

Panel 9

Urban Space and Public Art

Me Water, Teresa Pągowska's Mosaics at Gdynia Główna Railway Station

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In my essay, I will focus on the mosaics in public spaces by Polish artist Teresa Pągowska, and the way art is incorporated into the urban fabric on a local and national level. Therefore, I will talk about the city, the railway and the Baltic Sea as an abstract structure. This modernist-monumental synthesis, that is close to geometric abstraction, is embodied in one of Poland's railway stations in Gdynia.

The identity of the Tricity (Sopot, Gdynia, Gdańsk) is closely linked to transport, mainly maritime and rail. An example of such a connection is undoubtedly the railway station in Gdynia, in which its location and interior design directly refer to the life of seafarers, the life of the port. In the station's waiting room, travellers can admire the monumental trend in Polish art of the 1950s in the mosaics, which represent a cross-section of Gdynia's life, from the Baltic fauna and flora of the underwater world through the port and the symbolism of the railway system.

As a modern railway station in a port city, Gdynia Główna was designed from scratch in the inter-war period as a window onto the world, before being destroyed. Rebuilt in 1950-57, the station combined modernism, monumentalism and social realist representationalism. Immersed in this knowledge, Pągowska introduced four monumental mosaics into the station's space, two of which are directly dedicated to aquatic motifs, the third represents the harbour, and the fourth the railway - Pegasus on a wheel. This form of art is an example of momentary art from the Communist period from 1944 to 1989.

The mosaics have a strong intermedia component, combining public art, symbolism and urban space. They touch on the relationship between word, image and space. They are embedded in contemporary, artistic themes and are 'locally anchored' in the Tricity - they introduce a universal hydrological narrative and are part of the cultural horizon of the city of Gdynia and the Polish railways.

Biography

Julia Mielczarek is a MA student in Cultural Policy and Management in Culture program at the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies, University of Warsaw. She is also concurrently a BA student at the Artistic Research program at the Faculty of Artistic Research and Curatorial Studies, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw.