la Biennale di Venezia

14. Mostra Internazionale di Architettura

Partecipazioni nazionali

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di Architettura

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The Polish Pavilion
at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition —
la Biennale di Venezia

IMPOSSIBLE OBJECTS

Zachęta — National Gallery of Art
Warsaw 2014

Contents


POLONIA

Foreword

In the psychology of perception, art or geometry, impossible figures are those that can be drawn according to the rules of perspective but cannot actually be constructed. They exist as an image, creating an almost complete illusion of the potentiality of their existence, also in three-dimensional space, but upon closer inspection they prove to be mental traps.

Impossible Objects is the title of the project conceived by the Institute of Architecture and Jakub Woynarowski in response to the lead theme of the 14th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice proposed by its curator, Rem Koolhaas: *Absorbing Modernity 1914–2014*. What is the impossible figure here? The historicising-eclectic-modernist tomb of one of the fathers of Polish independence that sought to combine the symbolic meaning of its various elements with the Romantic topos of death, deeply ingrained in Polish culture, and officially authorised modernism (the need of which was acutely felt at the time)? Or its Venice replica, where the canopy detaches from the monument and seems to hang in midair, rather than — as the law of gravity would dictate — resting on the supports and columns? The 'Poland Project', which after decades of subservience could be realised within new boundaries courtesy of the political changes brought about by the First World War (some historians argue that this is when the 20th century began in earnest), is reinterpreted from the perspective of the year 2014. Do we really belong to a culture where modernity is an antiquity, as the curators of Documenta 12 suggested some years ago, or are we part of an 'uncanny Slavdom' (as posited by the Polish philosophy historian Maria Janion)? Or perhaps, as has recently been suggested by philosopher and sociologist Andrzej Leder, our culture's formative experience was the great social revolution that began with the outbreak of the Second World War? Referencing the figure of the Polish architect Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, who often coated his designs in a historicising attire, the project conceived by the Institute of Architecture and Jakub Woynarowski multiplies questions and

concepts in the debate about modernism, rather than providing any clear-cut answers to them.

The project *Impossible Objects* was selected through an open competition procedure, on the jury of which sat not only art and architecture curators and historians, but also the representatives of various architectural milieus, as well as practicing architects of the younger and older generations. I heartily thank all the jury members, as well as the representatives of the institutions, foundations and formal and informal civil society organisations involved in the debate concerning Poland's participation in the 14th Architecture Exhibition. I also thank the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland, which provides funding for the project, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, and the National Digital Archive, Poland — our partners in producing the exhibition and its catalogue. Above all, however, thanks are due to the authors of *Impossible Objects* — the Institute of Architecture's Dorota Jędruch, Marta Karpińska, Dorota Leśniak-Rychlak and Michał Wiśniewski, and the author of the artistic concept Jakub Woynarowski.

Hanna Wróblewska
Director of Zachęta — National Gallery of Art
Commissioner of the Polish Pavilion

▲ p. 8: Entrance to the Polish Pavilion, Venice. Modified version of a photo by Ilya Rabinovich, CC BY-SA

▼ Entrance to Marshal Józef Piłsudski's burial crypt under the Silver Bells Tower at Wawel Hill, Kraków, 1937. National Digital Archives, Poland


CORPORA

Michał Wiśniewski
Marta Karpińska
Dorota Jędruch
Dorota Leśniak-Rychlak

Impossible Objects

> Only a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the tomb and the monument. Everything else that fulfils a function is to be excluded from the domain of art.
> Adolf Loos[1]

At first glance, the drawing seems to be of a sketched geometrical figure. The eye begins to wander in an attempt to follow the line but, in trying to retrace it based on what it knows about representation, the mind loses track. Some of the elements seem to be congruent with the perspective, but others push unexpectedly to the front, even though they should really be disappearing into the background. If a builder was given the task of constructing such an object, no doubt he would simply give up. The figure is impossible. Both the design and its reality. Both the vision and its embodiment. Both the ideal and its convoluted shadow.

In reaction to the question about absorbing modernity, which is the motto of this year's International Architecture Exhibition, we have decided to reconstruct in the Polish Pavilion a baldachin from the crypt with the sarcophagus of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, where it overlooks the entrance to the burial chambers at the Wawel Royal Cathedral. The model presented here is in a scale of 1:1 and differs from the original in the emphasis put on the mannerist and astructural concept of its architect. Detached from

1 Adolf Loos, 'Architecture' (1910), in *The Architecture of Adolf Loos: An Arts Council Exhibition*, London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1985, p. 108.

the columns, the slab of the canopy seems to be levitating in the air, creating a hallucinogenic, impossible figure.

The historical context, as well as the interpretational motifs which create the content of the exhibition (both discussed further in the text), seem to grapple with a disturbing construction filled with tension. Any attempt at manipulating memory would lead here to such a distortion of reality that it would be completely filled with the substance of myth.

We thus present four impossibilities related to modernism: the nation, the monolithic state, the project and the monument (memory) where spirits, ghosts, and spectres of the national past keep vigil.

The Nation as a Construct

It was May 1935 when Józef Piłsudski died. This initially left-wing activist, who had fought against Russian domination in Poland, was the founder of the first regular Polish troops, under the auspices of Austria. Piłsudski was able to achieve this in reaction to the outbreak of the First World War, and when the war ended, he became one of the founding fathers of Polish independence. A growing conflict with the leaders of nationalist groups pushed the Marshal to orchestrate a military *coup d'état* in 1926, as a result of which he became a real, though not entirely formal dictator, who enforced his ideas and strategies in a manner which was sometimes rather brutal. The almost full decade of Piłsudski's rule, until his death in 1935, was a period of authoritarian power, but also one of progressive economic and social modernisation in Poland (as one of the first countries in the world, Poland introduced the right to vote for women as early as 1918). This style of modernisation with whip in hand was maintained by Piłsudski's continuators up until the outbreak of the Second World War. In the so-called 'rule of the colonels', the cult of the Marshal was an important symbolic element, the focal point or the ideological common denominator of which was the location of the leader's burial, and in particular the mausoleum arranged for him in the medieval Royal Cathedral at the Wawel Castle in Kraków — a pantheon of rulers, national heroes and artists. Buried in a specially reconstructed crypt, Piłsudski was to continue uniting the Polish people after his death.

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▶ Józef Piłsudski's funeral ceremony, the coffin is brought into the Wawel Cathedral, Kraków, 1935. Modified version of a photo from the National Digital Archives, Poland

The mausoleum, opened in 1937 and designed by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, a renowned Kraków-based conservator and architect, as well as a soldier with the troops created by Piłsudski in 1914, soon became a sacred site for the nation. The new object visually entered the historical space of the Wawel Hill by means of the especially constructed form of the baldachin which was placed over the entrance to the crypt. The openwork structure is relatively small, created by six Corinthian columns supported on a granite pedestal and crowned with a brown stone plate with an inscription. The whole object was built from spolia, wartime loot, so as to underline the nation's triumph over its three neighbouring states: of Russia (the columns came from the demolished St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral in Warsaw), Prussia (the granite elements are parts of the plinth of the Otto von Bismarck statue in Poznań), and Austria (the bronze elements were made from melted cannons), who had partitioned the territory of Poland and occupied the three respective areas for 120 years.

Piłsudski believed that the most important challenges which Poland faced after the regaining of independence included the need to emphasise the dignity of the free nation, to fight the legacy of enslavement, and to overcome the mental and civilisational differences between the different parts of the country which were the result of the many years of foreign domination. Similarly to many other politicians of his generation, it was obvious for the Marshal that in order to effectively fight the remnants of the past occupations, there was a need to create meanings, symbols and myths which would not only unite Poland and Poles, but which would also make it possible for the people to become a modern nation.

The thinking outlined above was the motivation for bringing back to Poland in the 1920s the remains of national heroes who had died outside their homeland. Also, new symbolic public edifices were erected. The story of the construction of the canopy over the entrance to Piłsudski's crypt, presented here in a nutshell, is very much in line with the above policy, thus demonstrating how one of the most important myths of the Second Polish Republic was born in the last years of its independence. Charged with a strong emotional load recognisable to Poles, the baldachin still remains a part of the semantic landscape of Central Europe — a region where new states were born and their identities built after 1918. The form of the project is indicative of the efforts architects had to undertake in grappling with the just developing of the architecture of modernity. At the same time, it is a reference to an

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▶ Vestibule of Marshal Józef Piłsudski's burial crypt under the Silver Bells Tower at Wawel Hill, Kraków, design: Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, ca. 1938. Photo by Stanisław Kolowiec, Historical Museum of the City of Kraków

important element of modernist philosophy, which turned out to be particularly important in the Central Europe of the interwar years — the focus is placed on the concept of the nation as a form, the construction of which was as if imposed from the top.

The nation in Polish historiosophical discourse was presented as something which had been there from virtually the beginning of time. Such an approach made it easier not only to overlook the ethnic and religious diversity of the community under discussion, but also to dismiss the question of fundamental social and economic divisions. Mindful of these divisions, the ambition of Piłsudski and those after him was not only to build a strong, industry-based economy in Poland, but also to construct a community narrative which would link Polishness with a hope for a better future for the broad masses. Though the concept of the nation has its origin in the period of the Enlightenment, it was one that still remained rather vague in Central Europe in the first decades of the 20th century. The construct of the nation simply made it possible to better manage the masses and include them in the execution of different projects, be they economic ones, such as industrialisation and militarisation, or those of a political nature — such as the different variants of authoritarianism and totalitarianism.

In the light of modernity studies, the idea to create a nation from scratch seems strikingly ambitious. It is accompanied by an almost utopian mind-set, with no room for impossibility or the incompatibility of the materials to work with, and where the costs (including human costs) are of no importance. As was the case with other countries from this part of Europe in 1918, Poland was faced with the task to create a symbolic language of its own, which would also be visually represented by architectural and urban planning projects of different levels of ambition. When designing new buildings and seeking a national style, architects — often fascinated with, or at least interested in the idea of modernism — resorted to the language of the past and the forms of the region. They must have been convinced that they were contributing to the creation of the nation. In the decorations and ornaments they used, and the spatial arrangements they proposed, they saw a useful material that could speak to the masses. The stronger the symbolic charge of the design, the bigger its potential impact.

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▶ A guard of honour at Józef Piłsudski's coffin, Wawel Hill, Kraków, 1937. National Digital Archives, Poland

▼ Drawing of the wrough-iron gate in the entrance to Marshal Józef Piłsudski's burial crypt (design: Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, 1937), made by Jakub Woynarowski. Based on a photo from the National Digital Archives, Poland

Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, the author of the baldachin, remains an anonymous figure in international discourse. Though he was a contemporary of Walter Gropius and there are modernist patterns to be found in his designs, he was not a representative of the avant-garde. What is characteristic of his work, however, is a manner of referring to the past and regional motifs which is reminiscent also of Jože Plečnik or Eric Gunnar Asplund. The Plečnik analogy seems particularly apposite here. Almost at the same time, both architects were employed to rebuild old royal residencies into modern seats of heads of state: Plečnik at Prague's Castle, and Szyszko-Bohusz in Kraków and Warsaw. In the works of both architects, there is also a specific suspension between modernity and classical tradition and, at the same time, a feel for detail and composition. When analysing Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz's designs, what is worth noting is a unique ability to construct symbolic figures. He transformed derelict castles and palaces or erected new public edifices and churches, assigning to them all the power of a simple sign. In this clear language, comprehensible to many, these buildings spoke on behalf of the nation or its leaders. The designs by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, though absent from the broad discourse of modernism studies, seem to be of greater prominence in the history of the interwar architecture of Central Europe treated as a tool for creating nations.

Already in the 19th century, the concept of the nation in Enlightenment terms had become a useful instrument for managing the ever greater human masses experiencing the European industrial revolution. The squandering of the concept in 1914 sparked a conflict of massive proportions. Keeping that in mind, the construction of the national state and the building of the nation itself serve as representative examples of the practical application of modernist concepts and notions. The language of historical forms used in the baldachin design, as well as the strange, mannerist style, evoke associations with the 19th century and show a modernism responding to the needs of the time, a modernism at the service of the authorities, a modernism of grand social and political constructions. This type of architectural discourse is nowadays incomprehensible or incapable of evoking strong community-type emotions. It does, however, retain the character of a valuable historical document, making it possible to reconstruct the shape of the community created by the interwar politicians who, in so doing, followed a collective vision of an imagined past. [MW]

The False Monolith

> National identity could have been conceived in theory, but it was not possible to have it enforced independently of the historical, cultural, linguistic and social circumstances.
> Miroslav Hroch[2]

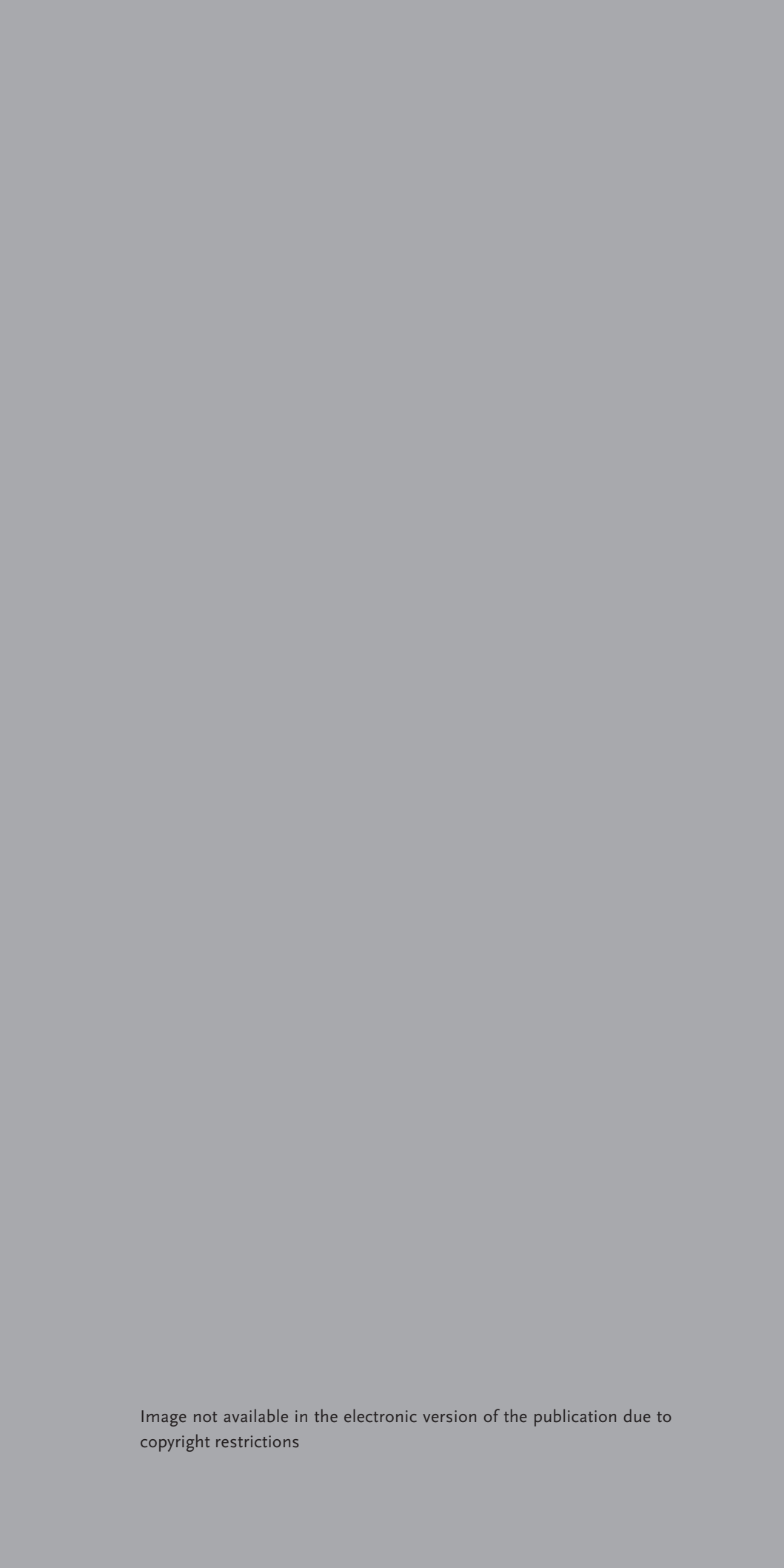
The baldachin over the crypt of Józef Piłsudski was created as a monument of victory, which was to commemorate the deceased Marshal and his leadership role in consolidating the three parts of the Polish territory that for over a century had been under foreign rule. Reality, however, quickly put the triumphant tone of the design by Szyszko-Bohusz to the test. Two years after the baldachin was complete, Poland failed to ward off both Nazi, and also Stalinist aggression. The dream about the power of the new state turned out to be just as false as the monolithic vision of the new statehood (a message also embodied in the baldachin). The state, after all, was continually tormented by social and ethnic conflicts.[3]

The elements composing the baldachin seem to reflect this rupture. The columns used in the project had originally been part of the St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral in Warsaw, taken apart in 1926 as a symbol of the oppression of the Russian occupant. Perhaps the construction of a national identity anew did, in fact, require such sacrifice — the church was one of the tallest buildings in the city, located in one of the most elegant squares of the capital, so it must have been a painful reminder of recent

2 Miroslav Hroch, 'Nowoczesny naród: oczywistość, konstrukcja, wymysł?', *Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni*, no. 3, 2010, p. 11.

3 Józef Piłsudski, born in Lithuania, conceived the concept of a federal programme which drew on the union of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth founded at the end of the 14th century and which continued for over four hundred years. Piłsudski advocated the reconstruction of the great Republic leading to a federation of independent states: Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, which were to create a buffer separating the territory of Poland from Russia. The concept, which ignored the nationalism-fueled conflicts stemming from the process of the constitution of modern nations, proved to be unfeasible.

▼ Illumination over the grave where Marshal Józef Piłsudski's heart is interred, Rasos Cemetery, Vilnius, 1936. Photo by Photo-plat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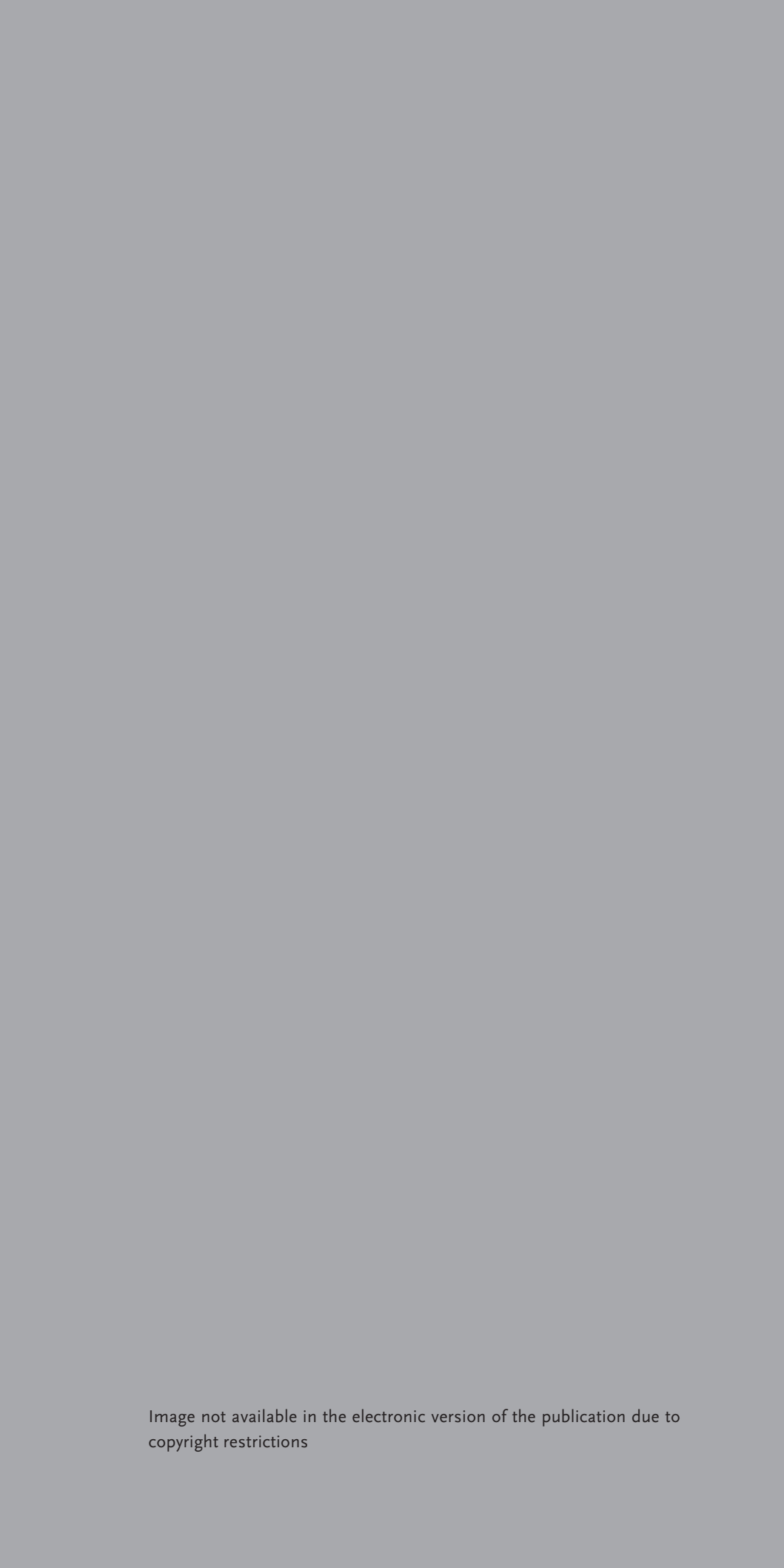
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oppression. However, the destruction of this symbol was also very telling with regard to the state's attitude towards national and religious minorities. Particularly since the event was accompanied by severe oppressive actions against ethnic and religious minorities, including the followers of the Orthodox Church. These actions, it should be added, were sanctioned by the Polish state from its very beginning. As a journalist with *Przegląd Wileński* [The Vilnius Review] wrote in 1922: 'The attitude of Poland towards the non-Polish nations living within her borders, established and temporary, is perhaps the gloomiest bit of Polish politics of today'. And further: 'One does not need to be a prophet to suspect that if things continue the way they are, Poland will relatively soon be faced with such an acute domestic crisis that the whole dissident situation in the former Republic will seem but an innocent game. It would be madness not to see that today's Ukrainians, Belarusians . . . are not the Russian Anti-Unionists who opposed the union from the 16th–18th centuries! Poland seems not to notice this at all . . . '[4]

Just like most of the nation states newly constituted in Europe after the First World War, Poland was founded pursuant to a decision of the European empires. Though they regained their sovereignty and their own territories, the politically, economically and infrastructurally backward countries were stuck in a feeling of impotence in terms of satisfying their aspirations and making their ideals about their own communities real. Their inferiority complex with regard to the West, where states had been continuously in existence and development from the Middle Ages, was on the one hand vented in a zealousness towards modernisation, manifested mainly in the form of abrupt industrialisation and urbanisation, and, on the other, in a deep immersion in the myths and rites of the past, be it imagined or real. Many of the Central European nations became disenchanted with the long-awaited creation of their own states. The idealistic vision of one's subjectivity could not be reconciled with the unsatisfied expectations that the national communities had with regard to the territories they had been granted or the need to share them with ethnic minorities. 'A cancerous presence — of Hungarians, Ukrainians, Jews — is spoiling the poet's image of Romania, or the patriot's image of Poland, or whatever it might be.'[5] As for the Polish context, the tragic symbol of the clash between the xenophobic ideal and reality was the death of Gabriel Narutowicz — the first president of independent Poland, elected in 1922 with a majority of votes from the Polish left and representatives of national minorities. Barely a few days after accepting the office and in an atmosphere of nationalist

4 Gardiner, 'Konsekwencje', *Przegląd Wileński*, no. 37/38, 1922, quote from Czesław Miłosz, *Wyprawa w dwudziestolecie*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2011, p. 212.

5 Tony Judt, Timothy Snyder, *Thinking the Twentieth Century*, New York: Penguin Press, 2012, p. 168.

hysteria, he was shot by Eligiusz Niewiadomski, a fanatic activist of the Polish nationalist movement. He said: 'What our eyes see, is not Poland yet. This is not the Poland of which the great hearts of our poets have dreamt, not the Poland for which generations have suffered, fought, and died.'[6] These words are the testimony of miasmatic ideas about an impossible figure — a homogenous and unanimous national community. Such ideas have, to a great degree, had a lasting control over the consciousness of the ethnic communities in this part of Europe, sparking up ever new conflicts.

The tomb of the Marshal at Wawel Castle also marks a moment when the public mood began to radicalise. In 1935, after the death of Józef Piłsudski, the attitude of the Polish state vis-à-vis minorities became even more resolute, with anti-Semitic attacks especially gaining in intensity. In a propaganda album published in 1939 entitled *Budujemy Polskę* [We Are Building Poland], which contained a forward by deputy prime minister Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, there is not a single mention of Ukrainians, Jews, Belarusians, Germans, or any of the other minorities who, at the time, constituted one third of the entire population of the country.[7] At the end of the book we find a 'map of the distribution of Poles', which is to serve as proof of the 'dominance of the Polish element'.[8] The increasingly powerful nationalist, authoritarian, or even dictatorship tendencies, fuelled by social and ethnic conflicts, poverty and national myths, were by no means a Polish speciality. Most of the European states located between Russia and Germany were following more or less the same path.

The baldachin over Piłsudski's grave — an expression of an 'impossible narrative' — is also an architectural tool for building national memory. As Tony Judt writes: 'Such mnemonic manifestations of the past are of necessity partial, brief, selective; those who arrange them are constrained sooner or later to tell partial truths or even outright lies — sometimes with the best of intentions, sometimes not.'[9] [MK]

6 Eligiusz Niewiadomski, 'W przededniu egzekucji. Do wszystkich Polaków' [On the Eve of the Execution. To All Poles], *Dziennik Poznański*, no. 25/65, 31 January 1923, p. 1, http://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/publication?id=40086&tab=3 (accessed 29 March 2014).

7 Nationalities according to the census from 1931 (self-determination according to the declared native tongue of the respondents): Poles: 68,9%, Ukrainian: 13,9%, Jews: 8,6%, Belarusians: 3,1%, Germans: 2,3%, other or not given 1,3%. Cf. Henryk Zieliński, *Historia Polski 1914–1939*, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1985, pp. 124–26, table 6.

8 Józef Radzimiński, *Budujemy Polskę*, Warsaw: Główna Księgarnia Wojskowa, 1939.

9 Judt, Snyder, pp. 277–78.

A Never-ending Project

At first glance, the baldachin designed by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz is a neoclassical structure, belonging to the current of 19th century historicism. As in his other designs, the architect proposed a number of stylistic solutions.

A graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, one of the most conservative schools at the time, he was just as fluent in using the language of Romantic historicism, as he was with modernist forms reminiscent of the Bauhaus style. Using the language of architectural forms as a costume of a particular style, he was able to dress the same building in different decorative variants seemingly contradictory in what they sought to express. He applied modernist forms but devoid of avant-garde ideas. This was also the case with the baldachin, for which the architect initially proposed two neo-Gothic visions (one of which was particularly expressive, with the figure of a haughty hussar crowing the tomb of the leader), and a neo-Renaissance one. Finally, a special commission issued a permit for the construction 'without precluding modern forms' and the architect presented a neoclassical design topped with a simple plate free of any historical references.

