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PANORAMA OF THE UPRISING. THE NEVER-CREATED MUSEUM MONUMENT TO SILESIA'S POLISHNESS

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Introduction

As part of the celebration of the Millennium of the Polish State in 1957–1966, the state administration implemented numerous projects in order to instil the desired vision of joint history in society. The most spectacular of them were monuments constituting major sites in town topography, meant to affect collective memory. Some entailed creation of multi-function complexes, however, not all of them were accomplished. One of such ghost monuments can be found in the Silesian Panorama never created in Katowice. In 1958, the idea was conceived to create a complex under that name combining a painterly panorama, a historical museum, and a panoramic cinema. It was to commemorate 40 years of the Silesian Uprisings: the leitmotif of the national celebration of the Millennium in 1961. The present paper speaks about the genesis of the idea, the Project's assumptions, and the course of the organisational works: the aspects previously undiscussed on a larger scale in literature.¹ It will also try to answer the questions about the reasons for the choice of the formal means, the place the unaccomplished Project takes in the history of the commemoration of the Silesian Uprisings, and the latter's relevance in the context of the history of Polish display art.

Project's history

The resolution of the Presidium of the Voivodeship National Council (PWRN) in Katowice of 13 August 1958 claims the following: *In relation to the upcoming celebrations of the Millennium of the Polish State, as motioned by the Voivodeship Secretariat of the Polish United Workers' Party in Katowice, the programme of the above celebrations will include the raising within the Katowice Voivodeship of a 'Panorama' meant to commemorate the century-long struggles of the Silesian people, with a particular emphasis on the historic deeds of the Silesian Insurgents struggling for social and national liberation, and meant to bond forever the ancient Silesian land with the Polish Motherland as the most precious contribution to the joint effort to liberate our Peoples' Homeland.*² The preparatory works were assigned to Jerzy Ziętek. Two potential locations for the Project were named: a piece of land south-east of the intersection of two major thoroughfares: Mikołowska and Kochłowska Streets (the latter currently A4 Motorway) and the plot east of the Park Hall at the corner of Kochłowska and Plebiscytowa Streets.³

The geological and mining studies obtained in November and December 1958⁴ as well as the construction evaluation⁵ demonstrated that mining planned to continue below both

locations could lead to unpredictable ground movements. Experts suggested to extremely minimize the potential construction on the sites. The necessity to adjust the design to the geological conditioning substantially increased the Project's cost.⁶

In March 1959, the Committee for Building the Silesian Panorama, KBPS, headed by Ziętek concluded a contract with the designing team: the Katowice-based architects Zygmunt and Jerzy Winnicki, and Irena and Czesław Kotel.⁷ They were to submit the architectural and detailed designs by 15 July 1959. There was no competition announced as was the rule with respect to projects of the highest rank supported by Poland's central administration, such as the Silesian Insurgents' Monument in Katowice, the Rotunda of the Raclawice Panorama, or the Monument of the Return of the Western and Northern Territories to the Motherland in Wrocław. This may testify to a local impact of the Project. KBPS obtained all the necessary approvals.⁸ In September, the Expert Team for the Evaluation of Investment Projects of the Voivodeship Economic Development Planning Commission positively evaluated the 'Design Assumptions' provided there existed no plot of more favourable conditions and the construction evaluation was reiterated.⁹ It confirmed the necessity to secure the structure, this raising the cost of its shell by 50–100 per cent; in conclusion, a suggestion was formulated to select a plot less exposed to mining damage.¹⁰ Eventually, on 28 November 1959, the Expert Team for the Evaluation of Investment Projects recommended to address the Architectural-Construction Department of the Municipal National Council in Katowice to have a different plot allocated for the structure. As it seems, this very date marks the end of the works on the Project.¹¹ No documents or press releases testifying to a further history of the Panorama have been traced. It may have been so that these plans were discontinued in favour of another more impressive project, or the authorities judged the Panorama idea as little fortunate, since in 1965, a competition was announced for an alternative memory infrastructure: Silesian Insurgents' Monument, and two years later, for a thematically-related museum.¹²

