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## *The Modern Movement in the sacred architecture of Wrocław between 1912 and 1933*

### *Introduction*

The religious architecture of Wrocław (then Breslau) in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is not a particularly well-recognised or sufficiently researched issue. The diverse landscape, consisting of structures erected in the period preceding the political triumph of National Socialism, includes a succession of historicizing buildings, examples of the so-called native trend, and finally churches with contemporary features clearly influenced by modernism. Between the years 1900 and 1933, nearly 25 churches and chapels of varying artistic value were built in Wrocław. Such a large group of diverse buildings certainly deserves a synthetic study covering both Catholic and Protestant churches. This article devoted to selected buildings between the years 1912 and 1933 is a summary of the initial searches which were based on existing studies, sources available in Wrocław archives, and research initiated in Berlin collections. It aspires to contribute to the study of the complex of buildings mentioned above. The following will be presented in chronological order: the design of the Grabiszyn Cemetery Crematory by Max Berg, the Osobowice Cemetery Chapel also designed by Berg, followed by the Catholic Parish Church of the Holy Family in Sępolno, the competition entry design of the Evangelical Gustav Adolf Memorial Church by Hans Scharoun and Adolf Rading also in Sępolno, and the finally completed design by Albert Kempter. It is shown on these examples, that modernity and avant-garde are not a homogeneous phenomenon. This has been revealed over the course of two decades in many different aspects, such as the ideological, structural, and the functional. The following text

aims to highlight this diversity, while demonstrating what appears to be a legitimate need for a much broader, monographic view of the religious buildings erected in Wrocław before the year 1933.

### *Research status*

Not much has been written about Wrocław's sacred buildings built between the fall of the German Empire and the end of the Weimar Republic. The articles and press information regarding both architectural competitions and the buildings themselves, published mainly in "Ostdeutsche Bauzeitung", "Schlesische Monatshefte", "Moderne Bauformen", "Die Bauwelt", "Der Baumeister", and "Deutsche Bauzeitung" are a valuable source for this research. The topic of Wrocław's religious architecture was briefly engaged by Fritz Schumacher [1] even before the war. Meanwhile, further attention should be drawn to Kurt and Josef Engelbert's work on Roman Catholic churches of Wrocław published in German, but was of a popular-scientific nature [2]. Its counterpart in Polish popular science literature is research on the same subject by Zygmunt Antkowiak [3]. It is also impossible to omit the dictionary-like study by Gerhard Scheuermann [4]. However, it was not until Beate Störtkuhl, Wanda Kononowicz, Artur Kwaśniewski, and Jerzy Ilkosz devoted their research to a professional analysis of the issue of Wrocław's sacred architecture of the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From what we know today, the texts of these researchers included in the third volume of *Architektura Wrocławia* [Architecture of Wrocław] edited by Jerzy Rozpędowski, contribute the most. Störtkuhl devotes the content of her article to Protestant churches built between 1900 and 1915 [5]. Their thorough analysis, together with a rich bibliography and references to architectural competitions held, especially in the final phase of the time range

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imposed by the topic, greatly enrich the state of knowledge of the context of this study. Wanda Kononowicz, on the other hand, takes up the subject of estate churches – Popowice, Sępolno and Grabiszyn – with great precision, which is of particular importance in the context of the two realisations for the Sępolno estate, referred to in this article [6]. Kwaśniewski devoted his research to Catholic churches from the years 1918–1939. Among them were the Popowice Church of St. Hedwig, the no longer standing Church of St. Peter Canisius, St. Clemens Dworzak on the Grabiszyn estate, the no longer standing Church of the Holy Spirit on the Tarnogaj estate, the Holy Family in Sępolno, St. Teresa in Osobowice, the Church of St. Joseph on present Krakowska Street, the no longer standing temporary Church of Christ the King on Szczepin, and the similarly no longer standing Church of Saint Roch in the cemetery on today's Bolkowska Street [7]. The research findings contained in Kwaśniewski's works deserve a more wide and in-depth elaboration. An extensive article by Ilkosz in the same volume raises the problem of Wrocław's Crematory. In it, the author provides an exhaustive account of the evolution of Berg's concept, together with the origin of the stylistic layer of the designs [8]. The same researcher takes up the subject of the Crematory several more times, including a comprehensive monograph on the Centennial Hall published in 2005 [9], and more recently (2022) in an article devoted to Berg's masterpiece, which Ilkosz co-authored with Ryszard Wójtowicz and Jadwiga Urbanik [10]. Ilkosz is also the author of entries on the Evangelical Gustav Adolf Memorial Church in the first volume of *Atlas architektury Wrocławia* [Atlas of the architecture of Wrocław], dedicated to sacred architecture and edited by Jerzy Harasimowicz [11], and in *Leksykon architektury Wrocławia* [Lexicon of Wrocław architecture], published in 2011 [12]. They were also joined years later, in 2018, with her huge monograph on Silesian modernism by Störkuhl [13], co-author of a catalogue of Adolf Rading's works from his Wrocław period, included in a monumental entry on Rading edited by her and Ilkosz [14].

