Imagined Poland.
Representations of the Nation State at the Exhibitions of Industry, Craft and Design, 1948–1974

by

Katarzyna Jeżowska

St Antony's College
University of Oxford

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Abstract

This thesis examines the use of design in the construction of Poland's national identity at the international exhibitions in the Cold War period. It is the first comprehensive study of Polish design discourse in any language that rests at the crossroads of design studies and cultural history. Based on original archival material, both written and visual, and oral interviews this thesis tracks the process of construction of Imagined Poland alongside the development of the design discipline during the three post-war decades. It charts the trajectory of these two narratives and examines their critical reception. In doing so this research casts new light on the relationship between design and political history in the Cold War Europe.

However, it is not a thesis about designed objects or spaces per se, but rather about their discursive qualities and the way that they were put in work to narrate the nation. Versatile and embedded in the cultural, economic and social contexts, design understand here in its broadest sense proved to be well suited to this role: it allowed political authorities, trade representatives and creative intelligentsia to address timely issues on their agendas. This thesis closely examines eight exhibitions organised in the Soviet Union, Italy, Belgium and Poland. The narratives of these events, as the thesis argues, reflected the state's changing self-understanding towards international public opinion. It indicates that although Polish exhibitions were occasionally adjusted to the particular location, their themes were largely shaped in response to the political developments at home and in the Eastern Europe. By using exhibitions as a framework, this thesis offers a new perspective to study Polish international modernism and suggests a limited impact of ideology on the development of professional networks. Subsequently it provides a nuanced reading of Poland's relationship with the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc and the rest of Europe beyond reductive paradigm of totalitarianism.

Extended abstract

This thesis examines the use of design in the construction of Poland's national identity at the international exhibitions in the Cold War period. It is the first comprehensive study of Polish design discourse in any language that rests at the crossroads of design studies and cultural history. Based on original archival material, both written and visual, and oral interviews this thesis tracks the process of construction of Imagined Poland alongside the development of design discipline during the three post-war decades. It charts the trajectory of these two narratives and examines their critical reception. By doing that this research casts new light on the relationship between design and political history in the Cold War Europe.

It is not a thesis about designed objects or spaces per se, but rather of their discursive qualities and the way that they were put in work to narrate the nation. Versatile and embedded in the cultural, economic and social contexts design proved to be well suited to this role: it allowed political authorities, trade representatives and creative intelligentsia to address timely issues on their agendas.

The thesis provides a collective portrait of the milieu of people and institutions involved in the process of creating Polish exhibitions in the first three post-war decades. The creative intelligentsia is the most important professional circle that this thesis follows in their attempts to construct a new international image of Poland; bureaucrats and trade representatives are another group that was involved in the process. By mapping the multidisciplinary network of professionals who were involved in creating Polish exhibitions this research clearly demonstrates that their approaches to the current political situation varied and therefore cannot be described in crude terms of collaboration or dissidence. A more nuanced analysis of their actions, which this thesis suggests, should consider the specificity of the design discipline, in which collaboration between different professions was of substantial importance. This thesis employs an interdisciplinary approach in which design – a multidisciplinary phenomenon of its own – provides a lens through which to study cultural, social, political and economic history.

This research draws from Cold War studies, which in the last twenty years have encouraged revision of the binary system of power during the Cold War. Using unpublished archival sources this thesis extends our understanding of the complexity of this Cold War divide and reassesses the relations within the Eastern Bloc. By using exhibitions as a framework, this thesis offers a new perspective to study Polish

international modernism and suggests a limited impact of ideology on the development of professional networks. Subsequently it provides a nuanced reading of Poland's relationship with the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc and the rest of Europe beyond reductive paradigm of totalitarianism.

In particular, it investigates Polish design discourse and its convergence with global developments of design as presented at international events organised during the Cold War period. By exploring secondary sources regarding the exhibitions of the other countries this thesis locates Polish presentations within Cold War trans-systemic competition. That positioning consequently poses a question about the distinctiveness of the Polish case in the broader context of the region and beyond. It also implies examination of Poland's contribution to shaping what some scholars called an alternative modernity as well as a response to Socialist Realism and its impact on the design discourse. The scholarship from the field of social and cultural history during socialism, and studies on socialist consumption and production in particular, helps contextualise the visions which Polish exhibitions presented.

Central for this thesis is an analysis of original archival sources that have never been examined before. They include written documentation, such as internal reports, minutes of meetings, memoranda, memoirs and press commentaries, which are analysed alongside photographs of exhibitions, documentation of selected showpieces, preparatory drawings of the exhibitions arrangements and film footage. This combination of written and visual documentation approaches historical events from a different angle to draw attention to details that otherwise would be overlooked. The three main categories of material – photographs and short films, reports and memoranda for internal purposes and published press reviews – are used to investigate the process, the outcome and the reception of Polish exhibitions and as such generate a comprehensive view of the events.

The thesis is composed of four chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. Arranged chronologically, the chapters are built around two exhibitions each. These pairs follow the development of exhibition narratives in light of changing political circumstances. This thesis closely examines eight exhibitions organised in the Soviet Union, Italy, Belgium and Poland. The narratives of these events, as the thesis argues, reflected the state's changing self-understanding towards international public opinion. It indicates that although Polish exhibitions were occasionally adjusted to a particular

location, their themes were largely shaped in response to political developments at home and in Eastern Europe.

The Introduction provides an overview of the recent scholarship on the exhibitions and locates it in a broader context of historical studies. It highlights the role of exhibitions as places where the national identities have been negotiated and interpreted for foreign audiences. Pavilions, the internal arrangement thereof as well as the selection of the exhibits, were instrumental in this process and widely addressed by scholars. The exhibition scripts despite their significance have been less studied and my thesis aims to address this gap. The Introduction also sets out the case for the importance of design in crafting a political narrative. By doing so it demonstrates how the study of exhibitions and design casts new light on the historical issues of international relations and national identity.

Chapter One examines the first Polish industrial exhibition held in Moscow in 1949 – at the outset of the most severe phase of Stalinism in Poland. Organised on the fifth anniversary of the communist rule, the exhibition aimed to give a broad overview of a new Poland, its people, culture and industry. During the intense year of preparation, the exhibition turned into a platform where old and the new ideas about the nation-state collided. The process of constructing of the exhibition narrative reveals the exhibition committee's resistance to the new style of aesthetics and politics: rather than blindly following the Soviet model, many Polish bureaucrats and designers were committed to adapting the interwar legacy to the new circumstances. As this chapter argues, they used interwar experiences in applied arts and architecture as a repository for the creation of a new post-war national identity. The projects from the 1920s and 1930s were revived and adjusted to the new circumstances. The chapter subsequently traces the under-researched beginnings of Polish design in the post-war period, using rather scarce visual documentation. It draws from archival material that has been never used before that documented the process – lengthy exhibition scripts, minutes from meetings between different professional groups involved in the exhibition making, reports and correspondence between the Polish and the Soviet side. The chapter maps the milieu of professionals involved in creating Polish exhibitions, which emerged in the late 1940s. The Exhibition of Regained Territories in Wrocław in 1948 was one of the most important events that consolidated designers working in the field of exhibitions. Jerzy Hryniewiecki, Bohdan Urbanowicz and Wojciech Zamecznik are some of the figures who made a significant impact on the way Poland was represented abroad throughout

the following three decades, and who reappeared throughout entire period that this thesis addresses.

Chapter Two moves into much better documented territory. The World Fair in Brussels in 1958 that it analyses has been a subject of numerous studies. The Polish exhibition – although never realised – has been considered a canonical work in the history of Polish art, architecture and design during the political Thaw. The existing research, however, focuses on the design of the pavilion and underplays the political underpinnings of its conception. By analysing lengthy reports and detailed transcriptions of the exhibition committee meetings, this chapter contextualizes the proposed exhibition schemes and suggests reading them in context of the 1956 political upheaval. Despite the outburst of mid-century modernism at home, the plans to present Poland in a progressive way for an international audience were cancelled. I would like to argue that this withdrawal was politically motivated and responded to a newly established national narrative, specific to the early days of Władysław Gomułka's regime. What is more, this tendency also determined the shape of another exhibition that Poland was simultaneously preparing for the Milan Triennale in 1957. While at home the authorities widely promoted modernity in design, the Polish pavilion at 11th Milan Triennale in 1957 showcased artisanal works inspired by national folklore. This claim, grounded in archival research, complicates the well-established reading of the post-Thaw culture and suggests its reassessment in a broader context of political developments at that time. This part of the Chapter Two centres on the international response to the Polish exhibition; Western journalists widely challenged the aesthetics that Poland proposed as inadequate for the contemporary world.

Chapter Three examines two exhibitions that were organised when the political situation in Poland had already stabilised. At the following 12th Milan Triennale in 1960 Poland portrayed itself as a forerunner of the welfare state. The exhibition prepared by Oskar Hansen, a vocal modernist and an active member of a progressive international circle of architects, depicted socialist Poland as a place where design and architecture could develop beyond constraints experienced by capitalist societies. The Polish display at the International Labour Exhibition held in Turin in 1961, which I analyse in the second part of this chapter, made a similar point. Once again, despite the expectations of Polish authorities, the argument conveyed in a sophisticated manner using modern design received a lukewarm reception from the international community. Commentaries published in professional and popular press, which formed a major part of the debate,

posed an important question as to why this strategy, calculated to achieve an international success, failed to convince the international audience about Poland's progress. Consequently, this chapter analyses a debate about design canons that spread in the West and in the East in the pursuit of 'good design'. The accompanying materials for both exhibitions – a photo-essay and an animated film – are part of this narrative and I analyse them in this chapter.

The final Chapter Four examines two anniversary exhibitions of the socialist system organised in 1969 and 1974 in Moscow and Warsaw respectively. More than two decades from the introduction of the communist rule in Poland, the authorities managed to align consumption and socialism, and the two exhibitions celebrated this fusion by displaying the abundance of commodities designed and produced in Poland. By examining design discourses in Poland and across the Eastern Bloc, this chapter analyses the role design played in producing the image of a 'really existing socialism'. Whereas the first part of this chapter examines an anniversary exhibition of the Polish People's Republic presented in Moscow, the second part of this chapter brings this discussion back home to Warsaw, which for the purpose of the following anniversary celebrations was portrayed as the hub of advanced socialist industries. This change of perspective from international to domestic forced the confrontation of the interest in design as declared by the authorities with the actual outcomes. By referring to the home audience for the first time, this chapter offers a closure of a sort: it juxtaposes the vision of Poland imagined by political authorities, bureaucrats, trade representatives, foreign journalists and design intelligentsia with fantasies about modern life for a home audience. This chapter draws from archival material, reports and published press commentaries and additionally makes a particularly strong use of first hand account through a series of personal interviews with Jacek Damięcki, the designer of the exhibition held in Warsaw in 1974.

The Conclusion considers the legacy of exhibition making in the first three post-war decades. It examines the reasons of the discipline's demise from the late 1970s onwards, including the period of transformation from socialism to capitalism. Subsequently, it analyses the potential of design and exhibitions for cultural diplomacy nowadays and suggests that the critical study of Poland's design history, which this thesis offers is central to these new policy initiatives.

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Introduction

In 1951, during a meeting to decide on the future of Polish exhibitions, the architect Jerzy Staniszkis made the case that for a successful exhibition 'a script and a spatial arrangement are indispensable. A well-selected subject, venue, [a clear understanding] of who the exhibition was for and what budget was at disposal were obviously of a great importance too', outlined Staniszkis.[1] However, that wasn't all.

> We must ensure the 'otherness' of our exhibitions… In order to create this 'otherness' we need a 'composer', a particular mind-set able to convince a commissioner to go for this or that kind of composition. In many cases we have already managed to achieve some results, but they are decidedly not enough. This begs the question, whether a central institution shouldn't have at its disposal a fixed set of predefined elements that could ensure the 'otherness' of an exhibition.[2]

This issue, raised at a meeting addressing the exhibition plans for 1952, was very timely: the hierarchy of the institutions responsible for Polish exhibitions abroad saw another change earlier in 1951. During the first post-war decade, following the reconstruction in the organisation of the governmental departments, the exhibitions were moved among agendas of various ministries, including Provision and Trade, Industry and Trade, Foreign Trade and later – the inner cabinet. Additionally, at the same time the Ministry of Art and Culture and the Polish Chamber of Foreign Trade established specialised agencies, which complemented the work of the major bodies. Thus, the interests, expertise and ambitions of each of these organisations varied, and that impacted the exhibition priorities and objectives.

However, Staniszkis' statement pointed also to a matter much more fundamental than the organisational reform. He enquired about a repertoire of national symbols representing Poland on the international scene, and asked who had the power, privilege and responsibility to decide on conceiving this vision of the nation. This issue was also

[1] Jerzy was part of a potent Staniszkis family that retained strong links with the political circles throughout the 20th century. His father, Witold Teofil Staniszkis, was a social activist and politician associated with the right-wing formations. His brother, Witold Staniszkis, was a pre-war nationalist and deputy of Bolesław Piasecki, leader of the fascist National Radical Movement 'Falanga'. Jerzy was the uncle of Jadwiga Staniszkis, a 1968-er, Solidarity advisor and former mentor of Jarosław Kaczyński.

[2] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/2/7. Protokół narady wytwórczej, poświęconej zagadnieniom analizy wystawiennictwa w r. 1951 i planom na rok 1952, p. 1.

addressed by Janina Królikowska, who spoke at the same meeting later that day. Królikowska, the Governmental Commissioner for the Exhibitions and Trade Fairs by the Cabinet Committee, ordered that meeting, which gathered 50 graphic designers and visual artists. She was one of the few women in the male dominated field who effectively managed the combination of the often conflicting ideological, pragmatic and artistic aspects of Polish exhibitions.

Just like Staniszkis, she considered the lack of a clear and widely recognisable national language one of the major problems that Polish exhibitions had been facing in the early 1950s. The pavilion Poland presented in spring 1951 at the Leipzig Trade Fairs was an apt example of this issue. As Królikowska stated, in comparison with other participants the Polish display

> was almost the best. However, could this exhibition fully satisfy us? No. The pavilion lacked the distinctive elements of our national creativity. It left the foreign visitors without a profound feeling that it was truly Polish.[3]

Indeed, the Polish pavilion presented in Leipzig may have seemed not national enough. It was overshadowed by the nearby pavilion of the People's Republic of China, which according to the local press was 'a sensation… [and was a] dominating topic of all home and foreign visitors to the Fair.'[4] In comparison with the lavish and exotic presentation of Chinese art and industry, the Polish pavilion lacked distinct national flavour. As the newsreel recorded, an allegoric sculpture embodying labour welcomed the visitors to the pavilion. At the entrance, two large signs with the name 'Polen' were presented next to red and white banners and a symbol of an eagle.

The national emblems were deemed insufficient to convey a clear message of the Polishness of the pavilion in Leipzig and in other locations. Nevertheless, in other contexts the national colours and the well-established image of the eagle were considered effective. What's more, the authorities used these symbols to cover up their 'complex of insufficiently enunciated Polishness', which became particularly dire in the

[3] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/2/7. Protokół narady wytwórczej, p. 2.
[4] *The Leipzig Fair: A Historical Survey. Published on the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Founding of the German Democratic Republic* (Leipzig: VEB Messeund Musikaliendruck, 1959), p. 22. Quoted by K. Pence, 'A World In Miniature: The Leipzig Trade Fairs In The 1950s and East German Consumer Citizenship', in D. Crew (ed.), *Consuming Germany in the Cold War* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), p. 27.

early 1950s, when the Cold War entered its international phase for the first time.[5] The national emblems – only slightly modified in comparison to the interwar period – allowed the communist power to make a strong claim about the historical continuity and legitimacy of the new system. At the exhibitions, the authorities wanted to employ a much wider range of visual elements in order to communicate the Polishness of pavilions and displays.

The desire to establish a distinctiveness of Polish exhibitions, as expressed by Staniszkis and Królikowska, marked the area of common interest between bureaucrats and designers. Although driven by different objectives, the need to define and communicate national specificity governed the collaboration of these two professional groups on the international exhibitions during the three decades that this thesis covers. This was not exclusively a Polish phenomenon. Touching upon cultural, political and economic matters, the international exhibitions were effective platforms for negotiating the identities of the presenting nations. In the last twenty years researchers in history, area studies, as well as art, design and architecture have been dealing with the subject of exhibitions and trade fairs from different disciplinary angles, and the issue of identity has been at the centre of their investigation.[6] As titles of numerous publications indicate, exhibitions and trade fairs were places where national identities were performed, crafted, projected, constructed or displayed.[7] These were the activities, which – regardless of time or location – reflected the intellectual and artistic efforts of

[5] M. Zaremba, *Komunizm, Legitymizacja, Nacjonalizm* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Wydawnictwo Trio, 2005), especially pp. 191–220.

[6] See for example M. Filipová (ed.), *Cultures of International Exhibitions 1840-1940: Great Exhibitions in the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2017); D. Raizman and E. Robey (eds.), *Expanding Nationalisms at World's Fairs: Identity, Diversity, and Exchange, 1851-1915* (London: Routledge, 2017); R. Devos, A. Ortenberg and V. Paperny (eds.), *Architecture of Great Expositions 1937-1959: Messages of Peace, Images of War* (London: Routledge, 2016); G. Miedema, *For Canada's Sake: Public Religion, Centennial Celebrations, and the Re-Making of Canada in the 1960s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); B. Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation: The 1951 Exhibition of Britain, Representing Britain in the Post-War World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). Other new publications about this subject include Z. Ryan (ed.), *As Seen: Exhibitions That Made Architecture and Design History* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2017); H. Atkinson, V. Clarkson and S. Lichtman (eds.), *Beyond Boundaries: Art and Design Exhibitions as Transnational Exchange from 1945* (upcoming 2019).

[7] See for example A. Yarrington, '"Made in Italy": Sculpture and the Staging of National Identities at the International Exhibition of 1862', in M. Pfister and R. Hertel (eds.), *Performing National Identity: Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 75–99 and R. A. López, *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution* (Duke University Press, 2010).

hosts and participants, including politicians, creative intelligentsia and merchants to name just a few. In this thesis I will explore this relatively recent, but dynamically evolving body of scholarship. However, rather than emphasising its concrete aspects – such as constructing, building or performing, I wish to concentrate on the analysis of discourse.

I will follow the proposal on the history of imagination, made by Jacques Le Goff in the 1980s, which he has since developed. As Le Goff claimed in one of his recent texts,

> historical reality reveals itself as a combination of 'real,' supposedly objective, history on one hand, and a history of 'images' of that reality on the other. Whoever sees only one of these facets of this historical reality leaves out half of its meaning. This meaning that emerges at the intersection of the two histories.[8]

This approach is particularly relevant here and highlights the analogy between the method and the subject of study. It allows me to move my interest from the tangible outcomes to the concepts or rhetoric, which in the course of shaping exhibitions were more important than the actual objects. Therefore, this thesis explores the discursive character of exhibitions. The approach resonates with the words of Jonathan Woodham, who is one of the founding fathers of design history as a distinct academic discipline. In his canonical publication about 20th century design, Woodham noted that

> the design and content of national pavilions were often constructed to portray particular facets of nation states or political regimes. As such they may be seen as bearers of myths rather than accurate reflections of more deep-seated national traits.[9]

This focus on the imagining of Poland opens several interesting research avenues with regard to processes and their outcomes. It suggests a conceptual activity unconstrained by external circumstance, yet conditioned by earlier experiences, mental maps and beliefs of individuals or social groups.[10] Consequently, it implies a question

[8] J. Le Goff, 'Poland, Europe, and Russia', in C. Evtuhov and S. Kotkin (eds.), *The Cultural Gradient: The Transmission of Ideas in Europe, 1789-1991* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 277.
[9] J. M. Woodham, *Twentieth Century Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 87.
[10] An analogy here can be drawn with research into the milieu of academics in Poland, Czechoslovakia and GDR under Stalinism by John Connelly. See his *Captive University: The*

about those who were taking part in the process, as well as those who were excluded from it and their relation to power. Although a few researchers have already critically readdressed the position of artists and intellectuals in the times of the regime, design intelligentsia has suffered a lack of scholarly attention in that respect.[11] By mapping the network of professionals who were involved in creating Polish exhibitions, this research implies that their approaches to the political situation varied. Thus, it suggests that they cannot be described in terms of collaboration or dissidence and require a more nuanced analysis.

The creative intelligentsia is the most important professional group that this thesis follows in its attempts to conceptualise Poland. Bureaucrats and trade representatives constituted other circles that were involved in the process. Driven by different agendas and balancing ideology with political and economic pragmatism, these three groups tried to develop a coherent version of Polish representation on the international scene. During lengthy debates in which they all took part, multiple interpretations of Poland – past, present and future – emerged. This study analyses that process and the various ideas that arose during its course. The focus on ideas resonates with Le Goff's understanding of history as an amalgam of imaginations and facts. Whereas the former is represented by the proposals made by the political, creative or industrial elites, the latter refers to everyday life in Eastern Europe and Poland in particular. Although the thesis at hand does not focus on everyday life, by drawing from studies on socialist consumption and production, it refers to it as a context in which lofty visions of national rebirth and modernist identity were created and received.

The number of sources written in English that address these themes in relation to Poland is systematically growing, yet still there are very few comprehensive positions that place design in a broader context. The work of David Crowley, spanning from the 1990s, which is often referenced through this thesis, is most influential and widely recognised for shaping the contemporary research into Polish design. The study at hand draws from Crowley's work, however it proposes a new angle to address some of the historical arguments that he has undertaken. The complex relationship between the East

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Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

[11] See for example B. Fijałkowska, *Polityka i Twórcy (1948-1959)* (Warszawa: PWN, 1985) and E. Toniak, *Prace Rentowne. Polscy Artyści Między Ekonomią a Sztuką w Okresie Odwilży* (Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2015).

and the West during the Cold War, the trans-systemic nature of modernism and the influence of ideology on everyday objects within the Eastern Bloc and in Poland in particular are some of the most pertinent themes. The international exhibitions that this paper analyses provide an original lens to investigate the Polish design, with particular focus on representation strategies (mediation). By heavily drawing on historical sources, the extensive use of undiscovered archives and on personal interviews, this thesis expands the understanding of connections between design and domestic politics.

During the Cold War the problem of narrating the nation through exhibitions became particularly complex: the intentions of the commissioners, the final outcomes of the efforts of multidisciplinary committees, and their reception by general audiences and media became convoluted in the dominating political narrative. The competitive spirit of the Cold War urged nation-states to rethink their post-war identities, which required them to substantially remodel the way they presented themselves in the first part of the 20th century. Furthermore, in the new geopolitical situation, each country not only represented itself, but was also perceived as part of a bigger socio-political entity. By associating with the capitalist West or the socialist East, the governments and state elites carved space for strategic alliances, political friendships and often far-flung cultural networks.[12] These very sophisticated international alignments, whether forced or voluntary, created systems that affected the national identities of both the participants and the hosts of international exhibitions.

However, it does not mean that the national representations succumbed to the larger schemes – on the contrary. The thematic volume of *The Journal of Contemporary History* published in 2012 presented several articles that addressed this issue. Written by scholars of European history, architecture and design, the texts shed light on countries for many years considered less significant to the development of the grand Cold War narrative.[13] The volume presents the pavilions of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia alongside those of West Germany and the Soviet Union. By analysing the internal debates of national committees, the recent scholarship exposed different national agendas in the fields of politics, economy and culture. As a

[12] For the Scandinavian alliance see for example K. Fallan, 'Milanese Mediations: Crafting Scandinavian Design at the Triennali Di Milano', *Journal of Art History* 83, no. 1 (2014), pp. 1–23.

[13] *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 1 (2012). Special Issue: Sites of Convergence–The USSR and Communist Eastern Europe at International Fairs Abroad and at Home. Guest Editor: György Péteri.

consequence of this approach the peripheral countries re-emerged with their own networks, ambitions and anxieties, rather than being mere subsidiaries of more important global actors.

In the introduction to the volume, its guest editor György Péteri proposed to interpret international exhibitions as sites of convergence between the West and the East. This approach, in his words, allowed to

> utilize the complex and rich experience of international fairs and exhibitions in order to improve our understanding of cultural, social and political interaction across the systemic divide between the social orders construed as 'capitalism' and 'socialism' in the cold war era.[14]

Péteri's text highlighted the transnational character of trade fairs and international exhibitions, however the majority of the articles presented in the volume recalled histories of a single nation's pavilions. Indeed, this methodology dominates the field of cultural research and, as some researchers believe, it could be particularly relevant for design studies. For instance, Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei advocated for 'a reinsertion of the national category into contemporary academic understanding of design'.[15] Nevertheless, as I would like to argue, a comparative approach seems to be more relevant and beneficial in addressing the phenomenon of transnational exhibitions. Since it requires access to an extended range of sources, it has been relatively rare.[16] My research offers a version of national history, but makes ready use of international material whenever relevant data is available. The state of existing scholarship does not provide sufficient information to formulate a well-rounded comparison between parallel exhibitions of Poland and Czechoslovakia, Hungary, East Germany or Yugoslavia. The thesis draws on existing research into international events, such as The World's Fair in Brussels that I analyse in Chapter Two and, to a lesser degree, the Milan Triennale and

[14] G. Péteri, 'Sites of Convergence: The USSR and Communist Eastern Europe at International Fairs Abroad and at Home', *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 1 (2012), p. 5.
[15] Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei argued for 'a reinsertion of the national category into contemporary academic understanding of design.' See K. Fallan and G. Lees-Maffei, 'Real Imagined Communities: National Narratives and the Globalization of Design History', *Design Issues* 32, no. 1 (Winter 2016), pp. 5-18.
[16] Exceptions include K. Elman Zarecor and V. Kulic, 'Socialism on Display: The Czechoslovak and Yugoslav Pavilions at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair', in L. Hollengreen et al. (eds.), *Meet Me at the Fair* (Pittsburgh: ETC Press, 2014), pp. 225–239; D. Crowley, 'Humanity Rearranged: The Polish and Czechoslovak Pavilions at Expo 58', *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 19, no. 1 (2012), pp. 88–105.

the International Labour Exhibition.[17]

This thesis argues that Polish design history greatly benefits from contextual reading. At the same time, it shows that on various occasions during the post-war decades, design from Eastern Europe was wrongly considered a homogenous outcome of the political system. This biased interpretation of the past that this study examines additionally induces a more nuanced understanding of the Eastern Bloc. The thesis presents the Polish case as part of Eastern Europe's larger story that the post-Yalta order aimed to organise around the Soviet Union. However, the strategies of dealing with this situation, historical conditions and the relationship with the rest of the world made the Polish case significantly different from Czechoslovakia, Hungary or East Germany. Polish design culture in a way reflected this ambiguous situation. In many respects, Polish design could not be satisfactorily described solely as an outcome of socialist culture, since it was shaped by inputs and ideas that reached far beyond the geopolitical context of the Cold War.

By exploring secondary sources regarding the exhibitions of the other countries, this study positions the Polish presentations amongst the Cold War competition inside the Eastern Bloc, as well between the East and the West. Although the competitive spirit was rarely expressed by the designers themselves, their commissioners (that means various state institutions) were well aware and eager to use the exhibitions in that context. This positioning consequently poses a question about the distinctiveness of the Polish case in the broader context of the region and beyond. It also implies the examination of Poland's contribution into the shaping of what some scholars called an alternative modernity, a term that I critically explore in Chapter Two. Péteri for example questioned its success by asking whether

> the socialist experiment really manage[s] to assert an alternative modernity, a genuine variant of modernity obeying its own distinctive norms, values and economic and sociological regularities?[18]

[17] P. Nováková, 'Čeští a slovenští umělci na Triennale di Milano, 1923-1968' (MA, Palacký University Olomouc, Philosophical Faculty, 2012). Vladimir Kulic has recently addressed Yugoslavia's pavilion at ILE, see his 'Representing a Maverick Socialism: Vjenceslav Richter and the Midcentury Pavilions of Yugoslavia' (66th Society of Architectural Historians Annual Conference, Buffalo: unpublished, 2013). I would like to thank the author for making this manuscript available to me.

[18] G. Péteri, 'Sites of Convergence', p. 6.

This question, reiterated by other historians around the late 1990s and early 2000s, opened a new way of approaching Eastern European history and design in particular. As such, it indicated a new direction of research, which led to the reconsideration of relationships between the East and the West in the context of modernity.

This thesis draws on the existing research, but also aims to advance this argument. By investigating original archival material, it examines the process of forming Polish modernity and its resonance both at home and abroad. In this context, it is also worth asking whether the desire to create an alternative model in design was as widely spread as Péteri's article suggests. Apart from the struggle to develop an original representation of Poland, as debated at the conference recalled at the beginning of this Introduction, the official documentation does not contain explicit claims about creating a model that would compete with the Western proposal in design. On the contrary, behind closed doors various exhibition committees openly stated the uncompetitiveness of Polish design. Architects and autocrats debated together the ways in which the low quality of the objects on display could be concealed. The visual means such as dramatic spatial design or the use of film projections were some of the methods widely applied in order to divert the attention of the international audience from the actual showpieces. Declarations about an alternative and superior model of design culture, as developed in Poland and other socialist countries, were more likely to appear on public forums. For example, in Chapter Three I examine an article by Szymon Bojko, who praised socialism as an ideal system for the development of design and criticised the American and Western approach to the creation and consumption of commodities. By examining various archival materials, the thesis casts light onto these different voices and uses them to reconstruct the complex relations that guided the process of imagining Poland.

In an attempt to attend this issue, Poland's rapport with the Soviet Union offers a new perspective.[19] As the material discussed below exemplifies, this relationship was quite unique and defined Poland's position within the bloc, and consequently it affected

[19] The recent fifteen years saw a growing interest in cultural aspect of relationships between Poland and the Soviet Union, nonetheless, this subject still awaits in-depth exploration. See for example P. Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland: Culture and the Making of Stalin's New Empire, 1943–1957* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); M. Poprzęcka and L. Jowlewa (eds.), *Warszawa-Moskwa / Moskwa-Warszawa 1900–2000*, (Warszawa: Zachęta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, 2004). Also on A. D. Rotfeld and A. V. Torkunov, *White Spots—Black Spots: Difficult Matters in Polish-Russian Relations, 1918–2008* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015).

the way Poland presented itself abroad. The framework of centre and peripheries could not accurately describe the relationship between Poland and the Soviet Union, neither could the postcolonial approach, which has been present in the Polish historiography for some time now.[20] What is more, 'an external empire', which Stalin created following the Yalta congress decision, included many countries that were more prosperous, affluent and progressive than the Soviet Union. The thesis at hand does not engage with contemporary discourse about the potentially postcolonial nature of post-war Poland. Nevertheless, the archival sources used here on numerous occasions challenge the interpretation of Poland as a mere satellite country of the Soviet Union. This thesis agrees with Piotr Piotrowski, the late scholar of Eastern European art, who argued that 'the post-colonial matrix… would simplify the issue and could not touch the real problem'.[21]

As a result of partitions on the territories of Poland several independent artistic milieux existed. Each of them was influenced by different European traditions: Poznań was well connected with Berlin, Kraków had a close bond with Vienna, Łódź with the Russian Jewish circles, and Warsaw 'enjoyed a melange of all the European avant-garde trends'.[22] From a historical perspective it can be observed that Poland's cultural bond with Russia was fraught. This division continued in the interwar period, when Poland regained independence. Even then, what is worth noting, information about the Russian avant-garde reached Poland through Berlin and Paris.[23] As an effect quite early on Warsaw established itself as 'a bridge between the East (Russia) and the West (France,

[20] Nevertheless, some authors insisted on applying the postcolonial theory to studies on Polish history. For a critical overview see S. Bill, 'Seeking the Authentic: Polish Culture and the Nature of Postcolonial Theory', *Nonsite.Org (Online Journal in the Humanities)* 12 (2014). Available online: http://nonsite.org/article/seeking-the-authentic-polish-culture-and-the-nature-of-postcolonial-theory. Accessed on 15 March 2017. Also D. Uffelmann, 'Theory as Memory Practice: The Divided Discourse on Poland's Postcoloniality', in J. Fedor, A. Etkind, and U. Blacker (eds.), *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 103–124.

[21] P. Piotrowski, 'East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory', *Nonsite.Org (Online Journal in the Humanities)* 12 (2014). Also his *In the shadow of Yalta: art and the avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989* (London: Reaktion, 2011).

[22] K. Kuc, *Visions of Avant-Garde Film: Polish Cinematic Experiments from Expressionism to Constructivism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), p. 5.

[23] The subject has been analysed by the Polish art historian Andrzej Turowski, who not only examined the relationships between Polish and Russian artists in the 1920s and 1930s, but also mapped the extensive and often not obvious network of contacts. See for example his 'Notatki o Awangardzie Rosyjskiej w Polsce', in M. Poprzęcka and L. Jowlewa (eds.), *Warszawa-Moskwa / Moskwa-Warszawa 1900-2000*, pp. 50–58.

Germany)'.[24] The introduction of Socialist Realism minimised if not the resonance, then at least the presence of international culture at home. Patryk Babiracki repeats the observations made by Marta Fik, a culture critic, who in the late 1980s wrote a chronicle of Polish cultural life. Fik stated that Polish authorities planned to introduce Socialist Realism in the late 1940s as a way of 'cutting Poland off from anything 'Western', and from vast territories of its national tradition – that is from anything that linked it to Western Europe and from almost anything of its own.'[25]

This claim, although it corresponds with Babiracki's interpretation of soft power, does not entirely fit with the image that emerged from the official reports and internal minutes this study examines. As the thesis and the First Chapter in particular illustrate, the creative intelligentsia preparing the Polish non-artistic exhibitions was very reluctant to follow the 'Soviet model'; the bureaucrats did not seem particularly keen on it either. This different angle may be due to the international (not domestic) character of the exhibitions that are at the centre of this study; it could also result from a specific focus on the commercial, not only propagandist dimension of the events. Nonetheless, the fact is that despite the considerable efforts, the lifetime of the Soviet doctrine in Poland was relatively short, especially in comparison with other countries of the bloc.[26] In 1952, as a result of the so-called 'mini-Thaw', the doctrine of Socialist Realism in Poland became 'open to a more flexible interpretation'.[27] What's more revealing is that the ideological strictures were loosened by Włodzimierz Sokorski, the minister of culture who three years earlier had introduced Socialist Realism into Polish art. By 1954 the position of Socialist Realism had significantly weakened, which was a harbinger of a wider process of relaxation that Poland was to experience in the upcoming years.

The situation in design was quite unique in this context. Although Socialist Realism had a limited impact on the aesthetics of everyday goods, the narratives in which daily objects were circumscribed gave evidence of the ideological shift. Jerzy Hryniewiecki, a highly regarded member of multiple exhibition committees liaising between political and creative coteries, noted on the wave of Thaw enthusiasm that 'the

[24] K. Kuc, *Visions of Avant-Garde Film*, p. 5.
[25] P. Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland*, p. 116. Originally in M. Fik, *Kultura polska po Jałcie. Kronika lat 1944-1981* (Londyn: Polonia, 1989).
[26] K. Śliwińska, *Socrealizm w PRL i NRD* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2006).
[27] P. Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland*, p. 153.

artistic endeavour of our exhibitions took a totally different direction' than other disciplines. [28] As he argued,

> this distinctiveness could only be explained by the fact that, whereas other art disciplines methodically broke contacts with worldwide art phenomena, avoiding any confrontations and tapping solely into tradition, predominantly 19th century tradition as a source of 'sincere' realism, the visual forms of our exhibitions, be it political or economic, had to communicate with countries that hadn't been using the out-dated propaganda language of bourgeois naturalism for decades.[29]

Socialist Realism, which affected the development of fine art, architecture, sculpture and literature, had as Hryniewiecki noted, a limited impact on the exhibitions in terms of both their spatial arrangement (exhibition design) and the objects presented. The Party ideologues' ability to prepare precise directional guidelines for designs that would result in the creation of socialist objects was limited. The USSR did not develop a potent alternative to the Western model that could have been imposed on the satellite states. The radical proposals for a new material culture made by avant-garde artists in the 1920s were denounced by Stalin's regime and forgotten for the next four decades. It was only in the 1960s, when they were re-introduced as the foundation of Soviet design.[30] At that time these transitional objects 'anticipating a future socialist culture that had not yet arrived' had purely historical value.[31] Poland had not only already looked to the West – mainly Scandinavia, Germany and France – for inspiration, but also started emerging as a conveyor of design concepts from the West to the Soviet Union.

The fact that some Western countries saw their interest in reinforcing the relations with Poland had decidedly strengthened Poland's position. For example, France considered Poland as its priority among the Eastern Bloc countries and through establishing a special relationship between Paris and Warsaw wanted to assure a

[28] J. Hryniewiecki, 'O Naszym Wystawiennictwie', *Projekt* 1, no. 1 (1956), p. 20.
[29] Ibidem.
[30] See A. Nikolaevich Lavrentiev and Y. V. Nasarov, *Russian Design: Tradition and Experiment, 1920-1990* (London: Academy Editions, 1995). Also D. Crowley, 'Staging for the End of History: Avant-Garde Visions at the Beginning and the End of Communism in Eastern Europe', in P. Babiracki and A. Jersild (eds.), *Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War. Exploring the Second World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 107–31.
[31] C. Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), p. 4.

'circulation of western ideas in the socialist bloc.'[32] From the mid 1950s for the Soviet public Poland was a 'window to the West'. Testimonies of transfer of information through Poland to the USSR can be found in memoirs of writers, scholars, artists and intellectuals, for all of whom 'their search for "world culture" led, by geopolitical necessity, along the same path – through Poland.'[33] By portraying a milieu of design intelligentsia involved in the making of the Polish exhibition, this thesis argues that the situation was similar to the one of literary culture.[34] The inspirational character of the Polish design culture is particularly noticeable in the late 1960s and the mid 1970s, when Poland presented quite a few exhibitions of industrial goods in Moscow. In Chapter Four I examine this sudden rise of Polish–Soviet design dialogues. Using archival materials and articles published in the Soviet press, I analyse the perception of Polish design in Moscow in the context of the anniversary exhibitions.

Urged by economic rationale, Poland aimed to initiate or maintain trade contacts with the West. This direction of exchange provided hard currency that the state badly needed: firstly for the post-war reconstruction, then from the mid-1950s for development, and in the final years for paying off its gargantuan international debts. The images of Poland were presented with this specific goal in mind and consequently focused on the Western audience, prioritising commercial profit. In the 1950s the Postcolonial South, a forgotten side of the Cold War conflict, also presented opportunities for Poland. By participating in the newly established fairs in Africa and Southwestern Asia, Poland – like other Eastern European countries – was looking for a long-term involvement in the region. Although in this geopolitical context an immediate commercial profit was highly unlikely, participation in postcolonial trade fairs and exhibitions opened up prospects for transferring knowledge, skills and expertise, and possibly also the civilisational model. In the context of this thesis the question how Poland positioned itself and how it was perceived in the countries of the Postcolonial South reverberates persistently. Did presenting the national pavilions at the postcolonial

[32] D. Jarosz and M. Pasztor, *Stosunki polsko-francuskie 1944-1980* (Warszawa: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2008).
[33] I. Grudzińska-Gross, 'Under the Influence? Joseph Brodsky and Poland', in D. L Ransel and B. Shallcross (eds.), *Polish Encounters, Russian Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 191. See also Y. Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and The Cold War: Raising The Iron Curtain* (Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).
[34] For example I. Gerchuk, 'The Aesthetics of Everyday Life in the Khrushchev Thaw in the USSR (1954-64)', in D. Crowley and S. E. Reid (eds.), *Style and Socialism. Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), pp. 81–99.

trade fairs allowed Poland to manifest its own agency, or the contrary – was it entirely determined by USSR's plan for the entire region? Whereas the thesis at hand focuses on Poland's presentations in Europe, the second phase of this study would expand the scope of its research by examining Poland's presence in the Postcolonial South. The primary and secondary sources that I have already consulted present an opportunity to build upon the story this thesis recalls.

The conference report, which I quoted at the beginning of this Introduction, revealed that national identity was an important concern for officials and designers alike. It prompts the question whether design was of any use in translating those visions into exhibition spaces and showpieces; or to put it differently, whether a whimsical concept of a nation's identity could be materialised. Many people have struggled to establish the relations between the two and the idea of national design emerged in between the lines of those enquires. In 1956 the deputy director of the British Council of Industrial Design acknowledged this effort in his presentation:

> I know that there is a mass of evidence on the side of folk lore and that many scholars have written learned volumes on national traditions in the arts, but whether any of them have really identified the influence of national character on design, as apart from the influence of climate, geography, religion or society I very much doubt. I know, too, that commercially there is much wishful thinking on this subject… There is, of course, commercial commonsense in such ambitions... I personally question the value of exploring national character as such in this context, for we live in a hybrid world with only isolated pockets of pure stock, and these are themselves often much exaggerated.[35]

The quotation reveals that design was portrayed as a vehicle of political identity both in the West and in the East. The authorities across the globe considered its legitimising potential, whereas businesses relied on the national specificity to make profit. In both cases the Cold War division of the world was instrumental in sustaining these claims, regardless of their accuracy.

Reilly's opinion, which sounds sensible from today's perspective, was not recognised by Poland or by other participants of the international exhibitions. The Polish authorities were charmed by the idea to showcase Poland as significantly different than other countries, and only the pragmatic rationale of the Polish

[35] P. Reilly, 'The Influence of National Character on Design', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 104, no. 4989 (26 October 1956), p. 920.

presentation forced the authorities to reconsider this strategy. As the archival documents certified, the exhibition committees were well aware of various audiences that would visit the Polish pavilion; minutes from meetings relating to the 1949 Exhibition in Moscow and the 1958 planned presentation in Brussels provide particularly strong evidence in that matter. In order to establish working international relations, the authorities believed they had to use a language that would be recognisable and understandable for the foreign audiences. There was little space for failure, since hard currency was of primary importance. Although exhibition designers may not have experienced ideological pressures with regard to the aesthetics of the presentations (as their colleagues did), their work was often constrained by the commercial interests of the state.

This aspiration to present a recognisable national contribution was not specifically Polish. For decades, committees across the globe made a considerable effort to make their exhibitions different. Design and architecture were widely used to achieve that. David Raizman and Ethan Robey, editors of the most recent publication addressing the intersection between exhibitions and the nations' identities, noted that

> a combination of resistance and envy that characterizes the experience of difference and reveals the social and political dimensions of design through the pavilions and displays at the fairs. The interpretive richness and complexity of the fairs emerges through the study of their artefacts.[36]

Although this observation comes from a collection of articles devoted to the events that happened between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it seems to still be relevant to the period that this thesis explores. As the authors argued, since the 1851 Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace, international exhibitions have functioned as places where national identities were represented

> outside of the main loci of power, marginalised in terms of economic or political structures, and/or geography – representations promulgated in visual terms, by displays of material goods.[37]

[36] D. Raizman and E. Robey, 'Introduction: Communities Real and Imagined. World's Fairs and Political Meanings', in D. Raizman and E. Robey (eds.), *Expanding Nationalisms at World's Fairs: Identity, Diversity, and Exchange, 1851-1915* (London: Routledge, 2017), n.p.
[37] Ibidem.

Since the beginning of the 20th century the architecture of the national pavilions played a particularly important role in this process.[38] The showpieces, whose function was then downplayed, were integrated into the architecture in order to 'construct a coherent binding narrative.'[39] Thus, the pavilions and temporary architectural structures were subjected to often conflicting demands. On one hand they had to defend their position as 'significant markers in the narrative of modernity' or architectural laboratories where progressive ideas could be tested.[40] On the other hand, they had to oblige their raison d'être and manifest the identity of a nation, which often overtly referred to the past and tradition. A belief that architecture has the power to represent national identities – or, as Devos, Ortenberg and Paperny put it, 'a particular confidence in its communicative ability' – was evident in the exhibitions organised between the late 1910s and the early 1960s.[41]

In the mid 20th century industrial design was gradually emerging to articulate similar claims. With its roots in an artistic mindset and technical expertise, with commitment to the improvement of the everyday life and with reformist ambitions, by the late 1940s design was the best tool to address the nations' production, consumption, domesticity, lifestyle and taste. The way it was put to work to 'narrate the nation' was significantly different than in the case of other disciplines that have been employed to do that so far.[42] While literature, film and fine arts explicitly and directly addressed the nation's past, design objects needed some extra support in that respect. That role was played by written and spoken commentaries generated by design objects: Party ideologues, journalists and sometimes the designers themselves were eager to explain not only how the objects were designed, produced and how they could be consumed, but also what they meant in the broader context of contemporary life and historical

[38] For example, G. Castillo, 'Peoples at an Exhibition: Soviet Architecture and the National Question', in T. Lahusen and E. Aleksandrovic Dobrenko (eds.), *Socialist Realism without Shores* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 715–46.
[39] R. Devos, A. Ortenberg and V. Paperny, 'Introduction. Messages of Peace and Images of War: Modern Architecture as Diplomacy', in R. Devos, A. Ortenberg and V. Paperny (eds.), *Architecture of Great Expositions*, p. 7.
[40] J-L. Cohen, 'Foreword', in R. Devos, A. Ortenberg and V. Paperny (eds.), *Architecture of Great Expositions*, pp. XXIII–XXVII.
[41] R. Devos, A. Ortenberg and V. Paperny, 'Introduction', in R. Devos, A. Ortenberg and V. Paperny (eds.), *Architecture of Great Expositions*, p. 13.
[42] S. Berger, 'Narrating the Nation: Historiography and Other Genres', in S. Berger, L. Eriksonas, and A, Mycock (eds.), *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), pp. 1–16.

developments. This discursive quality of design is at the centre of this thesis, which consequently casts a new light on the complex relations between politics and design. As Fredie Floré and Cammie D. McAtee noted

> designed goods, including furniture elements, can be seen as material expressions of power, which inform the way people interact or behave. Their agency is often less overt than that of, for example political slogans or statements. However, their silent presence is capable of negotiating and manipulating powerful ideological messages.[43]

This quote sheds light on the universal qualities of design, which have determined its use across the world both in the past and today. However, the claim resonates particularly strongly in the geopolitical context that this thesis examines. This seemingly apolitical quality of design and its multivalence initially opened numerous interpretative opportunities for the authorities, who could fill designed goods with meaning according to their current needs. As such, design has been an optimal device of soft power, be it in a domestic or an international context. In this thesis design is used in its broad sense and it refers both to the objects featured on displays (product design) and spatial arrangement of the exhibitions, displays, pavilions and trade fair stands (exhibition design). The decisions of what and how was to be presented were closely linked and proved to be equally important for orchestrating the show about country's progress, wealth and morale as many exhibition committee reports revealed. This thesis argues that design debates that took place between bureaucrats, design intelligentsia and trade representatives and often reverberated in the press, are central for understanding the entire process of imagining Poland.

The ongoing Cold War competition between two blocs made this political reading of design particularly pertinent. The aspirations of modern design, which is 'socially emancipatory, not just responding to the existing needs of society, but contributing to revolution or change', were visibly aligned with the declarative objectives of the socialist governments.[44] The rise of popularity of trade fairs and exhibitions as platforms for international exchange additionally aggravated the claims

[43] F. Floré and C. D. McAtee, 'Introduction. The Politics of Furniture', in F. Floré and C. D. McAtee (eds.), *The Politics of Furniture: Identity, Diplomacy and Persuasion in Post-War Interiors* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 4.
[44] T. Benton, 'Building Utopia', in C. Wilk (ed.), *Modernism: Designing a New World: 1914-1939* (London: V&A Publishing, 2008), p. 154.

about the specificity of every nation's production. Raymond Stokes considered whether socialism, or for that matter any other political system, 'produced artefacts or technological systems which uniquely expressed the politics or ideology of their designers.'[45] Stokes reached the rather predictable conclusion that objects produced in the socialist economy were not 'more humanitarian, more environmentally friendly, or more likely to be co-designed by workers' than their equivalents originating from the West.[46] Twenty years since the article was published and the field of Cold War design was progressively researched, this conclusion does not provide a satisfactory explanation for the complex relation between design and political systems.[47]

The core of this relationship should be, as I would like to argue in this thesis, not limited to the sole material outcomes. By examining design discourses rather than objects or spaces themselves, one could understand the position of design within the socialist system much better. As Lewis H. Siegelbaum aptly noted,

> the procedures for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services comprised a significant zone of interaction between the project and the actuality of socialism, between its ideals defined in terms of an enlightened awareness of the collective interest and the reality of shortages, competing priorities, external pressures, privilege, venality, and desires for imagined comforts, bourgeois or otherwise.[48]

This extended understanding of design – reaching beyond the production and consumption of things – also opens a space for investigating mediatory practices.[49] This study considers two aspects of mediation that often intertwined. One aspect relates to the spatial arrangement of venues and fairgrounds, which I refer to as exhibition design. It encompasses the use of sound, light, moving image, decorative paintings and photo-collages, as well as the selection of typography and exposition furniture. The variety of visual means allowed to decontextualise the objects and highlighted their attributes, which in an everyday context may have remained unnoticed. These usually

[45] R. Stokes, 'In Search of the Socialist Artefact. Technology and Ideology in East Germany, 1945-1962', *German History* 15, no. 2 (1997), pp. 221–22.
[46] R. Stokes, 'In Search of the Socialist Artefact', p. 237.
[47] In this thesis I refer to numerous publications in this field. Worth noting is J. Pavitt and D. Crowley (eds.), *Cold War Modern. Design 1945-1970* (London: V&A Publishing, 2008).
[48] L. H. Siegelbaum, 'Introduction', in L. H. Siegelbaum (ed.), *The Socialist Car: Automobility in the Eastern Bloc* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 2.
[49] G. Lees-Maffei, 'The Production–Consumption–Mediation Paradigm', *Journal of Design History* 22, no. 4 (1 December 2009), pp. 351–76.

sophisticated approaches resembled the commercial marketing strategies used to attract the viewers and influence their perception of objects. In a manner similar to Polish poster design from the period, the spatial arrangement – counterintuitively – rather than purely providing support, became the major component of the exhibitions. Designed goods constituted the other mediating channel; as outlined above, they played the role of the vehicle of national identity. This thesis, instead of focusing on one of the two elements, considers them as complementary parts which contributed to the creation of a holistic image that Poland projected.

The images of the country that emerged from the crossover designing of goods and of exhibitions were different from those promoted through visual arts, movies or literature. Design, in a similar way to architecture but unlike any other creative discipline, was engaged both in the representational practices of the state and in the domestic policy. Effectively, this two-sided nature of design was reflected in the complexity of national identity. Although design was utilised to convey the country's character in other ways as well (e.g. through the venues of Polish embassies around the world), the international exhibitions shed a distinct light on its very nature: they emphasised design's existence between realisations and concepts, between pragmatism and vision.

Sources

This thesis makes use of original archival material from visual and written documentations produced by institutions and individuals responsible for cultural, political and economic agendas. Dispersed in collections of different profiles, the sources prove the interdisciplinary character of the events at the heart of this research. The majority of sources that this study uses is located in Warsaw, which reflects the centralisation of institutions responsible for preparing Poland's representations abroad. I analysed the visual documentation of the exhibitions against the written sources, which encompass internal reports, minutes of meetings, memoranda, memoirs and press commentaries from the examined period. The majority of materials I consulted are held at the New Documents Archives (Archiwum Akt Nowych), where they belong to six collections related to exhibitions and trade fairs, mass events and propaganda, as well as light industry production and provision. These sources allow me to place design in a broader context of political strategies planned to influence the international and domestic audiences in various ways. By doing so they cast new light on the relationship

between the political, cultural and social history of the country. Additionally, I consulted the archives in Milan and Turin, which contain written and visual documentation of the Triennale and the International Labour Exhibition respectively: Library and Historical Archive of Triennale (La Triennale di Milano Biblioteca del Progetto e Archivio Storico), the Turin National Archives (Archivio di Stato di Torino) and the Historical Archive of the City of Turin (Archivio Storico della Citta di Torino). These materials enable me to examine Polish design against the development of the discipline in other countries at that time. They cast new light on the inter-systemic exchanges and prove particularly useful in considering the originality of the Polish design proposal.

The visual material that this thesis analyses contains photographs of exhibitions, documentation of selected showpieces and preparatory drawings of the exhibitions' arrangements, and is particularly important due to the temporary character of the presentations. Taken by delegates of the Central Photography Agency (Centralna Agencja Fotograficzna), or less frequently by local photographers, the pictures are stored alongside written documentation at the New Documents Archives and the National Digital Archive (Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe) in Warsaw.[50] The visual sources are useful in addressing historical events from a different angle: they draw attention to details that were not mentioned in the written documents, or re-examine the documents' interpretation provided by the authorities. This juxtaposition also sheds new light on the gap between ideas and declarations and the actual outcomes, a discrepancy that this thesis seeks to address in detail.

The collections of Warsaw's cultural institutions are even more specialised. A large section of the photographs that this study uses is stored in the archive of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, which contains personal records of designers associated with academia, including Jerzy Sołtan, Oskar Hansen and the Art and Research Workshop. It also contains documentation of the Polish Chamber of Foreign Trade. The latter consists of numerous, predominantly uncatalogued and unpublished photographs and drawings related to the Polish trade fairs abroad. The Museum of

[50] Photographs taken by Wojciech Zamecznik, a designer of Polish exhibitions in Italy, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Czechoslovakia, and a highly praised author of numerous graphic projects, are exceptional in this regard. An eager photography amateur and a member the Polish Photographic Society, Zamecznik documented not only his own designs, but also took more intimate snapshots of his colleagues during working visits in cities where Polish exhibitions were hosted.

Modern Art in Warsaw contains the documentation of exhibitions as part of Stanisław Zamecznik's wider personal collection. Additionally, I use the collections of Wojciech Zamecznik and Andrzej Pawłowski, and several personal archives of other designers I interviewed in Warsaw. I conducted interviews with nineteen artists and officials who were involved in the design and organisation of different exhibitions. These conversations, which often took place during several consecutive meetings, have been instrumental in forming my understanding of the process of constructing exhibitions and working relationships between different individuals and institutions. These first-hand accounts allow me to deconstruct the dominating narratives about the political impact on planning and staging of the events.

For exhibitions of greater political significance film documentation was produced. The footage was used in newsreels displayed in cinemas before regular projections. The official narration, which often featured Party representatives cutting the ribbon at an exhibition's entrance, was often combined with a light-hearted commentary underlining the social and entertaining aspect of the event. These short films are particularly significant, as they provide the most comprehensive overview of the exhibition venues and often capture the accompanying events. I consulted the footage available at the Digital Repository, part of the National Film Archive (Filmoteka Narodowa).

I also consulted professional design and architecture journals and daily press from Poland and, when relevant, also from other countries. The analysis of these commentaries, published in contemporary press, casts light on the reception of Polish exhibitions. International commentators, critics and journalists who reported on the events might have had a limited knowledge about Polish design, yet usually they possessed a good understanding of the international scene. Their own vision of Poland was influenced by reading about the current political situation or, less frequently, about the triumphs of the Polish interwar exhibitions. Devoid of any sentimental attachment, they were usually critical about Polish presentations and in their articles overtly expressed their disappointment with the inconsistency between their expectations and the results they were presented with.

By using varied archival material this thesis employs an interdisciplinary approach, in which design – a multidisciplinary phenomenon on its own – provides a lens for studying cultural, social, political and economic history. The combination of written and visual documentation sheds new light on research into the post-war history

of Poland and, more broadly, of Eastern Europe. The three sorts of documentation – photographs and short films, documents written for internal purposes, as well as published press reviews – allow me to investigate the process, the outcome and the reception of Polish exhibitions, and as such generate a comprehensive view of the events. The structure of this thesis reflects the variety of sources available for the exhibitions.

Chapter outline

The thesis is composed of four chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. Arranged chronologically, the chapters are built around two exhibitions each. These pairs follow the development of presentation narratives in light of changing political circumstances. The study closely examines eight Polish exhibitions organised in the Soviet Union, Italy, Belgium and home. The narratives of these events, as the thesis argues, reflected the state's changing self-understanding towards international public opinion. The research indicates that although Polish exhibitions were occasionally adjusted to a particular location, their themes were largely shaped in response to political developments at home and in Eastern Europe.

Chapter One examines the first Polish industrial exhibition, held in Moscow in 1949 – at the outset of the most severe phase of Stalinism in Poland. Organised on the fifth anniversary of the communist rule, the presentation aimed to give a broad overview of a new Poland, its people, culture and industry. During the intense year of preparation, the exhibition turned into a platform where old and new ideas about the nation-state collided. The process of constructing the narrative reveals the exhibition committee's resistance to the new style of aesthetics and politics: rather than blindly following the Soviet model, many Polish bureaucrats and designers were committed to adapting the interwar legacy to the new circumstances. As this section argues, they used the interwar experiences in applied arts and architecture as a source for the new post-war national identity. The projects from the 1920s and 1930s were revived and adjusted to the new circumstances. The chapter subsequently traces the under-researched beginnings of Polish design in the post-war period, using rather scarce visual documentation. It draws from archival material that documented the process but has never been used before: lengthy exhibition scripts, minutes from meetings between different professional groups involved in the exhibition making, reports and correspondence between the Polish and the Soviet side. The section maps the milieu of

professionals involved in creating Polish exhibitions, which emerged in the late 1940s. The 1948 Exhibition of Regained Territories in Wrocław was one of the most important events that consolidated designers working in the field of exhibitions. Jerzy Hryniewiecki, Bohdan Urbanowicz and Wojciech Zamecznik are several of the figures who made a significant impact on the way Poland was represented abroad throughout the following three decades, and who reappear throughout the entire period that this thesis addresses.

Chapter Two moves into much better documented territory. The 1958 World Fair in Brussels that it analyses has been a subject of numerous studies. The Polish exhibition – although never realised – has been considered a canonical work in the history of Polish art, architecture and design during the political Thaw. The existing research, however, focuses on the design of the pavilion and underplays the political underpinnings of its conception. By analysing lengthy reports and detailed transcriptions of the exhibition committee meetings, this section contextualises the proposed exhibition schemes and suggests reading them in view of the 1956 political upheaval. Despite the outburst of mid-century modernism at home, the plans to present Poland in a progressive way for an international audience were cancelled. I would like to argue that this withdrawal was politically motivated and responded to a newly established national narrative, specific to the early days of Władysław Gomułka's regime. What is more, this emphasis on the national narrative also determined the shape of another exhibition, which Poland was simultaneously preparing for the Milan Triennale in 1957. While at home the authorities widely promoted (socialist) modernity in design, the Polish pavilion at the 11th Milan Triennale showcased artisanal works inspired by national folklore. This claim, grounded in archival research, complicates the well-established reading of the post-Thaw culture and suggests its reassessment in a broader context of political developments at that time. This part of Chapter Two centres on the international response to the Polish exhibition; Western journalists widely challenged the aesthetics proposed by Poland as inadequate for the contemporary world.

Chapter Three examines two exhibitions that were organised when the political situation in Poland became already stabilised. At the 12th Milan Triennale in 1960 Poland portrayed itself as a forerunner of the welfare state. The exhibition prepared by Oskar Hansen, a vocal modernist and an active member of a progressive international circle of architects, depicted socialist Poland as a place where design and architecture could develop beyond the constraints experienced by capitalist societies. The Polish

display at the 1961 International Labour Exhibition held in Turin, which I analyse in the second part of this section, made a similar point. Once again, regardless of the expectations of Polish authorities, the argument conveyed in a sophisticated manner and using modern design received a lukewarm reception from the international community. Commentaries published in professional and popular press, which formed a major part of the debate, posed an important question as to why this strategy, calculated to achieve an international success, failed to convince the international audience of Poland's progress. Consequently, this chapter analyses the debate about design canons that spread in the West and in the East in pursuit of 'good design'. The accompanying materials for both exhibitions – a photo-essay and an animated film – are part of this narrative and I analyse them in this section.

The final Chapter Four examines two anniversary exhibitions of the socialist system organised in 1969 and 1974 in Moscow and Warsaw respectively. More than two decades since the introduction of the communist rule in Poland, the authorities managed to align consumption and socialism, and the two exhibitions celebrated this fusion by displaying the abundance of commodities designed and produced in Poland. Edward Gierek in particular used consumerism as a legitimising tool. By examining design discourses in Poland and across the Eastern Bloc, this chapter analyses the role design played in producing the image of a 'really existing socialism'. Whereas the first part of this section examines the anniversary exhibition of the Polish People's Republic presented in Moscow, the second part brings this discussion back home to Warsaw, which for the purpose of the following anniversary celebrations was portrayed as the hub of advanced socialist industries. This change of perspective from international to domestic forced a confrontation between the interest in design as declared by the authorities and the actual outcomes. By referring to the home audience for the first time, this chapter offers a closure of a sort: it juxtaposes the vision of Poland imagined by political authorities, bureaucrats, trade representatives, foreign journalists and design intelligentsia with fantasies about modern life for a home audience. This part draws from archival material, reports and published press commentaries, and additionally makes particularly strong use of a first hand account through a series of personal interviews with Jacek Damięcki, the designer of the presentation held in Warsaw in 1974.

