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RATIONAL VERSUS INTUITIVE –
ON THE APPROACH TO BUILDING
A FORM AND LOOKING FOR A SHAPE,
ON THE EXAMPLE OF STEFAN KRYGIER'S
ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPT

RACJONALNE VERSUS INTUICYJNE –
O PODEJŚCIU DO BUDOWANIA FORMY
I POSZUKIWANIA KSZTAŁTU NA PRZYKŁADZIE
KONCEPCJI ARCHITEKTONICZNYCH
STEFANA KRYGIERA

Abstract

Analysing the work of Stefan Krygier, it can be clearly seen that the fascination with art and, in particular, painting was dominant. However, the architectural education of the artist was not without significance. Logic and the sense of engineering influenced the approach to painting, while his experience from art was transferred to thinking about buildings and urban space. His architectural designs and realizations, although few, stand out with their distinctive forms. Often, however, an individual detail of a building results from purely aesthetic reasons and is not of a practical nature. The most frequent principle of shaping solids was the combination of straight elements and curved forms in the form of gentle arches. As a student of Władysław Strzemiński, like his master, he rejected discretion in art. He was an opponent of understanding it only as spontaneity. He believed that in order to create something, it was necessary to build a system of mutual relations. In his opinion, talent itself was not enough to create a valuable work. His works (both artistic and architectural) show the co-existence of a rationalist approach, understood as the logical character of the relationship between individual parts and the whole, and an intuitive approach characterized by freedom in choosing the shapes of individual forms.

Keywords: tectonics, architecture, architectural design, building a form, artist as an architect, inspiration by nature, spatial forms, dichotomy of organic form and geometry

Streszczenie

Artykuł prezentuje podejście do budowania formy i poszukiwania kształtu w projektach jednego z łódzkich powojennych architektów – Stefana Krygiera. Będąc uczniem Władysława Strzemińskiego, a jednocześnie artystą, twórcą form przestrzennych i architektem, podobnie jak jego mistrz odrzucał w sztuce dowolność. Był przeciwnikiem rozumienia jej jedynie jako spontaniczności. Uważał, że oprócz wrażliwości i intuicji potrzebna jest podbudowa teoretyczna i odpowiednia świadomość. Jego zdaniem sam talent artysty nie jest wystarczający do stworzenia wartościowego dzieła. Problematyka współwystępowania w jego twórczości podejścia racjonalistycznego, widocznego jako logiczny charakter projektów oraz swobody i intuicyjnego

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dobierania kształtów poszczególnych form, jest szczególnie widoczna w jego projekcie latarni morskiej jako rzeźby przestrzennej w Ustce (1972). Zaprezentowana w artykule twórczość Stefana Krygiera jest przykładem pewnej dychotomii – konstrukcji i porządku oraz natury i organicznych kształtów, które współistniejąc ze sobą, są interesującym przykładem myślenia o współzależnościach elementów składowych dzieła oraz reagowaniu poszczególnych jego części na siebie nawzajem.

Słowa kluczowe: tektonika, architektonika, architektonizacja, budowa formy, artysta jako architekt, inspirowanie naturą, formy przestrzenne, dychotomia formy organicznej i geometrii

1. Introduction

For the tradition of the Polish avant-garde, Władysław Strzemiński takes the place of priority. Łódź, as the place where he lived, created and taught, is an example of reflecting innovative tendencies not only in the form of a museum object, which has the largest and oldest collection of modern art in this part of Europe, but above all as respect for and continuation of the master's idea still present at the Academy of Fine Arts (formerly the State School of Fine Arts).

Stefan Krygier as one of Władysław Strzemiński's students, and later also his friend, did not remain indifferent to the strength of personality of this outstanding artist and pedagogue. Krygier's name is quite poorly recognised among people outside Łódź's artistic community and is associated mainly with painting. Even more interesting, as yet not widely presented, is the area of activity related to the creative, architectural visions of the designer.

