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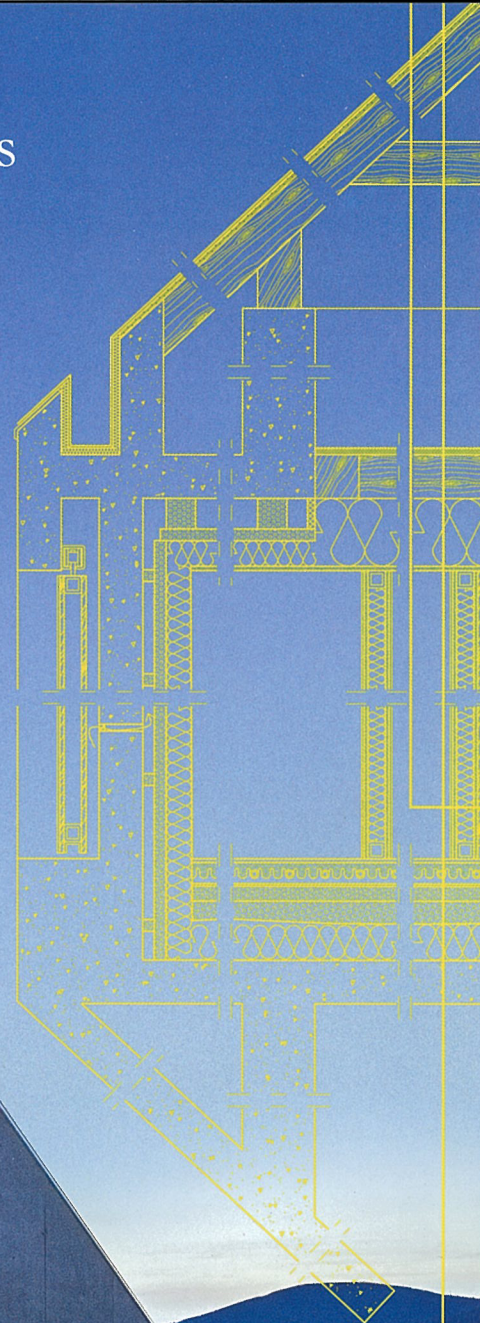
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ARCHITECTURE RENAISSANCE FOR POLAND

HIGHLIGHTS, Michael Webb

Resilience is the greatest asset of the Poles, who retained their pride and sense of nationhood during two centuries of foreign occupation. Twenty years of independence between the world wars were succeeded by the brutal onslaught of the Nazis and the Red Army, devastation and deportations, a massive shift of borders and population, and four decades as a Soviet satellite. The Poles fought back, in the Warsaw uprising and the Solidarity movement. Filmmakers and other artists exploited every loophole, and the catholic church strengthened public resistance to oppression. By 1989 the country was bankrupt but, in contrast to its former overlord, it quickly achieved a good measure of democracy, prosperity, and decentralization. In 2003 Poland joined the EU, and spent its subsidies wisely, on infrastructure and buildings of exceptional architectural quality.

Form Follows Freedom: Architecture for Culture in Poland 2000+ is the title of a recent book that celebrates the best arts-related buildings to be constructed in Poland since 2000. A more accurate title might be "Form Follows Funding", for many of the 26 featured buildings and several completed since were made possible by EU grants.

Now that source has run dry, the momentum is likely to slow. High-profile projects by foreign architects, such as the Philharmonic Halls of Szczecin (Estudio Barozzi Veiga) and Toruń (Fernando Menis Architect), and the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw (Lahdelma & Mahlamäki Architects) have drawn the most attention. **But a majority of the featured work is by small Polish firms, established since the collapse of communism, who are creating a distinctive architecture for the new Poland.**

As a sampling of this renaissance, I've selected four firms founded in the late 1990s, whose work I explored on a recent tour of Poland. Surprisingly, none of them is based in Warsaw, which has focused more on the restoration of historic monuments and constructing a forest of commercial towers, than embracing innovative architecture. I found more creativity in the provincial capitals of Cracow, Katowice, and Wrocław, as well as the small city of Koszalin.

