

BEATA MALINOWSKA-PETELENZ*

TEMPLES OF EUROPE AND THEIR CULTURAL CONTEXTS

ŚWIĄTYNIE EUROPY I ICH KULTUROWE KONTEKSTY

Abstract

European cathedrals and churches are not only a testament to faith but are also masterpieces of architecture and generators of the highest order of intellectual, emotional and aesthetic values. They are also important components of cultural contexts. The image of a temple often plays a part in the cultural space of a city – apart from the commonly understood religious function – it creates cities, it is a part of national memory, it strengthens social identity, in addition to fulfilling an aesthetic and marketing function. By remaining bound to each other, temples are a part of the multi-layered heritage of past generations.

Keywords: cathedral, literary references, aesthetic experience, historical memory, artistic manifesto

Streszczenie

Europejskie katedry i kościoły to nie tylko świadectwa wiary i hymny dla Stwórcy. To także fascynujące zabytki, arcydzieła sztuki architektonicznej, generatory najwyższej próby wartości intelektualnych, emocjonalnych i estetycznych, strażnicy poczucia tożsamości oraz istotne komponenty kontekstów kulturowych. Obraz świątyni nierzadko pełni – oprócz zrozumiałej dla wszystkich funkcji sakralnej – funkcje w przestrzeni kulturowej miasta: funkcję miastotwórczą, funkcję pamięci narodowej, funkcję wzmacniania społecznej tożsamości, funkcję estetyczną lub marketingową. Wszystkie te funkcje niewątpliwie są ze sobą w mniejszym lub większym stopniu sprzężone, składając się na wielowarstwowy spadek po poprzednich pokoleniach.

Słowa kluczowe: katedra, literackie odniesienia, przeżycie estetyczne, pamięć historyczna, manifest artystyczny

* Ph.D. Arch. Beata Malinowska-Petelenz, Institute of Urban Design, Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology.

The Myth of the Cathedral in Western European Culture

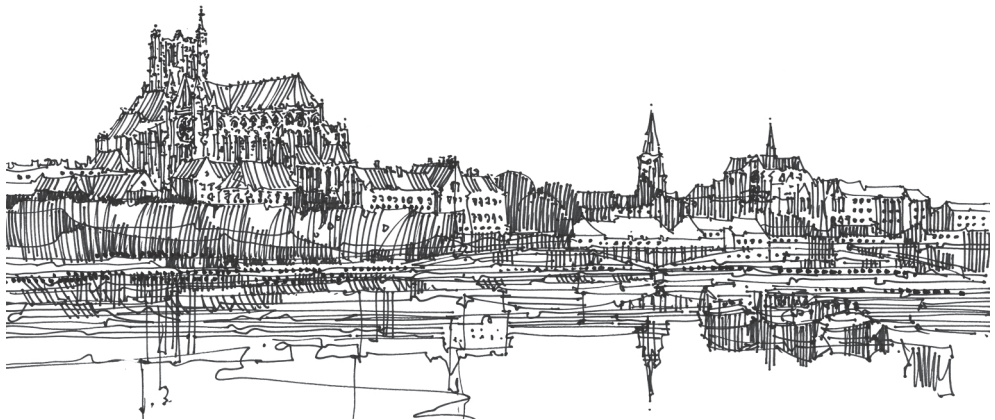
“I walked straight ahead along the Sevastopol Boulevard, amazed by the movement of people, vehicles and lights. (...) It started to rain. I passed the Conciergerie, a dour building as if from an illustration to Victor Hugo and found myself at the square, face to face with the illuminated cathedral of Notre-Dame. And then it happened”

Z. Herbert, *Kamień z katedry* in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*

To European culture, the gothic cathedral is an emblem, being an original spiritual and material entity that is representative of this part of the world. By asking the question about European identity, we irrevocably stand in the face of the phenomenon of gothic cathedrals.

To this day, the gothic cathedral constitutes an archetype of the Christian temple, its image appears in literature and art, sparking unfading emotions and interest in both visitors and the faithful. The madness of the form of gothic temples: the dynamism, slenderness and stone ornamentation often cause the so-called Stendahl syndrome in the more sensitive onlookers. Perhaps this is why the secretive expression of the tall pointed arch was, and still is, an inspiration to scientists, philosophers and scholars of culture, while in the dimension of myth and as multiplanar symbols still fascinate artists – painters, writers and poets, filmmakers and graphic artists.

Józef Tarnowski, when defining beauty in the context of architecture, writes: “Aesthetic value – beauty – stands at the top of the hierarchy that constitutes the aesthetic paradigm. It is a part of the beauty of form and the natural beauty of the employed material” [31, p. 370]. The pearls of gothic architecture endure not only simply as ‘perfect shells’ but also as pearls of religious art, that provide onlookers with space for their own spiritual joy. Roman Ingarden wrote that an aesthetic experience is not only the perception of the item itself, but also placing the onlooker into “a state of distinct emotion” [12]. In order to elicit such emotion, as Ingarden put it, “special qualities” are required. Andrzej Banach rounds out this



III. 1. Auxerre, panorama of the city (drawing by the author)

thought by stating that it is “immersing oneself fully in the feeling of fascination, to which we give ourselves in the present, for the feeling itself, without explanation and without a goal beside it” [1, p. 69].

It was the period of Romanticism that rehabilitated and became fascinated with the art of the Middle Ages. After all, it was Vasari who stated that the term ‘gothic’ meant nothing other than the style of the barbarian hordes that destroyed the Roman Empire. It was Viollet-le-Duc who published the ten-volume ‘Dictionary of French Architecture from the XI to the XVI century’ between 1854 and 1868. It was he who contributed so considerably to the study of the ‘pointed arch style’. “In gothic architecture [...] the aesthetic properties of a building become ennobled to a degree that was unknown before and has not been known since” [33, p. 29]. On the other hand, the gothic cathedral is, in Panofsky’s view, an image of scholastic dispute. The mature scholars of the XIII century developed a model of the logical justification of religious truths, typical of Medieval philosophy, which was based on the precise use of a predetermined procedure of intellectual discussion and the solving of disputes; Panofsky saw in the structure of the cathedral – in the ribs, pillars and vaults – the equivalent of a scholastic summa [24].



