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## ARCHITECTURE, TECHNOLOGY AND MEANING – THE *BI UNIT RZESZÓW CENTRE* RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL COMPLEX<sup>1</sup>

### ARCHITEKTURA, TECHNIKA I ZNACZENIE – ZESPÓŁ MIESZKANIOWO-USŁUGOWY *CENTRUM RZESZOWA JEDNOSTKA BI*

#### Abstract

The paper presents an analysis of *architecture and technology*, using the example of the *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre* residential and commercial complex, designed by Kraków-based architect Mieczysław Gała. The urban and architectural concept of the complex included 8–11-storey multi-family residential buildings, located at 7 Stanisława Jabłońskiego Street, designed using the industrialized SBM-75 technology. The project also included a commercial complex consisting of three pavilions, designed during the *political transformation* period: *Bank PKO SA in Rzeszów*, *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów*, and the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre*, located at the intersection of Łukasza Ciepelińskiego Avenue and Józefa Piłsudskiego Avenue. These structures were planned and built in stages, using the Z.S.B.O. (Integrated General Building System) prefabricated framing technology with traditional curtain walls. The architecture of the *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre* is analysed in terms of its location, architectural-urban composition, form, details, interiors, and the importance of the materials and construction technologies used in 1990s Poland.

*Keywords: architecture of Rzeszów, urban and architectural composition, architectural form, threads of significance in contemporary architecture*

#### Streszczenie

Rozważania na temat *architektury i techniki* podjęto na przykładzie *Zespołu mieszkaniowo-usługowego Centrum Rzeszowa Jednostka BI*, autorstwa krakowskiego architekta Mieczysława Gały. Koncepcja urbanistyczno-architektoniczna zespołu obejmowała zabudowę mieszkaniową wielorodzinną wysokości 8–11 kondygnacji, zlokalizowaną przy ul. Stanisława Jabłońskiego 7, zaplanowaną w technologii uprzemysłowanej SBM-75 oraz projektowany w okresie *transformacji ustrojowej* zespół usługowy trzech pawilonów wysokości 2–3 kondygnacji: *Banku PKO SA w Rzeszowie*, *Banku Handlowego w Rzeszowie* oraz *Centrum Handlowego „Ameryka”*, akcentujących skrzyżowanie Alei Łukasza Ciepelińskiego i Alei Józefa Piłsudskiego, planowanych i realizowanych etapowo w technologii szkieletu prefabrykowanego Z.S.B.O. z tradycyjnymi ścianami osłonowymi. Architekturę *Centrum Rzeszowa Jednostka BI* przeanalizowano w odniesieniu do miejsca, kompozycji architektoniczno-urbanistycznej i formy architektonicznej, detali i wnętrza, a także znaczenia materiałów i technologii budowlanych lat 90. XX wieku w Polsce.

*Słowa kluczowe: architektura Rzeszowa, kompozycja urbanistyczno-architektoniczna, forma architektoniczna, wątki znaczeniowe architektury współczesnej*

<sup>1</sup> The author is currently conducting research on the architectural works of arch. Mieczysław Gała. This paper is part of a series dedicated to this architect.

*The spatial and functional design of the complex was shaped by the phased implementation and construction capabilities of the adopted structural system.*

Architect  
Mieczysław Gała

## ARCHITECTURE AND TECHNOLOGY

“Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light...”<sup>2</sup> Le Corbusier’s famous definition refers to built architecture, primarily focusing on form and composition. For the Architect-Creator, “architecture is the play of masses in the imagination...” Dariusz Kozłowski’s definition reveals the origin of the creative act and the architectural idea itself. “The essence of architecture lies” in its form, “in the expression of the principles of the language of forms... Architectural form is defined” by ideas, motivations, or even architectural pretexts, as well as the “dilemmas of concept and material”<sup>3</sup>. Architecture results from the synergy of urban-architectural composition, form, construction, technology, materials, elevation composition, and details, all in relation to the site – be it within a city, town, village, or open landscape. As a research field, architecture and urban planning belong to the engineering and technical sciences, forming an evident and inseparable unity.

