

JUSTYNA KLESZCZ

ORCID: 0000-0002-7571-6367

Opole University of Technology, Poland

ARCHITECTURAL UNIVERSALISM – A NEW APPROACH OR AN EXPRESSION OF TRADITIONALISM?

UNIWERSALIZM ARCHITEKTURY – NOWE PODEJŚCIE CZY WYRAZ TRADYCJONALIZMU?

Abstract

Are universality and multifunctionality a new stage in architecture, or just a new form of old patterns? History knows numerous examples of form replication, from the Parthenon to contemporary copies. Although cultural continuity justifies their presence, contemporary imitation raises objections. Historical stylisation is sometimes accepted, while the replication of contemporary forms is criticised, revealing inconsistencies in the debate on the quality of architecture.

Keywords: universalist architecture, multifunctionality, Parthenon

Streszczenie

Czy uniwersalność i wielofunkcyjność to nowy etap w architekturze, czy tylko nowa forma dawnych wzorców? Historia zna liczne przykłady powielania form – od Partenonu po współczesne kopie. Choć kulturowa ciągłość uzasadnia ich obecność, współczesne naśladownictwo budzi sprzeciw. Stylizacja historyczna bywa akceptowana, podczas gdy powielanie form współczesnych spotyka się z krytyką, odsłaniając niekonsekwencje debaty o jakości architektury.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura uniwersalna, wielofunkcyjność, Partenon

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, very fashionable terms used by architecture researchers include ‘universal architecture’ and ‘multifunctional architecture’ (as opposed to the old-fashioned term ‘multi-purpose’), which are inextricably linked to the idea of architectural adaptability, changeability and openness.

For several decades now, some architectural theorists have rejected what they consider to be the ‘modernist’ fixation on culturally foreign architectural models and their replication regardless of local conditions, understood both as cultural heritage and (if not primarily) as related climatic and natural conditions, natural resources, and technological traditions. Vernacularism in architecture has emerged as a traditional or modern reinterpretation

of historically established knowledge about the past¹. Researchers such as Suha Ozkan even speak of the internationalisation of architecture, which, together with its universality and international applicability, is the main reason for the departure from locality, which is understood as the individualism of solutions used in different parts of the world². To define the problem, Ozkan stated over 40 years ago that ‘internationalisation in style became synonymous with the representation of contemporaneity’³. Therefore, the research did not focus on the problem of universality (understood as comprehensibility or usefulness) of solutions used in different cultural circles, but on the opposed attitude of apotheosis of regionality. Hence, these concepts have often appeared in connection with the vernacular architecture of various ‘niche’ cultures and ethnic groups, such as the ‘plebeian’ architecture of particular regions of India⁴, the peoples of the Arctic⁵, African countries⁶, etc. Balkrishana V. Doshi linked this to conscious, contemporary identity building and the search for an attitude towards the ‘Western’ model of architecture and urban planning, which was introduced in the territories conquered during the colonial era⁷.

Until now, the concept of ‘universality of architecture’ has appeared in connection with the concepts of vernacular architecture or modern regionalism⁸, or as a synonym for architectural accessibility, by the principles of universal design formulated in 1985 by Ronald Mace, which concerns fair access to public and social spaces for all citizens, regardless of their physical or mental abilities⁹.

Perhaps this pursuit of repeatability in certain forms, not only in modernist but also in vernacular architecture, i.e. architecture that is not created systematically but from the bottom up for very local needs, is in fact a reflection of specific ‘mental models’ that act on humans as a deeply rooted archetype, causing unexpected and often surprising similarities between vernacular architecture emerging in extremely different cultures and regions, or even between facilities from different historical periods¹⁰. Perhaps we, as a species, have an innate tendency to copy solutions that we consider exemplary in some way, or to which we have

¹ H. Fathy, *Natural energy and vernacular architecture: principles and examples with reference to hot arid climates*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1986, pp. 2–6; E. Hampson, *Arctic adaptive: responsive design in the Canadian north*, Ryerson University, Toronto 2011. DOI: 10.32920/ryerson.14662005.v1.

² S. Ozkan, *Regionalism within Modernism* [in:] V.B. Canizaro (ed.), *Architectural regionalism: Collected writings on place, identity, modernity, and tradition*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2007, pp. 103–109.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 103.

