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## *Design priorities on the example of the modernization of Abram Gurewicz Health Resort in Otwock*

### *Introduction*

Theory and practice in the field of architecture rarely go hand in hand. Theory does not want to tolerate the compromises of practice, while the latter does not very often look at the deliberations of the former. The following article presents the process of interpenetration of these two issues aimed at implementing the best practical solutions based on earlier research.

### *Nadświderzańska architecture – the genesis, definition*

The name of Nadświderzańska architecture is used to define objects with a summer function, occurring within the so-called “region of the historical Otwock line”<sup>1</sup>. The popular name “Świdermajer” was given to them later, and it was recorded and made famous in 1949 in the poem *Trip to Świder* by Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński. Adam Miłobędzki notes the influence of Swiss patterns on the construction of summer resorts, including those in the suburbs of Warsaw, at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries due to the expansion of railway junctions, including

the Warsaw–Vienna railway [3, pp. 295, 296]. The Alpine style appeared in the present territory of Poland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in an eclectic-historical version, which only freely referred to the vernacular architecture of the Alpine region. This process is already related to a completely new social system, which is part of the modern world of railways, mass tourism and democratic changes. With time, the “Alpine style” objects began to move further away from their models. The role of ornamentation has increased, and the remnants of the original architectural features of the Alpine region are the prominent roof eaves and balconies under the gables. The summer resort architecture, with its roots originating from the objects found in the mountains, began to appear regardless of the topography, e.g. in Ciechocinek or Międzyzdroje [4, p. 232]. According to Aleksander Wojciechowski, it was [...] *the most universal and cosmopolitan style of wooden architecture* (after: [5, p. 102]). Marek Olkuśnik, in his cross-sectional work on tourism in Europe at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, mentions the characteristic way of building summer resorts near Warsaw, criticized, mocked and ridiculed by the then elite as excessively oriental and decorated [6, pp. 206–208]. However, when comparing the “Świdermajer” architectural objects with, for example, the objects of neo-Russian style of dachas near Moscow and near Petersburg, the examples from the suburbs of Warsaw clearly show greater modesty and economy in the expression of decorations, or more modest articulation of the walls (there is no construction of round log walls, such as in *Pogodin’s House* by Nikolai Nitkin).

### *The purpose and the method*

The purpose of this paper can be divided into two groups. In the first part, the intention of the text is to present Abram Gurewicz Health Resort in Otwock as a non-

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Krajewski determines the range of the occurrence of the Nadświderzańska architecture as an area along the so-called Otwock line from Śródborów to Wawer [1, p. 127]. Today they are: Anin, Międzyzlesie, Radość, Zbójna Góra, Miedzeszyn, Falenica, Michalin, Emilianów, Józefów, Świder, Otwock. Robert Lewandowski extends the list of towns to include Daków, Miedzeszyn Nowy, Emilianów, Rycice, Anielin vel Jarosław, Świder with the health resorts of Otwock, Błota, Nowa Wieś, Świdry Małe, Świdry Wielkie and Celestynów; however, the author in his research does not distinguish the changing, with time, names of places, using the valid addresses [2, p. 41].

typical but also unique example of Nadświdrzańska architecture, present on a large scale, with an additive, randomly shaped body. Another goal of this study is to revalue the concept of decoration in Nadświdrzańska architecture because the decorations in verandas can be something more than just ornaments and constitute one of the main identity factors of Nadświdrzańska architecture. The second group of the goals of this work is to present the process of reconstruction of Abram Gurewicz Health Resort in the context of the situation in that facility existing in 2015 and to present design priorities behind the modernization.

A comparative analysis of the features of Abram Gurewicz Health Resort against the background of other buildings of the Nadświdrzańska architecture will be carried out, with particular emphasis on buildings of a similar scale and similarities in the shape of the body. Next, there will be a distinction between ornament and decoration in the Nadświdrzańska architecture and the key role of open-work decorations on verandas in defining the architecture under discussion will be indicated. In the second part of the text, specific features will be compared with the actual technical condition of the facility before the reconstruction, and the modernization process will be described based on the preservation of three identities: function, form and material.

