

KRZYSZTOF INGARDEN AND THE CRACOW'S APPLIED ART OF ARCHITECTURE

Abstract: The following essay aims at describing the designs of Krzysztof Ingarden, one of the best Polish architects, in the vein of reinterpretation of the tradition of arts and crafts in Cracow (also known as the Cracow school of architecture). However, these designs are neither an imitation, nor an overtly nostalgic return to the past, but rather an attempt at expressing of the much-coveted, elusive identity of rapidly modernising Poland – through both material experiments and concepts that are rooted in the *genius loci*. The paper discusses the accomplishments of the applied arts movement in Cracow (c. 1900–1925) and the recently completed projects by the office Ingarden & Ewy: Polish Pavilion for the Expo 2005, Japan; Wyspiański 2000 Exhibition Pavilion, and the Garden of Experience (The Garden of Stanisław Lem), both in Cracow.

Key words: Krzysztof Ingarden, tradition of the Cracow school of architecture, reinterpretation, material experiments

Applied arts and *genius loci* of Cracow

For architects – at least for the good architects - who hail from the city of Cracow and who know its ancient tradition, architecture and the applied arts, to put it bluntly, are inseparable. They are *de facto* one. This attitude has its origins in history – as most things do. In our part of the world, we obviously tend to believe (not without a dose of the good old Slavic superstition, perhaps) that certain ideas, phenomena and people are bound to meet and to recur, transgressing the limits of time and space – as our Romantic poets, to name but the two giants, Słowacki and Mickiewicz, had it. Thus I see it as a very logical occurrence that one of the best architects of today's Poland, Krzysztof Ingarden, gains international acclaim not by means of designing in the vein of Rem Koolhaas. The latter famously proposed (and I take the liberty to put it mildly, respecting the worthy Publisher) to ignore the context whatsoever. Instead, our architect chooses

to design with the uttermost respect to the site, its physical features and its *genius loci*. Moreover he embarks upon the quest for the expression of the identity, for the selection of site-specific materials, and for their application in the art of architecture. Why did I mention the recurrence of ideas, not to say ghosts? Spirits of the arts and crafts, of Ruskin, Morris and their Polish contemporary, late Romantic poet and philosopher Cyprian Kamil Norwid, certainly would know. Therefore let us cast a glance at the so called Cracow school of architecture, which emerged ca 100 years ago.

The Cracow school

The search for a new architecture (and for a national style) in Poland started no later than in other European countries, and was perhaps even more intense than elsewhere – or at least as intense as in Hungary (for the same reasons).¹ The south-eastern part of the country, which, since the partitions of Poland by Austria, Prussia and Russia in the end of the 18th century, was known as the province of Galicia, due to its cultural ties to Imperial and Royal Vienna, led in introducing Art Nouveau architecture. *Secesja* – as the Polish Art Nouveau derived its name from the Viennese *Sezession* – quickly became a roaring success. Stunning examples of large scale, modern developments such as the first warehouse built with a concrete structure by architect A. Feliński (1912), very much in the vein of the Glasgow School of Art, or the imposing steel and glass railway station replete with stylish *Secesja* details by W. Sadłowski, were constructed in Galicia's capital, Lvov (today Lviv in Ukraine), the fourth biggest city in the K. u. K. and the informal capital of Poland under the foreign rule. The aforementioned, wonderfully flamboyant iron details of the station (doors, balustrades, signs, consoles, lamps), were designed and cast in Cracow, in the famed Gorecki metal works. Also in Cracow, Stanisław Wyspiański, a veritable *l'uomo universale* of the Polish *Secesja*, and one of the founding members of the *Wiener Sezession*, artist, dramatist,

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¹As described in my publication under the title "Polish architecture today: at the crossroads", *World Architecture*, nr. 05/2005 (179), China, pp.17-19.