III. 2. The cathedral in Auxerre (drawing by the author)

The cathedral thus became an inspiration. A large number of various texts were written in this manner, indicating the numerous common qualities in the manner in which cathedrals were described – this became a part of the overall heritage of European humanities.

Goethe – to whom discovering the massive, unfinished form of the Strasbourg Cathedral was a shock – wrote about his fascination with the church. The text ‘Von deutscher Baukunst’ (first published anonymously in the year 1772, only to be republished a year later in the manifesto of the Sturm und Drang movement – ‘Von deutscher Art und Kunst’) became a record of that experience. Goethe elevated the gothic style to the rank of a national style, claiming that it was distinctly German and underscoring its independency from classical tradition. The aesthetic of the poet, strongly rooted and formed on the basis of cold classicism, would evolve in the face of the Cathedral of Cologne into a ceaseless and enthusiastic romantic fascination. Goethe not only discovered the beauty of gothic cathedrals for the romantics but also showed a new manner of recording an aesthetic experience, converting its image into a symbol and a literary metaphor [8, p. 196].

The rich traditions of depicting the gothic temple, the history of its literary ecphrases and, at the same time, the unending cultural context for ‘cathedral’ literature could be found not only in international literature but also in that of Poland. The sources of inspiration were numerous, among these were the fashionable *Grand Tours* – voyages undertaken under the influence of a fascination with architecture – which resulted in profuse amounts of memoirs and essays. Literary references to gothic cathedrals can be found in the most famous epic panorama of Paris by Victor Hugo – which is “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” – a tribute to cathedrals and the emotions that dwell within, whilst at the same time being the mother novel of all other stories with gothic churches in the background. Among these, we can also count the canonical works of Marcel Proust – “In search of lost time” and Joris-Karl Huysmans – “En route”.

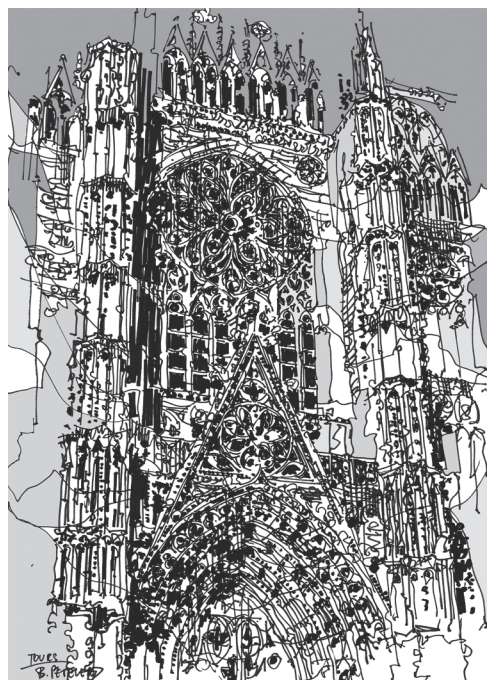
In Polish literature, the topos of the cathedral was particularly present in the fevered letters that Stanisław Wyspiański wrote during his travels when he happened to visit French cathedrals in 1890, in the letters of Zygmunt Krasiński (*Letters to father*), in the poems of Julian Przyboś (*Równanie serca* or *Narzędzie ze światła*), Tadeusz Śliwiak (*Katedra w Chartres*), Mieczysław Jastrun (*Chartres, Notre Dame*), as well as Adam Zagajewski (*Goty*). “...I sat in Paris for a month. I walked there under the black and silver Notre-Dame cathedral, looked at the maws of Medieval chimeras, which bent their necks to get a sip of heaven. I said to myself: ‘I am not going to write a poem about it...’ – I was afraid of this cathedral, that it might mock me, crush me” wrote Tadeusz Różewicz (*Zostanie po mnie pusty pokój*), to whom the cathedral had an altogether different meaning. It was included by the poet in the post-war world that lay in the rubble of values. The temple is not seen as an existing building but as one which needs to be rebuilt inside oneself, regaining values¹. In the case of Zbigniew Herbert, his passion was born when he visited the temple in Chartres. It was then that he came upon the idea to see all of the most important French cathedrals and transcend their metaphysics and symbolism, which he describes in the sketch ‘A Stone from a Cathedral’. “The greatness of these buildings had a psychological effect – these grand, overpowering giants reduced us to the size of a grain of sand, of minuscule dust attached to the robes of the Lord”, wrote Ryszard Kapuściński in *Lapidarium III*.

The romantic depictions of cathedrals by Schinkel (‘Gothic Cathedral and the Imperial Palace’) [23, p. 265] tied in with the landscape are widely known, as are the works of Caspar David Friedrich, whose gothic cathedrals are depicted as majestic buildings, standing far away and eliciting a feeling of being unreachable, dreamy visions². Cathedrals were depicted by the

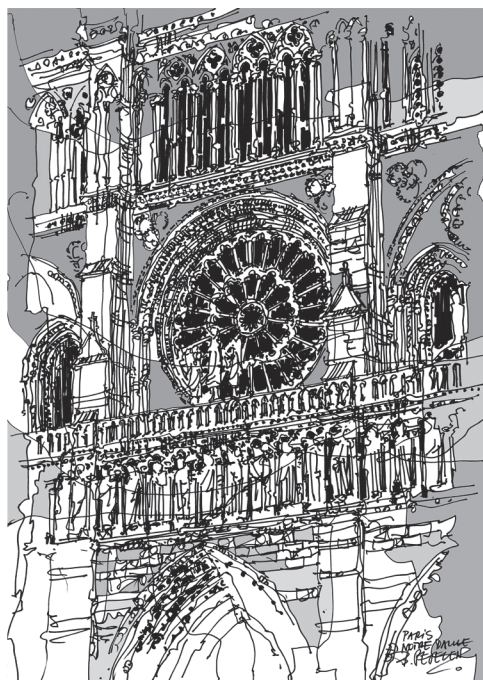
¹ Look further: A. Manecka, *Bliski gotyk*, http://rcin.org.pl/Content/51703/WA248_68055_P-1-2524_manecka-bliski.pdf (access: 13.12.2015, p. 107).