⁴ B.V. Doshi, *Cultural continuum and regional identity in architecture* [in:] R. Powell (ed.), *Regionalism in Architecture*, Concept Media, Singapore 1985, pp. 87–91.

⁵ E. Hampson, pp. 9–19.

⁶ E. Mba et al., *Cultural heritage in contemporary Nigerian architecture: case study of Enugu, Kano and Lagos*, “Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences” 2025, no. 4, pp. 52–68. DOI: 10.9734/arjass/2025/v23i4660.

⁷ B.V. Doshi, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁸ S. Ozkan, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–105.

⁹ R. Mace, *Universal design: Barrier-free design for everyone*, “Designers West” 1985, no. 1, pp. 147–152.

¹⁰ R. Lewcock, ‘Generative concepts’ in vernacular architecture [in:] L. Asquith, M. Vellinga (eds), *Vernacular Architecture in the twenty-first Century. Theory, education and practice*, Taylor & Francis, New York 2006, pp. 199–214.

been exposed frequently enough. So, could frequent exposure to representations of certain types of facilities, which can be identified with specific emotions, have caused the spread and rooting of selected, not fully conscious spatial patterns? Such a mechanism would explain the cultural and aesthetic value and functionality of facilities that have become familiar throughout history and function as elements of a cultural pattern characteristic of a broader group of ‘Western culture’ facilities. This would also explain the economically inconsistent priority given to building materials and techniques imported from other (‘Western’) cultural circles at the expense of local values, as already described in the literature.

This text describes the issue of the reception of stylistic forms, or even entire architectural compositions, in the context of the historical cultural values they carry. Using the example of two facilities, the Parthenon in Athens and the Orange Cube in Lyon, the relationship between a specific consent, or permission to copy the form of a facility across centuries, cultural milieus and functions, when it is considered unique to world culture, and the recognition of a similar action on a contemporary facility as unequivocally negative plagiarism, will be demonstrated. In discussions about architecture, stylisation and copying historical models are tolerated and considered as drawing on history and tradition rather than duplicating contemporary forms. Inconsistency in interpretation is the main fault of contemporary discussions about the quality of architecture.

1.1. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted using mixed research methods. The basic method was multiple case study analysis supported by qualitative methods. The research was prefaced by a partially structured literature review based on the PRISMA protocol guidelines. The analysis used the following databases: Web of Science Core Collection and Artificial Intelligence Research Assistant (Scite.ai), to compare and verify the results obtained.

The literature review was limited to publications in English, published in scientific journals indexed in the database, or as books. The literature review, based on searching the databases using sets of keywords related to the analysed issue (including: ‘universalism’ + ‘architecture’, ‘internationalisation of architecture’ + ‘universal architecture’, “Parthenon” + ‘modern architecture’, etc.), revealed no links between these issues, as well as a relatively small number of publications for individual groups of keywords.

1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of an ambiguous approach to architectural universalism and the distinction between the concepts of copy and plagiarism in historical and contemporary architecture appears in the literature mainly in the context of architectural education policy and the role assigned to regionalism in this process, as well as the need to build local identity, which would result in a reduction in the number of universalist models in this field. In this case, they are identified with the ‘international style’ defined almost a century ago¹¹. Therefore, on the one hand,

¹¹ H.R. Hitchcock, P. Johnson, *The international style*, Norton, New York 1966; C. Zhang, Y. Tian, D. Ren, *The effect of critical regionalism thoughts in architecture on contemporary chinese architecture – localization trend of Chinese architecture in 21st century*, “Applied Mechanics and Materials” 2012, no. 209-211, pp. 183–190. DOI: 10.4028/www.scientific.net/AMM.209-211.183.

universalism as such is criticised. On the other hand, some researchers treat it biologically, as an evolutionary stage in the development of architecture and its adaptation to changes that have taken place in the world, as a pursuit of the best possible use of knowledge and resources that can be obtained¹².

There are few references to historical architecture in the literature in the context of its universalism¹³. The concept is relatively new and only relates to the most recent architecture. The only case in which there is mention of a specific regional, and therefore spatially limited, universalism of solutions is vernacular architecture¹⁴.

2. FIRST CASE – THE PARTHENON

According to generally accepted doctrine, the largest of the temples dedicated to Athena, located on the Acropolis in Athens, is considered the pinnacle of Hellenistic architecture¹⁵. Built between 447 and 432 BC, it is an example of a hekatompedon, and although it is now an unrivalled model of proportion and architectural order, it remained essentially unknown for many centuries. Its turbulent and long history is often reduced to the stage that specialists – historians and architects – have considered the peak of the development of the ‘ideal building’. At the same time, its numerous transformations and adaptations remain on the sidelines of its original form and function. It was not until the publication of Julien David Le Roy’s drawings in 1758¹⁶, showing the Parthenon in all its glory, that the collective imagination of Europe was captured. Earlier drawings, such as those by Cyriakus from the mid-15th century¹⁷, although an essential element in the development of the Italian Quattrocento, could not have had a global impact.

According to Panayotis Tournikiotis, discussing the role of the Parthenon in the history and theory of contemporary architecture, this building became the ideal shell for introducing new ideas and functions in American and European architecture at the beginning of the 19th century¹⁸. Direct copying of the form or powerful references survived until the start of the next century. If a facility was to be a vehicle for some national or lofty, modern content, it took one of two forms: it was either an actual copy of the Athenian original, including an attempt to recreate its location on a hill, or, if its complex functional layout required it,

¹² I. Portnova, *About the principles of “universalism” and “cosmism” in modern architecture as an expression of the common human ideas of the contemporary time*, “International Journal of Psycho-social Rehabilitation” 2020, no. 4, pp. 1803–1808.

¹³ P. Kmiecik, *Piękno w strukturze na podstawie wyników prac wykopaliskowych przy wrocławskim bastionie Kleszczowym (pol. XVI w.)*, “Rocznik Filozoficzny Ignatianum” 2023, no. 3, pp. 11–26.

¹⁴ G. Ilięš et al., *What future for the land of the wooden civilisation? vernacular architecture from Maramures as subject of a long standing debate*, “GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites” 2018, no. 1, pp. 585–596; E. Mba et al., *op. cit.*; R. Lewcock, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ P. Tournikiotis, *The place of the Parthenon in the history and theory of modern architecture* [in:] P. Tournikiotis (ed.), *The Parthenon and its impact in modern times*, Melissa Publishing House, Athens 1994, pp. 200–229.

¹⁶ M. Korres, *The Parthenon from Antiquity to the 19th Century* [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 136–161.

¹⁷ P. Tournikiotis, *op. cit.*, p. 202; L. Lambrinou, *The Parthenon from the Greek revival to modern architecture* [in:] K. Harloe, N. Momigliano, A. Farnoux (eds), *Hellenomania*, Routledge, London 2018, pp. 126–161.

¹⁸ P. Tournikiotis, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

a combination of the Parthenon with another iconic building of the time that had survived to our times – the Parthenon.

2.1. THE MONUMENT

One of the first projects of this type was the monument to Frederick the Great in Berlin, designed by Friedrich Gilly in 1797, followed by the German Valhalla in Regensburg^{19, 20}, completed in 1819, and the Befreiungshalle in Kelheim, created by Leo von Klenze. Valhalla, in particular, highlights the critical issue of using a model setting and dressing it with a thoroughly modern functional layout and a modern steel truss roof, which is crucial for the facility's reception. Therefore, we are dealing with a copy of a form perceived as ideal, with an ideologically and technically modern 'interior', adapted to specific functions.

The idea of commemoration was also revived in Great Britain, partly under the influence of the British victory at Waterloo. It was taken up in the Scottish Parliament, resulting in the designs of Thomas Harrison and the partially completed Scottish National Monument on Carlton Hill in Edinburgh, designed by C.R. Cockrell and W.H. Playfair, and built between 1822 and 1829²¹. The same happened in other parts of Europe. The visions created were not considered copies (plagiarism, in the modern sense of the word), but rather a romantic interpretation of tradition.

The Parthenon became a powerful symbol at the beginning of the 19th century, a turbulent period in European history marked by wars of independence, revolutions, and republican ideas, and somewhat later, during the Greek wars of independence. At the same time, David Hume's philosophical thought, described in 1741, provided the theoretical basis for this²². It is therefore not surprising that the earliest design in Europe for a monument-facility that was a copy of the Parthenon was the design for a church, later the Temple of Divine Providence in Warsaw. This form was proposed in the first architectural competition for a church design in Poland by the French ambassador August de Choiseul-Gouffier as an ideal reflection of the contemporary Polish-Lithuanian republic²³, which was emerging on the model of ancient republicanism. The author, a temple researcher, proposed a perfect copy of the facility as a symbolic representation.