Project assumptions

The Silesian Panorama shall constitute a durable monument raised to pay homage to and commemorate the Uprisings to liberate Silesia. The ideological and didactic impact of the Silesian Panorama shall go far beyond the boundaries of Katowice; it shall become a cultural facility of the impact on the whole Upper-Silesian Industrial District, while also turning into an important architectural sight,¹² is what can be read in the 'Project Assumptions'. The Project included a display hall of a painting panorama, a Cinerama, and a museum. Each part was assigned a major importance by the authors. Through its size and impact potential, the panoramic painting could shape the image of the Silesian Uprisings, and consolidate their interpretation desired by the Investor in social awareness. A Cinerama, a panoramic cinema, would constitute the first attraction of the type in Poland, while the concept of creating a museum of Silesian Uprisings was presented as the necessity to satisfy the burning need: lack of an appropriate museum constituted a threat that the still existing mementoes of those events might become dispersed or lost.¹³

These functional units were to be connected through a foyer, and complemented with a utility room, a technological one, and a flat for the caretaker.¹⁴ The architectural design needed to be adjusted to the display requirements of giant canvases and the geological and mining conditions, while also safeguarding spaces for the Cinerama and the museum exhibition.

The building and its vicinity

In compliance with the recommendations, the panorama rotunda of a lightweight skeleton construction was to be raised on rigid foundations and propped against a monolithic frame of reinforced concrete, of 20-m diameter close to the ground, extending up to 40 m at the top with trusses, and covered with a flat roof resting on steel brackets.¹⁵ The inspiration for the design was drawn from the honoured competition design of the Pavilion of the Raclawice Panorama in Wrocław by Zbigniew Trella and Andrzej Czyżewski; a copy of the drawing was attached to the documentation.¹⁶ When elaborating the elevation, the emphasis was to be put on its artistic qualities and easiness to be kept clean. Regrettably, no drawing of the planned structure has been preserved.¹⁷ The structure supporting the canvas, disconnected from the rotunda frame, was to prevent its destruction in the event of the building falling.¹⁸ The viewing point was planned on a centrally-located platform of a 22-m diameter, raised 5 m above the bottom edge of the canvases so that the beholder's sight was on the painting's horizon line. With the capacity of 50 viewers, accessed along ramps and on stairs, the platform was to be lit with natural light or artificial light if such a need arose.¹⁹

The vicinity of the complex was planned in harmony with the institution's functional requirements, taking into account access roads, car parks, and guarded bike racks. The pedestrian access was subdued to the visual perspectives of the building. The complex was to be complemented with greenery meant to isolate the premises from the busy thoroughfares, and to provide a quality leisure site with benches, a landscaped fire tank, as well as a set of stalls.²⁰



1. Plan of Katowice with the location of the Panorama marked at the crossing of Kochowicka and Mikołowska Streets, State Archives in Katowice, ACNO 125, Photo Wiktoria Tombarkiewicz



2. Photograph of the planned location at the crossing of Kochłowska and Mikołowska Streets, view from the side of the roundabout, State Archives in Katowice, ACNO 125, Photo Wiktoria Tombarkiewicz

