

History of Construction of the New Building of the Museum of Art in Łódź in the Context of a Political Situation

Julia Sowińska-Heim*

In 1931, an international collection of modern art works was presented for the first time in Łódź, being then the second largest city in Poland and one of the most important industrial centres. It was a world-class event, since in the 1930s, Łódź museum was the only Polish and European museum presenting works of the most important avant-garde artists as a part of its permanent exhibition. In the post-war period considerable efforts were taken to erect a new building of the Museum of Art in Łódź. It was going to be an event on a national scale, since it would be the first modern multifunctional museum built from scratch during the period of People's Poland. Yet, the lack of perspective thinking and ideological entanglement of cultural institutions, as well as propaganda dictate and the lack of consistency in actions of communist authorities prevented Łódź from taking the chance of remaining in the very centre of pioneering museum activities. [socialist architecture; adaptive reuse; industrial heritage; urban politics; Museum of Art in Łódź]

In 1931 an international collection of modern art works was presented for the first time in Łódź, being then the second largest city in Poland and one of the most important industrial centres. It was a world-class event, since in the 1930s, Łódź museum was the only Polish and European museum presenting works of the most important avant-garde artists as a part of its permanent exhibition. The exhibits included works of such famous artists as Alexander Calder, Jean Arp, Fernand Léger, Max Ernst, Georges Vantongerloo or Theo van Doesburg.¹ History associated with creating the collection is unusual. These were the

* Department of History of Art, Faculty of Philosophy and History, University of Łódź, Franciszkańska 1/5, Łódź, Poland. E-mail: julia.sowinska@uni.lodz.pl.

¹ P. SMOLIK, "Przedmowa", in: *Międzynarodowa Kolekcja Sztuki Nowoczesnej / Collection Internationale d'Art Nouveau*, Katalog nr 2, Łódź 1932 [catalogue].

artists themselves that launched an initiative of acquiring and depositing the works by Polish and foreign avant-garde painters and sculptors at the museum. This idea was developed and implemented by the artists from *a. r.* (an acronym is interpreted as: revolutionary artists, *Pol. artyści rewolucyjni*, or actual avant-garde, *Pol. awangarda rzeczywista*), one of the most famous and active Polish avant-garde artistic groups of the interwar period.² The collection was assembled mainly by Władysław Strzemiński, Katarzyna Kobro, Henryk Stażewski and Jan Brzękowski.³

The new museum did not have a strict nature of a modern art museum and the essential part of the collection consisted of works by renowned Polish painters of the 19th century, e. g. Jan Norblin, Wojciech Gerson and Juliusz Kossak, although it also included works by old masters, e. g. from the studio of Lucas Cranach.⁴ They came mainly from the legacy transferred to Łódź in 1928 by a Polish historian and publicist as well as art collector, Kazimierz Bartoszewicz.⁵ However, this collection of modern art, unusual for those times, shaped a nature and defined a future direction of museum development.

Thanks to Przemysław Smolik, a councillor in the Department of Education and Culture of Łódź City Hall, involved in creation of the Łódź museum and, at the same time, supporting modern art, the works belonging to the avant-garde trends immediately landed in the exhibition halls.⁶ Because of the tight economic situation as well as an am-

² *A. r.* functioned in 1929–1936.

³ The paintings were transferred to Łódź in batches both in 1931 and in 1932. P. KURC-MAJ, "Jakie muzeum? – uwagi na temat historii Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi do 1950 roku", in: A. JACH – K. SŁOBODA – J. SOKOŁOWSKA et al. (eds.), *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi. Monografia. Tom I*, Łódź 2015, pp. 124–175; J. OJRYZŃSKI, "Międzynarodowa Kolekcja Sztuki Nowoczesnej. Kalendarium 1931–1991", in: U. CZARTORYSKA (ed.), *Kolekcja sztuki XX wieku Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi*, Warszawa 1991, p. 9.

⁴ *Katalog Działu Sztuki nr 1*, Muzeum Miejskie Historii i Sztuki im. J. i K. Bartoszewiczów, Łódź 1930 [catalogue].

⁵ Due to a goodwill gesture of the donor, the museum was originally called Muzeum Miejskie Historii i Sztuki im. J. i K. Bartoszewiczów [J. and K. Bartoszewicz Municipal Museum of History and Art]. The collection included both art works and a collection of antique books, Polish 19th century newspapers and an archive containing various documents.

⁶ Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi (hereinafter: APŁ), Akta Miasta Łodzi (hereinafter: AMŁ), Wydział Oświaty i Kultury (hereinafter: WOiK), Announcement to the Editing Committee of the Guide to Poland of 16 September 1932, file No. 17091.

bivalent and sometimes even hostile attitude towards modern trends in art,⁷ construction of a building specifically designed for museum purposes, and thus providing appropriate exhibition space for the valuable collection, was out of question. The collection was displayed in rooms on the first floor of the former Łódź City Hall at 1 Plac Wolności,⁸ hastily converted for exhibition purposes. In the first years of museum functioning, this building was still partly used by city officials.

