missing at the Supersam, everyone knew that one could not find

il.19

it anywhere else,"[57] adds the author. All the virtuosity the architects and engineers expended in bringing about such a structure did indeed have a purpose of its own.

But obviously, making more than a hundred tons levitating over thousands of people's heads takes more than just imagination. The pioneering and innovative solutions proposed by the architects and engineers in this building experiment, above all, drove builders and manufacturers all

56 Filip Springer, 104.

57 Ibid.

over the country to seek solutions that at first seemed far beyond their limits. "It was also under pressure from the architects working on this project that Polish steelworks pulled off a considerable feat - casting mirror panes, weighing four hundred kilograms and sixteen millimeters thick, whose large panes constituted an important element of the store's façade,"[58] writes Paweł Giergoń, art historian, researcher, and worshiper of the architecture built in Warsaw in times of the People's Republic of Poland.

Such details would never go unnoticed by the trained eyes of an architect. However, Maciej Krasiński addressed such points relatively sparingly in an interview for the monthly magazine Architektura just two months after the building's official completion on June 6, 1962. On that occasion, Krasiński referred to the most crucial undertaking of his life thus far as a "technologically uncomplicated building."[59]And if there was any way to translate the meaning of the building he had just devised with his colleagues, technologically uncomplicated was without a doubt the least appropriate term possible. In my opinion, these words resulted from an evident frustration because nobody seemed to care about the virtuosity of the architects, the unique spatial characteristics and the odd technological solutions of the building. Amidst the colorful tropical fruits on display and the penetrating smell of fresh ground coffee, amid all the appetizing novelties seen for the first time in exclusivity, nobody bothered to look at what was beyond one's fingertips.[60]

As it turned out, people at that time were not used to looking upwards, as architects commonly do. It would take some time before they finally realized the magnitude of the scenario into which they were plunged. For them to get used to this new context, a simple bunch of parsley was sold under a hundred-ton suspended roof. Krasiński was aware of the challenge set before them: "In writing about Supersam, I would like to mention certain circumstances that led to its form. Notwithstanding the goodwill shown towards our work, there were also doubts. These doubts concerned the fundamental issue: is the commercial pavilion worth searching for new forms, and does the obtained form correspond to the modesty of its purpose?"[61] And so he concluded in a hopeful tone: "It would be a great satisfaction to the authors if this building contributed to breaking down the resistance and fear of using new forms and new materials."[62] And it did.

In the early 1960s, when war wounds were finally healing and cities no longer looked like mounds of rubble and ruins under construction, the empty spaces left behind had to be filled with buildings and human life. And for such areas, there was no choice in mind but to build a new quality of architecture-a turn toward modernity. Indeed, the winds were changing direction in those years after the October revolution, which brought Władysław Gomułka to power in 1956, a new period of political transition was underway in the country, a time that gave people back their sense of freedom. In architecture, Jerzy Hryniewiecki wrote in his introduction to the catalog of the exhibition *Wystawy Architektury 1956-1959*):

58 Paweł Giergoń, "Warszawa-Supersam", Sztuka.net, http://www.sztuka.net/palio/html.run?_Instance=sztuka&_PageID=853&newsId=5080&callingPageId=852&_cms=newser&_CheckSum=1665695628.

59 Maciej Krasiński (1962), 343.

60 Filip Springer, 104.

61 Maciej Krasiński, "Supersam w Warszawie," 343.

62 Ibid.

> The hard, strict enslavement of rigid canons and urban prejudices has been broken and replaced by the freedom of architecture, which, even when stifling in the old lines of existing buildings, the contrast of lightness, brightness, and cheerfulness, brings even into the gloomy remains of the old cities freshness and creative joy and social progress.[63]

This was the role that the building was intended to address. To break with the canon of architecture and bring lightness into people's lives. In this sense, perhaps the structure was technologically uncomplicated, as Krasiński referred, as if suddenly, it did indeed become more palatable and finally won the public favor. Filip Springer transports us back in time to explain how the customers finally observed and admired the finesse of the building's solutions: "only when eating the specialities served there could one take a look at the advantages of Supersam."[64] Wandering among the gondolas in their brightly lit spaces, going up and down from the ground floor to the mezzanine, facing the transparency of its massive glass walls or the complex and colorful shapes of its mosaics, the inhabitants of Warsaw gradually became accustomed to the new, modern lifestyle emanating from the innovative forms of the pavilion.

The fondness of Varsovians for the building became increasingly apparent. Evidence is found in its presence as the backdrop for essential films shot on the city's streets at that time. Although in its first appearance on the big screen, the innovative, newly opened Supersam structure appearing only as a supporting actor in the film *Gangsterzy i Filantropi* (1962), directed by the duo Jerzy Hoffman and Edward Skórzewski, in its second appearance four years later it decisively took on the role of the leading actor. An even better example, which reveals the importance of the building in the capital's everyday life, is its major appearance in *Lekarstwo na Miłość*, an acclaimed film directed by Jan Batory in 1966. And it was no coincidence that many influential directors of the time chose the Supersam as a crucial component of their settings.[65] The architects decided to lay out the pavilion on the plot in such a way as to create a series of adjoining collective spaces, small squares, and meeting places. Not only did the variety of products available attract residents to Unii Lubelskiej Square at that time, but the quality of the public space created around it. "The whole building gave the impression of a spaceship that had landed among ordinary tenement houses and blocks. It was a pioneering store and an innovative solution in every respect," comments Grzegorz Piątek, architect, critic and art historian, in an interview on the website onet Warszawa.[66]

"Not only was it something completely new in terms of how Varsovians shopped, but also a building considered to be one of the most innovative and successful projects of People's Poland to this day,"[67] wrote the journalist

63 Jerzy Hryniewiecki, "Wystawa Architektury 1956-1959," *Katalog, Zarząd Główny SARP*, Warszawa 1960, 6.

64 Filip Springer, 104.

65 Other movies in which the Supersam was used as a backdrop for scenes from everyday life are "*Dzięcioł*" (1970), directed by director Jerzy Gruza and "*Co Mi Zobisz Jak Mnie Złapiesz*" (1978), by Stanisław Bareja.

66 Kartazyna Kowalczyk, "60 lat temu powstał pierwszy Supersam w Polsce. Był jak statek kosmiczny pośród szarości PRL," Onet Warszawa, https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/warszawa/pierwszy-supersam-w-polsce-dzis-mialby-60-lat-dlaczego-zostal-zburzony/nrbwhss.

67 Kamil Jabłczyński, "60 lat temu otwarto pierwszy samoobsługowy sklep w Polsce. Warszawski Supersam "wytyczył trendy w architekturze światowej," Warszawa Naszemiasto, https://warszawa.naszemiasto.pl/60-lat-temu-otwarto-pierwszy-samo-obslugowy-sklep-w-polsce/ar/c11-8851849.

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Kamil Jabłczyński in June 2022 on what would be the 60th anniversary of the groundbreaking of the capital's most beloved commercial pavilion. Its stunning forms not only caught the eye of the capital's residents, but its symbolic, formal, and technological values were also immediately recognized on the international scene. Although this was a small-scale building, it was a milestone of engineering and functionalism in modern architecture in times of the Polish People's Republic, as evidenced by the prize the building received at the 1965 São Paulo Biennial[68]– an epoch when some of the most influential architects of all time were producing at full speed, such as Le Corbusier, Philip Johnson, Oscar Niemeyer, Jørn Utzon, Gordon Bunshaft and Louis Kahn.

However, unfortunately, as the 1960s were being left behind, the impressive glass and aluminum facades of the innovative pavilion were losing their natural shine. Just like life, buildings need regular care. Their wounds need to be healed, and more than this, they must be looked after and given attention. Architecture is like a flower that needs to be periodically watered and pruned. And during the 70s and 80s, it was as if the concrete and glass flowers laid down in the 1960s had been abandoned outside the house in the middle of a harsh winter, with no one to take care of them. In this sense, it is not surprising that these structures, and memories associated with the architecture of that era, have taken on a rather gray and sad tone over the last decades of the 20th century.

Yet there was still hope for Supersam. It is no coincidence that in the middle 1990s, given its central position in the capital's daily life, McDonald's decided to open another of its franchises under the monumental roof designed by Zalewski and his companions. The first warning signs did not appear until the early 2000s, when the building's management authorities commissioned a technical report on the condition of the structure concerning the general safety of users and its compliance with new fire safety regulations— something that had never concerned them

68 Catalog of the VIII Sao Paulo Biennial (São Paulo: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo e Secretaria da Educação e Cultura, 1965), 434.

before— notes Filip Springer.[69] The most curious thing about the whole situation is that simultaneously with the owners' sudden concern about the building's structural condition, news began to leak out in the media that a new skyscraper was to be built at that same address, on the Unii Lubelskiej Square where Supersam had operated uninterruptedly for more than 40 years.

As if overnight, the most famous and perhaps most beloved commercial pavilion that ever existed in the capital was once again the main subject on the front pages of the city's newspapers. If, in the early 1960s, its arrival had represented the beginning of a new way of thinking and making architecture in the country, the news of its downfall, forty years later, would mark the dawn of a new phase of denial and systematic removal of significant examples of modern architecture from the urban landscape of Polish cities.

Dividing opinions and the hearts of many Varsovians, 2006 saw the beginning of a controversy that would become known as the "Battle for Supersam." On one side is the preservationist community, and on the other its opponents. Concerned about the uncertain future of the building, the modernist icon's defenders– led by Paweł Giergoń– sent a dossier with more than 1300 signatures to the office of the General Conservator of Historical Monuments of the Capital on March 21, 2006, with a formal request for the building to be listed.

In reply, six days later, on March 27, 2006, the owners published a technical report on the building by the then head of the department of mechanical engineering at Warsaw Polytechnic University, Prof. Kazimierz Szulborski, which stated that part of the building's roof was rusted and in danger of collapsing at any moment. "The Supersam needs to be closed and demolished, or the existing corroded roof needs to be removed and reconstructed completely from scratch,"[70] stated the professor in an interview with *Warszawa Wyborcza* a day later. As a result, the building was shut down indefinitely on April 9 of that same year - or until someone resolved the situation.

Several sides then decided to speak out. Prof. Andrzej Kuś, one of the engineers responsible for the design of the building's roof, said that the situation was not that serious and that the structure, he said, could be repaired within two weeks. Krzysztof Kłapa, the spokesman for McDonald's Polska, noted that the fast-food giant would not leave the building and that if they had to, they were willing to pay the space's lease for eight years in advance, allowing the renovations on the roof to be carried out immediately. In his sharp letter to the building's owners, the spokesman charged the space administrators with wasting their money instead of keeping the Supersam in good condition. The restaurant giant accuses the cooperative of either "gross negligence" or "consistently seeking to destroy the Supersam building," as reported by Michał Wojtczuk for *Wiadomości Gazeta* on April 8, 2006.[71] With McDonald's taking the surprising role of guardian of the modern heritage in a former soviet country and the massive engagement of the community of architects and Supersam defenders during the first months of 2006, the efforts to protect the building had finally begun to pay off. And on August 9, the then *Deputy of the Masowieckie Provincial Conservator of Monuments*, Eng. Arch. Maciej Czeredys decided to initiate a procedure to enter the Supersam into the register of monuments.[72] Nobody gets in. Nobody leaves.

It is impossible to know what is happening. The response from the General Conservator of Monuments is not forthcoming. The future of the building has yet to be decided. November 2006, those responsible for the building requested a permit to demolish the entire structure because of the imminent risk to the workers on site. The decision was signed immediately in the shadow of the hundred tons of Zalewski's roof.

Supersam's short-lived existence is finally, and unofficially, sentenced to an end. Its spectacular roof was envisioned and designed by the renowned architectural engineer and his colleagues as the focal point, and the most fantastic spectacle became the reason for its demise. One by one, the colossal roof trusses were torn down. Its substantial glass facades shattered, and its immense aluminum panels turned into scrap.

Precisely ten years after the last dump truck left the site at Unii Lubelskiej Square in December 2006, Wacław Zalewski, one of the key figures responsible for this architectural and engineering masterpiece of the second half of the 20th century, was also gone from this world. The legendary Polish builder probably passed away with a very bitter taste in his mouth. A few years before his death in April 2013, in an interview for *Architektura Murator* Magazine, Waclaw Zalewski said he was "very sad" when asked how he felt when he heard about the demolition of the Supersam seven years earlier. "Warsaw loved it very much," the legendary builder and designer added in a desolate tone.[73] But Zalewski knew well that it was not only the Varsovians who were fond of that building. Aside from the aforementioned honorable mention at the São Paulo Biennial in 1965, by virtue of his achievements, Zalewski was invited to be a full professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he taught for over 20 years until he retired in 1988. Perhaps the most curious fact is that in the year of its downfall, the Supersam was celebrated at precisely one of the world's most prestigious schools of architecture and engineering: The Architecture School and Planning of the MIT. Parallel to the chaotic scene of the dispute over the building's future in the city of Warsaw, the Supersam was being glorified in a retrospective exhibition on the life and work of Wacław Zalewski at MIT's Wolk Gallery.[74] On display from April 21 to September 15, the show took place virtually simultaneously with the agonizing and disastrous events that led to the demise of one of the most impressive structures built in the times of the Polish People's Republic. Moreover, while the enormous trusses of the pavilion's roof remained visible on the posters advertising the Cambridge exhibition, they were torn to pieces in the center of Warsaw.

69 Filip Springer, 105.

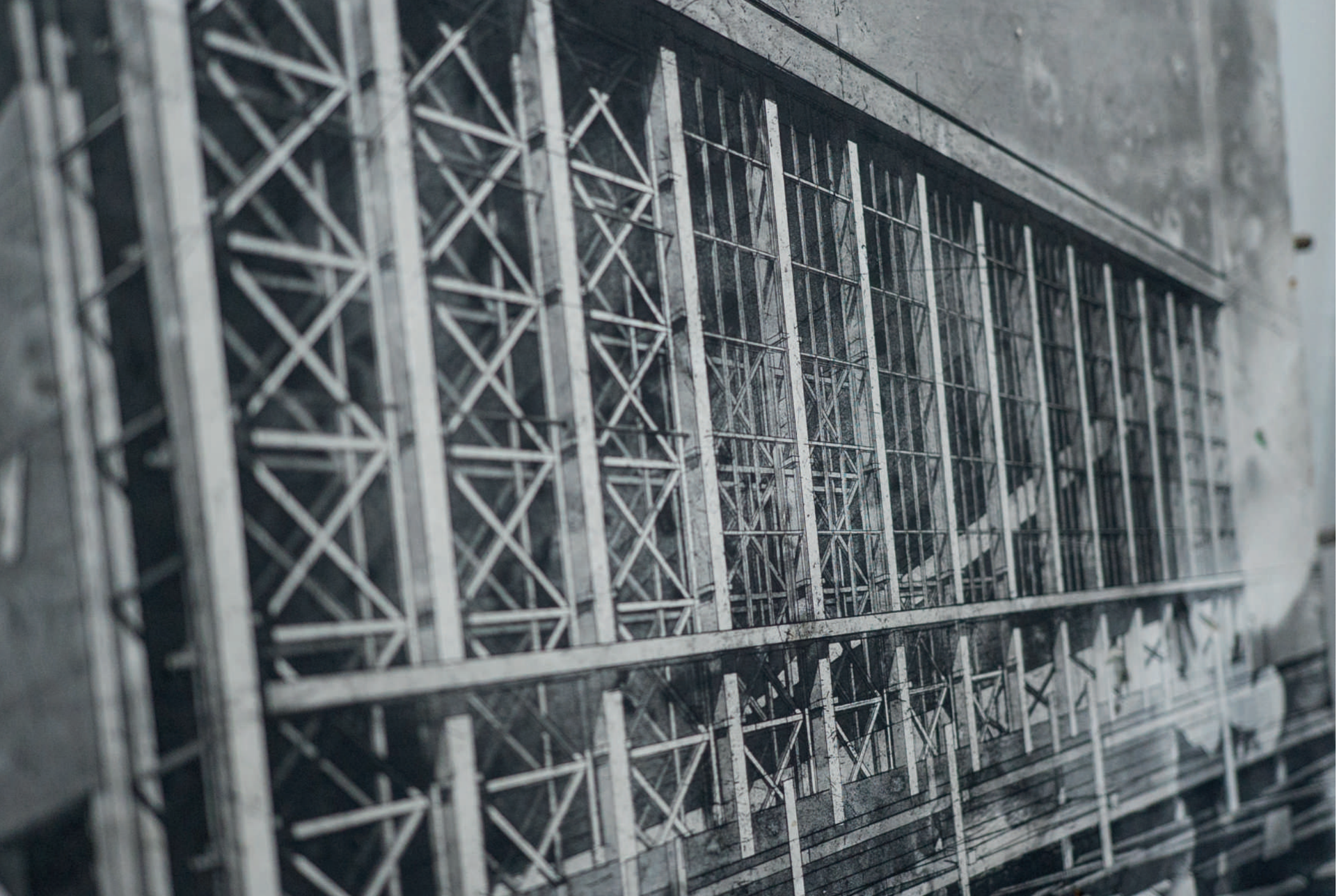
70 Dariusz Bartoszewicz, "Rozmowa z prof. Kazimierzem Szulborskim o Supersamie," wyborcza.pl, https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,3240931.html.

71 Michał Wojtczuk, "McDonald's uratuje warszawski Supersam?" wiadomosci.gazeta.pl, https://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114873,3268751.html.

72 Pawel Girgon, "Co Dalej z Supersamem w Warszawie?" Sztuka.net, http://www.sztuka.net/palio/html.run?_Instance=sztuka&_PageID=848&newsId=7461&-callingPageId=84

73 Maja Mozga-Górecka, "Intuicja Inżyniera – Rozmowa z Wacławem Zalewskim," *Architektura Murator*, nr.4 (2013): https://architektura.muratorplus.pl/krytyka/waclaw-zalewski-intuicja-inzyniera_7027.html.

74 Wacław Zalewski: Shaping Structures, Wolk Gallery, April 21 – September 15 2006, MIT School of Architecture and Planning, Cambridge, MA. Zalewski is also a co-author (with Edward Allen) of *Form and Forces: Designing Efficient, Expressive Structures*, published in 2009, the cover of which features the roof of the Supersam.



Some years ago, when I first came across the image of this building, I was deeply amazed. Even though I had only seen it through old black and white photographs, its architecture moved me so overwhelmingly that I felt I had to visit it. But it was no longer there. When the Supersam was demolished in 2006, I didn't even know it existed. I had just started my studies at the architecture school. When I came to Poland more than ten years later, I wished I had had the chance to get to know it personally. Although I spent years thinking about this building, I felt it was impossible to portray it properly by looking at those few old photographs I had on hand. It was only when I found a small blueprint that I decided to redraw and model it virtually, piece by piece. Even if my rough model lacked details, I could finally enter, and everything became clear. The monumental glass façade, the constructive solutions, the play of light and shadow, transparency and opacity, interior and exterior. The inverted parabola of the massive roof, a hundred tons delicately floating over the glass façade. These are the elements that I tried to highlight in the image. Halfway to its completion or demise, the lack of a context or a background leaves the feeling that nothing seems real. It is both surreal that this building existed, and hard to believe that it is no longer there.

Zalewski's Trilogy

Zalewski is already credited with constructing the roof of Warsaw's Supersam and Katowice's Spodek. The train station is another stop on the route to his brilliant career as a lecturer at the world's most prestigious technical university, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Filip Springer, 2017.

Exactly four years after the Warsaw Supersam was torn down, another innovative example of modern Polish architecture was demolished in the city of Katowice under very similar circumstances. It was as if Wacław Zalewski, the renowned Polish designer and builder, was re-experiencing a nightmare. Because, just as it had happened in that year of 2006, during that same cold and dark wintery week before Christmas, on December 22, another impressive and iconic structure imagined by Zalewski was blown up.

If in 2006 it was the steel wires that made the monumental roof of the Supersam float above the ground that was shamelessly cut, making its more than one hundred tons finally surrender to the force of gravity, in 2010, it was the stalks of the beautiful sixteen concrete flowers of the Katowice Train Station that were unceremoniously ripped out of the ground. The fact that two of his most symbolic and remarkable creations in his homeland were both cruelly demolished in the same fateful, icy December—a mere four years apart and in the same tragic and controversial way—must has been hard to swallow.

Yet another curious aspect that links the stories of these two lost masterpieces of Polish post-war modernism is that not only were they leveled to the ground during the same week before the end of the year and that they were envisioned and calculated by the mind of the same famous professor emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Wacław Zalewski. Both creations were chosen through a closed architectural competition, both held in the same year, 1959. That year, Zalewski was invited to participate in three contests in the country. In addition to his undeniable contribution to the two projects mentioned above, he was also responsible for creating another symbolic structure that would mark an entire era in the People's Republic of Poland: The *Hala Widowiskowo-Sportowa w Katowicach* (The Sports and Entertainment Hall in Katowice).[75]

Three buildings, three programs, three completely different solutions, but equally impressive and innovative. In this sense, these symbolic envelopes conceived by the master of engineering and mathematical calculation of steel and concrete structures, in my opinion, are part of the same ensemble. Like a cohesive set of artworks, which can be seen as a singular piece or a group of three closely related buildings involving the same actor and revolving around a common theme, these three fantastic modern structures from the times of the People's Republic of Poland establish a kind of *architectural trilogy*. Zalewski's Trilogy—of which we are left with only one still alive.

While the first work expired tragically in 2006 and the second crumbled catastrophically in 2010, the epilogue to this story, fortunately, holds a happy ending. But not entirely happy.

In December 2013, after five long years of extensive renovation and modernization, the *Spodek*[76] was finally brought back to life in the city of Katowice. Between gains and losses, the building regains almost all its charm and the shine it has lost through years of neglect, lack of maintenance and care. In short, the country's community of architects and preservationists had a reason to celebrate, and although the building had not yet been inscribed on the list of monuments, at least it showed signs that it had stood the test of time with great dignity. Most importantly, it had passed unscathed through the darkest and most catastrophic period in the recent history of Polish architecture. As if relieved at being told the good news that at least one of his three fabulous structures had survived the ravaging storm of the 2000s and that he was leaving a small material contribution as an eyewitness to all his incredible and intangible achievements, Wacław Zalewski closed his eyes for the last time, on the very same day, December 22.

il.22

75 The design for the Sports and Entertainment Hall in Katowice was developed by the architect duo Maciej Gintowt and Maciej Krasiński, with whom Zalewski had already collaborated on the plan for the Supersam, which opened in Warsaw in 1962.