2.2. THE TEMPLE

The history of the construction of the La Madeleine church in Paris was similar²⁴. The current church was designed in 1806 by Pierre Alexandre Vignon on the orders of Napoleon

¹⁹ Several designs were created for this facility, but all of them consistently referred to the idea of a Greek temple. In 1807 and 1809, the first two concepts were created for King Ludwig of Bavaria by Karl von Fisher, followed by Heller von Hallerstein, and finally Leo von Klenze's design was implemented.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 207; W. Lorenz, A. Rohde, *Building with iron in nineteenth century Bavaria – The Valhalla roof truss and its architect, Leo von Klenze*, "Construction History" 2001, no. 17, pp. 55–74.

²¹ P. Tournikiotis, *op. cit.*, pp. 208–209.

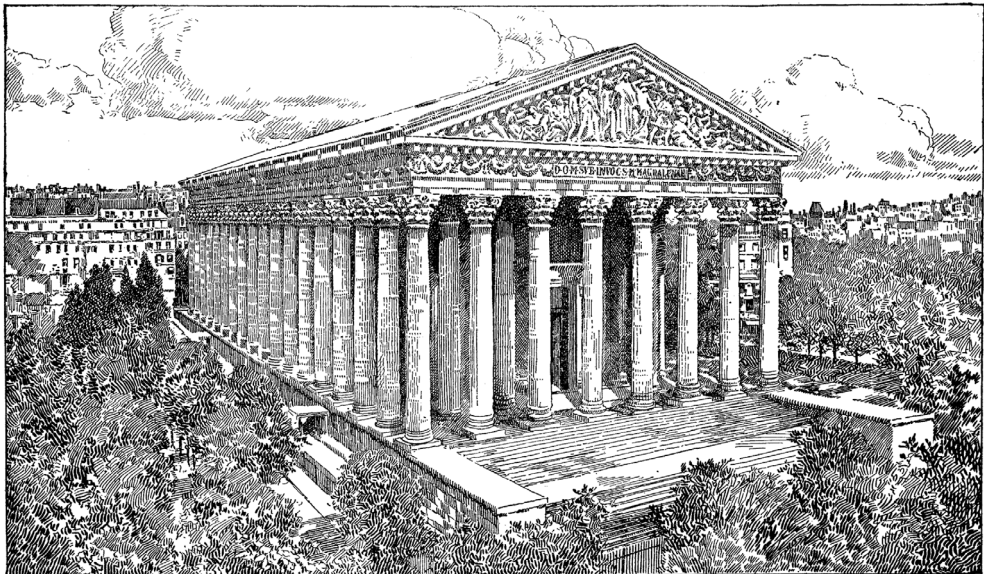
²² L. Lambrinou, *op. cit.*, pp. 132–133.

²³ M. Getka-Kenig, *Commemorative architecture, Periclean Athens and the Polish Revolution of 1791: Auguste de Choiseul-Gouffier's Parthenon-inspired temple for Warsaw*, "Classical Receptions Journal" 2023, no. 4, pp. 434–457.

²⁴ E. Bordure, *Les projets pour la première église de la Madeleine à Paris (1753–1791)*, "Bulletin Monumental" 2018, no. 2, pp. 99–127.

Bonaparte, and after the latter architect died in 1828, Jacques-Marie Huvé completed it as a temple to the glory of the French army, and finally, completed in 1842, it took on a form strongly inspired by the Parthenon, albeit different in detail.

Earlier, King Louis XV had planned a church in a slightly different form, with a visible dome, designed by Pierre Contant d'Ivry and Guillaume-Martin Couture. The cornerstone was laid in 1763, but the church was never completed. The competition, which took place in 1753, included creating the square and the church forming its northern block. The participants included Ange-Jacques Gabriel, Pierre Contant d'Ivry, Pierre-François Godot, and Jacques Hardouin-Mansart de Sagonne. At the end of the competition, the first of them was tasked with combining the three best proposals into one design²⁵. The need for further changes in 1764 left behind, also unimplemented, concepts by Pierre-Antoine Demachy, Pierre Patte, Charles Dupuis, Georges-Louis Le Rouge, Julien-David Leroy, and others. All of them were characterised by references to the original concept only in the area of the entrance portico²⁶ (Ill. 1).