In the period between creation of the museum and outbreak of World War II, its collections were systematically expanded and enriched with new acquisitions.⁹ This process intensified significantly from 1935, when, because of a competition, management of the museum was taken over by Marian Minich. He got engaged in final establishment of the museum's profile and determination of its development direction, based on the potential resulting from the great possessed collection of international modern art.¹⁰

After a dramatic war period, Łódź Museum started to function again in February 1945 and its management was again taken over by Marian Minich¹¹ (who served this function until his death in 1965).

⁷ M. MINICH, *Szalona galeria*, Łódź 1963, pp. 243–244. Intense emotions were stirred up by, e. g., decision to give Władysław Strzemiński the Award of the City of Łódź in 1932. I. LUBA, "Paradoks sztuki narodowej i modernizmu. Władysław Strzemiński laureatem nagrody artystycznej miasta Łodzi w roku 1932", in: *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 3–4, 2012, pp. 707–730; Z. KARNICKA, "Kalendarium życia i twórczości", in: *Władysław Strzemiński. W setną rocznicę urodzin 1893–1952*, Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi [the exhibition catalogue], Łódź 1993, pp. 76–77.

⁸ The issues concerning complicated history of location of the Museum of Art in Łódź, shown, however, primarily in the context of placing one of the branches of the museum in a nineteenth-century weaving mill, converted for this purpose, which is currently a part of a shopping and entertainment centre "Manufaktura", was presented in: J. SOWIŃSKA-HEIM, "Sztuka awangardowa w dziewiętnastowiecznej fabryce", in: A. PAWŁOWSKA – E. JEDLIŃSKA – K. STEFAŃSKI (eds.), *Acta Artis. Studia ofiarowane Profesor Wandzie Nowakowskiej*, Łódź 2016.

⁹ About history of the Museum of Art in Łódź in the 1940s, cf. J. SOWIŃSKA-HEIM – P. KURC-MAJ, "Awangardowa kolekcja w czasach socrealizmu. Polityka programowa Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi w latach 50. XX wieku", in: A. SUMOROK – T. ZAŁUSKI (eds.), *Socrealizmy i modernizacje*, Łódź 2016 (in print).

¹⁰ W. NOWAKOWSKA, "Wspomnienie o Marianie Minichu", in: *Odgłosy*, 27, 1966, p. 7.

¹¹ APŁ, AMŁ, Memoriał do Wydziału Kultury i Sztuki Zarządu Miejskiego w Łodzi of 11 January 1946, file No. 10.

First, the director faced an extremely difficult task of recovering a part of stolen or missing works, as well as organizing, from scratch, Museum activities. What proved to be an important challenge was finding a new seat. The works which had survived the war were temporarily stored at 14 Plac Wolności, where they had been placed by the Germans.¹² In a letter to the President of Łódź, Marian Minich argued that after the analysis of possibilities, so-called Poznański's Palace at today's Więckowskiego street was best suited for the purpose of the museum.¹³ It is a neo-renaissance building erected around 1900–1902¹⁴ according to a design by an architect, Adolf Zeligson, which used to belong to Maurycy Poznanski, the son of one of the most powerful factory owners, Izrael Kalmanowicz. Director's arguments in favour of this location concerned, among others, favourable location of the building in the city centre, many rooms, favourable natural lighting and even the right colour of walls. These features were to guarantee that the valuable exhibits would find a proper exhibition space.¹⁵ Marian Minich also put forward interesting arguments, pointing out "propaganda and representative" benefits. He tried to convince the city authorities that it was one of a few, if not the only Łódź building, which would provide appropriate setting for receiving foreign delegations; what is more "so-called Poznański's Palace" handed over as a museum seat was to become an important permanent monument to "democratic activities" of the Municipal Council of the City of Łódź.¹⁶ As Marian Minich mentioned, efforts to acquiring a separate, independent building for the Museum were hard.¹⁷ After a round of negotiations, thanks to favourable attitude of the City President, in 1946 the Museum received the building at its disposal. Then the struggle over the building, vividly described by Marian Minich, was waged with professors of the Faculty of Medicine of Łódź University.¹⁸

¹² APL, AMŁ, Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, typescript, 1953, in: Historia założenia i działalności Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, file No. 320, pp. 7–8; MINICH, pp. 285, 287.

¹³ "M. Minich a letter to the President of Łódź of 25 June 1945", in: A. JACH – K. SŁOBODA – J. SOKOŁOWSKA et al. (eds.), *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi. Monografia. Tom I*, Łódź 2015 [unnumbered pages].