Thus, the architect obtained an elegant openwork form, which was expressive but did not compete against the stylish polyphony of the cathedral's architecture. The 16th century Sigismund Chapel in the vicinity, a perfect embodiment of the ideas of high Renaissance, is the landmark in the neighbourhood of the baldachin which establishes the ideal module of classical composition and tectonics, in relation to which the work of Szyszko-Bohusz seems to play a subservient role. On closer inspection, however, it soon reveals its disturbing and radically anti-classical atectonicity. The plate with the inscription is not set on the capitals of the columns, but on small and hidden elements, thus leaving it apparently levitating in the air. This division in the construction is accompanied by the following quote: *Corpora dormiunt, vigilant animae* (Bodies sleep — souls keep vigil). The canopy, seemingly reconstructed on a 1:1 scale in the Polonia Pavilion, reveals the rupture in an even stronger manner by the actual physical detachment of the heavy slab from the supporting elements. The effect thus is that the mannerist gesture of the impossibility of the construction is strengthened, a gesture which in Szyszko-Bohusz's

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▶ The grave of Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, design: Witold Korski, ca. 1951, Rakowicki Cemetery, Kraków. Photo by Wojciech Wilczyk, CC BY-SA 3.0


PROF·DR·ARCH·
ADOLF
SZYSZKO
BOHUSZ
1883 — 1948

design had separated the two orders: the worldly order and death from the eternal domain of the spirit. The classical organisation was thus reversed so as to mark a certain Romantic — or even a surrealist — logic. The genuine activeness was now in the land of the dead, whereas the dream was in the real world. When seen from this perspective, the canopy ceases to be a solid classical aedicule — the original construction to which both classicists (Marc-Antoine Laugier), as well as modernists (Le Corbusier) referred, and instead it becomes a dreamlike construct contradicting the principles of tectonics. The slim space, which has no right to be there in between the supporting and the supported elements, contains a multitude of tensions which determine the symbolic character of the work by Szyszko-Bohusz. These are tensions between the classical order of the columns and the abstract and modernist nature of the slab, between tradition and modernity, between worldliness and eternity; between the past and the future, between life and death . . .

We can find the same paradoxes and contradictions when trying to describe modernist design, the immanent structural unfeasibility of which seems to be the building block of one of the most important tensions in modern art. Modernism, which is based on the affirmation of contemporaneity, is at the same time a design for a future that it had itself defined. For a modernist project to be executed, a society would have to be transformed in such a way that it would perfectly fit the form foreseen by the project. The relationship of modernism to time is yet another of the many impossible figures related to it. As Jürgen Habermas writes:

> Aesthetic modernity is characterised by attitudes which find a common focus in a changed consciousness of time . . . . The new value placed on the transitory, the elusive and the ephemeral, the very celebration of dynamism, discloses a longing for an undefiled, immaculate and stable present. This explains the rather abstract language in which the modernist temper has spoken of the 'past'. Individual epochs lose their distinct forces. Historical memory is replaced by the heroic affinity of the present with the extremes of history . . . .
>
> On the other hand, the time consciousness articulated in avant-garde art is not simply ahistorical; it is directed against what might be called a false normativity in history.[10]

It would be worth in this context recalling a sentence by Le Corbusier, who once admitted that he 'had only one teacher — the past'.

10 Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity — An Incomplete Project', in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster, London: Pluto Press, 1985, p. 5.

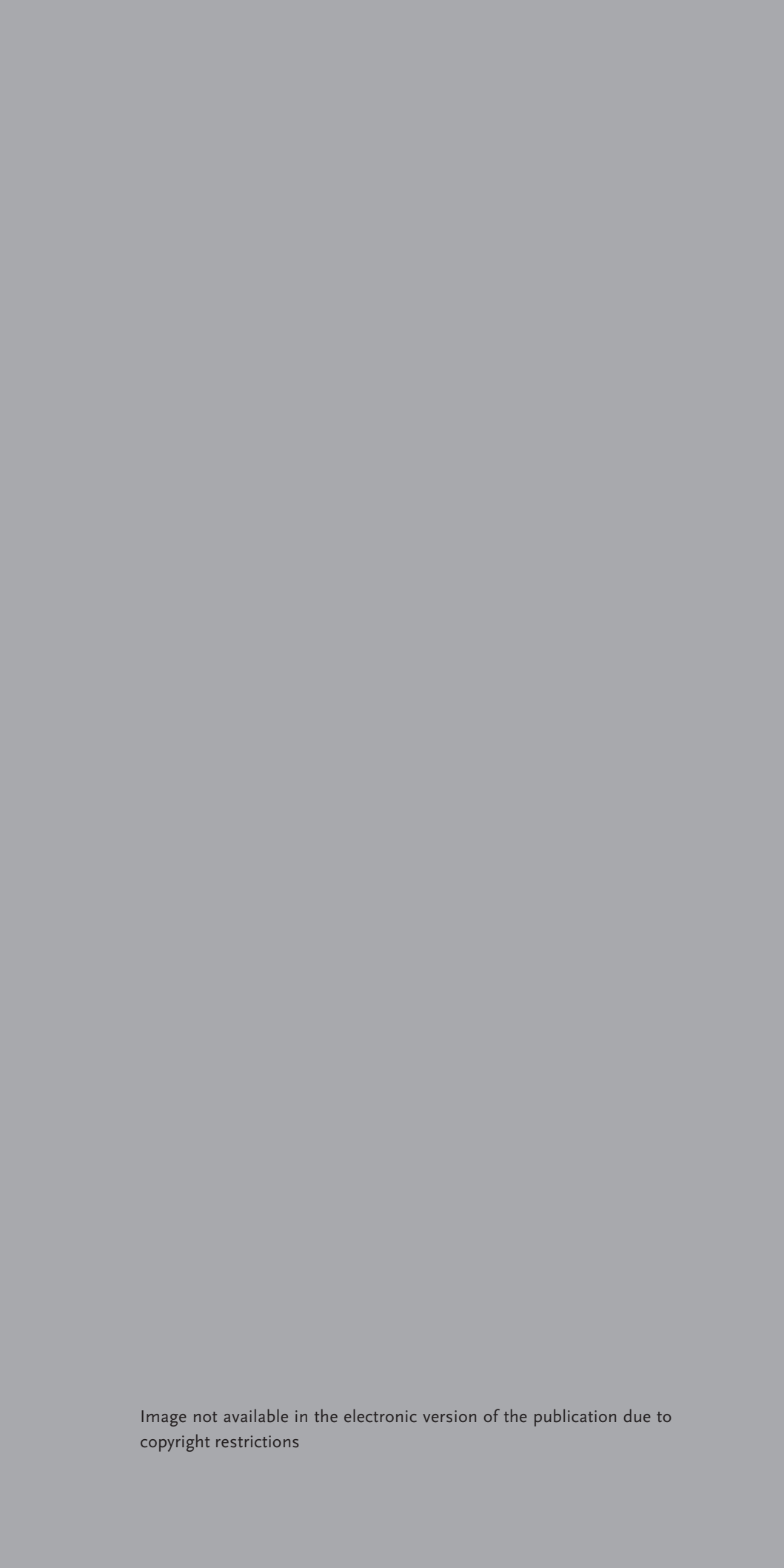
Szyszko-Bohusz, an architect faithful to the academic tradition, and the romantic and nostalgic reconstruction of history, surprises with his use of modernist forms, seeing them as part of an accessible repertory of means of artistic expression. He thus breaks the linear narrative of the succession of styles, placing modernism in an ahistorical line of randomly picked ones and, as a result, strengthening the impression of the design's surreal character (which, similarly to the works by Plečnik from the same period, reveals a surprising resemblance to the strategies of post-modernists). Szyszko-Bohusz wrote: 'It is of course an impossibility to spiritually travel in time, to a past era. . . . What we consider the spirit of the times is only our individual perception of those times. And we would do better to try and reflect the spirit of **our own** times, rather than be tempted to recreate something which ten years since will be perceived quite differently from the way it is perceived today.'[11]

With such attitudes in mind, the still binding monolithic vision of avant-garde modernism seems to dissolve into many divergent elements. It is especially difficult to talk about a single mandatory version of modernism in reference to Central Europe. Instead, one should speak about a true polyphony of styles and stances, a whole spectrum of modernist nuances: from avant-garde international modernism, via the 'national', local versions of moderate modernism, the so-called semi-modernism, to the trends typical of the 1930s, such as reactionary modernism, monumentalism or modernist classicism (all of these terms have their place in Polish art history).

It would be worth quoting here the painting by Jarosław Modzelewski *Strzemiński Mourning Malevich* (1985). The most renowned Polish artist and theoretician of radical modernism is lamenting over the body of the famous constructivist. The image is the '"avant-garde lament" as well as a lament for avant-garde and its tragic historical fate'[12] A certain aspiration is also contained here (its emphasis was probably not even intended by Modzelewski) for Polish art to participate amongst the leading lights of the international avant-garde. The dramatic figure of Władysław Strzemiński, without a leg and an arm that he had lost serving at the frontline of the First World War as an officer of the tsarist army, presents a physical absence and the geometrical asymmetry of a body

11 Adolf Szyszko Bohusz, *Rocznik Architektoniczny*, 1912–1913 ('Prace uczni prof. Szyszko-Bohusza w szkole politechnicznej lwowskiej'), pp. 10–12, quote from *Reaction to Modernism. Architecture of Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz*, exh. cat., Kraków: Institute of Architecture, National Museum in Kraków, 2013, p. 152.

12 Stach Szabłowski, 'Phantom Pains', in *Joanna Pawlik. Balans / Balance*, exh. cat., Kraków: The Bunkier Sztuki Contemporary Art Gallery, 2010, p. 38.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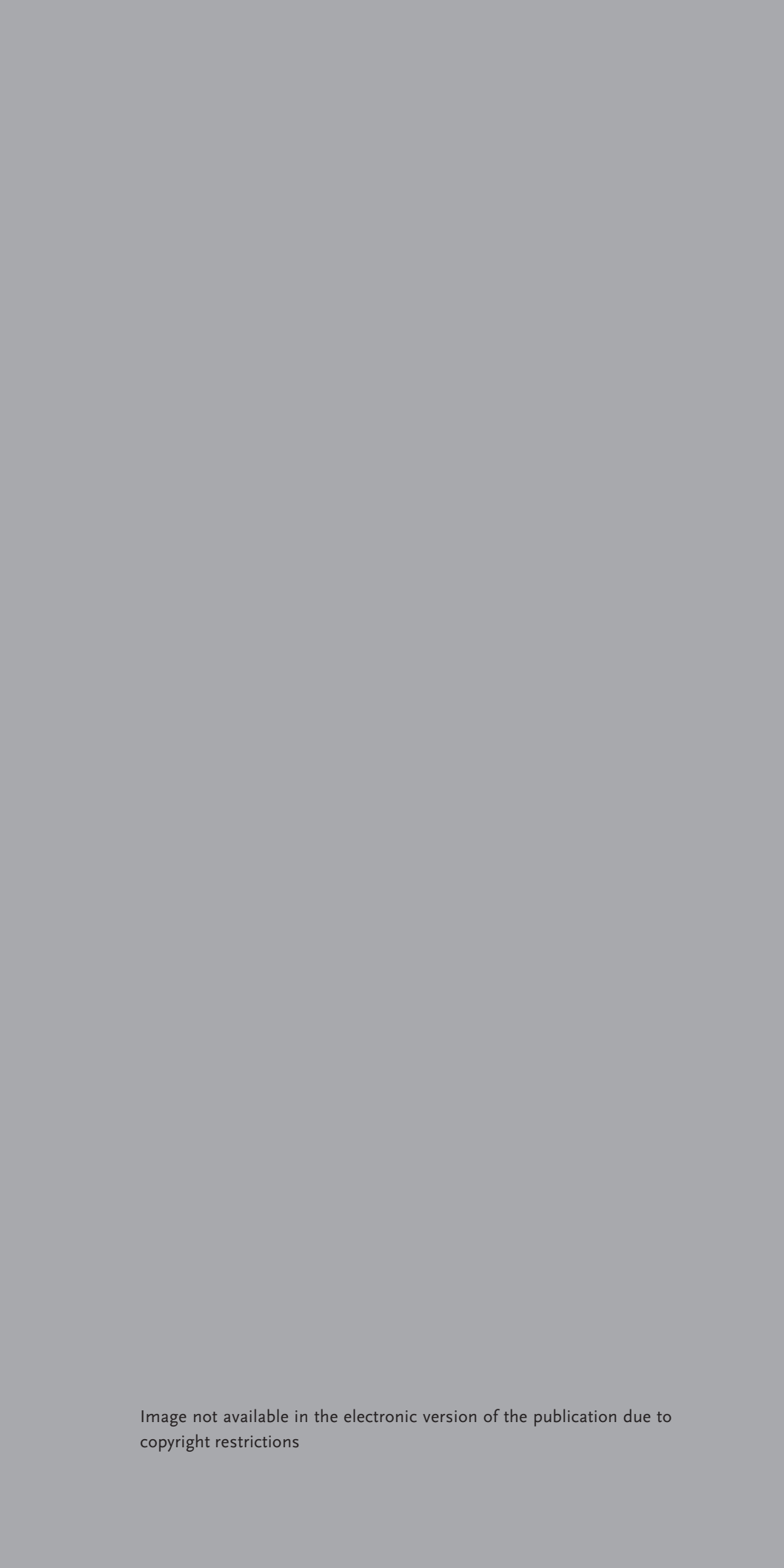
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which seems to be a metaphor of the unsteadiness and ambiguity of Polish radical modernism.

When considering the question about the absorption of modernism in the years 1914–2014 from the vantage point of Poland — which owed its independence to the global conflict of the First World War — the image that inevitably comes to mind is of a modernism which is equivocal, and which is, first and foremost, a political construct. The leading aspiration was to catch up with Western European modernist discourse but, at the same time, the Romantic cultivation of tradition remained an important part in the reconstruction of identity. It could be said that, instead of the international type of modernism, what was created was a form of an individually absorbed modernism so that it presented yet another national style. Avant-garde details and shapes clad in reactionary content became the official style of the authorities and the financial elites in Poland of the 1930s.

In the 1980s, the already quoted Habermas referred to modernity as an 'incomplete project'. He was writing, by the way, in reference to the first International Architecture Exhibition in Venice (*The Presence of the Past*) in 1980. Habermas believed that this was a radical reaction to modernism and a great manifestation of architectural postmodernism — a nostalgic call for the future. His term has maintained its disturbing suggestiveness. Is it possible to 'close' a modernist project? Is it possible to finally and irrevocably bid farewell to this irritating figure which only leaves behind unrealised concepts and continues to lead to ever new 'modernisms' and ever new hopes? [DJ]

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▲ Jarosław Modzelewski, *Strzemiński Mourning Malevich*, 1985, oil on canvas, 139 × 214 cm, National Museum in Warsaw. Photo by Piotr Ligier © National Museum in Warsaw

▶ **top:** The grave of Mies van der Rohe, design: Dirk Lohan, ca. 1969, Graceland Cemetery, Chicago. Photo by Michael Leland **centre:** The grave of Le Corbusier, own design, 1955, Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France. Photo © FLC/ADAGP **bottom:** The grave of Alvar Aalto, own design, 1949, Hietaniemi Cemetery, Helsinki. Photo by Peter LoBue

▼ The grave of Adolf Loos, own design, 1931, Zentralfriedhof, Vienna. Photo by Lucy Janes, CC BY-ND 2.0

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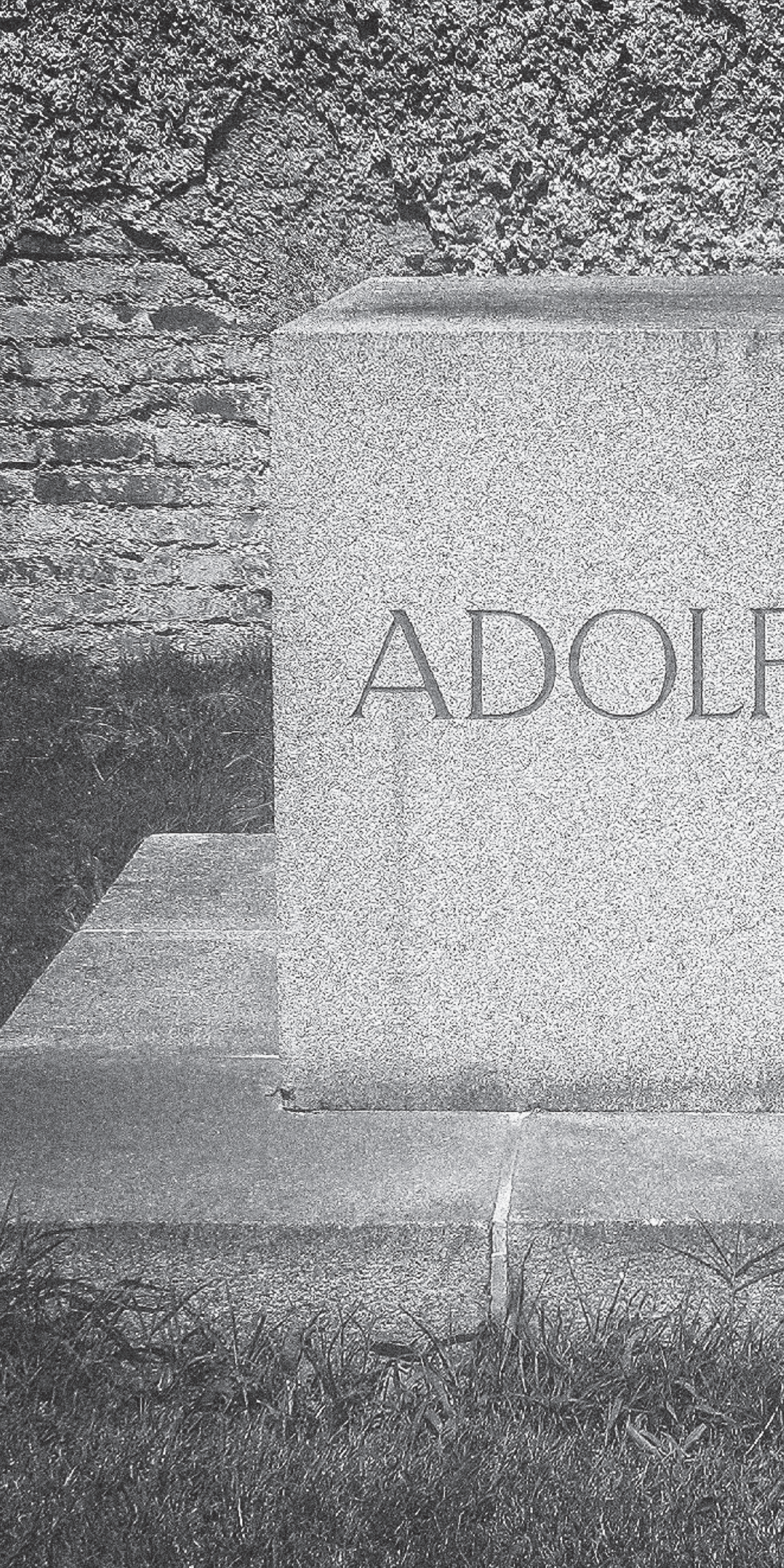
ADOLF


LOOS

The Modernist Monument

> ‘Every period has the impulse to create symbolism in the form of monuments, which according to the Latin meanings are “things that remind”, things to be transmitted to later generations. This demand for monumentality cannot, in the long run, be suppressed. It will find an outlet at all costs.’
>
> Sigfried Giedion[13]

So let us take a closer look at the means through which this demand for monumentality manifests itself, and how modernist “things that remind” actually look. The iconographic selection presented at the exhibition refers to a specific function, namely that of the tombs and mausoleums of commanders and leaders of nations from the interwar period and from the times immediately after the Second World War. These monuments have a distinct hieratical form, often originating from the classical repertoire. The proper centre of the design is frequently preceded by an impressive portico or colonnade — the very process of approaching the national sacrum is a meticulously staged spectacle. The loftiness of the monuments of the rulers of nations is underlined by where they have been located: quite frequently, the site is up on top of a hill or an elevation, or in the centre of a vast square, which is filled, already at the design stage, by masses of people coming to pay tribute to the ruler. The space is managed extensively, and the monumentality is embedded in the superhuman scale of the architecture.

The forms of the sepulchres are primary — cubes, aedicules, pyramids imitating Greek and Roman structures, or even more archaic ziggurats,

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[13] Sigfried Giedion, *Architecture, You and Me: The Diary of Development*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958, p. 28.

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▶ **top:** Lenin Mausoleum, design: Alexey Shchusev, 1929–30, Moscow. Photo by Richard Pare **centre:** Tannenberg Memorial, design: Johannes and Walter Krüger, 1924–27, Olsztynek (now Poland). Modified version of a photo from Bundesarchiv, Bild-146-2004-0008 **bottom:** Milan Rastislav Štefánik Mausoleum, design: Dušan Jurkowic, 1927–28, Bradlo Hill, Slovakia. Postcard, Grafo Čuda Holice

▼ Anıtkabir — Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Mausoleum, design: Emin Halid Onat, Ahmet Orhan Arda, 1953, Ankara. Photo by Raskolt, CC BY-SA 3.0

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pyramids or burial mounds. They emanate austerity, sombreness, and impose a feeling of posthumous domination. One of the specific forms of commemoration is the mausoleum. Its status lies somewhere between a monument and a tomb, and its message is of the glory and mightiness of the deceased, even though the mausoleum at the same time contains the dead hero's inevitably fragile and feeble remains (even if they have been embalmed). The death of the leader, even if it was of natural causes, has always been heroic or made to look as such, and the monument spells out the message about the immortality of the hero's merits. The task of mausoleums was to halt time and move it into the future in the (illusory) hope that the values now shared will also be followed by the next generations.

To the contemporary viewer, these 'time capsules' evoke a feeling of discomfort with their pompous and outdated natures. We feel embarrassed seeing the sepulchres of dictators and tyrants frozen in their triumphalism. We are curious how these instruments of identity sounded to the ears of those witnessing their creation. What tone did they hit? Did it already sound off-tune to some of the members of the imagined community, namely the nation?

Sigfried Giedion writes about this quite suggestively, stating that from the 19th century onwards, modernists only reproduced the rhetoric of the monumentality of the ancients, so as to compensate for their own lack of expressive power. This ideologist of modernism believes, therefore, that what was produced could be termed pseudo-monumentality. 'Routine shapes from bygone periods . . . [But] because they had lost their inner significance they had become devaluated; mere clichés without emotional justification.'[14] We could, to a certain degree, accept the reconstruction of these forms as the expression of modernism's longing for common values and ideas — as James E. Young adds in an essay dedicated to the monument and memory.[15] Generally, as Young further writes, it is membership in groups, be they religious, national, or class-based, which makes it possible (as Maurice Halbwachs noted as far back as the 1950s) for us to collect

14 José Luis Sert, Fernand Léger, Sigfried Giedion, *Nine Points on Monumentality*, in Giedion, *Architecture, You and Me . . .* , p. 25.

15 James E. Young, *Memory/Monument*, in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 237.

▶ Contemporary modernist monument, 2014, photomontage by Jakub Woynarowski

and later recall memories. This is how memory is actually managed — by national holidays and anniversaries, statues and monuments — this is how national identification is created. Therefore, monuments, even though they usurp a form evoking timelessness, immortality or, at least, longevity (which is proven by the material used — stone), are merely political products. The monument and its meaning are created in a specific time, place and as a result of a current political intention.

In the 20th century, death soon revealed its non-heroic face. The atrocities of the battles and mass graves from the First World War successfully undermined the lofty image of national struggles, unmasking the inappropriateness of their commemorations. National identification was also challenged. Questions were asked about the social and ethical circumstances related to monuments. As a result of all the above, monuments have in the last hundred years undergone a transformation, turning from monolithic creations of a definitely persuasive form into ironic and self-reflexive installations, welcoming interpretation.

Modernism itself, which was a movement in architecture known for its social project, its optimism and youth, and its affirmation of change and development, by definition seems to stand in contradiction to commemorating, petrifying or even — literally and metaphorically — the rigour of death. Lewis Mumford has captured it rather bluntly: 'The notion of a modern monument is veritably a contradiction in terms.' And if this was not enough: 'If it is a monument it is not modern, and if it is modern, it cannot be a monument.'[16] Instead of adapting to changing surroundings, the monument remains static. The very problem of modernism actually contributed to the devaluation of the commemorative form, as by dint of its aesthetic canon, modernism was doomed to self-referentiality and unable to create symbols which would relate to meanings beyond formal ones. The crisis of representation in the 20th century and the negation of death, typical of this civilisation, have made the construction of the monument, supported on a national foundation, extremely fragile. If the monument is still there at all, its form undermines its ontological status, revealing ambiguities and ruptures (from this perspective, the canopy in the Polish Pavilion is ideally postmodern).

Let us then ask about what the baldachin meant in the times when it was built. It was created by the chief conservator at the Wawel Royal Castle — a custodian and trustee of memory. He entered into a dialogue with the condition of the architecture there and designed the sepulchre of his former commander. At the same time, he consciously contributed to the creation of the myth of the leader (and, as it turned out, his own as

16 Lewis Mumford, 'Monumentalism, Symbolism and Style', *Architectural Review*, April 1949, quote from Young, p. 235.

well).[17] The symbol he proposed was easily comprehensible to the people of his time. In the spring of 1937, the commission issuing an opinion on the design of the reconstruction of the crypt to hold the tomb of Piłsudski, wrote: 'The architecture and material of the superstructure should be treated distinctly from the chapel, **without precluding modern forms** [emphasis — DL-R].'[18] Such a modern form was used in the crowning of the baldachin — a simple slab with a Roman typeface inscription: *Corpora dormiunt, vigilant animae*. Sources indicate that Szyszko-Bohusz himself was the author of the engraving.[19] The architect simplified the design's form in comparison to his former neo-Gothic or neo-Renaissance proposals, though still its essence is to be found in the engraved message — a text in the spirit of *The Forefathers' Eve* by Mickiewicz[20], calling on an important topos in Polish culture: the presence of forefathers and their actual engagement in the creation and preservation of identity. Actually, there are more texts at work here. The first, about the spirit keeping vigil, serves as a bridge between the present and the past, though it is undermined by the split in the construction, a split in the logic of the object. The other text is found in the description of the origin of the baldachin's parts — the so-called diagram by Syszko-Bohusz as Jakub Woynarowski, the author of the prints in the Polish Pavilion, terms the structure. Such an application of the spolia requires the use of some kind of prosthesis to make the architecture complete — such as a commentary explaining their origins. The triumphalist expression of this element, which contains literal

17 Cf. correspondence about the conflict: http://www.pilsudski.org/archiwa/dokument.php?nonav=1&nrar=701&nrzesp=1&sygn=86&handle=701.180/3237 (accessed 20 March 2014).

18 Quote from *Reakcja na modernizm. Architektura Adolfa Szyszko-Bohusza*, exh. cat., Kraków: Institute of Architecture, National Museum in Kraków, 2013, p. 86.

19 The Archbishop of Kraków, Adam Sapieha, was initially against the burial of Piłsudski at Wawel. He later exerted pressure to have the remains moved to a separate crypt. Since the state authorities lagged with the decision, he decided to transport the remains on 22nd June 1937, causing a huge scandal known as the Wawel conflict. Szyszko-Bohusz was engaged in preparing the new crypt; however, instead of employing temporary solutions, as he was supposed to by the commission of the Chief Committee for the Commemoration of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, he designed and executed the interior of the crypt, the baldachin and its surroundings, with the inclusion of references to his own coat of arms, which was criticised by the state institution headed by General Bolesław Wieniawa-Długoszowski.

