'The Joy of New Constructions in Times of Homelessness': Marian Bogusz's Art of the 1940s

AGATA PIETRASIK

Agata Pietrasik is a post-doctoral researcher at the Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA) in Paris. Her focus is on the visual representations of the experience of the Second World War and the Holocaust. The essay below is a revised version of an essay first published as '"Radość nowych konstrukcji" w czasach bezdomności. Twórczość Mariana Bogusza w latach czterdziestych' in the journal Miejsce: studia nad sztuką i architekturą polską XX I XXI wieku*, issue 1 (2015). Pietrasik's text explores the Polish artist Marian Bogusz's project for an imagined modernist settlement intended to host artists from all over the word, which he designed in 1944, while a prisoner of Mauthausen concentration camp. Connecting with other artists and attempting to organise cultural life in the camp, Bogusz planned for the artists' settlement be erected on the camp's ruins, demonstrating that the dream of modernist utopia remained alive throughout the war, even surviving in the context of the concentration camp. Pietrasik focusses on the aesthetic and ethical claims advanced by Bogusz, who went on to become a key figure of the post-war artistic scene in Warsaw, and considers how he positioned himself vis-a-vis his experience of war and the emergence of Socialist Realism.* (**KKW**)

'The Joy of New Constructions in Times of Homelessness': Marian Bogusz's Art of the 1940s

In her pioneering monograph on the Polish artist and organiser of artistic life Marian Bogusz, Bożena Kowalska argued that his artistic trajectory was heavily determined by his war-time experiences.[1] Art historian, art critic and a vocal advocate of modern art in the post-Stalinist period, Aleksander Wojciechowski shared this opinion, noting in his introduction to the catalogue of the artist's 1982 posthumous exhibition in Poznań that 'it was in Mauthausen that Bogusz the social worker was born, in addition to Bogusz the painter'.[2] Wojciechowski explained that the future that the artist was incessantly planning, throughout the course of the Second World War, became an escape from brutal reality. This essay examines the beginnings of Bogusz's artistic practice, which coincided with the dramatic period of the war and its aftermath, focussing on his architectural plans for an International Artists' Settlement (Międzynarodowe Osiedle Artystów), produced in Mauthausen concentration camp where he was imprisoned from 1942 to 1945. I will argue that these raise questions about the status of home in a world in which the experience of homelessness was widespread, as well as concerning the place of modernist utopias in dreams of reconstruction following war-time destruction.

One of the widely-discussed questions of the mid-1940s concerned the role artists were to play in the reconstruction of the intellectual life of the country. As early as 1944, Adam Ważyk, a Polish-Jewish writer and influential member of the left-wing literary avant-garde, published an article in the newly-founded Lublin magazine *Odrodzenie* (*Rebirth*) entitled 'The position of the artist', in which he described how war had changed not only the geopolitical situation in Europe, but also intellectuals' ethos.[3] The author located the question in a clearly-defined political framework, thereby equating the issue of the post-war ethos of the artist with the issue of the political engagement of art. Interestingly, he pointed to 'Western' rather than to Soviet Socialist Realists as the example that Polish intellectuals should follow, particularly French, left-wing writers and artists, whose art, in his view, was already making headway along the path of progressive political engagement. Ważyk did not discuss the tragedies of war and did not lament the ruin of Warsaw. On the contrary, on the smouldering ruins of the old world he was already dreaming of a new order and a new culture, rooted in the needs of the proletariat, rather than an art of 'crazy aesthetes', which would reach a wider audience than had any previous art. 'It may sound almost banal [but] war changes human characters', he stated.[4] Later, however, he explained the mechanisms of this process: 'Total war destroyed houses and penetrated cosy offices. Stay-at-home and office-working intellectuals, wrenched from their familial and social bonds, and from the atmosphere of bourgeois life, turned to the universal cause and many of them became somewhat activist'.[5]

Thus, the author of the 'Poem for Adults' referred to the destruction of homes as an example of the ultimate displacement of the separation between the private and the political sphere, by way of which both outsider artists and those that had hitherto avoided political engagement were unwillingly sucked into the whirlwind of history and politics.[6] In the text, the home served not only as a rhetorical figure, bringing to mind a sense of comfort and security devastated by war, but was also understood as a space connected with a defined, and in this case, bourgeois, social habitus. The destruction of this space had major impact in symbolic terms, for it rendered it impossible to reproduce the behaviours and interpersonal relations with which it was associated. Ważyk's text, as can be surmised from its clearly-stated ideological message, poses the question of the consequences of war-time devastation, the destruction of homes and the environment in which one lives.

The war destroyed cities all over Europe, leaving as its legacy millions of roving, homeless refugees and displaced people.[7] Recollecting his return to Warsaw in 1945, prominent writer and a Communist politician Jerzy Putrament wrote of the 'human torrent' flowing in the direction of the city and asked: 'Where are they going to live, amidst these burned-out tenement buildings? Who will feed them? Who will keep them warm?'. Yet he went on to express his peculiar fascination with the determination of this crowd returning to the capital, of which he, too, was a part: 'I am becoming conscious of an absurd and idiotic admiration for the endurance of the human species and the force of the instinct propelling man towards his patrimony. Not to property, not to home. Simply to a spot on the globe, the now abstract concept "Warsaw"'.[8]

The specificity of the post-war condition, marked by the experience of homelessness, was to have a far-reaching impact on European philosophy. Hannah Arendt and Theodor W. Adorno elaborated their influential philosophical concepts around it. According to both thinkers, the war-time destruction resulted, above all, in the loss of a common space, which, as intellectuals, they conceived of as being one in which 'speech and action acquired meaning'. The brutal rupture of existing social structures and of 'human catastrophes such as Auschwitz' directly influenced the philosophers' positions, forcing them into emigration and living and working in another cultural sphere and in another language.[9]