² Gothicism developed in Europe during the period of pre-romanticism, exhibiting a dark mood and a fascination with passing. The aesthetics of death, fear and melancholy that was typical of Gothicism

greatest artists – John Constable and William Turner. Camille Corot made a painting of the cathedral in Chartres, while Gustav Courbet painted the cathedral in Frankfurt. Cathedrals were also the subject of paintings by impressionists and postimpressionists. To Monet, the Rouen cathedral served as a subject of studying light, shadow and their effect on colour thirty times. The Viennese Stephansdom was depicted many times in the watercolours of Rudolf von Alt, whose works now fill the walls of the Belvedere; the same cathedral also features in the works of the Venetian-born Antonio de Pian.



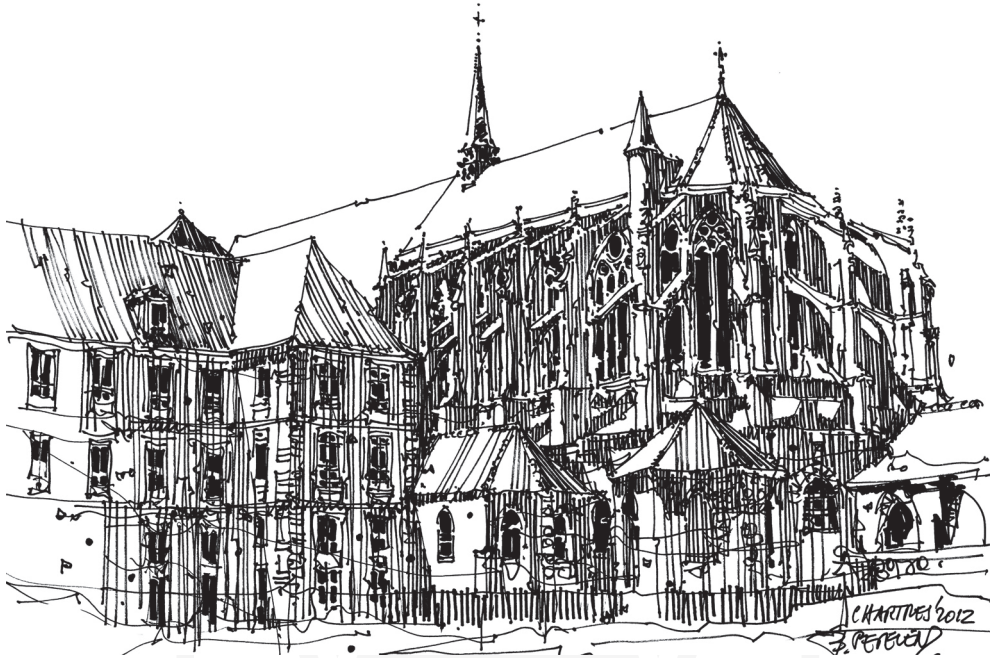
III. 3. The facade of the Tours cathedral (drawings by the author)



III. 4. The facade of the Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris (drawings by the author)

The most often painted Parisian temple is Notre-Dame cathedral – it was systematically depicted by Albert Lebourg, Paul Signac and Georges Stein, as well as by Henri Matisse. It was also painted by the Polish artists Józef Pankiewicz, Stanisław Kamocki and Jan Szancenbach in the “Landscape by night”. It was also painted by Vincent van Gogh, in a gloomy sketch along with Parisian roofs. Zdzisław Beksiński made paintings of modern cathedrals – twin-towered monstrosities with groups of buttresses, a gothic style level division and detail in the form of a rosette window – overflowing with unreal elements, pried from nightmarish dreams, they die, bringing sadness and a primal fear. Painted with thin streaks of paint, delicate strokes of the brush, woven from venous structural strands, at times barely visible through the fog and the clouds, they crumble and perish in the air.

strongly inspired the imaginations of the initiators of the Sturm und Drang period, as well as those of Romanticism later on [in:] *Klasycy sztuki*, vol. 13 *Friedrich*, ed. M. Pietkiewicz, Warszawa 2006.



III. 5. The apse of the Saint-Pierre church in Chartres (drawing by the author)

The Polish filmmaker and digital artist Tomasz Bagiński created a seven-minute animated short film called *The Cathedral* on the basis of a short story “Cathedral” by Jacek Dukaj – it is teeming with metaphors and was nominated in the American Academy Awards in 2002. His cathedral – similar to the churches from the turpistic paintings of Beksiński – grown into its environment, cruel and hungering, devours everyone who dares to come close to it. When a human life ends, the life of the temple becomes extended. “The phenomenon of Bagiński’s work lies in the skilful combination of the poetics of science fiction with a religious, cultural and civilizational symbol (as this architectural monument can bring to mind associations with some fort of totalitarianism) that is rooted in European culture” [15]. Bagiński deliberately uses and exploits the visual archetype of the cathedral – we do not know which exact cathedral it might be, but its visual elements cannot be mistaken with anything else.