Technology is a crucial aspect of human activity, grounded in knowledge and experience. It encompasses both practical and scientific domains, involving processes that either do not naturally occur or are designed to transform elements of nature. Nearly a century ago, Le Corbusier highlighted the importance of modern technology, stating: “We defend beautiful modern technology and show how much all arts owe to it – new forms of expression, bold realizations, and great technical possibilities”<sup>4</sup>. Technology drives civilization forward, and technological advancement plays a key role in economic development. As a research field alongside numerous engineering and technical sciences, including architecture, urban planning, construction, material engineering and science, environmental engineering and mechanics, “technology brings the world together”<sup>5</sup>. It is a significant element of culture.

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<sup>2</sup> Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture [Towards an Architecture]*, L’édition originale de cet ouvrage a été publiée en Paris 1923, Paris 1995, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> D. Kozłowski, *Definiowanie przestrzeni architektonicznej*, [in:] *Definiowanie Przestrzeni Architektonicznej. Międzynarodowa Konferencja Naukowa Instytutu Projektowania Architektonicznego, Kraków, 23–24 listopada 2001 roku*, DjaF, Kraków 2001, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, London 1927, after: Ch. Jencks, *Le Corbusier – tragizm współczesnej architektury*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa 1982.

<sup>5</sup> M. Sznajder, *Valerie Jarrett: nadchodzące wybory prezydenckie to krytyczny moment dla naszego kraju* [in:] *Fakty o Świecie TVN24 BiS*, 17.05.2024, <https://fakty.tvn24.pl/fakty-o-swiecie/valerie-jarrett-nadchodzace-wybory-prezydenckie-to-krytyczny-moment-dla-naszego-kraju-st7922230> (access: 20.05.2024).

## ARCHITECTURE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE WORK OF MIECZYŚLAW GAŁA<sup>6</sup>

While analysing selected works by Mieczysław Gała in the context of the relationship between architecture and technology, one can identify several characteristic elements. The importance of urban-architectural composition, in relation to site conditions and phased construction, is paramount. However, the primary focus should be on the structure, understood as the coexistence of architectural form, construction and material. As Maria Misiągiewicz states: “Architecture should be understood as the result of an idea reflected in appropriate materials”<sup>7</sup>. Materials like concrete, steel, ceramics, stone, and wood gain functional and aesthetic significance when considered within the context of the structural system, finishing

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<sup>6</sup> Arch. Mieczysław Franciszek Gała, MSc Eng. (1939–2020) – a graduate of the Faculty of Architecture at Cracow University of Technology (1958–1964). In 1964, he defended his diploma thesis entitled “A residential district for 20,000 inhabitants” – supervised by Prof. Witold Cęckiewicz. Since the mid-1960s, Mieczysław Gała had been professionally and personally connected to Rzeszów. He was the husband of Arch. Anna Krygowska-Gała. Mieczysław Gała and Anna Krygowska-Gała are co-authors and winners of many architectural competitions organised by SARP (Association of Polish Architects) and TUP (Society of Polish Town Planners). From 1965, Mieczysław Gała worked at the *Miastoprojekt* General Construction Design and Research Office in Rzeszów. From 1967 to 1982, he was an Architect and Chief Designer in the independent design team at *Miastoprojekt* BPBBO in Rzeszów. In 1974, he received the the National Education Commission Medal for his *contributions and achievements in the field of school construction*, and in 1986, he earned the Status of *Creative Architect*. His design work, largely dedicated to the architecture of Rzeszów, continued within his independent team at the General Construction Design and Research Office in Kraków (1983–1990), in collaboration with PUA SARP Rzeszów, PUA SARP Kraków, Architektura Marta Kozielec Design Studio (1993–1995), and *Miastoprojekt* BPBBO in Rzeszów. From 1995 to 2020, he served as an Architect and Chief Designer in the independent Monika Gała-Walczowska Mieczysław Gała Architektura Design Studio in Kraków. He was a member of SARP’s Rzeszów Branch (1965–2003) and Kraków Branch (2003–2020), as well as the Małopolska Chamber of Architects (2004–2020). He was the author of numerous study and completed projects. He designed many schools, including: the Pedagogical University of Rzeszów (co-authored with Arch. Tadeusz Lamers and Arch. Witold Sychłowy), the WSK Vocational School Complex in Mielec, the School and Educational Centre in Ustrzyki Dolne, the Primary School at 2 Lipińskiego Street in Kraków, the Educational Complex on the Nowe Miasto Housing Estate in Rzeszów, the Primary School on the Michałów Housing Estate in Radom, the Primary School on the Pod Skarpą Housing Estate in Wadowice (co-authored with Arch. Jarosław Kazior and Arch. Marta Kozielec), and the Secondary School Complex at 2 Kazimierza Wielkiego Street in Niepołomice. He was also the designer of the “Biawena” Sanatorium in Wysowa-Zdrój, the Krosno Centre – Provincial Office, PZU and PKO SA Bank, the BIUnit residential-commercial complex in Rzeszów, including PEKAO SA Bank, Bank Handlowy, and the “Ameryka” Shopping Centre, the “Rejtan” Commercial and Administrative Centre, and the “Prezydencki” Hotel and Conference Centre in Rzeszów. He designed residential complexes in Kraków, including at 22 Pilotów Street, 16 Rostworowskiego Street, 5 and 7 Zachodnia Street, 11–14 Przykopy Street, 166a–168 Kobierzyńska Street, 11a–d Sołtysowska Street, as well as housing estates in Stalowa Wola – Block 22: Central Estate and Pławo Estate, and in Bochnia – the Proszowska Wygoda Estate. Above all, he designed the Pobitno-Południe Estate, Profesorskie Estate, and Staromieście-Ogrody Estate in Rzeszów. Commemorative website of Arch. Mieczysław Gała: [www.mieczyslawgala.com](http://www.mieczyslawgala.com).

