

Architecture—Medium—Sacrum. The Higher Theological Seminary of the Resurrectionist in Krakow in the perspective of Marshall McLuhan's media theory

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Abstract

Architecture, especially sacred architecture, is one of the most complex media of culture. It not only shapes space, but also generates experience, structures ritual, organizes perception, and initiates processes of interpretation. In this sense, it can be read as a structural and symbolic message, which simultaneously reveals its medial character. This article examines this mediality through the lens of Marshall McLuhan's theory, which understands media—including art and architecture—as systems that organize sensory and cognitive experience. McLuhan's concept makes it possible to interpret architecture as a dynamic and creative communicative process. The study focuses on the Higher Seminary of the Resurrectionist Fathers in Kraków, one of the most fully realised examples of Polish postmodernism, analysed not through formal categories but within a mediological perspective. The aim of the article is to demonstrate how McLuhan's categories—such as the extension of the senses, the organization of perception, and the structure of the message—are genuinely present and justified in the experience of architecture. The article presents the theoretical foundations for understanding architecture as a medium, a brief reflection on postmodernism, an analysis of the Resurrectionist Seminary using the conceptual tools mentioned above, and final conclusions. The applied methodology includes analytical interpretation of the seminary's spatial structure, examination of available statements by the architect, and the use of McLuhan's theoretical framework (media studies analysis), which together make it possible to read the building as a dynamic narrative in which material function and form co-create meaning, experience, and ritual.

Keywords: Architecture as medium, cultural communication, media theory, spatial experience, mediology

Introduction

Architecture, especially sacred architecture, is one of the most complex media of culture. It not only shapes space, but also produces experience, organizes rituals, structures perception, and activates the process of interpretation. In this sense, it can be read as a structural and symbolic message, simultaneously indicating its medial character. This approach clearly corresponds with Marshall McLuhan's theory of the medium, according to which every medium, including art and architecture, functions primarily as an extension of human senses, a system organizing experience, and not merely a carrier of content. McLuhan emphasizes that communication tools, regardless of scale and material, shape the perception of the world more profoundly than the transmitted content. Art, therefore, is not only a representation or an aesthetic product, but a communicative process in which the creator, the medium, the context, and the recipient participate, situated in a given time and space. From this perspective, architecture appears as one of the most powerful cultural media: a medium operating slowly yet deeply, organizing the way space is perceived, the rhythm of movement, the hierarchy and sequence of impressions, and—in the case of sacred architecture—also individual spiritual experience, while also building relationships and community.

Charles Jencks, among others, moves in a similar direction, formulating the concept of the language of architecture, based on encoding meanings through form, metaphor, and cultural references. This language allows buildings to be read as statements, not merely as objects embedded in the broader discourse of the era. Within the framework of postmodernism, of which Jencks is one of the better-known interpreters, architecture becomes a polyphonic, narrative space, open to the recipient and their interpretation. Turning to theory and art, Władysław Stróżewski reminds us that a work of art exists fully only in the act of reception, only the encounter of a person with space restores its meaningful dimension (Stróżewski, 2002).

Understood in this way, the mediality of architecture serves as the starting point for this article. The Higher Theological Seminary of the Resurrectionist Fathers in Krakow represents one of the most consistent and mature postmodern sacred spaces in Poland. It not only reflects the aesthetics of the era, but also embodies the philosophy of postmodernism—a feature that is not self-evident in Polish realizations classified within this movement. At the same time, it is worth noting that this building has already been the subject of numerous architectural analyses and theoretical interpretations. This article does not aim to repeat them, but instead proposes an approach to the seminary's architecture through the conceptual framework of communication and media theory.

