

ARCHITECTURE OF NEW BRUTALISM IN KRAKÓW – THE HOTEL OF POLISH DIASPORA COLLEGE OF THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY

ARCHITEKTURA NEOBRUTALIZMU W KRAKOWIE – HOTEL KOLEGIUM POLONIJNEGO UJ

Abstract

The Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków-Przegorzały is an example of New Brutalism in Polish architecture. New Brutalism was born in England from theory of Peter and Alison Smithson and not without the influence of Le Corbusier's Brutalism. The architectural design of the Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the JU is the work of Cracovian architects: Tomasz Mańkowski and Dariusz Kozłowski; Dariusz Kozłowski and Maria Misiągiewicz are the authors of the interior design. The hotel with conference facilities was designed for students and scholars of Polish origin arriving in Kraków with the intention of studying and scientific work. The architecture of the hotel is a breakthrough – derived from modernity, refers to tradition, recalling motifs taken from the past. By being reminiscent of the historical university buildings of the Cracow Alma Mater and post-war seats of English universities, the architecture of the Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the JU is indicative of the international stature of the Jagiellonian University.

Key words: architectural form and composition, threads of significance in the 20th century architecture, New Brutalism in architecture, architecture as a symbol

Streszczenie

Hotel Kolegium Polonijnego Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie-Przegorzałach to przykład neobrutalizmu w architekturze polskiej. Nowy brutalizm narodził się w Anglii, z teorii Petera i Alison Smithsonów, nie bez wpływu brutalizmu Le Corbusiera. Projekt architektoniczny Hotelu Kolegium Polonijnego UJ jest dziełem krakowskich architektów: Tomasza Mańkowskiego i Dariusza Kozłowskiego, autorami projektu wewnątrz są Dariusz Kozłowski i Maria Misiągiewicz. Hotel wraz z częścią konferencyjną zaprojektowano z myślą o studentach i uczonych polskiego pochodzenia, przybywających do Krakowa z zamiarem studiowania i pracy naukowej. Architektura budowli jest przełomowa – wywodząc się z nowoczesności, nawiązuje ona do tradycji i motywów z przeszłości. Przywołując historyczne gmachy uniwersyteckie krakowskiej Alma Mater oraz powojenne siedziby angielskich uczelni, architektura Hotelu Kolegium Polonijnego UJ w Krakowie-Przegorzałach zaświadcza o międzynarodowej randze Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: forma i kompozycja architektoniczna, wątki znaczeniowe architektury XX wieku, neo-brutalizm w architekturze, architektura jako symbol

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*The first pretext for architectural form construction
were the ideas of New Brutalism*
Dariusz Kozłowski

1. NEW BRUTALISM IN ARCHITECTURE

New Brutalism in architecture was born in England in the late 1940s. inspired by Peter and Alison Smithson. New Brutalism is an architectural response to the spiritual, social and material losses caused by the World War II. “The name New Brutalism refers to the “old” Brutalism which descends from Le Corbusier, from his *beton brut*, meaning wet cast concrete, revealing the true nature of wooden framework and the surface of an untreated reinforced concrete casting”, says Dariusz Kozłowski, “nature which, in the eyes of architects, took on a moral value based on “sincerity” of the architectural matter and the “truly” architectural idea. The idea of forms of Le Corbusier’s late works, above all the La Tourette building and “housing units” are the origin of the principles of shaping architecture”². The aesthetics of Brutalism was determined by raw concrete, which was a symbol of strength and invulnerability in architecture. Both architecture of Le Corbusier, Mies van de Rohe or Walter Gropius and works of Andrea Palladio inspired authors of New Brutalism, and it indicates the postmodern breakthrough in the art of construction. This architectural trend also shows affinities with architectural works of Luis Kahn, whose student was Tomasz Mańkowski. The Smithsons were members of Team 10, which was established as a result of a schism and eventually disbandment of CIAM. The British architects challenged the totalitarianism of the modern architecture and urban planning, advocating the return to human values, and emphasized the importance of context and cultural area. “The picturesque informality is an essence of British culture”, underlines Nicolaus Pevsner, referring to the term *New Humanism*, promoted by editors of the “Architectural Review”, as a humanized version of the Modern Movement³. The architecture of New Brutalism of Peter and Alison Smithson was also influenced by visual arts: anthropological aestheticism associated with *art brut* – paintings and sculptures by Jean Dubuffet and works of photographer Nigel Henderson and sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi, determining the existential character of the trend⁴. Ruins remaining after bombardments of European cities revealed the structure of buildings – torn walls and ceilings revealing the nature of materials and remnants of once inhabited flats and vibrant buildings, shattered and stripped of dignity, like human remains...