The panorama

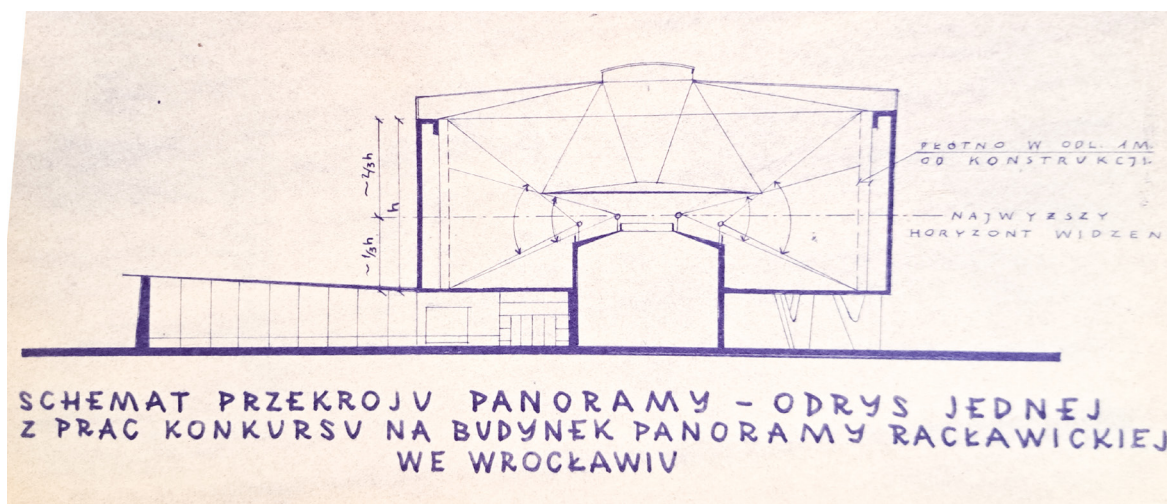
The Project's ideological and compositional centre was to be taken by a painting panorama presenting synthetically the course of the Silesian Uprisings. In June 1959, PWRN in Katowice commissioned the *narrative about the Silesian Uprisings and the Battle of Annaberg in the form of a short story* from the writer and columnist Wilhelm Szewczyk of Katowice and Kazimierz Popiołek of the University of Wrocław.²¹ Szewczyk selected the Battle of Annaberg considering it a *pars pro toto* of the whole struggle of the Silesians for their Polishness, thus also struggles against Germanization: *the Prussian and Nazi oppressions*.²² He regarded the topography of the battlefield as particularly appropriate for arranging the painting's space filled with impressive battle scenes, which facilitated *the emphasis on the heroism of the Insurgents, their moral victory over the prevailing enemy, and on the unquestionable folk character of the Uprising by juxtaposing half-civilian insurgents with German regular military colours*.²³ The viewing was to happen circularly and linearly. The scenes were to cover several dozen hours of the battles fought on a relatively vast territory. The observation point was placed not at the top of the mountain, but slightly away from it, allowing to show the village, the town, as well as the Oder River, in the distance, in the background.²⁴ The author justified his arbitrary choice of the Uprising episodes with the fact that as much as literature and science should aim at an objective presentation of the historical truth, *a painting work that an Uprising panorama should be, whether it wants it or not, is of a monumental character. Monuments are created precisely to boost the morale*.²⁵ He characterized Panorama's main goal as didactic, similarly as did the author of the second scenario. Popiołek also emphasized the necessity to accentuate the disproportion between the fighting forces, the semi-civilian character of the insurgent troops, the commitment of the rural and town population to the fights, and the folk character of the rising whose goal was *national and social liberation*. He proposed an unrestricted approach to topographic realities, and the inclusion of additional elements, such as the assistance of Polish regular troops and the general strike symbolized by *factory chimneys, chimneys with no smoke coming out*.²⁶

On 1 July 1959, KBPS signed a contract with the Wrocław painter of the older generation, Jacek Malczewski's disciple, Eugeniusz Geppert; the commission included making a scenario of a painting based on Szewczyk's guidelines, and providing an oil sketch 450 × 130 cm.²⁷ The preliminary sketch was to be ready in October 1959, while the design of a scale 1:15, on 1 June 1960.²⁸ No confirmation has been found whether the painter began the work, and if so, how advanced it was.