Ingarden & Ewý Architekci

Krzysztof Ingarden worked for Arata Isozaki in Tokyo before returning to Cracow and co-founding his practice with Jacek Ewý in 1991. The association continued as the firm added their Far East exhibition pavilion to Isozaki's 1994 Manggha Museum of Japanese Art on the banks of the Vistula, across from the Wawel Castle. Their orthogonal block of galleries complements the sinuous, shadowy museum. The firm design the Polish Embassy in Tokyo and was commissioned to create the Polish pavilion for Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan, enclosing the exhibits within a giant wicker basket. They collaborated with Isozaki once again in the competition to design the ICE Kraków Congress Centre. The site is in full view of the castle and old city and is separated from the Manggha Museum by a major traffic artery. The architects seized the opportunity to create a bold, organic form that complements rather than mimics the historical buildings. From afar, its roof appears as a silvery cascade, and its curved glass façade is pixilated with red, gray, white and silver rectangles. **No Polish building so well embodies the new spirit of freedom and traditional respect for the arts.** In contrast to most congress centers and concert halls, the main façade is transparent and the three-level foyer enjoys a panoramic view of a fairy-tale skyline. Flying staircases link the

levels within an oval void. To the rear is the main 1,900-seat hall, with its vineyard plan and carefully calibrated acoustics, two smaller halls and a multi-purpose arena.

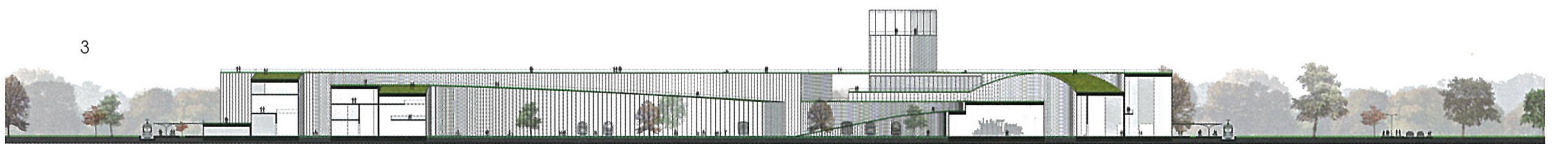
The Małopolska Garden of the Arts is located in a 19th-century extension of the city, takes its cues from the surrounding buildings, and incorporates fragments from the riding school that formerly occupied the site. Terracotta louvres shade the wood-framed glass, and they play off the old brick façade. The complex is permeable and welcoming. A lofty pergola leads to a glass-enclosed lobby. The three levels that flank a multi-purpose theater are interconnected, and each has a different role - one for music, another for visual arts, and a third for digital exhibits. There's also a library, a children's play area and a café, making this complex a lively gathering place at all hours of the day and night.

Ingarden and Ewý developed a novel approach in their competition entry for a railway and technology museum in Warsaw. The goal was to combine historical fragments and existing rail lines with a public park that would spur redevelopment in the Odalany district west of the city center. The architects proposed to display vintage locomotives on curved tracks within a pair of glass-walled horseshoe-plan pavilions. This provides a dynamic perspective on the engines, which seem to emerge from a tree-filled park.

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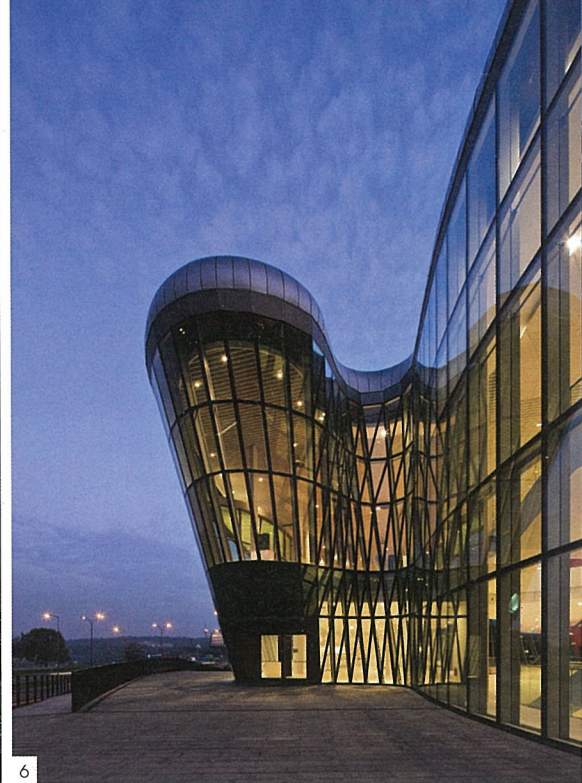


