



**MODERNISM IN GDYNIA**

# **MODERNISM IN EUROPE** ■

ARCHITECTURE OF 1920s AND 1930s AND ITS PROTECTION

International Conference

**"Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia.  
Architecture of 1920s and 1930s and Its Protection"**

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# MODERNISM IN EUROPE ■ MODERNISM IN GDYNIA

ARCHITECTURE OF 1920s AND 1930s AND ITS PROTECTION

Gdynia City Hall  
Gdynia 2009

**Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia  
Architecture of 1920s and 1930s and Its Protection**

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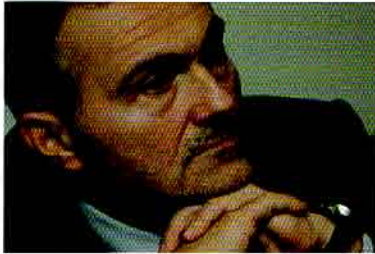
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*The book I have the pleasure of introducing presents the effects of the international conference on the architecture of the 1920s and 1930s and its preservation, held in September 2007.*

*There are very good reasons why the conference was held in Gdynia. The homogenous, well-thought and consistent architectural concept of our city centre, designed mainly in the 1920s and 1930s, brings into sharp focus the characteristic Modern Movement features of the time, with particular attention to functionality.*

*Gdynia's unique architectural complex, preserved almost in its original form, is the pride of the residents and a unique attraction for the visitors. Therefore, it is our responsibility not only to arrange the city space so that it should preserve its character and unique charm, but also to diffuse knowledge of the Modern Movement of the 1920s and 1930s.*

*I am convinced that you will find this book highly inspiring.*

*Gdynia 2009 r.*

*Mayor of Gdynia  
Wojciech Szczurek*

## INTRODUCTION

The book "Modernism in Europe – Modernism in Gdynia. Architecture of 1920s and 1930s and Its Protection" perfectly fits the vivid debate on the study and protection of Modern Architecture. The issues are so relevant today that there have been some well-known publications dedicated to them, and a series of conferences were held recently: in Gdańsk (2004), Gliwice (2005), Poznań (2007), Gdynia (2007) and Lublin (2008). They are discussed all over Europe and the world as well, and in order to share experience, an international worldwide organisation has been set up – the Documentation and Conservation of Modern Movement (Do.Co.Mo.Mo.).

Like no other city in Europe, Gdynia seems a perfect place for such activities and studies, as it is the baby of the emerging Modern Movement. The city's spatial shape and architecture bear testimony to that epoch. In this context, the conference on the protection of prewar European heritage, held in Gdynia in 2007, was an important event and this book is an effect of the conference. It does not aspire to be a monograph, yet it presents the complex historical and conservation work carried out in various European cities. The book consists of two parts: Part 1 is a presentation of models and icons of the 1920-30 Modern Movement, and Part 2 contains the practical and theoretical issues of the preservation of the heritage in question. It must be stressed that the articles reflect their authors' individual views and may not correspond with the opinions of the editors and reviewers. All the illustrations have been supplied by and on the account of the authors.

Part 1 starts with two articles on the issues related to urban planning. Wanda Kononowicz familiarizes us with the nature of the Modernist concept of the city and its development, and Jadwiga Roguska presents noted designs for city centres created in the 1920s and 1930s which – although often remained on paper – inspired many generations of architects. Andrzej Krzysztof Olszewski's article starts a series of papers on styles and trends in Modern Movement in Europe and elsewhere, discussing the influence of the American idea of Streamline on European architecture. Henrieta Moravčiková continues this topic drawing a cross section of the development of functionalist architecture in Slovakia; Evgeni Morozov writes about a Modernist face of Belarus, and Renāte Čaupale shows similarities between architectural forms in Latvia, Czechoslovakia and Poland in the early 20th century, while Weronika Wiśniewska and Magdalena Mostowska emphasize the prominent role played by French and Dutch avant-garde architects in shaping the face of European Modern Movement.

Next, Maria Jolanta Sołtysik starts a series of articles devoted to Gdynia; she analyses multi-layered ideological relations between Gdynia and European architectures. Jakub Lewicki discusses the first urban plans for Gdynia made by Roman Feliński in the context of the architect's lifetime achievement, and Alexander Bouryak shows the presence of Art Déco in Gdynia architecture. Joanna Olenderek focuses on noticeable analogies between Modern architecture in the cities of Gdynia and Łódź, thus starting the presentation of Modernist heritage of other cities and regions. Hence, planning concepts in Poznań in the 1920s and 1930s are discussed by Grażyna Kodym-Kozaczko and Mieczysław Kozaczko, the famous Poznań National Exhibition is the subject of comparative analysis by Hanna Grzeszczuk-Brendel, and Ryszard Nakonieczny presents the avant-garde architecture of public buildings in Upper Silesia. Jan Salm, in turn, sketches the history of Modern Movement in former East Prussia, and architectural values of Ciechocinek, a popular health resort in Northern Poland, are discussed by Waldemar Affelt and Aldona Nocna. Part 1 ends with a paper by Adam Szymski which contains comment and final remarks on Modern Movement terminology.