Ill. 1. View of La Madeleine Church in Paris from 1848–1862, source: *La Madeleine* [in:], ClipArt ETC, https://etc.usf.edu/clipart/79700/79762/79762_lamadeleine.htm (access: 1.07.2025)

2.3. THE CAPITALISTIC PARTHENON

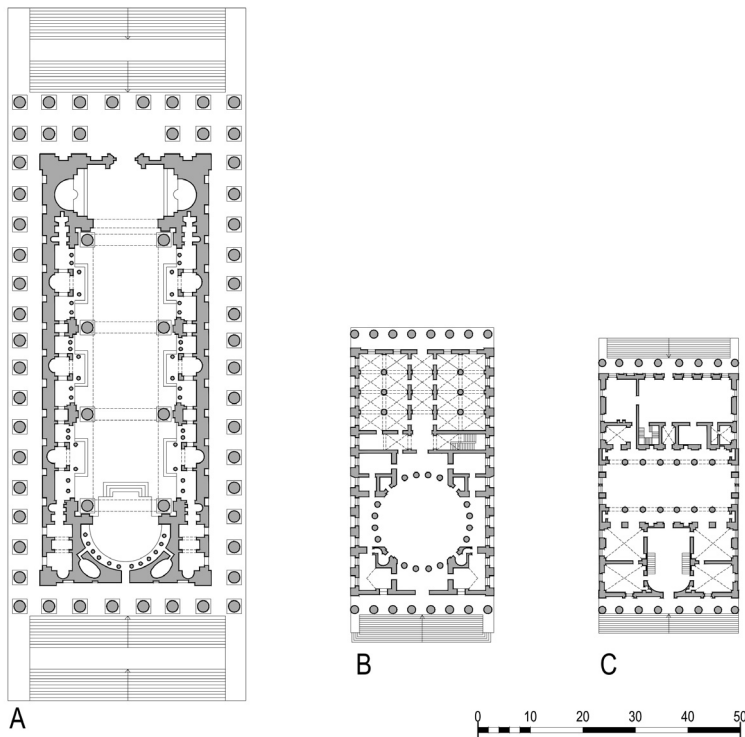
An even more liberal approach was taken by architects in the United States, where many essential facilities specific to the character and structure of the newly emerging capitalist and democratic state – Capitol buildings as seats of state authorities, bank headquarters, libraries, offices, and customs houses – were designed to refer to the Athenian model²⁷. The first

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 99.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 105–108.

²⁷ P. Tournikiotis, *op. cit.*, pp. 210–219; F. Koeper, M. Whiffen, *American architecture*, vol. 1, 1607–1860, MIT Press, Cambridge 1981, p. 153.

facility of this type is considered the Second Bank of the United States, built between 1818 and 1824 in Philadelphia by William Strickland²⁸. Subsequent projects replicated the proposed form, adapting it to local conditions, the investor's wealth, and the function of the building. The plans for individual facilities were the most strongly individualised, proposing layouts resulting from the requirements of new functions, 'squeezed' into the rigid plan of a temple. Hence, the floor plans, subordinated to the need for multi-axis symmetry, were essentially non-adaptable. Surprisingly, the same façade layout, modelled on the Parthenon, was used just as often for banks, courts²⁹, and offices as temples³⁰, and later, for residential buildings³¹. However, as the status of the facility declined, the quality of reproduction also deteriorated



Ill. 2. Comparison of ground floor plans for selected facilities inspired by the Parthenon: A – La Madeleine Church in Paris, B – Federal Hall National Memorial in New York, C – Second Bank of the United States in Philadelphia, source: own work

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 153–156.

²⁹ See: Custom House in New York, arch. T., D. i J. Frazee, 1833–1842; Ohio State Capitol in Ohio, arch. T. Cole, 1838–1861; Indiana Capitol in Indianapolis, arch. I. Town and A.J. Davis, 1831–1835; Tennessee State Capitol in Nashville, arch. W. Strickland, 1845–1859; Girard College in Philadelphia, arch. T.U. Walter, 1833–1848; Patent Office in Washington, arch. R. Mills, 1836.