<sup>7</sup> M. Misiągiewicz, *O prezentacji idei architektonicznej*, Wydawnictwo PK, Kraków 2003, p. 13.

materials, colour, and texture. In public utility buildings, monolithic reinforced concrete skeleton technology and the Z.S.B.O. prefabricated framing technology are most commonly used. The late 1960s and 1970s were crucial for technological advancements, marked by the rise of industrialized construction, especially in residential projects and prefabrication. An interesting formal technique characteristic of Mieczysław Gała's work is the emphasis on fragments of the monolithic or prefabricated reinforced concrete frame, especially in public buildings. This compositional technique aims to highlight important parts of the building, usually related to the entrance areas of banks, service pavilions, or schools. The architect also appreciated steel construction, whose architectural aesthetic complemented its functional advantages, allowing for the spanning of large spaces. Steel structural elements were often emphasized in schools, administrative, and commercial buildings. A key element in Mieczysław Gała's architecture is light. Skylights, glazing, curtain walls and the play of light and shadow showcase the significance of transparency in architecture.

The period of *political transformation* brought about a free market, opening Poland to highly developed Western economies and, consequently, broad access to modern technologies and building materials. The free-market economy also fostered the emergence and growth of domestic manufacturers and construction companies. These factors contributed to the adoption of modern building materials in Polish architecture from the 1990s onward, greatly expanding design possibilities. The quality of construction work has improved significantly. Gradually, the financial capacity of investors has increased as well, including those from the public sector, entrepreneurs, and private individuals.

### **THE BI UNIT RZESZÓW CENTRE RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL COMPLEX**

The relationships between architecture and technology, in reference to architectural threads of significance, have been analysed using the example of one of the most important works of architect Mieczysław Gała – the *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex*.

The work on the urban-architectural concept of the *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre*, was initiated by architect Mieczysław Gała as the Chief Designer in 1978 at the *Miastoprojekt* Rzeszów General Construction Design and Research Office. The architect created several versions of the project for the *Residential and Commercial Complex in Rzeszów – an implementation plan for the development of Lenin Street*, later renamed Józefa Piłsudskiego Avenue in Rzeszów. The proposed residential and commercial complex was located in the western part of the design area. The service section was planned along the then 22 Lipca Street and Lenin Street, now known as Łukasza Ciepielńskiego Avenue and Józefa Piłsudskiego Avenue. The multi-family residential buildings were situated deeper within the design area, somewhat behind a screen of commercial buildings, in a zone defined by transportation non-disturbance areas and a visual axis<sup>8</sup>. The urban-architectural concept, designed and implemented in stages, was divided into a high-rise residential section and a low-rise service section. The main

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<sup>8</sup> M. Gała, *Opis techniczny Planu realizacyjnego Zespołu mieszkaniowo-usługowego Centrum Rzeszowska Jednostka BI*, Kraków 1985, source: archive of the Monika Gała-Walczowska Mieczysław Gała Architektura Design Studio.

pedestrian passage, running north-south, elevated on a viaduct, served as the connecting element between these two sections, being linked with a pedestrian passage planned along the east-west axis.