Just like modernism, the architecture of New Brutalism drew on the heritage of Japanese architecture, emphasizing the meaning of form, plastic and sensual qualities of materials. In the manifesto of New Brutalism published in “Architectural Review”, the Smithsons wrote: “however for the Japanese the FORM was only a part of the holistic concept of life, a kind of reverence for the natural world and therefore also for materials in a man-built world”⁵. According to Dariusz Kozłowski, Reyner Banham’s rhetorical question asked in the subtitle of the book on New Brutalism: “aesthetics or ethics?”, characterizes the style to the fullest.

² D. Kozłowski, *Nowy brutalizm w Krakowie, albo prawda architektury Kolegium Polonijnego UJ [New Brutalism in Kraków or the Truth of the Polish Diaspora College of JU Architecture]*, Polski Cement [Polish Cement], 2001, no. 3, p. 8.

³ [After:] K. Frampton, *Modern Architecture: a Critical History*, Thames & Hudson, London 2016, p. 262

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 264

⁵ A. P. Smithson, T. Crosby, *Nowy brutalizm [New Brutalism]* [in:] Ch. Jencks, K. Kropf (ed.), *Teorie i manifesty architektury współczesnej [Theories and Manifestos of Modern Architecture]*, Grupa Sztuka Architektury, Warszawa 2013, pp. 246–247.

“Of course – aesthetics; ethical threads are pretexts for construction of architectural shape, but the form obtains depth only after comprehending and understanding (ethical?) assumptions of the idea”⁶. The ideas of New Brutalism are contained in architecture of Hunstanton School built in Norfolk between 1949 and 1954, according to a design by the Smithsons. The architecture of the school, in spite of its modern industrial aesthetics, contains references to the past. The horizontal solid was designed around two courtyards. Charles Jenks points to “explicit reference to past works, to the Miesian idiom of frame and infill and to the Palladian order of rectilinear formality”⁷. Among characteristic features of the New Brutalism architecture Dariusz Kozłowski accentuates: modesty, moderation, succinctness of the architectural form, logic and beauty of composition, importance of details and exposing the natural beauty of materials. “Building materials should display “sincerity” and proclaim their “naturalness”. Among them there is a brick; for New Brutalism there was nothing more natural than a brick. And among all bricks this particular one, which allows to build a wall with a rich texture of the outer face”⁸. During his stay in England Dariusz Kozłowski became interested in the architectural works of ABK Architects – Peter Ahrends, Richard Burton and Paul Kolarek, the authors of *Chichester Theological College* in Sussex, *Keble College Extension* or the *University of Oxford*. New Brutalism inspired European and world architecture of that time, influencing the search for new expression in Polish architecture of the 1970s. A brick, present in architecture since ancient times, is an aesthetic link between tradition and modernity represented by concrete. “Concrete is no longer perceived only as durable and useful. The material is suitable for the construction of buildings and it also gains a new dimension”, notes Tomasz Kozłowski. “It might be seen as decoration, a complement to the form. Contemporary concrete changes the meaning of other materials, becomes a background for them. Sometimes it might be called “indifferent” material. It is not a pejorative term, quite the contrary. Concrete might be a background, a set for glass, steel or brick. It creates the new aesthetics which uses qualities of different materials. It might be perceived as a new ornament, which even Adolf Loos would look favorably on”⁹. An expressive example of a marriage of concrete and brick in post-war European architecture is the *Church of the Resurrected Christ* erected in 1968–1970 in Cologne, according to the design of Gottfried Böhm. Brick and concrete were considered to be the reality and the basis of New Brutalism architecture, wood, steel and glass were treated as noble materials – accents complementing the composition.