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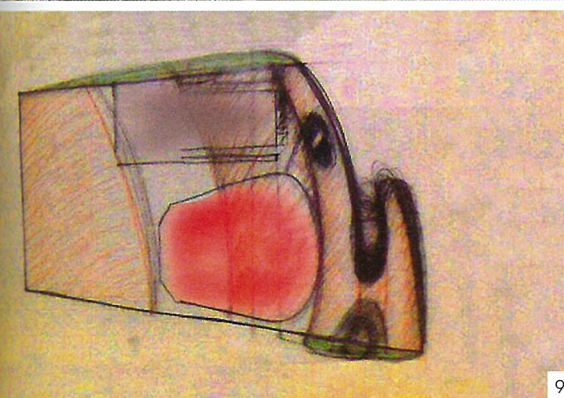
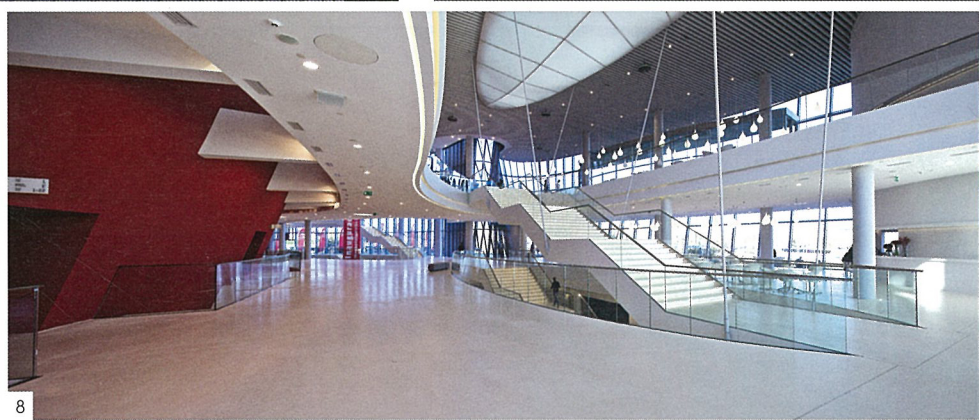
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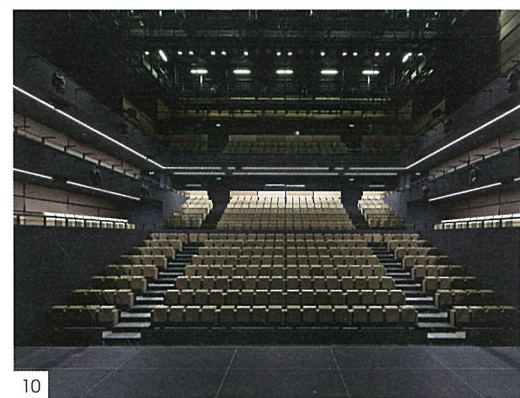


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9

- 1, 5/12 ICE Kraków Convention Center, Cracow, 2014
- 5, 12 © Wojciech Wandzel
- 6/8, 10-11 © Krzysztof Ingarden
- 9- Study sketch of building in plan
- 2/4 Railway and Technology Museum - Warsaw, 2016
- 2-3 Elevation and section - Not to scale
- 4- Rendering of building in its urban setting
- 13/20 Europe - Far East Gallery Exhibition Pavilion - Cracow, 2015
- 13-14, 17, 20 © Krzysztof Ingarden
- 15, 19 Study sketches of the relationship between the old and new building
- 16, 18 Study models of the volume and how it fits into context
- 21/29 Małopolska Garden of Arts - Cracow, 2012
- 21, 23, 26, 28 Study sketches © Krzysztof Ingarden
- 21- Floorplan layout
- 23- Study of garden benches
- 26, 28 Study of the elevations



