

## INTEGRATION OF ARCHITECTURE AND ART IN THE WORKS OF LUDWIG PETER KOWALSKI

Piotr Opalka✉

Faculty of Technical Sciences, Architecture, University of Applied Sciences in Nysa, Nysa, Poland

### ABSTRACT

The article addresses the issue of integrating architecture and stained glass art using the example of Ludwig Peter Kowalski, an outstanding artist, one of the most outstanding stained glass designers of the 20th century, and a renowned academic lecturer at art schools in Wrocław and Berlin. The aim of the project was to formulate functional, formal, technical, and design recommendations. The research was conducted both in Poland and, above all, in Berlin. A mixed-methods approach was used here, combining multiple case studies and qualitative research, including archival research and in situ analysis.

**Keywords:** Ludwig Peter Kowalski, Deutsche Künstlerbund, stained glass, art, architecture

### INTRODUCTION

Ludwig Peter Kowalski was a painter, promoter of applied art, and a renowned academic lecturer at art schools in Wrocław and Berlin. This versatile Silesian artist is considered one of the most outstanding stained glass designers of the 20th century. Only the small part of his works preserved in Silesia in architectural structures created before 1945 highlights his great talent. This article attempts to analyse the selected, most famous works of the artist, designed in connection with architecture. The research was conducted both in Poland and primarily in Berlin, with which he linked his private and professional life after 1945. The research project was carried out thanks to a university grant from the State Academy of Applied Sciences in Nysa.

### STATE OF RESEARCH, RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, RESEARCH METHOD

Literature on the work of Ludwig Peter Kowalski is not abundant. The first analyses of the artist's work were published in Silesian cultural magazines as early as the 1920s (Muschler, 1926). His professional activity was also mentioned in a monograph devoted to pre-war Chorzów (Schmidt, 1941). In addition, Kowalski and his artistic activity were and are constantly present in studies devoted to the Wrocław artistic environment (Hartung, 1967; Kern, 2018). After 1945, the artist's achievements were the subject of analyses in German and Polish publications. Unfortunately, awareness of his work in Poland is negligible.

The aim of the project was to examine the work of Ludwig Peter Kowalski in connection with stained glass art and architecture in particular, and to attempt to formulate functional, formal, technical and design

recommendations. In order to obtain a coherent and comprehensive answer to the research problem, mixed-method research was conducted, combining a multi-case study and qualitative research. After collecting data, conducting in situ research and analysing empirical evidence, an attempt was made to systematise the knowledge obtained and confront it with new datasets. An attempt was also made to formulate further research questions.

In the first stage, a review of the literature available in digital library resources was conducted, including the Opole Digital Library, the Lower Silesian Digital Library and the Silesian Digital Library. Then, queries were conducted in the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, the State Library in Berlin and the Deutschlandhaus Foundation in Berlin. During the entire study, confrontations were made with new datasets, including those based on a review of literature on the broadly understood issue of stained glass. Thanks to the kindness, knowledge and commitment of the owners and managers of the buildings in Berlin, it was possible to conduct in situ research and obtain additional information on the work of Ludwig Peter Kowalski. The substantive support of Erik Venhorst, a specialist in Construction and Art at the Archbishop's Ordinariate in Berlin, proved particularly important here. The research was conducted on selected public buildings in Berlin and in Poland on the only preserved monumental work of stained glass art in Nysa.

The selection criteria were:

- availability of individual preserved objects,
- diversity of architectural objects in which the artist designed and executed works, including in the context of their function, form and location,
- influence of stained glass, mosaics or frescoes on the perception of architecture.

Among the works located in Poland, the artist's work and connection with architecture is best represented by the preserved set of stained glass windows in Nysa. Abroad, the largest number of works in architectural objects of various functions, dates of creation and size can be found in Berlin. The research was conducted in situ, analysing the preserved state of the works, especially stained glass windows, and the universality of the subject matter related to a specific interior of the building or to the entire building, taking into account the challenge of creating a contemporary, expressionist work in a historical object. During the research, detailed documentation of the stained glass windows was made. Thanks to consultations with the users of the objects and a review of the literature, it was possible to read the symbolic layer of works with religious or secular themes.

## SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE ARTIST

Ludwig Peter Kowalski was born on 1 August 1891 in Nowe Hajduki, a district of Chorzów, and died on 5 July 1967 in Berlin (Wycisk-Müller, 2016). The artist studied at the State Academy of Art and Crafts in Wrocław, which, after Hans Poelzig's reforms, obtained the status of a royal academy. The lecturers of this one of the most progressive German academies were many famous architects and avant-garde artists, including Hans Scharoun, Johannes Molzahn, Oskar Moll and Oskar Schlemmer (Łukaszewicz, 1983). After the First World War, Kowalski initially worked in his own studio in Wrocław as an independent artist. In 1922, he became a member of the Silesian Association of Visual Artists, where he temporarily served as chairman. In 1928, the association was transformed into the Association of German Artists. In 1926, he joined the 1922 Group operating within the Silesian Association of Visual Artists (Stephan, 1932). He often presented his paintings at exhibitions, and his illustrations were regularly published in Silesian magazines. Many of his works had already been added to both museum and private collections.

In 1927, he was appointed lecturer at the Municipal School of Handicraft and Artistic Industry in Wrocław, at that time one of the most avant-garde art schools in Europe. He first taught a figurative drawing class, and in 1928 took over the management of the painting department. In 1934, the university's activities were deemed undesirable

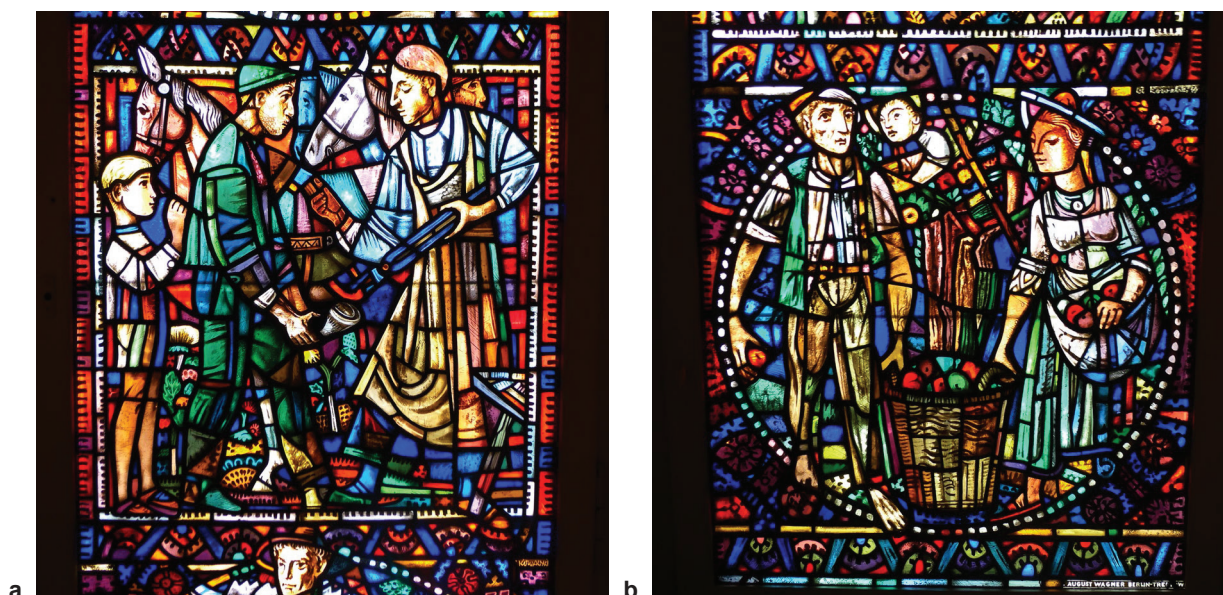
by the National Socialists for political reasons, which resulted in the dismissal of professors, including Kowalski. Due to his membership in the 1922 Group, all of his works, considered ‘degenerate’, were consistently rejected at exhibitions. However, the artist was not deprived of the right to practise his profession. Additionally, in 1937, his work was included in the Munich Nazi propaganda exhibition called *Degenerate Art*. At the same time, in the same year, he took part in the exhibition called *Reconstruction and Rejuvenation*, organised by the National Socialists, and was also accepted to the Prussian Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin. In 1942, he received the Upper Silesian Art Award. Thus, Kowalski’s artistic biography is characterised by many contradictions.