76 *Spodek* is the Polish word for "Saucer," the affectionate nickname used by the city's residents to refer to the saucer-shaped building.

il.23

1972 – – 2010

Dworzec Kolejowy w Katowicach

The railroad station in Katowice was an exceptional object. On the one hand, it turned out to be too young a building to deserve the name of a monument, but on the other hand, there was no doubt that it was so original that it deserved special attention.

Alicja Gzowska, 2011.

It felt as if history was repeating itself. The dust raised by the bulldozers that tore the Supersam building in Warsaw to pieces in 2006 had not yet settled when the first voices of protest against the planned demolition of the *Dworzec Kolejowy w Katowicach* (Katowice Central Railway Station) began to be heard loud and clear in the city streets, comments curator and art historian, Alicja Gzowska, in her book *Szesnaście Żelbetowych Kwiatów: Dworzec Kolejowy w Katowicach* (Sixteen Concrete Flowers: Katowice Railway Station), the most comprehensive monograph on the now nonexistent building.[77] According to Gzowska, it was in mid-2006, simultaneously with the famous and previously mentioned "Battle of Supersam," that the climate of uncertainty about the building's future began to become more evident in the Silesian capital. As a result, "The media summarized an interesting discussion about the architectural heritage of the communist era and how to value and preserve it,"[78] claims the author. It was precisely that year that the need to broaden and deepen the debate about modern architecture built in the times of the Polish People's Republic became more evident.

77 Alicja Gzowska, *Szesnaście Żelbetowych Kwiatów: Dworzec Kolejowy w Katowicach* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2011), 123.

78 Gzowska, 124.

The traumatic loss of the Supersam marked an urgent need to promote greater understanding—especially by the general public—of the values intrinsic to the modern heritage built in a *bygone era*.

An era that, however, can by no means be approached superficially and generically. The historical period known as the Polish People's Republic was, above all, a complex and heterogeneous epoch, whether on the political, social, cultural, or economic scene. This was also reflected especially in architecture. However, most of the population widely see the post-war modern heritage as a monotone. A brief passage in the book of history might be erased without significant consequences for understanding the whole. But history is not made of a homogeneous temporal substance. To hold the idea that the modern heritage, in all its heterogeneity, is composed of a uniform collection of architectural structures is a way of legitimizing the erasure of its parts and pretending that this would not affect the unity at large. As if in their singularity, these buildings had no value at all. As if their presence in the visible panorama of architectural history were irrelevant and, therefore, to be dismissed.

The second half of the 20th century was perhaps one of human history's most diverse and contradictory periods. Just as the fifties differ entirely from the sixties, and the events of the seventies differ from those witnessed from the eighties onwards, it is impossible to try to tar two buildings from this period with the same brush and pretend that the loss of a significant example of architecture from this period does not catastrophically affect the narrative of visual history as a whole. One may even say that modernism flourished, especially in the countries of the East, at a time when one day was never the same as another, fueled by the shortages of the early post-war years. Modern architecture grew up with the illusion of living in a world where everyone would be equal, becoming a symbol loaded with ideologies, reaching its zenith while being oppressed and decayed by the time it regained its much-longed-for freedom. After all, modern Polish architecture does not only carry the weight of history; it is the manifestation of history.

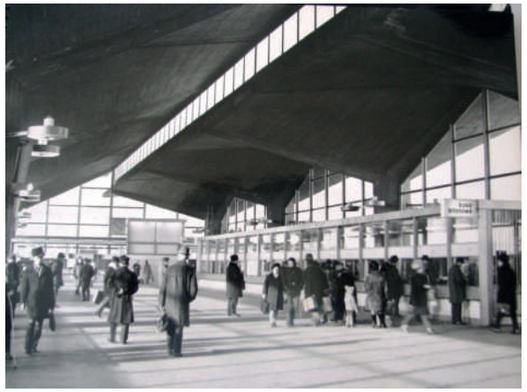
In this context, where everything changes so quickly, there is no time for things to grow old and become part of history in their own time. Sooner or later, these objects will also become part of history, and our inability to preserve them today will irreparably create a hole in the visual history of architecture. This disruption will be the chief witness of the peculiar barbarity of our time, that is, the disregard of culture.

As a direct result of this particular disdain for the achievements of the recent past, there has been a considerable loss of outstanding examples of modern architecture. As in the case of Supersam and the Warsaw-Okręcie Airport Terminal. Although these stood out for their technological and formal singularities, their unique and innovative features proved unable to defend themselves from the corrosive action of time. These two previous cases demonstrate that no achievement in the world is immune to the unfolding of history. As the glories of the past fade with time, the prospect of a possible future becomes unreachable.

In this regard, when dealing with phenomena from a bygone era, such as modern architecture, we need to put ourselves in the shoes of those who witnessed it firsthand. To understand history in depth, we need to have a clear and comprehensive picture of its specific context and proper place in space and time. The socio-economic and political context, the cultural scene, and the human landscape are some of the crucial elements to consider when trying to assess the relevance of a historical occurrence or phenomenon, when, for example, we try to situate in the infinity of time the significance of a particular architectural object.

Having said that, the words proffered in 1973 by Aleksander Franta,[79] one of the most renowned Polish architects of the 20th century, are incredibly enlightening about the contribution that the new Katowice Train Station had made to architecture at the time: "Its spatial shape, distinctive and individual, is distinguished by its scale and form of beautiful proportions, with a dominant structure of vault-sculptures with rhythmic breaking surfaces formed from the juxtaposition and repetition of its mushroom-modules."[80] For Franta, the brand new Katowice station emerged from an intelligent and dynamic arrangement of its structure and forms, providing a breathtaking sense of harmony at first sight.

Drawing myself into this image, I can even feel the surprise and admiration experienced by passengers disembarking at the Katowice Train Station in the early 1970s. Because a train station is not only made for locomotives, machines that only require two tracks and a destination. However, a terminal is a place full of meaning for the people who



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use it. At the end of the line, a terminus is a beginning: the gateway to a city. It has the role of welcoming newly arrived people, expressing in its forms and built spaces the values of a town that makes these structures unique. No wonder many stations acquire a uniquely symbolic value for a city and its inhabitants. For Aleksander Franta, the significance of this building transcended its traditional values as a mere "object of great contemporary architecture" because, as he says, "it strongly affects so many people" on many levels and is thoroughly integrated with the urban space. "Hence, every person, not only professionals, perceives this architecture in a natural and obvious way,"[81] Franta adds. More than literally, in this sense, the Katowice Train Terminal building occupied a central role in the city's everyday life. An element naturally integrated into the cityscape. And this naturalness Franta mentions, with which citizens came to relate to this structure, shows how deeply it was rooted in its specific context.

79 Aleksander Franta (1925-2019), Polish architect and theorist, laureate of the Honorary Award of the Association of Polish Architects in 1975, was one of the most influential figures in modern Polish architecture.

80 Aleksander Franta, "Powód do Niecodziennej Dumy," *Architektura*, nr.10 (1972): 374.

81 Franta, 374.

As a city primarily affected by the war, Katowice needed to be rebuilt like many others and was promoted to a prominent position on a regional scale. The new capital of Silesia required extensive reshaping, starting with the communication network and transportation infrastructure, "The [Train Station] building was to be one of the first elements of the Katowice city center's reconstruction project, which was to gain a new image of the industrial capital of Poland with architecture adequate for this role," comments Aleksander Franta.[82] In a country where practically all the most considerable cities concentrated on reconstructing their historical structures, Katowice was the most modern. In this sense, to architects throughout the country Silesia's capital stood as the central front for exploring new architectural forms and solutions.

The seven most highly regarded teams of architects in the country participated in the closed invitation-only competition for the design of the new Katowice Train Station. Among them were none other than the duo Arseniusz Romanowicz and Piotr Szymaniank, experienced architects responsible, among other similar projects, for the Central Station of the Capital.[83] However, they were no match for the proposal presented by the trio of experienced architects Wacław Kłyszewski, Jerzy Mokrzyński and Eugeniusz Wierzbicki, known as *Tygrysy* (Tigers) – a nickname inherited after the various architectural competitions won by the trio in those years.[84]

When the invitation to the competition was announced, "two of the planned four platforms and part of the underground tunnels had already been put into use," comments Alicja Gzowska, a situation that largely determined the way the new Terminal would be settled.[85] "Functionality was a key issue in the case of the new Katowice Trains Station: the terminal was to be the most important transfer hub in the region; moreover, it was to be "inserted" into the existing dense urban tissue, so the communication solutions inside and outside were given much attention," writes Anna Cymer about the challenges that the architects had to deal with.[86] The Tigers had done an incredible job regarding all the functional and operational complexity. But to win a competition of this sort requires more than an efficient arrangement of flows and programs. Above all, to nail a project of this kind requires a complete and direct image, a form capable of resonating with the spirit of its time. This building should be easily grasped and appreciated by its daily users and occasional visitors. With so many unresolved constraints and the competition deadline knocking on the door, the three Tigers realized they needed help. They were sure they had found the best functional solution for the Terminal building, but it lacked character, life, and appeal.

82 Ibid.

83 Arseniusz Romanowicz (1910-2008) and Piotr Szymaniak (1911-1967) won the competition for the design of the Central Station in 1946, which would only be built between 1972 and 1975 according to a new Romanowicz concept.

84 Wacław Kłyszewski (1910–2000), Jerzy Mokrzyński (1909–1997), Eugeniusz Wierzbicki (1909–1991). The pseudonym "Tygrysy" was created after 1945 in connection with a drawing by Aleksandra Wejchert, who placed a picture of three tigers tearing down their competitors on the door of their studio.

85 Gzowska, 23.

86 Anna Cymer, "Powrót do Nowoczesności," in *Architektura w Polsce 1945-1989*, (Warsaw: Fundacja Instytut Architektury, 2019), p.260.

With this in mind, they decided to bring in Wacław Zalewski as a consultant for the project. When the famous builder joined the three Tigers, the Station design was almost finished - they had solved for the people and vehicle flow inside and outside the building. All that was missing to win the competition was Zalewski's masterful touch, which he describes as follows: "I proposed a hall that would be like an urban park consisting of umbrellas. The line of columns itself was to show the way to passengers."[87] Straight away, Zalewski proposed a simple and winning solution consisting of 16 monumental columns in the shape of a chalice. Flowers cast in concrete, structures mathematically designed by the mind of the experienced builder who had very recently come into contact with the work of architect Félix Candela.[88] From his Spanish-Mexican colleague, Zalewski borrowed the *hyperbolic paraboloid*[89] construction solution of the concrete calyxes to win the Katowice Train Station competition for the Warsaw Tigers.

Sixteen flowers sculpted in concrete, nothing more, nothing less. Two rows of eight monumental flower-shaped columns perfectly aligned and pointed the way to the future. Two parallel lines like train tracks. One concretely organized row, like the passengers who repeatedly follow one after the other on their way home from a day's work in the country's industrial capital. On the rough concrete surface, a soft, almost velvety light is reflected, building the shape of the flower, which is revealed to the eyes of the passengers as they move through the space. In keeping with its primary function, the architecture of this building is fluid and dynamic. A structure to be seen in motion and glimpsed by the eyes of the hurried worker or lingering in the gaze of the traveler.

A roof made up of sixteen huge concrete calyxes, "umbrellas which, apart from the fact that they made up a powerful and innovative constructive solution, created the aesthetic expression of the building," Anna Cymer comments on the formal character of the Terminal. "The raw concrete, the visible traces of the formwork, the coolness of the material and its expressiveness, and together with its simplicity created a unique artistic expression," marks the author saying that the Train Station in Katowice was one of the most successful Polish architectural enterprises of the second half of the 20th century.[90]

Indeed, the tactile character of the building's raw materiality meant that the city's residents easily grasped complex mathematical forms. Soon after its inauguration, the station's concrete flowers became one of the main symbols for which the former mining town had become known. Industrial blossoms that sprouted just above an old mine dug in the middle of the city's heart. The symbol of a new and modern city that was flourishing, and more than that, "Due to the applied technical solutions, materials, and the unusual process of fabricating the formwork, the roof of the Station was a unique testimony of architectural and construction thought," comments the building's biographer Alicja Gzowska. As one of the

87 Maja Mozga-Górecka, "Intuicja Inżyniera – Rozmowa z Wacławem Zalewskim," *Architektura Murator*, nr.4 (2013), 30.12.2016, https://architektura.muratorplus.pl/krytyka/waclaw-zalewski-intuicja-inzyniera_7027.html.

88 Félix Candela Outeriño (1910 –1997) was known for his significant role in Mexican architecture and structural engineering development. Candela's significant contribution to architecture was the development of thin shells made out of reinforced concrete.

89 A *hyperbolic paraboloid* is a doubly-curved surface that resembles a saddle's shape; it has a convex form along one axis and a concave form along the other.

90 Anna Cymer, 260-261.

significant milestones in the narrative of the development of modern Polish architecture, the Katowice Train Station had the evidential power of a historical document, acknowledges the author.[91] Such testimony could not be more accurate. The story of its design and construction, the memories of its golden years, and even the narrative of its disappearance get mixed up with the chronicle of a city, its country and its inhabitants. It is to say that a building does not begin with the laying of its cornerstone and ends when its structure is toppled. The history of a design is also reflected in the way it materializes - in the challenges it imposes and overcomes, in all its flaws, defects, and shortcomings.

It turns out that these sculptural concrete flowers did not sprout from the earth spontaneously and naturally. "There was a long way from the competition to the design's realization. In the sixties, there was a very complicated bureaucratic machine for technical and economic verification of investments on this scale,"[92] clarifies Gzowska. It took seven years for the Tigers, from receiving the commission for the design to completing the technical studies required to start building the concrete flowers in downtown Katowice. After proposing the constructive solution for the Station's sculptural roof, Zalewski left for Venezuela in 1962 to teach at the Los Andes University in Mérida. And without the master to guide the construction, no one knew exactly how to get the building to stand. Although there was no doubt that Zalewski's structure would work, the country lacked skilled craftsmen to carry it out with the necessary precision. As Filip Springer explains, the government lacked carpenters ready to make such formworks and concrete masters able to cast such forms.[93]

From the considerable gap left by the departure of the experienced Zalewski to America, several experts were called to work on the project. Initially, 1:30 scale study models were made to be tested, which finally provoked even more doubts since this did not decipher the mysteries of Zalewski's mind. The solution found was to build a 1:1 scale model, that is, to create one of the concrete flowers in full scale to put the answer to the test. Such an experiment was carried out on the grounds of the *Zakładu Badań i Doświadczeń Zjednoczenia Budownictwa Hutniczego w Katowicach* (Department of Research and Experience of the Union of Metallurgical Construction in Katowice), as Alicja Gzowska reports.[94] Such a situation gives us an idea not only of the challenges imposed by Zalewski's project but, above all, of how it pushed the limits of the building and all the experts in the country far beyond their limits. As a result, it was expected that the building that opened in 1972 would differ widely from its original concept presented 13 years earlier. This situation granted an opportunity for the community of designers and builders to further the future development of the construction industry in the country. "The experimental work, although protracted in time, allowed for earlier resolution of technological problems,"[95] comments Gzowska. Additionally, the research made it possible to adjust the design before construction, making the concrete structure more economical and efficient.

91 Gzowska, 122.

92 Gzowska, 49.

93 Filip Springer, "Brutal," in *Źle Urodzone. Reportaże o Architekturze PRL-u* (Kraków, Wydawnictwo Karakter, 2017), 49.

94 Gzowska, 53.

95 Gzowska, 54.

il.25, 26

Underneath its iconic and sculptural concrete calyxes was a simple and lively building. For those arriving, taking the opposite way of newcomers, the structure revealed itself as an extension of the street. Its recessed positioning concerning the Plaza collaborated, freeing up public space so that urban life could flow naturally. Such a solution results from the architects' proposal to structure the terminal into two stories, freeing up the ground area and segregating the flow of arrivals and departures on different levels. Sliding from the Plaza into the interior of the building, passengers were welcomed into a vibrant urban space animated by stores, cafes, restaurants, travel company offices, and even a tiny hotel in case someone missed the last connecting train.

Overlying this first level on the ground floor was the "heart of the station", as Anna Cymer refers to the terminal's central hall: "It was there that one could admire the unique construction of the building's roof - its distinguishing mark and a great architectural value."[96] Moreover, "The layout of the station itself was modeled on the organizational scheme of the airport,"[97] Filip Springer points out. In this regard, the new terminal also fulfilled a contemplative function through the extensive elevated access walkway, a high street for the travelers' procession.

Once put into use, the station received excellent reviews from the architectural community as Alicja Gzowska comments: "The combination of unusual form and appropriate functional solutions in such a large building, which had never been seen before in Poland, deserved recognition."[98] Soon after its inauguration, the building earned its architects' several awards and it was not only from the architects that the building drew admiring glances, as Aleksander Franta testified at the time: "Its residents have accepted it. They like and are proud of it.

96 Cymer, 260.

97 Filip Springer, 147.

98 Gzowska, 119.

It is also an object of recognition and probably a bit of envy of the visitors. I think it is positive pride and positive jealousy."[99] Loved by its residents, the new station has established itself as a cornerstone in the city's daily life, "the station has become an object that belongs to Katowice. It is a fundamental part of the cityscape, one of its most characteristic and important elements,"[100] analyzes Franta a year after the building was finished.

Unfortunately its heyday did not last long, or rather, almost no time at all. Considering the size of the investment required to complete the work— which in addition to the material value of its more than 70,000 square meters of gross floor area, was the subject of development, experimentation and research for more than ten years prior, the fact that the station has operated at total capacity for less than four decades translates into a tremendous waste of time, energy and resources. For a building to be active for only 38 years, it is as if it never even came into the world at all.

Despite its relatively brief period of operation, the station lived in two completely different realities. By the end of the 1990s, its presence in the city became largely undesirable. The station went from heaven to hell in two decades, showing us the severity of the country's changes in this troubled period. In the 1970s, most of its users were frequent commuters who used public transportation to go to school or work. At the turn of the millennium, these trips started to be made primarily in private vehicles. At the time of the Polish People's Republic, the car was a luxury, while the popularization of the personal car after the transformation made trains nearly obsolete. As passengers began to thin out at the station, the leading commercial establishments moved to other parts of town. Add to the years of neglect and indifference to the maintenance of a building in which, still in complete decay, more than 20,000 people pass every day, and the result is predictably catastrophic.

In this sense, it is as if the trail of dirt left by the 40,000 shoes that came through the station every day was accumulating exponentially. And indeed, it has become a filthy place. "It was about dirt," wrote Filip Springer about its decline. "Because the station was always dirty, probably dirtier than in many other Polish stations," comments Springer. According to the author, the evident neglect of the building's maintenance was undoubtedly the main reason that earned it the title of the most hated railway station in the country at the beginning of the 21st century.[101]

From then on, the situation only got worse. And by the time the first voices in defense of the building began to be heard in the mid-2000s, the problem was ultimately out of control. Although the demolition of the Supersam in Warsaw in 2006 shocked the community of architects and preservationists, that tragic experience would prove to be not an exception but a violent rule that would spread to all corners of the country. Sadly, the controversial demolition of the capital's Commercial Pavilion set a precedent for eradicating many other exquisite examples of modern architecture in Poland. The way the owners manipulated the situation, in that case, taking advantage of the building's poor condition to sentence it to death with a dubious and catastrophic opinion about its material conditions, would serve as a perverse example of how to operate through the hurdles and loopholes of the law. And they couldn't wait to get their hands on it.

When in 2007, the *Polskie Koleje Państwowe* (Polish State Railways) announced its intention to privatize the Station, no less than 16 national and multinational development companies submitted proposals to take over the building. It was an opportunity for the capital's entrepreneurs that could not be passed by. The formula for success had already been thoroughly outlined a few months earlier in the Capital. Just as when the new owner took over the Station in 2009, he repeated the same successful blueprint that led to Supersam's downfall.

While still at the negotiating table, the developers were bold in first praising the iconic concrete flowers of the old station, as transcribed by Filip Springer from a web page deleted from PKP's website after the closing of the building sale:

> The hall of the new train station will use the existing chalice concrete structure, which will undergo renovation and modernization. It is a world-unique example of Brutalism - a trend of late modernism architecture, exposing space, raw materials and construction expertise. The reinforced concrete flowers will be exposed at full height for the first time. They will form an impressive closure of the pedestrian axis of Stawowa Street and the new Szewczyka Square. Between the two chalices will be a true "city gate" - monumental entrance to the station hall.[102]

The careful words of the new owner, who had suddenly understood the importance of the building's symbolic value to the city and its inhabitants, somewhat soothed the spirits of those most concerned about the Terminal's future. The idea of recovering the former past glory of the station's concrete flowers, preserving one of the main symbols of the built landscape of the country's industrial capital, and in the meantime reassessing a vital element of the city's urban fabric, served to appease and calm the anxieties of practically the entire population of the town.

However, soon after signing the contract and obtaining the building permits, the new owners quickly changed their minds referring to an expert opinion issued by a Silesian University of Technology professor, as Filip Springer attests: "The investor's representatives report that the technical condition of the cups is terrible, their reinforcement is eaten through with corrosion, and preserving the entire structure would jeopardize the safety of the investment,"[103] transcribes the author. After becoming aware of the report content released by the developers, Professor Włodzimierz Starosolski, co-author of the expert opinion, rushed to clarify things: "Only some elements are slightly corroded, and they need to be worked on." Professor Adam Zybura, Head of the Department of Building Structures of

99 Aleksander Franta, 374.
100 Ibid.
101 Springer, 144.
102 Springer, 148.
103 Ibid.

the Silesian University of Technology, met his colleague to reiterate the misunderstanding: "It should be emphasized that no traces of corrosion of the reinforcement can be seen on the surface of the concrete. (...) We did not find a single crack in the columns which would result from the reinforcement corrosion process,"[104] writes Filip Springer from another webpage that disappeared together with the building.

Legally, the Station was gone even before it was taken down.

With this absurd and irrevocable decision in hand, there was nothing that could stop the developers' plans. Most likely, they have no idea who Charles Jencks, Bernard Tschumi and Daniel Libeskind are—some of the most respected architects and architecture critics on the planet— voices raised in unison in defense of Wacław Zalewski's concrete flowers.

All efforts were to no avail.