The application of McLuhanian categories, such as the medium as an extension of the senses, the organization of perception, or the structure of the message, allows one to highlight aspects of Kozłowski's architecture that usually remain in the background of formal architectural analyses. From a mediological perspective, the seminary building appears as a dynamic and continuously relevant cultural message, guiding the recipient through symbolic and spatial narration. Postmodernism, in which architecture began to speak in multiple languages simultaneously, provides a particularly fertile ground for this kind of interpretation. Late twentieth-century Polish sacred architecture, in distancing itself from the modernist reduction of form, sought new ways to express the sacred, based on ambiguity, metaphor, and the experience of space. An analysis of the Resurrectionist Seminary from this perspective reveals not only Kozłowski's innovativeness, but also the usefulness of McLuhan's mediological tools for describing architecture as a cultural and spiritual medium.

The following sections of the article will present: the theoretical foundations for understanding architecture as a cultural medium, the issue of the sacred in architectural space, an analysis of the Resurrectionist Seminary using the conceptual framework of the aforementioned theories, and the concluding

reflections. The topic of sacred architecture also opens another avenue for broader analysis, namely whether the application of postmodernist ideas in sacred architecture remains in dialogue with the concept of the *sacrum* in art. This aspect, however, will not be examined in this article.

1. Architecture as a Medium: McLuhanian theoretical framework

For centuries, works of art and architecture have constituted creative testimony to human rationality, but also to human emotionality, spirituality, and corporeality, embedding themselves within the fundamental structures of culture. Art, regarded as an inseparable element of culture, is also a form of communication, interpretation, creation, and transformation of reality. As a phenomenon difficult to define, it provides a source of research inspiration not only in the field of architecture, but also in other disciplines, including philosophy and social communication and media studies. For the purposes of the present analysis, one can follow Clifford Geertz in understanding culture as a system of transmitting meanings, with art—like language or ritual—playing a significant role within this system as both testimony and a conduit, enabling not only the articulation of individual experiences, but also their embedding in collective consciousness (Geertz, 1972). The concept of the medium is understood as a transmitter, a carrier, something that mediates the message between sender and receiver, between meaning and its expression (Eco, 1972). McLuhan expanded this understanding, stating that the medium is an extension of the human being. It is not only a technical tool (e.g., printing, television, the Internet), but also the way in which we define, communicate, perceive, and create or transform reality. It can be art or architecture, which communicate and at the same time become the message itself, shaping consciousness and culture. A medium is any form that extends human capabilities. Thus, a medium can be, for example, language as an extension of thought and speech, clothing as an extension of the skin, the wheel as an extension of the legs, or art as an extension of sensitivity and cognition: “Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned. Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man—the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society” (McLuhan, 1994: 125). The media scholar emphasizes that it is not only the content of the message, but the form of the medium itself that profoundly influences the way we shape our understanding of reality: “all media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms” (McLuhan, 1994: 69). Art thus becomes a translation of culture, where the form of the medium affects us most, deeply transforming our lives and our way of being in the world. As Władysław Stróżewski writes: “A work of art not only represents reality, but participates in the creation of meaning—it is a carrier of significance that constitutes itself through its form” (Stróżewski, 2002: 45). McLuhan emphasized that it is not the content of the message that matters most, but the form in which the message is conveyed and the new meaning it generates. The medium, becoming the message, as an entity in itself, determines the way people think, feel, and organize reality—it gives it meaning. McLuhan’s medium is also a message in itself, influencing the recipient on a psychophysical level, deeply affecting our bodies and emotions, often beyond conscious awareness. McLuhan’s famous statement that media are extensions of human senses takes on particular significance from this perspective. In the understanding of media studies, art expands our capacities, even transcending them. Art affects and transforms our senses while simultaneously altering the balance among them. In a sense, art restores a certain type of sensory equilibrium, where the senses function more holistically. Thus, the message—the communication—is of crucial

importance, capable of influencing emotions, actions, thought, and understanding of recipients. The communicative power of architecture, extensively discussed by Jencks, affects human behavior, even compelling certain actions that are not always consciously perceived (Jencks, 1987).