Krygier was primarily the author of conceptions for service facilities and public buildings¹. Unfortunately, some of them remained only in the form of mock-ups or unrealised plans. He also designed the spatial assumptions of several Łódź housing estates (including Osiedle Doły, Osiedle Obywatelska I, and the housing estates on Wierzbowa or Anstadta Streets). His artistic inspirations were also transferred into the creation of visual identification systems or forms of small architecture.

The entirety of Stefan Krygier's creativity was aimed at combining the visual arts with architecture. The activity of Stefan Krygier as a designer-architect falls primarily in the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless, the transfer of ideas from art to architectural designs was not fully possible due to the creative limitations of those times (ideological, financial, and technical). As an architect, he did not have many significant facilities in terms of quantity in his artistic achievements; however, those were valuable projects and implementations. The realities of the People's Republic largely contributed to the fact that while working in a design office, he could only undertake individual experiments related to shaping the form. Art gave the artist greater freedom of imaginative creation, thus he devoted himself to it at the mature stage of his life.

Nonetheless, architectural education influenced his approach to art. He believed that "art did not exist in architecture as a separate, independent field. Neither did architecture exist outside or next to art. This problem should be seen as a system of interdependent values"².

¹ S. Krygier studied at the PWSSP in Łódź (now W. Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź) and at Warsaw University of Technology, where he obtained the title of magister inżynier architekt (Master of Architecture, engineer).

² S. Krygier, *Issues and Didactic Methods in the General Education of Architects*, typescript, in the possession of the artist's family.

In this statement one should see the explanation of the totality of Stefan Krygier's activity – oscillating between painting, sculpture and architecture. In the visual arts, the artist searched for clearly defined principles and order, while in architecture for finesse and lightness.

Due to the thematic scope of the conference devoted to the rational and intuitive way to architecture, particularly interesting are: the project of the lighthouse in Ustka as a spatial sculpture and the painterly visions of the city of the future of his authorship.

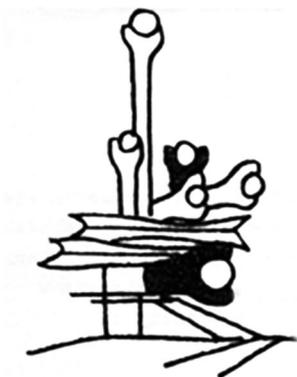
2. The lighthouse in Ustka as a spatial sculpture (1972)

The concept of the lighthouse in Ustka as a spatial sculpture was developed in 1972 as part of the *I Ogólnopolski Warsztat Artystów Plastyków "Tworzywa Sztuczne – Ustka 72"* (*First Polish Workshop of Plastic Artists "Tworzywa Sztuczne – Ustka 72"*). In the author's intention, the idea was to creatively integrate art with architecture and the object with its local surroundings. The solid of the lighthouse was built on the principle of a strong form. Its expressive shapes were to facilitate orientation in space, which in the case of the function of such an object was very important. Unambiguous identification was to be relied on the principle of indirect bonds – sculpture was connected with the elements found in space and not with space as a whole. The project consisted in the visual spread of formal building components in different directions. In this way, Krygier expressed his opposition to the automatic creation of the nearest neighbourhood of an architectural object and combining different components forming its body. The shapes that make up the lighthouse and its closest surroundings indicate a well-thought-out selection of forms added to one another, emphasising their visual affinity.