painter, set and furniture designer, whose genial spirit still soars above the city,² (and who shall later enter again this story), created his visionary designs for the national Acropolis at the Royal Castle of Wawel. He did it with one thought in mind: to express the nation through architecture. However, on the eve of regaining independence, several architects aimed at creating not so much an immense eclectic pantheon (as was the case of Wyspiański with the aid of architect Ekielski), but a modern, more useful, national style. They succeeded, publishing their prototypal designs in catalogues conceived as patterns for reconstruction from the damage of the First World War – and for construction of the new architecture for the reborn Polish state. Thus the so called “manor style” was conceived, combining – in a stunningly coherent form – features of the traditional Polish Baroque and Classical manors with the stripped down modern, cubist forms. Here Cracow not only entered the stage again, but played the second fiddle to none. The so called Cracow school, based upon the association *Polska Sztuka Stosowana (Polish Applied Art)* and *Warsztaty Krakowskie (Cracow Workshops or Krakauer Werkstaette*, clearly modeled on the *Wiener Werkstaette*), which was founded in 1913 by J. Warchałowski, J. Homolacs, W. Jastrzębowski and others, proposed a highly original, innovative, elegant architecture and design, combining vernacular regional styles of wooden construction with the then hippest avant-garde. Thus Polish Art Deco was born and became the most desired style, especially after the unprecedented victory during the 1925 Exposition des Arts Decoratifs in Paris. The Polish Pavilion, reminiscent of the classic façade of a Polish manor with the somewhat cubist portico and tympanum – equipped, however, with a very expressionist, luminous, overscaled steel and glass tower – won the Grand Prix for architecture (designed by J. Czajkowski). It also won 36 golden medals for its interior with sculptures (H. Kuna), tapestries, crockery (Ćmielów factory), glass (Niemen works), furniture (W. Jastrzębowski), wall paintings, graphic designs (Z. Stryjeńska), prints etc. The quality of design and artisanship exhibited at the Pavilion were unprecedented; they established the renown of the so called Cracow school of architecture. It happened despite the very short time for preparations and the ever-too-small-budget, as it is still the case with public commissions...³

The local and the global

There are obviously certain similarities between the situation of the reborn Poland in the 1920's and 1930's and now, after the fall of communism. However, the discussion of this subject, which is on one hand all-too-well-known, and on the other very broad (and I daresay at times rather depressing), certainly reaches beyond the scope of this article. The author herself wrote a few times for the Western and Central European publications about the situation of the emerging Polish architecture⁴. Admittedly, this architecture is getting more and more acclaimed. There are brilliant young architects and there is a true construction boom in Poland after the access to the EU and after the rain of its non-returnable funds. Krzysztof Ingarden, who speaks and writes as exquisitely as he designs, expressed his views on that subject very clearly. In his lecture, delivered as part of the series “Co to jest architektura?/What is architecture?”, curated by Adam Budak in the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology in Cracow he eloquently spoke about the present context of Polish architecture:

“These days this very context becomes both local and global. Architects face the problem of finding a proper cultural identification and reference. Since 1989, the young generation of architects in Poland has greatly broadened the field of its academic and professional activity. [...] Simultaneously, the context of New York, Shanghai, of Polish villages in Mazovia or in Galicia, or the context of Silesian collieries – all these have become their points of reference and field of architectural experiments. For many of those architects the aforementioned condition proves to be a lethal dose of informational chaos, of globalised disinformation, of an elastic and all-too-easy international language of architecture. The excess of information which quite often cannot be digested [...] or which cannot be precisely defined – such is the elastic, flexible and smooth <<seamless architecture>>. Some architects are however mobilized by such a situation. It might then become a point of departure for reflection and a quest for an individual identity – or even for that of a generation. The clash of Polish architectural reality with a multicultural open space of information makes one reflect upon one's own condition – on possibilities and

²Cf. Nicholas Hodge, “The Spirit of Wyspiański”, *Apollo*, February 2008.

³Cf. Anna M. Drexlerowa, Andrzej K. Olszewski, *Polska i Polacy na Powszechnych Wystawach Światowych 1851-2000*, IS PAN Warszawa 2005.

⁴Cf. the above WA essay; as well as Marta A. Urbańska, “New Polish Architecture: Seeking to Establish Order?” in: *Architectural Design The New Europe*, May-June 2006, Vol.76, No 3, guest ed. Valentina Croci, Wiley Academy; Krzysztof Ingarden, Marta A. Urbańska, “Young Polish Architecture”, in: *Emerging Identities – East!* Ed. by Kristien Ring, DAZ Berlin, Jovis 2005, etc.



1. Атеље Ингарден и Еви (сарадња: А. Јаницки),
Пољски павиљон на Ехро 2005, Аичи, Јапа –
изглед фасаде од пружа слева.