Symbols of Cities – Symbols of Beauty – Symbols of Domination

It is the factor of beauty which usually causes a building to become a symbol of a location. In Europe, we can find wondrous and monumental temples, which, due to the wide spectrum of their aesthetic impact and their social functions, have become the symbols of the cities in which they are located. It is enough to mention the grand French and Italian cathedrals,



III. 6. Venice – the square and basilica of St. Mark (drawing by the author)

the churches of Venice, Rome, Prague, Regensburg, Vienna and numerous other cities – these buildings, which strongly affect our emotions, strongly define public spaces at the same time – squares and streets – places which concentrate upon themselves the attention of tourists.

The cathedral of Cologne can serve as a model example of this (III. 8, 9) its construction took over 600 years, including periods of inactivity. The temple, along with the building of the train station and the Hohenzollern bridge, creates a distinct symbol of the city, printed on the covers of guides, postcards and souvenirs. It is one of the most recognisable symbols of Cologne and of Germany itself. Wojciech Kosiński writes “cathedral in Cologne on the Rhine, powerful and important in the sense of urban design, has become an example of building over entire centuries while upholding of the gothic aesthetic trend despite the surrounding stylistic evolution [17, p. 131]. “The cathedral had been under construction for a couple of centuries, yet when the romanticism of the XIX century brought with it a love of gothic, the call to finish the cathedral was made. During the Second World War, the entirety of Cologne was levelled by Allied bombers. The bombing raid lasted only 90 minutes – the cathedral survived with only slight damage, thus becoming a witness of history and a “link between the city that was and the city that is” [26, p. 102–118]³.

³ A city with 800 thousand residents, inhabited by only 5% of its inhabitants directly after the war.



- Ill. 7. Beauvais, the Saint-Pierre cathedral (phot. by the author)
- Ill. 8. Cologne, panorama of the city (phot. by Gustav Schmidt)
- Ill. 9. Cologne, cathedral (phot. by Gustav Schmidt)
- Ill. 10. Barcelona, Sagrada Familia (phot. by Gustav Schmidt)

At the foot of the great temple that is the keystone of the urban structure of the city is the famous Ludwig Museum⁴ of modern art, as well as the archaeological Roman and Germanic museum. Those, along with the building of the train station and the famous bridge, connected by the sequences of public spaces that flow between them, have rounded out this extraordinary mix of structures and styles, making it a true heart of the city – a teeming, living, new and dynamic urban entity [35, p. 191–243].

The phenomenal Sagrada Familia (Ill. 10) is both a symbol and an important city-forming element. Until the beginning of the construction of this temple, Barcelona had been dominated by monumental, calm buildings, strongly defined by the balanced shapes of houses and the dominant forms of church towers. Gaudi, while picking the site in the centre of the city for the ‘white giant’ that was to be over 100 metres high, re-evaluated the panorama of the city. The concept of the colour scheme of the building is based on the principle of intense contrast. The artist used bright sandstone and limestone, with concrete elements appearing over time. The panorama of the city ceased to resemble the harmonious silhouettes of Tuscan cities, balanced in terms of colour and material, and started to resemble the panorama of French cities with the even, small-scale structure of their buildings contrasted by the vertical, aesthetically different cathedral giants [17, p. 138]. The clash between the horizontality of the urban tissue of the profane with the vertical structure of the sacrum results in an astounding contrast.

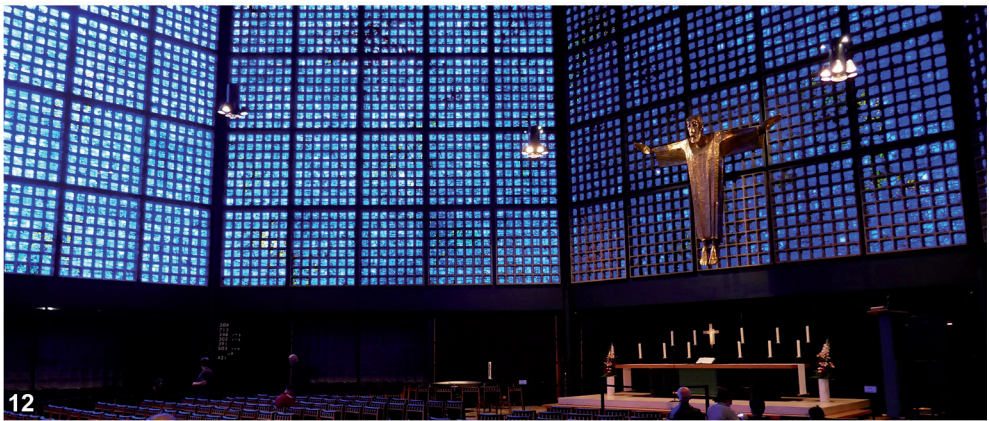
Monuments of historical memory

Today, cathedrals are also historical monuments – artefacts of a past culture, carriers of historical knowledge and skill. As Maurice Halbwachs writes, in order to return to the past by the means of an experience or memory “we need to bring back all of the voices that influenced us at that time” [10, p. 137] however, due to the fact that social conditions change – the signs of remembrance, traces, exhibits, archives – remain. It is this part of the social context that endures, transcends personal reflection, and which is a subjective memory – it forms a permanent trace, a proof of the existence of a number of facts of the past [20, p. 26].

Temples – Martyrs and Symbols of Reconciliation

The consequences of the Second World War have introduced a new term to architectural and urban discourse, that of the ‘martyr cathedral’. Father Janusz Pasierb describes the dramatic fates of cathedrals – the unspeaking witnesses of the sacrifice of war. He mentions,

⁴ The building was designed by the architects Peter Busmann and Godfried Haberer, 1986.