The functional and spatial layout made use of a significant level difference in the western part of the site, which allowed for separating vehicular and pedestrian traffic on different levels, ensuring the non-interference of these systems. The entrance to the investment site was designed from Grunwaldzka Street, as a one-way bypass. The proposed bypass serves the service delivery hubs and a parking lot with 137 spaces, located under the residential and commercial buildings, as well as the *Training Centre for the Staff of the Provincial Office* and a residential and commercial building at the corner of Józefa Piłsudskiego Avenue and Grunwaldzka Street. Placing the parking lot and service traffic under the buildings of the complex allowed for the allocation of recreational areas for residents.

The first stage of design and implementation included the *Urban-architectural concept*, *Technical and economic assumptions*, and *Technical designs* of the multi-family residential buildings No. 1, 2, 3, and 4, designed by architect Mieczysław Gała – Chief Designer, commissioned by *Inwestprojekt Rzeszów*, and later by the *Locators and Owners Cooperative Housing Association in Rzeszów*, currently the *Zodiak Cooperative in Rzeszów*, and implemented in stages as part of the *Residential and Commercial Complex* in Rzeszów at 7 Stanisława Jabłońskiego Street (project 1978–1986, construction 1986–1990). The multi-family residential buildings were planned as a layout of interpenetrating rectangular volumes. With varying heights of 8–11 stories, they form a composition resembling the letter L in plan. Residential buildings 1, 2, 3, and 4 were designed using an industrialized technology based on the SPB-75 Monolithic Construction System, developed by COBPBO Warsaw, as a cast-in-place slab-column reinforced concrete system, based on a 6 x 6 m grid, with a residential floor height of 2.8 m, 20 cm thick reinforced concrete ceilings, 20 cm thick reinforced concrete stiffening walls, and service floors with a height of 4.5 m. Many prefabricated elements were used: stairway flights, elevator shafts, window band curtain walls, and balcony railings. Building No. 1 has 8 stories and a staircase-based communication system, with three apartments accessible from the staircase on each floor. At the basement level and on the top floor, a connection between Building No. 1 and Building No. 2 was designed. Building No. 2 has varying heights of 10 and 2 stories, including 9 residential floors in the taller section and 1 service floor in the lower section. The building features two staircases and two passenger-furniture elevators, each serving 3 apartments per floor. Building No. 3 is 11 stories high: 10 residential stories and 1 service story, where the office of the Housing Cooperative is located. Building No. 2 features two staircases and two passenger-furniture elevators, each serving 3 apartments per floor. Building No. 3 is connected by a passageway, at a height of 26.9 meters, to Building No. 4, which has 8 residential stories. Building No. 4 also has a staircase-based communication system, with three apartments on each floor. The colour scheme of the residential building façades was originally designed in white – with sections of walls made of prefabricated panels and sections of walls made from aerated concrete blocks, covered with decorative plaster in terracotta colour. The gable walls were finished with corrugated metal sheets, and the recessed sections of the façades and balcony railings were in a dark brown shade. The service area below the viaduct was finished with jointed silicate brick, and the walls of the service premises were finished with decorative plaster in white. In 2006, architect Mieczysław Gała prepared a project for the modernization and colour change of the façades of residential buildings 1, 2, 3, and 4 at 7 Stanisława Jabłońskiego Street. The new colour scheme, maintained in white and grey, with accents in blue and navy,

emphasizes the aesthetic connection between the architecture of the residential buildings and the architecture of the commercial pavilions.

Subsequent stages of designing the *B1 Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex* took place as part of the collaboration between architect Mieczysław Gała and the Architectural Services Studio of the Association of Polish Architects, Rzeszów Branch, based on the designs of three service pavilions, emphasizing the intersection of Łukasza Ciepelińskiego Avenue and Józefa Piłsudskiego Avenue: Pavilion No. 1 – the *PKO Bank in Rzeszów*, Pavilion No. 2 – the *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów*, and the *Shopping Arcade – Pavilion No. 3*, named in honour of the Polish diaspora in the USA, the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre*<sup>9</sup>.