1. Ingarden & Ewy Architects (collaboration: A.
Janicki) , *Polish Pavilion at the Expo 2005, Aichi,*
Japan – wicker elevation from the left.

constraints. Formal experiments and “global thinking” have to be referred to one's own language, landscape and history [...] This means that an architectural language that was applied by an architect [...] shall be eligible, easy to understand and adequate to the circumstances of culture. I am utterly convinced that this language might be understandable for a viewer or user of architecture only under one condition: namely when it is equally intelligible and natural for an architect – in another words when it is a language of his or her own identity”⁵

Identity

...is truly a question here. For some it is a burden, however for a few it is a much-coveted quality – albeit the one which is very difficult to express in categories of architecture. It seems to me that if anyone managed today to grasp this mythical identity in Poland - Ingarden did. His three recent projects confirm this ability, varied as they are. Amazingly, one of them was especially designed to express Poland as such, or to express the Polish identity indeed. This is the first of the three projects that we shall briefly discuss here.

⁵Krzysztof Ingarden, „Matrix of Space”, in: *Co to jest architektura/What is architecture? Vol. II*, ed. by Adam Budak with Marta A. Urbańska, transl. by Marta A. Urbańska, Muzeum Manggha, Kraków 2008, pp. 430-451, courtesy of the Publisher.

The Polish Pavilion for the Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan

This ephemeral, but brilliantly conceived and perfectly constructed building was a huge success. The enthusiasm was shared by everybody – the visitors, the organizers and the architectural press, which usually, of course, tends to dislike that what is popular. Again, let us quote the words of Krzysztof Ingarden. His Cracow – based office Ingarden & Ewy, in cooperation with the artist Aleksander Janicki, won the national competition, brought the pavilion to life – and brought the spirit of Poland to Japan.

“The National Chamber of Commerce, which is the organiser of the Polish pavilion, defined the subject matter of the presentation on the basis of symbols that were easily recognizable in Japan for being associated with Poland, such as the music of Chopin and a unique tourist attraction – the salt mine in Wieliczka. [...] The designers defined their objective as in finding and applying an unconventional architectural vocabulary which would enable them to build metaphors with direct, and yet intelligible references to the intangibility of music and the physicality of a subterranean salt chamber. At the same time, this vocabulary was intended to be one that would build an image of modern Poland [...].



2. Атеље Ингарден и Еви (сарадња: А. Јаницки), *Пољски павиљон на Ехро 2005, Аичи, Јапан* – изглед фасаде с десна.
2. Ingarden & Ewy Architects (collaboration: A. Janicki), *Polish Pavilion at the Expo 2005, Aichi, Japan* – view from the right side.

The objective was complex and it required some acrobatics for it to be accomplished. [...] Another essential design decision was the definition of the form and matter of the elevation. Essentially, the elevation is the first signal sent out by the pavilion [...] the elevation should be formed as a cloud hovering over a symbolic cross-section of Poland. It was also supposed to show an affinity with the Polish landscape, and thus symbolically relate to Chopin's music. [...] Plastics, glass or steel seemed spent materials, and were rejected [...]. The key to the solution was found in Chopin's statue in Warsaw's Łazienki Park, where the composer is portrayed under a willow tree. This image, as well as the association of Chopin's music with the Mazovian landscape and willows – an association that is universal in Poland – provided an impulse to look for a method to use willow withes to form the elevation of the building. Wicker (*Salix Sp.*), being a variety of willow, proved a perfect material for this purpose. Namely, when woven, it is susceptible to spatial forming; it is light, cheap, and

it also ties in with the Polish tradition of arts and crafts and the legacy of regions that have specialised in weaving wicker products for many decades. Wicker, as a material per se, carries a message that other typical building materials are deprived of.”⁶

The wickerwork elevation was borne by curved steel frames. Each of them was individually designed by means of computer models, as they had double curvature; they were welded in Poland and transported to Japan. Needless to say, the frames were also woven in Poland, in the vicinity of the town Nisko on the river San in the east of today's Poland, where the artisans and craftsmen still work today like they did in the olden days indeed. The wicker is cut and boiled in quite primitive boilers, and then skillfully woven – into multiple baskets, boxes, shelves, garden chairs and tables – and even into one grand exhibition pavilion, as the events have shown. Several villages were involved in construction of the pavilion, and hundreds of craftsmen took pride in contributing to the representation of Poland in such an exotic context. The utterly precisely detailed construction (with a few glass elements neatly combined with the natural material) was indeed rising in Japan above the imaginary cross-section of Poland, which filled the pavilion's interior. Underneath its floor the grotto-like reconstruction of the famed Wieliczka salt mine *en miniature* was installed, replete with real salt crystals. The pavilion was so popular that new salt had to be shipped from Poland during the Expo, as the crystals fell prey to the tourists and their taste for (edible) souvenirs. The pavilion, metaphorically combining the stark contrasts, the ethereal music of Chopin with the underground salty cave and with the newly applied yet ancient mode of construction, veritably rose to the heights of one of the finest examples of Polish architecture ever.

The Wyspianski 2000 Exhibition Pavilion in Cracow

In spite of the use of the phrase exhibition pavilion, this building is much more durable than the previous one – and was much more debated. Moreover, it is not located on the rim of the Pacific Ocean, but in the very heart of the Old Cracow at the Royal Way, which joins the Royal Castle of Wawel with the Main Market Square. This is the epicenter of the most historic Polish town – and that of the most

⁶Krzysztof Ingarden “Polish Pavilion for Expo 205 Aichi, Japan – Architectural Messages”, in: *Kierunki/Directions. Seminar accompanying the 3-2-1 Exhibition*, ed. by Magdalena Poprawska and Marta A. Urbańska, transl. by Jerzy Juruś, Marta A. Urbańska, Centre of Japanese Art & Technology 'Manggha', Krakow 2005, courtesy of the Publisher, pp. 54-61.

conservative one. Cracow is not only the old capital of Poland; it is the only one of the four largest cities of prewar Poland that survived the war virtually untouched: Warsaw was completely destroyed, and Lvov and Vilna were invaded by the Soviet Union in 1939 (and never returned to Poland). Situated along the aforementioned Royal Way, at the Plac Wszystkich Świętych, between the 13th century churches of the Dominican and Franciscan Friars, en lieu of the demolished town house, the Wyspiański Pavilion is the first modern building that was completed in the historic centre since times immemorial. However, it has some affinity with the metaphorical Expo pavilion: again it was designed to encompass a spirit. This time – the spirit and work of the aforementioned Stanisław Wyspiański, in form of his stained glasses (which were designed on carton more than a hundred years ago, but were never completed). And, similarly as in Aichi, to make matters even more complicated, it was to combine the opposites: it also had to serve as the municipal information centre. The architect says:

“Whereas stained glass should be exposed in a high, calm and dark space, the public space for information should have an open, clear, well-lit character; it should be both well illuminated and also provide good visibility [...] onto nearby imposing building of the Wielopolski Palace (the Town Hall). We were supposed to find a solution for those contradicting guidelines and therefore we chose an elevation of a mobile character: both transparent and closed. Moreover, the elevation's material was intended to allow for a dialogue with the neighbouring buildings – above all with the Gothic churches [...] both constructed of brick. [...] We were of the opinion that nothing new or interesting can be said by means of a glass elevation in a historical context. [...] We focused on brick – and a new design challenge arose. Traditional bricks were unable to meet the demands of our idea [...]; had to be transformed and a new mode of connecting them had to be found. Therefore we designed special forms of bricks, one with a trapezoidal section. We created its prototype and tested it in the small brick manufacture “Ceramsus” in Lower Silesia. The bricks changed their traditional horizontal layout into a vertical one, and were mounted on steel rods that ran through a specially elongated opening in each and every brick. [...] Having such a system at our disposal and moreover having a full range of colours typical for mediaeval bricks (from deep violet to orange) we are able to build our structure from a material that is both characteristic and intelligible within the historical context. It builds a metaphor of a contemporary moment that remains closely related to history – of



3. Атеље Ингарден и Еви (сарадња: А. Јаницки), *Пољски павиљон на Ехро 2005*, Аичи, Јапан – logo.

3. Ingarden & Ewy Architects (collaboration: A. Janicki), *Polish Pavilion at the Expo 2005, Aichi, Japan* – logo.

contemporary architecture that results from the reinterpretation of a traditional language of architecture”⁷.