2. TRADITION AND MODERNITY OF ARCHITECTURE – THE HOTEL OF POLISH DIASPORA COLLEGE OF THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY IN KRAKÓW

Participants of the Meeting of Scientists of Polish Origin were behind the idea of establishing *Kazimierz Pulaski College of Polish Diaspora* in Kraków-Przegorzały and they also signed a symbolic *Act of Foundation* on July 19, 1979. The document states that the newly designed architecture of *the Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the Jagiellonian University* is to become

⁶ D. Kozłowski, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁷ Ch. Jenks, *Modern Movement in Architecture*, Anchor Books, New York 1973, p. 251.

⁸ D. Kozłowski, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁹ T. Kozłowski, *Beton – dopełnienie współczesnego monumentu [Concrete – Complementation of Contemporary Monument]*, Dni Betonu Wisła 2014 [Days of Concrete Wisla 2014] www.dnibetonu.pl (access: 01.07.2019).

“a symbol of the bond between Polish universities and Polish communities all over the world, to serve the youth of the Polish Diaspora and scientists of all countries, to beam with the idea of international cooperation and peace”¹⁰. The Jagiellonian University was donated a 9-hectare area of exceptional landscape value by Kraków authorities of that time. The plot of land, with an extensive view of the Kraków panorama and the mountains, is located on a terrain elevation above the Vistula River bend. The place located on the skirts of Lasek Wolski, surrounded by old-growth forest – oaks, pine trees and beeches, included two existing buildings designed by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, the first Dean of the Faculty of Architecture in Kraków: the architect’s own villa built between 1928 and 1929 in the French Renaissance style and *Schloss Wartenberg*, erected in the spirit of Heimatstil during the World War II. It was decided to adapt the existing buildings for scientific and research purposes. The newly designed hotel with conference facilities was located above.

The architecture of *The Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the JU* in Kraków-Przegorzaly is a work of Tomasz Mańkowski and Dariusz Kozłowski, while Dariusz Kozłowski and Maria Misiągiewicz are the authors of interior design. The architectural design was developed between 1973 and 1975 at The Department of Housing Construction Chair of Housing Architecture Institute of Architectural Design Faculty of Architecture Cracow University of Technology. The construction design was created in cooperation of Kazimierz Flaga, Marian Płachecki and Stanisław Karczmarczyk. The realization took place in 1975–1983.

The architectural form was inspired by both the ideas of New Brutalism and the unusual character of the place, co-created by nature and existing buildings. “The first pretext for building the architectural form were the ideas of New Brutalism”, emphasizes Dariusz Kozłowski. “The pretext for the shape of the architecture was also provided by the context: the outline of a clearing-court and the form of the adjacent slopes of gorges. The building was inscribed in it, gently approaching the trees”¹¹. The construction was planned on a “forest clearing”, created from the former tennis court. According to the principles of New Brutalism, the design took into account preservation of all growing trees, which required irrigation of the adjacent area during the construction works. The architecture of *the Hotel of Polish Diaspora College* is a breakthrough – deriving from modernity, which manifested itself to the fullest in the work of Le Corbusier, the architecture reaches for patterns taken from the distant past. The architectural form, the spatial composition, the details, they refer to tradition, evoking associations with monastery architecture or a fortress. “We are immersed in time”, Dariusz Kozłowski and Maria Misiągiewicz say. “This means constantly looking back – at the past, listening to history, believing in tradition in the power of heritage”¹². The architecture of the hotel resembles both: historical buildings of the vernacular Alma Mater and English universities erected after the World War II in the spirit of New Brutalism. The architectural idea of the intimate university building took into account spatial and cultural context and reached for “academic living” paradigm. “The beginning of the construction of architectural shape of the new building of the Polish Diaspora College was an idea of a spatial assumption – a vision of a building with an internal courtyard”¹³. Tracts with

¹⁰ *Act of Foundation* of the Hotel of Kazimierz Puławski Polish Diaspora College of the Jagiellonian University is kept at Chair of Housing and Architectural Composition, Institute of Architectural Design, Faculty of Architecture at Cracow University of Technology.