- Ill. 11. Dresden, view towards the Frauenkirche (phot. by author)
- Ill. 12. Berlin, Gedenkkirche, interior of the new chapel (phot. by Marcin Petelenz)
- Ill. 13. Warsaw, the cathedral of St. John (source: Wikipedia)
- Ill. 14. Coventry, cathedral (source: Wikipedia)

among others, Coventry cathedral and some cathedrals in Poland: the arch cathedral of St. John in Warszawa and cathedrals in Gniezno and Poznań. All of these three churches were redeveloped in the gothic style, “as if searching deeper, under the surface, in the past, for roots which are so dearly needed in a situation when all aspects of the old order were to crumble” [25, p. 24].

A model example is the cathedral of St. John in Warszawa (Ill. 13), which had been destroyed multiple times. During the years 1948–1956, the temple was rebuilt in accordance with a design by Jan Zachwatowicz [36, p. 119], a student of Oskar Sosnowski and a professor of the Faculty of Architecture of Warszawa University of Technology, who was one of the founders of the Office of the Reconstruction of the Capital and, within the Office itself, the Department of Historical Architecture.

The works of Jan Zachwatowicz still remain a source of controversy among architects and arts historians – with the reconstruction of the cathedral of St. John [21, p. 281]⁵ in a form that it probably never previously had being a prime example. While preparing for its reconstruction, the designer adhered to the principle of ‘regothicisation’ – building forms recreated on the remaining foundations and Medieval walls, based on preserved remains [37, p. 103].

The fate of the cathedral of St. Michael in Coventry (Ill. 14) was equally dramatic, although in the end, it turned out to have taken on an entirely different turn. The structure was built at the turn of the XV century and was counted among the most outstanding works of the gothic period in England. The cathedral – which was destroyed in 1940 as a result of a carpet bombing raid by the Luftwaffe – became a symbol of German attacks on Great Britain during the Second World War. The only things that remained of this towering temple were its external walls, the crypt and a ninety-metre tall tower. In 1950, a competition was organised with the primary idea of solving the problem of whether to rebuild it or erect a new building. The design by Sir Basil Spence was selected from amongst over 200 entries. As a result of the competition, the gothic ruins were preserved, while at their edge a new, modern temple was built [28].

The relationship between the ruin and the new structure is strictly physical – the newly designed, tall arcade in the form of a vertical corridor connects both structures, from which we can enter both the old and the new building. The relationship between the ruin and the new structure was sealed in accordance with the law of good continuation: both in terms of size and material, the architect connected both buildings and while designing the new section, he exercised restraint, as well as a great degree of design and construction courtesy. The new cathedral does not replicate the historical language of form and remains thoroughly modern, but it also interplays with the ruin. A monument to memory was erected, made up of two parts, simultaneously fulfilling the role of a metaphorical bridge between tradition and modernity.

⁵ The pre-war form of the church had a rich neogothic decor designed by Adam Idzkowski (1836–1940).

Dresden and its history is also associated with a bombing raid – that of the British and US forces on the night/early hours of the 14th/15th of February 1945, which was to be a response to the bombing of Coventry. That night, the city centre ceased to exist, and the lives of thirty-five thousand people were lost. The dome of the most important protestant temple – the Frauenkirche, called ‘the stone bell’ (Ill. 11) – collapsed during the Allied raid.

The reconstruction efforts in Dresden remind us of the post-war reconstruction of Elbląg, where a new old-town was built in the spirit of so-called retroversion [38]⁶, which is defined as the rebuilding of the structure of a ruined city with the use of modern architectural means. A new space was created, which is not a reconstruction of historical forms, and which also does not bear the mark of aggressive modernity. In 2006, Dresden celebrated the fact that it has existed for 800 years, which became the impulse to modernise and create new public spaces, which, along with new structures, currently form an attractive new frame of the city [9, p. 2018].

The church of St. Mary, also called the Frauenkirche, is a canonical example of a Baroque, or even a Rococo structure, which was built during the period when Saxon architecture flourished during the reign of August II the Strong. The builder of this beautiful, monumental temple was Georg Bähr, who did not live to see its completion [32, p. 218]. After the war, the political and architectural conservation authorities of the DDR decided to preserve and safeguard the historical ruins and turn them into a permanent monument [28]. For 60 years from the end of the War, this utterly destroyed structure remained a charred reminder, a monument to war. The new temple was opened in 2005 – its tall, monumental dome dominates the left bank of the Elbe against a backdrop of the partially rebuilt Altstadt. The meticulously reconstructed temple creates an impressive public space along with the surrounding New Market – Neumarkt.

During the reconstruction, stone elements that were suitable for identification and placement within the new structure of the building were selected from the rubble. The original apse was similarly included in the reconstructed church, with the dark colour of the charred elements preserved in order to tell the old elements apart from the new ones. The result is the distinctive and varied, bright and black decor of the temple.

A similar pole is played by the symbol of West Berlin: the Church of the Memory of the Emperor Wilhelm – the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche (Ill. 12). The church was built as a protestant temple during the final quarter of the XIX century as a monument to fallen Prussian soldiers. In the 1940s, as a result of an immense Allied bombing raid, the church was destroyed. Its remains were turned into a permanent, stone ruin [28]. A new urban complex designed by Egon Eiermann was built out of its fragments, along with a nave on an octagonal base, a hexagonal belfry, a chapel and a vestibule.

Bieńczyce – Modern Historical Memory

Paul Rocoer wrote about memorials and the fact that they function chiefly as reminders, indicators of remembering and support a failing memory, being a weapon in the fight against

⁶ Among other things, the establishment of ‘the new old-town’ in the form of creating a set of values identified with the image and atmosphere of historical town complexes – Maria Lubocka-Hoffman writes about it in her work.

forgetting, and even a silent replacement in the case of dead memory. Such places ‘remain’ as inscriptions, monuments, potentially as documents, while memories that are passed on orally, with the voice, are as fleeting as words [27, p. 58].

