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## MUSEUM BOOM CONTINUES: ON THE PHENOMENON OF MUSEUMS OF CONTEMPORARY ART FROM A CENTRAL EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

### Abstract

Since the 1990s Central Europe has been making up for the time lost in different spheres of life. The new century marked the beginning of the development process of museum infrastructure – a process that despite the economic crisis of the end of 2010s has been going on. Every year new museums open in both the historical and art sector, and especially those dealing with contemporary art. Nonexistent before 1989, museums of contemporary art constitute a new type of institution in the region. Their role is not only to collect the latest art and performance, but also to make connections between art and life. Considering the low regard of contemporary art in public life, the museum boom in the field of contemporary art is indeed a phenomenon. In every larger city in Poland, as well as in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, attempts are being made towards the creation of a museum or centre of contemporary art.

The aim of this article is to present and discuss the phenomenon of building new art museums in Central Europe, with emphasis on the mechanisms of their creation and local specificities. This museum-building frenzy that started in Central Europe at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be considered as part of the worldwide museum building boom. Various aspects of the museum boom are discussed in several points: 1) the grand vision for Warsaw – the desire to become an icon, 2) the political vision for museums, 3) contemporary art in the regions, 4) new spaces for old museums, 5) private patronage and non-governmental organisations.

Central European institutions that were established during this period meet the expectations of cultural circles, politicians and patrons. In most cases, the stories of building the museums echo the Western fashion for icons and the tendency to adapt post-industrial architecture for the purposes of art.

**SŁOWA KLUCZE:** muzealny boom, muzea sztuki współczesnej, Europa Środkowa

**KEY WORDS:** museum boom, museums of contemporary art, Central Europe

## Introduction

There are moments in history when the accumulation of museum projects and newly constructed buildings is exceptionally high and are widely referred to as the ‘museum age’. Although a museum is an institution that holds, conserves, develops and researches its collection and organises exhibitions, it is usually the new building that is associated with the phenomenon. In Central Europe the museum age started in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while globally it has been running since at least 1980s. Designing a museum constitutes one of the most prestigious commissions for an architect. Over the decades a number of ennobling terms describing museums were coined; among them temples<sup>1</sup> and cathedrals<sup>2</sup> are most commonly used<sup>3</sup>. With the increase in museum audiences, some people are suggesting that the museums have taken on the role of church<sup>4</sup>. It is a risky thesis; nevertheless museums have become lively destinations where many are spending their leisure-time.

Since the 1990s Central Europe has been making for the time lost in various spheres of life. The new century marked the beginning of the development process of museum infrastructure – a process that despite the economic crisis of the end of 2010s has been on going. Every year there are new museum openings in both the historical and art museum sector, especially those dealing with contemporary art. The former is a result of official historical policies and is a basis for political disputes for the interpretation of history (particularly the most recent one), triggering strong emotions fuelled by heated discussions in the media that has encouraged many to visit museums in increasing numbers. Numerically, art museums equal their historical counterparts and the social role that these institutions can play is not limited to the mere presentation of art objects.

The aim of this article is to present and discuss the phenomenon of building new art museums in Central Europe, especially the mechanisms of their creation and local specificities. This museum building frenzy that started in Central Europe at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be considered part of the worldwide museum building boom. Various aspects of the museum boom will be discussed through several points: 1) the grand vision for Warsaw – the desire to become an icon, 2) political vision for museums, 3) contemporary art in the regions, 4) new spaces for old museums, 5) private patronage and non-governmental organisations. Central European institutions that were established during this period meet expectations of cultural circles, politicians and patrons. In most cases history of building the museums echoes

<sup>1</sup> The term was popularised after Karl Friedrich Schinkel. See chapter 6 *The Museum: Temple of Art* [in:] T. Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and Its Institutions*, Princetown 1990.

<sup>2</sup> J. Pedro Lorente used this term in the title of his book: *Cathedrals of Urban Modernity. The First Museums of Contemporary Art 1800–1930*, Farnham 1998.

<sup>3</sup> On the other pole there were comparisons to cemeteries (F.T. Marinetti, *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism*, “Le Figaro”, Paris, February 20, 1909) and mausoleums (T. Adorno, *Valéry Proust Museum* [in:] *Prisms*, trans. S. and Sh. Weber, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1988, p. 175).

<sup>4</sup> J. Farago, *Why museums are the new churches*, BBC, 16 July 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150716-why-museums-are-the-new-churches> [accessed: 31.08.2015].

the Western fashion for icons and the tendency to adapt post-industrial architecture for the purposes of art.

## Methodology and literature

I have studied the development of the panorama of museums in Central Europe since 2006. Study trips have been my main method of acquiring data and information as they provide experiences involving museum building and its urban context, getting to know its collection and programme, as well as meetings with managers and people responsible for programme. Simultaneously I conduct research of books, articles and documents, follow current information and discussions in the media and museums' homepages. The focus of my research in Central Europe is limited to the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, namely the Visegrad Group member states, and is always presented in the context of European and non-European museums.