So what now seemed traditionally, on December 22, 2010, the concrete flowers were brutally torn out of the ground. One after another, they are toppled over, millions of tons of concrete transformed into rubble in a matter of days. When all the debris had been swept away and not a single crumb of concrete was left to tell the story, Piotr Żuchowski, the General Conservator of Historical Monuments, the highest position in the hierarchy of monument conservation in the country, revoked the building's demolition permit accusing the Provincial Monument Conservator of a gross violation of the laws protecting historical monuments in the country and the case went to court.[105]

Too late. The damage was already done. Sixteen concrete flowers. Structures that took 13 years to bloom uprooted in a couple of days after such a brief existence. I wonder how many memories were denied their concrete roots in the world? How many memories were refused a place in history? The shattered concrete surface also crumbled the sensitive memories of those who once touched its icy walls with open palms. With the end of this crafted structure, an essential element of the history of this place was also lost. The material link that connected us to a world we never had the chance to know– has been broken.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

When I got off at the modernized Katowice train station in January 2019, the reconstructed concrete flowers passed practically unnoticed. At that moment, I did not realize that I was walking on the remnants of the old station demolished almost ten years earlier. Those sculptural columns were copies recreated to replace the deliberately lost original structure. Amidst the profusion of different forms, materials, and finishings of the new building, the rebuilt concrete flowers looked more like artificial ones, displaced from their context and lacking their former brilliance. Although similar in form, the remade columns are no longer like the ones before because their materiality is no longer the same.

Additionally, in the old station, the sixteen concrete flowers played more than merely a decorative, structural and functional role; they *were* the station itself. Even though the new building seeks to mimic its original referent, it serves not so much to recall the structure it once was as it denies its previous existence. This image, in turn, seeks to emphasize that the building that used to be is no longer. Nothing remains in its copy. Only a memento, a place to go and remember hoping that it will not be forgotten any time soon.

Architecture and Capitalism

Fifteen years into the new millennium, it is as though the previous century never happened. The same architecture that once embodied social mobility in béton brut, now helps to prevent it (...) the final undoing of the 20th century, finds concrete proof in the methodic removal of its physical substance.

Reinier de Graff, 2017.

One year after publishing the English-translated version of the book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, written by the French economist Thomas Picketty, the Dutch architect, theorist, urban planner, and writer Reinier de Graaf offered us a brilliant reading on the socio-political content of a strictly finance-oriented volume. Because it is impossible to talk about architecture without mentioning the economic context in which it is set, we can never forget that every built structure also has an associated economic worth. While ideology is behind the genesis of architecture, economics is most often associated with its end. In his thoughtful reading of how the economic conjuncture described by Picketty materializes in and through the construction of architecture and cities, de Graaf agrees with Picketty's point of view in his article published by The Architecture Review in April 2015. While, according to the architect, Picketty claims that the "20th century was a brief exception in the inescapable mechanism of a deeply fraught economic system,"[106] in de Graaf's point of view, the last century was also merely an interval, a pause or anomaly in the history

106 Reinier de Graff, "Architecture is now a tool of capital, complicit in a purpose antithetical to its social mission," *The Architecture Review*, https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/architecture-is-now-a-tool-of-capital-complicit-in-a-purpose-antithetical-to-its-social-mission, April 25, 2015.

of architecture. Furthermore, he continues, "if the 20th century really was an anomaly, then perhaps so were its ideals: an entire period characterized by an enlightened belief in progress, social emancipation and civil rights can be retroactively discarded as a fleeting moment of self-delusion— a footnote in the long course of history."[107] If, on the one hand, this strong statement may seem a little too hasty, considering that at that moment, we were only fifteen years into the new millennium, on the other hand, he is quite definite in his reading of the transformations in the architectural scenario at the beginning of the 21st century when he says that what can be seen so far is not at all encouraging.[108]

So far, the impact of capital in the twenty-first century does not only translate into the retroactive dumping of the many social achievements embodied by twentieth-century architecture to which de Graaf refers. In the context of the twenty-first century, where the return on wealth tends to exceed the return on labor increasingly, it is not only the rich-built forms that are under serious threat but the simplicity of life of those people who depend on their work to survive with dignity.

Speaking of wealth, to get a more concrete idea of how the postulations of the Dutch architect can be understood in the context of Poland, a short anecdote about the paint factory called *Nobiles* will make it clear.[109]

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

109 The Nobiles company was founded in 1897 under the name *Spółka Komandytowa "Towarzystwo Nobiles"*.

Established at the turn of the 20th century by the young Polish entrepreneurs Kochanowicz and Sachnowski, first as a garage business, the paint factory prospered and through the hard work of its founders grew from manufacturing 98 tons of paint in 1923 to 648 tons of color by the year 1938. After the end of World War II, the now state-owned company became one of the leading suppliers of paints and varnishes throughout the Soviet Union, coloring the majority of the tinted vehicles circulated throughout Eastern Europe.[110]

By the 1990s, with the greyest years of Polish history in the past, Nobiles entered the free market with unshakable self-esteem. At a time marked by "bankruptcy, hopelessness and ruin," comments Piotr Witwicki about the context of the era in his hometown Włocławek, "Nobiles appeared to be a company that quickly adapted to the new times."[111] As a company with virtually no competition and therefore very successful in times of the Polish People's Republic, its employees enjoyed an economic condition that was certainly above average, as well as a sense of belonging and identity concerning the business itself. In this context, Nobiles' employees were speedy to anticipate the changes that were to come with the arrival of the free market, transforming the state-owned company into an employee-owned company immediately as soon as the old state ceased to exist.[112]

110 Wikipedia editors, "Kujawska Fabryka Farb i Lakierów Nobiles," Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, http://pl.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kujawska_Fabryka_Farb_i_Lakier%C3%B3w_Nobiles&oldid=66734373 (accessed July 11, 2022).

111 Piotr Witwicki, "Nobiles," in *Znikająca Polska* (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka Wydawnictwo, 2021), 71.

112 Piotr Witwicki, 71.

More than ever, the company became a symbol of pride, not only for its employees but for all the residents of the small town to which its history had been linked since it was founded more than a hundred years ago. This inseparable bond with the city and its inhabitants led the company to sponsor the humble local basketball team, then newly promoted to the first division in 1992. As a result of the club's identification with the city's company and its inhabitants, the basketball team became one of the top teams in the country, earning the town of Włocławek the title of basketball capital of Poland which lasts until today.[113]

Nobiles, like the other examples in this thesis, also had a tragic end. The more its owner-employees enjoyed their privileged position as successful new Polish capitalists, the more they worried that one day competition from foreign-owned companies would bring the demise of the company, the employees, and even the basketball club. After all, this was the end of the vast majority of the old state-owned companies and also of the new companies founded after the fall of the Iron Curtain. As many successful companies in the country went bankrupt, "They started looking for an investor out of fear"[114] attests Witwicki. Shortly afterwards, in 1996, the company was finally purchased by a group of Dutch investors. Although "The agreement was that the buyout would be a one-time action," the fact that "The employees managed to win relatively good terms" was far from translating into a happy ending for Nobiles - even less so for those who relied on their jobs for a living. But the new owners did not even bother to worry about issues beyond the cans of paint that came out of that factory. For the reason that, as Witwicki comments, "above all, it was about the profit."[115] Nobody cared whether the company had existed for ten or a hundred years, whether it kept a basketball team that the people of an entire town were proud of, or whether people depended on that job to survive. "It quickly became apparent that the intention was to maximize profits not by developing the business but by extinguishing it. The production shutdown was patchy, but it was very consistent. The new owners knew how to deal with such matters."[116] Finally, after going through two world wars and surviving the Soviet occupation for more than forty years, maintaining its reputation and dignity and becoming a symbol of pride for all those who worked there and that colored an entire country for more than one hundred years, the company was bankrupt in just five years.

When the employees were informed of the situation, "that the plant would eventually cease to exist, ambulances stood outside the building. Rightly so, because when the workers heard what awaited them, they began to lose consciousness,"[117] Witwicki states. On the day that an important chapter in the city's history was brought to a halt with the closure of the doors of Kujawska Fabryka Farb i Lakierów Nobiles, a fundamental element of the identity of that place ceased to exist. Some people completely lost their grip on reality, others lost their jobs, and three committed suicide.[118]

113 Ibid, 75.

114 Ibid, 76.

115 Ibid, 77.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

II.27

1963 – – 2015

Dom Turysty „Miramar" w Sopocie

Any discussion of the purposefulness, or historical legitimacy, of architecture in the contemporary world must necessarily begin with the acknowledgement of its present futility, assuming it as the origin of any investigation of architecture's future or past.

Giancarlo de Carlo, 1972.

When Giancarlo de Carlo sat down to write his article entitled "Legitimising Architecture," which was to be published by *Forum* magazine in 1972, he was very aware of the purpose of architecture. The discussion about the legitimacy of architecture is not about what architecture is and what it is not. As De Carlo himself puts it, "A building is not a building."[119] Much because some buildings are irrelevant while others have some noteworthy qualities, but it happens that the purpose of architecture, as De Carlo suggests, is not reflected in its formal characteristics and aesthetic values, "A building, in the sense of walls, floors, empty spaces, room, materials, etcetera, is only the outline of a potential: it is only made relevant by the group of people it is intended for,"[120] stated the italian architect. Giancarlo de Carlo was a very assertive architect, an influential figure with many convictions, which he tirelessly prophesied whenever there was an opportunity to do so. On one such occasion, in an interview conducted by Ole Bouman and Roemer Van Toorn just four months before De Carlo passed away, he again reiterated his opinion on the meaning of architecture: "Meaning will

119 Giancarlo Di Carlo, "Legitimising Architecture," *Forum* (nr. 1, Vol. III, 1972): 8-20

120 Ibid.

only appear after you have made a painstaking analysis of the assignment, taking into account the context in which it occurs, your own personal background, your view of society, your hopes and disappointments."[121] For de Carlo, this is perhaps the only way to understand its significance. In the case of modern Polish architecture, the search for meaning is even more complex for the reason that there is less and less tangible evidence to feed this discussion.

This is because not all examples of lost modern architecture have had entire monographs devoted to them—quite the contrary. Information is scarce as buildings disappear. Similarly, not all of the active architects had their buildings featured on the covers of architectural journals, nor were their credits published in the few specialized magazines that circulated at the time. Some characters in this history are so unknown that it is as if they had not even existed. Just as their buildings are so largely ignored, it is hard to believe that they could have been even minimally relevant and significant in their time.

By digging through the relics of the past, I try to find the evidence needed to reconstruct these structures and retell their stories. As a foreign architect living in a strange country, I feel that this effort is an exercise in translation. It starts from careful research and reading of their original vestiges, goes through the understanding and comprehension of their former existence and significance, and culminates in casting their old forms into a new work of art. By doing this, I am allowing them not only to be deciphered and recognized in the present but providing a second chance to these architectures, or rather, an afterlife.

It was winter 2015, and as the year approached its end, fewer visible traces remained of what was once one of the most well-known and frequented buildings in Sopot in the far north of Poland. It is Christmas, and the city dwellers feel they can finally relax. Eventually, the ruins of the former *Dom Turysty „Miramar"* (Miramar Tourist's House) were torn down and moved far away. No one was surprised by this tragedy. Of the former building that occupied one of the most prime locations on Poland's Baltic Sea coast, as of 2016 only the concrete floor of the former ballroom leveled to the ground is visible.

Translating Miramar's history of this building was no easy task. Like the very materiality of the building, few official archives attesting to its former existence have been preserved. Or at least they are nowhere to be found. Even more scarce is the technical information about a building of this era, the more difficult it seems to pinpoint whether this is because no one is interested in its past and history or whether, instead, this results from a desire to conceal its former achievements and glories. Turns out that in the case of the Tourists' House of Sopot, however insignificant its existence may seem today, it will be impossible to erase the traces of its brief tenure in the realm of the material world. Despite its absence from history books, the few images of this building that still circulate are those used to print old postcards. And that has great significance for this story. Because for a building to occupy this place, to be considered worthy of "a postcard," we can conclude that its existence has been far beyond insignificant.

121 Ole Bouman and Roemer Van Toorn, "Architecture is too Important to Leave to the Architects. A Conversation with Giancarlo de Carlo," *Archis*, https://archis.org/volume/architecture-is-too-important-to-leave-to-the-architects-a-conversation-with-giancarlo-de-carlo/, February 1, 2005.

Just as buildings don't fade away, it will be challenging for these thousands of postcards to disappear from the face of the earth once and for all. Like it or not, at some point, someone will finally find their way to those dusty old boxes forgotten in the basement. When these postcards again see the light of day, the existence of the memories witnessed by this building can no longer be denied.

Soon after the end of the Great War, a modest investment called "The Tourist's House" was launched on the northern edge of the city of Sopot. The tiny village on the shores of the Baltic Sea did not seem so attractive at first glance, but the populace was eager for a place under the sun, and with each new summer, more and more tourists crowded around the humble structure with their tents and makeshift huts. After a few years, there was no other solution than to expand the investment to welcome the horde of tourists that every year headed north towards the sea.

It was at this point that the experienced architect and engineer Stanisław Sowiński,[122] in the role of senior designer in the *Miastoprojekt Gdańsk* office, took on the project for the new premises of the *Dom Turysty PTTK w Sopocie* (The Tourists House of the Polish Travel & Tourism Society in Sopot). Aside from his more than ten years of experience in the public architectural office in Gdańsk, throughout the 1950s Sowiński had earned his position as a full professor in the Department of Architecture at the city's Polytechnic University. His solid career, both in the practice of the profession and in the teaching of architecture, gave him all the credentials for a project that was to help build Sopot's image as the new capital of the country's seaside tourism.

Designed by Sowiński in 1961 at the Miastoprojekt office and opened in 1964 within the PTTK complex in Sopot's Kamienny Potok district, the Tourist House "Miramar" was initially named "Na Szlaku" (On The Road)– probably under its roadside position on the route between Sopot and the modernist city of Gdynia. Once opened, Sowiński's singular building "served up to 2,500 meals a day in a 60-seat fast-food bar and a restaurant for 100 people,"[123] as Stanisław Balicki, a Sopot-based journalist for Dziennik Bałtycki, recalls. Most likely, the building took great advantage of its prominent position on a small hill halfway between the country's two most popular destinations for vacationers. Besides its location smack dab in the middle of the road, there was another reason why hungry travelers decided to stop at the Miramar: its outstanding architecture.

As Anna Kazińska-Olejniczak, a local editor and photographer, recalls, "Its modernist facade, though so different from the typical Art Nouveau architecture of Sopot, impressed with its modernity and extremely sophisticated-for the time-design."[124] Sowiński was very keen on how he laid out the building on the site and established its architecture. Taking advantage of its elevated position and visibility of the road, the architect designed the facade of

122 Stanisław Sowiński (1911–1979), designer at the Miastoprojekt Gdansk office (1949-64). Assistant (1946-50), Assistant Professor (1950-55), Deputy Professor (1955-62) and Senior Lecturer (1962-67), and Head of the Department of Urban Architecture Design at the Faculty of Architecture, Gdansk University of Technology (1968-69). Head of the Urban Architecture Department at the Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning, Gdansk University of Technology (1969-79).

123 Stanisław Balicki, "Znana Firma Deweloperska Przejęła Teren Po Sopockim Miramarze?" Dziennik Bałtycki Sopot, https://dziennikbaltycki.pl/znana-firma-deweloperska-przejela-teren-po-sopockim-miramarze-pb-gorski-bez-komentarza-prosze-dzwonic-za-pol-roku/ar/c1-15818450, April 23, 2021.

124 Anna Kazińska-Olejniczak, "Dom Turysty Miramar w Sopocie. Kiedyś Odbywały Się Tam Słynne Dancingi," Sopot Naszemiasto, https://sopot.naszemiasto.pl/dom-turysty-miramar-w-sopocie-kiedys-odbywaly-sie-tam/ar/c9-5177051, June 21, 2019.

the upper level to be seen from a distance at automobile speed. Its *brise-soleil* was designed in a sharp way and with considerable thickness. If, on the one hand, the goal was to block the sun and protect the interior spaces from excessive heat and noise, on the other hand, their secure and repetitive patterning, accentuated by a captivating play of light and shade, was capable of catching the eye of even the most unsuspecting traveler.

Nevertheless, it was not only by virtue of its forms that this building earned its place in the hearts of the *Sopotians*. "For many years, the Miramar Tourist House was one of the most characteristic buildings in Sopot, with a restaurant known for its famous dancing floor,"[125] comments the local photographer. The restaurant served to attract visitors and travelers passing through during the day, while at night, locals took over the dance floor: "It attracted not only visitors but also residents of the Tri-City,[126] who danced until dawn at the famous parties organized at the Miramar,"[127] Kazińska-Olejniczak concludes.

Over the years, the Dom Turysty Miramar has become a mandatory stop for travelers and a beloved haunt for locals. This architectural object of overwhelming modernity and curious shapes had found its *raison d'être* in its exact location. Across the country, similar structures designed to serve local tourism proved an excellent opportunity for architects to explore new forms and modes of expression in the early 1960s. As these structures became known, the Tourist Houses occupied a privileged position at the front of the exploration of new forms and constructive solutions, buildings that, at first glance, were unpretentious but highly functional, modern, and quite appealing. Architecture, in this context, fulfilled a fundamental purpose: to make sure that the experiences lived would be forever etched in the visitors' memory. The Polish Travel & Tourism Society (PTTK) quickly realized the potential of modern architecture to produce unique buildings. And that's because the PTTK had already had previous very successful experiences, in which the partnership with influential and renowned architects had proven fruitful. As a result of this synergy, other outstanding examples of hospitality architecture were erected in the country, such as the Dom Turysty PTTK in Krakow,[128] and the Dom Turysty PTTK in the city of Płock.[129]

Throughout the 1960s, the concept of the Tourist House went from a strange novelty to a popular destination by the 1970s, which would be its golden years. In this context, the Miramar lived its glory days in this decade, serving as a magnet attracting tourists from all over the country to the city of Sopot.

One of the main formal characteristics of this building, and one that perhaps makes it unique nationwide, was its "V" or "butterfly" roof solution. Commonly associated with mid-century modern American architecture, this exotic element became extremely popular on the west coast of the United States throughout the 1950s. Sowiński's incorporation of the butterfly wing roof solution in his design for the Dom Turysty Miramar in Sopot shows how acutely aware he was of the modern architecture scene beyond the country's boundaries. By appropriating a solution widely explored by other essential names of modern architecture in tropical territories, such as Oscar Niemeyer in his Yacht Club in Belo Horizonte,[130] and Marcel Breuer in his Geller House in Long Island,[131] Sowiński brought new air to the Polish Baltic Sea coast. Not just a fresh breath of modernity but a breeze of enthusiasm that carried the dream and imagination of those who experienced his architecture.

il.28

125 Anna Kazińska-Olejniczak, 2019.

126 The Tri-City or Tricity is a metropolitan area in Pomeranian Voivodeship, consisting of three contiguous coastal cities forming a row on the Baltic Sea coastline, namely the towns of Gdańsk, Gdynia, and Sopot.

127 Anna Kazińska-Olejniczak, 2019.

128 The Dom Turysty PTTK in Cracow was designed by architects Stanisław Spyt and Zbigniew Mikołajewski between 1956-59 and inaugurated in 1963 as the most extensive tourist facility in the country at that time. Today, it is known as Hotel Wyspianski.

129 The Dom Turysty PTTK in Płock, designed by the famous polish architect Marek Leykam between 1957 and 1959, was opened in 1962 and currently stands for *Hotel Starzyński*. The building was listed in 2018.

130 The Yacht Club in Belo Horizonte (Brazil) was designed by the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer (1907-2012) between 1940 and 1942.

131 The Geller House in Lawrence, Long Island, was designed by the Hungarian-American architect Marcel Breuer (1902-1981) between 1944 and 1945.

il.29, 30

Whether they were travelers parking their colorful cars and seeing themselves reflected in the huge glass panels of the ballroom or beachgoers arriving from the trail and gazing curiously at the oddly shaped building while waiting in line for a hot dog. This unusual roof solution had yet another purpose of being. By inverting the roof's slope, the butterfly wing typology considerably enlarges the façade area, thus allowing the interior spaces to be intensely lit. As a tourist house on the sea, this building was mainly used in summer. By extending the views to the blue horizon, where the sky merged with the sea, Sowiński had coupled an innovative architectural form with a powerful image. It is impossible not to let myself be carried away by my imagination when I observe the pictures of this space. Immediately I associate the characteristic of the space built by Sowiński with that outlined by Frank Lloyd Wright in Taliesin West.[132] The similarity is shocking, and the fact that the Miramar was designed immediately after the death of one of the most influential figures in modern architecture of all time does not seem to be a coincidence. In this sense, the Miramar can be considered a posthumous tribute to the master. A more austere but no less modern building, and like Taliesin West, it was built by the architect to escape the harsh winter and enjoy the sunlight and views of the landscape.

The Miramar Tourists' House was a simple, straightforward building, exactly what you expect to find while on summer vacation. Think about nothing and dance until the sun rises. During the 1980s, the building never stopped being popular, and the parties on the restaurant's famous dance floor continued to draw crowds. Until the early 1990s, the Miramar was a much sought-after destination, and not only by tourists in search of sun and fun, festivals, meetings, celebrations and events of all kinds were organized in this curious object of architecture on the shores of the Baltic Sea. Then its popularity began to wane. Seizing the opportunity, the Balt-Tur Grupa Hotelowa, a tourist company founded in 1983 in Sopot, bought the building with the alleged intention to create a more significant conference center there because, after all, the building had built up a reputation in its name over the years. By 1995, when Balt-Tur took over the Miramar, the company was expanding and already had dozens of similar structures in the city. Although its best days were gone, the old Tourist House would still be a strong potential competitor for the business's success– unless all its remaining pride was taken away from it.

In an open market-driven economy, competition is scary. The logic is always to capitalize more, and in this sense, you don't make more money by attracting more tourists, offering better services, and improving your infrastructure. The Miramar may have been a bit decadent in the early 1990s, but a prompt renovation would get it back on track; after all, it enjoyed one of the prime locations in the city and had a loyal place in the hearts of the *Tricity* residents. There wasn't a living soul in the area who had never been in that restaurant, who hadn't danced until dawn in its ballroom.

It is no wonder that while Balt-tur was building its fame, taking advantage of the excellent location and symbolic potential of the Miramar to promote its name in the business, the company undertook gradual and systematic destruction of the physical integrity of the building. As the company fostered its reputation by hosting catered events in the structure of the former Tourists' House, the city inhabitants witnessed the decay and collapse of one of its most cherished structures, which lost all its charm and the memories associated with it.

When the building was finally shut down, the restaurant dismantled, and the ballroom sealed, I wonder how many Sopot residents felt their hearts break. How many met their sweetheart on that dance floor or in line waiting to buy an ice cream on the way back from the beach. How many memories of summers past were left, locked in that structure without being able ever to see the light of day again.

In 2001, the Balt-Tur came up with a proposal to build a vast conference hall with a hotel where the Miramar stood. However, they did not find investors who believed it was a great opportunity, speculated the journalist Piotr Weltrowski.[133] Failing to obtain the necessary investment to realize their miraculous idea, Balt-Tur simply turned their backs on the building; after all, their mission had already been accomplished, and they now had a good name and no possible competitors to match.