20 Adam Mickiewicz's *The Forefathers' Eve* (*Dziady*) is a Romantic drama in four parts. One of them takes place on the day following All Saints' Day, in reference to a ritual of recalling the dead.

references to the past (including monuments) of the three partitioned territories and the three occupying countries, is an attempt at employing other, no doubt conflicting memories in the creation of the new myth. The baldachin proposes a cohesive and coherent vision of the past which, unquestionably, is in contradiction with the contemporary conviction that neither the past nor its meaning are homogenous.

In his text to this catalogue, David Crowley writes about the relatively modest commemoration of Piłsudski by Szyszko-Bohusz.[21] The Marshal's cult, however, engaged huge forces — such as the entire mightiness of the Wawel hill. It was not the canopy in itself, but the Royal Cathedral which served as 'Piłsudski's baldachin' and he himself was 'the peer of kings' (the Marshal used the term in reference to the Romantic poet, Juliusz Słowacki, whose ashes he had brought to Wawel a decade earlier). The message is reinforced by the regal symbolism of the mausoleum: next to the baldachin, in the centre of the floor tiles, there is an image of the sun surrounded by shields and coats of arms, and the copper latch to the stairs is in the form of a lion — an obvious symbol of courage and power.

The fact that Szyszko-Bohusz incorporated his own coat of arms into the shield of the commander is very indicative of the complex relations between architecture and politics, between the ego of the architect and his subservience. His wish to commemorate and immortalise himself could even have led to him jeopardising his own position — the Chief Committee for the Commemoration of Marshal Józef Piłsudski filed an official request to remove the architect from the position of the chief conservator at Wawel after the illegal transfer of Piłsudski's remains from the Crypt of St. Leonard to the one prepared by Szyszko-Bohusz.

Both the monumental structures, as well as the much more modest own tombstones of modernist architects, which we recall in the vestibule to the Polish Pavilion, convey a message about relations with memory, and about commemorating by means of specific forms. At the end of his life, Adolf Loos, who is the author of the motto of our exhibition, produced several sketches of his tombstone. It seems therefore that, mindful of his own mortality, he designed a memorial for himself, as was the case with other great representatives of 20th century modernism. When we asked him about his own tomb, Rem Koolhaas, responded, as if somewhat annoyed: 'I have no sympathy for death.' And then added: 'I have no interest in death.' The comment contains one of the answers to the question of the sense of our presentation.

The private tombstones of architects, who had often been engaged in creating forms that were at least to some extent symbolic, reveal their intimate relations with shape and architectural value. They also shift re-

21 Cf. David Crowley, 'Piłsudski's Architect', pp. 59–81.

flection onto the place of individual fate and the inevitable end of one's existence — regardless of the caste one is a member of in one's lifetime. The juxtaposition of interwar or post-war forms, created at the same time as the most radical modernist projects of the avant-garde, show the symbolic need for representation which is connected both to authority, and to individual existence. The monuments created as a result of the desire to control both memory and space by dint of their pompousness, are as ludicrous as they are terrifying. They seem to be exhausted as a political means of expression; however, we can easily find their echoes in corporate high-rises or the monumental buildings of contemporary authorities, no matter how democratic they may be. [DLR]

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▼ Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, design of the canopy over the entrance to Marshal Józef Piłsudski's burial crypt, neo-Gothic version, 1935. Photo by Dariusz Błażewski © Wawel Royal Castle

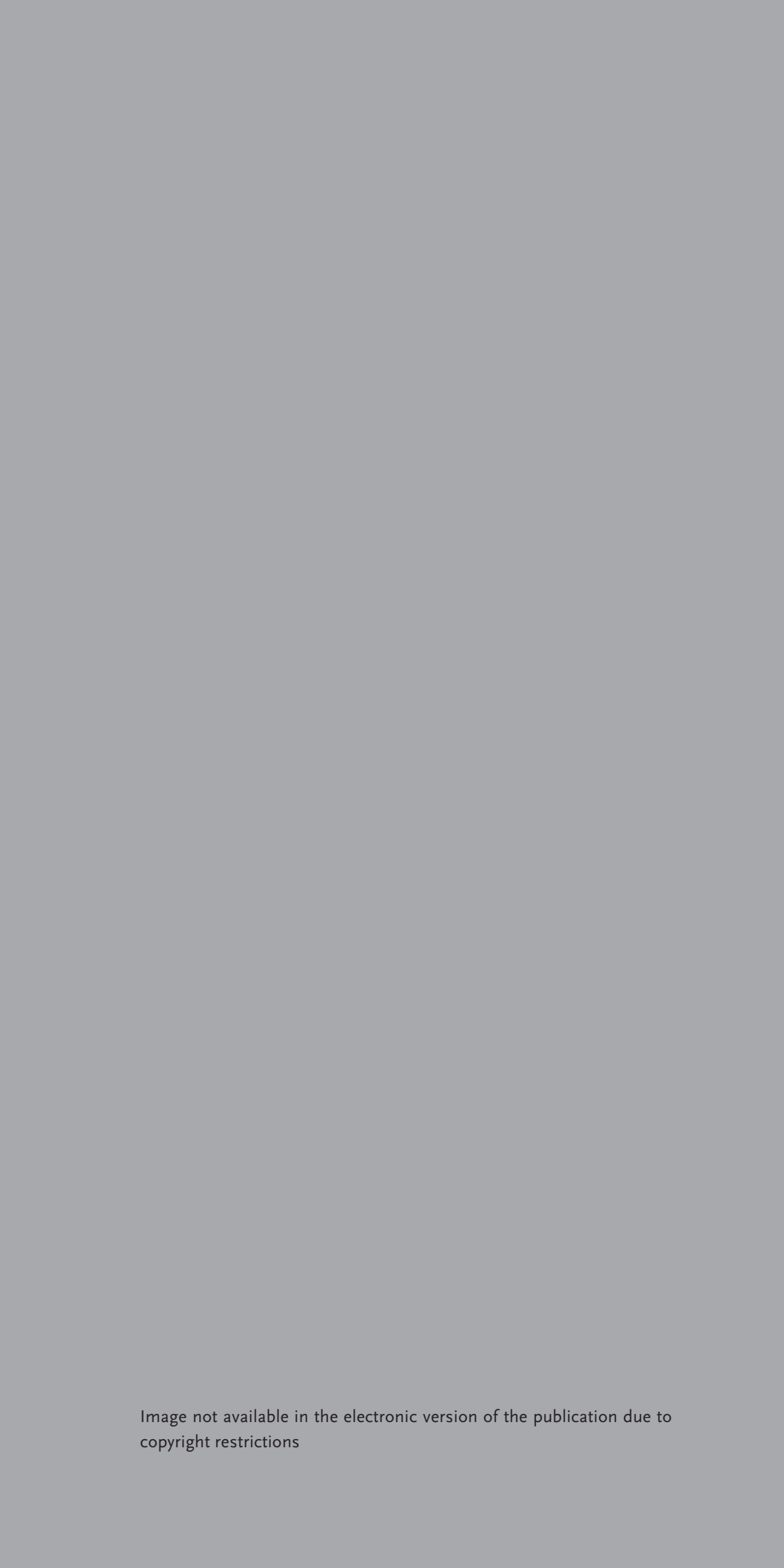
▼ p. 49: Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, design of the canopy over the entrance to Marshal Józef Piłsudski's burial crypt, neo-Gothic version, side view, 1935. Photo by Anna Stankiewicz © Wawel Royal Castle

▼ pp. 50–51: Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, design of the canopy over the entrance to Marshal Józef Piłsudski's burial crypt, neo-Renaissance version, 1936. Photo by Anna Stankiewicz © Wawel Royal Castle

▼ pp. 52–53: Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, design of the canopy over the entrance to Marshal Józef Piłsudski's burial crypt, longitudinal section, 4th version, 1937. Photo by Anna Stankiewicz © Wawel Royal Castle

▼ pp. 54–55: Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, detailed design of Marshal Józef Piłsudski's burial crypt and canopy, cross section, 1937. Photo by Anna Stankiewicz © Wawel Royal Castle

▼ pp. 56–57: Drawing of floor tiles near the canopy, made by Jakub Woynarowski, based on Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz's design, 1937, Wawel Royal Castle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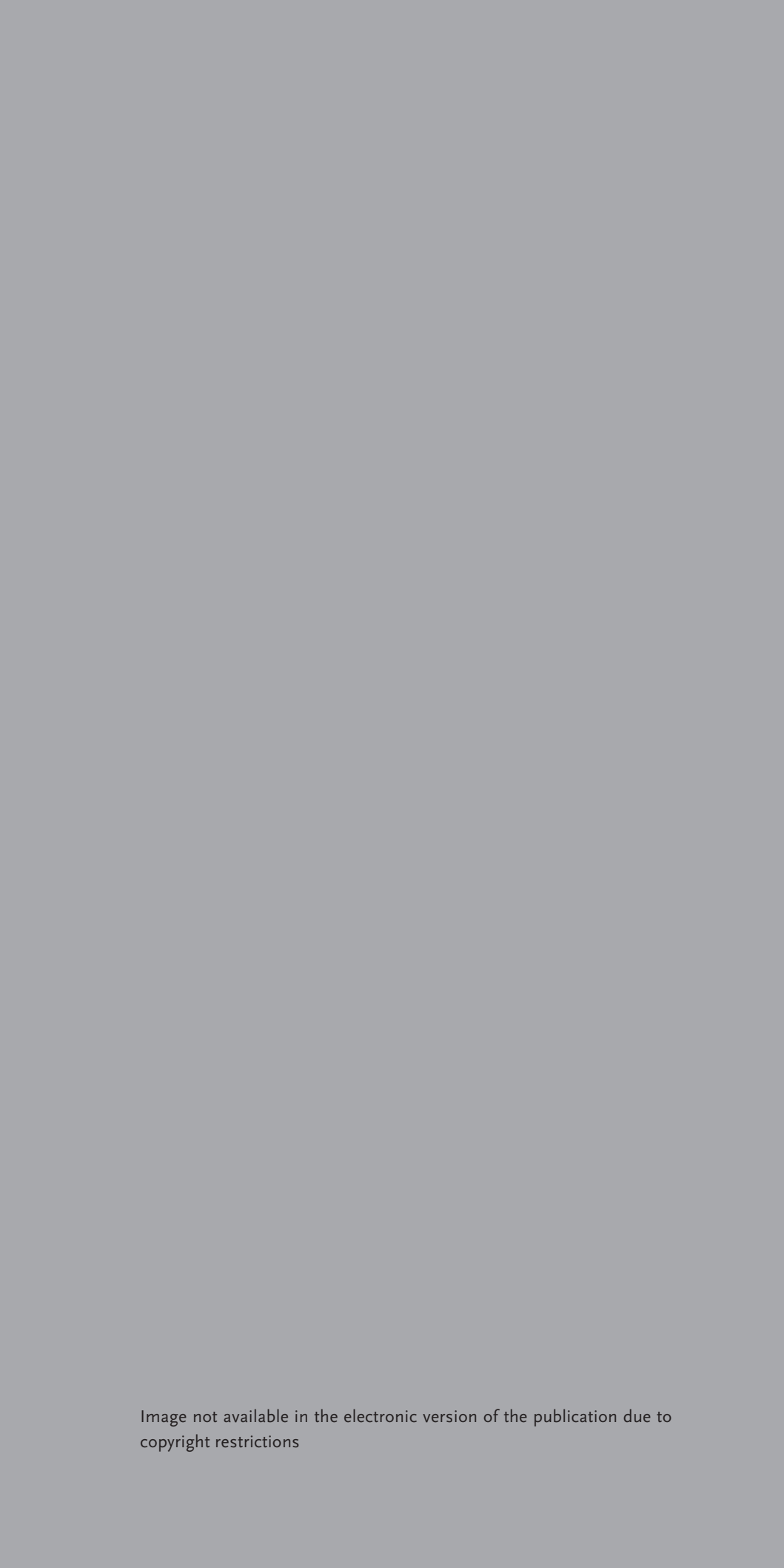
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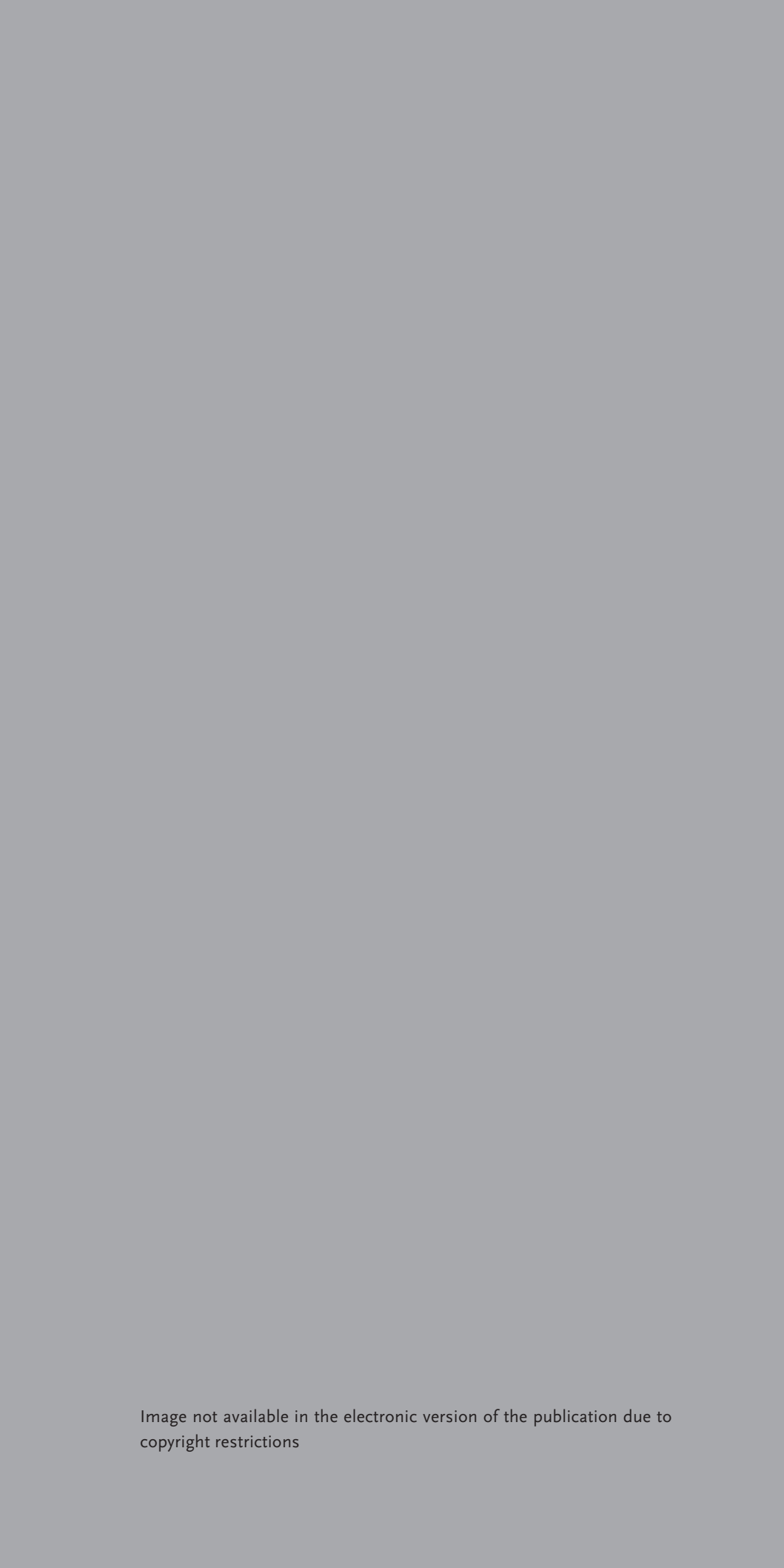
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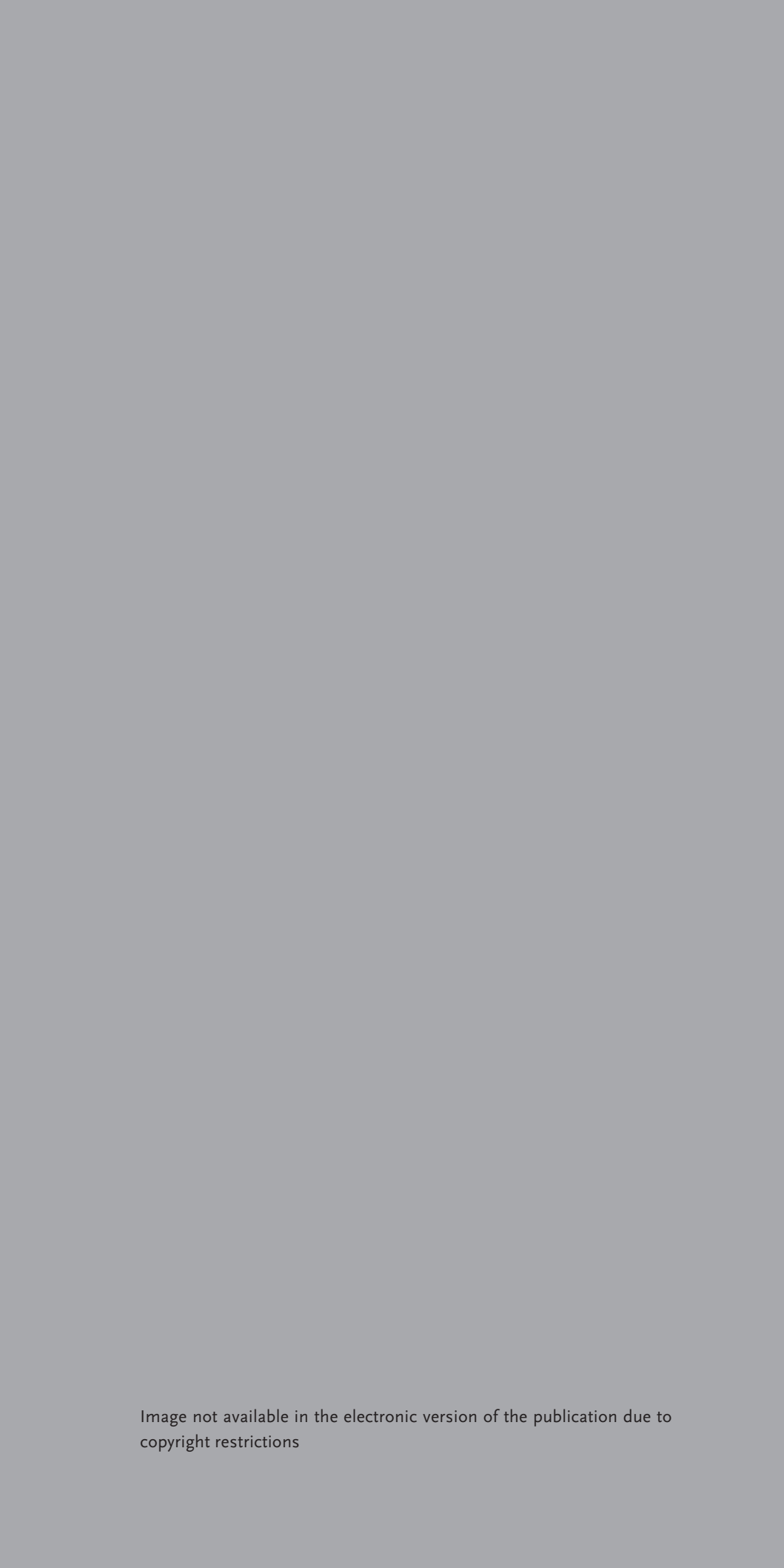
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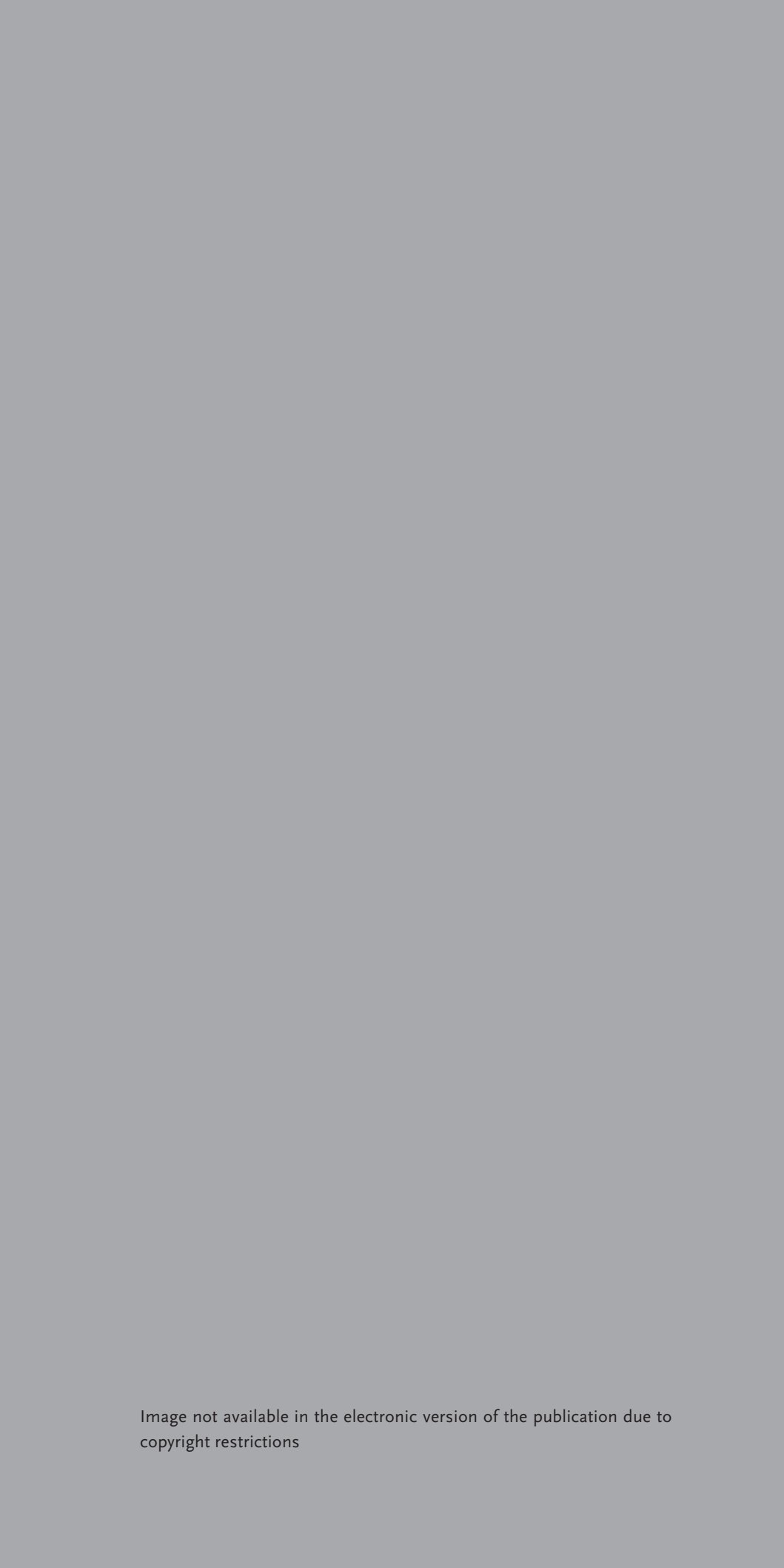
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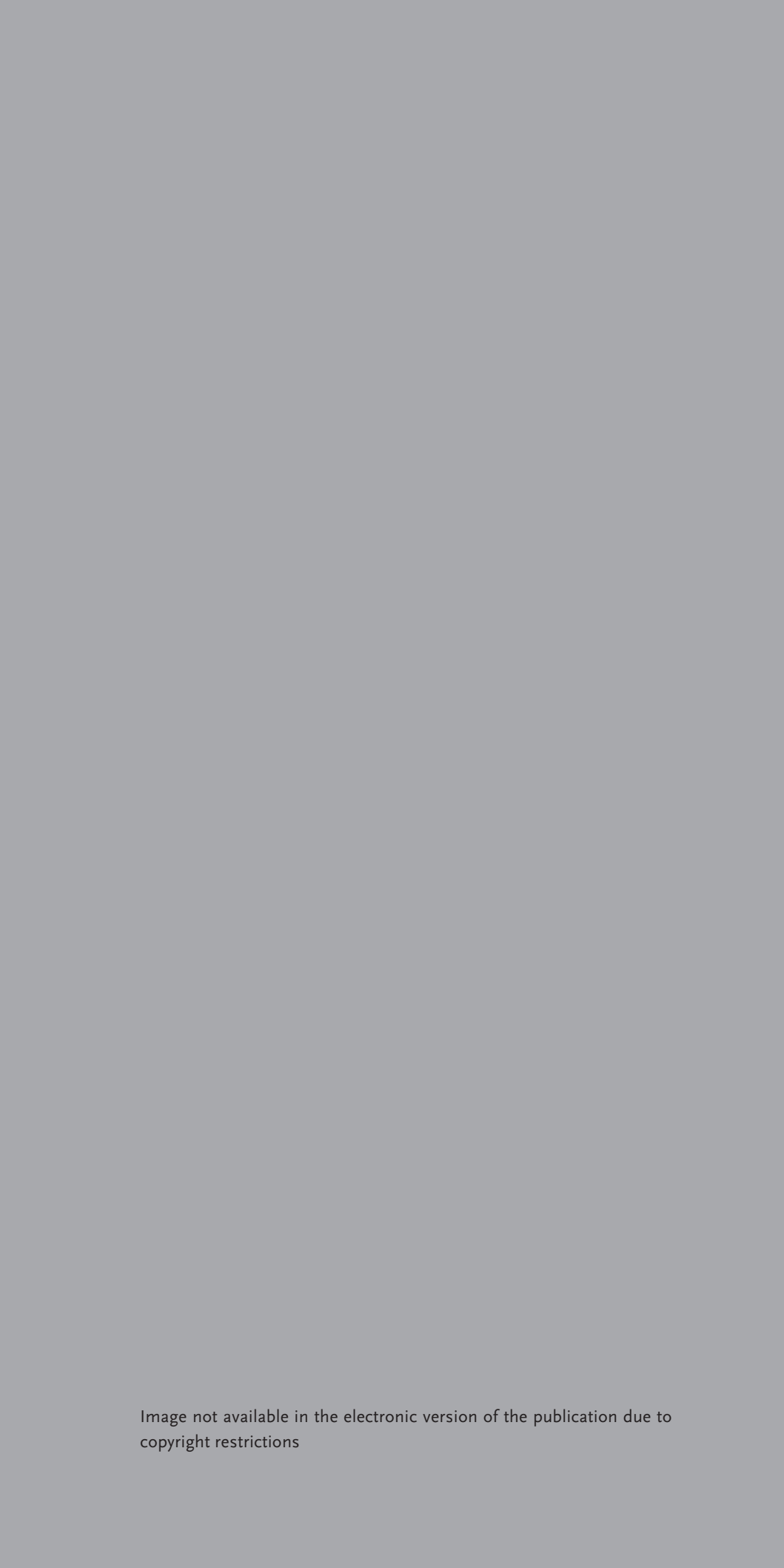
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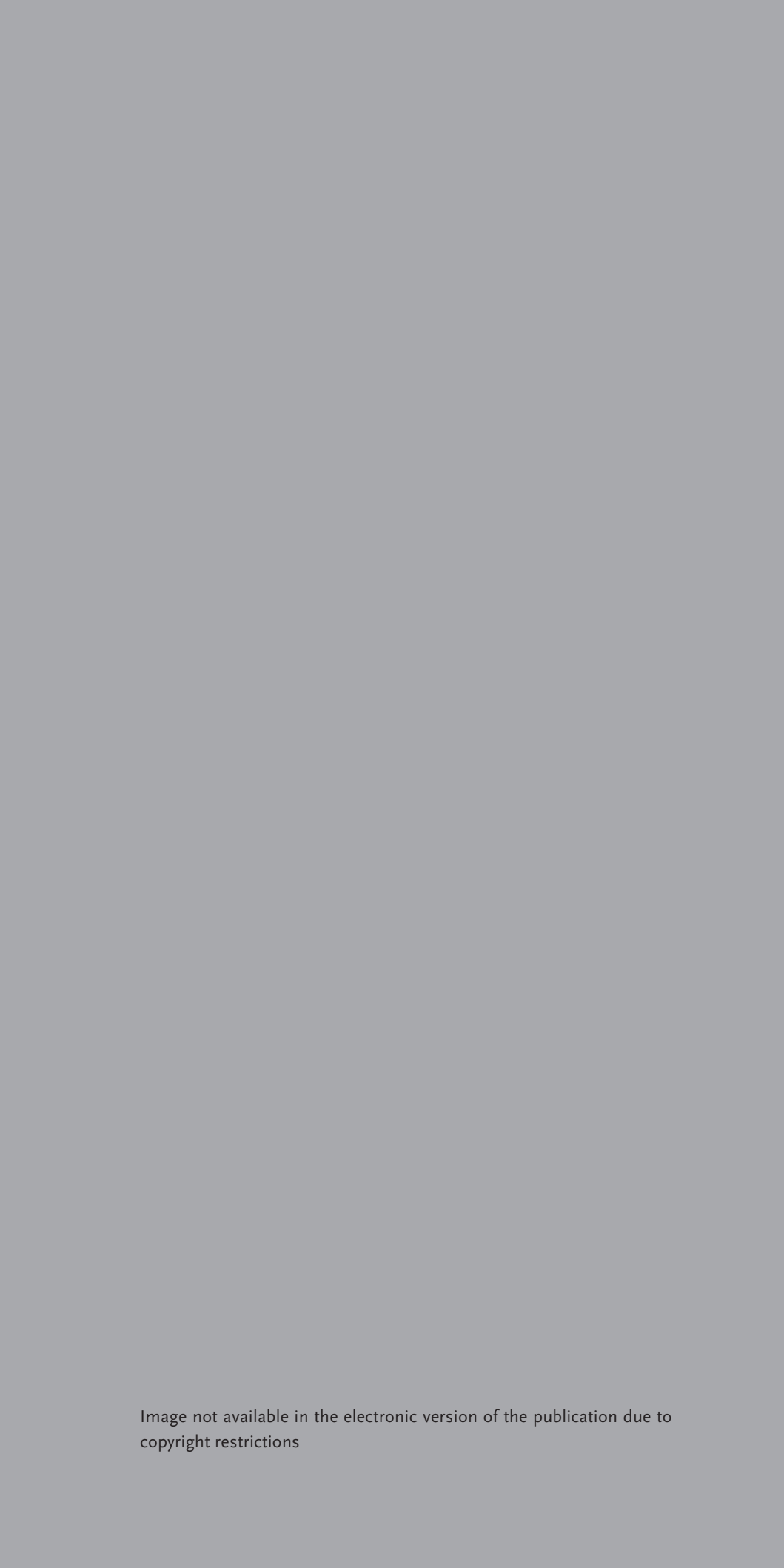
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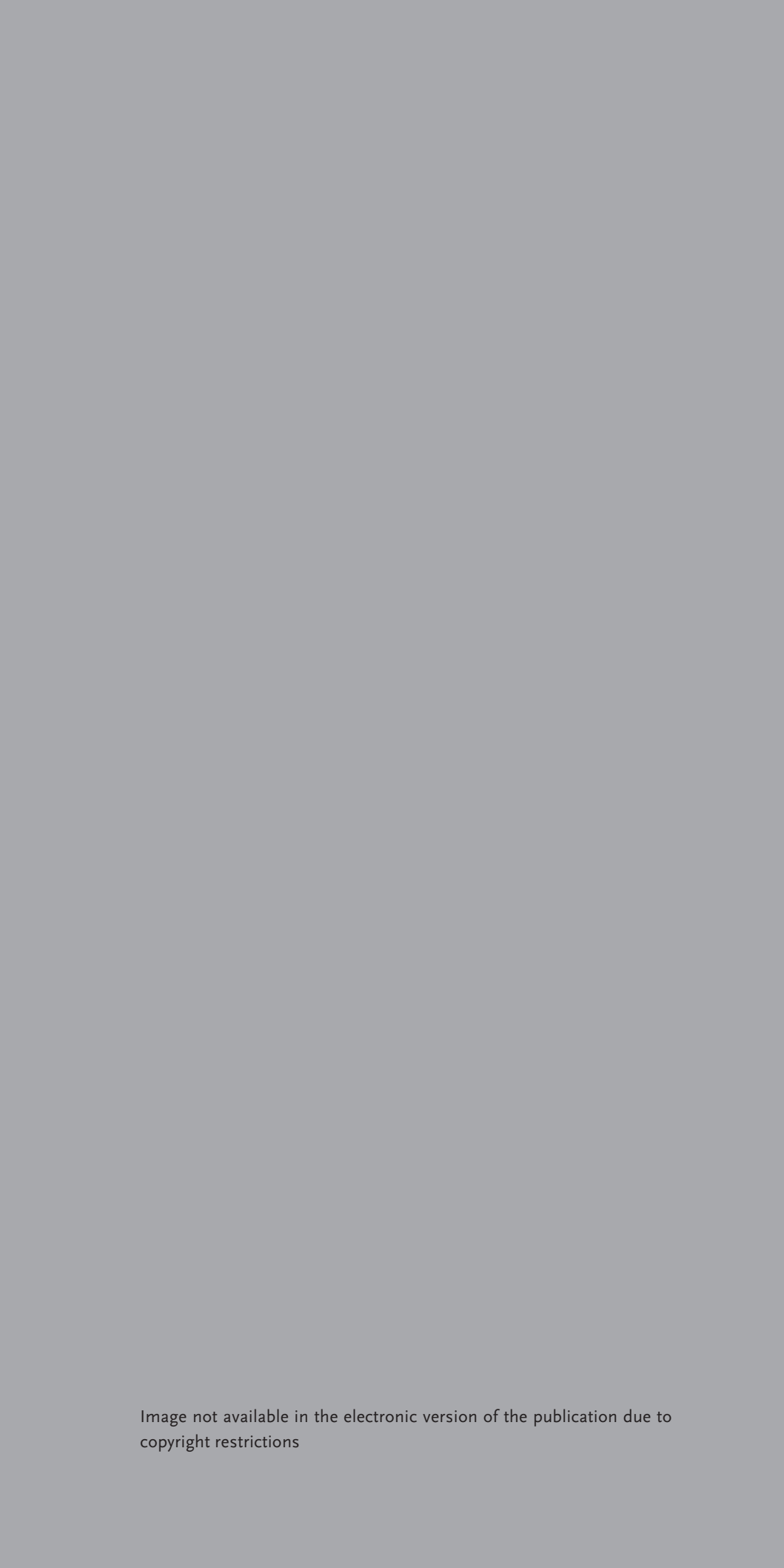
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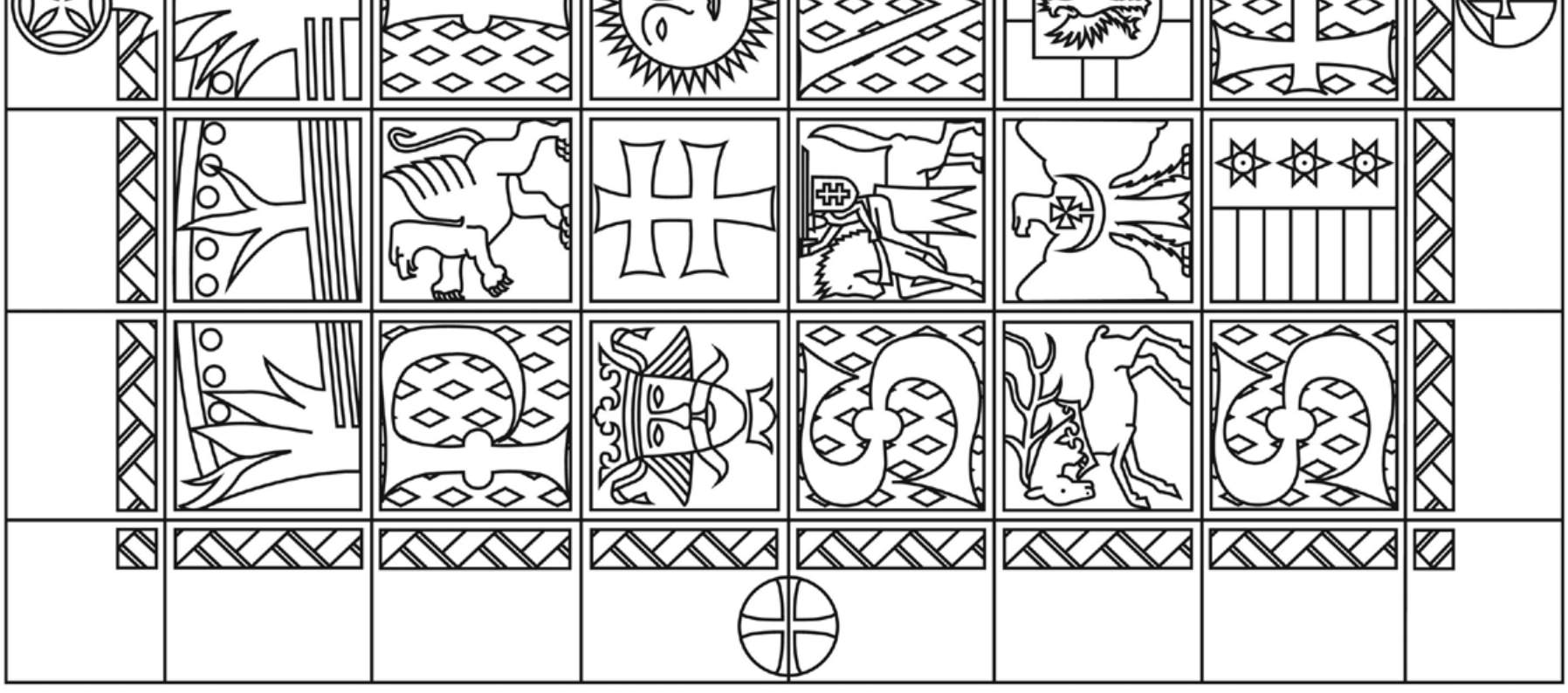