The inspiration for this form of patriotic education may have been derived from a heated debate over the display of the Raclawice Panorama, this clearly pointed to by a direct reference of the authors of the concept of one of the competition designs from 1957. Another could have been derived from the Panorama of Jasna Góra: the painterly vision titled *The Last Storming of the Jasna Góra Monastery by Swedish Troops in 1655* opened to the public on 28 May 1958.²⁹ When recalling its example in view of the planned Silesian Panorama the literary critic Zdzisław Hierowski pointed to the fact that this genre of historical painting, although anachronic in artistic terms, continued to be attractive to the admass, and could serve as an effective instrument of shaping patriotic attitudes.³⁰

The museum

The project of the museum display presented by Janina Matuszczak (Upper-Silesian Museum in Bytom), contained six departments: the main part dedicated to the Silesian Uprising was to fill in the stately room 10 × 20 m, with the remaining rooms meant to cover the space of 35 sq m each. Their respective themes were characterized as: *I Mementoes of the 1905–1907 Revolution, II Tradition of the Working Class's Struggle in 1907–1917, III (Social Revolution in Russia and Germany, the Plebiscite) Genesis and Course of the Silesian Uprisings 1917–1922, IV Results of the Uprisings and the Plebiscite. Foundation and Activity of Poland's Communist Party, KPP, 1922–1939, V Underground Struggle against the Invaders, VI Martyrology Mementoes*.³¹ KBPS judged the proposal too extensive versus the actual needs, so the plan was adjusted to the Client's guidelines. Following a modification, the exhibition was to cover



3. Copy of the competition drawing for the design of the Raclawice Panorama in Wrocław, State Archives in Katowice, ACNO 125, Photo Wiktoria Tombariewicz

the foyer, as well as spaces that expanded it, and the waiting room whose surface was increased from the standard 200 sq m to 300 sq m in order to be able to include a larger number of exhibits. The originally foreseen part meant for the academic activity: a study of the lecturer and assistants, a library, a reading room, and an archive were renounced as the museum's components.³²

Plans were made for a map (3 × 5 m) of the area covered with the Plebiscite, marking the Uprising frontline, to greet the visitor across from the entry. The entrance was to be flanked by two life-size figures of Silesian Insurgents in historic uniforms and gear, symbolizing Polish 'eternal guard' on the Oder River. The walls along the corridor encircling the Panorama room were to feature four Insurgents' standards, visual materials, and showcases with documents, orders, small weapons, and other Insurgents' mementoes.³³

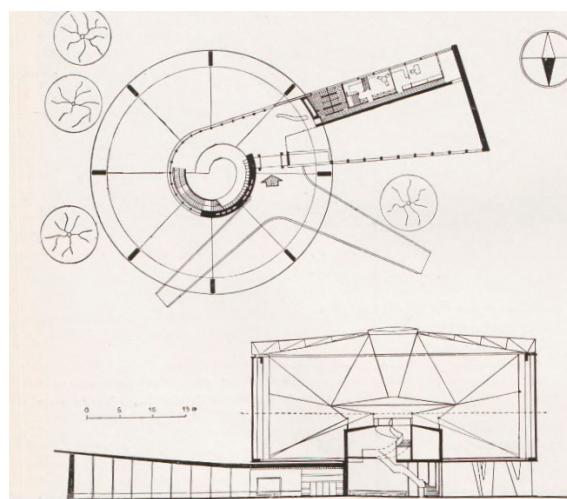
The interpretation of the developments as a grassroots uprising of the Polish population of Upper Silesia for the region to be incorporated into the Polish 'Motherland' was an essential motif of Western propaganda, present in numerous publications, lectures, public celebrations, and press of the time. By shifting emphasis and manipulating the sources, the authors were aiming at giving the visitor the impression that among the most important reasons for the Uprisings were the social questions, while the insurgents took up arms not only to fight for national liberation, but also for social questions, thus the taking over of power by Communists in 1945 was actually the crowning of their aspirations. The Silesian Uprisings were shown as a link within the chain of the social revolution, placed amidst the struggles of the 'working class' and the foundation of Poland's Communist Party, as well as the guerrilla, as can be naturally suspected, under the logo of the Peasants' Battalions (BCh) and People's Guard (GL).