It was not until late 2005, when the rights to the plot with the "Miramar" were bought by Polonia Bałtyk,[134] as informed by Stanisław Balicki in 2021 as he continued his quest to understand the unfolding of this story. "It was not until 2011 that the company applied for a demolition permit for the building, which was granted,"[135] informed Balicki. A very curious fact in this story is that as soon as the demolition permit was issued, Balt-Tur renamed one of its hotels in the city with the suggestive name "Hotel Miramar." If the message that the Balt-Tur

132 Taliesin West was designed by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) in 1937 as his winter home and studio in Scottsdale, Arizona, from 1937 until his death.

133 Piotr Weltrowski, "Sopot: budynek dawnego Domu Turysty Miramar rozebrany," Trojmisto.pl, https://www.trojmiasto.pl/wiadomosci/Sopot-budynek-dawnego-Domu-Turysty-Miramar-rozebrany-n97815.html, January 11, 2016.

134 Stanisław Balicki, 2021.

135 Ibid.

wanted to send when it bought the building had not been clear enough, after ensuring that it was brought to ruin to take its symbolic place and also its name, now its true intentions were transparent. While Balt-Tur's task was to make sure that the building was closed, Polonia Bałtyk's role was to ensure that it was finally eradicated. "We will start demolition for sure this year. I think it will be August or September—says Michał Szczurko, the president of Polonia Bałtyk,"[136] transcribed from her interview with the CEO of the company Anna Mizera-Nowicka in May 2011.

As Anna Mizera-Nowicka had revealed in her interview with the president of Polonia Bałtyk, "For now, the owner has not decided what will be built in the place of the former Dom Turysty Miramar. Unofficially, it is said that he had proposals to sell the property."[137] In the natural order of things, built structures are not demolished without a clear purpose or concrete justification. Permissions to remove solid structures should always be accompanied by a good reason or at least a plan that specifies the need for this kind of investment—because transforming a building into ruins and clearing the land of rubble costs money.

The logic of the whole operation carried out by Polonia Bałtyk, following the intentions of the local authorities, becomes quite evident in this case. It had acquired a piece of land with a building built on it for a particular capital amount and intended to sell the same chunk of ground with the old structure missing for even more money. A reasoning, to my mind, formidably perverse, I would say. Not surprisingly, finally, the confusing mathematics of this calculation didn't seem to add up, and Polonia Bałtyk decided to abort the idea and pass the building on because, after all, on the land, there was still a building. Someone needed to do the dirty job of clearing it away. And this did not look like an easy task. Nor did it look like a very profitable one. So this assignment was given to a company of dubious nature based in Warsaw and going by the name of FN Astra. Intrigued by the company's "goodwill" in performing such a mission, Piotr Weltrowski decided to undertake some research into FN Astra's field of activity, and the result is what follows:

> Information about the company that can be found online is superficial and limited to entries in the National Court Register. What is known is that the company was registered in the capital in 2013, and the object of its activity is not specified, as the company, in theory, is supposed to be engaged in advertising, wholesale and retail trade, as well as real estate rental.[138]

The company probably did not have much experience in the demolition business as it took them more than four years to complete the simple task of tearing down the structure of a small building. In the early days of 2016, news of the vanishing of the building was delivered to the residents of Sopot as follows: "The building of the former Tourist House Miramar in Sopot, which had been falling into ruin for years, was demolished,"[139] wrote Piotr Weltrowski in January 2016. FN Astra had accomplished its unfortunate task. However, as Stanisław Balicki reported in April of 2021, "FN Astra'sAstra's debts to the city were growing, presumably related to real estate tax and ground lease payments. In June, a bailiff's announcement appeared about an auction of the property seized at Sopot's request. Ultimately, it did not take place, and the parties had to settle.[140] And the story unfolds as Balicki describes, "At the end of August 2021, an entry appeared in the land and mortgage register of the former 'Miramar' property."[141] PB Górski purchased the debts of FN Astra, taking over the real estate in exchange for these debts, concludes the Sopot journalist.

So far, in August 2022, the investor has not applied for a permit for any new building in the area.

Recently, while searching for the image of this now lost edifice, I learned that the large sign of the former "Miramar" was finally removed from the property. The last material witness, the ultimate sign that the Dom Turysty Miramar once occupied this land on the shores of the Baltic Sea in the city of Sopot.

Now, we can say it is finally gone and forever.

136 Anna Mizera-Nowicka, "Dom Turysty Miramar w Końcu Zniknie z Sopotu," Sopot Naszemiasto, https://sopot.naszemiasto.pl/dom-turysty-miramar-w-koncu-zniknie-z-sopotu/ar/c3-918367#734c5983f354e620,1,3,3, May 22, 2011.

137 Anna Mizera-Nowicka, 2011.

138 Piotr Weltrowski, 2016.

139 Ibid.

140 Stanisław Balicki, 2021.

141 Ibid.

When I discovered that this building had recently been demolished, the lack of information about its history puzzled me the most. In this context, most people, including architects, do not know what this structure was, who built it, and where it stood. Not simply because this was a small-scale building in a little city, but because of the lack of information regarding its previous existence. Like the Dom Turysty Miramar in Sopot, many modern buildings torn down over the past few years in Poland lack historical records. From this perspective, this artistic project can be considered a kind of retrospective documentation. Filling in the missing gaps, I try to reconstruct their narratives of their moments of glory and decay, either in written or visual form. For in the few images circulating of the Tourist House in Sopot, countless pieces of information are missing. Given that, one cannot understand the significance of what this building once was, but it is also hard to grasp what it might have come to be if it had had a different ending.

The print objects created object images serve as a complement to the building, elements that try to fill in the missing data, like the image of a façade for which no record can be found. I reconstruct them to first to see what is not there, then present them in another way, in images never seen before, or even previously unknown. By bringing these buildings back to life, these images invite the observer to go within, to wander around. Therefore, it is necessary to cast them in space so that in their materiality these images not only produce a displacement but also creates a physical confrontation with the viewer that is also reflexive.

Architecture and Craftmanship

The emotional rewards craftsmanship holds out for attaining skill are twofold: people are anchored in tangible reality, and they can take pride in their work. But society has stood in the way of these rewards in the past and continues to do so today.

Richard Sennet, 2008.

The value of craftsmanship, of manual labor, has been systematically diminished over the last centuries. The practical knowledge, the *ways of doing*, passed on from generation to generation through direct contact with the materiality of the craft, is fading away with each passing day. "Technical skill has been removed from imagination,"[142] is what cultural historian Richard Sennet explains in his book *The Craftsman*. "If the craftsman is special because he or she is an engaged human being, still the craftsman's aspirations and trials hold up a mirror to these larger issues past and present,"[143] adds the author. Taking note of Sennet's thoughts on craft as a field, it makes the closing of various Polish building material factories that much more devastating.

So when the porcelain factory in the town of Włocławek stopped operating in the early 1990s, part of the living history of that town was also unexpectedly discontinued. Over the years, the city built its fame around its most coveted product: *faience*. At that time, decorator-ceramicists were considered artists, and it was from the pottery

142 Richard Sennet, "The Troubled Craftsman," in *The Craftsman* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008), 21.

143 Ibid.

factory in Włocławek that the most virtuoso artisans in the country came. Faience was a cult object, almost sacred in the town in the context of the Polish People's Republic; Piotr Witwicki recalls his childhood memories of the city where he was born and raised.[144] Throughout the 20th century, the craft and trade of *faience* became a symbol of pride for the town and its inhabitants, so when its oldest and most traditional factory was finally extinguished, Włocławek lost more than a workplace and a product to boast about; it was deprived of, above all else, a vital part of its own identity.[145]

After the transformation, handmade goods became obsolete overnight. In the context of the pottery factory in Włocławek, "the word 'faience', which has always operated in a folksy and somewhat awkward context, now has a pejorative meaning,"[146] comments Witwicki. "Since 1990, it has come to mean only something junk or deplorable. A dictionary of the Polish language explains that "faience" is nowadays colloquially something worthless, and the Urban Dictionary of Slang and Colloquial Speech adds that it is *Russian trash sold at stadiums*,"[147] concludes the author. In this context, the current depreciation of everything handmade goes far beyond rejecting small objects made by the artisan's hand - it encompasses all forms of making that result from craft systems.

144 Piotr Witwicki, 59.

145 Ibid.

146 Ibid, 65.

147 Ibid.

As far as architecture is concerned, James Carpenter—a designer who works at the intersection of environment, architecture, fine art, and engineering—explains in his article "Valuing Material Comprehension" that the term craft has also acquired a negative connotation since it was segregated from the realm of construction after the Industrial Revolution.[148] From that moment on, the figure of the architect was finally disassociated from that of the constructor, and the imagination and knowledge of the craftsman were severed for good. As a result, "the base knowledge of the material within the building industry has, for all intents and purposes, been lost,"[149] adds Carpenter. This recent loss of meaning of craft creates two consequences: first, the devaluation of artisanal products widely produced in the country until the late 1980s and its impact on the closure of countless factories and state manufacturing enterprises; and second, the consequent broad devaluation of the material values imbued in modern architecture from the beginning of the 21st century.

Craftsmanship, whether in the fabrication of minor artifacts or the construction of architecture, is the material expression of human engagement in the processes of labor and construction. Utilitarian objects and reinforced concrete structures convey the history of their time, bearing not only the hands of those who made them but also the memories of those who experienced them. Because, as the Swiss architect and scholar awarded the Pritzker Prize in 2009, Peter Zumthor suggests, it is by being "capable of absorbing the traces of human life" that they speak to us and thus, "take on a specific richness."[150] Such treasures also remind us that the materiality of things needs to be crafted and therefore maintained, cared for.

148 James Carpenter, "Valuing Material Comprehension," in *Building (in) the Future: Recasting Labor in Architecture*, Peggy Deamer and Phillip Bernstein (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 63

149 Ibid.

Exceptionally handcrafted items - those born out of harmony between craftspeople and the place they come from and the materials available on site - have become obsolete with the arrival of new industrialized products designed and sold by multinational conglomerate companies. Similarly, the more traditional hand-built construction systems developed *in loco*, based on the builders' in-depth knowledge of materials and ways of doing things, were overtaken by pre-fabricated and standardized components and elements that arrived with the landing of the new developer-based construction industry.

As the collapse of the manufacturing sector established the bankruptcy and closure of countless factories in the country, it was not only its economy that was substantially affected but the lives of the people who needed them to make a living. The pride derived from labor gave way to unemployment, and with it, workers found themselves disconnected from identity and meaning in life. In this context, Witwicki testifies that most of the former craftsmen, now unemployed, were seen as "too old to learn a new skill and too young to die."[151] As a result, a considerable portion of the population was relegated to a kind of limbo, from which many still can not find their way out.

150 Peter Zumthor, "Melancholy Perceptions," in *Thinking Architecture* (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 2010), 24.

151 Piotr Witwicki, "Niewidzialni Robotnicy," in *Znikająca Polska* (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka Wydawnictwo, 2021), 100.

The extinction of artisanal building systems determined the decay of the country's modern architectural heritage, which also negatively impacted on people's daily lives. Historical built structures, which, therefore, demand care and maintenance, were forgotten, neglected, and thus deteriorated at a fast pace. Symbols of pride and identity became a matter of shame and repulsion. In this context, the buildings of modern architecture were put on the sidelines, in a state of uncertainty, too modern and innovative to acquire the status of monuments at the same time that they had become too obsolete and archaic to continue to exist.

il.31

1969 – – 2017

Zakład Elektroniki Górniczej w Tychach

To me, the presence of certain buildings has something secret about it. They seem simply to be there. We do not pay any special attention to them. And yet it is virtually impossible to imagine the place where they stand without them. These buildings appear to be anchored firmly in the ground. They give the impression of being a self-evident part of their surroundings and they seem to be saying: *I am as you see me and I belong here*.

Peter Zumthor, 2010.

I am not sure why I have become attached to this building. At first glance, it doesn't say much; it doesn't seem to be exceptional in any way. It is what it is and appears to be fine where it stands. A building that makes sense because it exists, and that's it. It was as if it was deeply rooted in the landscape and belonged to it uniquely.

Since I first came across its image, searching through the countless files of recently destroyed buildings around me, it has been permanently etched in my memory. After years of living with its absence, I feel that it reveals itself every day, more striking in its simplicity. It becomes more tangible, present and accessible. For me, preserving archives that attest to the former existence of things that no longer exist is a way of preventing their memory from being deleted from the city's memory once and for all.

Certain buildings find their reason for being derived from their location, it is to say that when displaced from their context, they mean nothing. Not that the place where they find their abode is spectacular in and of themselves. Most cities are mundane, just as most buildings have no more than four walls and a roof. What makes a place or a built structure special is its connection to the lives of the people

who live within. In view of this, the substantial value of a building derives from its relevance in someone's life, or rather, in people's lives. Since architecture finds its actual significance in the social and civic sphere. This is what I saw in that first image, a structure that belonged not only to the place but to the lives of the individuals who used to live there.

The history of a building is not only intertwined with the documentary narrative of a place but also with the memory of the life it hosts. In the case of Tychy's *Zakład Elektroniki Górniczej* (Mining Electronics Factory), or just ZEG for the more intimate, its history intersects with the city's chronology and its inhabitants' memories. "Its [ZEG's] history is inseparably connected with the history of the city of Tychy"[152] it is with these words that journalist and editor Ewa Iwanciów introduces the contents of her monograph on the ZEG building published in 2007, the year the factory closed its activities permanently. "This monograph is an attempt to recall and organize important facts from the Company's life, which, if not written down, will fade away from our memory with time,"[153] asserts the author. As a building largely unknown beyond the city limits, that an entire monograph has been written and dedicated to its memory is something that shows us how its existence was deeply tied to the city and also rooted in the lives of its inhabitants. And further how the residents of Tychy would take the news of the demise of one of the most representative enterprises the town had ever witnessed in the future.

152 Ewa Iwanciów, *Zakład Elektroniki Górniczej SA: 1964-2007* (Tychy: Zakład Elektroniki Górniczej SA, 2007), 8.

153 Ibid.

Not without reason, the announcement of the ZEG's downfall would be received by the local community with much apprehension. As seen with other architectural objects built in the country at the same time. The ZEG was a building that made people proud to live there, a representative symbol of the city and a source of some gratification for those fortunate enough to work in its facilities. A company that its employees felt honored to be a part of. They waited impatiently to come back on Monday when they left on Friday. ZEG was more than a place to punch the clock from eight o'clock,it was a building from which their lives and families could never be dissociated.

For a mid-size town known for years only as a bedroom community for mining workers, the establishment of the Mining Electronics Factory has meant a considerable gain in self-esteem. At that time, the ZEG was a unique undertaking in Poland and the European mining industry—a priority task for the Polish economy, explains Ewa Iwanciów.[154] Its innovative concept combined three fundamental ideas: scientific research, production of machinery for the mining industry and their direct implementation in mines within the automation and mechanization of the Coal Industry Plants, clarifying the author on the pioneering role of the ZEG.[155]

For the task of designing a structure that would be a match for one of the country's most progressive factories, the authorities turned to the young and promising architect Marek Dziekoński,[156] who graduated from the Wroclaw

154 Ewa Iwanciów, 19.

155 Ibid.

156 Marek Dziekoński (1930-2002), was a polish architect who worked mainly in Wrocław and Tychy.

Polytechnic University in 1955. Designed at the *Tychy Miastoprojekt* by Marek Dziekoński in the early 1960s, the first plant of the new Mining Electronics Factory in Tychy was opened on May 29, 1969. Soon after its inauguration, it was "recognized as one of the country's most modern industrial facilities,"[157] comments Ewa Iwanciów. One year later, the galvanizing plant was completed, and in 1971, the chemistry laboratory building. As soon as the first stage of development of the Mining Electronics Plant came to an end, its usable area increased as much as ten times: from 1,250 square meters to 12,500 square meters.[158]

il.32 

Tychy suddenly started exporting high-tech products to the Soviet Union, German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, and Romania from a town of mostly mine workers. The ZEG factory was a precursor in Poland's printed circuit board field: the first one-sided printed circuits were produced in 1965. The production of double-sided circuits was started in 1969, which enabled the wide application of integrated circuits and miniaturization of devices. Technological solutions developed in Tychy would soon find their way to the People's Republic of China, Argentina, Egypt, Greece, and Iraq.[159]

Boosted by the success acquired in its first years of operation, the structure of the factory was expanded, and with it came even more new products and further recognition. The material scope of the second stage expansion, which took place between 1971 and 1975, included the construction of two 12-storey towers, a new mechanical hall, warehouses and a garage. After its completion in 1975, the usable area increased to approximately 20,000 square meters. By then, the ZEG Factory in Tychy employed 1,546 people, and the product range grew to almost 500 items.[160]

Wearing the uniform with the three letters printed on it had become a source of pride and a symbol of success, and ZEG propelled the lives of many young workers in the city, providing not only a job but educational opportunities as well. The Faculty of Computer Science of the Silesian University of Technology was based on ZEG. Another revolutionary aspect was that "unlike many industrial giants in Silesia which employed mainly men, women dominated in ZEG for years,"[161] comments Ewa Iwanciów. Over the years, different generations of Tyszans have passed through the factory, creating an indissociable bond between ZEG, the town of Tychy, and its inhabitants.

157 Ewa Iwanciów, 20.

158 Ibid.

159 Ibid, 25.

160 Ibid.

161 Ibid, 33.

When I stumbled upon the remains of this building a few years ago I knew none of its history or significance. I was unaware of its relevance to the lives of those who witnessed it in the first person. Nonetheless I too became attached to this structure, but from a completely different perspective. I didn't have the opportunity to experience it, just as I didn't know anyone who had. For me, the ZEG was only an image. Still, images hide in themselves an infinite depth and an enormous wisdom. When I met with it for the first time, although it was already gone, it was still there, present in that image.

Considering a building is more than just a built structure, its existence transcends its physical materiality; tangible things can continue to exist in the relics left along the way, and even the slightest shred of evidence of their former presence can spark curiosity. For me, interacting with these relics of the past symbolizes the beginning of an adventure. Seeing as architecture is also an adventure, in this case, the hidden stories behind their facades are what interests me the most. To insert yourself into an image is to dive deep into the memories that it can awaken. Immersing myself in these images is a way to understand things I don't know. A world that I never had the opportunity to experience. It is also an exercise for the imagination. Because an image, after all, is only a picture. The back of a photograph is always white. Like an empty page to be written, invented. And to understand its reality is to fill in the missing gaps, all that cannot be seen and all that goes beyond the visible reality itself.

il.33

I ask myself: what do I see in this image?

In this image, I see a genuine, humble building. Apart from the tactile characteristics of the materials and the craftsmanship found in the details and constructive solutions of a building, honesty is what I admire most in architecture. That is the correctness in the use of materials, the respect for its surroundings, the awareness of its presence in connection with the public space, and the dignity with which it accepts and reveals the relentless passage of time. Buildings that acquire a unique specificity concerning the human, built and natural landscape in which they are embedded. To the trained eye of an architect, such structures never go unnoticed,even when they are no longer present.

In other words, it is as if *something* of these buildings remained an integral part of the place they once stood, insisting on not disappearing altogether. Peter Zumthor, known for his acuteness toward materials and the simple way he introduces his buildings into the landscape, refers to this something as a *sensitive tension*: "when I come across a building that has developed a special presence in connection with the place it stands in, I sometimes feel that it is imbued with an inner tension that refers to something over and above the place itself."[162] The tension Zumthor mentions is, in my opinion, what transcends architecture itself, what makes a building unique, that is, the life it holds, the energy that revolves around its spaces, leaving its traces and going beyond the limits imposed by its walls.

According to the Swiss architect, what imbues architecture with meaning is its exposure to life. "Naturally, in this context, I think of the patina of age on materials, of innumerable small scratches on surfaces, of varnish that has grown dull and brittle, and of edges polished by use,"[163] remarks Zumthor. It is to say that buildings by themselves don't tell us much; it is the stories of the people who inhabit them that matter, "architecture's aesthetic and practical values, stylistic and historical significance are of secondary importance,"[164] concludes the architect. So it is through contact with the concrete materiality of architecture that we can witness experiences that are alien to us, that we can understand something that goes beyond our existence.

Furthermore, James Carpenter draws attention to the importance of the engagement of craft of architecture when he says: "It can be argued that materials knowledge is the key to creating a meaningful design because when a deep understanding of the materials accompanies a structure's design, a structure resonates with and communicates itself through the care that went into its creation."[165] Peter Zumthor agrees with Carpenter when noting that he believes in the corporeal wholeness of an architectural object as the essential aim of his work as an architect. For the Swiss architect, "the physical substance of what is built has to resonate with the physical substance of the area."[166] Hence, the value of craft in architecture resides in the thought put into refined, well-crafted connections between the materials used.

If, as both Peter Zumthor and James Carpenter claim, the true meaning of architecture is embodied in the care for the materials employed in its creation, it is only by looking closely into the nooks and crannies of a building, through respect and attachment to its materiality, that we can grasp and understand its true meaning as an object of architecture and, more than that, its real value to the lives of those who inhabit it.

While architecture has been continuously deprived of the tactile quality once imbued in its materials, its dwellers have irreparably lost their ability to appreciate these values. Architects no longer sculpt details that attract the eye. Architecture has become flat, devoid of all its former depth. Its users have become uninterested to the touch of the materials that no longer speak the human body's language. As the materiality of architecture became dictated by the machinery's movement, the tangible bond that tied us to the matter of the built space has been broken.

162 Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture* (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 2010), 41-42.

163 Peter Zumthor, 24.

164 Ibid, 26.

165 James Carpenter, 61.

166 Peter Zumthot, 99.

Nowadays, when most of the buildings we confront no longer exude the care employed in the manufacture of the construction, where the architect's hand is no longer visible in the shapes built, the innate ability to see and understand the meaning of architecture is lost.

The materiality of the world goes largely unnoticed. The structures built around us resonate less and less with the physical substance of reality. Architecture has lost its earthly bond and sense of gravity. It has been stripped of the former textures and wrinkles that appealed to the eye. As a result, space has become aseptic.

Along with the smells, the sensory memory was hijacked from architecture. Buildings used to come into the world through a vast network of collaborative practices. Behind every component used in construction lies a story that no longer speaks the language of the craftsman but that of the developers. Architecture has been snatched away slowly and, yet, so suddenly that we don't even realize it.