The Conclusion considers the legacy of exhibition making in the first three post-war decades. It examines the reasons of the discipline's demise from the late 1970s

onwards, including the period of transformation from socialism to capitalism. Subsequently, it analyses the potential of design and exhibitions for cultural diplomacy today and suggests that the critical study of Poland's design history, which this study offers, is central to these new policy initiatives.

The thesis at hand proposes an original reading of the post-war period in Polish history. It centres on the discursive qualities of designed objects or spaces and analyses the way they were put to work to narrate the nation. Versatile and embedded in the cultural, social and economic contexts, design proved to be well suited for this role: it allowed political authorities, trade representatives and creative intelligentsia to address timely issues on their agendas. They used design to interpret the nation's past, redefine the country's international affiliations and outline the developmental ambitions for international audiences. This research tracks the process of constructing Imagined Poland along with the development of the design discipline during the three post-war decades. It charts the trajectory of these two narratives and examines their critical reception. In doing so this thesis casts new light on the relationship between design and political history in Cold War Europe. By using exhibitions as a framework, this thesis offers a new perspective to study Polish international modernism and suggests a limited impact of ideology on the development of professional networks. Subsequently it provides a nuanced reading of Poland's relationship with the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc and the rest of Europe beyond reductive paradigm of totalitarianism.

Chapter One
Challenging the ideology: design of goods and exhibitions in the post-war years

By the end of the Second World War Stalin was already beginning to implement his project of Sovietising Central and Eastern Europe. He aimed to impose a strong bond between the Soviet Union and Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Eastern Germany and Yugoslavia, as well as among all those countries. The link would work on both a practical and a symbolic level. Despite preliminary assumptions, this radical plan of transforming the politics, economy, culture and history of what would later become the Eastern Bloc was less than straightforward. The way different countries responded to this project revealed the diversities and complexities of the region; rather than passively absorbing ideas and practices that were employed in an attempt to Sovietise, Eastern European states selectively adapted only some elements of the Soviet model and resisted the rest with varying degrees of success.[51]

This thesis presents the different outcomes of the confrontation with the Soviet model that Polish authorities, Party officers and creative intelligentsia were part of during three decades of forming a new representation of the nation-State on the international scene. International exhibitions and trade fairs were platforms on which Poland, but also other Eastern European states, experimented with and invoked their national styles in the new political circumstances. In this context the first five post-war years were particularly interesting. They revealed in the most striking way the conflict between the new order and the interwar legacy.

The most difficult phase of the Stalinist rule fell between 1948 and 1953. However, Stalin's attempts to unify the Eastern Bloc were initiated a few years earlier, when plans aiming to solidify the Soviet influence zone were drafted. Economic policies were at the centre of this plan and they aimed to bring all Eastern European 'institutions and practices in line with those of the Soviet Union.'[52]

The first Polish economic plan covered the three years between 1947 and 1949, and was rather unique in that respect. It was developed on the basis of materials prepared by Polish economists in London during the occupation – when the war was

[51] E. A. Rees, 'Introduction. The Sovietization of Eastern Europe', in B. Apor, P. Apor, and E. A. Rees (eds.), *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period* (Washington: New Academia Pubishing, 2008), pp. 1-27.
[52] T. Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Random House, 2011), p. 167.

over, the original proposals were implemented with a few amendments. The major objective of the Rebuilding Plan was to raise the living standard of the working class above the pre-war level. In order to achieve this, the plan assumed a social and economic transformation of the country, followed by war indemnity and the unification of the Regained Territories with the rest of the country. Prime production costs were to be reduced and production efficiency improved.[53] Due to an extremely low starting point, as well as feasible planning and the heartfelt involvement of people in the reconstruction, the goals outlined by the project were achieved, which in the long run made the plan an unprecedented success.

The following economic plan, scheduled for the six years between 1950 and 1955, was aligned with the regular 5-year planning period of the Soviet economy.[54] It was popularly known as the Plan of Building Socialism and its main goals were outlined in late 1948. As the title revealed, the objectives were visibly different from the previous scheme. The language used to write it additionally accentuated the political rather than pragmatic character of its intentions. The plan prioritised intense industrialisation, with particular emphasis on heavy industry and metallurgy. Over time it was revised several times due to external political circumstances. One of the biggest amendments followed the outbreak of the Korean War, when war effort dominated the production agenda of the entire region. Investment quotas in the heavy industry were increased at the expense of consumption, which almost disappeared from the government's agenda. Nevertheless, the official propaganda was spreading the image of Poland's economic and social progress.

These two plans, although separated by only a few years, were fundamentally different and demonstrated the character of the new state as it gradually evolved. As Padraic Kenney noted, the early post-war years were driven by the ambition of 'renewal and reconstruction, of national rebirth and new social empowerment', while the later period was shaped by the state's 'great ambitions to recast society and… to mobilize that society towards grand economic and political goals.'[55]

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[53] 'Ustawa z Dnia 2 Lipca 1947 r. o Planie Odbudowy Gospodarczej', *Dziennik Ustaw* 53, no. 285 (1947).
[54] 'Ustawa z Dnia 21 Lipca 1950 r. o 6-Letnim Planie Rozwoju Gospodarczego i Budowy Podstaw Socjalizmu na Lata 1950–1955', *Dziennik Ustaw* 37, no. 344 (1950).
[55] P. Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland. Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 335.

These objectives were reflected in the narratives of exhibitions organised between the late 1940s and the mid 1950s. This chapter will analyse two of them: the Exhibition of the Regained Territories in Wrocław and the First Exhibition of Polish Industry held in Moscow in 1949. Both presentations relied on the interwar experiences of the creative intelligentsia, which had been employed in the new circumstances. The levels of formal constraints suggested by the authorities with regard to both exhibitions were noticeably different: while the design team was given a lot of artistic freedom in Wrocław, a considerable pressure to temper the originally proposed visual language was applied in Moscow.

Looking into multiple reports from the exhibition committee meetings sheds new light on the complex process of programming the events. The biographies of the people involved in organising and designing these presentations provide an explanation for some of the decisions. Finally, the reception of both exhibitions contributed to understanding the development of art and design ideas on a larger scale. It also reintroduced the discipline of exhibition design into Polish post-war culture.

'Sophisticated and completely western in conception': the Exhibition of Regained Territories, Wrocław, 1948

The Exhibition of the Regained Territories (*Wystawa Ziem Odzyskanych: WZO*), organised in Wrocław in 1948, is different than all the other presentations this thesis analyses. Although it was held in Poland, it aimed to communicate to both domestic and international audiences and influence public opinion worldwide. The exhibition was visited by nearly 2 million people, including around 5,000 foreign guests.[56]

The WZO was organised to celebrate the recovered territories, the lands incorporated into Poland following the Yalta Conference agreement. Pomerania with Gdańsk and Lower Silesia with Wrocław were integrated with Poland, while Lvov and Vilnius were lost to the Soviet Union. Although troublesome from an administrative point of view, the Regained (Recovered) Territories became central to the *raison d'être* of the post-war Polish state.[57] Consequently, the exhibition aimed to demonstrate that the decision made in Yalta regarding Polish borders was fair, legitimate and final.

[56] According to information from an unpublished catalogue of photographs available at the New Files Archive in Warsaw.
[57] P. McNamara, 'Competing National and Regional Identities in Poland's Baltic "Recovered Territories", 1945–1956', *History of Communism in Europe*, no. 3 (2012), p. 21.

Wrocław represented the traumas of the past and the dialectical triumphs of the present, exposing Nazi atrocities and manifesting Poland's historical claims to these territories.[58] The exhibition, as the official brochure written in English stated, was to be 'a report given by Government to the Nation and by the State to the whole world, a report of the tremendous work performed during the last three years in the field of reconstruction, population and agricultural improvement of this land.'[59] By demonstrating recent political facts, the exhibition emphasised the pivotal significance of the Recovered Territories for Poland, and the considerable effort that the state had already put in restoring life in the area heavily destroyed during the last months of the war.[60] The official propaganda presented the incorporation of the western territories into Poland as a victory of the communist peace camp. This narrative was strengthened by the International Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace in Wrocław, organised in late August. The Congress was part of the official peace movement, which formed one of the most important propagandist narratives of the Cold War.[61] The peace rhetoric became a fundamental element in the language of Soviet political propaganda of the 1940s. That was when Stalin expressed a view that neither war nor revolution would trigger a profound change in the world, which could happen only under the banner of a struggle for peace. Consequently, the Soviet Union started portraying itself as a peace-loving state, a narrative that in the mid 1940s was imposed on the entire Eastern Bloc.[62] On the opposite end were the United States and the Western countries, which communist propaganda persistently portrayed as warmongering capitalists.

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[58] N. Davies and R. Moorhouse, *Microcosm. A Portrait of a Central European City* (London: Random House, 2011).

[59] L. Gluck, 'The Aim of the Exhibition and Its Meaning', in *Exhibition of the Regained Territories*, (n.p., 1948), p. 6.

[60] The majority of researchers focused on the aesthetic qualities of the exhibition, for example M. Zwierz, *Tradycje Wystawiennicze we Wrocławiu w Latach 1818–1948. Architektura i Rozplanowanie Terenu Wystaw* (Wrocław: Muzeum Architektury, 2016) and A. Kostołowski, 'Biegi z Przeszkodami. Wystawy Ziem Odzyskanych (1948) i Wrocław Moje Miasto (2000)', *Quart* 1, no. 11 (2009), pp. 69–92. For the political significance of the exhibition see J. Tyszkiewicz, *Sto Wielkich Dni Wrocławia. Wystawa Ziem Odzyskanych we Wrocławiu a Propaganda Ziem Zachodnich i Północnych w latach 1945–1948* (Wrocław: Arboretum, 1997).

[61] K. Murawska-Muthesius, 'Modernism between Peace and Freedom. Picasso and Others at the Congress of Intellectuals in Wrocław, 1948', in J. Pavitt and D. Crowley (eds.), *Cold War Modern*, pp. 33–41.

[62] G. Roberts, 'Averting Armageddon. The Communist Peace Movement, 1948–1956', in S. A. Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 322–38.

After two months of intense work and almost two years since its conception, the exhibition opened to the public on 21 July and remained open until 31 October 1948. It spanned 150 acres of existing exhibition grounds and was split between a few historical buildings, including the most spectacular: the Centennial Hall and the Four Domes Pavilion. Additionally, several smaller buildings were constructed to host displays of particular industries and branches of economy, along with a few experimental structures that spread across the city. The visitors were guided through 'the horrors of destruction, through the toil and effort of the population of the land, and along Odra to the wide breath [sic] of the sea.'[63] Found objects, photographs, sculptures, paintings and spatial installations were all used to illustrate the main points of the exhibition script:

> Museum pieces and historic relics are confronted by the most modern technical achievements. Sorrows of the past and the tragedy of destruction reinforce the joy of returning to the Regained Territories, military triumphs and efforts of the reconstruction.[64]

The creation of this multimedia spectacle involved over three thousand architects, painters, graphic designers and sculptors. Well-established artists worked hand in hand with undergraduate students in what became the first social commission of an unprecedented scale in post-war Poland.

Some of the artists involved in the Wrocław exhibition were responsible for the triumphant presence of Poland at international events during the interwar years, including the famous pavilions at the 1925 Paris International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts and the New York World's Fair opened in 1939. For many others, like cousins Wojciech and Juliusz Zamecznik, the exhibition in Wrocław became a turning point in their careers and the beginning of a prolific and longstanding involvement with the discipline of exhibition design. Jerzy Hryniewiecki, an architect and one of the most influential figures in the country's cultural life, served as the Art Director of the WZO, responsible for the visual design of the display.[65] The pavilions' interiors and other architectural matters were overseen by Mikołaj Kokozow, member of the Warsaw-based architectural team 'Pingwiny' specialising in modernist buildings

[63] J. Hryniewiecki, 'The Language of the Exhibition', in *Exhibition of the Regained Territories*, p. 10.
[64] Ibidem.
[65] Katalog Oficjalny Wystawy Ziem Odzyskanych (Wrocław: Prasa i Wiedza,1948).

and industrial displays.[66] Their projects were inspired by interwar aesthetics and emphasised simple and functional forms.[67] The exhibition formed the canon of pioneering design solutions that in the years to come were referenced by architects, artists and bureaucrats alike. They were also highly regarded by critics, who saw them as a prediction of the most ground-breaking artistic trends of the 20th century, such as Pop Art, Environmental Art and Arte Povera (Fig. 1.1).[68]

Fig. 1.1. Open air installations and sculptures at the Exhibition of the Regained Territories photographed by Jan Bułhak

The exhibition was widely praised by the international audience too. Sir James Maude Richards, Britain's prominent architectural writer and an enthusiastic

[66] 'Pingwiny' included Jerzy Wasilewski, Stefan Hołówko, Tadeusz Iskierka, Konstanty Kokozow and Bogumił Płachecki. See J. Zieliński, *Realizm Socjalistyczny w Warszawie. Urbanistyka i Architektura (1949–1956)* (Warszawa: Hereditas, 2009), p. 59.
[67] P. Marciniak, *Doświadczenia Modernizmu. Architektura i Urbanistyka Poznania w Czasach PRL* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Miejskie, 2010), p. 213.
[68] B. Kowalska, *Polska Awangarda Malarska, 1945–1980. Szanse i Mity* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988), pp. 62–4.

propagandist for the modern movement, spoke very fondly of the exhibition in *The Architects' Journal*:

> I saw a magnificent exhibition at Wrocław, a kind of prestige exhibition to show what was being done and what plans were being made for the territories they acquired from Germany. It was the best piece of exhibition design I have ever seen – both from the point of view of ideas and execution. It had none of that rather heavy-handed symbolic-heraldic style one associates with Russian publicity displays. The style was much more sophisticated and completely western in conception. [69]

This quality did not seem surprising to his colleagues, who recalled the interwar successes of Polish exhibition design. 'They haven't produced what one might call a "Polish style" yet', recalled F. R. Yerbury.[70] 'In the international exhibitions before the war, the Polish pavilion was always one of the most charming, and very distinctive.' Hugh Casson seconded his opinion, adding that the exhibitions were also 'somehow very national at the same time. It could never have been anything but Polish.'[71]

The applause from British architectural luminaries confirmed the class of the Polish exhibition within the international context. The conversation also revealed that they were perplexed about the direction in which Polish exhibition design would move in the new political circumstances. On the one hand, they vividly remembered Polish pavilions from the interwar period and praised their original and distinctive style, reminiscent of what they found in Wrocław. On the other, like many other external observers, they sensed that in the new political reality in which Poland found itself, the Soviet influence would unavoidably change the Polish style and potentially destroy its interwar legacy. Indeed, from the late 1940s Moscow aimed to impose cultural hegemony on Poland and other Eastern European states. Early signs could be noticed in a review of the Wrocław exhibition that was published in the official medium of the Association of Polish Architects, the monthly *Architektura*.

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[69] 'Round the Table: Round the World', *The Architects' Journal* 109, no. 2815 (1949), p. 74. A short version of the statement quoted in H. Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain: A Land and Its People* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), p. 55.

[70] Francis Rowland Yerbury (1885–1970) was a British architectural educator and organiser, known for his extensive travels and the study of modern architecture, documented in his acclaimed photographs.

[71] Sir Hugh Casson (1910–1999) was an architect and a writer at *Architects' Journal*. Between 1948 and 1951 he served as Director of Architecture at the famous Festival of Britain.

In February 1949, *Architektura* printed an article by Michał Jassem, in which he critically reviewed the event with a special focus on the Pavilion of Destruction (Fig. 1.2). In the centre of the pavilion stood an expressive sculpture by Czesław Wielhorski, exhibited against a wall painting by Henryk Tomaszewski. A destroyed torso stuck on a construction of metal debris was, according to Jassem,

> a total misunderstanding in terms of its form and concept… the fact that demolition bricks swept into a pile and a misshapen iron construction were used to symbolise the devastation, is a doddle and a platitude that could only be tolerated as a hasty and short-lived trick.[72]

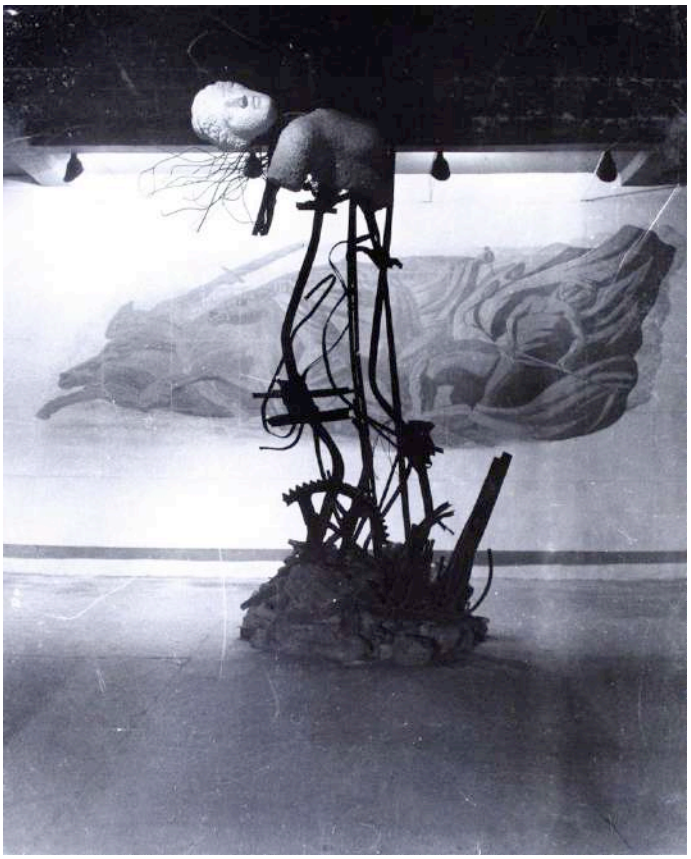

Fig. 1.2. Sculpture in the Pavilion of Destruction designed by Czesław Wielhorski and Stanisław Stala. On the second plan a painting of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse by Henryk Tomaszewski and Marian Jaeschke

Jassem's comment revealed his discontent with the visual aspect of the display, but also more fundamentally – with the interpretation of the events that the pavilion

[72] M. Jassem, 'Trzy Uwagi Krytyczne o Dziale Zniszczeń na Wystawie Ziem Odzyskanych', *Architektura* 3, no. 2 (1949), p. 62.

symbolically represented. As he explained later in the article, there were two essential issues that should have been shown: annihilation and victory. There was no sense in depicting any other emotions, which in Jassem's opinion only diminished the powerful message of the entire pavilion. There was no place for innuendos or individual interpretations of the recent past, which may have distorted the meaning of the events and dissolved the main narrative:

> Here, in the Regained Lands, without lyrical reflection and without sorrow, without buffoonery but also without fear we look upon the ruins of our national and social enemy. This construction site on the banks of the primevally Polish Odra river pleases us; looking at the debris from this point of view, we don't see in it the horror of death or the pathos of perishing, but rather an economic issue.[73]

Jassem's article seemed to be a cautionary warning to other architects. The review was published in February, concurrently with the official symposium in Nieborów, where Socialist Realism was proclaimed as the official style in the visual arts.[74] Similar announcements were made at the congress of the professional associations: of writers in January, architects in June, and composers and music critics in August that year.[75] At the time when the Wrocław exhibition was conceived, these new aesthetics were not imposed yet; during the preparation of the WZO only a few changes were made to highlight or tone down some elements of the display due to their political character.[76] At the industrial exhibition in Moscow, organised just a few months later, political requests from the Soviet host became more insistent and, despite explicit objections of the Polish organisers, some of them were attended to. Although many Polish bureaucrats and designers were committed to continue with the experimental design implemented in Wrocław, Moscow saw the exhibition as a unique occasion to broadcast the new visual language of socialism.

[73] Ibidem, p. 63.
[74] The conference took place in Nieborów between 12–13 February 1949.
[75] The congresses were held respectively in Szczecin between 20 and 23 January 1949, in Warsaw on 21 June 1949, and in Łagów Lubuski between 5 and 8 August 1949.
[76] For details see M. Zwierz, *Tradycje wystawiennicze*, especially pp. 247–299.

The people and the economic achievements of socialist Poland: the Polish Light Industry exhibition in Moscow, 1949

The Polish Light Industry exhibition opened in Moscow's Gorky Park on Saturday 20 August 1949.[77] The Polish Newsreel (*Polska Kronika Filmowa*) provided an overview of the opening ceremony of this large up-to-date presentation of Polish manufacturing.[78] The newsreel started with a scene of a crowd observing Tadeusz Gede, the Polish Minister of Foreign Trade, cutting the ribbon.[79] The camera followed him walking down the stairs towards the textile display to show the accompanying officials around. 'Thousands of Muscovites visit the exhibition every day,' announced the narrator enthusiastically. The camera captured the elegant crowd strolling through the display's sections, looking with equal attentiveness at Polish textiles, clothes and shoes, motorbikes and heavy machines. But what the audiences were really interested in were not only the achievements of Polish industry, but also – as the narrator asserted – the people involved in the reconstruction of the country. In fact, these two themes intersected in the exhibition's narrative.

The war transformed Poland's population dramatically: in August 1939 it counted over 35.3 million people, while by February 1946 that number dropped to 23.9 million due to loss of life, migration and the redrawing of the country's borders. Political decisions introduced in the first years of communist power made additional changes in the social structure. Due to agrarian policies, landed gentry (*ziemiaństwo*) – traditionally one of the most influential groups in Polish society – was in decline; meanwhile, the middle class (*mieszczaństwo*) was also significantly reduced as a result of the state's repossession of industry, banks and enterprises. This created an unprecedented situation, in which the void that appeared after eliminating one part of society was methodically filled by a social group that had not existed before. As

[77] The exhibition was open between 20 August and 18 September 1949. It was the last event organised by the Commission of Exhibitions and Trade Fairs. In January 1950 it was replaced by the Polish Chamber of Foreign Trade, which took over all responsibilities related to Polish presentations abroad.

[78] O. Borzechowa, 'Moskwa. Wystawa Przemysłu Polskiego', *Polska Kronika Filmowa*, 38/49 (1949). Available online: http://www.repozytorium.fn.org.pl/?q=pl/node/5581#.VWtislnBzGc. Accessed on 1 May 2014.

[79] Described by Leopold Tyrmand as 'a technocrat in the service of the communists which with stunning generosity pay him for their docile cooperation.' L. Tyrmand, *Diary 1954* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014), p. 146.

Katherine Lebow phrased it, 'a landscape of destruction became a landscape of opportunity'.[80] This new social group that emerged from the process of restructuring society consisted of small landholders or pre-war rural workers without land, unskilled workers from urban and rural areas, and lumpenproletariat. Many of them moved to cities and consequently changed their occupation. According to a census from 1950, the number of people employed in industry increased by over 8% in comparison with 1939.[81]

The Gorky Park of Culture and Leisure, where the exhibition was located, additionally emphasised this focus by its own historical association with the working class. Built in the late 1920s, the park was conceived as a special place where workers could spend their free time in a modern way – playing sports, attending the amusement park, or watching a play in the theatre or a movie in the cinema. While enjoying the popular culture, they were subjected to an acculturation process carefully orchestrated by Stalin. Through shaping the visitors' consciousness and engendering behavioural norms, the space consequently became a 'fairground for "building the new man"'.[82] This acculturation process was expanded in 1939, when after a huge delay the park gained a new exhibition venue designed for the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition (*Vsesoyuznaya Selsko-Khozyaystvennaya Vystavka: VSKhV*). [83] After the war, the event's focus shifted towards the presentation of industry, and in 1959 the venue was renamed the Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy (*Vystavka Dostizheniy Narodnovo Khozyaystva: VDNKh*). By the Yalta Conference, the Soviet influence zone expanded to the satellite countries and the idea of an Eastern brotherhood under the auspices of Moscow was disseminated. In this new political order the Polish Light Industry Exhibition, preceded by similar shows organised by Hungary and Czechoslovakia earlier that year, seemed to be a symbolic continuation of the pre-war tradition of All-Union exhibitions. All of the Eastern Bloc countries were

[80] K. Lebow, '"We Are Building a Common Home". The Moral Economy Of Citizenship in Postwar Poland', in F. Biess and R. G. Moeller (eds.), *Histories of the Aftermath. The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), pp. 216–7.
[81] A. Jezierski and C. Leszczyńska, *Historia Gospodarcza Polski* (Warszawa: Key Text, 2003), p. 399.
[82] C. Shaw, ''A Fairground for "Building the New Man"'. Gorky Park as a Site of Soviet Acculturation', *Urban History* 38, no. 2 (2011), pp. 324–44.
[83] T. J. Colton, *Moscow. Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

finally united in the struggle for peace and socialism, as the inscription on the entrance to one of the pavilions announced.

In this vein the Polish exhibition was a result of Soviet-Polish cooperation, which as Patryk Babiracki argued aimed to persuade the public that both nations 'shared a common, peaceful destiny as neighbours, friends, ethnic Slavs, and communists.'[84] In December 1948 Warsaw received a letter from Moscow, in which plans for organising the Polish Light Industry Exhibition were approved. According to a confidential note written by a Ministry of Industry and Trade representative, the initial idea of the exhibition was conceived in the Soviet Union and mentioned the personal involvement of the chief of the All-Union Trade Chamber in the plan.[85] Subsequently, Hilary Minc – the Polish Minister of Trade – proposed an accompanying programme of popular, cultural and sporting events that would demonstrate the friendship between Poland and the USSR (Fig. 1.3). Accepting this suggestion meant that the scope of the exhibition changed significantly and that the presentation of industrial achievements would be linked with commercial, political and artistic themes.

Fig. 1.3. Poster of the Polish Light Industry exhibition illustrating the cooperation between Poland and the Soviet Union. Designed by Wojciech Zamecznik

[84] P. Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland*, p. 9.
[85] The note was prepared by Marian Kalita, an economist, social and economic activist, Ministry of Industry and Trade's plenipotentiary for the Exhibition of the Regained Territories and International Trade Fairs. AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Notatka z konferencji u Ministra Minca w dniu 26.02.1949.

Over the following months, keeping the balance between varied parts of the narrative presented the exhibition committee with a challenge and required a range of competencies. It also imposed a close collaboration between people of mixed professions, ideas and ambitions. The committee was formed by representatives of different ministries, whose work was coordinated by the Bureau of Fairs and Exhibitions – with the Vice Commissar Tadeusz Trębicki as the main executive. The exhibition's cultural programme was assigned to the Ministry of Arts and Culture, which delegated Juliusz Starzyński, art historian and initiator of the State Institute of Art, to coordinate the cultural programme. Starzyński, who at that time was working as the director of the International Cultural Relations Bureau (*Biuro Współpracy Kulturalnej z Zagranicą*), was supervised by the Vice Minister Włodzimierz Sokorski.[86] The cultural programme included a large exhibition of Polish political caricatures, a display of paintings and sculptures from the 19th and early 20th century and two monographic exhibitions of Felicjan Szczęsny Kowarski and Xawery Dunikowski.[87]

Apart from the officials, the exhibition committee consisted of an extended artistic team. The group that included artists of various professions, many of whom were previously employed at the 1948 Exhibition of the Regained Territories, was responsible for conceiving the visual narrative of the event, which consisted of arranging the space of the venue, commissioning artworks and decorations, as well as consulting the exhibits selection. Jerzy Hryniewiecki, who served as the Art Director of the Wrocław exhibition, had a similar role at the exhibition in Moscow, where his main task was to liaise between the designers and the bureaucrats. In an official note Vice Commissar Trębicki characterised Hryniewiecki as

> a non-Party member, very intelligent, sophisticated, interior designer. Enjoys huge authority among visual artists. He is particularly suitable for a managerial position. He was the leading architect at the Exhibition of Regained Territories. A good acquaintance of Minister Spychalski.[88]

[86] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Zarys przygotowań do wystawy w Moskwie, p. 1.
[87] S. Kapyrina, 'Paralele. Krótka Kronika Artystycznych Kontaktów Polsko–Rosyjskich w Latach 1946–1998', in M. Poprzęcka and L. Jowlewa (eds.), *Warszawa-Moskwa / Moskwa-Warszawa 1900–2000*, p. 132.
[88] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/3/`9. Notatka służbowa T.S. Trębickiego do Obywatela Ministra dr. St. Jędrychowskiego, 28 kwietnia 1949 Warszawa.

Hryniewiecki shared some of his duties with Bohdan Urbanowicz, who was the chairman of the artistic committee. Urbanowicz, a painter and an architect, was responsible for the appropriate expression of the architectural and visual arrangements. The team also included Eryk Lipiński, a well-known caricaturist, who became the exhibition advisor. Mikołaj Kokozow and Kazimierz Husarski were the main architects, while painter Marian Jaeschke, sculptor Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz and graphic designers Tadeusz Trepkowski and Henryk Tomaszewski took care of the exhibition's visual elements. Working on a large representative display, such as the one in Moscow, meant a gruelling schedule and limited creative opportunities, but it provided a much needed income. Additionally, for many older members of Polish creative intelligentsia it presented an opportunity to reuse their experiences of the first republic and the occupation period to rebuild the country after 1945. What is more, many of the creators retrospectively expressed a moral obligation to do so. Bohdan Urbanowicz, the director of the artistic committee of the Moscow exhibition and a reformer of the post-war education system, gave a personal account on that matter in his memoirs written in the 1980s. When the war broke out Urbanowicz, along with many members of pre-war intelligentsia, joined the Polish army. Following the Nazi invasion, he was captured in a Prisoner of War camp in Murnau, where he spent the rest of the occupation with over 5,000 other Polish officers. Among them were the aforementioned Juliusz Starzyński and Jerzy Sołtan, the architect and leading designer of the Polish pavilion in Brussels, along with many other luminaries of Polish culture, politics and science. This experience resulted in strong interpersonal bonds, many of which were put to work after the war. As Urbanowicz recalled,

> In the 1940s we, the former Murnau prisoners, believed that it was our duty to start working in the Ministry of Art and Culture and the other so called "intellectuals" felt in the same way.[89]

[89] See B. T. Urbanowicz, 'Murnau (1939–1945)', *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 47, no. 3–4 (1985), pp. 403–6. Another P.O.W. camp that played a similar role in Poland's post-war life was Oflag IIC Woldenberg, where Jerzy Hryniewiecki, an architect and architecture writer Tadeusz Barucki and Wacław Kłyszewski from the modernist architectural group 'Tygrysy' were kept. See T. Barucki, *Architekci Polscy o Architekturze, 1909–2009* (Warszawa: Salix Alba, 2009) and M. Stępień, 'Plastyka Obozowa', in J. Fąfara (ed.), *Oflag IIC Woldenberg: Wspomnienia Jeńców* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1984), pp. 296–303.

Although they joined the ranks of officials or worked on commissions for the socialist state, they made use of their pre-war experience and expertise, developed in a completely different political reality.

The artistic team was supervised by a subcommittee composed of selected Politburo members. At the top of this hierarchy was Stefan Jędrychowski, Deputy Chairman of the Central Planning Office, earlier involved in the Ministry of Navigation and Foreign Trade. Artur Starewicz, the director of the Party's Propaganda Department, oversaw the editorial committee. He was working closely with his deputy, Jerzy Bogusz, a senior official in the Mass Propaganda Department of the Party, a zealous bureaucrat supporting Socialist Realism in Poland and critical of any signs of modernity in the visual arts.[90] Bogusz was the author of the exhibition script, which outlined the rationale of the themes that the exhibitions aimed to address. He was also responsible for formulating the ideological message that the event as a whole was to deliver. Over the years, through working on numerous similar events, Bogusz developed a clear understanding of his political role in the exhibition-making process. He expressed his ideas about the objective of his work in an article published in 1950 in *Nowa Kultura*:

> The editor formulates the exhibition script, establishes its key aspects and defines the hierarchy of issues to address. He does not specify the forms that will illustrate the themes; it is the architect who gives form to content. Nevertheless, that does not mean that the editor's task is finished the moment he hands the programme over to architects and artists. He has a duty to support the architects and artists in their search for solutions that would work best in view of the script.[91]

This short fragment demonstrates the alleged liberty of the creative intelligentsia and how their visions supposedly defined Polish exhibitions. Although to a certain degree that was true (and I am going to return to this subject later in this chapter), the influence of Party officials should not be underestimated. As the process of formulating the exhibition script revealed, the implementation of visual elements depended on the approval of officials such as Bogusz.

The aesthetics were also conditioned by the transnational context. This aspect would determine the look on the Polish exhibitions hosted in Western Europe more

[90] J. Aulich and M. Sylvestrová, *Political Posters in Central and Eastern Europe 1945–95. Signs of the Times* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 23–4.
[91] J. Bogusz, 'Architektura Wystaw', *Nowa Kultura* 10 (1950), p. 5.

clearly in the later period, though it was not without meaning for the exhibition in Moscow too. The working concept that the Committee developed was contrasted with earlier events organised by Hungary and Czechoslovakia, with the latter emerging as a particularly important reference. During springtime, some delegates visited Prague to meet with their Czechoslovak counterparts responsible for preparing the commercial and artistic sections at the Czechoslovak exhibition. Jerzy Hryniewiecki met with local architects who were keen to share their thoughts regarding the practicalities of organising the event in Gorky Park. After his return to Warsaw, Hryniewiecki reported on the meeting. One of the most important issues, which he suggested might require particular attention, were similarities and differences between the two nations: their industries, artistic scenes and their relationships with the USSR.[92] In fact, the presentations of both countries – the Czechoslovak already on display and the Polish still in preparation – had much in common: the sizes of both events were alike and the selection of industry branches was comparable too.[93] Consequently, in the eyes of the Polish organisers the exhibition turned into a competition between the two nations. As Hryniewiecki stressed, it additionally increased the pressure to represent the country in the most attractive way.

There was one important difference between the two presentations that Hryniewiecki noticed. While the Polish script emphasised the connection between the contextual and commercial parts of the exhibition and treated them as equally important, the Czechoslovak one focused on the business-related aspect of the presentation. Although introductory texts about contemporary Czechoslovakia were distributed across various parts of the display, they engaged with current political matters only to a small extent. Captions and slogans were reduced in number in favour of images – the latter however appeared to be the bone of contention. Just before the opening of the show, two large painted panneaux placed above the entrance to the Czechoslovak pavilion had to be covered up due to, as Hryniewiecki put it, 'their particular aesthetics'. Following this incident, the Czechoslovak committee advised the Polish delegation to use photography instead of paintings whenever possible in order to

[92] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Protokół z konferencji w sprawie Wystawy Przemysłu Lekkiego w Moskwie, odbytej w P.K.P.G. pod przewodnictwem Ob. Ministra Jędrychowskiego – w dniu 31 maja 1949 roku.

[93] An archival newsreel from the Czechoslovak exhibition is available online: http://www.criticalpast.com/video/65675038604_exhibition_Czechoslovakian-manufactured-goods_wearing-apparel_motorbikes. Accessed on 15 May 2016.

avoid a similar problem. However, Hryniewiecki, who in his usual manner demonstrated his self-confidence, considered the advice irrelevant. In his opinion, the contrast between art in both countries was big enough and Polish art could never be dismissed on aesthetic grounds. According to Hryniewiecki, Czechoslovak art at that time represented realism with a tendency towards simplifications and expressionist deformations, whereas art in Poland spoke a dramatically different language. Since the works selected by the Polish committee for the exhibition in Gorky Park seemed to be more stylistically temperate and represented moderate tendencies, originating from the interwar experiences, Hryniewiecki believed they could be presented in Moscow without any concerns. The upcoming events demonstrated that is was not exactly so.

The epoch of Soviet influences in culture had just commenced and Socialist Realism was slowly infiltrating the national architectural and artistic scenes. In the view of Stefan Mękarski, who was observing the situation from the perspective of a London émigré, Poland at that time was experiencing

> a foreign revolt in Polish culture… We observe… the most severe and the most threatening type of losing independence, which we have experienced in our history. All previous levels and variations of weakening or losing the independence had in principle character of a *political* crisis. The current loss of independence means that apart from the political crisis a cultural crisis of an unprecedented scale… happens simultaneously.[94]

It is worth adding here that Mękarski's opinion was characteristic for the Polish intelligentsia in exile, resonating strongly in places where the Polish diaspora was particularly active. London, where the Polish émigré government had settled, was one of them; Paris, Rome and New York, where active milieux of Polish culture, literature and historical research had emerged in the first post-war decade, were the others.[95] Various visions about Poland's past and future reflected the sentiments of émigré politicians, artists, historians and writers, who did not accept the decision made at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences. These constructs had 'a compensative function' and they justified resistance, reflected the nostalgia after the lost homeland and served as a

[94] Fragment of Mękarski's lecture at the Independence League congress in London 1949, quoted in S. Mękarski, *Sowiecko–Rosyjskie Wpływy Kulturalne w 'Polsce Ludowej'* (Londyn: Instytut Wschodni Reduta, 1961), p. 23.
[95] See for example K.A. Jeleński, *'Kultura' – Polska na wygnaniu = 'Kultura', la Pologne en exil* (Warszawa: Instytut Dokumentacji i Studiów nad Literaturą Polską, 2005).

refuge from the everyday mundane problems.[96] Whereas the theme of the émigré cultures remains beyond the scope of this work, the visions of Imagined Poland that emerged among expatriates often collided with how the authorities interpreted Poland for the foreign public opinion.[97]

Nonetheless, the influence of Socialist Realism on creative disciplines varied significantly. Painting, sculpture and at least part of architectural production became subordinated to the official aesthetics relatively quickly. For the upcoming six years they operated within a restricted visual language, addressing a range of preselected themes. It was much more difficult to formulate a similar set of rules for design. Unlike for painting, sculpture or architecture, the official ideologues were not able to form any concrete instructions that could be translated into a truly socialist object – a vessel, a textile or a chair.[98] Although there were some attempts to link Socialist Realism with folkloric aesthetic, the authorities were not able to create a definite instruction that could be applied to design.[99] That half-hearted interest in peasant craft, however, facilitated a much more profound investigation into the subject, which I will analyse later in this chapter. Still, this inability to define what a Socialist Realist object should look like created an unprecedented situation, in which design formed a professional asylum for those who did not want to adjust their creative work to official regulations.

Discussions about national Polish aesthetics that were triggered by Hryniewiecki's visit to Czechoslovakia continued at subsequent meetings. The consultation among the organisers took a considerable amount of time and lasted about 150 days; that left only 90 days for design, production, installation and transport.[100] That bit of mundane logistical information reveals the challenge faced by the exhibition

[96] R. Stobiecki, *Klio na Wygnaniu: z Dziejów Polskiej Historiografii na Uchodźstwie w Wielkiej Brytanii po 1945 r.* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2005), p. 21.
[97] Polish emigration post-1945 has recently attracted the attention of numerous scholars, see for example Sławomir Łukasiewicz, ed., *Polska Emigracja Polityczna 1939-1990: Stan Badań* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IPN, 2016), two volumes edited by Anna Mazurkiewicz, ed., *East Central Europe in Exile* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) and Violetta Wejs-Milewska, *Wykluczeni – Wychodźstwo, Kraj. Studia z Antropologii Emigracji Polskiej XX Wieku (Idee, Osobowości, Instytucje)* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu, 2012).
[98] R. Stokes, 'In Search of the Socialist Artefact. Technology and Ideology in East Germany, 1945–1962', *German History* 15, no. 2 (1997), pp. 221–39.
[99] For attempts to exploit folklore politically and aesthetically see various essays in the catalogue of the exhibition held in Zachęta between October 2016 and January 2017. J. Kordjak (ed.), *Poland – a Country of Folklore?* (Warszawa: Zachęta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, 2016).
[100] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Notatka służbowa, p. 1.

committee, who must have felt considerable pressure to present Poland appropriately. At one of the exhibition's committee meetings Marian Kula, the director of the Polish Economic Publishing House *Polgos* (*Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne*), raised a question about the style that the display was to follow.[101] The choice was, in Kula's words, between 'a Soviet model' and a 'truly Polish style'. In the transcript of the meeting we don't find any explicit definition of what each approach would entail: while the former most likely referred to the Socialist Realism aesthetics, the latter remained open to interpretation. It might have meant progressive solutions that the committee members saw at the Exhibition of Regained Territories a few months earlier, or the visual forms of the interwar pavilions that Poland presented abroad. What can be read from the document, however, is that Polish national style was defined by denial rather than approval of certain artistic features: it was shaped in opposition to what was recognised as the Soviet style.

Almost at the same time, a USSR delegation visited Poland. The trip, organised in April 1949 – a crucial moment of preparation for the Moscow exhibition, was to make a reconnaissance of Polish industry and its exhibition methods. In order to do that the group visited the XXII International Trade Fair in Poznań, which was well known for its representative character. The Polish textile industry pavilion became the scene of confrontation. The textiles were draped on an abstract construction in an organic form that resembled modern sculptures, which due to its original shape demonstrated various patterns of materials (Fig. 1.4).

Reportedly, the USSR delegation criticised the presentation, claiming that it was not understandable to the average visitor.[102] In light of the upcoming exhibition in Gorky Park, this comment was a nudge to the Polish organisers. Although the delegates did not make any suggestions about what the display should look like, they clearly indicated which kinds of patterns and forms would not be welcome at the upcoming exhibition in Moscow. Judging from the visual documentation of the textile stand at the Polish Industrial Exhibition, the Polish side accepted this suggestion.

[101] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji Programowej w dn. 20 kwietnia 49r. I-szej Polskiej Wystawy Przemysłu Lekkiego w Moskwie, p. 2.
[102] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Notatka w sprawie przygotowań do Wystawy w Moskwie, p. 1.

Fig. 1.4. Display of Polish textile industry at the XXII International Trade Fair in Poznań, 1949

The selection of exhibits was the other part of planning that the committee had to consider. Heavy industry tools and products were presented alongside consumption goods and light industry objects. Textiles, clothing and mineral industry, particularly important for the Polish export to the Soviet Union, occupied a large pavilion, while wood, artistic production (*przemysł artystyczny*) and paper industries were presented in a smaller one.[103] In the last week of June, objects proposed by respective industries were verified one at a time by a special panel formed by members of trade organisations, the exhibition committee and representatives of the artistic team. Preliminary lists of accepted items were sent to Moscow for a final approval, in order to – as the official report explained – confront the selection of objects with the demands of the Soviet market.[104]

The selected exhibits represented not only the important branches of Polish economy, but also the political and social transformation that the country had experienced since the end of the war. According to the script, the exhibition in Moscow was planned to demonstrate contemporary Poland on 'the fifth anniversary of people's

[103] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/7/45. Protokół z konferencji międzyministerialnej odbytej w dniu 18 stycznia 1946, p. 3.
[104] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Korespondencja Dyrektora Finansowo-Administacyjnego Edwarda Tchórzewskiego do Państwowej Komisji Planowania Gospodarczego, dn. 20.05.1949.

power.'[105] It connected industrial and thematic elements, so they could serve as evidence of the country's progress. The positive transformation of the state was staged as the outcome of 'the Soviet liberation' and credited to USSR's assistance. The friendship between both countries was highlighted on numerous occasions. A boost in the production of everyday objects, an increase in the employment rate and the expansion of the welfare system were presented as major achievements in comparison with the interwar period. An instant process of modernisation characterised the mechanisation of industry, the development of transport infrastructure and widespread access to education – and they were overseen with paternal care by Bolesław Bierut, the country's president, whose portrait alongside images of other Politburo members was displayed in the central space of the exhibition.

At the heart of this progressive narration was the worker, represented through a variety of media. Wincenty Pstrowski, the legendary miner who initiated the labour competition in 1947, was shown as a role model. His torso in coal was placed by the exhibition entrance (Fig. 1.5). Several sculptures and reliefs featured groups of figures, which according to the script had a symbolic meaning: they embodied the alliance of workers, peasants and the Party – people's power or liberated labour.[106] Representations of many anonymous workers were featured across the venue. Woodcuts, particularly familiar to the local audience, as they were widely used in Russian books, illustrated scenes from the revolution in order to commemorate the historical connection between workers of both nations.[107] Photographic portraits of labour avant-gardists highlighted the links between their personal biographies and the country's recent history.

[105] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Wystawa Polska w Moskwie – Broszura–przewodnik po zagadnieniach gospodarczo-społecznych Polski omawianych na wystawie.
[106] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji Artystycznej Wystawy Przemysłu Lekkiego w Moskwie, odbytego w dniu 7 czerwca 1949.
[107] Woodcuts were made by Konstanty Maria Sopoćko (1903–1992), a graphic artist and the Art Director of an illustrated kids' magazine *Płomyczek*.

Fig. 1. 5. Still from the newsreel of the Polish Light Industry in Moscow with varied representations of workers.

The use of photographs in exhibition-making was developing rapidly and by the late 1940s it was a well recognised technique for efficient communication with the viewer.[108] In the context of presentations, the power of photography relied on its ability to deliver a simple and clear message in the most direct way. The Moscow exhibition committee assumed, however, that 'the Soviet viewer is used to reading and they must have some captions otherwise the photographs will not be comprehensible.'[109] The majority of images used at the Polish display were delivered by central agencies such as Film Polski, the Military Press Agency and the Central Photographic Agency. Many of them where taken by the most talented post-war photographers, like Stefan Bałuk – responsible for the photographic service at the exhibition in Moscow, but also the Polish pavilion at the 1951 International Trade Fair in Prague, and many others.[110] According to the written documentation, one of the photomontages for the Moscow presentation

[108] U. Pohlmann, 'El Lissitzky's Exhibition Designs: The Influence of His Work in Ermany, Italy, and the United States, 1923-1943', in M. Tupitsyn (ed.), *El Lissitzky. Beyond the Abstract Cabinet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 52–64 and B. Stimson, *The Pivot of the World. Photography and Its Nation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).
[109] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29 Protokół z konferencji w sprawie Wystawy Przemysłu Lekkiego w Moskwie, odbytej w P.K.P.G. pod przewodnictwem Ob. Ministra Jędrychowskiego w dniu 31. maja 1949, p. 4.
[110] Stefan Bałuk (1914–2014) was a photographer and a photo reporter associated with the Central Photographic Agency (*Centralna Agencja Fotograficzna*). During the war he was active in the anti-communist resistance, for which he was sentenced for 2 years in prison.

was created by Mieczysław Berman, a leading Polish artist of this genre, whose works were inspired by, inter alia, the leading lights of the avant-garde: El Lissitzky, Aleksander Rodchenko and Gustav Klutsis.[111]

Workers representing particular industries were standing next to machines, demonstrating how they work and explaining the production processes. Additionally, most of the exhibits' captions contained information about the amount of time a worker needed to produce a particular item. The workers' tasks were simple, repetitive and did not require advanced expertise; their effort was valued because of the fast pace rather than precision. The priority, as the first economic law of socialism envisaged, was to fabricate a high volume of products that would meet the basic needs of society.

Part of the process of creating a New Man was devoted to the formation of a rigid system of socialist morality and the development of political consciousness. By the end of the 1940s, the workers were presented as an element of not only the productivist, but also the political narrative. At the exhibition in Moscow, proletarians were shown as the driving force of the socialist revolution, but in the upcoming months their political engagement became additionally emphasised. The state organised mass rallies where workers voiced their support for the Party's political decisions: they marched against the war in Korea and demonstrated for peace.[112] The exhibition visuals mirrored this new strand of the narrative. For example, the Polish display at the 1951 Trade Fair in Prague demonstrated the workers' involvement in political matters in the form of direct representation. Large scale photographs captured miner Józef Kociuba making a speech at the Warsaw Peace Congress – one of the main events of the peace movement, where both the East and the West tried to 'achieve moral authority, political leverage and strategic advantage over the other' (Fig. 1.6).[113] The miner's words were quoted alongside fragments of speeches by Bierut and Stalin, leaving the impression that the voice of the workers played an equally important part in the international peace debate.

[111] For Berman's recent biography see P. Rypson, *Czerwony Monter. Mieczysław Berman – Grafik, Który Zaprojektował Polski Komunizm* (Kraków: Karakter, 2017) and other texts by the same author.
[112] For the involvement of the public in the Soviet peace movement see T. Johnston, 'Peace or Pacifism? The Soviet "Struggle for Peace in All the World", 1948–54', *The Slavonic and East European Review* 86, no. 2 (2008), pp. 259–282.
[113] P. Deery, 'The Dove Flies East. Whitehall, Warsaw and the 1950 World Peace Congress', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 48, no. 4 (2002), pp. 449–468.

Fig. 1. 6. View of the Polish exhibition at the International Trade Fair in Prague, 1951 designed by Wojciech Zamecznik and Maurycy Tomasz Stryjecki and photographed by Wojciech Zamecznik

The visual portrayal of workers at the exhibition in Moscow, although it included various techniques and artistic conventions, focused predominantly on males in their twenties and thirties. Women, despite the fact they were an important part of the post-war industrial force, were featured sporadically, the documents barely mentioning some presentations of female workers in the textile industry pavilion.[114] Their absence from the propagandist image is striking, especially given the official campaign for women's professional work: the three-year plan assumed that the number of female industry workers would rise by seven points from 1946, reaching 32% in 1949.[115] Exorbitant productivity quotas and work competition politics in the first post-war decade made women an indispensable part of the labour force . Since the restrictive social norms changed during the war and traditional gender roles became looser, many women were up for performing tasks traditionally ascribed to men, in order to support themselves and their families. Why then were there barely any female workers portrayed at the exhibition in Moscow? As Małgorzata Fidelis suggested, the reason for

[114] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/28. Scenariusz Przemysłu włókienniczego.
[115] M. Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 49.

this absence relates to the symbolic meaning of the role division. The official propaganda diminished women and treated them as 'less enlightened and less important'. Their work, which contributed to the development of secondary branches of industry, such as textile production, was seen as repetitive and requiring patience.[116] The labour of male workers, for instance coal mining, was instead depicted as adventurous and heroic. It can be assumed that the latter generated more powerful imagery and could better symbolise the effort of the country's post-war reconstruction: the workers' vigour was characteristic of the dynamic transformation of the country.

Despite this hierarchy of different economic branches, the development of light industry was vital for the Party, both on a pragmatic and a symbolic level. The production of goods designed to fulfil people's needs was the priority of socialist economy, whereas the quality of products was visibly less important. In official Party rhetoric workers were the primary beneficiaries of the fruits of their own labour and, what's more important, the owners of the means of production. New buildings elevated from the rubble, wide motorways and everyday goods served the same people who worked on their creation. The loop resembled Marx's dream: labour and the consumption of its products were intertwined. The state propaganda painted an image of the workers under socialism as susceptible to excessive consumption; their needs were depicted as modest and their appetites moderate thanks to a special psychological construct developed under socialism. The desire for luxury, typical in the capitalist economic system, made Westerners dependent on commodities and turned them into voracious consumers with insatiable appetites. The socialist society was supposedly immune to such behaviour.[117]

Demonstrating this unique feature at a showcase that aimed to celebrate the wealth and prosperity of the country was another challenge faced by the exhibition committee. In order to tackle this issue, they decided that selected displays should avoid any allusions to luxury, as it might have a damaging effect on the morale of the general audience. One of the ways to achieve this was to show existing objects in a non-consumerist context. Following this rationale, a member of the committee suggested to present decorative crystal vessels in an imaginative surrounding. According to his

[116] M. Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization*, p. 76.
[117] I. Merkel, 'Luxury in Socialism. An Absurd Proposition?', in D. Crowley and S. E. Reid (eds.), *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010), p. 55.

proposal, a fairy tale grotto was to be constructed in one of the pavilions – a diamond mine with Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was put forward as a feasible alternative for the conventional arrangement of a bourgeoisie interior, where this type of product was often displayed.[118] This extravagant suggestion was not acted upon, and instead the committee decided to look for more down to earth solutions.

Creating an ideal habitat for the working class was the core of the plan. Accordingly, the exhibition featured architecture and furniture conceived for new urban dwellers. Large scale photographs showed a recently accomplished estate of small apartment blocks in Żoliborz, built by the Warsaw Housing Cooperative (*Warszawska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa: WSM*). Designed by Barbara Brukalska and Stanisław Brukalski, a leading modernist duo from the interwar period, the building continued a larger scheme commenced before the war. It was composed of several so called colonies, which consisted of a block of flats with an internal patio and communal facilities. Three such colonies were built in the 1930s, and three others were completed between 1946-1948. The exhibition in Moscow presented some of these buildings, possibly the most spectacular one: the 13th Colony. The Home for the Lonely, as it was commonly called, included 130 single and double rooms, a communal restaurant on the ground floor and a reading room in the basement of the building.[119]

A display of the architecture was presented next to the stands, which were arranged like actual rooms and communal spaces, filled with furniture and everyday objects.[120] Although the display was to resemble workers' homes, only two rooms explicitly referred to the habitats of the working class. Among them was a multi-functional room in a small flat and a community hall (*świetlica*), offering various cultural activities within factories.[121] In that context a piano and a set of representative furniture might have looked odd, as they resembled the pre-war living conditions of a wealthy middle class family. However, as the exhibition documentation alluded to, these objects illustrated the state's effort to develop a new culture for a new social

[118] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Wystawa Polska w Moskwie. Efekty Specjalne.
[119] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Sprawozdanie z posiedzienia Komisji Weryfikacyjnej, odbytego w dniu 22 czerwca 1949 roku, p. 2.
[120] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Sprawozdanie z posiedzienia Komisji Weryfikacyjnej, odbytego w dniu 22 czerwca 1949 roku, p. 2. See also: M. Leśniakowska, "The Brukalskis' Poetics of the Avant-Garde," in C. Frejlich (ed.), *Out of the Ordinary: Polish Designers of the 20th Century* (Warsaw: Adam Mickiewicz Institute, 2011), pp. 172–83.
[121] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Pawilon poczeski, p. 2.

group. In order to do that, the authorities were appropriating the most constructive elements of culture and lifestyle, which used to be associated with other social groups. It was part of a strategy employed by the Party since the late 1940s, which – as Padraic Kenney observed – aimed at bridging the gaps between different parts of society.[122] Through blurring class lines, the state meant to create a new form of attractive and inclusive mass culture, which in the long term would provide the Party with legitimacy.[123] Within this plan the legacy of interwar material culture and design ideas was particularly relevant.

The lists of exhibits presented in Moscow are not very precise, which makes it impossible to establish what exactly was on display. Reconstructing the situation of Polish design and production in the early post-war years is almost equally difficult, since documentation is fragmentary and has not been properly examined as a whole yet. Some designs are known only from spoken accounts, many others are difficult to link with a particular author. Shortly after the war many factories automatically took on the pre-war production and started replicating out-of-date designs of foreign – mostly German – origins.[124] Not only was their quality mediocre, but they also failed to respond to contemporary living conditions. Objects produced for mass consumption that followed those patterns were assessed as 'repulsive and alien to our culture'.[125]

An institution that aimed to change that situation and subsequently reshape the Polish design scene was the Office for the Supervision of Aesthetic Production (*Biuro Nadzoru Estetyki Produkcji: BNEP*), founded in 1947. Aleksander Wojeciechowski, a leading chronicler of Poland's artistic life, in an article published during the early days of the Office's activity called the BNEP 'the most awkward institution in the world.'[126] The reason of this vivid description seems to lie in the wide range of activities the Office undertook to improve the quality of material production – in a country where industry was almost non-existent and for a society that was drastically impoverished

[122] P. Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland,* pp. 314–34.
[123] For the role of mass culture in an authoritarian society see S. Barańczak, *Czytelnik Ubezwłasnowolniony. Perswazja w Masowej Kulturze Literackiej PRL* (Paris: Libella, 1983).
[124] W. Wincze, 'Gawędy O Meblarstwie', *Mój Dom* 40 (1989), quoted in A. Maga, 'Ład furniture after 1945', in A. Frąckiewicz (ed.), *Spółdzielnia Artystów 'Ład' 1926–1996*, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Muzeum Akademii Sztuk Pięknych, 1998), p. 38.
[125] W. Telakowska, *Twórczość Ludowa w Nowym Wzornictwie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sztuka, 1954), p. 5.
[126] A. Wojciechowski, 'BNEP = Sztuka + Życie Czyli Jedna z Najdziwniejszych Instytucji w Europie', *Wiadomości IWP. Suplement* 2 (1988), pp. 4–6. Initially published in *Problemy* 4 (1949).

after years of war and occupation. The BNEP evolved from the Manufacturing Department (*Wydział Wytwórczości*), established in 1945 within the Ministry of Art and Culture. In 1947 the newly formed Office was part of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and later of the Ministry of Light Industry. The latter was responsible for overseeing the mass production of daily goods.[127] This decision brought hopes that the BNEP's actions would have a practical impact on the improvement of material culture at home. It was the first step towards creating a legitimate structure for the development of Polish post-war design. The institution reached out to established artists and craftsmen, many of whom ceased their artistic work during the occupation; additionally, it made efforts to approach new talented artisans from rural areas.[128] Wanda Telakowska, *spiritus movens* of the entire initiative, together with Maria Skoczylas-Urbanowicz organised workshops, placements and trainings for them, and later purchased designs for future production.

By 1950, BNEP's collection comprised 9,528 designs – however, most of them had much more in common with handicrafts rather than modern mass production.[129] It was not particularly surprising, given the situation in which the Office was operating: a large part of the industry was ruined, material resources were scarce and awareness of the specificity of design for mass production was limited, even among educated artists. In these circumstances small objects made by hand and from cheap materials represented the most widespread form of design-like activity. For this reason, Telakowska initiated a programme of cooperation between educated applied artists and nonprofessional craftsmen from rural areas. The skills of the latter, as Telakowska believed, could be adapted for contemporary mass production. I will analyse this programme in more detail in Chapter Two, but for now it is worth noting that this ambitious concept was received enthusiastically by the authorities, who saw a deep connection between socialist culture and folklore. In 1949 Włodzimierz Sokorski, at that time the deputy Minister of Culture, noted in his speech about musical culture in socialist Poland that

[127] W. Telakowska, 'Początki Wzornictwa w Polsce Ludowej', *Wiadomości IWP* 1 (1987), pp. 47–52. Text originally written in 1966.
[128] K. Czerniewska and J. Olejniczak, *Z Dziejów Wzornictwa w Powojennej Polsce (1945–1950)* (Warszawa: Instytut Wzornictwa Przemysłowego, 1989), see also A. Wojciechowski, 'Polska wytwórczość artystyczna w latach 1945–1951', *Przegląd Artystyczny* vol. 2 (1952), pp. 65–73.
[129] A. Frąckiewicz, 'Jak zrobić coś z niczego', in J. Kordjak-Piotrowska and A. Szewczyk (eds.), *Zaraz po wojnie* (Warszawa: Zachęta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, 2015), pp. 152–160.

> the similarity between folk singing and the songs of the mass proletariat is not a simple meeting of form and content. It is an artistic convergence beating with the pulse of our times, our emotions and our struggles. It matches the dynamic of our times.[130]

This interpretation of folklore was extended to other domains. In the following chapters I will look closely at the debate it provoked within craft and design.

Simultaneously to implementing Telakowska's crafts programme, the BNEP managed to insert some artists into a few restored factories, so they could improve their understanding of mass production. The effects of this arrangement included decorative glass and ceramics prototyped in the former German factories of Lower Silesia, but also objects of a more utilitarian character, such as furniture pieces for workers' flats, which resonated particularly well with the contemporary productive narrative. Starting from the late 1948, the BNEP's experimental furniture workshop involved the most progressive architects, designers, as well as craftsmen and craftswomen of the interwar period, including Władysław Wincze, Halina Jastrzębowska, Czesław Knothe and Barbara Brukalska (Fig. 1.7) – they designed prototypes of typical furniture for small living spaces.[131]

Some of the more promising outcomes were designed by Ład Artists' Cooperative, of which Wincze, Jastrzębowska and Knothe were prominent members. The group was founded in 1926 after the success of the Polish pavilion at the 1925 Paris International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts, which members of the future cooperative designed. Ład was driven by an ambition to improve the country's visual culture (*kultura plastyczna*) – and the economic situation of its members – through manufacturing quality objects.[132] The objects were connected by the idea of perfect form, material and manufacturing; meanwhile, the aesthetics were a matter of individual style. In the interwar period the majority of Ład's designs, characterised by 'painstaking craftsmanship' and high prices, was produced for

[130] W. Sokorski, 'The True Course of People's Art (1949)', in D. Crowley (ed.), *Design and Culture in Poland and Hungary, 1890-1990. A Tempus 'Design for Industry: East/West Europe' Reader* (Brighton: University of Brighton, 1993), pp. 61–3.
[131] The furniture was developed in cooperation with the Central Wood Industry Board. See K. Czerniewska and J. Olejniczak, *Z Dziejów Wzornictwa*, p. 29.
[132] K. Orthwein, 'Spółdzielnia „Ład" w Latach Przedwojennych i Po Wojnie. Przyczynek do Zagadnień Kultury Mieszkania', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 1, no. 2 (1957), pp. 83–98.