¹⁴ K. STEFAŃSKI, *Atlas architektury dawnej Łodzi*, Łódź 2008, pp. 138–139.

¹⁵ "M. Minich a letter to the President of Łódź of 25 June 1945."

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ MINICH, p. 291.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 292–294; the vice-chancellor T. Kotarbiński to M. Minich, a letter of 22

A festive vernissage of the first post-war exhibition of the City Museum of Art in Łódź,¹⁹ as the institution was called those days, was held on 13 June 1948,²⁰ already in the new seat. A design of building conversion for museum purposes, including adaptation of rich residential interiors to exhibition requirements, was made by a conservator, Jan Marksens.²¹

The works from different periods, ranging from Gothic to the 20th century, presented to the public in forty halls, according to the exhibition concept of Marian Minich, created the organic whole and thus illustrated existence of purposeful progress in the ways of artistic vision and thinking.²² A centre of museum exhibition was the works belonging to the International Collection of Modern Art handed over in the interwar period by the a. r. group and rescued in the war period.²³ An important place in the structure of the permanent exhibition was taken by the Neoplastic Room, which was designed by Władysław Strzemiński (an outstanding avant-garde artist, member of the a. r. group) at the request of director Marian Minich in 1947.²⁴ A year later the room was opened to the public.

The 1950s in Polish art and culture were marked by domination of the socialist realism doctrine and strong subordination of museums to the policy of communist authorities.²⁵ Museums were perceived as an

September 1945.

¹⁹ In 1948, the Łódź museum was given the name Miejskie Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi (The City Museum of Art in Łódź), while the name Museum of Art in Łódź, used up to these days, was introduced in 1950. APŁ, AMŁ, Statut organizacyjny Miejskiego Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, of 6 February 1948, file No. 1; M. MINICH, "Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi", in: M. MINICH – M. RUBCZYŃSKA – J. ŁADNOWSKA (eds.), *Rocznik Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi 1930–1962*, Łódź 1965, p. 24.

²⁰ APŁ, AMŁ, Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, typescript, 1953, in: *Historia założenia i działalności Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi*, sygn. 320, p. 7–8.

²¹ MINICH, p. 295.

²² M. MINICH, *Szalona galeria*, Łódź 1963, p. 79; J. ŁADNOWSKA, "Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi", in: A. WOJCIECHOWSKI (ed.), *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1945–1960*, Warszawa – Wrocław – Kraków 1992, p. 321. See also: SOWIŃSKA-HEIM – KURCMAJ.

²³ Eighty-two works from the pre-war collection survived the war. J. ŁADNOWSKA – J. OJRYZŃSKI, "Historia Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi", in: U. CZARTORYSKA (ed.), *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi. Historia i wystawy*, Łódź 1998, p. 10.

²⁴ A detailed design of the Neoplastic Room made by Strzemiński has a date of 17 March 1947. APŁ, AMŁ, Księga inwentarzowa. Rok 1945–1947, file No. 25, p. 50.

²⁵ The first consequence of politicization of the museums was centralization of man-

important tool for building great work of social progress.²⁶ An important role, from the ideological perspective, was played primarily by propaganda and educational goals of art.²⁷ In 1949, the Łódź museum come under administration of the Ministry of Culture and Art.²⁸ Thus, the communist authorities were given the opportunity to directly control the institution and interfere in its exhibition program. In the post-war period the City Museum of Art in Łódź (later the Museum of Art in Łódź) was perceived as an important cultural institution, which could help to build a new image of workers' Łódź.²⁹ With the advent of new cultural policy, the director of the Museum had to revise previously conducted exhibition activities.³⁰ Implemented changes resulted primarily from a clear conflict between the socialist realism doctrine and modern art. The International Collection of Modern Art, determining a character of the Museum from 1950, could not be easily presented in the exhibition halls. Abstract art works, being too "imperialist", were tucked into the warehouse.³¹ While the Neoplastic Room was painted over.³² Avant-garde art, condemned in the socialist period

agement in the form of appointment of the Chief Directorate of Museums and Monument Protection as a body operating under the Ministry of Culture and Art and supervising state museums. P. KURC-MAJ, *Rola inicjatyw i kolekcji prywatnych w muzealnictwie polskim na przykładzie polityki budowania zbiorów w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi w latach międzywojennych i bezpośrednio powojennych XX wieku*, 2015 (typescript, in print).

²⁶ H. KĘSZYCKA, "O muzealnej służbie społeczno-oświatowej", in: *Muzealnictwo*, 3, 1953, p. 9.

²⁷ J. BOGUCKI, *Sztuka Polski Ludowej*, Warszawa 1983, p. 76.

²⁸ Exactly on 14 December 1949. APŁ, AMŁ, Protokół zdawczo-odbiorczy z dnia 28 marca 1958 roku, in: Informacje dotyczące nieruchomości 1946–1968, file No. 676, p. 3. As a result of changes in the cultural policy museum institutions were reorganized, from 1945 they were gradually nationalized. As a result, in 1950 most institutions were already subject to the central authority.