¹¹ D. Kozłowski, *Nowy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹² D. Kozłowski, M. Misiągiewicz, *Tradycja i nowoczesność architektury – Tezy XVIII Międzynarodowej Konferencji Naukowej Definiowanie przestrzeni architektonicznej* [Thesis of XVIII International Scientific Conference *Defining Architectural Space*], Kraków 2019.

¹³ D. Kozłowski, *Nowy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

living rooms from the outside and galleries from the inside were arranged around the courtyard, whose form and dimensions were taken from the courtyard of the *Jagiellonian University Collegium Maius*. The space of the hotel courtyard is surrounded by three – and four-storey building wings. “The “function” became an important pretext of the architectural shape – it is reflected in the external form of the building”, emphasizes Dariusz Kozłowski. The usable area arrangement of the building includes: the hotel part – an entrance hall with a reception desk, single and double rooms, residents’ suits, kitchens on hotel floors, club rooms, conference area with an auditorium and administrative part. According to the principles of New Brutalism “all the differences of function were extracted from the structure of the building: staircases, form of larger rooms, the nature of auditoriums they were all exposed¹⁴. The main entrance to the courtyard was planned from the southeastern side, through a “gate” crowned with a reinforced concrete platform, reminiscent of a “deck-street in the air” – a characteristic element of the Smithsons’ architecture¹⁵. The choice of materials – brick and concrete – was not accidental. To the contrary, Dariusz Kozłowski, like Le Corbusier, “wants to give reinforced concrete the properties of “natural material”, moreover – to give it a position equal to the one of stone, wood or terracotta¹⁶. In the architecture of the *Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the JU*, brick and concrete refer to the historic buildings of the University, where brick and stone detail have primacy. Among the threads of significance deciding on the architecture of the building one should mention: a courtyard motif, a tower accommodating a quarter-turn staircase and above all the repeated prefabricated reinforced concrete motif of a bay. “Separated forms – of the blocks of rooms with loggias and bays, galleries, staircases, apartment complexes, hallways, auditoriums – create a composition that is not free of the atmosphere of late modernism and longings for a certain surplus of shapes, remaining in a lightweight compositional anarchy”, explains Dariusz Kozłowski, “the whole structure was turned into one huge decoration¹⁷”. The top parts of the elevation were covered with plaster imitating the texture and colour of concrete. Tectonics of the elevation is created by a composition of loggias and bay windows, emphasizing modularity and unusual idea of living. “The hotel rooms, or rather scientific work rooms, are divided into three zones: living space, bathroom with an entrance hall, and a bay window with a worktable”, explains Dariusz Kozłowski. “The bay window occupies half the width of the room, the rest of it is reserved for a deep loggia¹⁸. The space for scientific work is accentuated both on the elevation and in the interior – by elevating the step above the floor level and raising the level of the ceiling. Full concrete headwalls of the bay windows, like in a monastery cell, are intended to encourage concentration limiting views, which could distract scientists, while the side slender window provides sufficient lightening for scientific work. The interior design of the *Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the JU* refers by the used materials – brick, concrete, raw plaster, wood, as well as by industrial elements of the interior design, to raw character of the elevation and the principles of New Brutalism. A poetic motif of the circular cut-out in the reinforced concrete balustrade of the bridge in an abstract way accentuates the “gate” leading to the courtyard making this element sculptural. A fountain placed in the middle of the hotel courtyard took a cubic form elevated on a graded pedestal. The perfect geometry of a cube was sculpturally deconstructed by a vertical fluting-like carvings. This architectural joke in a form of the fountain seems to be

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

¹⁵ Ch. Jenks, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

¹⁶ Misiągiewicz M., *Architektoniczna gra z betonem – Klasztor La Tourette [Architectural Game with Concrete]*, Polski Cement [Polish Cement], 2002, no. 2, p. 11.