In 1989, architect Mieczysław Gała prepared the conceptual design for Pavilion No. 1 and the interior design concept for the *PKO Bank in Rzeszów*<sup>10</sup>. The technical design for Pavilion No. 1, currently housing the *PEKAO S.A. Bank* at 1 Łukasza Ciepelińskiego Avenue, was developed in 1989 by Mieczysław Gała – Chief Designer, in collaboration with architect Witold Sztorc. The construction took place between 1990 and 1992. The building was designed using a prefabricated frame technology (Z.S.B.O.) with traditional curtain walls. Pavilion No. 1 is two stories high. The access was planned via an internal driveway. On the ground floor – on the side facing Ciepelińskiego Avenue – a customer service hall was located, while on the opposite side, there was a service hall for the staff, along with social rooms, restrooms, and staircases. The first floor houses staff offices. The front façade of the *PKO Bank* building in Rzeszów, facing Ciepelińskiego Avenue, was designed on two planes at the ground floor level. The foreground is defined by an arcade, marked by the building’s skeletal structure, which extends toward the street. The rhythm of columns is crowned by a horizontal line of the parapet, concealing the flat roof. The southwest corner of the bank building is accentuated by the projection of two floors of the skeletal structure. The sense of lightness in the openwork structure is accentuated by the white plaster. The protruding arcade highlights the entrance area of the bank, serving as a compositional frame for the second plane of the western façade, which features segments of a traditional curtain wall, partially finished with grey granite cladding. On the upper floor, the front façade is characterized by dominant white plaster, a rhythm of glass windows, and grooved window pilasters in navy blue, along with inscriptions of the bank’s name and logo. The main symbolic feature of the *PKO Bank* building in Rzeszów is the entrance portal, which extends beyond the openwork arcade, flanked by corner pillars clad in stone panels. The entrance portal is topped with a skylight featuring a semi-circular cross-section and a front with a semi-circular window against a navy blue background. The eastern and northern façades, facing Stanisława Jabłońskiego Street, have a completely different character, largely defined during the conceptual design stage, which architect Mieczysław Gała prepared in 1985. The composition of the northern façade of the *PKO Bank* building in Rzeszów is defined by the play of contrasts between the undulating brick wall at the northeast corner, planned on an arc, the protruding cylinders concealing the semi-circular landings of the stairwells, the sculpted fragment of the ground floor extending northwards, and the orderly first floor, marked by the

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<sup>9</sup> The name of the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre* was given in order to commemorate emigrants from Podkarpacie region living in the USA, becoming a symbol of freedom and success of the Polish diaspora from Podkarpacie in the United States of America, in: H. Nicpoń, *Ludzie i mury. 60 lat Spółdzielni Zodiak w Rzeszowie*, Spółdzielnia Zodiak–Wydawnictwo Edytorial, Rzeszów 2019, p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> The first version of the conceptual design for the *B1 Unit Rzeszów Centre Residential and Service Complex* was created by Arch. Mieczysław Gała in 1978. Arch. Mieczysław Gała prepared another version of the conceptual design for the complex in 1985.

geometry of right angles and the rhythm of the skeletal structure. This dynamic interplay of forms is complemented by the contrasting colours: the dominant white of the plaster, the coral hue of the brick, and the navy blue of the grooved window pilasters.

A pedestrian walkway was planned between pavilions 1 and 2, leading to Ciepelińskiego Avenue. A semi-circular skylight made of polycarbonate with a navy blue aluminium structure is supported by reinforced concrete beams connecting the pillars, which are further topped with navy blue capitals, resembling a colonnade that defines the boundaries of the postmodern pedestrian passage.