Part 2 begins with an article by Bogusław Szymgin containing topical and important questions about criteria and principles in the protection of Modern Architecture. The importance of these questions is highlighted in the article by Marcin Gawlicki and Tomasz Błyskosz, who also suggest the desired strategy for conservation projects. The same issues are discussed by Maria Jolanta Żychowska, who stresses the urgent need for saving some valuable, yet deteriorating, Modernist buildings. The next papers give account of how particular communities cope with the protection of the heritage in question. Jos Tomlow presents the effects of the student workshops consisting in the regeneration of the famous Bauhaus housing estate – Törten in Dessau; Mark Watson demonstrates the results of the adaptation of industrial architecture in Great Britain; Zuzana Labudová writes about the prewar architecture in Košice, and Jadwiga Urbanik about the regeneration of Hans Scharoun's WUWA hotel in Wrocław.

The achievements of Gdynia conservation effort are discussed in the article by Robert Hirsch, who stresses the city monument protection office's significant successes and the city authorities' sponsorship and encouragement to their activities. Anna Orchowska-Smolińska and Anita Jaśkiewicz-Sojak bring to attention the urgent need for the protection of the Gdynia port and industrial architecture, which still encounters many obstacles. The problems and successes in the protection of the 1920-30 buildings in Cracow are discussed by Andrzej Białykiewicz and Małgorzata Włodarczyk, while Justyna Wojtas gives account of the transformations related to changes in the functions of Upper Silesian buildings. Part 2 ends with some interesting information about the 1920-30 collection of the Chicago Polish Museum by Jan Loryś.

While recommending this book, I must highlight a very important fact for the protection of Polish Modernist heritage, the fact we may be and indeed are very proud of: in September 2007, the city centre of Gdynia was entered into the register of monuments. It is the "youngest" city centre to gain this status in the history of monument preservation – an unprecedented event worldwide. This is an indisputable success of the Gdynia conservation and scientific community, and a success of Gdynia authorities, who recognize this fact as a great chance for the promotion and development of the city.

\* \* \*

*The precious Modernist resources in Gdynia, coupled with advanced research and local government approach – capable of seeing both the problems posed and the opportunities offered by this heritage – have put Gdynia at the forefront of Modern Architecture promotion. The achievement of local research and conservation community make Gdynia the right venue for regular meetings of people interested in Modern Architecture, and a forum for an exchange of ideas and research results connected with this specialist area of architecture and conservation. There is growth potential in this area, so Gdynia is likely to become a major European centre of Modern Architecture studies and its preservation.*

*The conference has been a success in that the national and international references of Gdynia architecture have been recognised in their complexity, shaping a new perspective from which it should be seen. It is no longer limited to a search of immediate links, but is more directed at the kind of research that will present a comprehensive, global-scale picture of modernist architecture, through which relevant local phenomena will be perceived. The latter are, naturally, of primary importance to the local community, who should make sure that they are given proper care. The endeavours to grasp the complexity of ideas and characteristics of Modern Architecture seen as a process, largely contributes to a fuller and better perception of the picture, making conservation efforts more rational.*

*The approach demonstrated during the conference of treating Modern Architecture as a common heritage of mankind, and more immediately – Europe, with due respect paid to its regional varieties and studying them, deserves praise. This is particularly important in Central and Eastern Europe, where the change of borders– after World War I, World War II and after the transition of 1989 – affecting cultural orientation and the status of historically shaped regions – causes special problems in heritage protection there. It is therefore with great satisfaction that we note research into Modern Architecture across borders – the Upper and Lower Silesia, Byelorussia, East Prussia. The presentation of Modern Architecture in Slovakia and Latvia shows previously unknown similarities with how it developed in Poland, While stressing the leading role of the modernist architecture created in Germany, the Netherlands and France, the authors show the cultural community of Europe without superficially looking at it in terms of influence.*

*A lot is happening in the field of modernist heritage protection, so we may expect theoretical and practical efforts to intensify in the nearest future. Modern Architecture poses previously unknown challenges to monument and – speaking more broadly – heritage conservation. New tools, approaches and procedures are needed. Even the principles may have to be modified for reasons of quantity, the scale of the tasks to be performed and a different functional, structural and formal perspective. This is why the scientific, objective identification of the values of Modern Architecture, so often suggested in this publication, is so important; in other words, the question: What to protect? Equally relevant are the numerous examples of practical activities and success stories from many countries.*

*We would be happy to see this initiative continued and growing. We also hope that the way it has been organised and funded – an alternative to high-profile, high-cost scientific conferences – will affect the choice of the speakers, thus helping to keep the high professional standard of the project.*

Reviewers

Romana Cielątkowska  
Jadwiga Roguska

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