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## *Postmodern architecture in the historical quarters of Poznań as a shaping element of the city's cultural environment*

### *Postmodernism – a definition of the phenomenon on the basis of Poznań*

Searching for postmodern architecture in Poznań should start with the definition of that style in the history of contemporary architecture. Postmodernism was born in Western Europe at the beginning of the 1960s in the aftermath of criticism of the achievements of Modernism [3]. The main features of that style include pluralism, eclecticism, double coding and return to the idea of a compact city development. Postmodernism again draws attention to the relations between the building and its surrounding, that is the issue of space context. It emphasizes the significance of the multifunctional character of the city structure, rejecting most of the provisions of the Athens Charter which reflects the modern way of thinking about architecture and the city that developed in the 1920s and the 1930s.

Postmodern architecture appeared in Poland only at the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s. That delay was caused by the communist system that prevailed in Poland [7]. The late 1980s were undoubtedly the period of creative experiments when architects had to follow the norms and standards imposed by communist legislature, on the one hand, and drew on the achievements of the European architecture, on the other hand.

In the case of Poznań the most interesting examples of buildings that feature the traces of early Postmodernism include the residential buildings known as infill buildings that appeared in such quarters as Wilda, Łazarz, and

Jeżyce at the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s [1]. It should be noted that the complementary residential architecture was one of the most favorite motifs of Postmodernism. The completion of the historical structure of the city is becoming a process of continuation of earlier activities. The process limited in a sense by existing investments adds unique features with references to the neighboring and older buildings to the newly developed architecture.

Both modern and postmodern architecture drew from the ideas of theorists and critics of earlier architecture – from the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>1</sup>, it was postulated for instance by E. Kauffman. The principles of developing “modern” architecture with historical roots can be transposed to contemporary architecture [5]. They include transparency and moderation in external appearance and outline as well as the dominance of right angles and straight lines, stereometric shape of the building. In respect of composition the elements placed closely next to one another or on one another. Peace, gravity, and height corresponding to the “size” of the materialized ideas or the tasks served by the buildings. Finally, ethos and morality instead of noisy glamour and representativeness.

<sup>1</sup> In his first major article written in 1920, Emil Kaufmann outlined the basics of the research on architecture of late 18<sup>th</sup> century by dividing the period known as “classical” into two categories: classical and classicistic – known also as neo-classicism which he described as a formal expression and rather own structure.

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## Poznań Postmodernism of the 1980s

In the case of Poznań one of the first examples of complementary buildings constructed in the postmodern costume is the residential building at Wierzbicę Street 4a from 1985 designed by Marian Fikus and Szymon Weyna<sup>2</sup>. The building was constructed on an oblong rectangular

In spite of its style, characteristic of Postmodernism, the building perfectly fits the spatial context of the street and the quarter. The use of scale and façade divisions applied by the designers clearly corresponds to the neighboring buildings (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. An in-fill residential building at Wierzbicę Street 4a in Poznań dating back to the 1980s by Marian Fikus, an architect. View from the street (photo by A. Nadolny, 2010)

II. 1. Budynek mieszkalny (z roku 1985) o charakterze uzupełniającym przy ul. Wierzbicę 4a w Poznaniu, widok od strony ulicy (fot. A. Nadolny, 2010)

plan created by additive geometric solids. Its main body is regular, cuboidal covered with a pitched roof<sup>3</sup>. The front façade which displays some postmodern motifs alludes to classical patterns. That search is reflected in the layout of the façade alluding to the idea of the golden division. The characteristic middle projection crowned with a triangular tympanum supported on four columns adds special lightness to the building (Fig. 1).

The following is what Marian Fikus wrote in his comment on the project about the search for stylistic convention of the building: “When placed directly next to two houses with very rich architecture there should be a plane background with well balanced proportions, a connecting element. Furthermore, it should also provide a connection with the character of the street by continuing its fabric”<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The building was designed in the office of Miastoprojekt in Poznań

<sup>3</sup> On each floor, from the first through third, there were two one-room apartments and one two-room apartment. Each of them had a bathroom with toilet and a kitchen. All rooms, except for sanitary accommodation, had natural daylight exposure. The uppermost floor that was taller than the other ones had four one-room apartments.

<sup>4</sup> Archival materials owned by Prof. arch. Marian Fikus.

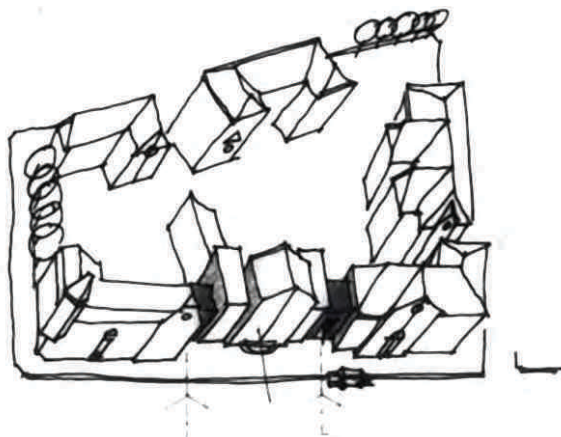


Fig. 2. Detail of the conceptual sketches, source: courtesy of prof. arch. Marian Fikus

II. 2. Koncepcja ukształtowania budynku mieszkalnego zaproponowana przez M. Fikusa po analizach przestrzennych, źródło: mat. archiwalne prof. arch. Mariana Fikusa



Fig. 3. An in-fill residential building at J.H. Dąbrowskiego Street 18 in Poznań dating back to the 1980s by Eryk Siński, an architect. View from the street (photo by A. Nadolny, 2011)

II. 3. Budynek mieszkalny (z lat 1982–1984) o charakterze uzupełniającym przy ul. J.H. Dąbrowskiego 18 w Poznaniu, widok od strony ulicy (fot. A. Nadolny, 2011)



Fig. 4. An in-fill residential building at Poznańska Street 34, 36, 36a in Poznań dating back to the 1990s by Klimaszewska & Biedak, an architects. View from the street (photo by A. Nadolny, 2011)

Il. 4. Budynek mieszkalny (z roku 1995) o charakterze uzupełniającym przy ul. Poznańskiej 34, 36, 36a w Poznaniu, widok od strony ulicy (fot. A. Nadolny, 2011)

The residential building at J.H. Dąbrowskiego Street 18, designed by Eryk Sieński from 1982–1984, is another example of Postmodernism of the 1980s (Fig. 3). The building was constructed on the plan of the letter L. It has two stairwells – one in the front part and the other in the outbuilding. The building has six floors above the ground and one underground floor. What is characteristic of that building is that its apartments on the upper floors have



Fig. 5. An in-fill residential building at Kochanowskiego Street 27/28 in Poznań dating back to the 1990s by Klimaszewska & Biedak, an architects. View from the street (photo by A. Nadolny, 2011)

Il. 5. Budynek mieszkalny (z roku 1998) o charakterze uzupełniającym przy ul. Kochanowskiego 27/28 w Poznaniu, widok od strony ulicy (fot. A. Nadolny, 2011)

two levels. The front part has 12 apartments, the outbuilding has 18 apartments. The façade of the building from Dąbrowskiego Street has ten axes, whereas the façade from the backyard has five axes. The irregular placement of window openings and their various sizes emphasize the designer's fascination with the achievements of Postmodernism. In order to add variety to the main body of the building the front façade was designed with two rows of balconies, smaller and bigger. Their alternate placement adds special dynamics to the building. The furthestmost planes of the façade have loggias which visually enrich the façade add as well as vertical row windows. The spatial conditions required the designer to adjust that building to the neighboring buildings. He did that, however, by contrast. The reference to the neighboring buildings with scale and divisions is clear, although it was done with the use of other means of architectural expression.

### *Poznań Postmodernism of the 1990s*

The beginning of the 1990s in the Polish history of architecture marked another return to Postmodernism. After the moment of political transformation the space in Poznań, especially its center, became again a place of architectural activities directed among others to fill in empty spaces. The scale of these activities, at first small, transformed in time into an organized system. Filling in empty spaces in the city was conducted on several planes such as individual building structures or the whole urban complexes shaping anew the image and character of the city [2]. The search for a new spatial layout is still visible in those activities, however, it occurs on another mental and impression level. New designs, just like earlier, were executed on the basis of contrast. In their architectural forms they referred to contemporary trends in developing residential architecture.

The most interesting examples of Postmodernism of the 1990s in Poznań include the residential buildings in Jeżyce quarter. The first building worth mentioning is the multi-family residential infill building constructed in 1995 in the block at Poznańska Street 34, 36, 36a (Fig. 4) commissioned by Building Production Company "ATANER" from design office Klimaszewska & Biedak sp. z o.o. in Poznań<sup>5</sup>. The building was constructed on the plan of the letter L, corresponding this way to the form of the neighboring buildings from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, (so called front building with an outbuilding.) It has two stairwells leading to 34 apartments. A very interesting solution was applied in the case of that building consisting

<sup>5</sup> Developed on the basis of the technical description of the building maintained in the archives of "Ataner" in Poznań.

in designing the stairwells from the side of the backyard, which corresponds to the design solutions from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The front façade with thirteen axes is divided by a vertical axis along the entrance to the building. The clearly marked ground level of the building is rhythmically divided into the same size sections by storefront windows. In its form the residential building is supposed to correspond to the neighboring buildings by postmodern contrast. It can be assumed that the authors of that design applied the composition method proposed by Robert Venturi where the main emphasis is put on presenting a spatial play with various materials, their texture, and color in the building façade. In the context of the postmodern discourse the building is not free of historical allusions both in its plan and the façade as well as in respect of historicizing details [4].

Another distinctive structure is the building constructed in 1998 designed by the same architects at Kochanowskiego Street 27/28<sup>6</sup>. Its location in the corner lot with the neighboring buildings from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries offered a possibility to create a unique work of architecture (Fig. 5). According to the design assumptions the building corresponds in its scale to the neighboring buildings and, just like most postmodern designs in Poznań, it functions in the urban fabric on the basis of contrast. The main body of the building is divided into characteristic sections. A clearly marked ground floor, and the middle section of the façade features horizontal bands of plaster going along the shape of the façade. The façade cladding made of dark blue ceramic tiles provides marine

connotations of the building. All those efforts take us to a different style reality. It can be said that the building has become a kind of symbol connecting new architecture with the existing space context [6].

The postmodern activities were not limited only to architecture. Urban planning of those times in Poznań can also boast of some interesting examples. As I mentioned earlier, Postmodernism restored in the city its traditional function in which squares, blocks, and streets played a significant role.

Those experiences were the basis of the development of the residential estate Różany Potok in Morasko in 1989–2008 in Poznań (Fig. 6). The space development designed by Marian Fikus with his team corresponds very clearly to the idea of postmodern urban planning. The spatial conception of that urban design was developed as a small town with squares and streets around geometric blocks of buildings. The residential buildings in Różany Potok estate were planned according to two conventions: single-family buildings in row houses and multi-family buildings in four-storied houses in compact blocks. The postmodern character of that estate is visible in the following elements. It was developed according to the principles of classical urban planning that is with the use of orthogonal matrix dividing space into streets, blocks, and squares. From the architectural point of view the buildings laid out in its space allude and refer to the classical architecture. Such elements include triangular tympanums, columns, porticos and loggias.

Zielone Wzgórza estate in Murowana Goślina designed by Jerzy Buszkiewicz, Tomasz Durniewicz, Stanisław Sipiński and Eugeniusz Skrzypczak is an example of such a “new” town with postmodern connotations in the region of Greater Poland. The space conception of the town was

<sup>6</sup> Developed on the basis of the technical description of the building maintained in the archives of “Ataner” in Poznań.