¹⁷ D. Kozłowski, *Nowy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

“making fun of the historical past. Evoking associations with a chipped piece of a column and the fountain foretelling the postmodern era of the contemporary architecture...”

3. ROUGH POETRY OF THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE *HOTEL OF POLISH DIASPORA COLLEGE OF THE JU IN KRAKÓW*

“The architecture of the past”, says Dariusz Kozłowski, “even the past, which still belongs to the space of contemporary architecture, is sometimes condemned by the passing time to hard attempts at survival”¹⁹. The architecture of the *Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the JU* in Kraków-Przegorzały, renamed the *Wolski Hotel*, is currently being renovated in a way that raises many doubts.... The concrete planes of the outer platform, crowning the symbolic “gate” leading into the courtyard and some of the concrete bays, have been plastered in white, while the sloping concrete planes of the bays and the balustrades of the platform have been covered with sheet painted in red. Such operations blurred the essence of New Brutalism and the original character of this architecture. They should be ceased and replaced by cleaning and subsequently impregnation of concrete, using the latest building technologies. The purpose of impregnation is to strengthen the structure of concrete, to protect it against moisture and contaminants absorption²⁰. Colourless, matt, concrete penetrating – hydrophobic impregnation will be appropriate, followed by coating impregnation – protecting against the absorption of contaminants and at the same time facilitating subsequent treatments²¹.

“In the investigation on the essence of architecture, we think of it as art”²², says Dariusz Kozłowski. The architecture of the *Hotel of Polish Diaspora College*, just like architecture of old university buildings, emphasizes the stature of the oldest Polish university. The architecture of the building defined by the solid arranged around the courtyard was united with the place and surrounding nature by subtle decomposition of form and openings introducing into the space determined by the building. According to Tomasz Kozłowski, “beauty ceased to be an object of interest for creators long time ago (as in other arts). Another generations of architects, in pursuit of novelty and negation of their predecessors, forget about once the most important determinant of art”²³. But while admiring the “unspeakable space” of the architecture of the *Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the JU* in Kraków-Przegorzały, we are experiencing the beauty, the contemporary view of the *rough poetry of the architecture of New Brutalism*, full of existential depth, complexity and ambiguity. The beauty of the architectural composition, the tectonics of the elevation – articulated by bays and loggias, emphasized by the sensual qualities of materials – brick and concrete – is enlivened by the play of light and

¹⁹ D. Kozłowski, *Beton i architektura – Gesamtkunstwerk Carla Scarpy w San Vito di Altivole* [Concrete and Architecture – Gesamtkunst of Carl Scarpa in San Vito di Altivole], Dni Betonu Wisła 2014 [Days of Concrete Wisla 2014], www.dnibetonu.pl (access: 01.06.2019).

