



## Review

### ***“Tomasz Mańkowski. Architecture is the most important thing”. The exhibition at the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław***

*“Tomasz Mańkowski. Architecture is the most important thing”*

*Exhibition open until October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022*

*Organizer: Museum of Architecture in Wrocław*

*Curators: Joanna Majczyk, Barbara Szczepańska, Maciej Siwy*

*Exhibition set-up: Joanna Majczyk, Mikołaj Twardowski*

*Substantive consultations: dr hab. Agnieszka Tomaszewicz, prof. PWr*

The protagonist of the exhibition, which has been presented at the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław since June 21, 2022, is architect Tomasz Mańkowski (1926–2012) – a professor at the Cracow University of Technology and an artist connected with Kraków [1]. Mańkowski's complex biography and multi-thematic oeuvre constitute an excellent presentation of changes in Polish architecture after 1945. The exhibition features a subtle collage of impressions which are guided by the architect's credo – the title slogan, i.e. “Architecture is the most important thing”. As emphasized by the curators of the exposition, the simplicity of forms, the rules of geometry and the humanistic message form the basis of Mańkowski's creative activity.

The exhibition was based on three main narrative motifs, i.e., the Gomulka's thaw (after 1956), prefabrication and housing (the 1960s and 1970s) and postmodernism (up to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century). In each trend, original and mostly unknown to the national public, architectural and urban concepts were presented. The axis of the political turning point is represented by award-winning, but not implemented, competition projects which were prepared by Mańkowski in cooperation with, for example, Jerzy Sztark, Tadeusz Kantor and Witold Skulicz. Apart from the Polish Pavilion for the World Exhibition Expo in Brussels (Fig. 1a) and the People's Astronomical Observatory and Planetarium in Warsaw (1956), multi-col-

ored boards of the Lodge for anglers at Goczałkowice lagoon (1957) and Divine Mercy Church in Kalisz (1959) (Fig. 1b) were included. The basis for the story about prefabrication consists of light wooden houses for families of miners in Silesia (1957) (Fig. 2a) which are presented along with the General Housing Program for Iraq (1978) and the concept of the Student Village of AGH University of Science and Technology [2] (Fig. 2b). Diverse models of housing, individual and collective, were set in a broad social and political context, whereas the modular nature of architecture was reflected in the arrangement of spatial models which were designed on orthogonal grids. The “postmodern” part is represented by buildings with individualized forms which are characteristic of the architecture and art of the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as by the presentation of modernized design techniques. The building of Polonia College in Przegorzały constitutes the bond which connects the periods of modernism and postmodernism.

At the exhibition particularly noteworthy are the original architectural models, the oldest of which – an urban model of the AGH University of Science and Technology Student Village in Kraków was created in the mid-1960s (Fig. 3a), and the youngest – a deconstructivist model of Radio Kraków thirty years later (Fig. 3b). The diversity of the exhibits, the presentation of authentic boards and drawings, which were developed from the 1950s up to