²⁹ "Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi", in: *Przegląd Artystyczny*, 7–8–9, 1949.

³⁰ More details about the exhibition program: SOWIŃSKA-HEIM – KURC-MAJ.

³¹ "Cichy dramat Muzeum Sztuki...", in: *Głos Robotniczy*, August 19, 1957. Not all the paintings associated with modern art were removed from the exhibition halls, but their number was drastically reduced. OJRYZŃSKI, "Międzynarodowa Kolekcja Sztuki Nowoczesnej", p. 19.

³² J. ŁADNOWSKA, "Sala neoplastyczna – z dziejów kolekcji sztuki nowoczesnej w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi", in: Zespół kustoszy Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi [Ed. A team of curators of the Museum of Art in Łódź], *Miejsce sztuki. Muzeum – Theatrum Sapientiae, Theatrum Animabile*, Łódź 1991, p. 78. In the early 1950s, Strzemiński himself was directly stigmatized. He was removed from the Association of Polish Visual Artists

for naturalism devoid of ideals and non-humanistic formalism,³³ did not return to the halls of the Museum of Art in Łódź until 1 January 1956,³⁴ with the advent of a political thaw. In the late 1950s, precisely in 1959, director Marian Minich also made successful efforts to reconstruct the Neoplastic Room.³⁵ At the same time, he began efforts to build a modern building designed for the Museum of Art in Łódź.³⁶ Despite worsening over the years, dramatic housing conditions, resulting primarily from insufficient exhibition³⁷ and warehouse space, as well as the inability to adapt the converted building for modern museum needs,³⁸ it was his successor, Ryszard Stanisławski,³⁹ who in 1973, after years of efforts and negotiations with the authorities, managed to bring about a nationwide competition for the conceptual architectural design of a building of the Museum of Art of Łódź.⁴⁰

In the rich archival documentation stored in the Museum of Art in Łódź, the first document in which the director clearly calls for the need to build a new museum building is a letter of October 1968 to the Department of Culture of the National Council of the City of Łódź. It outlines a difficult situation of the Museum, which must function in converted, too small rooms of the nineteenth-century former Poznański's

and also expelled from the Academy of Fine Arts, where he had taught in 1945–1949.

- ³³ Archiwum Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi (hereinafter MSŁ), J. PAWLAS, *Abc sztuki. Władysław Strzemiński*, Warszawa 1985 [typescript], pp. 25, 27.
- ³⁴ M. MINICH, [untitled], in: R. ZARĘBOWICZ (ed.), *Malarstwo polskie w galerii Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi*, Warszawa 1957, p. 9.
- ³⁵ MSŁ archives, Bolesław Utkin a letter to the Museum of Art in Łódź, July 28, 1959.
- ³⁶ J. OJRYZŃSKI, "Geneza i pierwsze lata muzeum", in: U. CZARTORYSKA (ed.), *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi. Historia i wystawy*, Łódź 1998, p. 22.
- ³⁷ Available exhibition space allowed for displaying only 9 % of the collection at a time. The Museum with the only world-famous international gallery of modern art in Poland in the building in Więckowskiego street had only 1,760 m² at its disposal.
- ³⁸ Serious difficulties resulted from the lack of appropriate facilities. The Museum did not have a proper screening and lecture room, a former Poznański's parlour was used for these purposes. This situation did not change until 2008, when new, large, modernized and adapted to the needs of a modern museum exhibition space of ms² (a branch of the Museum of Art in Łódź) were opened to the public in a 19th century converted weaving mill at 19 Gdańska street.
- ³⁹ M. Minich died in 1965, and Ryszard Stanisławski took over as a director in 1966.
- ⁴⁰ More: J. SOWIŃSKA-HEIM, "Regionalne ambicje a rzeczywistość centralnego planowania. Trudna historia budowy nowego gmachu Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi", in: P. GRYGLEWSKI – K. STEFAŃSKI – R. WRÓBEL (eds.), *Centrum, prowincje, peryferia – wzajemne relacje w dziejach sztuki*, Łódź 2013, pp. 209–228.

palace, and a poor-state outbuilding from the side of Gdańska street. As an important argument for accepting and supporting this project by the city was that it would be the first building of this type erected in the post-war Polish history. So its implementation would be a unique and important event in the whole country. The document ends with a suggestion that if a new museum building was not built in Łódź, while the idea of creating the Central Museum of Contemporary Art in Poland was implemented, probably in Warsaw, Łódź could lose its precious collections to the capital.⁴¹

Director Ryszard Stanislawski, negotiating with government officials, tried to speak to them in their own language. In a letter of 3 February 1969 to the Department of Culture of the National Council of the City of Łódź he wrote about Łódź as a city of deep tradition of revolutionary and workers' movements, where it was possible to create a Museum of Art, housing the works of the most progressive, avant-garde and revolutionary artists. Referring to the propaganda slogans, the director argued that creation of appropriate conditions for functioning and further development of the museum was particularly important for the city, which, while retaining its industrial character, at the same time, with its eight universities founded after the war, many scientific and research institutions, a newly erected building of the Grand Theatre, was a visible symbol of socialist achievements of the country. He also stressed that establishing the Museum housing the only gallery of modern art in Poland, but also, due to its pioneering nature, belonging to a few institutions of this kind in Europe would be of "*enormously propaganda and political importance*"⁴² for Łódź. The new museum building would be a permanent monument to the cultural aspirations of the city.⁴³

⁴¹ MSŁ archives, Director Ryszard Stanislawski to the Department of Culture of the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź of October 8, 1968, file No. M.Sz. II-0/35/68.

⁴² MSŁ archives, a letter of director Ryszard Stanislawski to the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź, Department of Culture, Dot. postulatów rozwojowych i potrzeb Muzeum Sztuki z dnia 3 lutego 1969 r., attachment 1, file No. M.Sz.I-0/2/69.

⁴³ MSŁ archives, the director of the Museum, Ryszard Stanislawski, to Comrade Sergiusz Kłaczek M. A. Editor-in-chief of "Głos Robotniczy" in Łódź of 27 July 1971, file No. AS/065/2297/71.

An important argument, convincing for government officials and in favour of construction of new seat for the Museum of Art, was also deteriorating conditions of the exhibits caused by air pollution. The only way to reduce this danger, according to the director, was change of location of the museum and its transfer to a less built-up area, not in immediate vicinity of the active factories.⁴⁴ Therefore, it was suggested that a new museum building should be erected around the park at Zdrowie, the largest park in Łódź (advertised as one of the largest parks in Europe).⁴⁵ To support this proposal, director Stanisławski argued that emerging modern museums were often localized outside the city centres, and placing them in the vicinity of recreational areas could increase attendance.⁴⁶ The analysis of attendance constituted at that time an important point to official ratings of cultural institutions functioning.⁴⁷

The subject was raised in May 1969, at a meeting of the Executive of Łódź Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR KŁ). After a long discussion, a resolution was passed about the urgent need to erect a new building of the Museum of Art in Łódź.⁴⁸ While on 3 June of the same year, at a meeting of the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź, a resolution was passed providing that by 1 October 1969 the Museum of Art should outline an initial program and financial conditions of the new building.⁴⁹ The official publication

⁴⁴ MSŁ archives a letter of director Ryszard Stanisławski to the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź, Department of Culture, Dot. postulatów rozwojowych i potrzeb Muzeum Sztuki z dnia 3 lutego 1969 r., attachment 2, file No. M.Sz.I-0/2/69, p. 10.

⁴⁵ Currently, J. Piłsudski park. It was created in the area of urban forests, which until World War I occupied here the area of approx. 400 ha, later it was reduced to 115 ha. The first proposals to create the park here were put forward in 1904, but preliminary works began only in the interwar period. In the 1930s, i. a. a stadium, game park and zoo were created in the area. Initially, the park was also to include a botanical garden, which, however, was created only in the 1960s and does not belong directly to the area of the park. Currently, Park at Zdrowie occupies the area of 172 ha.

⁴⁶ MSŁ archives, a letter of director Ryszard Stanisławski to the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź, Department of Culture, Dot. postulatów rozwojowych i potrzeb Muzeum Sztuki z dnia 3 lutego 1969 r., attachment 2, file No. M.Sz.I-0/2/69, p. 11.

⁴⁷ Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź, *Dotychczasowe osiągnięcia i dalsze kierunki polityki kulturalnej m. Łodzi, Łódź October 1969*, p. 14.

⁴⁸ MSŁ archives, File 1, a handmade note of 13 May 1969.

⁴⁹ MSŁ archives, A handmade note of 03.VI.1969; cf. MSŁ Archives, Ryszard

of the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź of October 1969 provided for construction of a new building for the Museum of Art in Łódź, as part of a program of development of cultural life in Łódź.⁵⁰ While it clearly highlighted a unique nature of the museum, which was the only one in Poland housing a gallery of modern art.⁵¹ Cooperation of the museum with important foreign institutions was also appreciated.⁵² These were not binding decisions yet, but a starting point, giving some hope.