The design task was actually even more complex, than the architect (modestly) describes. There were three additional problems. Firstly, the public controversy regarded even the correctness of the very idea of exhibiting of the stained glasses in a rather mundane place, at the urban square (even the one near to the Town Hall). The mystical, giant drawings by Wyspiański, who was influenced by the aforementioned Romantic prophetic poet Słowacki, depicted the late Kings and Princes of Poland. The designs were originally meant for the Wawel Cathedral – and were never placed there, as they were too expressionistic for the taste of the belle époque – and the Chapter of the Cathedral. Finally, the backing of the pre-eminent director Andrzej Wajda, and the 100th anniversary of the death of Wyspiański, led to the conclusion in form of the completion of the pavilion. The

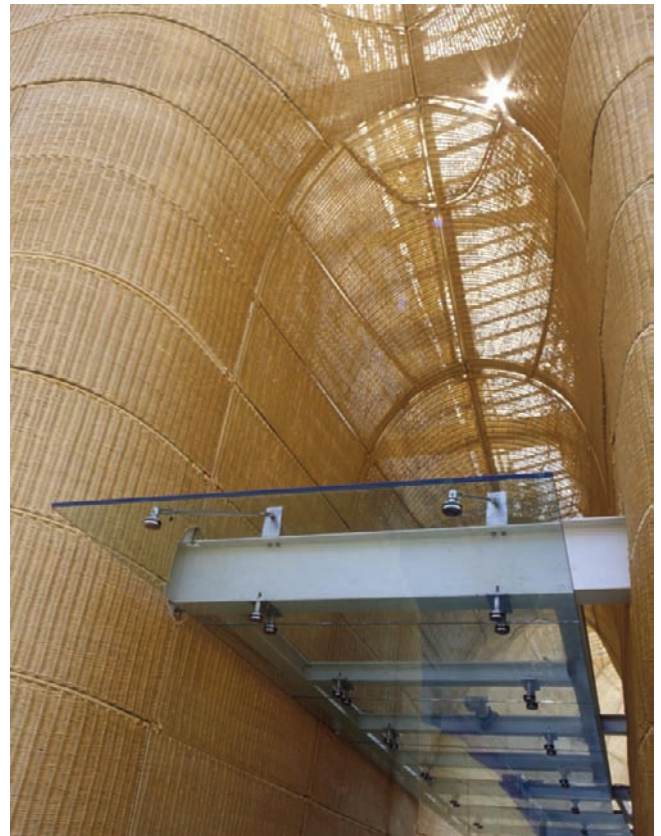
⁷Ingarden, “Matrix of Space”, op.cit.

glasses (reduced in size – 1:1,5) were cast in the same Atelier Żeleński (albeit by a different owner), which completed all of the famed stained glasses by Wyspiański in his lifetime. Secondly, the site, apart from being very exposed in the urban fabric – which was solved by means of the innovative application of brick as an elevation screen – had one more vicissitude : it was very narrow (merely 4 met). Paradoxically, these constraints led to another successful architectural device. The plan was logically based upon Wyspiański's own sketches for a stage set of one of his dramas; its semi-cylindrical ends have a lot in common with the architecture of expressionism. But the most amazing quality is revealed inside. Due to the application of the graphite-coloured, large Italian tiles and the full height of the interior, the narrow room in which the stained glasses are exhibited has indeed the atmosphere and proportions of a dimly lit, vertical, Gothic sacred space.

Thirdly, the stained glasses were to be visible also in an inverted manner, so to speak – that is from the outside of the pavilion, from the Square. Sadly – and without any fault of the architects of the Wyspiański Pavilion, but due to the lack of coordination by the city fathers – the Wszystkich Świętych Square, which was recently redesigned by some other architects (and very neatly paved and expensively furnished) has nothing in common with the spirit of the genius of the Art Nouveau and the hero of Young Poland, as the movement was also called. Instead, it exudes the stale air of old Galicia, and of a provincial town (replete with the bust of a worthy 19th century mayor) – something that Wyspiański detested to the core. Fortunately, at night, due to the proper illumination, the stained glasses and the pavilion are perfectly visible – and during the day they soar above the *un peu* bourgeois pavements and eclectic flower beds... Furthermore, not in the eclectic spirit, but in the Ruskinian Arts and Crafts one, the pavilion is quickly overgrown with ivy and vine. Such was the idea of its architect. Wyspiański would have certainly liked it.