### ***Sacred architecture in the context of Wrocław's socio-artistic situation***

There is no doubt that the architectural landscape of Silesia, and thus of Wrocław as a provincial capital, must largely be seen, especially in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, from the perspective of Berlin. The capital was for a long time the primary source of cultural and ideological inspiration for both Wrocław and the entire region. The fact that the vast majority of architects active in Silesia were graduates of Berlin's Technische Hochschule was also significant. It inevitably meant that ideas shaped there, gradually made their way to the provinces, as Vladimir Šlapeta [15, p. 97] and Piotr Łukaszewicz [16, pp. 33–35] extensively describe. However, Wrocław had been labelled merely a province submissive to Berlin, which was a significant mistake. There are several reasons for this, but the existence of a serious art school in Wrocław, is in this case most sufficient. The Staatliche Akademie für Kunst und

Kunstgewerbe, headed by Hans Poelzig, played a major role in the formation of modern integral German art, including architecture (above all, due to the architecture class he led) [15, p. 97], [16, p. 41], [17, pp. 1–26], because of which Wrocław, alongside the leading artistic centers of Prussia, took one of the most important places on the map of the emerging avant-garde. Not only were the ideas born in the capital adapted in Wrocław, but moreover, the community centred around the academy became a strong catalyst for changes of a cross-regional nature, which is of course also proven by the architecture.

While we can speak freely of the avant-garde dynamically entering the architectural scene in the area of public buildings or new housing estates designed on a grand scale, the problem becomes much more complex in the aspect of sacred buildings. The source of this is undoubtedly the ever-present tension between conservative and progressive, or rather innovative approaches to the construction of sacred buildings [18, pp. 12, 13]. Confession is of little importance here. Although increasingly reformist currents are discernible in both denominations from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the liturgy, among other things – in both Catholic and Protestant terms – imposed significant constraints on the structure of the temple, the respect for which the creators of modern architecture eventually had to contend.

The origins of the changes in the perception of the Church and sacred architecture that eventually took place, must be sought in two areas. Within the Roman Catholic Church, the turning point, or rather the turning phenomenon, turned out to be the Liturgical Movement, which initiated a wide-ranging discourse on changes that ultimately went well beyond the liturgy [19, pp. 10–13]. An invaluable role in this discourse was fulfilled a few years later by Romano Guardini (initially associated with the Liturgical Movement) and Johannes van Acken, who were clerics considered to be the main theorists of the reform movement at its peak [20], [21]. In contrast, the fruit of increased research into the role of the liturgy in the design of the architectural space of a church was Karl Freckmann's first practical guide for church planners [22]. Both the theorists of the Liturgical Movement and the above-mentioned Guardini and especially van Acken, pointed to the need for a paradigm shift in the perception of the liturgy from a kind of theatrical performance to a celebration including the whole gathered community. Underlying this shift in mentality was the need to see the Eucharist in its essential aspect as a feast, rather than a sacrifice. This in turn started a discussion on the meaning of celebration *versus oriente* and consequently on the location of the altar in the church space. According to the ideas of the renewal, it should be located more in the centre, surrounded by the faithful, which as we know was introduced with varying degrees of success as a result of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council less than half a century later [23, p. 96].

On the Protestant side, the counterpart to the Liturgical Movement were the nationwide German Protestant church building congresses, especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> (1906) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (1928) Kongress für Kirchenbau des Protestantismus, which was held several times. The debates held on these

occasions proved to be the driving force behind changes in the perception of architecture as an elementary part of celebration, where by its very nature the liturgy in ceremonial form was not the starting point, contrary to the Catholic milieu [24, pp. 119–127]. Protestant churches showed a somewhat greater openness to modern forms of expression; nevertheless, as in the Catholic milieu, attachment to tradition still halted for a long-time radical changes in the shaping of the form of modern sacred architecture in dialogue with the modernizing world. Both Catholics and Protestants, in attempting to redefine the place and character of the Church in the modern world, consequently also had to face the question of what character the building expressing this place would take on. In this context, many young architects seized the opportunity to experiment with modern forms also in sacred architecture, even if the only form of expression were to be conceptual designs. Rudolf Schwarz, Dominikus Böhm and Otto Bartning belonged to this group. Their innovative concepts balancing between minimalism, functionalism, and expressionist tendencies aimed to construct a modern form that on the one hand transcended tradition and on the other hand was appropriate to the mystical character of the church as a place of worship.

Against this backdrop, Wrocław presents itself as a religiously heterogeneous city, a lively cultural center, which in the 1<sup>st</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century found itself on the threshold of its greatest historical development – also on the artistic level. The decline of the empire, the Great War, the forcoming of the Weimar Republic and thus the new political order, as well as the overpopulation crisis, placed the city in a completely new reality.