The question of what living and home become after the cataclysm of war was also posed by Martin Heidegger in the famous lecture 'Building Dwelling Thinking', delivered in Darmstadt in 1951 to an auditorium full of architects.[10] In comparing Adorno and Heidegger's positions, Samir Gandesha has noted that for both philosophers the return home, also conceived of as the return of the subject to himself, was an impossible move to make. According to Heidegger, the real housing question (*Wohnungsfrage*) was not of a utilitarian nature, for, as he claimed in the aforementioned lecture:

> however hard and bitter, however hampering and threatening the lack of houses remains, the *proper plight of dwelling* does not lie merely in the lack of houses. The proper plight of dwelling is indeed older than the world wars and their destruction … The proper plight of dwelling lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell*.[11]

According to Adorno (and Arendt, likewise), though, exile, homelessness, and the impossibility of returning home were the result of other motives: of the actual material and symbolic destruction of the community they lived in. Linking the, in many respects divergent, philosophical projects of Arendt and Adorno, Gandesha refers to both as 'homeless philosophy' which subjects the possibility of the return of the subject to himself to critical reflection and in so doing recognises that 'genuine experience, then, is openness to what is different, and is thus steadfastly in opposition to the Hegelian concept of Spirit unburdening itself of otherness on it tortuous journey home to itself, and equally to the Heideggerian *topos* of ontological uprootedness'.[12]

In his short story *House on the River*, published in 1947, Kornel Filipowicz recounted the story of a concentration camp prisoner who often returns in his mind to the image of his family home: 'How permanent and untouchable that house seemed to me at that time, from the perspective of dreaming and longing. I never permitted a vision of the destruction of its image for long. The survival, intact, of this house became a sort of condition for me, some sort of a point of reference, to which, after the end of the war I would be able to link my interrupted life'.[13]

Fig. 23.1. Marian Bogusz, A set of houses for musicians. Drawing from the album *Buildings of the Mauthausen camp site* (1943–1945). Ink, watercolour. Photo: Witalis Wolny, 1973 (negative number 109030. Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw.
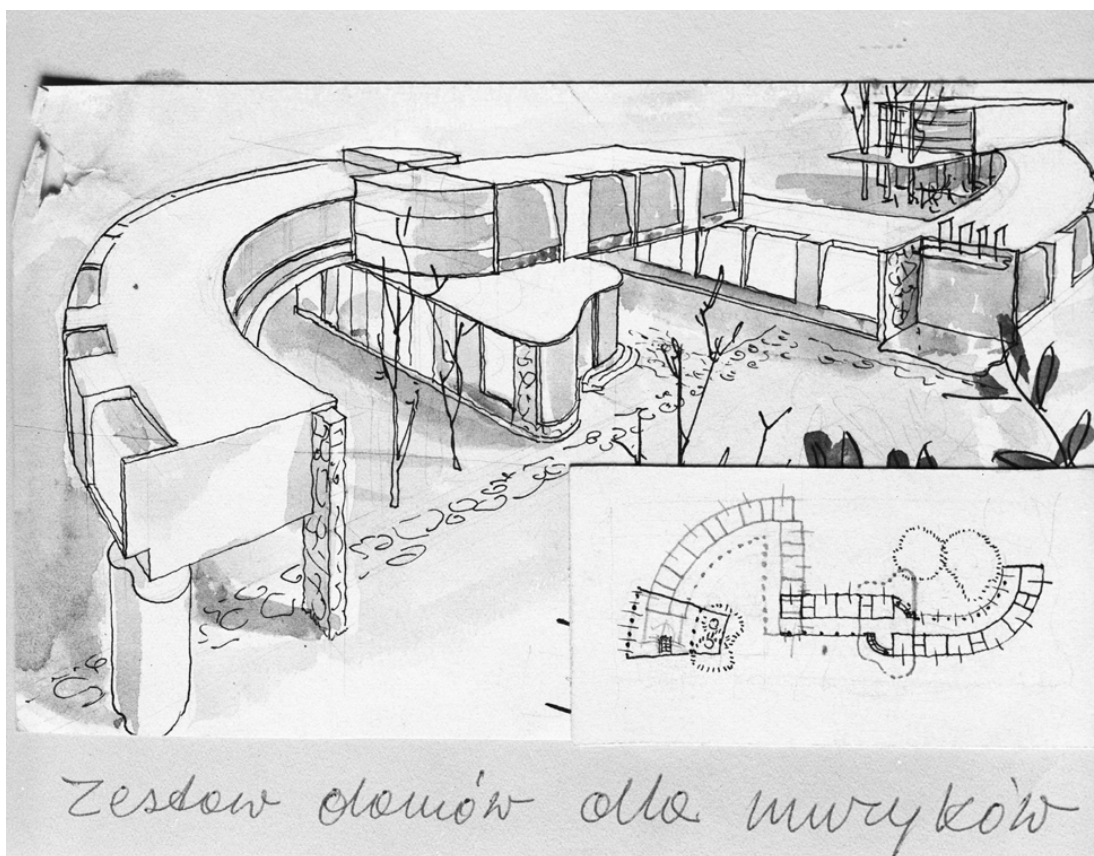
Marian Bogusz, who was a prisoner in Mauthausen during the war, also wove dreams of houses. He recorded their form in sketches produced in around 1945. Bogusz's houses were part of a project for an international settlement of artists, which, according to the artists' design, was to be created on the smouldering embers of the camp. Architectural drawings showing visions of the settlement were not publicly presented until several decades after the war, in 1979, on the occasion of Bogusz's exhibition at Galeria ZA in Rawka. The artist often stressed that the experience of the camp had left its mark on his artistic position and that, though it might seem paradoxical, it was this that was at the basis of his engagement in social art.[14] Bogusz's futuristic visions have a Janus face because of their rooting in the past of the camps: they look both forwards and backwards. The idea of an international settlement of artists and its reappearance in Rawka thirty years after the war, in a completely different context, provides the clearest evidence for this. Besides the architectural projects from the camp, the artist also presented a plan of a settlement for artists which was to be realised in the local setting in Rawka, a small town in central Poland located between Warsaw and Łódź. The houses that Bogusz conceived for Rawka were to be located close to nature, within the surrounding forests, and host around fifty artists. Underneath the plan of the colony the artist wrote a reminder 'No trees should be felled', expressing his concern for the surrounding landscape.[15]