The Garden of Experience – The Garden of Stanisław Lem

In the beautiful landscape and educational park in Cracow known as The Garden of Experience, one will certainly not find any of the aforementioned petty bourgeois features – much to my delight. The project may be described as an amazing one, both in terms of its logic – and the pure enthusiasm, which brought it to life. The *spiritus movens* was first incarnated in Mrs Danuta Szymońska, the head of the Centre of Culture of Nowa Huta. One definitely needs to



4. Атеље Ингарден и Еви (сарадња: А. Јаницки), *Пољски павиљон на Ехро 2005, Аичи, Јапан – детаљ улаза.*
 4. Ingarden & Ewy Architects (collaboration: A. Janicki), *Polish Pavilion at the Expo 2005, Aichi, Japan – detail of the entrance.*

explain here that Nowa Huta, even though it is administratively a part of Cracow, this old town, is indeed new, as the name has it. It was originally built at the close of the 1940s, as the socialist ideal industrial new town around the giant steel mill. It was conceived as the healthy working class counterweight to the reactionary conservative old Cracow. As is often the case, the revolution devoured its own children, the workers rose against the system which created them, and finally, after 1989, the restructured mill reduced the employment – and the district found itself increasingly a social vacuum. Fortunately, the initiative emerged, and the citizens' movement started to work for the revitalisation of the district – here in form of revitalisation of its largest park. The truly Romantic enterprise, without much budget, gained momentum (and it was in keeping with our belief in recurrence of ideas that are in the air, even in a polluted one – the patron of the Centre was no one else but the aforementioned poet C.K. Norwid, who greatly advocated the positivist social work!)



5. Атеље Ингарден и Еви, *Павиљон Виспијански 2000*, Краков 2007 – поглед на ентеријер са галерије, са одразима витража које је осмислио С. Виспијански пре сто година.
5. Ingarden & Ewy Architects, *Wyspiański Pavilion 2000*, Cracow 2007 – view of the interior from the gallery, with a reflection of stained glasses designed by St. Wyspiański hundred years ago.

There were so many persons and institutions involved at various stages of the project – including the physicists, various engineers, cultural and social workers, the communal investor – and the budget was so low, that the whole could have ended up in a terrible conundrum. Stunningly, it did not. To the contrary, the completed Garden received the prize for the best project completed in Poland with the EU funds. This certainly had to do with the coordination by the office of Ingarden & Ewy, who luckily won the open tender for the architectural design. In my opinion it is indeed one of the best public projects that appeared for a long time. The Garden is both witty and didactic, relaxing and instructive, well designed and organic, disciplined and natural... and apart from the beautifully logical architecture, it has the perfect patron.

The choice of Stanisław Lem, the genial Polish science-fiction writer and philosopher, and one of the wittiest spirits ever, is absolutely perfect indeed – for a multitude of

reasons. Some of them are quite unexpected, as is often the case with scientific discoveries, but they tie in with our intuition. For instance, Lem loved toys – but in a rather murderous way. He described his morbid fascination (with smashing them) wonderfully in “Wysoki Zamek”, the account of his idiosyncratic childhood in prewar Lvov.⁸ Lem also had something in common with the architect of the Garden, as Ingarden's grandfather, himself a famed philosopher, once taught young Stasio and his colleagues mathematics (albeit seemingly to not much avail, as the writer valiantly admitted ...)⁹

The Garden is actually a giant toy itself – and a didactic device amidst verdure. Conceived as a space for children to learn physics through experiments, it has nearly 50 toys, which are very robustly constructed (by physicists and engineers) and which demonstrate various physical phenomena. Optics, acoustics, flows, liquids, gravity, reflection, interference of waves, any phenomenon may be researched here. The direct contact with physics becomes an amusing experience, not just another dry lesson. The quality of the applied arts (and crafts) enters the stage here too – or rather enters the platforms. The entire architectural concept serves to underline both the organic logic of physics – that is of nature – and the tactility of the material world. The toys are positioned on platforms, which shapes are extracted – or transposed – from the shapes of fallen leaves. They are situated along the wavy, sinuous paths, which already partly existed in the park – and which layout was resembling some willowy branches. Thus the geometrized fallen leaves are perfectly in place; they illustrate the force of gravity and assume various textures. Here the skills of the architects shine through: these textures are as varied, as they are recycled. Bamboo, pine boards, tarmac, coniferous logs, various broken paving stones, even stunning, elliptical black marble slabs, were used – and did not cost much. The pop-arty black ellipses were, for instance, the throwaway bits from cutting openings for the washbasins. The materials, rich despite their low cost, their patterns and textures, enhance the experience of physical space.