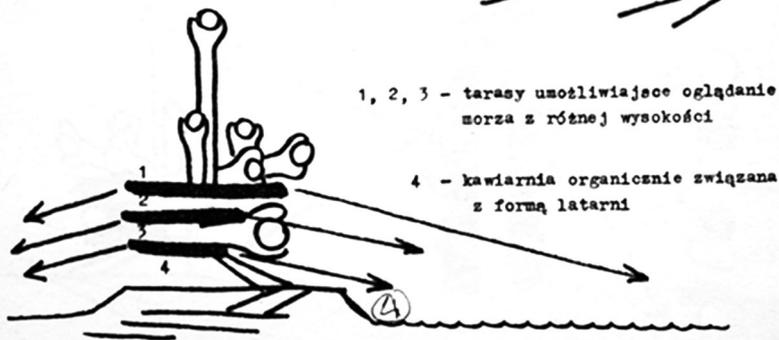
The sculptural shape of the lighthouse clearly refers to organic shapes. The form of the object brings associations with a budding organism. Its core resembles an archegonium that produces independent, spherical elements, which, if there was an opportunity, could detach from the parent organism and start to independently develop themselves into identical copies. Such an interpretation of the concept explains the designer's idea to create a visual identity not only of the closest neighbourhood of the lighthouse but of the entire city of Ustka.

The main assumption of the architect was to create in the recipients' minds a memory trace, thanks to which, during the confrontation of individual elements, they were to recognise their form and colour, and consequently associate them with the lighthouse dominating the whole. In this way, also the structures that are outside the visual range of the main object should be associated with it. In the intention of the author, the lighthouse was to become a reference point for all of the scattered parts creating an identification system across the whole city. The architect, except for the form of a lighthouse housing a cafe and terraces enabling observation of the sea from various heights, also designed the maritime zone signage system, which was made of beach furniture, information points, showcases, life buoys – all in a stylistics referring to the lighthouse.

Krygier in this project reveals clear inspiration from nature, but without a direct reference. The forms proposed by him are characterized by an innovative approach to abstraction – variations on the subject of the forces of nature are to fulfill various functions serving man. Streamlined, spherical shapes were created by the artist in an intuitive way, often omitting the symmetry of individual compositional forms. However, it is worth paying attention to a certain regularity, which not only characterises this architectural concept of Krygier, but



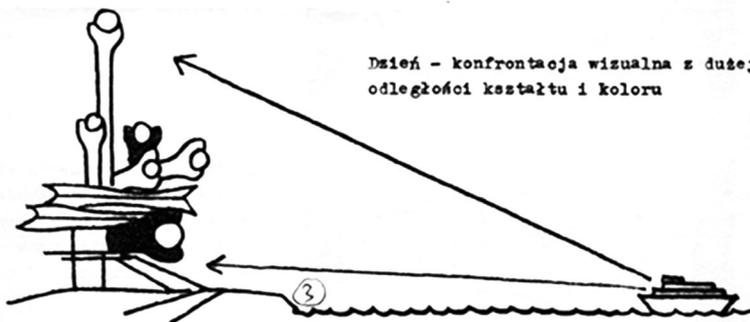
1.1



1, 2, 3 - tarasy umożliwiające oglądanie morza z różnej wysokości

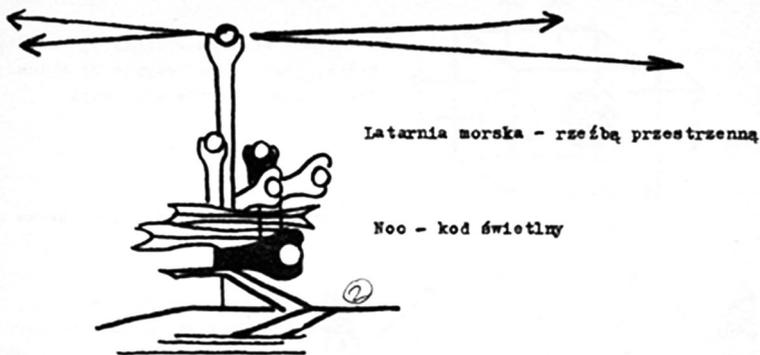
4 - kawiarnia organicznie związana z formą latarni

1.2



Dzień - konfrontacja wizualna z dużej odległości kształtu i koloru

1.3



Latarnia morska - rzeźbą przestrzenną

Noo - kod świetlny

1.4

also other aspects of his work. The dichotomy between organic and geometrical forms, between intuition and rationality is also visible in his strictly artistic works. These dependencies can be clarified by dividing them into three groups: an intuitive, free selection of shapes and rational rules organising these shapes.

