



10. Makieta w konkursie na Kościół w Nowej Hucie - I wyróżnienie, proj. Jurand Jarecki, 1958, archiwum własne Autora  
 10. Mock-up in the contest for the church in Nowa Huta - I award, by Jurand Jarecki, 1958, Author's archive

towych w Wiśle autorstwa Stefana Tworkowskiego sprzed 1937 r. (il. 6) czy gmach Poczty w Mikołowie zaprojektowany prawdopodobnie przez Juliana Paternana-Sadłowskiego w 1932 r. Co najmniej dwie generacje górnośląskich architektów w okresie międzywojennym i tzw. PRL-owskiego socjofunkcjonalizmu zyskały wówczas pokaźny rozgłos w kraju i za granicą dzięki indywidualnej transpozycji corbusierowskich zasad architektury. Realizacje te nie były wiernym naśladownictwem mistrza, lecz twórczym rozwijaniem jego myśli, co pokazał między innymi Mieczysław Król w kilku katowickich megastruk-

turach mieszkaniowych, wśród których największy rozgłos przyniosła mu tzw. Superjednostka (il. 7), wywodząca się z idei bloku marsylskiego - Unité d'Habitation. Dowodzą tego także realizacje Henryka Buszko i Aleksandra Franty - tandemu posługującego się corbusierowskim alfabetem w wielkich założeniach urbanistycznych, jak: 30-to tysięczne Osiedle 1000-lecia w Katowicach czy Ośrodek sanatoryjno-wypoczynkowy w Ustroniu (il. 8); obiekty zaprojektowane przez Tadeusza Teodorowicza Todorowskiego: gmach Laboratorium Wydziału Budownictwa oraz Pawilon Architektury Politechniki Śląskiej w Gliwicach (il. 9), czy wreszcie twórczość znakomitego architekta konstruktora Juranda Jareckiego, który w konkursowej wersji Kościoła w Nowej Hucie (il. 10) przyswoił rzeźbiarskie, prostokątne formy ciągnowe zastosowane w Pawilonie Philipsa na EXPO w Brukseli w roku 1958, nie wspominając o niezwykle nowoczesnych rozwiązaniach szklanych ścian kurtynowych Domu Handlowego Zenit w Katowicach. Wymienieni architekci poprzez swoje dzieła niewątpliwie stworzyli wyróżniającą się markę górnośląskiej szkoły architektury<sup>16</sup>. Także i dzisiaj architektura prezentowana przez najmłodsze pokolenie miejscowych architektów miewa korzenie corbusierowskie – trzecia generacja spadkobierców genialnego francusko-szwajcarskiego architekta.

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## LE CORBUSIER IN WARSAW AND UPPER SILESIA

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The year 2012 will be remembered in the cultural world as the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Le Corbusier (1887-1965), the great architect of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (il. 1) In Poland, the organiser of the Year of Le Corbusier – Centrum Architektury (Centre of Architecture) in Warsaw – did not content itself with celebrating the birthday of the guru of global modernism, who was born on 6 October 1887, but also prepared a special educational and artistic pro-

gramme entitled “Le Corbusier”, and invited the participation of many esteemed institutions, artists and researchers from Poland and all over the world. According to the principal organiser of the celebrations, Grzegorz Piątek, the idea came from “(...) Le Corbusier’s ideological presence and absence in Poland (...) in order to create an opportunity to (...) seek traces of his influence in our urban architecture and place the legacy of Polish architects in the global in-

<sup>16</sup> *Śląska szkoła architektury? Architektura na Górnym Śląsku po 1989 roku*, katalog wystawy, SARP Katowice 2009

tellectual context, but also to reflect upon the robustness of modernist urban planning ideals (...)”<sup>1</sup>. The project entailed a number of events that took place in Warsaw, Katowice and Tarnów. I myself organised Le Corbusier in Katowice, following the concept of tracing Le Corbusier’s ideas in Katowice. This text has been presented at a Warsaw meeting with the participation of Charles Jencks, Arthur Rüegg and Charles Knevt.

Was Le Corbusier indeed never in Poland?

To date, neither Polish, nor foreign literature has ever mentioned that Le Corbusier ever visited Poland. We only know that there were preparations for two visits of his: first to Warsaw in 1933, and then to Wrocław in 1948, but they never actually took place.

The first planned visit is mentioned in *Kronika Związku Stowarzyszeń Architektów Polskich* (Chronicles of the Union of Polish Architects’ Associations, ZSAP) in February 1933: “The exhibition at the I.P.S (Social Policy Institute) and the Architectural Propaganda Week will be held from 24 May until 6 June this year on the occasion of the participants of the Moscow Congress passing through Warsaw. The guests will be welcomed by the Z.S.A.P. Council and will include, among others, Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius, who are going to deliver lectures in Warsaw.”<sup>2</sup>

Le Corbusier was also a member of the Polish-French Organisation Committee of the World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace<sup>3</sup> which took place in Wrocław in 1948, but in the end he did not appear at this event, either.

However, those whose professional paths crossed with Le Corbusier’s suggested he had indeed travelled through Poland on his way to Moscow. As recalled by Jerzy Sołtan in a conversation with Andrzej Bulanda: “In the case of Poland one might be tempted to quote Le Corbusier’s own words. At the time of his greatest popularity in Russia, he used to travel on a number of occasions between Paris and

Moscow. Through the windows of the train – there were no airplanes then – he watched the landscape between Zbąszyń (German border) and Stowbtsy (Russian border). The view must have given him little amusement. This Churchillian war corridor of Europe, regularly devastated every couple of years, had nothing to offer; neither in terms of natural beauty (forests had been cut down, the place was totally flat), nor works of men, since what might have been appealing once had already been razed to the ground. What, then, could have caught his perceptive eye?”<sup>4</sup>. As confirmed by Wojciech Leśnikowski at the meeting at Rue de Sevres in 1965, “Le Corbusier travelled through the Polish land at least twice on his way to Moscow. Nobody stopped him to ask for a lecture, even though Szymon Syrkus and other Polish architects had dubbed him a genius.”<sup>5</sup>

In Chapter 6 of his book entitled *Le Corbusier*<sup>6</sup>, published in 2001, Kenneth Frampton reports that the great architect stayed in Prague between 1 and 6 October 1928 before setting off on a rail journey through Warsaw to Moscow, where he was warmly welcomed on 10 October. In order to unravel the course of this journey, I asked for the help of the Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris. An employee of the Foundation, Arnaud Dercelles, worker of the Centre for Documentation and Research and co-publisher of two volumes of the architect’s private correspondence<sup>7</sup>, introduced me to two letters which mentioned a journey through Poland.

The first of the two letters was addressed to Le Corbusier’s mother, Marie-Charlotte-Amélie Perret. It reads as follows:

*6 October 1928,  
Train Prague-Warsaw.*

*Dearest Mummy.*

*Having left Prague behind, I finally find a moment to write to you. Since my arrival last Sunday right up until Saturday two hours before my departure, I had no rest from the Congress, all the visits and even an*

<sup>1</sup> Based on the information poster „Le Corbusier 2012”, texts: Grzegorz Piątek, graphic design: Magdalena Piwowar, publisher: Centrum Architektury, Warszawa 2012

<sup>2</sup> “Architektura i Budownictwo”, No. 2/1933, p. 60

<sup>3</sup> 60 years ago, Wrocław hosted the World Congress of Intellectuals. Sources: PAP, 25.08.2008 and M. Bibrowski, *Picasso i Kongres* [In:] M. Bobrowski (ed.), *Picasso w Polsce*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1979, p. 27

<sup>4</sup> J. Sołtan, *Rozmowy o architekturze*, Muzeum Akademii Sztuk Pięknych, Warszawa 1996, p. 56

<sup>5</sup> W. Leśnikowski, *Śmierć przez przeciętność. Wspomnienia architekta*, Architektura i Biznes, 2007 No. 2, p.79 and J. Kurek (ed.), *Wojciech Leśnikowski architekt obywatel świata*, Politechnika Krakowska, Kraków 2012, p.89

<sup>6</sup> K. Frampton, *Le Corbusier*, Thames & Hudson, London 2001, p. 89

<sup>7</sup> A. Dercelles, R. Baudouin, *Le Corbusier. Correspondance. Lettres à la famille. Tome I: 1900-1925, Tome II: 1926 – 1950*, Infolio éditions, Gollion, Paris, 2011 (Vol. I), 2012 (Vol. II)

*impromptu conference organized by the Academy, the School of Applied Arts and a group of young people.*

*At the Congress, there were 150 participants, including great personalities of a variety of titles. Four evenings, Sunday through Wednesday, all filled with parties at Beneš's, visits to the opera and a cocktail party organised by the city council and the Minister of Common Education. As it turned out, and as you might have quite rightly predicted, they expected something from me. I would even risk saying that the entire meeting hall was thrilled with my lecture, which was later confirmed by the press. At the closing of the Congress, the participants formulated a declaration of 'a hundred thousand youths', because at the end of my discourse I said: 'I do not<sup>8</sup> complain on my behalf alone, I speak on behalf of ten thousand, a hundred thousand youths who are being oppressed by the academy'. Thus I brought forth a note of bold action at the heart of philosophical debate.*

*So at yesterday's evening conference, which I had titled "Technology makes way even for lyricism", I drew in black, red and blue, using my acquired technical skills, on a large sheet of paper, 6 metres long – a meaningful testimony, which I made my gift to the Prague Academy.*

*Arthur Fontaine was delighted with my speech. He said "It seemed to me as if your words were my own."*

*As far as rest is concerned, it was, as they say, forgotten. I slept three to four hours a night. Yesterday an avant-garde Czech poet paid me a great token of his highest admiration by declaring: "Le Corbusier is a great poet!"*

*The Czech are charming in their hospitality. The city teems with life. They are just now adding the finishing touches to the Trade Fair Building, which<sup>9</sup>, is a perfect copy of our Palace of the League of Nations (less divine proportions). It is impressive.*

*Do not fear even for a moment that all this will make me fall into the snares of pride. I am always longing for my busy solitude.*

*I am now reaching the Polish border. Spruces fill the view much like in the Jura. It is Saturday, six o'clock, and I will be riding without stop until Mon-*

*day for a full fifteen hours! What an opportunity to make up for my sleepless drinking spree.*

*Please do not hold it against me that I had not written before. It was simply impossible. But I always keep the image of my brave Mummy close at heart. If we can all be wiser and better people, perhaps the nearest future will bring you more tenderness to enjoy. We must learn to see the bigger picture, make sense of it and make it bear fruit.*

*(...) I will see you soon, my dear Mummy.*

*Your Éd.*

*Just in case, here is my address:*

*CENTROSOYUS Presidium, Moscow.*

The addressee of the second letter is Le Corbusier's wife-to-be, Yvonne Gallis, whom he married in 1930. The letter reads as follows:

*Sunday, 7 October 1928,*

*My dearest Vonvon.*

*I am now approaching the Russian border. The weather is marvellous. Around and up to the horizon I can see nothing but a great flat vastness of sand covered in fields and forests. I have been travelling since yesterday, having set out from Prague at two o'clock. Yesterday, still in Czechoslovakia, I found my bed in the sleeping car. This is where I will spend this night at the border. Travel agencies do an amazing job. I am travelling surrounded by red velvet, alone in my compartment. One Japanese man is travelling next door. The country seems empty and deserted. Everybody is very kind to me. Just the other day William Ritter himself accompanied me to the station. He was in excellent shape. He'd been in Prague for eight days before he noticed a poster about my conference and got in touch with me at the last moment.*

*The Friday conference<sup>10</sup> was extraordinary. It was held in an avant-garde theatre. The house was full. I received every possible token of friendship and my participation in this solemn and quite tedious event was very active.*

*Just before my departure I received your letter of 1 October. You are no longer writing about the*

<sup>8</sup> The words "I speak" were crossed out – footnote by A. Dercelles, R. Baudouin.

<sup>9</sup> *Veletržní palác* and the expositions were built between 1925 and 1928 by two Czech architects: Josef Fuchs and Oldřich Tyl. The design is characterised by the use of curtain walls – footnote by A. Dercelles, R. Baudouin.

<sup>10</sup> The conference, entitled „New Forms of Applied Arts” was held as part of the Fifth Annual Congress of the International Federation of Intellectuals' Associations titled "Elements of Contemporary Civilisation" – footnote by A. Dercelles, R. Baudouin.

<sup>11</sup> Translated from French into Polish by K. Korpa-Stempel.



dentist. I do hope you will eventually visit one. Give my regards to my good Blumenstein. As for the fur, I have seen two large fur stores in Prague, but they only had caraculs and beavers. See, there you are!

I also received your humorous postcards. Be damned you jokers, you have been emptying my bottles! Remember we will need them for the big feast after my return. As far as the card in Javanese (?) is concerned, I have thrown it away and didn't even try to read it. That was a mistake, for it might have given me something to do in my sleeping car.

My dearest Vonvon, this morning I read again your letter from Monaco. It is better now, isn't it? We have a life of trust ahead of us. My dear, are you happy? You must be, for doubt is a painful thing. I have put you through an ordeal. My child, do you know, I keep in close touch with my Mummy. Be kind to her and make a place for her in your little heart. My mother is a woman of delightful character. With her, everything is open and alive. And you can find a place in her heart, too. Write to her often, for I cannot. My days are becoming more and more entangled. They are busy, minute after minute. My head is positively bursting with ideas.

Tell Peter that I received one pack of letters in Esplanade. I forgot to leave my new address at the hotel. Let me know if there is anything I should receive. And please tell him that I wrote when at Frugčs (Loucheur). I will write to St Paul (Beneš told me St Paul is a financial genius).

(...) That is all, my dearest Vonvon. Love and kisses from your Doudou.

Give my regards to Peter and Albert.<sup>11</sup>

These two messages allow us to reconstruct Le Corbusier's journey through Warsaw to Moscow. Upon consulting the Museum of Rail Industry in Warsaw<sup>12</sup>, I managed to establish the then valid timetable and route of the train, and with much certainty concluded that Le Corbusier stayed in Warsaw from 3.27 p.m. on 6 October 1928 till 9.12 on the following morning, i.e. about 18 hours, if the train was not delayed. This means that he must have got off the Prague-Warsaw train, which had also called at Katowice, at the final stop in Warsaw between 9.07 and 9.31 a.m. and change for the Nord Express

CIWL-D23/24 line from Paris Nord to Stowbtsy/Negoreloye to finally alight on the Polish-Russian border and get on the third line from Negoreloye to Moscow.

How he spent his time in Warsaw and where he stayed for the night remains a mystery. The case needs further investigation to shed some light on this enigmatic, perhaps wholly insignificant incident in the life of the great architect, whose 41<sup>st</sup> birthday fell on that very day. He never mentioned this fact in his letters and probably did not attach much importance to it, though his grim memories of the journey through our country quoted by Wojciech Leśnikowski might have been the effect of his feeling lonely on that special day: "Suddenly I faced a short, bald, disagreeable-looking man – the legendary architect, Le Corbusier. *So you are from Poland* – he said. – *What a flat and unpleasant country...*"<sup>13</sup>. Jerzy Sołtan also recollects Le Corbusier's distaste for the country: "We would often discuss his travels between France and Russia through Poland. What was his impression of the latter? *Mon pauvre Sołtan, Il est triste votre pays... – it is sad, that country of yours*. I remember these words very well, I heard them more than once. But there was this one time – he must have been in a bad mood – when he let it slip and said: *Il est mache votre pays – it is ugly, that country of yours!...*"<sup>14</sup>.

In the Polish community of artists and architects, Le Corbusier was considered a celebrity and was always present in their discussions and programmes. A photograph from 1929, taken during one of the social meetings of architects from Katowice, depicts Tadeusz Michejda pointing at a paper effigy of Le Corbusier as if in admiration, and Karol Schayer "crowning" it, which was not just a meaningless gesture (il. 2). Both Tadeusz Michejda, in his realisations (il. 3) and polemics in the architectural journal "Architektura i Budownictwo"<sup>15</sup>, and Karol Schayer, in his projects constructed in Silesia (il. 4), in Warsaw (il. 5) and in Beirut, as well as many of their colleagues, showed great fascination with Le Corbusier and readily implemented the modernist thought of the master of European and world architecture. Silesian suburbs abounded in creative

<sup>12</sup> Many thanks to Mr Krzysztof Kłociński, manager of the archives at the Museum of Rail Industry in Warsaw.

<sup>13</sup> W. Leśnikowski, op. cit., p.79, Jan Kurek (ed.), op. cit., p.89.

<sup>14</sup> J. Sołtan, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> T. Michejda, *O zdobyczach architektury nowoczesnej*, "Architektura i Budownictwo", 1932, No. 5, pp.137-153.

reinterpretations of Villa Savoye in Poissy, among them a café accompanying sports facilities in Wisła, designed by Stefan Tworkowski in the 1930s (il. 6) and the post office in Mikołów, designed most probably by Julian Paterman-Sadłowski in 1932. At least two generations of architects in Upper Silesia came to prominence in the interwar period and during the so-called sociofunctionalism of the People's Republic of Poland thanks to their individual transpositions of Le Corbusier's ideas. Their projects were not faithful reiterations of his designs, but creative interpretations of his concepts. Some examples were Mieczysław Król's residential megastructures, of which the most famous is the so-called Superunit (il. 7), derived from the idea of the Marseille Unité d'Habitation. Other architects to use Le Corbusier's language in great urban settlements were the duo of Henryk Buszko and Aleksander Franta, the authors

of the Millennium Settlement in Katowice, which housed 30 thousand residents, and of the holiday resort in Ustronie (il. 8). Similarly influenced by the French-Swiss architect were Tadeusz Teodorowicz Todorowski, designer of the Laboratory of the Construction Faculty and the Architecture Hall of the Silesian Polytechnic in Gliwice (il. 9); and Jurand Jarecki, a great talent who drew inspiration from the sculptural angled contours and steel tension cables used in the Philips Pavilion at the EXPO in Brussels in 1958 and from the contest version of the Nowa Huta church (il. 10) to apply very modern solutions in the glass curtain walls of the Zenit shopping centre in Katowice. All these architects undoubtedly added to the unique character of the Upper Silesia school of architecture<sup>16</sup>. Today, the youngest local architects still draw on Le Corbusier's ideas – the third generation of devoted heirs of his great legacy.

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<sup>16</sup> *Śląska szkoła architektury? Architektura na Górnym Śląsku po 1989 roku*, exhibition catalogue, SARP Katowice 2009