Stanisław Lem wrote in the aforementioned remembrance that to him space is decidedly more a friend of humans, than time. Space does not have crevices, unexpected traps, space is homogenous and – unlike in time – one may return to where one departed from. Lem did not consider himself a religious man, like, after all, Albert Einstein, who was

⁸Stanisław Lem, *Wysoki Zamek*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2006, p. 27 (English transl. by M. Kandel, *High Castle: A Remembrance*, New York 1995).

⁹Ibidem, p. 79-80.

famously impressed by the logic of construction of the world¹⁰. But I like to think that perhaps, moved by the artistic application of logical laws, as embodied in architecture, the spirit of Lem is soaring above the Garden. He may be arriving from the High Castle in Lvov – or wherever he abides; *spiritus flat ubi vult...* However, we are still lucky to experience architecture that is built and designed in Cracow – in a more direct manner. Thus we may find for ourselves, whether we are convinced by its language – as it was applied by Krzysztof Ingarden...

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¹⁰Cf. Albert Einstein, *Mein Weltbild*, hrsg. Carl Seelig, Ullstein 2005.

МАРТА А. УРБАЊСКА*

КШИШТОФ ИНГАРДЕН И ПРИМЕЊЕНА УМЕТНОСТ У АРХИТЕКТУРИ КРАКОВА

Резиме

У есеју су приказани пројекти Кшиштофа Ингардена (Krzysztof Ingarden), једног од најбољих пољских архитеката, у складу са реинтерпретацијом традиције уметности и заната у Кракову (која је позната и као краковска школа архитектуре). Но, ови пројекти нису ни имитација ни повратак на старо, пун носталгије. То је пре покушај да се изрази неухватљив идентитет пољске државе која се све брже модернизује. Овај архитекта који живи и ради у Кракову практично реализује, али и развија своје идеје које су духовите, а ипак укорене у локални контекст – у дух самог простора. Он овако оцењује актуелну ситуацију: «Мноштво информација које најчешће не можемо да сваримо [...] или које није могуће јасно дефинисати – то је еластична, флексибилна и глатка 'архитектура без спојева'. Међутим, има архитеката које управо оваква ситуација мобилише. То може постати полазна тачка за размишљање или тражење личног – или чак генерацијског идентитета. Сукоб пољске архитектонске стварности и мултикултурног отвореног информацијског простора чини да размишљамо о сопственој ситуацији [...] Формални експерименти и 'глобално размишљање' морају да се уклопе у сопствени језик, простор и историју [...]» („*Matrix of Space*”, у: *Co to jest architektura/Šta je arhitektura? sv. II, urednik Adam Budak sa Martom A. Urbanjskom, Muzeum Manggha, Kraków 2008, 160–180*). У тексту су сажето приказани резултати примењене уметности у Кракову (око 1900 – 1925), где је створена пољска сецесија (*Secesija art nouveau*), национални

стил (такозвани “стил владе-линских двораца”) и раскошни ар деко. На тој основи приказани су недавно завршени пројекти атељеа Ingarden&Ewy'. Први од њих је и високо оцењени пољски павиљон за Ехро 2005 у Јапану (Аичи). Обогаћен изузетно компликованим програмима који су обједињавали нестварну музику Шопена и много практичније захтеве (чак и подземне какав је био задатак да се прикажу рудници соли у Вјелички), опремљен подацима о Пољској и поетичном фасадом од плетера на изувјаним челичним рамовима, овај павиљон се налази на врху пољске архитектуре. Следећи пројект је био павиљон за изложбу Wuspiński 2000 који се налази на Краљевском путу у Кракову и представља прво модерно здање у таквом историјском контексту (2007). Осмишљен да служи као изложбени простор за недовршене витраже Виспјањског, генија сецесије, али и да буде градски информативни центар, павиљон на задивљујући начин реинтерпретира употребу опеке карактеристичне за средњовековни Краков. И на крају, Врт искуства (Врт Станислава Лема, 2008) представља изванредни научни парк са мноштвом едукативних играчака. И поред скромног буџета, архитектура духовито илуструје лепоту логике, закона који управљају физичким светом и његов материјални садржај, али и дух патрона, великог писца научне фантастике, Лема који је рођен у Лавову и који је толико волео да разбија играчке... али који би се свакако поносио – из више разлога – поштовањем које му је исказао Ингарден.