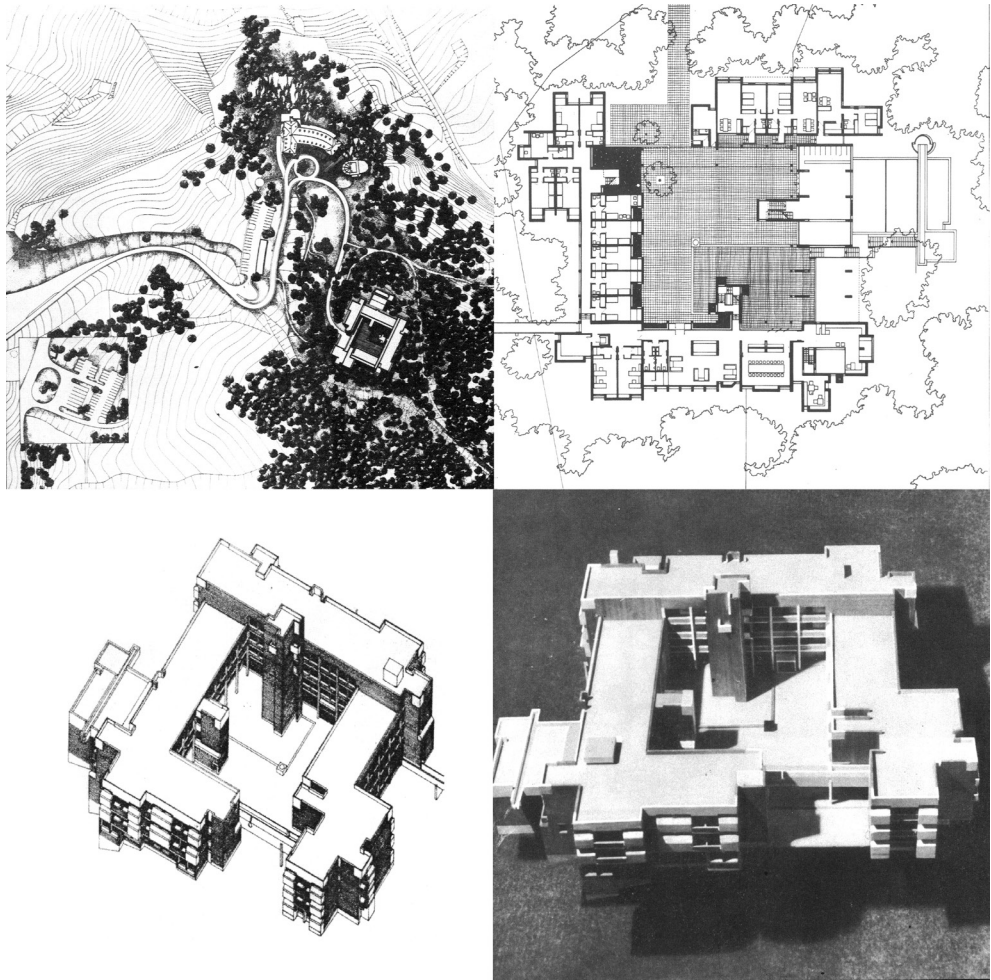
²⁰ Exemplary products: Sikagard® – 715 W, is designed to remove organic deposits on concrete surfaces, <https://pol.sika.com/> (access: 11.06.2019).

²¹ A. Kazimierowicz, *Impregnat do betonu: jaki wybrać? Impregnacja betonu, czyli jak zabezpieczyć posadzkę, kostkę, płyty tarasowe czy prefabrykaty betonowe* [Concrete Impregnation: Choosing the Best One. Concrete Impregnation, how to protect flooring, cobblestone, terrace slabs or precast concrete products], <https://murator-dom.pl/> (access: 09.06.2019).

²² D. Kozłowski, *Credo*, <http://www.dariuszkozowski.arch.pk.edu.pl/> (access: 03.05.2019).

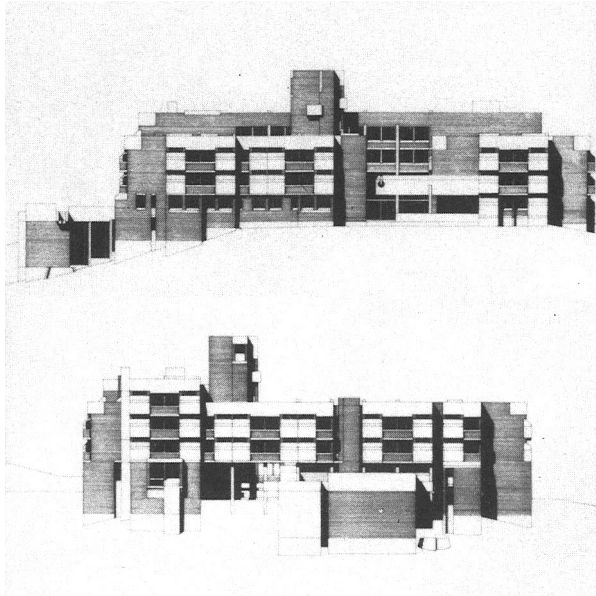
²³ T. Kozłowski, *Architektura a sztuka* [Architecture and Art], PK, Kraków 2018, p. 53.