### *Max Berg's designs from 1912–1922*

Among the many consequences of Wrocław's radical demographic development was the need for adequate burial space and cemetery infrastructure. From Wrocław's necropolises, the Grabiszyński and Osobowicki Cemeteries were the fastest growing, so it was there that new investments were sought. The first of these is the concept, or rather a series of designs for a crematorium for the Grabiszyn Cemetery by Max Berg.

The history of the plans for a crematorium for Wrocław begins as early as 1911, when the Wrocław City Council decided to build a new burial complex in the Grabiszyński Cemetery, consisting of a crematorium with facilities, a chapel, and an extensive columbarium [25, p. 1], [8, p. 408].

Max Berg, being the acting Municipal Building Councillor, did not take the opportunity to commission a specific architect, nor did he launch a competition, but personally undertook the work on the disposition of the Municipal Council. As a result, over the course of a decade, several concepts emerged, illustrating the evolution of Berg's style and artistic preferences [26, p. 442]. Amongst the most original versions dating back to as early as 1912, strong influences from Byzantine architecture are discernible (which is particularly evident in the idea of a central composition of a single or multi-dome building, together with its variants), as well as ancient architecture of the East – especially the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus and the

spiral minaret of the great mosque in Samarra, fragments of which were discovered in 1911. These motifs can be seen both in sketches from the Deutsches Museum in Munich and in later designs. Berg returns to them repeatedly, constantly modifying them. This can be seen both in the cross-sections of a design that Berg made in collaboration with Albert Kempter in October 1912, preserved in the collection of the Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung in Erkner, near Berlin, under the inventory number N193/68 [8, p. 420] as well as one of the last, which he also executed in collaboration with Kempter between 1920 and 1921. From the point of view of the genesis of Berg's style, it is interesting to compare his concept with the crematorium in Dresden, discovered a few months earlier, by Fritz Schumacher. The influence of the so-called "Zyklopenstil" – a term coined by Karl Scheffler for the synthesis of monumental Wilhelminian German architecture of the 1<sup>st</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [27, p. 100] – is evident in Berg's concepts, as well as in the Schumacher crematorium mentioned above.

The creative use of historical forms, while at the same time searching for an adequate contemporary form is a frequent phenomenon in the period of nascent modernism – as Matthias Schirren points out [28] – it is one of the fundamental features of the work of Hans Poelzig, who drew extensively on the formal and structural resources of Gothic or the motifs of indigenous architecture, including timbered construction. As it turns out, this phenomenon was also not foreign to Schumacher (mentioned above) and above all, Berg. Berg modified the design many times, but it can be said that in general, all versions share a common ideological direction – a centrally located chapel – clearly dominating the cemetery space – topped with a dome and surrounded by a cloistered columbarium, composed in a variety of different variants. Even a cursory review of crematorium buildings built in the German-speaking area around 1910 reveals certain analogies. In addition to the already mentioned Dresden crematorium, a central structure with a chapel or conflagration hall topped by a dome and surrounded by cloistered columbariums, the Sihlfeld crematorium in Zürich, designed by Albert Froelich, is an intriguing structure.

Berg's concept for the crematorium, as envisaged in the original design of 1912, was to consist of a tall, but somewhat squat chapel, designed on a square ground plan, with much lower, oblong columbariums added on the sides. The chapel was to be crowned by a stepped dome with a lantern. As the troublesome part of the complex, the crematorium was placed in the basement, while the chimney was situated at the back of the building, invisible from the front, where it was to be dominated by a column portico with a monumental staircase.

As the visionary, Berg was fully aware of the importance of the complementarity of the arts, so he invited the Austrian Expressionist painter Oskar Kokoschka to collaborate on the concept of the crematorium, as he had done with Centennial Hall, this time offering him the opportunity to create a monumental painting with eschatological themes for the interior of the crematorium chapel [8, pp. 408, 409]. Kokoschka was tasked with completely



Fig. 1. Crematorium  
– drawing by O. Kokoschka, 1914  
(source: Kupferstich-Kabinett,  
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen  
Dresden, photo by H. Boswank)

Il. 1. Krematorium  
– rysunek O. Kokoschki, 1914  
(źródło: Kupferstich-Kabinett,  
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen  
Dresden, fot. H. Boswank)

Kokoschka, Oskar (1866–1980): Entwurf für Krematorium Breslau: Das Innere des Domes mit Wandbildentwurf (Perspektivische Ansicht des Inneren mit Fresko II); Pinsel und Feder in Tusche, Aquarell, schwarze Kohle, Farbkreiden, Graphit, auf leicht verbräuntem Papier, auf Shirting aufgezogen, 1330 x 1024 mm; 1740 x 1290 x 55 mm (Rahmen), SKD Kupferstich-Kabinett Dresden C 1983-632 Weidinger/Strobl 800 Foto: Herbert Boswank