10



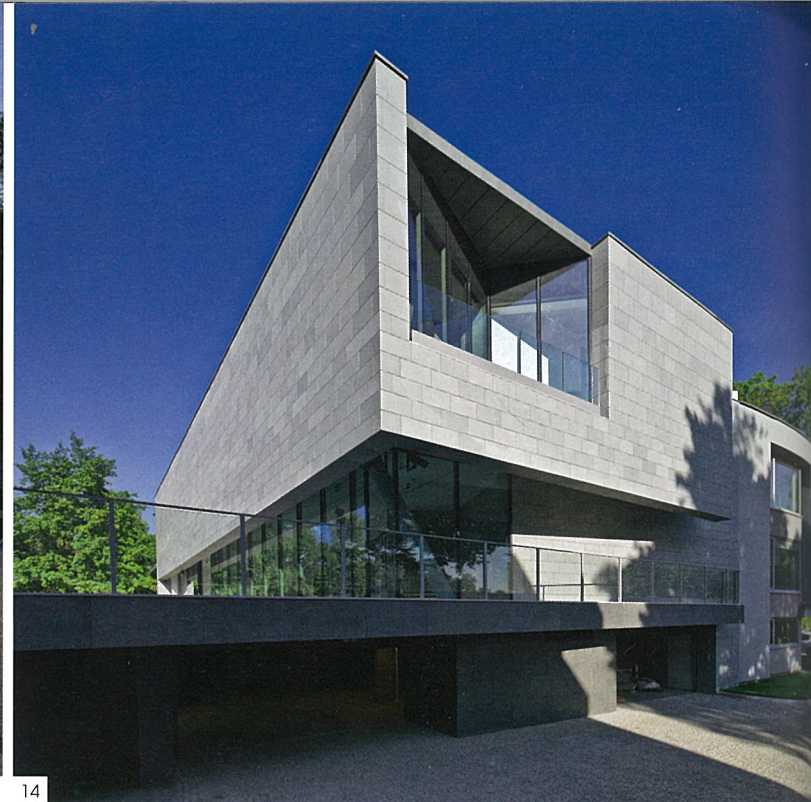
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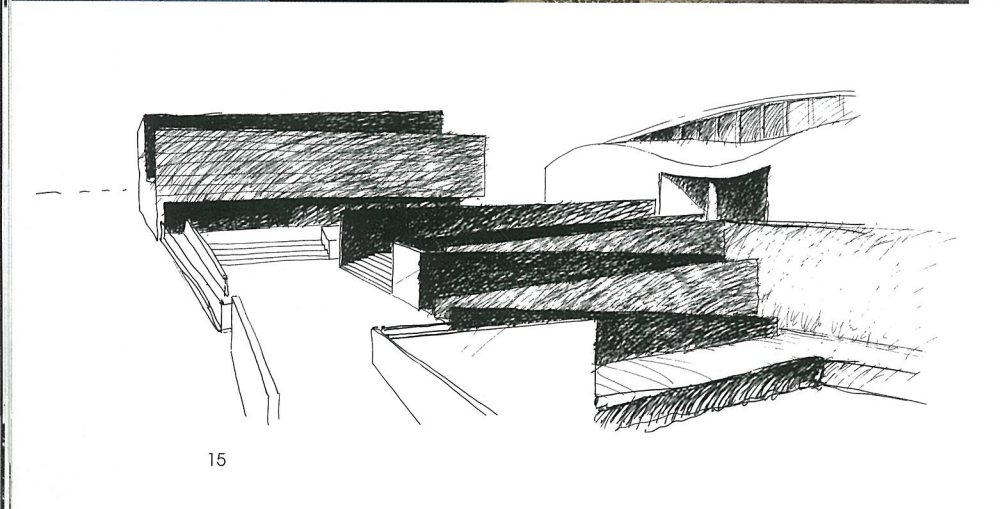
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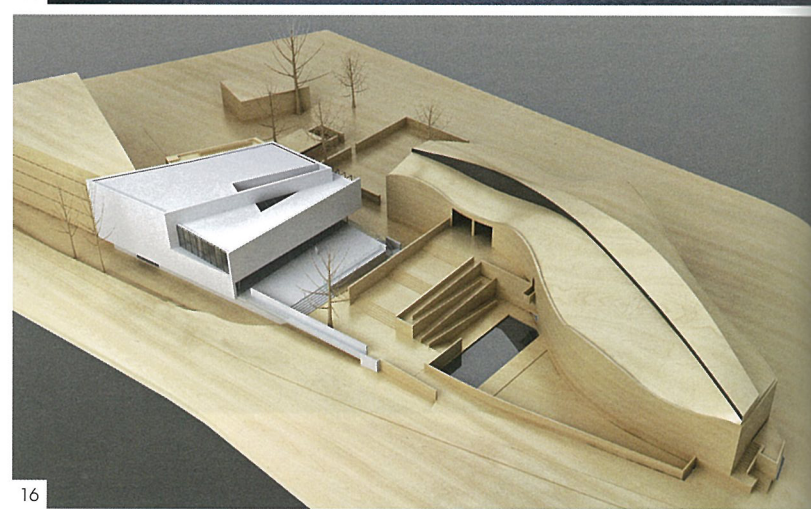