#### Researchers

Andrzej Cichy dealt with the periodization of buildings, the development of a typology of formwork, and pointed to its role as one of the style features of this architecture [7, p. 35]. Robert Lewandowski is a popularizer of the architecture of the region, in his

studies he deals with Michał Elwiro Andriolli, the genesis and area of occurrence of the phenomenon in question [2, pp. 35–47]. Adam Krajewski in his works defines the region of its origin, discusses its individual elements, deals with its periodization and attempts to define the architecture of the Vistula river and points to its Swiss-Russian genesis [1, pp. 127–141]. Jerzy Szałygin [8, pp. 216–238], Marcin Górski [9, pp. 72–75] together with Wiktor Lach [10, pp. 6–25], [11, pp. 5–20] are defining the characteristic features. Ewa Pustola-Kozłowska wrote about urban changes in the region [12, p. 11]. Iwona Trzcińska dealt with the social impact of so called “Świdermajer” architecture [13, pp. 11–15, 75]. Agnieszka Szurek wrote about Otwock in the context of visiting trends in other holiday resorts in Poland and around the world [14, p. 75]. Agnieszka Woško-Czeraniakowska created drawing charts with over a series of examples of façade compositions, formwork, porch structure and a list of formwork ends [15, pp. 108–113].

#### Extension

##### *Abram Gurewicz Health Resort against the background of the features of Nadświdrzańska Architecture*

Marcin Górski carried out a comprehensive and clear analysis of the features of Nadświdrzańska architecture in the case of the building in question [9, pp. 72–75]. Abram Gurewicz Health Resort was created in 1906–1943. From a single “Gurewiczanka” villa, it grew by adding more wings and merging several objects (Fig. 1). “Gurewiczanka”, already after the plan, the location of the entrance and

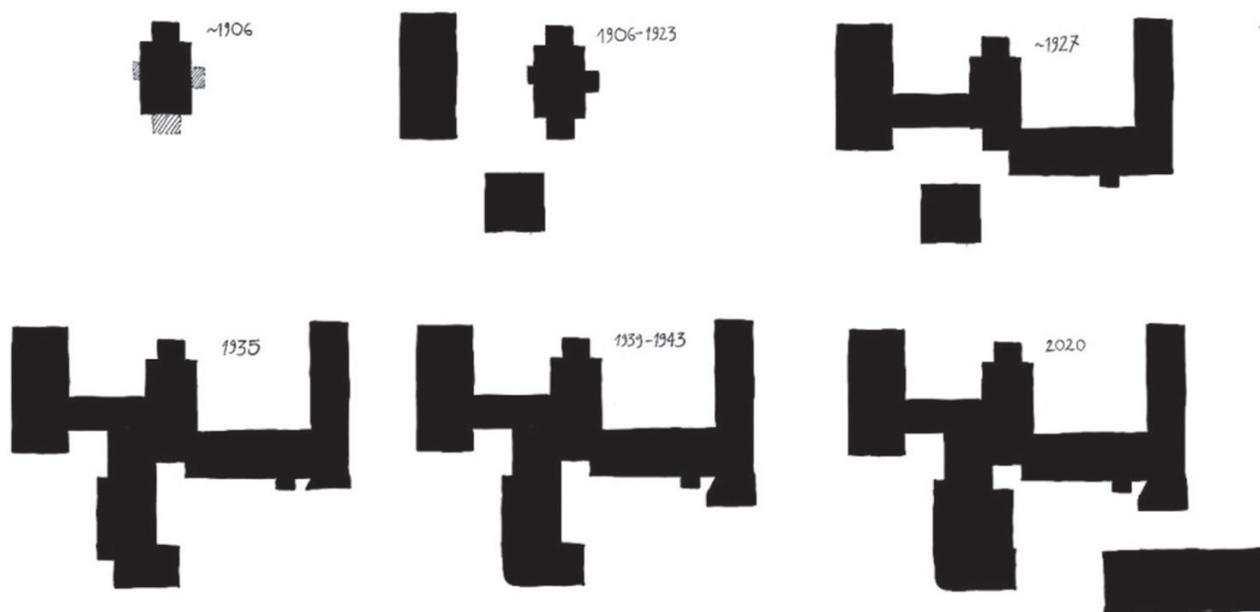


Fig. 1. Following stages of development of Abram Gurewicz Health Resort in Otwock.

It can be seen how the typical shape of “Nadświdrzańska” Architecture in the case of villa “Gurewiczanka” (~1906–1923) was continuously developing in a much richer shape. The three separate facilities were connected by wings in the years 1927–1935 (drawing T. Trzupek)

Il. 1. Kolejne etapy rozwoju Uzdrawiska Abrama Gurewicza w Otwocku.