Suddenly, architecture had been torn out of the ZEG. Impromptu, the building, found itself drained of life and meaning. At the end of 2007, wrote the building's monographer, as the Factory was being shut down, "the situation of the ZEG building during the last several years reflects the situation of the Polish mining industry,[167] which has been going through constant restructuring since the beginning of the 90s,"[168] testifies Ewa Iwanciów. Already at the beginning of the country's turbulent transformation to a market economy it became clear that there was only one way for ZEG to survive the coming changes: privatization. Already in the mid-1990s the company was gradually subdivided into different administrative divisions. Cuts and layoffs were the order of the day. Little by little the new micro-companies left the building, until it became completely empty. And then abandoned.

At one point, the building fell into the hands of investors, who immediately realized the potential the area could provide minus the building on it. It would not be difficult to convince the authorities that this was an excellent opportunity for the city: liquidating the ZEG building. By December 2014, they finally put their hands on the consent for the demolition of the structure, not even 50 years old. Everything happened quietly, just before the Christmas break and without informing the public. Even the architects' community in Tychy, including the architect former partner Ewa Dziekońska, did not know that the building that brought her to Tychy, the *Zakład Elektroniki Górniczej*, the ZEG, the work of the great architect Marek Dziekoński, would disappear from the landscape of the city of Tychy, as informed by the Dziennik Zachodni journalist Jolanta Pierończyk on March 2016.[169]

Stanisław Niemczyk,[170] a well-known polish architect who worked shoulder by shoulder with Marek Dziekoński in the *Miastoprojekt* office in Tychy from 1968, was also surprised when informed by the Dziennik Zachodni journalist.

167 In 1990, the 70 hard coal mines operated in Poland employed around 400 thousand miners. At the end of 2007, there were only 30 active mines in the country, and the number of miners had decreased to less than one-third.

168 Ewa Iwancików, 7.

169 Jolanta Pierończyk, "Budynek ZEG-u w Tychach do Wyburzenia! Architekci Zdumieni," Dziennik Zachodni, https://dziennikzachodni.pl/budynek-zeg-u-w-tychach-do-wyburzenia-architekci-zdumieni/ar/c3-9460973.

170 Stanisław Niemczyk (1943-2019), known as the "Polish Gaudí", Niemczyk was one of the most prolific architects devoted to sacred architecture in the country. He was the winner of the Honorary SARP Award in 1998.

"This topic has never been the subject of meetings of the urban planning and development commission in the City Hall,"[171] said the architect who used to spontaneously attend such meetings regularly. "The ZEG building was of decent architecture for administrative facilities of the time, with full amenities. There was a canteen and a swimming pool. The whole thing was very well done, although implementing this project in those days was difficult. It is a pity that it will cease to exist,"[172] concludes Niemczyk. Another city personality testifying in favor of the building on that occasion was Dr Maria Lipok-Bierwiaczonek, retired director of the City Museum in Tychy. One didn't have to be an architectural scholar to see that this was a building that the architect had very carefully crafted. "He was an architect who was extremely sensitive to form. An architect-artist who shaped the designed objects in a sculptural manner. Strips of concrete and glass, alternating strips of walls and windows. Clear, pure form. In every detail of this building, one can see the architect-artist's hand,"[173] transcribed by Jolanta Pierończyk. However, for the developer, the lines engraved by the sculptor-architect's hand have no meaning.

When the ZEG was torn down in the spring of 2017, a monographic exhibition dedicated to the life and legacy of one of the most influential architects to have lived and worked in the city of Upper Silesia, *Marek Dziekoński: Koncepcja - Kreacja - Konteksty*,[174] was accidentally inaugurated at the *Muzeum Miejskie w Tychach* (Tychy City Museum)—

il.34

a few blocks away from the demolition site. In my opinion, this casual simultaneity between the celebration and the contempt of modern architecture and its creators in early 21st century Poland justifies the relevance of this artistic venture in this context.

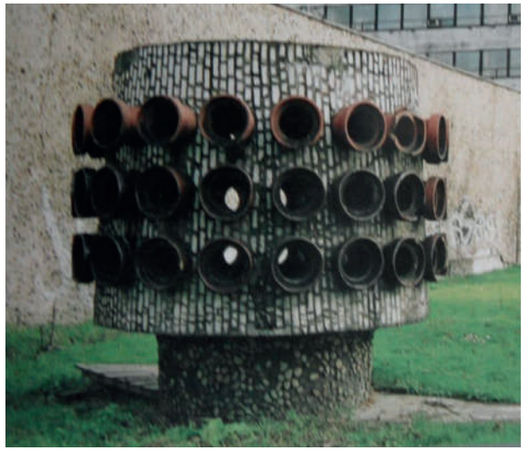
Concurrently with the demolition of the building sometime during May of that year, as if the now-deceased architect were dying for a second time along with his structure, architect Justyna Wojtas-Swoszowska takes the monographic exhibition on display in the city of Tychy as a pretext to celebrate the architect-sculptor's achievements in an article that has the tone of a statement: "Marek Dziekoński – Mistrz Rzeźbiarskiego Modernizmu" (Marek Dziekoński - Master of Sculptural Modernism). In her piece, the author's concern for the integrity of other lesser-known buildings designed by Dziekoński in the city is manifest, which, according to Justyna Wojtas-Swoszowska, are no less significant: the multifunctional pavilion of the NOT Mining Club (1963-1964) and the massive hall of the artificial ice rink called the Winter Stadium

171 Jolanta Pierończyk, 2016.

172 Ibid.

173 Ibid.

174 The exhibition curated by the art historian Patryk Oczko took place at the City Museum in Tychy between March 25 and September 16, 2017.



il.35

(1977-1978). In both examples, “the architect expresses his outstanding craftsmanship skills,”[175] she articulates. His buildings were consistent in every detail, from the design to its execution, from the interior space to the creation of the logo, qualities that, in her opinion, could be boldly compared to the achievements of masters of modernism like Le Corbusier and Eero Saarinen.[176] Ewa Dziekońska, approached by the journal’s author at the time, mentioned that “Marek had the soul of a sculptor,”[177] and from it derived his ability to create buildings with beautiful shapes and balanced proportions.

From the moment ZEG was taken down, she would have to live with the dual absence of her husband, both the individual and the things he created. “The architects are upset not only with the owner’s decision but also with the city’s consent to the loss of such characteristic buildings,”[178] wrote Justyna Wojtas-Swoszowska. The city conservationist herself, Maria Bachniak, admitted that “Tychy will lose its identity.”[179] But as it looks, there was nothing she could do about it. Because, as informed by the journalist Jarosław Jędrysik, Ewa Grudniok, the press spokesman of the Tychy City Hall, said that the permit for the demolition was issued by the Mayor of Tychy “following the Law,” and she goes saying that the owner, in this case, on as Jędrysik transliterates to us, “has no obligation to justify the reasons for the demolition” of whatever it posses.”[180]

The saddest thing about the demise of the ZEG Factory is that by secretly conspiring to demolish the building, both the authorities and the developer avoided drawing the attention of the city’s residents and its community of architects and preservationists. By doing so, they have shied away from establishing a healthy debate about the significance of the structure in the lives of its inhabitants and the Tychy cityscape. This evasive stance reveals a disregard for the built heritage and a lack of respect for people’s opinions on the subject. The debate about the uncertain future of a building, even though there is no guarantee that it will be considered relevant and worthy of protection, means at least that it has been given a chance for recognition and an opportunity for survival.

175 Justyna Wojtas-Swoszowska, “Marek Dziekoński – Mistrz Rzeźbiarskiego Modernizmu,” *Architektura Murator*, nr. 6 (2017), May 31, 2017, https://architektura.muratorplus.pl/wydarzenia/marek-dziekonski-mistrz-rzezbiarskiego-modernizmu_7488.html.

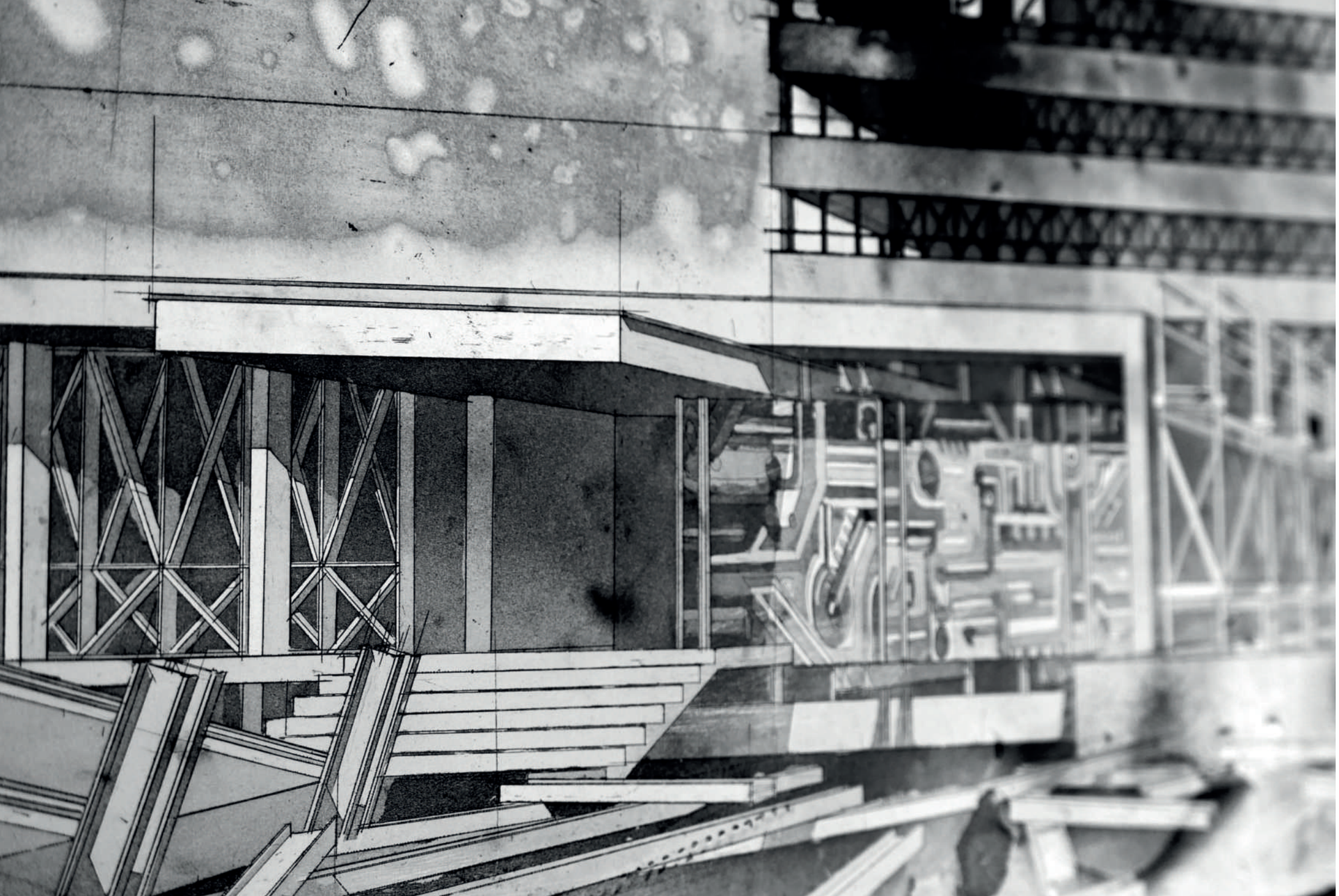
176 Justyna Wojtas-Swoszowska, 2017.

177 Ibid.]

178 Ibid.

179 Jolanta Pierończyk, 2016.

180 Jarosław Jędrysik, “Wyburzą Budynki ZEG-u,” Nowe Info, https://noweinfo.pl/wyburza-budynki-zeg-u/, March 20, 2016.



I have never been to the city of Tychy. Though I had the opportunity to visit Tychy from the current Katowice train station; I did not.I could have toured the empty plot of land left behind after the removal of the Zakład Elektroniki Górniczej building in 2017. But what would have been the point if what I wanted to see was no longer there? When I decided to work with lost structures, I decided to use only references that were readily available and within reach of the public. I was not interested in digging up information from official records as I was dealing with the collective memory of these buildings. I was interested in what can be remembered or can be easily found, information circulating on the surface rather than buried in archives.

When I came across the image of this lost building, what struck me most were its sculptural forms and the craftsmanship intrinsic to the construction materials employed. A building shaped by the architect to resemble a computer board, poetically so fitting the function it was meant to serve. Similarly, the mosaic by the main entrance, handmade piece by piece, had been inspired by the integrated circuits produced in the building over the years. However, the combination of art, craftsmanship and architecture not only made the glory of this structure but was also the reason for its downfall. As architectural design became merely virtual data and construction largely industrialized, these former values became widely seen as something negative and old-fashioned. In this context, it seems curious to me that the only element preserved from this building was precisely the mosaic.

Perhaps art is indeed the last refuge of craftspeople.

The Warsaw School of Conservation

Dilapidated modern buildings restored to their original state invariably transition to tributary pastiche. A restored Le Corbusier feels like a Richard Meier, a restored Mies like a John Pawson. We cannot relive history. There are only memories of memories.

Reinier de Graaf, 2017.

Not all buildings that go away disappear altogether. Not all structures leveled to the ground vanish entirely from the surface of existence. Some of them are brought back as if unearthed from the depths of oblivion to a kind of afterlife. In this way buildings can be resurrected, but their renewed presence in urban space, reincarnated more often than not, proves to be flat - devoid of depth. Its restored existence does not bring us any consolation because it does not recover the essence of what was lost. There are specific characteristics intrinsic to an original building that can never be restored in its copy. It is to say that we must learn to let go of what is already lost, because once past, the temporal substance of architecture can never be recovered in the present. In this context, Reinier de Graaf situates the phenomenon of the modern architecture debacle during the second half of the 20th century. According to the Dutch architect, this phenomenon began in 1948, with the mastering of its most symbolic typology: the architectural box. After Mies van der Rohe built his glass box in Plano, Illinois, "there was no more point in doing a box,"[181] wrote the architect.

181 Reinier de Graaf, "The Inevitable Box," in *Four Walls and a Roof* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2017), 82.

It is to say that once something has been made, the act of remaking it is unlikely to bring a more significant contribution than that provided by the original.

By coupling the tragedy of modern architecture with the glory and downfall of the box typology, Reinier de Graaf suggests that the fortuitous repetition of form is one of the main reasons that lead to the loss of meaning in architecture. It is as if the essence encapsulated by the initial object is being dissipated to the point that it is impossible to experience it again in all its brightness. In the same way, it is to say that the more faithful a reproduction is, the greater the distance that pushes us away from its former existence. It is as if the essence of the initial object is scattered to the point that it is impossible to experience it again. Boxes cannot be recreated; they can only be reshaped, is what Renier de Graaf states: "Boldness can give way only to shame: pitched roofs, add-on porticos, portes-cochères, and giant façade paintings all deemphasize the box's Platonic and repetitive nature, only to reinforce it."[182] When finally pulled back to the surface of the material world, after all their material values have been scratched off, these new old architectures— buildings reborn— lack the earnestness acquired over the years. It is as if their wrinkles had been wiped away, leaving us with only a sense of complete temporal confusion. Above all, their polished materials and ascetic forms are short of the characteristic roughness carved by the action of time on the surfaces of things that exist and persist.

In his book *A Natureza do Espaço*, Brazilian geographer Milton Santos defines roughness as what remains of the past as "form, built space, landscape, what remains of the process of suppression, accumulation, superposition, with which things everywhere replace and accumulate."[183] In this sense, the wrinkles of the urban territory are records of the passage of time in a specific place - scars that attest to absent presences: the past itself embodied in the present. In this regard, buildings rebuilt on the foundations of their originals are just a specter of what they once were. Ghosts that haunt us, yet after the initial fright of their unexpected appearance has passed, they become mundane and ordinary. They disguise themselves in the background of the contemporary city, becoming invisible to daily life. In most cases, reborn buildings are like death masks of their originals, a frozen image of the past in the present, with its materiality that is displaced in time and therefore prevents us from seeing the original face behind its white plastered surface. What is lost with the complete suppression of the past can never be revived in the present.

Among the many devices used to justify stripping past structures of their original materiality and then dressing them in new guises is the idea of recovering the appearance of their worn-out facade. This was the excuse used in 2009 by the consortium that owned the former *Centralny Dom Towarowy w Warszawie* (Central Department Store in Warsaw) when applying to the capital's authorities for a large and controversial project of renovation, modernization and expansion of one of the most progressive and avant-garde modern architecture projects realized in the country in the post-war period. Anna Cymer comments about the values embodied in the CDT building and the

182 Ibid.

183 Milton Santos, *A Natureza do Espaço: Técnica e Tempo, Razão e Emoção* (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2006), 92.

il.36

relevance of its architecture at the time, "the first building in post-war Poland to have completely glazed facades; the first escalator was also installed there."[184] Analyzing the characteristics of the building, the author explains that the CDT incorporated all the five features of modern architecture formulated by Le Corbusier: reinforced concrete frame structure freeing the façades, a terrace on the roof, the pilotis that lift a building above ground, the accessible design of the ground plan, and the ribboned windows running alongside the façade.[185]

Although modern Polish architecture flourished in all its splendor after the end of the doctrine known as Socialist Realism in 1956, some remarkable examples of modern architecture, in its purest essence, came to light in the very brief period between the end of the war and the proclamation of *Socrealizm* in 1949. Such is the case with the CDT in Warsaw, designed simultaneously with Mies van der Rohe's notorious glass pavilion mentioned earlier, between 1947-48 by the architect duo Zbigniew Ihnatowicz[186] and Jerzy Romański.[187] These structures share an overwhelming modernity in their forms. For a reason the building was chosen by the Frankfurt am Maim Architecture Museum for its collection of the most representative buildings of 20th-century architecture.[188] In this context, the fact that the Central Department Store in Warsaw was included in the register of protected monuments in the year 2006 does not seem unreasonable. But unfortunately, this deserved recognition did not do much good. Because when the Department for the Protection of Historical Monuments in the capital approved the project to modernize the CDT in 2014, it was not being protected, but sentenced to death.

It turned out that, at that time, it became public knowledge that only a few constructive elements of the building were actually listed. Claiming that virtually nothing of the original structure remained after the disastrous fire in 1975, the owners were given carte blanche to "restore the appearance of the building's original glory," consumed by the flames of a fire that occurred almost forty years ago. Anna Cymer comments about the extent of the fire, "Although the building suffered a fire in 1975 and after the renovation, many details were reconstructed, it was still

184 Anna Cymer, "Tuż Po Wojnie, Między Modernizmem a Socrealizmem," in *Architektura w Polsce 1945-1989* (Warszawa: Centrum Architektury, Narodowy Instytut Architektury i Urbanistyki, 2019), 53.

185 Anna Cymer, 53.

186 Zbigniew Ihnatowicz (1906-1995), a Polish architect who graduated from the Gymnasium King Zygmunt August in Vilnius (1933), academic teacher and collegiate judge of the International Union of Architects (UIA).

187 Jerzy Romański (1909-1968) was a Polish architect who graduated from the Faculty of Architecture of the Lviv University of Technology (1935).

188 Patrycja Jastrzębska, "Ochrona Powojennego Modernizmu: Upadki i Wzloty," Tu było, Tu stało, https://www.tubylotustalo.pl/artykuly/26-powojenny-modernizm-prawem-chroniony, Accessed in May 13, 2022.

an example of architecture with a metropolitan character and modern silhouette."[189] When the renovation finally began, and the masks fell off, "Most of the building was dismantled quickly, leaving only the reinforced concrete structure and a fragment of the staircase,"[190] comments Tomasz Żylski in his article on the history of the *Cedete* published in the magazine *Architektura Murator*, "for which the investor and architects were hit with criticism from everywhere."[191] Justifying the removal of virtually all the material substance of the building on account of the devastation caused by the fire, in this case, seems to me to be a bit of a stretch.

In observing this context, the art historian, graduate of the Institute of Art History at the University of Warsaw, Patrycja Jastrzębska, decided to found the initiative called *Tu Było, Tu Stało*,[192] or in English "Here It Was, Here It Stood". For the reason that in the context of modern architecture in Warsaw, most of it is already gone. In one of her articles, entitled "Ochrona Powojennego Modernizmu: Upadki i Wzloty" (Protecting Postwar Modernism: The Ups and Downs), Jastrzębska makes a harsh criticism of the system of protection of modern monuments in the country: "All this is being done under the slogan of revitalization and restoring the object to the city and under the supervision

il.37

and approval of the conservation services."[193] And she follows, "Therefore, if an object such as Cedet, which is listed in the register of historical monuments, can be demolished, can we even talk about any possibilities of actual protection of this architecture?"[194] The question she brought to the table at the time of the almost complete demolition of the CDT in the year 2014 remains even today without a definitive answer.

The ironic title of The Warsaw School of Conservation emerged from this incoherent conservation practice, carried out mainly in the streets of the capital—but not exclusively. In a context where even architectural structures of recognized historical, cultural, and social relevance are unceremoniously torn down, above all, being listed and protected by law, "The demolition and re-building of historic buildings have become a disturbing practice,"[195] says Jastrzębska. For however much these new structures may seek to resemble in form and volume their lost referents, they can, in fact, never replace them. "Because it must be made clear, a monument is also its history, its original substance, and its material truth,"[196] the author categorically states. Behind the increasingly transparent modern glass façades of new buildings are the old ones that have been obscured and forgotten. We are not observing a praxis that seeks to re-establish the concrete form of structures that have become unreachable because they have been lost in time. In this case, we are dealing with a phenomenon that seeks to defraud concrete structures, depriving them of their proper roughness, thereby making it impossible for people to connect with the memories of the buildings.

189 Anna Cymer, 55.

190 Tomasz Żylski, "Historia Cedetu," *Architektura Murator*, nr. 10 (2018), https://architektura.muratorplus.pl/realizacje/historia-cedetu-tomasz-zylski_9049.html, accessed on July 12, 2022.

191 Tomasz Żylski, 2018.

192 "Tu Było, Tu Stało" is an initiative born out of reflection on the quality of changes in Warsaw's architecture after 1989. For several years they have been following the changes that have occurred and are occurring in the space of the capital, and documenting them on an online map.

193 Patrycja Jastrzębska, "Ochrona Powojennego Modernizmu: Upadki i Wzloty," Tu było, Tu stało, https://www.tubylotustalo.pl/artykuly/26-powojenny-modernizm-prawem-chroniony, accessed in April 17, 2022.

194 Patrycja Jastrzębska, accessed in April 17, 2022.

195 Ibid.

196 Ibid.

il.38

1966 – – 2017

Rotunda PKO w Warszawie

Warsaw is a great city. (...) When I want to tell someone about it, I say that it is definitely not a place from a children's story. You live in a city of contrasts, bizarre opposites. There is a raw beauty in it. Warsaw is different.