## ARTISTIC CREATIVITY

Ludwig Peter Kowalski is considered one of the great stained glass designers of the last century. In addition to stained glass, he left behind numerous drawings, paintings, mosaics and frescoes and, above all, stained glass. The themes of his paintings included portraits, studies of human figures, still life, landscapes and urban impressions. He designed stained glass in public buildings in the years 1925–1935 and 1950–1960. He carried out the projects in close cooperation with the Berlin stained glass company August Wagner, Berlin-Treptow. Among secular objects, one can point out cultural objects, including theatres, educational objects, headquarters of public institutions and associations, railway stations, and office buildings. A significant part of the works carried out in sacral objects, including Catholic and Evangelical churches and chapels, were figurative biblical representations. Kowalski designed stained glass windows, frescoes and mosaics for existing objects as well as newly designed ones. The first group includes sacral objects built at the turn of the 19th century. The second group includes designs intended for objects erected simultaneously with the creation of the artist’s works. These are modernist objects. Here, cooperation between the architect and the artist was necessary and possible. In the objects created earlier, the artist had to adapt in terms of the form, size and content of the work. Both stained glass, frescoes and mosaics designed and implemented in various techniques, formal and compositional solutions defined the spaces of the objects in a specific way. All this had an impact on the dialogue with architecture, which was different in each of the objects.

Before 1945, Kowalski made a number of mosaics, frescoes and stained glass windows in public buildings, including in Gliwice, Katowice, Opole, Nysa, Kluczbork, Oława, Strzelce Opolskie and Nowa Sól. In the first period of his work, two monumental stained glass windows in Gliwice and Nysa draw attention. In Gliwice in 1940, in the new building of the Upper Silesian Association of Miners and Metallurgists in Gliwice, he designed five monumental stained glass windows decorating the hall (Kluge-Gleiwitz, 1928). Unfortunately, the stained glass windows were lost during the war. In Nysa, in 1937, in the building of the then office building of the electricity distribution company Überlandwerk Oberschlesien AG, currently the headquarters of the power plant in Nysa, the artist designed a total of ten stained glass windows (Fig. 1). This is the largest preserved collection of stained glass windows with secular themes in Silesia (Sąsiadek, 2012). The coloured glazing was designed on two storeys of the building, directly above the ground, almost the entire height of the individual storeys, and constitutes the only strong lighting of the open spaces next to the staircase (Opalka, 2013). The stained glass windows located on the first floor depict historical figures who built the myth of German statehood. The works on the second floor are an apotheosis of work and craft. These are genre scenes of bakers, farmers, butchers and fishermen. This is a common theme in Kowalski’s work (Müller-Hofstede, 1940).

The artist also painted frescoes in the Katowice municipal theatre, secondary schools, including those in Opole and Nowa Sól, and in the hall of the Polish State Railway station in Strzelce Opolskie in the years 1934–1936. A monumental mosaic with the Resurrected Christ was created in the cemetery chapel in Półwieś, a district of Opole. In Oława, the altar made in 1934–1935 has been preserved in the parish church. The stained glass windows of the choir in the Church of St. Camillus in Charlottenburg, a district of Berlin, built in 1930–1932, were destroyed in 1943 and have not survived to this day.



**Fig. 1.** Office building of the power plant in Nysa (1937). The apotheosis of work and craft: a – blacksmithing, b – fruit growing