The Cinerama

The Cinerama was to seat 400 individuals; three projectors were to cast images on a semi-circular screen at least 22.5 m long, allowing for a 180° viewing angle. The technological

process was commissioned from experts who judged that the available American systems: Cinerama, Circarama, and Cinemiracle, could not be applied owing to high licence costs, suggesting the construction of a Polish system based on the Soviet Kinopanorama. The projections on a screen of the 6–8: 1 proportions were to be complemented with a stereo sound. The principle of this technology was projecting reels from three or more projectors recorded in a way allowing to complement one another and create a continuous image. The 'seams' on the image edges from projectors were to be hidden by installing permanent scenography elements (a tree, a banner, etc.). Spectators were to experience battle and historical shows seated in rotating chairs, on a rotating floor, or standing.³⁴

The use of a panoramic projection in museum praxis, today relatively popular, in the late 1950s and early 60s would have been a pioneer project not only in Poland.



4. Competition for the building to house the Raclawice Panorama in Wrocław: work no. 17, the architects Zbigniew Trelła and Andrzej Czyżewski, *Architektura*, 4 (1958), p. 154

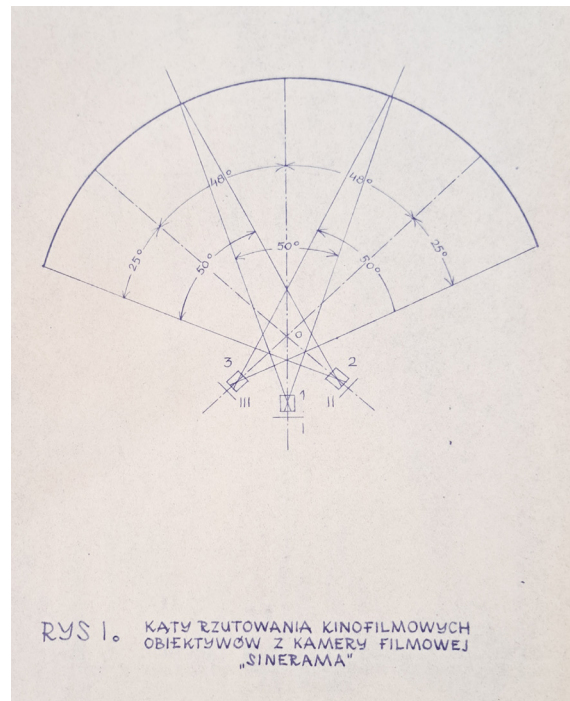
The Cinerama system was first presented in Broadway in 1952; the Cinemiracle system, developed around the same time, was not successful at all, while Walt Disney's first Circarama version dates back to as late as 1955 (it was improved in the 1960s).³⁵ The first projection in the Kinoparama system took place in Moscow on 28 February 1958: half a year before the experts suggested the technological solution for the Katowice cinema.³⁶ The idea of a panoramic projection accompanying a panoramic painting, though on a much smaller scale, was finally implemented in 2021 when the display in the small rotunda pavilion of the Raclawice Panorama was rearranged. Almost the whole circumference of the walls is taken by a screen on which a video complementing the experience of the painting, together with a stereo sound in the background and a voice-over commentary is projected.

The idea's genesis, impact, and further life

The Silesian Panorama was planned as a part of the Millennium celebrations involving mounting permanent, visiting, and temporary exhibitions, as well as establishing museums. Communicating with genuine mementoes and documents was to shape the image of the past, while also imposing its interpretation: as a way of successfully fulfilling nation's aspirations together with the creation of the Polish People's Republic, PRL (Communist Poland). All throughout Poland numerous exhibitions connected with the national or local impact of the 550 years of the Battle of Tannenberg, the 100th anniversary of the January Uprising, and the remaining crucial points in the Millennium agenda were mounted.³⁷ The special status of the topic of the Silesian Uprisings stems from its potential to legitimize the Polish administration over the Western and Northern Territories. This is the fact accounting for the Project's scale, and the aspiration to make it maximally modern, attractive, and recognizable as a centre of a cult of the Uprisings in the Katowice Voivodeship. The display would allow to shape the image of a genuinely Polish descent and progressive ambitions of the 'people' of this part of the former borderland, not only among the residents of the region, but also visitors from other corners of Poland, contributing to creating a homogenous image of the national territory.

The celebration of the Millennium inspired a move towards modernity in Polish museology: light and sound effects, videos, mechanical elements, and dioramas, all were meant to consolidate the credibility of the proposed narrative.³⁸ Much more attention than before was paid to authentic documents and period mementoes which thanks to the aura of having been actual 'participants' in the past turned into living links with that past, inciting visitors' emotions and sentiments.³⁹ The above-mentioned novelties were mainly the accomplishments grouped around the core period of the celebrations, namely 1960–1965; thus, the Silesian Panorama would have been in the vanguard of the changes.

The direct inspiration for the idea to mount the museum may have been found in the appeal of the author of a press release in *Trybuna Robotnicza*,⁴⁰ however, the question of amassing insurgent mementoes and displaying them had been raised earlier, and was resumed after the Project had been discontinued. In June 1961, on the occasion of the



5. One of the schemes of the Cinema Panorama technological concept, State Archives in Katowice, ACNO 125, Photo Wiktoria Tombarkiewicz

40th anniversary of the Third Silesian Uprising, a temporary *Exhibition of the Insurgents' Deeds* was launched at the Upper-Silesian Museum in Bytom. On that occasion, the Uprisings were set into Communist historiography; the exhibition's motto was a quote from Władysław Gomułka: *The road covered by Silesians in the three Silesian Uprisings is the same one as that followed today by Polish democracy*.⁴¹ In 1964, a branch of the Museum of Opole Silesia: Museum of the Uprising in Leśnica was founded; meanwhile, the Katowice Voivodeship still continued without its own institution of the kind. An idea was coined to mount a Museum of Struggle and Victory and of the Silesian Uprisings as complementing the Silesia Insurgents' Monument. However, the design by Jurand Jarecki selected in 1967 in a competition, similarly as the painting panorama, still continued an unaccomplished plan.⁴² A permanent display dedicated to the Uprisings was finally mounted in Upper Silesia in 2014. The Museum of Silesian Uprisings launched in Świętochłowice is once again connected with the recent revival of the administration's focus on promoting the Polish vision of the history of the region. Other examples of this interest are the heatedly-debated permanent exhibition related to the history of Upper Silesia at the Silesian Museum in Katowice or the Upper-Silesian Pantheon lately opened in the underground of the Katowice Archcathedral.⁴³

Conclusion

The Uprising panorama with a museum would have probably been the most sizeable investment and the most symbolically prominent project of the Millennium in the Katowice Voivodeship. By consolidating the narrative about Upper

Silesia as a region imbued with the Polish spirit and progressive ideas, it would have harmonized with the propaganda of the Western and Northern Territories, as well as Communist historiography. The further history of the question of the museum commemoration of Silesian Uprisings shows that as much as

the latter of the factors lost its prominence, the first, namely emphasizing the 'Polish element' as the decisive component moulding the facet of this region, also prior to its entire incorporation into the Polish state, continues to shape the ideological line of public projects within memory infrastructure.

Abstract: In 1958, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Silesian Uprisings, the administration of the Katowice Voivodeship decided to create the Silesian Panorama: an institution combining a museum of insurgents' mementoes, the Battle of Annaberg Panorama, and the first in Poland panoramic cinema. The plans entailed establishing a museum-and-educational institution, pioneer in its character, not merely in Poland. Since the infrastructure of memory, finally unaccomplished, has never been discussed in literature, the first part of the paper speaks about the course of the organizational works, the stage of shaping the project, as

well as the reasons for giving up the idea. The necessary information was provided by materials preserved in the State Archives in Katowice as well as in press releases. The planned commemoration was presented in the context of the development of the technology of panoramic cinema and its application in museum praxis; its role in the history of the efforts to create a permanent display of mementoes of Silesian Uprisings in the Katowice Voivodeship has been discussed, and so have the sources of the project's originator to reach for the genre of a panoramic painting, in the discussed period considered anachronical.