Although McLuhan does not use the concept of transcendence in a philosophical sense, he attributes to art the function of revealing hidden structures and transcending current forms of perception. The artist has the ability to see what society has not yet recognized, to anticipate technological and social changes, and to expose tensions hidden within media and culture (McLuhan, 1994). The medium thus becomes a culture-shaping factor, one might say it shapes and interprets the conditions in which content is received and understood: "A work of art has no existence or function apart from its effects on human observers. And art, like games or popular arts, and like media of communication, has the power to impose its own assumptions by setting the human community into new relationships and postures. Art, like games, is a translator of experience. What we have already felt or seen in one situation we are suddenly given in a new kind of material. Games, likewise, shift familiar experience into new forms, giving the bleak and the blear side of things" (McLuhan, 1994: 267). In this sense, art as a form of communication is a medium par excellence: it transforms perception, teaches new ways of seeing, builds emotional and cognitive relationships with reality, and also initiates cultural transformations. McLuhan repeatedly wrote about artists as the society's radar—individuals who anticipate and reveal cultural changes caused by technologies, including new media. He does not treat art as an aesthetic domain, but as a cognitive tool that allows us to understand the changing communication environment. Art functions as an environmental radar, fulfilling the role of subliminally adapting us to the technological environment in which we must operate: "The artist picks up the message of cultural and technological challenge decades before its transforming impact occurs. He, then, builds models or Noah's arks for facing the change that is at hand" (McLuhan, 1994: 77). The artist responds to changes in communication, creating forms that preemptively give meaning to cultural phenomena, which then function as a medium of meaning. McLuhan also points out that art is a way of expressing complex reality, acting as a filter that generates new meanings before they are consciously recognized by society. In the media scholar's reflections, it is evident that art does not merely reproduce culture but transforms and analyzes it. Art reflects human beings, their environment, anticipates developments, and also mediates self-knowledge. Thus, art reshapes social relations, creates new frameworks of meaning, and imparts new significance to reality (it acts as a sense-making process), becoming also a space for interpretation, not only expression. In architecture, this is visible in the structure of interiors, the distribution of light, the rhythm of transitions, and the way space is framed. In the context of sacred architecture, McLuhanian thinking reveals an even deeper dimension of its mediality. If a medium is an extension of human senses, and architecture defines the ways of seeing, hearing, and moving, it simultaneously defines modes of being in a community and ways of experiencing the sacred. Architecture does not so much communicate spiritual content as it enables it and establishes the spatial conditions for its experience.

In this understanding, the medium becomes an interpretive tool: it allows the study of architecture in terms of perception, experience, the decoding of cultural messages, and social impact, while simultaneously the medium itself becomes a message, a work of art. In this sense, analyzing architecture through McLuhan's framework is not merely a theoretical experiment but opens up the possibility of intellectual insight into the architectural work and the process of its reception.

2. Postmodernism, the language of architecture, and the narrativity of form

The term postmodernism is generally understood as the designation of a cultural formation associated with significant changes in the scientific, technological, economic, and axiological determinants of life in advanced Western societies in the second half of the twentieth century. Commentators on the philosophy of postmodernism generally agree that one of the main tasks of this philosophy is to free thinking, speaking, writing, and judgment from the context and concepts developed by the European tradition. This primarily concerns contemporary changes that no longer fit the vision of the world and of humanity outlined by the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment's faith in human rationality and knowledge is of little importance for postmodernists, because in the context of the profound transformations of the twentieth century, knowledge of an absolute nature cannot exist—it is impossible. Broadly speaking, postmodernism appears as a movement that challenged existing values and worldviews, particularly in societies where religion has a fundamental role. The questioning of science, belief in progress, philosophy, metaphysics, or theology amounted to a profound skepticism toward previously established rationality. As Welsch writes, postmodernity or postmodernism is not an invention of the fields of art or philosophy, but a reflection of the reality in which we live. A key characteristic of this reality is the simultaneity and interpenetration of different concepts and expectations. These constitute the fundamental principles and challenges of postmodern pluralism. The credo of postmodernism is the recognition of the indisputable right to diverse forms of knowledge, life concepts, and norms of behavior and conduct (Welsch, 1998). The author points out: from this moment on, truth, justice, and humanity appear in the plural (Welsch, 1998, s: 9). In his understanding postmodernity continues modernity but rejects modernism, understood as the ideology of authority, augmentation, innovation, anticipation, and overcoming. Drawing on tradition serves the purpose of transforming and articulating reality in a contemporary manner. In his philosophy, Lyotard focuses on limits and conflict zones, on frictions from which the unknown and the elements contrary to the habits of reason emerge (Lyotard, 1997). The explosion of small narratives and their contradictory diversity opposes any form of totalization. Narratives emerge according to their own pragmatics, forming a complex set of relations between the narrator and the narrative, and between the narrator and the listener (Carroll, 1991). Lyotard also discusses the artistic avant-garde of the twentieth century, its work on the concept of art, and its experimental undertakings, that is, the exploration of new, paralogical possibilities and the creation of multiplicity (Lyotard, 1997). For Lyotard, postmodernism is a state of mind, a state of spirit. According to this conception, postmodernist philosophy has three main dimensions: first, it aims to present and legitimize a break with unity; second, it seeks to highlight the effectiveness of pluralistic assumptions; and third, it aims to explain the internal problems of pluralism, since multiplicity and heterogeneity generate conflicts. The rejection of unity thus implies a rejection of domination and coercion. This notion encompasses both previous worldviews and monopolistic utopias, including, among others, religious systems. A common feature of positions close to Lyotard's postmodernism, particularly those associated with poststructuralism—Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault—is the recognition of the fragility and uncertainty of multiple truths that were previously regarded as absolute and inviolable. Architecture should be observed and considered through the worldviews it embodies. Modernist buildings were connected with a project of domination, attempting, through an elevated architectural language, to rise above existing languages (Welsch, 1998).

The expression “postmodern architecture” became widely used and gained a positive connotation thanks to the American architect and critic Charles Jencks, who, together with architect Robert Stern, transferred this term from the theoretical literature into the field of architecture, simultaneously initiating

the debate on postmodernism in architecture. In *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*, Jencks argues that the fundamental flaw of modernist architecture was that it was created primarily for elites. In contrast, postmodernism seeks to overcome these aspirations to elitism by expanding the architectural language toward vernacular elements, tradition, and the commercial jargon of urban environments. This gives rise to the concept of so-called double coding, meaning architecture that speaks both to elites and to the so-called man on the street. According to Jencks, the foundation of postmodern architecture is both social and semantic motivation (Jencks, 1987). Postmodern architecture consciously communicates with users and viewers. It communicates because it has the structure of a language. Thus, architecture can achieve the goal of social communication only if it is capable of addressing different strata of its audience. This can be achieved by combining various architectural languages—for example, by juxtaposing traditional and modern codes, elite and popular, or international and regional elements. This is the essence of postmodern double coding. A number of analogies exist between architecture and language. Jencks refers to architectural words, expressions, syntax, and semantics. However, as Jencks points out, there are limitations in the architectural code that arise from experience and culture, which shape the interpretation of a given building. This means that there exists a multiplicity of codes, varying across different subcultures. Jencks identifies two such subcultures: one uses the modern code, derived from scientific knowledge and the ideology of technological development in architecture, while the other is familiar only with the traditional code, based on the common understanding of standardized architectural elements (Jencks, 1987). Many buildings combine multiple codes that can be interpreted in two ways, creating so-called mixed metaphors with opposing meanings. The effect of this flexibility is the ambiguity and mystery of a building's significance. This is precisely what Jencks emphasizes—that ambiguity carries greater power than literalness. The interaction of different meanings produces a multi-layered architectural work. The language of architecture, like spoken language, must employ recognizable units of meaning. These units of meaning are words. Words in architecture are more flexible and polymorphic, and their particular significance depends largely on the visual context and the code of the observer. Most architectural words are symbolic signs. Another aspect shared by architecture and language is syntax. Syntax in architecture refers to the rules for combining words such as doors, windows, and walls (Jencks, 1984). Simply put, a building must stand according to certain principles and construction laws. The linguistic and metaphorical character of architecture has also been discussed by Mario Gandelzonas, Manfredo Tafuri, Denis Hollier, Robert Stern, Jürgen Habermas, and many others (Hays, 1998).

In the context of sacred architecture and postmodernism, language, communicativeness, and mediality (medium as a carrier of meaning) acquire particular significance. Here, metaphor cannot function merely as a stylistic device, it becomes a tool for conveying spiritual and communal ideas. The narrativity described by Jencks is not a literary plot but a sequence of spaces, their dramaturgy, and symbolic saturation (Jencks, 1987). The observer becomes a participant in the medium's narrative through light, rhythm, the contrast between interior and exterior, the use of archetypes, and deliberate formal strategies.

As Ewa Węclawowicz-Gyurkovich writes, the Polish version of postmodernism became a form of opposition to abstract spatial forms associated with the particular experiences of totalitarian regimes. The author notes that on Polish soil diverse influences are visible, including surrealist continuations of the Dadaist revolution as well as neo-Romantic efforts toward stylistic autonomy within the national tradition (Węclawowicz-Gyurkovich, 1992). It is precisely within this tradition that the work of Dariusz Kozłowski can be situated, for whom architecture was never merely a functional arrangement but also a spatial narrative, intriguing the viewer and inviting them to interpretation.

3. Resurrectionist Seminary in Krakow: architecture as narrative

The Higher Theological Seminary of the Resurrectionist Fathers in Krakow (built between 1985 and 1993) is one of the most important examples of Polish postmodern sacred architecture. As Ewa Porębska notes, this realization represents the quintessence of postmodernism in its finest architectural expression (Porębska, 2023). The complex was designed and executed by the Krakow-based architects Dariusz Kozłowski, Wacław Stefański, and Maria Misiągiewicz. The project was recognized by the journal *Architektura-Murator* as best reflecting the idea of postmodernism in Polish architecture and was also acknowledged in 2006 as one of the 20 icons of contemporary domestic architecture within the exhibition "Polska. Ikony architektury" organized by Am for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The design concept by Dariusz Kozłowski and his team is based on the idea of four gates, which, analogous to beliefs in primitive societies, represent a rite, initiation, and a symbolic path toward transcendence. The system of four gates symbolizes the journey of a prospective seminarian, who, upon deciding to enter

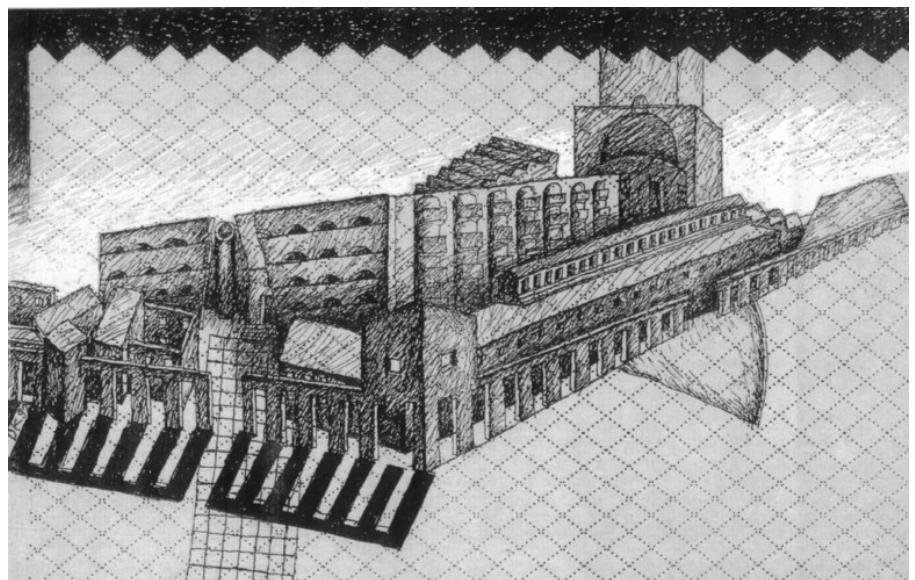


Fig. 1. The Axis of the Spiritual Path and the concept of the Four Gates (drawing by D. Kozłowski, *Architektura-Murator* 3/1995)