The conceptual design, along with the interior conceptual design for Pavilion No. 2, which housed the *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów*<sup>11</sup> – now the *Goldenmark Salon* at 3 Łukasza Ciepelińskiego Avenue – was created by architect Mieczysław Gała in 1992. The technical design was developed between 1992 and 1993 by architect Mieczysław Gała, the Chief Designer, in collaboration with architect Witold Sztorc and with the assistance of architects Marta Kozielec and Jarosław Kazior. Pavilion No. 2 was also designed using the prefabricated Z.S.B.O. skeletal technology, with traditional curtain walls. The building has two above-ground floors. A third level was planned at the ground floor, accessible from an internal driveway. The spatial concept of the building connects its architectural form and structure with the arrangement of its interior. From the side of Ciepelińskiego Street, the rectangular block of the *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów* is hollowed out in the central part, based on the modular grid of the skeletal structure. The elongated cut-out emphasizes the compositional axis of the entrance, leading towards the centrally located operations hall of the bank, which was designed with double-height ceilings. The two-story space of the bank's operations hall is illuminated by a slanted, glazed curtain wall. An elongated skylight with a triangular cross-section is completed with a portico supported by two columns. This postmodern portico emphasizes the bank's entrance, serving as the building's main symbolic feature. Stairwells are located in the wings of the building that extend towards Ciepelińskiego Street, situated on opposite sides of the passage and the entrance portico. On the first floor, office spaces for bank employees are planned, connected by a gallery in the form of a mezzanine that opens onto the operations hall on the ground floor. The composition of the front façade of the *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów* is arranged on two levels, at ground level, on both sides of the entrance portico. The arcade, formed by the protruding skeletal structure with a roof, creates an impact through the rhythm of columns crowned by a horizontal parapet line and the pristine white plaster. The openwork ground-floor structure highlights the external entrance area of the bank, framing the second plane of the façade, with sections of the traditional curtain wall, partially finished with grey granite cladding. At the northwest corner, facing the pedestrian walkway between pavilions 1 and 2, the skeletal structure extends to the height of two stories, further accentuating the corner. On the opposite side, the corner of the openwork ground-floor arcade is emphasized by the extension of the parapet and semi-circular navy-blue fields against a white background, creating the impression of portals. At the first-floor level, the front façade of the *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów* is defined by the dominant white plaster, bands of glazing, and the rhythm of grooved window pilasters in navy blue, as well as golden inscriptions of the bank's name.

The architectural form of the *Shopping Arcade – Pavilion No. 3*, later renamed the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre*, was defined by architect Mieczysław Gała in 1993, during the conceptual

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<sup>11</sup> The first version of the conceptual design for Pavilion No. 2 in the *B1 Unit Rzeszów Centre Residential and Commercial Complex*, from 1985, pertained to the *Pewex Department Store*.

design phase. In 1996, the architectural and construction technical design for the *Shopping Arcade – Pavilion No. 3*, now the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre* – was developed by Mieczysław Gała as the Chief Designer, in collaboration with architect Witold Sztorc. The architecture of the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre* is primarily perceived through its centrally positioned corner structure, which represents a segment of a cylinder, standing three stories high and flanked by protruding white rectangular blocks, grooved and finished with white plaster. The main section of the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre*, designed on a quarter-circle plan, impacts the urban space through a curved façade, designed as a curtain wall system with reflective glass, mirroring a significant public space of Rzeszów and highlighting the intersection at the junction of Józefa Piłsudskiego Avenue and Łukasza Ciepelińskiego Avenue. The rectangular block adjacent to the *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów* – now the *Goldenmark Salon* – was recessed in relation to Pavilions 1 and 2. In the middle of the white plane of the façade, a bay window was placed, designed along a gentle curve using a curtain wall system with reflective glass. The main entrance to the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre* is located on the north-south axis, facing Józefa Piłsudskiego Avenue. The main entrance is highlighted by a vertical glass curtain wall system with reflective glass, topped with a semi-circular skylight that illuminates the shopping premises designed in a mezzanine form. The *Shopping Arcade – Pavilion No. 3* was designed using monolithic construction technology, primarily due to the need for a structural span of 9 meters to accommodate sanitary and stormwater drainage between the column grid. *Pavilion No. 3* was conceived as a shopping arcade with two and three service floors, housing individual retail and service units. These facilities are accessible from communication galleries, arranged around a three-story high hall, crowned with an elongated semi-circular skylight. The hall of the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre* extends the pedestrian overpass connecting Jabłońskiego Street with Piłsudskiego Avenue. The hall serves as an attractive indoor public space for customers, with its central feature being Rzeszów’s first escalator, which leads from a level of –1.8m to +3.6m, providing access to the various shops and service units. The retail and service units are serviced by three logistical communication shafts, connecting the delivery level with the various shopping floors, ensuring seamless operation without interfering with the customer flow in the galleries. The “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre* was designed to house 13 units with diverse usable areas ranging from 65m<sup>2</sup> to 314m<sup>2</sup>. On the ground floor, beneath the entire footprint of the *Shopping Centre*, a parking lot for 42 cars was designed. The colour scheme of the *Shopping Centre*’s façade was coordinated with the façades of the *PKO Bank Pavilion* and the *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów*. The dominant elements are white, noble plaster combined with glass surfaces in the curtain wall system with reflective glass. In the entrance areas, parts of the façade are finished with grey granite stone cladding. The view of the fifth façade of the *B1 Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex* from above also deserves attention, revealing the entire architectural and urban composition of the development.