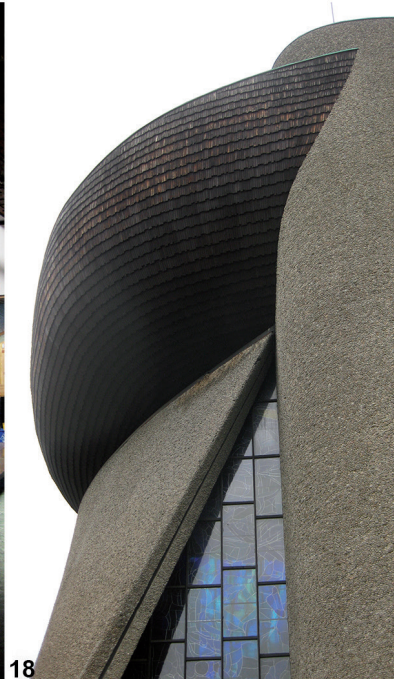
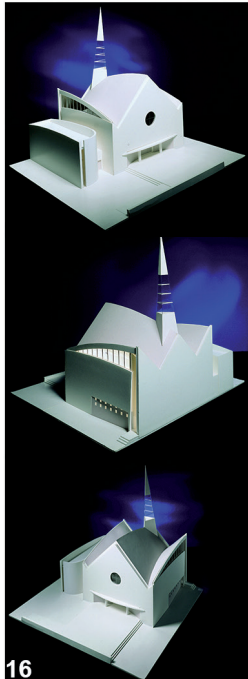
The ‘Ark of the Lord’ (Ill. 15, 17, 18) is a canonical example of a church devoted to historical memory – it is the symbol of Nowa Huta and Polish post-war architecture, a structure, the importance of which isn’t based solely on aesthetic factors. The church, designed by Wojciech Pietrzyk, is an example of a place ‘overgrowing with meaning’, the construction of which was sort of forced by the residents of Nowa Huta. It is that historical context, first and foremost, which has earned it its legendary image. It is also a ‘citizen’s church’ – it had been deemed important even before it was built [22, p. 132]; after all, the residents of Nowa Huta, along with church dignitaries, fought for a building permit to be issued for a church to be located in this growing residential estate for over 20 years.

“The church designed by Zbigniew Solawa in Nowa Huta – awarded first prize in a competition in 1959 [17, p. 168] – would quite probably have been a global sensation” writes Wojciech Kosiński. The unbuilt church by Solawa in Nowa Huta is a structure that is important for historical, symbolic and, first and foremost, aesthetic reasons. This temple, with an attractive, fascinating and modern form, and eighty-meter tower, would strongly dominate the socialist modernist housing estates of the 1950s. The design that won the SARP competition was rejected by the authorities due to the size of the temple, under the pretext of high construction costs and building difficulties⁷. It needs to be mentioned that it is at this very spot, at Osiedle Teatralne, near a now historical ‘thousand-year’ school, that the Church of the Holiest Heart of Lord Jesus Christ was built in the 1990s (photo 16). The design of the temple resulted from a closed competition and the first religious project based on a design by the JET Architekci⁸ design practice (along with Przemysław Gawor). The three-nave, small scale church with a square floor plan, topped with a latticework tower, is a rounding out of the local urban structure.

The ‘Ark of the Lord’ church is an example of late modernism – expressive, soft and lively. “Just like Le Corbusier’s chapel in Ronchamp, it represents a unity of form, structure and function. As a building unbound by the normative, it could be designed with a flair and inventiveness, which was unthinkable for cooperative residential developments” [34, p. 98] The temple was built within the borders of the Bieńczyce housing estate, which was built on the basis of a competition design from 1959. The urban context of the surrounding multi-storey buildings, which was also historical and symbolic, influenced the expressive form of the mass of the church, which was to be open and accessible to the faithful from all sides. The interior is dominated by an expressive sculpture of Christ – an astounding piece of work by Bolesław Chromy.

⁷ The change in the stance of the communist authorities on the Church resulted in the tragic events of April 1960.

⁸ Later *Ingarden&Ewý Architekci*.



- Ill. 15. Nowa Huta, the Bieńczyce housing estate and the Ark of the Lord church (phot. by Adam Gryczyński)
- Ill. 16. Nowa Huta, model of the Church of the Holiest Heart of Lord Jesus Christ (source: materials courtesy of the designers)
- Ill. 17. Nowa Huta, The Ark of the Lord, interior (phot. by Marcin Włodarczyk)
- Ill. 18. Nowa Huta, The Ark of the Lord (phot. by Marcin Włodarczyk)

Symbols of Post-war Avant-garde – A New Aesthetic and Metaphor

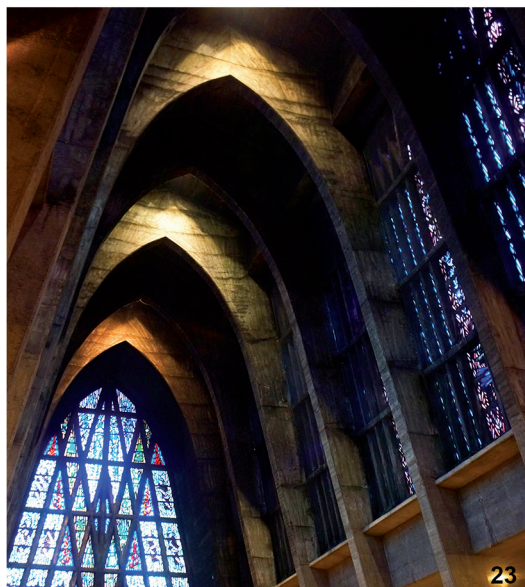
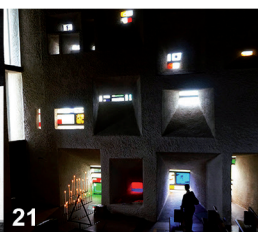
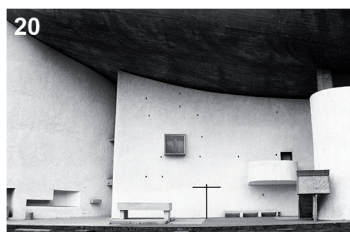
“Its nature is that of a sculpture, timeless, supracultural, extremely artistic and scenic”

[16, p. 14]

Charles Jencks calls such types of structures iconic [13]. The chapel in Ronchamp (Ill. 20, 21, 22) has had volumes of scientific studies written about it, its image becoming a staple of book covers, works on the post-war architecture of the XX century, historical guides and souvenirs. This ‘reasoned sculpture’ [14, p. 166], with a religious form of use, masterfully harmonious in the interior and exterior spaces which connect and collide; it is outstandingly precise and creates a structure in balance – removing a single element would cause the harmonious whole to collapse.