shadow. The architecture of the hotel impacts by a full unification of ideas, form, function, construction... “I have a feeling that we slip through time: we may think that we move from the future to the past or from the past to the future”, says Jorge Luis Borges. “The presence always contains an element of the past, an element of the future”²⁴. *The spirit of the place* is created by the architecture of the *Hotel of Polish Diaspora Hotel of the JU* integrated into the space of the forest landscape park in Kraków-Przegorzały. The architecture originating from the achievements of modernity, but containing formal and symbolic references to the threads of significance creating centuries-old tradition of the art of construction.

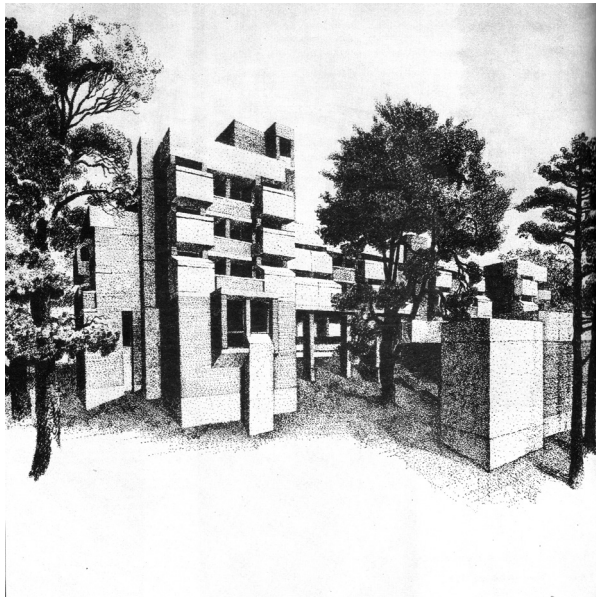


III. 1. Tomasz Mańkowski, Dariusz Kozłowski, Maria Misiągiewicz, *Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the Jagiellonian University*, Kraków-Przegorzały, Source of illustration: Publishing House of the Chair of Housing and Architectural Composition Institute of Architecture Design, Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology

²⁴ J. L. Borges, *Czas [Time]*, Literatura na Świecie, 1988, no. 12, p. 43, [after:] M. Misiągiewicz, *Architektoniczna geometria [Architectural geometry]*, DjaF, Kraków 2005, pp. 13–14.



III. 2. Dariusz Kozłowski, *Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the Jagiellonian University* – elevation drawings, Kraków-Przegorzały, source of illustration: Publishing House of the Chair of Housing and Architectural Composition 1963–1981 Institute of Architecture Design, Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology



III. 3. Dariusz Kozłowski, *Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the Jagiellonian University* – elevation drawings, Kraków-Przegorzały, source of illustration: Publishing House of the Chair of Housing and Architectural Composition 1963–1981 Institute of Architecture Design, Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology



III. 4. Tomasz Mańkowski, Dariusz Kozłowski, Maria Misiągiewicz, *Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the Jagiellonian University*, Kraków-Przegorzały, photos: Dariusz Kozłowski



III. 5. Tomasz Mańkowski, Dariusz Kozłowski, Maria Misiągiewicz, *Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the Jagiellonian University*, Kraków-Przegorzały, photos: Dariusz Kozłowski, Monika Gała-Walczowska



Ill. 6. Tomasz Mańkowski, Dariusz Kozłowski, Maria Misiągiewicz, *Hotel of Polish Diaspora College of the Jagiellonian University, Kraków-Przegorzały*, photos: Monika Gała-Walczowska

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