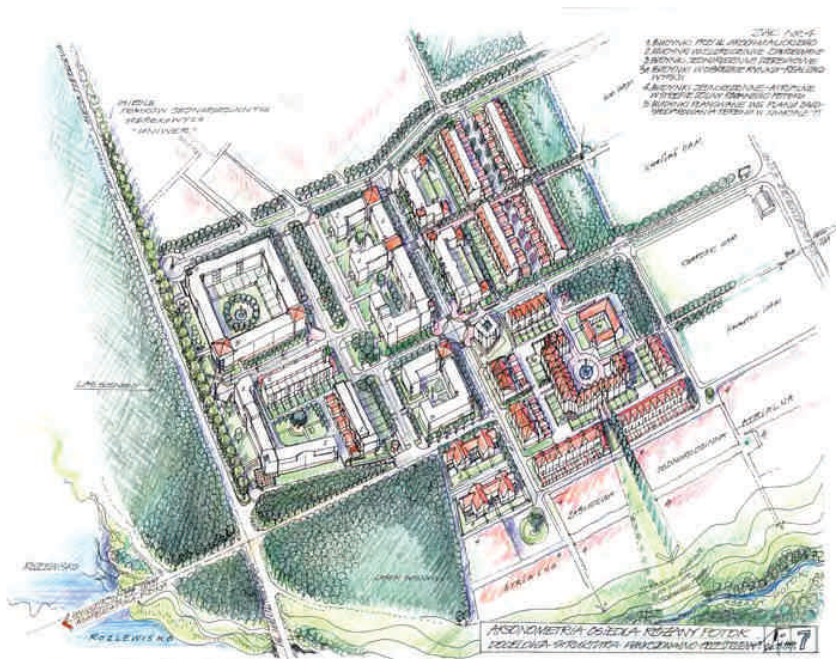


Fig. 6. Różany Potok settlement in Poznań, author's sketch, source: courtesy of prof. arch. Marian Fikus

developed at the beginning of the 1980s and its construction began in 1982. The space development plan assumed the return to the idea of a "traditional town" with the market square as the main element of the space composition of the design. The authors made a vital attempt at restoring the past where small towns played a significant role in developing settlements in the region of Greater Poland. The search for postmodern connotations in respect to that design should begin with its spatial layout where the market square is its main composition element. The scale of the central square of the town became a kind of yardstick used when developing its other parts that is blocks of single- and multi-family houses. The remaining part of the town was also designed according to the classical urban planning principles with blocks, streets, and squares being its dominant elements. In respect of their architecture the buildings in the town demonstrate postmodern features. Although they were built with the use of the large panel construction technology, the residential buildings, especially those next to the main market square, have an

interesting architectural costume full of allusions to earlier times.

The selected buildings and spatial designs presented in this paper that have been executed in Poznań and the region of Greater Poland over the last twenty, thirty years have some postmodern features. They have become clear marks of both modernity and creative search of architects in the landscape of the city and the region. This is the simple reason why I decided to choose only those traces which in my opinion fully demonstrate the creative path of that style in contemporary architecture. Taking into account its theoretical connotations as well as the spatial expression, the postmodern architecture can or actually should be perceived as an important element in the culture of contemporary cities. Very often we talk about assets of contemporary culture as elements of identity defined at local level. In my opinion the postmodern architecture and its definition of style as an intellectual discourse perfectly fits the contemporary demand for cooperation between architecture and culture.

Translated by  
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### *Architektura postmodernistyczna w historycznych dzielnicach Poznania jako element kształtowania środowiska kulturowego miasta*

Architektura modernistyczna i postmodernistyczna korzystała z myśli teoretyków i krytyków architektury wcześniejszych okresów twórczych – przełomu XVIII i XIX wieku, postulował to między innymi Emil Kauffman (1891–1950). Zasady kształtowania architektury „nowoczesnej” o historycznych korzeniach można przetransponować na współcześnie tworzone dzieła architektury. Zaliczyć do nich możemy przejrzystość i powściągliwość w wyglądzie zewnętrznym oraz w zarysie, dominację kąta prostego i linii prostych, stereometryczną bryłę budowli. W kwestii kompozycji – elementy ściśle ustawione obok siebie lub na sobie. Spokój, powaga i wyniosłość odpowiednia do „wielkości” ucieleśnianych idei lub spełnianych przez budynki zadań. Na zakończenie etos i moralność, zamiast ruchliwego przepychu i reprezentacji.

Postmodernizm przywraca istniejącą w XIX wieku rangę elewacjom i krawędziom przestrzeni. Różnicuje je skalą, wprowadzając przewężenia, przejścia itp. Nadaje budynkom indywidualny rys, ukazując jednak przede wszystkim ich współdziałanie w kreowaniu przestrzeni miasta z przełomu XIX i XX wieku. Teraźniejszość wymaga od nas dużej kreatywności, mamy tutaj na uwadze współdziałanie sztuki i architektury. Świat postmodernistyczny został postawiony w trudnej sytuacji odnalezienia się w zgiełku dnia dzisiejszego. Działanie po ogłoszeniu hasła upadłości malarstwa i sztuki, oznajmieniu, iż nikt i nic nie jest już w stanie nas zaskoczyć, że wszystko już było nie napawa optymizmem. Gdzie w takim razie jest tutaj miejsce na sztukę? Na ludzką wrażliwość? Świat nigdy nie będzie w stanie wyrzec się sztuki i architektury aczkolwiek zmusił ją do zmiany swojego oblicza.

**Key words:** postmodern architecture, Poznań, culture environment

**Słowa kluczowe:** architektura postmodernistyczna, Poznań, środowisko kulturowe