To fully understand Stefan Krygier's work it is necessary to analyze the sources of the designer's inspiration. His artistic creations were influenced in part by direct acquaintance with Władysław Strzemiński. In Krygier's works, the plane enabling the integration of the influence of solarism and unified unity was architectonisation. Its area included both the mutual borrowing of forms as well as the method of binding various shapes. Both of these features are visible in the design for the lighthouse in Ustka as a spatial sculpture.

According to Kobro and Strzemiński, the architectural design was to consist in an attempt to embed the sculpture into the infinitude of space. In their opinion, it consisted in combining sculptures and architecture with common elements of form. These repetitions may have appeared as imitating scale and proportions, identical measurements or as applying the same character of accentuation³. Such repetitiveness of shapes was to become the basis for the creation of a common architectural and sculptural rhythm. Krygier defined architectural design as a stylish unification of large spatial zones. In this regard, Krygier's activity as a designer was focused on the integration of individual elements of the environment and shaping the visual identity of the place.

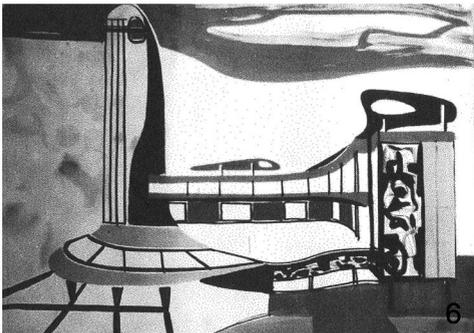
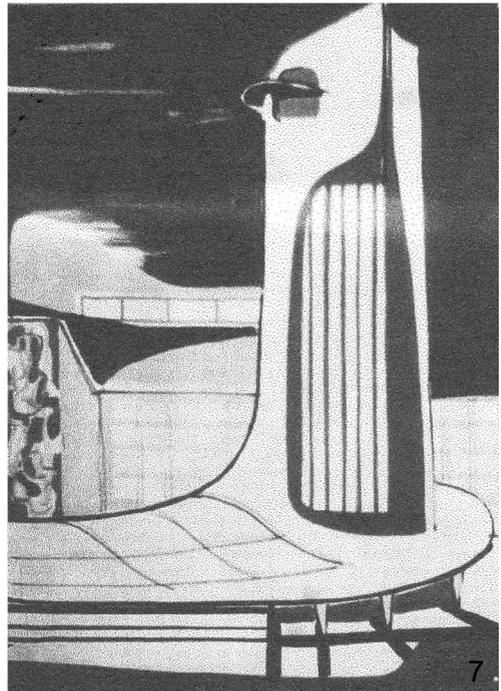
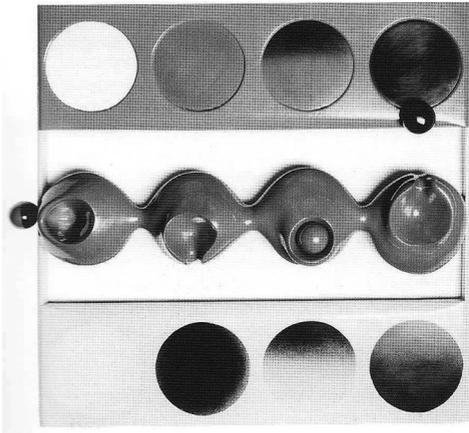
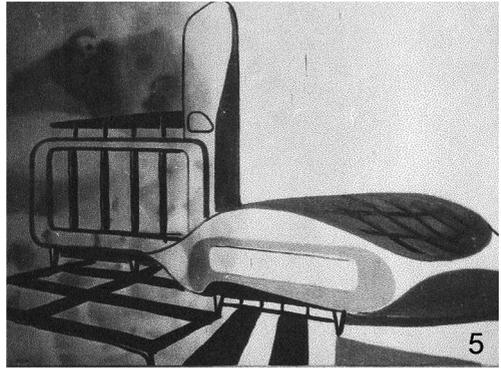
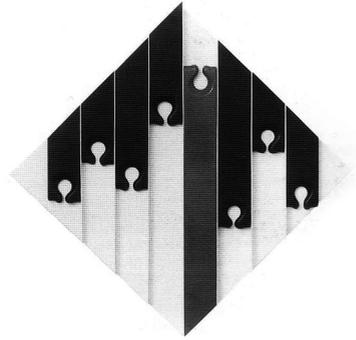
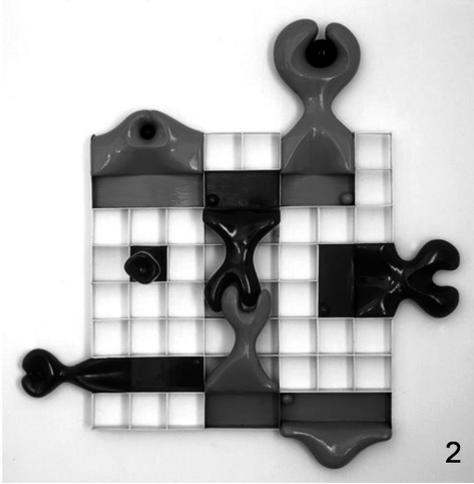
In the aforementioned project for the lighthouse (1972), there is a transfer of forms taken from Krygier's sculptural compositions – the Form Condensation Centre I relief (1970). In the Form Condensation Centres proposed by the artist (three works were created from this series), the author knocked out the sculpture from the function it had previously performed⁴, giving it the character of an open spatial zone. In this way, the boundaries of the work expanded in a difficult to predict manner.