covering the huge plane of the interior walls. He accepted the offer. Interestingly enough, he did not stop at the fresco design, but presented his own bold, clearly expressionist vision of the architecture, which he demonstrated to Berg (Fig. 1). Kokoschka's monumental, tectonic, and by design multi-coloured conception of the interior must have made such a strong impression on Berg, that the subsequent projects of 1914 and 1916 (Fig. 2) became the result of another collaboration between these two artists [8, p. 414]. Moreover, the motifs that appeared in several versions of their joint designs would recur many years later in Berg's work, including in the unrealised project for the campus of Berlin University. It seems that the most significant modification of the original variant was the change of the chapel plan from square to circular. The 1914 version of the chapel is a slender cylindrical structure with an intriguingly conceived dome with a lantern (the 1916

version lacked the dome), not without reason evoking associations with buildings from the exhibition grounds, particularly Poelzig's domes above the Historical Exhibition Pavilion. The additionally composed structure of the dome, and especially the lantern itself, also evokes connotations with the Centennial Hall itself, but also allows one to ask what influence, if any, Poelzig's Upper Silesian Tower, erected for the East German Exhibition in Poznań, and especially Bruno Taut's Glass Pavilion from the Köln Werkbund exhibition, had on the shape of Berg's concept.

One of the most recent modifications was a project developed together with Albert Kempter as part of the 1919–1921 concept for the redevelopment of Wrocław, where the crematorium, with a form practically unchanged from the previous version (the new design envisaged a two-storey building on an oval plan, from which the familiar cylindrical chapel emerged, closed by a conical dome without

lanterns), was inscribed into the monumental, axial layout of the cemetery and located in its centre. As it turned out, this project also failed to be completed. Ultimately, Berg ended his cooperation with the City Council after a conflict ignited that lasted until 1924, while the following year Richard Konwiarz took over working on the project [26, p. 443]. Undoubtedly, it was the impasse caused by the lack of funds and the growing conflict between the officials and Berg, as well as the clearly conservative approach to evaluating the solutions presented by him, that was the main reason why one of the most avant-garde architectural visions in the city's history did not live to see realisation.

A major undertaking related to the constantly expanding area of the Osobowice Cemetery was the necessity of construction of a new, more spacious funeral chapel connected to the mortuary. In response to this need, Berg's design was unique in every respect. The chapel was designed on a grand scale and realised with its furnishings as a complete work of art – *Gesamtkunstwerk* – in 1920–1921, although earlier Berg designs had already been created in 1910–1911, 1914 and 1919 [29].

The building, located on the axis of the cemetery avenue, was constructed in reinforced concrete as a simple structure consisting of three compositional elements (blocks) – a portico supported by two cylindrical columns, a high, centrally located chapel with an openwork bell on the roof and a mortuary. The entire layout is surrounded by a much lower courtyard, which gives it a basilica-like appearance. The chapel's simple, undecorated white façades, flat roof and exceptionally harmonious proportions make it one of the first examples of *Neues Bauen* in Wrocław (Fig. 3). Berg's approach to realising the chapel's concept was extremely conscious, inviting Hans Leistikow and Alfred Vocke to work with him. Leistikow was entrusted with the abstract painting and stained-glass decoration of the interior, while Vocke made and signed a small stone relief – a personification of death with a face covered by a veil leading naked figures of a man and a woman by the hands, placed above the portico as the only decorative element of the façade. The chapel was intended as an interdenominational or even non-religious place of last conflagration, and it was also for this purpose that Leistikow created the first monumental abstract painting in Silesia, in line with the idea of abstraction as a phenomenon with an interreligious dimension. The interior was characterised by noble simplicity according to Berg's conception, dominated by a fresco by Leistikow, which is not visible today, and which corresponds to the abstract stained-glass windows filling the interior, located on the sides, with slender triple windows – lower in the farmyard and high in the "nave". The furnishings in the form of chairs, pews, the pulpit, and catafalque, including details such as handles and candelabra, were designed by Berg himself (Fig. 4).

### *Dwelling estate churches*

The situation of a steadily growing city, struggling at the beginning of the new century with a crisis of overcrowding and dire living conditions for its inhabitants, required the authorities to draw up a comprehensive de-

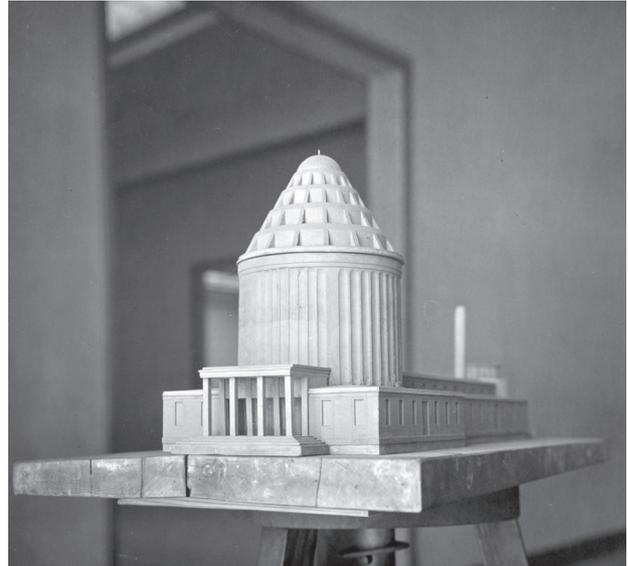


Fig. 2. Crematorium – model for M. Berg's design, 1916 (source: Deutsches Museum in Munich, photo in Muzeum Architektury, Wrocław)