The project for Rawka provided Bogusz with an opportunity to present his original designs from Mauthausen, which were reprinted in the catalogue. There are only a few drawings by Bogusz that present the vision of the settlement in Mauthausen, and these exist only as photographic reproductions made in the 1970s. The are held in the archive of the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. The drawing depicting an imagined house for musicians (Fig. 23.1), which was published in the catalogue of the Rawka exhibition, stands out as an example of modernist, Bauhaus-inspired architecture. The long and rounded form of the house is stretched along the forest and split into two levels; parts of the upper level are suspended on tall columns, other parts rest on the lower story of the building. The architecture conceived by Bogusz has a particular flow: its soft edges and tall square windows set the form in motion and render it similar to a river effortlessly meandering through a forest. Similar qualities are present
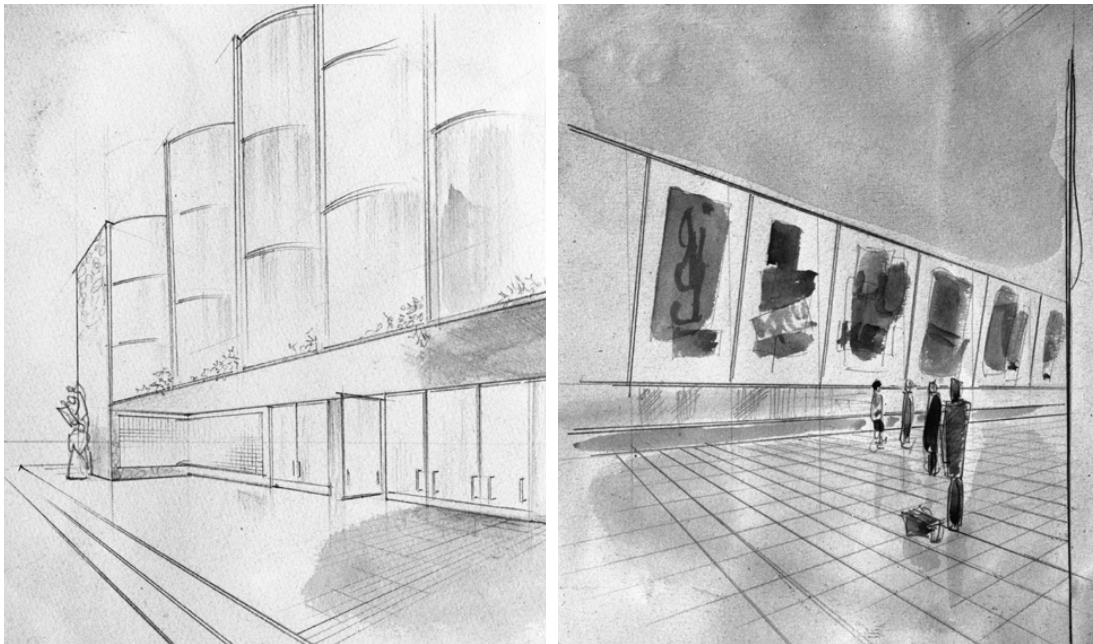
Fig. 23.2. Marian Bogusz, Reading Room – entrance. Drawing from the album *Buildings of the Mauthausen camp site* (1943–1945). Pencil, watercolour. Photo: Witalis Wolny, 1973 (negative number 109036). Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw.

Fig. 23.3. Marian Bogusz. Exhibition rooms. Drawing from the album *Buildings of the Mauthausen camp site* (1943–1945). Pencil, watercolour. Photo: Witalis Wolny, 1973 (negative number 109037). Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw.

in the drawing of a façade of an unspecified building (Fig. 23.2): big glass windows open up the space of the building while rounded corners evoke motion. Another drawing preserved in the archive (Fig. 23.3) presents an exemplary interior of the imagined building—a grand exhibition space. There are two aspects of this drawing that are particularly interesting: firstly the generous amount of space designated by Bogusz for the display of artwork reveals the utopian character of the whole enterprise, secondly the model artworks placed in the room are all large scale abstract paintings, and can be interpreted as testament to the fact that a particular type of practice was tied to the idea of the international settlement for artists.

The possibility of decontextualising the project and its ready adaptability to new conditions cannot, however, blur the specificity of Bogusz's idea, which was, after all, rooted in Mauthausen. The artist made a point of this in a letter addressed to his deceased friend the Spaniard Emmanuel Muñoz, a fellow prisoner and co-creator of the settlement (reproduced in the 1979 catalogue):

> Dear Muñoz, at last I am showing publicly the whole vision of our International Artists' Settlement. We did not have time to consult on the placement of individual studios or the whole spatial and urban concept before the liberation of the camp (9 May 1945). I did this without your consultation immediately after the liberation, when it was possible to move around the space in its entirety. I remember your enthusiasm when you saw the first sketches on scraps of paper. I think it was in the spring of 1944 … Months passed, and we 'created' our settlement. This vision enabled us to survive.[16]