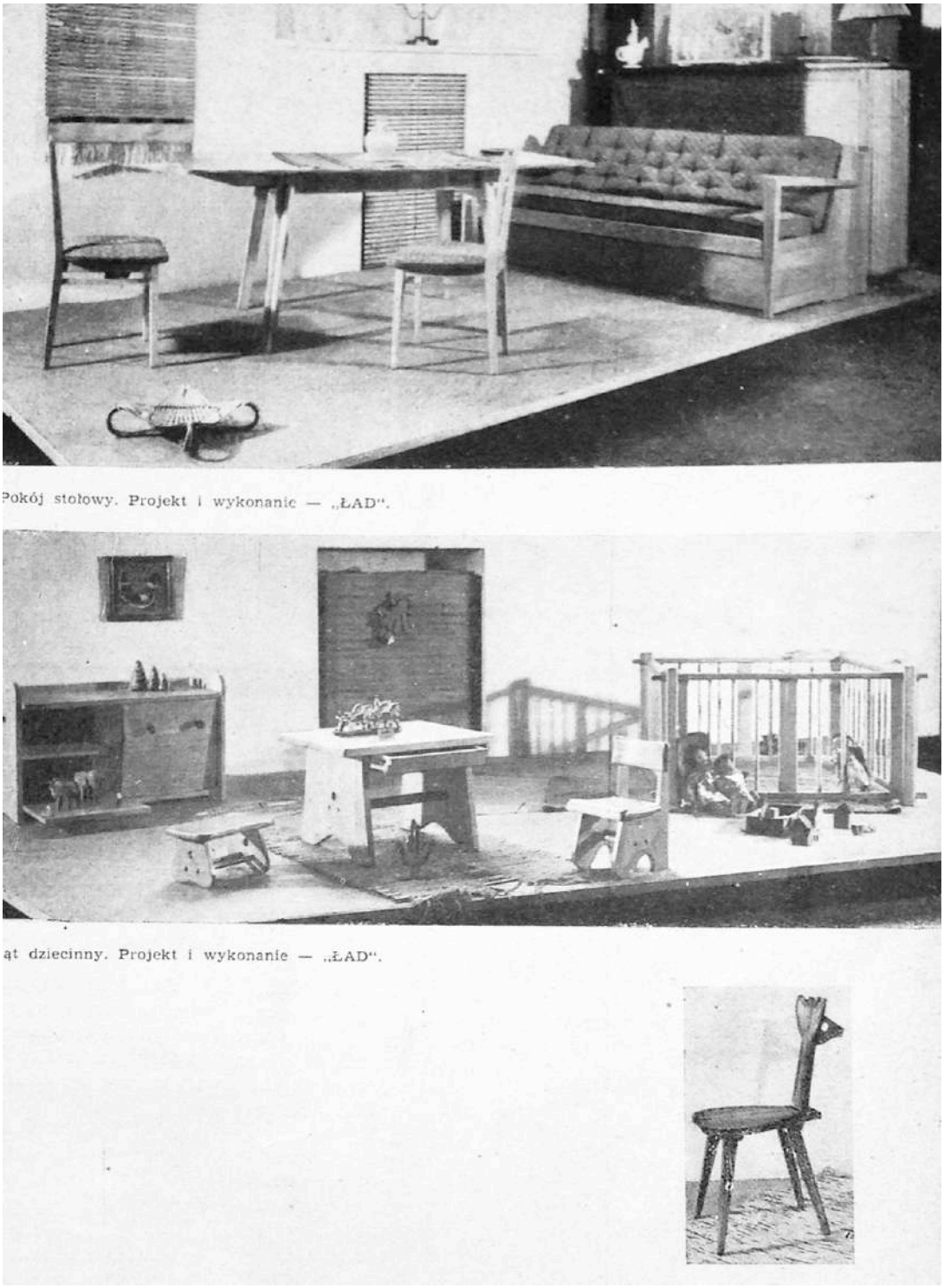

Fig. 1.7. Dining room designed and produced by ŁAD cooperative. Photograph published in *Architektura* no 1, 1948

representative interiors and wealthy individuals.[133] Ład pieces became emblematic of the interiors of the Second Republic and, by decision of the Minister of Foreign Affairs August Zaleski, they furnished the newly established Polish embassies in Sofia, Berlin and Stockholm.[134] It was a well-considered commission, which demonstrates the role that embassies play in formulating the self-representation of a nation in front of the international public opinion. They are, as Jane C. Loeffler noted, 'symbolically charged buildings uniquely defined by domestic politics, foreign affairs, and a complex set of representational requirements.'[135] Therefore, just like international exhibitions, the embassies represent each country's effort to define its position on a global scale.

During the occupation and the brief aftermath period, the Cooperative's creative ambitions were tempered by being confronted with the harsh reality. At that time many Ład projects addressed issues of affordable and functional furniture for small flats, and included a commission from the BNEP for a series of fittings for frame houses. A few years after the war the artists resumed their 'state-building' mission. In the late 1940s they furnished official interiors (e.g. the Polish consulate in Moscow) and offices of the most important state officials, including Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz and Deputy Prime Minister Szyr.[136] Although it is impossible to identify the designers of many furniture pieces with certainty, the archival lists of the exhibits suggest that some of them were displayed at the Light Industry Exhibition in Moscow.[137]

Both themes of the BNEP's activity that I outlined above – related to folklore inspirations and the production of mass furniture for workers' houses – were well aligned with the Party's propagandist efforts. In fact, the governmental institutions appreciated the outcomes of these pioneering activities and reportedly used them for promoting Poland abroad on various occasions. The International Cultural Relations Bureau and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs treated them 'as a precious collection [of

[133] A. Frąckiewicz, 'Ład: the critical perspective', in A. Frąckiewicz (ed.), *Spółdzielnia Artystów 'Ład',* p. 53.
[134] A. Chmielewska, *W służbie państwa, społeczeństwa i narodu: 'państwowotwórczy' artyści plastycy w II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN, 2006).
[135] J. C. Loeffler, *Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), p. 3. See also D. Hagströmer, 'In Search of a National Vision: Swedish Embassies from the Mid-Twentieth Century to the Present' (Royal College of Art Ph.D. thesis, 2011).
[136] See A. Maga, 'Ład furniture after 1945', p. 138.
[137] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Protokół z konferencji z architektami i grafikami w dniu 21.VI. 1949, p. 3.

objects] that demonstrated the Polish creative and cultural potential to foreign guests.'[138] These themes also fit into the major narrative of the exhibition in Moscow. Although without certainty, some BNEP objects were displayed in Gorky Park, among them furniture and decorative textiles recurrently mentioned in the presentation scripts. The exhibition committee agreed that luxurious furniture associated with the pre-war upper class was not supposed to dominate the exhibition – instead, the pavilions were to focus on displaying simple, yet well designed and manufactured furniture for workers.[139] The latter was created by designers with prolific interwar careers and represented hypothetical solutions rather than actual outcomes, but these facts did not seem to matter for the authorities. On the contrary: rather than being a concern, the experience of the creative intelligentsia was treated by the authorities as an advantage, to be be used for the benefit of the exhibition. The potential rather than real character of the displays was not considered a problem either, as long as they attracted the attention of visitors and international trade representatives.

Conclusions

Many of the themes that the exhibition in Moscow addressed were further developed over the following years. The post-war reconstruction, the dynamic development presented in contrast with the interwar backwardness, and an eternal friendship between Poland and the Soviet Union were among the most perennial topics at the Polish pavilions at least until the mid 1950s. The most important theme that remained at the centre of the exhibitions was the working class. The presentations consistently addressed the issue of its evolving identity, displayed working class culture and brought to play its political relevance in light of current events. The preoccupation with living conditions in post-war Poland was less visible in the exhibition scripts – it was replaced by the development of heavy industry, but also by demonstrating a society newly transformed in the socialist spirit.

The discussion about national style was a constant part of exhibition planning. It was associated with constructing anew the image of the country on the international scene, as well as illustrating its relations with the Soviet Union. From the late 1940s, the

[138] K. Czerniewska and J. Olejniczak, *Z Dziejów Wzornictwa*, p. 41.
[139] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/5/29. Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji Wystaw Międzyn. z dn. 18.II.1948r., p. 3.

pressure to subjugate every aspect of life in the country to the Soviet model increased. In Polish economy it was done through introducing state ownership and central planning, in agriculture – through attempts of forced collectivisation; in politics – by consolidating the one party system; and in culture – by introducing Socialist Realism.

As this chapter and the rest of the thesis claims, some representatives of the creative intelligentsia and nomenclature defied those attempts to Sovietise design and material culture. Among the milieu portrayed in this section, the resistance did not take the form of a direct protest. Instead, it was done with the ethos of performing the job according to the highest professional standards. For many designers and architects the socialist programme that the new state advocated sounded very promising: the egalitarian nature of artistic production, state patronage and a social revolution appealed to the leftist sentiments that many of them shared. The avant-garde architectural concepts from the 1920s and 1930s and the functionalism of daily objects fit the times of post-war austerity well. Additionally, in reaching into this interwar repository the authorities saw their political benefits. As Zdzisław Mach, a Polish sociologist noted,

> new political elites usually claim some continuation of what they regard as good, just and progressive elements of nation's past and refer to them in the construction of the new symbolic structure of the state. Old symbols are often reviewed in new contexts and meanings. The idea behind such a symbolic manipulation is to identify the new state with the nation or, at least, with those segments and social forces of the nation whose support is sufficiently important to the new ruling elite.[140]

This process of appropriation intensified with time – when national emblems, history, linguistic heritage, traditional culture as well as celebrations and rituals became objects of the state's interventions.[141] The following chapters will look at some of those attempts in detail. The discussions about national style and the uniqueness of the Polish approach were continued, but a different political context changed their main focus.

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[140] Z. Mach, *Symbols, Conflict, and Identity. Essays in Political Anthropology* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), p. 106.

[141] See for example J. Kubik, *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power. The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (Pittsburgh: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); and I. Main, *Trudne Świętowanie. Konflikty Wokół Obchodów Świąt Państwowych i Kościelnych w Lubline (1944-1989)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2004).

Chapter Two

A Polish way: socialist modernism and a modern vernacular around the mid 1950s

The first few post-war years were marked by dynamic changes on the political scene and a gradual consolidation of the Soviet power. The 1947 election brought with it the formation of the communist government, followed by amendments in the state's political and legal system. They were confirmed in 1952 by the new constitution, which indicated a turn towards socialism and proclaimed a new name of the country, which from then on was to be known as the People's Republic of Poland. The Stalinist period between 1949 and 1951 was the most severe phase of the communist regime, marked by repressions and the state's control over all domains of life in the country. In 1949 Socialist Realism was introduced as the obligatory doctrine, which profoundly marked Polish cultural life. Life in Poland looked grim and people were hopeless. Thus, Stalin's death in 1953 was seen as an event that would bring a change. Its direct impact on people's lives was limited, but the political scene was visibly shaken. Shifts within the *nomenklatura* followed promptly; the pace of these actions was quick, which left many bureaucrats perplexed and unsure how the situation would develop. The changes reached their peak in autumn 1956, when on a wave of social unrest Gomułka was selected by the Party as the new First Secretary. The decision was received enthusiastically by the society – people believed, reassured by a series of gestures made by the new Party leadership, that it foreshadowed a significant move towards transforming the system. The early months of Gomułka's governance represented a 'residue of Marxist concepts with hitherto-rejected idealism, humanism, and Polish nationalism'.[142] It raised hopes for a fresh start.

This new beginning required a new visual language, which had to not only assist in legitimising the new power, but also condemn the Stalinist rule – though not socialism per se. The new aesthetics had to mark the nation's distinctiveness, while emphasising its newly proclaimed openness to the West. All these ambitions were to be demonstrated by a decisive break from Socialist Realism, monumentality and the usual repertoire of symbols used to represent the socialist system in the previous years. However, two obstacles appeared in this seemingly simple project. Firstly, targeting the

[142] Z. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc, Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 244.

visual language of the past was not so easy: as the previous chapter demonstrated, Socialist Realism had little resonance in design, which even in the late 1940s and the early 1950s appropriated many different references and styles. Secondly, no consensus had been achieved with regard to what was supposed to fill the void of the 'old style'. Therefore, as this section will show, the new aesthetics had to be negotiated ad hoc.

The process of forming a new Polish style was aligned with 'a Polish road to socialism', proclaimed in October 1956 by the new First Secretary of the Party, Władysław Gomułka. At the core of his rule was the conviction about Poland's specificity: the consequently strong position of the Catholic Church and the peasants' ownership of land – unique on the scale of the Eastern Bloc – had to be accommodated within the socialist ideology. Gomułka was sure that the connections with Moscow, other socialist countries and the West had to be reformulated too. Although he did not question Poland's association with the USSR, he aimed to shift those relations towards home rule rather than clientele bonds.[143]

Some historians explained this attitude by referring to Gomułka's biography, especially in the context of the political conflict between 'Nativists' and 'Muscovites'.[144] Gomułka, a representative of the former group, was a homegrown communist who spent the Nazi occupation at home, reorganising the underground communist movement. In 1949 he was imprisoned, yet unlike national communist leaders of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, he avoided prosecution. The lack of a network – which many of his colleagues established while in the Soviet Union – not only affected Gomułka's political position, but also influenced his views on Polish-Soviet relations. Additionally, in formulating this more autonomous approach, some researchers noticed his personality trait: Gomułka, who was often characterised as 'domineering', was unwilling to accept the dictates of Soviet leadership.[145] In December 1954, as a result of the political amnesty following Stalin's death, Gomułka

[143] See for example the coal conflict with Czechoslovakia in I. Lukes and K. Sieber, 'The Dog That Didn't Bark: Czechoslovakia and the 1956 Events in Poland', in J. Rowiński (ed.), *The Polish October 1956 in World Politics* (Warszawa: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2007), pp. 153–74.
[144] A. Prażmowska, 'Władysław Gomułka', in S. Casey and J. Wright (eds.), *Mental Maps in the Early Cold War Era, 1945-1968* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[145] A. Werblan, 'The Polish October of 1956. Legends and Reality', in J. Rowiński (ed.), *The Polish October*, pp. 13–42.

was released from prison and returned to politics.[146] For the next fourteen years his 'mental map', his ideas about socialism and Poland's place in Europe dominated Polish politics and economy, as did the representation of Poland on the international scene.

In this chapter I will examine the Polish exhibition at the Brussels World's Fair (which was never completed) and at the 11th Milan Triennial Exhibition of Decorative Arts and Modern Architecture (Milan Triennale). Preparations for both events had commenced respectively 13 and 2 months before Gomułka returned to power, but when he became the Party's First Secretary in autumn 1956, a dramatic shift in the scripts and visual language of the presentations took place.[147] The modernist elements discussed in the previous months became visibly marginalised and instead the vernacular dominated the narrative; the approach of the exhibition committees changed too. The most drastic outcome of this transformation was Poland's withdrawal from the major exhibition at the World Fair's in Brussels, as well as realising a side project of a predominantly commercial character. Nevertheless, as both events demonstrated, the aesthetics – whether they were associated with the universal or the vernacular, modern or traditional – embodied values that the Party believed would allow Poland to win other nations over.

'It is not about refrigerators, but about a grand experiment and its outcomes': Polish pavilion for the Brussels World's Fair, 1958

An enthusiastic article, written in 1955 by an American journalist Howard Simons, celebrated the growing popularity of fairs among visitors. Simons noted that

> [a]lthough the trade fairs were designed and are reportedly held to stimulate world trade, to exhibit the latest in manufactured goods, and to show off the result of a nation's industrial, scientific and technological ingenuity and production, there is more and more evidence that they are also being used as a sparring arena for ideological propaganda.[148]

[146] For the most detailed analysis of the development of events that informed the political Thaw in Poland, see P. Machcewicz, *Rebellious Satellite: Poland 1956* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
[147] Preparations for the Polish display in Brussels commenced on 17 September 1955. The earliest information about Poland's participation in the Milan Triennale is dated 23 August 1956, with the opening scheduled for 27 July 1957. See Letter of Tommaso Ferraris to the Italian Embassy in Warsaw, 1 December 1956. La Triennale di Milano, Polonia rapresentanze diplomatiche, 32.1.
[148] H. Simons, 'World Goes to the Fair', *The Science Newsletter* 67, no. 12 (1955), pp.186–7.

The world or universal exhibitions additionally accentuated this claim. The Brussels World's Fair, the first organised since the end of the Second World War, had great aspirations. It was planned as a joyful celebration of humanism and a triumph of science. It aspired to give a comprehensive view of the spiritual and material richness of all nations regardless of race, belief and outlook, and it was to feature the greatest achievements of humanity in the fields of art, science, technology and economy. In doing so, the organisers wanted to prove that nations complement each other and that all burning problems of the contemporary world could be resolved through considering mankind as the most central element of every undertaking.

In the words of Belgium's General Commissar, the exhibition had three main goals to fulfil: it strived to foster international collaboration based on the respect of human rights; it planned to introduce the idea of trust between nations; and it aimed to promote a rise in the quality of life around the world through a multifaceted exchange of accomplishments.[149] In the midst of Cold War rivalry, with world powers locked in the Nuclear Arm Race and the Space Race, that was a great challenge. Global players and their allies seemed to be more likely to compete rather than collaborate, and that state of affairs was reflected in the climate of world fairs and industrial exhibitions across the planet. It was also an appropriate time to reflect on the distinctiveness of each country, a task that Eastern European countries took particularly seriously in light of the recent political events in the communist bloc.

After Stalin's death Moscow intensified its attempts to strengthen the bonds between the satellite states. The concept of socialist internationalism, whose origins could be tracked back to the 19th century, was manifested through the rise of a new Eastern Europe project in the 1950s – in May 1955 Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, GDR, Romania, Hungary and Poland signed the Warsaw Pact. It was a Soviet attempt to keep those countries in a stronger grip, but with time it became an instrument for decision making within Eastern Europe.[150] In an effort to 'build a transnational socialist community, which would serve as both a counter to and competitor with the capitalist West', multiple forms of exchanges of people, cultures, and goods were established. Among them were trade fairs and international exhibitions, but also what Rachel

[149] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0. Inwentarz Zespołu akt.
[150] L. Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered: International Relations in Eastern Europe, 1955-1969* (London: Routledge, 2015).

Applebaum called 'a friendship project', covering mass tourism, pen-pal clubs, friendship camps and associations that citizens from across the Eastern Bloc were encouraged to get involved in.[151]

The Polish pavilion in Brussels was planned to fall into the East European integration scheme and to emphasise Poland's bond with other socialist countries. The rationale of the presentation, offered by the exhibition's deputy commissar Janina Królikowska the exhibition committee meeting in the summer of 1956, was deeply rooted in the confrontation between communism and capitalism. In her view, the Brussels Fair was emerging as

> a confrontation of two standpoints and two ideas. On one hand – the capitalist countries will aim to demonstrate that technological progress and the development of art, culture and science, which take place in capitalist conditions, are the best possible form, best suited to serve people. On the other hand – using our own examples, we will illustrate that this is much more feasible within our own conditions, that this is the very essence of our system and political views.[152]

Since the late 1940s, Królikowska had been employed in organising Polish exhibitions and trade fairs through a Party mandate – first as the Commissar of the Exhibitions and Fairs by the Cabinet Committee, and later as the director of the Central Office for Visual Art and Exhibitions.[153] According to Wojciech Fangor, a painter who met her on numerous occasions, including the later stages of works on the Brussels exhibition, 'she was a very efficient bureaucrat and was very energetic, she knew all the artists and she knew who would be most suitable for a particular job.'[154]

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[151] R. Applebaum, 'The Friendship Project: Socialist Internationalism in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s', *Slavic Review* 74, no. 3 (2015), pp. 484–507.

[152] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/9. Stenogram z narady ze spotkania z przedstawicielami resortów dot. Międzynarodowej Wystawy w Brukseli. The report covering the first meeting of the exhibition committee with the representatives of various industries is not dated. We can assume from the content of the document that the meeting took place between the end of June and the beginning of August 1956.

[153] After stepping down from this position, she became a member of the board for the Association of Folk and Art Industry Cooperatives (Związek Spółdzielni Przemysłu Ludowego i Artystycznego). The Institute of National Remembrance's archive contains Królikowska's files, including documents relating to her change of name (until 1948 she had been known as Marcela Kurzok).

[154] According to the transcript of an interview with Wojciech Fangor by Aleksandra Kędziorek. See her 'Modernistyczna Wizytówka PRL. Projekt Pawilonu Polskiego na Wystawę Światową w Brukseli w 1958 roku' (MA, Instytut Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011), p.

As an experienced functionary, Królikowska must have been well aware that the political situation in the region influenced the presentation of Poland on the international scene. During the same meeting, Królikowska addressed the underdevelopment of the country and the difficulty this might pose for the exhibition narrative. The confrontation between the East and the West, as she recognised, 'would be particularly difficult to handle since we are significantly backward in several areas of life.'[155] 'However', she added, 'generally speaking the truth is on our side.'[156] Although the 'civilisational underdevelopment', as the commissar referred to the situation in the Eastern Bloc, was evident – it was rarely acknowledged in the official discourse. The economy's inability to meet the demands of the citizens could be discussed in a more open manner for a brief period in autumn 1956, but even then very few publicists openly criticised the socialist system and its uncompetitiveness.[157] Some of the most progressive economists advocated reforms that would introduce a few elements of market mechanisms into socialist economy, as a way to improve Poland's situation.[158] However, their suggestions were ignored by the Party.

The architecture of the Polish pavilion was envisaged as a voice in this discussion about superiority between two political systems. It was also considered to provide a strong leverage point, since the architectural and artistic scene during the political Thaw was flourishing. In order to choose the best project, professional associations of artists and architects jointly organised a nation-wide competition in spring 1956. The Polish pavilion, as the regulation from 26 May 1956 stated, was to

93. See also W. Włodarczyk, *Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie w Latach 1944-2004* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 2005), pp. 180–181.

[155] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/9. Stenogram z narady ze spotkania z przedstawicielami resortów dot. Międzynarodowej Wystawy w Brukseli.

[156] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/9. Stenogram z narady ze spotkania z przedstawicielami resortów dot. Międzynarodowej Wystawy w Brukseli.

[157] M. Jastrząb, 'Polityka Kształtowania Cen', in D. Stola and M. Zaremba (eds.), *PRL Trwanie i Zmiana* (Warszawa: Wyższa Szkoła Przedsiębiorczości i Zarządzania, 2003), p. 212.

[158] The group of economists proposing the reforms included Czesław Bobrowski and the almost 20 years younger Włodzimierz Brus, Jan Mujżel, Józef Popkiewicz and Stefan Kurowski. See M. Walasek, 'Idee Liberalne w Polskiej Myśli Ekonomicznej po II Wojnie Światowej do Lat 70. XX wieku', *Gospodarka w Praktyce i Teorii* 2, no. 31 (2012), pp.145–65. See also the autobiographical E. Łukawer, 'Refleksje o tym, z czego byliśmy swego czasu dumni, a czego u nas już od dawna nie ma', *Nierówności Społeczne a Wzrost Gospodarczy*, no. 11 (2007), p. 20 and S. Kurowski, *Od Października do Sierpnia. Moje ćwierć Wieku Dyskusji o Gospodarce* (Warszawa: Elipsa, 2001).

mark Polish links with the Eastern Bloc while manifesting Poland's openness to the West. The text of the regulation instructed:

> At the exhibition in Brussels there will be a juxtaposition of two systems and two ideologies, their achievements, developmental prospects and potential opportunities. The Polish exposition should underline the fact that the Polish state and the Polish nation share their ideas, endeavours and interests with other socialist countries; it should mark Poland's contribution to the development of universal culture and progress, and its affirmation of world peace. The scheme needs to strongly emphasise our current involvement and our eagerness to collaborate further, to participate in an economic, cultural and scientific exchange with all capitalist countries – as an expression of peaceful coexistence between states of different political, economic and cultural systems, and as a realisation of bilateral trust between the nations.[159]

The brief of the Polish pavilion reflected the idea of a peaceful collaboration between the nations, which was one of the main themes that the Belgian organisers wanted to celebrate. This concept was also manifested, as Rika Devos argued, by other national pavilions; the architectural schemes of participating countries 'asses(s)ed the memory of World War II' and incorporated 'the threat of the Cold War in the modern architectures of Expo 58.'[160] As this chapter will demonstrate in the Polish case, however, the idea resonated more in the narration proposed for Poland's exhibition rather than in the pavilion itself.

The competition proved to be extremely popular and it turned into a manifestation of the new post-Stalinist aesthetics in Polish architecture. All 102 entries were displayed over the summer at a well-attended exhibition in the National Theatre in Warsaw.[161] The initial response to the presented schemes was very positive: the press enthusiastically welcomed the break from Socialist Realism in architecture and the first fruits of relaxation in cultural strictures.[162] After preselecting the three most promising

[159] The text of the regulation has not been archived as a separate document, some fragments were quoted in the committee reports and reprinted in numerous journals. AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/6. Notatka w sprawie udziału Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej w Powszechnej Wystawie Międzynarodowej w Brukseli – 1958.
[160] R. Devos, '"Let Us Now Invest in Peace." Architecture at Expo 58 in Resonance of War', in R. Devos, A. Ortenberg, and V. Paperny (eds.), *Architecture of Great Expositions*, p. 135.
[161] 'Rozstrzygnięcie Konkursu na Projekt Pawilonu na Wystawę w Brukseli', *Trybuna Ludu* 155 (4 June 1956).
[162] A. C[zerwiński], 'Konkurs na Polski Pawilon w Brukseli. Wrażenia z Wystawy', *Stolica* 11, no. 25 (1956), pp. 2–3.

projects, the jury made its final decision about the successful submission – a team led by Jerzy Sołtan was unanimously selected as the competition winner.

In order to fully understand the significance of this decision in post-Stalinist Poland, one needs to look at Sołtan's biography. Educated as an architect before the war, he spent the occupation in the P.O.W. camp in Murnau. While there, he initiated a correspondence with Le Corbusier, and in 1945 he joined his Paris studio as an associate. After four fruitful years he decided to return to Poland, where he became one of the few emissaries of modernist ideas from France, and in later years also from the rest of the world – thanks to his involvement with the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (*Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne: CIAM*). In Warsaw he found employment at the Academy of Fine Arts, where he promptly became the dean of a newly established Department of Interior Architecture. From 1954 he led the Art and Research Unit (*Zakłady Artystyczno-Badawcze: ZAB*), an interdisciplinary experimental platform founded at the Academy, with the Polish Chamber of Foreign Trade (*Polska Izba Handlu Zagranicznego: PIHZ*) used as inspiration. It was an enclave where designers, architects and engineers had unprecedented opportunity to develop innovative designs for industry and national commissions, including exhibition pavilions and prototypes of cars or consumer electronics.

In 1955 ZAB employees formed the core of the winning team for the Polish Pavilion in Brussels. The crew included an architect Zbigniew Ihnatowicz, a constructor Lech Tomaszewski and painters Wojciech Fangor and Tadeusz Babicz – all from a close circle of Sołtan's colleagues.[163] Later, during the process of developing the presentation, the team expanded and included construction engineers, technicians, visual artists and designers with a proven record of work for various pavilions and trade fair stands, such as Stanisław and Wojciech Zamecznik, Julian Pałka and the Błażejewski brothers.[164]

[163] The competition entry was prepared in collaboration with Jan Hempel, Małgorzata Marconi and Henryk Marconi.

[164] The themes were assigned to: Stanisław Zamecznik (open spaces), Tadeusz Zieliński (start), Jarosław Gliński (heavy industry and machinery), Józef Mroszczak (natural resources), Aleksander Łącki (light industry and textiles), Jan Muniak (anniversary of the Jagiellonian University), Julian Pałka (man and the nation – governance), Jerzy Staniszkis (book, music, theatre), Tadeusz and Janusz Błażejewski (folk art), Wojciech Zamecznik (mathematics), Henryk Marconi (exhibition of contemporary art), Jan Lenica/Tadeusz Babicz (millennium), Oskar Hansen (coexistence), Jan Krzysztof Meisner (café). No information is available whether

According to the brief, the pavilion not only had to demonstrate great artistic invention, but also interweave technological and aesthetic aspects into the display.[165] Sołtan's team went far beyond that: the presentation was described as 'an artistic and technological exhibit in itself' that contributed towards the development of modern construction engineering on a global scale.[166] The core of this innovation was the roofing surface, which provided light and a sturdy shelter over the exhibition plot (Fig. 2.1). The structure was supported by a few interchangeable pylons, which allowed designers to treat the walls and the roof of the building in a purely aesthetic manner, reducing their role in the construction of the building. The draft was designed to limit the impact of the structure on the natural environment: the foundations were minimal, the perforation of the roof allowed to keep trees, and the layout of the pavilion followed the natural shape of the terrain slope. Rather than being altered, the landscape around the pavilion was treated as a significant part of the design: built elements were planned to cover only 50% of the Polish plot. The Fair's organisers warmly welcomed this environmentally friendly attitude.

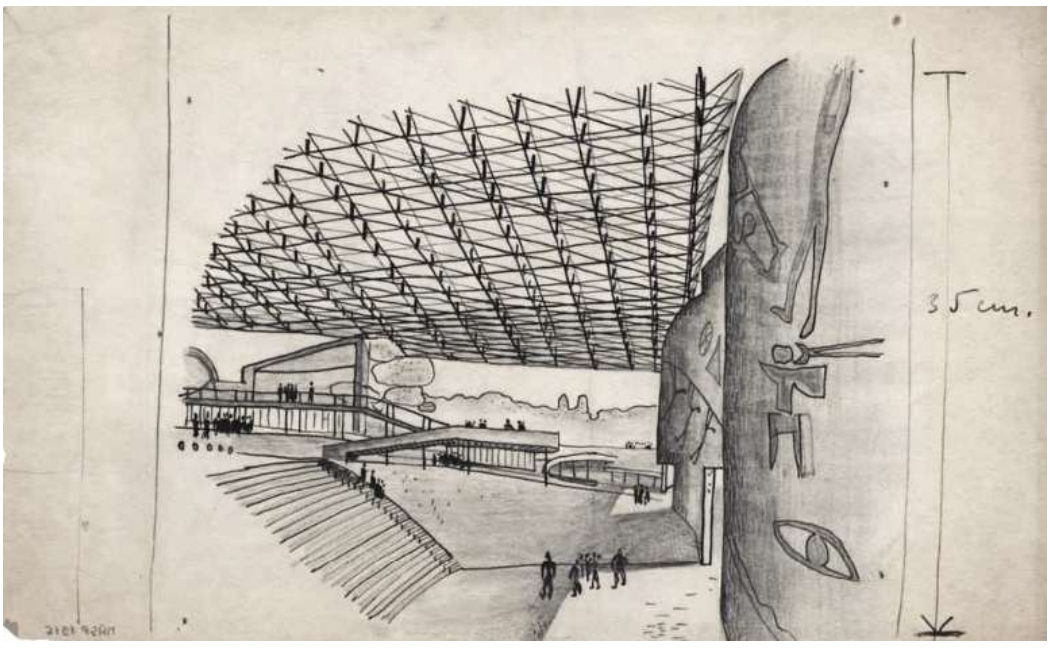

Fig. 2.1. Initial design of the Polish pavilion at the World Exhibition in Brussels drawn by Jerzy Sołtan, 1956

any of the commissioned designers commenced their work. AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/12. Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji Artystyczno-Technicznej w dniu 12.XI.56r.

[165] Redakcja, 'Bruksela 1958', *Przegląd Artystyczny* 2 (1957), p. 35.

[166] The project resonated with contemporary works by Konrad Wachsmann, Buckminster Fuller and Robert le Ricolais in the US, and Pier Luigi Nervi in Italy.

At this stage the scheme included rather vague information about the arrangement of the exhibition space. According to an early concept, the area was split into two levels hosting a display of three-dimensional objects and a thematic exhibition. Film, music and visual arts were an organic part of the architectural project. A long curved wall was designed as a canvas for a large painting by Wojciech Fangor, which after dusk would serve as a screen for audiovisual projections (Fig. 2.2). A selection of short films made by Ludwik Perski, one of the founding fathers of Polish post-war cinematography, would intertwine with physical objects displayed on plinths. The experimental soundscape was composed by Stanisław Skrowaczewski, a young and extremely talented conductor of the Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra, who in 1960 defected to the United States – where he developed a brilliant career. This multimedia spectacle was, as Sołtan explained, a crucial component of the Polish presentation:

> An exhibit cannot say everything about itself trough the way it looks. Sometimes the history of its making, the story of the man who conceived and created it, of the place where it was made, of the material used to shape it – is much more interesting than the object itself. Film will be the narrator of this story… The music does not simply accompany one film or another; it is the sum of impressions from the space surrounding it… So perhaps it is *Musique concrete,* interwoven with the simplest, most elementary folk themes.[167]

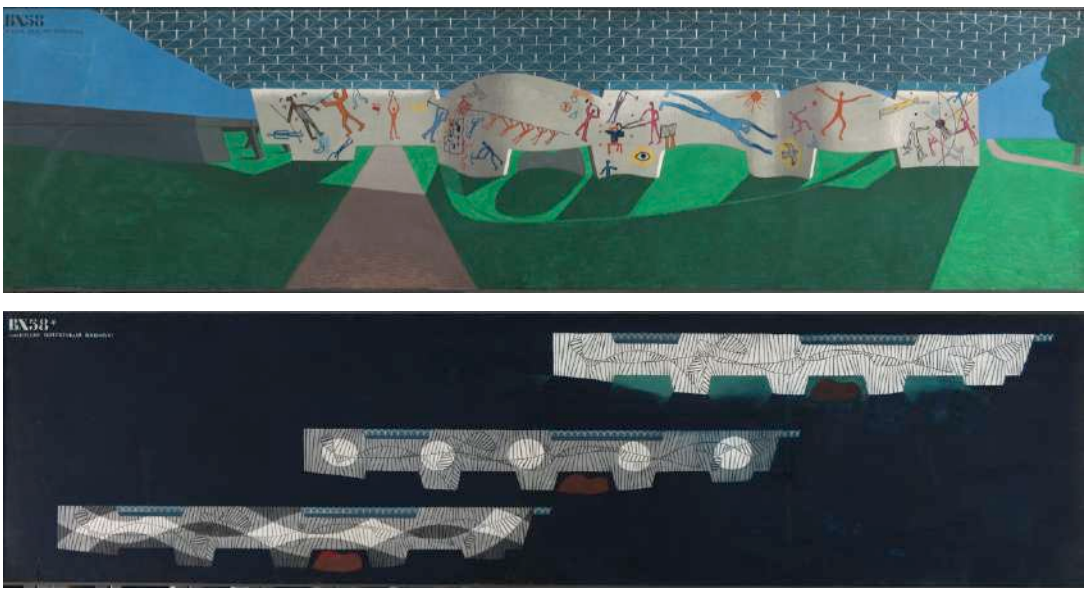

Fig. 2.2. Decorative panneaux designed for the Polish pavilion by Wojciech Fangor, 1956

[167] J. Sołtan, 'Bruksela 1958', *Przegląd Artystyczny* 2 (1957), p. 38.

The exhibition committee supported the plan despite the technological, financial and time difficulties it posed.[168] The project, which was an example of ambitious modernist architecture, was what the state needed at that very moment. It signified a break from the aesthetics of the Stalinist period and as such was appropriate to represent a new, less authoritarian direction of the Party-state.[169] The progressive style was widely associated with pro-Western tendencies not only in culture, but also in politics, and therefore was endorsed by Poland and other socialist countries after Stalin's death. During the early days the authorities commissioned the most innovative and worldly architects and designers to create works that would represent the new politics at home and abroad. They were given almost complete creative freedom to prepare experimental works that would follow the artistic principles they believed in. By the end of 1950s this approach shifted dramatically and a group of often nameless epigones emerged, resulting in what was later called *Socialist Modernism* or *socmodernism*, analogically to *socrealism* (Socialist Realism).

The term, originally in Polish, had pejorative connotations. It denoted a bastardised version of modernism, which prioritised aesthetics over the social and utilitarian functions of a building or object. Jerzy Sołtan called this superficial approach 'a masquerade of "modernism"' or 'a philistine modernism'.[170] He blamed both designers and consumers for this 'degeneration'. The state – the main initiator, commissioner and patron of all new projects – remained beyond open critique. Adam Miłobędzki, in his 1994 book on the history of Polish architecture, reportedly used the term *socmodernizm* to describe a new approach in architecture that materialised in post-Thaw Poland. As he argued, it was applied 'to serve standardisation of social mass housing in the first place'; the outcomes of this process were 'a mere reflection of a second-class functionalism, passively appropriated from the West.'[171] Since Miłobędzki introduced the term (at least into the Polish language), it has been used in a broader

[168] The research into the technological aspect of the pavilion was undertaken by Tomasz Kluz from the Warsaw University of Technology, as well as Leon Lew, Stanisław Sokołowski, Andrzej Koy and Bohdan Koy – in collaboration with the Building Research Institute and the Construction Equipment Repair Institute.
[169] A. Friszke, 'The Polish October of 1956 from a Fifty-Year Perspective', in J. Rowiński (ed.), *The Polish October 1956*, p. 318.
[170] J. Putowska, 'Meble Seryjne', p. 213; and J. Sołtan, 'Modernizm Kołtuński i Modernizm Barokowy (I)', *Przegląd Kulturalny* 46, no. 376 (1959), pp. 6–7.
[171] A. Miłobędzki, *Architektura Ziem Polski. Rozdział Europejskiego Dziedzictwa* (Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 1994).

sense to characterise all architecture created in the socialist states after 1956. In this context, the term 'socialist modernism' operates, as Vladimir Kulic argued, within a stereotypical understanding of socialist culture and architecture in particular, and 'seems to imply that socialism was not a natural condition for the development of modernism.'[172] The socialist pavilions and the international trade fairs that Kulic analysed in his research demonstrated a wide spectrum of modernist approaches which could not be satisfactorily explained by such a reductionist term.

The term 'socialist modernism' imposed a reductionist view of the world, in which modernism was geographically predefined, but 'socialist modernity' did the opposite. It proposed a shift of perspective, which allowed to reassess culture, society, economy and politics across the socialist states.[173] It helped approach the half-century in socialist countries not as a failed attempt to copy Western achievements, but rather as 'a comprehensive counter model to capitalist modernity – a version of modernity in its own right.'[174] The idea that modernity existed beyond the Western canon, not as an aberration but as its different form, and that socialist countries contributed with their original projects to the global mid-century modernism, was demonstrated in numerous international exhibitions.[175] The World Exhibition in Brussels in particular was a perfect place to follow the unexpected outburst of socialist modernity represented by world-class modernist displays from the Eastern Bloc and Yugoslavia.

The location of the national pavilions within the fairs, proposed by the organisers, reflected what Susan E. Reid called the 'geometries of the World Fair' (Fig. 2.3).[176] Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania were allocated plots in the vicinity of the USSR. Moscow used this arrangement to emphasise the idea of a

[172] V. Kulic, 'The Scope of Socialist Modernism. Architecture and State Representation in Postwar Yugoslavia', in M. Penick, V. Kulic, and T. Parker (eds.), *Sanctioning Modernism: Architecture and the Making of Postwar Identities* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), p. 38.
[173] Katherine Pence and Paul Betts referred to 'an alternative modernity' as a framework used to challenge the preconceptions about GDR, especially in confrontation with West Germany. See K. Pence and P. Betts, 'Introduction', in K. Pence and P. Betts (eds.), *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture And Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), p. 12.
[174] M. Calic, D. Neutatz and J. Obertreis, 'Introduction', in M. Calic, D. Neutatz and J. Obertreis (eds.), *The Crisis of Socialist Modernity: The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1970s* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), p. 12.
[175] P. Kolář, 'Communism in Eastern Europe', in S. A. Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 203–219.
[176] S. E. Reid, 'The Soviet Pavilion at Brussels '58: Convergence, Conversion, Critical Assimilation, or Transculturation?', *Cold War International History Project Working Paper* 62 (2010), p. 18.

consolidated socialist bloc, which stood against the capitalist countries. Interestingly, Poland was assigned a plot to the south of this quarter, separated from the rest of the Eastern Bloc by pavilions belonging to Chile, Malta, Norway, Finland and Argentina – which made it seem less important for the Soviet concept. Nevertheless, Poland participated alongside Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union in a series of working meetings held between 1956 and 1957, during which the national committees discussed their exhibition proposals.[177] Despite Moscow's effort to coordinate all Eastern European presentations, in the end only Hungary and Czechoslovakia (the two remaining exhibition participants from the Bloc) prepared pavilions, which manifested their independence rather than compliance with the Soviets.

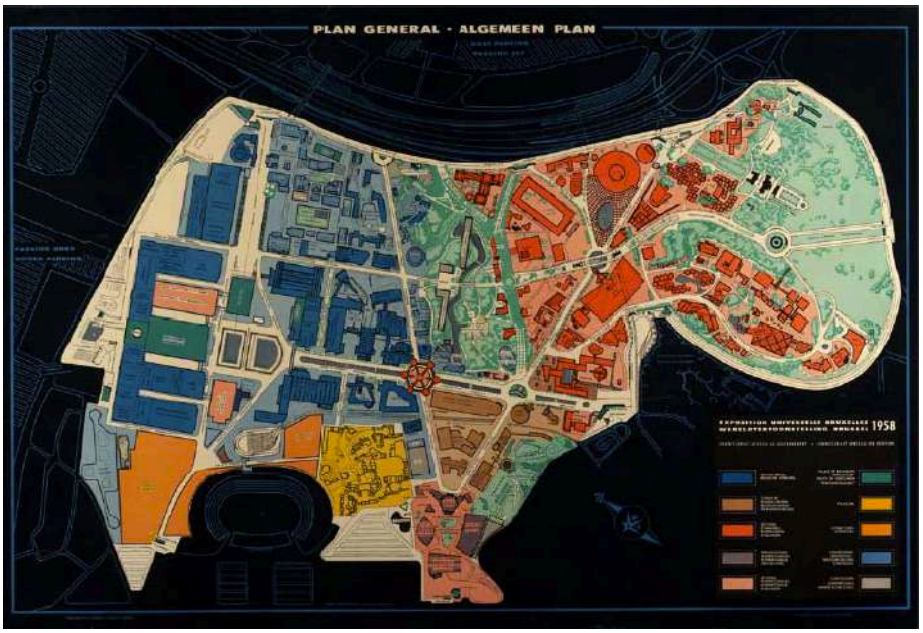

Fig. 2.3. Plan of the Brussels fairground

The Soviet exhibition committee correctly assumed that their display would be compared with the American one. As Susan E. Reid argued, they embraced the diplomatic approach and in order to initiate a conversation they followed the rules established by their capitalist counterpart. The Soviet pavilion consequently used

[177] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/6. Sprawozdanie na dzień 16 listopada 1956 r. z przebiegu prac nad organizacją udziału Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej w Powszechnej Wystawie Międzynarodowej w Brukseli – 1958 r. These meetings are also mentioned by György Péteri in his 'Transsystemic Fantasies. Counterrevolutionary Hungary at Brussels Expo'58', *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 1 (2012), pp. 137-160.

'appropriations and rapprochements both in the culture of display and in the iconography of progress.' [178] Other Eastern European countries, through lengthy negotiations behind closed doors, balanced West-inspired elements with national features in order to attract the attention of a foreign public. These gestures were designed to improve the image of each country on the international scene.

Czechoslovakia staged one of the most impressive exhibitions, which won the Grand Prix and gained unexpected praise from the general audiences.[179] An unassuming structure of glass and steel was filled with industrial exhibits gathered under the theme 'One day in Czechoslovakia'. A multiscreen projection introduced the country's culture and society; the mesmerising technology was used to entertain visitors in a similar way that the pavilions of the capitalist countries did.[180] While for Czechoslovakia the most impressive elements of the presentation were the exhibits, especially the multimedia show, for Yugoslavia it was the architectural approach in itself. It was a refined work of architecture that eschewed any reference to Soviet culture. Although praised by the Western intelligentsia, the pavilion – due to its sophisticated character – did not gain much appreciation among the public. In search for approval, the exhibition committee aimed to soften the image at the last minute by adding amateur craft pieces invoking national folklore. The modernist designs of both displays and the modernising concepts presented by them signified a separation from Stalinist aesthetics and a break from Soviet influence.

The national pavilion presented an opportunity to manifest a fresh start for Hungary as well, although the circumstances of this presentation were even more complicated. The modernist style was a pragmatic choice of János Kádár's administration – used to gain legitimacy both abroad and at home. Universal, modernist aesthetics were planned as a way to release international tension in the case of Hungary, and effectively create space for future commercial cooperation with the West. However, the last-minute additions of Socialist Realist artworks eliminated any doubts about the

[178] S. E. Reid, 'Cold War Cultural Transactions: Designing the USSR for the West at Brussels Expo '58', *Design and Culture* 9, no. 2 (2017), p. 141.
[179] It is also one of the most widely researched pavilions. See A. Miljački, *The Optimum Imperative: Czech Architecture for the Socialist Lifestyle, 1938-1968* (London: Routledge, 2017); K. E. Zarecor and V. Kulic, 'Socialism on Display'; and C. M. Giustino, 'Industrial Design and the Czechoslovak Pavilion at EXPO '58: Artistic Autonomy, Party Control and Cold War Common Ground', *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 1 (2012), pp. 48–68.
[180] D. Crowley, 'Humanity Rearranged', pp. 88–105.

future fate of the country. In line with the anti-revisionist campaign that intensified in mid-1958, those visual elements were used to deny any claims about the democratisation of Hungary, and to send a message to the visitors that the pavilion represented the achievements of a socialist nation. As a result the display became, as György Péteri noted, 'a manifestation of the emerging kádárist consolidation and its political and social order.'[181]

Although the meanders of domestic politics in Eastern European states during the Thaw period might not have been clear to the foreign public opinion, the visual language employed in the exhibitions was chosen to make a strong statement about the countries' political directions. In this respect Poland's position was not much different than Hungary's. The Polish script was being developed for nearly two years and never got entirely completed. There were two main versions of it, both of which had undergone numerous amendments. The first one was prepared by Karol Małcużyński, who worked on it from May 1956 to January 1957, when he relocated to London to work as a press advisor to the Polish embassy. Upon his departure Stanisław Jankowski and Kazimierz Golde assumed the role. Mirosław Kowalewski, Józef Hurwic and Artur Międzyrzecki were additionally appointed to develop the thematic sections of the programme: in economy, chemistry and culture respectively. Jerzy Gembicki worked as the group's secretary.

The writing team included prominent personalities of Polish intellectual life. Among them were journalists, writers, architects – well-regarded specialists in their domains, associated with Warsaw's intellectual circles.[182] Małcużyński was a journalist writing for the main official journal *Trybuna Ludu*, as well as a scriptwriter for the Polish Newsreel and a correspondent at the Nuremberg Trials. Jankowski, known under his Home Army code name Agaton, was an architect actively involved in the reconstruction of Warsaw. Golde was a prominent pre-war journalist who, after being interned in the P.O.W. camp in Murnau, worked as a long-standing assistant editor of *Trybuna Ludu.* Międzyrzecki was a poet, translator and literary editor who occasionally wrote movie scripts; and Gembicki was a journalist and editor, working for numerous titles throughout his career and associated with *Polpress*, an official news agency. With

[181] G. Péteri, 'Transsystemic Fantasies', p. 137.
[182] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/16. Wyjątki z posiedzenia Zespołu Scenarzystów, Projektantów i Kierownictwa Biura Wykonawczego w dniu 2 listopada 1956r.

intelligentsia or middle class backgrounds and established professional positions, these specialists were put in charge of the prestigious international projects. They were well educated, spoke foreign languages – usually French, English and Russian – and were exposed to the West. It would not be accurate to describe them as Party proponents, but they were aware of their value to the system.

The first script was ready in July 1956. The central theme of its narrative was Poland's recent history. The year 1945 was presented as a starting point for a series of positive changes introduced in the country by the communist government. It followed the official Party argumentation, used on many different occasions before and after, claiming that People's Poland came to existence as a natural development in the country's history and was a successor to (some of) its traditions. Wars were an important part of Poland's heritage, but the writers wanted to contextualise them in a different way. The script emphasised human, material and cultural losses that the country suffered as a result of the Second World War, yet the exhibition was supposed avoid

> false notes, 'Pologne martyre' or wretchedness. We need to be unsentimental, speak curtly and demonstrate historical facts. If, for example, the Dutch present water and the struggle against the sea as their main motive, 'their element', then in some sense war, its destruction and severe consequences for the nation, is the 'Polish element'.[183]

War was assimilated into Polish history. Through the comparison with the Netherlands, the script underlined the geographical predetermination of war: it was an inevitable consequence of Poland's location in Europe. Just like the Dutch, who despite considerable efforts could not prevent the floods, Poles could not do much to stop military aggressions. They were inscribed in Poland's 'unfortunate geographical location', as Norman Davies put it when describing the physical determination of Poland's fate over centuries.[184]

The scriptwriters suggested that the best way to portray these dramatic events would be through striking visual effects. The travelling display *Warsaw accuses* (1945) and the *Destruction Pavilion* at the Exhibition of Regained Territories (1948) were two

[183] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/4. Ramowe założenia programowe ekspozycji polskiej na Powszechnej Wystawie Międzynarodowej w Brukseli, 1958, p. 3.
[184] N. Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland. Volume 1: The Origins to 1795* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 23.

examples they considered worth following.[185] *Warsaw accuses,* organised by the Capital Reconstruction Bureau and the National Museum in Warsaw, where it was originally presented, focused on cultural heritage destroyed by the German occupants (Fig. 2.4). Remnants of monuments, paintings and furniture, laid out without pathos alongside documents, demonstrated the burden of the tragedy experienced by Polish culture.[186] Ignacy Witz, an illustrator and art critic visiting the presentation noted that:

> it was a shocking exhibition. A lot could be written about the destruction and devastation brought about to Polish culture, but no words could show it as clearly or leave as profound mark as seeing it with one's own eyes… The broken antique furniture, the shattered sculptures hurt me directly.[187]

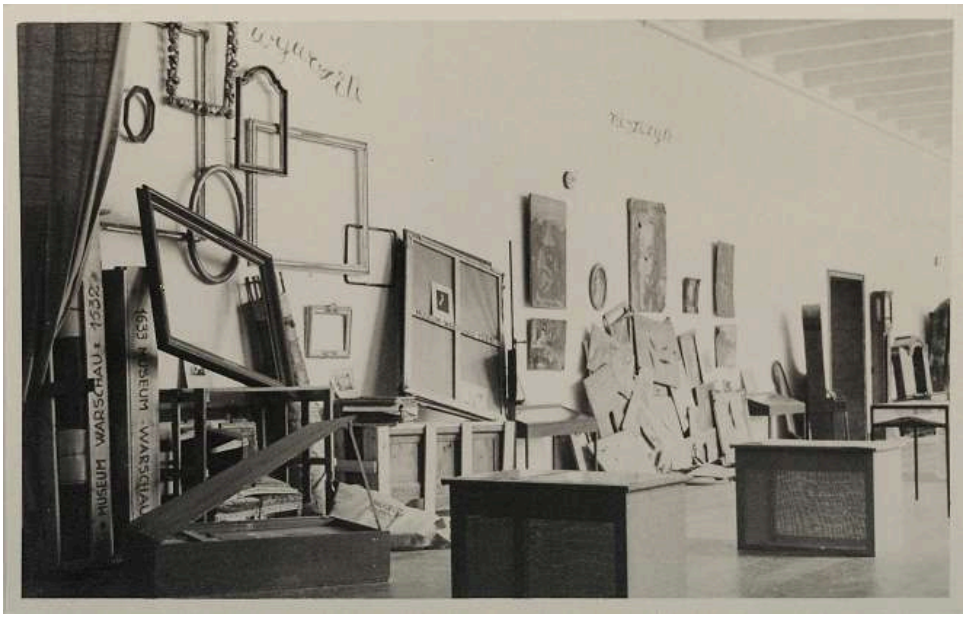

Fig. 2.4. Fragment of 'Warsaw Accuses' exhibition at the National Museum, Warsaw in 1945

The *Destruction Pavilion,* designed by Czesław Wielhorski for the Wrocław exhibition, made a similar impression (Fig. 2.5 and Fig. 1.2). Through the use of

[185] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/4. Ramowe założenia programowe ekspozycji polskiej na Powszechnej Wystawie Międzynarodowej w Brukseli, 1958, p. 3.
[186] L. Perski and J. Bossak, 'Wystawa w Muzeum Narodowym "Warszawa oskarża"', *Polska Kronika Filmowa* 20/45 (1948). Available online: http://www.repozytorium.fn.org.pl/?q=pl/node/4519. Accessed on 17 July 2016.
[187] I. Witz, *Przechadzki po Warszawskich Wystawach 1945-1946* (Warszawa, 1972), p. 14. quoted in A. Kotańska, 'Dokumentacja Fotograficzna Wystaw: Warszawa Wczoraj, Dziś, Jutro (1938 r.) i Warszawa Oskarża (1945 r.) w Zbiorach Muzeum Historycznego m.st. Warszawy', *Almanach Muzealny* 2 (1999), p. 311.

dramatic set design, this part of the display illustrated the wide scale of destruction that the Regained Territories suffered during the war. In doing so it appealed to the viewers' emotions:

> the gloomy atmosphere of this period is accentuated by darkness in the destruction section. The sole source of light are the glaring, brightly lit photographic compositions with numbers… On the wall across from the entrance a huge paining by H. Tomaszewski depicts the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. In front of it… a symbol of destruction: a sculpture composed of crushed metal constructions. Nearby, the arms of Christ from a roadside cross. Only the arms remained – the rest was smashed.'[188]

Fig. 2.5. Pavilion of Destruction at the Exhibition of Regained Territories in Wrocław, 1948

Both shows recalled in the Brussels script used very theatrical exhibition methods, in which fragments of actual objects, large-scale paintings and sculptures were presented alongside photographs and written captions. At this stage of the Brussels

[188] O. Terlecki, 'Dzisiaj Ziemia Ta żyje!', *Dziennik Polski* 203, no. 1242 (27 July 1948), p. 4.

exhibition planning no drawings of the actual interiors were prepared; however, the commission suggested that the abovementioned examples should be followed.

Although the Second World War was the most important reference, the script also referred to other historical conflicts, summarised in a few compact phrases: 'A thousand years of Polish history (958-1958). The life of forty generations, few of which knew peace. The battleground for soldiers of fifty nationalities.'[189] The plan contained a brief reference to the millennium of Polish statehood in 1966, an anniversary that intensified the struggle for control between the Party and the Church. In the following years the authorities explored the propagandist meaning of this conflict and its potential in constructing Poland's national identity based on secular values. The subject gained a more prominent place in the narrative of the Polish pavilion at the Milan Triennale in 1960, and I will return to it in Chapter Three.

The concept of 'the Poland of the Piasts' was much more developed. Throughout the 20th century the first Polish dynasty functioned in the political discourse as a myth, which rather than reflecting historical truth – reflected a construct superimposed on reality.[190] The Piast dynasty belonged to a rich repository of historical symbols, to which the communist power eagerly reached in the process of reconstructing Polish national identity. The Poland of the Piasts represented a homogenous country that included the Regained Territories within its border. By referring to a long-term conflict with the Germans and Prussians that Piast Poland experienced, the state symbolically connected the anti-German attitudes of the medieval times with current anxieties.[191] The Jagiellonian University, founded by Casimir III the Great, also belonged to the Piast legacy. The script referred to the University in the context of the educational achievements and the upcoming 600th anniversary of People's Poland.[192]

The exhibition narrative seamlessly linked the early formation of the Polish state with the further development of the country's economy and culture until the present

[189] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/16. Notatka w sprawie scenariusza wystawy brukselskiej, p. 2.
[190] P. M. Dabrowski, *Commemorations and the Shaping of Modern Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).
[191] R. Pankowski, *The Populist Radical Right in Poland: The Patriots* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 46.
[192] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/4. Ramowe założenia programowe ekspozycji polskiej na Powszechnej Wystawie Międzynarodowej w Brukseli, 1958, p. 4. For the planning of the anniversary see H. Barycz, 'Przed Wielką Rocznicą Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego (1364–1964)', *Kultura i społeczeństwo* 2 (1957), pp. 3-33.

day. The presentation of industry, education, contemporary art, research and science that followed was introduced as a 'constructive apotheosis' of contemporary Poland.[193] As one of the versions of the script suggested, each branch of social life was to be portrayed through a selection of explicitly Polish objects, individuals and phenomena. Among them the committee listed branches of industry that were particularly important for Polish export, such as coal, heavy machineries and textiles – but also the post-war reconstruction of the capital and the Regained Territories, which were presented as crucial to the Polish national interest.

This broad, but imprecise script contained a very particular overview of what 'a national style' or Polishness could mean. In fact, this became a very pertinent question around October 1956, when Gomułka returned to power. The concept of the 'Polish road to socialism', developed in response to the idea of Polish specificity that Gomułka was convinced of, influenced the committee's decisions. Ludwik Perski, a cinematographer responsible for selecting films for the presentation, was at a meeting with the scriptwriters and designers on 2 November 1956, where he suggested that the Polish road to socialism – in all its particularity – should be the exhibition leitmotiv:

> Poland in and of herself is a display piece for visitors. It is a strange country that in the last twenty years has gone through capitalism, occupation and, recently, our week-long October revolution, and who knows what else she will go through?[194]

Perski, described by his contemporaries as a vigilant observer of the world, sounded very cynical about recent political events in Poland. Others participants of this debate eagerly responded to the changes, lending their voices to the situation. 'We need to overcome the current stalemate of lies that Poland is the [world] leader,' argued Królikowska.[195] This statement echoed Gomułka's speech from 24 October, made in front of a crowd gathered on the Parade Square in Warsaw.[196] He claimed that in the recent past many statements of the Party officials were empty and with no basis in

[193] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/4. Ramowe założenia programowe ekspozycji polskiej na Powszechnej Wystawie Międzynarodowej w Brukseli, 1958, p. 3.
[194] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/16. Wyjątki z posiedzenia Zespołu Scenarzystów, Projektantów i Kierownictwa Biura Wykonawczego w dniu 2 listopada listopada 1956r.
[195] Ibidem.
[196] 'Przemówienie Władysława Gomułki na Wiecu w Warszawie', *Trybuna Ludu*, 25 października 1956 r.

reality. From now on, Gomułka pledged, the Party leadership would tell the nation the entire truth, without understatements about Poland's economic and political situation and without concealing the difficulties that the country experiences. From now on, under his leadership, the Party would not give empty promises to the nation. Jankowski called Gomułka's speech 'a sharp polemic with our script'.[197] According to him, Gomułka 'established some principles, and exposed profuse lies, that we had made. Today we wouldn't show that we are the main global producer.'[198] Before long Jankowski became the exhibition's next scriptwriter – and the points he raised at the meeting resonated with his version of the plan.