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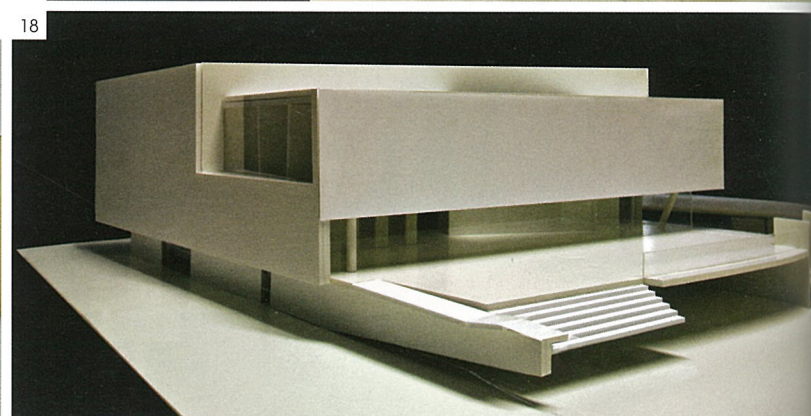
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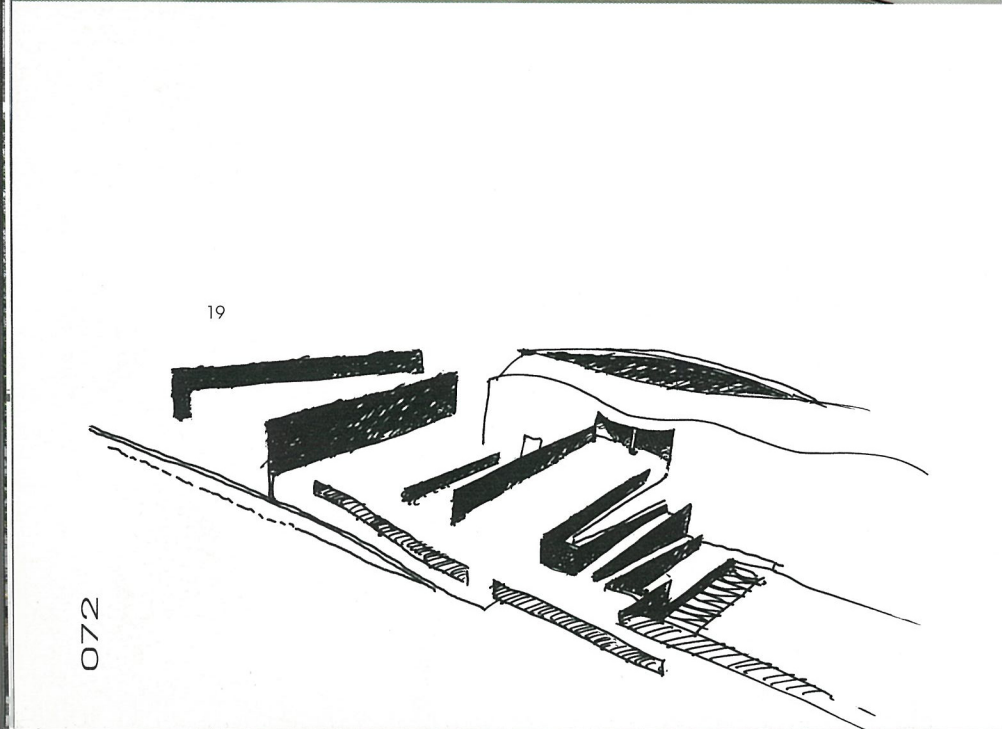
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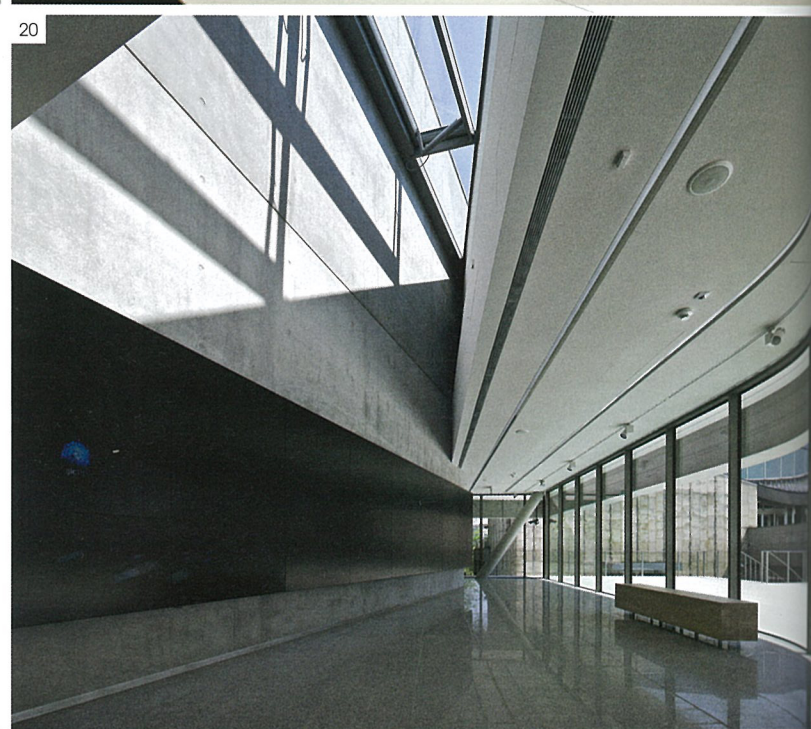