The settlement of artists erected on the terrain of the former camp reveals the extent to which Bogusz's thinking was rooted in his war-time past. In the next part of the letter, the author describes the placement of the houses for artists which were to be built near the so-called *Russenlager*, the part of the camp constructed especially for Russian prisoners of war, beside the quarry that was a site of forced labour and the death of many of the prisoners of Mauthausen camp. According to Bogusz, this area of the settlement, which was on a hill, was to consist in houses for writers and musicians, meeting rooms, exhibition rooms, and even an amphitheatre. The whole could be connected with the lower area by a system of terraces. The administrative centre of the settlement was planned in place of the administrative centre of the camp, the construction office (*Baubüro*) where Bogusz himself worked as a prisoner. Among other tasks, he was to work on technical drawings of the camp's planned extensions.[17] The driving of cars was to be forbidden within the pale of the settlement, and the passage between different buildings was to be made simpler by mobile walkways. A few humble drawings presenting the vision of the settlement show a fascination with modernist architecture, featuring long, spiral walls fitted with windows opening out onto the woodland in the middle.

The drawings produced by Bogusz are decidedly different from many other works produced in concentration camps, above all because they are not documentary in nature: they do not speak directly of life in the camp but are the record of a dream of a different life in the future. However, in order to fully grasp the meaning of Bogusz's imaginary houses, one has also to try to imagine them in the context of the place on whose ruins they were to be constructed: Mauthausen concentration camp.

Marian Bogusz spent three years in Mauthausen. In February 1941, he was transferred there from prison in Poznań. He was twenty-one at the time and had some experience in the artistic field, acquired over the course of his studies at the Poznań State School of Decorative Arts and Artistic Industry (Państwowa Szkoła Sztuk Zdobniczych i Przemysłu Artystycznego).[18] He had already begun drawing, mostly portraits of his fellow prisoners, in Poznań Fort no. 7. He spent his first year at Mauthausen working in the quarry but was then allocated to work in the camp administration in 1942, in the construction office, where he was allocated work on technical architectural drawings associated with the expansion of the camp. Bogusz used his position to help other prisoners.[19] In 1943, the Nazis organised a craft workshop at the camp, engaging several artists, among them Bogusz. During working hours, the artists had to produce items ordered by the camp personnel. Besides affording the prisoners a significant improvement in their material conditions, their artistic work also gave them access to materials, which they used in their illegal work.[20]

Information concerning this period in Bogusz's life is piecemeal: with the exception of the above-cited information collected by Janina Jaworska, there are no further recollections relating to the period spent in the camp. After the death of the artist in 1980, one of his friends described the atmosphere when Bogusz spoke of his camp memories, while admitting that there was no audience for these stories at the time and that they were not taken very seriously:

> During the evening chats we had in the studio of our artist friend, Bogusz recounted things that I have only begun to believe to have been true now, many years later. For at the time I put down much of what he said to the Schnapps to which he was partial … at the time, I quite mistakenly thought that some of what he was saying was just general drunken fantasy. For instance, that for his twenty-second birthday he received four crayons as a gift from an SS man from the concentration camp personnel: red, blue, green and black, as well as a drawing pad of good quality card.[21]

At present, we can only collate the recollection above with Bogusz's works. The four colours referred to can be seen in the watercolours created in around 1943 in Mauthausen. The work entitled *Without Hope* (*Bez nadziei*) depicts a man, who in a gesture of resignation buries his head in his hands, resting on a table. The palms of the figure's hands are unnaturally enlarged, making the figure seem massive and indifferent. The colours, applied in thick brushstrokes, underline the all-encompassing sense of weight and merge into a dark, muddy mass of shades. Dark blue and green are the dominant colours. The colours flow into one another, creating stains, which are disturbingly reminiscent of the colour of murky, polluted water. The work translates onto paper and transforms into the language of colour a mood of exhaustion, despair and hopelessness in an extraordinarily suggestive way.

The association of the colour of the picture with the colour of the murky water is connected to the context of the forced labour carried out by the artist, for, as of 1943, working in the camp artistic workshop, Bogusz specialised in painting seascapes in oil, ordered by the guards in the camp.[22] He received an additional portion of food for every painting produced.[23] The Italian painter Aldo Carpi, who was sent to Mauthausen in 1944, recalled that there was often a brutal struggle to get work in the workshop. For example, when his fellow prisoners found out that Carpi was a professor of painting, they began to fear for their positions, since losing their job would mean being 'allocated to work outside the camp, and so to be sentenced to death'.[24] One of the prisoners took Carpi's food and paints for this reason.

Bogusz recalled that, along with other artists, among them the aforementioned Muñoz, and the Czech artist Zbynek Sekal, they would go through rubbish bins in search of newspapers

and books containing reproductions of artworks. Next, they would cut out pictures and put them together in book form: 'In this way we made albums, among others of Holbein and Rembrandt, with text in Polish, Czech and German … Poetry was often included in these albums', recalled Bogusz.[25] Another Pole joined this group of artists in 1944: Zbigniew Dłubak, hiding behind the adopted name Andrzej Zdanowski, who was transferred to Mauthausen from Auschwitz.[26]

Bogusz, Dłubak, and Sekal co-organised several 'exhibitions' in the camp.[27] Small works by artists, affixed to a blanket, were presented on the wooden bunks of several barracks. Artists also produced small posters for the exhibitions. One of these, designed by Bogusz on the occasion of Dłubak's exhibition in March 1945, represents the silhouette outline of a prisoner holding a hammer in one hand and a palette in the other. The double character of the figure is additionally highlighted by the use of a red background on the right-hand side of the drawing. In the context of the camp, the hammer can be read as a reference to prisoners working in the quarries, who split blocks of granite with similar hammers. The drawing may therefore relate to the double status of the artist-prisoner. The colour red, meanwhile, may be an allusion to political engagement in the leftist movements active in the camp, in which both Bogusz and Dłubak were involved.[28]

Similar tropes, weaving together Socialist rhetoric glorifying the proletarian struggle with the situation of the prisoner in the concentration camp, are evident in another series of works produced by Bogusz in Mauthausen: illustrations for the famous *proletkult*-style poem entitled 'The Ballad of the Stoker's Eyes' by the Czech poet Jiří Wolker.[29] Wolker's work, focussed on describing the struggle and exploitation of the working class, resonated in a new way in the context of the concentration camp. It became a space, or even a certain framework, within which one could also perceive a reflection of the prisoners' struggles.