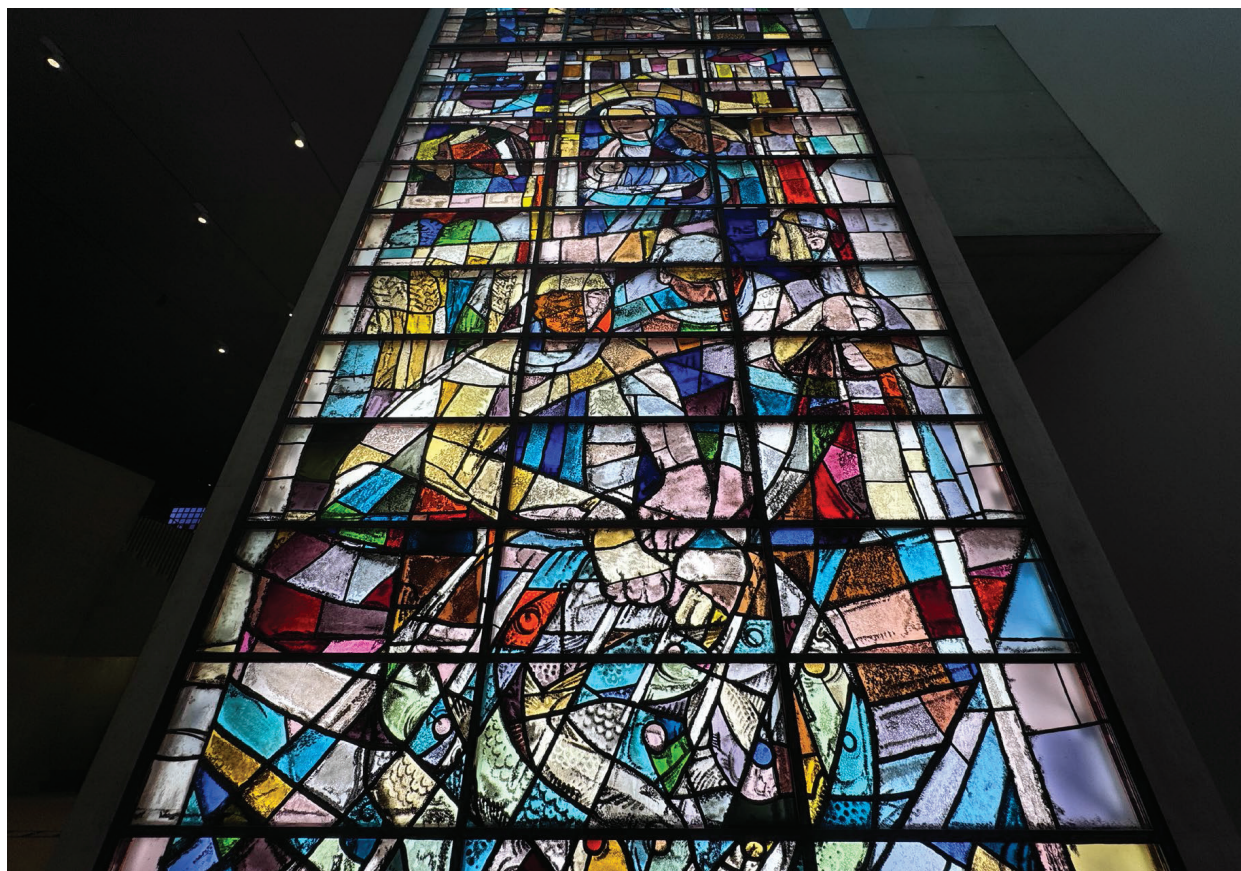
Source: photo by the author.

Ludwig Peter Kowalski, like the entire German population, was forced to leave his home in 1945. He then irretrievably lost his studio and almost all of his artistic achievements. After the war, he linked his professional and private life with Berlin. He first worked in East Berlin as a professor of art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Weissensee, before moving to West Berlin in 1948. At that time, he created stained glass windows in a variety of styles for secular and religious buildings of various denominations. These included the stained glass windows in the churches of St. Rita, St. Elizabeth, St. Ansgar, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Emperor Frederick Memorial Church, and Luisenkirche. He also created stained glass windows in the conference room of the Bundeshaus in Berlin, in the foyer of the Schiller Theatre, as well as stained glass windows in the chapel of the Catholic student residence Wilhelm-Weskamm-Haus in Charlottenburg, a district of Berlin, and in the meeting room of the district council of the city hall in Kreuzberg, a district of Berlin. Outside Berlin, he created stained glass windows for the baptistery of the parish church in Neuwied, the Berufsgenossenschaft trade association headquarters in Mannheim, the Navy Memorial Church in Wilhelmshaven, the House of the German East in Munich, the cemetery chapel in Wolfsburg, and mosaics for the Church of St. Philip Neri in Lima, Peru.

In 1950, Kowalski made stained glass windows for the exhibition called *German Homeland in the East* in Berlin. In 1975, the works were installed on the staircase of the Deutschlandhaus building in Kreuzberg, a district of Berlin. Currently, the stained glass windows are displayed in the same building on one of the pillars in a way that prevents their full viewing (Fig. 2). The works depict three lost areas of former Germany – East Prussia, Silesia and Pomerania – which symbolise agriculture and horse breeding, mining and flax weaving, and agriculture and fishing, respectively.

In 1952, in the Bundeshaus Wilmersdorf building, the seat of the representative of the federal government before the unification of Germany, Kowalski made stained glass windows with 24 German coats of arms. This type of work was often done by the artist. He placed the coats of arms of cities in stained glass windows in Gliwice and Nysa, among others.