³⁰ See: St. Paul's in Richmond, arch. T.S. Stewart 1845; Unitarian Church in Quincy, arch. A. Parris, 1828.

³¹ See: Lee Mansion in Arlington, arch. G. Hadfield, 1820; Judge Wilson House in Ann Arbor, 1843; residence in Berry Hill in Halifax, arch. John Evans Johnson, 1842–1844; L. Lambrinou, *op. cit.*, pp. 143–144.

significantly, remaining, despite being classified as Greek Revival, a caricature drawn more from descriptions than from experience of contact with the original³² (Ill. 2).

Over time, the pattern was reduced and fragmented. In the composition of subsequent elements, already as a quotation rather than a direct copy, the pronaos began to be used more often as an element intended solely to place the facility in a specific cultural context^{33 34}.

Some researchers, including Tournikiotis, attribute the growing need for education, often academic, to the creation of accurate copies of the Parthenon in various parts of the world, which are correct in form but not necessarily in the materials used. These copies were made as fragments of the original structure or scaled-down models, which proved insufficient³⁵. They were therefore treated not as copies – plagiarism, but as a reproduction of an ideal, a form of homage through faithful imitation, but also as cheap entertainment, as in the case of the 1897 copy in Nashville, which was the main attraction of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition, along with a Ferris wheel and other attractions of this type. Despite being a replica, American publications on the facility attribute its authorship to William C. Smith³⁶. Interestingly, in 1931, it was reconstructed using concrete and without the remaining buildings, and the authorship of the next replica is attributed to Wilbur Foster Creighton³⁷ or Russell E. Hart³⁸, and what is even more interesting, despite the facility being considered a ‘finished’ work and, from an American perspective, a historical monument, during its renovation in 1986–1988, its structure was extended from the north-east with a lobby, a sanitary complex, and a shop, transforming the pronaos into an exhibition and communication area, while adapting the remaining part for museum purposes and creating social amenities for museum employees in the place of the opisthodomos and the part behind it, and moving the entrance to the facility to a level below the main level, thus disrupting the very idea of the building’s composition. In the meantime, in 1915, a similar copy became part of an analogous exhibition – the San Francisco Exposition (Ill. 3).

2.4. THE TEMPLE OF COMMERCE

The next moment in history when more copies of the Parthenon appeared was during the postmodern period, when it became a globally recognisable symbol of a ‘temple’. In the USA, even earlier, in 1966, the Caesars Palace complex was opened in Las Vegas, which was the antithesis of the previous approach to the Parthenon as a model of order and proportion. The facility was designed by Jay Sarno and Melvin Grossman in 1962³⁹.

³² See: Uncle Sam Plantation in St. James Parish, Louisiana, from about 1850.

³³ See: Entrance portico of the Academy of Athens, Arch. Theophil Hansen and Ernst Ziller, 1859–1867; Low Memorial Library, University of Columbia in New York, Arch. Charles McKim, 1895–1898; Roosevelt Hall at National War College in Washington, 1903–1907; Philadelphia Museum of Art in Philadelphia, Arch. Horace Trumbauer, Howell Lewis Shay, Julian Abele, and Clarence Zantlinger, 1916–1928; Remembrance Monument in Melbourne, Arch. Phillip Burgoyne Hudson, and James Hastie Wardrop, 1934.

³⁴ L. Lambrinou., pp. 146–150.