This work, so different and alien, was seen by the members of the avant-garde, the apologists of simplicity and the lightness of steel and glass that were Le Corbusier’s contemporaries, as a work of some unfathomable race living outside of time, in lands that were ruled by different laws than those that they acknowledged [3, p. 252]. “It was soon ‘domesticated’, the mastery of the author acknowledged, imitators doomed to failure and its architecture proclaimed as the most outstanding work of modernism” [19, p. 57]. In Le Corbusier’s work, we can find the final form of geometric abstraction and the end of the modernism of Bauhaus, while at the same time, its form forces the onlooker to carry out subjective analyses, comparisons and explications – the time of metaphors has arrived in architecture. “The structure, made out of concrete with a shape that is freely interpreted by the onlooker and built without any rational motivations on the part of the architect whatsoever, has become the source of an entire palette of architectural styles, expressing itself through a wealth of forms and comparisons” [6].

The construction of the chapel at Ronchamp, as well as the monastery in La Tourette, generated a new manner of thinking about the expression of concrete as a building material. The works of Giovanni Michelucci (Chiesa dell’Autostrada, 1964), Claude Parent and Paul Virillo (Sainte-Bernadette de Nevers, 1966), Gottfried Böhm or Fritz Wotruba are wonderful examples of a style called brutalism. ‘Poured stone’ became the material of such religious icons as the pilgrim’s church in Neviges or the Viennese church of the Holy Trinity. The foundations of this style were formed by earlier temples: for instance, the famous Sainte-Thérèse in Metz (1954, arch. Roger-Henri Expert) (Ill. 23, 24) and Saint-Remy in Baccarat (1954–1957, arch. Nicolas Kazis) (Ill. 19), which stemmed from a movement that began in the 1920s and had been backed by such outstanding architects as Guillaume Gillet and August Perret.



- Ill. 19. Baccarat, Saint-Remy church (phot. by the author)
- Ill. 20. Ronchamp, chapel (phot. by the author)
- Ill. 21. Ronchamp, chapel, interior (phot. by the author)
- Ill. 22. Ronchamp, chapel, detail of the entrance (phot. by the author)
- Ill. 23. Metz, the Sainte-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus church, interior (phot. by the author)
- Ill. 24. Metz, the Sainte-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus church, interior (phot. by the author)

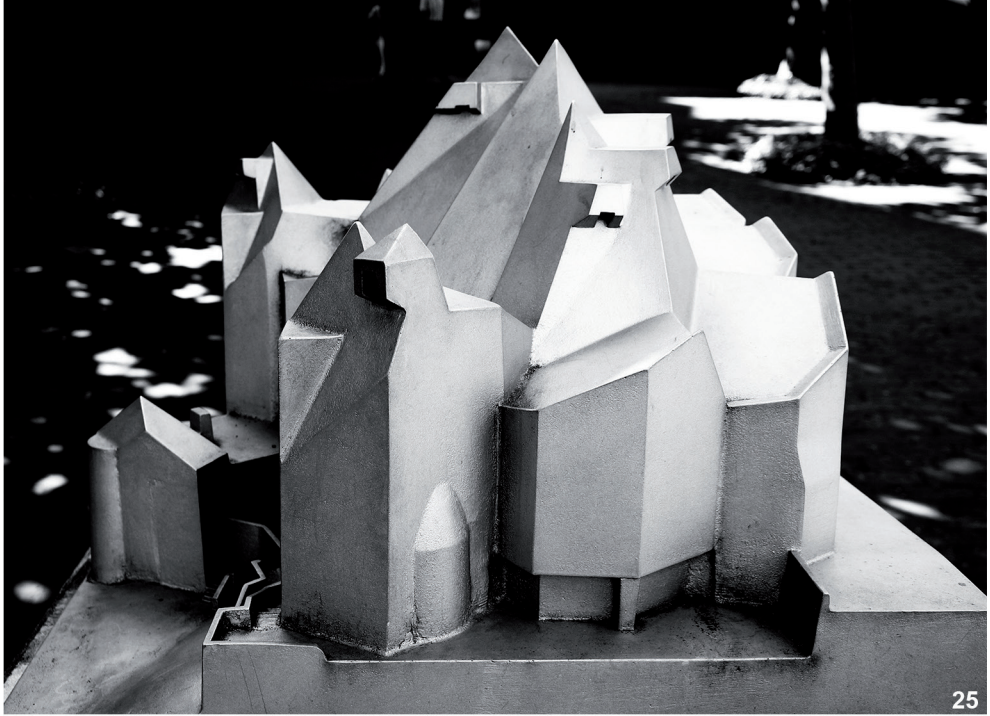
This period provided us with a concrete heritage with a wealth of stylistic and formal approaches, fitting the great aesthetic formation that was modernism. The French photographer, Fabrice Fouillet preserved this series of churches in his serially published project 'Corpus Christi'. It was a homage paid to the religious architecture of the 1950s and the 1960s, as well as a hymn of praise to the new aesthetic that broke away from the run-of-the-mill, stagnant and outmoded historicism. These churches, spread over the whole of Europe, strongly associated with the reconstruction of post-war ruins, show us a different concept, a sacrum, a spirituality filled with modernity – and even though many decades have passed since their construction, they are still misunderstood and criticised in many circles⁹.