The poem 'The Ballad of the Stoker's Eyes' tells the story of Antoni, the boiler-room worker referred to in the title, who loses his sight as a result of exhausting work and devastating health conditions. Throughout the poem, the author stresses that the modern conveniences that the bourgeoisie benefit from are paid for by the exploitation of the working class, and that this is inscribed in the comfort of modern city life. Antoni works at night, while other inhabitants of the city sleep:

> The factories have gone quiet, so has the street
> The stars have gone to sleep round the moon
> And in the city there's only one place
> That has not closed its eyes so late…
> In this house work roars night as it does day
> And at night you hear the engines
> THE STOKE-HOLD IS HUNGRY
> The flames call
> FOR COAL TO STOKE!
> And men rush in their effort of labour
> Not counting the long years of suffering,
> They melt their hatred in the flames of the stoke-hold
> Into the red lights of the street-lamps…[30]

The disturbing blurring of boundaries and the unification of man and object returns as a theme in subsequent verses of the work, and the reification of the bodies of the workers develops in two main directions: the workers turn their bodies into tools, becoming machines, or else the products of their labour, such as electricity, contain elements of bodily suffering. The worker forced into inhuman labour is thus a contemporary Prometheus, engulfed in his effort, and like the Greek god has to pay the highest price for the gift he delivers to mankind. In the end, Antoni loses his sight, and the electricity produced by the work of his muscles illuminates the streets and houses of the city:

> Along with the coal,
> Antoni throws part of his eyes into the furnace
> He makes the flames red with his own blood

It's well known:
The result was born of man,
Of man too, light on earth.[31]

Bogusz made ten small drawings illustrating the individual verses of the poem.[32] As in the poem, the motif of the eye serves as a linchpin. In the opening drawing of the series, we see a collage composed of images of the city and eyes. The next drawing, entitled *House* (*Dom*), shows an empty room, at the centre of which there is a table with a lamp shining above it, and the form of the lightbulb resembles a pair of eyes. The poetic metaphor of Antoni, who 'melted his eyes into the blueness of the flame', is illustrated rather literally, and yet the great strength of the work lies precisely in this literalness.[33] In one of the last illustrations, the reality of the camp seems to enter into the space of the poem with ever greater force: an emaciated figure, reminiscent of a skeleton, can be seen in the picture, with arms outstretched in a gesture of helplessness, revealing black holes of empty eye sockets. 'I am blind', announces the sentence written beneath in capital letters. I have nothing, adds the gesture of the hopelessly dangling hands. The effect of Bogusz's drawings relies on their simplicity and synthetic character. The motif of blindness and of the injured eye was echoed in later works, such as the 1947 drawing entitled *Covered Eyes* (*Przesłonięte oczy*), in which the artist represented himself in the form of a bust, once again exchanging subject and object positions. His left eye is covered from above by a hand that seems to be none other than the hand of God.[34]

Of all the surviving works by Bogusz from the period when he was in Mauthausen, none refers directly to camp life. Those described above undoubtedly come closest to documenting life behind barbed wire, such as *Exhausted* (*Zmęczony*) or *Without Hope*, but even these drawings do not contain direct references that would immediately identify the figures represented in them as camp prisoners. Bogusz did not talk about his experience directly, but as though only when the occasion presented itself, while getting to the bottom of other stories. Georges Didi-Huberman claimed that images produced in concentration camps are only legible from an appropriate ethical perspective, which—in spite of all—allows for the unknown to be situated in time by the use of other words and images.[35] Looking askance, rather than looking directly, positioning pictures in unlikely contexts or creating new constellations out of them, is the ethical challenge with which Didi-Huberman presents the contemporary viewer. In light of these considerations, the story about the worker losing his sight in Wolker's poem, as interpreted by Bogusz, contains the experience of the concentration camp and is perhaps also a testimony of the powerlessness of the author of the drawings, who was unable to recount directly on the one hand, while, on the other, was unable to remain silent. The mutual dependency between Wolker's and Bogusz's narratives is not a straightforward relation based on substitution, in which one story takes the place of another, but rather they are told together, seeping into one another. The illustrations for Wolker's poem were provided with an inscription, legible at first glance—'Mauthausen 1944'—whose presence on the margins of the drawing has the effect of making it immediately lose its innocence. If we read the poem askance, from the perspective of Mauthausen, the story of the exploitation of the workers refers to the key question of forced labour in the socio-economic system constructed by the Nazis. Together with the Third Reich's war effort, which engaged a majority of men in battle on the front, there was an increased need for workers able to strengthen strategic branches of the German economy such as farming and heavy industry. This was why, over the course of time, the SS began to transform itself into an organisation that incorporated genocide into its modern business model.[36] All these factors were woven together in relation to the problem of architecture in Bogusz's aforementioned utopian vision. The Mauthausen camp was not only strongly associated with German industry, but, more importantly, its operation was directly linked to the ambitious architectural projects undertaken by the main architect of the Third Reich, Albert Speer. Building materials, particularly granite, marble, and limestone, were prized ideological markers in Nazi aesthetics, as they evoked imperial splendour and suggested associations with ancient Rome, coveted by the Nazis.[37] Construction was one of the most dynamic sectors in the Third Reich's economy.[38] According to research carried out by Paul Jaskot, under Adolf Hitler's government, the construction trade developed at a faster pace than the economy as a whole.[39] This was also why it came to be a strategic focal point for combatting