I have found that the subject of new museums in Central Europe have been discussed by other researchers only in single articles<sup>5</sup>. My comparative research of museums in the region has resulted in the publication of a book *Czas muzeów w Europie Środkowej. Muzea i centra sztuki współczesnej (1989–2014)* [Museum Age in Central Europe. Museums and centres of contemporary art (1989–2014)] which has a pioneer character. Museological publications refer mostly to world trends and discuss mainly museums from Western Europe, the United States and increasingly Asia. Central or Eastern Europe is rarely present in those publications, and if yes, it is only briefly mentioned.<sup>6</sup> The 2015 book *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum* edited by Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Piotr Piotrowski, is an exception. There is, however, a growing number of publications on specific museums and museum buildings, as well as literature devoted to specific subjects, museum education for example, but they usually do not go beyond the perspective of one country, and if they do, references are particular to Western, not Central Europe.

## Central European specificity

Central Europe is a political, economic, social and cultural construct. The most widely referred to concept of Central Europe is Mitteleuropa<sup>7</sup> which according to various authors encompassed Germany, Switzerland and Austria, and further on: Poland,

<sup>5</sup> M. Tali, L. Pierantoni, *New art museums in Central and Eastern Europe and the ideologies of urban space production*, "Cultural Trends" 2011, No. 20:2, p. 167–182; M. Székely, *Contemporary Art Museums in Central Europe. Between International Discourse and Nation (Re)building Strategies*, "ÉTUDES DU CEFRES" 2014, No. 17.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. in: J. Pedro Lorente, *The Museums of Contemporary Art. Nation and Development*, Farnham 2011.

<sup>7</sup> The most commonly used was introduced by Friedrich Naumann in his 1915 book *Mitteleuropa*.

Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. Some definitions went even further to include Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg as well as parts of France, Italy and Yugoslavia<sup>8</sup>. The core idea of the concept was unification of Central Europe under the leadership of Germany and Austria. Regardless political references Central Europe is best characterised on the ground of intangible features of climate and spirituality. Milan Kundera in his famous essay *The Tragedy of Central Europe*, says explicitly: “Central Europe is not a state: it is a culture or a fate. Its borders are imaginary and must be drawn and redrawn with each new historical situation”<sup>9</sup>. Culture distinguishes this region both from the West and from the East. Although many authors have discussed the notion of Central Europe on various grounds<sup>10</sup>, for me Kundera’s text remains the most compact and accurate lecture on the subject. He puts specificity of geopolitics and culture in this telling paragraph:

The history of the Poles, the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Hungarians has been turbulent and fragmented. Their traditions of statehood have been weaker and less continuous than those of the larger European nations. Boxed in by the Germans on one side and the Russians on the other, the nations of Central Europe have used up their strength in the struggle to survive and to preserve their languages. Since they have never been entirely integrated into the consciousness of Europe, they have remained the least known and the most fragile part of the West – hidden, even further, by the curtain of their strange and scarcely accessible languages<sup>11</sup>.

After the fall of communism three countries of the region started to cooperate within the frame of the Visegrad Group established in 1991 by Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary (since 1993 comprising the Czech Republic and Slovakia) with major goal to gain membership in the NATO and the European Union, to build European security and safeguard cultural community. Historical experience as well as cooperation between these states especially on the grounds of culture justifies my choice to look at Central Europe through the prism of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

<sup>8</sup> J. Elvert, *Manowce “Mitteleuropy”*. *Niemieckie koncepcje nowego kształtu Europy w okresie międzywojennym* [in:] J. Kłoczowski and S. Łukasiewicz (eds.), *O nowy kształt Europy. XX-wieczne koncepcje federalistyczne w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej i ich implikacje dla dyskusji o przyszłości Europy*, Lublin 2003, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> M. Kundera, *The Tragedy of Central Europe*, “New York Review of Books”, 26 April 1984, Vol. 31, No. 7, translated from the French by E. White, [http://www.ises.hu/webimages/files/Kundera\\_tragedy\\_of\\_Central\\_Europe.pdf](http://www.ises.hu/webimages/files/Kundera_tragedy_of_Central_Europe.pdf) [accessed: 28.11.2015].

<sup>10</sup> Including: György Konrád, Václav Havel, Czesław Miłosz, Daniło Kis, Mihály Vajda, Milan Šimečka, Oskar Halecki, Jenő Szűcs, Timothy Garton Ash, Gerard Delanty, Erhard Busek, Emil Brix, Jacek Purchla, Henryk Samsonowicz, Antoni Podraza, Csaba G. Kiss. Piotr S. Wandycz.

<sup>11</sup> M. Kundera, *op. cit.*

## Panorama of museums in Central Europe after 1989

Absent before 1989, museums of contemporary art constitute a new type of institution in the region. Their role is not only to collect the newest art and stage exhibitions, but also to make connections between art and life – current topics not necessarily related to art<sup>12</sup>. This is not an easy task due to the lack of specialised institutions and a poor understanding for contemporary art generally. Considering the low regard of contemporary art in public life, the museum boom in the field of contemporary art is indeed a phenomenon. In every large city in Poland, as well as in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, there have been attempts made towards the creation of a museum or centre of contemporary art. In some places these institutions have become part of political wrangling and a fight for symbolic capital. The desire for such museums is becoming widespread and such developments are already an integral part of the world museum building boom.