Christian Kerez, 2008.

In the three hundred meters that separate the reborn *Centraly Dom Towarowy* from the resurrected Rotunda PKO in the center of Warsaw, a whole world could fit. The fact that both have been expelled only to then be brought back is something that connects them. However, what keeps these two objects distinct is not only the four-minute walk over Jerozolimski Avenue but the seventeen years that have passed between the completion of one structure and the other.

If after the box built by Mies van der Rohe in Plano, Illinois, there was no longer any reason to make a box because the best box had already been made,[197] after the opening of the CDT in Warsaw, no more glass boxes should have been built in Poland from then on. But it was not because modern Polish architecture had reached its maximum expression with Zbigniew Ihnatowicz's building but because of the proclamation of the doctrine of Socialist Realism. Like a gap cut through the heart of the history of modern Polish architecture, Socialist Realism is what deprives it of a sense of continuity. It separates these two buildings of modern architecture that, although located on the same street

197 Reinier de Graaf, 82.

a few hundred meters from each other, seem to belong to two entirely distinct worlds.

The establishment of *Socrealizm* was not the first significant breakthrough in the history of modern architecture in East-Central European countries. Exactly ten years earlier, in 1939, the Great War put it on hold. CDT's appearance in the early post-war years highlighted an attempt to reestablish the continuity lost at the beginning of the conflict. Anna Cymer offers an excellent interpretation of the post-war Polish architectural scene: "There was neither upheaval nor revolution in Polish architecture after 1945. Thanks to the ongoing work of architects during the war, as well as the activities of clandestine studios and teams of designers carried out during the occupation, the traditions and forms of the 1930s were carried on in postwar architecture."[198]

Somewhat similar to the significance of the *Centraly Dom Towarowy* in the context of the first revival of modernist ideals in the early post-war years, at the conjuncture of the second reclaiming of modernity after the closure of the Socialist Realism doctrine in 1956, it would be another built structure that would determine the fate of architecture in the country for an entire generation to come: the so-called *Ściana Wschodnia w Warszawie* (Eastern Wall in Warsaw). The imposition of the doctrine of Socialist Realism in the late 1940s— at the expense of the canon of modernism and as an ideology forced upon and against the will of the country's architects themselves, also denying the natural process of the historical development of architectural

198 Anna Cymer, "Tuż Po Wojnie. Między Modernizmem a Socrealizmem," in *Architektura w Polsce 1945-1989* (Warszawa: Centrum Architektury, Narodowy Instytut Architektury i Urbanistyki, 2019), 39.

il.39

thought and practice— fortunately, proved to be a very brief chapter in the recent history of architecture.

Analyzing the buildings erected in this historical gap between 1949 and 1955, one realizes that this framework had a clear purpose for being put in place: to establish a context that could shield the arbitrary superimposition of a symbol that would hardly have come into existence otherwise: *Pałac Kultury i Nauki w Warszawie*. The construction of The Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw embodies the story of the country's ephemeral doctrine of socialist realism: conceived at the turn of the 1950s, built between 1952 and 1955, and brought to an end in 1956. As a monstrous undertaking for the scale of the city, involving some 8,000 workers on rotating shifts, comparable only to the construction of Brasília between 1957 and 1960, there was not much time and resources left for other projects and buildings in the capital. As a result, after 1956, there was no shortage of problems to be solved in the city. Wounds were still open and urgently needed to be healed.

Perhaps the most important reconstruction project in the country after the end of the Socialist Realist ideology was precisely the *Ściana Wschodnia*—a modernist wall to stand against the Palace. Although the Soviet authorities had a plan to occupy the enormous area in the immediate vicinity of the Palace, due to the unrealistic characteristics of the project, the ambitious plan never made it out of the realm of ideas.

As an immediate response, the most anticipated architectural and urban redevelopment competition in an entire decade was finally launched in 1958. The proposal submitted by the team led by Zbigniew Karpiński,[199] who had nothing in common with the ideas of the era of socialist realism, was chosen as the winner over the proposal designed by Marek Leykam, one of the most celebrated and prolific architects in the period of Socrealizm and who had, in addition to his remarkable achievements and the support of the community of Varsovians, a great and esteemed fellow professional and then a member of Parliament as a member of the jury. Controverses aside, the winning design for the Eastern Wall "was created, and so it was generally accepted, as an 'anti-symbol' of the Palace of Culture and Science and the MDM,[200] and of the past in general– as it seemed to us at the time,[201] transcribes Anna Cymer from the archives of architect Józef Sigalin.[202]

199 Apart from Zbigniew Karpiński (1906-1983), the team consisted of Jan Klewin (1096-1999) and Andrzej Kaliszewski.

200 *Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa* (Marszałkowska Residential District) is a socialist realist sizeable residential complex in the center of Warsaw, erected in 1950–1952 according to the design of the team of architects led by Józef Sigalin (1950–1951) and Stanisław Jankowski (1951–1952).

201 Anna Cymer, 227.

202 Józef Sigalin (1909-1983), Polish architect and urban planner, author among other books Warszawa 1944-1980. Z Archiwum Architekta (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1986).

The Eastern Wall's counterproposal that contrasts it with its immediate neighbor, the Palace of Culture and Science, is manifested in its various elements: buildings that vary in scale and height to establish an urban space in different layers, depths, and perspectives. "They form a whole that, although the scale matches metropolitan aspirations, also offers spaces that are intimate and not overpowering,"[203] Anna Cymer notes. In its sequence of spaces and programs, there is an apparent attempt to build a vibrant and dynamic urban area that contrasts with the intrinsic sterility of the monumental plaza on which the Palace of Culture and Science stands. On the one hand, ramparts of buildings of different heights intermingle with empty spaces where pedestrians circulate freely at the pace of the big city; on the other, accessible commercial galleries and areas for living and leisure allow the architecture to be permeated by urban life in the slow pace of the neighborhood.

The massive Eastern Wall was complemented by a small pavilion with a coffee bar, café and terrace; there was also a cinema called "Relax," and bookended by the *Dom Handlowy Sezam* "On the side of Jerozolimskie Avenue, the architects planned to loosen the development, so they designed a square whose background was the high-rise Universal Office Building, with the focal point taken by a round pavilion with a sunken roof and a characteristic broken cornice– the Rotunda PKO,"[204] as described by Cymer.

203 Cymer, 230.

204 Cymer, 231.

After taking charge of the project, Karpiński began working on several fronts and with an even larger team of architects. Between the demolitions and the different buildings that had to be erected almost simultaneously, there was a shortage of hands to construct the various structures to make up the wall while the monumental palace across the street was also being constructed. To design the critical piece of his scheme, the ensemble composed of the Universal office building and the circular pavilion with a sunken roof, Zbigniew Karpiński called in the architects Jerzy Jakubowski,[205] and Jerzy Kowarski;[206] the latter collaborating only on the design of the Universal. The circular pavilion was inserted as the "icing on the cake," Karpiński had an unmistakable idea of how each building would be implanted into the reconstructed city center. On the contribution that the Eastern Wall would bring to the context of the restoration of modernity lost during the years of socialist realism, Karpiński commented in an interview with the *Architektura Magazine* in 1969: "I was fascinated by the subject, as a completely new approach– the idea was not to built a wall so not to interrupt the existing traffic pattern."[207] For Karpiński, the most important and also the most challenging element to deal with was the pedestrian street behind the wall. He had the idea of creating a pedestrian walkway running parallel to the avenue at the back: "Above all, I wanted to match the uniformity and the urban scale of the foreground, and the intimate scale on the background interiors. This was not an easy task."[208] concluded Karpiński. A mission that, together with his collaborators, he masterfully fulfilled in the overall design of the Eastern Wall.

Due to its privileged position as the focal point of the entire Eastern Wall ensemble, its unusual circular shape, its human scale in contrast to the monumentality of the whole complex, and the relationships it created with the network of public spaces that flowed organically around it, the Rotunda became "the second most recognizable building in the city of Warsaw,"[209] comments Anna Cymer in her article for the *Tu Było, Tu Stało* platform, entitled "Jak Warszawa Rotunda Straciła" (How Warsaw Lost the Rotunda). That such a tiny circular glass pavilion could match the presence and reputation of the gigantic Palace of Arts and Science, threatening to overtake it as the capital's most representative symbolic structure with the installation of the Rotunda took its revenge against the fierce period embodied by the architecture of the monumental neo-Gothic Palace in the heart of Warsaw.

Regarding appreciation and esteem, the Rotunda won the dispute by a wide margin. It was a remarkable building and would remain engraved in the memory of the several generations of Varsovians who spontaneously met *pod Rotundą*[210] (under the Rotunda). In this sense, the Rotunda became the most distinctive building in the city center. Because this humble pavilion, unlike the Palace, was a sympathetic structure to people, a building easy to find and also cherished. It was as if the unusual presence

205 Jerzy Jakubowski (1919-1995).

206 Jerzy Kowarski (1917-2004).

207 Krystyna Gierlińska, "Rozmowy o Warszawie," *Architektura*, nr.12 (1969): 443.

208 Ibid.

209 Anna Cymer, "Jak Warszawa Rotunda Straciła," Tu Było, Tu Stało, (n.d.), accessed July 10, 2022, https://www.tubylotustalo.pl/artykuly/497-jak-warszawa-rotunde-stracila.

210 Tu Było, Tu Stało, accessed July 10, 2022.

il.40

of this circular glass pavilion, albeit slight in scale, had been able to shift the gravitational center of an entire city. Because, unlike the monumental Palace, an intangible and distant structure, detached from urban life and meant to be regarded from a distance, the Rotunda was rooted in the daily life of the capital's inhabitants, a building that people bumped into every day. An unavoidable presence. A place to find one another. A place to find oneself, above all. It is to say that the Rotunda had become not only one of the capital's most representative buildings but one of its most striking identity symbols. A virtue that becomes rarer every day, sparse in the profusion of images that the contemporary city has become. There are few architectures nowadays capable of conveying a sense of belonging, for the reason that this building embodied the essence of its time and place. The Rotunda was a prominent, omnipresent building for those born and raised in Warsaw in the second half of the 20th century. It is to say that there was

no Warsaw without the Rotunda and no Rotunda without Warsaw and its inhabitants. Two things that cannot be disassociated. And in this sense, undeniably melded and inevitably bound for life. A must-see for anyone visiting Warsaw for the first time. Because if you had not seen it, it was because you had not been there. And the funniest thing about it all is that in the images where this little pavilion comes out in the foreground, the monumental Palace is simply a backdrop, distant and removed from life in the city. Sad and gray, hidden in the mist or invisible in the snow. The Rotunda, on the other hand, is neither hidden nor distant; it is rooted in everyday life of the city.

In this sense, the Eastern Wall, in all its restored modernity, proved to be the antithesis of the failed conservatism of socialist realism. With these two contrasting worlds brought literally face to face, the capital's inhabitants quickly chose to stay on the side of the wall, as if entrenched amidst the vibrant urban life and sheltered by its diverse layers of buildings and programs, uses and activities. Given the fact that Karpiński's urban plan did not seek to impose itself on the urban space, it nourished itself from it, and together they created a perfect symbiosis for life to flourish.

Between the already inhabited urban space of the city center and the Palace of Culture and Science, the Eastern Wall combined entertainment, culture and leisure. In its most significant contribution to the city and its inhabitants, the urban complex designed by Karpiński provides the town with commercial spaces more adequate to its new scale, centralized services, offices, and houses. In this context, Anna Cymer was very emphatic about the meaning of the Eastern Wall in the context of the country at that time: Regarding the Rotunda, the Varsovian author says, "It was simply liked. It was not an ordinary building, which usually can be modernized, rebuilt or even replaced by a new incarnation without much harm."[211] The author suggests that certain sets of buildings should be treated exceptionally. The Rotunda was not only one element of the Eastern Wall ensemble but the most important.

History has shown us that impressive buildings from our recent past have not been given the respect they deserve. In this light, Christian Kerez, a Swiss architect who won the design competition for the new Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw in 2007, was very keen in 2008 to note where things stood in the capital when it came to the preservation of modern heritage. In an interview conducted by Maciej Szczepaniuk for *Życie Warszawy* magazine, Kerez said he was concerned about the situation of a particular small modernist pavilion[212] in the capital: "It's a wonderful, spacious, light and fragile building. I'm afraid it may soon disappear. Because the problem in this city is that it has been dormant in terms of investment for decades and is now catching up. It happens very quickly, on the verge of becoming obsessed with modernity."[213] And this has been the rule in the capital over the past two decades: a city known for its peculiarly not–very–preservationist practice towards modern heritage. In the context of the Eastern Wall, "This phenomenally well-thought-out arrangement of blocks has disappeared, replaced by a chaotic collection of random, incoherent buildings, in which the investor's profit is more important than the quality of the urban space which is created,"[214] comments Anna Cymer in another article of hers published on the Tu Było, Tu Stało platform. And obviously, the first buildings to disappear in this context were those with the characteristics described by Christian Kerez. First, the *Dom Handlowy Sezam* was removed in 2015, followed by the erasure of the Universal Office Building in 2016 and finally, the liquidation of the Rotunda in 2017. Three prominent buildings, three different uses, spatial and structural characteristics, brought the same tragic end.

The beginning of the end, however, began almost ten years earlier. As early as 2009 signs of the Rotunda's demise were evident. As if the Rotunda's place in the center of the capital never existed, the building's owners decided to organize on their own terms a competition for the design of a new pavilion on the site, which was to mimic the forms of the iconic building designed by Jerzy Jakubowicz in the 1960s. It was as if they wanted to replace it without taking it away or, instead, made it over in a new fashion. In this sense, the initiative was perceived by Varsovians as an attempt to bury a building that was still alive.

With the release of the competition results, in which the proposal presented by the Gdansk studio KD Kozikowski Design was chosen as the winner, a fierce debate about the future of one of the most representative buildings in the capital began. First of all, the winning design was simply indefensible. So much so that not even the owners dared to defend it.[215] On the other hand, the existing rotunda was no longer the same as in years past, nor was it seen as a unanimous object by the new generations of Varsovians. The city was divided between those who signed a petition to take the structure down and those who supported an acceptable counter-proposal. Still, there was one consensus: The Rotunda was too important to disappear completely, just as it was unthinkable to replace it with a structure that did not measure up to its height.

Then, the PKO bank decided to go for a second strike: *Changing The Face 2013 Rotunda Warsaw*,[216] is what they called their new undertaking After the disastrous attempt in 2009, they had finally learned their lesson. In this second attempt, the idea was to convey that the original building would remain, even with a new look, preserving its captive place in the hearts of the most nostalgic citizens but adapting its appearance to recent trends. In other words, wishing to protect something without actually saving anything. Even the then Provincial Conservator Barbara Jezierska encouraged the bank to preserve the pavilion without placing it under official protection. The Conservator hinted that entering the Rotunda in the register of monuments would take too long and that it would be simpler to just modernize the building, as reported by Anna Cymer.[217] Such a statement gives us an idea of in what context the "Warsaw School of Conservation" notion emerged in the early 2010s.

211 Tu Było, Tu Stało, accessed July 10, 2022.

212 One of Poland's most compelling examples of post-war modernist architecture was a completely glazed pavilion with a steel structure and a spacious and functional interior called *Pawilon Chemia* (Chemistry Pavilion), built in 1960 according to Jan Bogusławski and Bohdan Gniewiewski's design. It was demolished in 2008.

213 Życie Warszawy, April 04, 2008.

214 Anna Cymer, "Dekonstrukcja Ściany Wschodniej," Tu Było, Tu Stało, (n.d.), accessed July 12, 2022. https://www.tubylotustalo.pl/artykuly/223-dekonstrukcja-sciany-wschodniej.

215 Tu Było, Tu Stało, accessed July 10, 2022.

216 The competition "CHANGING THE FACE 2013 ROTUNDA WARSAW" was co-organized by PKO Bank Polski, DuPont, the Warsaw Branch of the Association of Polish Architects, Polish Green Building Council and Architizer.com within the frame of the international architectural competition "CHANGING THE FACE".

217 Tu Było, Tu Stało, accessed July 10, 2022.

The first significant process of "modernization" at the expense of "preservation" in the capital was carried out in the previously mentioned *Centralny Dom Towarowy*, a few hundred meters from the Rotunda. If from the revitalization of the CDT, only the skeleton of a single façade remained, the future of the Rotunda did not look promising at that point. Just as the justification for the almost complete replacement of the Commercial Pavilion was based on the fact that the building had already been rebuilt after the 1972 fire, alleging that the Rotunda had also undergone a similar traumatic situation in 1979[218] was the alibi needed for the replacement of the building in its entirety.

When the Rotunda's owners announced the results of the competition to rebuild the Rotunda in 2013, the fate of what had been one of the capital's most representative buildings had finally been sealed. And nothing could be done to preserve it from being dismissed and entirely replaced by its reincarnated copy, reshaped by the Krakow architect duo, Gowin & Siuta.

It took four years for the demolition to start, and nothing could be done to save it. Between 2013 and 2017, no considerable progress was made toward recognizing the importance of its material value and its possible safeguarding as a representative example of 20th-century Polish modern architecture. Curious is the fact that no one in the office of monument conservation has bothered to verify the authenticity of the evidence presented by the owners that virtually nothing remained of the original

il.41

building after the gas explosion and therefore there was no evidence to be considered for possible inclusion of the structure on the list of protected monuments.

However, as the Rotunda began to be torn down, its structure turned out not to be as the building's owners claimed, erected after the 1979 gas explosion, but "it retained the original framework which was crafted in the 1960s by engineers Stanislaw Wiecek and Wlodzimierz Wojnowski,"[219] in collaboration with Jerzy Jakubowicz in the 1960s. The then-conservator of the capital, Michał Krasucki, issued a last-minute order to suspend the demolition, arguing that they fabricated the evidence on the condition of the building's original structure. By now, the damage had been done. And as if history had been repeating itself, the machines were immediately released to go back to work and finish what they had started a few days before, tearing down the structure before further information could be brought to light. Teary-eyed, the city watched silently as the vital piece of Karpiński's urban planning scheme was cruelly removed from the capital's center.

A few days later, the corner plot at the confluence of Marszalkowska Street and Jerozolimskie Avenue had been cleared, and there was no longer any sign of the old circular pavilion that had found its place there in 1966. The city lost one of its most significant symbols and representative buildings. Yet there was no reason for nostalgia as it had been promised beforehand that it would soon be reincarnated, regaining its place in the heart of the capital. This had been the justification for its dismissal. Forasmuch as what motivated the demolition of the PKO Roundabout was not any negative opinion about its structure's physical and material condition but a false claim that the original construction of the building had already disappeared in 1979 and that there was, therefore, nothing to be preserved.

It becomes clear in this case that there is a longing to overwrite the old with the new, but without actually being able to replace it. Because the new Rotunda is designed to be a modern copy of its ancestor. The same building was built anew and in the very same place. The exact shape was appropriated, the same facade reproduced, and the same roof recreated. The same name, but different. Displaced in time but deprived of its actual materiality.

Its re-embodied presence in the city today only serves to reaffirm its absence. To reinforce what the new building is not and never will be. Because for those who knew the real Rotunda, a quick glance at that edifice is enough to see that it is no longer there. Consequently, passers-by now strolling avoid looking at it directly for fear of completely forgetting what the original building looked like. In this sense, in its new reincarnated form, the new Rotunda does not help us to remember but rather to forget it for good. Anna Cymer, in analyzing the reconstruction project carried out by Bartłomiej Gowin and Krzysztof Siuta, said that "one does not have to be an expert in architecture (...) to notice with the naked eye the clumsy proportions of the new pavilion, the lack of horizontal divisions and, the complete disruption of the spatial relationships sophisticatedly elaborated by Jerzy Jakubowicz."[220] For Cymer it is evident that the new building simply "doesn't work" for the simple fact that, like it or not, the new Rotunda is simply a poorly designed building and therefore far from matching the original.

Since the announcement of its reinstallation, it's as if no one talks about the new Rotunda anymore. It is as if it has finally disappeared into the city's backdrop. The everyday life in the capital's center no longer seems to be reflected in its transparent façades. The new pavilion no longer welcomes urban life as before. It repels it. The building lacks detail, depth, and above all, character.

218 The tragic event occurred on February 15, 1979, at 12:37, when a gas explosion killed 49 people and injured 77, destroying 70% of the building's original structure.

219 Franciszek Mazur, "Rozbiórka Warszawskiej Rotundy PKO Wstrzymana Przez Konserwatora," Bryła, March 17, 2017, https://www.bryla.pl/bryla/7,85301,21509935,rozbiorka-warszawskiej-rotundy-pko-wstrzymana-przez-konserwatora.html.

220 Tu Było, Tu Stało, accessed July 10, 2022.

When I first came to the city of Warsaw, the site where the old Rotunda had stood was entirely enclosed by construction site hoardings. Although it was impossible to see what was going on, the roar indicated that the new building was already on its way. I had come there to see what was going on and, above all, to try to understand the reason for putting a copy of an old building in place. In architecture, as in printmaking, no reproduction is the same. Duplications are always similar and never truly identical. For the reason that the multiplication, whether printed on paper or built in steel and concrete, always implies a displacement concerning the original. But while in printed art, multiplication seeks an approximation, the reconstruction of architecture in any case invariably provokes a detachment.

Within this framework, my intention with this series of built images is to approach these lost architectures by manipulating and multiplying their images. In attempting to reconstruct and cast them in space, there is also an explicit desire to move them away from their original referents. The exercise of drawing, etching, and building these images serves as tools to confront, discover, and understand these objects.

The Dehumanization of Architecture

The dehumanization of architecture includes the devastation of its material memory, destruction, and the reckless obliteration of its traces.

Waldemar Baraniewski, 2016.

The materiality of memory present in architecture, as "tangible history," to use Waldemar Baraniewski's own words, is something that concerns each of us: "It is thanks to architecture that the topography of history is not an abstraction,"[221] commented the Polish art historian and professor in a conversation with Tomasz Fudala, Michał Krasucki, and Joanna Mytkowska in which they discuss the reasons for the loss of outstanding objects of modern architecture in early 21st century Poland. For the democratic opposition activist during the communist period, the disappearance of significant structures built during the People's Republic of Poland is due to a process that he calls "the dehumanization of architecture." In other words, it is to say that architecture has been stripped of its human, social and public values as money and developers come into the picture. In this sense, Baraniewski points out, to reverse this phenomenon, we should all take a share of responsibility in the fight for the integrity and preservation of our greatest collective good, the built human heritage. It is from a lack of knowledge, or alienation, about our history

221 Waldemar Baraniewski, Tomasz Fudala, Michał Krasucki and Joanna Mytkowska, "Zaczęło Się od Artystów, I Co Dalej?" in *Emilia: Meble, Muzeum, Modernizm* (Kraków–Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Karakter, 2016), 10.

that the disrespect for the achievements of our predecessors comes from Baraniewski's point of view. This is why the task of preserving the common goods of the past is by no means a simple undertaking. This is why we witness today a complete disregard of our contemporaries for the phenomena of recent history. Against this background, it is not the buildings we build today that represent the spirit of our time, but rather the way we preserve-or fail to preserve-architectural structures that are the outcome of the collective work of past eras.[222]

The systematic dilapidation of modern heritage is a phenomenon that knows no boundaries and borders. Observing the recent radical transformation of the urban landscapes of Polish cities, it is undeniable that efforts and mechanisms for the protection and preservation of built heritage are both insufficient and ineffective. In this context, to bring about change, much more than political will and technical expertise is needed. The exercise of preservation is an activity that requires humanity from all involved - a talent that is visibly scarce in society and surprisingly diminished in the architectural community. One might even say that the dehumanization of architecture to which Baraniewski refers can be seen as a direct consequence of the dehumanization of the profession of architecture itself and of the individual architect as well. As the author states, something that has been determined by the excessive instrumentalization of professional practice over the last decades, as well as by the exaggerated rationalization of its means and forms.[223]

As architecture has been systematically deprived of its former humanity, establishing a field of action ruled and controlled by investors and developers and therefore informed by data of a purely economic nature— the figure of the architect is becoming increasingly dispensable and perhaps even irrelevant. And this is reflected in their loss of control over their professional field, the city, which becomes an arena closed only to developers and where only money counts. Relegated to a secondary role, the architect apathetically watches the urban fabric being stripped of all its content and human dimension.

Kenneth Frampton, a British architect, critic and historian, is another author who refers to dehumanization in architecture. For Frampton, this is mainly a consequence of the architect's alienation from his primary craft— the art of construction. In Frampton's point of view, the gradual and consequent disconnection between the professional architect and the construction site is a direct result of the social division, categorization and hierarchization of labor that concerns not only the architect but all forms of production.[224] In this context, in which the professional architectural practice is at the service of an industry driven by the market, architecture finally takes on the value of a mere product. From this perspective, where all architecture can be freely commercialized, the city is also for sale. And this is what the story of the next building revolves around: the "Emilia" Furniture House.

222 Baraniewski, Fudala, Krasucki and Mytkowska, 10.

223 Ibid.

224 Kenneth Frampton, "Intention, Craft, and Rationality," in *Building (in) the Future: Recasting Labor in Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 28-37.

il.42

1969 – – 2017

Dom Meblowy „Emilia" w Warszawie

Emilia stood on the border of two worlds: The old Warsaw, experienced by the war, and the socialist-realist, triumphant Warsaw. It did not want to belong to either of these worlds, both were considered "past."

Błażej Brzostek, 2016.

Twenty years after the end of the war, the city of Warsaw was still growing at a breakneck pace and had already reached the quota of more than one million inhabitants. An overwhelming growth, considering that the capital was inhabited by just over 400,000 people at the end of the conflict. As the reconstruction work in the areas most affected during the war was completed, the demand for new investment fronts grew. In its unique shape and scale, the new metropolis urgently needed new housing units and more, a new architecture, and a new way of inhabiting the city. As the demand for housing increased, domestic spaces were shrinking. Apartments were transformed into "living machines," living spaces that demanded a new type of furniture, more adequate to the reality in which they were being built.

It was seeking to fill this gap that the *Wojewódzkiego Przedsiębiorstwa Handlu Meblami w Warszawie* (Provincial Furniture Trade Company in Warsaw) commissioned the team of architects consisting of Marian Kuźniar, Czesław Wegner and Hanna Lewicka to design the Dom Meblowy Emilia in that year of 1964. In this sense, the country's largest Furniture Pavilion was also to fulfill a purpose of a symbolic nature: a role model for the new ways of life

and a place where the industry of the People's Republic of Poland could show off. If the genesis of this building lies in a last desperate effort to celebrate the unattainable greatness of the industry in times of the People's Republic of Poland, then the Emilia Pavilion would be the last moment of glory for modern Polish architecture, its ultimate sigh, its highest point and from which, there was only one fate—and the future no longer seemed even slightly promising.

The *Dom Meblowy „Emilia"* (Emilia Furniture House) stood on a threshold within the recent history of the city of Warsaw, according to art historian Błażej Brzostek.[225] Neither here nor there. This is because the Emilia Pavilion was not only at the edge between two cities of very different formal and spatial characteristics, but mainly because it had been designed and built when a crucial period in architectural history was coming to an end. Designed between 1964 and 1966 and built throughout the last years of the 1960s, *Pawilon Emilia* was born out of the last sigh of formal freedom that the country's architects enjoyed since the end of the doctrine of Socialist Realism. "Emilia's emergence is a time in the history of Polish architecture of bold, expressive forms and innovative architectural solutions,"[226] comment Łukasz Bireta, Aleksandra Kedziorek and Cezary Lisowski in their article entitled "Szklane Duchy: O Architekturze Emilii i Znikających Pawilonach Handlowych Warszawy" (Glass Ghosts: About Emilia's Architecture and Warsaw's Vanishing Commercial Pavilions).

As a result of this freedom enjoyed by the community of architects, by the end of the 1960s, the country would see the birth of hundreds of buildings of expressive forms and innovative constructive solutions, which would be validated and recognized worldwide to come. However, with the turn of the 1970s, this period of golden years finally came to a halt. Modern architecture, which had become an omnipresent symbol of democracy and freedom in those years, writes Małgorzata Włodarczyk in an article published in the journal Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki (2013), entered in the 1970s a process of generalized crisis that would only escalate over the coming decades.[227]

Until then, modern Polish architecture had been characterized mainly by extreme functionalism and formal expressionism, yet from the 1970s on, there was no more room for beating around the bush. Architecture, industry, and especially construction processes were to become cheaper, faster, and more efficient. Consequently, the time for experimentation and original projects based on precise details and unique solutions was over—all this was to be supplanted by the typification and repetition of standardized and industrialized solutions.[228] The challenge that would become the order of the day for the country's architects was to build more while spending less.

About the situation imposed on architects from the mid-1960s on, the following passage from Anna Cymer is very informative:

225 Blazej Brzostek, "Wokól Emilii," in *Emilia: Meble, Muzeum, Modernizm* (Kraków–Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Karakter, 2016), 65.

226 Łukasz Bireta, Aleksandra Kedziorek and Cezary Lisowski, "Szklane Duchy: O Architekturze Emilii i Znikających Pawilonach Handlowych Warszawy," in *Emilia: Meble, Muzeum, Modernizm* (Kraków–Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Karakter, 2016), 95.

227 Małgorzata Włodarczyk, "Architektura Lat 60. XX Wieku. Fragment Historii Krakowa i Innych Polskich Miast," *Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki*, nr.3 (2013): 104.

228 Ibid, 93.

il.43

(...) the work of the architect-designer became de facto redundant, as the representatives of this profession complained. This was reflected in the built structures, which were increasingly similar. Typification and standardization of construction gradually limited the architects' and designers' freedom of action; more and more rarely did they have the opportunity to design an original building, usually composing objects from available repetitive elements produced industrially.[229]

229 Anna Cymer, "Lata 70. Architektura w Kryzysie," in *Architektura w Polsce 1945–1989* (Warsaw: Centrum Architektury, Narodowy Instytut Architektury i Urbanistyki, 2019), 270.

In this sense, as the creativity of architects was gradually undermined by the increasingly blatant presence of typified elements, architecture was being reduced to the process and result of the pragmatic construction of structures that were less and less original in their proposals and solutions. “This gradual loss of creative freedom, which architects had been experiencing since the mid-1960s, reached its apogee in the following decade and was connected with the renewed centralization of investments and decision-making processes,”[230] Anna Cymer clarifies. If the cityscape built in the second half of the 20th century presents itself to our eyes in the 21st century in a poor and monotonous way, it is undoubtedly not the architects’ fault.

What’s more, if today’s outstanding examples of architecture from the times of the Polish People’s Republic that still persist in the urban landscape of today’s cities seem entirely inappropriate to us, it is because many of its most incredible achievements have simply been erased from history. The few high-class objects that have survived to this day are isolated amid a profusion of new architectures that are becoming increasingly autonomous and uncompromising towards their presence. Completely dislocated from their former context, these once extraordinary objects have been stripped of the roots that anchored them in reality, resulting in a complete loss of meaning and the very purpose for which they continue to exist.

When I set foot in Poland for the first time, nothing around me seemed to make sense. Most probably because I came from a very distant place and was not used to how things

230 Anna Cymer, 230.

il.44

il.45, 46

were in this still unfamiliar place. As a trained architect, it is through careful observation of the surroundings and the historical evidence that accumulates on the urban landscape that I try to understand the specific characteristics of the place where I find myself. One might even say that the history of a city can be read through its architecture. There are places where this message comes to us immediately, others that need to be uncovered. There are still those where the stories need to be unearthed. This is the case in the city of Warsaw.

Once, this was a modern, different city. Today, however, its architecture looks like that of any other European metropolis, not unlike that of other large cities in the Old World. This is because an essential chapter in the recent history of architecture, the architecture of the times of the People’s Republic of Poland, has been largely extinguished and erased from the visible surface of history. This does not mean that modern buildings have entirely vanished from Warsaw’s urban fabric. The erasure of the memories of the recent past through the ruination of modern architecture in the capital took place in a very peculiar way. The systematic removal of prominent and notable examples of architecture built in the times of the People’s Republic of Poland cast doubt on the idea that this city had once been a modern city. As a result, buildings came to be seen as isolated facts and no longer as elements of a single narrative. Their legacy was then disrupted— deprived of a comprehensible meaning.

In this context, unique structures became easy prey. They often disappeared without even leaving a trace, and with no one to weep over their grave other than a small portion of the community of architects and preservationists. Besides the aforementioned Supersam (1962-2006), Sezam (1969-2015) and Universal (1965-2016), this was the same end of the *Kino Moskwa* (1950-1996) at 17 Puławska Street, designed by Kazimierz Marczewski and Stefan Putowski; of the *Kino Skarpa* (1960-2008) on Mikołaj Kopernik 5 Street, designed by Zygmunt Stępiński Andrzej and Milewski; of the *Pawilon Chemii* (46) (1960-2008) on Bracka 9 Street, designed by Jan Bogusławski and Bohdan Gniewiewski; and also of the *Pawilon Meblowy* (45) (1962-2013) on Przeskok 2 Street, devised by Henryk Borowy and Andrzej Kocięcki.

The same year that the Rotunda was torn down, so too was *Dom Meblowy Emilia* removed from the city’s landscape. It is a curious fact that these two buildings, apart from their geographical proximity, on opposite sides of the Palace of Culture and Science square, were not only built simultaneously in the mid-1960s but also disappeared in a dramatically synchronized fashion. In a particular way, those two notorious examples of modern architecture disappeared simultaneously in 2017 is something that makes this an especially tragic year for modern architecture in the capital.

Only a few months after the last vestiges of these two pavilions were removed from the center of Warsaw, I touched down in the capital for the first time.

It was early in the morning when the train stopped at the platform at the Central Station in Warsaw, it was cold and the city was covered by a dense mist. The building that rose in front of me could not be seen at all, sticking out into the white cloud that hung above it. But it was there. It was impossible to deny its presence. From what was barely visible, you could get an idea of the size of this massive structure. However, what is most impressive is not its mass and shape, but the vastness of the area it dominates. The feeling that this Palace gives is of being extremely distant even though it is rising immediately in front of us on the other side of the street. It is as if, at the same time that it seeks to withdraw from the city, the city itself stands against it. There is no attempt at dialogue on either side. Two conflicting worlds that tolerate each other without ever showing signs that they will one day come to a common agreement. It feels as if its presence in this immense plaza in the center of the capital transforms it into a negative space, a no-man's land. Above all, the impression I get is that its presence in the city is above all, oppressive.

I move north along Emilia Plater Street around the circular volume of the Sala Kongresowa without knowing if this is the front or the back of this monumental Socrealist tower. I keep moving forward, trying to move away so I can see it in its entirety. The Palace of Culture and Science insists on not fitting into my field of vision. I cross the street, and finally, it is revealed in its total monumentality as the haze gradually lifts with the arrival of the earliest sunshine. I feel that I have never been so close and far from a building simultaneously in my life. Maybe it's because it spreads out over the terrain towards me while it stands alone and unfolds in height away from the ground. Its historicist architecture also seems entirely out of place in the context in which it stands. At first glance, there is no other building in the immediate surroundings that appear in accordance with its existence. The modern skyscrapers that stand at my back are utterly oblivious to everything. And everything I see seems very, very odd to me.

Behind me is an entirely empty plot of land. Curious. This was probably not an empty site, given its highly privileged position. Through the siding, I can see only the outline of what I guess was a concrete ground floor, its edges torn to shreds and small debris scattered everywhere. Like its two immediate neighbors, a new skyscraper is likely to be erected on the remnants of a now non-existent building. I catch myself wondering what kind of structure this used to be. And then, about the reasons that led to its demise. It all looks pretty confusing to me. This city is like a giant puzzle with many pieces missing. In this sense, the feeling is that even if I can put all of them together, the picture of this puzzle will never be complete.

It was January 15, 1970, when the emblematic Emilia Furniture House opened its doors to the public on the same spot that caught my attention in 2017, at 51 Emilia Plater Street. Until the day of its opening, there was no furniture store of a similar scale in the entire country. Nor was it easy to find a pavilion of such bold shapes and innovative features. Completed almost simultaneously with the completion of the Eastern Wall across the Palace Square, the Emilia Pavilion fit perfectly into this new context created by Karpiński's master plan. Or rather, it echoed its spirit, building a direct, spontaneous and sonorous dialogue that practically made the Palace of Culture and Science tower completely mute, ignored at the top with all of its arrogance. With the insertion of the Pawilon Emilia, the immense Palace was finally surrounded on all sides, isolated in its austerity amidst a sea of buildings of overwhelming modernity.

Architecturally speaking, like the Eastern Wall, the Emilia Pavilion represented the antithesis of Socrealist architecture. A light and transparent building, deeply rooted in everyday life of the city, accessible, modern, and innovative. Furthermore, the Furniture Pavilion was a building that was simple in its scale and quite generous concerning the public space. In contrast to the Palace's structure, which sprawled imposingly over the urban territory, the Emilia Pavilion was set back from the street, creating a small esplanade that, although infinitely more petite than the Palace's megalomaniacal plaza, was much more frequented, vibrant, and full of life.

Seen from the outside, its open and blunt architecture, authentic forms, fluid spatial features and sweeping presence already made the gigantic Palace seem insignificant. Framed through its wide glass curtain from a clean, pure, radical interior space, the colossal neo-Gothic building looked even more ridiculous, like a fossil next to a spaceship. The sublime presence of the Dom Meblowy Emilia in front of the Palace made it absolutely outdated, as if both structures belonged to two parallel worlds even though the distance between them was only a few dozen meters, and they were built in almost the same epoch.

In a broader sense, "The Emilia Furniture House embodied in its crystalline form, the *contradictions of socialism*,"[231] as Błażej Brzostek wrote, referring to the Marxist thesis of "the contradictions of capitalism." The author states that, "The first contradiction, observed in one of the most prestigious public facilities, was between its ambitious assumptions and the reality of everyday life."[232] An even more peculiar contradiction was found in the relationship between its exhibition and commercial functions. Very often, what was displayed there was not for sale. Either because they could not replace the items sold or because the industry was far from being able to supply the actual demand for the furniture items on display in the store. In this sense, due to its architectural features, the mere presence of the Furniture House became ironic in the context in which it existed. The Emilia Pavilion had become a symbol and source of reality that never would come to pass.

It could also be said that the building designed by the trio of architects, since it was brought into being in another reality than its own, never reached its climax as a Furniture Pavillion. Because its time had already passed when it opened its doors in that winter of 1970. Even with all its potential constrained by the country's declining economic, political and social situation, as a pavilion dedicated to an industry in full swing, the Dom Meblowy Emilia never failed to amaze. In this framework, Waldemar Baraniewksi reports, "It was a valuable object of Polish modernism, and an example of the originality of Polish engineering thought as a realization of the 'open light steel frame system'. The interior space itself is incredibly interesting."[233] Designed to be a commercial pavilion, it gladly took on its pure exhibition function from its first days. Its free, open and

231 Błażej Brzostek, 85.

232 Ibid.

233 Baraniewski, Fudala, Krasucki and Mytkowska, 10.

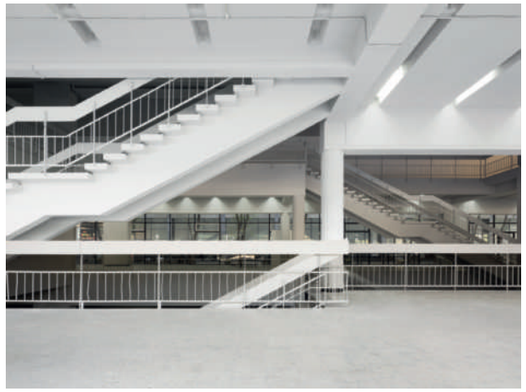
versatile floor plan, resulting from a modular structure and the absence of internal partitions, made this building undeniably versatile.

The professor also points out that with each forced transformation the pavilion was subjected to, the more evident its spatial qualities became and the more objectively it expressed itself as willing to take on new functions. An example of this was the moment when the furniture store was finally shut and its spaces cleared. Rather than witnessing a complete loss of meaning with the removal of its primary function, it was then that the building changed its role for the first time and that it finally revealed its true potential. "It became undeniable after the elimination of those retail displays because before that, one did not see how brilliantly this interior was designed and arranged,"[234] comments Baraniewski.

Emilia was an underestimated building from the beginning. Perhaps this is because it was one of the last examples of modern architecture of genuinely original and expressive forms to be unveiled in the capital, as stated by Bireta, Kedziorek and Lisowski: "The Emilia Pavilion was one of the last commercial pavilions built in the center of Warsaw in the spirit of post-war modernism."[235] On the other hand, with the mindless repetition of rehearsed forms and the profusion of standardized solutions introduced in the 1970s, its small scale did little to make its curious silhouette increasingly unnoticed in a sea of progressively taller, less engaging, and more boring buildings.

234 Ibid.

235 Bireta, Kedziorek and Lisowski, 95.



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As the city took on a new scale, with an increasingly metropolitan atmosphere, people looked with less care and interest at the capital's small modern pavilions and their exquisite detail and tangible substance. This was because, as Bireta, Kedziorek and Lisowski comment, "The modernity of the commercial pavilions was also expressed in the way building materials were used."[236] All these qualities, in the end, had a purpose: more attractive ways to display goods, "which in the victualling realities of communist Poland meant that "consumers - instead of rebelling against empty shelves - could contemplate the scarcity of goods in nice surroundings,"[237] paraphrase the authors from the book *Gaber i Pani Fantazja: Surrealizm Stosowany* by Klara Czerniewska.

But in the changing times, the good old things of the past no longer had any value. As the modern architecture of

236 Ibid, 96.

237 Ibid.

il.48

the pavilion lost its charm, the furniture on display inside also stopped seducing new customers. The popularization of new prefabricated building systems made modern architecture with craftsman-like features obsolete, with "the entry of international furniture corporations and the emergence of their gigantic stores on the outskirts of the city, Emilia's *raison d'être* in the center has become problematic,"[238] comments Błażej Brzostek. For the simple reason that every building without a reason to exist is a problem for those who own it.

The process of transforming the city center was gradual and progressive, "Emilia's neighbors started to disappear,"[239] notes Błażej Brzostek, first the *Pawilon Kawiarniany*, removed at the end of the 1980s, when the *City Center w Warszawie* was built 1991 on Złota Street 44. Next was the turn of the property immediately north of Emilia,

238 Błażej Brzostek, 93.

239 Ibid.

taken over for the construction of the Warsaw Financial Center, completed in 1999. The following was the Jazz Club Akwarium, one of the first of its kind to open in Poland in 1977 and an immediate neighbor of Emilia to the south, demolished in 2001 to give space to another skyscraper: The Hotel InterContinental Warszawa opened two years later. Then, even the *City Center w Warszawie* was overtaken after operating for only 15 years, demolished in 2007 for the construction of the Żagel Tower designed by international architect Daniel Libeskind and completed in 2013.

It is as if the lightning had missed the pavilion twice, striking in the same place. It turns out that since the early 1990s, when its surroundings began to transform radically, the pavilion had remained forgotten, recessed, hidden. Its facades had been covered by huge colorful banners for years. So when these were removed in 2009, "Warsaw inhabitants have managed to forget that there is anything at all under the banner, that there is some architecture,"[240] commented Tomasz Fudala in his conversation with Waldemar Baraniewski, Michał Krasucki and Joanna Mytkowska. And indeed, the literal rediscovery of the pavilion, allowing the city inhabitants to once again be amazed by that fascinating space, brought a kind of afterlife to the building—*one last sigh of modernity*.

In those years, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw began to take an interest in the decaying Modernist pavilion on Emilia Plater Street. An interest that did not arise by coincidence comments Marcel Andino Velez, then vice-director of the Museum. The interest arose in 2006 when the Supersam pavilion was demolished, an event

240 Baraniewski, Fudala, Krasucki and Mytkowska, 8.

that started a debate about the legacy and uncertain future of post-war modernism in the capital.[241] From then on, the cultural institution began working behind the scenes with the Ministry of the State Treasury, which owned the rights to the pavilion. The idea was to use the *Dom Meblowy Emilia* as the Museum's temporary headquarters until its new premises, chosen through an architectural competition in 2007, from which the proposal submitted by Swiss architect Christian Kerez was selected as the winner, were finally completed.

When the Museum finally took control over the Emilia Pavilion on August 2, 2012, one of the first immediate actions was opening one of the most significant exhibitions ever held by the Museum: *Miasto na Sprzedaż* (City for Sale). It was as if the Furniture House was living its afterlife before it died. Due to the fact that before accepting its tragic end, it had an important message to deliver. And thanks to the museum curators, this statement was masterfully made. An exhibition born out of the institution's empathy for the uncertain future of the modern pavilion on Emilia Plater Street. For a little over a month after the lease signing for the building, the Emilia Pavilion was privatized on September 18 of that year. In 2016, when the Museum's lease period ended, the keys would be handed over to the Griffin Investment Group, which had clear plans about the fate of the unique pavilion in the capital's city center. In fact, even though Griffin knew that the building would not be released for another four years, they were not willing to wait that long to liquidate the building.