Formed as the first of the series, the Form Condensation Centre I was a relief, the basic construction of which was a frame divided into modular fragments with the help of a lattice of slats. Rounded red and black shapes “spilled out” from the square frame beyond its area in the vertical and horizontal directions. Each of them had a place for a ball, becoming in this way a kind of their archeogonium. For Krygier, this construction became a “completely conceptual ‘launcher’ for white, black and red table tennis balls, spreading everywhere and surprising with their presence.”⁵ During the plein-air in Osieki (1970), Krygier placed these balls in various places, including paths, tables in the dining room or sugar bowls. The spatial form of the Form Condensation Centre as a set of points of a specific character was a pattern for analogous, in formal terms, moving elements. The shape of the lighthouse as a spatial

³ K. Kobro, W. Strzemiński, *Kompozycja przestrzeni obliczenia rytmu Czasoprzestrzennego*, s.n., Łódź 1931, p. 8.

⁴ G. Sztabiński, *Między percepcją a formą. Koncepcja sztuki Stefana Krygiera*, [in:] Stefan Krygier /1923–1997/, red. K. Knapik, kat. wystawy, Muzeum Historii Miasta Łodzi, Łódź 1999, p. 20.

⁵ K. Knapik, *Kalendarium życia i twórczości*, w: K. Knapik (oprac.), Stefan Krygier 1923–1997, Muzeum Historii Miasta Łodzi, Łódź 1999, p. 36.



sculpture presented at the Symposium on Spatial Forms in Ustka in 1972 was supposed to function in a similar way.

Activities related to the creation of sculptural Form Condensation Centres were preceded by works from the cycles of *Collineations* and *Conflicts* on which the artist worked in the 1960s and 1970s. These reliefs made of wood, in white, black and red were created by Krygier in accordance with the principle of architectonics – that is, the interdependence of all components of the work. Their construction consisted of deliberate modification of the forms added to one another.