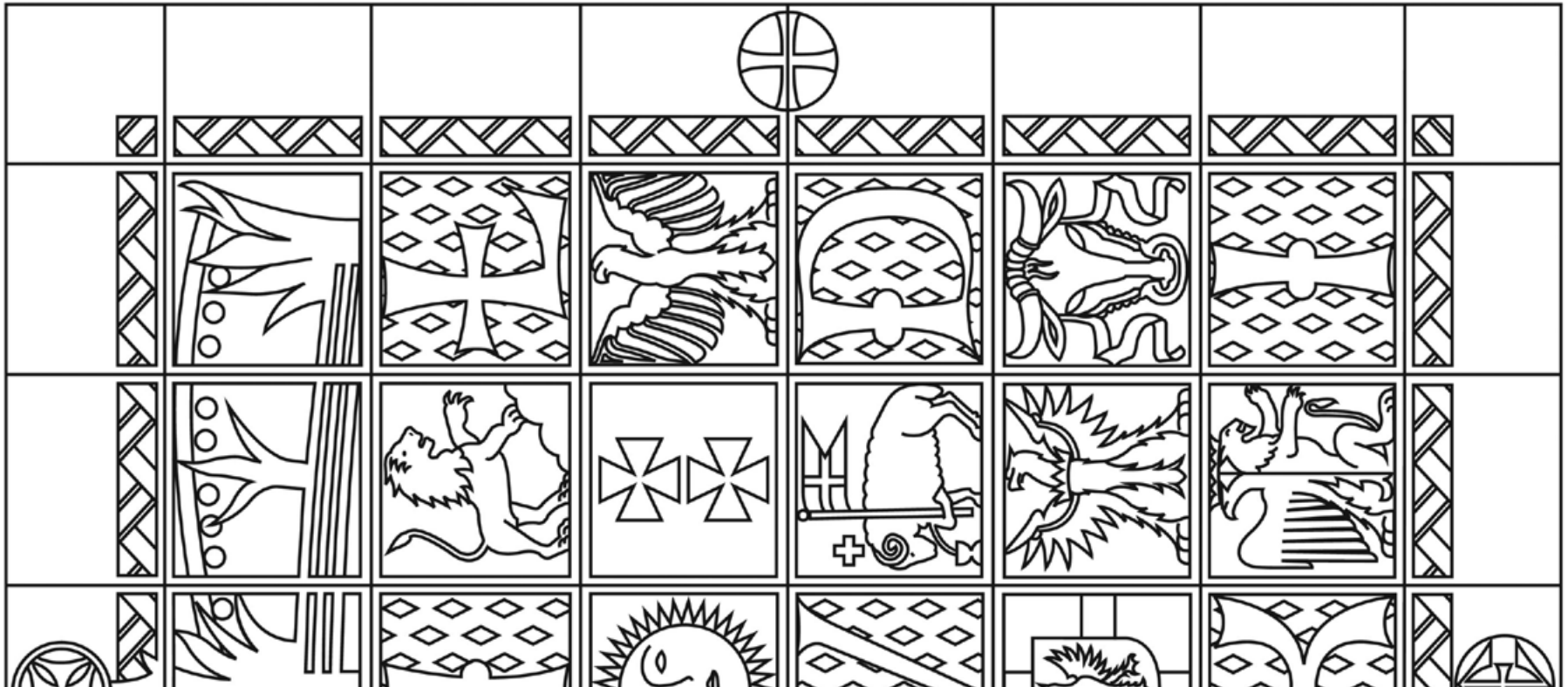

David Crowley

Piłsudski's Architect

Writing after the liberation of Kraków at the end of the Second World War, Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz reflected on the complex of historical buildings in the city which had occupied much of his professional life: 'Wawel always formed a separate world in itself. In this microcosm, like in a miniature, all historical events in Poland were reflected, often like a brighter version of all that has happened in our Fatherland. Here, on Wawel, stood the oldest Christian church in Poland; here regal power flourished and faded; and the reconstruction of the Castle was undertaken several years ahead of the restoration of independent Poland.'[1] For Szyszko-Bohusz, both as architect and conservator, architecture existed on a longer historic scale than the short lives of men. This was cause for hope. Surveying the ruined state of the country, he said, 'whilst we cannot be indifferent to our own war experiences during the years of the Second World War, the salvation of the Castle from destruction gives us hope for the future.'[2] This faith in the endurance of places was a product of Szyszko-Bohusz's training, though not necessarily in the Academy in St. Petersburg where he studied architecture in the first decade of the twentieth century: it was the result of his immersion in Polish neo-Romanticism and, in particular, in the idea that the historic fabric of Kraków — including, of course, Wawel — was a living lesson in national values. At the end of the 19th century Poles had been encouraged to take pilgrimages to the city, learning to understand its churches, palaces and streets as sites of heroic deeds and as evidence of former glory before the partition of the country by its neighbours. The climax of these excursions was the ascent of the steep approach to Wawel.

1 Szyszko-Bohusz cited by Piotr Gacek, 'Wawelskie życia Adolfa Szyszko-Bohusza', *Architektura*, May 1988, p. 18.

2 Ibid.

The site of the royal palace, until Warsaw was made the capital at the end of the sixteenth century, it continued to claim authority over the patriotic imagination. Wawel cathedral was the burial place of Polish monarchs, as well as saints and national heroes. In this way, Wawel concentrated religious devotion with patriotism. This heady mix was stirred when, in 1890, the body of Adam Mickiewicz, the soldier-poet who had died in exile and been buried outside Paris in 1855, was reinterred in the cathedral crypt on Wawel. A melancholic, theatrical procession, the event was a great public spectacle. Such *pompes funebrès*, as well as the legends and myths about the history of Wawel embroidered by artists and writers, had the effect of consecrating this hill into the *sacrarium* of Polish history in the minds of patriotic Poles.[3]

Romantic nationalism did not end in 1918, but it was changed by the conditions of independence, supplemented by new myths of heroism. The insurrectionary tradition — risings against foreign rule in 1830, 1846–48, 1863–64 and 1905 — had been a catalogue of failure, producing generations of martyrs and exiles. Yet in the Romantic imagination, these disasters were evidence of the virtue of the national cause. The cult of the nation was expressed through corpses. 1918, however, threw up a victor, Józef Piłsudski. The Head of State of the reborn country was the living subject of a 'cult'.[4] Even before 1918, Piłsudski's roles as an underground activist, prisoner and paramilitary had been mythologised, not least by the soldiers who had heeded his call to form Polish Legions at the outbreak of the First World War. But after 1918, and particularly after the *coup d'état* in 1926, the Marshal became the subject of an official cult. His stern visage glared down from the wall of every state office and school, and appeared on Polish coins

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3 On the role allocated to Kraków before the First World War in the Romantic nationalist imagination, see Jacek Purchla, *Matecznik polski. Pozaekonomiczne czynniki rozwoju Krakowa w okresie autonomii galicyjskiej*, Kraków: Znak, 1992.

4 For a detailed examination of the Piłsudski cult, see Heidi Hein-Kircher, *Kult Piłsudskiego i jego znaczenie dla państwa polskiego 1926–1939*, Warsaw: Neriton, 2008.

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▲ p. 58: Józef Piłsudski's funeral procession on its way to Wawel Hill, Kraków, 1935. National Digital Archives, Poland

▶ A Legionnnaires' reunion, Oleandry, Kraków: the arrival of Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły, General Inspector of the Armed Forces, with the Polish Legions Memorial in the background, 1939. National Digital Archives, Poland

and postage stamps. Streets, institutions, and ocean liners bore his name (as did the airplane piloted by Ludwik Idzikowski, who attempted, unsuccessfully, to cross the Atlantic in July 1929). The Marshal's deeds were taught to children in Polish schools as stirring lessons in conduct and patriotism. The keenest could graduate to the Legion of the Young (Legion Młodych), an association formed in 1929 which promoted selfless duty to the state and personal asceticism — virtues closely associated with the Marshal. In fact, the Polish Legions were themselves the subject of a minor cult in which they were invariably depicted as a brotherhood made up of the selfless and the brave. As a cult, myth was more important than fact. Piłsudski's Legions were, after all, a small military force, never totalling more than 25,000 men during the First World War. But their symbolic function was considerable.

Cults may be fashioned from myths, but they also take on material forms and have real effects. Szyszko-Bohusz was implicated in, and benefited from, the Piłsudski cult. Between 1914 and 1916 he had fought in the Polish Legions, and, in 1916, when in charge of the conservation workshops at Wawel, arranged for the High Command of the clandestine Polish Military Organisation (Polska Organizacja Wojskowa) to operate from the castle. According to one conspirator, their quarters 'were so well concealed in the castle's cellars that only a knowledgeable guide could ever successfully find them.'[5] After 1918, Szyszko-Bohusz enjoyed a place in a trusted caste of former Legionnaires occupying prominent public roles. Just as military formations preceded and effectively created government in Poland, these men had been soldiers first and became public figures later. A guiding creed of the Legions had been the primacy of the national cause over any interest which might divide their ranks. Class counted for little (or, as some historians have put it, membership of the legions was itself a kind of elevation, ennobling all who served[6]). Much has been made of the Legion's eschewal of ethnic

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[5] Ryszard Mirowicz, *Edward Rydz-Śmigły. Działalność wojskowa i polityczna*, Warsaw: IWZZ, 1988.

[6] M. B. B. Biskupski, *Independence Day: Myth, Symbol, and the Creation of Modern Poland*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 16.

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▶ Dining room at the Presidential Castle in Wisła, design: Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, 1931. Modified version of a photo by Stanisław Mucha, National Digital Archives, Poland

▼ View of the Presidential Castle in Wisła, design: Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, 1931. Photo by Stanisław Mucha, National Digital Archives, Poland

divisions too. As members of a society which had been stateless for so long, it was the state, above all, which commanded loyalty, far less the people or nation. Traces of this attitude survived into the post-war years, not least in the decision to launch the May 1926 coup.

Szyszko-Bohusz took on many official duties in the 1920s including that of the rectorship of the Kraków Academy of Fine Art (1924–29) and membership of prestigious bodies including that which oversaw in Warsaw in 1925 the creation of the Grave of the Unknown Soldier, a monument containing the remains of an anonymous combatant who had died fighting in the Polish-Soviet War in 1919. And as a conservator employed by the Ministry of Public Works from 1929, he had under his care the most important historic buildings in the capital (including the Royal Castle and Łazienki). His considerable body of works as an architect included the presidential summer residence (Presidential Castle, 1929–30) in Wisła, high in the Beskid mountains, close to the source of the Vistula river. Eschewing payment, Szyszko-Bohusz offered his design as a tribute to his friend, President Ignacy Mościcki, as did the regional authorities in Silesia who funded it. A series of flat-roofed geometric masses with a free plan of open spaces on the ground floor, the Castle was furnished with tubular steel furniture and decorated with vividly-coloured walls. By the disappointing standards of official architecture around the world in the first post-war decade, the Castle was a remarkable fanfare for new conceptions of space and design (and art historian Andrzej Szczerski has identified it as a sign of this border region's bold claims to modernity[7]). It was also a fitting tribute to Mościcki, a prominent scientist and politician who had been behind the construction of the State Works of Nitrogen Compounds (Państwowa Fabryka Związków Azotowych), a mammoth complex of smoking chimneys and steel-framed factories on the edge of Tarnów.[8] It should be stressed, of course, that the exterior of the Castle incorporated a number of picturesque elements too, including rough sandstone cladding which matched its wild setting and signalled, perhaps, an aristocratic habitus. But, as Ewa Chojecka argues, the intended occupant of this 'new manor' in the Beskid mountains testified to a 'republican-intelligentsia model of modern representation, deprived of any dynastic or ancestral prestige'.[9]

7 Andrzej Szczerski, '"Nowa Europa" i modernistyczne enklawy', in *Modernizm na peryferiach. Architektura Skoczowa, Śląska i Pomorza 1918–1939*, ed. Andrzej Szczerski, Warsaw: 40 000 malarzy, 2011, pp. 239–44.

8 Barbara Bułdys, 'Mościce — A Dream of Modernity', in *Tarnów. 1000 Years of Modernity*, Warsaw: 40 000 malarzy, 2012, p. 139.

9 Ewa Chojecka, 'The Castle Manor of the President of the Republic of Poland in Wisla and Tugendhat Villa in Brno — Two Contradictory Formulae', *Architecture of Civil Engineering Environment*, no. 5, 2008, p. 6.

Confident in his opinions as well as his abilities, and secure in his place in the ruling elite, Szyszko-Bohusz was not, or not just, a bureaucrat. His work as a conservator at Wawel was not, for instance, only a matter of painstaking archaeology and diligent renovation. He envisaged his role there as an artist or architect, altering and adding to the historic fabric of the complex according to a vision shaped, in part, by his loyalty to the Polish Legions. For instance, he presented a number of proposals to give order to the site in order to emphasise its character as the 'national Pantheon'. A 1919–21 scheme proposed that a large formal 'square' organised around a circular altar be created between the cathedral and the Sandomierz and Złodziejska towers. This would have necessitated removing 19th century structures such as the 'ugly' red brick garrison hospital which had been built by the Austrians to create a clear vista; paving over the archaeological remains of two medieval churches and other historic buildings; and the construction of a long double height arcade of blind arches on top of the ramparts. In a 'thirty point' programme accompanying his designs, Szyszko-Bohusz described this terrain as a 'campo santo', but he did not envisage a cemetery: redesigned, it would serve as an orderly setting for 'great celebrations' and spectacular rallies.[10] The Pantheon was also to be equipped with a rostrum for speeches on the top of the ramparts, ascended to by steps like a Roman tribunal. Szyszko-Bohusz came close to political dramaturgy, imagining the Head of State (Naczelnik Państwa, the title assumed by Piłsudski at the time) leaving his ceremonial offices with a retinue of staff to take the tribune via a set of special stairs. The scheme was never realised (much to the relief of present-day conservators who point to the destruction it would have entailed). In 1923, Wawel Castle was nominated as an official residence of the President, a decision which presented Szyszko-Bohusz with an opportunity — if not always the funds — to restore 'splendour'. Restoration sometimes meant repatriation. This was the case of the sixteenth-century Jagiellonian tapestries which had been plundered during the partition of Poland and only returned from Russia as a condition of the Treaty of Riga signed at the end of the Soviet-Polish War.

10 Text reproduced as an illustration in *Wawel narodowi przywrócony. Odzyskanie zamku i jego odnowa, 1905–1939*, exh. cat., Kraków: Zamek Królewski na Wawelu, 2005, p. 173.

▼ Ceiling and frieze in the antechamber of the Envoys' Room at Wawel Royal Castle, Kraków, 1927. National Digital Archives, Poland

But more often, the historic furnishings of the ceremonial spaces of Wawel Castle were lost, and only the fixed decoration — celebrated frescoes and ornamental ceilings — could be restored. In fact, in the early 1930s, Szyszko-Bohusz proposed that each of the restored rooms be given an association with different branches of the army.[11] Each would bear the arms and insignia of a division. Although his tribute to Polish militarism was not realised, Szyszko-Bohusz entered into correspondence with the military authorities seeking funds and support.

Szyszko-Bohusz's contributions to the Piłsudski cult usually took on a rather more austere tone than many of the popular and even kitsch outpourings of enthusiasm for the Marshal. At the end of the 1920s, for instance, he designed a number of sarcophagi and crypts for grand, public funerals organised by the Sanation (Sanacja) regime. His contribution was to present an austere conclusion to events which involved spectacular and usually highly sentimental displays of national unity. The first of these was the interment of the remains of Juliusz Słowacki in the Crypt of National Bards alongside Adam Mickiewicz in Wawel in 1927, after a long and elaborate ritual which started in the grave in Paris where he had been buried in 1849. In Paris, the coffin was transported in a carriage dressed with ornamental silks and gilded ornament followed by a long trailing procession of dignitaries to L'Église de la Madeleine. Arriving in Gdynia after being transported by navy ship, Słowacki's coffin sailed down the Vistula high on the prow of a paddle steamer to Warsaw, where it was taken to the city's cathedral on a towering bier pulled by eight horses. Then on it went to Kraków by train. Ornamental coins were minted and special editions of newspapers and magazines were published to record this journey and the committal in Wawel. This mournful national theatre far outstripped the elaborate ritual staged for Mickiewicz's remains interred in the same crypt in 1890, 45 years after his death in Istanbul (as described above). This was, after all, effectively a state funeral organised by the Polish Republic, a point which Piłsudski made forcefully in his oration over the coffin. Addressing the pall bearers, all legionnaires, he said,

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[11] See Hanna Billik, Zdzisława Chojnacka, Agnieszka Janczyk, 'Wawel narodowi przywrócony: obchody 100-lecia powrotu Wawelu do Polski', *Muzealnictwo*, no. 46, 2005, p. 67.