The theses in the first version of the script prepared under Jankowski's guidance, dated 23 January 1957, were explicitly political. The turning points in Party politics, which Gomułka had outlined in October, formed the background for the industrial and cultural parts of the display. The exposition, as the script indicated,

> should illustrate the significance of the Polish October for our economic development, for the distinctiveness of the Polish road to socialism... and for the possibilities of wide international collaboration.[199]

The presentation was supposed to address the issue that all foreign press was particularly interested in at that moment, which was whether 'a socialist country within the Eastern Bloc could grow adopting principles of sovereignty and democracy.'[200]

Gomułka's pledge for a realistic assessment of Poland's economic situation forced the committee to reconsider the competitive spirit of the Brussels World's Fair and Poland's position within it. An ambitious scheme to present future-oriented products, fuelled by rumours about America's tentative plans to present an atomic-powered Ford, had to be abandoned.[201] The presentation of Polish industrial production, although tempting because of possible commercial gains, was dismissed as

[197] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/16. Wyjątki z posiedzenia Zespołu Scenarzystów, Projektantów i Kierownictwa Biura Wykonawczego w dniu 2 listopada listopada 1956r.
[198] Ibidem.
[199] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/16. Notatka w sprawie scenariusza wystawy brukselskiej, p. 5.
[200] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/14. Stenogram z posiedzenia Komisji Artystyczno-Technicznej Wystawy Brukselskiej, odbytego w dniu 15.3.57, p. 60.
[201] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/9. Stenogram z narady ze spotkania z przedstawicielami resortów dot. Międzynarodowej Wystawy w Brukseli.

inappropriate in the current state of the Polish industry.[202] The committee recognised that due to 'ignoring the achievements and the technical expertise of the other countries' over the last few years, Polish industry was uncompetitive.[203] Aleksander Wolski, deputy Minister of Construction and the future ambassador in Brussels stressed that Poland, visibly poorer than Western countries, should use the pavilion to explain the context of its situation:

> We cannot impress visitors with synthetic materials, refrigerators, all those things that Americans will present, everything they can purchase with the money they earn… but we need to demonstrate to the people around the world who are looking at us that this is not about refrigerators, but about a grand experiment and its outcomes.[204]

The committee decided that as a result of this limitation the exhibition strategy had to be reconsidered – instead of showcasing the country's industrial production, the display was to focus on Poland's cultural heritage. Visual culture, folklore, craft and national cuisine would depict contemporary Poland in more favourable terms, avoiding the embarrassment that a low level of industrial performance would most likely cause.[205] The cultural themes presented in an emotional manner would evoke idyllic aspects of Polish life, whereas representations of industry would expose backwardness or negligence. The committee expected that a romanticised image of the country would not be criticised for being out-dated or inconsistent with the current world's achievements. All peculiarities of that representation could be easily justified by Polish national specificity; industrial exhibits, on the contrary, would be measured against a rigid system of references formed on the basis of Western accomplishments. Artur Starewicz, the main ideologue of the Party – responsible for mass propaganda and in the upcoming years one of the closest collaborators of Gomułka, stressed that in order to avoid embarrassment

> we need to lean on Polish national specificity, our particular inventiveness in architectural, exhibitory and artistic solutions. We need to look for original and

[202] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/14. Stenogram z posiedzenia Komisji Artystyczno-Technicznej Wystawy Brukselskiej, odbytego w dniu 15.3.57, p.15.
[203] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/16. Założenia scenariusz wystawy brukselskiej, p. 2.
[204] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/14. Stenogram z posiedzenia Komisji Artystyczno-Technicznej Wystawy Brukselskiej, odbytego w dniu 15.3.57, p. 51.
[205] Ibidem, pp. 41-5.

> striking measures that could counterweight the bareness of the exposition determined by our modest budget… if we don't want to present the state with a fait accompli of exceeding our financial plan… we need to use all our invention and resourcefulness.[206]

By denying the previously used aesthetics of Socialist Realism, the pavilion could symbolically disavow the country's past. The Polish presentation should not only manifest remorse for the Stalinist years, but it should also highlight the failures

> that happened due to the centralisation, the autocratic management of national economy, the under-development of our democracy – they should be the core of our display and it should serve as a background for presenting other issues.[207]

This statement made by Wolski, circulated internally among the key members of the exhibition committee, revealed the level of reproval among the bureaucrats. It also raised further concerns about how Poland should present itself on the international scene. According to Starewicz, this self-criticism was vital for the Polish presentation, yet it needed to be voiced very carefully – given the international scale of the event:

> We need to take into account that the capitalist pavilions will be shining brilliantly, there will be a tendency to show the results and richness of an unimaginable level. Moreover, this exhibition will function as a competition between the two worlds. [The capitalist countries] will bend over backwards to demonstrate spectacular effects, so there is a danger that we will look like a poor relation.[208]

Starewicz's concerns were not isolated and the exposition committee was very careful about the way it was going to address the past. It was a delicate matter, as the narrative had to address two different issues. On one hand, following Khrushchev's Secret Speech, the display had to condemn the Stalinist past; on the other, it had to express the continuity of the Soviet system and deplore revisionist tendencies. A new understanding of socialism had to be formulated and, consequently, the representation of the country had to be reconsidered. The committee disavowed the spectacular effects that had been planned in the earlier weeks. Financial constraints were one of the reasons of this unprecedented call for modesty; Poland, like Hungary, was operating within a

[206] Ibidem, p. 60.
[207] Ibidem, p. 51.
[208] Ibidem, p. 62.

very limited budget. More importantly however, it was a symbolic gesture manifesting a new style in communication between the Party and its audience, both at home and abroad. 'It needs to be said that we cannot bring propaganda to this exhibition… [or] a pompous speech that we are so good at making,' argued Aleksander Wolski. 'It is our duty to accurately depict what happened in Poland.' [209] In the new climate the ostentatious celebrations, political festivities and grand parades that marked the Stalinist period were also revised.[210]

Demonstrations of grandness were not unique for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. 'The pavilions of plenty', presenting material abundance and national wealth, were widely used at numerous post-war trade fairs and exhibitions. They allowed countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain to make a strong statement in the Cold War competition.[211] The call for modesty made by the Polish exhibition committee was not isolated. The West German pavilion in Brussels was planned as 'a spectacle of restraint'. In this case, moderation symbolised the turn towards a democratic society and a strong opposition to monumentality associated with the Third Reich. It also aimed to distinguish the Western display from its Eastern counterpart, which under the influence of Moscow was confined to 'the patterned carpets, lacquered veneers and dust-catching knick-knacks.'[212] The concepts of 'dignity' and 'humility' were translated into visual forms inspired by works of Mies van der Rohe, which became Germany's staple style for the upcoming international exhibitions.[213] In a similar vein Japan, the United States and the Soviet Union referred to transparency in their expositions, often in a very literal way: open-plan buildings and glass walls represented 'the openness, lightness or visual clarity… to deliver proof that they had "nothing to hide"'.[214]

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[209] Ibidem, p. 12.
[210] P. Osęka, *Rytuały Stalinizmu. Oficjalne święta i Uroczystości Rocznicowe w Polsce 1944-1956* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Wydawnictwo Trio, 2006).
[211] R. H. Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).
[212] G. Castillo, 'Making a Spectacle of Restraint. The Deutschland Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels Exposition', *Journal of Contemporary History* 47, no. 1 (2012), p. 113. For East German design in the 1950s see E. Rubin, 'The Form of Socialism without Ornament. Consumption, Ideology, and the Fall and Rise of Modernist Design in the German Democratic Republic', *Journal of Design History* 19, no. 2 (2006), pp. 155–68.
[213] P. Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects. A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), especially pp. 189–196.
[214] R. Devos, '"Let Us Now Invest in Peace." Architecture Iat Expo 58 in Resonance of War', in *Architecture of Great Expositions*, p. 153.

For the Polish committee, modesty meant a fresh start following Gomułka's return to power and the subsequent transformation of the Party. It also was also part of Gomułka's personality, which was a widely known fact.[215] *The Times* depicted him as a hard working leader, who bears the physical 'marks of his lifelong apprenticeship to Communism' and lives with his wife Zofia 'in a tiny apartment in the Warsaw suburb of Praga.'[216] In the early period this humble image gained him support: people were more willing to sacrifice their personal wellbeing for the sake of the future prosperity of the country, knowing that their leader also refrained from luxury.

The turn towards moderation required serious amendments to the design of the Polish pavilion. Although the original scheme was supported by the exhibition committee and was commended by the intellectual circles, publicists writing for a general audience assessed it more critically. A journalist writing for the illustrated weekly magazine *Stolica* claimed that the plan of the Polish display was too forward-looking and he accused it of being pretentious, lacking cohesiveness and simplicity.[217]

A new wave of discontent rose in November 1956, when a weekly journal for young intelligentsia and students *Po Prostu* published an article signed by the Union of Polish Youth (*Związek Młodzieży Polskiej: ZMP*). The text appealed for Poland's immediate withdrawal from the event, justifying this decision with the dramatic economic situation of the country. The article pointed out the lavishness of this endeavour and suggested that the money should be redirected towards constructing new housing blocks.[218] The criticism was not pointed at the visual form, but instead brought up a pragmatic argument that resonated with a wider audience. In shifting the perspective, this criticism gained momentum and responded to Gomułka's call for the entire nation to tighten its belt.

In February 1957, when about 80% of the technical research for the pavilion was completed, a ministerial decision brought that activity to a halt. Work was resumed after three weeks, but in the meantime the design team was asked to amend the plans in order to respond to the recently announced budget cuts. There were also some personal

[215] A. Werblan, *Władysław Gomułka: sekretarz generalny PPR* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1988), p. 88.
[216] 'POLAND: Rebellious Compromiser', *The Time*, 10 December 1956, p. 25.
[217] A. C[zerwiński], 'Konkurs na polski pawilon w Brukseli. Wrażenia z wystawy', *Stolica* 11, no. 25 (1956), pp. 2–3.
[218] 'Uwagi i Wnioski Aktywu ZMP Ministerstwa Kultury i Sztuki', *Po Prostu* 46, no. 408 (11 November 1956).

changes: Sołtan was moved to the position of an associate architect (working alongside Wacław Zalewski), and Zbigniew Ihnatowicz became the main architect on the project. Aleksander Kobzdej – who earlier was a member of the exhibition committee – joined the artistic team, where he worked with Wojciech Fangor and Henryk Marconi.

The new design, called BRU58, was described by Sołtan as a 'shrivelled' version of the original concept: the size was reduced from 5,000 m2 to 2,000 m2 and the budget was cut by two-thirds.[219] It utilised a temporary structure called *Tropik* that Sołtan, Ihnatowicz and Zalewski developed for the Polish Chamber of Foreign Trade in 1954 (Fig. 2.6). The pavilion was designed for demanding tropical weather conditions: a construction made of thin metal poles covered by a textile canopy and walls made of Venetian blinds or textile panels enabled free air circulation. The light prefabricated structure was also cost effective, which seemed to be particularly important, given the character of the Polish presentation in the countries of the Postcolonial South. Although Poland, like other Eastern European countries, intensified its presence at the trade fairs in New Delhi, Damascus, Tunis and Casablanca in the early 1950s, these exhibitions were kept rather low-key. In contrast to the expositions in the West they were less profitable, therefore the amount of money spent on the temporary construction had to be considerably lower. That also made *Tropic* useful in the context of planning the Polish display in Brussels.

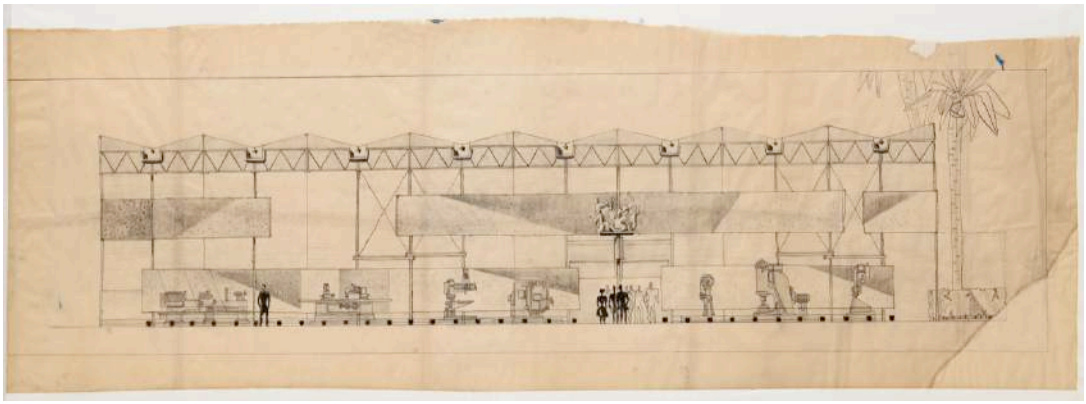

Fig. 2.6. Generic *Tropic* pavilion designed at the Art and Research Workshop by a team led by Jerzy Sołtan, 1954-55

[219] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/14. Stenogram z posiedzenia Komisji Artystyczno-Technicznej Wystawy Brukselskiej, odbytego w dniu 15.3.57, p. 40.

The new scheme, developed hastily in less than three weeks, did not contain many details about the visual concept – it was a subject covered at one of the last meetings of the exhibition committee. The team decided that the look of the decorative elements should remain modern; sketches, paintings and forms of embellishments featured across the pavilion were to be simple, informative and cheerful. 'We are not hoping for a grand and decorative wall painting, but rather for a poster, which will capture a joke or [deliver] information', explained Jankowski.[220] As an example, he mentioned the decorations used at the International World Festival of Youth and Students, which was held in Warsaw in 1955 (Fig. 2.7). Attended by 30,000 young visitors from around the world, the Festival was seen as a harbinger of modernity and a release from the Socialist Realism doctrine. [221] Wojciech Fangor and Lech Tomaszewski, who developed the visual elements for the Polish exhibition in Brussels, designed a widely reproduced colourful panel presented at the Festival.

Fig. 2.7. Street decorations during the International World Festival of Youth and Students held in Warsaw in 1955. Images published in *Projekt*, no 2 (1956)

[220] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/14. Stenogram z posiedzenia Komisji Artystyczno-Technicznej Wystawy Brukselskiej, odbytego w dniu 15.3.57, p. 19.
[221] The Festival was initiated by the Party and, at least in its early stages, it was carefully orchestrated to meet the official propaganda goals. See P. Osęka, *Rytuały Stalinizmu*, chapter 3, pp. 221-238.

In opposition to these modern aesthetics, the committee recalled the major work of Polish 19th century historicism, *The Battle of Grunwald*. The painting, portraying a medieval victory of the united armies of Poland and Lithuania over the Teutonic Knights, could become part of the historical narrative of the earlier script – but it did not fit into the new post-Thaw version. It represented monumentality and pathos, qualities that were in conflict with the modest and modern approach. Humour, also mentioned by Jankowski, was included to counterbalance this language of grandiosity and monumentality, which was associated with the past and which the Polish exhibition wanted to avoid.[222] The light tone of the commentary captions that were presented alongside cheerful visuals in the Polish pavilion, although not explained in detail, was seen as a way to ease communication with the Western countries. The Hungarian organisers were of a similar opinion:

> The Hungarian pavilion is situated between the pavilions of the Soviet Union and the USA. Obviously, at a site like this one cannot use superlatives, nor can one strive after monumentality. We will, therefore, both in the script and in the implementation try to establish an easy, humorous style. Our expression is direct, we will talk to the visitors in a personal tone… This style has a double role. On the one hand it will appeal to the visitor and, we hope, will provide her [them] with pleasant memories. On the other hand, it will indirectly counteract the [image created by the] general propaganda according to which life in the socialist countries is dreary and humourless.[223]

This quotation raises an interesting point of a more universal character. The national expositions presented to foreign audiences had to not only outline the country's identity, but also confront and disassemble myths and stereotypes. The reviews published by Western journalist that I engage with in Chapter Four, revealed some of them.

Visitors from capitalist countries were the main group that Poland, like other Eastern European countries, wanted to approach. As the committee assumed, their knowledge about Poland was limited and shaped by capitalist propaganda. In order to challenge their preconceptions, the exhibition was supposed to illustrate Poland's historical connection with the West. The Polish pavilion needed to make it clear to workers and creative intelligentsia visiting the fair in Brussels, that the turbulences

[222] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/16. Scenariusz Pawilonu Polskiego na Wystawie Brukselskiej. Założenia wstępne, p. 7.
[223] G. Péteri, 'Transsystemic Fantasies', p. 142.

experienced by Poland and the entire Eastern Bloc were only temporary. The display had to assure the people from developing countries that, regardless of those recent issues, socialism remained 'the future of the world'.[224] While addressing a small group of Polish expats living in Belgium, France, Luxemburg and the United States, the exposition aimed to encourage them to return. That appeal was part of a recent change in the migration policy in Poland: the borders, which had been shut since 1949, slowly started opening again in 1955.[225] Due to the character of the Polish community, Belgium was particularly interesting for the Party: workers and miners who had fled the severe economic situation at the beginning of the 20th century were the perfect target for the official repatriation campaign.[226] The authorities presented them as victims of the pre-war bourgeois government policy, currently suffering from arduous working conditions in the capitalist society.[227] The socialist state could offer relief to their situation and provide them with the welfare they deserved.

The committee's discussions revealed a level of confusion and scepticism among high-level bureaucrats, who were perplexed by the pace and breadth of the post-Thaw changes. Aleksander Kobzdej, a painter who only recently had denounced Socialist Realism, contended that in the past plenty of people knew how to write scripts. 'Currently,' he bemoaned, 'we need a new kind of script, a new way of thinking.'[228] The development of the political situation was progressing, and it was closely followed by amendments in the presentation's script and design. Despite the efforts to accommodate these changes – reducing the costs, shifting the main argument and tempering the visual language – on 30 March 1957 the Parliament decided to call off Poland's participation in the Brussels fair.

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[224] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/14. Stenogram z posiedzenia Komisji Artystyczno-Technicznej Wystawy Brukselskiej, odbytego w dniu 15.3.57, p. 49.

[225] D. Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracje z Polski 1949-1989* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IPN, 2010), especially chapter 4.

[226] J. Szumski, 'Między Stabilizacją a Radykalizmem – Polska Emigracja Górnicza w Belgii', in B. Czarnecka (ed.), *Minione, Teraźniejsze. Niderlandystyczne Refleksje Kulturowo-Historyczne* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2015), pp. 19–37. Also M. Żmigrodzki, *Polonia w Belgii* (Lublin: Polonijne Centrum Kulturalno-Oświatowe UMCS, 1978).

[227] The situation of Polish miners in Belgium deteriorated as a result of an economic crisis that hit the country in the 1930s. E. Piqueray, 'Bieżące Procesy wśród Polskiej Społeczności i Polskich Szkół w Belgii', *Przegląd Polsko-Polonijny*, no. 2 (2011), pp. 150–168.

[228] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/14. Stenogram z posiedzenia Komisji Artystyczno-Technicznej Wystawy Brukselskiej, odbytego w dniu 15.3.57, p. 45.

The exhibition committee used a variety of arguments for participating, and envisaged the probable consequences – both symbolic and pragmatic – of withdrawing from the show. To challenge the decision, the committee highlighted the prestige of the World's Exhibitions: the first post-war event of that kind was an unprecedented opportunity for Poland to present achievements and values of the socialist system.[229] Polish presence in Brussels could defy the inter-war performances of the 'bourgeoisie Poland' by proposing an alternative – to the sophisticated modernity of aristocratic provenance (presented at the 1925 World Exhibition in Paris), and to the western-oriented style influenced by the nation's Catholic myths (presented in New York in 1939).[230]

After the world observed and widely commented on the brutally suppressed worker strikes during the 1956 Poznań Trade Fair, the exhibition in Brussels was seen as an opportunity to improve Poland's image on the international scene. Given the concept of peaceful coexistence, which – after Stalin's death – was defining the interactions between the countries of two blocs, the committee believed that withdrawing could have an adverse effect and even lead to the deterioration of Poland's international relations. Although it would not incur any financial sanctions, the retreat would most likely jeopardise diplomatic relations with Belgium, as well as Norway and Finland, with whom Poland shared parts of the plot.[231] The committee expressed concern that the decision would also affect the economic exchange with the West.[232] Not only would it flag the country's poor economic situation, but it would also portray Poland as an unreliable partner. Although the event did not have a strictly financial

[229] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/6. Notatka w sprawie udziału Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej w Powszechnej Wystawie Międzynarodowej w Brukseli – 1958, p. 9.
[230] For both presentations see the thematic volumes edited by Joanna Sosnowska, especially the articles by A. Chmielewska 'Czym Jesteśmy, Czym Być Możemy i Chcemy w Rodzinie Narodów?', in J. M. Sosnowska (ed.), *Wystawa Paryska 1925. Materiały z Sesji Naukowej Instytutu Sztuki PAN, Warszawa, 16-12 listopada 2005 roku* (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2007), pp. 65-74 and A. Chmielewska, 'Przeszłość, Teraźniejszość i Przyszłość Polski Według Twórców Działu Polskiego', in J. M. Sosnowska (ed.), *Wystawa Nowojorska 1939. Materiały z Sesji Naukowej Instytutu Sztuki PAN, Warszawa, 23-24 Listopada 2009 Roku* (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2012), pp. 66–80.
[231] A. Kędziorek, 'Jerzy Sołtan and the Art and Research Unit's Project for the Polish Pavilion at Expo 58', in Ł. Stanek (ed.), *Team 10 East. Revisionist Architecture in Real Existing Modernism* (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art, 2014), pp. 108–114.
[232] AAN GKSPnPWM 2/326/0/-/6. Notatka w sprawie udziału Polskiej Rzeczpospolitej Ludowej w Powszechnej Wystawie Międzynarodowej w Brukseli – 1958, pp. 8-10.

character, the committee was deeply troubled about the loss of potential trade opportunities, especially with exhibitors operating within the capitalist markets.

As commissar Królikowska later asserted, criticism voiced in newspapers played an instrumental role in reconsidering Poland's representation in Brussels.[233] The financial cuts announced in Gomułka's speech were quoted as the main reason of the withdrawal: the cost of the most economic version of the Polish pavilion was estimated at 15 million Polish zlotys (300,000 US dollars). However, the way the project was managed could suggest other motives as well. The process resembled the general dynamic of decision making influencing various state projects. Tamás Bauer identified four phases that describe the mechanics of investment-cycles in planned economies: run-up, rush, halt and slowdown.[234] This quite accurately matches the process of preparing the Polish exhibition in Brussels. Firstly, the state made a hasty decision to participate in the event in order to support the progressive post-Thaw image of Poland on the international scene. The way it was communicated to the public formed popular support for the idea. The dynamically evolving political and economic situation of the state caused some obstacles in realising the initial project, but it did not make the committee reconsider the endeavour. While the issues intensified, critical voices gained prominence in the public discourse. In order to satisfy popular demand, the scheme was scaled down and later – abandoned. The editors of *Przegląd Artystyczny* criticised this tedious process in an article published in March 1957:

> At the end of January 1957, three and a half months had passed since national saving had been proclaimed during the Polish October, and at least those three and a half months of arduous work could have been spared. Since they were not, then don't the outcomes of this work – expressed through ideas, drawings, sketches, computations, mock-ups, prototypes, etc., but not through the actual full-scale realisation – embody the Polish tragedy…[235]

The withdrawal of Polish participation was a veto against a progressive and pro-Western Poland that the architectural schemes of the pavilion embodied. Wojciech Fangor, who was responsible for the painted decorations of the pavilion, in a

[233] (Klin), 'Polska weźmie udział w Wystawie w Brukseli, ale znacznie tańszym kosztem', *Głos Pracy* 43 (20 February 1957), p. 2.
[234] These phases were first described by T. Bauer, 'Investment Cycles In Planned Economies', *Acta Oeconomica* 21, no. 3 (1978), pp. 243–60 and later used by for example, N. Swain, *Hungary: The Rise and Fall of Feasible Socialism* (London: Verso, 1992).
[235] Redakcja, 'Bruksela 1958', *Przegląd Artystyczny* 2 (1957), pp. 34–45.

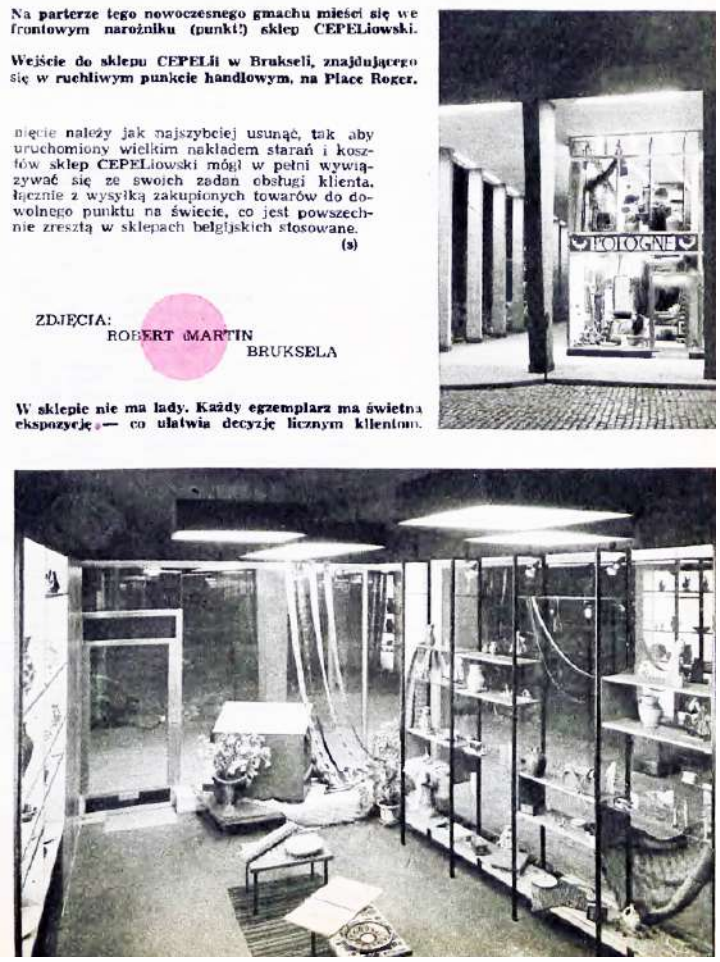
conversation with Aleksandra Kędziorek suggested that the modernist character of the structure offset the balance: 'probably if we [the artistic team] had decided to design a shack with a thatched roof, like in a rural heritage park, Gomułka would have agreed to that, because it would have been much cheaper and very Polish.'[236] There is not enough evidence to support his argument, but Fangor's words resonate with Gomułka's hostility towards creative intelligentsia and attachment to the traditionally Polish rather than cosmopolitan values. This more vernacular approach to the Polish style was applied in a project of a much smaller scale that Poland in the end presented during the World's Exhibition – a boutique with Polish craft.

Following the cancellation of the national pavilion, Poland looked for opportunities to present selected aspects of Polish culture that would not require a large budget. Among them was the opening of a boutique by the Central Office of the Art and Folk Industry (*Centrala Przemysłu Ludowego i Artystycznego: CPLiA*). The Office was founded in 1949 in order to deal with all matters related to artisanal production and rural handcraft, which earlier had been assigned to the BNEP.[237] After closing the Bureau, the CPLiA became the only institution responsible for organising, producing and commercialising folk craft. By the official decree it also took over Telakowska's initiative.

The boutique in Brussels was the first permanent shop that the CPLiA opened abroad (Fig. 2.8). It was located in a modern retail and apartment complex on Place Rogier, aiming to attract the attention of Expo visitors.[238] In light of Poland's withdrawal from the main exhibition, the CPLiA effectively became the only physical venue of Polish presence at the time of the Fair.[239] A large neon signboard with the name 'Poland' placed above the entrance highlighted the representative function of the store. It offered a prime selection of ceramics, wickerwork and decorative fabrics, prepared with additional attention to detail especially for the foreign market. The shop became a huge success and was followed by the opening of a boutique in New York's

[236] A. Kędziorek, 'Modernistyczna wizytówka PRL', p. 91.
[237] P. Korduba, *Ludowość na Sprzedaż* (Warszawa: Fundacja Bęc Zmiana, Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2013), especially chapter 4, pp. 133–201.
[238] s., 'Cepelia w Brukseli', *Stolica* 13, no. 33 (17 August 1958), p. 9.
[239] See: M. Giżycki, 'Avant-Garde and the Thaw. Experimentation in Polish Cinema of the 1950s and 1960s,' in K. Kuc and M. O'Pray (eds.), *The Struggle for Form Perspectives on Polish Avant-Garde Film 1916–1989*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 83–92.

Fifth Avenue in 1960. International customers, as the press reported, were particularly interested in the original folk pieces. The objects included decorative fabrics designed by Eleonora Plutyńska, the most celebrated Polish textile designer, promoter of traditional weaving techniques and co-founder of the Ład Cooperative.[240] A few months later her works were presented at the Polish exhibition at the 11th Triennale in Milan (for which Poland was preparing concurrently). According to the suggestion made by the CPLiA delegates at an official meeting held in December 1956, the exported folklore objects were to be treated as an element of propaganda of Polish culture abroad.[241] However, presented in a non-commercial context of the Triennale, the same objects were received less enthusiastically: foreign reviewers perceived them in the context of the entire Polish presentation as inadequate for the contemporary design challenge.


Na parterze tego nowoczesnego gmachu mieści się we frontowym narożniku (punkt!) sklep CEPELiowski.

Wejście do sklepu CEPELii w Brukseli, znajdującego się w ruchliwym punkcie handlowym, na Place Roger.

nięcie należy jak najszybciej usunąć, tak aby uruchomiony wielkim nakładem starań i kosztów sklep CEPELiowski mógł w pełni wywiązywać się ze swoich zadań obsługi klienta. łącznie z wysyłką zakupionych towarów do dowolnego punktu na świecie, co jest powszechnie zresztą w sklepach belgijskich stosowane.
(s)

ZDJĘCIA:
ROBERT MARTIN
BRUKSELA

W sklepie nie ma lady. Każdy egzemplarz ma świetną ekspozycję — co ułatwia decyzję licznym klientom.

Fig. 2.8. CPLiA boutique in Brussels published in *Stolica* 13, no. 33 (1958)

[240] A. Demska, 'Eleonora Plutyńska. Directly onto the Loom', in C. Frejlich (ed.), *Out of the Ordinary*, pp. 102–11.
[241] P. Korduba, *Ludowość na Sprzedaż*, p. 179.

Historic arts in a new context: the Polish exhibition at the 11th Milan Triennale, 1957

The 11th edition of the Milan Triennial International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts and Modern Architecture (*Triennale di Milano Esposizione Internazionale delle Arti Decorative e Industriali Moderne e dell'Architettura Moderna*, later called Triennale) was held in Palazzo dell'Arte al Parco between 27 July and 4 November 1957. It featured 18 national pavilions and objects from 43 countries displayed across various thematic exhibitions.[242] The wide international representation made it the most cosmopolitan Triennale up to date. Contributors included four countries from behind the Iron Curtain, invited by the Italian organisers in light of the political changes that spread across Eastern Europe. The Triennale's theme – 'the expressive quality of present society' – created a framework for contextualising the comparison between different participants.[243] It was a very propitious subject, given the political changes taking place in Eastern European countries, which forced national governments to rethink the values and ideas that their countries stood for. In February 1956 the Triennale organisers sent letters of invitation to Poland, the USSR, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary, and a few weeks later to Yugoslavia.[244] In the official statement they explained that this decision was motivated by 'the strong interest to compare ideas, tastes and creative modernity from those two opposing worlds'.[245] Of no lesser importance was the urge to develop diplomatic relations with those Eastern European countries which had recently changed their international policy due to the political Thaw. Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland and Yugoslavia responded positively to the invitation. The USSR opted out in the last minute, and this withdrawal put the satellite countries in the limelight. The international press speculated about the implications this decision would have for the pavilions of

[242] Among thematic exhibitions there were: the International Exhibition of Modern Architecture; the Exhibition of Museology; the Exhibition of Artistic Production; the Exhibition of Popular Italian Productions; the Exhibition of Graphic Art; the International Exhibition of Industrial Design; the International Historical Exhibition of Photography; the Exhibition of Living Interiors (Dell'abitazione); the Exhibition of Flowers and Gardens; the Exhibition of Sculpture; the Exhibition of Leonardo Da Vinci.
[243] A. Pansera, 'The Triennale of Milan: Past, Present, and Future', *Design Issues* vol. 2, no. 1 (1985), p. 28.
[244] F. Zanella, 'Attraversamenti Di Confini. Italia-Jugoslavia. Dimensione Nazionale E Internazionale Della Ricerca Negli Anni '50', *Ricerche Di S/Confine* 2 (2013), p. 46.
[245] 'Alla prossima Triennale', *Il Giornale della Radio industria e della Elettrodomestica*, 21 April 1956, pp. 2–4.

Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia, but also Yugoslavia, which officially was beyond Moscow's influence.

> When she [Russia] withdrew her tentative show plans, these four countries quickly decided it would be polite to show the Western worlds what they could do without their stepmother Russia's eagle eye on them,

wrote an American journalist.[246] At this stage of international scholarly research into the Triennale, it is difficult to be sure about the potential influence the USSR's participation might have had on the displays of the people's democracies. We do not know what the Soviet Union's motivations and initial plans to take part in the event were, nor do we know the reasons behind the withdrawal; however, we can assume that the decision had a political underpinning. The relations between Italy and the USSR were quite tense at that time. In June 1956, in the midst of the Triennale preparations, the Italian Communist Party leader Palmiro Togliatti made a public speech in relation to Khrushchev's announcement at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in which he openly criticised the USSR.[247] At the same time Italy started developing a closer relation with Yugoslavia, which led to additional tensions between Moscow and Rome. That coincided with the Milan-based publishing house Feltrinelli preparing the first ever edition of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* – a novel banned in the USSR due to a 'great number of libellous and even anti-Soviet declarations' that the book contained according to Soviet officials.[248] This caused a hostile climate toward the Soviet Union in Italy, which may have contributed to Moscow's decision to withdraw from the event.

The main theme of the 11th Triennale was the 'relationship between arts, contemporary architecture, artistic production and industrial design… which refers not only to the opportunities of the present moment, but also to the future premises.'[249] This

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[246] L. Goodenough, '25 Nations Mingle Politics, Designs as Triennale Opens', *Home Furnishings Daily*, 29 July 1957, p. 1.
[247] S. Pons, 'The Italian Communist Party between East and West, 1960-1964', in W. Loth (ed.), *Europe, Cold War and Coexistence, 1955-1965* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 98–107.
[248] Letter from a deputy director of the Department of Culture to the Central Committee of the CPSU, 1 August 1957, reprinted in P. Mancosu, *Inside the Zhivago Storm. The Editorial Adventures of Pasternak's Masterpiece* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2013), p. 68. The publication was addressed in a direct correspondence between Khrushchev and Togliati.
[249] I. M. Lombardo, 'Discorsi Inaugurali', in A. Pica (ed.), *Undicesima Triennale* (Milano: n.p., 1957), pp. 12–13.

concept found a strong resonance among socialist states, which interpreted it in their own way. Yugoslavia, awarded with a silver medal, showcased ceramics, textiles, jewellery and furniture that expressed the national search for a new visual language.[250] The Yugoslavian display in Milan was the country's method of developing diplomatic and commercial relations with Italy, which in the upcoming years proved particularly important.[251] The Romanian presentation declared an openness to modernity, but also other aesthetic traditions, including folk art.[252] The pavilion featured a selection of artisanal and contemporary artistic production – graphic design, publications, paintings, decorative textiles, ceramics and terracotta vessels were presented alongside works by the famous Romanian-born sculptor Constantin Brâncuşi, who had died a few months earlier. A spiral structure, resembling Lucio Fontana's installation at the 1951 Triennale, dominated the space. The Czechoslovak exposition was entirely devoted to artistic glass, which was laid out in a dramatic spatial arrangement.[253] Emanuel Poche, art historian and director of the Prague Museum of Decorative Arts curated the showcase, while František Tröster, author of the Czechoslovak pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair designed it, and the pavilion was one of the most consistent exhibitions at the Triennale. Architectural sculptures in melted cast glass in particular 'were a revelation to everyone who witnessed them.'[254]

The Polish national display, prepared by the Ministry of Art and Culture, also celebrated artistic rather than industrial production.[255] Poland confirmed its participation in the Triennale in August 1956 and was allocated a space in the Palazzo del Arte between the Finnish and Czechoslovak stands.[256] The pavilion presented 'modern

[250] F. Zanella, 'Attraversamenti Di Confini', p. 50.
[251] K. Ruzicic-Kessler, 'Italy and Yugoslavia: From Distrust to Friendship in Cold War Europe', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 19, no. 5 (2014), pp. 641–64.
[252] A. Pica, 'Discorsi Inaugurali', p. 13.
[253] See P. Nováková, 'Čeští a slovenští umělci na Triennale di Milano, 1923-1968' (Diplomová práce, Palacký University Olomouc, Philosophical Faculty, 2012).
[254] J. Hawkins Opie, *Contemporary International Glass* (London: V&A Publications, 2004), p. 12.
[255] Poland re-established its diplomatic relations with Italy shortly after the war, but only in 1957 did they expand. The cultural exchange between both countries was regulated by individual contracts between artists and institutions. See J. Sosnowska, *Polacy na Biennale Sztuki w Wenecji, 1895-1999* (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1999), p. 127.
[256] Aside from preparing a national display, the Polish committee submitted several designs to the International Exposition of Contemporary Architecture, organised as part of Triennale. The projects included Oskar Hansen's pavilion for the Izmir Trade Fair (in collaboration with Henryk Tomaszewski); Stanisław Jankowski's Mariensztat district in Warsaw; Putowski's Dom

examples of historic arts: ceramics and printed fabrics, carpets, tapestries, gobelin tapestries.'[257] The exhibits were created by artists and artisans, including both educated and amateur designers, as well as artistic collectives working in the rural and urban centres.[258] They were connected with different creative hubs across the country that represented a divergent approach to artisanal production. The black simple vases from Białostocczyzna, a region in Northeast Poland, were the only genuine pieces developed by self-taught local craftspeople (Fig. 2.14). They were significantly simpler and less decorative than other objects featured at the Polish display in Milan. Other exhibits were designed by trained artists and manufactured by skilled artisans or, in a few cases – entirely produced by trained artists inspired by the indigenous culture of specific regions.

By returning to the idea of artisanal production, the exhibition appealed to the well-established concept of the Polish national style being rooted in folklore craft. The longest tradition of these vernacular sentiments and collaborations developed in Southern Poland.[259] Between the late 19th and the early 20th century, Kraków was the Polish cradle of the Arts and Crafts Movement. The local artisanal tradition from Zakopane was the object of fascination of the fin de siècle artistic intelligentsia, who appropriated it as a tool for rethinking contemporary artistic production. This process, distinctive for the development of design across Europe, was at the centre of forming the official style of the Second Republic.[260] The Polish Applied Arts Society (*Towarzystwo Polska Sztuka Stosowana*) and its successor the Kraków Workshops (*Warsztaty Krakowskie*) were the two groups at the forefront of rethinking folklore for contemporary use in the first two decades of the 20th century.[261]

Słowa Polskiego; and a competition project for the Polish pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair, by Oskar Hansen and his team.

[257] D. C. Uhrmacher, 'Polonia', in A. Pica (ed.), *Undicesima Triennale*, p. 165.

[258] B. S., 'Debiut polskiej plastyki na triennale'*, Stolica* 21, no 7 (1957).

[259] D. Crowley, *National Style and Nation-State: Design in Poland from the Vernacular Revival to the International Style* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

[260] See A. Chmielewska, *W Służbie Państwa, Społeczeństwa i Narodu: 'Państwowotwórczy' Artyści Plastycy w II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2006).

[261] The Polish Applied Arts Society functioned between 1901-14 and was followed by the Kraków Workshops, which were active between 1913-26. For the history of both associations see the comprehensive and abundantly illustrated volume edited by Maria Dziedzic: *Warsztaty Krakowskie 1913-1926* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademii Sztuk Pięknych, 2009), available also in English. Also a canonical publication by Irena Huml *Polska Sztuka Stosowana XX Wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1978).

In the post-war period artists used the local artisanal heritage in two ways: traditional motives inspired new patterns for industrial production, or indigenous techniques were adapted for producing modern designs, especially in textiles and ceramics. The Polish exhibition at the Triennale showcased objects illustrating both approaches. The latter was represented by a large tapestry made by Maria Bujakowa, a craftswoman and educator working in Zakopane, and designed by Tadeusz Brzozowski, a visual artist associated with Kraków's post-war avant-garde milieu (Fig. 2.9). The State High School of Wood Industry, a progressive college where local folk art met cubism, operated in Zakopane from the early 1920s. After the war the profile of the school diminished, and it resulted in the production of 'a quasi-folk mass-manufactured gimcrackery of the worse sort following outdated designs of the Imperial-Royal Austrian secession from 50 years ago.'[262] To counter this, Antoni Kenar developed his original works and, after becoming the college's director, he established an ambitious educational programme combining craft and applied art.[263] The exhibition at the Triennale presented some of the most spectacular examples of his pedagogic work, including printed fabrics along with his own sculptural furniture (Fig. 2.10). Interestingly – his creations, due their folkloric styling, had also been showcased in the previous year by the Polish pavilion at the Venice Biennale.[264]

A different approach to applied art and inspirations from a rural heritage was developed in Warsaw, where the Artists' Cooperative Ład had been operating since 1926. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ład was driven by the idea of beautifying everyday surroundings. The nature of this goal meant that the Cooperative's production included not only furniture, but also decorative objects: jacquards, tapestries and ceramics (Fig. 2.11). Like all other Ład creations they dwelled within the tradition of artisanal production, and the exhibition in Milan presented new outcomes of these inspirations – which were awarded a Golden Medal.

[262] W. Telakowska, 'Dramatyczne Kontrasty', *Projekt* 1, no. 1 (1956), p. 11.
[263] W. Telakowska, 'Zakopiańskie wzory dla przemysłu', *Projekt* 1, no. 2 (1956), p. 60.
[264] J. Sosnowska, *Polacy na Biennale Sztuki w Wenecji*, p. 101.

Fig. 2.9. Polish exhibition at the 11th Milan Triennale. On the right – tapestry designed by Tadeusz Brzozowski
Fig. 2.10. Furniture by Antoni Kenar presented at the Polish exhibition in Milan
Fig. 2.11. Installation of Polish folk pottery and textiles at the 11th Milan Triennale in 1957

The official policy towards craft was similar in all people's democracies. Handicraft lay, as David Crowley put it, 'at the edges of the ideologues' field of vision.[265] Although the states were not able to develop concise rules for creating socialist craft, they developed a rhetoric that could explain the political significance of artisanal production. The latter was inscribed into the larger political narrative. As Juliet Kinchin noted with regard to Hungary:

> It did not take much to 'reinvent' crafts in a vernacular idiom as a form of working-class culture through which to resist the perpetuation of narrow class interests and 'extreme individualism' (*szélsőséges individualizmus*) of bourgeois taste. In the new republic of peasants and workers, pottery was by its very nature viewed as an 'art of the people' – ubiquitous, accessible, and with an intrinsic functionality and earthy 'realism' derived from its connection with the soil.[266]

This quotation reveals that the official craft narrative in the political context was shaped in a similar manner across all of Eastern Europe. However, like in the case of design developments that I explore in Chapter Four, the national specificity of the historical, cultural and political background predefined each state's individual policies.

Wanda Telakowska's grand endeavour of improving the quality of mass production was written into this official policy in Poland. The use of craft expertise, which was only one part of her concept, attracted the authorities' interest – and not unproblematic support. Educated as a graphic designer, Telakowska became fascinated with the way creativity and the aesthetic sense could be taught when she was working as a pre-war vocational school inspector at the Ministry of Religion and Public Enlightenment (*Ministerstwo Wyznań i Oświecenia Publicznego*).[267] At that time she also published articles in an art and design journal *Arkady*, where she wrote about the various aspects of everyday aesthetics. During the occupation she continued working as an educator at several vocational art schools. When the war was over, she took action – with a clear concept, personal panache and acquaintances in ministerial offices. She believed that connecting craft and mass production could not only serve as a solution

[265] D. Crowley, 'Stalinism and Modernist Craft in Poland', *Journal of Design History* vol. 11, no. 1 (1998), pp. 71–83.
[266] J. Kinchin, 'Hungarian Pottery, Politics and Identity: Re-Presenting the Ceramic Art of Margit Kovács (1902–77)', *The Journal of Modern Craft* 2, no. 2 (1 July 2009), p. 173.
[267] A. Frąckiewicz, 'Wanda Telakowska', *culture.pl*, 2015. Available online: http://culture.pl/pl/tworca/wanda-telakowska. Accessed on 30 March 2016.

for the current issues, but in a longer perspective could improve the aesthetic quality of everyday goods available to the wider public.

In this plan the legacy of the interwar period played a significant role. The sole idea of creating an official institution that would establish a connection between factories and unemployed artists in order to improve the quality of produced goods was born in the Ministry of Industry and Trade in the 1930s.[268] Ład, of which Telakowska was a keen admirer from the early days, was the most important link between the interwar and post-war periods, providing connection with the earlier activity of the Kraków Workshop. This legacy became more pronounced after the Stalinist era. In a pocket book about industrial design, published in 1966 in a popular science series, Telakowska wrote:

> Today's international successes of our artistic weaving – just to give an example – are a continuation of the interwar achievements, when the awareness of the very important visual matter developed. The continuity of a years-long folk art experience is brought up again, after being deferred during a period of uninspired eclecticism in the official 19th century art.[269]

The interwar legacy was also cherished by the curator of the exhibition Marek Leykam, an architect and – like Telakowska – a contributor to *Arkady*. He made his name in the early 1930s through competition entries and articles. Born and educated in Warsaw, Leykam was well acquainted with the city's architectural and artistic circles.[270] Reportedly, it was during his short time at the Academy of Fine Arts that he developed a much wider social network, rather than during his education at the Technical University.[271] At that time in the early 1930s, he met artists whose works he presented at the Triennale exhibition. During his life he developed a deep friendship with Antoni Kenar; with others, for instance Hanna and Lech Grześkiewicz, he later collaborated on the decorative elements of his projects.[272]

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[268] W. Telakowska and T. Reindl, *Problemy wzornictwa przemysłowego* (Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1966), p. 25.
[269] Ibidem, p. 22.
[270] Leykam attended the same secondary school as Jerzy Hryniewiecki and they remained close friends until their professional argument in the late 1950s.
[271] I owe this information to Leykam's son Paweł Lewiński, who I interviewed in Warsaw on 15 December 2015.
[272] They collaborated on the design of a monument to Victory and Freedom, planned for the Saski Garden in Warsaw. M. Rydzyńska, *Pracownia Grześkiewiczów. Zarys monografii*, 2014. Available online:

Like many other architects he spent the war in a P.O.W. camp in Switzerland, where he wrote and defended his doctoral dissertation at the Technical University in Zurich. Although the thesis dealt with early medieval architecture, a broader experience of Swiss design and conversations with peer detainees resulted in Leykam's fascination with simple, functional forms and prefabricated elements.[273] After his return to Poland, he combined his interest in history and a modern approach to architecture both in his educational role as Professor of Medieval Architecture at his alma mater, and as a practicing architect. His designs of public buildings were known for their functional modernist looks with sophisticated classical references. Some researchers wanted to read these 'classical jokes' as Leykam's subversive practice aiming to ridicule Socialist Realism in architecture.[274] In these interpretations his uncompromising approach was interpreted as a sign of political dissent. Recent research, on the other hand, abandons this political reading and connects Leykam's attitude with his steady vision of architecture.[275] For the Triennale, Leykam designed the space with Czesław Rajewski and Maciej Krasiński, his frequent collaborators in architectural projects.

Despite Leykam's professional position and knowledge of the Polish artistic scene, Poland was officially represented in Milan by D.[avide] C.[atullo] Uhrmacher. Biographical information about Uhrmacher is scarce.[276] Born to Jewish parents in 1924 in Trento, North Italy, he moved to Czechoslovakia in the mid 1940s, where for a few years he worked with the Communist Radio Prague. As a result of the Stalinist purges he was persecuted, and in 1953 managed to escape to Italy. In Milan he worked as a publicist and translator for the Feltrinelli publishing house, and he also participated in the trade arrangement between Italy and Romania. All these details do not provide a satisfactory explanation of his involvement in the Polish exhibition. However, what can

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http://grzeskiewiczowie.art.pl/inwent/pracownia%20grzeskiewiczow%20zarys%20monografii.pdf. Accessed on 30 March 2016.

[273] After the war, apart from teaching, Leykam worked in the Central Office for Industrial Construction Studies and Designs, an autonomous state enterprise where a specialised group of architects and engineers developed progressive architectural designs. In 1948, together with Stanisław Hempel he designed a modernist spire that dominated over the Exhibition of Regained Territories in Wrocław.

[274] See for example J. Zieliński, *Realizm Socjalistyczny w Warszawie*.

[275] F. Springer, *Źle urodzone. Reportaże o architekturze PRL* (Kraków: Karakter, 2012), pp. 40–6

[276] I rely on an article by Paolo Tessadri, 'Radio Praga, "Cacciate l"Ebreo Italiano Catullo Davide Uhrmacher'', *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 25 April 2013. Available online: http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/04/25/radio-praga-cacciate-lebreo-italiano-catullo-davide-uhrmacher/575207/#disqus_thread. Accessed 18 August 2017.

be read from these biographical facts is that Uhrmacher had a strong political mandate, which Leykam lacked.

In the introductory essay about the Polish display published in the official catalogue, Uhrmacher presented craft against the political background of post-war Poland. Although the exhibits per se did not explicitly have any ideological meaning and their creators avoided political involvement, the interpretation provided by Uhrmacher made them political. As he recalled, in 1947 artists, organisations and institutions entered a dialogue that was to affect cultural life, and they already shared a conviction that art was indispensable in people's lives. Everyday objects and surroundings were to become the vehicles of this idea; art 'has to determine roads, shop windows displays, interiors; it has to prove its power through the design of our clothes, book covers and all other objects that surround us,' Uhrmacher pleaded.[277] His text stressed the significant role the state had played in this scheme:

> There have been two basic factors that determined the art revival in Poland: the state's support and the people's interest in artistic implementations. The former, thanks to wise policy, organising exhibitions, purchasing artworks, and [the development of] a scholarship system, provided artists with good living conditions. The latter acted as a stimulant, encouraging artists [to look for] new solutions.[278]

As Uhrmacher noted, this ambitious long-term scheme was still being developed. In anticipating potential critique of the outcomes presented in Milan, he admitted that

> after a decade of intense work, we are still far from having completed this programme. Nevertheless, we can now clearly see the direction of our work; we have already implemented numerous important projects and we have a clear idea about the prospects for the development of art in service of the community.[279]

One can easily recognise in his words the project initiated and directed by Wanda Telakowska within the organisational framework of the BNEP and later of the IWP. The catalogue text, however, attributed the project entirely to the communist state. Despite Telakowska's ambition, reiterated in Uhrmacher's text, the results of this

[277] D. C. Uhrmacher, 'Polonia', p. 165.
[278] Ibidem.
[279] Ibidem.

programme could not and did not meet the needs of the population. Works selected for the expo in Milan represented what in contemporary terminology is called *studio craft* – a practice of creating objects that are primarily defined by aesthetic rather than utilitarian purposes.[280] The exquisite class of works on display was drastically disproportionate to the miserable quality of textiles, ceramics and furniture scarcely available on the market. The objects presented in Milan belonged to a refined discipline of handicraft that existed on the margin of centrally planned economy, characterised by shortages of daily goods.[281]

The Polish exhibition included one more element, which did not fit with the official narrative explored in the introductory text; it also looked odd among the artisanal production that dominated the space. In the middle of the pavilion stood a television set screening *Cinéforms* (*Kineformy*), a short film by Andrzej Pawłowski.[282] The film was a recording of a projection screened by a simple cinematographic device that Pawłowski had constructed a few years earlier from a cardboard box, two broomsticks, a tape recorder, a sheet of tracing paper and two stool seats. With the skilful use of a spotlight, this primitive apparatus displayed a set of abstract, dynamically changing images. The first public presentation took place in January 1957 in the famous Cricot 2 theatre in Kraków, where the projection was screened live in front the audience, with an accompanying soundtrack mix of Yma Sumac, Bach and Honegger.[283] The images were described by one of the observers of the original spectacle as

[280] P. Kirkham and S. Weber (eds.), *History of Design: Decorative Arts and Material Culture, 1400-2000* (New York: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 635-637. Referring to the Italian context, Penny Sparke used the term 'art-craft', which described 'aesthetically innovative artefacts, emanating from the world of fine art – which was situated unquestionably (with decorative art just below it) at the top of the cultural hierarchy.' See P. Sparke, 'The Straw Donkey: Tourist Kitsch or Proto-Design? Craft and Design in Italy, 1945–1960', *Journal of Design History* 11, no. 1 (1998), p. 59. The Polish 'rzemiosło artystyczne', popularised in the interwar period, is the closest translation of the term used by Sparke. See J. Krupiński, *Wzornictwo – Design: studium idei* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademii Sztuk Pięknych, 1998). In the 1970s Irena Huml proposed 'object art' (sztuka przedmiotu) to describe decorative artisanal practice. See I. Huml, *Sztuka przedmiotu – przedmiot sztuki* (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2003).

[281] M. Mazurek, *Społeczeństwo Kolejki. O Doświadczeniach Niedoboru 1945-1989* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2010).

[282] M. Jankowska, *Film artystów: szkice z historii filmu plastycznego i ruchu fotomedialnego w Polsce w latach 1957-1981* (Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 2002), p. 34.

[283] Created by Jerzy Kaszycki. See J. Trzupek and M Pawłowski (eds.), *Andrzej Pawłowski 1925-1986* (Katowice: Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej BWA, 2002), p. 43.

> fabulous, fascinating beyond words; they came from a mist and vanished; they were colourful and black and white, beautiful. They did not represent anything material, but they were reminiscent of everything. They were quite abstract, unaccountably and powerfully vivid, full of life, biological, coming to life and dying real death. They were breathlessly dramatic... The projections were unique, the number of mobile forms and their combinations infinite…[284]

One of these live projections was documented and turned into the experimental short film displayed in Milan.[285] There are no files explaining the inclusion of this movie at the Polish expo. We could speculate that the piece was chosen as an attractive, but safe addition to the show presented in front of an international audience. The film did not express any form of disagreement, nor did it make a political statement – it seemed to exist beyond reality. According to Pawłowski's friend and Poland's most celebrated director, Andrzej Wajda, the film 'wasn't critical, it just was out there.'[286] At the same time the abstract language could connect it with the Western audiences' tastes.

Paradoxically, the lack of references to everyday life in Poland made both the film and the handicraft ideal material to construct an image of the country. Due to their 'vagueness' in that sense, they were inserted into the ideological narrative without trouble. They were also complementary in tackling key themes that had been used by the state in forming national identity. Handicraft, inspired by the vernacular culture, represented the idea of Polishness; while Pawłowski's movie contained an element of the Thaw's desire for a modern and progressive Poland. Both of them were not only harmless for the country's image, but also supportive of the Party's narrative when contextualised.

The foreign reviewers did not notice these nuances and read the Polish exhibition literally. They also ignored the contextualisation suggested by the text in the

[284] J. Trzupek, 'Wprowadzenie', in J. Trzupek and M Pawłowski (eds.), *Andrzej Pawłowski*, p. 14.
[285] In 1958 *Cinéforms* were presented at the World Film Festival in Brussels, which was accompanying the World's Fair. The film was very well received by the international audience and was awarded with a medal. For the discussion on Polish cinematographic representation in Brussles see M. Giżycki, 'Avant-Garde and the Thaw. Experimentation in Polish Cinema of the 1950s and 1960s', in K. Kuc and M. O'Pray (eds.), *The Struggle for Form Perspectives*, pp. 83–92. The film is available online: https://artmuseum.pl/pl/filmoteka/praca/pawlowski-andrzej-kineformy. Accessed on 30 March 2016.
[286] Wajda's statement recorded in a movie by Daniel Rycharski, *Legenda Kineform*. 2012. Available online: http://artmuseum.pl/pl/kolekcja/artysci/andrzej-pawlowski. Accessed on 30 March 2016.

catalogue. The image of a progressive society and a protective state that spreads its patronage over all artists for the benefit of the entire nation – which Uhrmacher wanted to portray – did not impress the international audiences, who remained sceptical about the validity of the Polish craft programme outcomes.

The foreign public had a limited knowledge about Poland and Eastern Europe. The turmoil connected with the de-Stalinisation processes across the region made the situation more difficult to comprehend. Despite the initial declarations of interest in the newcomers that the organisers made on the eve of the event, the complexity of the national design scenes escaped the notice of the majority of the reviewers. Most of the journalists reporting from the Triennale, among them established design critics and commentators, barely acknowledged the Polish, Czechoslovak, Romanian and Yugoslavian participation in the exhibition. They predominantly focused on the national displays of their own countries and the most spectacular demonstrations of future design powers – Finland, Italy, Japan and the United States. Additionally, apart from the national showcases, the Triennale covered over a dozen thematic exhibitions, which to the foreign reporters must have been far more interesting or relevant than the pavilions from behind the Iron Curtain.

Those few Western and American reviewers who bothered to write a short paragraph about the presentations from Eastern Europe – depicted them as a monolith. Eastern European expositions were approached collectively and their stands were perceived as a sum of experiences developed under grim political circumstances. In the words of an American commentator: 'For the first time, excepting Czechoslovakia, which exhibited before the war, four behind-the-Iron-Curtain countries are officially and rather dramatically represented.'[287] According to an Italian journalist Angelo della Masse, showcases from Eastern Europe were heavy, monotonous, sometimes melancholic and oppressive, which was the result of the isolation in which the artists were living.[288] Art, as he summarised the situation in the Eastern Bloc, cannot flourish when it lacks liberty. On the other hand, the Western presentations were described as blossoming, thanks to the international exchanges and collaborations the countries had been developing in the post-war years.

[287] L. Goodenough, '25 Nations Mingle Politics', p. 1.
[288] A. della Masse, 'Serie, Attraenti e Convincenti le Esposizioni Straniere Alla Triennale', *Corriere della Nazione. Roma*, 28 August 1957.

In the reviewers' eyes, the major feature that defined a priori the Eastern European displays was their difference from the Western stands. There seemed to be a general consensus on what Westernness meant: simple forms, bright colours, polished steel and a sensible dose of electronic appliances prevailed in most displays. Progress was mentioned as the common denominator across the capitalist expositions, and it was achieved through unity of culture, artistic expression and craftsmanship. These features were translated into practicality, splendour and 'a certain lightness' of the modern times that the Western pavilions manifested.[289] The Italian journalist noted that the well thought-through pavilions from Western and Nordic countries were juxtaposed with the Eastern European sections 'filled with din and coarse theatrical gimmicks'.[290]

The West was perceived, as some of the aforementioned comments demonstrated, as an advocate of modernity in contemporary artistic practices – and its sole representative. This understanding of modernity had a very rigid framework and a rather prescriptive character. It was 'a universal yardstick which was being accepted across art, technology and customs' as a text in a catalogue *Forme Nuove in Italia,* published in 1957. [291] The author of this text, Ivan Matteo Lombardo, a socialist politician and the President of the Milan Triennale, claimed that these 'new forms' 'can contribute with orderly incommensurable power to the unification of the civilised world, without any way impairing the original creative spirit inherent in each people's nation.'[292] Combining these two aspects proved to be quite difficult for the Polish exhibition committee.

Poland's creative intelligentsia, despite living behind the Iron Curtain, did not lack this universal approach to design or the knowledge about global developments in the field. After Stalin's death the exchange with the Western design world accelerated and in many cases was facilitated by more progressive state officials. In 1956 the first Polish design magazine *Projekt* was launched by the Workers Publishing Cooperative 'Prasa' (*Robotnicza Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza*), which was nota bene dependent on the Central Committee of the Party. *Projekt* presented the development of design in Eastern European countries, but – unlike its Soviet equivalent *Dekorativnoe Iskustvo SSSR* – it

[289] Ibidem.
[290] Ibidem.
[291] A. Pica and I. M. Lombardo, *Forme nuove in Italia. Stile, forma, colore, nell'artigianato e nell'industria* (Carlo Bestetti, 1957), p. 7. Text originally in English.
[292] Ibidem.

also had a much more international outlook and meticulously surveyed the contemporary design scene in Western Europe and the United States.

Although travel was still limited, the state offered a small range of scholarships for design graduates and young professionals, which allowed them to take apprenticeships in Italy, France, Finland and later in the United States; additionally, educational and research institutions in those countries offered a limited number of grants.[293] Furthermore, organisations such as the British Council or Institut Françoise were active in promoting their cultures through events and well-equipped libraries. In the official discourse, however, Polish authorities rarely acknowledged these pro-Western trends of Polish design culture. Consequently, the Polish organisers disregarded the universal approach suggested by Lombardo.