Poland has become the biggest construction site of museums and art centres in Central Europe, but one has to remember that it is the biggest country of the region where the negligence in museum infrastructure was statistically the highest<sup>13</sup>. Since the end of 1990s until 2015 approximately twenty institutions opened dealing with collecting and exhibiting contemporary art and there was a flurry of new buildings for already existing institutions. The term ‘icon’ has been the keyword in Polish museum debates. In Slovakia we may speak about a balance in public and non-public investments in art institutions. Hungary was the first country of the region where, even before 1989, the process of creating a museum of contemporary art was initiated. And the Czech Republic has the biggest museum dealing with 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in the region and one of the biggest in the world (20 000 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space).

The museum boom has been a time of the struggle for new infrastructure – for new buildings, new wings, modernisations and adaptations. It is still going on in the second decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century and the schedule of construction works includes openings planned till at least 2020. Collections form only the background of all deliberations. They were often begun as late as during the designing process of a building (e.g. collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw) or even after the opening of the new building (e.g. collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art MOCAM in Kraków). After the initial fascination with new buildings it was time to consider the important role that education would serve in these institutions. Museums started to both figuratively and literally open up to visitors; the museum experience gained a special meaning. Museums started to be considered as one of key centres of learning and for developing competences. Further, the visitor has become the subject of unprecedented interest – one is no longer anonymous, not only a student or an adult,

<sup>12</sup> H. Belting, *Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age* [in:] P. Weibel, A. Budensieg (eds.) *Contemporary Art and the Museum. A Global Perspective*, Ostfildern 2007; P. Piotrowski, *Muzeum krytyczne*, Poznań 2011.

<sup>13</sup> K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów w Europie Środkowej. Muzea i centra sztuki współczesnej (1989–2014)*, Kraków 2014, p. 92–95.

but a person with specific features and interests in response to which specialised programmes are created.

## Grand vision for Warsaw – the desire for an icon

References to symbolic, extraordinary, eye-catching architecture can be found in almost all competitions requirements for new museums in Poland, or at least in the statements of investors, politicians, journalists<sup>14</sup>. This architecture can offer a new branding to cities looking for recognition in the international arena. Amongst other Central European countries, only in Hungary was the desire for an iconic museum strongly voiced<sup>15</sup>. The fashion for icons came to Central Europe from the West where spectacular designs by so-called ‘starchitects’ have ignited the imagination of politicians, marketing specialists and citizens since at least 1980s<sup>16</sup>.

The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw was supposed to be the greatest museum project in Poland after 1989<sup>17</sup>. This newly constructed building is centrally located; a representative plot neighbouring the massive Palace of Culture and Science, considered a Stalinist symbol of the capital due to its considerable size and design. This museum aimed at bringing back prestige to the contemporary art in society and

<sup>14</sup> Apart from the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw which is given as an example below, iconic architecture was discussed referring to the Centre for Contemporary Art “Elektrownia” in Radom (jury of the architectural competition in justification of its decision referred to the icon, see: Nasza inwestycja – budowa siedziby MCSW Elektrownia, <http://www.elektrownia.art.pl/?nasza-inwestycja-budowa-siedziby-mcsw-elektrownia,205> [accessed: 28.11.2015], Silesian Museum in Katowice (jury of the architectural competition in justification of its decision referred to the symbolic feature of the design, see: press release *Mamy projekt nowego Muzeum Śląskiego*, Muzeum Śląskie w Katowicach, 15.06.2007), Contemporary Museum Wrocław (programme concept for the museum indicated that there should be built an attractive, extraordinary museum with recognisable shape, see: P. Krajewski, D. Monkiewicz, *MWW Muzeum Współczesne Wrocław. Koncepcja Programowa*, Wrocław 2007, p. 6, also the jury of the architectural competition in justification of its decision referred to the icon, see: *I nagroda / The 1 Prize* [in:] *Konkurs na opracowanie koncepcji architektonicznej Muzeum Sztuki Współczesnej we Wrocławiu / Tender for an Architectural Concept of Museum of Contemporary Art in Wrocław*, koncepcja P. Wilkosz, W. Stefanik, K. Woźniak, Wrocław [2008], p. 42), Museum of Art – ms<sup>2</sup> in Łódź (press release published by the museum referred to the landmark of the city, see: *Nowe miejsce dla sztuki*, ms<sup>2</sup>, 4.09.2007).

<sup>15</sup> According to new buildings planned for the City Park. See below.

<sup>16</sup> Publications on iconic value of architecture are numerous. Main titles comprise: Ch. Jencks, *The Iconic Building*, New York 2008; Ch. Jencks, *The Iconic Building Is Here to Stay* [in:] P. Dean (ed.), *Rethinking Representation*, “Hunch. The Berlage Institute Report” 2006/2007, No. 11 (Winter), Rotterdam; D. Sudjic, *Can We Still Believe in Iconic Buildings?*, “Prospect”, 19.06.2005, <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/2005/06/canwestillbelieveiniconicbuildings> [accessed: 18.10.2015]; D. Sudjic, *Landmarks of Hope and Glory*, “The Observer”, 26.10.2003, Arts, <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2003/oct/26/urbandesign.architecture> [accessed: 18.10.2015].

<sup>17</sup> I presented the history of the competition in: K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów...; A varsói Modern Művészeti Múzeum: a nagy várakozásról, a meghiúsult reményekről és a társadalmi kapcsolatok építéséről*, “Opus Mixtum II. A Centrart Egyesület Évkönyve” 2013, p. 36–47.