Krygier described *Collineations* as transformations of abstract forms in various points of space lying on straight lines, and spreading of these forms in specific zones. *Conflicts*, on the other hand, were treated by the author as the mutual reaction of shapes and colours created in the process of transformation. Despite the similar measures used to create them, each cycle addressed different issues related to shaping the form. The affinities prevailed in *Collineations*, while the opposition was emphasised in *Conflicts*. Regardless of the distinctiveness and peculiarity of each of Krygier's described artistic activities, the factor that joins them all is the idea of fighting opposites, in which balance is always the winner. These seemingly purely artistic sculptural activities reflect the artist's and designer's sensitivity to the shaping of space, creative visions of modern architecture including the larger one, for example in the urban context.

3. Creative visions of modern architecture

In the 1950s, in the period directly preceding the first architectural realisations, Krygier made a series of works depicting creative visions of modern architecture. It was a time when bold design creations could only exist on paper. The then prevailing socialist realism meant that unfettered ideas could be revealed in a form other than the built environment.

Krygier's temperas created in the 1950s present a futuristic architecture, full of expression. The objects painted by the artist resemble the scenery of the city of the future. Sant'Elia was of the opinion that "oblique and ellipsoidal lines are dynamic and contain emotional power one thousand times higher than the power of vertical and horizontal lines"⁶. The buildings of dynamic shapes and rhythmic divisions created by Krygier on paper, formally write these objects in the trend for expressionism. These works show the means of expression characteristic of this style, such as: towering solids, "sinuating" facade windows and wavy

⁶ A. Sant'Elia, *Architektura futurystyczna, manifest futurystyczny*, <https://rewolta.wordpress.com/2007/09/11/antonio-santelia-manifest-futurystyczny-architektura-futurystyczna-11-lipca-1914/> (access 07.07.2018).

III. 2. S. Krygier, *Form Condensation Center I* (relief), 1970

III. 3. S. Krygier, *Conflicts VII* (relief), 1970

III. 4. S. Krygier, *Collineation III* (relief), 1970

III. 5. S. Krygier, Architectural visions on paper (tempera), 1950s

III. 6. S. Krygier, Architectural visions on paper (tempera), 1950s.

III. 7. S. Krygier, Architectural visions on paper (tempera), 1950s.

lines of shapes. In Krygier's works, the lightness and flexibility of the architecture are noticeable. He obtained the first by raising the objects' bodies above the ground level. In addition, one can see the breakdown of their "load" into two parts of contrasting proportions. The vision of architecture, painted on paper in tempera, was reflected in the objects designed by Krygier in later years. The expressive approach to creating buildings can be seen, among others, in contrasting sets of proportions and shapes, in the attempt to "lift" buildings up to give them lightness or in sculptural elements of roofing. Such features are presented in, e.g., the Krygier-designed I Student House of Łódź University of Technology (1959), a cinema concept for Radomsko (1959, together with arch. J. Michalewicz) or a design for a hotel (50 / 60th).

4. Summary

Analyzing the work of Stefan Krygier, it can be clearly seen that the fascination with art and, in particular, painting was dominant. However, the architectural education of the artist was not without significance. Logic and the sense of engineering influenced the approach to painting, while his experience from art was transferred to thinking about buildings and urban space. His architectural designs and realisations, although few, stand out with their distinctive forms. Often, however, an individual detail of buildings results from purely aesthetic reasons and is not of a practical nature. The most frequent principle of shaping solids was the combination of straight elements and curved forms in the form of gentle arches.

As a student of Władysław Strzemiński, like his master, he rejected discretion in art. He was an opponent of understanding it only as spontaneity. He believed that in order to create something, it was necessary to build a system of mutual relations. In his opinion, talent itself is not enough to create a valuable work. His works (both artistic and architectural) show the co-existence of a rationalist approach, understood as the logical character of the relationship between individual parts and the whole, and an intuitive approach characterized by freedom in choosing the shapes of individual forms.

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- [2] Kobro K., Strzemiński W., *Kompozycja przestrzeni. Obliczenia rytmu czasoprzestrzennego*, Łódź 1931.
- [3] Niezabitowski A. M., *O strukturze przestrzennej obiektów architektonicznych*, Katowice 2017.