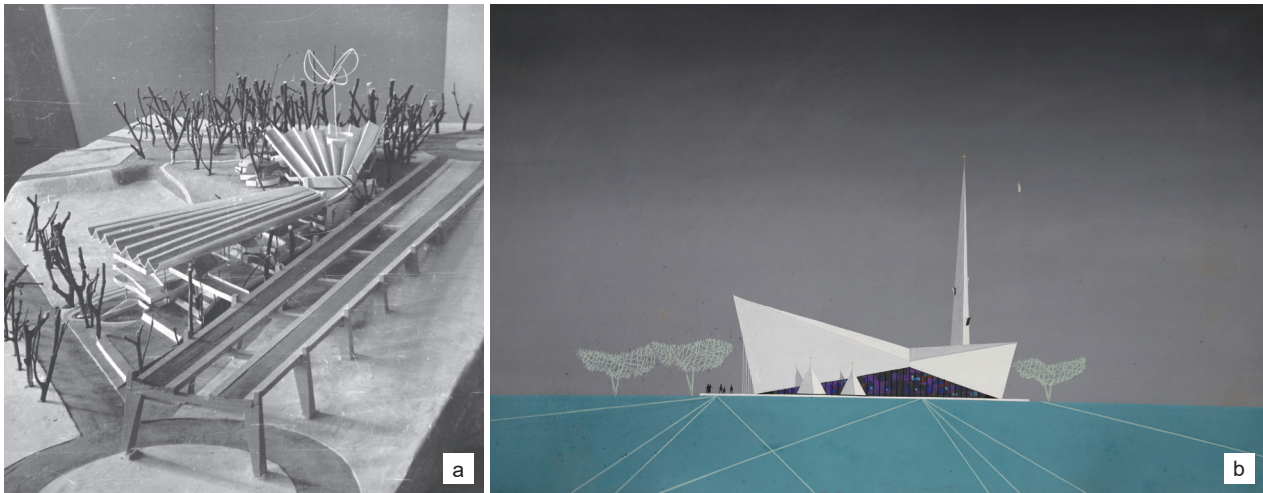


Fig. 1. "Tomasz Mańkowski. Architecture is the most important thing". Views of the arrangement fragments:

- a) a photo of the non-existent model of the Polish Pavilion for the Brussel's World Fair. SARP competition design, 1<sup>st</sup> honorable mention. 1956. Tomasz Mańkowski, collaboration: Jerzy Sztark, Bohdan Lisowski, Teresa Lisowska, Jerzy Tyszkowski, Jerzy Tombiński, Tadeusz Gawłowski, b) colored façade of Divine Mercy Church in Kalisz. 2<sup>nd</sup> award. 1959. Tomasz Mańkowski, collaboration: Jerzy Sztark, Witold Skulicz (board)

II. 1. Wystawa „Tomasz Mańkowski. Architektura jest najważniejsza”, widoki fragmentów aranżacji:

- a) zdjęcie nieistniejącej makiety Pawilonu Polskiego na Wystawę Światową EXPO w Brukseli. Projekt konkursowy SARP, I wyróżnienie. 1956. Tomasz Mańkowski, współpraca: Jerzy Sztark, Bohdan Lisowski, Teresa Lisowska, Jerzy Tyszkowski, Jerzy Tombiński, Tadeusz Gawłowski, b) Kościół pw. Miłosierdzia Bożego w Kaliszu. Projekt konkursowy SARP, II nagroda. 1959. Tomasz Mańkowski, współpraca: Jerzy Sztark, Witold Skulicz (plansze)

the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, provide an interesting picture of changes in the artists' workshop. Hand drawing techniques and traditional materials (paper, wood, ink, pencil, water paint) have been replaced by printing and computer methods over time (flat drawings, visualizations, virtual walks).

The presentation of the professional creative activity is complemented by an extensive biography of the architect. Mańkowski was born in Kraków in 1926 as Tomasz Eibenschütz, son of attorney Stanisław Eibenschütz and

Ewelina née Anisfeld [3]. The Jewish origin dramatically influenced the life of the family – almost all of the architect's relatives died in the Holocaust, whereas he survived, inter alia, thanks to the heroic help of sisters Jadwiga, Magdalena, and Maria née Mańkowski. The surname given to the Eibenschütz family enabled Tomasz Mańkowski and his mother to survive the war. In 1954, Mańkowski graduated from the Faculty of Architecture of the Cracow University of Technology and was soon employed at the University. He held various functions within its structures,