## ARCHITECTURE, TECHNOLOGY AND MEANING

The city is co-created by architecture and urban planning, which, along with natural conditions – topography, greenery, water – define its character. One of the most important urban spaces in Rzeszów is shaped by architecture with historic, aesthetic, and symbolic value: sacred architecture – *The Monastery of the Bernardine Fathers* and *the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Rzeszów*, *the Bernardine Gardens*, monumental public administration

buildings – *The Podkarpackie Province Office in Rzeszów* and *the Podkarpackie Regional Assembly Office in Rzeszów*, one of the city's symbols – *the Monument to the Revolutionary Act, the Rzeszów Gallery*, and *the BI Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex* with the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre*.

A reflection on the relationship between *architecture and technology*, is presented on the architecture of the *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex* – including residential buildings, *PKO SA Bank in Rzeszów*, *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów*, and the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre* – constructed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, according to the vision of architect Mieczysław Gała. The professional career of the Kraków-based architect began in the mid-1960s, during a time of fascination with modernity and technology. It is then that his projects and realizations characterized by post-war modernism emerged. They were often shaped or sometimes constrained by technology, such as prefabricated concrete panels. According to Charles Jencks, “an architect’s work is influenced by the existing syntax (structure and technology) and semantics”<sup>12</sup>. While analysing the completed projects of architect Mieczysław Gała, it is important to emphasize the significance of architectural-urban composition, the location, and the potential for phasing the investment. However, the most crucial aspect seems to be the synergy of architectural form, composition, and structure. Since the early 1980s, the architect had focused on seeking an individual character in architectural form, details, and meaning. The architect transposes timeless architectural motifs into the contemporary context, using both traditional materials and modern construction technologies, giving new expression to portals, porticos, arcades, and colonnades. Skylights, glass elements, and curtain walls highlight the significance of transparency and light in architecture. The projects and realizations of the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are characterized by frequent references to modernist architectural forms, while also respecting the place and drawing inspiration from the past, with the use of modern technologies and materials.

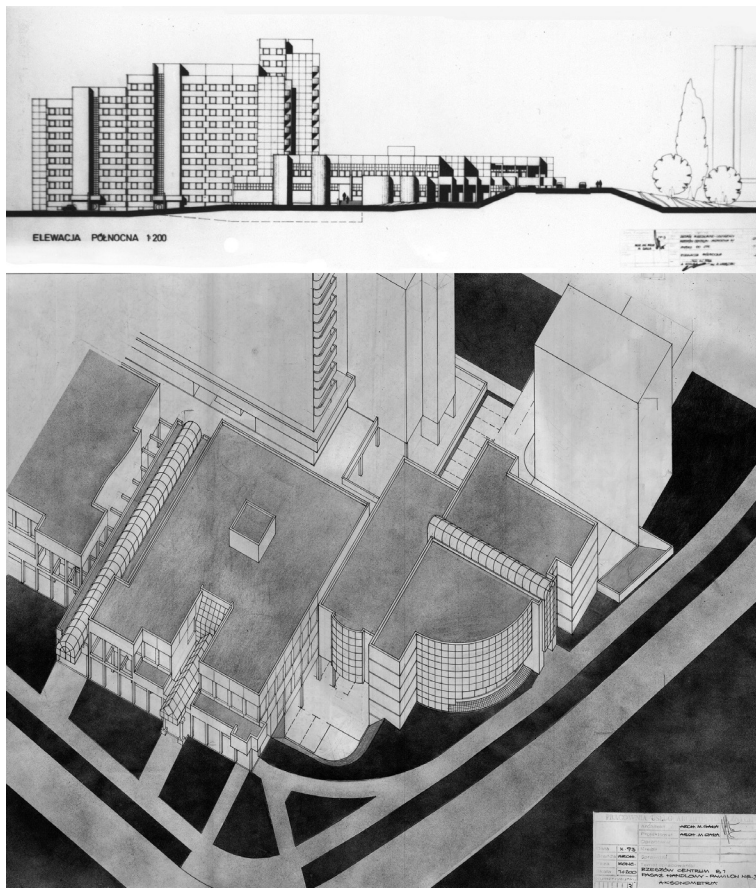
An analysis of the architecture of the *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex* – the multi-family residential buildings, and above all, the service pavilions of *PKO SA Bank in Rzeszów*, *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów* and the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre*, reveals the dynamic relationship between architecture, construction, technology, materials, and symbolic motifs. The multi-family residential buildings at 7 Stanisława Jabłońskiego Street, designed using the industrialized SBM-75 technology, dominate the composition with their height of 8–11 stories. The architecture of the service pavilions of *PKO SA Bank in Rzeszów*, *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów* and the “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Centre*, designed during the period of *political transformation*, stands out in terms of meaning and symbolism. The architecture of the service pavilions is characterized by a unique synergy between architecture and structure. The architectural form, the composition of the façades, and the spatial concept of the *PKO SA Bank* and *Bank Handlowy* pavilions in Rzeszów are closely related to the choice of construction system – the Z.S.B.O. prefabricated framing technology with a structural module of 6m x 6m, combined with traditional curtain walls. The skeletal structure, protruding in front of the buildings, creates external spatial elements of the façades, highlighting the entrance zones of the banks and diversifying the composition. The architecture of the *PKO SA Bank*, *Bank Handlowy* and “*Ameryka*” *Shopping Center* pavilions, designed and realized in stages, is united by a postmodern character and architectural symbolic motifs. Portals and skylights emphasize the entrances to the banks, while pedestrian passageways are marked by the rhythm of colonnades, stepped column capitals, and