unemployment: 'In 1932, two million marks were invested in the construction industry, a figure which had increased to nine million by 1936, with the number of employed workers [rising to] two million'.[40] As a result of such a swift increase in production, by 1936 it was a shortage of workforce, rather than unemployment that became the burning problem, which was resolved during the war by the exploitation of the prisoners of concentration camps for forced labour.[41] The need for building materials rose accordingly.[42] The system whereby building materials, mostly stone, were delivered by concentration camps such as those in Flossenbürg or Mauthausen had been institutionalised at the time of the founding of Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke GmbH (DEST) in 1938.[43] The company was responsible, among other things, for producing and managing stone extraction. The organisation's report of 1940 claimed that the main objective of DEST was to put the prisoners of concentration camps to work producing building materials.[44] The growing need for stone was doubtless the cause for the sudden visit made by Heinrich Himmler and other high-ranking Nazis to the quarries surrounding Mauthausen almost immediately after the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, and the decision to establish a camp there.[45] The granite and marble quarried by the prisoners of Mauthausen and Gusen was to provide material for Speer's monumental projects, such as the Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg and the planned remodelling of Berlin.

The architecture of Mauthausen was itself a means of prisoner oppression. The camp's monumental stone 'security' gate expressed the crushing ideological message of fortified architecture with a show of symbolic force. Moreover, the prisoners were forced into deadly work on the construction of the camp. In collages published shortly after the liberation of the camp in 1946, Mauthausen survivor Simon Wiesenthal represented it from the perspective of a prisoner, whose sensitive and mindful gaze transformed the stone blocks of the camp tower walls into the skeletons and skulls of murdered prisoners.[46] As in Wolker's poem, here too, objects become the bearers of human suffering.

In aesthetic terms, the architecture proposed by Bogusz in his International Artists' Settlement, light, modern, and functional, was the decided opposite of the oppressive, fortified architecture of the camp. Faith in modernity was, for the artist, not only an aesthetic but also an ethical credo. The modern architecture proposed by Bogusz—sparing in its expressive means and, above all, open to the surrounding nature—implied liberation from the weight of history. The settlement was planned in such a way as to both stimulate creativity and sensitivity, as well as to facilitate the construction of new interpersonal relations. In this respect, Bogusz's project relates to the modernist utopias of the beginning of the twentieth century. It was just this sort of architecture—modern, constructed of steel and glass, making it possible to cut oneself off from the past and to begin life anew, from zero—that was also the object of reflection in Walter Benjamin's essay 'Experience and Poverty', published in 1933. Benjamin compared two types of interiors: the excessively comfortable bourgeois salon, oversaturated with meanings; and the modern, transparent home, representative of an architecture that enables one to liberate oneself from the stigma of past habits, fulfilling Benjamin's reading of Brecht's dictum: 'Erase the traces!'.[47] More than a decade later, Bogusz harboured similar dreams, though he took as his negative point of reference the oppressive architecture of the camp in Mauthausen, rather than bourgeois home furnishings. Considering the project for the artists' settlement from a contemporary point of view, marked strongly by debates about the forms of representation appropriate to concentration camps, the imposition of life and creativity in a place of death and genocide—this Brechtian 'erasure of traces'—may seem inappropriate. But one can also see the project from another perspective. The situation of the settlement for artists on the site of the former concentration camp connects two archetypal functions of architecture: as tomb and as home.[48] An ambivalence connecting death and life can be seen in all Bogusz's camp work.

Though the power of the artist's imagination recorded on sheets of paper is striking, one nonetheless wonders how it was possible to dream the dream of a modernist utopia in a concentration camp, a place whose existence erased the very meaning of utopian thinking, for many. In recalling, by way of his sketches, the dreams of the pre-war avant-garde, Bogusz was pursuing dreams that were not so much anachronistic as universal (notably predating the

avant-garde itself): dreams of emancipation.[49] And even if we find traces and echoes of the past, often already defeated postulates of the first avant-garde, these were not simply the same propositions, for the reality in which they came into being was entirely different. Nevertheless, it is significant, particularly from the perspective of the later development of the artist's creative practice, that it was specifically the language of modernity that became the language of emancipation for him.

In the aforementioned letter to Munoz, Bogusz wrote of the project:

These everyday conversations awakened an imagination that was distant from the daily roll-call, the smell of the crematorium. It was a tank, which made us resistant to psychic breakdown and being flattened into a state of slavish torpor and bestiality. Leaving nothing but the chimney. But we did not forget how to think. We were 'superhumans', because we had our own internal life, our own idea … and they could not destroy it, even though they destroyed life physically, because, within our idea of an international artists' settlement was man, humanity—thinking about everyone.[50]

Seeking to describe the role that art played for concentration camp prisoners, Brett Kaplan coined the term 'esthetic survival'.[51] The scholar cited, among others, the example of Charlotte Delbo, who, while a prisoner in Auschwitz, exchanged her ration of bread for a Molière play. Delbo was worried she might lose her memory, and so she read the play as many times as it took for her to learn the entire text, which she would then recite in her mind during the camp roll-calls.[52] In a manner similar to Bogusz's case, artistic activity was not only a way to break out of the brutal routine of camp life but also a space for establishing one's humanity.