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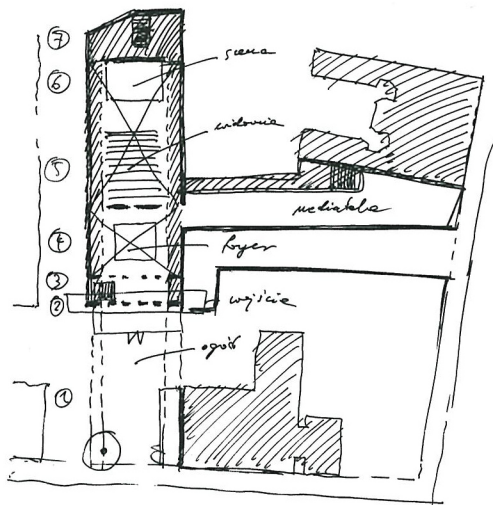
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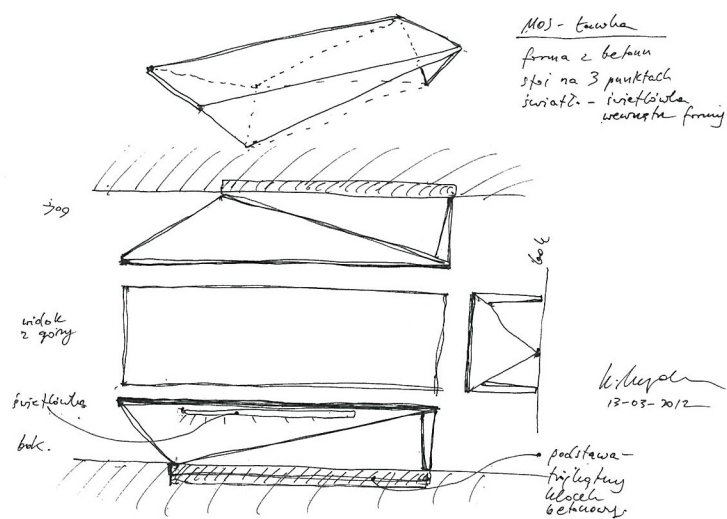
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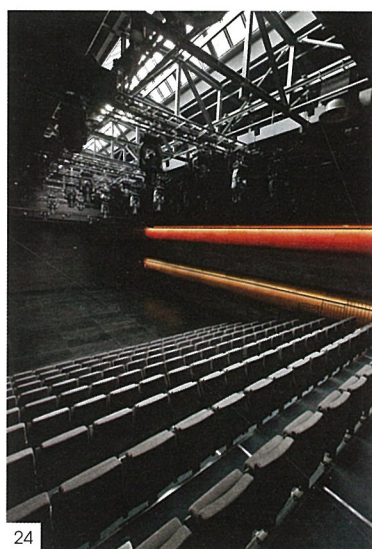
22

