

Andrzej Białkiewicz\*

## OLD ARCHITECTURE – TODAY

The architecture that surrounds us today, besides modern works, includes historic buildings. The architecture of the past requires special maintenance, restoration and adaptation to contemporary needs. Work is carried out with modern materials and technologies, and its result is a new quality.

*Keywords: architecture, monument, new, value*

Architecture which surrounds us today – besides contemporary more or less significant works – is a whole stock of edifices representing the past epochs. The future of architecture will result from its cultural heritage as well as its contemporary output. The acknowledged and assessed architectural portfolio of old times requires maintenance, restoration and adaptation to contemporary needs. Work is often done with the use of new materials and contemporary technologies. Can we call the stocks of the bygone epochs exposed to such procedures historic architecture? I will present these problems exemplified by a Paulinite monastery in Włodawa.

In 1698, Ludwik Konstanty Pociej (1664–1730), the owner of the Town of Włodawa, suggested founding a monastery in Włodawa to the Order of Paulinites. In 1701, the construction commenced; in 1718, the monks were formally introduced. The visitation protocol of 1726 says, *monasterium totaliter perfectum est*; *recommending their prior, the residents emphasize that he not only built the monastery but also created a brotherly atmosphere here* [1].

The functional layout and architecture of the monastery are typical of Paulinite construction. It seems that the author of the design could be a royal architect of Italian origin named Józef Piola (?–1715).

It is indicated by the fact that he was the author of a Baroque Paulinite church in Warsaw and the first, unimplemented design of a church in Włodawa, so he stayed in touch with D. Paprocki involved in the construction of the monastery in Włodawa. It is a two-storey building, partly cellared, with four wings, on a square-like projection. In the centre, there was a large garth with a park garden. The object had got prominent pitched roofs covered with ceramic tiles. From the east, the building was strengthened by wide supports protecting it from a sliding slope on the Bug River side. A corridor, 4.2 m wide, led around the garth on both floors. It had got entrances to individual rooms. The ground floor was meant for community purposes. It had got a library, a refectory, halls, an archive, a kitchen, a laundry and manufacturing facilities. The first floor had got cells for the monks.

After several years, it turned out that the object was too big for monastic needs and difficult to maintain. Soon, a part of the building was rented to secular people. An inn, a division of the Court of Peace and a salt storeroom functioned here. In 1829, the refectory was rented for a grain storeroom. The monastery was seriously damaged during the 1812 war. In 1830–1831, the army occupied it as a field hospital and quarters which devastated the object completely.

\* Białkiewicz Andrzej, Assoc. Prof. D.Sc. Ph.D. Arch., Cracow University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture.

After the fall of the January Uprising, the partitioner's reaction to the activity of monasteries which aimed at regaining independence was the suppression of most of them [2]. In relation to the Włodawa monastery, the execution of the Tsar's liquidation order of 27 October / 8 November 1864 was scheduled for the night 15/16 November 1864. By the suppression, the order lost its buildings, lands as well as capital deposited at the Bank of the Polish Kingdom which became the property of the state. The Włodawa parish was governed by the diocesan clergy till 1993. The diocesan priests received a small part of the monastery adjoining the church [3]. The remaining part was used by various secular offices.

On 15 July 1993, an agreement was signed by the Siedlce bishop and the General of the Order. It specified the takeover of the church and a small part of the monastery by the Order, while the Office of the Town of Włodawa relinquished the remaining part for its sake. It used a part of the object till 1999.

We should notice that the technical condition of the object was very bad despite the fact that it was constantly used and refurbished. In fact, the refurbishments were limited to immediate repairs, alterations and adaptations to the users' changeable needs. The roofing cover and the roof truss were in a very bad condition. The leaky water and canalization installations destroyed the interiors. The garth level, raised 1.2 m, and a lack of proper rainwater discharge from the roof as well as the area around the object contributed to the rising damp of the walls and floors within the ground floor. In order to prevent it, the users added countless layers of the floor raising its level and seemingly liquidating the dampness. However, the result was not a dry object. The cracked bearing walls, loosened vaults with fragments not supported by the walls anymore and hanging in the air against the principles of static, wretched window woodwork and peeling

plasters painted with oil inside and complemented with cement outside added to the overall technical condition. The interior was so altered that its original functional layout became completely unreadable. Office rooms appeared in the corridors, new room divisions, additional entrances and transport with narrow passages and little corridors were built.

In 1995–1997, the roof truss and the roofing cover were changed over the entire monastery by the Order. Rings of reinforced concrete were installed in the attic on the bearing walls which somehow stabilized its static layout.