Fig. 2. The Gate of Initiation in the foreground, with the Gate of Hope in the background (photo by author)

**Fig. 3.** The Gate of Hope (photo by author)

the Seminary, passes sequentially through the four gates (Kozłowski, 1994). The project's authors assign symbolic meaning to each gate, deliberately drawing on postmodernist stylistic references. The first gate is the Gate of Initiation. Upon entering the seminary grounds, one encounters a wide opening in a perforated wall, leading to the Courtyard of Desires. According to Dariusz Kozłowski, the Gate of Initiation represents a boundary between worlds, endless arcades, the deconstruction of the wall, silence, a source of emerging thought, and the growing of curiosity (Kozłowski, 1995). It simultaneously symbolizes an invitation to meditation and, according to Dariusz Tabor, reflects the inner turmoil of a young person approaching a major life decision (Tabor, 2011).

The second gate is the Gate of Hope—an intentional rupture in the wall with semicircular windows revealing, like a curtain, a monumental portal. It leads to a three-winged building where seminarians and educators reside, organized around the Courtyard of Youth. The symbolism of hope is associated with youth and future formation, yet the wall's rupture can be interpreted differently, evoking notions of destruction, division, and brutalism. Color also plays a significant role in this architecture. In the Gate of Hope, a portal through the wall was created in

**Fig. 4.** Gate of Knowledge (photo by author)

pink. Pink, as a combination of red and white, symbolizes life but also death—the sacrifice of blood—and mystery, as well as purity (Feuillet, 2006).

The third gate, the Gate of Knowledge, is a passage between enfilade staircases leading, on one side, to the church and, on the other, to the library. As Tabor writes, knowledge encompasses two realities—*Sacerdotium* (the church, prayer, liturgy) and *Studium* (the lecture hall and academic block with the library, representing study and scholarly pursuit) (Tabor, 2011). The fourth, the Gate of Faith, in the project is envisioned as the Column of Resurrection, which, together with the horizon beyond the Gate of Knowledge, forms a cross symbolizing the synthesis of the divine (vertical) and the human (horizontal). This synthesis is made possible through faith (Kozłowski, 1995).

The entire complex consists of three architectural zones organized around a trapezoidal courtyard. The first zone is a perforated concrete wall on the north and east sides. The second zone comprises a series of two-story peripheral buildings located to the north, and to the east: the Provincial House, the Travelers' House, the kitchen with the refectory, and the gymnasium. The third zone is a three-winged, four-story building housing the seminarians' and educators' apartments. At the end of the eastern wing stands the seminary church on a square plan, topped with a four-segmented dome, while at the end of the western wing is the academic block with a lecture hall rising over the central courtyard. The axis of the complex runs north–south, connecting Kraków's Main Square with Twardowski Rocks. Along this axis is the path of the Spirit—a set of four symbolic gates (Tabor, 2011).

The Resurrectionist Fathers' Seminary in Kraków, a unique work in the context of sacred architecture in Poland, demonstrates a deliberate attempt to translate postmodernist stylistics into ecclesiastical architecture. The overlapping symbolism of forms, the spatial intricacies of the entire complex, the apparent lack of symmetry and harmony, deconstruction, references and fragmented quotations embedded in walls and façades, as well as the use of a color palette that significantly departs from conventions in construction, all reflect the author's deep understanding of postmodernist ideas. In this case, the effect is not so much one of grotesque or humor, so characteristic of postmodernist architecture, though these may arise in the observer's imagination, but rather of surprise, unease, and the search for stability. The observer engages with a carefully considered message shaping psycho-physical experience. Even the layout of the complex—sequential, almost theatrical—reveals the McLuhanian essence of the medium as a framework for experience. The concept of the path, light, interior-exterior