**Fig. 2.** Fragment of a stained glass window made for the German exhibition *Homeland in the East* (1950) in Kreuzberg. Fishing symbolising Pomerania

Source: photo by the author.

Also, in 1950, in the Schiller Theatre in Berlin, which was being rebuilt after World War II, the artist created an impressive monumental façade of polished glass (Fig. 3). The glass wall in the main foyer of the theatre is 25 m long and 5.20 m high. In the evening and at night, appropriately illuminated, it becomes a dominant feature in the body of the building. The artist presented abstract and surreal figures here and ornaments with motifs of both tragedy and comedy. Thanks to the colouristic integration, the whole is very coherent and not distracting. This is a very important project. The stained glass is not viewed only from the interior of the building – here, the foyer, but above all, most often from the outside. The elevation remains white during the day. However, in the evenings, it can be illuminated in colours consistent with the presented repertoire. The glass wall then becomes a dominant feature. From the inside, white, intricately cut glass limits the view to the outside. Thanks to this, the viewer, even during the day when the elevation is not illuminated, is not distracted by the everyday life, including traffic on the street. They are in a temple of art.

During the reconstruction of the Protestant Luisenkirche church in the Berlin district of Charlottenburg in the years 1950–1956, destroyed as a result of an Allied air raid in September 1943, the artist designed four stained glass windows in the eastern wing of the temple, filled with the magic of spiritual figures. The stained glass windows, dated 1954, 1955 and 1956, present scenes from the Old Testament (Fig. 4). The biblical figures



exude seriousness and dignity, evoking associations with medieval paintings. In a similar poetics, the artist made a round stained glass window in the Catholic church of St. Rita, located in the peripheral Berlin district of Reinickendorf. The stained glass window placed in the presbytery, centrally on the wall behind the altar, is a dominant feature in the modestly equipped temple. In other words, the entire interior design is subordinated to Kowalski's work. The stained glass window shows Christ Pantocrator in a mandorla in a standing position with a closed Holy Scripture in his right hand and his left hand raised in a gesture of blessing (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 3.** Schiller Theatre in Berlin (1950): a – general view; b – view from the foyer

Source: photos by the author.





**Fig. 4.** Luisenkirche in Berlin. Scenes from the Old Testament: a – *God gives Moses the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments* (1955); b – *Abraham's Sacrifice* (1954)

Source: photo by the author.



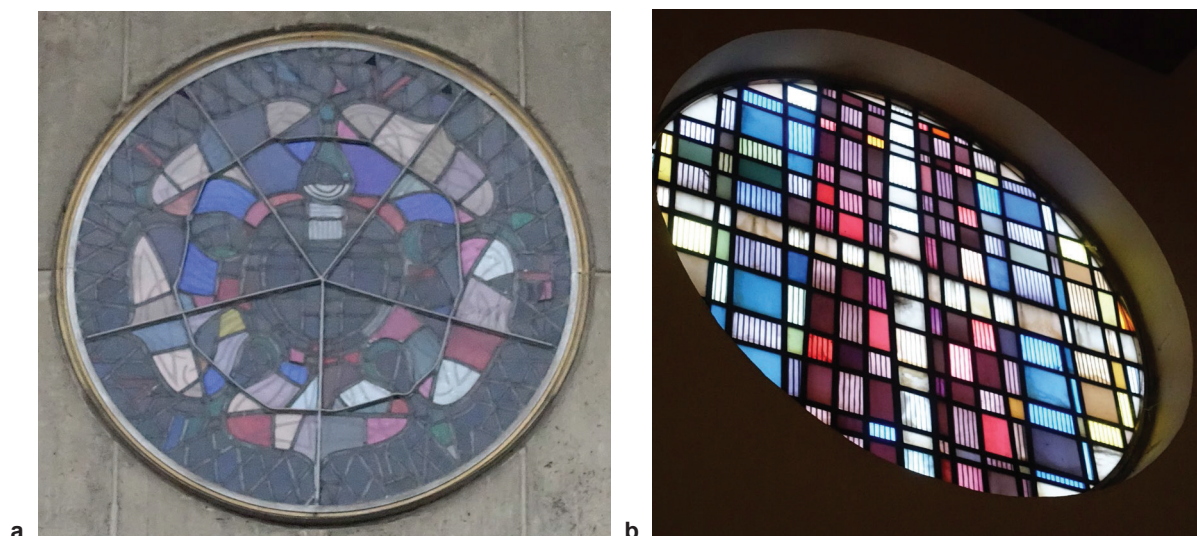
**Fig. 5.** *Christ Pantocrator*, St. Rita Church, Berlin

Source: photo by Erik Venhorst.

In 1957, in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (*Herz-Jesu-Kirche*), a combination of neo-Gothic and neo-classical elements, located in the Berlin district of Charlottenburg, Ludwig Piotr Kowalski created three stained glass windows in the apse of the presbytery. In the stained glass windows, the artist presented scenes related to the miracles, suffering and Resurrection of Christ and the life of the Holy Family. Also, in this case, the artist created a work that does not constitute dissonance with the historical object.

All the windows in the neo-Gothic Church of St. Elizabeth from 1911, located in the Berlin district of Schöneberg, were destroyed during World War II. In 1960–1961, Ludwig Peter Kowalski designed five large stained glass windows in this single-nave, spacious church. Against a geometric-abstract background, the artist presented dignified groups of figures frozen in lofty immobility. The hieratic nature of the figures is emphasised by Gothic robes.

During the International Architectural Exhibition Interbau, the largest German exhibition event of the 1950s, Kowalski created frescoes and stained glass windows in two newly built churches. The exhibition opened in the summer of 1957. The entire design was implemented over an area of 25 ha in the Hansaviertel district of Berlin, which had been destroyed by war operations. More than 50 outstanding architects, including Alvar Aalto, Walter Gropius and Oscar Niemeyer, designed some 1,300 apartments, a library, two churches, a kindergarten, an elementary school and a shopping centre here. In the Protestant Emperor Frederick Memorial Church in Berlin (*Kaiser-Friedrich-Gedächtniskirche*), the artist designed five round windows (Fig. 6). Opposite the glazed eastern elevation, three works were placed on the windows above the gallery: *The Annunciation*, *The Angel Shows the Women the Empty Tomb* and *The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. The window above the central portal depicts *Luther's Rose* with the inscription *Vivit (He Lives)*. The fifth stained glass window, distinguished by its abstract forms, is located by the southwestern staircase. Kowalski's works are illuminated by a monumental light glass wall entitled *Victory of Light* by Georg Meistermann. The construction of the church, designed by the Berlin architect Ludwig Lemmer, was carried out in the years 1955–1957.