The low-budget artisanal display did not win Poland international acclaim and the general tone of the reviews suggested that the pavilion stood out unfavourably from the more sophisticated stands. Angelo della Masse described the Polish exhibits as 'melancholic, monotonous and often simply heavy.'[294] A West German journalist Ulrich Seelmann-Eggebert commented in his review that

> while the Soviet Union and the dogmatic and strict satellites are not participating, Poland has sent a selection of the folklore, which with its wall rugs, ceramics, and battled wooden furniture is [more] suitable for log cabins and hunting huts.[295]

Similar thoughts were echoed by other Italian reviewers: 'Sad section, full of banality, and old stuff,' reported the conservative *La Nazione*.[296] The social-liberal *Comunità*, founded by Adriano Olivetti, described Kenar's raw benches with repulsion as 'a massive structure of thick beams that hold up four pieces of sofa.'[297]

More positive comments came from a left-wing oriented Italian journalist Ernesto Nathan Rogers. A leading figure of the Italian design scene and editor-in-chief of the influential *Casabella Continuità*, Rogers was also an active supporter of artisanal

[293] Information about these study trips comes mainly from personal interviews with the designers.
[294] A. della Masse, 'Serie, attraenti e convincenti'.
[295] K. Leigh Kopp, *Germany's Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), pp. 85-89.
[296] R. Papini, 'La Triennale e la forma pura', *La Nazione. Firenze*, 20 September 1957.
[297] M. Labó, 'Le sezioni straniere', *Comunita, Milano*, October 1957, p. 67.

culture. He was one of the initiators of the National Craft Company (*Compagnia Nazionale Artigiana*), which after the war provided Italian craftsmen with exported tools and facilitated the distribution of craft objects in the United States.[298] In a detailed review of the Triennale published in the November/December issue of the *Casabella Continuità,* Rogers praised Poland's presentation for its expressive character. In the selection of the Polish exhibits he noticed a reflection of the circumstances in which they were created, and an expression of Polish society's values. They made, as he wrote, a poignant case for sincerity in design:

> Although the value of presented works is not imminent, one must observe with sympathy these 'resistant' artists who suffered during the Stalinist period, as they now turn to us with pity, saying that they want to join the common struggle, which – apart from representing many pitfalls – can bring a faint hope for sincerity to them, and to us likewise.[299]

Rogers' comment should be interpreted in the broader context of his approach to the modern movement in architecture and design. Identity was for him an important feature of contemporary architecture, which could be established not by imitating others, but rather by starting a dialogue with the country's past. In his widely discussed article *Continuità e crisi,* Rogers called for a reconsideration of modernity in design.[300] He claimed that one of the biggest mistakes the design community was making at the time was treating the modern movement as a purely aesthetic style. Instead, according to Rogers, the essence of modernity lay in the dialogue between the historical context, the technological development and the artistic tradition of the place that a building or an object originated from.[301] Ingenious works of design and architecture could emerge only when all these factors were addressed. Placing design in this broad context, which many journalists reviewing the exhibition overlooked, allowed Rogers to better comprehend the Polish exhibition. It may also be one of the factors, apart from his left-wing sympathies, contributing to his more favourable judgement of Poland's display.

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[298] See A. J. Pulos, *The American Design Adventure, 1940-1975* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), p. 229.
[299] E. N. Rogers, 'Utilità e inutilità della Triennale', *Casabella Continuità* vol. 217 (1957), p. 3.
[300] E. N. Rogers, 'Continuità o crisi?', *Casabella Continuità* vol. 215 (1957), pp. 2–3.
[301] Torre Velasca, which Rogers designed together with his associates at the BBPR, is one of the best examples of applying this approach in practice. The tower was completed in 1958.

The positive review that the Polish presentation received in the Finnish press came from a different point of view. In 1957 Finland was already recognised for its remarkable style in design, which at least partly was a result of the government's well-planned strategy. By the 1950s, having nearly completed paying war reparations to the USSR, the country started exporting its products to the West and the United States. This change in the trade network required a restructuring in Finland's industry: while the reparations were paid in heavy industry goods (net worth of 226.5 million dollars), the capitalist market deals mainly focused on domestic items.[302] It was a shift that no one really expected – from a country that was primarily an exporter of bulky goods and raw materials, Finland turned into an avant-garde producer of high quality commodities of pleasing aesthetics. [303] By collaborating with modernist designers, the Finnish government developed a strong national brand that resonated across demanding markets. At the same time Finland increased its presence at international trade fairs and exhibitions abroad.[304] In 1951 Finns were showered with prizes and accolades at the 9th Triennale in Milan. Following this success Annikki Toikka-Karvonen, a well-known ambassador of Finnish design, claimed that

> this success is a convincing proof that the Finnish spirit has something original to give humanity and that it is able, through independent efforts, to find its own ways of expressing its visions, its poems, without the need to appear as an apprentice or imitator of those who are apparently more powerful.[305]

Finnish presentations, apart from their commercial goal, made it clear that Finland, despite its close relations with the Soviet Union, should be considered a part of the Scandinavian family.[306] Six years later, when reviewing the Polish exposition in Milan, Toikka-Karvonen again emphasised the importance of an original aesthetic

[302] For the image-building aspect of the Triennale exhibitions in the Scandinavian context see K. Fallan, 'Milanese Mediations: Crafting Scandinavian Design at the Triennali Di Milano', *Journal of Art History* 83, no. 1 (2014), pp. 1–23.
[303] T. Myllyntaus, 'Design in Building an Industrial Identity. The Breakthrough of Finnish Design in the 1950s and 1960s,' *ICON – The Journal of the International Committee for the History of Technology, Special Issue on Technology in Everyday Life* vol. 16 (2010), p. 201.
[304] K. Davies, '"A Geographical Notion Turned into an Artistic Reality": Promoting Finland and Finnish Design in Post-War Britain 1953-1965', *Journal of Design History* 15, no. 2 (2002), pp. 101–16.
[305] R. te Velde, 'Ultima Thule: "Beyond Known Borders". Exploring the Relationship between Design and Finnish National Identity', *Kunstlicht* vol. 34, no. 3 (2013), p. 74.
[306] That was one of the reasons why Finland exhibited their products alongside Sweden, Denmark and Norway, under the broader brand of 'Design from Scandinavia'.

language in design. In a review published in *Helsingin Sanomien*, the largest Finnish magazine, she wrote that the Polish display

> was the one we would remember from the exhibition. The curation was simple and clear with attention to details despite a small budget they had. Poland took part in the Triennale for the first time, but nevertheless it presented great finesse and a selection of original artistic talents – especially in the first class decorative textiles.[307]

The original approach that elevated Finnish design to world-class level also resonated with Telakowska's ideals. At the same time when the Polish project was visibly struggling to make a real impact on the industrial production in the country, the Finns were consistently building their position through transferring the skills and expertise from low-key handicraft to large-scale production. The originality of Finnish design came from its link with local craftsmanship being applied to methods of industrial assembly. As *Design Quarterly* noted,

> the Finnish industrial designer is, almost without exception, a producing craftsman. He derives incisiveness of concept as well as freshness and validity in his work through constantly working with the materials of his craft… The results are rewarding. Mass-produced products are creatively conceived and realistically produced because designers have both the full use of factory facilities and knowledge of factory production methods, and have time and opportunity to be craftsmen-experimenters.[308]

The positive review in the Finnish press brought with it some hope that eventually Poland would be able to imitate Finland in its approach to design. The political climate seemed favourable too, since Polish authorities sympathised with Finland. The cultural exchange between these two countries intensified: between the late 1950s and the early 1960s, following an invitation from the Finnish government, Polish designers visited art universities in the North.[309] These study trips and research visits resulted in exhibitions and articles about Finnish design presented for audiences in

[307] A. Toikka-Karvonen 'Milanon Triennale- näyttely', *Helsingin Sanomien,* 20 October 1957.
[308] '15 Contemporary Finnish Designers', *Design Quarterly* 37 (1957), pp. 2–25.
[309] Among them was Teresa Kruszewska, who between 1963 and 1964 spent three months in Alvar Aalto's studio, designing institutions in Helsinki, Lahti, Kotka, Rovaniemi and Turku. Hansen visited Finland almost at the same time. See his report 'Trzy Kontakty z Finlandią', *Projekt* 1, no. 34 (1963), pp. 2–7, 21.

Poland.[310] The image of design that emerged from these contacts strongly resonated with Polish professionals: unlike Italy or the United States, Finland represented a design model that seemed to be within reach.[311] Wood, for example, extensively used in both countries, was one of the elements of these shared sensibilities. It was the embodiment of 'coexistence of vernacularism (*rodzimość*) and modernity (*nowoczesność*), an individual beauty and social expediency', which many Polish creative professionals praised.[312] The Finnish tendency 'to stabilise and unify the level of life of all social strata' was also an interesting feature for designers in Poland, many of whom were interested in improving the quality of everyday objects; it also resonated with the Party ideology.[313]

The revival of vernacular culture proclaimed by Rogers and Toikka-Karvonen coincided with the upcoming end of mid-century modernism. Many critics accused designers that in an attempt to demonstrate their country's progress, they swapped the vibrant and original visual language of national cultures with generic, modernist aesthetics. This unification trend visibly intensified in the upcoming years, to the point where in the following Triennale in 1960 the national pavilions practically blended into each other, as one of the reviewers claimed. Regardless, Finnish design was persistently developing its original approach rooted in local artisanal tradition. It provided an argument for the design debate in Poland, which developed subsequently in 1957.

The national press, however, focused predominantly on the successes of the Polish exhibition, which were believed to be the most interesting information for the general domestic audience. There were reports on the two silver medals awarded to Antoni Kenar for his collection of printed textiles and to the architects of the Polish pavilion; the press also praised the gold medal presented to the Ład Cooperative for the jacquard textiles designed by different members of the group. All the awards were shown as signs of Poland's success. Marek Leykam suggested in his article for *Projekt* that the pioneering approach of the Finns paved the way to the organisers' warm

[310] 'Design from Finland' opened in Warsaw in October 1962. The exhibition poster, designed by Józef Mroszczak, featured a photograph of gnarly wood, which in Polish general opinion embodied Finnish design.
[311] E. Pelkonen, 'Helsinki-Warsaw, c. 1960', in Ł. Stanek (ed.), *Team 10 East. Revisionist Architecture in Real Existing Modernism* (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art, 2014), pp. 116–50.
[312] A. Lewińska, 'Rodzimość i Nowoczesność we Wzornictwie Fińskim', *Wiadomości IWP* 9–10 (1970), pp. 1–21.
[313] Ibidem.

reception of the Polish exhibits, despite the criticism from journalists.[314] Jerzy Hryniewiecki, in an article for the Polish daily *Życie Warszawy,* reported that the Triennale demonstrated 'a sort of monotony', which was a result of the homogeneous approach in the majority of national pavilions. 'There is no visible link between an object and a country [where it was produced]. It comes as no surprise that French exhibits are not so different from Swedish ones, the German [objects are not distinct] from Spanish ones,' Hryniewiecki complained.[315] The Polish national exhibition worked against this trend, bringing 'a sort of exoticism into the venue.'[316]

However, these positive accounts shared a bitter conclusion that cut through many reviews: the discrepancy between the exhibition and the everyday material culture in Poland. Different commentators addressed this problem from various angles, as they referred to the availability of goods, their export value and unutilised design potential. Hryniewiecki, in the aforementioned article written for the general public, asked bluntly 'whether Poland, who does not produce aesthetically pleasing objects for daily use on a mass scale, should have taken part in this sort of event.'[317] Another journalist Jerzy Bogusławski, in an article published by the official party journal *Trybuna Ludu*, noticed with resentment that the selection did not do justice 'to what Poland could and what it actually does produce.'[318] By making this claim he did not refer to Polish industrial manufacturing, which would be unreasonable in an economy of shortages, but rather to craft production. He perceived craft as a lucrative enterprise that could generate hard currency – and the Triennale as a platform for initiating international trade deals. He claimed that the Polish pavilion left the impression of 'a private initiative of a few artists supported by the Ministry of Culture and Art.'[319] By showcasing a small and non-representative selection of objects, the exhibition failed to address the commercial aspect of the exhibition. It was, in Bogusławski's opinion, a lost opportunity to support Poland's economy, which the Polish representatives – unlike their Czechoslovak peers – misjudged. Similar views were expressed by other journalists on different occasions,

[314] M. Leykam, 'Impresje Powystawowe', *Projekt* 2/6, no. 8 (1957), p. 24.
[315] J. H.[ryniewiecki], 'Dzień Polski na Triennale w Mediolanie', *Życie Warszawy* vol. 235 (1957).
[316] Ibidem.
[317] Ibidem.
[318] J. Bogusławski, 'Mediolańskie wystawy', *Trybuna Ludu* vol. 275 (1957).
[319] Ibidem

which demonstrated that design was predominantly seen as a factor generating hard currency.[320]

At the time when Bogusławski's text revealed the instrumental approach to traditional production, a criticism came also from people with a much broader understanding of craftsmanship. For Marek Leykam, the Polish exhibits illustrated no correlation between artisanal and mass production, an issue that Finland had managed to resolve. In Poland, as he bitterly noted, the potential of artists working for the improvement of mass production had not been fully realised yet. Other pavilions featured the final outcomes of artists' collaborations with the mass industry, which although high-priced, were still available to the local customers. In that respect, the Polish display was quite disappointing:

> In order to recreate and expand markets, and concurrently to provide mass consumers with utilitarian and also aesthetic values, art enters industry, even heavy industry… At the same time in Poland, after so many years of the BNEP's and later of the Institute of Industrial Design's activity, we managed to introduce only a few textile designs into industrial production.[321]

While Leykam concentrated on the results of the actual process initiated by the BNEP, for Aleksander Wojciechowski the Polish expo at the Triennale triggered a reflection on the limitations of craft – a problem that was never addressed in the public debate. The state was mesmerised by the ideological potential of craft, and Telakowska believed in its transformative power. In a commentary from the Polish exhibition in Milan published in *Projekt,* Wojciechowski contemplated:

> Tradition helps art develop. But tradition can also hinder progress. We cannot reject tradition if we don't want to impoverish our own art. However, carrying on the entire spectrum of its experiences is a conscious limitation of rapid progress opportunities. [322]

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[320] See for example W. Danielak, 'Złote Dolary... Za Kurpiowskim Dywanem', *Trybuna Mazowiecka*, 2 March 1957. The case described in the article was a subject of a correspondence between the foreign trade enterprise Varimex responsible for export of Polish artisanal tapestries and the Ministry of the Foreign Trade.

[321] M. Leykam, 'Impresje powystawowe', p. 24.

[322] A. Wojciechowski, 'Niektóre sprawy polskiej architektury wnętrz', *Projekt* 2, no. 3 (5) (1957), p. 13.

Tradition for Wojciechowski was tantamount with the heritage of Polish artisanal manufacturing, which included a variety of manual techniques, the use of raw materials and a repository of folk inspired forms that had been used continuously throughout decades. Wojciechowski was a keen admirer of Telakowska's craft programme and he demonstrated his support through numerous articles, some of which had been quoted earlier. However, in his opinion the development of craft reached a turning point and required reconsideration, as the Polish exhibition in Milan had demonstrated. Wojciechowski suggested that a new type of industrial production should be developed based on artisanal practices. In order to respond to the current needs of society, this production was to operate on a mass scale, embrace advanced technologies and integrate specially trained artists into the process. Traditional practice, although it should be continued, should not replace fully developed modern production. Effectively, Wojciechowski appealed for the development of industrial design as more appropriate for the evolution of modern society.

Conclusions

The few years following Stalin's death marked a short, but intense modernist episode in Polish culture. They influenced the way Poland wanted to be presented globally too. Nevertheless, with Gomułka's rise to power in autumn 1956, the modernist tendencies that Poland planned to unveil on the international scene were tempered. Instead, from the beginning of the new year, pieces inspired by local folklore dominated the narratives of the exhibitions. The vernacular connotation corresponded with the concept of the 'Polish way to socialism', and artisanal practices could be easily accommodated with the Party rhetoric about national and egalitarian culture. Crafts existed in the artistic niche separated from the everyday issues of industrial production and everyday consumption, which still remained a highly problematic subject. By showing artisanal objects, the authorities managed to avoid questions from the international audience about consumption, provision or economy in Poland, which probably would have been raised if design pieces were presented. Instead, the displays offered a positive story about the state's role in preserving the national heritage, providing employment to the artists and making art useful to a large part of society. In doing so, the authorities appropriated the efforts of design activists and organisers, like

Wanda Telakowska, and repurposed them to veil 'the reality of the total lack of quality consumer goods in the shop.'[323]

The discrepancy between what was available home and what was showcased abroad exposed the superficial character of the state's involvement in the matter of craft and design. In an article suggestively titled 'Dramatic contrasts' Telakowska wrote, not without frustration:

> It is hard to believe that apart from highlights showcased 'once in a blue moon'– our 'everyday' visual culture is on such a low level… It makes me wonder why our visual artists' potential of talent and artistic culture, so successfully used for propaganda purposes, is not applied to everyday matters?[324]

There was a huge gap between the products presented by Poland at the international exhibitions and the state of commodities available for Polish consumers. As the discussion around the exhibition in Milan demonstrated, craft and artisanal production had a limited capability to tackle this issue: it was unable to meet the demands of the developing society, and on top of that with time it was growing pointless in the international context. Although its commercial potential was still high, as the successes of the CPLiA demonstrated, its ability to drive a national identity building process on a global scale was less effective than the authorities might have wished for. Wojciechowski's call to develop modern industrial production became very relevant to the situation at that time, as the character of Polish exhibitions abroad shifted. From the 1960s, Poland started using the exhibitions not only to manifest the development of the socialist society, but also to take advantage of the commercial opportunities, which frequently arose on the margins of cultural events.

[323] L. Taylor, 'The Search for a Polish National Identity – 1945-68. An Analysis of the Textile Design Work of Prof. Wanda Telakowska, Director of the Institute of Industrial Design, Warsaw', in S. Stern-Gillet (ed.), *Culture and Identity: Selected Aspects and Approaches* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1996), p. 404.
[324] W. Telakowska, 'Dramatyczne kontrasty', *Projekt* vol. 1 (1956), p. 11.

Chapter Three

For the masses: architectural design and the welfare state rhetoric in the early 1960s

Gomułka rose to power on the people's discontent and his rule was defined by the rhetoric of providing for the working masses. A large part of society believed that his reign would bring significant improvements to the country's situation, especially in the context of relations with Moscow and the standard of life. The new course in policy and the turn towards consumerism in particular were aligned with the broader process that was shaping domestic politics across the Eastern Bloc. Mass consumption became a pragmatically justified element of governmental agendas, which aimed to gain the support of the people and appease public moods. Indeed, backed by a revisionist group within the Party, Gomułka managed to achieve rapid success in that sphere. As history demonstrated, the support was rather short-lived – in the end, Gomułka's short-sighted policy led to strikes in 1970, and consequently to his dismissal. Before that happened however, the domestic situation was described as *little stabilisation (mała stabilizacja)*. Some historians rightly point out that the term, although very popular, was ill-suited to describe the political atmosphere of the 1960s in Poland, given the progressing division within the Party, the expulsion of Polish Jews and the escalating conflict between the state and the Catholic Church.[325] Nevertheless, *little stabilisation* expressed well the development of material culture and individual consumption in Poland at that time. Used for the first time in 1962 by Tadeusz Różewicz, in the title of his play, the phrase entered colloquial speech within months of the play being adapted for Television Theatre.[326] Michał Głowiński, a renowned Polish linguist, explained it in his dictionary of newspeak in the People's Republic as a period when

> terror did not reach the levels known from the beginning of the 1950s; when ideology was reduced to calls for production to export and gain dollars for

[325] See M. Zaremba, 'Społeczeństwo Polskie Lat Sześćdziesiątych – Miedzy »małą stabilizacją« a »małą Destabilizacją«', in K. Rokicki and S. Stępień (eds.), *Oblicza Marca 1968. Materiały z Sesji Naukowej Zorganizowanej Przez Oddziałowe Biuro Edukacji Publicznej Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej – Komisji Ścigania Zbrodni Przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w Warszawie 6 Marca 2003 Roku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IPN, 2004), pp. 24–51.

[326] A. Hanuszkiewicz, *Świadkowie albo Nasza Mała Stabilizacja* Telewizja Polska SA (1963). Available online: http://ninateka.pl/kolekcja-teatralna/material/swiadkowie-albo-nasza-mala-stabilizacja-jerzy-jarocki. Accessed on 5 January 2017.

> People's Poland; when there was no significant rotation of governmental positions; when many people found the meaning of life in acquiring objects that represented a particular standard of living – Janusz Szpotański called them the soc-set (*sockomplet*) – washing machine, refrigerator, TV and car, which the greater part of society could not attain and could only dream about.[327]

In Różewicz's *The Witnesses or Our Little Stabilisation,* these commodities were at the heart of the flimsy conversations that the protagonists were having. Material goods contributed to the image of the generation of post-war baby boomers: living in a city, blasé, and predominantly preoccupied with consumption.

Only a few years earlier design for the masses had become a timely subject, addressed from different angles by various professionals. Design critics, as the previous chapter demonstrated, were one of the groups who claimed it was necessary to depart from artisanal, decorative goods towards simple, functional objects for the masses. Similar voices were raised on many occasions by journalists, creative intelligentsia and the wider public, who additionally manifested their dissatisfaction with the quality of material goods in Poland. However, it was only in the late 1950s and the early 1960s that the authorities addressed this problem and changed their narrative. Gomułka's return to politics proved to be instrumental in that aspect.

In the first few years of Gomułka's regime, propagandist efforts were focused on a more holistic approach towards socialist spaces, both public and private: housing, educational facilities, working spaces and sites of leisure were of prime importance. The concept of standardisation in providing for the masses preoccupied the imagination of the authorities. Meanwhile, the problem of individualising the sites was slowly emerging as one of the design concerns among professionals. In the official rhetoric, these spaces replaced large construction and heavy engineering projects that dominated the image of the country in the late 1940s and the early 1950s. The issue of mass housing highlighted the problem of domesticity that in the 1950s and 1960s attracted the attention of governments across Europe, and the Eastern Bloc in particular.[328]

The two exhibitions that I explore in this chapter – the 1960 12th Triennale in Milan and the 1961 International Labour Exhibition held in Turin – allowed the state to

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[327] M. Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie: komentarze do słów, 1966-1971* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Pomost, 1991), p. 47.

[328] P. Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), especially chapter 4. Also various articles in R. Schuldenfrei (ed.), *From Homelessness to Homelessness* (London: Routledge, 2012).

demonstrate its reformed approach to the subject through a selection of the most current design proposals and realisations. They were presented as testimony to the joint transformative effort of the state and the creative intelligentsia to improve society and its material surroundings. By showcasing the outcomes of these – often not obvious – alliances, the Party posed as a patron of modern design and architecture.

The themes suggested by the Italian organisers of both events – home and school in Milan, and work and social security in Turin – coincided with the Polish government's agenda. These topics also indicated the global dimension of the problem, turning the expo grounds into a sparring arena between systemic solutions. The themes allowed the participating countries to manifest their commitment to improving the standards of living, which effectively transformed the exhibitions into another stage for the welfare race.

The politics of standardisation and individualisation: the 12th Milan Triennale, 1960

The 12th Triennale, for the first time in its history, was organised under a theme.[329] All participating countries were asked to address contemporary issues related to home and school in their national displays.[330] The overarching theme was an answer to the severe criticism of the previous Triennale: in 1957 the event had been accused of being detached from current social matters. This time the organisers expressed their desire to confront 'the real problems and to interest the average consumer, who was attentive to the increasing consumption of those years as well as to the production of superfluous goods.'[331] Out of the 16 countries that declared their participation in the event, only a few responded to this call, including Great Britain, Mexico and Poland. Other countries, just like in the previous years, gave priority to the commercial aspect of their displays.[332] One of them was Czechoslovakia who, following the commercial success of its previous exhibitions, once again decided to focus entirely on decorative glass objects. A similar disengagement from the main theme was demonstrated by the

[329] The exhibition was open to the public between 16 June and 4 November 1960.
[330] A. Pansera, 'The Triennale of Milan: Past, Present, and Future', *Design Issues* 2, no. 1 (1985), p. 28.
[331] A. Pansera, 'The Triennale of Milan', p. 28.
[332] I-M. Tanier, 'The Twelfth Triennale of Milan', *Interiors*, October (1960), pp. 112–128.

Scandinavian countries and provoked critical remarks from some reviewers and other participants.[333]

The Polish pavilion, commissioned by the Ministry of Art and Culture, was situated on the ground floor between the Austrian and German sections. The presentation was curated by Oskar Hansen, an architect and luminary of post-Thaw architecture in Poland, with the assistance of Jolanta Owidzka, a textile artist. Owidzka and Hansen met while working at the Association of the Polish Artists, as secretary and chairman of the interior design section respectively. Since then, they frequently collaborated on various architectural and exhibition projects.[334]

The Polish exhibition in Milan showcased 434 pieces, including textiles, glass pieces, ceramics, publications and large-scale photographs of architecture created by 59 designers, craftsmen and architects. Through this diversity of objects Hansen wanted to demonstrate 'the specificity of our Polish conditions, without beautifying the situation… All these projects and realisations… exposed the individuality of man's nature and technology.'[335] Many Polish exhibits belonged to the category of original artisanal works and studio prototypes, which had a very limited chance of being introduced into regular production. This fact did not diminish the Polish presentation, on the contrary — the Triennale explicitly prioritised the discursive value of experimental designs over mass-produced commodities:

> Exhibits presented at the Triennale do not have to be articles of commerce; they can be triggers for further discussion, illustrating the experiments that are not profitable as of yet. That's why almost every stand features designs born out of experiments, conducted without restraint or concern about the potential refusal from a producer or a consumer. Everyday goods however, even if they are world-renowned and widely distributed products, are not displayed.[336]

In principle, this scheme was beneficial for countries with an underdeveloped light industry, such as Poland, allowing them to demonstrate their creative potential

[333] See for example J. Owidzka, 'Pawilon Polski na XII Triennale w Mediolanie', *Architektura* 10, no. 156 (1960), p. 409.
[334] Over the years, Hansen designed several exhibitions of Owidzka's tapestries. The information was provided by Jolanta Owidzka in an interview with the author, Warsaw, 5 January 2017.
[335] J. Gola (ed.), *Oskar Hansen. Ku Formie Otwartej / Towards an Open Form* (Warsaw: Muzeum Akademii Sztuk Pięknych; Fundacja Galerii Foksal; Revolver, 2005).
[336] M. Sobolewska, 'Triennale 1960', *Wiadomości IWP* 2 (1961), p. 1.

rather than the actual manufacturing outcomes. By shifting the focus towards design concepts, the Triennale organisers encouraged experiments in the fields of housing and education.

Following these official guidelines, the Polish pavilion presented a new type of artisanal works, applicable to contemporary urban interiors. Nevertheless, in comparison with the previous expo at the Triennale, the one in 1960 offered rather limited references to folklore, evident in just a few exhibits. One of the most prominent objects that highlighted its traditional provenance was a richly decorated chest crafted in the Małopolska region at the beginning of the century (Fig. 3.1).

Fig. 3.1. Polish exhibition at the 12th Milan Triennale in 1960

Other crafts had a much more contemporary character and were presented as decorative elements for the modern living environment. One of them was an armchair designed by Władysław Wołkowski (Fig. 3.2) – made of wicker and metal, the construction was Wołkowski's most recognisable piece, which he had been producing on a small scale since the 1920s. Out of the entire collection of furniture presented in Milan, the chair bore the most resemblance to the folk-inspired exhibits from the earlier displays; however, Wołkowski revised the traditional handicraft aesthetics in the experimental spirit of the late 1950s, embracing in his design the organic shape that characterised the most up-to-date creations. His furniture, which was widely publicised in popular magazines, was designed 'to individualise ordinary interiors, to break through the tedious monotony of standardisation'.[337] The exhibition showcased many

[337] J. Wielgut-Walczak, 'Władysław Wołkowski. Shaping Wicker Objects', in Cz. Frejlich (ed.), *Out of the Ordinary*, pp. 218–27.

other works with a similar function: glassworks, ceramics and textiles were examples of decorative items used to beautify modern, standardised flats.


8. Autor Władysław Wołkowski, Warszawa. Wykonanie autora
8a. Widoczne wiązanie wikliny z metalową konstrukcją fotela pokazanego na zdjęciu nr 8

9. Autor Władysław Wołkowski, Warszawa. Fotel wiklinowy z konstrukcją metalową. Wykonanie autora
9a. Międzynarodowa Wystawa Porównawcza Stali i Szkła na XII Triennale. Na pierwszym planie wazon-dwojak Władysława Zycha, Warszawa

10. Autor Władysław Wołkowski, Warszawa. Fotel wiklinowy z metalową konstrukcją. Wykonanie autora
10a. Fragment fotela pokazanego na zdjęciu nr 10. Widoczne wiązanie wikliny z metalową konstrukcją mebla

Fig. 3.2. Chair by Władysław Wołkowski, photographs published in *Architektura* 10, no. 156 (1960)

The exhibition also featured a few examples of objects developed with mass production in mind. Among them were chairs designed by members of the Ład Cooperative, which carried the legacy of the interwar period – not through any particular style, but through the perfection of form, material and realisation; stylistically, the chairs were in fact very different (Fig. 3.3). Jan Kurzątkowski created a simple plywood chair with a rounded base and backrest, which was made as a one-off at the Academy's workshop in 1956. The chair designed by Czesław Knothe combined a wired net with a simple wooden frame. It represented the material experiments Knothe had initiated in the mid-1950s, when he developed a series of prototypes using industrial wire, which potentially could be applied to mass production.[338] The chair by Marian Sigmund utilised similar technology of bent plywood, but combined it with a soft seat. Just like the rest of his designs, it was 'a neutral furniture not marked by excessive modernity, carefully designed, and discreetly decorative'.[339] It was the only chair out of those presented in Milan that was available through regular production.[340]

Fig. 3.3. Chairs at the Polish exhibition in Milan designed by (from the left): Czesław Knothe, Marian Sigmund, Jan Kurzątkowski and Władysław Wołkowski

[338] A. Panecka, 'Czesław Knothe. Wywiad', *Projekt* 5, no. 138 (1980), pp. 28–35.
[339] A. Maga, 'Marian Sigmund. Doing it by the Book', in Cz. Frejlich (ed.), *Out of the Ordinary*, p. 222.
[340] La Triennale di Milano, Biblioteca del progetto e Archivio Storico, Nazioni Estere Polonia, TRN_12_DT_113_CM, 113.14. La liste des oeuvres vendables d'exposition Polonaise à la XII Triennale di Milano, p. 2.

The efforts of these individual creators to design for mass production were not acknowledged by the industry. 'Poland does not have a lasting tradition of good popular furniture', argued Jadwiga Putowska in an article published that year in *Architektura*. She appealed to the readership, which consisted predominantly of architecture and design professionals:

> We have to build a democratic culture of dwelling in cities and villages from scratch. Mass-produced collections, furnishing hundreds of thousands of flats, will play a major role in this process. We need directional guidelines for [developing] popular low-cost furniture, and we need to place the design of these objects on the right track.[341]

Hers was not an isolated thought and many artists at that time shared similar sentiments. Any attempts they initiated in that direction attracted the interest of officials, who recognised the ideological potential of those claims and placed them in the context of the new socialist society and providing for the masses. The exhibition in Milan presented works of the first generation of designers who were qualified to change the situation. The selection of prototypes for mass production included original pieces by creators who formed the industrial design scene in Poland: Andrzej Jan Wróblewski, Emil Cieślar and Olgierd Rutkowski. Born in the 1930s, they had started studying at the Academy of Fine Arts before the actual design programme was established. Nevertheless, the education from the Sculpture Department that they all gained proved to be sufficient training for giving shape to an object. Especially that it was followed by working at the experimental Art and Research Unit run by Jerzy Sołtan at the Academy. A set of cutlery, which Wróblewski, Cieślar and Rutkowski developed at the Unit, was displayed at the exhibition in Milan. The slightly older Maria Chomentowska, educated at the Interior Design Department of the Academy, showcased the early prototypes of school benches she created at the Institute of Industrial Design, where she had started working while completing her studies (Fig. 3.4). The plywood furniture, although shaped according to the modern spirit, bore marks of the interwar influences of Chomentowska's teacher, the aforementioned Jan Kurzątkowski.

[341] J. Putowska, 'Meble Seryjne Instytutu Wzornictwa Przemysłowego', *Architektura* 6, no. 152 (1960), p. 213.

Fig. 3.4. Prototype of a school bench designed by Maria Chomentowska

These subtle continuations of the interwar heritage of Polish applied art went unnoticed by the foreign reviewers. In Poland, however, they were welcomed as signs of the country being reborn after the Stalinist period. The simple forms and 'democratic' materials (e.g. natural plywood that replaced the more expensive in production highly polished veneers) were received with enthusiasm as harbingers of modernity. External observers were well accustomed to similar solutions, therefore the Polish examples did not impress them much: wired mesh chairs presented by Polish designers seemed to be not much different from works by Harry Bertoia from America, plywood had successfully been explored since the 1940s by Ray and Charles Eames, and wicker armchairs were developed simultaneously in Sweden by Kerstin Hörlin-Holmquist and in Italy by Roberto Mango.[342] Polish designers were familiar with this furniture developed in the West – as early as in 1948 some of those works were shown in *Architektura,* and around 1955 photographs of the American, Italian and Scandinavian achievements were publicised in a popular weekly magazine.[343] What is more, shortly after the war Polish designers started their own explorations of simple, modern and functional furniture, but due to the unavailability of technologies those experiments were delayed in time.[344]

[342] P. Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), especially chapter 5.
[343] See for example an article in the *Stolica* weekly, published for a general readership. See J. O., 'Nowoczesne Meble na Zachodzie', *Stolica* 10, no. 44 (1955), p. 15.
[344] J. Hryniewiecki, 'Na Drodze do Nowego Mebla', *Architektura* 1 (1948), pp. 20–23.

Polish furniture and accessories were barely noticed in Milan, and not highly regarded. As one critic observed, the Polish display was 'a little bit too tentative' and unconventional, and Poland still had 'a long way to go'.[345] Unlike Polish products, Polish graphic design was very positively received. Illustrated publications for children, although loosely related to the entire concept of the exhibition, were the most praised elements of the Polish pavilion.[346] In the words of a Dutch reviewer, they 'demonstrated such a charm and imagination that it makes one wish to be a Polish child'.[347] This was not an isolated voice: illustrated publications followed the success of the Polish Poster school and became globally recognised. A Swedish journalist noted that the Polish presentation revealed 'numerous talents, who follow the contemporary tendencies in their own way'.[348] She noticed that the Polish exposition featured 'quality ceramics, a few interesting jacquards, and some timid, but praiseworthy attempts to produce original furniture'.[349] Nevertheless, these were mere outcomes of 'the international trends', followed from behind the Iron Curtain.[350] The exhibitions from Eastern Europe were perceived by Western audiences as 'an odd batch', even if national displays did not have much in common. Her judgement of the Czechoslovak pavilion was not much different; although the Czechoslovak textiles were quite pleasant, the showcased glass seemed to be inspired by the West-German Rosenthal.[351] Regardless of their noticeable differences, the Polish and Czechoslovak presentations were considered parts of the same narrative.

In fact, similarities between the designs of different nations were symptomatic for all exhibitions and spanned across the political divide. For many observers the 12th Triennale illustrated the end of a vernacular style and the rise of a global approach to design. Between the late 1940s and the mid-1960s, post-war (or mid-century) modernism became a universal aesthetic. The early enthusiasm about the emergence of this cosmopolitan language, was overshadowed in the early 1960s by a concern that many nations had lost their original styles in the pursuit of modernisation. A journalist

[345] I.-M. Tanier, 'The Twelfth Triennale of Milan', p. 115 and B. Huber, 'Rückblicke und Ausblicke an der 12. Triennale in Mailand', *Das Werk* 47, no. 11 (1960), p. 393.
[346] H. Urbanowicz, 'List z Mediolanu', *Dziennik Łódzki* 271 (13 November 1960), p. 4–5.
[347] P. Brattinga Jr., 'Kamers Als Aquaria', *Nürtinger Zeitung*, 29 July 1960.
[348] E. Meldal, 'Nu Kan Inte Möbelstilen Bli Mycket Mer Anemisk', *Kvällsposten*, 22 July 1960, n.p.
[349] Ibidem.
[350] Ibidem.
[351] Ibidem.

from the Swiss architecture journal *Das Werk* commented that the national pavilions presented at the Triennale seemed to be amalgamated: the Czechoslovak stand, so distinct three years earlier, in 1960 was 'hardly distinguishable from the Finnish pavilion.' [352] Japan presented 'an improved version of Aalto bentwood chairs'; meanwhile, the chairs from the Danish section might have been placed in the Austrian display and vice versa.[353] Western countries were visibly struggling for originality.

The socialist ideologues found an opportunity in this global trend – to talk about the specificity of design in the Eastern Bloc.[354] Rather than referring to particular aesthetics, which as it was mentioned earlier were rather similar on an international scale, they referred to the social context in which design was developed. In Poland, the voice of Szymon Bojko resonated particularly strongly. He was one of the most important art and design critics at that time, and a long-term employee of the Party's cultural department. He also had an impressive professional network – both in the East, where he researched the Russian avant-garde, and in the West, where he was a well-respected ambassador of Polish graphic design.

In his review of the 12th Triennale, written for the weekly *Nowa Kultura,* he made a point about the distinctiveness of Polish design culture. Bojko noted that despite the significant backwardness of the technological and material aspects of Polish design, the exhibition revealed that Polish artists represented a great creative potential in contrast to others:

> One could risk saying that the success of the Polish pavilion is inversely proportional to its size, abundance and the technological quality of its exhibits in comparison with other countries.[355]

In another publication he made a very similar remark with regard to the Polish display at the Venice Art Biennale, which took place almost at the same time. Poland's political isolation was, according to Bojko, the biggest source of the strength of Polish creativity. Being detached from the international art scene allowed Polish artists to focus on greater ideas, instead of trying to satisfy commercial demands. The benefits of

[352] B. Huber, 'Rückblicke Und Ausblicke', p. 393.
[353] Ibidem.
[354] For the Soviet context see for example T. Jerlei, 'Socialist Elements in Soviet Design Ideology', in H. Barbosa and A. Calvera (eds.), *Tradition, Transition, Trajectories: Major or Minor Influences? Proceedings* (Aveiro: University of Aveiro, 2014), pp. 587–91.
[355] S. Bojko, 'Mediolańskie Triennale 1960', *Nowa Kultura* 40 (2 October 1960), p. 8.

Poland's isolation were even more evident in a design context, and Bojko referred to the 12th Triennale to prove his thesis. As he noted: 'For some time now, the Triennale has been a field on which two tendencies clash.'[356] One was represented by the US and the Western European countries – Bojko described it as 'commercial, conservative, driven by an expedient opportunity to sell'. The other, visible in Eastern Europe and Poland in particular, 'was being "more independent", contesting the utilitarian (commercial) purposes [of design].'[357]

The complex system of official commissions demonstrated the state's approval of artistic practices and its goodwill attempt to create a positive atmosphere that would allow artists to engage fully with social issues. The Party's support of creative projects relieved artists from courting consumer desires; at the same time, the system of official commissions, centrally managed by the authorities, allowed visual artists and designers to earn a living.[358] Eastern Europe, Bojko continued, was to 'remain probably the only centre in the world for experimentation and discussion in industrial art, which by its nature is dependent on technological development and material resources.'[359] The Polish selection presented in Milan was, according to Bojko, a perfect illustration of this approach and as such could provide a viable alternative for the development of design on a global scale. There were a few Western commentators who expressed similar beliefs on different occasions between the late 1950s and mid 1960s – such as the left-wing Tomás Maldonado, rector of the famous Ulm School of Design, or Ernesto Nathan Rogers, quoted in the previous chapter.[360] However, during the 12th Milan Triennale

[356] Ibidem.
[357] Ibidem.
[358] A system of state commissions, dubbed 'profitable works' (*prace rentowne*), was described by E. Toniak, *Prace Rentowne. Polscy Artyści Między Ekonomią a Sztuką w Okresie Odwilży* (Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2015). In the following decades this system was criticised by several artists, who for various reasons didn't want to rely on or could not obtain lucrative official commissions. The monopolist practices of the state were particularly burdensome for conceptual and critical artists. See Z. Kulik, 'Pracownie Sztuk Plastycznych' (Warszawa w Budowie 4, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, 22 November 2012). Available online: https://artmuseum.pl/pl/doc/video-wwb-tv-pracownie-sztuk-plastycznych. Accessed on 29 September 2017.
[359] S. Bojko, 'Mediolańskie Triennale 1960', p. 8.
[360] Both Maldonado and Rogers focused on the conditions for creating design rather than on the final results of actions. Ernesto Nathan Rogers expressed an opinion that an alternative model developed in different political circumstances could save contemporary design as a whole from the banality and isolation, which he had observed in current Western production presented at the Triennales. Maldonado, in an article published in 1963, stated that designers working in a non-capitalist society are given opportunities that their Western peers do not have. However, in his

these voices remained unheard, and international critics disregarded Polish industrial design and applied art as irrelevant to the current situation and internationally uncompetitive.

The Polish architecture on show had a better chance of impressing the audiences, since it was, as Virág Molnár observed, a very current tool of social reforms.[361] The main exhibition theme created an opportunity to present Polish architectural ideas for new dwellings and education. The display focused on the exemplary schemes that had just been conceived and, with a few exceptions, completed. These were nonetheless unusual works which, rather than illustrating the everyday culture of home and school, revealed a potential that was never fully explored.

Fig. 3.5. Polish exhibition at the 12th Milan Triennale, 1960

judgement, the designers failed to explore this prospect: 'Curiously enough, the industrial designer in the Socialist countries is not fully conscious of the new possibilities that his economic and social system – at least in theory – offers to his profession… The designers of a noncompetitive society are in a favourable position for attacking this new kind of task, but until now not very much has happened.' See H. Lindinger, *Ulm Design. The Morality of Objects* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p. 152.

[361] V. Molnár, *Building the State. Architecture, Politics, and State Formation in Post-War Central Europe* (London: Routldge, 2013), p. 7.

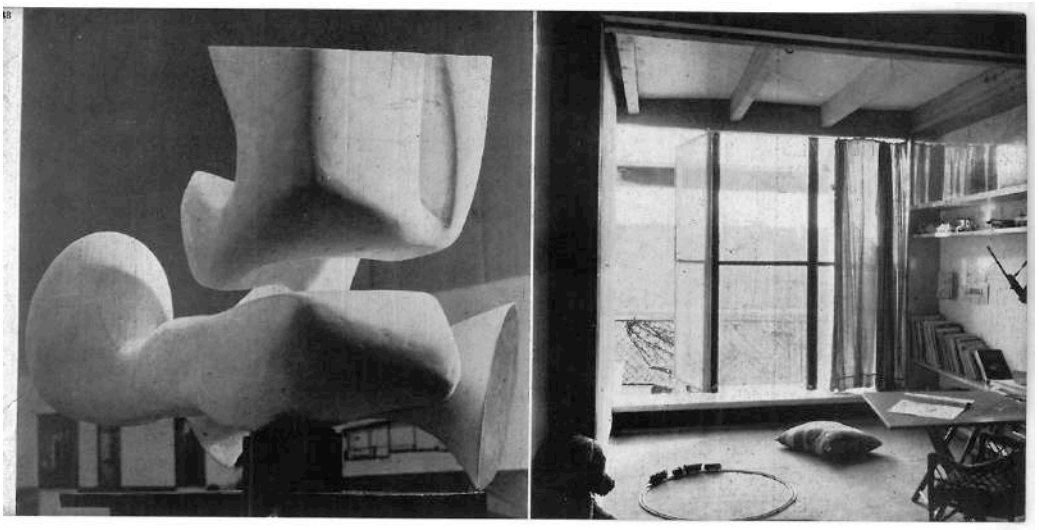

Fig. 3.6. Page from the Polish exhibition catalogue: 'studio ed attuazione' (*eng*. study model and implementation). On the left – spatial model by Oskar Hansen, on the right an interior of the Hansens' flat in Warsaw

The most prominent place was given to a spatial model by Oskar Hansen (Fig. 3.5 and Fig. 3.6). It represented the interior of his own flat, which he designed with his wife Zofia Garlińska-Hansen, with whom he collaborated on most of his projects.[362] Just like the flats of many other architects, this private space was an embodiment of Hansen's professional beliefs.[363] The yellow fibreglass sculptural form was suspended from the ceiling in the middle of the Polish display. 'An active–negative model', as Hansen used to call it, was a tool he frequently used in his teaching to represent an interior of a building and to reconstruct the feeling it may evoke. As he explained on various occasions, 'Its main purpose is to conduct an emotional study of a composition of a space before commencing the technical phase.'[364] The Triennale expo featured photographs of interiors designed by the Hansens for the 1957 2nd Exhibition of Interior Architecture held in Warsaw in 1957 – they used Owidzka's printed textiles which, apart from having a decorative purpose, divided the space into functional zones.

[362] Zofa Garlińska-Hansen was the co-author of most of Oskar Hansen's architectural projects, yet her input has only recently been properly acknowledged. For the professional situation of other female architects in socialist Poland see P. Marciniak, 'Spousal Collaboration as a Professional Strategy for Women Architects in the Polish People's Republic', in M. Pepchinski and M. Simon (eds.), *Ideological Equals: Women Architects in Socialist Europe 1945-1989* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 63–77.

[363] The Hansens lived in this house with their two sons between 1950 and 1996. See A. Kędziorek, 'Domy Hansenów', in F. Springer, A. Kędziorek, and J. Smaga (eds.), *Dom Jako Forma Otwarta: Szumin Hansenów* (Kraków: Karakter, 2014), pp. 32–48.

[364] See J. Gola (ed.), *Oskar Hansen*, p. 105. The model was made by Hansen in collaboration with his students, Emil Cieślar and Andrzej Jan Wróblewski.

These fabrics were one of the last works Owidzka developed for the Institute of Industrial Design. In 1957 she left the Institute and started working independently: 'I was fed up with the industry, it deformed all our designs. That was the reason I quit my job and concentrated on individual projects.'[365] Unlike her earlier designs conceived with mass reproduction in mind, her personal portfolio consisted predominantly of one-off decorative textiles and large tapestries for representative interiors. Her professional choice seemed typical for many creative professionals at that time: the post-Thaw changes on Poland's artistic scene made them believe that originality and individual expression should be celebrated. This is the first generation that pursued its more independent ambitions and praised personal style, which – as Irena Huml noted – was reflected in the rise of one-artist exhibitions.[366] This was a transformative experience for Owidzka and other makers. It led to the emergence of a truly original approach to textiles, which quickly became acclaimed abroad.[367]

The photographs of the ideal interiors were displayed alongside visual documentation of the most progressive housing estates that were being developed in Poland at that time. The temporary post-Thaw relaxation in architectural planning regulations resulted in the unprecedentedly high quality of some of the buildings. Among them were Warsaw's mass housing schemes: the Hansens' Rakowiec Estate, Osiedle Młodych (*The Estate of Youth*) by Stefan Ciechanowicz and Tadeusz Kobylański, and Sady Żoliborskie (*Żoliborz Orchards*) by Jacek Nowicki and Halina Skibniewska, to whom I will return later in this chapter.[368]

Innovative solutions were also noticeable in school buildings. The exhibition introduced new schemes for primary schools in urban and suburban areas. Their authors

[365] An interview with Jolanta Owidzka, Warsaw, 5 January 2017.
[366] W. Lipowicz, 'Dekady. Z Profesor Ireną Huml Rozmawia Wojciech Lipowicz', in H. Jasicka (ed.), *Użytkowa Fantastyka Lat Pięćdziesiątych: Katalog Wystawy* (Poznań: Muzeum Rzemiosł Artystycznych, Oddział Muzeum Narodowego w Poznaniu, 1991), p. 17.
[367] The Lausanne International Tapestry Biennials were instrumental in promoting Polish textile artists on the international scene. See G. E. Cotton, 'The Lausanne International Tapestry Biennials (1962-1995) The Pivotal Role of a Swiss City in the "New Tapestry" Movement in Eastern Europe After World War II', *Textiles and Politics: Textile Society of America 13th Biennial Symposium Proceedings*, Paper 670, (Washington, D.C., 2012). Available online: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1669&context=tsaconf. Accessed on 1 September 2016.
[368] See R. Zalewski and Z. Gąsior (eds.), *Osiedle Młodych, Warszawa: 16 XII 1956–16 XII 1961* (Warszawa, 1961) and T. Fudala, 'Mieszkanie z instrukcją obsługi. Osiedle Sady Żoliborskie Haliny Skibniewskiej', in Ł. Gorczyca and M. Czapelski (eds.), *Mister Warszawy. Architektura mieszkaniowa lat 60. XX wieku* (Warszawa: Robotnicza Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa Osiedle Młodych, 2012), pp. 34–55.

were much less prominent architects than the Hansens and their names remained unacknowledged in most of the expo materials. The buildings were grouped according to their typologies rather than particular locations, which signalised their replicable character: village schools were designed by Janusz Cierpiński, Jerzy Grochowski, Zasław Malicki and Marian Szymanowski; schools for small towns by Ludwik Borawski and Wiesław Nowak; and for the city by Andrzej Małek.[369] School architecture had a smaller impact on the creation of Poland's positive image abroad, even though it proved to be a significant contribution to the broader debate at home.

The new types of schools that the presentation featured, apart from providing input to the architectural discussion, concluded the transformation of Poland's education system. The exhibition at the Triennale took place in the last year of a series of educational reforms initiated in 1956.[370] They were centred around the concept of a free, compulsory, universal and public education, introduced shortly after the war. Despite a course of amendments, these reforms sustained the idea of education as an integral part in the formation of socialist morality.[371] Moreover, they were presented as a social achievement of the socialist system: in comparison with the 1930s the illiteracy in 1960 reportedly dropped by about 20%.[372] As a consequence of the reforms, the educational facilities had to expand too. Additionally, the demographic boom, which resulted in a high demand for new houses, was followed by a demand for new schools a few years later.

The much-needed expansion of the schooling infrastructure across the country was linked with the millennial programme, organised to celebrate the country's thousand-year anniversary. The Polish Millennium, as the event was officially named, was preceded by the Great Novena, a nine-year programme of religious ceremonies, mass pilgrimages and celebrations around the Marian cult prepared and run by the Catholic Church. The state responded with a counter programme of social initiatives, the culmination of which was scheduled for 1966. While the Church put special

[369] J. Owidzka, 'Pawilon Polski na XII Triennale w Mediolanie', *Architektura* 10, no. 156 (1960), p. 409.
[370] R. Skawiński, 'Korzenie i Uwarunkowania Reform Polskiej Edukacji w XX Wieku', *Studia Ełckie* 10 (2008), pp. 193–229.
[371] E. Kahl, 'Polityka Oświatowa Władz w Procesie Instalowania Nowego Ładu Społecznego (1944–1948)', *Biuletyn Historii Wychowania* 27 (2011), pp. 33–50.
[372] Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Rocznik Statystyczny, Warszawa, GUS 26 (1966), p. 34 quoted in J. R. Fiszman, *Revolution and Tradition in People's Poland: Education and Socialization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2015), p. 269.

emphasis on engaging with the youth on the spiritual plane, the Party addressed the pragmatic needs of the young generation.

Following the creation of the catchy slogan 'a Thousand Schools for the Thousandth Anniversary', the Social Fund for the Construction of Millennium Schools was established in November 1958.[373] Its goal was to build the public profile of the endeavour and collect donations from individuals and organisations. The response to the project was very positive: on the wave of this social enthusiasm, the state launched a national competition among different professions, provinces and social groups, in order to compare their contributions.[374] As a result of the programme 1,197 new primary, secondary and vocational schools and training facilities were built across the country.[375] They replaced numerous makeshift classrooms hosted in temporary locations, spontaneously constructed shacks and school buildings that were partially destroyed during the war.[376] Subsequently, the Ministry of Education commissioned the Institute of Industrial Design to develop a series of school furniture pieces, which initially were to be tested by a primary school in the Warsaw district of Żoliborz, and ultimately to be installed in all other new buildings. The main designer working on the scheme was the aforementioned Maria Chomentowska, whose simple plywood school bench was featured at the Triennale exhibition. However – just like many other prototypes – the plywood version of the school set, finalised in early 1960, was never introduced into regular production.[377]

The so-called 'millennium schools' (*tysiąclatki*), or 'schools-monuments of the Polish millennium', were built according to a modern architectural design that was

[373] S. Stępka, 'Społeczny Fundusz Budowy Szkół Tysiąclecia (1958-1966)', *Studia Historyczne* 50, no. 2 (2007), pp. 233–242.
[374] M. Migdalski, 'Rozwój Budownictwa Szkolnego na Mazowszu z Okazji Tysiąclecia Państwa Polskiego', *Rocznik Mazowiecki* 2 (1969), pp. 458–464.
[375] S. Stępka, 'Społeczny Fundusz Budowy Szkół Tysiąclecia (1958-1966)', p. 240.
[376] J. Dobek, (ed.), *Architektura i budownictwo szkolne PRL*, p. 25. Additionally, some of the old educational facilities were occupied by the state for different purposes, such as the location of Party facilities. See A. Basista, *Betonowe Dziedzictwo* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2001), p. 104.
[377] M. Chomentowska, 'Meble Szkolne', *Biuletyn IWP* 3, dodatek do miesięcznika 'Przemysł Drzewny' (1959), pp. 43–44. The project was later developed with the use of anthropometric data in furniture sets for primary education. See M. Płażewska and R. Terlikowski, 'Wyposażenie Klas I-IV', *Wiadomości IWP* 1–2 (1965), pp. 21–29 and M. Płażewska, 'Wyposażenie Klas V-VIII', *Wiadomości IWP* 3 (1965), pp. 8–16.

replicated in urban, suburban and rural areas (Fig. 3.7).[378] The two- or three-storey buildings with a line of windows running across the façade were constructed from prefabricated elements that for some reviewers evoked the Bauhaus tradition.[379] This architectural model, as the professional journal *Architektura* explained, symbolised the egalitarianism and universality of education in the socialist country.[380] The prefabricated components allowed the state to meet the quantitative demands; the early results of this new construction process, as presented in Milan, demonstrated they could also be functional and sensible. Only an entire decade later the scheme was critically reassessed. Henryk Buszko, the chairman of a professional association of architects, noted in his report for the Ministry of Education that despite the fact that architects had managed to build a number of new facilities, the millennial project left them apprehensive. 'Is it actually the best setting for the development and formation of a smart, righteous, modern human being?', Buszko questioned.[381]

Fig. 3.7. 'School of the future' in Bielany, Warsaw, designed by Jerzy Władysław Baumiller, published in *Architektura* 8, no. 178 (1962)

The construction of mass housing faced similar challenges of quantity versus quality. In the post-war reality, providing shelter for displaced and traumatised people was a practical challenge, which soared to a critical level with the demographic boom of

[378] S. Dobosiewicz, 'General Education', in T. Galiński (ed.), *Culture in People's Poland* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, 1966), pp. 367–382.
[379] W. Geppert, 'Szkoły Przyszłości', *Architektura* 8, no. 178 (1962), pp. 303–9.
[380] W. Geppert, 'Wczoraj i Dziś w Budownictwie Szkół', *Architektura* 8, no. 178 (1962), p. 301.
[381] *Architektura i Budownictwo Szkolne w Polsce Ludowej* (Warszawa, 1974), n.p.

the early 1950s.[382] The demand for new housing was particularly high in the cities. By 1950, urban dwellers represented around 36% of the entire population of Poland; ten years later that number reached 48%, and in the next decade the figure grew by another 4%.[383] In Poland, like in the rest of Eastern Europe, the state had complete control over all aspects of the housing sector: not only did it finance and manage the construction of new buildings, but it was also responsible for allocating the flats to individuals and families. This centralised policy, rather than improving the housing situation, resulted in the opposite. Anders Åman, in his pioneering publication on the architecture of Eastern Europe, raised two questions: how much was built, and to what standard? The answers, which he provided by comparing statistical material from different countries, were not satisfactory:

> housing production in the people's democracies during the Cold War was low, decidedly lower than in the West, in spite of repeated claims to the contrary. After the rapid recovery of the earliest post-war years, housing standards improved remarkably slowly.[384]

The budget for investing in new housing was very limited; in the early 1950s the Polish government prioritised military aims over the development of new housing schemes. Since this expenditure hierarchy, determined by Poland's political situation, was impossible to alter – the government had to look for temporary solutions to address the financial deficiency in the sector. In order to deal with the budget constraints, it introduced a set of strict norms and regulations, which affected the entire process of planning, construction, completion and provisioning.[385] Ten square metres per person – the housing allowance applied originally – was halved over the following few years.[386]

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[382] Housing and domesticity was on the agendas of many governments across Europe. See D. Crowley and P. Betts, 'Introduction', *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 2 (2005), pp. 213–36.

[383] A. Zborowski, M. Soja, and A. Łobodzińska, 'Population Trends in Polish Cities – Stagnation, Depopulation or Shrinkage?', *Prace Geograficzne* 130 (2012), p. 11.

[384] A. Åman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era. An Aspect of Cold War History* (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1992), p. 82.

[385] For the typification, prefabrication and savings introduced by various administrative regulations in architecture and urbanism see M. Czapelski, '"Mistery" i inni. O warszawskiej architekturze mieszkaniowej lat 60. i jej uwarunkowaniach', in Ł. Gorczyca and M. Czapelski (eds.), *Mister Warszawy* (Warszawa: Raster), pp. 13–33.

[386] D. Jarosz, *Mieszkanie się należy: studium z peerelowskich praktyk społecznych* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra-JR, 2010), pp. 87–98.

Some attempts to ease the harsh policy were made around 1954, on the wave of the post-Stalinist transformation. As a result, the state gave up its monopoly over the housing sector and reactivated housing cooperatives and private construction bodies, which had been abolished in the late 1940s.[387] During the following years the authorities in Poland, the Soviet Union and other Eastern European states became interested in mass housing and, more broadly, in the living conditions of a socialist society. In mid-1957, Khrushchev launched what was to be dubbed 'perhaps the most ambitious governmental housing program in human history', which became his signature reform in Moscow.[388] As Christine Varga-Harris noted, the scope of the project was threefold: to shape the Soviet person, to invigorate socialist society and to solidify Communism. Consequently, she claimed, by addressing the issues of home and house, the authorities connected them with discourses of the post-war reconstruction and Cold War rivalry.[389]

At the centre of the plans to improve the housing situation was the application of standardised solutions, which significantly improved the efficiency of constructing new buildings. Modular elements were used for the first time in Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic, where in the late 1940s officials proclaimed the standardisation in housing construction.[390] In Poland, Gomułka introduced a similar approach to overcome the housing crisis of the late 1950s. Therefore, the number of

[387] These gestures partially relieved the state from bearing all the costs of constructing the new housing, but also confirmed the bankruptcy of the current housing policy. See K. Madej, *Spółdzielczość mieszkaniowa: władze PRL wobec niezależnej inicjatywy społecznej (1961-1965)* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2003). On housing cooperatives see M. Ciechocinska, 'Government Interventions to Balance Housing Supply and Urban Population Growth: The Case of Warsaw', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 11, no. 1 (1987), pp. 9–26.

[388] See for example C. Varga-Harris, 'Homemaking and the Aesthetic and Moral Perimeters of the Soviet Home During the Khrushchev Era', *Journal of Social History* 41, no. 3 (2008), pp. 561–89.

[389] C. Varga-Harris, *Stories of House and Home: Soviet Apartment Life during the Khrushchev Years* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), p. 10. See also S. A. Harris, 'Soviet Mass Housing and the Communist Way of Life', in C. Chatterjee, D. L. Ransel, M. W. Cavender, K. Petrone (eds.), *Everyday Life in Russia Past and Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), pp. 181–202.

[390] K. Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity. Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

available flats increased: in 1956 nearly 90,800 new flats were completed, and by 1961 the number would increase to 144,200.[391]

Polish authorities believed that artists and architects could introduce a new, more creative approach to the use of standardised elements, and therefore the state put pressure on them to prioritise that aspect in their practice.[392] As the Polish text in the Triennale's catalogue highlighted, the government relied on 'the technological progress and industrialisation, which allowed it to build better and faster, use the materials more rationally and organise work in a more efficient way' in order to meet the housing demands.[393] This approach imposed by the authorities raised the architects' concerns much quicker than it did with regard to educational facilities. The Polish exhibition in Milan and its accompanying publication addressed the issue of standardisation in the context of the quality of life.

The catalogue of the Polish display, prepared independently from the official Triennale publication, was designed by Oskar Hansen – with the assistance of Jolanta Owidzka. It was a form of visual essay, where black and white photographs were combined with drawings and short captions. Although it contained images of objects and architectural schemes showcased by the Polish presentation, the folder told a much more complex story about contemporary society. The photographs the catalogue featured were taken in Poland, but they served to illustrate more universal issues, which to various extents applied to all countries around the globe. By selecting images with groups of people and placing them next to portraits of individuals, Hansen emphasised that communities are diverse and not as homogenous as they may seem (Fig. 3.8). A blurred frame of a crowd juxtaposed with a composition of tinned sardines implied that the obvious difference between the two should make us rethink how communities are being treated (Fig. 3.9). Each and every member of a community should be addressed as an individual, treated with respect and dignity, and be guaranteed adequate living conditions.