Keywords: Silesian Panorama, Millennium of the Polish State, museum, Silesian Uprisings, Katowice, monument, panorama.

Endnotes

- ¹ For a brief discussion of the archival materials with their scans see J. Grudniewski, R. Kaczmarek, M. Węcki, *Powstania śląskie 1919-1920-1921. Uczestnicy – Pomniki – Rocznice*, Katowice 2011, pp. 65-69.
- ² State Archives in Katowice (below: AP), Presidium of the Voivodeship National Council in Katowice (below: PWRN), Voivodeship Commission for Economic Planning (below: WKPG), Cat. No. 125, p. 37.
- ³ *Ibidem*, p. 71.
- ⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 51-69.
- ⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 71-80.
- ⁶ *Ibidem*.
- ⁷ AP, Society of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (below: ZBoWiD), District Board in Katowice (below: ZO), Cat. No. 417, pp. 23-26.
- ⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 87-91.
- ⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 7.
- ¹⁰ AP, ZBoWiD, ZO, Cat. No. 417, pp. 27-32.
- ¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 10-11.
- ¹² AP, PWRN, WKPG, Cat. No. 125, pp. 10-11.
- ¹³ [unauthored], 'Katowice otrzymają panoramę powstańców', *Trybuna Robotnicza*, 15 Aug 1958, p. 1.
- ¹⁴ *Ibidem*.
- ¹⁵ AP, PWRN, WKPG, Cat. No. 125, pp. 27-28.
- ¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 92. The drawing published earlier in *Architektura*, 4 (1958), p. 154.
- ¹⁷ AP, PWRN, WKPG, Cat. No. 125, p. 31.
- ¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 28.
- ¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 24.
- ²⁰ *Ibidem*.
- ²¹ AP, ZBoWiD, ZO, Cat. No. 417, pp. 12-13.
- ²² AP, PWRN, WKPG, Cat. No. 125, p. 104.
- ²³ *Ibidem*.
- ²⁴ *Ibidem*.
- ²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 109.
- ²⁶ AP, ZBoWiD, ZO, Cat. No. 417, pp. 1-3.
- ²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 20.
- ²⁸ AP, PWRN, WKPG, Cat. No. 125, p. 32.
- ²⁹ ŻER, 'Zwiedzajcie panoramę', *Świat* 17 Aug 1958, p. 10.
- ³⁰ Z. Hierowski, 'Panoramę', *Trybuna Robotnicza* 23-24 Aug 1958, p. 7.
- ³¹ AP, PWRN, WKPG, Cat. No. 125, p. 99.
- ³² *Ibidem*, p. 103.
- ³³ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

- ³⁴ AP, ZBoWiD, ZO, Cat. No. 417, pp. 4-9.
- ³⁵ S. Mascia, 'Fiat Looks at the Panoramic Cinema in the Sixties', *International Panorama Council Journal*, 4 (2020), p. 64.
- ³⁶ J.H. Krukones, 'Peacefully coexisting on a wide screen: Kinopanorama vs. Cinerama, 1952-66', *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 4 (2010), p. 287.
- ³⁷ A. Młynarczyk-Tomczyk, „Wielka lekcja historii”. *Prezentacja Tysiąclecia Polski poprzez wystawy w latach 1960-1966/67*, Kielce 2022, pp. 66-76.
- ³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 171.
- ³⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 74-75.
- ⁴⁰ [unauthored], op. cit., p. 1.
- ⁴¹ L.M., 'Droga', *Trybuna Robotnicza* 5 Aug 1961, p. 3.
- ⁴² A. Borowik, *Nowe Katowice. Forma i ideologia polskiej architektury powojennej na przykładzie Katowic (1945-1980)*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 248-251.
- ⁴³ W. Tombarkiewicz, 'Renesans formuły panteonizacji wewnątrz sakralnych we współczesnej Polsce', *Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 3 (2020), pp. 93-94.

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