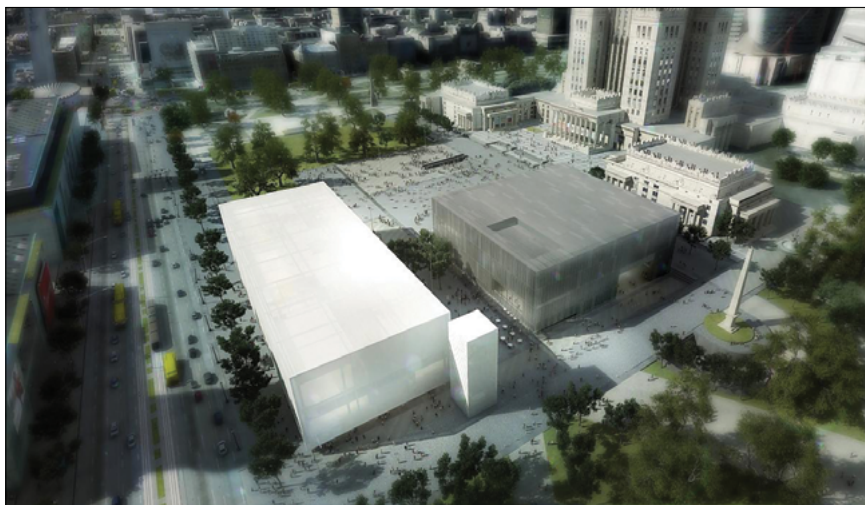
build strong bonds between art and society. An architectural competition announced in 2005 stimulated great expectations for a fairy-tale iconic building, a celebrity architect, and the realisation of a truly democratic museum and cultural turn towards modernity. In the regulations of architectural competition it was clearly stated: “Architecturally, the Museum building should offer a counterpoint to the Palace of Culture in terms of form and meaning, and the shape of its solid ought to become a new symbol of Warsaw, recognizable all over the world”<sup>18</sup>. Everyone expected a Polish Bilbao. The name of Spanish city was repeated endlessly in the public discourse, but conversations ignored a deeper reflection on the complex character of the transformation of the capital of the Basque country, where the sculpture-like silhouette of the Guggenheim Museum was only one of many elements. For many, the sobering moment came with the announcement of the results of architectural competition – first prize was awarded to the Swiss architect Christian Kerez for a minimalist, ‘quiet’ building. The choice favoured a design that did not attempt to visually compete with the nearby Palace, but suggested an expected architectural counterpoint.



III. 1. Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, arch. Christian Kerez, winning design from 2007

<sup>18</sup> *Rules and Regulations of the competition for an architectural design concept for the building of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw*, Office of the Mayor of the Capital City of Warsaw [2006], p. 7.

This design that divided the jury had the form of sublime box in the shape of letter ‘L’ with a fully glazed ground floor that optically lifted the higher storeys. The only decorative element of the edifice would be the sculpturous roof made of a row of halves of cylinders that was invisible from the street level. The choice of Kerez’s design created turmoil for many weeks and was widely covered by the media. The first director, Tadeusz Zielniewicz, and the Programme Council attempted to prevent the building becoming a realisation; however, in the end they ostentatiously expressed their resignation.



III. 2. Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, arch. Thomas Phifer and Partners, winning design from 2015

Both the educated elite and general public were polarised into either staunch opponents or enthusiastic supporters of the design with discussions and debates waged in the daily press and in Internet forums. At the core of this debate was the decision whether to make this museum an example of symbolic architecture that could become a poster landmark of Warsaw or to become a building that was ‘friendly’ to the art presented inside its walls. Protests did not bring decision to cancel selected design and the City of Warsaw signed agreement with the architect in 2008. This started a strenuous process of changes in the selected design. At the request of the investor, spatial disposition of the building was changed no less than three times. Delays, new demands, misunderstandings and mutual accusations finally lead to breakdown in relations between major stakeholders and in 2012 the city terminated the contract. This returned the project to its starting point. Immediately doubts were raised whether the museum project would be continued at all<sup>19</sup>. In 2014 a newly reformed set of rules

<sup>19</sup> K. Jagodzińska, *Współczesne wciąż tymczasowe / Contemporary still temporary*, “Herito. Dziedzictwo, Kultura, Współczesność / Heritage, Culture & the Present” 2012, No. 8, p. 151–157.



governing the selection of an architect for the building of the museum was set in place and the next competition for a museum and theatre complex was announced. This time iconic architecture was not included in the requirements, but strategies for connecting architecture with its context were paramount. In jury's justification for selecting the proposal by the architectural firm Thomas Phifer and Partners it was stated:

The architect's understanding of such ideas as openness, transparency, as well as the convincing simplicity of the solutions proposed, give hope that these buildings, so long awaited, will finally become a reality [...] By means of the values they communicate and the attitudes they reinforce, standing in stark contrast to the monumental character and the architectural vanity of the neighbouring Palace of Culture, they will become the symbol of contemporary Warsaw<sup>20</sup>.

## Political vision for museums

Building a museum often has a political dimension. Politicians are mostly interested in historical museums, but art museums are also in the spotlight, especially during official openings and the cutting of ribbons. The lack of engagement in the construction process from authorities may also be interpreted in the political context<sup>21</sup>. For example, the government of Hungary got involved in two major cultural/museum projects in Budapest: first the building the Palace of Arts and then the creation of the museum district in the City Park. However, in order to make these buildings a reality was a process that met with severe criticism.