Il. 2. Krematorium – makieta do projektu M. Berga, 1916 (źródło: Deutsches Museum in Munich, fot. w Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu)



Fig. 3. Wrocław, Osobowicki Cemetery, Cemetery chapel, designed by M. Berg, 1921 (source: [30, p. 320])

Il. 3. Wrocław, cmentarz Osobowicki, kaplica cmentarna, proj. M. Berg, 1921 (źródło: [30, s. 320])

velopment plan, including above all a housing policy. The master plan finally adopted after many years of work in 1924, envisaged the expansion of Wrocław through a territorial extension, running for the most part along the line of the Oder [31, p. 7]. In line with Max Berg's earlier assumptions, the master plan envisioned the distribution of settlements on the outskirts of the city [32, pp. 85–88],



Fig. 4. Wrocław, Osobowicki Cemetery, Cemetery chapel – interior, designed by M. Berg, 1921, painter: H. Leistikow (source: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg)

Il. 4. Wrocław, cmentarz Osobowicki, kaplica cmentarna – wnętrze, proj. M. Berg, 1921, mal. H. Leistikow (źródło: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg)



Fig. 5. Wrocław, Church of the Holy Family in Śępolno, south elevation, designed by K. Langer, 1930 (photo by P. Oleś, 2022)

Il. 5. Wrocław, kościół św. Rodziny na Śępolnie, elewacja południowa, proj. K. Langer, 1930 (fot. P. Oleś, 2022).

[33, p. 96], [13, p. 139]. The difference in housing policy in relation to the period prior to the outbreak of the First World War, included above all the scale of activities carried out and the comprehensive approach to the implementation of the plan, and thus also the provision of access to culture and services for the inhabitants, including religious fulfilment.

Consequently, entire complexes of religious buildings were incorporated into the new neighbourhoods, mainly because the church, along with parish facilities encompassed with performance, theatre, and sports halls for the youth, was seen as a place intended for social integration of the local community.

Śępolno, realised as a model garden-type housing estate, was built between 1919 and 1935 in several stages in the eastern part of the city according to a plan made by Hermann Wahlich and Paul Heim [32]. It was planned as an elongated layout with a central green square accentuated on its long axis by a forecasted school building to the west and a Protestant church building to the east. A Catholic church was envisaged on the south-eastern outskirts of the square, the construction of which relied on raising the necessary amount of funds.

Chronologically speaking, the Catholic Church of the Holy Family was built earlier. Its construction, designed by Kurt Langer, was completed in 1930. Out of three proposed locations, the Catholic Parish chose the plot of land at the junction of today's Monte Cassino and Dembowskiego Streets, located in the south-eastern part of Śępolno. The massive body of the church immediately catches attention. The temple is not characterised by an exceptionally modern form, but rather evokes associations with medieval buildings with Romanesque features, especially thanks to its massive westwerk-like tower covered by a stepped, hipped roof. In his designs, Langer became known as a moderate advocate of traditional forms, who emphasised modernity mainly in terms of construction, which can also be seen in this example.

The church is a classic three-nave basilica built out of dark brick in an innovative reinforced concrete construction, with a system of interconnected frames linking the structure of the nave to the side aisles (Fig. 5). The presbytery is quite typically closed from the east by a pentagonal apse. The entire body of the building is covered by a high gable roof, the side aisles by pulpit roofs. Although Langer used the traditional compositional elements of a church in terms of the spatial layout, the shape of the window openings, and the roof form, he nevertheless used a subtle range of modern decorative motifs to shift the emphasis towards Expressionism, which was already familiar thanks to many Berlin projects at the time – including Ernst Paulus' Evangelical Church of the Cross in Berlin Schmargendorf. The façades are dominated by the clearly defined geometric under-eaves frieze of the tower and naves, the monumental, slightly overhanging face of the front wall, the cubic main portal, and the bands of the semi-circular windows, formed by a sequence of brick heads protruding in front of the face of the wall. The interior is covered by flat ceilings, with visible features of a classical basilica. Langer achieved a particularly inter-

esting effect in the side aisles, which thanks to the construction of reinforced concrete frames form a sequence of parabolic arches in perspective (Fig. 6). The church's furnishings are another interesting strand of the dialogue between tradition and modernity; the classical spatial layout is dominated by rounded, curved shapes, particularly evident in the inter-nave arches, the pulpit and the shape of the organ gallery. Evidently, Langer conceived the interior in such a way as to draw all attention to the originally gilded apse with its star vault and the main altar, whose setting is dominated by a modernist mosaic with the scene of finding Jesus in the temple. Therefore, although Langer's design bears avant-garde features – betraying a fascination with Expressionism – stylistically it is still undoubtedly quite conservative.