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▶ The General Józef Bem Mausoleum, design: Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, 1929, Tarnów, Poland. National Digital Archives, Poland


BEM APÓ

'Gentlemen, in the name of the government of Poland, I bid you carry the coffin of Juliusz Słowacki into the royal crypt, for he was the peer of kings'.[12] Szyszko-Bohusz's primary role in this national event was to alter the crypt to accommodate the sarcophagus that he had designed. Słowacki was laid to rest within a massive block of black Krzeszowice marble with a cross on its top and a silver laurel wreath inscribed with his name at its end.

Rather more remarkable in terms of design was Szyszko-Bohusz's setting for a sarcophagus bearing the remains of another 19th century hero, Józef Bem. Another Polish nationalist whose life had been garlanded with myth, he was renowned as a soldier who survived terrible odds on the battlefield during the 1830 November Uprising and the Hungarian Revolution of 1848. In fact, he only escaped his final battle at Segesvár (today Sighişoara, Romania) in 1848 by feigning death. He fled to the Ottoman Empire where he converted to Islam and served as the governor of Aleppo, until he succumbed to malaria in 1850 and was buried in a Muslim cemetery. In 1929, the Committee for the Return to the Country of the Remains of General Bem — which had Piłsudski as its honorary patron — arranged for the relics of this secular saint to be transported from his dusty grave in Aleppo to his birthplace in Tarnów. The slow-moving entourage paused at symbolic points en route, including the National Museum in Budapest and, inevitably, the large courtyard at Wawel Castle, where his coffin was displayed to the public. In both places, large crowds gathered in sombre rituals of commemoration.

Commissioned by the Mayor of Tarnów, Szyszko-Bohusz arranged six tall Corinthian columns on a platform at the centre of a small lake in a picturesque city park. These were to support a stone sarcophagus containing the General's coffin, as well as urns filled with soil gathered at the sites of his battles and in Hungarian provinces.[13] Eight stone spheres connected by chains symbolise, in a rather literal fashion, cannon balls around the base

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[12] On this event and for an interpretation of Piłsudski's phrase, see Patrice M. Dąbrowska, '"Equal to the Kings"? Viewing Wawel Burials of the Interwar Period', *Centropa*, vol. XII, no. 1, January 2012, pp. 6–19.

[13] The Hungarian regions included those which had been given to Romania according to the Treaty of Trianon of 1920, making the monument also one to Hungarian irredentism.

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▶ Coffin with Józef Piłsudski's body, St. Leonard's Crypt, Wawel Cathedral, Kraków, 1935. National Digital Archives, Poland

of this 12-metre high structure. Whilst precedents for the Bem Mausoleum can be found in the elevated sarcophagi in Greek and Roman necropolises, Szyszko-Bohusz's design owed less to archaeology than to poetry. Elevated and impassive, the design was a metaphor in stone for the lofty values of sacrifice and valour.

The most important event in the Piłsudski cult was, inevitably, that of the funeral of its principal figure, the Marshal himself. A controversial affair which drew the regime and the cardinal at Wawel into sharp disagreement about the entombment of a former socialist and solider in the resting place of kings, Piłsudski's funeral took place there in May 1935. His body was embalmed and displayed with his sabre, his *maciejówka* (cap), and other ceremonial symbols of rank in a glass coffin. Initially his coffin was placed in the St. Leonard crypt, alongside the tombs of King Jan III Sobieski and Kościuszko. This could not be a permanent arrangement. The Marshal's body had not been well preserved and the journey from Warsaw to Wawel — not least on the bumpy cobbles of Kraków — had damaged the air-tight seal of the glass coffin: in consequence, Piłsudski's body began to deteriorate.[14] The coffin was replaced within months by another designed by sculptor Jan Szczepkowski, albeit without great success: the body continued to decay. Moreover, the crypt itself was inadequate. It was damp and could not accommodate another sarcophagus or the large numbers of pilgrims. These often arrived in festive mood, much to the displeasure of the archbishop.

One solution — agreed by all parties — was to extend the Romanesque crypt under the Tower of Silver Bells. This was acceptable to the Church because it allowed for a separate entrance for the secular pilgrims who wanted to pay homage to the Marshal. Szyszko-Bohusz set to work. His early schemes included an entrance in the form of a Gothic temple capped with a figure of a Hussar on horseback. The entrance that was actually constructed — completed in 1937 — is far less theatrical. A simple structure, it features elements which belong to the vocabulary of classical architecture — Corinthian capitals and balustrades, as well as a Latin inscription (*Corpora dormiunt, vigilant animae* [Bodies sleep — souls keep vigil])

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[14] For a detailed discussion of the treatment of Piłsudski's body after his death see Bogusław Kwiatkowski, *Mumie. Władcy, święci, tyrani*, Warsaw: Iskry, 2005.

▶ Canopy over the entrance to Marshal Józef Piłsudski's burial crypt under the Silver Bells Tower at Wawel Hill, Kraków, 1937. National Digital Archives, Poland

— but Szyszko-Bohusz composed them in an idiosyncratic fashion. The columns do not seem to perform their conventional load-bearing function: the massive slab fashioned from copper and bronze overhead sits on hidden posts. It seems to float above the descending stairs, as if denying gravity. The vertical lines of the columns continue 'through' the slab into six finials in the form of military crosses. Like his contemporary Jože Plečnik, responsible for the renovation of Prague Castle between 1920 and 1934, Szyszko-Bohusz's approach to classicism was expressive and even idiosyncratic. In this relatively free addition to the historic fabric of the cathedral, Szyszko-Bohusz expressed an answer to the question which he had asked — somewhat rhetorically — twenty years earlier: 'Should our conservator not be, above all, an artist? In the restoration of a building, should he not care [most] for that which can for all times act as a memorial of our culture and art?'[15]

So what was being remembered in this small structure? The new entrance to the crypt — usually described as a baldachin in reference to the cloth of state which covered royal thrones and the beds of kings in the European tradition — marked Piłsudski's status as a victor.[16] It was fashioned from the trophies of war. The stonework was recycled from sections of granite plinth which had supported a bronze sculpture of Otto von Bismarck in Poznań until 1918.[17] The six nephrite columns of Szyszko-Bohusz's structure were salvaged from the St. Alexander Nevsky orthodox cathedral in Warsaw. Dedicated by the Russians to pro-tsarist Poles who had been executed by insurgents during the January Uprising in 1863 and a clear demonstration of Russian power, the cathedral had been built between 1894 and 1912 only to be dynamited, after much discussion and a few protests, in 1924–26.[18]

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[15] Szyszko-Bohusz cited by Mieczysław Wallis, *Lata nauki i mistrzostwa Stanisława Noakowskiego,* Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1971, p. 266.

[16] See Grzegorz Gill, 'Baldachim wawelski symbolem odrodzonej Rzeczypospolitej w 1918 r.', *Sowiniec*, no. 34/35, 2009, pp. 91–94.

[17] Witold Molik, '"Straż nad Wartą". Pomnik Bismarcka w Poznaniu (1903–1919)', *Kronika Miasta Poznania*, no. 2, 2001, pp. 91–108.

[18] See Piotr Paszkiewicz, *Pod berłem Romanowów, Sztuka rosyjska w Warszawie 1815–1915,* Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki PAN, 1991, pp. 114–37.

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▶ **top:** Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, design of the southern elevation of the Józef Piłsudski Legionnaires House in Kraków, 1932. Published in *Architekt*, no. 4, 1932 **bottom:** The Józef Piłsudski Legionnaires House, design: Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, 1934–36, Kraków. National Digital Archives, Poland

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The octagonal bases and the Corinthian capitals of the columns were recast from Austrian guns. The symbolism of salvage was clear: no longer serving Poland's enemies, they were now doing duty to the great unifier, the Marshal. In the case of the nephrite columns, a further — perhaps more private — symbolism was at work too. The orthodox cathedral in Warsaw from which they came had been designed by Szyszko-Bohusz's teacher in St. Petersburg before the First World War, Leon Benois. This expression of patriotism was also, perhaps, one of patricide.

In fashioning the crypt from the remains of Poland's enemies, Szyszko-Bohusz made a clear reference to classical antiquity and, in particular, to the idea of the trophy in ancient Greece and Rome, where the bloodied weapons of a vanquished army would be stacked to form a victory monument. But it is striking that whilst the recycled materials from which the entrance to the crypt was made might be well described as 'spolia', they bore no signs of their earlier lives. As Richard Brilliant has written, 'Spoliation involves shifting "presence" forward and is most effective when memory traces can be perceived or, at least, some awareness of the transgressive act of appropriation can be appreciated.'[19] In other words, the emotional or associative effects of spoliation are heightened when the marks or wounds of dissection are visible. By contrast, the entrance to the crypt draws its emotional effects from absence: the small canopied structure framed an empty space symbolising the loss of the Marshal.

Even in this spare, classical form, the entrance to the crypt under the Tower of Silver Bells was a historical frame for a historic figure in a historical setting. Reminiscences of the baldachin were also found, perhaps unexpectedly, in the double-height entrances that Szyszko-Bohusz favoured in a number of his modernist schemes of the 1930s. The Józef Piłsudski Legionnaires House in Oleandry in Kraków is a case in point. First conceived at the First Congress of Legionnaires in 1922, the building was to provide a headquarters for the Association of Polish Legions in peacetime. It was also to be home to a Museum of Independence containing relics and documents testifying to the role played by Polish soldiers in the struggle for independence. In 1927, the city authorities offered up a plot of land. A highly symbolic site, this had been the point from where the newly-formed First 'Cadre' Company (I Kompania Kadrowa), the nucleus of the Polish Legions, set out to engage Russian forces in August 1914. The men had belonged to patriotic sports and rifle clubs. Standing on the grass of the Wisła football

19 Richard Brilliant, 'Authenticity and Alienation' in *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine*, ed. Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2001, p. 169.

pitch, Piłsudski famously announced their commission: 'Everyone that is gathered here: you are Polish soldiers.'[20]

Viewed today, the Józef Piłsudski Legionnaires House looks perhaps more like the abstract architectural compositions of the interwar avant-garde than Szyszko-Bohusz and his co-designer, architect Stefan Strojek, intended. A central, five-story vertical block is connected to a four-story block set back from the street line. The staggered footprint and stepped profile, combined with a high canopy that turns the corner of the building, lends it a dynamic form. The long windows in the stairwell and a glass-walled service unit breaking the roofline add transparency, particularly when lit at night. The building is, however, incomplete. It is only the south-eastern corner of what was planned to be a much larger complex. In Szyszko-Bohusz and Strojek's design, three wings arranged around a courtyard were to be connected by an elevated, double-height arcade. Whilst the design was coded with modernist elements, most obviously the strip windows and flat roof, the full scheme was far more conventional, even retrospective in form. It was to have the axial symmetrical arrangement of classical Greek temples like the Pergamon Altar (which in 1930 had been reopened to the public in Berlin after many years of closure) or even a gymnasium, the training ground for competitors in Greek games and the meeting place of poets. Other closer-to-home precedents of this compositional form include the neoclassical Saxon Palace in Warsaw (remodeled by Adam Idźkowski, 1839–42) with an imposing colonnade accommodating the grave of the unknown soldier from 1925, perhaps the most important of all the public monuments in inter-war Poland. These allusions emphasised the self-image of the Legionnaires as a brotherhood of warrior-poets whose loyalty to the state was incontestable. Occupying the site of a mythical event marking the 'call to arms', but dressed in the architectural language of the present, the Józef Piłsudski Legionnaires House pressed the Legion's claims to contemporary relevance (claims which were to be put to the test in September 1939).

'Piłsudskism' — with its strong attachment to the figure of the powerful leader, and valorisation of military valour and heroic death, as well as its belief in the authority of the state — has been compared to Italian Fascism.[21] To this one might add, that Il Duce — like the Sanation regime in Poland — was undecided on matters of architectural style.[22] Without

20 Piłsudski cited by Andrzej Garlicki, *U źródeł obozu belwederskiego,* Warsaw: PWN, 1983, p. 249.

21 See, for instance, Leon Trotsky, 'Pilsudskism, Fascism, and the Character of Our Epoch' (4 August, 1932), in *Writings of Leon Trotsky. Supplement (1929–33)*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979.

22 Richard A. Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture 1890–1949,* Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1991, pp. 387–89.

a clear lead, modernists and traditionalists in Italy vied for influence. Whilst some promoted conservative, neoclassical styles as a way of reviving the splendour of ancient Rome (*Romanità*), others promoted modernism as the means to represent Italy as a modern industrial state.[23] Even the most ambitious of the 'rationalists' — as Italian modernists were known, made reference to tradition in an effort to draw on *italianità* (*Italianness*).[24] Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del Fascio in Como (1932–34), the best-known building conceived by a member of the group, is a case in point. His design for the local party headquarters was based on the play of volumes and voids, reflections and screens, within a carefully proportioned, regular framework of blank white walls, slender columns and floors. The starkly modernist and abstract character of this white cube was undeniable. But the building also struck ideologically resonant notes of tradition: the ground plan — organised around a courtyard under glass — made reference to the spatial traditions of the palazzo as did the use of marble facings. With its underlying classicism, Szyszko-Bohusz's scheme for the Józef Piłsudski Legionnaires House might well be understood as a near cousin of Terragni's Casa del Fascio.

Polish architectural writers were keen to find parallels between Fascist Italy and their homeland in the 1930s. Buildings like the Józef Piłsudski House in Kraków — one example of many such 'hybrid' designs which sought to harmonise tradition with modernity in the 1930s — seem to lend weight to these claims of kinship. But perhaps some limits need to be placed on this analogy. Few schemes as bizarre as those created in Italy were realised in Poland. Consider, for instance, the Foro Mussolini, a classical sports stadium in Rome initiated in 1928, which was ornamented with bold antique mosaics in the Roman manner depicting a motorised truck carrying flag-waving *squadistri*, paramilitary gangs associated with the struggle for power at the beginning of the 1920s. Moreover, the turn to monumentalism was common across Europe and across ideologies.

Jan Parandowski argued for a more subtle understanding of Poland's relationship with Italy or, more precisely, what he called *łacińskość* (which might be translated as Latinity), in an essay with the marvellously capricious title, 'Poland Lies on the Mediterranean Sea' at the end of the 1930s.[25]

23 Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, pp. 90–99.

24 Diane Y. Ghirardo, 'Italian Architects and Fascist Politics: An Evaluation of the Rationalist Role in Regime Building', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 39, no. 2, May 1980, p. 188.

25 Jan Parandowski, 'Polska leży nad morzem śródziemnym', *Arkady*, vol. V, no. 3, March 1939, pp. 113–16.

For Parandowski, a classicist and literary critic, the Romantic period was a kind of long interregnum:

> Romanticism lasted longer in us than anywhere else, because it was more profuse, more wide-ranging and with loftier content. Our entire 19th century was, in fact, Romantic. Józef Piłsudski, a steel-willed man of action, was a Romantic. The works of Juliusz Słowacki, second only to Mickiewicz as our Romantic leader, accompanied Piłsudski throughout his life. His [Słowacki's] verses were . . . quoted in his daily commands.[26]

But this was not the characteristic flattery of the cult. According to Parandowski, Romanticism had served its purpose, but it had also obscured deeper structures of connection with European culture. This was to be found in the unconsciousness of language. In its grammar and orthography, Polish is a Latinate language. Recognition of this fact could be a step in the recovery of deep and long traditions that connected the Second Polish Republic with the first, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów), and the age of humanists like Jan Kochanowski. Perhaps, the echoes of Szyszko-Bohusz's antiquarianism can be heard here. His various schemes on Wawel — the presidential interiors, the Pantheon project and the entrance to the crypt containing Piłsudski's body, as well as the Bem Mausoleum in Tarnów and his modernist works — were united by an underlying classical order. They formed both his contribution to the Piłsudski cult and, in their severe and idiosyncratic style, his attempt to discipline it.

This text is an expanded version of David Crowley's essay featured in the catalogue *Reaction to Modernism. The Architecture of Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz*, Kraków: Institute of Architecture, National Museum in Kraków, 2013

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[26] Ibid.

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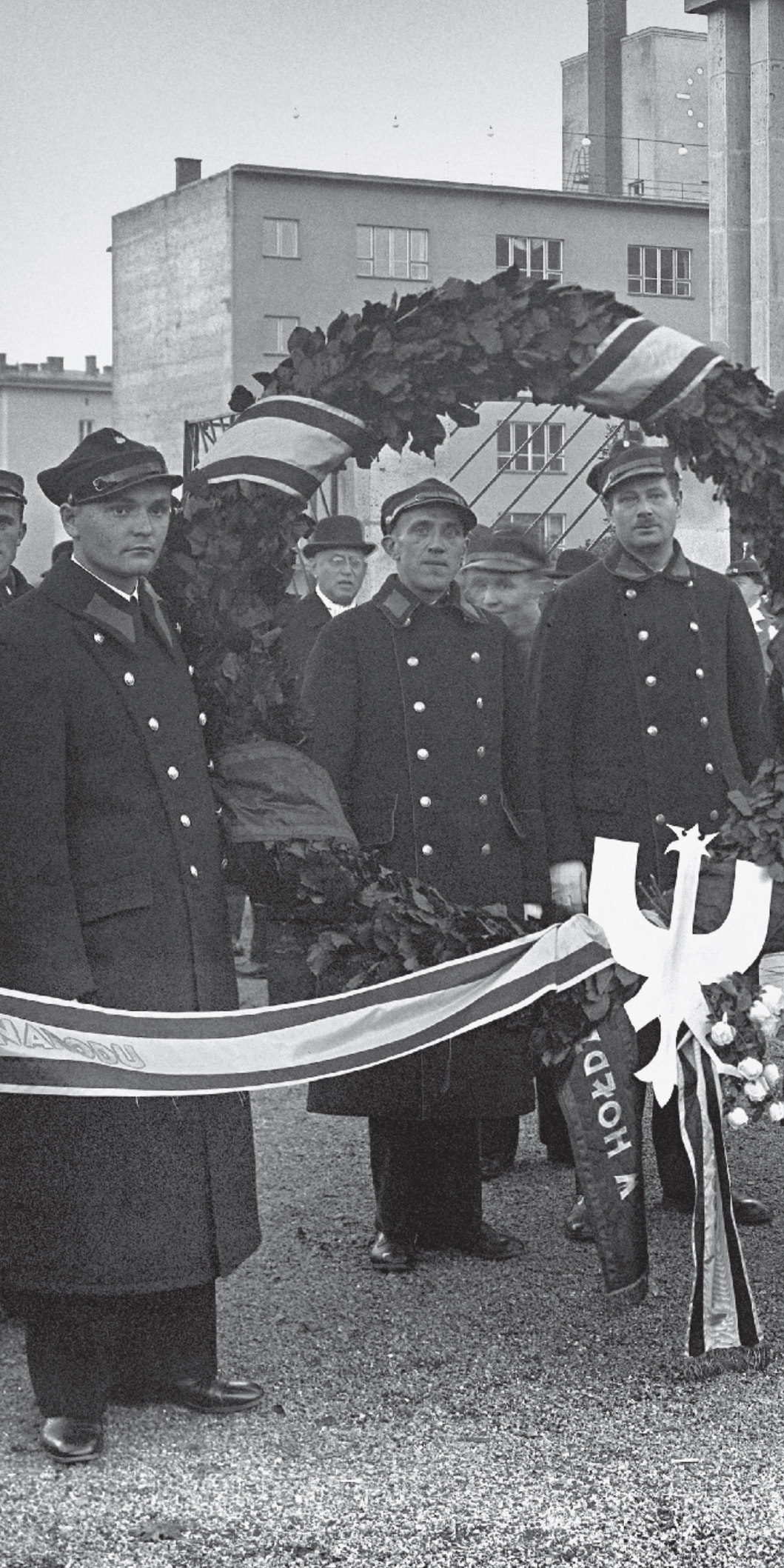
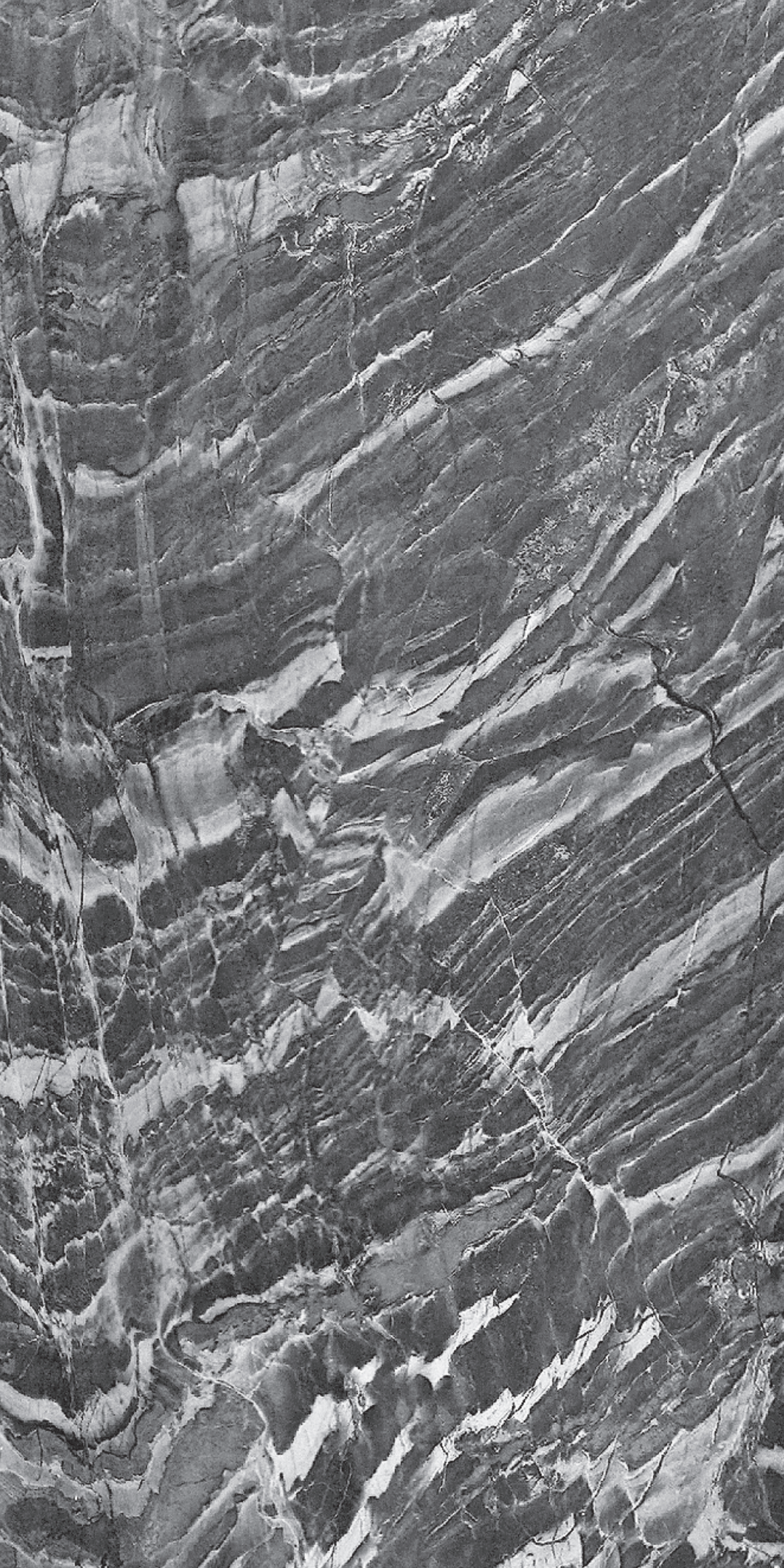
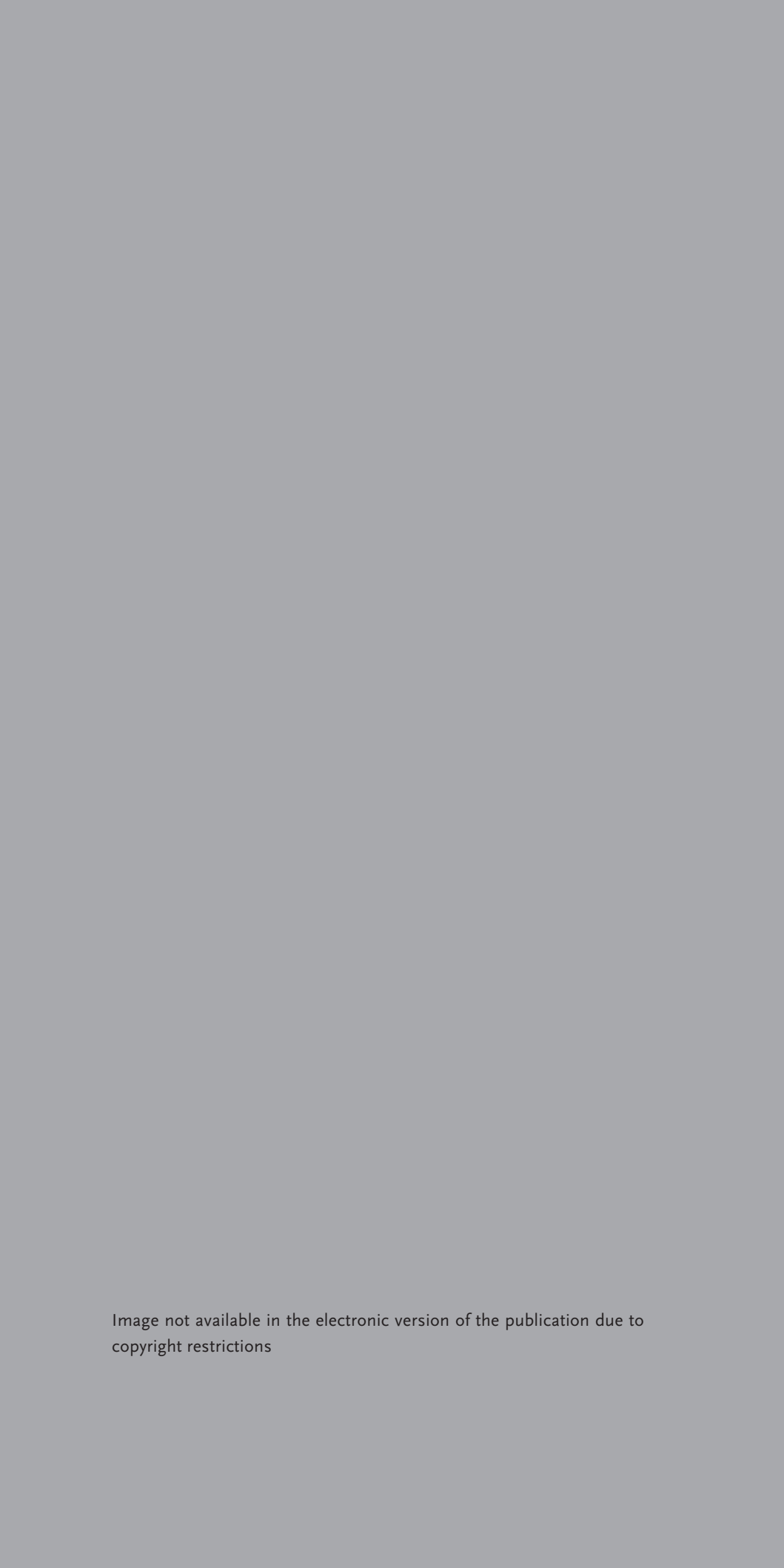
- ▼ All Souls' Day tribute to Marshal Józef Piłsudski in front of the Legionnaires House, Kraków, 1935. National Digital Archives, Poland
- ▼ pp. 84–85: Marble pattern, canopy over the entrance to Marshal Józef Piłsudski's burial crypt under the Silver Bells Tower at Wawel Hill, Kraków. Photomontage by PROPS, CC BY-SA 3.0
- ▼ p. 86: The Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego building at Aleje Jerozolimskie covered with a pall following Marshal Józef Piłsudski's death, Warsaw, 1935. Photo published in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 2, 1935




MIASTO KRAKÓW, ŚWIĘTO UMARŁYC

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Dariusz Czaja

The Polish Theatre of Death

1.