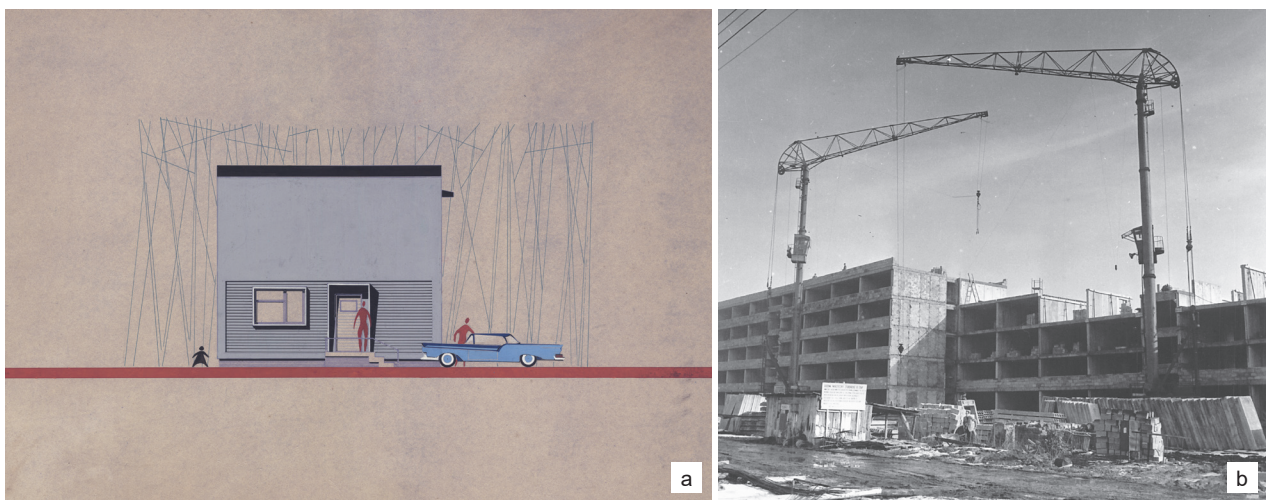


Fig. 2. "Tomasz Mańkowski. Architecture is the most important thing". Views of the arrangement fragments:

- a) colored façade of the prefabricated house from wood waste. 1957. Tomasz Mańkowski, collaboration: Jerzy Sztark, b) a photo of the Student Village of the AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków. 1960s (under construction). Tomasz Mańkowski with team

- II. 2. Wystawa „Tomasz Mańkowski. Architektura jest najważniejsza”, widoki fragmentów aranżacji: a) dom prefabrykowany z odpadów drzewnych. 1957. Tomasz Mańkowski, współpraca: Jerzy Sztark, b) Miasteczko Studenckie AGH w Krakowie. Lata 60. XX w. (w czasie budowy). Tomasz Mańkowski z zespołem



Fig. 3. “Tomasz Mańkowski. Architecture is the most important thing”. Views of the fragments of the arrangement, in the foreground: a) models of the Student Village of the AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków, b) a mock-up of the seat of Radio Kraków (photo by M. Łanowiecki, June 2022)

Il. 3. Wystawa „Tomasz Mańkowski. Architektura jest najważniejsza”, widoki fragmentów aranżacji, na pierwszym planie: a) makiety Miasteczka Studenckiego AGH w Krakowie, b) modelu siedziby Radia Kraków (fot. M. Łanowiecki, czerwiec 2022)

i.e. from 1963 he was head of the Department of Designing Residential Buildings, in the years 1964–1966 he was vice-dean for science, from 1970 – deputy director, and from 1980 – director of the Institute of Architectural Design. In 1980, the architect was awarded the title of full professor. During the period of the Polish People’s Republic, he was one of the few to maintain international professional contacts, and thanks to a scholarship received in the 1960s from the Foreign Students Scholarship program, he practiced with Louis Kahn for a short time. The exhibition presented many artifacts from Mańkowski’s private life, among other things, family photos, documents and press articles as well as drawing supplies.

Mańkowski’s design philosophy was reflected in the concept of the exhibition which was developed by architects Joanna Majczyk and Mikołaj Twardowski who were connected with the Faculty of Architecture of Wrocław University of Science and Technology. The logical, orthogonal spatial layout of the presentation was created by two main compositional axes – the first horizontal axis had a system of tables (with pull-out drawers) and tops on which spatial models of buildings were placed. The second vertical composition line included black and white as well as multicolored works from the period of the so-called October thaw, which were framed in white passe-partout and delicate black frames. The motif of nets and modules is repeated in the structures of flat spaces and harmonizes with the construction modules of the presented architecture. Geometric figures – circles, triangles, and rectangles – were included in the visual identification concept of the exhibition components. Thanks to the open composition, the background of the exhibition has become – as an equal partner – the greenery of the park adjacent to the Museum of Architecture (Fig. 4). The leading motif of transparency and permeability of the idea is emphasized by the materials used, i.e. tracing papers, translucent foils and details made of matt plexiglass. Multifaceted spatial

compositions which transmit light, color, and movement surprise with a variety of impressions. “Traditional” materials such as paper, wood and its derivatives, from which the original boards and models of buildings were made, were supplemented with a palette of metals which harmonized with the cold, subdued colors of the room. Small elements of equipment, i.e. boxes, brochures for visitors and mounting structures for the wall foils were prepared by means of the craft technique according to individual projects. The possibility of tactile perception was put on a par with visual impressions – in the drawers of stables in which additional exhibits and information contents were placed and structures with varied textures that can be touched were designed.