In the same year, on 30 September 1969, the Department of Culture and Art of the City of Łódź was submitted preliminary guidelines on construction of the new building. A year later, exactly on 22 September 1970, they were approved by the Ministry of Culture and Art.⁵³ The Administration of Museums and Monument Protection of the Ministry of Culture and Art in Warsaw, expressing its opinion on the guidelines on construction of the new building, emphatically confirmed the urgent need for its construction. Supporting it with two main reasons which, moreover, confirmed the situation presented by director Ryszard Stanisławski, namely air pollution in the vicinity of the current location of the museum having a harmful effect on the collections and too small exhibition and storage space. It was pointed out that almost unbelievable cramped space prevented the museum from proper development of its activities on the scale which it was capable of due to importance of its collections as well as skills of its employees. At the same time, location of the museum within the park at Zdrowie was supported, away from the “factory centre” and well-connected with the city centre.⁵⁴

Unfortunately, general situation in the country and a decision to reduce construction projects in 1971–1972, including those related to cultural activities, adopted at the central level by the Presidium of the

Stanisławski, *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi w latach 1965–1968*, of 24 July 1969, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź, *Dotychczasowe osiągnięcia i dalsze kierunki polityki kulturalnej m. Łodzi, Łódź October 1969*, p. 28.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 14.

⁵³ MSŁ archives, Ministry of Culture and Art Administration of Museums and Monument Protection in Warsaw to the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź Culture Department, a letter of 22 September 1970, file No. MOZI 85-9/7/70.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

Government⁵⁵ in April 1970 did not foster commencing activities related to construction of the museum. After the Executive of KŁ PZPR and the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź had passed a resolution in 1969 on the necessity to build a new building for the Museum of Art, the institution paradoxically found itself in a stalemate. Since final decisions about construction were not taken, and therefore construction works were not undertaken, and, at the same time, a design of reconstruction and enlargement, if only temporary, of the existing Museum surface became outdated.

In 1971, the director asked contemporary editor-in-chief of *Głos Robotniczy*, being a popular newspaper giving a political direction to the party, for transfer of money raised during the raffle organized on the newspaper jubilee, as the first contribution to a fund for construction of the Museum of Art in Łódź. Creation of such a fund would make it possible to announce in "in the current five-year period" a competition for a design of the Museum. Starting a money collecting campaign by *Głos Robotniczy* would also be a form of legitimization of the project and allow for its more effective dissemination.⁵⁶

The guidelines on construction of a new building from 1969 (updated in 1972) assumed that an extensive museum complex would be erected with modern world-standard expositional rooms, an appropriately designed reading room and library, a screening and lecture room, café or even a room for children, where parents could leave their children under professional care to calmly devote themselves to communing with works of art. Director Ryszard Stanisławski clearly emphasized an educational role which the museum should serve and at the same time warned against giving it an elite character.⁵⁷ The museum's task was not only to present works of art, but also to carry out diverse activities, such as discussions, readings, children's education, engaging the audience in taking creative activities or their co-

⁵⁵ MSŁ archives, Council of Ministers RM 121-184/70, Decision No. 46/70 of the Presidium of the Government of 27 April 1970, file No. A/012/1453/70.

⁵⁶ MSŁ archives, the director of the Museum, Ryszard Stanisławski, to Comrade Sergiusz Kłaczko M.A. Editor-in-chief of "Głos Robotniczy" in Łódź of 27 July 1971 AS/065/2297/71.

⁵⁷ MSŁ archives, Ryszard Stanisławski, Założenia budowy gmachu Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, (typescript), p. 7. MSŁ archives, Memoriał nt: "Założeń budowy gmachu Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi", 1969 r., file No. K. 17.

participation in artistic activities.⁵⁸ In addition to facilities for visitors, a very strong emphasis was put on creating appropriate conditions for scientific and research work, as well as collector's activities.⁵⁹

Finally, after more than four years of effort, in February 1973, a nationwide⁶⁰ competition for a conceptual design of the building of the Museum of Art in Łódź was officially announced.⁶¹ The Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź commissioned the Łódź Branch of the Union of Polish Architects to conduct the competition (no. 515).⁶² The competition was planned as one of the most important events of celebrations of the 550th anniversary of granting Łódź municipal rights and the 150th anniversary of the industrial Łódź,⁶³ thus it was to express interest of the authorities of the workers' city in cultural issues.⁶⁴

The new museum building was to be located in the place already proposed by director Ryszard Stanisławski and approved by the Department of Construction, Urban Planning and Architecture of the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź,⁶⁵ namely the

⁵⁸ "Sukces czy porażka? Dyskusja pokonkursowa", in: *Architektura*, 4, 1974, p. 160.

⁵⁹ MSŁ archives, Teczka 1, Ryszard Stanisławski, Założenia budowy gmachu Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, (typescript), p. 10; MSŁ archives, Memoriał nt: "Założeń budowy gmachu Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi", 1969 r., file No. K. 17.