Albert Kempter took a bolder approach to the project entrusted to him for the Evangelical Gustav Adolf Memorial Church. The construction of the church was preceded by a competition announced in January 1932 [34], in which Kempter won first prize. The chief judge of the competition was Fritz Höger, and other prize winners included: Hans Thomas (second prize), Hermann Wahlich (third prize), and Buchwald and Hesse. The designs of Georg Wolf and Paul Klein and Wilhelm Bruck and Zinkler were purchased, while the designs of the team of Hans Scharoun and Adolf Rading, as well as those of Helmert, Gase, Wahl and Rödel of Essen, Erich Grau, Brix and Erwin Grau were honoured [35].

The construction according to Kempter's design was completed between 1932 and 1933. The church was realised on a centrally located plot at the axis of the estate, at the eastern end of the green square as a clear compositional dominant of the whole establishment. The competition, which besides Kempter also included Rading and Scharoun, was awarded on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1932. The church designed by Kempter not only fitted perfectly into the urban context of the surroundings, but above all proved to be a sufficient counterbalance to the monumental school building designed by Hugo Althoff and Max Schirmer at the opposite end of the estate's axis in 1927 – which can be assumed, was also decisive in the final decision to choose Kempter's proposal. The final result was a unique, monumental, raw brick building of perfect proportions, composed of simple, interconnected cubic volumes. The basilica-like body of the building consists of a wide nave with a tower inscribed in the façade, slightly set back from the face of the wall, and side aisles adjacent to the nave, like the tower, slightly set back and of a much lower height. As a result, the whole takes on the effect of a pyramidal, dynamic structure. Both the nave and side aisles are covered by a flat roof. The only elements articulating the side elevations are the slender, high windows of the nave, which are matched by narrow slit slits in the upper part of the tower – not preserved today. The absence of any decorative elements heightens the impression of radical austerity, which is certainly intended to focus all attention on the geometry and tectonics of the building (Fig. 7). Originally, the interior of the church, like the exterior, presented a simplicity, even minimalism, pushed to the limits of aesthetics. The main nave, preceded by a shallow vestibule, was



Fig. 6. Wrocław, Church of the Holy Family in Sępólno, interior view, south aisle, designed by K. Langer, 1930 (source: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg / Hugo Schnell.)

Il. 6. Wrocław, kościół św. Rodziny na Sępólnie, widok wnętrza, nawa południowa, proj. K. Langer, 1930 (źródło: Bildarchiv Foto Marburg / Hugo Schnell)



Fig. 7. Wrocław, Gustav Adolf Memorial Church, view from the south-east, designed by A. Kempter, 1933 (source: [36, p. 65])

Il. 7. Wrocław, kościół Pamięci Gustawa Adolfa, widok od południowego wschodu, proj. A. Kempter, 1933 (źródło: [36, s. 65])



Fig. 8. Gustav Adolf Memorial Church – competition design by H. Scharoun and A. Rading, general view, 1932 (source: Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Hans Scharoun Archiv, No. 1253 Bl. 65/3)

Il. 8. Kościół Pamięci Gustawa Adolfa – projekt konkursowy H. Scharouna i A. Radinga, widok ogólny, 1932 (źródło: Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Hans Scharoun Archiv, Nr. 1253 Bl. 65/3)