History is not just politics. Nor can it be reduced to isolated events threaded on a cause-and-effect string. The past is comprised not only of the most evident and most often described 'froth of events', but also of a vast sphere of elusive prejudices, opinions, images and phantasms. This is everything that historiography (from the *nouvelle histoire* camp) and cultural anthropology (after the lesson of Roland Barthes's *Mythologies*) has come to refer to as collective mythology. It is precisely the latter that forms the space of 'long duration', the real substrate which the political element will build itself upon.

If we look at the history of Poland of the last two hundred years (and a few — let us count from the date of the Third Partition [1795]) from the perspective of the history of mentality, if we examine the history of the Poles in the context of collective psychology, then in this panoramic picture we will easily identify a common element: the figure, or topos, of death. The Polish history of the last two centuries carries a deadly mark. First of all, of the real death of real people buried in real cemeteries. Over the years, however, a solid ideological-symbolic superstructure has been erected upon these real corpses.

There is no doubt, it seems, that a black thread of mourning runs deeply through the tissue of Polish life. This is true in many respects. From the specifically Polish model of Catholicism (strongly emphasising the theme of the crucified Christ), through public-space practices (the funerals of famous artists and political leaders, which become patriotic spectacles), to works of art (Polish theatre filled with the spirits of the dead, as is the related film tradition). Death may be a master from Germany but, as it turns out, he feels at home in Poland too. For over two centuries now it has been an indispensable component of our symbolic equipment, an ideational

foundation of the Polish collective imagination. Death: a black flag under which — like under a wide umbrella — we can all take shelter.

Experienced, represented and enacted, death occupies a central position in the Polish mythology of the last two centuries. At the same time, mythology — as I understand it here — does not mean fiction, untruth, or fancy. Although woven with beliefs and imaginings, it lives a life that is very much real. Empirically unobservable, it nonetheless exercises real power over the thinking and behaviour of those who believe in it.

2.

In a note to Part II of his poetic drama, *Forefathers' Eve* (*Dziady*), Adam Mickiewicz[1] felt obliged to explain the strange title: 'Forefathers' Eve is the name of a festival still celebrated among the common folk in many districts of Lithuania, Prussia, and Courland, in memory of forefathers, that is, generally, dead ancestors'. Since the clergy had been trying to root out the custom, he added, 'folk celebrate the forefathers secretly in chapels or in empty houses not far from the graveyard'.[2] Mickiewicz had the right intuition: the 'spirit of Polishness' lives in the cemetery or nearby. In his mega-drama, the poet recognised the national community's needs and dressed them in theatrical form. In doing so, he furnished the Polish consciousness (and unconsciousness) with a framework that would function for a long time to come, codifying the rules of the national and patriotic game.

Whether we know it or not, want it or not, and like it or not, we all derive from *Forefathers' Eve* and Forefathers' Eve. From the play and from the ritual. This is where our modern founding myth originates from. It is perhaps not surprising that the stateless Poland of the 19th-century (with an extension up to 1918) found such a firm rootedness in the Romantic

1 Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), Poland's greatest Romantic poet, one of the 'Three Bards' (alongside Juliusz Słowacki and Zygmunt Krasiński) of Polish Romantic literature. For two centuries now, Mickiewicz's works have been at the centre of the Polish literary canon, forming also the fundamental core of our symbolic imagination. Interestingly, his death, burial and corpse were quickly integrated into Polish patriotic mythology; on Mickiewicz's corpse and its 'afterlife' in the Polish symbolic universe, cf. Stanisław Rosiek, *Zwłoki Mickiewicza. Próba nekrografii poety*, Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 1997.

2 Mickiewicz's note to *Dziady, Part II* quoted in notes to idem, *Pan Tadeusz or The Last Foray in Lithuania: A Story of Life Among Polish Gentlefolk in the Years 1811 and 1812 in Twelve Books*, trans. George Rapall Noyes, 1917, pp. 317–18, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/28240/28240-pdf.pdf (accessed 29 March 2014).

drama and the November festival of the dead. Or that the communion of the living and the dead became a national ritual, that the language of corpses appealed to the Poles to strongly. What *is* surprising, however, is that the state's rebirth, two world wars, the communist ideology, and — as we shall see — capitalist dogmatics have debunked the myth only slightly. We continue to feel good in the theatrical gesture of communing with the dead and in the celebration of Zaduszki [All Saints' Day]. A past filled with corpses and ghosts is not a strange land for us; on the contrary, this is where we feel very much at home.

It is significant that, for the Polish consciousness, the post-war stagings of *Forefathers' Eve* were something more than just a routine item of theatre repertoire. Instead, they became a national cause. This was not just theatre; it was — the public felt — a dramatisation of life, our life. The adaptations staged by Swinarski, Dejmek or Grzegorzewski always became a curiously sensitive barometer of the Polish mentality; we viewed and interpreted them, but they also viewed and interpreted us. The same applies to *Sorcery* (*Gusła*), an adaptation directed by Włodzimierz Staniewski with the Gardzienice Theatre, which distilled — via Mickiewicz's text — the spiritual source of Polishness.[3] And what were Tadeusz Kantor's *The Dead Class*, *Wielopole, Wielopole* or *I Shall Never Return*, if not a Jewish variation on the theme of summoning the dead and raising ghosts? Critic Jan Kott wrote thus about a performance of the latter: 'Shortly before the end of the spectacle, actors and mannequins sit jam-packed, as if pasted into each other, on stacked tables and stools. The priest calls the dead by their names. For the last time Kantor performs his Forefathers' Eve'.[4]

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[3] Kazimierz Dejmek's (1967), Konrad Swinarski's (1973), Włodzimierz Staniewski's (1981), and Jerzy Grzegorzewski's (1987, 1995) were the most successful — artistically and in terms of their mythmaking impact — adaptations of *Forefathers' Eve* in post-war Polish history. On their historical context and staging details, cf. *Dziady. Od Wyspiańskiego do Grzegorzewskiego*, ed. Tadeusz Kornaś and Grzegorz Niziołek, Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 1999.

[4] Jan Kott, *Kadysz. Strony o Tadeuszu Kantorze*, Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2005, pp. 26–27.

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▼ Interior view, Room of Honour, Polish Pavilion, World Expo, Paris, 1937, design: Bogdan Pniewski, Stanisław Brukalski, 1936–37. National Digital Archives, Poland

And Hallowmas, the annual Triduum of All Hallows on 31st October–2nd November? Known informally in Poland as the 'Feast of the Dead', it often becomes a keystone of familial and national identity, producing — whatever the degree of our religiousness — a sense of mysterious intimacy. Asked in the early 1990s about his perception of Poland, the illustrator Andrzej Dudziński, long based in New York City, replied:

> You know, it recalls visits to Grandma's. Those visits were always connected with Hallowmas — I attended the festival here this year and was suddenly reminded what it meant and how important it was. I remember we'd go to Grandma's, to Tczew, and visit the graves there. . . . This is what Poland is for me. It is the Feast of the Dead that we fled from: from those graves.[5]

Hardly a unique statement, many of us will identify with Dudziński's words: Poland as a cemetery, a community, stretched in time and space, of the living and the dead.

Collective thought defines the festive hierarchy unto its own image and likeness, often ignoring official religious dogmas. Watching the 'mass levy' Poles undertake during Hallowmas, one could venture to say that it is these two days — All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day — that we celebrate as the most important Catholic holidays of the year. Here again, as in Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve*, a pagan substrate shows through the Christian outer layer. Writer Andrzej Stasiuk commented aptly on this following his visit to the monumental Basilica of Our Lady in Licheń[6] ('the Sagrada Familia of the East, the Taj Mahal of my homeland'): 'No God has ever been needed here, just dozens, hundreds of saints, floating in the air like ghosts, plus their goddess. Bones under the ground, spirits above'.[7]

Looking at the constant Polish re-living, remembering, and re-creating of death in life and art, one is tempted to think that perhaps the grave or coffin would be more fitting as the national emblem than the eagle . . .

5 'Okno do środka. Rozmowa z Andrzejem Dudzińskim', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 1, 1992, p. 10.

6 The Basilica of Our Lady of Sorrows, Queen of Poland in Licheń Stary (Wielkopolska province) is one of the major centres of the Marian cult in Poland. A huge structure, its construction was started in the mid-1990s and the basilica was officially consecrated in 2004. For an ethnographic description and a discussion of the basilica's aesthetic values, cf. Ewa Klekot, 'Święte obrazki, Licheń i sąd smaku', *Konteksty*, no. 1/2, 2002, pp. 117–19.

7 Andrzej Stasiuk, *Dziennik pisany później*, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2010, p. 150.

In any case, viewed from a mythological perspective (only cursorily outlined here), Poland turns out to be a vast necropolis: permanent mourning becomes our way of life and our mental history turns thus into necrography.

3.

The paradigm of the Romantic re-living of death and of placing it at the centre of community life continues to rule Poles' hearts and minds. We continue to suffer from a native version, inculcated by the great Romantic poets, of *sein zum Tode*. Death is our national totem. Just as in the past, we continue to gather around it during special moments.

In the ritual and symbolic space opened up by Mickiewicz's drama and the religious festival it is named after are contained many events belonging to contemporary public life. The theatre of the feast of the dead has long enjoyed a privileged position in Poland. It is evoked — semi-consciously — on the successive anniversaries of lost uprisings and battles. It forms an appropriate context for their commemoration. It is also a convenient and — an important aspect — a performatively effective model of re-living history. Theatre critic Jacek Dobrowolski wrote insightfully about the enduring character of this model of participating in the celebration of historical defeats:

> We bring the ashes of those who fed Mother Poland with their blood from the battlefields to the ecclesiastical and national sanctuaries, worshipping them like relics of Christian martyrs and caring for them more than we care for our fellow man. Do we find greater satisfaction in communing with the dead during the reading of the roll of honour than in getting to know the living and interacting with them? We relish the role of the great mourners, bearing the testimony of our masochistic and martyrological narcissism and loving our suffering rather than trying to discover a truth that would go beyond it. The cult of the suffering Christ is more important for us than Resurrection, and we prefer to celebrate national defeats rather than victories.[8]

8 Jacek Dobrowolski, 'Dziady, czyli nie wszystko. Próba rekonstrukcji polskiego Dionizosa', *Teatr*, no. 11, 2000.

A rare opportunity to witness the persistence of this model of reacting to traumatic national events was created by the crash of the presidential plane near Smolensk in April 2010. Stretching for weeks (and then for months), the sequence of ritual gestures took us smoothly from a Vilnius-Kaunas[9] version of Forefathers' Eve to a Smolensk one. From beneath the thin fabric of modernity showed through, time and again, an underlayer of Romanticism. It could be noticed in the particular rhetorics of the time of mourning, in street reactions (the rallies under a cross erected in front of the Presidential Palace in Warsaw[10]), in the funerals of the victims, and, in particular, in the course and circumstances of the burial of the presidential couple at the Wawel Cathedral in Kraków. Watching all these events, it was difficult to resist the impression that the 19th century had never ended . . .

Political controversies notwithstanding, in the ideational and symbolic background of the burial of President Lech Kaczyński and his wife, Maria Kaczyńska, were the other great funerals of the last two centuries: the transfer of Adam Mickiewicz's remains from the Montmorency Cemetery near Paris to the Wawel Cathedral (1890), the interment of Juliusz Słowacki's

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[9] The II and IV parts of Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* were written in Vilnius and Kaunas, hence the literary-historical term.

[10] The wooden cross in front of the Presidential Palace at Krakowskie Przedmieście Street in Warsaw was erected by Boy Scouts, shortly after the news of the presidential plane's crash. Originally considered a substitute memorial for the victims, it then became their substitute grave. With time, however, the site became a stage for spectacular 'struggles over the cross', the arena of a fundamental ideological dispute between the 'defenders of the cross' and its 'opponents'. As a chronicler of those events wrote, 'In effect, the most important was the performance that took place: instead of a debate about the causes of the crash and the best way of commemorating its victims, a war broke out on Krakowskie Przedmieście Street at the height of a hot summer, a holy, aerial war with the cross over our nationhood, over the future of Poland, the Church, and the world. A political dispute was replaced by a national drama, once again presented not on a national stage but in the street.' Dariusz Kosiński, *Teatra polskie. Rok katastrofy*, Kraków: Znak, 2013, p. 235.

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▶ Polish Legionnaires Mausoleum, design: Juliusz Kłos, 1932, Kalisz, Poland. National Digital Archives, Poland


CZEŚĆ BOJOWNIKOM O WOLNOŚĆ

ashes[11] in a Wawel crypt (1927), and the burial of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, also at the Wawel Cathedral (1935). As in all those cases, the funeral of the presidential couple became a grandiloquent *theatrum* of national mourning, not only reviving Romantic rhetorics, but also evoking traditional Polish funeral ceremonies of the pre-modern era — the large-scale mise-en-scènes known as *pompa funebris*. Characteristically, the tragic death of the presidential couple had to be complemented ritually, and the ritual's scenario replayed sequences familiar from the past. As Dariusz Kosiński, a chronicler of the Smolensk performance, wrote:

> Once it had been decided that the president and his entourage were national heroes, and their death led to mass-scale dramatic actions, the whole cycle had to find a finale in an act of a properly solemn character, surpassing everything that had been done before and, at the same time, inscribing itself in the sequence of national and ecclesiastical tradition. In this capacity, nothing could replace a monumental funeral, and the only truly monumental burial was possible at Wawel Hill.[12]

The Wawel ceremonies not only brought the national mourning to a symbolic close, but also elevated Mr. and Mrs. Kaczyński from an ordinary, human, mortal dimension to the level of heroic (or, in some versions, martyrial) immortality.

The burial of the presidential couple at the Wawel Cathedral was a consequence of the logic of the mourning drama and was intended to unify a politically divided national community. But I am not interested here in the event's political significance. What matters from the cultural perspective is something else: the funereal spectacle served the needs of the moment, dictated, as they were, by the mythological imperative of a patriotically solemn death. Here, as so many times before in the last two centuries of Polish history, it turned out that the mortal remains of great Poles do not end their existence in the grave but instead — and powerfully — become part of the symbolic universe. Freed from materiality, they begin to signify in a different order. The dead are no longer among us, but they hold reign over us. The tomb of the presidential pair has been made semiotically significant and it radiates outside. Corpses engage symbolically, exert pres-

11 Juliusz Słowacki (1809–1849), a Polish Romantic poet, considered one of the 'Three Bards' alongside Adam Mickiewicz and Zygmunt Krasiński. Author of an original philosophical system set forth in his *Genesis from the Spirit*, his work also features themes of national messianism.

12 Kosiński, p. 163.

sure, cause people to act, divide and unite. One thing is certain: the dead continue to speak to us from their 'living' grave; we need them and they need us. It is us who set in motion these dead bodies from which the souls have departed. And it is the fate of the living that is primarily at stake here.

4.

If the image of the Polish theatre of death outlined here is accurate, an important question arises: how should we think today about this overrepresentation of corpses, ghosts and phantoms in the Polish imagination? How does the Polish thanatophilia appear against the background of the future-oriented, and increasingly united and secularised Europe? It seems that there is no simple and conclusive answer to these questions. In any case, the Polish response has been greatly varied here. Whether in the press or in common thought, radically different opinions have been voiced about the seasonal ghost-raising séances, and the persistent presence of the metaphysics of death in the contemporary Polish mythology. The conflicted parties have dug into their entrenched positions, rendering any constructive debate virtually impossible. It is also worth adding that the lines of division do not overlap closely with political sympathies; rather, we are dealing with two different models of re-living history and two different notions of national memory.

The 'mythmakers' not only note the positive aspects of thinking about our present and past in terms of death (reviving the Romantic phantasm of Poland as the 'Christ of the nations', of a national history construed as permanent mourning), but actually find in such thinking a symbolic idiom of the Polish 'national character', a token of identity that distinguishes us from the mentally formatted European nations. The 'mythbusters', in turn, regard such thinking as a historical burden that needs to be shed as soon as possible; they say it is anachronistic and preserves our mentality in an indigestible martyrological marinade, while being ostentatiously out of tune with the new — future-oriented — priorities of modern Europe.

It is sometimes said that Polish political thought continues to be governed by two coffins: Roman Dmowski's[13] and Józef Piłsudski's. It is hard to say to what extent this applies today. In any case, I find more convincing the notion that the Polish collective mythology and symbolic imagination are ruled by the legacy of two other dead men: Henryk Sienkiewicz and Witold

13 Roman Dmowski (1864–1939) was a Polish politician, political writer, pro-independence activist, co-founder of the right-wing National Democracy political movement, the main ideologist of Polish nationalism.

Gombrowicz. Their names signify two antagonistic attitudes: to cheer people's hearts vs. to debunk superstitions. To reinforce vs. to deconstruct the Pole in the Pole. To preserve native anachronisms vs. to promote European modernity. Eternal trauma and infantilism vs. intellectual sobriety and maturity. These coffins carry quite different value deposits.

But the issue is more complex than that. The rigid division outlined above looks convincing on paper only. While it does reflect the general vectors of the dispute, it also generalises the positions, preventing us from appreciating their subtleties. How to escape this trap?

An interesting and thought-provoking suggestion is provided by Maria Janion, long a supporter of the notion of the continuing appeal of the Romantic paradigm in post-war Polish history. Commenting on José Ortega y Gasset's observation about the significance the past holds for the construction of individual and collective identity, she at one point says:

> Culture needs to go with its dead, we need to go with our dead, and it's an utterly fundamental awareness that they are with us. . . . I have pointed out on numerous occasions that Polish culture is a culture of mourning, renewed ceremoniously once a year, and Mickiewicz was right here when he wrote in the French preface to *Forefathers' Eve* that a link between the visible and invisible worlds, between the living and the dead, was an important aspect of Polish culture, and discussed this aspect in his Paris lectures as a characteristic feature of Slavic culture in general.[14]

Many years later, Janion will add significantly: 'To Europe — yes, but together with our dead', and will even use the phrase as the title of a book.[15]

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[14] 'Najwyższym szczęściem dzieci ziemi jest jedynie osobowość. Rozmowa z Marią Janion', *Konteksty*, no. 3/4, 1995, p. 14.

[15] Maria Janion, *Do Europy tak, ale razem z naszymi umarłymi*, Warsaw: Sic!, 2000.

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▶ **top:** Zbigniew Cybulski as Kowalski-Malinowski in *Somersault*, dir. Tadeusz Konwicki, 1965, Poland. Photo by Zbigniew Hartwig © Studio Filmowe KADR **bottom:** Jerzy Trela as Konrad, Adam Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve*, dir. Konrad Swiniarski, 1973, Stary Teatr, Kraków. Photo by Wojciech Plewiński

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These statements, made by an outstanding interpreter of Polish Romantic literature, aptly capture the essence of the problem. For what are we really talking about here? Certainly not about a simple reproduction of a martyrological cliché of Romantic origin. Already at the beginning of Poland's transformation, in the early 1990s, Janion trumpeted the twilight of the Romantic paradigm in Polish mentality. She also wrote and spoke on several occasions about the negative impact (on young people's sensitivities in particular) of the Romantic cult of victimhood and brooding over death. Criticising historical reenactments, such as the scenes from the Warsaw Uprising replayed in public spaces of the capital where 'infantile veterans meet militarised kids', she spoke about a real syndrome of 'infection with death'. Thus, Janion can hardly be suspected of succumbing, naively and slavishly, to Romantic rhetorics, and the statements quoted above can by no means be taken as a token of her adhesion to the nationalistic camp or of support for a postmodern idolatry of dying.

Janion's position is worthwhile for one fundamental reason: it distinctly demonstrates that contemporary remembrance of the dead, the powerful presence of death in the Polish imagination, is not — and certainly does not have to be — a simple and regressive repetition of history. To elaborate shortly: it seems to me that it is possible today to think about the Polish 'forefathers' and their spiritual and cultural significance without going to extremes; in other words, it is possible to go beyond the seemingly inescapable alternative outlined above. For perhaps not so much death itself is an issue here as the way it is perceived. And so, finally, one 'pro' and one 'con' with respect to the Polish *theatrum* of death.

Con: I can find no positive aspects in using, abusing and appropriating death for the purposes of martyrological-national (and actually pseudo-patriotic) spectacles and like rhetorics. Such an understanding of death stymies Polish thinking in the provincial gesture of the irrational repetition of the familiar just because it is familiar. It also results in a sense of grotesque pride in a dubious distinction. So construed, death becomes a tribal totem, holding the community in a state of permanent fixation with its own suffering. This attitude leads to a melancholic (in the Freudian sense) refusal to stop mourning and culminates in a disposition that could be called mental necrophilia.

Pro: the remembrance of death, or, more precisely, of our dead, 'our dear deceased' (including the ideologically 'inconvenient'), serves as a clear gesture of anchoring the contemporary community in older layers of culture and as such is enriching. It is, perhaps, first of all an attempt to reject the thoughtless and pointless modern ideological dogma of the primacy of the future, a dogma that sometimes assumes grotesque proportions. A sense of communion with the dead is, undoubtedly, a metaphysical notion, a belief that requires no proof. It can also become a source of private rituals. Interestingly, however, when transferred to the domain of art and realised in a grand theatrical (or filmic) fiction, the ritual of Forefathers' Eve, of summoning the spirits of the dead, ceases to be a folkloristic anachronism; it may become a powerful spiritual experience. There is ample proof of the realness of such metaphysical transference.

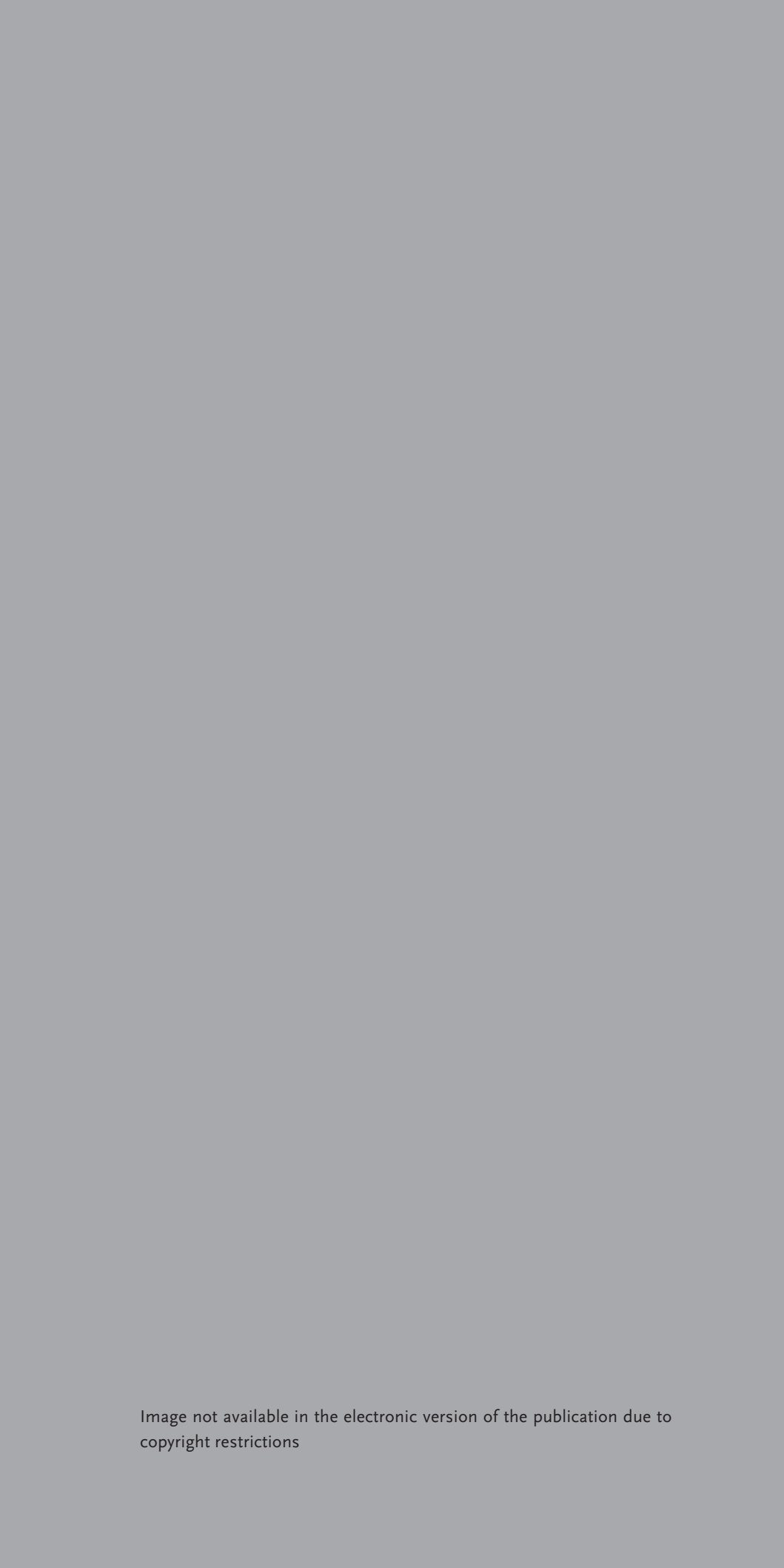
5.

I am watching a digitally remastered version of Tadeusz Konwicki's *Somersault*.[16] Zbigniew Cybulski, dressed in a leather jacket, jumps from a train (the character he plays introduces himself as Kowalski or Malinowski). He forces his way through thick brushwood to suddenly appear in a small town, a provincial Polish microcosm, strange and peculiar ('these people are not alive, they are ghosts only'), a place where the living mingle with the dead. He reminisces about the not-so-distant war, having arrived, as he says, to find his own death. This is an unusual film, hypnotic, mysterious. Seemingly distant, yet disturbingly close. Part spiritual and thanatic *Forefathers' Eve*, part oneiric and hallucinational *Wedding*.[17] A very Polish film, with a strong idiomatic stigma. War, ghosts, crosses, phantoms, death. I am at home, I am where I belong.

16 *Somersault* (1965, original title: *Salto*), written and directed by Tadeusz Konwicki, music by Wojciech Kilar. Film critic Tadeusz Sobolewski thus wrote about its surprisingly enduring appeal: '*Somersault* is the kind of cinema — or actually cinematic literature — that creates an autonomous, symbolic reality, filtered through reminiscence, myth, dream. Lit with autumn sunlight, the scenery of the dreamy town where Kowalski-Malinowski arrives resembles the kitschy landscape with swans that we see during the opening sequence. This is a synthetic Poland — Konwicki's Poland — which has something in common with the Poland of Gombrowicz and Mrożek, though it is treated differently and, as a result, absolved. . . . Here is an inert, provincial country, kind of disinherited, living in the shadow of the war, marked by crosses, filled with the toll of church bells, resisting modernisation, which is approaching in the shape of a huge industrial plant growing, ominously, just outside the orchard fence. A martyrial country, one whose martyrdom is devalued, ostentatious, one never knows when it is genuine and when feigned.' Tadeusz Sobolewski, 'Polski taniec salto', *Dwutygodnik*, no. 27, 2010.