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<sup>12</sup> Ch. Jencks, *Le Corbusier...*, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

lighting elements. The character of the architecture of the *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex* is also shaped by the finishing materials and the colour palette of the façades. After modernization, the residential development stands out with the white and grey plastered surfaces of the façades, interspersed with touches of blue and navy. The architecture of the service pavilions is defined by the dominant white of the fine plaster, combined with compositional accents in navy blue, sections finished with clinker and stone cladding, and the arc-shaped curtain wall with reflective glass of the *“Ameryka” Shopping Centre*.

The architecture of the *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex*, including the residential buildings at 7 Stanisława Jabłońskiego Street, *PEKAO S.A. Bank* at 1 Łukasza Ciepielińskiego Avenue, *Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów – currently the Goldenmark Salon* at 3 Łukasza Ciepielińskiego Avenue, and the *“Ameryka” Shopping Center* at 40 Józefa Piłsudskiego Avenue, built according to the vision of architect Mieczysław Gała, is a valuable and worth preserving realization from the late 1980s and early 1990s, representing a *sign of the times of political transformation* in Poland.



III. 1. Urban-architectural concept of the *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex*, conceptual project – annex to the Technical and Economic Assumptions – northern elevation 1985, conceptual project – axonometry 1993, main designer and author: arch. Mieczysław Gała; source: archive of the Monika Gała-Walczowska Mieczysław Gała Architektura Design Studio.



III. 2. *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex – PEKAO S.A. Bank at 1 Łukasza Ciepelińskiego Avenue, Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów – currently Goldenmark Salon at 3 Łukasza Ciepelińskiego Avenue, residential buildings at 7 Stanisława Jabłońskiego Street, pedestrian walkway and flyover walkway, main designer and author: arch. Mieczysław Gała, co-author collaboration arch. Witold Sztorc; photos: Mieczysław Gała, Monika Gała-Walczowska.*



III. 3. *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex – PEKAO S.A. Bank at 1 Łukasza Ciepelińskiego Avenue, Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów – currently Goldenmark Salon at 3 Łukasza Ciepelińskiego Avenue, residential buildings at 7 Stanisława Jabłońskiego Street, interiors of Bank Handlowy in Rzeszów, main designer and author: arch. Mieczysław Gała, co-author collaboration arch. Witold Sztorc; photos: Mieczysław Gała.*



III. 4. *BI Unit Rzeszów Centre residential and commercial complex – “Ameryka” Shopping Centre at 40 Józefa Piłsudskiego Avenue and residential buildings at 7 Stanisława Jabłońskiego Street, main designer and author: arch. Mieczysław Gała, co-author collaboration arch. Witold Sztorec; photos: Mieczysław Gała, Monika Gała-Walczowska.*

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