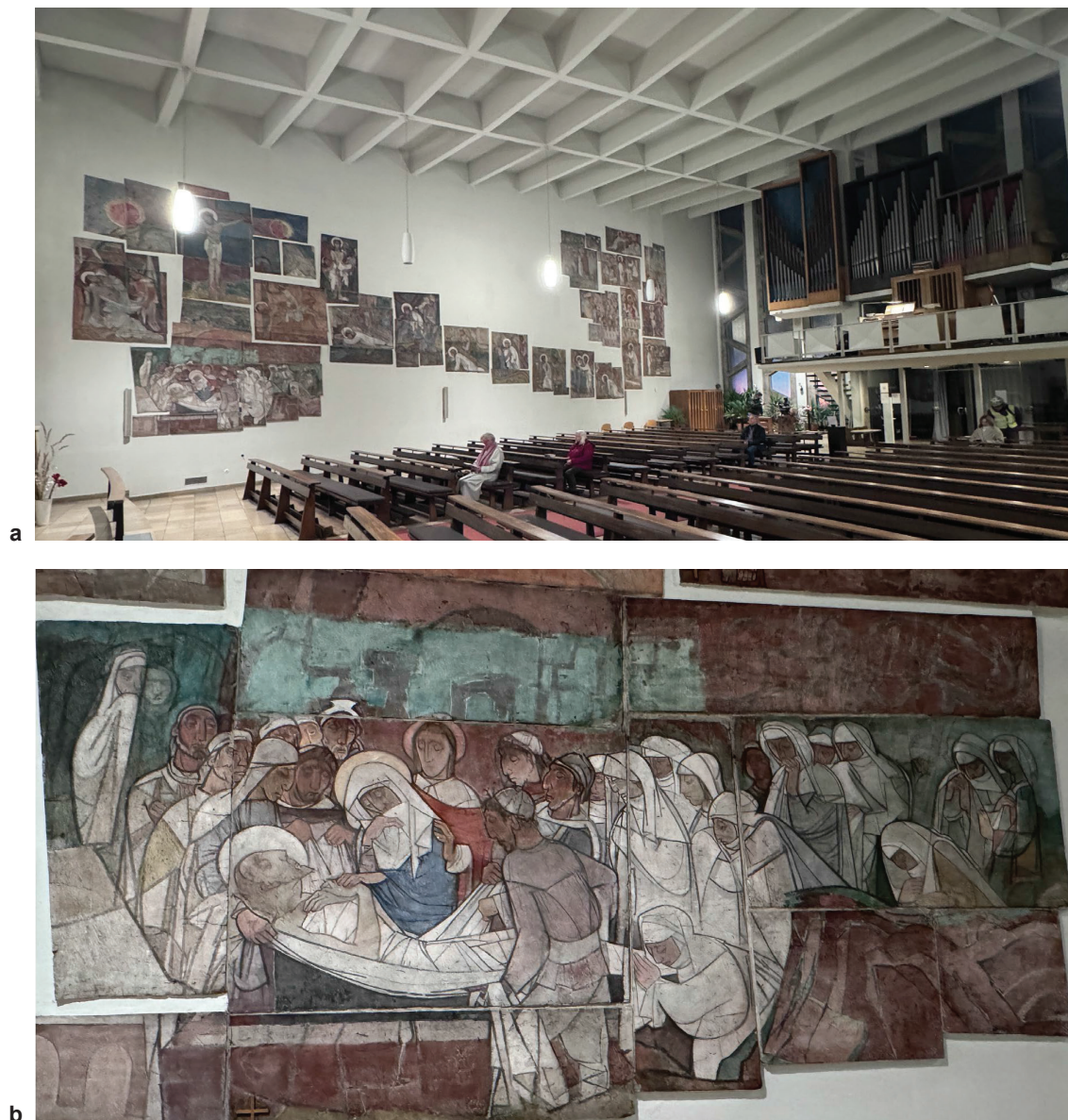


**Fig. 6.** Stained glass windows in the Emperor Frederick Memorial Church in Berlin (1957): a – *Luther Rose* above the central portal; b – abstract composition by the staircase

Source: photo by the author.

Also, in the same year, 1957, the Roman Catholic Church of St. Ansgar was opened. Kowalski painted a monumental fresco on the north-west wall of the temple, depicting the twenty Stations of the Cross, arranged on an arch, presenting the story of Christ's life from birth to Resurrection. This composition, deeply rooted in Christian iconography, is located opposite the almost entirely glazed south-east wall, which illuminates the interior (Fig. 7).





**Fig. 7.** Fresco presenting the 20 Stations of the Cross in the Church of St. Ansgar in Berlin (1957): a – general view, b – *The Entombment* (Station 14)

Source: photo by the author.

The Church of St. Ansgar was built on an open plan in the shape of a parabola, according to the design of the Berlin architect Willy Kreuer. Outside the centre of Berlin, in the Schlachtensee district, in the single-nave Roman Catholic Church of the Twelve Holy Apostles, the artist designed a mosaic cross. The cross, shimmering in shades of gold, brown and orange, designed in a semi-circular low apse, is an important element building the interior of the church. The church was built in 1953–1954. Both this mosaic and the fresco in the Church of St. Ansgar are examples of interiors in which the artist's individual works 'build' the mood of the interior.

## CONCLUSIONS

In situ research, interviews with local communities, analysis of new datasets of written and iconographic material, as well as research on historical continuity over the decades from the interwar period to the first two post-war decades, expanded the knowledge on the work of Ludwig Peter Kowalski, as well as the perception of architecture, in particular in the context of stained glass art. Based on the research conducted, it is possible to articulate functional, formal, technical and design recommendations.