17 *The Wedding* by Stanisław Wyspiański is a masterpiece of Polish drama. First staged in Kraków on 16th March 1901, it was inspired by the wedding of poet Lucjan Rydel with a peasant girl, Jadwiga Mikołajczykówna and their subsequent wedding reception in the village of Bronowice near Kraków. A creative continuation of Romantic drama, *The Wedding* ingenuously combines history and realism with symbolism and vision; it is considered one of the most profound attempts to describe the Polish mentality.

▼ Masthead, *Lech* magazine, design: Wacław Lipiński, published in *Lech*, no. 5, 1939, modified by Jakub Woynarowski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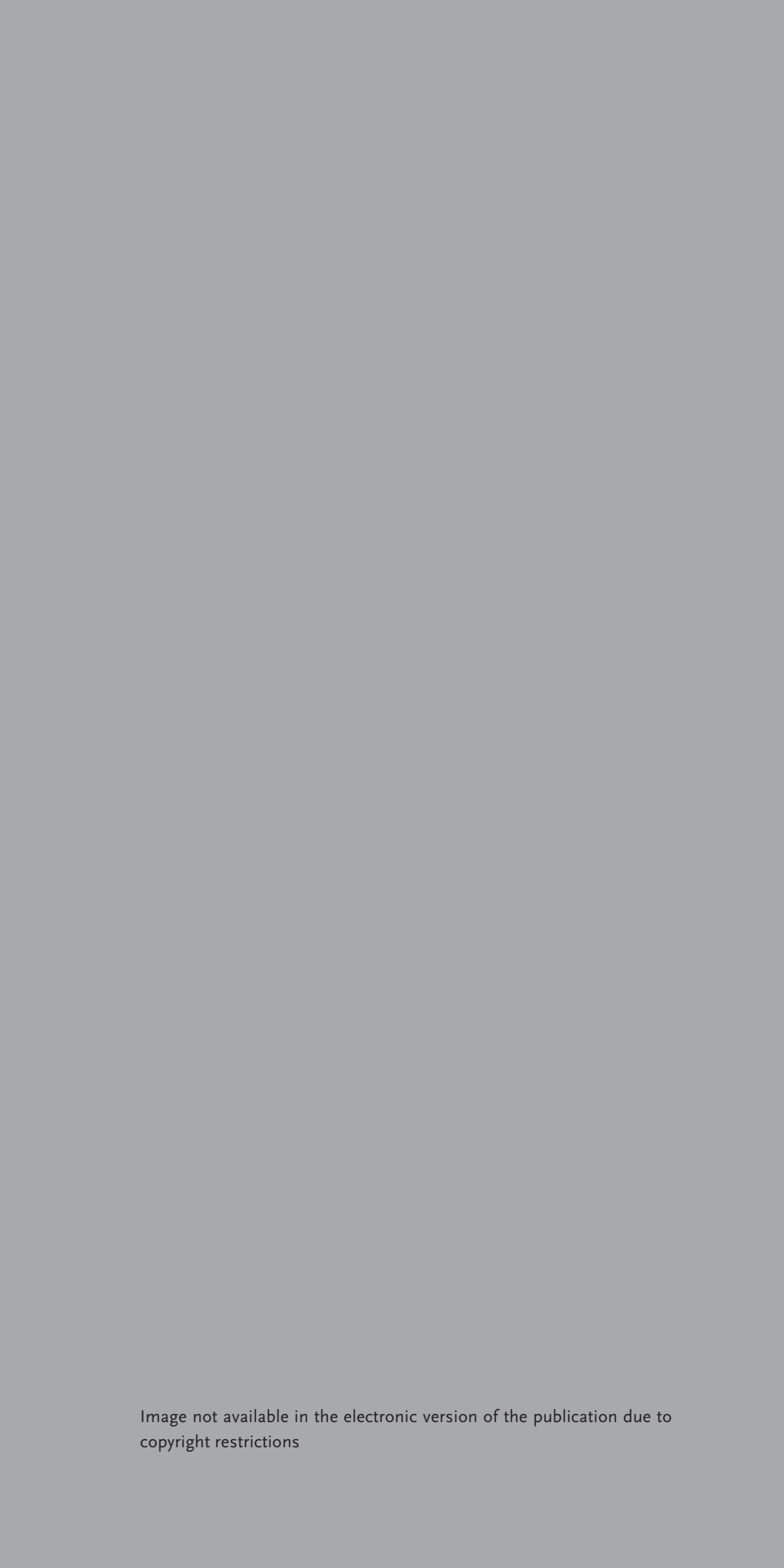
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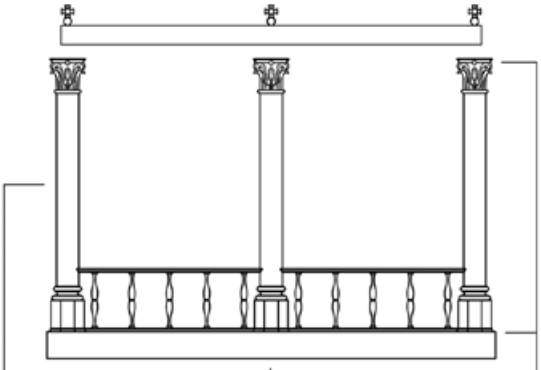

RUSSIAN
EMPIRE

GERMAN
EMPIRE

AUSTRO-
HUNGARIAN
MONARCHY

Jan Sowa

Our (Impossible) Modernity

Reconstructing, in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, the early theoretical interest in the modern era, Jürgen Habermas writes that the term 'modern times' (French: *temps modernes*) first appears in usage at the beginning of the 19th century. From the outset, it is accompanied by an awareness of the long-term character of the changes experienced by the Western world that were culminating at the time. The term 'modern times' refers to a long period of change inaugurated at the turn of the 15th/16th centuries by the discovery of the 'New World', the Renaissance, and the Reformation.[1] The second half of the 18th century, that preceded the emergence of the term 'modern times', sees a radical acceleration of the process of change. Three great revolutions take place, the consequences of which will, in the following century, shape modernity in its mature, complete form: a political breakthrough, that is, the American Revolution, resulting in a democratic-parliamentary system of government; the Great Bourgeois French Revolution, introducing the emancipatory notions of liberty, equality and solidarity (as the too patriarchal-sounding 'fraternity' should be updated today); and the somewhat less distinct and spectacular — but no less important — Industrial Revolution in north-western Europe, starting from the mid-18th century.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of volumes have been devoted to the study of these phenomena and summarising them here, even cursorily, is not possible.[2] Nor is it the point. When we reflect on the absorption of modernism in Central and Eastern Europe — occurring only in the 20th century,

1 Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Two Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987, p. 5.

2 For a synthetic approach cf. for example Catharina Lis, Hugo Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Preindustrial Europe*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982.

but heavily influenced by prior historical experience, something that is aptly demonstrated in the architectural designs of Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, e.g. the canopy over the entrance to Marshal Józef Piłsudski's burial crypt at the Wawel Cathedral in Kraków — what appears more important than the essence of the modern transformation is a dramatic gulf persisting throughout the modern era, right from its beginning at the turn of the 15th/16th centuries, between Eastern and Western Europe. It is one of the most interesting — and most complex — phenomena in the continent's history. It has the character of 'long duration', in the sense in which the term was used by the French Annales School: throughout the last two millennia, Europe seems permanently broken into two fundamentally different parts — East and West — with the line of division running roughly alongside the River Elbe in present-day Germany. In antiquity, this is where Roman influence ends; in the Middle Ages, it is the limit of the Carolingian expansion and thus of feudalism in its classic form;[3] in the early modern era, the Elbe separates areas where serfdom permanently disappears, supplanted by a system of waged labour (West), from those where it intensifies, turning de facto into slavery (East); in the 17th and 18th centuries, a similar border separates the Western absolutisms, with their socio-political centralisation, from the growing political disintegration of Central and Eastern Europe.[4] All this means that by the 19th century, the Elbe had become a frontier between rapid urbanisation and industrialisation in the West, and poverty and backwardness in the East. Interestingly and

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[3] East of the River Elbe, the feudal system was markedly distinct from its Western counterpart: it was devoid of elements of vertical dependency, there was no clear stratification of the aristocracy, and a different form of land ownership dominated: allodium (allod) rather than fief. Cf. Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, London: New Left Books, 1974.

[4] The exception here is, of course, Russia. This country follows its own development path, distinct from the history of Central and Eastern Europe. Russia appears as a kind of 'anomaly', combining some aspects of peripheral development with the role of a 'semi-core' of an alternative, Central-Asian world order. Prussia may seem another exception, but it is not. Prussia was a result of the secularisation of the Teutonic Order, which originated from north-western Germany, primarily Bremen. Although Prussia lay geographically to the east, culturally and socially it belonged to the West.

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▲ p. 104: Jakub Woynarowski, *Interregnum*, 2014

tellingly, in the mid-20th century the western flank of the so-called 'Eastern' or 'Soviet bloc' runs almost exactly where the Carolingian empire's boundary ran over a millennium earlier (with important changes in Thuringia). Of course, the above regularities can be dismissed as a result of chance, but intellectually such an explanation would be unsatisfactory. Instead, these all constitute indications to believe that a permanent divide exists between Eastern and Western Europe and that this divide is something Real in the structural sense bestowed upon the term by 20th-century philosophers, such as Jacques Lacan, Claude Lefort or Alain Badiou: despite the changes of political systems, dynasties, states borders and alliances, this divide persistently returns to its place.

Throughout the early modern period, that is, between the 16th and 18th centuries, Central and Eastern Europe's specificity is perfectly exemplified by the region's largest political structure, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Covering much of the region, this huge entity — due to its peculiar nature and political decentralisation, it can hardly be called a state — is distinct in every respect from the modern order of Western Europe. The position of the aristocracy is not weakened but actually strengthened, at the expense, mainly, of the bourgeoisie, resulting in a decline of cities in contrast with their prosperity in the West. Instead of the birth of the urban proletariat, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth sees more rural serfdom. While European states build their economic power on mercantilist protectionism and overseas trade, the Polish nobility sees no need for a fleet at all and actually prohibits Polish merchants from practicing international trade (sic). At the same time, while in western Europe absolutism strengthens the position of central government and the bureaucratic-administrative apparatus, in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth they disintegrate, as a result of the free elections of kings and the anarchic behaviour of Sejm (parliament) envoys who enjoy not only the right of free veto (*liberum veto*), but also the freedom to cancel a session at any time (*liberum rumpo*). Whereas in the West the foundations of future parliamentary democracy are slowly being laid on the basis of estates' representative bodies, in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth the nobles' democracy — a de facto institutionalisation of the anarchy of the ruling class — stagnates and decomposes.[5]

5 This description is necessarily abridged and simplified. For a more complex analysis, the reader may wish to consult my book *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesnością* [The Phantom Body of the King: Peripheral Struggles with Modernity], Kraków: Universitas, 2011, where I devote two chapters to the divergence of the development paths of Eastern and Western Europe: 'The Magnificent 16th Century' and 'The Political Economy of a Peripheral Agrarian Empire', pp. 47–206.

The second half of the 18th century is not only a time of the three triumphant revolutions mentioned above. During the same period, between 1772 and 1795, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is wiped off the map by its neighbouring powers: Austria, Prussia, and Russia, three states whose symbols — or rather synecdoches — Szyszko-Bohusz will use in his design of the canopy over the entrance to Marshal Piłsudski's burial crypt. This temporal coincidence is by no means accidental. Alongside the three revolutions, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's collapse was the fourth great triumph of modernity. A pre- and anti-modern residue, one that had found itself incompatible with the Westphalian order of sovereign modern states and had actively opposed modernity, was scrapped from the surface of the continent. Interestingly, even Russia, the seemingly least modern of the three partitioning powers, had been much more successful than the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in implementing a least some of the aspects of early-modern statehood: it had a highly centralised government, an efficient bureaucracy, and a powerful, modernised army.

For the residents of Central and Eastern Europe's largest political entity, the partitions of 1772–95 mean not only the end of political sovereignty but also, paradoxically, a forced entry into modernity. The new administrations quickly conduct a series of crucial reforms that radically transform the tissue of social relations. They curtail the nobility's anarchic freedom and levy taxes, forcing the *szlachta* to pay to foreign governments what it refused to pay the Polish king (taxation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was two to three times lower than in Western Europe, resulting in proportionately lower budget revenues). Importantly, this forced modernisation does not exclude the core of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's economy, that is, farming, where new technologies and organisational models result in crop increases, finally bringing productivity in line with Western European levels (the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lagged behind the West even in the sphere central to its economic system, that is, grain production).[6] Last but not least, the new administrations introduce a key modern reform, a sine qua non of modern development:

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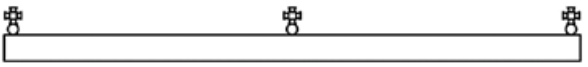
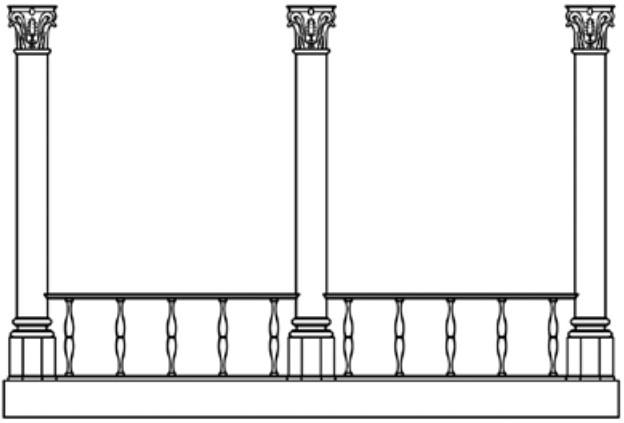
[6] Wiktor Kula, 'Czynniki gospodarcze w polskim procesie dziejowym', in idem, *Historia, zacofanie, rozwój*, Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1983, p. 161.

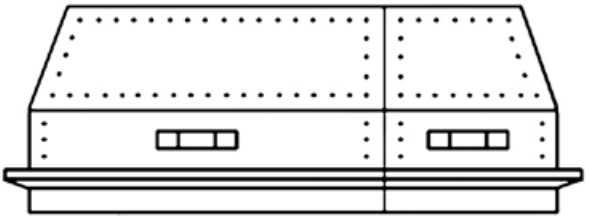
▶ Jakub Woynarowski, *Corpora dormiunt, vigilant animae*, 2014



VIGILANT ANIMAE



CORPORA DORMIUNT



they abolish serfdom, creating a vast workforce reservoir for nascent industry. The latter thrives under the new system too, with the Warsaw-Łódź area becoming in the 19th century one of the Russian Empire's largest industrialised regions.

This situation has far-reaching implications for all of subsequent Polish culture. From the outset, Poland's entry into modernity was an antagonistic one, a confrontation with a force that offers possibilities but also destroys. For this reason, Poles' attitude towards modernity has invariably been ambivalent. The modern order appears as something that has impressive achievements and opens vast prospects but, at the same time, inspires fear and hatred, for it destroys the traditional patterns of culture. Thus, modernity both attracts and repulses. This sometimes catatonic inertia between the two opposing tendencies is described by the American culture theorist and scholar, Clifford Geertz, as a conflict between 'epochalism' and 'essentialism'.[7] The first term denotes a desire to follow the zeitgeist and live up to an era's ideals. Starting from the 18th century, the zeitgeist means democracy and capitalism: universal suffrage, new communication media, industrial development and overall prosperity. The alternative is an 'essentialist' wish to preserve one's culture, distinctness, local specificity and a whole range of related cultural norms and social institutions. Although Geertz, an anthropologist working in Indonesia and Morocco, amongst other places, formulated his diagnosis in the 1960s in the context of the postcolonial states of Asia and Africa, it nonetheless perfectly describes the situation of Polish culture throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Naturally, modernisation breeds problems everywhere due to its traumatic character, and the West was no exception. But, even in this context, the condition of Poland and other peripheral/postcolonial countries is unique. Here, the familiar socio-economic tension between the old and new is accompanied by another, at least as strong: the antagonism between the native and foreign. The coincidence is all the more unfortunate since the two pairs of opposites overlap dangerously: the old is native, domestic, whereas the new is foreign, and literally so, coming from abroad. That is why the situation of Polish culture is diametrically different from that of its French, German or American counterparts. Whereas the conservatism vs. progressivism discussions may be similar, in Germany or France the confrontation with modernity does not mean the experience of something foreign in the mundane, ethnic sense. In those cultures, both the tendency for radical change and the opposite striving to preserve the old and traditional are native

7 Clifford Geertz, 'After the Revolution: The Fate of Nationalism in the New States', in idem, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1993.

elements. For a Pole, the choice is dramatic, entailing a confrontation not only with the risks of modernisation, but also with formulas considered foreign and alien.

The fact that for Poles entry into modernity is tantamount to the utter and irreversible loss of the old, native and traditional, from the very outset shapes in Polish culture a nostalgic attitude that profoundly affects whole generations of Polish elites. From the Romantic bards, enamoured, like Mickiewicz, of the cosiness of the 'Sarmatian'[8] little manor house, to the 20th century proponents of the Jagiellonian idea, we are a nation of cultural nostalgists and our attitude to the challenges of the present is often determined by a desire to bring back the lost paradise of the old world. As is usually the case with nostalgia, this reference to the past operates according to a phantasmal logic: rather than marking a return to any actual historical truth, it is a creative act that generates a past which never was.[9] That is why it is not a traditionalistic attitude but a neo-traditionalistic one; an attitude that itself engenders a tradition, only pretending (to itself and others) that it returns to something. Such a strategy can be encountered in various fields of culture; and architecture has been no exception. With his penchant for weaving traditional forms into modern designs, but also for constructing new elements presented as parts of vintage structures (as was the case at the Wawel Cathedral or the Royal Castle in Warsaw), Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz is a perfect exemplification of this nostalgic and neo-traditionalistic tendency. And not the only one. Built from 1952–55, Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science, modernist not only in its architectural form but also — and perhaps first of all — in its socio-cultural assumptions, was decorated with Renaissance features copied from the historical tenements of the town of Kazimierz Dolny. An aesthetically alien construction, installed in Warsaw by a foreign political power was thus familiarised by adding elements borrowed from native tradition.

How is modernity possible at all in such socio-cultural realities? Well, it is not. Few can repeat Bruno Latour's controversial adage that 'we have never been modern'[10] as convincingly as the people of Central and Eastern Europe, and especially the Poles, the region's largest

8 Polish gentry believed themselves to be descended from the ancient Sarmatians, giving rise to a culture known as Sarmatism; cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarmatism (translator's note).

9 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic Books, 2001.

10 Cf. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993.

nation.[11] Anyone who has ever tried to pursue modern, emancipatory ideals in Poland — be it social equality, minority rights, secularism or equal access to the public sphere — is well aware how fiercely such pro-modern projects are resisted. Ample evidence of this resistance can be found in the daily press.

What, therefore, should we do with those elements or 'remains' of modernity, to use an apt term from a book by Przemysław Czapliński,[12] of which the socio-cultural reality of Central and Eastern Europe is so full? While their presence in architecture, culture or politics is undeniable, we need to look closely at how they function. An insightful critic of modernity, Fredric Jameson, argues that modernity needs to be clearly distinguished from modernisation. The modern project is comprised, according to him, of two elements: a material-infrastructure basis (technologies, organisational models, machinery, equipment and so on) and a socio-ideological superstructure — a set of norms and values associated with modernity, such as equality, social justice, secularism and so on. Jameson calls the first

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[11] This throws an interesting light on Latour's conception of modernity as a whole. His statement pertained, of course, not to countries non-modern because of their backwardness, but to the very core of Western culture, which, according to the French sociologist, has never — despite its ideals and aspirations — operated according to the rules of the modern order. A peripheral approach to this issue reveals another aspect. The canon of modern socio-cultural organisation seems to be rather singular and one can hardly imagine many diametrically different modes of being modern (cf. e.g. Fredric Jameson, *Singular Modernity. Essay on the Ontology of the Present*, London: Verso, 2002). Bound up with this is the attack against the Enlightenment ideals and their universalism, waged recently by postcolonial theory (e.g. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). The modes of being non-modern are, in turn, many, and the Polish non-modernity remains fundamentally different from the Western one, which Latour was referring to.

[12] Cf. Przemysław Czapliński, *Resztki nowoczesności*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2011.

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▶ Polish eagle designs modified by Jakub Woynarowski **top:** Eagle embossed on US addresses, design: Wojciech Jastrzębowski, published in *Grafika Polska*, no. 3, 1927 **centre:** Logotype of Drukarnia Polska printing house, Kraków, 1920s–30s **bottom:** fragment of masthead, *Lech* magazine, design: Wacław Lipiński, published in *Lech*, no. 5, 1939

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component ‘modernisation’ and the second one ‘modernism’.[13] Modernity, he believes, is a complex interaction between the two. The mainstream of Polish public opinion and its political class seems preoccupied chiefly with the material-infrastructure aspect of the modern project and does all it can to avoid the ideological one. Motorways, Internet, rapid transit, ATMs — yes! Emancipation of women, sexual minority rights, separation of state and religion, rational urban planning, reduction of material inequalities through active redistribution — no! This is not a way of building a modern society in Jameson’s sense, but rather a formula for modernisation without modernity. In this respect, Poland epitomises the whole region. The current realities in the Baltic states, where homophobia has been elevated to the level of a national virtue, in Slovakia or Romania, with the discrimination of their Roma minorities, or in Hungary under the reign of Viktor Orbán are but different incarnations of the same problem with modernism.

The poor condition of modernity in Central and Eastern Europe has yet another consequence, that is extremely interesting from the perspective of cultural studies. It is not hard to realise that we live in an era marked by a regression of emancipatory politics and a dangerous revival of rightwing extremisms. In the field of culture and social theory, we continue to grapple with the legacy of postmodernism which waged a frontal assault against rational/modern ideals. Significantly, Central and Eastern Europe has found itself rather at home in the postmodern world. In Poland, the main proponents of postmodernism and post-structuralism in their various hues have been the advocates of socio-political conservatism, e.g. the sociologist Zdzisław Krasnodębski or the literary scholar Ewa Thompson,[14] both overtaken by post/neo-Sarmatian nostalgias. How is it possible that an avant-garde intellectual theory has been so successful in definitely hidebound circles? This is due precisely to the weakness of Central European modernity, and especially of Central European modernism in Jameson’s sense. This weakness —

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[13] Jameson.

[14] Cf. Zdzisław Krasnodębski, *Demokracja peryferii*, Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2005, and Ewa Thompson’s key articles: ‘Narodowość i polityka’, *Europa*”, no. 165, 2 June 2007; ‘Said a sprawa polska’, *Europa*, no. 65, 29 June 2005; ‘Słudzy i krytycy imperium’, *Europa*, no. 137, 18 November 2006; ‘Sarmatyzm i postkolonializm’, *Europa*, no. 264, 25 April 2009.

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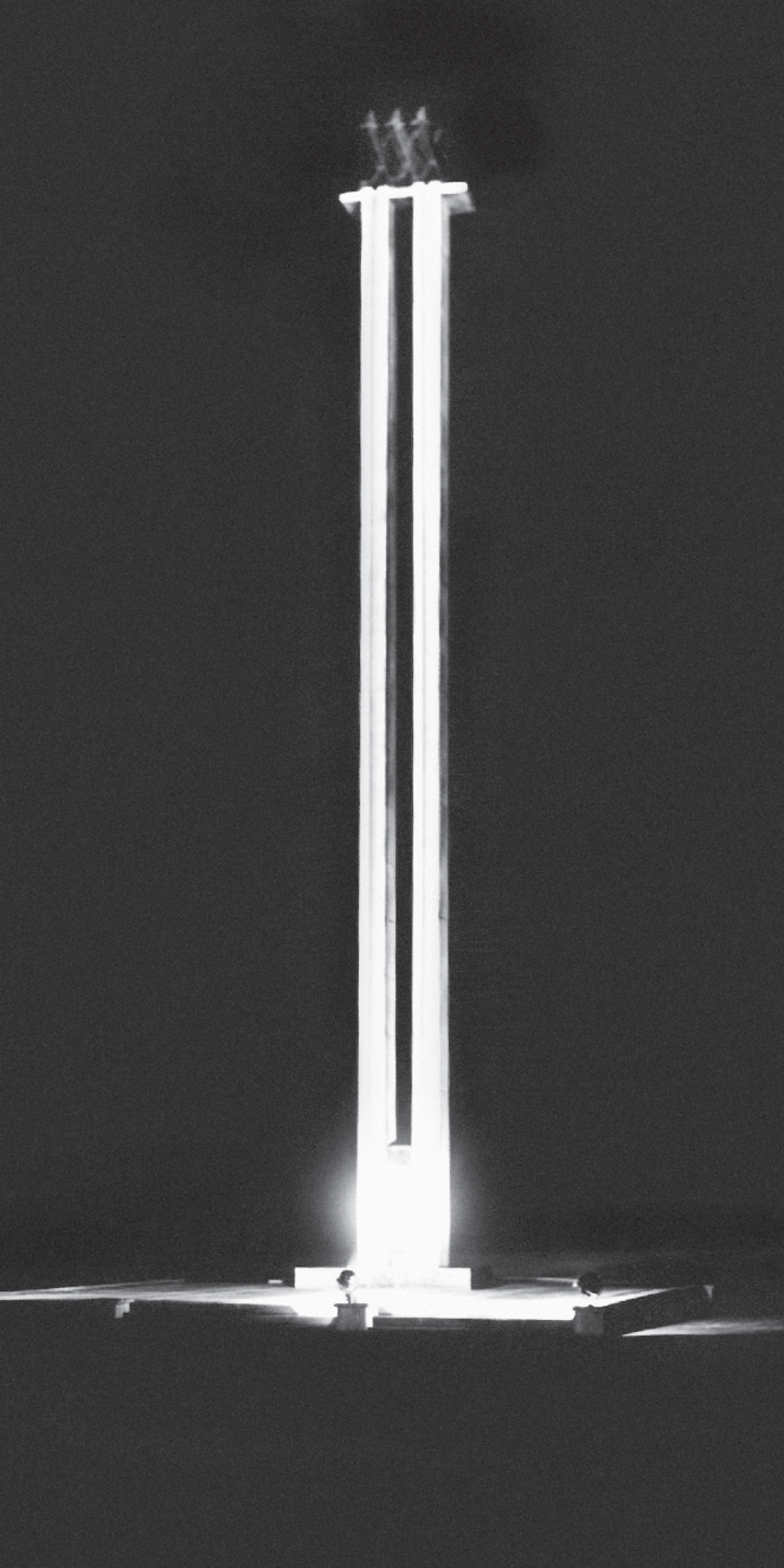
▶ Józef Piłsudski memorial, Okęcie military airport, Warszawa, 1935. National Digital Archives, Poland



founded, as has here been demonstrated, on many centuries of historical distinctness in the European East — means that although we have never been modern, we nonetheless became postmodern, even before the return of conservatism in the West provided for the coining of this very term. Our sense that modernity is something foreign and the anxiety this breeds, our nostalgic desire to return to a pre-modern paradise, the strong position in our culture of irrational and anti-modern elements (religious fundamentalism as a sense that enacted law should be based on revealed law, affirmation of tradition, attachment to hierarchical community organisation, power distance, a soft spot for authoritarianisms and so on) – all this tallies nicely with the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment-modern ideals.