This aspect was reiterated on the following pages of the publication, which featured photographs of diverse families. It was a sophisticated critique of the contemporary

[391] A. Basista, *Betonowe Dziedzictwo. Architektura w Polsce Czasów Komunizmu* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2001), Aneks, n.p.
[392] M. Filinger (ed.), *Miejskie Budownictwo Mieszkaniowe w planie 1961-1965. Materiały z Narady w Urzędzie Rady Ministrów w dniu 9. III. 1961* (Warszawa: Arkady, 1962).
[393] P. C. Santini (ed.), *12a Triennale di Milano, Palazzo Dell'Arte.* (Milano: Arti grafiche Crespi, 1960), p. 118.

housing norms in Poland, where all families – regardless of their structure, the age of the members or their occupations and habits – were allocated the same space per capita. This was the standardisation that Hansen argued against, claiming that 'one doesn't equal one, two – two, and one three may be different from another three.'[394] The booklet also included a collage that Hansen had prepared with Wojciech Zamecznik three years earlier, for the aforementioned Exhibition of Interior Architecture held in Warsaw. The phrase placed on this piece, 'I look I see, I see I think', challenged the process of perception, connecting facts and drawing conclusions (Fig. 3.10). In the context of the catalogue, it sounded like an appeal to reconsider the preposterous housing policy, but also the contemporary architectural schemes – so they could become more relevant to the dynamically changing structure of society.

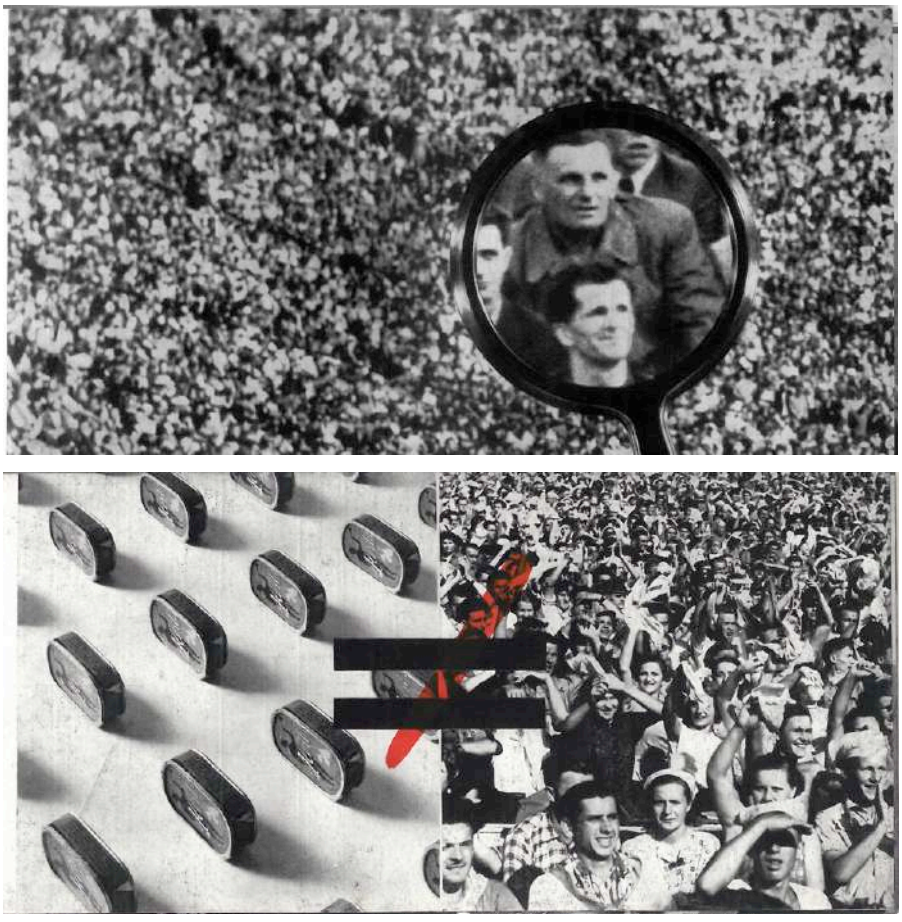

Fig. 3.8 and 3.9. Photomontage published in the catalogue of the Polish exhibition in Milan

[394] [O. Hansen], 12a Triennale Di Milano. Polonia (n.p., [1960]).

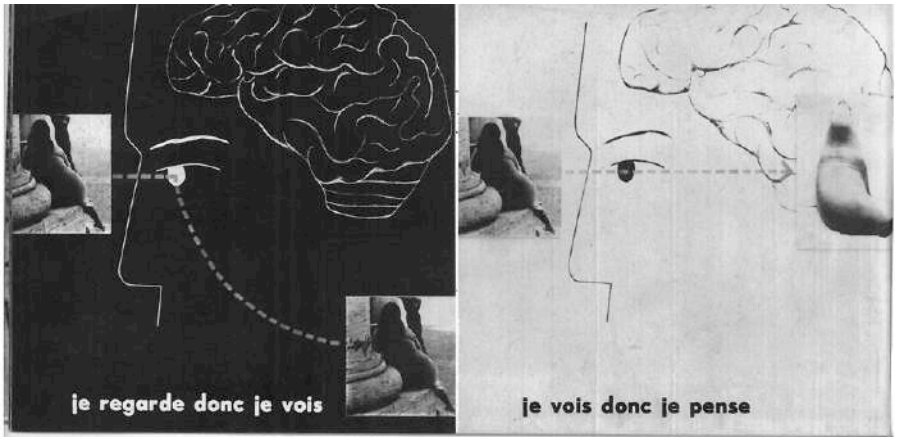

Fig. 3.10. Collage designed for the 2nd Exhibition of Interior Architecture and Decorative art in Warsaw, 1957 by Wojciech Zamecznik and Oskar Hansen. Caption: 'occhi – immaginazione – vita psichica' (eyes – imagination – internal life), reprinted in the catalogue of the Polish exhibition in Milan.

An illustration by Jan Młodożeniec, spreading across the last pages of the folder, was a reiteration of the call (Fig. 3.11). It depicted a bunch of imaginary birds placed in a domestic interior, referring to the natural ability of different species to create a nest that fits their particular needs at any given moment in their life cycle. In a metaphorical way, the drawing supported Hansen's belief that inhabitants should be allowed and encouraged to customise the space they occupy.[395] Architecture, as Hansen claimed on many occasions, should work as 'a background for everyday activities'. [396]

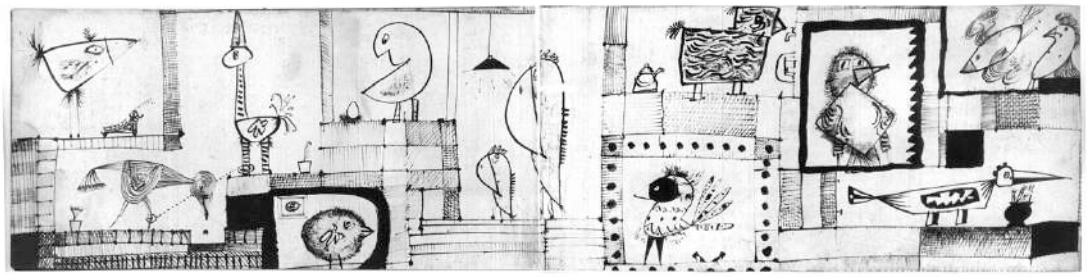

Fig. 3.11. Drawing by Jan Młodożeniec published in the catalogue of the Polish exhibition in Milan

Hansen's critical approach to the housing and building policies went unnoticed by the authorities, who had assessed the exhibition concept before accepting it. The damage his claims could cause to the state was insignificant in comparison to the

[395] A. Kędziorek, 'Domy Hansenów', in F. Springer, A. Kędziorek and J. Smaga (eds.) *Dom jako Forma Otwarta*, pp. 32–48.
[396] O. Hansen, 'Kilka Uwag o Mieszkaniu', p. 8.

benefits that his name could potentially bring to the perception of Poland on the international scene. With an established position within progressive circles of architects in the West, Hansen brought 'a rare dual perspective on two worlds' to the state project.[397] His formative experience as an architect took place in Paris between 1948 and 1950, when he was an apprentice at the studios of Fernand Léger and Pierre Jeanneret, Le Corbusier's cousin. In 1949 he took part in the International Summer School of Architecture in London and began actively participating in the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (*Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, CIAM*). He subsequently became a member of Team 10, which emerged from CIAM and challenged its dogmatic approach to built environments. In Hansen's view, high modernism had failed to solve the problem of designing for the masses – it ignored life changes, disregarded the tenants' psychological needs and was economically unsustainable.[398] In 1959, as part of this critique at a CIAM meeting in Otterlo, Hansen presented the Open Form theory, which since then has remained at the heart of all his and his wife's works, including the exhibition in Milan, and its catalogue in particular.

Hansen's international network must have been recognised by the Party as one of his two greatest assets. The other one was most likely his involvement in the social aspect of architecture, which coincided with the field that the state had to address as a matter of urgency. His interest in mass housing, in functionality and in the interwar concept of a minimum habitable dwelling – which he shared with many other architects of his generation – were highly relevant to the socio-political situation of the 1950s and 1960s. Since the current policies had failed to provide a solution to housing shortages, which in the late 1950s had reached a dramatic level, the Party was willing to test new visionary ideas.[399] These alternative solutions were seen not only as a method of solving the persisting problem of mass housing, but also as a way to prove the state's progressive stance.

Improving the sphere of the everyday was part of the legitimising rhetoric of governments across Europe, and was embodied in modernist architecture and design. Since the 1940s, when the American governmental agencies recognised its potential,

[397] D. Crowley, 'Paris or Moscow? Warsaw Architects and the Image of the Modern City in the 1950s', in G. Péteri (ed.), *Imagining the West*, pp. 105–30.
[398] O. Newman (ed.), *Otterlo, 1961,* p. 190.
[399] V. Molnár, *Building the State. Architecture, Politics, and State Formation in Post-War Central Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013).

post-war modernism became 'the stylistic *lingua franca* of transnational consumer capitalism and its idealised "good life".'[400] At the beginning modernist aesthetics were used by the capitalist West to win over the communist East, but after Stalin's death the authorities in the Eastern Bloc embraced the persuasive potential of this style. Since then, modernism in architecture and design stopped being a confirmation of the superiority of the Western way of life and became a more universal sign of progress and modern living.[401]

In Poland architecture was believed to have a coercive power, able to transform society in a modern spirit. Halina Skibniewska, the creator of one of the housing schemes presented in Milan, explained in an interview published in a popular lifestyle magazine, *Ty i Ja*:

> I very much appreciate my role of 'managing' the lives of the inhabitants, especially those unaware of their own needs, those who arrived from completely different circumstances, who have problems with adapting to the new existence (i.e. migration to the cities). Therefore, I look for settings that trigger proper functioning. ... A truly contemporary apartment is "flexible", as it enables the education of the occupiers – through demonstrating exemplary settings.[402]

This task of shaping the new society through the spatial arrangements of cities, but also through educational facilities, as well as working and domestic spaces, was ceded by the state to selected architects and designers. Both Skibniewska and Oskar Hansen were among them. They represented a particular community of creative intelligentsia, forward-thinking and well-travelled, with strong professional links with progressive artistic, design and architectural circles abroad. While most Polish architects and designers were employed predominantly in large state design offices, where they were perceived merely as engineers and managers, design luminaries had a significantly different professional profile.[403] Apart from focusing on their architectural practices, they taught, published theoretical works and were often, but not always,

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[400] G. Castillo, 'East as True West: Redeeming Bourgeois Culture, from Socialist Realism to Ostalgie', in G. Péteri (ed.), *Imagining the West*, p. 92.
[401] G. Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists. Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 2.
[402] B. Łopieńska, 'Halina Skibniewska Wyjaśnia Sady Żoliborskie', *Ty i Ja* 10, no. 42 (1963), p. 5.
[403] K. Elman Zarecor, 'Architecture in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union since 1960', in D. Rifkind and E. G. Haddad (eds.), *A Critical History of Contemporary Architecture: 1960-2010* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 256.

involved in political activities. Unlike many of their peers working in more traditional settings, they were not anonymous; popular media – including the illustrated *Poland* magazine, issued for the foreign readership – published interviews with them and popularised photographs of their works. In this context, Hansen was the best person the Party could employ for curating the exhibition in Milan, where his well-informed selection of the most progressive practices and his own presence would support this desired image. Nevertheless, Hansen's architectural principles, demonstrated in Milan beyond the exhibition, were much more difficult to reconcile with the state's agenda. Although between the late 1950s and the mid 1960s the Hansens realised several housing projects, their initial ideas were usually hindered by technological, economic or bureaucratic circumstances.[404] The couple's ambitious attempts to humanise modernist architecture through a more individual approach to its dwellers went against the Party's interest. The authorities were predominantly interested in the number, rather than in the quality of the newly developed facilities.

The dissonance between opinions expressed by the state within and beyond the representative context was addressed on numerous occasions. Newspapers were full of letters written by members of the public, in which they complained about the quality of their apartments or the impossibility to purchase goods presented at various exhibitions. This dissonance was not uniquely Polish. Ina Merkel, who analysed the consumer culture in the GDR, noticed that while the Party approved the aesthetics, it disavowed the practical impact of the progressive architectural and design schemes. Both the authorities and the creative intelligentsia

> rejected decoration and embraced simplicity and clarity of form, as well as functionality and durability. There was little agreement, however, on the consequences for design itself. As long as it remained a question of stripping the wood curlicues off the cabinets and banning plush and pomp from the apartments, throwing away the family crystal and taking that bellowing stag off the wall, both sides could fully agree. Together they fought against kitsch. But as soon as someone tried to realise modern, Bauhaus-oriented architecture and

[404] The Hansens' realisations included the Rakowiec Estate in Warsaw and the Słowacki Estate in Lublin, designed between 1960 and 1963. Rakowiec was designed by the Hansens together with Zasław Malicki and Marian Szymanowski, following a social housing scheme developed by Helena and Szymon Syrkus from the avant-garde Praesens group of the interwar period. See H. Syrkus, *Ku idei osiedla społecznego, 1925-1975* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976), p. 252.

> functionality on a practical level, the two groups ended up on opposite sides of the barricades.[405]

This dissonance between the state's declarations and actions continued to dominate the design discourse, and in the late 1960s it affected consumerist goods in particular. I will return to this problem in the following chapter.

By commissioning Hansen to curate the show, the Party hoped to present Poland as a modern and progressive welfare state. The proposals by Hansen, Skibniewska and the young generation of industrial designers were the core element of the social programme that the authorities wanted to promote. These schemes conveyed socialist values and their modernist aesthetics testified to the progressiveness of the state. This strategy, however, did not prove particularly successful. The exhibition in Milan attracted limited attention from the reviewers, who entirely ignored the architectural section of the Polish presentation. In their comments they demonstrated how bored they were already with the universal language of mid-century modernism, which Poland had only just decided to fully embrace.

'To restore the dignity of the workers': the International Labour Exhibition in Turin, 1961

Despite the lukewarm reception, the Polish exhibition in Turin continued the logic initiated in Milan and aimed to portray the country as a modern, socialist welfare state. Architecture was at the centre of the promise about the improvement of people's living conditions after the Thaw. While the presentation in Milan focused on domesticity and educational facilities, in Turin – working spaces and places of recreation were particularly emphasised. Once again the theme established by the hosts became an occasion to manifest the official view of the state in the context of current social problems.

The International Labour Exhibition, where Poland showcased its national display, was part of a centenary celebration of the unification of Italy, which was held throughout 1961. The major events were held in Turin, where on 17 March 1861 king Victor Emmanuel II had signed the unification act. Three strands of the expo

[405] I. Merkel, 'Consumer Culture in the GDR, or How the Struggle for Antimodernity Was Lost on the Battleground of Consumer Culture', in S. Strasser, C. McGovern and M. Judt (eds.), *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 290.

programme aimed to illustrate the past, the present and the future of the country, which according to the official documents symbolised

> the glory of Italy one hundred years ago, her present achievements, and a look into the future through the most original and interesting study of a man at work.[406]

The display, which belonged to the last section, was the largest international component of the celebratory programme. It was held between May and October 1961 under the title 'Man at Work. A Century of Technical and Social Developments, Achievements and Prospects'. The exhibition originated in 1956, in a local circle of Christian Democrats, and was eagerly supported by Turin's mayor Amedeo Peyron.

By proposing this presentation, the establishment wanted to use the anniversary narrative to elevate the position of the city. The authorities perceived the showcase as an opportunity to boost the image of Turin, which in the past used to be an important centre in Italy – and link the city with the role it wanted to play at present: the economic capital of the country. Within one year the idea grew and the event expanded from local to national level, gaining the patronage of the Republic's president, Giovanni Gronchi. In the following months, the expo developed further and was subsequently recognised by the Bureau International des Expositions as a specialised international exhibition.[407]

The global reach of the event raised comparisons with the World's Exhibition in Brussels, especially that both presentations addressed the issue of modern technology in people's lives. The ILE, according to its organisers, intended to offer the general public an insight into the technological developments and social advancements across the globe.[408] In the words of the governmental commissioner Giustino Arpesani, the display aimed to

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[406] 'The Turin International Labour Exhibition', *Migracion* 1, no. 3 (9 July 1961), pp. 41–52. The exhibitions had a prominent space in the official programming and allowed to communicate complex ideas to a wide audience. The list of exhibitions included historical presentations that illustrated the premises of the 1861 unification, as well as a variety of thematic shows concentrating on leisure, commerce or culture, featuring industrial goods, flowers, fashion and works of art among others. See W. Bossi (ed.), *Italia 61: Guida Ufficiale* (Torino: Comitato nazionale per la celebrazione del primo centenario dell'unita d'Italia, 1961), p. 80.

[407] B. Zevi, 'La Dissociazione Architettonica, Tara Delle Esposizioni,' *L'architettura. Cronaca E Storia* 4, no. 70 (1961), p. 218.

[408] *Italia 61: Torino, Maggio – Ottobre 1961* (Torino: Comitato ordinatore dell'EIL, 1961), p. 2.

> disavow the view that man is slave to the machine, the fruit of his own genius and a tool of his progress; and to reinstate the dignity of workers and to emphasise their constant need of support, legal protection, and continuous development of social justice.[409]

This was an extended version of the message that the exhibition in Brussels had presented to its visitors three years earlier. The Belgian king Baudouin I, in his opening speech of the 1958 Brussels World's Fair, reportedly said that technology 'is not enough to create civilisation.'[410] Additionally, he claimed that the development of morality and a will to collaborate are the necessary components of progress. Despite these declarations, a collaborative spirit was as difficult to summon in Turin as it was in Brussels.

The organisers of the ILE introduced the event both as a successor and a contender of the earlier traditions of world's exhibitions. They argued that dividing the space into distinct national pavilions, which was how the expos used to be arranged, emphasised the competitive character of the displays. Additionally, separate stands imposed a self-celebratory approach of each state or company, which did not bring any value to society at large. The ILE wanted to break away from these traditions and propose a new, more conciliatory format for the pavilions. The voluminous catalogue of the ILE recalled:

> Declarations of humanitarianism and internationalism, which dominated the scripts of the exhibitions of the past, were in the end often overshadowed by attempts of different participants to compete over supremacy and progress. Although the motives of these exhibitions had a positivist underpinning, their actual purpose… was to illustrate the progress and wellbeing that each country had achieved.[411]

The committee aimed to mark a distinction between the ILE and the 'purely propagandist exhibitions', which were very frequent during the Cold War. Whereas the latter used all available information in an instrumental way in order to confirm a predefined concept, the Turin team wanted to reflect the 'democratic principles and

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[409] W. Bossi, 'Il Gigante Di Cemento Armato', *Gazzetta Del Popolo*, 29 January 1961.
[410] *Belgia. Bruksela. Wystawa 1958. Zarys* [n.p., 1958], p. 13.
[411] *La Celebrazione Del Primo Centenario Dell'Unità d'Italia. Italia 61* (Torino: Comitato Nazionale per la celebrazione del primo centenario dell'unità d'Italia, 1961), p. 486.

goals of our times.'[412] They aimed to facilitate that task by addressing the issue of a man at work, which was critical not only for Italy, but for any other modern nation.[413]

The Labour Exhibition presented 18 national displays and 5 showcases prepared by the international organisations invited on behalf of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[414] The ILE was hosted in the newly built Palazzo del Lavoro, designed by one of the most innovative engineers of his time, Pierre Luigi Nervi, with the assistance of his son Antonio Nervi.[415] It was a huge exposition space of about 45 000 square meters, covered by a spectacular celling supported by pilasters of armed concrete. The interior design of the palace was coordinated by Giò Ponti, one of the most prominent Italian architects and designers.[416] His main task was to adapt the building so it could host 23 visually distinctive displays.[417]

In accordance with the event's general ambition, the participants were asked to abandon any propagandists or commercial objectives that they may have had, and to focus on the universal and collaborative aspect of the experience.[418] The national committees were invited to construct their exhibitions around one of the themes suggested by the organisers, relating to the organisation of work and national labour policies. The list covered areas that were currently on the agenda of the International Labour Organisation in Geneva and were being discussed at the annual ILO conferences.

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[412] *La Celebrazione Del Primo Centenario*, p. 486.
[413] *La Celebrazione Del Primo Centenario*, pp. XXVI-XXVII.
[414] The representation from behind the Iron Curtain included Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and the USSR. Other participating countries were: Yugoslavia, Argentina, Denmark, Finland, France, West Germany, Japan, Great Britain, Mexico, the United States, Switzerland and Vatican City. Additionally, the exhibition featured international organisations: the Italian Council of the European Movement, the European Communities, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation.
[415] The building was reviewed in the Polish press with enthusiasm and Nervi was awarded with an honorary doctorate from the Warsaw Technical University. In the explanation of this decision we read that the armed concrete, which was the main material used by Nervi in his project, seemed to be particularly relevant for the prefabricated construction that was widely used in Poland at that time. P. B., 'Pier Luigi Nervi Doktorem H. C. Politechniki Warszawskiej', *Architektura* 11–12, no. 169–170 (1961), p. 473.
[416] *La Celebrazione Del Primo Centenario*, p. XXVII.
[417] The building was funded by Giovanni Agnelli, a local industrialist and the owner of the Turin-based FIAT factory. Norma Bouchard presents a very interesting interpretation of the building and its location at the fairgrounds in the context of Fordism. See her 'Italia '61: The Commemorations for the Centenary of Unification in the First Capital of the Italian State', *Romance Studies* 23, no. 2 (2005), pp. 117–29.
[418] W. Bossi (ed.), *Italia 61*, p. 99. A separated part of the ILE was devoted to Italian companies and institutions. See *Italia 61: Torino, Maggio – Ottobre 1961*, p. 9.

In early 1960, Poland decided to participate in the ILE as one of five countries from behind the Iron Curtain, next to Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and the USSR. The Polish pavilion was located between the Hungarian and the American sections. Hungary presented artisanal production and precise machinery, while the USA explored technological development and various means of communication. This declared aim of the American exhibition was overshadowed by its space competition with the USSR. In May 1961 Alan Shepard made the first manned Mercury flight, following Yuri Gagarin's journey into outer space that had been completed a few weeks earlier.[419] These successes were, according to Giò Ponti who served as a coordinator of the ILE, the result of a collective effort. They opened entirely new perspectives before humanity, also with regard to the improvement of labour conditions:

> After thousands of years of lethargy all nations are moving towards a modern society; some historical circles have been closing, meanwhile the others have opened. Since the Earth has already been explored, science and technology are offering remarkable opportunities of research and exploration of the infinite space. The millennial dreams – to hear, to see, to communicate with and to fly into space – which up until now occupied the imagination of poets, are opening in front of us.[420]

The Soviet exhibition, apart from celebrating their space achievement, addressed selected aspects of hygiene and safety in a workplace, while Romania focused on presenting the developments of their petrochemical industry. Czechoslovakia, with whom Poland was often compared, presented cooperative movements in agriculture, and Yugoslavia used the opportunity to make a case for worker self-management.[421]

The Polish stand focused on the theme of social security. The task of preparing the section was assigned to Jerzy Licki (Finkelkraut), professor of sociology and labour law from the University of Warsaw and long-term employee of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.[422] Well-educated and fluent in six different languages, Licki combined an academic career with several governmental roles and with activism in

[419] 'Dalla Scuola Che Prepara i Cosmonauti ai Missili per <<collegamenti Postali>>', *Gazzetta Del Popolo* 1342 (1961), p. 4.
[420] W. Bossi, 'Il Gigante Di Cemento Armato', *Gazzetta Del Popolo*, 29 January 1961, n.p.
[421] For Yugoslavia's participation see V. Kulic, 'Vjenceslav Richter'.
[422] A. Kojder, 'Jerzy Licki (12 X 1901 - 31 III 1982)', *Przegląd socjologiczny* 35 (1985), pp. 233–36 and W. Wincławski, *Słownik biograficzny socjologii polskiej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2004), pp. 226-227.

domains related to social law.[423] He was the initiator of many community enterprises that focused on vocational training, workers' holidays and social aid (especially for elderly citizens). He also served as Poland's representative at the annual International Labour Organisation conferences, and was the co-author of publications celebrating social achievements of socialist Poland.[424] With this impressive background in the field, Licki was well prepared to present the Polish contribution to what was called the 'welfare race'.

The exhibition was held in the midst of a battle between the West and the East over the idea of a welfare state, in which both opponents tried to appropriate this concept and link it with the capitalist or socialist vision of society.[425] Despite Turin organisers' attempts to highlight the collaborative efforts of different countries to advance welfare development, the ILE unavoidably ended in a competition of social achievements. It became a platform on which various ways of organising the optimal welfare state were demonstrated and contested. The distinctiveness of the different approaches laid in the planning of labour, the design of modern working environments, and – more broadly – the arrangement of life for the working class within a contemporary society. The solutions that the competing nations advocated were deeply embedded in the ideological concepts of organising society in their socialist or capitalist states. Welfare was as significant as the space race in the Cold War match between the East and the West – they both allowed countries to prove their progressiveness: one in terms of technology, the other in terms of social security. While Poland's offer with regard to the former was limited, the latter looked like potential leverage that the state strongly needed at that time. By emphasising the special relationship with the workers,

[423] Additionally, Licki belonged to an influential network of the former students of Leon Petrażycki, a legal scholar and one of the founding fathers of Polish sociology; and of Jerzy Lande, a professor of law in Vilnius and later in Kraków. Among students who attended seminars by Petrażycki and Lande were future professors and state officials. They maintained close relations throughout their professional lives, which John Connelly described as 'a mixture of reverence and intimacy characteristic of Old World paternalism.' See J. Connelly, *Captive University*, p. 167.

[424] E. Pragierowa and J. Licki, *Osiągnięcia socjalne Polski Ludowej* (Warszawa: Polonia Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1951) and E. Pragierowa and J. Licki, *Ten Years of People's Poland: Social Achievements* (Warsaw: Polonia Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1955). Poland was one of the founding members of the International Labour Organisation established in 1919.

[425] F. Maupain, *The Future of the International Labour Organization in the Global Economy* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2013), p. 24.

the authorities believed they could erase the negative recollections of brutal repressions of workers' protests, which the foreign public opinion was still likely to remember.

Although there were multiple differences in social policies across Eastern Europe, the major components of the social welfare system were shared.[426] It was founded on three pillars: full employment, system of state-controlled prices associated with the rationing of goods and services, and common access to social services such as education, health care and pensions.[427] The state was the major provider and manager of social services and prided itself on being 'a promoter of social development and improvement of living conditions for the population.'[428] An essential element of the official strategy of dealing with social problems was denial: socialist governments for a long time disavowed the issues of unemployment, poverty and inequality and presened them as systemic flaws of capitalist societies. Following the escalation of the social issues in the late 1950s, the authorities had to shift this strategy – not only they restructured the welfare system, but also turned it into an important element of its legitimising strategy. The governments extended public services to individuals who could not provide for themselves due to illness, invalidity, maternity or old age. In the framework of this new policy, welfare was perceived as a form of the state's gratitude for the hard work that an individual performed over his or her lifetime. At the same time, it was to compensate for the dramatically low consumption and development rate. As Alex Pravda noted,

> what anchors most Soviet and East European workers' attachment to 'real existing socialism' is full employment, a welfare wage, low income differentials and stable food prices. In a sense workers' acceptance of strong state control is conditioned by that state's delivery of the above package of security-welfare benefits. The situation may be seen as a tacit social compact, which underpins the relationship between workers and regime in all industrialised Communist states.[429]

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[426] T. Inglot, *Welfare States in East Central Europe, 1919-2004* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 26-27.

[427] J. Kochanowicz, 'Co Pozostało z Państwa Socjalnego (Po Komunizmie)?', in K. Gawlikowski (ed.) *Indywidualizm a Kolektywizm* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN, 1999), p. 200.

[428] E. Les, 'Poland', in J. Dixon and D. Macarov (eds.), *Social Welfare in Socialist Countries* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 158.

[429] A. Pravda, 'Industrial Workers and Political Development in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe' (National Council for Soviet and East European Research, 1981), p. 7. Quoted after M. Lebowitz, *The Contradictions of 'Real Socialism'* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), p. 137.

The Eastern European countries invested more in social policies than their Western counterparts, but also they made significantly greater efforts than Western countries to publicise their actions in this domain.[430] The shifts following Stalin's death put additional pressure on the Eastern European countries to accelerate the promotion of their welfare achievements. Following the post-Thaw transformation in internal and external politics, Moscow declared the redefinition of its relationship with the West. Consequently, the open hostility between the two blocs that characterised the earlier period was abandoned and replaced by a fierce competition between them. This shift, according to György Péteri, resulted in a conflicting situation, in which the Eastern European states were experiencing a

> tension between the push for modernity and the profound need to steer modernising developments so as to produce and reproduce systemic exceptionalism rather than to blur the distinction between capitalism and socialism.[431]

An open confrontation between Nikita Khrushchev and Richard Nixon at the American exhibition in Moscow in 1959, known as the 'kitchen debate', was an emblematic demonstration of this approach.[432] For the Soviet Union, this was a continuation of the strategies and political ambitions initiated by Stalin in the 1930s, when he declared that Russia would catch up and overtake the West and America.[433] That meant the isolation of the Eastern European countries was weakening, the bonds within the bloc were being redefined and, as a result, Poland and the other satellites started exploring new commercial markets. Rather than living the dream of overcoming the West, Polish authorities were concerned with achieving its approval – knowing that it could bring commercial benefits and lead to business contracts in the future. In order to succeed, Poland's priority was to construct a positive representation of the country in the eyes of its potential partners.

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[430] Measured as a percentage of net material product. H. Obinger and C. Schmitt, 'Guns and Butter? Regime Competition and the Welfare State during the Cold War', *World Politics* 63, no. 2 (2011), p. 253.
[431] G. Péteri, 'Introduction', in G. Péteri (ed.), *Imagining the West*, p. 8.
[432] G. Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
[433] J. Scherrer, '"To Catch up and Overtake" the West. Soviet Discourse on Socialist Competition', in K. Miklóssy and M. Ilič (eds.), *Competition in Socialist Society* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 10–22.

In Turin, high quality design became an important component in this lengthy process of persuasion. In was applied on two levels: on the first one it created an attractive setting in which the issue was discussed – spectacular exposition design attracted the attention of viewers and the press alike; on the second level, the modern architecture of the pavilion gave physical shape to the welfare policy and introduced the potential sites when it could be exercised. At the event in Milan the elaborate conceptual framework defined the Polish presentation, whereas in Turin the visual elements highlighted the display's narrative. The installation was prepared by a team of the most celebrated graphic designers working at that time in Poland: Wojciech Zamecznik, Wojciech Fangor, Jan Lenica, Józef Mroszczak, Julian Pałka and Henryk Tomaszewski. The architectural side of the stand was overseen by Kazimierz Husarski. With a solid background in architecture, painting or graphic design, all of them had extensive experience in designing for the exhibitions.

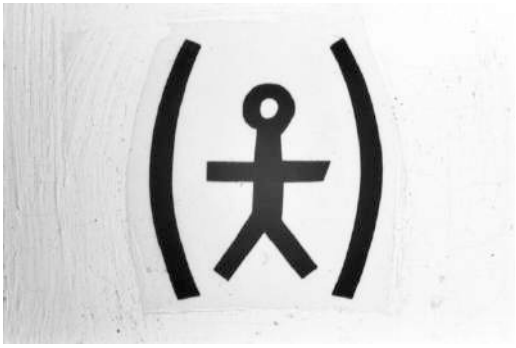

Fig. 3.12. Symbol of the Polish exhibition in Turin drawn by Wojciech Zamecznik and Jan Lenica

A simplified human silhouette placed within brackets became the sign of the Polish section (Fig. 3.12). The brackets embracing the figure signified the state's guardianship over an individual and resembled the symbolic gesture of hands forming a shelter. The walls, repeating the curvature of the brackets, divided the space into separate sections that discussed the circumstances in which governmental support was most needed: diseases, disability, old age, motherhood, loss of a breadwinner and unemployment (Fig. 3.13). A series of large-scale black and white photographs depicted these situations through metaphors. They were presented alongside boards with descriptions of relevant policies, which created a dialogue between issues and available solutions. As the catalogue stated, 'the symbol of the "negative" or "evil" is answered in

each case by the "positive" – the "reply" illustrating the means of easing the ensuing evil or removing its basis.[434]

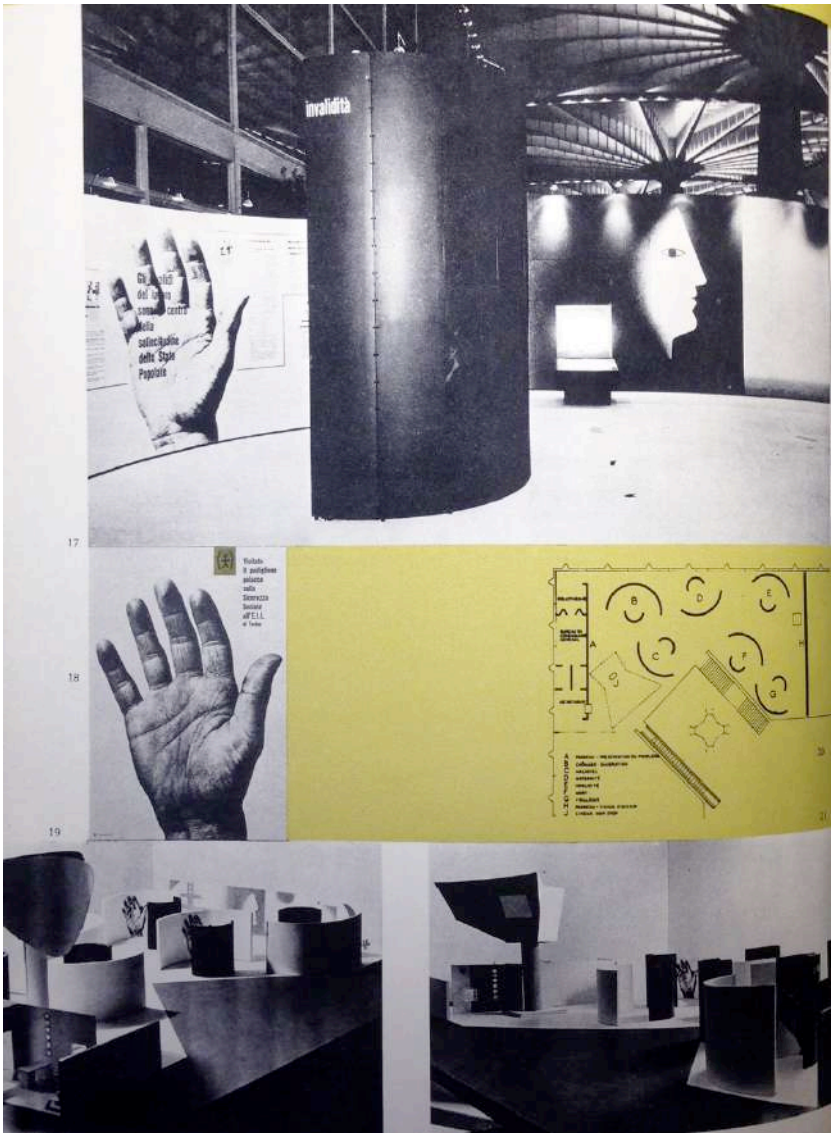

Fig. 3.13. Polish exhibition in Turin presented alongside architectural models. Published in *Projekt* 6, no. 3 (25) (1961).

The images were accompanied by captions with relevant fragments of the constitution, written down on large photographs of hands. The shots were captured by Janina Mierzecka, a photographer from the Lvov circle of the late 1920s. They were originally commissioned by Mierzecka's husband, a well-known dermatologist, who used them to illustrate his publication on the impact of labour conditions on human

[434] *Esposizione Internazionale Del Lavoro. Guida* (Torino, 1961), p. 133. Text originally published in English.

skin.[435] In this particular anatomical atlas entitled *The working hand,* most of the examples were hands of heavy industry workers, which provided interesting iconographic material about the physical aspect of labour. Due to the high artistic quality of Mierzecka's photographs, she published them once again in the late 1930s, in the form of a photographic album (Fig. 3.14).[436] High contrast images, enlarged and reoriented towards the viewer, make a powerful and compassionate statement about the working class. Hand iconography was quite popular at that time and the Soviet pavilion in Turin explored the symbolism of hands in relation to products created manually.[437] It expanded the conventional representation of labour: by focusing on a small fragment of the workers' bodies, the photographs shifted the representation of labour from large narratives to more intimate, personal stories. In the context of the Labour Exhibition, freestanding images of hands became a powerful symbol of the working class and their daily sacrifices.

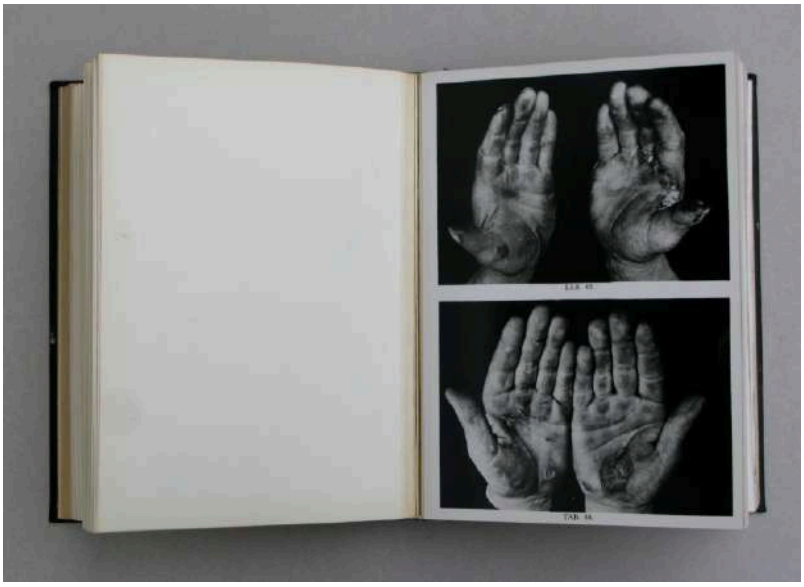

Fig. 3.14. *Ręka Pracująca* (Working Hand) book with the photographs by Janina Mierzecka

Similarly restrained, yet very powerful visual language was applied in a short animated movie that was shown at the pavilion. The animation, presented on an elevated screen placed opposite the entrance to the stand, introduced visitors to the

[435] Henryk Mierzecki (text) and Janina Mierzecka (photographs), *Ręka Pracująca* (self-published, 1939).
[436] K. Puchała-Rojek, 'Ucieczka Od Piktorializmu. Kobieca Fotografia Artystyczna w Dwudziestoleciu Międzywojennym', *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 31 (2006), pp. 89–113.
[437] See "Vedremo all'Esposizione," *Gazzetta Del Popolo*, October 2, 1961.

theme of the Polish exhibition. The film was a suggestive stream of photomontages portraying difficult moments in people's lives – unemployment, emigration, war, sickness, old age and maternity were depicted through a series of dynamically changing visuals.[438] Their impact was additionally amplified by the dramatic soundtrack composed by one of the pioneers of electronic and concrete music in Poland, Andrzej Markowski.[439] The power of this 4-minute movie, as one Polish journalist accurately noted, lied in

> the use of relatively few, but nevertheless incredibly apt graphic symbols, and their movement and metamorphosis across the frames. A human face, its transformation into ruins and its reappearance with eyes shut, a red teardrop rolling down from them – that's war. A hand that moves and then all of a sudden is lifeless – that's unemployment. Emigration is shown as the transfiguration of a human face into a white bird flowing through red streaks, then a black bird, etc.[440]

Within these aesthetics, the individual styles of both authors of the animation can be easily recognised. Wojciech Zamecznik's approach evolved from the early post-war years.[441] He worked across different media, including posters, exhibition designs and short movies. In all his works he looked for a simple graphic element, around which he could build a disciplined composition. One of his earliest and most recognised works was the Pavilion of Coal at the 1948 Exhibition of Regained Territories in Wrocław. His concise and metaphoric use of visuals, according to some conservative critics and adversaries of Socialist Realism, 'removed a viewer from contemporary reality'.[442] With time this feature became one of the most important characteristics of Zamecznik's

[438] The movie received a Silver Dragon award at the National Short Film Festival in Kraków in 1962.
[439] See M. Komorowska, 'Markowski Andrzej', E. Dziębowska (ed.), *Encyklopedia Muzyczna PWM* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000), reprinted in English and available online: http://www.polmic.pl/index.php?option=com_mwosoby&view=czlowiek&id=236&lang=en. Accessed on 1 September 2016.
[440] S. Stopczyk, 'O Wojciechu Zameczniku', *Projekt* 5–6, no. 27 (1961), p. 31.
[441] This fragment is based on an essay I wrote for Wojciech Zamecznik's mongraph, see 'Escape from Reality: Wojciech Zamecznik's Exhibition Designs', in K. Puchała-Rojek and K. Ziębińska-Lewandowska (eds.), *Wojciech Zamecznik. Photo-Graphics* (Warszawa: Fundacja Archeologia Fotografii, 2015), pp. 53–68.
[442] M. Jassem and J. Minorski, 'Wystawa Ziem Odzyskanych we Wrocławiu', *Architektura*, no. 10 (1948), p. 7.

designs. It allowed him to find a universal dimension in every subject he addressed, whether it was for a trade fair stand, a national pavilion or for an art installation.

The work of Jan Lenica, with whom Zamecznik closely collaborated on the exhibition in Turin, could be defined by an opposite approach. Lenica's work demonstrated, as one expert wrote in the 1960s, 'a profound interest in the problems of a human being who is lost in the mechanisms of contemporaneity.' [443] His artistic career started from satirical drawings published in various Polish magazines, and later expanded into posters, illustrations and animated movies. Perhaps due to the nature of his early works, Lenica's designs entered into dialogue with everyday life and took part in 'the battle against evil and human harm, ignorance and loss of humanity between the cogs of the machine of militarism, fascism and bureaucracy.'[444]

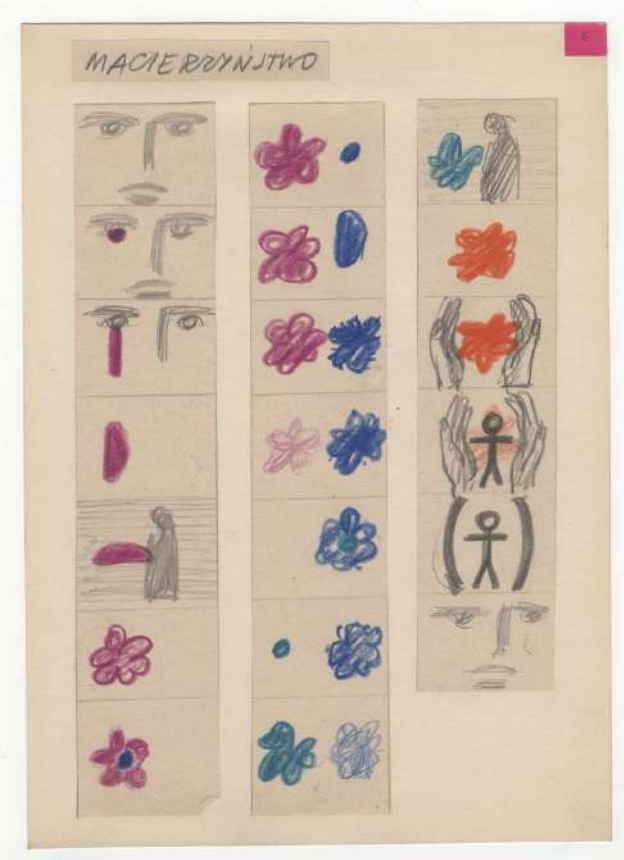

Fig. 3.15. An early version of the storyboard of the animated movie presented at the Polish exhibition in Turin, drawn by Wojciech Zamecznik and Jan Lenica

[443] E. Skierkowska, *Współczesna ilustracja książki* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1969), p. 203.
[444] Ibidem.

The collaboration of these two truly original and radically different artists resulted in the spectacular animation for the Polish pavilion in Turin. The short film appealed to the universal emotions of the viewers, while avoiding a didactical tone and the glorification of the socialist system. By using the animation, the Polish committee responded to the request of the Italian organisers, which encouraged the participants to use film projections, spatial installations, photographs and graphics to convey their idea. Poland was hoping to make its message more accessible to the visitors it wanted to attract: the workers themselves.

The exhibition content was also shaped towards this goal. The particular concern over the welfare of the working class at the Polish section of the ILE was demonstrated through a series of public buildings. The modernist aesthetics of those current architectural realisations were believed to influence the wellbeing of their users, and have a positive effect on the workers' health and safety.[445] This claim was underpinned by a recent decree issued by the Polish Ministry of Heavy Industry, instructing that factories should be redecorated in order to improve the organisational culture.[446] This approach resembled the mission associated with architecture and industrial design during the years of the revolution, when many professionals aimed to confine their creative practice into the socialist ideology.[447] The policy was an example of a functional approach towards visual culture in socialist Poland, which was praised in the text about the Polish presentation included in the catalogue. According to the authorities, this approach not only benefited common people by beautifying their surroundings, but also provided artists with an opportunity to create works that were aesthetically pleasing and socially useful.

The display featured photographs of newly completed textile factories in Central and Western Poland. Vast production halls equipped with modern machinery illustrated the recent modernisation of the industry and provided evidence of technological progress. The fact that one of the factories was located in Gorzów, a town that had previously belonged to Germany, was additionally useful for the official propaganda – it was proof that industry thrived and the population enjoyed a prosperous life under

[445] J. Olkiewicz, 'Polski Pawilon w Turynie', *Projekt* 6, no. 3 (25) (1961), pp. 9–13.
[446] S. Bojko, 'Problemy Koloru Funkcjonalnego', *Projekt* 1, no. 23 (1961), pp. 1–3.
[447] For the zeal of the creative intelligentsia to change reality and circumscribe their practices to the socialist ideology see T. Vujosevic, *Modernism and the Making of the Soviet New Man* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

Polish administration. The photographs suggested that light industry was vigorously growing and the workers employed on the factory floor could afford the goods they produced. The exhibition also featured a small selection of educational facilities, constructed as part of the millennium programme analysed above.[448]

Modern factories were presented alongside leisure facilities, where workers could rest and recuperate. Health resorts (*uzdrowiska* and *sanatoria*) were an important category of public buildings and a relatively new addition to the social services offered by the state in Eastern Europe. Paid holidays at these facilities were part of the systematic progression of consumption in socialist countries, and were considered a form of reward for good work performed over the rest of the year.[449] From the late 1950s the number of leisure facilities significantly increased, reaching its peak popularity in the 1970s, when they became symbols of 'the democratization of luxury.' [450] Many resorts and holiday facilities were developed by occupational organisations to serve a particular group of workers and their families, as the names of such places indicated. As an example of this trend, the pavilion presented the 'Hutnik' (the steel worker) resort, which was completed in 1960.[451] Vacations in these facilities, although subsidised by the government and administered by a state enterprise, were far from being 'socialist' in their character. In contrary: they belonged to the sphere of leisure which remained beyond the state's surveillance.[452]

All the buildings – including factories, resorts and schools – were designed to cater to large groups of people.[453] The majority of them represented what Krisztina Fehérváry called *Socialist Generic*: a stripped down version of modernism, an impersonal style aligned with the bureaucratic state associated with alienation and

[448] Among the educational facilities was a primary school in Warsaw's Bielany district, designed by Jan Zdanowicz and Jerzy Baumiller, and completed in 1961. It was part of a large architectural project in the district by Maria and Kazimierz Piechotka.
[449] For the history of holidays in the Soviet Union see D. P. Koenker, 'Whose Right to Rest? Contesting the Family Vacation in the Postwar Soviet Union', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 2 (2009), pp. 401–25.
[450] A. Szczerski, 'The Decade of Luxury: The People's Republic of Poland and Hotels in the 1970s', *Art in Translation* 3, no. 2 (2011), pp. 179–212.
[451] Designed by Zofia Fedyk and Jerzy Nowicki. See E. Węcławowicz-Bilska, 'Mieszkać w Uzdrowisku', *Czasopismo Techniczne. Architektura* 104, no. 1A (2007), pp. 189–94.
[452] See various articles in the edited volume D. Crowley and S. E. Reid (eds.), *Pleasures in Socialism*, especially 'Introduction: Pleasures in Socialism?', pp. 3–51.
[453] For the consequences of this approach to the environment see E. Kaczmarska, *Uzdrowisko i Jego Przestrzeń Społeczna: Wybrane Zagadnienia Przestrzenne Polskich Uzdrowisk Karpackich w Aspekcie Integracji Europejskiej*, Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Krakowskiej. Architektura 47 (Politechnika Krakowska, 2002).

abject citizenship.[454] Nonetheless, in the first few years of Gomułka's rule the modernist appearance of this architecture suggested an efficiency of the housing, schooling and leisure programmes, and the state's concern for the wellbeing of the workers. This positive message in Turin was accentuated by the use of colourful photographs, which contrasted with the monochrome scheme of the rest of the Polish stand. Unlike in the 1940s, captions with a direct commentary became redundant and instead shifted towards contextual information. As Urszula Czartoryska, Poland's most prominent theorist of photography proposed at the beginning of the 1960s:

> photography has great suggestive potential; a viewer who is constantly exposed to the magic of cinema, of press photo-reportages and of television spectacles and chronicles – has been taught to absorb the black and white image of a photograph placed in the wide space of the pavilion – with the same curiosity and as automatically and effortlessly as all the other mass media.[455]

The International Labour Exhibition occupied a marginal space in international reviews from the celebrations, and the press focused mainly on the events of national importance. Local press was predominantly concerned with the legacy of the exhibition venue and the potential reuse of the buildings for the benefits of local communities.[456] The distinctive approaches of each country towards issues of work slipped under the radar of the reviewers. For Ernesto N. Rogers, the luminary of the Italian design scene already introduced in the previous sections, the ILE was another occasion to criticise the current situation in design and its negligence of social themes. The expo, he argued, was a mere scenography that obscured the real issues that Italy and the rest of the world faced at that moment.[457] The decorations, although spectacular, were absolutely useless in addressing the actual social problems related to the situation of the working class. According to Rogers – instead of highlighting the issues, modern design concealed them. Peter Rawstorne, a British journalist who reviewed the exhibition for *The*

[454] K. Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).
[455] U. Czartoryska, 'Fotografia w Wystawiennictwie Targowym', *Projekt* 4, no. 37 (1963), p. 43.
[456] See various articles in *Casabella Continuità* 252 (1961).
[457] E. N. Rogers, 'Un Errore Nazionale', *Casabella Continuità* 252 (1961), p. 3.

Spectator magazine, shared the Italian's opinion. He argued that for the purpose of propaganda 'the skill of the international designers has been stretched to its limit.'[458]

Indeed, exhibition design occupied the central space in reviews written by those few who decided to comment on the national displays. Poland's pavilion, like other national stands, was mentioned in a handful of articles that provided a short description of the event with an accompanying photograph.[459] The journalists laconically praised the originality of the Polish installation design and its metaphoric approach to the subject. Some of them suggested that the unconventional imagery proposed by the Polish team, although very appealing, made the exhibition too difficult to understand for a large part of the audience.[460] It was a concern restated by some reviewers from Poland. The official daily *Dziennik Polski* reported that the metaphoric language of the Polish presentation appealed mainly to the Italian intelligentsia.[461] The contemporary imagery, elegance and simplicity that they appreciated in the display, posed difficulty for less educated visitors – the group that the organisers especially wanted to attract.[462] The modern aesthetics, initially conceived as egalitarian and detached from the established conventions, failed the life test and did not manage to communicate effectively with the working class.

This outreach problem was tackled in the public programme that accompanied the Polish exhibition. Rather than exploring the possibilities of modernist language, it relied on well-established aesthetics in the past had successfully attracted public attention. From the late 1940s, public programming at the Polish pavilions abroad was designed to appease the tastes and expectations of the wider public. It reaffirmed people's perception of Poland by featuring musical and dance performances to folkloric music, exhibitions of non-abstract art and screenings of films by acclaimed directors. The state folk song and dance ensembles such as Mazowsze were particularly important components of line-ups for the general audiences. Although their authenticity was questioned – the dances, songs and costumes had very little in common with the

[458] P. Rawstorne, 'Italia 61', *The Spectator*, 11 May 1961, p. 683.
[459] *Projekt* published a detailed description of the exhibition and included several photographs of its design mock-up. J. Olkiewicz, 'Polski Pawilon w Turynie', *Projekt* 6, no. 3 (25) (1961), pp. 9–13.
[460] P. Novelli, 'La Colossale Rassegna Del Lavoro Racconta Come L'uomo Divenne Gigante', *Gazzetta Del Popolo*, 6 May 1961, p. 8.
[461] J. Adamczewski, 'Italia 61. Korespondencja Własna z Włoch', *Dziennik Polski* 240, no. 5481 (11 October 1961), p. 4.
[462] *La Celebrazione Del Primo Centenario*, p. 550.

genuine practices of rural communities and were an artistic adaptation of traditional motives – their spectacles attracted large crowds that had no musical preparation.[463] Additionally, due to the scale of the promotional campaigns, Mazowsze became the most recognisable element of Polish culture and as such was appealing to both expats and foreign viewers.[464] Official propaganda presented Mazowsze as an expression of a new culture of workers and peasants, promoting an image of a cheerful, dancing and singing society that maintains a close connection with its own roots.[465] The 'Polish Days' organised in Turin were not much different. They featured spectacles by the Mazowsze and Śląsk ensembles, as well as an exhibition of naturalistic drawings by Tadeusz Kulisiewicz from his recent trip to Venice. Turin's audiences also had a chance to watch the latest movie by Andrzej Wajda *Samson*, which through a reference to a biblical parable told the story of a Jew who struggled with his identity after escaping from a ghetto.[466]

Effectively, the pavilion in Turin used two visual registers. One, represented by the public programming, was embedded in the more traditional way of thinking about the nation and its heritage, and utilised references to rustic culture. This image of Poland was aimed at a wide audience and was drawing from well-recognised aesthetics, histories and phenomena. The other register reached for more sophisticated means: the exhibition's spatial arrangement, the film by Zamecznik and Lenica and the public architecture featured on display proposed a more contemporary aesthetic to talk about welfare. It used the bold visual language of the designers, which many visitors might have found surprising in the national context. This new modernist style, after the initial period of Gomułka's return to the vernacular, was much closer to the visual language employed by the Western countries, and as such signalised Poland's openness to the world. These two approaches were combined in order to highlight the social agendas of the state and to improve the perception of the country in front of the international opinion.

[463] R. Pasternak Mazur, 'What Did Folk Music (Muzyka Ludowa) Mean in Socialist Poland?', *Symbolon*, no. 1 (2011), pp. 94–100.
[464] M. Trochimczyk, 'The Impact of "Mazowsze" and "Śląsk" on Polish Folk Dancing in California', *Polish American Studies* 63, no. 1 (2006), pp. l5–34.
[465] K. Dadak-Kozicka, *Folklor Sztuką Życia. U Źródeł Antropologii Muzyki* (Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1996).
[466] In the same year *Samson* was nominated for a Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival.

Conclusions

The modern facilities where the people of socialist Poland lived, worked, were educated and taken care of were showcased in Milan and in Turin – and formed the image of a socialist wonderland. Both exhibitions resorted to photographs and technical plans, prototypes and models, which were to testify that Poland had experienced a positive turn under Gomułka's rule. Drawings and illustrations, widely used in the earlier presentations, worked in a different manner: they were open to viewers' interpretations and operated on a more abstract level, which required people to imagine. Photographs, on the contrary, were believed to show an objective body of evidence: they were trusted to show things as they really were. By using this specific imagery Polish officials aimed to depict not an imagined socialist utopia – but the real, existing socialism.[467]

The displays in Milan and Turin portrayed socialism as a viable alternative to the Western capitalist systems of organising society. The social security that the Polish state offered its citizens was particularly attractive in this context. The image of Poland featured in Italy was evidently idealised and selective, as were the representations of all other nations. Despite the hosts' encouragements to address the universal aspects of their proposed themes, the majority of national stands had a celebratory character and praised the achievements of their own countries. The more alluring the portrayals of these successes would be, the less likely were the remarks about the disjunction between the official rhetoric and reality.

The catalogue accompanying the Polish exhibition in Milan and the animated film presented in Turin additionally emphasised the human dimension of the welfare state: they empathically depicted vulnerable people who were being taken care of by the state. Consequently, they supported the understanding of social welfare as 'a genuine act of governmental benevolence, a true manifestation of socialist humanism.'[468] Poland's creative intelligentsia played an essential role in this process of humanising the

[467] The term 'real (existing) socialism' was applied to the period between the 1950s and the 1980s to differentiate between socialist ideology and socialist practice. See M. Lebowitz, *The Contradictions of 'Real Socialism': The Conductor and the Conducted* (New York: NYU Press, 2012); K. Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1995), and R. Bahro, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* (London: New Left Books, 1978).

[468] J. Dixon and H. S. Kim, 'Social Welfare under Socialism', in J. Dixon and D. Macarov (eds.), *Social Welfare in Socialist Countries* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 3.

image of the system – by presenting socialism not as an abstract political concept, but as a series of physical facilities that made workers' lives easier and more satisfying. In the following years that narration expanded into material goods, and the next chapter will address this issue in the context of the developing socialist consumption and the emergence of industrial design as an autonomous professional discipline.

Chapter Four

Needs and dreams: design in a socialist narrative between the late 1960s and the mid 1970s

In December 1970, as a result of the workers' strikes and prompted by the division inside the Party, Władysław Gomułka was expelled from the position of First Secretary and the Central Committee assigned his post to Edward Gierek. In an attempt to stop the protests – just like Gomułka fourteen years earlier – Gierek announced a prompt improvement in providing victuals, an increase of living wages and a temporary freeze of food prices. Gierek's declarations seemed far more ambitious and far-reaching than those of his predecessor; according to the official propaganda from 1971, Poland was to progress towards 'modern socialism'. The phrase captured Gierek's aspirations very well, but the signs of modernisation had been manifested long before and their international use preceded the domestic application.[469]

In this vein, the exhibitions explored in the previous chapter demonstrated the most progressive ideas in architecture; in design they took slightly longer to develop. For example, the narratives of the Milan and Turin presentations addressed in Chapter Three centred on the social aspect of the state's policy by displaying selected examples of housing estates and public buildings realised during the post-Thaw period. The interiors of these structures, however, were furnished not by functional and mass-produced commodities, but by decorative artisanal objects. Although they proved quite successful in confirming the civil liberties and creative freedom that the state had granted to the artists and intelligentsia after 1956, they were less evocative of other matters. Many of those items celebrated experimentation, an approach that the socialist authorities in the post-Thaw period took pride in and promoted with regard to cultural production and organising society. [470] Nevertheless, due to their one-off nature the crafts were rather useless in addressing the egalitarian rhetoric of the state. The latter aspect was crucial for the Party in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Subsequently, growing

[469] The phrase was reportedly used in 1972 by a journalist Stefan Bratkowski. See A. Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours. Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (Pittsburgh: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), p. 354.
[470] See A. Miljački, *The Optimum Imperative*, especially chapter 3 entitled *Experimentation. 1958-1968: Reform from within*, pp. 181-267. On the experiments in arts see D. Crowley and D. Muzyczuk (eds.), *Sounding the Body Electric: Experiments in Art and Music in Eastern Europe 1957-1984* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 2012).

social discontent forced the government to engage more explicitly with the increasing public demands. While the policies were difficult to enforce, propaganda came in with support preceding any actions. From the late 1960s consumables presented an enormous potential in that respect, but in order to turn those items into effective vehicles of the political message, a new design narrative had to be developed.

The authorities believed that the products of socialist economy had to be modernised to follow Western models. This tendency was noticeable in the Polish exhibitions organised both home and abroad, but in each case this strategy had different origins. In Poland, light industry objects promised to satisfy consumption demands and were used to gain and maintain the people's support for the political system. They were widely used by the Party to gain legitimacy and control behaviours by turning citizens into consumers. In the international context the shift towards consumption became part of improving Poland's image – it demonstrated economic progress and through modern design of displayed pieces manifested the country's openness to the West. Light industry goods, especially everyday commodities presented in a captivating way, were showcased to attract international visitors, trade partners in particular, and to generate income in a foreign currency.