- 22- © Marcin Czechowicz/Architektura Murator
- 24, 27 © Krzysztof Ingarden
- 25- © Iñigo Bujedo-Aguirre
- 29- New façade study model

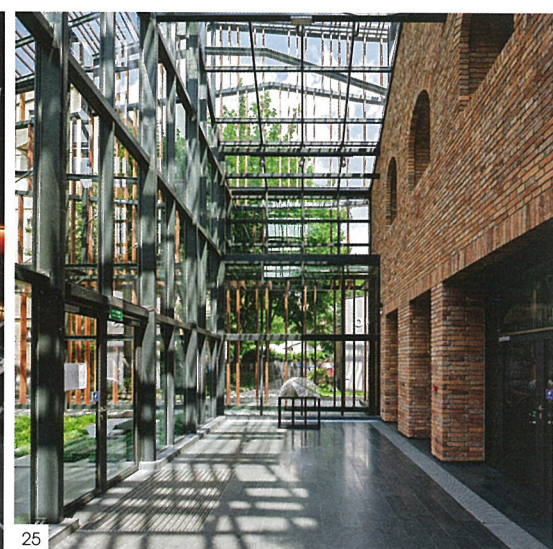
All images courtesy of Ingarden & Ewý Architekti



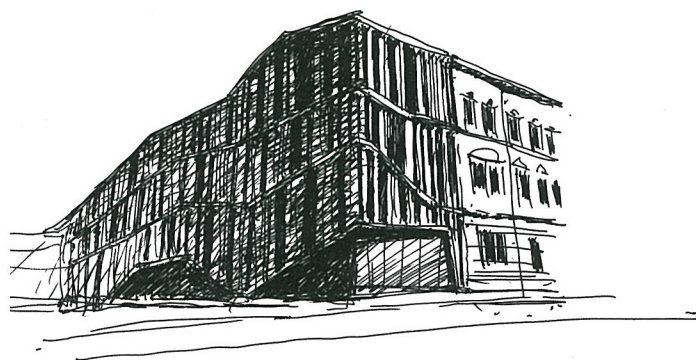
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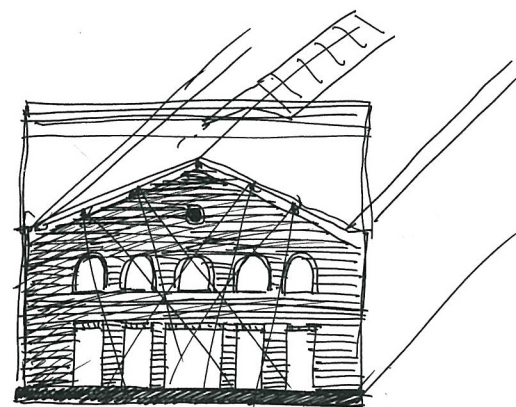
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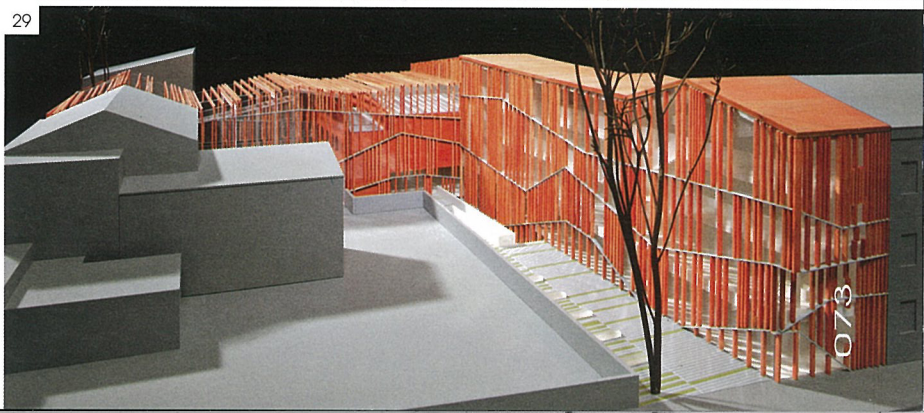
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