Typowy kształt architektury „nadświdrzańskiej” w przypadku willi „Gurewiczanka” (~1906–1923)

przemieniał się w znacznie bardziej złożoną formę. Trzy odrębne obiekty połączono skrzydłami w latach 1927–1935 (rys. T. Trzupek)

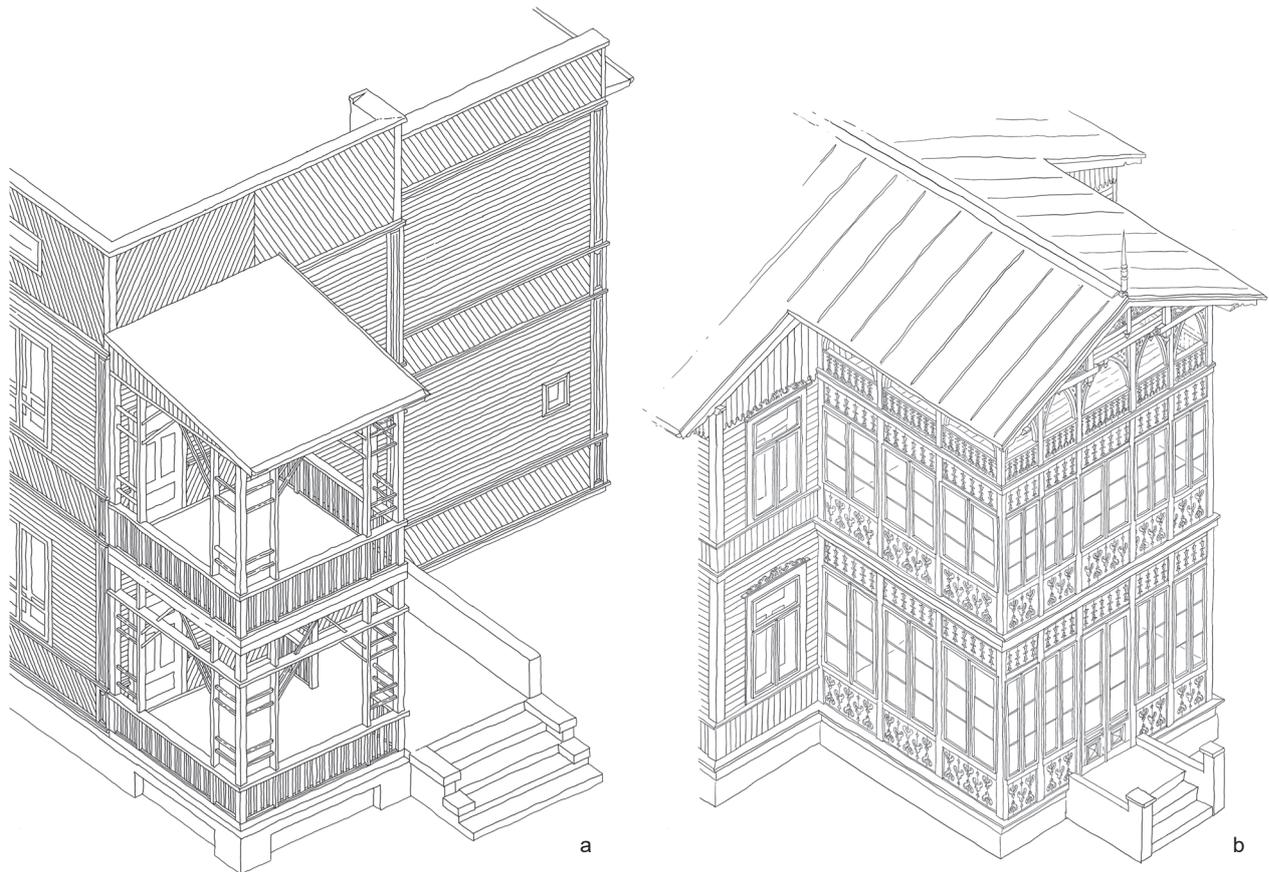


Fig. 2. Comparison of verandas:

- a) „Willa u Dziadka” (Otwock, 43/47 Mickiewicza Street),  
 b) Abram Gurewicz Health Resort (Otwock, 8 Armii Krajowej Street).  
 The first one was seriously remodelled in the 1970s (drawing T. Trzupek)

II. 2. Porównanie werand:

- a) „Willa u Dziadka” (Otwock, ul. Mickiewicza 43/47),  
 b) uzdrowisko Abrama Gurewicza (Otwock, ul. Armii Krajowej 8).  
 Pierwsza została poważnie przebudowana w latach 70. XX w. (rys. T. Trzupek)

the veranda, resembles the characteristic shapes of other “Świdermajer” objects with a similar scale and principles of shaping the body. The complex obtained its individual character after numerous reconstructions, multiplying the typical features of Nadświdrzańska architecture, such as: additivity or stepped character of the blocks.