Alain Badiou has cited Warłam Szałamow: man, as opposed to the horse, is an example of an animal whose strength of resistance lies not in his fragile body but in his determination to remain who he is, which is 'something other than a mortal being'.[53] In the framework of Badiou's philosophical conception, man 'goes beyond the condition of the animal', remaining faithful to the event, in so far as the event is understood to be a supplement that cannot be inscribed into the framework of the given situation (the French Revolution or the music of Arnold Schönberg are examples of events for him).[54] Fidelity to the event means the pursuit of the ethics of truth, whose principles the French philosopher formulates in the following terms: 'Do all that you can to persevere in that which exceeds your perseverance'.[55]

Bogusz remained faithful to art, to the postulates of modern art, and it was in accordance with these that he sought to reorganise post-war reality after his return to Warsaw, through the House of the Polish Army (Dom Wojska Polskiego) and the newfound institute the Club of Young Artists and Scientists (Klub Młodych Artystów i Naukowców), which became a platform for understanding and discussing questions of modern art. One of his best-known works of this period is entitled *The Joy of New Constructions* (1948); it radiates what Mieczysław Porębski once called the Cubist 'joy of constructive activity'.[56]

In 1948, Felicjan Szczęsny Kowarski, an artist connected to the older generation of Polish post-Impressionists, set out to work on the unfinished series *Ghetto* (*Getto*). One of the surviving sketches from the series, entitled *On the Threshold of the House* (*Na progu domu*), represents a ruined brick house with empty window panes hanging down from their frames, with a broken-down door, which can be seen as a kind of inverse of the utopian visions of Bogusz. Impeding the entrance is a dead body lying on the threshold of the house, represented in abrupt foreshortening, all but reduced to a stain. The picture is constructed in such a way that the viewer somewhat instinctively adopts the position of the person entering the house. But it is unclear who the victim lying on the floor might be. Is it the owner of the house, or a casual passer-by? And who, then, is the person standing on the threshold: a returning inhabitant, or a new occupant? Faith in a new world, indispensable in the construction of homes, was an expression of the victory of life over death. Kowarski's drawing is a reminder that all new houses are also the houses of the dead. In this sense, it complements the vision of Bogusz, whose imagined settlement of artists was to be erected on the site of the death of the prisoners of Mauthausen.

Translated by Klara Kemp-Welch

1   Bożena Kowalska, *Bogusz – artysta i animator* (Pleszew: Muzeum Regionalne w Pleszewie, Pleszewskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne, 2007), pp. 13–14. Marian Bogusz's creative activities spanned many fields. He was not only an artist but also, and perhaps above all, an organiser of artistic life, and his legendary temperament was the driving force of many artistic initiatives from below: *plein-airs*, symposia, galleries, and clubs. Bogusz's legacy is extraordinarily rich and multi-faceted, consisting in painting, drawing, sculpture, as well as architectural projects and numerous graphic and theatre designs. A posthumous monographic exhibition of Bogusz's work was held in 1982 at the National Museum of Poznań; its organisers were the first to try to unite the artist's heterogeneous oeuvre. Maria Dąbrowska and Irena Moderska (eds.), *Marian Bogusz (1920–1980). Wystawa monograficzna*, exhibition catalogue (Poznań: Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, 1982).

2   Aleksander Wojciechowski, 'Introduction', in Dąbrowska and Moderska (eds.), *Marian Bogusz (1920–1980),* unpaginated. Aksander Wojciechowski (1922–2006), was an art historian and art critic. From 1950 to 1991 he was the director of the Modern Art Research Atelier at the Institute of Art in the Polish Academy of Science (Pracownia Plastyki Współcz. Inst. Sztuki PAN). In the years 1979–88 he was also the director of the Polish section of the International Association of Art Critics, AICA.

3   Adam Ważyk, 'Pozycja artysty', *Odrodzenie* 8/9 (1944): p. 6.

4   Ważyk, 'Pozycja artysty', p. 6.

5   Ważyk, 'Pozycja artysty', p. 6.

6   The poem by Adam Ważyk titled 'Poem for Adults' ('Poemat dla dorosłych') was published in the journal *Nowa Kultura* (*New Culture*) on 28 August 1955 and is considered one of the first public critiques of Stalinism and Socialist Realism in Poland.

7   Tony Judt, *Post War. A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Pimlico, 2007), pp. 22–40.

8   Jerzy Putrament, 'Warszawa w lutym', in Jan Górski (ed.), *Pamięć warszawskiej odbudowy 1945–1949. Antologia* (Warsaw: PIW, 1972), pp. 83–84.

9   Dirk Auer, 'Theorists in Exile: Adorno's and Arendt's Reflections on the Place of the Intellectual', in Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesha (eds.), *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 239.

10   Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2000), p. 162.

11   Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in David Farrell Krell (ed.), *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 363. Also quoted in Samir Gandesha, 'Leaving Home: On Adorno and Heidegger', in Tom Huhn (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 121.

12   Samir Gandesha, 'Homeless Philosophy: The Exile of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Exile', in Rensmann and Gandesha (eds.), *Arendt and Adorno*, p. 279.

13   Kornel Filipowicz, 'Dom nad rzeką', in Filipowicz, *Krajobraz niewzruszony* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1947), p. 150.

14   Bogusz also produced works on the theme of war, including: *Ściany kul kwitną twarzami* (1965–1966), mixed media, 48.5 x 72 cm. Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, Lublin; from the series *Listy z Getta – Wspominam ściany synagogi* (1965–1966), mixed media, tin, wood, 114 x 166 cm. Muzeum Ziemi Lubuskiej, Zielona Góra. See: Bożena Kowalska, *Bogusz – artysta i animator*, pp. 95–96.

15   *Wystawa Mariana Bogusza: Wizje architektoniczne 1944–1945. Projekt osiedla artystów 1979*, exhibition catalogue, Galeria Autorska „ZA" (Rawka, 1979), p. 13.

16   Marian Bogusz, letter to Emmanuel Muñoz. Reprinted in *Wystawa Mariana Bogusza*, exhibition catalogue, p. 6.

17   My account of Bogusz's war-time fate is from Janina Jaworska, *Nie wszystek umrę… Twórczość plastyczna Polaków w hitlerowskich więzieniach i obozach koncentracyjnych 1939–1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975), pp. 65–66.

18   Jaworska, *Nie wszystek umrę*, pp. 65–66.

19   'As I already mentioned, the camp to which they brought those who were sick was in an unfinished state. Bringing particular buildings and the terrain itself to a useable standard demanded many interventions, which were, in turn, associated in some way with organisation. The *Baubüro* was best positioned to help. Promoted to the position of Kapo … Henryk Matuskiewicz, a Pole [along with] Marian Bogusz and Mieczysław Ładno …

helped the employees of the camp for the sick to amass materials. Paving curbs to mark out the streets in the camp, paint, finishing materials flowed into the camp from their stores'. Stefan Krukowski, *Nad pięknym, modrym Dunajem. Mauthausen 1940–1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1966), pp. 254–255.

20   Jaworska, *Nie wszystek umrę*, p. 65.

21   Henryk Waniek, 'Absolwent Mauthausen', *Twórczość* 7 (2009): pp. 145–46.

22   Jaworska, *Nie wszystek umrę*, p. 65.

23   Jaworska, *Nie wszystek umrę*, p. 65.

24   Aldo Carpi, *Dziennik z Gusen* (Warszawa: Replika, 2009), p. 48.

25   Jaworska, *Nie wszystek umrę*, p. 65.

26   Jaworska, *Nie wszystek umrę*, p. 69.

27   Bogusz recalled three exhibitions, Dłubak two. See: Jaworska, *Nie wszystek umrę*, p. 69; Zbigniew Dłubak and Piotr Filipkowski, 'Wywiad Ze Zbigniewem Dłubakiem', *Obieg* 1 (2006): pp. 52–60.

28   Political activity in the camp was recalled by another Mauthausen prisoner: Kazimierz Rusinek, 'Introduction', in Jiří Wolker, *Gorączka zielone ślepia ma* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1985), pp. 8–9.

29   Jiří Wolker (1900–1924) was one of the best-known Czech poets, author of poems that were politically engaged and inspired by folklore and the Romantic tradition. Citations from 'The Ballad of the Soldier's Eyes' ('Balada o očích topičových') given here are from Wolker, *Gorączka zielone ślepia ma.*

30   Wolker, 'Balada o očích topičových', p. 16–18.

31   Wolker, 'Balada o očích topičových', pp. 30–31.

32   The sketches are now in the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw (Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie).

33   Wolker, 'Balada o očích topičových', p. 38.

34   *Covered Eyes* (*Przesłonięte oczy*, 1947), ink, paper. Muzeum Okręgowe w Radomiu, Radom.

35   'Den Bildern der Konzentrationslager l..t sich ihre Lesbarkeit troztallem nur zurückgeben, wenn wir einer Ethik folgen, die da lautet da. Wir vor dem Unbenennbaren, Namenlosen unermüdlich weiterschreiben, mit anderem Worten: es immer wieder verzeitlichen'. Georges Didi-Huberman, 'Das öffnen der Lager und das Schließen der Augen', in Ludger Schwarte (ed.), *Auszug aus dem Lager: Zur Überwindung des modernen Raumparadigmas in der politischen Philosophie*, trans. Eveline Passet (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2007), p. 24.

36   Michael Thad Allen, *Buisness of a Genocide: The SS, Slave Labor and the Concentration Camps* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), pp. 58–72.

37   Paul B. Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression: The SS, Forced Labor and the Nazi Monumental Building Economy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 17. See also: Alex Scobie, *Hitler's State Architecture. The Impact of Classical Antiquity,* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990).

38   Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression*, p. 11.

39   Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression*, p. 11.

40   Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression*, p. 16.

41   Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression*, p. 16.

42   Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression*, p. 19.

43   Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression*, pp. 21–29. See also: Allen, *Buisness of a Genocide*, pp. 58–71.

44   Cited in Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression*, p. 22.

45   Rudolf A. Haunschmied, Jan-Ruth Mills, and Siegi Witzany-Durda, *St. Georgen – Gusen – Mauthausen: Concentration Camp Mauthausen Reconsidered* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2007), p. 49.

46   Simon Wiesenthal, *KZ Mauthausen* (Linz: Ibis Verlag, 1946).

47   Walter Benjamin, 'Experience and Poverty', in Michael W. Jennings (ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Vol. 2 1927–1934* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 734. See also: Esther Leslie, *Derelicts: Thought Worms from the Wreckage* (London: Unkant Publishers, 2013), pp. 21–22.

48 'But if tombs themselves are always forms of architecture, so too is the womb, the very cradle of life. And if architecture is associated with death, it is also associated with life'. Neil Leach, *Camouflage* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), p. 220.

49 Leslie, *Derelicts*, pp. iii–vi.

50 Marian Bogusz, letter to Emmanuel Muñoz, cited in *Wystawa Mariana Bogusza*, exhibition catalogue, p. 6.

51 Brett Ashley Kaplan, *Unwanted Beauty. Aesthetic Pleasure in Holocaust Representation* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

52 Kaplan, *Unwanted Beauty*, p. 39.

53 Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (London: Verso, 2001), p. 11.

54 Badiou, *Ethics*, p. 11.

55 Badiou, *Ethics,* p. 47.

56 Cited in Piotr Juszkiewicz, 'Powrót do innej przyszłości. Zmiana koncepcji obrazu *w* myśli Mieczysława Porębskiego (1948, 1957)', *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 38 (2013), p. 54.