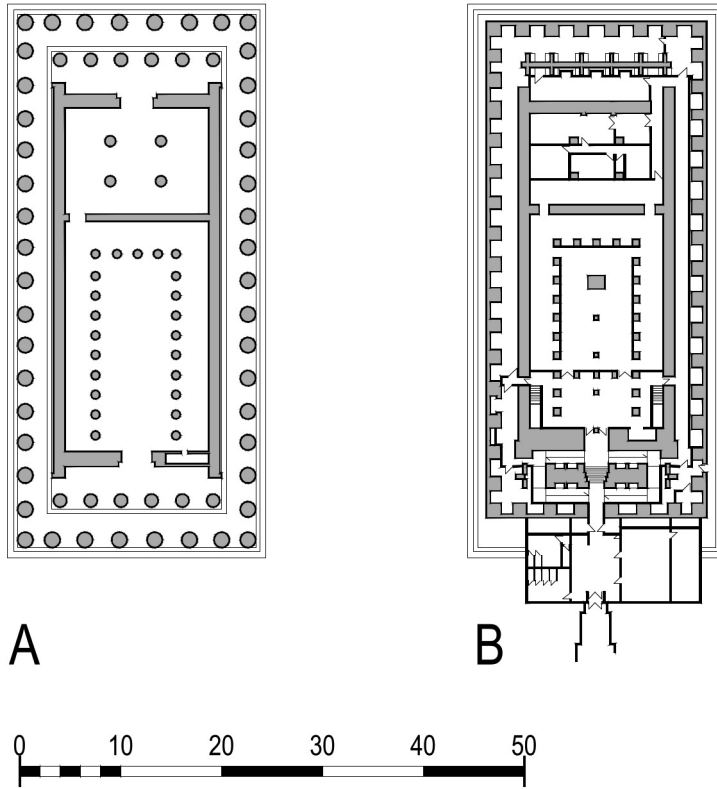
³⁵ P. Tournikiotis., pp. 222–224.

³⁶ W.F. Creighton, *The Parthenon in Nashville. From a personal viewpoint*, JM Productions, Nashville 1991, revised ed., pp. 4–5.

³⁷ P. Tournikiotis., pp. 223–224; W.F. Creighton., pp. 19–20.

³⁸ L. Lambrinou., p. 149.

³⁹ C.L. Guzman, *Caesars Palace, 1966–1996*, University of Nevada, Las Vegas 1997, p. 4. DOI: 10.25669/c9ms-16wb.



Ill. 3. Parthenon in Nashville. A – ground level floor plan from 1897, B – ground level floor plan from 1931, source: own work

While placing a replica of the temple in an exhibition and entertainment complex in Nashville bordered on kitsch, albeit as a form of homage to a particular ideal, the extremely commercial approach, drawing on ancient motifs, proportions, and elements of the Parthenon, broken down into individual components and reattached to the extremely modernist structure of a complex housing a hotel and casino, is nothing more than a caricature of ‘tradition’. This is especially true after several significant later redevelopments, which transformed the antique motifs and the original proportional composition into a *horror vacui* composition (Ill. 4).

3. SECOND CASE – THE ORANGE CUBE

While in the case of copies and references to buildings such as the Parthenon, which belong to the catalogue of outstanding architectural monuments, are described in textbooks and are considered canonical, in principle, even the production of a complete copy and attributing it to someone else’s authorship does not generally provoke any reaction, the situation is entirely



Ill. 4. Caesars Palace after the opening in 1966 and in 2010. A – author: Las Vegas News Bureau, source: Vintage Las Vegas – Caesars Palace, 1966 [in:] Vintage Las Vegas, <https://vintagelasvegas.com/post/766988786397757440/1966>, B – author: Cygnusloop99, source: Caesars Palace viewed from the top of the Eiffel tower at Paris Las Vegas [in:] Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caesars_Palace_-_South_East_-_2010-12-12.jpg (access: 1.07.2025)

different in the case of architecture not considered iconic, architecture in the ‘international style’ as defined in 1932⁴⁰.

Located in Lyon, the Orange Cube building serves as an office, exhibition, and display space. Completed in 2010–2011 for Rhône Saône Development, it is located on the waterfront next to the historic warehouse facilities of the port. The design by Jakob + Macfarlane Architects⁴¹ is a key element in the transformation of the port docks into commercial and cultural facilities. The facility is adjacent to the arched Salins hall and opens onto the Saône River at its mouth, where it flows into the Rhône, creating a coherent line of buildings between the river and the railway line leading to the former port buildings.

Although dominant, its characteristic form results from a clearly defined urban context, the form and layout of the neighbouring buildings, and the role it was assigned in revitalising the port waterfront. It is a logical consequence of a series of decisions that created a very

⁴⁰ H.R. Hitchcock, P. Johnson, *op. cit.*

⁴¹ *Orange Cube* [in:] Jakob + Macfarlane Architects, <http://www.jakobmacfarlane.com/en/project/orange-cube/> (access: 1.07.2025).

expressive structure. Let's consider it to be so dominant that it could just as well be found in another, equally neutral context. It is not surprising that barely a year after the building's completion, an identical form, consistent in size, colour, and perforation pattern, appeared in the urban and architectural concept for the redevelopment and extension of the Miami district, Overtown, by Pharrell Williams and Chad Oppenheim⁴². In this case, however, a discussion arose about potential plagiarism, which remained unresolved, especially in the context of the impracticability of the entire project. Nevertheless, this case shows that plagiarism and self-plagiarism can be discussed in the reproduction of a very distinctive building form in contemporary architecture (Ill. 5).



Ill. 5. Orange Cube in Lyon, and a part of the concept of the Ice Cream City, source: *Orange Cube* [in:] Jakob + Macfarlane Architects, <http://www.jakobmacfarlane.com/en/project/orange-cube/> (access: 1.07.2025), [11] [*Orange Cube*] [in:] UploadHouse, <https://www.uploadhouse.com/viewfile.php?id=16765523&showlnk=0> (access: 1.07.2025)

4. CONCLUSIONS

Although the concept of 'international style' in architecture was officially introduced in 1932 with the completion of the PSFS skyscraper⁴³ in Philadelphia by George Howe⁴⁴ and was named as such by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in their book of the same title⁴⁵, as the following analysis shows, this style had already emerged over 100 years earlier, based on the concept of the ideal form of the Greek Parthenon. The universalism of the 'international style' of architecture was based on 'elasticity' and the possibility of 'general growth'⁴⁶, rather than on the top-down aesthetics with which it is currently associated. The Parthenon, as a symbol of the emergence and development of first Classicism and later Neoclassicism as one of the historical styles of the 19th century, was associated with formalism, but one that was inspired and did not limit the use of new solutions, as was the case at the time of its creation.

In the case of such a powerful medium of content – an idea, as the Parthenon was for European and post-European culture in North America – it became a universal form for

⁴² Mika, *Pharrell Williams & Chad Oppenheim are building a 'Ice Cream City'* [in:] The Neptunes, 17.10.2012, <https://theneptunes.org/2012/10/pharrell-williams-chad-oppenheim-are-building-a-ice-cream-city/> (access: 1.07.2025).

⁴³ Philadelphia Saving Fund Society building.

⁴⁴ F. Koeper, M. Whiffen, *op. cit.*, pp. 336–340.

⁴⁵ H.R. Hitchcock, P. Johnson, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 241.

emphasising ideologically significant content and values, such as civil equality, modernity and, broadly understood republican ideas. At the same time, a particular mystery, hidden in the complex mathematical relationships that make up the composition of the structure, and thanks to the finesse of the sculptural solutions adopted, made it ideal, with its apparent simplicity, as a tool for constructing monumental architecture. In this case, the historic building, as a universal symbol of the values associated with it, has become an expression of very traditional content.

Universalism in architecture is nothing new – it has existed since at least the mid-18th century, albeit understood somewhat differently than today. Although it was sometimes evident in copying facilities regardless of local conditions, location, and climate, it was much more common to transfer the idea, adapting its visual representation to the characteristics of the place.

Today, this concept has split into two separate trends. One has crystallised into the idea of ‘universality of solutions’, understood as ensuring accessibility to the broadest possible group of users. The other concerns formal, material, and compositional solutions used regardless of geographical location, climate, availability of raw materials, or specific cultural characteristics of a given place. It therefore seems that the 19th-century approach was much more sensible than the contemporary practice of copying solutions due to fashion or the prevailing political climate.

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Author's Note

Assoc. Prof. Justyna Kleszcz, PhD, DSc, Architect

Practising architect living in Wrocław, Professor at the Opole University of Technology and a Chairperson of the Scientific Council of the Discipline of Architecture and Urban Planning. In 2014, she submitted a dissertation entitled “Animal Therapy in Urban Space. The Coexistence of Humans and Animals” and obtained her doctorate at the Faculty of Architecture, Wrocław University of Technology. In 2022, she completed her habilitation at the Faculty of Architecture at the Cracow University of Technology. Her scientific interests focus on non-anthropocentric design and architecture of animal-aided therapy centres, as well as new trends in biophilic urban design. Her present research examines the theoretical and practical aspects of urban farming as well as the morphological and historical transformations of urban space. j.kleszcz@po.edu.pl