In the architecture of the so-called “Świdermajer” objects, verandas are their main architectural distinguishing feature. They come in many different variants. There are 1-, 2- and 3-level, polygonal, glazed and stepped verandas. The front façade of verandas usually had 3 or 5 modules (an even number of pillars), the side façade usually had 2 modules (3 pillars). In addition to verandas, there are also entrance porches, turrets, balconies, balcony terraces and loggias. There are also hipped roofs, mansard roofs, and roofs with angles clearly exceeding 30°, verandas appear in different numbers and in different places. Both of the presented examples (Fig. 2) are unusual and therefore meaningful. Villa “U Dziadka” is specific due to the asymmetrically located entrance, simplified detail or the use of a shed roof. The inter-window strips have obliquely arranged formwork, and the boards that fill the

balustrades are straight, the decorative effect is obtained by interchangeably using a wide and narrow profile. The veranda in the Abram Gurewicz Health Resort building is also unusual, it is extended by another, non-usable level, added later. In the archival photos, the height of the veranda’s roof is lower than the roof above the building’s body. The veranda is closed and glazed, the openings in the balustrades are built-up. There are also external stairs here, this time located centrally.

The main function of the architecture under analysis were living quarters, intended for rent in the summer<sup>2</sup>. Hence the need for several multi-storey structures to allow all guests to enter their own part of the veranda. The buildings were entered through a small porch to the staircase from which you could get to a 2.5-track system with

<sup>2</sup> Some claim that Nadświdrzańska architecture assumed the functions of schools, hospitals, sanatoriums and health resorts as well as private residential houses, but the first two uses are not confirmed in reality. In fact, the building at 101 Kraszewskiego Street in Otwock was used as a primary school, although it was not designed for that purpose, but only adapted after the war [8, p. 365].

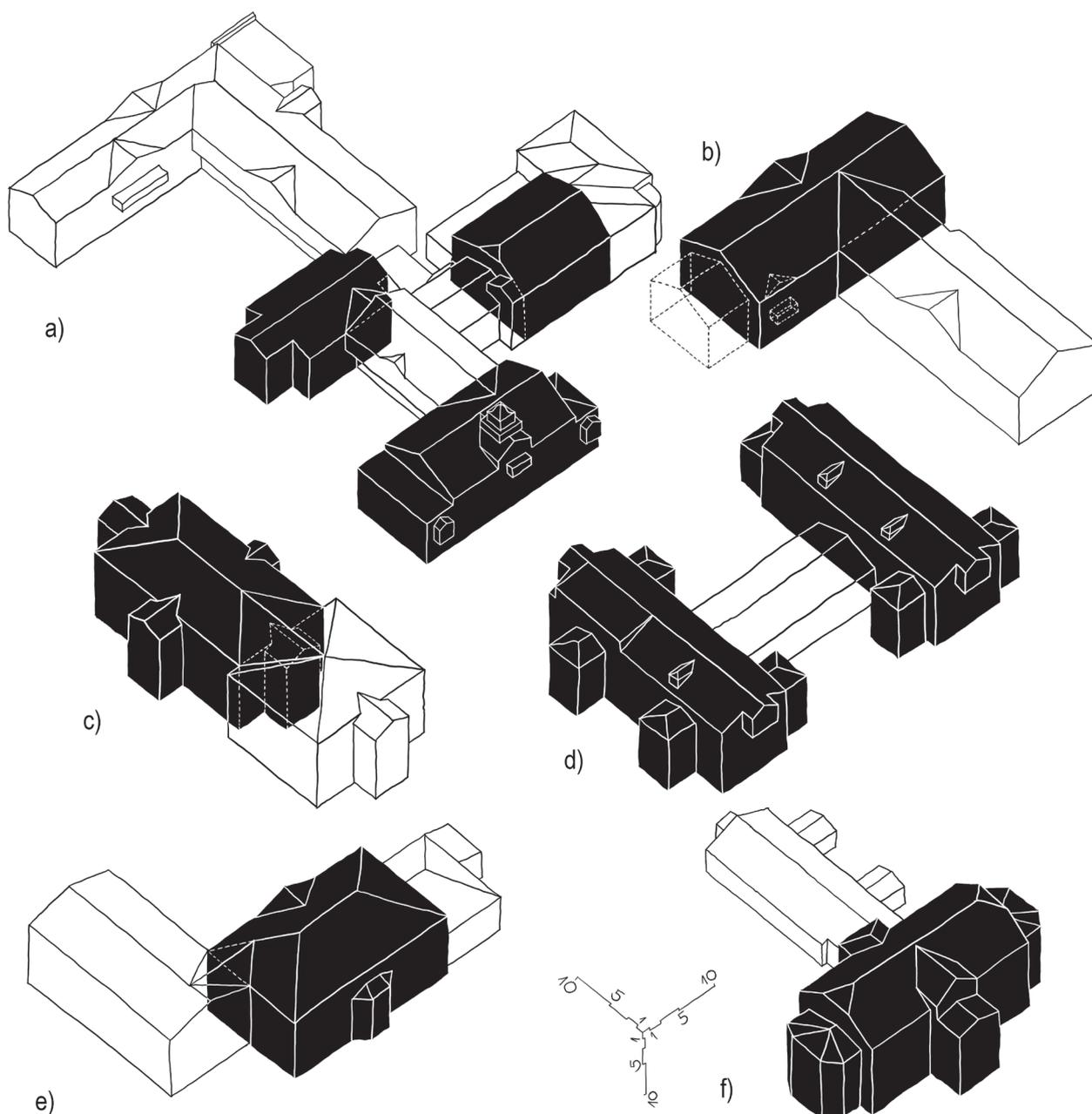


Fig. 3. Axonometry of buildings with complex shapes: a) Abram Gurewicz Health Resort, 8 Armii Krajowej Street (early 1906), b) Dr Przygoda Sanatorium, 5 Warszawska Street (1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century), c) 10 Moniuszki Street (1929), d) 24 Zaciszna Street (approx. 1920), e) 13A Samorządowa Street, Villa „Nowość II”, f) 5 Kościuszki Street (before 1893). All facilities are located in Otwock. The black forms are in fact examples of the most typical solid structures in the Nadświdrzańska architecture, they can be distinguished in much richer and complex shapes of bigger objects (drawing T. Trzupek)

Il. 3. Aksonometrie budynków o złożonych kształtach: a) Uzdrawisko Abrama Gurewicza, ul. Armii Krajowej 8 (pocz. 1906), b) Sanatorium Dr Przygody, ul. Warszawska 5 (1. ćw. XX w.), c) ul. Moniuszki 10 (1929), d) ul. Zaciszna 24 (ok. 1920), e) ul. Samorządowa 13A, willa „Nowość II”, f) ul. Kościuszki 5 (przed 1893 r.). Wszystkie obiekty znajdują się w Otwocku. Podkreślenie części brył przez zaczerwienie ma wydobyć najbardziej typowe układy brył w architekturze nadświdrzańskiej. Są one odnajdywalne w znacznie bogatszych i złożonych zespołach brył (rys. T. Trzupek)

a corridor in the middle. On the side of the entrance porch there were kitchens and bathrooms, and on the front and side there were rooms for rent and verandas. Comparing the shape of the primary object – Villa “Gurewiczanka” it was initially similar, but due to growth of whole complex, the typical arrangements started to change.

The dominant building materials were pine and oak wood for the foundations. The construction of the walls

of the ground floor was post-log, the structure of the first floor was skeletal (the discussed example of Abram Gurewicz Health Resort). The insulation was often made of compacted needles, clay, straw and wood shavings. The interiors were finished with rough boards covered with plaster on reeds. The outer plinth of the building was about 40–60 cm high and was made of brick, sometimes it was plastered. Simple purlin and purlin-collar systems do-

minated in the roofs covered with light tar paper or asbestos cement. Gutters and finishing were made of zinc sheets<sup>3</sup> [7, pp. 36–40], [10, pp. 10–25], [1, pp. 134–138], [8, p. 366].

The formwork, its dimensions and profile are an important element when considering the features of the Nadświdrzańska architecture. There were two horizontal friezes: window friezes and inter-story friezes. The upper part, located on the knee wall, had a vertical formwork direction and was finished with decorative cut-outs. The corners of the building were additionally accentuated with moldings. The decoration was also present in fillings of balustrades, under and over the windows, window frames, shutters in protruding eaves of gable walls and verandas, and in fillings of veranda structures [7, pp. 36–40].