⁶⁰ Originally, an international competition was planned. F. DŁUŻAK, "Muzeum jakiego nie było", in: *Kurier Polski*, 56, 1972, p. 4; J. POTĘGA, "Gdzie i jakie powinno być Muzeum Sztuki? Specjaliści proponują Zdrowie", in: *Dziennik Łódzki*, No. 35, pp. 1-2; (k), "Z perspektywy jutra", in: *Życie Warszawy*, 112, 1972, p. 6.

⁶¹ MSŁ archives, SARP Oddział w Łodzi, Informacja o ogólnopolskim realizacyjnym, otwartym i powszechnym konkursie architektonicznym na koncepcyjny projekt wielofunkcyjnego gmachu Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi.

⁶² MSŁ archives, Stowarzyszenie Architektów Polskich SARP (Union of Polish Architects) Łódź Branch to the Director of Łódź Construction Association of June 8, 1972, file No. OB/236/72/T-41.

⁶³ MSŁ archives, SARP Łódź Branch, Informacja o ogólnopolskim realizacyjnym, otwartym i powszechnym konkursie architektonicznym na koncepcyjny projekt wielofunkcyjnego gmachu Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi.

⁶⁴ MSŁ archives, Deputy Chairman of Stowarzyszenie Architektów Polskich SARP Łódź Branch Zdzisław Lipski, to the Director of Łódź Construction Association of June 8, 1972 r. MSŁ archiwum, SARP Łódź Branch, Informacja o ogólnopolskim realizacyjnym, otwartym i powszechnym konkursie architektonicznym na koncepcyjny projekt wielofunkcyjnego gmachu Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi.

⁶⁵ This information gave rise to elaborating an implementation plan and, in consequence, establishing exact location. MSŁ archives, Chief Architect of the City of Łódź, Director of the Department of Construction, Urban Planning and Architecture of the

area within the Central Park of Culture and Recreation in Łódź.⁶⁶ Construction of the new building of the museum was to become a part of the project planned on a grand scale, strongly supported and promoted by the authorities and aiming at arrangement of Popular Park at Zdrowie and its transformation into Central Park of Culture and Recreation.⁶⁷ Even before commencement of works, the first secretary of Communist Party KD⁶⁸-Polesie, Marian Kwapisz, asserted that, given the atmosphere which had been created, all the employees of workplaces, institutions, design offices, members of youth organizations, students from Polesie, and even the soldiers would participate in social activities at Zdrowie in large numbers, and even other districts would also eagerly join in the work.⁶⁹ Planned changes to the park at Zdrowie were to turn it into an attractive place of “mass rest and active recreation” for the entire Łódź agglomeration. Not just local but also nationwide press informed about the project in a very positive tone.⁷⁰ The facilities were to include not only the Museum of Art, but, among others, an amusement park, a go-kart track, a sports centre, a summer theatre, exhibition outdoor event space, including summer cinema and circus, as well as a swimming pool complex.⁷¹ The project included construction of an astronomical observatory.⁷² A very important element of the Central Park of Culture and Recreation designed in the 70 form was a monument to Revolutionary Action in 1905 (unveiled in 1975). It is in its immediate vicinity that the new museum building was to be situated, being a modern arts centre designed according to the latest trends in the world’s museology.

Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź architect Jerzy Sadowski M. A. Eng., letter of 10 May 1972.

⁶⁶ A design of Centralny Park Kultury i Wypoczynku was made by architect Włodzisław Stępnik and engineer Kazimierz Chrabelski.

⁶⁷ “Ambitnie – dla siebie, Na Zdrowie po zdrowie”, in: *Głos Robotniczy*, 66, 1972, p. 3.

⁶⁸ KD – Komitet Dzielnicowy.

⁶⁹ “Czekamy tylko na front robót, Na Zdrowie po zdrowie”, in: *Głos Robotniczy*, 66, 1972, p. 3.

⁷⁰ “Na Zdrowie po zdrowie”, in: *Głos Robotniczy*, 66, 1972, p. 3; H. BATOROWICZY – I. KAMPINOWSKI, “Majowa opowieść dla Izzy”, in: *Sztandar Młodych*, 103, 1972, p. 3; “Zdrowie’ – łódzka baza wypoczynku”, in: *Trybuna Ludu*, 156, 1972, p. 3.

⁷¹ Od strony Al. Unii.

⁷² MSŁ archives, A conceptual design of spatial arrangement of Centralny Park Kultury i Wypoczynku in Łódź of May 12, 1972.

In the competition for the design of the Museum of Art in Łódź, the jury awarded the first, second, and two fourths awards as well as five distinctions of the first degree and five of the second degree.⁷³ According to the opinion of the jury, the winning design prepared by an architect, Jan Fiszer, stood out due to a balanced and clear form well related to the building's function. The project was also considered to be economical and uncomplicated in technical terms, which in communist Poland of the 1970s was not insignificant.⁷⁴

By January 1976, around 30 % of works on drawing up a programme-planning study of the new building of the Museum of Art in Łódź had been completed.⁷⁵ However, the Voivodeship Planning Commission of the Łódź City Hall ordered to suspend the works. This was a consequence of decisions taken by the Regional Team of Review and Audit of Investment Project Documentation,⁷⁶ which, after having carried out an audit in Łódź design offices, negatively assessed concluding agreements on documentary work concerning tasks not covered by the current 5-year plan,⁷⁷ considering them to be activities resulting in economic losses.⁷⁸ And that was, unfortunately, the case of the new building of the Museum of Art in Łódź.