relationships, the rhythm of columns, and interpenetrating spaces all organize the observer's perception, becoming a communicative message. It is a space that directs movement, regulates pace, builds moods, and communicates through color and texture. This is also reflected in the creators' conscious choices, including the selection and definition of building materials. Maria Misiagiewicz emphasizes the particular role of concrete as a material capable of influencing the psyche, provoking feelings and desires, thereby stimulating the senses and engaging thought (Misiagiewicz, 2003). This reflects a precise process of postmodernist as well as medial thinking. The choice of material is also a medium through which the architect-artist shapes future experiences. Monika Gała-



Fig. 5. The seminary church designed on a square plan (photo by author)



Walczowska devotes her article to this topic, highlighting the function of concrete in postmodern architecture and showing how architects subordinate form, symbolism, and metaphor to the material, describing architecture, following Kozłowski, as a “game of conventions” (Gała-Walczowska, 2018).

Perhaps this is why, when observing the complex from a distance and then approaching it, one encounters a work whose function is not immediately apparent. Only after reflection and noticing the cross above the church dome can the religious function of the buildings be determined. Upon closer inspection, the observer encounters fragmented walls, a partially ruined colonnade, and a gap in the façade of the first building (the Gate of Knowledge). The idea of the four gates is difficult to identify and decipher, even after studying the author’s intentions. It remains open to individual assessment, perception, and interpretation. Postmodernist stylistics deliberately introduce differentiation, ambiguity, and often disrupt traditionally conceived space and imagination. The result of such interventions is a multiplicity of interpretations. It is also worth noting the architectural consistency within the interiors of the seminary. In the corridors between the buildings, the raw concrete ceiling is slanted to one side, simultaneously disturbing the perceptual stability of the passage while complementing the overall stylistic effect of the complex. The symbolism of the path and the transition to successive stages of initiation, invoked among others by Eliade, is familiar and deeply embedded in the structure of the human mind, in its cognitive categories (Eliade, 1999). Postmodernist symbolism, by design, presents these categories traditionally rooted in human consciousness in a different way. Within it, the notion of pluralism can be clearly discerned. The disruption of wholeness, the fragmentariness (a broken or unfinished wall), the threatening, jagged character of the building layout, the effect of collapse, the tearing of the front façade, fragments and quotations (concrete colonnade), the rawness of the concreto – all these suggest not unity of truth, but perhaps doubt that must be overcome. Kozłowski and his team designed and created a narrative structure and a cultural medium, a medium of human conditio—a space that guides, resists, surprises, and invites, perhaps even compels reflection, including continuous questioning of *sacrum*. This building does not merely represent postmodernism, it enacts it as a way of thinking about architecture.

The architecture of the Seminary is thus a multi-coded message: simultaneously for the initiated and the uninitiated, for the faithful and the non-believers, for architects and users, while at the same time creating the framework for individual and social experience. This architecture narrates, guides, raises questions, and at the same time creates a space for encounter—both intellectual and spiritual. In the Seminary, this narrative certainly has a cultural and architectural dimension, connecting all levels of the spatial medium. Anna Maria Wierzbicka also highlights the narrativity and the multilayered nature of meaning in architecture—it is precisely its symbolic and metaphorical character that makes the Seminary building an example of architecture whose material form functions as a message, a spatial narrative (Wierzbicka, 2013). Yet it still provokes a question, long posed, about the relationship between such an idea, a conception of reality, and the creation of *sacrum* within architectural space.