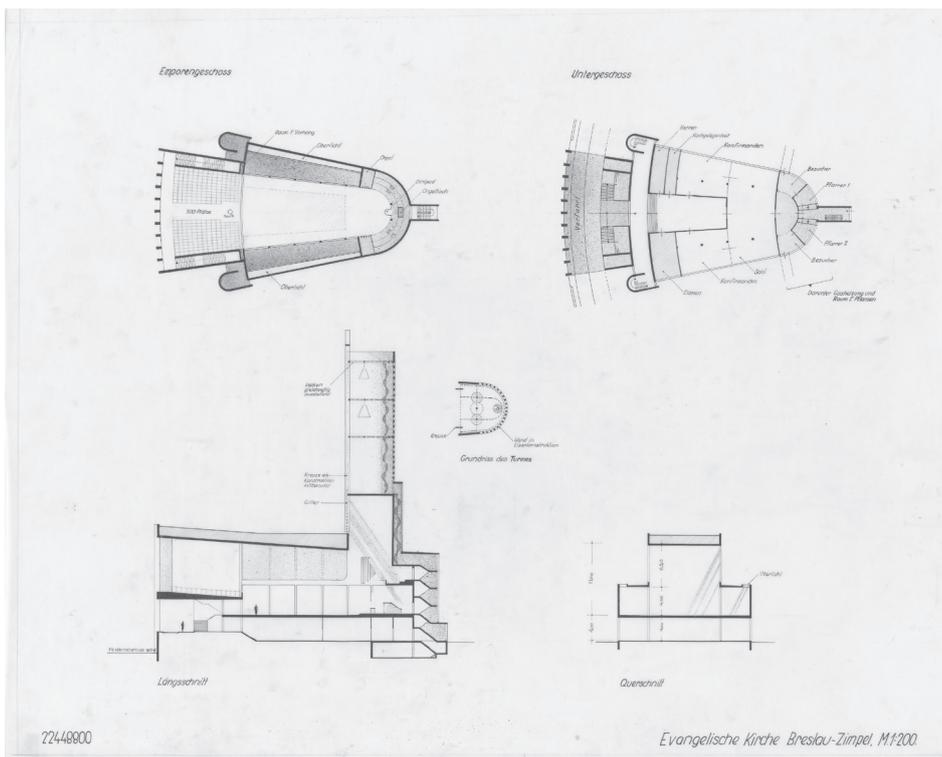


Fig. 9. Gustav Adolf Memorial Church – competition design by H. Scharoun and A. Rading, plan and cross-section, 1932 (source: Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Hans Scharoun Archiv, No. 1253 Bl. 65/5)

Il. 9. Kościół Pamięci Gustawa Adolfa – projekt konkursowy H. Scharouna i A. Radinga, plan i przekrój, 1932 (źródło: Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Hans Scharoun Archiv, Nr. 1253 Bl. 65/5)

separated from the side aisles by sliding walls, which made it possible to modify the volume of the interior according to the needs of the community – a pioneering solution for a church building, unprecedented in the Oder region. The only accent focusing attention within was a simple, slender cross above the marble altar, closing the compositionally empty eastern wall of the church.

The aforementioned competition attracted 79 entries [32, p. 73, note 44]. Of these, the design by Scharoun and Rading (the attribution is finally confirmed by Ilkosz [14, p. 385],

and explicitly mentioned in “Die Bauwelt” [35]), in the years 1925–1932 strongly associated with the Wrocław artistic community, deserves special attention as by far the most avant-garde proposal. The competition for the design of an Evangelical church for Sępólno, was the last Silesian competition in which Scharoun took part. Here, the architects proposed a light yet monumental two-storey structure, which was ahead of its time. It broke out of the traditional pattern and was maintained in light tones (Figs. 8, 9). The parabolic-shaped structure opened with a glazed fa-

çade, divided by a row of vertical muntins, broadly towards the central square of the estate and narrowed to the east towards the altar space. This is where the slender, tall belfry was positioned, repeating the parabolic layout, and rising from the building structure to form its dominant accent. The massive yet lightweight side walls of the belfry were transformed at the top into two twin crosses, closing the composition as a whole. The bells hung in the belfry were designed to be left uncovered, adding to the lightness of the building. There is no doubt, that the style used by Scharoun and Rading in the design of the church must have been an echo, or in fact a continuation of an earlier design for a school planned on the opposite side of the central square, which he similarly presented with Rading at an unofficial competition in 1926 (Fig. 10). At the time, the school design, like the later church design, was rejected, presumably being too bold (the design by Althoff and Schirmer, mentioned above, was eventually realised). The interior of the church was designed as a three-nave basilica with a spacious matroneum and narrow side aisles lit from above. The central space was to be illuminated by tall, narrow windows, while the altar was intended to be lit from above through a skylight in the bell tower. This unusual use of natural light, together with a well-conceived spatial arrangement, combining the traditional scheme of the church interior with a modern design, would certainly have made a unique contribution to the still very typical modern church architecture of not only Wrocław.

Translated by  
Piotr Oleś

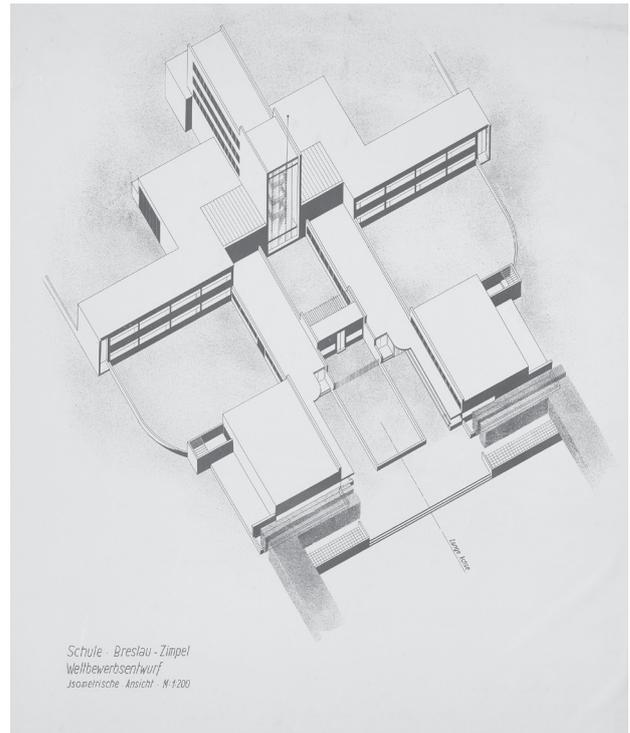


Fig. 10. Competition design for a school, kindergarten, police station and cultural centre for the Sepolno estate by H. Scharoun and A. Rading, 1926 (source: Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Hans Scharoun Archiv, Nr. 1254 Bl. 66/6)