The museum of contemporary art was based on an international collection assembled by Irene and Peter Ludwig, renown art collectors from Germany<sup>22</sup>. The museum as an independent institution was established in 1996, but the collection had been donated to the Hungarian state by 1989 and was then managed by the Hungarian National Gallery (HNG). Since 1991 works were on view in the Building A of the former Royal Palace, right next to the HNG. In 2005 the museum changed its lo-

<sup>20</sup> Ogłoszenie wyników procedury wyłonienia architekta, Warszawa 21.07.2014, <http://artmuseum.pl/pl/text/ogloszenie-wynikow-konkursu> [accessed: 2.09.2015].

<sup>21</sup> E.g. in Bratislava where people of culture for years postulated creation of kunsthalle (see: *Bude v Bratislave Kunsthalle? Rozhovor s Richardom Gregorom*, "Flash Art CZ/SK", December 2007 – May 2008; Z. Kizáková, *Metropola bez Kunsthalle nie je metropola*, "kultura.pravda.sk", 21.04.2010, <http://kultura.pravda.sk/galeria/clanok/34014-metropola-bez-kunsthalle-nie-je-metropola/> [accessed: 28.11.2015]; *Dvadsať Rokov od Nežnej Neprebehlo: Kunsthalle*, <http://sites.google.com/site/dvadsatrokovodnezej/rozne/fakty/kauzu/kunsthalle> [accessed: 28.11.2015]. History of the MoMA in Warsaw has had strong political context.

<sup>22</sup> History of the Ludwig Museum and construction process of the Palace of Arts is presented in my book: K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów...*, p. 233–243, 528–535. See also: K. Néray, *Selected Works from the Collection*, Budapest 2000 (English insert from 2003); K. Néray, *The Social Role of Contemporary Art and the Ludwig Phenomenon*, paper presented at the AICA congress *Culture and Politics* in Bratislava, November 1998, manuscript.

cation with a new premise in the Palace of Arts that offered a larger exhibition space and modern infrastructure, but robbed the museum of its prestigious spot on the main touristic route.



III. 3. Former Royal Palace housing the Hungarian Gallery of Art and the Ludwig Museum until 2005, Budapest, photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

Palace of Arts occupies central location in the new district of Budapest – Millennium City Center. It houses the Bartók National Concert Hall, Festival Theatre and the Ludwig Museum. The first phase of investment involved the building in 2002–2004 of the cultural complex: a proposed multifunctional building and convention centre (the latter were never built) connecting to the Hungarian National Theatre, while the second phase included two hotels and two office buildings. However, the Palace of Arts was designed without reflection and consideration of the future tenants and their needs. The ‘museum part’ remained the most enigmatic. Initially investors wanted to allocate it to the auction houses and smaller galleries. Next it was proposed that it would house a new institution – Museum of Modern Hungarian Art (Modern Magyar Művészeti Múzeum, 4M). It became obvious that there was no clear vision about possible programme and collection. Hungarian museologists and art historians were resentful of the new institution being planned behind the closed door of the Prime Minister, with decisions being made without consultation with the experts in the field. Further, there were suggestions of locating private collections in the building, then the collection of HNG (which proved to be too big for this space), and

finally the Ludwig Museum was chosen. It was however already too late to fully adjust the building to the needs of collection and programme of this institution. Besides the many deficiencies of the building, the museum's location outside the city centre where one needs to travel intentionally, became increasingly problematic. Adding to this dilemma, part of the planned investment that included the convention centre which was supposed to develop attendance figures was never realised.



Ill. 4. Ludwig Museum in the Palace of Arts, Budapest, arch. Zoboki Demeter & Associates Architects, opened in 2005, photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

In 2011 the planning of the grand museum district in the centre of Budapest commenced<sup>23</sup>. The first step involved the formal merging of two biggest art museums in Hungary – the Museum of Fine Arts and the Hungarian National Gallery. This union aimed to present a collection designed to abolish the division between Hungarian and international collections. The envisaged museum district is to encompass buildings around representative Heroes Square and the construction process is under the responsibility of the specially employed commissioner (successful director of the Museum of Fine Arts). This vision was immediately considered unrealistic, especial-

<sup>23</sup> History of the museum district is presented in my book: K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów...*, p. 243–247; LIGET BUDAPEST <http://ligetbudapest.org/eng/> [accessed: 18.10.2015].

ly due to the financial situation in Hungary, and plans were met with strong criticism from the cultural milieu.

Nonetheless in 2013 the competition for the idea and spatial disposition of the future museum district in and around the City Park (where buildings of the Museum of Fine Arts and Mücsarnok – kunsthalle – are located) was announced, and in 2014 the international architectural competition for five new museum buildings: the Museum of Ethnography, the House of Hungarian Music, the New National Gallery–Ludwig Museum, the FotoMuzeum Budapest and the Museum of Hungarian Architecture. The investment known under the name Liget Budapest Project was also considered as a revitalisation of the whole park and institutions within. In the first round of the competition it was impossible to announce the winner of the building for the New National Gallery–Ludwig Museum. In 2015 two designs were selected, one by the Norwegian firm Snøhetta and the second from the Japanese SANAA, both guaranteeing an iconic value for the city. Ambitious agenda projects are set for 2016 with the commencement of construction works, and the opening is planned for 2018<sup>24</sup>.