After unsuccessful attempts to appeal against the decision in March 1976, director Ryszard Stanisławski asked the President of Łódź to temporarily solve the problem of dramatic housing conditions of the Museum of Art by converting residential buildings adjacent to the current location.⁷⁹ Thus, the history had made a circle and despite in-

⁷³ MSŁ archives, Protokół z oficjalnego otwarcia kopert z nazwiskami autorów prac nagrodzonych i wyróżnionych, w Konkursie SARP Nr 515 na Muzeum Sztuki, of 28 July 1973, pp. 1–4.

⁷⁴ MSŁ archives, [Konkurs SARP nr 515. Propozycja zakwalifikowania prac do grupy "O" i N], Projekt 26, file No. k. 1–53.

⁷⁵ MSŁ archives, Protokół z posiedzenia dotyczącego przerwania opracowania projektu koncepcyjnego Muzeum Sztuki w Parku Kultury i Wypoczynku na Zdrowiu w m.Łodzi (studium programowo-przestrzennego), February 20, 1976.

⁷⁶ Letter Pl.VI-800/1/4/76 of January 31, 1976.

⁷⁷ MSŁ archives, A letter of the Department of Culture and Art of the City Office of Łódź to the Museum of Art of 18 February 1976, file No. Kl.II-0004aT/3/76.

⁷⁸ Archiwum MSŁ, Bolesław Pietrzykowski, Vice President of the City of Łódź, to the Director of the Museum of Art in Łódź of 31 March 1976, file No. PL.Va-200-4/76.

⁷⁹ Namely the buildings at Więckowskiego 38 and 40 street. MSŁ archives, Director Ryszard Stanisławski to the President of Łódź of March 16, 1976, file No. A/221/492/76.

volvement of many people in construction of the new building for the Museum as well as acceptance of this idea by local and central authorities, at the level of the Ministry of Culture and the Arts the situation returned to negotiations from years before.

Construction of the building of the Museum of Art in Łódź, was to become an event on a national scale: the first modern multifunctional museum built from scratch during the period of People's Poland. The city was going to have a building unrivalled in Europe,⁸⁰ a unique museum,⁸¹ the most modern one in the country.⁸²

Łódź already had what was the hardest to get, namely the valuable collections, but it lacked determination and consistent actions on the part of the city authorities to create an appropriate architectural setting for them. When in 1931 the latest avant-garde art work by European artists was presented to the audience in the Łódź Town Hall, it was the world's second permanent collection of modern art. It had absolutely pioneering character. When, after about forty years, in the late 1960s and 1970s, director Ryszard Stanisławski was struggling, unfortunately unsuccessfully as it turned out, for construction of the first modern museum building in post-war Poland, the United States alone founded during this period more than two hundred museums of modern art.⁸³ Due to the lack of perspective thinking, as well as consequences of the actions of communist authorities, Łódź, but also Poland, did not use the opportunities to stay in the centre of pioneering museum activities.⁸⁴

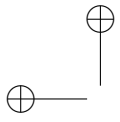
⁸⁰ "Sztuka – krótko – kultura – krótko", in: *Zwierciadło*, 36, 1973, p. 15.

⁸¹ "Jakie będziemy mieli Muzeum Sztuki", in: *Głos Robotniczy*, 180, 1973.

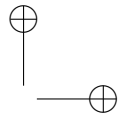
⁸² "Laserowe dziwy w nowym gmachu Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej", in: *Express Wieczorny*, 13, 1973, p. 3.

⁸³ MSŁ archives, a letter of director Ryszard Stanisławski to the Presidium of the National Council of the City of Łódź Department of Culture, Dot. postulatów rozwojowych i potrzeb Muzeum Sztuki z dnia 3 lutego 1969 r., attachment 1, file No. M.Sz.I-0/2/69.

⁸⁴ Currently, the Museum of Art in Łódź occupies three seats converted for museum purposes. In the Herbst Palace old art has been presented since 1990, while the main collection of modern and contemporary art has been displayed since 2008 in the former 19th century weaving mill within the entertainment and shopping complex "Manufaktura" (ms²), which, like the building in Więckowskiego street, used to belong to the Poznańskis. Ms¹ in Więckowskiego street is primarily used for holding experimental activities and presentations.

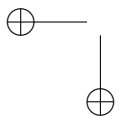


|



—

—



|