The Mariendom in Neviges (Ill. 25), a monolith designed by Gottfried Böhm, a master of concrete, a German architect and sculptor and a laureate of the Pritzker prize for the year 1986, is like a stamp, a logo – known and recognised, eliciting poetic associations with a mountain, a meteorite or a mountain crystal [18, p. 85], evidently referencing German expressionism. The temple was placed at the edge of the old town, in the near vicinity of a Franciscan monastery. The heart of the town is the small, oval Kirchplatz, at the centre of which stands an old church. At a distance of only around 100 metres to the north-west lies the new, grand structure with a length of almost 130 metres, placed upon a hill. A long, concrete passage with stairs leads to the church, whilst simultaneously playing the part of a square – a forum. The soft shapes, pleasant to the eye, shift into ones that are sharp, straight and pointy, as if carved from a rock. The temple is built upon a hill and visible from a considerable distance, becoming both an urban and an architectural dominant. Thanks to the decomposition and breaking up of the structure of the roof, the grand, irregular and dynamic form fits in with the loose layout and pointed roofs of historical houses.

The incredibility of this layout is based on the urban blending of the new structure into the Medieval urban layout – a structure that is larger than the centre of this layout, which has re-evaluated the panorama of the city and its views. The gigantic mass of the church in Neviges engages in a dialogue with the small scale urban environment, whilst simultaneously being in contrast with it in terms of material and size, providing it with an excellent background, as well as achieving a high level of emotional tension. Both structures play along excellently – there occurs a mutual form of support, by being contrasted with the raw, nearly windowless concrete mass, the small, richly detailed post and beam houses seem even finer.

Similarly, the Viennese icon – the church of the Holy Trinity by Fritz Wotruba (Ill. 26), erected on Geogenburg Hill amidst an elegant district of Vienna dominated by villas, the edge of the urban environment on one side, and the hills of the Viennese Forest on the other –

⁹ For example, internet forums and webpages <http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/architektura/galerie/1508566,11,koscioly-ostatnich-dekad.read> (access: 30.03.2016).



- Ill. 25. Neviges, Mariendom, model (phot. by the author)
- Ill. 26. Model of the church of the Holy Trinity by Fritz Wotruba, Mumok, Vienna (phot. by the author)
- Ill. 27. Florence, Chiesa dell'Autostrada – The Highway Church, interior (phot. by the author)
- Ill. 28. Nevers, Sainte Bernadette church, fragment of the interior (phot. by the author)
- Ill. 29. Nevers, Sainte Bernadette church (phot. by the author)

is an exemplification of the searches that symbolise the complex aesthetic, symbolic and metaphoric content. It is a distinct and unique form, deeply connected with archaic megaliths, which was shaped boldly and loosely, in an abstract manner. The incredible artistic idea which employs sculpturesqueness, asymmetry, a loose formal layout and, at the same time a 'dramatic physiognomy' [4] has resulted in an excellent composition made out of over 150 concrete blocks, amazingly homogenous and harmonious.

Both of these examples, as well as the church of Giovanni Michelucci near Florence (Ill. 27), or the concrete bunker in Nevers [7, p. 146] (Ill. 28, 29) are in the form of an artistic manifesto, a tale of a yearning for individualism – “a unique solution for a unique situation” [2, p. 72] – as well as a deep need for stepping outside of the bounds of reason and geometric order. Their concrete heritage is boldly continued in the works of Carl Scarpa, Tadao Ando, Massimiliano Fuksas, as well as the final great work of Corbu in Firminy, which “manifests the truth regarding pure matter and the purity of the sacrum of the XX and the beginning of the XXI century” [6].

Conclusion

“Just as cathedrals once jutted over cities and provided waypoints for travellers as they towered above their surroundings, so do they now tower above history. We return to them seeking our roots”

[25, p. 8]

The temples of Europe are not merely structures with a predetermined programme, the signs of the sacred within a space organised by man; they are also carriers of grand ideas, they make places distinct and become symbols of cities. Their form dominates panoramas and urban landscapes, as well as the open countryside, being a sign of cultural continuity within society. The French cathedrals, masterful creations of the highest possible aesthetic value in the cultural landscape, were one of the grandest revolutions in the history of architecture, while the development of civilisation that occurred thanks to their construction is being compared to that of the industrial revolution.

European temples have entered the sphere of interest of great artists and, at the same time, have entered such forms of art as literature, poetry, the graphical arts, film and digital art, as important elements of the cultural landscape. In places where they have blended in with natural elements, they have become the joint work of man and nature, becoming the entirety of cultural and natural heritage.

Religious buildings, by also operating through their artistic and architectural form, play the part of a recording of memory. They spur the imagination of various points in history, becoming one of the sources of social emotions. At the same time, they represent the results of efforts in building, crafts and the arts that were undertaken in ages past. Often preserved in a varying scale of damage and destruction, they turn into historical ruins [5].

The post-war period has brought with it avant-garde artistic manifestations – a number of iconic buildings that were a tribute to a new aesthetic which broke off all ties with historicism. These structures, while not always understood by society, have become permanently fixed into the European cultural landscape.

“Respect your acquired skills, o child of Europe, Heir of gothic cathedrals, baroque churches” – wrote Czesław Miłosz in *Daylight* (1993). It is, after all, still them – the churches, cathedrals and chapels, the forms and structures that constitute the beauty of European cities that are the living symbols of this part of the world, having been, in all aspects – regardless of religious views – the pride and reference point of the civilisation of Europe over the centuries.

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