Fig. 4. “Tomasz Mańkowski. Architecture is the most important thing”. View of the fragment of the arrangement (photo by M. Łanowiecki, June 2022)

Il. 4. Wystawa „Tomasz Mańkowski. Architektura jest najważniejsza”, widok fragmentu aranżacji (fot. M. Łanowiecki, czerwiec 2022)

The exhibition is of high quality, both in terms of content and space. The broad context in which the creative activity of Tomasz Mańkowski is embedded, the straightforward (although professional) language and the variety of content have a great popularizing value, which is not often found in presentations of this type. We encourage

everyone who is interested in the history of contemporary Polish architecture [4, pp. 135, 136, 229, 230], changes in the techniques of project presentation, and the relationship between philosophy and architecture to visit the exhibition.

*Editorial board*

### References

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### Abstract

#### *"Tomasz Mańkowski. Architecture is the most important thing". The exhibition at the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław*

The subject of the review is the monographic exhibition entitled "Tomasz Mańkowski. Architecture is the most important thing", which has been presented at the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław since June and is on up to October 2022. Tomasz Mańkowski (1926–2012), the main hero of the exhibition, was an architect, professor and lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture of the Cracow University of Technology. His professional activity, covering a period of over fifty years, focused on the issues of geometry and form, whereas in the structural and functional layer on prefabrication and housing. The exhibition presents the artist's profile and his most important achievements, which were the result of independent or team work (including competition concepts from the period of the Gomułka Thaw, the Student Village of the Cracow University of Technology, a General Housing Program for Iraq, the Polish College in Przegorzały, the Village Children's Hospital in Rajsko near Oświęcim, Radio Kraków). Tomasz Mańkowski's architecture was presented against a broad background of social, political, and cultural events. The exhibition is distinguished not only by an interesting program concept which significantly contributes to the current state of knowledge about post-war architecture and urban planning, but also by an elegant arrangement.

**Key words:** Tomasz Mańkowski, Polish architecture, exhibition, Museum of Architecture in Wrocław

### Streszczenie

#### *„Tomasz Mańkowski. Architektura jest najważniejsza”. Wystawa w Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu*

Przedmiotem recenzji jest wystawa monograficzna zatytułowana „Tomasz Mańkowski. Architektura jest najważniejsza”, prezentowana od czerwca do października 2022 r. w Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu. Tomasz Mańkowski (1926–2012), główny bohater ekspozycji, był architektem, profesorem i wieloletnim wykładowcą Wydziału Architektury Politechniki Krakowskiej. Jego działalność zawodowa, obejmująca okres ponad pięćdziesięciu lat, skupiała się na zagadnieniach geometrii, formy, a w warstwie konstrukcyjno-funkcjonalnej – prefabrykacji i mieszkalnictwie. Na wystawie przedstawiono sylwetkę twórcy oraz jego najważniejsze dokonania, będące efektem pracy samodzielnej lub zespołowej (m.in.: koncepcje konkursowe z okresu odwilży gomułkowskiej, Miasteczko Studenckie Akademii Górniczo-Hutniczej w Krakowie, modelowy program mieszkalnictwa dla Iraku, Kolegium Polonijne w Przegorzałach, Wioskę Dziecięcą w Rajsku koło Oświęcimia, Radio Kraków). Architekturę Tomasza Mańkowskiego przedstawiono na szerokim tle społeczno-polityczno-kulturowym. Wystawę wyróżnia nie tylko interesująca koncepcja programowa, wnosząca istotny wkład w dotychczasowy stan wiedzy na temat architektury i urbanistyki powojennej, ale również elegancka aranżacja.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Tomasz Mańkowski, polska architektura, wystawa, Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu