

## I Biennale of Spatial Forms in Elbląg at the National Museum in Warsaw

The scientific and technological revolution in 1960s Poland was not tantamount to a renaissance of sci-fi art, expressed mainly through literature or its film adaptations (with a particular emphasis on Stanisław Lem's prose). Above all, it represented an important impulse for the creation of new technical solutions in almost all walks of life. It was also used as a pretext that allowed propaganda policy to depict the authorities as open and ready to mediate between art and industry. Unfortunately, the ties between art and industry in Poland do not have a long tradition, as they were interrupted by subsequent wars that caused a lack of institutional continuity. After 1949, the authorities, with their oppressive actions and arbitrary decisions on "strategic" moves, either exploited or entirely ignored the indications of artists, as a result of which their seemingly mutual goals did not tally.

The Statute of the National Museum in Warsaw, which included a provision related to "organizing and holding educational and didactic activities as well as popularizing culture in the broadest possible scope,"<sup>1</sup> was drafted directly after the museum restarted its operations after the war. Over the years, it was formulated in a different manner, but its objectives were invariably fulfilled, mainly in terms of cooperation with regional cultural centres in organizing exhibitions, including lending the museum's own works, as well as assistance in organizing newly established institutions.<sup>2</sup> The exhibition entitled *The Reconstruction of Prince Józef Poniatowski's Bridge* (22 July – 19 August 1946) marked the beginning of cooperation, or rather the symbolic expression of support for the efforts of industrial plants working to quickly and effectively raise the city from ruins. The display that accompanied the commissioning of the first bridge in Warsaw mostly illustrated the technical aspects of its reconstruction. On show were photographs depicting war-time destruction, designs, and repair works performed during the reconstruction, original construction equipment, such as parts of the crane used to lift the span structures, as well as artistic visions of the bridge: paintings, drawings and watercolours. The exhibition coincided with the social expectations of the Warsaw community, which was stirring back to life. The display did not yet have to contend with any dogmatic limitations, and was only fuelled by the need to present the invincible force of existence, looking at examples of artistic and technical solutions as part of enthusiastic visions of the future. Although slightly earlier than the aforementioned exhibition, the *Spring Salon* (May–June 1946), organized by the Board of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers (ZZPAP) with a jury headed by Jan Cybis, became the harbinger of future events, culminating in the Socialist Realist 1<sup>st</sup> *Nationwide*

<sup>1</sup> Statute of the NMW, order no. 126 of the Ministry of Culture and Art of 19 November 1970.

<sup>2</sup> See Stanisław Lorentz, "Pięciolecie współpracy między muzeami Warszawa – Olsztyn 1958 – 1962," *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Ann. 9 (1965), pp. 297–332.

*Exhibition 'The Youth Fighting for Peace'* (October–November 1950). The introduction of compositional rules in line with the assumptions of Socialist Realism became a norm that was to result in “restoring order to the world enveloped in the chaos of war, restoring meaning to art in the landscape of post-war catastrophe and at the same time finding a connection with the artistic tradition.”<sup>3</sup> The latter was expressed above all through the notion of monumentality, which in the interwar period referred to the relationship between sculpture and architecture, and was now used for the purpose of manifesting the new socialist reality. *Przegląd Artystyczny*<sup>4</sup> [Art review], a magazine published by ZPAP, was selected as a platform for the new ideas. Włodzimierz Sokorski, who served as a deputy member of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) and a deputy to the Legislative Sejm (1947–52), defined the “criteria of Socialist Realism” on its pages, emphasizing that “each and every deformation entailed an intended or unintended ideological falsehood.”<sup>5</sup> Socialist Realism forced artists to implement political slogans and imposed a manner of thinking aimed at reflecting reality in line with the vision delineated by the party. The communist party's strategy was strengthened by the words of Russian avant-garde ideologist Osip Brik: “architects, sculptors and painters are workers just like engineers, metalworkers, textile workers, carpenters and others,”<sup>6</sup> even indicating the need to create a collective, a creative team uniting workers and artists.<sup>7</sup> “We should prove to workers – claimed Brik – that productive labour represents a great cultural force and may help them creatively master it.”<sup>8</sup> Art, along with the manner of its presentation, became part of the political system.

The new artistic situation that emerged in the mid-1950s initiated a period that lasted until 1989. The political processes that began during the Polish October of 1956 (the so-called “thaw”) resulted in the versatile and unbridled development of art and, consequently, artistic life. “The explicit domination of modernity as a theoretical and artistic message in post-Stalinist art, and the related practice of abstraction, were, among others, a reaction to the dogmatism of Socialist Realist culture. Thus, the revived neo-avant-garde returned to the point of departure of the first avant-garde and redefined the limits of freedom of artistic practice and theory within the ‘pure form.’”<sup>9</sup>

The patronage of industrial plants lent credence to the cultural policy mechanism and enabled closer contacts with artists who had hitherto shunned actions initiated by the authori-

<sup>3</sup> Piotr Piotrowski, *Znaczenia modernizmu. W stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku* (Poznań, 1999), p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> *Przegląd Artystyczny* was published since 1946 in Krakow as a monthly magazine of the branch of the Association of Polish Artists and Designers (ZPAP). Since 1950, it was published in Warsaw as ZPAP bimonthly edited by Helena Krajewska. Since 1952, it was published by the National Art Institute and ZPAP and edited by Mieczysław Porębski, and between 1957 and 1960, it was published by the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences and edited by Aleksander Wojciechowski. Source: Krystyna Zakrzewska, “Przegląd Artystyczny” and Aleksander Wojciechowski, “Przegląd Artystyczny w latach 1957–1960,” in *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1945–1960*, Aleksander Wojciechowski, ed. (Wrocław–Warsaw–Krakow, 1992), pp. 382–95.

<sup>5</sup> Włodzimierz Sokorski, “Kryteria realizmu socjalistycznego,” *Przegląd Artystyczny*, no. 1 (1950), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Osip Brik, “Na porządku dziennym,” Józef Kaliszan, tr., in *Między sztuką a komuną. Teksty awangardy rosyjskiej 1910–1932*, Andrzej Turowski [selection], [Wanda Lohman ed.] (Krakow, 1998), p. 304.

<sup>7</sup> See Piotr Piotrowski, “Artysta między rewolucją i reakcją. Studium z zakresu etycznej historii sztuki awangardy rosyjskiej,” *Seria Historia Sztuki*, no. 22 (1993), pp. 33–34.

<sup>8</sup> Brik, op. cit., p. 306.

<sup>9</sup> Andrzej Turowski, *Budowniczość świata. Z dziejów radykalnego modernizmu w sztuce polskiej* (Krakow, 2000), p. 375.

ties, contributing to the positive reception of instrumental, tactical moves that had its source in the communist party. During the early 1960s, the industrial development of the country was assessed positively in all respects. This could have resulted from the broadly understood fascination with the “leap forward,” the noticeable process of catching up in terms of technology, as well as the propaganda of economic success. The fascination with industry and modern technologies reappeared, assimilated by the new generation of avant-garde artists, who saw these actions as an opportunity to create works that would allow them to popularize contemporary art in the country. Works gathered in collections could represent genuine educational value as well as an indispensable alternative for the society, which not long ago had been led to believe that Socialist Realist art was the only example to follow. The availability of new places of creative work was to serve as an explicit example of the “sensitization” of the ruling class. The political opening towards contemporary art and related problems was to be ensured by thematic exhibitions, and then plein-air, symposiums or biennials.

In 1959, the catalogue of the exhibition that inaugurated the Gallery of Contemporary Art in the National Museum in Warsaw featured a *Foreword* written by Professor Juliusz Starzyński. In it, we read that: “the value of the exhibition lies in showing the continuity of the fundamental visual problems which occupied modern art in Poland – and in the Western world.”<sup>10</sup> In the further part of his essay, Starzyński strongly focused on two personalities: “[...] artists such as Strzemiński or Wiciński did not limit themselves to purely aesthetic ideas, but presented visual art issues in the broader context of cultural and social phenomena.” The author emphasized the “multitude of sketches at the exhibition,” underlining the “radiation of innovative artistic thought to architecture, theatre, monumental arts and the aesthetics of everyday life, which is typical of our avant-garde.”<sup>11</sup> Starzyński’s text became the binding interpretation of how to perceive modernity in its broad scope of influence. The National Museum, as one of the most important and opinion-forming cultural institutions, proved to be a natural ally in the quest for modernity, enabling the continuation of artistic activities with a creative reference to the avant-garde legacy.

The decision to reveal the spatial experimentation that influenced the image of art throughout the first six decades of the century was taken by the director of the National Museum in Warsaw, Professor Stanisław Lorentz – he founded the permanent Gallery of 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Polish Sculpture in the Wilanów Orangery (22 July 1961),<sup>12</sup> which he intended as the germ of a future Museum of Contemporary Art.<sup>13</sup> Even though the gallery was closed down ten years later (19 February 1971),<sup>14</sup> the display of the historical background of modern sculpture greatly

<sup>10</sup> Juliusz Starzyński, “Wystawa ‘Od Młodej Polski do naszych dni,’” in *Od Młodej Polski do naszych dni. Rysunki i studia malarzkie*, The National Museum in Warsaw, 1959 (Warsaw, 1959), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Galeria Rzeźby Polskiej XX wieku w Oranżerii Wilanowskiej*, exh. cat. (Warsaw, 1961).

<sup>13</sup> Stanisław Lorentz, “Muzeum Sztuki Współczesnej,” *Współczesność*, no. 20 (1968), pp. 1–2.

<sup>14</sup> See Alina Ryx, “Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej,” in *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, Ann. 20 (1976), p. 557. According to the account of H. Kotkowska-Bareja, long-standing curator of the NMW Department of Sculpture (1959–2001), the decision to close down the Gallery of 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Polish Sculpture in the Orangery was taken by the then Director of the Palace Museum in Wilanów, Dr. Wojciech Fijałkowski (who consulted it with NMW’s management). Since then, there has been no representative permanent exhibition of sculptures from the NMW collection and numerous deposits, as the visions of their presentation that evolved over the years were limited to selected fragments of Polish or European art, treating sculptural works as merely a supplement of the presented period or problem. Dariusz Kaczmarzyk, curator of the NMW sculpture collection in the Łazienki park and author

preceded presentations of other forms of creative activity. The exhibition prepared by the Gallery of Contemporary Art (curated by Hanna Kotkowska-Bareja) – established within the structure of the National Museum in 1958 – was a survey of the collection of sculpture ranging from 1900 to 1960. It differed from previous standard gallery displays, presented in parallel in the Zachęta National Gallery of Art (e.g., *Polish Sculpture 1945–60*). Its “novel” characteristics, according to Jerzy Zanoziński’s text in the catalogue, consisted in “arranging a number of sculptures in the garden adjoining the Orangery.”<sup>15</sup> The comparison with the Zachęta exhibition is justified in that the latter had been the venue of key modern art exhibitions (e.g., the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> *Modern Art Exhibition*) and had seen innovative methods of their presentation. The museum wanted to become a leading centre of contemporary art with its own collection of sculptures, regularly enriched with new purchases, beyond competition from even the Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions (CBWA) and its network of subordinate Bureaus (BWAs). This was confirmed by the very few art collections representing rather diverse artistic levels. In view of the urgent need to involve efforts and resources to assume the leading role among institutions promoting current art, the National Museum engaged in cooperation with the founder of the first private gallery (Krzywe Koło, i.e., Crooked Circle Gallery), organizer of artistic activities with many-sided interests and capabilities: Marian Bogusz (1920–80). His hitherto effective work, open to international contacts, met the demands of modernity and justified his selection as a well-prepared assistant curator of the museum’s exhibitions.

The idea to organize a Biennale of Spatial Forms emerged among avant-garde artists associated with the Crooked Circle Gallery. The discussions between Gerard Kwiatkowski, Marian Bogusz, Henryk Stażewski, Stefan Gierowski and Magdalena Więcek (mostly held in her studio in the Mokotów district of Warsaw) revolved around matters such as the existence of art within the urban tissue, the coexistence of forms and architecture or constructing new objects in the open space – “sculpting air.” The first arrangements as to the purpose and direction of future actions were made during the 1<sup>st</sup> *Parade of Contemporary Art – Elbląg ’63* organized thanks to cooperation with Bogusz. Kwiatkowski’s multi-faceted activity in the “Red Tavern” Young Intelligentsia Club in Elbląg, functioning under the patronage of the ZAMECH Mechanical Works, enabled him on the one hand to establish contacts with artists, on the other – to organize exhibitions of the most recent art with the support of the National Museum in Warsaw. From the perspective of the Biennale’s propaganda success, an important text was written by the secretary of the Elbląg section of PUWP. In it, he invoked the tradition of the Polish avant-garde, indicating that: “Artists had already dreamt of transforming the world back in revolutionary Russia – these were the circumstances of the new renaissance, while the Pole Strzemiński was the first to claim that everyday objects would turn into works of art in the future. It is up to us to develop and act upon this idea. Today, we may already state that not only everyday objects, but the entire world that surrounds us will be a work of art in the future. It is up to us to shape it so that it becomes a painting. The world will turn into a painting, in which the man will live, work and develop the thought that will serve mankind.

of publications *Rzeźba polska od XVI do początków XX wieku* (Warsaw, 1973); *Rzeźba europejska od XV do XX wieku* (Warsaw, 1978), was mainly interested in old sculpture. Katarzyna Mikoćka-Rachubowa’s guide to the Gallery of Sculpture at the Old Orangery, published by the National Museum in Warsaw in 1989, included only NMW’s collection of historical sculpture until 1939. See “Rzeźba XX wieku. Z Hanną Kotkowską-Bareją rozmawia Waldemar Marek Bielski,” *Orońsko. Kwartalnik rzeźby*, no. 1–2 (1996), pp. 6–8.

<sup>15</sup> Jerzy Zanoziński, “Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie” in *Galeria Rzeźby Polskiej XX...*, op. cit.

This thought began to take shape nowhere else than in socialist countries, which is why this is where it will have to be acted upon. We realize that this is a new phase that we are willing to enter. It is never easy to begin something new.”<sup>16</sup>

The beginnings were indeed difficult: after two years of negotiations with the local authorities of Elbląg and the local section of PUWP, Kwiatkowski was accepted as the organizer of the planned Biennale. At a meeting with the Minister of Culture and Art, Lucjan Motyka, he presented a justification for the need to transform the urban space, emphasizing the social values embodied in the actions of artists. The fact that ZAMECH Mechanical Works in Elbląg participated in the project was a chief asset of the future Biennale, making it possible to confront art with technological developments, and new technologies with nature. At that time, ZAMECH was a modern enterprise that manufactured specialized equipment for the shipbuilding industry. The possibility of ZAMECH's comprehensive assistance in providing materials and constructing works of art proved to be the decisive argument in deliberations on the idea to organize the Biennale and the possibility to create various objects using a permanent material (welded iron).

The information brochure of the 1<sup>st</sup> *Biennale of Spatial Forms*, with graphic design by Bogusz, included the terms and conditions of participation, which consisted of 16 clauses. Among the most important ones, we find the following: “2. Accepting the invitation shall be tantamount to granting consent for the construction of a spatial form designated for an area in the city of Elbląg, agreed with the Organizational Committee, with dimensions of at least 2.00 m × 2.00 m × 2.00 m [...]; 12. The assembly of the spatial form and its placement in the location designated by the artist shall be managed and supervised by the artist, in his presence, with the prior consultation of specialists from the Biennale's technical office [...]; 13. Any and all drawings, models and blueprints of the design shall be exhibited at the end of the Biennale and remain the property of the author [...]; 14. The created forms shall constitute the collection of the open-air gallery of spatial forms and be the property of the Mechanical Works and the city of Elbląg.”<sup>17</sup> Maps and photographs of areas designated for spatial forms constituted an important part of the information brochure. Local authorities and the management of ZAMECH made it possible to invite 40 artists for a period of four weeks.<sup>18</sup> The aforementioned guidelines specified the size of prepared works beforehand. However, this is not to say that artists succumbed to these limitations – the vast majority of the forms greatly differed from the agreed dimensions, which should be interpreted as a manifestation of independence and freedom. Both the organizers and the artists taking part in the Biennale were aware of the situation, and chose to play a game of sorts, where each of the parties had to make concessions in the name of art. The public space was appropriated by artists and inhabitants of Elbląg alike,

<sup>16</sup> Archives of El Gallery, Elbląg, *W związku z ciągle zachodzącymi zmianami...*, TS.

<sup>17</sup> *Informator I Biennale Form Przestrzennych*, Elbląg 1965. Contains a historical outline of Elbląg, schematic plans of areas designated for spatial forms, photographs as well as rules and regulations of participation.

<sup>18</sup> Full list of participants of the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale: Magdalena Abakanowicz, Marian Bogusz, Julian Boss-Gosławski, Artur Brunsz, Jan Chwałczyk, Zbigniew Dhubak, Jerzy Federowicz, Wanda Gołkowska, Zbigniew Gostomski, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz, Bronisław Kierzkowski, Edward Krasinski, Jerzy Krechowicz, Hilary Krzysztofiak, Lech Kunka, Gerard Kwiatkowski, Jerzy Lengiewicz, Adam Marczyński, Andrzej Matuszewski, Stanisław Sikora, Kajetan Sosnowski, Antoni Starczewski, Henryk Stażewski, Krystyna Sulewska-Figiela, Bogusław Szwarz, Magdalena Więcek, Mieczysław Wiśniewski, Juliusz Woźniak, Bohdan Załęski, Krystyn Zieliński, Jan Ziemiński. Foreign guests: Jetta Donega (Italy), Tihomir Gyarmathy (Hungary), Jan Hendrych (ČSSR), Stanislav Makarov (ČSSR), Antoni Milkowsky (USA), Eduard Ovčáček (ČSSR), Miloš Urbásek (ČSSR), Jan Wagner (ČSSR), Józef Wagner (ČSSR).

as if in retaliation for the dictates and guidelines they had to obey – a successful attempt at questioning the political order.

The Biennale officially began on 23 July, coinciding with the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Parade of Contemporary Art – Elbląg '65*, which opened in El Gallery according to Bogusz's concept. The exhibition proved to be the last event associated symbolically with the Crooked Circle Gallery, at the same time forming *Confrontations '65*,<sup>19</sup> which closed the cycle of art meetings organized by Bogusz. This time, the carefully arranged display merely served as a supplement to the spectacular demonstration of art that the Biennale of Spatial Forms turned out to be. The exhibition documented the accomplishments of Polish art of the turn of the 1960s, featuring the works of almost 60 well-known artists, including many doyens of modern art, such as Alfred Lenica, Maria Ewa Łunkiewicz-Rogoyska, Adam Marczyński, Jadwiga Maziarska, Henryk Stażewski, former members of the 55 Group: Marian Bogusz, Zbigniew Dłubak and Kajetan Sosnowski. The international aspect of the exhibition was asserted by the display of works of Lajos Kassák, an avant-garde Hungarian artist associated with constructivism, in the central gallery space. Owing to his absence, the spatial form he designed was to be constructed by Tihamér Gyarmathy, but – regrettably – it was eventually not presented. In his art programme, Bogusz emphasized that “the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale of Spatial Forms is an enormous experiment that shapes the correctly understood, modern form of patronage and of including artworks in our everyday work and everyday life [...]”<sup>20</sup> The programme assumptions included the theoretical deliberations of Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński,<sup>21</sup> presented in the work *Kompozycja przestrzeni. Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego*<sup>22</sup> [The composition of space. Calculations of the space-time rhythm], according to which the designs of artists should integrate the existing surroundings: “The connection between the sculpture and the space, saturating the space with the sculpture, the sculpture blending in with the space and becoming tied with it – these are the organic laws of sculpture.”<sup>23</sup> The spatial forms constructed during the Biennale were created for specific locations (**figs 1-3**). “This is not about placing a traditionally understood sculpture in the open air, but about the development of a selected location with both designed and existing elements (greenery, architecture) – claimed Bogusz. Given such assumptions, the artist has to think using a different spatial scale than when working in the studio on a painting or sculpture for a traditional exhibition. The encounter with the real dimension of architecture, greenery of the area and dimension of the material represents an important contribution to revising a number of artistic assumptions formed in the studio. It also influences the artist's responsibility for the created form and the modern situation of art in our reality.”<sup>24</sup> Throughout the Biennale, but also afterwards, the Mechanical Works were

<sup>19</sup> *Konfrontacje 65 / Confrontations '65*. The exhibition comprised the solo presentation of Lajos Kassák 1887–1967 (Hungary) and collective presentation of Polish artists.

<sup>20</sup> Marian Bogusz, “I Biennale form przestrzennych,” *Kultura*, no. 32 (1965), p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Bogusz was the author of the script and co-designer (with Jerzy Oplustil) of the exhibition *Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Strzemiński* at the Art Propaganda Centre in Łódź, December 1956 – January 1957. This was the first monographic presentation of their work (including their publications) after the period of Socialist Realism, signifying political thaw.

<sup>22</sup> Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Strzemiński, *Kompozycja przestrzeni. Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego*, Biblioteka „a.r.”, n° 2 (Łódź, 1931).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Bogusz, *op. cit.*

involved in ‘new, creative production,’ as not everyone managed to complete their pieces. “Workplaces were designated for artists on the enormous shop floors. There was something impressive in this collaboration to create enormous metal forms that were ‘useful to no-one’ and ‘not ordered by anyone.’”<sup>25</sup>

Stanisław Lorentz proved to be a huge enthusiast of the Biennale (fig. 4). Following a meeting with its organizers, the *Exhibition of Models and Photograms of Spatial Forms*<sup>26</sup> created in Elbląg, executed under Kwiatkowski’s supervision by ZAMECH workers, opened on 25 November 1965 (fig. 5). The exhibition arranged by Bogusz was supplemented with photographic documentation of forms executed in the urban space (also shown under construction – figs 6–7) and views of ZAMECH shop floors during regular production work. The presence of photography made it possible to rescale sculptures and present the audience with selected details, introducing various contexts of executed works to the perception process. Photographs changed subjective relations and introduced new qualities. The above is backed by the intellectual work of the photographer, who emphasized his subjectivity – instead of simply manifesting the presence of a given object/sculpture, he created a new work of art. Therefore, the audience could enter the world of free interpretations and overlapping comparisons, creating their own narrative. Owing to the presentation of models and their photographic reinterpretations, they as if mediated the spaces of signs, in which the historical narrative coexists with the contemporary interpretation.

During the opening of the exhibition, the National Museum, Mechanical Works and the city of Elbląg concluded an agreement “on assuming supervision over the Biennale and the development of arts culture in the city”<sup>27</sup> in a solemn ceremony (fig. 8). In his statements, Professor Lorentz emphasized the workers’ and engineers’ “sensitivity to the beauty of structure – the structure assembled from parts familiar to them.”<sup>28</sup> The museum undertook to purchase ten models to its collection of contemporary art – a promise that was not fully kept. The Xawery Dunikowski Museum of Sculpture in the Królikarnia Palace in Warsaw (a division of the NMW) currently holds only four models: *Klaskator* by Bronisław Kierzkowski,<sup>29</sup> *Spatial Form* by Marian Bogusz,<sup>30</sup> *Spatial Form* by Zbigniew Gostomski<sup>31</sup> and *Elbląg 65* by Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz,<sup>32</sup> which is almost entirely destroyed.<sup>33</sup> The catalogue, with graphic design by Bogusz, was published after the exhibition and alluded to the interwar constructivist

<sup>25</sup> Wiesław Borowski, “Formy przestrzenne w Elblągu,” *Kierunki*, no. 36 (1965), p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> “Wystawa I Biennale Form Przestrzennych Elbląg 1965, 26 XI – 11 II 1966,” in *Kronika Wystaw Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie 1862–2002 / Chronicle of Exhibition at the National Museum in Warsaw 1862–2002*, Anna Masłowska, ed., vol. 2, 1963–82 (Warsaw, 2006), p. 81.

<sup>27</sup> Collection of Iconography and Photography of the NMW, Agreement by and between NMW and Gen. Świerczewski Mechanical Works in Elbląg of 26 November 1965, MS no. 2175.

<sup>28</sup> Statement by director Prof. S. Lorentz, in “Rzeźby z elbląskich skwerów na wystawie w Muzeum Narodowym,” *Express Wieczorny*, no. 274 (1965).

<sup>29</sup> *Klaskator*, iron, 1965, 39 × 56 × 17.5 cm, 3.5 kg, inv. no. Rz.W.515 MNW.

<sup>30</sup> *Spatial form*, iron, 1965, 80 × 42 × 42 cm, 22 kg, inv. no. Rz.W.291 MNW.

<sup>31</sup> *Spatial form*, iron, 1965, 80 × 47.5 × 32 cm, 56 kg, inv. no. Rz.W.308 MNW.

<sup>32</sup> *Elbląg 65*, iron, 1965, 175 × 140 × 70 cm, inv. no. 232342 MNW.

<sup>33</sup> A reconstruction of Jarnuszkiewicz’s *Elbląg 65* sculpture is located in the Centre of Polish Sculpture in Orońsko under the title *Signpost Composition*, 1994, inv. no. CRP (RZ) 581. *Katalog rzeźby i obiektów przestrzennych z kolekcji Muzeum Rzeźby Współczesnej*, Julita Twardowska, ed. (Orońsko, 2001), p. 35, fig.

publication *Blok*.<sup>34</sup> Like during the museum exhibition, the artist confronted photographs of executed spatial forms with monumental machines and products. The visual layout of the printed texts resulted from the theory of functional typography formulated by Władysław Strzemiński. Back in 1956, *Nowy Nurt* [New current], which was the internal magazine of the Crooked Circle Club – the institution associated with the Crooked Circle Gallery – published an advertisement, reading: “the editorial team is looking for copies of all works by Strzemiński: articles, notes from lectures, works on aesthetics and any others.”<sup>35</sup> In response to the appeal, the magazine received – mainly from Łódź – writings such as the issue of *Druk funkcjonalny* [Functional print] (1933) and *Teoria widzenia* [The theory of seeing] in the form of notes, fragments of which were published at the time.<sup>36</sup> The vertical or horizontal arrangement of the text “always resulted from its content. When preparing the print [Bogusz, and Strzemiński before him] divided it into parts and zones, separating individual semantic groups.”<sup>37</sup> The text containing information was laid out in geometrical compositional blocks, juxtaposed in terms of layout and size. Individual words and sentences were written out in vertical and horizontal lines, in reference to constructivist works. Mieczysław Szczuka – co-founder of the Blok group (1924–26), “strongly involved in activities of the political far left – designated an instrumental function for art and equated it with literally understood productive labour. He demanded that new solutions be implemented solely for the purpose of designing industrial forms, interior decoration, typography and fashion. He was also the author of photomontages referred to as ‘poezoplastyka,’ [visual poetry] surprising in their diverse semantic associations,”<sup>38</sup> whose examples we may find in Biennale’s catalogue. Szczuka equated art with productive labour; together with Strzemiński’s *Functional Print*, these became the point of reference for Bogusz’s typographic solutions.<sup>39</sup>

When recalling direct references to the idea behind the Biennale, one ought to mention the variety of displays, exhibitions and presentations that took place both in Poland and abroad. These included the actions of Czech artists in Vítkovice near Ostrava<sup>40</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> Symposium of Visual Artists and Scientists in Puławy (1966), which combined the need for scientific and artistic decisions with possibilities offered by the chemical industry. However, the participation of industrial plants in the Sculpture Symposium in Aalborg (1968), Urbanum ’71 Symposium in Nuremberg, exhibition *The National Museum – Zegrze Reservoir Route* at the NMW (1971),<sup>41</sup> Symposium of Spatial Forms Ustka – 72 (1972) or Lublin Visual Art Meetings (1976) was either

<sup>34</sup> *I Biennale Form Przestrzennych. Elbląg 23 VII – 22 VIII 1965* (Elbląg, 1965).

<sup>35</sup> “Do wszystkich odbiorców Nowego Nurtu!,” *Nowy Nurt*, no. 2 (1956), p. 40.

<sup>36</sup> Władysław Strzemiński, “Teoria widzenia. Wstęp,” *Nowy Nurt*, no. 8 (1956), pp. 51–55. The announced continuation of “Teoria widzenia” never appeared in *Nowy Nurt*. The entire work was only published in 1958 by Krakow’s Wydawnictwo Literackie.

<sup>37</sup> Janusz Zagrodzki, “Stefan Gierowski i Krzywe Koło,” in *Gierowski i Krzywe Koło*, Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, 2003 (Łódź, 2003), p. 14.

<sup>38</sup> Irena Kossowska, *Sztuka dwudziestolecia międzywojennego w Polsce* [online], Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, June 2004, [retrieved: 18 January 2016], at: < <http://culture.pl/pl/artukul/sztuka-dwudziestolecia-miedzywojennego-w-polsce>>.

<sup>39</sup> Bogusz owned issues of *Blok* magazine as well as texts of Russian avant-garde artists, whose rhetoric served as perfect ideological “support” in the process of realizing his art projects.

<sup>40</sup> Juliusz A. Chrościcki, “Elbląg. Biennale na półmetku,” *Współczesność*, no. 17 (1965), p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> *Trasa: Muzeum Narodowe – Zalew Zegrzyński*, 21.06–08.08.1971.



scarce or recalled merely intentionally. “The fusion of *par excellence* political and ideological premises on the one hand, with the ambitions of artists to create downright modern and at the same time autonomous actions and debates on art was something exceptional in art – commented Piotr Piotrowski – as it indicated the political naivety and opportunism of this milieu,” later adding that “on the other hand, it [indicated] the pragmatism, inventiveness and involvement for the sake of modern art.”<sup>42</sup> The fact that the organizers were conscious of the circumstances in which they had to function is indisputable. Neither Bogusz – an activist and member of the Main Board of ZPAP, nor Kwiatkowski – who proved to be an efficient organizer, should be suspected of the naivety ascribed to them, while the steps aimed at gaining the support of Professor Lorentz clearly indicated that they were perfectly aware of the situation. Regrettably, in spite of the declarations made, the agreement between the National Museum in Warsaw, ZAMECH Mechanical Works and the authorities of Elbląg on the museum’s assumption of permanent supervision over the Biennale of Spatial Forms and the development of the city’s arts culture revealed a lack of determination on the part of the museum to work towards integrating contemporary art and industry.

Even before the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale of Spatial Forms drew to a close, the decision was taken to prepare subsequent editions. During a session of Elbląg’s Municipal National Council, the councillors decided to modify the initial assumptions. Fewer artists were to be invited, the excuse being concern for the appearance of the city and its saturation with spatial forms. However, the real reason was the need to significantly decrease the available funding.<sup>43</sup> The role of the organizational committee was greatly limited. An academic board was appointed, whose task was to select participants of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennale. It was chaired by Stanisław Lorentz, and consisted of Juliusz Starzyński, Mieczysław Porębski, Bohdan Urbanowicz, Ryszard Stanisławski, architect Jerzy Hryniewiecki, Marian Wnuk, sculptor and dean of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and Wojciech Wilski, Department Director at the Ministry of Culture and Art. One of the initiatives of the board was to erect a *Monument to Adam Mickiewicz*<sup>44</sup> according to a design by Zbigniew Pronaszko, intended for Vilna (Vilnius) in 1924.<sup>45</sup> The idea was put forward by Wnuk, yet it was not fulfilled due to his death. It follows that the future of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennale was not only seen in terms of the achievements of innovators. The activities of the board resulted in the publication of the information brochure of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennale, which contained rules and regulations of participation, photographs of existing spatial forms and an indication of areas proposed for future interventions. The rules and regulations contained

<sup>42</sup> Piotrowski, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>43</sup> Archives of El Gallery, 1965, Minutes from a meeting of the Elbląg City Council, TS.

<sup>44</sup> (rt) [Ryszard Tomczyk], “Przed otwarciem II Biennale Form Przestrzennych w Elblągu,” *Głos Elbląga*, no. 151 (1967). The monument (executed in metal) was to stand on Mickiewicz Street in Elbląg.

<sup>45</sup> *Design for a Monument to Adam Mickiewicz* according to Zbigniew Pronaszko was created in 1922. In the following year, it was presented to the authorities of Vilna (Vilnius), yet failed to gain their acceptance. (*Design for a Monument to Adam Mickiewicz for Vilna* [1922] is currently held at the National Museum in Krakow, bronze cast, 51.5 × 18 × 18 cm, unsigned). On account of the hundredth anniversary of the trial of the Filaret Association in 1924, the Committee for the Construction of the Monument decided to implement the artist’s vision in the Vilnius garrison, contrary to the opinion of the municipal authorities. The temporary, wooden model of the sculpture, measuring 12.25 m in height, was erected on the bank of Neris river. Unfortunately, the 1938 flood destroyed Pronaszko’s realization. See Piotr Szubert, “Pomnik Adama Mickiewicza w Wilnie,” *Blok-Notes*, no. 9 (1988), pp. 195–236; Aleksandra Melbechowska-Luty, Piotr Szubert, *Posągi i ludzie. Rzeźba polska dwudziestolecia międzywojennego* (Warsaw, 2005), pp. 43–46; Piotr Szubert, “Pomnik Mickiewicza – ołtarz narodu,” in *Materiały do studiów nad sztuką XIX wieku. Pomniki w XIX wieku*, János Brendel, ed. (Poznań, 1993), pp. 20–21.

an outline of the conditions that had to be met by the prepared works: "The execution of the designed spatial form shall take into account the current or future architecture of the display location designated by the Municipal Architect in Elbląg, shall match the conditions existing in the specific surroundings. The weight of the spatial form should not exceed five tonnes of metal."<sup>46</sup> It seems that the above restrictions were caused by the lack of due caution on the part of the organizers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale, who failed to secure the required material to execute the works, and by concern about the scale of proposed designs. Such advance designation of the parameters of the works revealed far-reaching intervention in the process of their creation. Initially, 17 artists, including seven from abroad, were selected for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennale.<sup>47</sup> All in all, only the ten Polish artists were invited. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennale took place under the patronage of the Minister of Culture and Art, Lucjan Motyka, and the Minister of Heavy Industry, Janusz Hryniewicz. The *Exhibition of Contemporary Art* at El Gallery, which accompanied the Biennale, included the "painting section," with works by artists from Warsaw, Wrocław and Elbląg, and the "sculpture and abstract bas-relief section," with works by Elbląg artists and participants of the 1<sup>st</sup> Biennale of Spatial Forms. Despite the patronage of the National Museum, the scope of the exhibition was no match for the problems raised during *Confrontations '65*, which summarized the achievements of the Crooked Circle Gallery.

In the following years, the National Museum concluded agreements with subsequent plants, for example, with the Marcelli Nowotko Sulphur Mines and Processing Plant in Machów, near Tarnobrzeg (sulphur conglomerate) on 30 June 1966.<sup>48</sup> The resulting cooperation consisted in "the organization and provision of works from own collection for the historical museum exhibition at the Baranów Castle."<sup>49</sup> Another agreement, concluded on 31 October 1972 with the Passenger Car Factory (FSO) in Warsaw, generally boiled down to "technical assistance" for the museum and "organizing trips by both institutions to their respective facilities." None of the subsequent agreements culminated in an artistic manifestation that would imply certain actions on the part of the local community, such as the one born in Elbląg. This link, albeit imperfect, proved to be unique in terms of its ultimate results. Lorentz often underlined the importance of industrial patronage,<sup>50</sup> yet one whose main purpose was to reconstruct historical facilities, which would then gain a museum-like character, while their further use for representative purposes, conferences and conventions contributed to their popularization. The important thing was for "the monument to be preserved" and secured with the help of the industrial plant. This collaborative outlook became a model for other institutions, whose functioning was endangered by a particularly difficult financial situation. Today, we may recall

<sup>46</sup> "Regulamin uczestnictwa," in *II Biennale Form Przestrzennych*, Elbląg, July 1967.

<sup>47</sup> Letter of the Organizational Committee of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennale of Spatial Forms in Elbląg of 1 June 1967, signed by Gerard Kwiatkowski, containing the list of participants selected by the Academic and Artistic Board: "Representatives of Poland: Julian Pałka, Oskar Hansen, Lech Tomaszewski, Stanisław Zamecznik, Henryk Morel, Maciej Szańkowski, Grzegorz Kowalski, Stanisław Słonina, Magdalena Więcek, Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz. All proposed artists were present at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennale. Representatives of foreign countries: Olga Jevric (Yugoslavia), Ernst Neizvestny (USSR), Joe Oda (Japan), Pietro Cascella (Italy), Slavco Tihec (Yugoslavia), Kobłasa (CSSR), Wostan (Stanisław Wojcieszynski) French Polonia", did not take part. Enclosed to the letter was an information brochure with detailed terms and conditions of participation.

<sup>48</sup> NMW Archives, Correspondence of Director Stanisław Lorentz, 1966, file 28, no. 829.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Stanisław Lorentz, "Rola i formy mecenatu przemysłu w dziedzinie ochrony zabytków i przystosowaniu ich do potrzeb turystyki," *Ochrona Zabytków*, vol. 20, no. 4 (1967), p. 8.

the peculiar union of the museum with the industry: even though it was a one-of-a-kind event, unused in theoretical reflection on art, it revealed the cooperative potential of two autonomous entities combined by the personality of the artist/curator Marian Bogusz. It is thanks to him that modernity could be defined within the open urban space, and designs “transferred” to the museum’s gallery extended the semantic scope of the term “sculpture.”

Translated by Aleksandra Szkudłapska