III. 5. New National Gallery–Ludwig Museum, Budapest, design by Snøhetta, 2015

## Contemporary art in the regions

Collections initiated by the Ministry of Culture in Poland became the driving force for establishing new institutions and constructing innovative buildings. In 2004 the Polish cultural policy was directed at contemporary art and the Ministerial programme

<sup>24</sup> LIGET BUDAPEST <http://ligetbudapest.org/eng/index.php?page=page&id=82> [accessed: 18.10.2015].

the “Signs of the Time” became the remedy for long-term negligence in the field of collecting contemporary art<sup>25</sup>. A network of associations and foundations was established within the programme whose aim was to collect and promote contemporary art, and in the end search for permanent places of exhibiting. In total fifteen such associations and collections were established. The programme itself was soon cancelled (2008), however, the majority of associations successfully continue their activity.

The first art centre – the fruit of the programme – was opened in Toruń under the name Centre of Contemporary Art “Znaki Czasu” [Signs of the Time]. It was opened in 2008 as the first building in contemporary Poland constructed from scratch especially for the purpose of housing contemporary art. In 2010, an association in Wrocław led to realisation of the Contemporary Museum. Two years earlier, the results of the architectural competition for the new building had been announced. According to initial plans, it was supposed to be erected by 2016 when the city will hold the title of the European Capital of Culture; however, due to the lack of funds realisation of the building was postponed. Since 2011 the museum has been operating in a temporary site – an air raid shelter from World War II. Also in Kraków the foundation established within the “Signs of the Time” programme initiated creation of the Museum of Contemporary Art MOCAK, which was opened in 2010 in a building merging the historical walls of the production halls of the Schindler’s Factory and modern architecture. Finally, due to the political struggle between the mayor of the city and marshal of the Małopolska region over where the museum would be built and who would run it, the collection built within the “Signs of the Time” did not find its place in the new building.<sup>26</sup> In 2013 TRAF0 contemporary art centre was opened in Szczecin that was also initiated within the frames of the “Signs of the Time” programme, but finally not connected to the association and its collection<sup>27</sup>.

Polish programme was inspired by the French programme supporting contemporary art in the regions Fonds régionaux d’art contemporain (Regional Funds for Contemporary Art, in short FRAC) which was introduced in 1982<sup>28</sup>. In total twenty two FRAC’s were established, one in each department. But French programme differs from its Polish counterpart in its key organisational aspect as funding from public sources is guaranteed in France, while Polish associations have to secure funding on their own, often resulting as a barrier for further activities.

<sup>25</sup> History of “The Signs of the Time” programme is presented in a separate chapter in my book: K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów...*, p. 301–319 and in my article *Zachęcenia do kolekcjonowania*, “Art & Business” 2010, No. 3, p. 16–23. See also: D. Jarecka, *Sztuka lokalna idzie do Zachęt*, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 3.02.2006; P. Sarzyński, *Zniechęcanie Zachęt*, “Polityka”, 6.09.2008 (No. 36).

<sup>26</sup> The museum did not decide to accept the collection as formally it would not be possible get possession of it, the collection would remain the deposit. Collection is still managed by the foundation established by regional authorities and for most of the year is kept in the storage.

<sup>27</sup> K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów...*, p. 472–476.

<sup>28</sup> See P. Urfalino, C. Vilkas, *Les Fonds régionaux d’art contemporain. La délégation du jugement esthétique*, Paris 1995; *Trésors publics. 20 ans de création dans les Fonds régionaux d’art contemporain*, S. Philippon (ed.), Paris 2003 (exhibition catalogue).



III. 6. Museum of Contemporary Art MOCAM, Kraków, arch. Claudio Nardi Architects, opened in 2010, photo by Rafał Sosin

## New spaces for old museums

Edifices are constructed not only for newly established institutions, but also for those with long traditions whose previous homes no longer meet requirements of size and technical conditions. After sixty years spent in the temporary building Museum of Art in Łódź in 2008 gained its proper space for the presentation of the modern and contemporary art collection in the historical building of weaving mill in the former Izrael Kalmanowicz Poznański's textile factory. This huge 19<sup>th</sup>-century factory complex was converted into a shopping and entertainment mall called "Manufaktura" in the 2000s. Located there is a branch of the museum called ms<sup>2</sup> that on the one side neighbours the commercial complex, and on the other looks out to the row of workers townhouses which constitute one of the enclaves of poverty in the city, thus making the location a challenge for exhibiting works and running educational programme<sup>29</sup>.

The museum was opened in an adapted post-industrial building that perfectly illustrates a widespread trend in Poland and in the Czech Republic. This recycling of architecture offers the possibility to acquire a central location in a city as well as to take over identity of the old building. Post-industrial spaces are often a background for contemporary art. Here one of two strategies for exhibition rooms may be applied

<sup>29</sup> See D. Jarecka, *Sztuka otwarta na nowo*, "Gazeta Wyborcza", 24.11.2008, p. 18; K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów...*, p. 248–253.

– to introduce a white cube (like in ms<sup>2</sup> in Łódź) or to leave original walls, sometimes with production equipment what adds new meaning to the art.



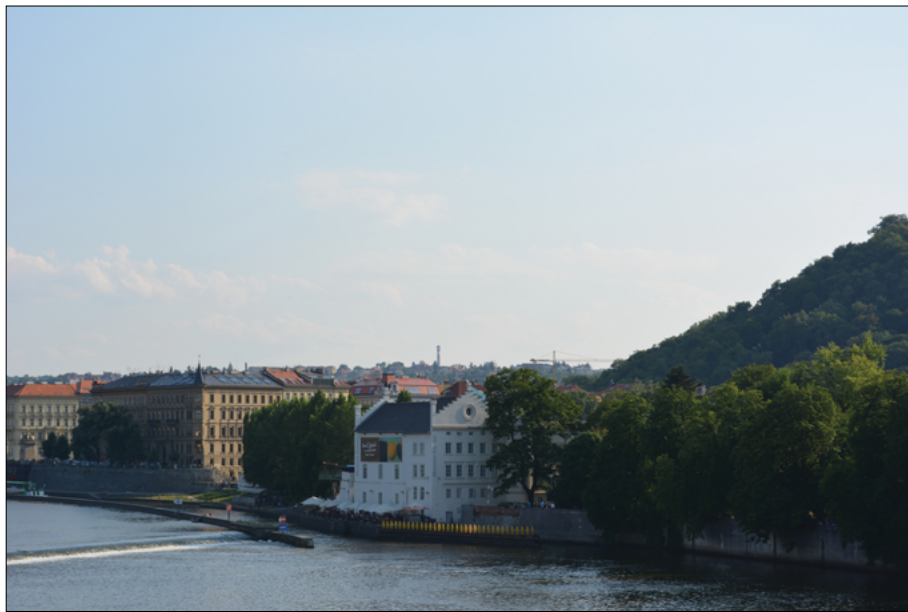
III. 7. Museum of Art ms2, Łódź, opened in 2008, photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

## Private patronage and non-governmental organisations

All the above-mentioned institutions are funded from public resources. Since 1990s there has been a slow increase in the number of private collections and collectors' with the ambition to seek permanent places of presentation for their art. In 1993 Meda Mládek (a Czechoslovakian collector who emigrated to the United States) decided to donate a part of the collection that she was assembling with her husband to the city of Prague which in return would offer a museum building to accommodate the collection. A former mill dating back to the Renaissance located in the centre of capital was selected to house the newly founded Museum Kampa (2001)<sup>30</sup>. Mládek's collection is one of the most important collections focused on Central European art

<sup>30</sup> See: J. Vlastník, *Meda Mládková*, "Travel in the Czech Republic" 2001, p. 36; P. Volf, *Obsession*, "The Heart of Europe Magazine" 2003, No. 3, p. 31; *Sbirky Musea Kampa / The Museum Kampa Collection*, J. Machalický, J. Lammel (eds.), [Prague] 2009; K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów...*, p. 414–421.

with key Czechoslovak artists<sup>31</sup>, alongside significant works by Polish, Hungarian and Yugoslavian artists created mostly in 1960s and 1970s.



III. 8. Museum Kampa, Prague, opened in 2001, photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

One year earlier Čunovo near Bratislava saw the opening of the Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum<sup>32</sup>. The Slovak gallery owner Vincent Polakovič and Dutch entrepreneur and art collector Gerard Meulensteen, whom Polakovič managed to convince to invest in a museum in Slovakia, established the museum. The museum building is reminiscent of a Roman galley and is picturesquely located on an artificial peninsula on the Danube. The size of the exhibition space soon proved to be insufficient to display the collection so the museum organised temporary exhibitions only. In 2014 a new wing was opened that finally allows presentation of both Meulensteen's collection and collection assembled by the museum.

In Poland an attempt to build a private museum was taken by Grażyna Kulczyk, a millionaire, art collector, owner of the Stary Browar [Old Brewery] shopping mall and founder of the Art Stations Gallery operating within the complex. The museum was originally designed to be located underground, specifically under the park ad-

<sup>31</sup> 215 works by František Kupka, 17 sculptures by Otto Gutfreund and 240 works by Jiří Kolář. The art of Jan and Meda Mládek, <http://www.museumkampa.com/en/The-Jan-and-Meda-Mladek-Collection-120.htm> [accessed: 28.11.2015].

<sup>32</sup> See: K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów...*, p. 510–515; *Múzeum moderného umenia Danubiana*, P. Žalman (ed.), 2001; L. Petránký, *Ako sa to začalo...*, “Art Revue” 2000, No. 1.



joining the shopping mall. The famous architect Tadao Andō was ready to design the edifice to house Kulczyk's collection, yet the project was cancelled due to a lack of financial support from the European Union funds<sup>33</sup>.



Ill. 9. Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum, Čunovo, arch. Peter Žalman, opened in 2000, photo by Danubiana

Individuals not only invest in permanent spaces for presentation of art, they also create art centres. In 2008 Leoš Válka, Czech entrepreneur in the field of construction and interior design, opened the Centre for Contemporary Art DOX in Prague – one of the main Czech centres for art<sup>34</sup>. In Poland, in 2003 Andrzej Walka, co-founder of one of the biggest Polish enterprises in construction industry, established a private gallery Atlas Sztuki in Łódź<sup>35</sup>. Private initiatives of this kind are numerous, however, their number is still much smaller than the private institutions.