Il. 10. Projekt konkursowy szkoły, przedszkola, posterunku policji i centrum kultury dla Sepolna autorstwa H. Scharouna i A. Radinga, 1926 (źródło: Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Hans Scharoun Archiv, Nr. 1254 Bl. 66/6)

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### Abstract

#### *The Modern Movement in the sacred architecture of Wrocław between 1912 and 1933*

The topic of the article is the modern movement in the sacred architecture of Wrocław between 1912–1933. Text, which is a contribution to the study of the problem of ecclesiastical architecture created in the capital of Lower Silesia in the years 1900–1933, examples are given of five structures – built and designed. They include both Catholic and Protestant buildings – the designs of the crematorium and cemetery chapel at Osobowice by Max Berg, the Catholic Church of the Holy Family by Kurt Langer, the Protestant Gustav Adolf Memorial Church designed by Albert Kempter and the outstanding, but unrealized competition project for this church by Hans Scharoun and Adolf Rading. These buildings are characterised by stylistic and functional diversity. Text provides a glimpse into the development of the modern movement in the work of Wrocław's architects from the radically avant-garde visions of Max Berg and Oskar Kokoschka working together on the crematorium project, through the classically modernist character of the Holy Family Church built for Sępolno, to the functionalist style of the Albert Kempter's Gustav Adolf Memorial Church and finally the ahead of its time, clearly not fitting into the categories of conservative church architecture competition design by Scharoun and Rading for the same church.

Modernity, like the avant-garde, as a heterogeneous phenomenon reveals itself on many levels – from ideas to construction to functionality. An analysis of the buildings discussed based on the current state of research and an archival search including surviving designs and press materials proves that the capital of the Silesian Province not only did not remain on the fringes of the emerging avant-garde, but, with the strength of the local artistic milieu of the local artistic community, concentrated among others around the Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts, actively co-created the avant-garde, incorporating the iconic architecture created here into the framework of the extremely dynamic modern movement, which was developing rapidly at the time.

**Key words:** Wrocław, sacred architecture, modern movement

### Streszczenie

#### *Ruch nowoczesny w architekturze sakralnej Wrocławia w latach 1912–1933*

Tematem artykułu jest ruch nowoczesny w architekturze sakralnej Wrocławia w latach 1912–1933. W tekście, który stanowi przyczynek do badań nad problematyką architektury sakralnej powstałej w stolicy Dolnego Śląska w latach 1900–1933, przytoczone zostały przykłady pięciu budowli – powstałych i projektowanych. Wśród nich znalazły się zarówno budowle katolickie, jak i protestanckie – projekty krematorium i kaplica cmentarna na Osobowicach Maxa Berga, katolicki kościół św. Rodziny Kurta Langer, ewangelicki kościół Pamięci Gustawa Adolfa projektu Alberta Kemptera oraz wybitny, choć niezrealizowany projekt konkursowy dla tego kościoła autorstwa Hansa Scharouna i Adolfa Radinga. Budowle te charakteryzuje stylistyczna i funkcjonalna różnorodność. Tekst pozwala dostrzec rozwój ruchu nowoczesnego w twórczości wrocławskich architektów począwszy od radykalnie awangardowych wizji Maxa Berga i Oskara Kokoschki pracujących wspólnie nad projektem krematorium, przez klasycznie modernistyczny charakter zrealizowanego dla Sępolna kościoła św. Rodziny, po funkcjonalistyczny chłodny w stylu zrealizowany przez Alberta Kemptera kościół Pamięci Gustawa Adolfa i wreszcie wyprzedzający epokę, wyraźnie niemieszczący się w kategoriach konserwatywnej architektury sakralnej konkursowy projekt Scharouna i Radinga dla tego samego kościoła.

Nowoczesność, podobnie jak awangarda, jako zjawisko niejednorodne ujawnia się na wielu poziomach – od idei, przez konstrukcję po funkcjonalność. Analiza budowli omówionych na podstawie aktualnego stanu badań i kwerendy archiwalnej obejmującej zachowane projekty i materiały prasowe dowodzi, że stolica Prowincji Śląskiej nie tylko nie pozostawała na rubieżach rodzącej się awangardy, ale siłami tutejszego środowiska artystycznego skupionego między innymi wokół Królewskiej Akademii Sztuki i Rzemiosła Artystycznego, aktywnie ją współtworzyła, włączając powstałą tutaj architekturę kultową w ramy niezwykle dynamicznie rozwijającego się wówczas ruchu nowoczesnego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Wrocław, architektura sakralna, modernizm