Fig. 6. a), b), c) Fragments and quotations (photo by author)

4. McLuhan's theory and architecture—conclusions

When McLuhan's theory is juxtaposed with Kozłowski's architectural realization, several conclusions emerge: the medium organizes perception—the Seminary guides the viewer through spatial sequences in a way that can be analyzed in McLuhanian terms as a framework of experience. Sacred architecture is a medium that extends the senses: light, acoustics, and the rhythm of space become tools of communication, extensions of the author's idea and message, but also of the epoch itself, with its dilemmas and uncertainties related to the path of faith. Meaning arises from form and from the experience of that form. The viewer becomes, in a sense, a co-creator of the message, and the postmodern narrative quality of the building requires interpretation, in line with the intuitions of both McLuhan and Jencks. Without the effort of a co-creative recipient, this architecture cannot fulfill its function.

In the field of aesthetics and the philosophy of art, Władysław Stróżewski emphasized that a work of art comes into full existence only in the act of reception (Stróżewski, 2002). This means that sacred architecture is not merely a material arrangement of forms but a space of encounter: between a person and a place, a person and an idea, a person and another person, and a person and the *sacrum*. This experience is organized by architecture—that is, by the medium. In this sense, sacred architecture uniquely embodies McLuhan's understanding of media: it creates the framework for spiritual experience. Sequences of passage, focused light, the rhythm of columns, spatial openings and narrowings—all of these do not simply illustrate the *sacrum* literally but co-create it on the sensory level. Medium transforms perception, teaches new ways of seeing, builds emotional and cognitive relations with reality, and also initiates cultural change (McLuhan, 1994). McLuhan does not treat art as an aesthetic domain, but as a cognitive tool that allows us to understand the changing communication environment.

In the postmodern era, the collapse of coherent narratives meant that architecture began to independently construct a sphere of meanings, drawing on metaphor, archetype, or intertextual quotation. It is precisely at this point that McLuhan, Jencks, and Kozłowski intersect. The architect, however, despite consistent references to Western postmodernism, created a building that, despite some criticism, became a medium and a message that continues to move, astonish, and at the same time sustain reflection on the search for the sacred in architecture. This building is not only a functioning seminary, not only an educational space, but also a place of visitation akin to a museum, and consequently a site of recurring questions, including those about the *sacrum*. Therefore, this architecture can be understood as a full-fledged cultural medium: influencing the way space is perceived, shaping social relations, and provoking religious inquiry and the experience of the *sacrum*.

McLuhan's media theory proves not only applicable to the study of architecture but especially insightful in the case of postmodernist buildings, which operate through metaphor, narrative, and spatial dramaturgy. For McLuhan, a medium—such as art—shapes the way we understand, experience, and give meaning to the world. His position is clear: art is a medium that extends the senses and perception, creating an environment of meanings that convey significance, reveal structures, and reflect changes in communication. The artist acts as a mediator, anticipating, interpreting, and conveying these changes to the audience. The creators of the seminary in Kraków appear to function as such mediators, artists who anticipate or sustain fundamental questions about human existence. Such a medium does not merely convey content, it creates new ways of experiencing reality, and by anticipating society, artists recognize changes brought about by technologies, reveal invisible forces, and uncover hidden cultural content. In this sense, architecture becomes a tool for generating new cultural and cognitive meanings. Here one can observe an axiological function: art allows us to perceive what is significant and valuable. The media theorist understands art not as an aesthetic decoration of the world, but as a cultural radar, a means for

consciously understanding the influence of media and technology on culture. In McLuhan's theory, art is a medium that can even neutralize the effects of other media. Thanks to this function, art. And architecture not only reflects culture but also participates in its creation and transformation, constituting one of the key mechanisms for recognizing and interpreting reality.

The work of Dariusz Kozłowski fits within these frameworks, offering architecture that speaks through form, light, rhythm, and symbolic multilayering. The Resurrectionist Seminary thus constitutes not only an example of postmodernism in Poland, but also evidence that architecture as a medium can be analyzed from the perspective of communication and cultural theory. In this way, its deepest function is revealed: shaping human thought, experience, and emotions, while simultaneously formulating a message co-created with the observer.

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