Apart from public and private institutions there is a small number of art centres run by associations and foundations. One of the most important in Poland is the Wyspa [Island] Institute of Art located in a former school of shipbuilding in the Gdańsk Shipyard. The programme of Wyspa is strongly rooted in society, with the view that contemporary art is only a point of departure for taking a stand on important social issues. In Slovakia such socially engaged institution can be found in Žilina – Stanica, a space for art and performative activities located at the still functioning railway station.

<sup>33</sup> I. Torbicka, *Kolekcjonerka sztuki – Rozmowa z Grażyną Kulczyk*, Gazeta.pl Poznań, 15.02.2007, <http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/1,36000,3920585.html> [accessed: 18.10.2015]; I. Torbicka, *Grażyna Kulczyk nie zbuduje muzeum!*, Gazeta.pl Poznań, 9.10.2009, [http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/1,36001,7126194,Grazyna\\_Kulczyk\\_nie\\_zbuduje\\_muzeum\\_.html](http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/1,36001,7126194,Grazyna_Kulczyk_nie_zbuduje_muzeum_.html) [accessed: 18.10.2015].

<sup>34</sup> See: K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów...*, p. 402–405; *DOX Centrum současného umění / Centre for Contemporary Art – Start*, exhibition catalogue *Vítejte v kapitalismu!*, 19.10.2008–8.02.2009, Praha 2008; *DOX, Centrum současného umění, architektury a designu*, “Architekt” 2007, No. 9; J. Skřivánek, *Jak se staví galerie*, “Art+Antiques”, June 2008.

<sup>35</sup> See: K. Jagodzińska, *Czas muzeów...*, p. 450–452.



III. 10. Centre for Contemporary Art DOX, Prague, opened in 2008, photo by Katarzyna Jagodzińska

## Museum phenomenon and its challenges

The number of new museum projects, new institutions and newly built edifices for contemporary art in Central Europe can be seen as significantly contributing to the current museum building phenomenon. Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary share common historical experiences that from the 1990s paved the way to the development of infrastructure for art collections. The explosion of museums in Central Europe may illustrate the growing interest in promoting cultural ventures in democratic states and the growing consciousness of authorities and private patrons of the necessity to invest in culture. When planning and designing these new institutions, investors and architects are following a worldwide trend by looking to the West for their inspiration. Reaching out for patterns to the West is referred to the interrupted tradition of building new edifices for art during the Communism era.

New museums and buildings increase what culture has to offer, as these spaces are places for the presentation of art, improve conditions for storing art that allows for further development of the collection, expansion of educational offerings and provides the visitor with an enhanced aesthetic experience. This is a clear example of Central European museums following the trend that has been present in Western countries for several years of shifting the focusing on the collection (protection, conservation) to the visitor (access, education, leisure time activity). Formally a museum does not exist without a collection, but according to the current philosophy it also does not exist without a visitor. Museums have become fashionable. Although muse-

ums of art in Central Europe cannot reach the attendance numbers recorded by historical museums (Museum of the Warsaw Uprising in Warsaw, Schindler's Factory and Rynek Underground in Krakow, Terror Háza in Budapest) or centres of science (Copernicus Science Centre in Warsaw, Techmania in Pilsen), many of them have started to play the role of meeting places where one spends free time, that goes beyond attending an exhibition.

This impressive number of new museums constitutes a challenge at many levels. It is connected with the necessity of securing funding for current activities and programming. Equally important is the necessity to find their own formula for functioning in a given context, which would encourage the audience to come and use the space. Not only is the number of museums growing, other types of cultural institutions are also being built and (re)developed offering the audience similar experiences: theatres, philharmonic halls, opera houses, libraries, events arenas, cinemas. However, the question remains whether museums can remain topical and relevant to their audiences when competing for the attention and leisure time of the same target group.

This is because alongside the museum boom, modern societies have been changing, and the most important change from the perspective of cultural institutions regards the models of spending free time and consuming culture. Transformations in museums are the subject of a recent book by Graham Black called *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-first Century*. The author writes: "If museums do not change to respond flexibly and rapidly to changing public demand, that public will go elsewhere."<sup>36</sup> And public demand is the product of changes going on in the society at large. The most important ones from the perspective of museums are: rapid development of new technologies, changes in ways of communicating (as Black emphasises "people today increasingly refuse to be passive recipients of whatever governments, companies or cultural institutions such as museums offer"<sup>37</sup>), demographics (migration, growth of racial and ethnic diversity, especially in big cities) and generational changes. Black writes that 21<sup>st</sup>-century museums will seek to engage and involve their users, on-site and online, on a number of levels, including:

[...] engaging with users as active participants, contributors and collaborators on a learning journey together, rather than as passive recipients of museum wisdom; reaching out to build relationships and partner their communities; continuing to change and take on new meanings and roles as society continues to transform itself<sup>38</sup>.

Museums cannot ignore changing models of communication (e.g. social media) and the development of new technologies (e.g. smartphones, tablets, applications). Museums of the 21<sup>st</sup> century represent a model of an open museum with an increasing participatory programme. In terms of building relations with audiences, the museum is becoming a thriving and vital community centre. These developments in the museum sector are taking place on a global scale and Central European museums are

<sup>36</sup> G. Black, *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-first Century*, London–New York 2012, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

an inseparable part of these changes, no longer content to be merely followers of the worldwide museum building boom.

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