Interestingly, another fact concurrent with the sale and lease of the Pavilion was the building's secret inclusion on the capital's list of protected monuments twenty minutes before midnight that same day when Griffin's payment was delivered to the Ministry of the State Treasury's account. One could argue that the investment group had acquired a plot of land with enormous buildable potential and had been given a legally protected monument that it could never even put a nail in the wall. The affair turned into a tug of war and a game of influence, the result of which was the immediate nullification of the building's inscription on the capital's list of monuments days before the inauguration of the provocative but equally appropriate exhibition at the brand-new headquarters of the Capital Museum of Modern Art.

The atmosphere surrounding the opening of the *Miasto na Sprzedaż* exhibition was tense. Three thousand people visited the Emilia Pavilion on the first weekend alone. Inside Emilia, the crowd was swirling, comments Marcel Andino Velez. "The speeches were accompanied by the hustle and bustle, with a group of artists scattering leaflets with the slogan "Miasto Nie Na Sprzedaż" (The City Is Not For Sale) and raising such shouts,"[242] adds Andino Velez. Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, then Mayor of the Capital, made a statement against the new owners saying that "a self-respecting business does not fight against culture,"[243] as testimonies by Andino Velez. Although the developer later sued her, she got a standing ovation for those words. And they lost. They also sued and lost the case against the Director of the Museum, Joanna Mytkowska, for a statement issued on Sunday, October 14, in which she said: "A public cultural institution is being harassed and intimidated by a developer who has become the new owner of its temporary headquarters. The museum has been taken hostage, with the help of which the developer is trying to force good solutions on the city authorities,[244] as Andino Velez transcribed.

After this first great public success and the repercussion of the voices in defense of the building, the Museum carried out an extensive renovation of the pavilion, or rather, a careful restoration of the modern pavilion. When the Emilia was brought back to life, recovering all its original shine and grandeur, the institution discovered a space of incomparable characteristics, ideally suited to the exhibition function of a modern art museum. Pavilion and Museum signed one of the most convenient and fruitful partnerships established in the capital between art and architecture. For those who had the opportunity to visit the exhibitions held between 2012 and 2016 at the temporary headquarters of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, the success of this endeavor could not be more evident. "The temporary occupation of the abandoned Emilia by the Museum of Modern Art made it possible to bring back its former form and even its content - i.e. the exhibition - to a certain degree. Emilia is once again on the brink: the ultimate one, it seems,"[245] testified Błażej Brzostek.

If the fate of many outstanding examples of Polish architecture is to disappear irretrievably from the surface of existence, at least the Emilia Pavilion was given one last chance to show off. Displaying all its glory and magnificence.

If, even in this exceptional case, of a remarkable building like the Dom Meblowy Emilia, is it really plausable that one-day such structures would receive the due respect they deserve?

A building that had proved itself capable of adapting to new use, from commercial pavilion to museum, that had been restored to its original glory to the point that no one could deny that in the functionality of its spaces and the expressiveness of its forms lay countless values and qualities. Not even given the opportunity and the time to include it in the list of monuments and preserve it as the essential and significant achievement for architectural history that it was—none of this would be able and sufficient to prevent the building from being demolished when the lease expired on May 14, 2016.

241 Marcel Andino Velez, "Muzeum w Domu Meblowym," in *Emilia: Meble, Muzeum, Modernizm* (Kraków–Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Karakter, 2016): 135

242 Marcel Andino Velez, 147.

243 Ibid.

244 Ibid.

245 Błażej Brzostek, 94.

"These buildings will disappear every time money stands against them,"[246] Filip Springer answered the question about the fate of the monuments of post-war modernism in Poland. And indeed, this is a question of money. As the same investor said when sought by Michał Wojtczuk on the occasion of the building's first (irregular) inclusion in the list of monuments of the capital: "Perhaps we would have bought the Emilia Furniture House, knowing that the pavilion is a monument. But we would not have paid 115 million zlotys for it."[247] To put it another way, it is as if the building is to stay, the plot has no commercial value. If, on the other hand, the building does not count, the actual value of the property reaches its full potential. No investors would have bought this stretch of land if there were no guarantees that they could increase their investment at least tenfold.

Worried by the strong statements of the Griffin Capital Investors and in a last desperate gesture to save the Pavilion from the tragic end that was being announced, the association *Miasto Jest Nasze*, a Warsaw residents' association founded in 2013, submitted an application for entering the Emilia Pavilion in the register of monuments in August 2015. An application primarily ignored by the then chief provincial conservator Rafał Nadolny. Only when Barbara Jezierska[248] resumed her position as chief regional conservator in January 2016 the procedure was finally continued and legally initiated on February 28, 2016, three months before the owner's received the keys to the building.

By then it was too late. The decision, even if upbeat, proved to be unfortunate because it came into force only on December 14, when the building was already stripped of its façade, interiors and, more tragically, its famous roof. Of course, the municipality officials and the investor accused the provincial conservator of several legal flaws, and rightly so: legally, a building can not be listed while it is being torn down. In addition, the conservator decided on the integral protection of the pavilion, even though the building was already partially demolished at the time of its listing. Ultimately, the owners were forced to save parts of the building in the middle of the wreck. They kept some parts of the roof, but not all. It became clear that they should demolish the building as soon as possible, not to give it a chance for its protection.[249]

It proved correct. The plot is still empty as of August 2022.

246 Filip Springer, "Pięc Lat: 2012-2017. To Była Walka o Fragment Miasta. A Nie Tylko o Budynki," (2017), 324.

247 Michał Wojtczuk, "Nocna Ochrona Pawilonu Emilia. Inwestor Czuje Się Oszukany," Gazeta Wyborcza, October 17, 2012, https://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,12683589,-nocna-ochrona-pawilonu-emilia-inwestor-czuje-sie-oszukany.html.

248 Barbara Jazierka, who had already held the position of chief conservator of the capital between 2007 and 2011, had shown herself to be a very engaged person in the struggle to defend modern heritage with particular attention to the case of the Emilia Pavilion. Interestingly she was replaced by Rafał Nadolny just in the period in which this story unfolds—a chief conservator much less inclined to issues concerning modernist architecture.

249 Tomasz Urzykowski, "Pawilon Emilia zabytkiem, ale wpisana niedbale. We wpisie do rejestru były błędy," Gazeta Wyborcza, January 11, 2017, https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,34862,21226274,pawilon-emilia-zabytkiem-ale-wpisana-niedbale-we-wpisie-do.html.

il.49

In a way, I feel that my journey in this doctorate and the recent history of the Emilia Pavilion are connected in a very unique way. For the reason that its discovery at the very beginning of this research in 2019 provoked in me a fascination so overwhelming that it led me to rethink the whole project I was about to undertake. At first, my intention was to investigate existing structures that were poorly cared for and on the verge of disappearance. I felt that by taking overlooked and neglected modern buildings as the subject of my work, I would be doing something relevant on behalf of these objects, and that by doing so I might be able to contribute to changing the tragic fate on the horizon. In this context, the removal of the Emilia Pavilion made me realize that I could not ignore the fact that so many other modern architectural structures in this country had already been irretrievably lost in recent years. As I became aware of thi sad history, I was driven by a desire to understand the reasons behind a practice that was beginning to awaken in me a strange uneasiness.

As I delved deeper into the subject, undertaking a retro-active research approach; starting with the downfall of these buildings back in time to their origins. The more I pursued this enterprise, the more I realized that this was the path I was meant to follow. As I shifted my focus from threatened structures to those that had already been lost, I had no doubt that the Emilia Pavilion would play a central role in the development of this art project. Interestingly, this building disappeared just before I first entered the country in 2017. Removed on the grounds that another structure would be built immediately in its place, five years later, as I am concluding this research, the empty lot left after the demolition of the Emilia Pavilion remains unoccupied in the heart of the capital.

il.50

1978 – – 2021

Hala Widowiskowo-Sportowa „Urania" w Olsztynie

Disconnection from the context, lack of internal coherence, disharmony, disproportionality, disregard for the immediate surroundings are, in fact, characteristic features not only of the urban spaces of Warsaw, but also of Polish urban spaces in general— where they are not purely historically conditioned.

Andrzej Leder, 2016.

Analyzing the urban fabric of Polish cities from a psychoanalytic point of view, the Polish cultural philosopher, psychiatrist and psychotherapist Andrzej Leder claims they undergo a kind of "post-traumatic" experience. In Leder's perspective, similarly to their inhabitants, cities can also be analyzed from a psychoanalytic point of view.[250] As structures endure and transform over time, the city's history materializes in its built forms and spaces. Its narrative can be re-created from a close observation of its vestiges and the way its temporal layers reveal themselves to our eyes in the present. In this stratification, it is possible to perceive what continues and survives and what is missing, what was and is no longer, or what is being concealed, erased, or forgotten. It is to say that every urban structure that endures in its existence is compelled to coexist with its own history, its problems, crises and traumas.

In the context of Polish cities, traumatic urban and architectural experiences are piling up. Destroyed and rebuilt dozens of times over the years, many of the country's major cities are characterized by an accumulation and

250 Andrzej Leder, "Jeżeli Brakuje Własnej Formy (1)," *Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni*, nr 4, 2015, 10.

superimposition of different temporal layers. Bearing the imprints of time, these relics allow us to reconstruct in memory the historical narrative that makes each of them unique and singular to a place. Built spaces are an accumulation of their previous existential experiences. Although many of these memories are not always fortunate, this does not mean that they are irrelevant and can therefore be fortuitously erased without any consequence because these reminiscences are crucial elements to a place's identity and the sense of belonging it provides to its inhabitants. Thus, every action on the territory, whether adding to or subtracting from it, inevitably results in a consequent impact on people's lives.

Furthermore, the forces that act upon the built space not only affect the human sense of place, belonging and identity that derives from it. Actions imposed upon a given territory, such as the construction and removal of its structural and symbolic elements, also affect and inform the very activity of the architect. In this framework, the Brazilian architect and professor Angelo Bucci,[251] states that when operating on urban territory, the architect must first seek answers to the problems and crises imposed on the urban environment he inhabits. Above all, the Brazilian architect defends that the solutions to the troubles of the cities must originate from the unbalance that they provoke, that it is only through the experience of these disturbances that the architect will be able to find the answers to the problems, crises and traumas of the city he/she inhabits. [252]

Traumatic urban experiences, such as those witnessed by Polish cities throughout the 20th century, are not only revealed in the absence of lost buildings or wholly devastated structures. They crystallize in the built forms or the unfilled voids left behind by their forced removals. The erasure of important architectural objects from times past, as a violent action over the territory, starts to act as a norm, establishing the parameters of conduct over the city. In other words, by informing how we operate in the urban space, the violence materialized in the new urban development processes generates more violence, establishing a continuous cycle that feeds back and worsens.

Observing the emptiness left behind by the removal of a substantial part of the modern heritage built in Poland over the last few years, I try to reflect on the possible consequences of this act of erasure both in people's lives and in the practice of architecture as well. By dealing with the memories of buildings that no longer exist, digging into their traces and rewriting their histories, I realize today that this crisis is a fully evolving process and that continues to unfold in the present. Hence, the relevance of this artistic endeavor seeks to identify and expose an urban practice that has transformed the landscapes of Polish cities over the last decades with almost no resistance or opposition. An example of this is the recent demolition of the *Hala Widowiskowo-Sportowa "Urania" w Olsztynie* (Sports and Entertainment Hall "Urania" in Olsztyn), which, although being rebuilt from scratch in the same place, seems to me entirely out of place and time.

251 Angelo Bucci (1963–), Brazilian architect and professor of architecture at the University of São Paulo (FAU USP) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

252 Angelo Bucci, *Sao Paulo, Reasons for Architecture: The Dissolution of Buildings and How to Pass Through Walls*, (Austin: The Centerline Series, 2011).

il.51, 52

The recent history of Hala Urania suggests that this practice of the ruination of built heritage not only continues to leave victims along the way in the present time but that, above all, as a current and ongoing crisis, it keeps unfolding and transforming as we move forward. Designed by architects Wiesław Zenon Piątkowski[253] and Henryk Gotz in 1973 and opened in 1978, the Hala Urania was finally disassembled in 2021. What makes this building unique is the integrity of its original structure at the time of its removal. This is because the town of Olsztyn is isolated from the country's major centers. This remoteness has proved beneficial in preserving the forms that attest to its historical continuity. One piece of evidence for this is that the building had undergone any kind of adaptation or renovation, proudly celebrating its magnificent modernity that shocked the inhabitants of this small town in the late 1970s.

Indeed, the stunning modernity preserved in its entirety until the beginning of 2021 made the Hala Urania an invaluable piece of architecture on the scale of the country. If, on the one hand, its unique brilliance made this building an object of worship among the community of preservationists and devotees of modern architecture from the times of the People's Republic of Poland, on the other hand, the preservation of its striking original features was also the reason that led the old structure to be replaced. This has been the fate of post-war architecture built in the country over the past two decades. From small, humble pavilions to magnificent structures of formal, technological and constructive values recognized and praised worldwide, buildings of different scales, programs and characteristics have been systematically erased from the map. Although the structures depicted in this doctoral work were all built in the 1960s and 1970s, this crisis is not limited to the buildings of this period. With this in mind, it is to be expected that the precedent of these violent actions over the built heritage will continue to lead to further tragic unfoldings in the future.

253 Wiesław Zenon Piątkowski (1929-2011), a graduate of the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology (1958), was a member of SARP Olsztyn and the Warmia and Mazury District Chamber of Architects of the Republic of Poland.

il.53, 54

In this framework, while post-war modern architecture no longer holds the same leading position as before, the current processes of urban development are gradually beginning to advance on other fronts. The act of replacing the old with the new is becoming ever closer to replacing the more recent constructions, an action on the urban territory that continuously denies the achievements of an increasingly less distant past. A witness to this current unfolding of violent action on the country's built heritage is the ongoing demolition of the *Dom Towarowy Solpol* building in the city of Wroclaw. Designed by post-modernist Polish architect Wojciech Jarząbek[254] in 1992 and first opened a year later, this icon of postmodernism in Poland's time of transformation is, at this very moment, being deconstructed piece by piece in the heart of the capital of Lower Silesia. A building recognized as one of the country's most relevant examples of post-modern architecture is being demolished less than thirty years after its establishment is clear evidence of how violent actions on the country's built heritage will unfold over the coming years. As a result, the city's territory will witness a growing lack of historical continuity and, consequently, a more significant disconnection between people and the specific context in which they find themselves.

254 Wojciech Jarząbek (1950–).

il.55, 56

Yet not all is lost. Although rare, the few examples that contradict this trend demonstrate how the maintenance and preservation of once-popular modern buildings can help enhance and redevelop urban space without incurring a loss or disruption of historical continuity, the sense of belonging and identity of a particular place. An excellent example is the recent modernization of the Bus Station in the Polish city of Kielce. Designed by architect Edward Modrzejewski[255] in 1975 and in operation since 1984, the city's most characteristic building passed from the hands of *Państwowa Komunikacji Samochodowa* (State Automobile Communication) to the city government of Kielce in the year 2017, to then be renovated and reopened three years later. Although some parts of the building have been demolished, the historic Kielce bus station building has retained much of its original appearance and features and its symbolic value as one of the most representative structures of late modernism in Poland.

Looking at these images, I wonder what it would have been like if other structures of similar architectural value had been treated with the same respect and care. Just as the Kielce Bus Station also came very close to having a much less fortunate ending, many of the previously mentioned structures might have had another fate. When seen as possessing potential for the future, built structures embody multiple possibilities for survival within themselves, yet when seen only as an object, architecture is doomed to be constantly emptied of meaning and, consequently, considered irrelevant and disposable.

255 Edward Modrzejewski (1927–2015).

After months of demolition work and numerous dumpsters filled with rubble, the *Hala Widowisk-owo-Sportowa w Olsztynie* was literally emptied at the end of the year 2021. By the beginning of the following year, little could be seen on its site beyond the subtle outline of the old concrete structure of what had been one of the most magnificent sports arenas in the country. Somehow, when I came across the image of this bare ground, I experienced a flood of mixed feelings. Immediately I recalled the memory of the empty Municipal Theater grounds in my hometown. I was again staring at a construction site and trying to see what was no longer there. At this moment, I realized what I was seeking, and the meaning of this artistic project.

As I stood on that bare ground, I realized that when buildings are gone, a fundamental part of our history is lost along with them. Staring at that empty building site, I was not looking to see the building that was not there; I was thinking about all those structures I would never build. In withdrawing from the architectural practice, I felt I had lost a part of my story yet to be written. In the effort to reconstruct the images of these buildings and entrech them in concrete, I was ultimately seeking to give myself a second chance. My aim is for these works to reflect the figure of the architect I always wanted to be.

Certainly for artists of all stripes, the unknown, the idea or the form or the tale that has not yet arrived, is what must be found. It is the job of artists to open doors and invite in prophesies, the unknown, the unfamiliar; it's where their work comes from, although its arrival signals the beginning of the long disciplined process of making it their own.

Rebbeca Solnit, 2005.[255]

Summary

At its core, this thesis is a work of providing context; it contextualizes who I am and the origin of my love of architecture, it contextualizes the use of intaglio as my methodology, and finally it contextualizes the importance of these modern structures by detailing the histories of their birth and destruction. Through re-imagining the lost modern structures throughout Poland in etched concrete sculptures, this method of memorializing brings these structures back into the present consciousness. These objects and this document serve as souvenirs for buildings that are long gone.

The importance of the discussion of my first encounters with architecture followed by my disillusionment with the professional field of architecture, reveals why I feel so strongly about buildings and the flaws developing in the contemporary practice which made the disappearance of valuable buildings so jarring to me during my transition from Brazil to Poland. While exploring my new home, what began to stand out was a process of total denial of the achievements of modern architecture built over the second half of the 20th century. The systematic erasure of postwar buildings in Poland after the turn of the 21st

256 Rebbecca Solnit, Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (New York: Viking, 2005), 5.

century became an obsession for me. By making these buildings my object of study, I began to enter a strangely familiar territory as modern architecture is a vital element of my heritage and history. It is something that informs who I am and where I come from. It is something that validates the way I perceive the world around me. By dealing with a subject so close and familiar to my previous experience in Brazil, not only as an architect but also individually, I have occasionally come to imbue these images with personal content.

Even though the choice of the case studies in this written thesis was made rather intuitively, upon viewing their images in volumes recently released, I finally realized the importance of this practical work in promoting and expanding this debate beyond the circle of architects and experts on the subject. As I delved deeper into the subject, I undertook a retrospective research approach; starting with the fall of these buildings to their origins. In parallel, the practical research was conducted in depth in search of formal solutions to answer the questions that arose along this path. In dealing with modern buildings that had already disappeared, stripped of their materiality, the research with the materials became a fundamental component of the practical work, opening a new exploratory path ahead for me.

To discover that the modern architectural heritage built during the Polish People's Republic was being subjected to a manifest process of devastation was something I could not conceive of and that provoked a certain uneasiness in me. In light of this, I began cataloging modern buildings lost over recent years in all four corners of the country. The more I went through, the longer this list grew. These buildings and their tragic histories became more than an obsession for me, taking on the central purpose of this doctoral research. This enthusiasm made me eager to discover everything within my reach, starting with a new language. Fascinated by the specificities of this strangely familiar landscape, I went on a quest to familiarize myself with the specific legal codes and scrutinize the many legal acts that regulated each of the mechanisms and practices related to protecting modern heritage in the country.

All this initial effort finally proved very beneficial for the consequent developments of this research. Since the systematic erasure of post-war Polish architecture is a relatively recent phenomenon, the available bibliography on the subject is still untranslated and utterly inaccessible from a linguistic point of view. In this sense, a substantial part of the articles, newspapers, magazines, interviews and books used as references in this written work was published along the flow of the research itself. In a way, this investigation was being built and deepened along the way as I was encountering additional authors and researchers interested in discussing and debating the causes and consequences of the recent erasure of modern heritage. This simultaneity not only gave me the feeling of living within the construction of history in the present, but also served as an impulse for the research itself, validating its relevance.

Inspired by the multiple historical and temporal layers that are revealed over the facades of buildings throughout the streets and cities of this country, I began to explore printmaking as a kind of archeological tool, through which I sought to unearth images of buildings capable of revealing information about them that at first glance seemingly invisible to the eye. In a very spontaneous way, I initially decided to portray buildings in a state of neglect, abandonment and disrepair. This stratification was already very evident but, curiously, appeared ignored. Starting with traditional etching, I moved into materials that even further manifested the mementos of forever lost buildings. This process of experimental concrete etching makes these images imbued with even more significance, they become gravestones in this new format.

In practical experimentation, I learned to lose control of the creative process. By incorporating constructive materials in making the printed objects presented in this work, the process became unforeseeable because these materials refuse to be contained, to recede into the image silently. Looking from this angle, the materials used do not play the role of mere support but take on a fundamental part in constructing the image itself. Just like drawing, materials can also reveal something about what is seen but not perceived. It is as if they have their own inner, untamed voice. Even if these images, by themselves, cannot retrieve the presence of these lost buildings, the incorporation of constructive materials made it possible to bring together their remembrance and the materiality that was so proper to them.

By combining the aesthetics of craft, the tactile characteristics of the materials, and the constructive solu-

tions themselves, it is as if these buildings acquire a new meaning in their representation, gaining a second life in their print objects. By merging with the matter, the image is emancipated from the building to which it refers to becoming something else. Vestiges that insist on not fading away altogether. These printed objects, as spatial installations, were conceived to interrupt, occupy, and recover their presence in space as a place of mourning and remembrance. In this way, they propose another relationship with the public that is by no means passive. Interposing themselves in the way, they force people to confront their presence and move around to avoid the exposed rebars that do not let us forget what these images are all about.

As a series of practical experiments developed through a cyclical process, this doctoral research does not reach a conclusion but rather a new starting point. In investigating artistic practice, I have always kept myself open to bringing in different external factors to participate in the process. As a result, in repeating these experiments, I did improve the way I executed them; however, due to the mismatched nature of the constructive materials concerning their application in printing intaglio matrices, I never gained complete control of what I was doing. In the materiality of these printed objects, the unpredictability of this process of experimentation is more than evident. It invites us not only to go through these images with our eyes but with our hands and body, finally creating a new model of perception and experience, again opening doors to the unknown. We should leave them this way, permanently open.

As this doctoral project comes to a close, my devotion to architecture will continue. By fabricating a form of expression of my own over the years, that has not only given meaning to the things I do, but also to my existence, I finally feel ready to resume building things in the world, to occupy, traverse, and manifest myself in space. Establishing a whole new field of professional practice, my creations present a strong personal statement about my worldview. As a manifest reaction to reality, my enthusiasm and frustrations with architecture operate as an inexhaustible source of inspiration. I am committed to further investigating all that printmaking has to offer while continuing to analyze and illuminate issues within architecture and collective memory.

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