In 2000, a design of revitalization was prepared [4] whose principal assumption was to restore the original spatial layout and to place a contemporary monastic function, modified and conditioned by the current building code, in the created interiors. Architectural research was done. All the wall motifs, discovered after removing the plasters, were documented. It facilitated the detailed definition of secondary brickwork, window and door openings and old recesses in the walls which acted as wardrobes.

The main functions of the monastery – a chapel, a gate, a refectory, a library, a kitchen, a residential part – had to return to the same rooms as almost 300 years ago. Similar principles were applied while creating interiors whose character, expressed in their plainness and colours, refers to the tradition of Paulinite monasteries. The ground floor has got a gate, a refectory, a chancellery, a conference room, a room for visiting priests, guestrooms, a kitchen with a resource base, a laundry and sanitary facilities. The first floor has got a residential part, a leisure room, a library, archives and a choir. In several cases, the abovementioned assignments were hard to reconcile as the current safety regulations often excluded each other. A contemporary technical infrastructure had to be applied and combined with modified monastic functions.

1. Włodawa, Paulinite Monastery, façade, 2001. Photo by author/ 2. Włodawa, Paulinite Monastery, façade, 2005. Photo by author



In 2000–2006, restoration works were done. All the alterations, brickwork and a secondary staircase – all the elements which were added in the interiors when the object was not used by the order – were removed. Destroyed plasters and the new ones including a lot of cement moistening the walls were removed, too. It concerned the internal and external plasters. Then all the wall motifs whose technical state did not match suitable norms were repaired. Fragments of walls made of breeze hollow bricks were demolished and replaced with full ceramic brick. After dismantling the destroyed window woodwork, all the window recesses were improved. The wall motifs were loosened, the lintels were cracked there. New window woodwork, identical as the original, was installed. The main door and the historic doorframes and lintels made of sandstone with the founder's coat of arms and a board from 1711 were fitted. These elements, seriously damaged, were kept at the Museum in Włodawa; in 1999, they returned to the monastery; in 2000, they were restored. Next a boiler room and storerooms for wood oil fuel oil were constructed. Afterwards the barrel vaults in the corridors, above the rooms and the refectory were rebuilt. The vault over the refectory, which tumbled down in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was faithfully reconstructed. Building expertise proved that the technical condition of the remaining vaults of the corridors, especially c. 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> of cracked, loosened ones off the bearing walls, may cause a catastrophe. They were restored and glued under pressure where possible. The walls were dried, vertical insulation was fitted on every foundation wall. The area around the monastery was lowered to its original height. The garth level was restored. Horizontal thermal insulation was laid on the ground floor. The object received new water, canalization, central heating and electrical installations. Renovation plasters were applied which facilitated air penetration without

keeping dampness inside the walls but drying the object. The interior was painted with parameters similar to the plasters. Special plasters were laid on the elevations up to the ground floor window lintels. Architectural details were reconstructed. In 2006, the work was completed; in September, the Apostolic Nuncio in Poland Archbishop Józef Kowalczyk, the General of the Order Rev. Izydor Matuszewski and Bishop Henryk Tomasik consecrated the monastery and the enclosure.

We can say that the restoration work at the Włodawa monastery helped to find a compromise between the historical value of this object and its contemporary functions. The building fully regained its original character and now serves the same, but strongly modified, functions as nearly 300 years ago.

The restoration of this historic object allows for less or more intervention in its condition. These activities are often connected with renewal and modernization. The issues of restoration referring to the construction of historical edifices are often analyzed in the context of contemporary requirements and needs. We cannot ignore current technological and functional circumstances. The necessity of using new elements which improve the living standard determines numerous solutions. Contemporary interference introduces totally new technologies and materials. In restoration, the range of creativity is subordinate to the results of scientific research and seems rather limited in relation to the creation of contemporary architecture. Despite all that, as a result of conservatory works, new cultural values characteristic of the present are produced. Old architecture is continuously influenced by contemporariness. That is why it is very difficult to answer this question unambiguously: in what sense does it become architecture today? Certainly, it is a separate category but still it is architecture which plays an important role in our cultural landscape.

## ENDNOTES

[1] Jasna Góra archives, 1661, p. 291. Acc. to: D. Cichor ZP, *Dzieje kościoła i klasztoru paulinów we Włodawie 1698–1864*, Kraków 1994, p. 382.

[2] Suppression concerned 108 monasteries in the Polish Kingdom.

[3] From 1867 to 1993, 21 diocesan priests fulfilled the

obligations of the parish priest in Włodawa. Information based on: *Tabela proboszczów we Włodawie* edited by Leon Chałupko, in: M. Nadratowski, *Parafia i klasztor Ojców Paulinów, [in:] Włodawa Miasto i Region na przełomie XX/XXI wieku*, Lublin – Włodawa 2002, pp. 262–263.

[4] The author of architectural research and the design of revitalization is Andrzej Białkiewicz.