In the functional aspect, the work of Ludwig Peter Kowalski shows that the visual language used by the artist corresponded perfectly in objects with different functions. In particular, the phenomenon of matching contemporary, expressive language in historical objects is important here. In addition, the visual side of the works seems to be important, which, depending on the function and form of the interior, can be a dominant feature or, as in the case of Schiller's theatre, remain almost in the background. The effect of artist-architect dialogue may be the harmonious interplay of a work of art in an architectural space. Based on the collected research material, it can be stated that the artist's works are characterised by the selection of repeatable solutions in the technical execution of stained glass. The colours of the works, despite the evolution of his work, are also similar. It can therefore be assumed that it will be possible to recreate the artist's unpreserved works with modern AI tools. For example, the stained glass in the building of the Upper Silesian Association of Miners and Metallurgists in Gliwice, the only trace of which are preserved black-and-white photographs with a description of the colour scheme. The study could include a change in the perception of the interior currently lit by ordinary windows. Attempts to recreate the artist's works could bring closer the artist's technique and the stained glass workshop. If conservation work or supplementation of possibly damaged elements of the works is necessary, it would be possible to recreate them. During the implementation of the project, it would be necessary to conduct detailed physicochemical tests of the preserved works in Nysa and Berlin. Further detailed technical and historical studies could be the basis for formulating further research questions.

In terms of the technical aspect, Kowalski's works evolved from the stained glass windows in Gliwice and Nysa, which were characterised by a dense 'drawing' of lead frames, to the increasingly 'lighter', more dematerialised in space, Berlin works. Here, the supporting structure of the stained glass windows is significantly less visible. Nowadays, for reasons of utility, many churches are heated, which can also pose a threat to stained glass. It would therefore be necessary to monitor stained glass and the rooms in which they are installed.

Among the formal recommendations, it would be necessary to indicate the need to popularise the artist's works. It would be advisable to develop an interactive guide to architectural objects in which the artist's works are located. However, the most comprehensive way to learn about Ludwig Peter Kowalski's works would be to take a guided tour. Considering the preservation of the stained glass windows in Berlin and Nysa, it would be valuable to conduct research on their state of preservation, to determine potential threats and to indicate conservation measures in order to maintain their durability.

The scope of future research on preserved stained glass should include their conservation. This work should be based on traditional materials and technologies. The use of AI tools could contribute to the reconstruction of destroyed stained glass or individual elements based on the artistic and technical solutions used by the artist in other works. A broad area of research in the field of building physics would be the implementation of additional glazing for better thermal modernisation of buildings, while another interesting area of research could include the impact of stained glass light on the interiors of buildings. The limitation of the research remains the fact that most of Kowalski's works in Silesia were destroyed before 1945. These works, apart from the stained glass from Gliwice, are not documented.

Architecture influenced Kowalski's works in terms of the form, size and content of the stained glass. In addition, religious buildings influenced the content of the works. In Protestant churches, it was the biblical theme from the Old Testament, while in Roman Catholic churches, representations from the New Testament dominated. In secular public buildings, the theme met the expectations of the ordering party. In secondary schools, this was

a narrative referring to education, and in industrial facilities, it distinguished industrial builders and historical figures. In theatre facilities, for example in the Schiller Theatre, it was possible for him to create a composition combining surrealism and abstraction. An extreme, negative case of the influence of architecture on the exhibited stained glass is Kowalski's work in the Deutschlandhaus building. Here, its proper viewing is impossible.

Kowalski's work also had an influence on architecture. In the church of St. Ansgar, the Way of the Cross is the main element building the interior. Here, the artist had complete freedom in shaping the individual stations on the arch. In the Schiller Theatre, the use of white polished glass had to be a compromise between the artist and the architect. In other facilities, in particular, mosaics had an influence on the construction of the architectural interior.

The study has brought significantly closer and systematised the work of Ludwig Peter Kowalski. For the author, it also became an inspiration to examine other preserved works of 20th century stained glass art in preserved modernist buildings in Silesia. In particular, in connection with other projects by the same artists or workshops that also operated outside Poland.

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## INTEGRACJA ARCHITEKTURY I SZTUKI W TWÓRCZOŚCI LUDWIGA PETERA KOWALSKIEGO

### STRESZCZENIE

W artykule podjęto problematykę integracji architektury i sztuki na przykładzie twórczości Ludwiga Petera Kowalskiego, wybitnego artysty, jednego z najwybitniejszych projektantów witraży XX wieku, a także uznanego wykładowcy akademickiego wyższych uczelni artystycznych we Wrocławiu i w Berlinie. Celem projektu było sformułowanie zaleceń funkcjonalnych, formalnych oraz technicznych i projektowych. Badania przeprowadzono zarówno w Polsce, jak i w Berlinie. Wykorzystano podczas nich metodę mieszaną, łączącą studium wielu przypadków i badania jakościowe, w tym badania archiwalne oraz analizę in situ.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Peter Ludwig Kowalski, Deutsche Künstlerbund, witraże, sztuka, architektura