This chapter analyses two exhibitions organised for the anniversaries of the Polish People's Republic – Moscow in 1969 and Warsaw in 1974. They manifested two distinct approaches of design professionals and the Party towards industrial design. As the former were struggling to establish an autonomy of their profession – the state, noticing the political benefits, undertook some efforts to write industrial design into its official narrative. Following that, design was presented as a testimony of Poland's progress and modernisation and, on the other hand, as an ideal socialist form of art. Nevertheless, this process revealed a dissonance: in a desire to emulate Western aesthetics, Polish design was loosing its national character. Like everywhere else, decoration was ruled out and priority was given to a functional, high-tech look; folk references, widely employed in the previous years were outmoded too. In these circumstances, the way in which the Polish authorities, journalists and designers interpreted design culture emphasised Poland's specificity. That was incredibly important both in terms of clearly stating the Polishness of the exhibitions, but also in a broader sense of manifesting the distinctiveness of the socialist proposal, at least in terms of production and consumption.

The narratives of both presentations were deeply rooted in the economic and political turns that consecutively happened in Poland – the reforms hastily introduced by Gomułka in the last two years of his reign and the programme of creating 'Second Poland' announced by Gierek during the first months of his leadership. Technical intelligentsia and designers were employed in these projects by the state, in a similar vein as architects were in the 1960s and craftspeople in the 1950s. Consequently, the newly established profession of designing for industry found itself at the forefront of official propaganda. The displays that this chapter analyses reveal the complex efforts of the authorities and journalists within that context, and they are particularly telling examples of the design discourse used for political gain: the mid 1970s was the last moment when a claim about the specificity of Polish design could be made and resonate with the public – if not in the West, then at least still back home and in the USSR. With the borders more open and international contacts permitted, Polish designers in the late 1960s and the early 1970s were able to closely follow the recent developments in design around the world. What is more, they became transmitters of Western concepts in design and culture to other, more secluded parts of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc.

'Polish products for everyone': the exhibition of the 25th anniversary of the Polish People's Republic in Moscow, 1969

The last two years of Gomułka's governance were characterised by his attempt to reform the country's economy in order to restore trust in his leadership and to avert the danger of the system eroding further.[471] Bolesław Jaszczuk, one of the 'unideological technocrats' that Gomułka introduced to the Party leadership in the 1960s, was responsible for drafting the programme of reforms.[472] It introduced the concept of selective growth, which aimed to modernise selected branches of the economy: electrical and electronic technologies, machine fabrication, chemical industry and non-ferrous metal processing were prioritised over other sectors. The modernisation of those industries was expected to bring about relatively quick results, which would financially enable the transformation of the rest of the economy and trigger further

[471] A. Seleny, *The Political Economy Of State-Society Relations in Hungary And Poland: From Communism to the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[472] N. Ascherson, *The Polish August* (London: A&C Black, 2011).

technological exchanges with the West. Subsequently, in the late 1960s new categories of commodities emerged that had been absent or played only a marginal role in the narratives of previous exhibitions. They included consumers' electronics, cars and technologically advanced household objects, but also domestic goods made from synthetic materials. This newly adopted approach was noticeable in Moscow, where the major part of the 25th anniversary of the Polish People's Republic took place in 1969.

The commemoration of establishing the communist system in Poland meant a very particular kind of display. Organised every five years, they aimed to demonstrate the complex bond connecting Poland with the Soviet Union. Additionally, they emphasised Moscow's superiority and by doing that they portrayed Poland as a beneficiary of this relationship: civilisational development and technological progress were credited solely to the alleged friendship with the Soviet Union. Although 1969 marked the Silver Jubilee of establishing the socialist system across the entire Eastern Bloc, celebrations of the Polish-Soviet relations dominated the anniversary.[473]

The Eastern European countries had been regularly showcasing their economic achievements in Moscow – starting from 1949, when Poland displayed its first exposition of light industry, which I explored in the first chapter. Since 1954 similar pavilions were featured at the city's biggest venue – the Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy (*Vystavka Dostizheniy Narodnogo Khozyaystva, VDNKh*). VDNKh, built under Stalin's regime, was a continuation of the short-lived All-Union Agricultural Exhibition. The space's fairgrounds depicted the monumentality of Socialist Realism and, through various public artworks, evoked the richness and diversity of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. The trade fair in itself embodied an idealised version of the socialist reality, 'a Disney World of Socialism', presented as a land where 'vegetables were bigger, chickens more plentiful, and people more cheerful than anywhere in the world.'[474] From the early 1960s agricultural achievements started being replaced by technological developments, which marked a relatively new field that the USSR wanted to champion.[475] This shift towards modern technologies also changed the optics of the official narrative offered to the wider public. The VDNKh was to

[473] The archival press materials mention the festivities of Romanian and Bulgarian socialist statehood, but do not cover the analogue events in Czechoslovakia or Hungary.
[474] V. E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 251.
[475] S. Gerovitch, *From Newspeak to Cyberspeak: A History of Soviet Cybernetics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).

reassure the visitors 'not about the present, but about the brightness of their future, future that was neither open nor unpredictable but seemingly stable, metered, and machine like.'[476]

The 1969 Polish anniversary exhibition hosted in Moscow shared a similar ambition. Yet, the Polish presentation aimed to combine the image of a country owning a technologically advanced industry with the vision of a consumerist society of a sophisticated material culture. While the former signified an important part of the Polish export to the USSR, the latter signified a new area of products that were on the rise following the recent business agreements between both countries.[477] Poland's light industry, although never reaching more than 16% of the state's international trade exchange, attracted much more interest from the popular press and general audiences.[478] Consequently, the modern designs of consumer products and technologically advanced machineries were highlighted in two complementary displays that Poland presented in Moscow under the title '25 Years of People's Poland'. On the occasion of the event the illustrated magazine *Poland,* distributed abroad and written for an international readership, published a special issue for Soviet readers. One of the main articles written in anticipation of the Polish expo in the USSR emphasised the turn towards light industry for mass consumers. Titled 'Polish products for everyone', the text mentioned the rapid development of the heavy and machine industries. It also claimed that

> the most widely known 'representatives' of our industry abroad are products of daily consumption, bought and used by millions of people in the Soviet Union, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and in many other countries in Europe and the world.[479]

To prove this thesis, the article was illustrated with photographs from earlier exhibitions organised by the *Universal* foreign trade company (Fig. 4.1). Reproduced in full colour, the frames were filled with attractive looking consumer goods to be used for

[476] C. Neidhart, *Russia's Carnival: The Smells, Sights, and Sounds of Transition* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), p. 163.
[477] Z. Landau and J. Tomaszewski, *The Polish Economy in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 275.
[478] E. Czerwińska, *Znaczenie Obrotów Handlowych z ZSRR dla Polski przed Zmianami Systemowymi i Obecne Tendencje* (Kancelaria Sejmu. Biuro Studiów i Ekspertyz, April 1993). R. Martin, *Constructing Capitalisms: Transforming Business Systems in Central and Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Publishing, 2013), p. 154.
[479] 'Pol'skiye Tovary Dlya Kazhdogo', *Pol'sha* 6, no. 178 (1969), p. 6.

leisure. According to the article, the vast majority of these commodities was sold to Eastern European countries, while some partly supplied the United States, Great Britain, France, Canada, as well as young African countries.[480]

Fig. 4.1. Display of the foreign trade company Universal from an article about Polish industry published in *Pol'sha* 6, no. 178 (1969)

The showcase of Polish economic achievements was the largest part of the Polish celebrations in Moscow – the official estimates state that it was visited by nearly one million people.[481] The exposition, which was open between 26 June and 27 August, displayed circa 25,000 items from the different branches of Polish industries, including the prominent presentation of heavy machinery and consumer goods.[482] The second, much smaller exhibition that opened on 30 June focused on applied art (*sztuka użytkowa*) and was hosted in the Pavilion of Culture of the VDNKh.[483]

[480] Ibidem, p. 7.
[481] E. Basiński, *Polska-ZSRR. Kronika Faktów i Wydarzeń, 1944-1971* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1973).
[482] 'Największa Nasza Ekspozycja za Granicą', *Dziennik Polski* 151, no. 7887 (27 June 1969), pp. 1–2.
[483] AAN PPRKCWOiK 2/1400/0/17. Eksport 1969, p. 2. The exhibition later travelled to Riga, where it was showed in August at the National Art Museum in an extended version including glass and ceramics brought from Warsaw – in total about 200 objects.

The lengthy celebrations also included numerous film projections, public meetings with artists, scientific symposia and other cultural events amassed during the dedicated Polish Days held across the Soviet Union.[484] The audiences in more distant locations were offered a chance to celebrate Polish culture through a television broadcast, used for the first time as part of the event's cultural programme. The Polish Days, in the opinion of the Polish ambassador in Moscow Jan Ptasiński, resonated positively both in the USSR and in Poland.[485] The anniversary programme did not appear in a void. Since the Thaw, international contacts within the Eastern Bloc had been widely promoted by the authorities, and so in the 1960s Polish culture, including literature, movies and fine art, was well known and highly regarded in the Soviet Union.[486] On this wave of interest design from Poland, but also from Czechoslovakia and East Germany, gained prominence among Moscow's design intelligentsia, who secured access to information on global developments in the world of design, art and architecture through Polish publications. The general public at the same time was exposed to Polish material goods – through economic exports and propagandist strategies. As Iurii Gerchuk, an editor of the *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* noted in the 1960s, the exhibitions of applied art, design posters and book design were regularly brought to the USSR. Polish clothes, shoes, homeware, household goods and decorative items were objects of desire for the Soviet public, 'who preferred them to domestic products which seemed, in contrast, to be largely clumsy and old fashioned.'[487]

The 1969 celebratory events presented various aspects of Polish industry, but none of them reflected the actual situation of consumption in Poland at the end of Gomułka's regime – the shortages of everyday products that Polish people were experiencing on a daily basis. On the contrary: larger exhibition, designed by Julian

[484] The programme included nearly 40 smaller exhibitions presenting book publishing, commercial and film posters, contemporary realist paintings, photography, architecture and urbanism. Meetings with Polish poets, writers, literary translators, composers and sculptors were also arranged. The programme included concerts, spectacles and performances by state folk song and dance ensembles. A mini festival of Polish cinematography included popular movies such as 'Everything for sale' by Andrzej Wajda.
[485] AAN PZPRKCWK LVI-966. Z Moskwy 21.7.1969.
[486] M. Olejniczak, *Polsko-Radzieckie Kontakty Kulturalne po II Wojnie Światowej: Fakty, Problemy* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1977), pp. 151-156. Also T. Kosinowa, *Polski Mit: Polska w Oczach Sowieckich Dysydentów 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980* (Kraków: Instytut Książki – Nowaja Polsza, 2012).
[487] I. Gerchuk, 'The Aesthetics of Everyday Life in the Khrushchev Thaw in the USSR (1954-64)', in D. Crowley and S. E. Reid (eds.), *Style and Socialism*, p. 82.

Pałka and Henryk Wiśniewski, aimed to give the impression of an incredible richness and variety in Poland's industry. The pavilions were divided into thematic sections that featured both heavy and light industrial production. The first part concentrated on various sorts of machineries for construction, agriculture, metallurgy and shipyards. It also included the chemical and automobile industries by showcasing displays of passenger cars and heavy goods vehicles.

The section devoted to electro-technical equipment allowed Poland to demonstrate an innovative shift in technology.[488] The selection featured car radios, lighting systems and musical instruments. The biggest revelations of the exhibition were computing machines produced by the Wrocław-based Elwro company. As the Polish press reported, the proto-computer Odra 1304 was programmed to answer '100 questions regarding economy, culture and science in People's Poland' within 3 seconds.[489] Although it was already a challenging task, the early computers were planned to deal with even more complex assignments. The cybernetics were immersed in futuristic visions of better-organised societies on both sides of the Iron Curtain.[490] From the mid 1960s computers were the centre of a larger techno-scientific debate in Poland; bureaucrats, scientists, engineers and economists – including authorities such as Oskar Lange – discussed strategies to use the devices in the planning and management of socialist economy.[491] In the 1970s computers became critical for the realisation of Gierek's vision of the new Poland and the science-technological revolution that laid at its core.[492]

While this part of exhibition focused on the reorganisation of the state as a whole, another section demonstrated a modernised lifestyle. Before the display was

[488] 'Dni Nauki i Techniki na Moskiewskiej Wystawie', *Dziennik Bałtycki* 154, no. 7764 (1 July 1969), p. 1.
[489] 'Członkowie Kierownictwa Partii i Rządu ZSRR Zwiedzili Polską Wystawę Przemysłową w Moskwie', *Życie Radomskie* 163 (10 July 1969), pp. 1–2.
[490] T. Cubbin, 'The Domestic Information Machine: Futurological Experiments in the Soviet Domestic Interior, 1968–76', *Home Cultures* 11, no. 1 (2014), pp. 5–32.
[491] P. Wasiak, 'Electronic Battlefields, Visions of Progress and Computer Networks in State Socialist Poland', *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* Vol. 56, no. 2 (2015), pp. 495–516. For a broader overview of the subject see J. Kordjak-Piotrowska and S. Welbel (eds.), *Kosmos Wzywa! Sztuka i Nauka w Długich Latach Sześćdziesiątych = Cosmos Calling! : Art and Science in the Long Sixties* (Warszawa: Zachęta - Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, 2014).
[492] J. Kalinski and Z. Landau, *Gospodarka Polski w XX Wieku* (Warszawa: Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, 1998), on Gierek's policy see especially pp. 290-330.

open to the public, the organisers outlined the event's objectives in an article written for the Soviet audiences:

> We want to show visitors our daily life, to demonstrate that we are able to live beautifully and dress elegantly. We hope that this part of the exposition [organised] under the theme 'Man and Home' will gain special interest. It will provide an opportunity to observe how the current level of Polish technology, science and economics rationally fulfils the needs of modern households.[493]

Following this statement, the presentations included household appliances such as refrigerators, as well as state-of-the-art domestic electronics, furniture sets (some of which were made of plastic), music records and a wide variety of Polish books and magazines published in Russian. The exposition reproduced real interiors and furnished them with simple furniture pieces in bright colours, which – unlike at the previous showcases – were not prototypes, but mass manufactured commodities. These objects, featured along with glass and ceramic items, enabled the recreation of a modern living space for middle class urban dwellers. A substantial part of the exhibition was also devoted to clothes and textiles, and this section was planned to attract a specific demographic. Bright colourful patterns, Polish denim, sports clothing and contemporary cuts of garments were particularly appealing to a young and hip public.[494] The way the outfits were presented intensified this sensation. Clothes were displayed on mannequins gathered in thematic sections that followed the dress codes for parties, leisure or sport; they were all arranged on elevated podiums decorated with long straps of materials hanging from the ceiling (Fig. 4.2). Other garments were shown by models moving to the rhythms of modern music in a choreographed spectacle. A prominent Russian designer Alla Levashova, in her review for *Dekorativnoe Iskusstvo SSSR* described the entire spectacle as full of joy and enthusiasm, 'a wonderful performance, not a traditional fashion show'.[495]

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[493] 'Yubileynaya Vystavka', *Pol'sha* 6, no. 178 (1969), p. 5.
[494] M. Oiva, 'Something New in the Eastern Market. Polish Perceptions of the Developing Soviet Consumerism, 1961–1972', in E. Hausbacher, J. Hargaßner and E. Huber (eds.) *Fashion, Consumption and Everyday Culture in the Soviet Union Between 1945 and 1985* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2014), pp. 99–124.
[495] A. Levashova, 'Pezhissura Ulitsy', *Dekorativnoe Iskusstvo SSSR* 10, no. 143 (October 1969), p. 32.

Fig. 4.2. Display of Polish fashion presented at the 25th anniversary exhibition in Moscow in 1969. Photograph published in *Dekorativnoe Iskusstvo SSSR* 10, no. 143 (1969)

By presenting fashionable outfits in a visually stunning setting, the authorities aimed to convey the image of a progressive and rejuvenated state. Fashion was well-suited to do that: it appealed to desires and projections rather than to functionality. This narrative function of clothes proved to be particularly effective in the Eastern Bloc countries from the second half of the 1950s. As Djurdja Bartlett noted in her seminal book about fashion in Eastern Europe, 'dress was not about fashion as an everyday object. Instead, images of smart and luxurious dresses were an ideal medium to visualise the progress that the socialist regimes dreamed of.'[496] The dress, and more broadly the textile industry, fit with the multifaceted narratives of the state. For example, the authorities in West and East Germany, as Judd Stitziel noted, methodically used production and consumption of clothing

> to prove the superiority of their respective politico-economic systems, to make claims to represent the German nation, and to establish the legitimacy of the state and encourage allegiance to it.[497]

[496] D. Bartlett, *FashionEast: The Spectre That Haunted Socialism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), p. 20.
[497] J. Stitziel, *Fashioning Socialism: Clothing, Politics, and Consumer Culture in East Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p.51.

Placed in the transnational context of the exhibitions, fashion additionally worked as a conveyor of Western trends, and the Polish presentation in Moscow highlighted this feature very clearly. For the Soviet audiences, who did not have direct access to Western clothing, Polish garments symbolised the cultural developments and novelties from beyond the Iron Curtain – and at the same time, they also provided the mediation that made Western trends seem less intimidating and more relatable. This international aspect of the Polish display was an important factor that contributed to the huge popularity of the showcase among Muscovites and the good press it received. Meanwhile, the other exhibition organised as part of the same anniversary was much less celebrated, and its explicitly national and historical narrative might have been the reason for its lukewarm reception. The demonstration must have been unappealing to the Soviet audiences, who were fed up with the propaganda, already dissatisfied with socialist economy and fascinated with the distant world of Western consumption. Nevertheless, this second exposition, smaller and less feted by the public and media, offers an interesting overview of the changes that had taken place in Polish design over two and a half decades.

Presented in Moscow as part of the 25th anniversary celebration the exhibition was based on a series of six displays organised across Poland in April and May 1969.[498] They were compressed and adapted to the new venue by Tadeusz Błażejowski, a prolific set and exhibition designer who often worked in a creative duo with his brother Janusz. The Moscow exhibition featured a selection of applied art, modern crafts and designs for industrial production, developed in Poland during the last 25 years (Fig. 4.3).

In the original version of this cumulative showcase in Poland, different categories of objects were presented in cities that had links to a particular industry. Thus, the industries were connected with the sociopolitical history of Polish cities and specific pieces were displayed against a social background, in which they were historically produced and consumed. Poznań for example, known as a hub of the furniture industry, hosted an exposition of furniture; apart from featuring the country's production, the showcase also explored changes in the Polish living habits that had taken place over the two decades. Łódź, with its history of textile manufacturing

[498] AAN ZPAPwW 2/794/0/3/17. Założenia programowe i organizacyjne Ogólnopolskiej Wystawy Sztuki Użytkowej w 25-lecie PRL.

reaching the 19th century, held a presentation of industrial and decorative fabrics. Not only did it highlight the creations of this most successful Polish production sector, but it also aimed to raise consumer awareness about the functionality of different kinds of materials. Glass and ceramic production was put on display in Wrocław. This fragment of the exhibition outlined the early post-war legacy of the 'post-German patterns' and featured the transformation of the industry, which followed shortly after. In Gdańsk, 'the most significant' public interiors (according to the expo's catalogue) were shown; using examples of factories, coalmines, hospitals, community cultural centres and shopping malls, the display highlighted the importance of space design within the communal aspects of architecture. Design for industry was presented in Lublin, the cradle of the Polish communist government, and it emphasised the social aspect of mass production. By showcasing the outcomes of the country's industrial production – Lublin, according to a report in *Poland* magazine,

> looked into the future, it anticipated the cooperation of artists, designers and industry. Prospects for such a cooperation are great, since there is an ever-increasing demand both at domestic and overseas markets, not only for high-quality and technically advanced products, but also for interesting solutions with regard to modern forms.[499]

Fig. 4.3. Series of posters celebrating Polish design and decorative art during the 25th anniversary of Polish People's Republic in 1969 reprinted on a dust jacked of a catalogue

[499] G. Bartoshek, '25 Let Pol'skogo Prikladnogo Iskusstva', *Pol'sha* 8, no. 180 (1969), p. 47.

The last presentation in the series was hosted in Warsaw and it examined Polish design for public events, fairs and exhibitions. In a *mise en abyme* manner, the display featured photographs and three-dimensional models of Polish stands at trade fairs, pavilions and expositions held home and abroad, with special attention to the visual side of the political celebrations.[500]

All six showcases were coordinated by the Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions in cooperation with the Polish Visual Artists Association (*Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków: ZPAP*), a state run artists' union. The presentation in Moscow, due to is official status of a foreign exhibition, additionally involved the Polish Ministry of Art and Culture and its Soviet counterpart. The content was consulted with Poland's consumer rights organisation called the Bureau for Cooperation with Consumers *Opinia*. Founded in 1965 by the Polish Ministry of Trade and Services, *Opinia* was chaired by Maria Jaszczukowa, wife of Bolesław Jaszczuk, member of the Politburo and the aforementioned author of economic reforms during the ultimate years of Gomułka's power. According to its statute, the bureau declared commitment to improve consumption culture in Poland, to raise consumer awareness and protect the users of products from unlawful commercial practices. The widely promoted slogan 'We advise, inform and help consumers' outlined the organisation's mission.[501] In reality, however, *Opinia* was more concerned with shielding government's commercial policies, through a wide ranging promotional strategy – including the publication of a specialised bulletin, thematic exhibitions and an extensive media presence. In order to manipulate the demands, the bureau used modern marketing strategies and, for instance, 'promoted "novelties" – often old products in new packaging with new, higher prices.'[502] By doing so, it aimed to divert public attention from the scarcity of daily essentials, such as basic food products, towards the available, but less required consumption goods and household items.

Given its profile, *Opinia's* involvement in the preparation of the anniversary presentation seemed to be an obvious decision. The exposition in Moscow, just like

[500] AAN ZPAPwW 2/794/0/3/17. Ramowy konspekt wystawy ustalony w dniu 6.05.68 na posiedzeniu Przedstawicieli Okręgu w Warszawie.
[501] AAN ZPAPwW 2/794/0/3/17. Założenia programowe i organizacyjne Ogólnopolskiej Wystawy Sztuki Użytkowej w 25-lecie PRL.
[502] M. Mazurek and M. Hilton, 'Consumerism, Solidarity and Communism: Consumer Protection and the Consumer Movement in Poland', *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2007), pp. 315–43.

Opinia's earlier outputs, created a positive image of a consumerist society, which reflected the aspirations of the state and, as such, replicated the political narration of progress and development. In a similar vein, the display manifested the consumerist shift in governmental policies and also reflected the desires of the public, very rarely fulfilling them.[503]

The discrepancy between what was being produced and consumed in Poland and what was shown to the wider audience was not exclusively a Polish issue. Industrial exhibitions and trade fairs around the world usually featured experimental or representational objects that enabled each nation to demonstrate their technological possibilities and economic prosperity, which could give them competitive advantage over other countries.[504] Nonetheless, the confrontation of the showcased items with the products of a centrally planned economy was particularly telling. The Leipzig Fair in the late 1940s for instance, as Katherine Pence reported, revealed 'a discrepancy between the fantasy of the displays and the realities of shortage.'[505] The public often addressed this issue in letters sent to the popular press, which sometimes published them with an appropriate commentary that intended to explain the problem.[506] Designers and design critics frequently raised their voice in this matter too – they were able, like no one else, to indicate the lost opportunities in the production of goods. In the context of the Moscow presentation, figures from Polish design circles voiced the most clearly articulated criticism of the situation. In an article reviewing the series of celebratory expositions, Ignacy Witz called for a restlessness in demanding that the objects featured at the displays would be widely available:

> The exhibitions [of Polish applied art on the 25th anniversary of the Polish People's Republic] reveal the achievements, but I'm afraid they also show glaring disproportions between the possibilities or beautiful dreams and the everyday reality… We have to be restless in drawing artists into production

[503] P. H. Patterson, 'Risky Business. What Was Really Being Sold in the Department Stores of Socialist Eastern Europe?', P. Bren and M. Neuburger (eds.), *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 116–39.
[504] See for example A. J. Pulos, *The American Design Adventure*.
[505] K. Pence, 'A World in Miniature', p. 33.
[506] For the tradition of writing letters to the authorities and press in socialist Russia see S. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Also M. Mroczkowska, *Listy do 'Przyjaciółki' tygodnik: codzienne życie Polaków dekady gierkowskiej w listach czytelników* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, 2004).

> processes and demanding that their efforts make a significant imprint [on production].[507]

Witz seemed to be pointing his finger at the artists, who in his words were reluctant to engage with the industry – but also at the authorities, who kept missing the opportunity to use the artists' potential on a daily basis. Jerzy Olkiewicz, an illustrator and design writer from the *Projekt* magazine circle, commented on the selection of objects in a similar manner:

> Thanks to their talent, invention and panache, the utilitarian artists were able to cope with the staggering material shortages of the 1940s and 1950s. At the time when interior design was at a standstill or even was moving backward to the period of plaster and moulding, our exhibition design was highly applauded abroad. When glassworks were unable to provide an efficient supply of window glass, artists created pioneering glass forms. Issues of industrial design were being discussed, when even simple everyday goods, created without any artistic involvement, were not available on the market.[508]

This text, which appeared in the introductory section of the catalogue of applied art for the 25th anniversary of the People's Republic, addressed the discrepancy between design for daily needs and the objects presented on displays. Additionally, it pointed out the power that design could have had over the planning and development of the Polish industry throughout the post-war period. In spite of design's positive potential, the political and economic circumstances of dysfunctional manufacturing and a centrally planned economy hindered the efforts of designers. Most of the works that were conceived at that time did not enter into regular production, and many prototypes that passed to the implementation stage were realised poorly and without attention to detail. The factory directors did not understand the value of good design, to which Olkiewicz and many other commentators referred on various occasions. The supervisors believed that in a centrally planned economy all goods, regardless of their functional or aesthetic qualities, would find their way to the customers. Light industry in particular suffered from this approach: along with outdated technologies and obsolete materials, incorrect management and work organisation were damaging for industry. At the core of the problem was, however, the centrally planned economy and the lack of market

[507] I. Witz, 'Potrzebna Niecierpliwość', *Słowo Ludu. Magazyn* 502, no. 6767 (7 July 1969), p. 6.
[508] J. Olkiewicz in A. Janota (ed.) *Polska Sztuka Użytkowa w 25-Lecie PRL* (Warszawa: Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków, 1972), n. pag.

mechanisms that could regulate supply and demand. That not only affected the production, but also had a negative influence on the morale of the designers themselves. Zdzisław Wróblewski, one of the most prolific industrial designers working with the Institute of Industrial Design, noted:

> the customer pays the same price for good or bad products, and there is nothing motivating designers to make an effort – they receive the same wages regardless of the outcome; since they don't have direct contact with the user, they don't take responsibility for the mistakes.[509]

This quote revokes images of scarcity and shabby goods that dominated accounts of socialist design culture at home.[510] It draws attention to the 'dramatic contrasts' (as phrased by Telakowska) between the realities of domestic consumption and representational strategies presented in the context of international exhibitions. As such, the quote illustrates the difference in professional opportunities and therefore work attitudes between designers whose work was primarily intended to be distributed at home versus those whose designs were exhibited abroad.

By the mid 1960s the authorities grew aware of the power of industrial design. Thanks to that, designers – sometimes also known as utilitarian artists (*użytkowcy*) – became indispensable for the propagandist success of the technologically savvy Poland in the last few years of Gomułka's rule and the early years of Gierek's power. A few of them post-rationalised the role they were ascribed in the socio-political plans of the authorities. One of them was Krzysztof Wodiczko, one of the most important Polish conceptual artist, who in 1968 graduated from the Industrial Design programme at Warsaw's Academy of Fine Art. In an interview held two decades later, he reflected on his professional position within a socialist society:

> I was trained to be a member of the elite unit of designers, skilful infiltrators who were supposed to transform the existing state socialism into an intelligent, complex, and human design project.'[511]

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[509] B. Łopieńska, 'Nasz Dom 1963. Zdzisław Wróblewski', *Ty i Ja* 10, no. 42 (1963), pp. 14–15.

[510] See for example Leopold Tyrmand's anecdote about a recent purchase in his *Diary 1954*, p. 296.

[511] D. Crimp, R. Deutsche, and E. Lajer-Burcharth, 'A Conversation with Krzysztof Wodiczko', *October* 38 (1986), p. 33.

In the end, Wodiczko turned towards a more conceptual practice, devoted to a critical dialogue between designers and the system. The graduates who decided to continue working in design on an everyday basis struggled with the industry, production norms and material shortages, while in the official narrative their work was celebrated as a sign of modernisation, progress and often innovation.

However, a revealing twist appears here: after years of promoting craft and decorative arts, the state gave industrial design priority over artisanal practice. The rhetorical strength of popular, mass produced goods was significantly different than that of the exclusive, experimental objects. As Olkiewicz remarked in his above-mentioned text,

> making a piece of furniture from wicker or wood trunks may seem to be more pleasing than developing, at last on an industrial scale, a truly popular and mass-produced piece of Polish furniture. It is perhaps easier for an artist to engage with the sophisticated form of a sculptural composition, rather than bend to designing a well-balanced piece of industrial glass.[512]

Although the state did not entirely abandon artisanal production and continued promoting it abroad, design for the masses seemed to be more relevant for the new official narrative. It fit the up-to-date policies of consumption in Poland during the early years of Gierek's rule, but also all across the entire Eastern Bloc. It became the most pertinent aspect of the political narrative and, as Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger noted, 'deeply subsidised basic consumption has been propagated as a socialist citizen's right.'[513] This link between consumption and the political ideology of developed socialism materialised within industrial design, and that was reflected in a number of design organisations established in Eastern Europe.

The professionalisation of industrial design, which was facilitated by the state, was planned as a method that would lead to the improvement of production quality. In 1962, the All-Union Scientific Research Institute for Technical Aesthetics (*Vsesoyuznyi Nauchno-issledovatel'skii Institut Tekhnicheskoi Estetiki: VNIITE*) was founded in the Soviet Union. Although the wide range of activities it undertook did not make a real impact on the mass production of the everyday goods, it resulted in the evolution of a

[512] J. Olkiewicz in A. Janota (ed.) *Polska Sztuka Użytkowa,* n. pag.
[513] P. Bren and M. Neuburger, 'Introduction', in P. Bren and M. Neuburger (eds.), *Communism Unwrapped*, p. 10.

potent future-centred narrative.[514] The development of design culture in the USSR was followed by similar actions from Bulgaria. In 1963 the Bulgarian Council for Aesthetics of Industrial Goods was established, and the first edition of a specialised design journal *Dizain* was published in Sofia in 1968 – over a decade since the Polish *Projekt* had been first released. Rossitza Guentcheva argued that in the early 1960s the quality of goods became a priority for Bulgarian communist authorities; however, she did not clearly state the distinction between the actions and rhetoric of the Bulgarian officials.[515] At the same time, a phenomenon known as 'mass consumption societies' started developing in Western Europe, North America, Australia and Japan.

As a consequence of the consumptionist turn in politics across the Eastern Bloc, industrial design became an important element of the cultural exchange among countries. Between the mid 1960s and early 1970s there was a clearly noticeable rise of the Polish-Soviet cultural interests in design.[516] Exhibitions of industrial design, which since the 1960s started being organised on an unprecedented scale across the Eastern Bloc, began depicting design as 'a utilitarian art, which is ubiquitous, genuinely mass appealing and international.'[517] The interest in design significantly increased, which was reflected in a publication of a series of articles about local design scenes, but also rich engagement programming including exhibitions, professional visits and workshops held both in Poland and in the USSR.[518] As noted by a Soviet journalist during this exchange, the designers representing Moscow had to challenge how were they

[514] For the Soviet Design see T. Cubbin, 'Introduction to "Problems of Soviet Design" and "The Production (Industrial) Art of the Future" by Karl Kantor', *Journal of Design History* 29, no. 4 (2016), pp. 385–404 and Y. Karpova, 'Accommodating "Design": Introducing the Western Concept into Soviet Art Theory in the 1950s–60s', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 20, no. 4 (2013), pp. 627–47. For design in the context of material culture see A. Alekseyeva, 'Constructing Soviet Domesticity and Managing Everyday Life from Khrushchev to Collapse', in G. H. Roberts (ed.), *Material Culture in Russia and the USSR: Things, Values, Identities* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp. 55–69 and various articles by Susan E. Reid, for example her 'Communist Comfort: Socialist Modernismand the Making of Cosy Homes in the Khrushchev Era', *Gender & History* 21, no. 3 (2009), pp. 465–98.

[515] R. Guentcheva, 'Material Harmony. The Quest for Quality in Socialist Bulgaria, 1960s-1980s', in P. Bren and M. Neuburger (eds.), *Communism Unwrapped*, pp. 140–63.

[516] M. Olejniczak, *Polsko-Radzieckie Kontakty Kulturalne po II Wojnie Światowej: Fakty, Problemy* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1977), p. 156.

[517] Ibidem.

[518] In 1968 the Senezh Studio visited Poland, where it held a major exhibition of their research, presented a series of lectures and took part in numerous meetings with major Polish design figures. A few months earlier Hansen had visited Moscow with a series of workshops with Senezh. L. N., 'Senezhskaya Studiya', *Dekorativnoe Iskusstvo SSSR* 4 (April 1968), pp. 36–7.

perceived by their Polish colleagues and convince them that 'the design ideas do not always have to come from the West.'[519]

A genuine interest in the exchange of information about design theory and practice was clearly noticeable among design professionals from the both countries.[520] However, the official press statements released for the Moscow exhibition highlighted the propagandist aspect of this dialogue. The daily press in both Poland and the Soviet Union focused mainly on the reciprocal visits of the prime ministers Józef Cyrankiewicz and Alexei N. Kosygin, diplomats, government officials and public figures. During these meetings, as the national press agencies reported, the Soviet side praised Poland's accomplishments and the friendly collaboration between the two nations, while Polish bureaucrats emphasised the role of the Soviet Union in the process of Poland achieving its current position.[521] The shared past, although it allowed to emphasise the historical bond between them, was used by Polish authorities more cautiously than on previous occasions. A commemoration of the 'two countries' struggle against the fascist invader' was one of the few historical narrative threads highlighted in the presentation's public programming. In fact, Polish officials noticed that the recent two decades were not as relevant for the legitimisation process at that time; what is more, they even realised that a symbolic association with the Soviet Union rather than with the West could impede the optimistic message about Poland's modernisation. That is why historical aspects, although important from the propagandist point of view, were much less exposed during this display. They proved to be less significant than the optimistic outlook and cheerful celebration that dominated the exhibition.[522]

Instead, design was the centre of attention in professional Soviet publications, such as *Ogoniok* and *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR*. Their articles, although they acknowledged the official side of the celebrations, put particular emphasis on the

[519] See E. Shaposhnikova, 'Senezh V Varshave', *Dekorativnoe Iskusstvo SSSR* 11 (November 1968), pp. 23–36.
[520] T. Cubbin, 'Open Form and the Polish Influence on Soviet Design of the 1960s', *Herito* 24 (2016), pp. 82–93.
[521] 'Situation Report: Poland', 11 July 1969. HU OSA 300-8-47-138-55; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Situation Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. Available online http://catalog.osaarchivum.org/catalog/osa:189843bc-fc23-478f-b901-6e0f19a6d901. Accessed on 20 April 2017.
[522] Ibidem.

cultural and visual aspects of the showcase. For authors of the editorial opening to *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR,* those features represented a 'new type of mass culture' that emerged in the post-war decades under socialism and was presented as a testimony of the country's progress:

> Along with a book, a poster becomes a powerful tool not only for propaganda and agitation, but also for teaching people about aesthetic taste, and helping them to overcome the obstacles in perceiving art. [In this process] decorative art has played an important role too; regular exhibitions of tapestries, ceramics, glass and furniture have become platforms where artists presented solutions for specific environments – be it a public or residential interior, a prototype for industrial production or a unique, not widely available work.[523]

According to the editors, Polish design and utilitarian art owed their quality to the social conditions in which they had been developed. It enabled artists to address current social issues, but at the same time it was deeply rooted in socialist circumstances. Design was presented as a form of art the was accessible and understandable for the wider audiences, and as such could be used to transform tastes and behaviours of the socialist society. Subsequently, socialist Poland offered the decorative artists, architects, designers and constructors

> an opportunity to solve pressing problems of modern interiors, to improve apartment furnishings, to promote new materials and methods of production, and to reduce the cost of consumer goods. Naturally, this does not mean that Polish artists have abandoned their creative experiments, which they called "a laboratory plan." On the contrary: their recent explorations are the evidence of the depth and seriousness of their experimental approach. Most importantly, now the outcomes [of these endeavours] can be found not only among a short series of ceramics, glass, furniture or fabrics, but also in mass production.[524]

The image of Polish design depicted in this introductory text by the Soviet editors was quite generic. Similar things could have been said to describe the design culture of those times in Czechoslovakia, Hungary or the German Democratic Republic, none of which presented their exhibitions in Moscow due to political circumstances. Nevertheless, in comparison with other national issues of the *Dekorativnoe Iskusstvo SSSR*, the one devoted to the Polish scene presented a much more modern attitude than

[523] [Editorial], *Dekorativnoe Iskusstvo SSSR* 10, no. 143 (October 1969), p. 1.
[524] Ibidem.

the ones dealing with Bulgaria or Romania that had been published several months earlier. *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* celebrated the progressive look of the exhibition in Moscow and Polish design more broadly. As the editorial remarked, the tragic experiences that Polish people lived through in the 20th century did not constrained them,

> requiem has never obscured the creation… Today, a high level of industry and the profound transformation of the entire socioeconomic structure clearly demonstrate that Poland has confidently moved forward as a socialist state with a highly developed economy…[525]

As a result, the transformation of the country's cultural life – the Soviet editors observed several lines later – was ingrained in tradition and the national heritage.[526] Although the text was not explicit in what either of those terms meant, a glimpse at the publication pages clearly suggests that tradition was used here as shorthand for the rural, peasant- and folk-related ideas and aesthetics. The cover of this volume was, for example, decorated with an ornate folk style paper cut-out (Fig. 4.4). It was by no means representative of the content of the articles, which predominantly celebrated Polish contemporary design, but papercutting was well popularised through the previous decades and widely associated with Polish culture.

Highlighting the folk art references seemed to be at odds with the intentions of the Polish organisers. From the mid-1960s they wanted to play down the rural aspect of Polish culture, fearing it might interfere with the key message about the country's modernisation and progress. Consequently, the profile of the state-funded Institute of Industrial Design, the great adversary of Polish artisanal production, was adjusted to follow the state's agenda. In the 1960s the Institute's interests turned away from the cooperation between artists and skilled amateurs (which was part of the programme initiated in the early 1950s), and moved towards research and design for industry. Like similar institutions across the Eastern Bloc, the Institute focused on ergonomic investigations and technologically advanced solutions. The romanticised vision of everyday aesthetics, rooted in folklore and peasant tradition that the state promoted in

[525] Ibidem.
[526] Ibidem.

the previous decade, was replaced by a technocratic plan. Design seemed to be the final stadium of the evolution of applied arts.

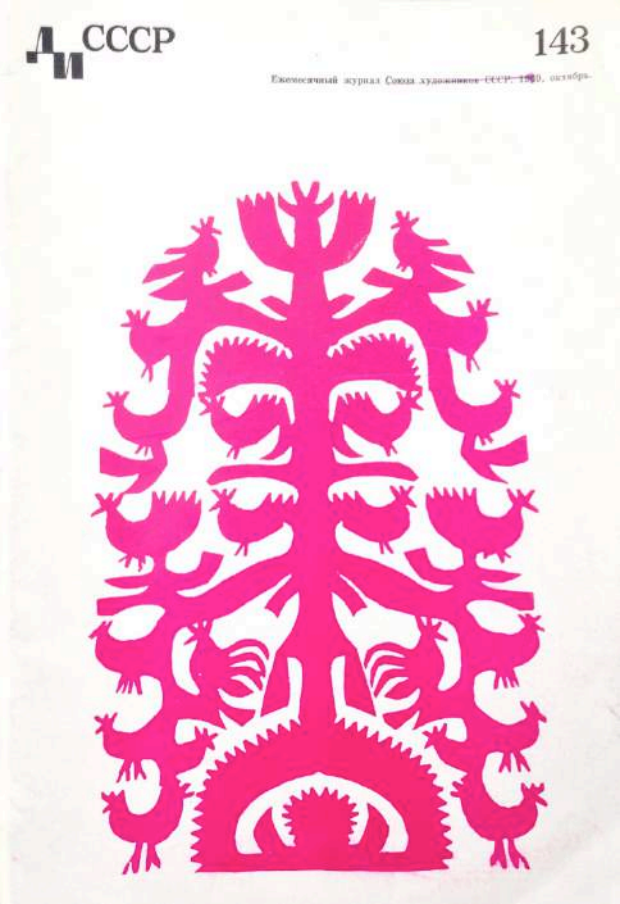

Fig. 4.4. Front cover of a special issue of *Dekorativnoe Iskusstvo SSSR* 10, no. 143 (1969) devoted to Polish design, craft and architecture

The CPLiA – another institution that from the late 1940s had inspired interdisciplinary discussions about the role of folk art and handcraft in national culture – was transformed too. In the early 1960s it focused mainly on commercial activities both in Poland and abroad, trying to accelerate to production of goods.[527] With time, the quality of the organisation's branded products deteriorates, the faithfulness to the principles of handcraft decreased. They were reimagined as exotic decorations that could appeal to the foreign tastes. *Poland*, the illustrated monthly magazine, regularly featured articles on the CPLiA stylised in that vein. They demonstrated a new approach to folk and handcraft: floral patterns were fashionable decorations of contemporary

[527] P. Korduba, *Ludowość na Sprzedaż*, especially pp. 195-201.

dresses and mass produced folksy objects added a rustic chic to plain modern interiors (Fig. 4.5).

Although rural aesthetics were downgraded in industrial design, they permeated into a new popular culture. Some of their aspects were presented to the local audiences in Moscow through the local programming. Unlike in the event in Turin in 1961, the folk-inspired dances and music were significantly reshaped. The celebrations of the 25th anniversary included performances by young bands such as *No To Co* (And so what) and *Mamy dwadzieścia pięć lat* (We are 25), a creative collective of 30 musicians who successfully combined traditional tunes with contemporary popular melodies.[528]

Fig. 4. 5. Selection of objects inspired by the Polish artisanal production photographed by Tadeusz Rolke for *Poland* magazine 11, no. 171 (1968)

[528] Following a very positive reception in Moscow, the band toured in the USSR with a recital for the Polish Days celebrations. AAN PPRKCWOiK 2/1400/0/17. Pismo radcy ambasady w Moskwie Lesława Wojtygi do kierownika Wydziału Kultury PZPR Wincentego Kraśki Nr 11208/21/S z 21.7.69 r.

The groups – their musical repertoire and scenic image – were a home-grown response to the Western trends among youth.[529] This hybrid form of culture appeared across the Eastern Bloc as a result of multiple cultural transfers from the West and often further to the East, as Juliane Fürst demonstrated in her book on youth culture in the Soviet Union.[530] These transfers, at least in the case of the Polish bands would not have happened if it wasn't for the authorities, who facilitated and promoted them on a large scale in Poland and abroad.

The naïve and rustic inspirations incorporated by the young performers were supported by the state, which saw in them a national, viable alternative for foreign models.[531] Małgorzata Fidelis called the 1960s 'the first global decade for the inhabitants of the Soviet Bloc', as the western trends in music and young people's lifestyles were denounced and mocked by the Party; by the end of the 1960s the authorities started using them for their own political goals.[532] The potential of this new musical genre to support the progressive image of the country was confirmed by its use in the official newsreel film from the exhibition, screened in Polish cinemas before regular movie projections.[533] The soundtrack, so different from the ones used to accompany previous events of a similar character, was yet another sign that the government wanted to address younger citizens.

The popularity of these bands with youth demonstrated that the target audience approved the aesthetic – with a dose of national pride similar to the one accompanying international sporting events. The popular press was very enthusiastic about this phenomenon too. An illustrated monthly *Dookoła Świata* (Around the world), in an article published in 1969, praised the new national trend in music:

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[529] T. W. Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
[530] J. Fürst, 'Swinging across the Iron Curtain and Moscow's Summer of Love', in R. Jobs and D. Pomfret (eds.), *Transnational Histories of Youth in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Springer, 2015), pp. 236–59.
[531] A. Pelka, 'Youth Fashion in Poland in the 1950s and 1960s: Ideology, Resistance, and Manipulation', in K. Fahlenbrach, M. Klimke, J. Scharloth and L. Wong (eds.), *The Establishment Responds: Power, Politics, and Protest since 1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 197–210.
[532] M. Fidelis, 'Red State, Golden Youth : Student Culture and Political Protest in 1960s Poland', in T. S. Brown and L. Anton (eds.), *Between the Avant-Garde and the Everyday: Subversive Politics in Europe from 1957 to the Present* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), pp. 145–53.
[533] The newsreel is available online http://kronikarp.pl/szukaj,54487,strona-1. Accessed: 2 February 2017.

> For a few years [Polish bands] emulated the most famous idols of Western music, with varying degrees of success; up until the moment when new, native elements emerged in the repertoire of our most popular music bands. All became clear. A new tendency in our popular, young people's music was born – a national, Polish style referring to folklore. It could not have been ignored, on the contrary: thanks to a skilful patronage it was developed, refined and appropriately promoted.[534]

This case casts light onto a paradox that marked the Polish exhibition in Moscow and complicated various matters for Polish officials from the moment they had claimed the country's openness to the world. On one hand, they believed that following the Western example, in design in particular, would be beneficial for Poland's economy and international relations. On the other hand, they never abandoned the desire to establish a unique national style which, as I have suggested earlier, heavily influenced the Polish international exhibitions. Stanisław Barańczak, a careful observer of the popular culture during the communist regime, noted the authorities tried to reconcile this conflict driven by their pragmatic and ideological objectives. 'The Western model of mass culture,' Barańczak remarked, 'is highly attractive, but by principle is cosmopolitan.'[535] He continued:

> Superintendents of mass culture in the Polish People's Republic demand in a more or less explicit way a 'nativeness', which does not necessarily have to be rooted in the Polish national tradition: they understand 'nativeness' as anything that is 'non-Western'.[536]

The celebratory exhibition in Moscow and the associated public programming aimed to achieve a balance between both elements. However, as revealed by the archival material, it rather came across as a lack of a clear narrative and resulted in confusion among the Soviet journalists and the public. Although design critics must have been well aware of these significant changes in Poland's current design agenda, perhaps by recalling rural culture in the introduction to the Polish issue of the *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR,* the editorial board wanted to emphasise the socialist rooting of Polish design practices. This case shows that the narrative qualities of design

[534] 'Brawa dla organizatorów', *Dookoła Świata,* no. 5 (1969), pp. 6–7.
[535] S. Barańczak, *Czytelnik Ubezwłasnowolniony*, pp. 20-1.
[536] Ibidem.

were used not only by the exhibition-makers, but also by journalists, who mediated their reception.

Nonetheless, for the 1969 Moscow exhibition Polish organisers explored first and foremost the narrative ability of mass-design to address political issues that emerged within the last years of Gomułka's rule. By presenting a variety of durables on the one hand – clothes, domestic appliances and passenger cars – the presentation aimed to tackle people's growing dissatisfaction with the current supply of goods. On the other hand, technologically advanced objects for personal use demonstrated the potential and competitiveness of Polish industry and highlighted the process of household modernisation. By featuring these categories of mass-produced objects, the display aimed to reinforce the concept of 'little stabilisation' and, consequently, to boost the public moods and influence the public's opinion about the situation in the country. The last few years of Gomułka's order were an interesting period from a historical perspective; although the long-term politics of the old leader were still in place, they initiated the socio-economic changes that defined the upcoming decade.

'Persuading People's Poland It Has Never Had It So Good': Warsaw XXX, 1974

Gomułka's attempts to rethink the economic policies and to gain social support ended spectacularly badly. The reforms drafted by Bolesław Jaszczuk happened too late to make any significant impact on the overall situation in the country, even though they proposed the most radical transformation of the Polish economy in over a decade.[537] Their scope was limited and it proved to be short-sighted in the end: 'selective growth', planned as leverage for the economy, had opposite consequences. Limiting investments to heavy industry only and reducing the development of the other sectors made labourers vulnerable. Wages were frozen and many workers were made redundant.[538] Despite repeated warnings issued by several economists, the reforms did not significantly engage with consumption and the Party notoriously treated it as 'buffer sector' rather than an urgent social policy issue. Society grew disillusioned with the 'little stabilisation', which by the mid 1960s was an entirely devalued concept, as the

[537] Z. Pełczyński, 'The Decline of Gomułka', in R. F. Leslie (ed.), *The History of Poland Since 1863* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), especially pp. 400-3.
[538] B. Fowkes, *Rise and Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995).

country drifted towards stagnation.[539] Between 1968 and 1970, salaries rose by less than a meagre two per cent.[540] Socialism was clearly not delivering its promises of an improved quality of life. The dismal financial situation of the majority of households and the constant issues with the provision of daily goods resulted in people being discontent, which manifested itself during mass protests.

When in December 1970 Edward Gierek replaced Władysław Gomułka as First Secretary, Polish society was clearly frustrated with the Party's line. The strikes in the coastal region had been brutally pacified just a few days earlier, and although the Party regained control over the streets, the demands of the workers remained unaddressed. From his first days in power Gierek had to make it very clear that his approach to social issues would be significantly different from his predecessor's. It would enable hime to not only calm the atmosphere among the workers, but also to control the popular moods. In one of the internal documents outlining the consumption policy for the upcoming years, Gierek's cabinet admitted:

> In the given circumstances a proposal to dynamically develop production and provision of a wide range of modern, attractive, sought after and relatively cheap consumers' goods is the only alternative, obviously apart from developing housing construction and services, which are a separate issue. Otherwise the demands for meat might be much more striking than we assume today.[541]

From the beginning of his political career Gierek had carefully managed the public perception of himself. As the leader of the Silesian branch of the Party, he 'had made a reputation as the "manager" of Silesia and as someone who knew the West,

[539] See S. Autio-Sarasmo, 'Stagnation or Not? The Brezhnev Leadership and East-West Cooperation', in D. Fainberg and A. M. Kalinovsky (eds.), *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange*, (n.p.: Lexington Books, 2016), pp. 87–104. For a political context see M. Zaremba, 'Społeczeństwo Polskie Lat Sześćdziesiątych – Miedzy »małą Stabilizacją« a »małą Destabilizacją«', in K. Rokicki and S. Stępień (eds.), *Oblicza Marca 1968*, pp. 24–51.

[540] J. Kaliński, 'Ekonomiczne Aspekty Kryzysów Systemu Komunistycznego w Polsce (1956–1980)', *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 1, no. 11 (2007), pp. 89–104.

[541] AAN URM 2/290/0/5.4/27. Założenia w sprawie dostaw przemysłowych artykułów rynkowych na lata 1971–1975, KPRM, Warszawa, październik 1971 r., pp. 83–84. Quoted in Ł. Dwilewicz, 'Kupowanie Poparcia. Polityka Gospodarcza Jako Środek Stabilizacji Sytuacji Wewnętrznej w Polsce w Pierwszych Miesiącach Rządów Edwarda Gierka', *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2, no. 13 (2008), p. 166.

where he had spent his younger years.'[542] When he became the First Secretary, he established himself as a 'father figure', a leader of the nation who could talk to people, listen to them and advise. At his request all portraits of the socialist leaders, which until then were mandatory elements of official interior design, were removed from schools and public offices.[543] Although he opposed this traditional form of adoration, he enjoyed being captured in photographs during his visits in factories and conversations with common people, as well as in more intimate situations (Fig. 4.6).

Fig. 4.6. First secretary Edward Gierek during family gathering

This visible shift in the depiction of the First Secretary was characteristic of a much broader change in the language that the authorities used to communicate with the people in the 1970s: younger, better educated and more immune to the propagandist clichés used in the interwar and occupation periods. Modern technology, with television in particular, became pivotal to the effectiveness of disseminating official messages,

[542] A. Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours. Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State Universty Press, 2003), p. 353.
[543] J. Eisler, *Siedmiu Wspaniałych. Poczet Pierwszych Sekretarzy KC PZPR* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czerwone i Czarne, 2014), especially chapter 4 on Edward Gierek, pp. 253-311. See also George Blazynski's characteristic of Gierek in his *Flashpoint Poland*, Pergamon Policy Studies on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980), pp. 81-6.

which focused on praising the country's achievements. Especially in the early years this 'propaganda of success' created an optimistic atmosphere around the new Secretary and gained him sincere support from many people.[544] '[Gierek] is doing everything that's possible to convince people and win them over,' Stefan Kisielewski, a declared opponent of the system, noted in his diary in April 1973.[545]

At the same time, being exposed to Western culture – which was part of Gomułka's plan to open Poland to the world – whetted people's desires for a better life and shaped their dreams about material culture. Gierek's scheme, a leap towards modernity and the construction of 'a second Poland,' was presented to the people as an opportunity to fulfil those dreams. His promises of the country's economic growth were based on a simultaneous rise of investment and consumption. Nevertheless, Gierek's unprecedented plan aimed to break up a well-recognised economic cycle, in which only one of these two elements was prioritised at a time. The former was fuelled by loans from the West, which by the end of the decade rose the level of 20 billion dollars (more than the results of a similar debt policy run by Walter Ulbricht and later Erich Honecker in the GDR). This was a 'kiss of debt', as Stephen Kotkin phrased it: while the influx of cash allowed consumption to improve and accelerated the economic growth, it also led to a gradual curtailment of socialism's *raison d'etre*.[546]

For thirty years waves of intense investment in heavy industry and machinery led to the stagnation or worsening of the standard of people's lives across the Eastern European countries. The initial positive results of Gierek's policy seemed to be an economic miracle: the record level of the investment rate, which reached 21.9%, was paired with the apparent increase of living standards.[547] In comparison with the previous years, the shop supply situation improved substantially, however the out-dated production processes resulted in the goods being of bad quality and miserable variety.[548]

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[544] M. Zaremba, 'Propaganda Sukcesu. Dekada Gierka', in P. Semków (ed.), *Propaganda w PRL – Wybrane Problemy* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo IPN, 2004), p. 26-27.
[545] S. Kisielewski, *Dzienniki* (Warszawa: Iskry, 2001), entry for 28 April 1973, p. 758.
[546] S. Kotkin, 'The Kiss of Debt. The East Bloc Goes Borrowing', in *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective*, ed. Niall Ferguson (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 80–93.
[547] J. Chumiński, 'Przemysł PRL – Niewykorzystana Szansa Modernizacji', in J. Chumiński (ed.), *Modernizacja Czy Pozorna Modernizacja. Społeczno-Ekonomiczny Bilans PRL 1944-1989* (Wrocław: GAJT, 2010), p. 336.
[548] D. Stola et al., 'Czy Polska Rosła w Siłę i Ludzie Żyli Dostatniej? Dyskusja', *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* 2 (2008), p. 33.

Between 1971 and 1975 the Polish annual growth rate of material products was 9.8%.[549] Gierek's political goal 'to make Poland grow in power and to enable people to live a life of ease' seemed to be achievable and it allowed the country to enter 'la belle époque' of socialism.[550]

For the first time people were not asked to make sacrifices, but were ostensibly encouraged to consume.[551] This sudden departure from austerity and pro-consumerist tendencies were symptomatic of a mature state socialism across the Eastern Bloc and it could be seen, following Strasser, McGovern and Judt's suggestion, 'as a prism through which many aspects of social and political life may be viewed.'[552] 1971 was announced by Leonid Brezhnev as the year when the heroic history of communism marked by victims, self-denial and giving up of life comforts officially ended. From now on the wellbeing of the citizens was placed at the centre of the political agenda and was declared a priority for the upcoming five-year period.[553] While the quality and availability of commodities remained problematic, the Soviet households, due to a

[549] J. Chumiński, 'Strukturalne Uwarunkowania Nieefektywności Gospodarki Socjalistycznej', in J. Chumiński (ed.), *Modernizacja Czy Pozorna Modernizacja*, p. 84.
[550] The phrase used by Paczkowski in his *The Spring Will Be Ours,* chapter 6.
[551] A. Leszczyński, *Skok w Nowoczesność. Polityka Wzrostu w Krajach Peryferyjnych 1943-1980* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2013), especially pp. 349-358.
[552] S. Strasser, C. McGovern, and M. Judt, 'Introduction', in S. Strasser, C. McGovern, and M. Judt (eds.), *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 4. Literature on socialist consumption has significantly expanded since the late 1990s and now includes classic positions like the above-mentioned *Getting and Spending*. Three volumes edited by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid entered the canon: *Style and Socialism. Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000); *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); and *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010). For a range of national studies see P. Bren and M. Neuburger (eds.), *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and P. Betts, 'The Politics of Plenty. Consumerism in Communist Societies', in S. A. Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 424–438. There is also a growing number of essay collections that focus on the national approach, for example E. Hausbacher, J. Hargaßner, and E. Huber (eds.), *Fashion, Consumption and Everyday Culture in the Soviet Union Between 1945 and 1985*, ed. (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2014) and D. Crew (ed.), *Consuming Germany in the Cold War*, ed. (Oxford: Berg, 2003), and many other articles cited in this and previous sources.
[553] M. Zaremba, '"Bigosowy socjalizm". Dekada Gierka', in G. Miernik (ed.), *Polacy Wobec PRL: Strategie Przystosowawcze* (Kielce: Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2003), pp. 183–200 and C. Varga-Harris, *Stories of House and Home: Soviet Apartment Life during the Khrushchev Years* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

systematic growth of salaries, spent proportionally more on non-consumables, such as clothing, furniture and electronic appliances.[554]

The Polish national economic strategy for the period between 1971 and 1975 was formulated in a similar vein. Among priorities was the rise of consumption and the improvement of the living standards of individuals.[555] The publication of the document outlining the policy was followed by a report on the situation of industrial design in Poland, released – not incidentally – in December the same year. It was commissioned by Jan Szydlak, a member of the Politburo responsible for the Party's propaganda, and prepared by a team of design professionals: representatives of the official associations of artists, architects, designers, academics and selected officials. When referring to the economic plan, the report stated that

> In the processes of economic development viewed in the broadest possible sense, including the improvement of living standards and the advancement of national culture, industrial design plays a significant role… To a foresighted economic policy, correlated with the cultural policy, design is a valuable tool that shapes the required consumption patterns. Design is also the most common vehicle for the concept of progress and of a job well done. It establishes habits of aesthetic order and comfort, and saturates the individual and societal life with cultural values.[556]

Although the national economic strategy and the report about the condition of design in Poland were drafted by different bodies, they flag two important issues. Firstly, they both signal the role that material objects played in Gierek's economic policy shift. The exhibition for the 30th anniversary of the Polish Peoples' Republic, to an even greater extent than the showcase hosted five years earlier in Moscow, revealed the complex relation between the state, its citizens and consumption goods in the first part of the 1970s. The exhibits, passenger cars and domestic technology in 1974 were not just seemingly interwoven in the official narrative of the country's modernisation – they were central to the social contract between the authorities and the people. Although

[554] N. Chernyshova, 'Consumers as Citizens. Revisiting the Question of Public Disengagement in the Brezhnev Era', in D. Fainberg and A. M. Kalinovsky (eds.), *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era,* pp. 3–20.
[555] Ł. Dwilewicz, 'Kupowanie Poparcia', p. 172.
[556] 'Raport o Stanie Wzornictwa Przemysłowego. Warszawa, Grudzień 1972', *Biuletyn ZPAP* 1, no. 111 (1973), pp. 34.

very successful at the beginning of the decade, by its end this instrumental use of design and consumerism proved fatal to the integrity of the political system.[557]

Secondly, these two documents disclose a professional opportunity that opened for industrial designers at that particular moment, following the Party's interest in design. Although temporary and superficial, this official involvement provided designers with a short-term concession that in the previous years had been enjoyed by craftsmen, architects and other artists of cultural production, whose works had been recognised by the state as politically useful. It was the very moment when design

> was just coming into its own in Poland, and it required academic solutions to many problems. In those years, there was a departure from the traditional attitudes of artistic handcrafts for the need of large-scale industrial production.[558]

The official patronage was particularly useful in developing an international design network, which required designers to travel abroad frequently and to arrange official visits to Poland of their Western counterparts. In order to do that, a group of Polish designers formed the Association of Industrial Designers (*Stowarzyszenie Projektantów Form Przemysłowych: SPFP*) in 1963.[559] Shortly after, the Association commenced drafting legislative documents that would regulate the cooperation between designers and industry.[560] One of the most important gatherings were the congresses organised biannually in different locations by the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID). As Susan Reid noted, participation in these events 'not only enabled individual professional advancement, but also promoted the development of the profession.' [561] These meetings of a truly international group of attendants from numerous countries also, unavoidably, became a platform for comparing conditions for

[557] D. Priestland, 'Neoliberalism, Consumerism and the End of the Cold War', in A. M. Kalinovsky and C. Daigle (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War* (London: Routledge 2013), pp. 401–15.
[558] J. Trzupek, 'Creator of Universal Systems', in Frejlich C. (ed.), *Out of the Ordinary*, pp. 290–99.
[559] R. Bojar, 'Ku Designowi. Od 1946' (n.p., n.d.). I am very grateful to prof. Wojciech Wybieralski for sharing this unpublished document with me.
[560] Kraków, Akademia Sztuk Pięknych, Archiwum Andrzeja Pawłowskiego, Andrzej Pawłowski 'Doświadczenia Estetyczne'. [Kraków]: [1963-4]. I would like to thank prof. Maria Dziedzic and Maciej Pawłowski for making this manuscript available to me, along with other documents from Andrzej Pawłowski's archives quoted in this chapter.
[561] S. E. Reid, 'Foreword', in S. Mikkonen and P. Suutari (eds.), *Music, Art and Diplomacy: East-West Cultural Interactions and the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. XV.

design development created by the liberal and socialist states. Andrzej Pawłowski, who had some of the most extensive international contacts among Polish designers, regularly participated in the ICSID congresses. In 1961, two years before the Polish association got established, Pawłowski – along with his younger colleague Ryszard Bojar and the prominent aforementioned critic Szymon Bojko – participated in 2nd ICSID congress in Venice.[562] At the following event, Poland participated as a fully-fledged member of the ISCID. A few years later, Pawłowski was made the Council's vice president (1967-69), and then president (1969-1971), thus becoming one of the Polish emissaries in the international design world.

At the 9th ICSID Congress held in Moscow in 1975, Pawłowski was the coordinator of a thematic strand 'Design and Labour in the Socialist Countries', and his presentation addressed the differences between design activity in capitalist and socialist societies:

> Industrial design arose out of the system of property values. In the capitalist countries it has served primarily to activise consumption and, thus, production. It made the consumer eager to acquire something that was new or rather looked different. The turning of the article or thing into a fetish led to the dangerous conviction that the value of a person's life depends exclusively on the quantity and quality of the 'things' one has. All worshiping this principle and taking this as 'the good life' were interested only in what they could buy for the pay received for their work. This way of stimulating man's activity was always objected to by people wanting labour to be recognised as the basic human value. As Engels once said, property was thereby enthroned and, eventually, completing the alienation, money, as the alienated and hollow abstraction of property, became omnipotent. Now, as he put it, man was slave not to his fellow, but to the thing.[563]

The references to the history of socialism included in Pawłowski's speech contextualised the development of design in Poland and allowed him to highlight the socialist character of production and consumption. Nevertheless, despite this Marxist warning, the citizens of socialist countries wanted to consume and from the late 1960s their governors additionally encouraged them to do so. Design, which the Party used in an instrumental way, was to help them in achieving this goal. A similar approach was

[562] R. Bojar, 'Ku Designowi. Od 1946'.
[563] A. Pawłowski, 'Activising Design', in *ICSID'75. 9th ICSID Congress Moscow. Plenary Papers* (International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, 1975), p. 82. The text was originally published as an English translation. Pawłowski did not speak English.

noticed among the Soviet bureaucrats. Dmitry Azrikan, one of the first industrial designers associated with VNIITE, in his vivid account of the development of industrial design in the Soviet Union wrote that

> design within a 'planned economy' was not needed. Furthermore, it was rather dangerous for the system because it demanded social changes in the cultural and economic spheres, and it could bring changes in the officially approved mentality. The way the communist system treated design showed the real anti-human face of the Soviet Empire.[564]

This approach, as it was demonstrated earlier, was typical for many officials across the bloc, and in principle could be attributed on a broader scale to bureaucrats of the capitalist countries too. This instrumental understanding of design, but also art, architecture and literature for that matter, was in opposition to how the creators perceived the role of their disciplines in the social context. Pawłowski, like the majority of Polish industrial designers at that time, perceived design as a complex force that could improve people's lives. Contrary to their initial instincts, the non-competitive model of economy was not an advantage in pursuing this goal. As Pawłowski remarked,

> within the Polish commercial and industrial spheres, [the profession of an industrial designer] is still presumed to be concerned with giving products an aesthetic and fashionable form. [Design] is known, unjustly I'm afraid, as the "miraculous cure" for economic problems.[565]

Similar convictions determined the professional position of designers across Eastern Europe, but by no means were they unique to socialist countries. Wolfgang Fritz Haug, in his response to an enquiry from the International Design Centre, written around the same time, compared design in the capitalist society to the Red Cross:

> It tends some wounds, but not the worst, inflicted by capitalism. Its function is cosmetic, and thus prolongs the life of capitalism by making it occasionally somewhat more attractive and by boosting morale, just as the Red Cross prolongs war. Thus design, by its particular artifice, supports the general

[564] D. Azrikan, 'VNIITE, Dinosaur of Totalitarianism or Plato's Academy of Design?', *Design Issues* 15, no. 3 (September 1999), p. 64.
[565] A. Pawłowski, 'Rola Projektanta Form Przemysłowych w Eksporcie' (n.p., n.d.).

> disfigurement. Its responsibility lies constantly in questions of styling, in environmental styling.[566]

The exhibition for the 30th anniversary of the Polish People's Republic, which was organised in the midst of these debates, revealed that Gierek's team understood design not only as a salve for issues of commerce, but also as a remedy for its political nature. Consequently, the presentation also hinted at the fundamental differences between the authorities and design professionals: while the former were treating design as an ad hoc solution, the latter were more interested in a strategic engagement of design within social and economic issues.

The 30th anniversary of the People's Republic was feted throughout the year in Poland and abroad. In Prague, an exhibition 'Things and us' opened in January (Fig. 4.7); in April Sofia hosted the Polish Days of Science and Technology; in May a display titled 'A man, his home and environment' was organised in Berlin. A large industrial showcase was hosted in Moscow too,

> culminating thirty years of existence of People's Poland, which is a new start, an important step forward on the road to modernity and prosperity, to the formation of a socialist model of life, and to strengthening the ties with other socialist states.[567]

The celebrations were also held across Poland. One of the most prominent events called *Panorama of the 30th anniversary* (*Panorama XXX–lecia*) consisted of a series of pavilions prepared by each province. Following local expositions, they were all brought to the capital where they were showcased for several months.[568] Similarly to the 'combined' expo organised five years earlier in Moscow, this presentation wanted to celebrate the cultural and economic achievements of the last three decades. The most grandiose component in this series was an exhibition organised to praise Warsaw's industry. It was carefully timed to coincide with the National Day of Poland's Revival on 22 July and the commemoration of the outbreak of the Second World War on 1 September.

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[566] W. F. Haug, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics. Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), p. 137.
[567] P. Kalasevich, '1974 – Uvenchaniye i Start', *Pol'sha* 12, no. 244 (1974), p. 46.
[568] S. T. Wierzchoń, 'Panorama trzydziestolecia', *Stolica* 1, no 1361 (1974), p. 11.

Fig. 4.7. Things and us, a display of Polish design in Prague, January 1974

Just like on the other occasions, the official celebrations included visits of the Soviet leader in Warsaw and his Polish counterpart in Moscow – accompanied by a traditional demonstration of power, namely a military parade followed by tanks and overlooked from the air by helicopters. That year, however, a very showy parade in the centre of Warsaw was accompanied by an exhibition designed to entertain citizens. *The Times* reported the story under a suggestive, and somewhat familiar to the British readership headline 'Persuading People's Poland It Has Never Had It So Good.'[569] The celebrations were, as Richard Davy the author of the article noted,

> part of an attempt to galvanize support for the present government, to identify it with Polish history and the Polish national interest, and to remind people that whatever they think of communism it has at least brought them a materially better life and 30 years of peace and security for the first time in almost two centuries.[570]

Davy aptly observed that a historical theme was combined with a modernisation narrative, as the exhibition's audio-visual depictions of the past were effectively

[569] R. Davy, 'Persuading People's Poland It Has Never Had It So Good', *The Times* 25 July 1974, p. 18. It was a reference to Maurice Harold Macmillan's famous speech from July 1957, celebrating Britain's prosperity.
[570] Ibidem.

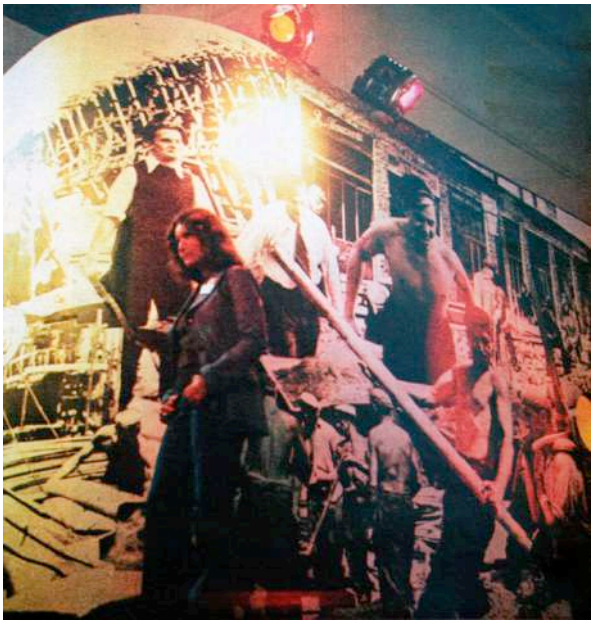
featured alongside contemporary industrial displays. They were presented at two venues in the centre of Warsaw: the Palace of Culture and Science – a monument to Socialist Realism in architecture – which hosted the demonstration of smaller items; and the Victory Square, where the more voluminous items, including cars and prefabricated building components, were showcased in the open air.[571] A Polish popular magazine *Perspektywy* described the exhibition as extraordinary:

> Warsaw has never seen anything like this! The huge exposition, presenting the post-war chronicle of the capital's work, achievements and prospects – astonishes visitors with its élan, the number of objects on display, the breadth of information and studies on various aspects of the city's life, and finally – with its unprecedented variety of presentation methods.[572]

Attractive audio-visual effects – soundtracks, video projections, large-scale photographs, sculptural constructions, charts, illustrations and collages – were used to impress the visitors and intensify the propagandist effects of the display (Fig. 4.8). Through the use of photographic collage and multiscreen projections the presentation featured a complex image of Warsaw composed of multiple fragments of historical and emotional character. A clear tale of modernisation and progress framed this visual composition, which otherwise might have seemed chaotic due to its non-linear character. The narrative reflected the approach of the main curator (*komisarz wystawy*), Stanisław Jankowski, an urban planner and architect who for many years worked at the Capital Reconstruction Bureau (*Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy*).[573] Jankowski was also the writer of the post-October script for the Polish pavilion at the 1958 World Exhibition in Brussels. In a column written for the Warsaw daily *Życie Warszawy,* he suggested that in order to fully appreciate the capital nowadays, one would need to remember what the city looked like in 1945.[574] Warsaw was to him a complex phenomenon composed not only of its current structure, but also of its history and future projections. The display in

[571] J. Grzelak, 'Warszawa w obchodach XXX-lecia Polski Ludowej', *Kronika Warszawy* 3, no 19 (1974), pp. 103-5.
[572] B. D.[zięgielewska], 'Warszawa XXX. To trzeba zobaczyć', *Perspektywy* 38, no 264 (1974), pp. 10-12.
[573] S. Jankowski, *Z Fałszywym Ausweisem* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1988). When developing the celebration programme, Jankowski collaborated with the Deputy Commissioner Roman Białkowski and Henryk Urbanowicz, the director of the State Enterprise Workshops of Visual Arts (Państwowe Przedsiębiorstwo Pracownie Sztuk Plastycznych, PSP), the organisation responsible for producing the visual elements for the event.
[574] S. Jankowski, 'Z Johnem Steinbeckiem – Po Warszawie', *Życie Warszawy* 283 (1963), p. 3.

the Palace of Culture and the presentation on the Victory Square in their own ways embraced the past, present and the future of the city.



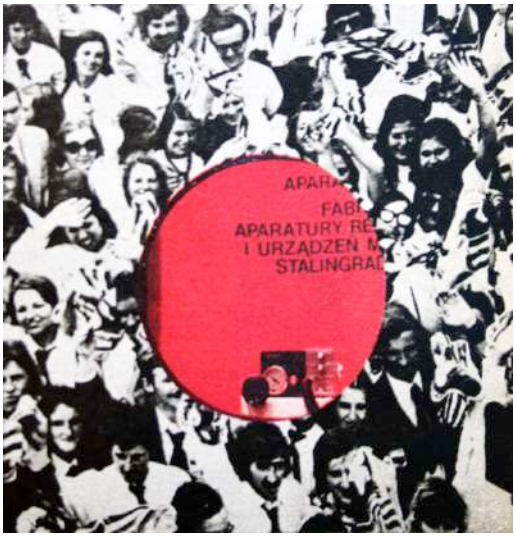


Fig. 4.8. Collage presented at the Warsaw XXX exhibition in the Palace of Culture and Science photographed by Tomasz Sikora
Fig. 4.9. Display of medical equipment at the Warsaw XXX exhibition in the Palace of Culture and Science photographed by Tomasz Sikora

This was best visible in the Palace exposition, in a looped projection positioned in one of the rooms. It was a compilation of around 600 original photos capturing Warsaw throughout the last three decades – shown on twenty-four synchronised screens in 10-minute sequences and accompanied by a musical composition of local melodies.[575] This multiscreen projection called *Laterna Magika* was a popular and highly effective spectacle device used across the world. Czechoslovak stage and exhibition designers became widely praised masters of the technique after producing mesmerising audio-visual spectacles for the national pavilions at the World Trade Fairs in Brussels in 1958 and in Montreal in 1967. Relying on these international successes, Polish organisers commissioned the Prague-based company to create *Laterna Magika* for the Warsaw show, which – as popular press reported – was one of the major attractions of the display.[576] Similar effects were created by Charles and Ray Eames, whose 7-screen projection *Glimpses of the USA* became a revelation at the American

[575] E. Bernstein, 'Warszawa XXX. Nowe Formy Plastyki Współczesne', *Biuletyn Informacyjny P.P. Pracownie Sztuk Plastycznych* 9, no. 15 (1974).
[576] a, 'Warszawa XXX. Migawki Z Wystawy', *Życie Warszawy* 211 (4 September 1974), p. 10.

National Exhibition in Moscow in 1959. 'The film breaks with the fixed perspectival view of the world,' wrote Beatriz Colomina about their representation of contemporary America:

> In fact, we find ourselves in a space that can only be apprehended with the high technology of telescopes, zoom lenses, airplanes, nightvision cameras, and so on, and where there is no privileged point of view.[577]

The Polish projection using different technologies aimed to achieve a similar objective: through an immersive experience it sought to evoke original emotions and memories of Warsaw's inhabitants, who collectively formed a multi-layered representation of the city through the decades.

This historical introduction was followed by the depiction of contemporary life in the city, which showcased the recent developments in the capital in terms of mass housing, public transport, leisure and culture. The latter additionally included a series of more traditional thematic *Varsaviana* displays, featuring Polish posters, developments in the city and the history of local media. Through a series of photographs, diagrams, illustrations and explanatory captions, this part of the exhibition directly praised the achievements of Gierek's government. The slogan 'The Party – city, the capital city – man – the fullness of life' suggested that the Party was the guardian of the personal wellbeing of its citizens.

The modernising aspect, presented in the previous section through reconstruction and new works that were recently completed in Warsaw, was also visible in the careful selection of products from the local industry (Fig. 4.9). Among them there was professional equipment used by the national press and photo agencies for recording and broadcasting the news. In a mini studio, arranged by the Warsaw Television, visitors could participate in the recording of a television programme, which then was broadcast in colour on the locally made Rubin 707, the first popular colour TV set produced in Warsaw since the 1970s.[578] Although records do not hold an index of the exhibits presented at *Warsaw XXX*, we can assume from the archival photographs and press reviews that this part of the display highlighted the technologically advanced

[577] B. Colomina, 'Enclosed by Images: The Eameses' Multimedia Architecture', *Grey Room* 2 (2001), p. 11.
[578] B. D[zięgielewska], 'Warszawa XXX', p. 12.

character of the capital's industry, but also demonstrated the growing popularity of consumer electronics, which by that time had already made a huge impact on people's lives. In the 1970s television was the most popular medium used for both entertainment and obtaining information, and by the middle of the decade it was present in 80% of Polish households.[579]

Some of the consumer electronics and household appliances were produced on foreign licences – from the East, like the aforementioned Rubin, and to a limited extent from the West. Józef Mrozek noticed, however, that only 3 out of 154 foreign licenses that Poland bought between 1971 and 1973 were for manufactured consumer goods.[580] This data indicates two things: that the number of new consumer products was very small in comparison with other sectors of economy; and that consumer goods were primarily designed by home-grown talents. Although it may be difficult to prove the latter, the fact is that there was a growing number of Polish professionals specialising in design for technical and electronic industry, which increasingly became interested in creating consumer products. Many of their projects resembled the technological rationalism of the Ulm School, which strongly affected the development of industrial design in Poland. Tomás Maldonado, the dean of the school, visited Warsaw in 1963 with a lecture outlining the Ulm approach to design.[581] 'Scientific operationism', which defined the school's curriculum under Maldonado, centred on the rational not aesthetic qualities of design, which relied on technological knowledge and profound understanding of the social context.[582] It was enthusiastically received by the Polish design community, who believed that this way of thinking about design, 'unlike

[579] K. Pokorna-Ignatowicz, *Telewizja w systemie politycznym i medialnym PRL: między polityką a widzem* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2003), especially chapter 4, pp. 91-161. For similar phenomena in the Soviet context see K. Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).
[580] J. A. Mrozek, 'Trudne Stulecie / A Difficult Century', in C. Frejlich (ed.), *Rzeczy Pospolite, Polskie Wyroby 1899-1999 / Common Wealth, Polish Products 1899-1999* (Olszanica: Bosz, 2001), p. 23.
[581] J. A. Mrozek, 'Od prehistorii do historii, czyli edukacja projektantów w niekonsumpcyjnym społeczeństwie', in C. Frejlich and M. Kochanowska (eds.) *Projektowanie wszędzie. 40 lat Wydziału Wzornictwa Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie* (Warszawa: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych, 2018, pp. 24–7.
[582] P. Betts, 'Science, Semiotics and Society: The Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung in Retrospect', *Design Issues* 14, No. 2 (1998), pp. 67–82.

American commercial design, could be adapted to the conditions of a socialist economy.'[583]

Many of these designers had graduated from various departments of academies and technical universities between the mid 1950s and 1960s, before design education became formalised – among them were Janusz Zygadlewicz, Jan Andrzej Wróblewski, Krzysztof Meisner, Ryszard Bojar, Wojciech Wybieralski and Krzysztof Wodiczko.[584] There was also Jacek Damięcki, who designed the second part of the exhibition held in the Victory Square. The son of a prominent modernist architect, Damięcki started his professional career in the early 1960s in the milieu of Polish modernists at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw.[585] As a third year student, he joined the Art and Research Workshops, where he worked closely with Jerzy Sołtan.[586] Under his and other tutors' supervision he participated in developing prototypes for exhibition pavilions, small electric appliances, cars and domestic equipment. Thanks to Sołtan's support, shortly after graduating Damięcki joined the Paris-based architecture studio run by George Candilis, Alexis Josic and Shadrach Woods, where he spent several months as an intern.[587] Work experience with architects from the influential Team 10 group changed Damięcki's approach and made him more interested in systems and their social impact. Consequently, upon his return to Poland, he ceased his engagement with the Workshops and undertook architectural studies at the Technical University, where he worked under the supervision of one of the most important Polish modernists, Helena Syrkus. Not only did he develop new interests, he also felt the limitations of working for the industry within a centrally planned economy – just like Jolanta Owidzka had felt a few years

[583] Ibidem. The influence of the Ulm School on Polish design was also confirmed by Maria Dziedzic and Maciej Pawłowski during our interview in May 2017.
[584] The autonomous Design Department at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw was officially established in 1977, following the work of the School of Industrial Design (Katedra Projektowania Form Przemysłowych), founded in 1960. In Kraków, the Industrial Design Department was established in 1964, replacing the 3-year Industrial Design Studies (Studium Form Przemysłowych) course.
[585] His father, Bohdan Damięcki, was a modernist urban planner and architect who designed several buildings in Gdynia during the interwar period.
[586] Damięcki's graduation project, developed under the supervision of Lech Tomaszewski, a visionary constructor and engineer, explored the concept of changing surfaces. This and other information about Jacek Damięcki come from a series of interviews I conducted with Jacek Damięcki and Viola Damięcka between 25 September and 29 November 2012 in Warsaw.
[587] Damięcki's training in Rome and Paris was possible thanks to the Ministry of Art and Culture Scholarship. In Paris, he worked particularly close with Shadrach Woods on prize-winning competition schemes for the Free University in Berlin, and for the reconstruction of central Frankfurt the same year.

earlier and Wodiczko some time later. He then focused on designing architectural schemes, spatial projects and installations.

For the 1974 exhibition in the Victory Square he collaborated with a multidisciplinary team of progressive musicians, painters, architects and designers.[588] According to many reviewers it was the most original part of the celebrations, which combined an open-air display of large-scale exhibits with an immersive, theatrical installation. A 350-metre-long pre-fabricated military bridge was the spine of the entire concept (Fig. 4.10). It led to a black fortress-like space, where walls were covered with abstract shapes that suggested a grim atmosphere. Inside, a dramatic set was arranged, including decayed photographic cameras, fragments of broken machineries, industrial waste and remnants of buildings (Fig. 4.11). Derelict pieces were laid out to resemble a chaotic post-war landscape. A description was provided by three short phrases placed within the setting: 'we returned to this', 'that was our beginning' and 'no more'. The space was filled with the terrifying noise of rumbling planes, which accentuated the dramatic power of the installation, especially at night when the city became almost silent.

This intense portrayal of recent history was underlined by placing the presentation in a square, where subsequent governors of the city – many of whom had taken Warsaw by force – would often manifest their power.[589] The name of the square, which changed several times over the centuries, reflected this process: first it was the Saxon Square; then the Eastern Orthodox Church Square; the Józef Piłsudski Square; for a short time it was Sachsenplatz, later renamed to Adolf Hitler-Platz (on the first anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War); in 1940, a five-meter wooden V with the inscription 'Germany wins on all fronts' was raised in the centre of the Square; the end of the war brought the space its most recent name at that time – Victory Square, which marked Poland's triumph over Nazi Germany. As a central location in the city, the Square had a place in the personal memories of many Warsaw citizens.

[588] The construction was developed by Damięcki in cooperation with Maciej Dańko, Paweł Nowak and Bolesław Sroczyński. Abstract paintings were created by Rafał Kwinto. The sound was composed by Bohdan Mazurek, sound engineer and leading figure associated with the Polish Radio's Experimental Studio. See M. Pasiecznik, 'A History of Electroacoustic Music in Poland from the Perspective of the Polish Radio Experimental Studio 1957-1990', in *Anthology of Experimental Music Cultures in Central and Eastern Europe 1950-2010*. Available online: http://www.soundexchange.eu/#poland_en?id=1. Accessed 19 June 2017.

[589] An initial idea to organise the installation at the representational Parade Square (Plac Defilad), which adjoined to the Palace of Culture, was abandoned because of traffic concerns.

Fig. 4.10 and Fig. 4.11. Open-air anniversary installation Warsaw XXX held at the Victory Square designed by Jacek Damięcki

The designer of the installation recalled a dramatic scene that happened there in 1944:

> When the Warsaw Uprising collapsed, my mother and I, along with many other people, were herded in front of Nazi tanks to the Victory Square... From here we were sent to Szucha [location of the Gestapo detention centre]... For me the

> uprising ended here. I wanted to encapsulate In this installation everything that I knew about the city, everything I experienced [at Victory Square] at that time.[590]

The poignant turn towards a painful past was juxtaposed with the glorification of the future that the other part of the presentation revealed. This reflective atmosphere that the visitors were exposed to within the black fortress was confronted with a celebratory spirit, which dominated the external part of the display. As soon as the visitors stepped outside, various products from the local automobile factory were laid out before their eyes (Fig. 4.12). It was an unusual view. Although the popularity of personal vehicles systematically grew in Poland from the late 1960s, in 1975 cars were still luxurious goods: for every 1,000 citizens there were only 31 cars, which was significantly less than in Czechoslovakia, the GDR or Hungary.[591] One of the most admired models was a recent prototype of a Fiat 1100p Coupé, developed in the Passenger Automobile Factory in Żerań. This one-off experiment prepared within just one year was the Polish response to a personal sports car. The dynamic silhouette, designed by Zbigniew Wattson, was unprecedented among the products from Polish factories and resembled Italian car models of the time. It represented what Lewis H. Siegelbaum aptly called 'a socialist car', which embedded

> aspirations for overcoming the gap in technology between the capitalist and socialist worlds, as well as for enhancing personal mobility, flexibility, and status in the latter. It brought those who possessed one a little closer to an imagined West even as its own limitations and those imposed on it frustrated the fulfilment of those imaginings.[592]

A showcase of different models of cars, as well as buses and aircrafts, was accompanied by large photographic panels depicting a modern assembly line in Warsaw's automobile factory. A selection of prefabricated construction materials, presented a few paces further, revealed future construction plans for the city's new housing estates. A passenger car and an apartment in a newly built block of flats were the dreams of many Poles. The extensive use of international loans enabled the

[590] Interview with the author.
[591] M. Jastrząb, 'Cars as Favours in People's Poland', in L. H. Siegelbaum (ed.), *The Socialist Car*, pp. 30–46.
[592] L. H. Siegelbaum, 'Introduction', in L. H. Siegelbaum (ed.), *The Socialist Car*, p. 2.

significant development of the automobile industry and the new approach to mass housing, marked by improved availability during the first part of Gierek's decade.

Fig. 4.12. Open-air anniversary installation Warsaw XXX held at the Victory Square designed by Jacek Damięcki

The official propaganda presented it as successes of the visionary economic policy – visible signs of the end of austerity and the beginning of normalisation. While many people wanted to believe in that transformation, some commentators insisted that it was only a political makeshift designed to win people's support. In the programme aired on 22 July 1974 by Radio Free Europe, Michał Górecki, the editor of the station's economic section, thundered:

> This entire propaganda campaign has one major goal – to convince the Polish audience of the great achievements of the People's Republic... Although the living standard during the last three years has without a doubt improved rapidly, one needs to remember that the aspirations of an average Polish working class family are still centred around basic needs, and the best proof is the fact that each increase in the society's purchasing power is mostly reflected in a greater demand for meat and more expensive grocery products, for clothes and footwear. The economic review of the last thirty years doesn't only include photographs of newly completed industrial plants and optimistically selected statistical charts of steel, sulphuric acid and coal production. There aren't any comparative statistics that could replace these rudimentary measures of economic performance – a rapidly growing prosperity and a dynamic demand for articles, which in Poland are still known as luxurious or semi-luxurious commodities.[593]

The hierarchy of products that Górecki mentioned revealed a discrepancy between the society and the officials. The former saw consumption and light industry goods as a major problem, and at the same time the latter believed that luxurious commodities could at least partly solve that problem.

Andrzej Osęka, one of the most renowned art critics, expressed himself with similar scepticism in his article published in the popular weekly *Kultura*. In the text, written in an allusive tone, a subtle criticism of propagandist efforts can be distinguished between the lines. 'Machines, new cars, old fire engines, useful equipment for cleaning the streets do not interest me much', Osęka wrote. He seemed rather unimpressed by the clichéd juxtaposition of the old and the new. Instead, he praised the impact that the installation made on the daily life of ordinary people. He was deeply moved by the use of the audio-visual media, which made him recall memories from the occupation.

[593] AAN PZPRKCwW 2/1354/0/XXXII/168. Radio Wolna Europa, 22 lipca 1974, godzina 19.50. Pogadanka gospodarcza. Jak wygląda gospodarczy rachunek strat i zysków za okres ostatnich 30-tu lat. Co osiągnięto i czyim wysiłkiem, a co zmarnowano, zaprzepaszczono i z czyjej winy, Michał Górecki.

> The installation caught me unawares in my everyday routine and dragged me out of it… not with the use of catchy phrases, banners, speeches or explanatory panels... but with [the use of] a thing that cannot be justified by rational needs, that cannot be used to improve traffic or protect green areas [in the city], not even to decorate [public spaces].'

These few lines sound like an appeal against design used for making political claims about progress and modernisation. 'Our imagination has been elevated [to a higher level], it has been moved into a very distant realm – far from the situation in which we were at that time,' Osęka continued. This 'shock', as he called it, may have had a long-lasting impression on the people who visited the installation and changed the way their perceive reality: 'I am not convinced that after this opinion-shaping audio-visual history lesson – [visitors' imagination] will land softly among colourful, glossy Fiats.'[594] Osęka suggested that by reviving painful memories, the exhibition made profound changes in the people's perception of the present day; that perhaps the public would demand from the state that not only their material needs were satisfied, but also that some more significant changes were introduced into the way society was managed.

What Górecki and Osęka seemed to suggest was that despite the spectacular efforts of Gierek's government, people were difficult to deceive. The boost in the acquisition of goods, although strongly desired, proved to be too fragile a foundation to build people's support on it. This strategy was widely employed by governments across Eastern Europe, turning citizens into consumers.[595] A promise that the objects presented at the exhibitions would one day become attainable for the masses was delayed in time. Socialist consumerism appeared to be, as Greg Castillo put it, 'a domestically engineered cataclysm' which erupted in the 1980s.[596] Nevertheless, the turn towards consumption was the only imaginable rhetoric that late Gomułka and early Gierek could resort to in order to influence the society given its demographics: in 1969 nearly 38% of Poles were 20 years old or younger.[597] The waves of social unrests in the mid 1960s –

[594] A. Osęka, 'Zgliszcza na Placu Zwycięstwa', *Kultura* 22 (1974), p. 9.
[595] L. Gatejel, 'Appealing for a Car: Consumption Policies and Entitlement in the USSR, the GDR, and Romania, 1950s–1980s', *Slavic Review* 75, no 1 (2016), pp. 122–45.
[596] G. Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front. The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 204.
[597] Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Rozwój i zmiany w strukturze ludności w latach 1950-2015. Available online: http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/ludnosc/struktura-ludnosci,16,1.html. Accessed 26 April 2017.

when young people, both students and workers, manifested their discontent with the current situation, revealed the potential of this demographic.[598] For the new generation, unlike for people born before the 1930s, the comparison between the pre-war and current living standards was not striking. In an attempt to gain their support, the Party resorted to novelty, freshness and progress, and design had a proven track record of signifying these features. While tradition remembered the past of the city and country, industrial design was future-oriented.

The 1974 anniversary exhibition managed to incorporate design into its promise of modernisation and imminent progress under socialism. Here, design was not treated as a national phenomenon, but as an inherent element of the socialist organisation of society. The major preoccupation shifted from the issue of what objects should look like – towards how objects, and how the entire design discipline, could function in a non-competitive system, within the context of economic, political and social circumstances. Consequently, designers became a voice in this debate, as they tried to justify their work and social involvement. The authorities selectively used these statements to support their own policies and to demonstrate their progressiveness. Nevertheless, as its broader actions demonstrated, the state treated design rather instrumentally, in a similar manner to how folklore, craft and architecture had been treated earlier. Design was an important factor that illustrated the vision of a country that looks to the future – technologically advanced, prosperous and optimistic. In this setting, the architectural structure in the Victory Square was an odd element that stood out from this narrative not only by evoking the past, but also by suggesting a critical reading of the current policies. Although the intentions of the designer might not have been crystal clear to the majority of the visitors, the installation cast new light onto the role design could potentially have played in the context of politics.

Conclusions

The anniversary exhibitions held in 1969 in Moscow and in 1974 in Warsaw offered new visions of Poland – and industrial design played an instrumental role in communicating these concepts. As this chapter aimed to demonstrate, industrial design

[598] M. Zaremba, 'Biedni Polacy. Społeczeństwo polskie wobec wydarzeń marcowych w świetle raportów KW i MSW dla Kierownictwa PZPR', in M. Kula, P. Osęka and M. Zaremba (eds.), *Marzec 1968: Trzydzieści Lat Później*, pp. 144–70.

allowed the authorities to address the issues of individual consumption, modern lifestyle and technological advancement, which were the foundations of Poland's reformed identity during the last two years of Gomułka's rule and the first half of Gierek's term. In this frame of reference, design was portrayed as a solution to the system's past maladies, although it was never used to actually tackle them. Since industrial design was a relatively new discipline in Poland, the state saw an opportunity in shaping it according to its current political needs.

The authorities treated design as a means to an end. Design for technologically advanced machines was used to emphasise the scientific and technocratic approach of the Polish industry, which would make it more efficient and profitable. Simultaneously, design for consumerist goods, especially furniture and household products, apart from contributing to the narrative about improving people's living conditions, became circumscribed by the newly formed popular culture. By visualising popular dreams about a better life, which often emulated the Western model, design was programmed to 'distract people from politics, ideology, thinking in more broad terms,' as Stefan Kiesielewski, writer, composer and vigilant observer of the times noted in his diary.[599] Kisielewski recorded the moment when the state took on popular culture to 'befuddle people, make them absolutely harmless for the government'.[600] This chapter proved that the potential of design in that matter was far greater than of any other artistic discipline. The prototypes, true scale models and a small category of prime quality export products, which dominated most of the exhibitions, were presented in front of the audience as ready to use. They were simulacra representing the better future.[601]

This strategy employed by the Polish state was not much different from how design was used in Western Europe and North America. Throughout the 20th century countries across the globe not only used it to gain a market edge, but also to promote some of their ideological values. Although it has been used in the Cold War competition, design on both sides of the Iron Curtain proved to be surprisingly similar. The Polish design discourse did not develop in a vacuum, but rather as a direct response to the models from the West and from the East. Although it frequently drew from concepts that had already proven to be successful, the desire to remain distinctive was

[599] S. Kisielewski, *Dzienniki* (Warszawa: Iskry, 2001), pp. 42-3.
[600] Ibidem.
[601] B. Robinson, *The Skin of the System: On Germany's Socialist Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

also very pertinent. The Polish case was not unique. Yet a particular combination of political, economic, social and cultural circumstances of the late 1960s and the mid 1970s made its case different from other countries, both within the Eastern Bloc and beyond.

Conclusion

From the late 1940s the issue of national identity had preoccupied political, creative and intellectual elites alike. As the discussion between the architect Jerzy Staniszkis and the official functionary Janina Królikowska quoted in the Introduction demonstrated, it was believed that both the form and the content of an exhibition could express national identity. What the Imagined Poland should stand for and how that message should be conveyed were equally important issues. The two components were being constantly renegotiated in order to align the image of Poland presented to the foreign public with the current political, cultural and economic policies of the country.

One could assume that the shift in 1989 would have resulted in a dramatic breakthrough in how Poland wanted to be perceived by Europe. Instead, the country's image as it was conceived in the new reality looked surprisingly familiar. A Polish official at a conference held in Warsaw in 2006 presented this explanation:

> for the programme of promoting the country [abroad], design offers a great opportunity to convey a message – both modern and embedded in tradition – about our contemporaneity, about our intellectual, educational, creative and economic potential. It has placed Poland among the backward countries because of the circumstances of the years 1939–1989, but those countries have ambitions to return to the group of the most developed countries in the world… There is nothing [other than design in a broad sense] that could better prove the extent of the development and civilisational level our country. If Poland stops being associated – and even that with some difficulty – with solely the production of ham and vodka, and instead becomes one of the creators of contemporary design, then that will be the best confirmation of our civilisational aspirations and historical traditions.[602]

The statement was outlined by the Undersecretary of State at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Rafał Wiśniewski, who had worked in diplomacy from the 1990s.[603] Presented at a design conference, the speech intended to reassure the audience that the state was recognising the potential of design. Thus, it met the intentions of the event's

[602] R. Wiśniewski, 'Czy Promocja Polski Potrzebuje Designu?', in C. Frejlich (ed.), *Wzornictwo – Kultura i Gospodarka. Czy Można Promować Polskę Przez Wzornictwo?* (Kraków: Rzecz Piękna Fundacja Rozwoju Wydziału Form Przemysłowych Akademii Sztuk Pięknych, 2006), p. 8.

[603] His biographical notes mention that he was the author of Poland's cultural diplomacy reform in 1997. See http://www.kopenhaga.msz.gov.pl/resource/4e2b7ff8-c292-434e-a6a0-ab8c5d96aff1:JCR.

organisers – a group of designers, design pedagogues and managers involved in shaping Poland's design policy, who were aiming to change the common perception of the discipline. They wanted to debunk the myth that design is about creating aesthetically pleasing objects and instead promoted an understanding that it 'influences the competitiveness of the economy, and has a huge significance for culture and promotion of the country abroad.'[604] Or, to put it differently, that design is a multidisciplinary phenomenon and needs to be approached holistically.

When compared with declarations made by the political authorities between the late 1940s and mid 1970s, this speech of the Undersecretary reveals an uncanny similarity. This association would unlikely be made by the speaker, let alone the listeners. In the general perception the two statements belonged to two distant political periods which, as many wanted to believe, had nothing in common. To my understanding, however, this parallel highlights three points that traverse historical periods and political systems: a persistent preoccupation with creating a favourable image of the nation abroad; an importance of tradition and history, coexisting with a desire to be perceived as a modern country; and a need to manifest an affiliation with other likeminded communities. Despite standing on two sides of the historical watershed, both the aforementioned speaker and the elites whose actions this thesis reconstructs seemed to employ similar rhetoric. They expressed a shared conviction that design can support Poland's claims about its progress, historical legacy and position in the world. Nonetheless, these qualities were understood differently in the socialist period and in the early 2000s, as they belonged to differing narratives.

The language used to describe the process of creation and dissemination of national identity has also visibly changed. The term 'propaganda' that figures in archival documents, denoting a form of advertising, in more recent documents and publications was replaced by slogans such as 'promoting the country' or 'nation branding' – a catchphrase coined at the beginning of the 21st century. This change in terminology and creation of an entirely new jargon reveals a significant shift in the essence of the activities. By adopting methods from marketing and political science, nation branding 'aims to bridge a gap between nationalism, national identity, national

[604] See conference materials available online http://www.konferencja.diz.pl/konferencja/. Accessed 13 December 2017.

images and reputations.'[605] In this context, imagining a nation entails developing a business strategy and designing an identity, a task often assigned to an international branding agency. In the early 2000s, in an attempt to catch up with the Western trends, Polish authorities commissioned a London-based agency to create Poland's new identity. Following a few months of research the company recommended founding the Polish brand on the country's history, suggesting that 'dramatic history, together with its physical location – part of the West but adjacent to the East – helps to explain why Poland is a country of paradoxes.'[606] This interpretation, presented by the branding agency to the Polish authorities in 2005, was not dissimilar from the narrative that the exhibition committee developed for Polish exhibitions, including the Brussels World's Fair in 1958.

Indeed, the nation's past was considered a substantial element of identity formation and has been carefully managed in the process of 'imagining' and 'branding' alike. As this thesis illustrated, the communist authorities frequently fragmented, manipulated, or subverted entire decades in order to align Poland's past with the current ideological narratives. The exhibitions became a tool in this historical policy aimed at international public opinion. Carefully briefed scriptwriters used exhibition scripts to celebrate designated historical symbols, figures and events in order to assert the system's continuity, or to stigmatise others as bourgeois, elitist or cosmopolitan.

After 1989, like other countries of the former Eastern Bloc, Poland renounced its past again. The Undersecretary's statement cited above was symptomatic of that approach. It gave the impression that Polish history became suspended with the outbreak of the Second World War. Time had stopped for fifty years and was resumed only in 1989, following the collapse of the communist regime. According to this reading suggested by the quotation, the country's development was hindered for a half-century, which made Poland a mere subject of the USSR's policy. Thus, following this narrative, the end of the Eastern Bloc was seen as a chance for Poland and other Eastern European states to regain objectivity. Vaclav Havel, shortly after the collapse of the communist rule, in an interview initially published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* stated that

[605] See P. Surowiec, *Nation Branding, Public Relations and Soft Power: Corporatising Poland* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 7.
[606] M. Aronczyk, '"Living the Brand": Nationality, Globality and the Identity Strategies of Nation Branding Consultants', *International Journal of Communication* 2 (2008), p. 57.

> Communism homogenized everything: from Berlin to Vladivostok the same administrative state structure existed and the factories were decorated with the same stars. For many years the possibility of expressing one's own difference – national, cultural or social – was suppressed.[607]

The statements made by both Havel and the Polish Undersecretary of State expressed a popular belief about the totalitarian character of the communist regime, which prevailed in the 1990s. Contemporary historiography of the last twenty years has authoritatively challenged this viewpoint, providing a new reading of the Cold War system of power.[608] Drawing from unpublished archival sources, this thesis extended the understanding of the complexity of the Cold War divide. In particular, it pushed for a reconsideration of Moscow's influence in the region and of the relations between Poland and the USSR.

The confidence in the transformative power of 1989, displayed by the Undersecretary, may resemble the enthusiasm unveiled by the changes of 1956. The desire to manifest Poland's forwardness in the 2000s echoes the message that Jerzy Hryniewiecki passed to the readers of the first issue of *Project* magazine. Entitled 'The shape of the future', the article opened with a cry 'we want to be modern'.[609] While Hryniewiecki explained at length what it meant to be modern – as a citizen, consumer and artist – in the post-Thaw Poland, the Undersecretary was less descriptive and imaginative in that respect. His speech did not clarify what 'a modern message' could mean in the context of Poland's representation abroad, neither did he suggest how it could be combined with tradition and what the latter meant in that context. However, he insisted that the Polish design heritage, which presumably entailed both modern and traditional aspects, could improve the image that Poland was projecting abroad at the time. The promotion of Poland, as he stated, required serious modifications of

> all those photographs praising our touristic assets that draw so little from the Polish school of documentary and artistic photography, this artistic entourage –

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[607] A. Michnik and A Jagodziński, 'Havel's Half', *The Guardian*, 25 September 1992, p. 23.
[608] See for example S. Autio-Sarasmo and K. Miklóssy, 'Introduction: The Cold War from a New Perspective', in S. Autio-Sarasmo and K. Miklóssy (eds.), *Reassessing Cold War Europe* (London: Routledge, 2010). Izabella Main recounts the early debate about writing the history in the first decade of the post-stalinist period. See her 'The Memory of Communism in Poland', in M. Todorova and A. Dimou (eds.), *Remembering Communism. Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), pp. 97–117.
[609] J. Hryniewiecki, 'Kształt Przyszłości', *Projekt* 1, no. 1 (1956), pp. 5–9.

> posters and promotional publications – that have so little in common with the Polish school of graphic design, these structures erected at successive EXPOs that barely ever invoke Polish traditions of set design and architecture. Contemporary Polish design should be significantly more involved in designing the Poland of today and of the future, for us and for foreigners curious of our country.[610]

In this fragment of the Undersecretary's speech disdain for fifty years of Polish history is seamlessly combined with high praise of the national design heritage. This fact reveals some interesting details about the perception of design in Poland's diplomatic circles, which I believe remained unchanged from the mid 20th to the beginning of the 21st century. It suggests that design has been considered an apolitical component of a marketing strategy and its function was instrumental in conveying the state's objectives. In the people's democracy exhibition design was, as one of the bureaucrats in the early 1950s stated, 'a reflection of the nation's creativity, exemplified by productive, social and cultural achievements, as well as an illustration of the benefits that come from planned economy.'[611] This fragment reiterates the trust in design's representational capacity, which was noticeable on both sides of the Iron Curtain. By conceiving an image of Poland, the authorities exercised the ability of design to convince foreign audiences of Poland's values, culture and ideals. Nevertheless, the images were deeply embedded in the state's domestic and international policies regarding the production, consumption and provision of goods, and the exhibitions were planned as a way to generate financial gain. As this study revealed, the Cold War presentations and fairs proved the twofold nature of design as both soft and hard power.[612] Often, the distinction between the representative role and the commercial purposes of exhibitions was blurred, with both elements folding into one another. The minutes from a cross-ministerial meeting held in January 1946 read:

> There cannot be a purely economic exhibition without a cultural and artistic note. There cannot be an artistic exhibition without an economic interest…

[610] R. Wiśniewski, 'Czy Promocja Polski Potrzebuje Designu?', p.10.
[611] Z. Grelowski, 'Reorganizacja Wystawiennictwa Polskiego', *Gazeta Handlowa*, 25 January 1950.
[612] For design in the context of cultural diplomacy see the special issue of *Design and Culture: Design as an Object of Diplomacy Post-1945*, especially H. Atkinson and V. Carkson, 'Editors' Introduction', *Design and Culture* 9, no. 2 (2017), pp. 117–22.

> Every cultural exhibition is followed by a propagandist one, and propaganda's ultimate goal is to support the country's economic interest.[613]

Three decades later these objectives were no longer valid. The political and economic function that Polish exhibitions used to fulfil decreased significantly in the mid-1970s, and their artistic quality seemingly declined as well. Within the next thirty years, as the Undersecretary of the State remarked, the legacy of Polish industrial exhibitions and trade fairs was completely lost. Therefore, it is worth asking: what happened in the 1970s that caused this dramatic shift? What made the discipline, which was long celebrated as nearly as significant for the country's perception abroad as the Polish School of Posters, not only lose its significance but nearly cease to exist?

The economic recession provides the first and the most obvious answer. In the 1970s the oil crisis caused price inflation and an economic slowdown across Europe. Unemployment, social instability and the increase of living costs struck western societies after three decades of unprecedented prosperity. The crisis hit Eastern Europe too. As a result of the international economic situation, the cost of Gierek's international loans spiralled out. Trade with the West, which up until then had been generating hard currency, was also affected, leaving Poland deprived of its most significant income. In response to the crisis not only did the prices of consumables go up, but also investments were put on hold. The strikes and street demonstrations that broke out in 1976, and once again with a vengeance in 1980, were the gravest outcomes of this dramatic situation. The reduction of the number of international exhibitions and trade fairs that Poland participated in was another, less perceptible consequence of the crisis.

In fact, at that time the rationale of organising international exhibitions was widely questioned on economic, but also on social grounds. In May 1968, a few hours after its inauguration, the 14th Milan Triennale was taken over by protesters. The demonstrators argued against the way 'the modern society had reduced the status of art and architecture to that of commercial goods, depriving them of their role as communicators of ideas and thoughts.'[614] Effectively, the public was denied access and the entire event was cancelled. It took five years for the next Triennale to be organised.

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[613] AAN KRdsWiT 2/376/0/7/45. Protokół z konferencji międzyministerialnej odbytej w dniu 18 stycznia 1946.

[614] P. Nicolin, 'Protest by Design: Giancarlo de Carlo and the 14th Milan Triennale', in J. Pavitt and D. Crowley (eds.), *Cold War Modern*, p. 233.

The subsequent editions, rather than following a three-year cycle, were opened with even greater delays, that is in 1979, 1988 and 1992.

The decline of the World's Fairs was similar. The events organised from the 1960s onwards did not live up to the reputation of the 1958 exhibition in Brussels. On the contrary: many of them were criticised as irrational, costly and not sustainable from the point of view of natural resources, architectural legacy and urban impact.[615] Although the World's Fairs were never held regularly, the twenty-two year gap between 1970 and 1992 was particularly telling. The World's Fair in Osaka, which was the last event before this long break, exemplified how external circumstances changed the exhibitors' modus operandi. As Anne Collins Goodyear argued, the economic and political situation jeopardised the overtly ambitious approach that the United States' exhibitions used to demonstrate. The World's Fair in Osaka marked the end of an era and signalled 'the rupture of a modernist paradigm and the arrival of new historical moment.'[616]

At that moment the world was gradually becoming more homogenised. Although the Iron Curtain persisted and the systemic differences between capitalist and socialist states were still present, the cultural differences between two blocs seemed to be smaller than ever before. The faith in the socialist project was fading and it was becoming clear 'that the state socialist economic model was not competing effectively with its capitalist rivals.'[617] The anniversaries of the political system were still widely celebrated at home and in the other parts of the Bloc, yet rather than being opulent demonstrations of cultural, economic and political power, they resembled regular trade fairs. The representative role of these events was gradually becoming dominated by a commercial pragmatism constrained by the economic network of COMECOM. In that vein the 1984 anniversary of the Polish People's Republic, traditionally celebrated in Moscow's VDKNH, was organised under the title 'Made in Poland'. The character of

[615] For the critical analysis of the trade fairs' legacy in the context of urban planning see P. Lopes Simoes Aelbrecht, 'A World Fair for the Future: A Study of the Legacy of the Expo 1998 Urban Model', in L. Hollengreen et al. (eds.), *Meet Me at the Fair*, pp. 485–501.
[616] A. Collins Goodyear, 'Expo '70 as Watershed the Politics of American Art and Technology', in *Cold War Modern*, p. 203.
[617] D. Priestland, 'Neoliberalism, Consumerism and the End of the Cold War', in A. M. Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 401.

Polish presence abroad had drastically changed. As noted by Irena Huml, a leading scholar of the applied art in Poland, with time Polish national exhibitions

> lost this marvellous timbre that [in the past] was born from rightful decisions, meagre resources, even poverty, which people knew how to turn into a real achievement.[618]

The economic, cultural and political events of the global scale made an unquestionable impact on the exhibition strategies of late socialism, but in order to fully understand the transformation of Poland's exhibition landscape at that time, one needs to address a generational shift. A brief look at the biographies of the most prolific and innovative designers reveals that by the mid 1970s the design milieu portrayed in this thesis had started to disintegrate. In 1958 Jerzy Sołtan, author of the unrealised pavilion in Brussels, was appointed the role of visiting critic in architecture at Harvard University and he spent the following nine years traveling between Poland and the United States. He maintained his position in Warsaw as dean of the interior architecture department. Officially, he still led the Art and Research Workshop at the Academy, held the position of consultant for the Polish Chamber of foreign Commerce, and was a board member of the Council of Industrial Production of Aesthetic Supervision. While in the States, Sołtan was a guest lecturer at various American universities. Finally in 1967, after years of bureaucratic procedures, he received his passport and permanently left for the USA, where he became the chair of the architecture department at Harvard University.

Jerzy Staniszkis – the architect who suggested that Poland must develop an original style, as quoted in the Introduction – also departed. In 1960 Polservice sent him to Iraq, where he worked with a local practice on several architectural projects and simultaneously lectured at the University of Baghdad.[619] In 1962 he moved to the United States, where he spent the next twenty-five years as a professor of architecture at the Detroit University.

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[618] W. Lipowicz, 'Dekady. Z Profesor Ireną Huml Rozmawia Wojciech Lipowicz', in H. Jasicka (ed.), *Użytkowa Fantastyka Lat Pięćdziesiątych*, p. 18.

[619] Together with Aleksander Markiewicz, Staniszkis designed an office building in Jumhuria Street. For the Polish involvement in Iraq see Ł. Stanek, 'Miastoprojekt Goes Abroad: The Transfer of Architectural Labour from Socialist Poland to Iraq (1958–1989)', *The Journal of Architecture* 22, no. 4 (2017), pp. 786–811.

For Marek Leykam, the exhibition in Milan that he curated and designed in 1957 was a small side project, and his practice focused on industrial architecture. Similarly, for Jolanta Owidzka co-curating the 1960 Polish exhibition in Milan was a one-off activity, beyond which she developed a successful career in artistic textiles.

Among the designers mentioned in this thesis Wojciech Zamecznik and Stanisław Zamecznik were the most committed to the discipline. They treated exhibitions holistically and apart from spatial arrangements designed also posters, animations and additional elements of visual communication. Wojciech died prematurely in 1967, his cousin passed away four years later.

Jerzy Hryniewiecki, an éminence grise of Polish exhibitions, was not actively involved in designing exhibitions since the 1950s. As a member of various professional committees, he advised official bodies on new commissions. Additionally, as a guest writer he reviewed Polish exhibitions for various titles. Eloquent, witty, opinionated and well connected, he was best fitted for this role. He died in 1989.

Oskar Hansen, who designed and curated the Polish pavilion at the 1960 Milan Triennale, in the following decade concentrated on large scale urban and architectural projects, which he developed together with his wife. The exhibitions he designed at that time, except Exempla 1974 in Munich and the Polish pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1977, had a much more intimate character and predominantly consisted of art displays for Warsaw's art institutions. He also continued teaching in the Visual Structures Studio at the Academy of Fine Arts until his retirement in 1983.[620] In the late 1960s the Hansens bought a piece of land in Szumin, a small village in north-east Poland, where they built a cottage house with an adjacent garden. The place became their beloved retreat and in the mid 1990s they moved there permanently.

Although most of these designers worked in academia, they educated several successors who continued their legacy in designing exhibitions. Among them are Viola Damięcka and Jacek Damięcki – they studied under Sołtan and together designed several Polish pavilions at trade fairs.[621] Damięcki was also the designer of the open-air anniversary exhibition in Warsaw, which I analysed in Chapter Four. Beyond this specialisation in exhibitions, the former students have had a significant impact on how

[620] For the educational practices of Hansen see website of Radical Pedagogies project http://radical-pedagogies.com. Accessed 10 December 2017.
[621] J. Gola, 'Sztuka Przestrzeni', in G. Kowalski and M. Sitkowska (eds.), *Powinność i Bunt: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie, 1944-2004*, (Warszawa: ASP, 2004).

the works of Sołtan, Hansen and others were passed to the next generation. Hansen's student Grzegorz Kowalski, who became one of the most prominent Polish sculptors, is a good example of this legacy. As a student Kowalski assisted in Hansen's experimental workshop at the academy. Later, when he became an independent lecturer, he included the concept of the Open Form in his pedagogical curriculum, adapting it to the programme of artistic rather than architectural or urban teaching.[622]

In the early 1990s, while the legacy of Polish designers was being preserved in the academies of fine arts, public museums and galleries across the country gradually began addressing the themes of Polish design from the previous decades – through a series of exhibitions organised across the country.[623] The exhibition 'Użytkowa fantastyka lat pięćdziesiątych' (The applied fantasy of the 1950s), held in 1991 at the National Museum in Poznań, was the first large-scale presentation of Polish design from the past era. The term 'applied fantasy' in the exhibition title came from the diary of writer Leopold Tyrmand, who in January 1954 recognised it as a trend spread among Warsaw's youth:

> picked up from [Western] movies and illustrated magazines, but somehow deepened by the inborn Warsaw flair for utilitarian fantasy, born of necessity in the gray, postwar communist poverty.[624]

The quotation, as the curators of the exhibition suggested, provided an apt description of a brief period between the mid 1950s and the early 1960s that the exhibition portrayed. Mid-century design was characterised by bright colours, organic shapes and rich patterns, which determined the look of furniture, textiles, ceramics and glass designed around 1956. This new aesthetic was associated with the post-Stalinist relaxation that transformed political, cultural and social life of the country at that time.

This narrative encouraged a heroic reading of Polish design as defined by the struggle between visionary designers and reactionary state, which torpedoed the

[622] 'Budził Respekt. Rozmowa Moniki Stelmach z Grzegorzem Kowalskim', dwutygodnik.com, October 2017. Available online: http://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/7422-budzil-respekt.html. Accessed 10 December 2017.
[623] The thematic exhibitions included 'Odwilż: Sztuka około 1956 roku', Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej, 1996; 'Szare w kolorze 1956-1970', Zachęta – National Gallery of Art, 2000; 'Rzeczy pospolite: polskie wyroby 1899-1999', National Museum, Kraków, 2000-2001; 'Wiecznie młode. Polski vintage', Institute of Industrial Design, Warsaw, 2007.
[624] L. Tyrmand, *Diary 1954*, p. 43.

implementation of progressive projects. The simplistic story had a celebratory character and was heavily based on the design icons: the prototypes and models, which although never got introduced into mass production, populated people's imaginations through frequent reproductions in popular press and at the exhibitions from the late 1950s. This interpretation has reoccurred ever since, and for many years immobilised the perception of this period and Polish design history in particular.

This narrative, although very appealing, proved to be inadequate for the challenging times of systemic transformations that were ahead. In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, Krzysztof Jan Meisner – a designer and author of lively accounts of the Polish design scene – pointed at the failed legacy of this interpretation:

> nowadays, there is no one to be heard – neither in the government, nor in the parliament, nor in television – talking about the need to rebuild Polish personality in technology, about Polish involvement in civilisation. What is worse, everything that is Polish is treated with disdain or hostility.[625]

Despite its visual appeal, as Meisner noted, the potential of Polish design in the post-communist reality was limited. In the 1990s Poland looked up to the West like other countries from the Eastern Bloc. Although the nostalgia that struck the region a few years later did not significantly alter the situation outlined by Meisner, it brought attention to the Polish culture from that period. An increased interest in music, visual culture, cinematography and design from the mid 1950s until the early 1980s coincided with the change on the Polish political scene, which was taken over by a generation of post-communist politicians.[626] Design of the post-Thaw modernity once again appeared on the pages of colourful magazines, attracted the attention of museumgoers and sparked the fascination of vintage enthusiasts. This tendency interested many researchers, resulting in multiple volumes addressing the issue of post-communist nostalgia and transformation.[627] The 2008 exhibition 'Cold War Modern', organised at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, responded to these popular sentiments in an

[625] K. Meisner, 'Socdesign', in H. Jasicka (ed.), *Użytkowa Fantastyka Lat Pięćdziesiątych*, p. 62.
[626] K. Pobłocki, 'The Economics of Nostalgia : Socialist Films and Capitalist Commodities in Contemporary Poland', in O. Sarkisova and P. Apor (eds.), *Past for the Eyes : East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), pp. 181–214.
[627] M. Todorova and Z. Gille (eds.), *Post-Communist Nostalgia* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012).

impressive manner, and at the same time engaged pioneering research with this period. In the following years the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw repeated this success with an extended programme of events devoted to Polish modernism and the legacy of Oskar Hansen in particular.[628]

But what does this resuscitation of past decades mean for Poland's representational policy, or more broadly – its cultural diplomacy? In 2006, as the speech of the Undersecretary of State suggested, design was still treated rather suspiciously by policymakers. Although some of them, like Wiśniewski himself, might have already recognised the potential of design, they were still more inclined to use it as a generic language for commercial profit rather than a historically charged national heritage. New initiatives that have emerged since then may suggest that this approach has began to change, and Polish design from the socialist period has become recognised as an interesting component of Poland's cultural policy – equally important as fine art or music. At the forefront of these activities is the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, whose mission is 'to build and communicate the cultural dimension of the Poland brand through active participation in international cultural exchange'.[629] In 2012 the Institute launched a special Polska Design Programme, which 'serves as a platform for presenting contemporary Polish culture and the promotion of Polish creativity and innovativeness'.[630] Effectively, through a series of exhibitions, events, study visits and publications, it enforced the perception of design as part of the nation's cultural heritage and a key factor in Poland's development.

In late 2017 the Institute inaugurated a grand four-year cultural diplomacy project, financed by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage – 'Polska 100' – which aims to celebrate the centenary of Poland's independence abroad. The concise strategy outlines the crucial areas of the programme and a separate section is devoted to the history of 20th century Polish design in the context of Central and Eastern Europe.[631] Although this objective suggests the ambition of a noteworthy change towards a more comprehensive presentation of design to the international audience, it also raises some questions about very nature of the role of design history in cultural diplomacy. Can the context in which Polish design has emerged and developed throughout the last century

[628] See the project website https://hansen.artmuseum.pl. Accessed 1 December 2017.
[629] See: https://iam.pl/en/about-us/adam-mickiewicz-institute. Accessed 10 December 2017.
[630] See: https://iam.pl/en/programmes/polska-design-programme. Accessed 10 December 2017.
[631] See https://iam.pl/en/programmes/polska-100-programme. Accessed 1 February 2018.

be unveiled using an affirmative and heart-warming narrative? Or, if we ask this question differently: how profound can the account of Polish design be, when structured around the positive notion of design icons and celebrated figures? Or, as a matter of principle: is there a justifiable space in design diplomacy for a critical analysis of historical accounts? These questions are still to be answered upon the programme completion in 2021. However, as Jonathan Woodham pointed out, the rhetoric of design is nearly impossible to reconcile with realpolitik, which finds narratives of success more useful than historical analyses of problems and shortcomings.[632] Although the critical account of the suppressed history of Polish design that this thesis offers may not be directly applicable to the objectives of promoting the country on the international stage, it is much needed to advance our understanding of the past. A study of design due to its versatility, if nothing else, offers a new perspective for that understanding.

[632] J. M. Woodham and M. Thomson, 'Cultural Diplomacy and Design in the Late Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries: Rhetoric or Reality?', *Design and Culture* 9, no. 2 (2017), pp. 225–41.

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