The above-described perspective provides a key — not the only one for sure, but nonetheless an interesting one — for interpreting Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz's architecture, including the Wawel canopy that serves as a point of departure for the design proposed by the Institute of Architecture team. It can be considered as a prefiguration of postmodernism *avant la lettre*. As we know, nostalgia is one of the key dispositions of the postmodern subject, providing a libidinal basis for the postmodern inclination for anachronism and pastiche. It is in this perspective that I would interpret the anachronisms and formal quotations present in Szyszko-Bohusz's works. Postmodernism appreciates all that is irrational and anti-Enlightenment. Being aware of this, we are better able to capture the paradoxical relation between modernist aesthetics in its Central-European version and a respect for authoritarian power, as manifested by the Wawel canopy (as well as, later, by numerous realisations of socialist realism).[15] This perspective explains also Szyszko-Bohusz's own evolution — never, it seems, really concluded — from historicism to modernism, a trajectory that postmodernism in its own way reverses and distorts.

Finally, a more general observation: the surprising topicality of Szyszko-Bohusz — which means what might have once seemed a peripheral, post-colonial and particular reaction to modernism's universalistic aspirations appears today as a foreshadowing of the subsequent development tendencies of the core of Western culture — is a symptom of a much wider phenomenon. Throughout a large part of the 19th and 20th centuries, the world developed in the context of various theories of modernisation. From Marx to Fukuyama, social theorists of various political orientations believed that humanity progressed firmly in one direction, set by the most developed nations and

15 This tension could also provide an interesting perspective on the architecture and theoretical discourse of Albert Speer, insofar that their relation to modernism could prove more complex and less clear-cut than might appear at first sight. For more on this cf., for example, Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

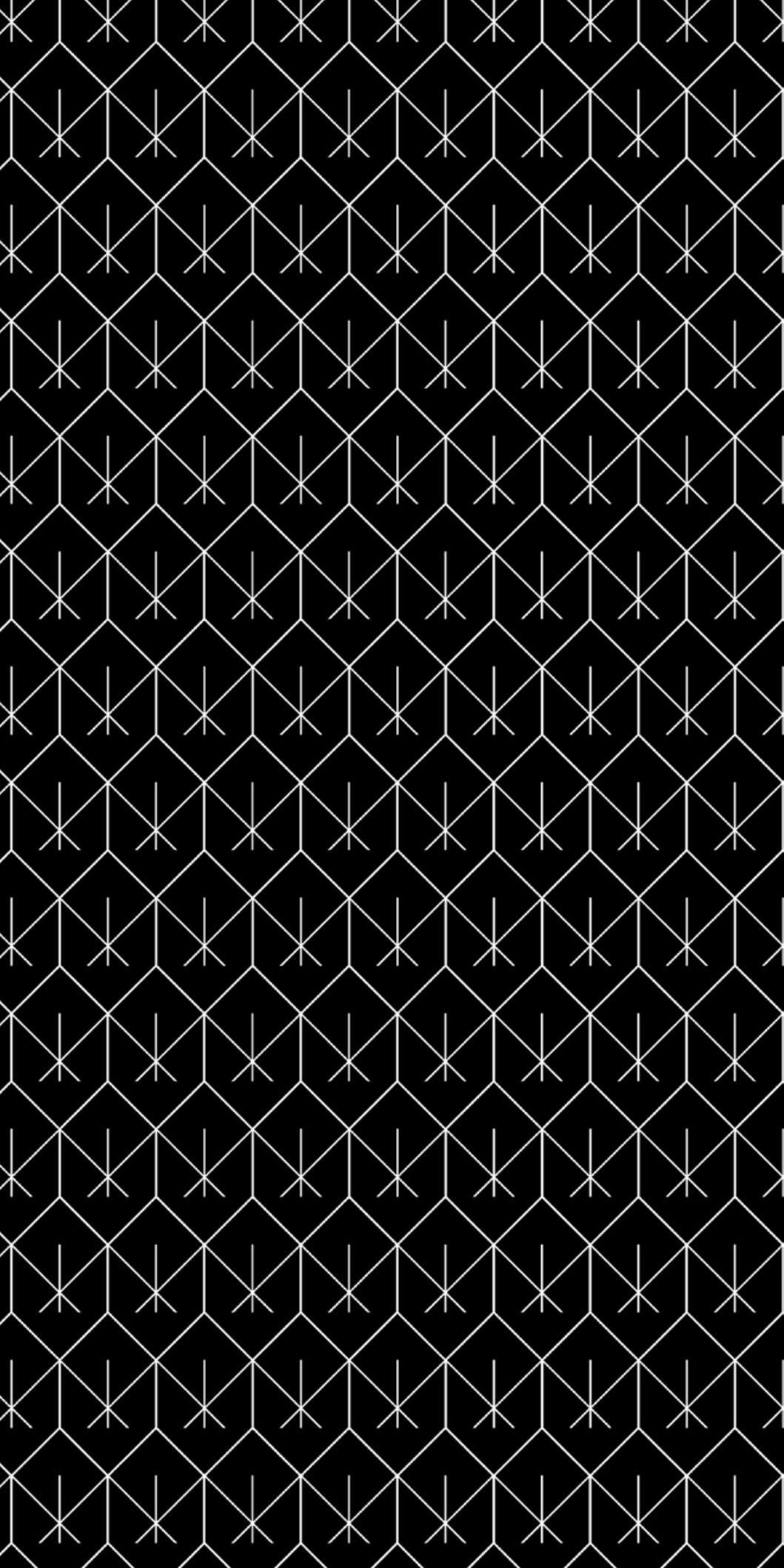
cultures. This is epitomised by Marx's observation that the 'country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future'.[16] The second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st have seen a reversal of this trend; today it is the peripheries that set a path for the societies and cultures of the centre. It is in France that a debate is currently under way on the principles of *laïcité* and the burka ban, a subject that has been discussed in Turkey since the Atatürk era. Only a few decades ago, most social theorists were convinced that Turkey was following France's course, not the other way round.[17] Another example: the precarisation of work, increasingly widespread in the wealthy countries of the capitalist core, is nothing but the import of labour relations well known from the peripheries (the German sociologist, Ulrich Beck, calls it even the 'Latin-Americanisation' of the labour market[18]). And yet another confirmation of the rule: neoliberalism, a theory and praxis ever more dominant in the developed world's economic and social policies, was originally conceived as a reform strategy for Latin America, winning its legitimacy by courtesy of the transformation of Central European peripheries, including Poland. Its career is a movement from the peripheries to the centre, a movement far more real than dreams about the universalisation of the welfare state that the West is (less and less) famous for. There are positive examples too: the contemporary series of more or less successful social struggles aimed at transforming political regimes in various places around the world (the Arab Spring, the Indignados movement, the Occupy movements, the protests in Thailand and Venezuela, the Maidan protests in Kyiv) were born in the Middle East and North Africa, going on to inspire activists in Europe or the United States.[19] Fortunately or not — depending on how we feel about modernity as a theory and practice — we are no longer living in an era of modernisation, but rather one of de-modernisation. It is a process that is aesthetically anticipated in the work of Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz.

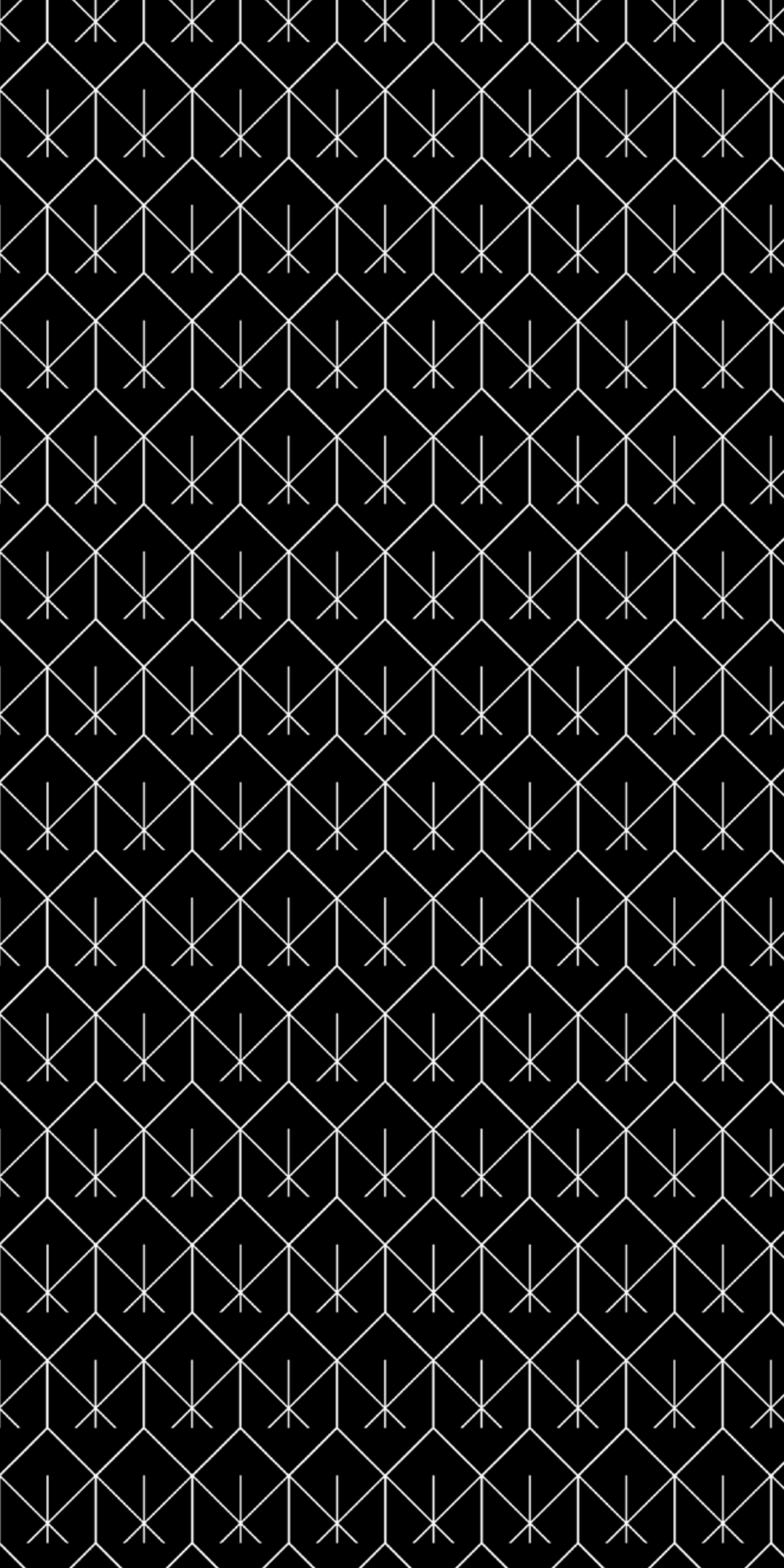
16 Karl Marx, preface to first edition of *Das Kapital* (1867).

17 Cf. for example Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society. Modernizing the Middle East*, New York: Free Press, 1958.

18 Cf. Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London: SAGE, 1992.

19 Cf. Anna Curcio, Gigi Roggero, 'Tunezja jest naszym uniwersytetem. Notatki i refleksje z Liberation Without Borders Tour', in *EduFactory. Samoorganizacja i opór w fabrykach wiedzy*, ed. Jan Sowa, Krystian Szadkowski, Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2011.





Jean-Louis Cohen

Invisible Modernisms

The relationship between modernity and political power in the 20th century has been a troubled one. There have been very few cases of complete convergence between the spatial and aesthetic agenda of modern architecture and the policies of political regimes. Such encounters have taken at place at the level of municipalities, most notably in Western Europe — one could think for instance of the programs of social-democratic mayors of the 1920s or the 1950s in Germany or France. During the interwar years, which saw the unfolding of what is generally called the 'modern movement', only a handful of national governments endorsed modernism. Perhaps the most obvious ones in this regard have been the Generalitat in Catalogne during the Second Spanish Republic, from 1931 through 1939, or the Czechoslovak state, which used the new language as a political vehicle.

In a broader perspective, the development of modernisation has only exceptionally been synchronic with the emergence and the diffusion of modernity, as a cultural construct, and modernism, as an artistic or architectural language. With perhaps a brief exception during the Estado Novo of Getúlio Vargas, the rather exceptional architecture that took shape in Brazil beginning in the mid-1930s has taken place in an absence of social modernisation. On the contrary, there are historical situations in which modernisation develops in an absence of modernism. Such is the case of the Soviet Union between 1932 and 1934, even if some forms of late constructivism can still be found until the late 1930s.

A more thorough definition of modernity has anyway to be proposed, in order to understand the subtle adjustments that have taken place between mainstream positions and the most radical design strategies — for instance the ones of the constructivists or of functionalists, such as Hannes Meyer, or of the team of Eugène Beaudouin, Marcel Lods, and Vladimir Bodiansky in France. If one subscribes to the linguistic model implicitly used by Rem Koolhaas in conceiving the 'Fundamentals' section of the 2014 International Architecture Exhibition, when the focus is centered on

the buildings' lexical elements — from doors to stairs and from ceilings to corridors, then one has also to question the transformations that have occurred along the syntactic axis. It is also worth underlining that the relationship between vocabulary and syntax has not been a stable one since 1914. There are cases in which the distinction has been blurred, for instance when cladding panel have become load-bearing structures, as in many buildings conceived by Jean Prouvé in the 1950s.

The patterns according to which political leaders have endorsed architecture correspond to a wide spectrum of situations. In some cases, the most provocative features identified with radical modernism can be disguised or suppressed, whereas innovative plan layouts for the buildings are kept. In other cases, modernist features are transformed into pure decoration of buildings that have kept conservative plans. As codified in the late 19th century and widely disseminated — and 'absorbed' — if we accept the concept proposed by the International Architecture Exhibition — internationally, the design methods of the Paris École des Beaux-Arts allowed for such a superficial endorsement of an aesthetic considered as just another 'style', which could be applied to axial and symmetrical plan arrangements.

One of the most extreme situations in this respect was the one determined by the Second World War, on both sides of the divide between the Axis and the Allies. Contrary to common opinion, the war generated a vast quantity of buildings, in addition to the massive fortifications built by the French and the Germans, and among them some extremely large projects extending to the scale of entire territories. I would single out two of these macro-projects for the reflections they provoke.

The first one is the mammoth office building erected for the War Department in Washington, which took its name — the Pentagon — from an infrastructural eponym: the freeway interchange in which it was located. Built in 13 months beginning in late 1941, the Pentagon was meant to house more than 30,000 clerical workers, from the mail boys to the generals, and used modernist features both in its plan layout and in its details.

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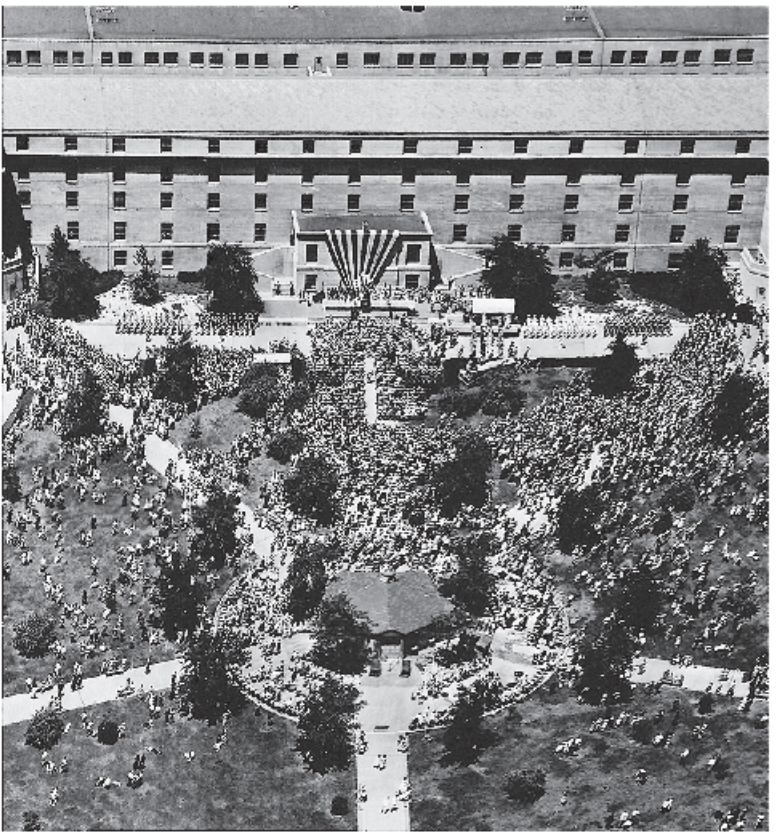
▲ p. 120: View of the Pentagon, Headmasters of the War Department: employees eat lunch on steps, General Court, Pentagon Building, Washington, DC, 1943. National Archives photo no. 111-SC-174556

▶ **top:** Civilian and military personnel attending the US Saving Bond 'Opportunity Drive' of the National Military Establishment at a rally in the centre courtyard of the Pentagon. Washington, DC, 1949. National Archives photo no. 111-SC-321969 **bottom:** An aerial view of the Pentagon Building, Washington, DC, 1952. National Archives photo no. 111-SC-397236



Each segment of the polygon is made of five parallel bars of offices, lit by narrow and long courtyards, and divided in modular offices. Shunning elevators, the interior circulation is achieved by ramps, which orchestrate a sort of extended architectural promenade through the 26 kilometers of corridors. If the exterior façade of the structure built with concrete walls is clad in stone, all the others are left with visible marks of the formwork, exhibiting the horizontal layers of the material as it was poured into place. To paraphrase Le Corbusier's famous aphorism, the building is a machine to work-in, a perfectly taylorised organism allowing for the administration of the war. Interestingly, besides a short number of shots controlled by the censors, very few images of the Pentagon were disseminated during the war. Its low-rise profile — five floors altogether, its horizontal expansion, and the alternating pattern of built wings and courtyards could give it the status of an early 'mat' building, a type generally considered as having been generated by Le Corbusier's Venice hospital project.

An even more invisible and puzzling structure is the huge territory cut off from the rest of the north-eastern German island of Usedom, and devoted by the Nazis to the production and the testing of rockets: Peenemünde. In my view, this complex is much more evocative of the relationship the Nazi regime constructed with architecture than the bombastic compositions designed by Albert Speer for Adolf Hitler's new Berlin. The electric power station, the factories devoted to the production of liquid hydrogen or oxygen, and the halls devoted to the production of rockets, many of which have survived to this day, are built in a *sachlich* language. Their concrete skeleton is left visible, as are the brick infillings. Walter Schlempp, a former member of Speer's Berlin team, had designed a rigorous architecture in order to accommodate a highly advanced technological program. Yet this rather elegant and sophisticated interpretation of industrial modernism was meant to remain totally hidden, out of sight of all Germans, not to mention other nationals. Was this preoccupation for innovative architecture an effect of the longing for technological perfection that the program led by Wernher von Braun had, or was it the expression of the modernist drive of architects frustrated by Berlin's neoclassical building program? The question remains open.

In their respective manners, these two projects are the expression of what could be called a shameful modernism — an architecture contradictory with the official agenda, as Washington's government buildings were

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▶ Peenemünde, construction project, design: Walter Schlempp, 1937–43. Photo Deutsches Museum **top:** an aerial view of the settlement **centre:** material warehouse **bottom:** repair hall

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no less neoclassical than the ones designed for Berlin and certainly more numerous, if one only thinks of the Federal Triangle built in the 1930s. Considering the modernism of the Pentagon and Peenemünde also helps to understand the complex mechanisms of adjustment between patrons and architects, as political power is almost never a monolithic block, but is layered and split in various, and often rival, factions and networks. The episode of the closing of the Berlin Bauhaus in 1933 revealed the fracture between Nazi leaders favourable to functionalism, and conservative ones, and similar tensions also existed in the early phase of Stalinism, with the new leaders emerging from the working class or the peasantry being more receptive to the nouveau riche taste of 'socialist' realism than their better educated predecessors. In the case of the Pentagon, it is clear that the military were not interested in building a monument, but wanted instead a machine, and in the case of Peenemünde, their German colleagues and their scientist partners had no objection against the use of functional, objective language.

In short, these contradictions reflect the impossibility of considering the adjustment between power and architecture if both are conceived as homogeneous, seamless, entities. Architecture is no less fractious than politics, and its response to the opportunities opened by the circles of power is adjusted to the different sensitivities at work. If one were to use a military metaphor — in echo to the previous analyses — it could be said that the war of styles and of political programs is more often fought by guerillas or partisans than by large armies facing each other frontally.

▼ pp. 128–31: *Impossible Objects*, Polish Pavilion, 14th International Architecture Exhibition, 2014. Rendering by Kacper Kępiński, CC BY-SA 3.0


P O R A


ANIMA

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(b. 1977), has a specialist interest in the problems of contemporary architecture (especially from a social perspective) and the visual arts. She is working on a doctoral thesis at the Institute of Art History at the Jagiellonian University on the theme, *Three Models of Social Architecture in 20th Century France. Le Corbusier, Aillaud, Bofill*. She works in the Education Department of the National Museum in Kraków. She was co-curator of the exhibition *In-habitation 2012. Garden City*, Gated City (National Museum in Kraków). A member of the Institute of Architecture.

MARTA KARPIŃSKA

(b. 1977), editorial secretary of *Autoportret. Pismo o dobrej przestrzeni*, a graduate of Art History. In 2009–13 was editor of the monthly *Architektura & Biznes*. A member of the Institute of Architecture.

DOROTA LEŚNIAK-RYCHLAK

(b. 1972), art historian and architect, chief editor of *Autoportret. Pismo o Dobrej Przestrzeni*. Curator of the exhibition *Charles Rennie Mackintosh* (International Culture Centre, Kraków, 1996) and co-curator of the exhibitions: *3_2_1. New Architecture in Japan and Poland* (Manggha Centre, Kraków, 2004) and *In-habitation 2012. Garden City, Gated City* (National Museum in Kraków). The author of the introduction to a selection of texts by Adolf Loos, *Ornament i zbrodnia* [Ornament and Crime] (2013). President of the Institute of Architecture.

MICHAŁ WIŚNIEWSKI

◆

(b. 1976), a graduate of art history and architecture, is interested in the connections between modern architecture and politics. He works in the International Culture Centre and the Economic University in Kraków. The author of a monograph on Ludwik Wojtyczko. Co-curator of the exhibitions: *In-habitation 2012. Garden City, Gated City* and curator of the exhibition *Reaction to Modernism. Architecture of Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz* (both in National Museum in Kraków). A member of the board of the Institute of Architecture.

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Institute of Architecture — a foundation established in 2011 in Kraków which is engaged in the promotion of disinterested reflection on the theme of space, through the organisation of interdisciplinary exhibitions about architecture, publishing books, promoting architectural education and the popularisation of architecture, mainly in its modern and contemporary forms.

Author of the artistic concept

JAKUB WOYNAROWSKI

◆

(b. 1982), a graduate of the Graphics Department and the Interdepartmental Intermedia Studio of the Academy of the Fine Arts in Kraków; he currently teaches at the Studio of Narrative Drawing at his alma mater. He is a designer and illustrator, as well as a graphic artist, creator of comics, artbooks, visual atlases, films and installations. He is also an initiator of site-specific activities in public space.

Authors of essays

DAVID CROWLEY

(b. 1966), a graduate of the Royal College of Art and the University of Brighton, who also studied at the Kraków Academy of Art in Poland in the 1980s. He taught at Staffordshire University and the University of Brighton before joining the RCA in 1999. Former Deputy Head of the History of Design programme, he is now Professor and Head of Critical Writing in Art & Design. He also works closely with students in various design programmes at the College, including in the School of Communications. He writes regularly for the design press and curates exhibitions (*Cold War Modern*, Victoria and Albert Museum, 2008–09). Having a special interest in Central and Eastern Europe, he has published, as author or editor, several volumes on the region's cultural history.

DARIUSZ CZAJA

(b. 1961), anthropologist, writer, music reviewer; researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Jagiellonian University in Kraków; member of the editorial board of the Polish folk art quarterly *Konteksty*. He is the author of numerous books on philosophy, cultural anthropology and literature: *Sygnatura i fragment. Narracje antropologiczne* [Signature and Fragment. Anthropological Narrations] (2004), *Anatomia duszy. Figury wyobraźni i gry językowe* [Anatomy of the Soul. Figures of Imagination and Speech Games] (2005), *Lekcje ciemności* [Lessons of Darkness] (2009), *Gdzie indziej, gdzieś dalej* [Somewhere Further, Somewhere Else] (2010).

JEAN-LOUIS COHEN

(b. 1949), a French architect and architectural historian specialising in modern architecture and city planning. Since 1994 he has been the Sheldon H. Solow Professor in the History of Architecture at New York University Institute of Fine Arts. He has curated many major exhibitions including: *The Lost Vanguard* (MoMA, New York, 2007); *Scenes of the World to Come and Architecture in Uniform* (Canadian Center for Architecture, 1995 and 2011); *Interférences — architecture, Allemagne, France* (Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Strasbourg; Deutsches Architekturmuseum,

Frankfurt, 2013); *Le Corbusier: An Atlas of Modern Landscapes* (MoMA, New York, 2013). His recent publications include: *Le Corbusier, la planète comme chantier* (2005), *Liquid Stone, New Architecture in Concrete* (2006), *Above Paris, the Aerial Survey of Roger Henrard* (2006), *Mies van der Rohe* (2007), *Architecture in Uniform* (2011) and *The Future of Architecture. Since 1889* (2012). In 2013, the Collège de France in Paris appointed him to a chair devoted to Architecture and Urban Form.

JAN SOWA

◆

(b. 1976), sociologist, writer and activist; studied literature, philosophy and psychology at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, and University Paris 8 in Saint-Denis. He is associate professor at the Faculty of Social Communication of Jagiellonian University. In his research, Sowa explores the borders of cultural studies, social anthropology, critical theory, art and politics. He has written and edited several books on society, media and history, as well as on social and political theory. One of his last books is *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą* [The Phantom Body of the King. Peripheral Struggles with Modern Form] (2011).

The following institutions, organisations, and periodicals — participating in the debate on modernism in Polish architecture inspired by the theme of the 14th International Architecture Exhibition — have extended their patronage to the exhibition:

Museum of Architecture in Wrocław; Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw; Association of Polish Architects (SARP), Warsaw; The Young Architects Forum of the Association of Polish Architects (SARP), Białystok; Association for the Protection of Historical Monuments (TOnZ); The Polish Section of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA); Fundacja Architektury, Warsaw; Fundacja Centrum Architektury, Warsaw; Bęc Zmiana Foundation, Warsaw; *Arch* magazine; *Architektura-murator* magazine; *Architektura & Biznes* magazine; *Autoportret* magazine; *Magazyn Miasta* magazine; Architecture Snob; TRACE (Central European Architectural Research Think-tank).

The debate's initial meeting, which took place in April 2013 at the Zachęta — National Gallery of Art, was moderated by Dr. Krzysztof Nawratek.

www.architektura2014.weebly.com

EXHIBITION

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Impossible Objects
7 June–23 November 2014

The Polish Pavilion
at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition —
la Biennale di Venezia

Polish Pavilion Commissioner:
Hanna Wróblewska
curatorial team:
Institute of Architecture — Dorota Jędruch, Marta Karpińska,
Dorota Leśniak-Rychlak, Michał Wiśniewski
artistic concept:
Jakub Woynarowski
assistant commissioner:
Joanna Waśko
curator's assistants:
Iza Wałek, Agata Wiśniewska

organiser of the exhibition:
Zachęta — National Gallery of Art

ZACHĘTA

www.zacheta.art.pl
www.labiennale.art.pl

Polish participation in the 14th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice was made possible through the financial support of Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland

Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland.

exhibition partners:
Adam Mickiewicz Institute; National Digital Archives, Poland

BOOK

Impossible Objects

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conceived by
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and Jakub Woynarowski
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