In most of the summer houses in Otwock, the façades were impregnated with linseed oil. The villas were also painted in light colors: light aquamarine, pink, white, pale yellow, light beige, azure, various shades of gray. Sanatoriums and treatment facilities were painted in light gray and white (e.g., Abram Gurewicz Health Resort). The schedule of conservation works on the discussed complex contains conclusions from stratigraphic studies, which show that at the end of the 1920s the Health Resort was white and gray. In the 1920s, when the extension of the guesthouse was completed, all wings were unified. The façades were designed in a very light gray color scheme, with the exception of white windows [11, p. 20]. The composition of the body of a typical building consisted of the main body founded on a brick foundation and verandas added on three sides in a skeleton structure. Attics, usually usable, with a knee wall, were covered with a gable roof (with a slope of within 30°) protruding beyond the gable wall and centrally crossing the roof of a small avant-corps. There were dormers in the roof slope illuminating the attic rooms. The buildings are characterized by a fragmented body shaped by adding smaller ones, covered with a separate, gable roof.

Abram Gurewicz Health Resort is an unusual example among other buildings of Nadświdrzańska architecture. By juxtaposing its body with objects of a similar scale, one can see the randomness of this system compared to other objects, and at the same time it is possible to find some similarities. It is possible to distinguish characteristic modules repeated in the solids, which are in fact examples of the most typical solid structures in Nadświdrzańska architecture (Fig. 3). In the case of Abram Gurewicz Health Resort under analysis, these were three separate facilities connected by wings in the years 1927–1935. In Figure 3 there is also the newest intervention, which does not disturb the characteristics of the form.

### ***The issue of ornament and decoration in the Nadświdrzańska architecture***

The problem of ornamentation in the Nadświdrzańska architecture occurs with virtually every attempt to define

<sup>3</sup> There is also information about other species such as spruce and larch.

it, for many researchers it is identity factor of this buildings<sup>4</sup> [10, pp. 16, 17], [1, pp. 133–136], [8, p. 366]. An interesting distinction is made by Antonio Monestiroli by separating the concepts of decoration and ornament. According to Monestiroli, decoration, in the Vitruvian approach, consists in searching for forms appropriate for a given building, and “building elements take representative forms” and become inextricably linked with the whole. Ornament, as understood by Monestiroli, is something secondary to architecture, it functions in the form of “stage directions”, leading its own narrative, often not directly related to the building<sup>5</sup> [16, p. 37].

The issue of ornaments in architecture had its ethical dimension from the very beginning of development of architectural theories. Architects and theorists such as Christopher Wren, Johann Bernhard Fisher von Erlach, Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, Walter Gropius and Adolf Loos emphasized, above all, the purposefulness of its use, connection with the material and they were critical of its various manifestations<sup>6</sup>. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the problem of ornament ceased to be so passionately discussed with the simultaneous increase in popularity of use and a complete change in the understanding of the problem of ornament in architecture, just to mention Daniel Liebeskind’s or Zaha Hadid’s works, where whole building appears as decoration/ornament.

The decorations appear in the so called “Świdermajer” architecture in the form of boards cut with a hair saw. One of the main features of the Nadświdrzańska architecture is the veranda, which was to be a buffer space between the interior of the building and the surrounding nature, and the openwork partitions were to filter the sun and constitute an additional membrane between man and the forest. The forms that the openwork decorations took are secondary to the role they played – they were aimed at bringing people closer to nature and at the same time separating them, and in this sense, located in the verandas, determined the sense of this architecture. Therefore, in the understanding of Monestiroli, cut-outs on verandas are decorations, and not only mere ornaments (Fig. 4).

### ***Modernization of the Abram Gurewicz Health Resort – the situation now***

Abram Gurewicz Health Resort in Otwock, designed by architects unknown to this day, is the largest preserved building representative of the so called “Świdermajer” architecture. The analysis of the issues described above shows that it is a non-typical example of the Nadświdrzańska architecture, occurring on a large scale, with

<sup>4</sup> Krajewski draws attention to the misuse of the concept of “wood-carving” (consisting of carving) in relation to ornamentation found in the Nadświdrzańska architecture, which is based on cutting with a hair saw (laubzega) [1, pp. 137, 138].

<sup>5</sup> The decorum principle was based on the compliance (unity) of the form with the content.

<sup>6</sup> Hakan Sağlam in his paper *Re-thinking the Concept of “Ornament” in Architectural Design* presents the attitudes of leading architects towards ornament from antiquity to the present day [17, pp. 126–133].

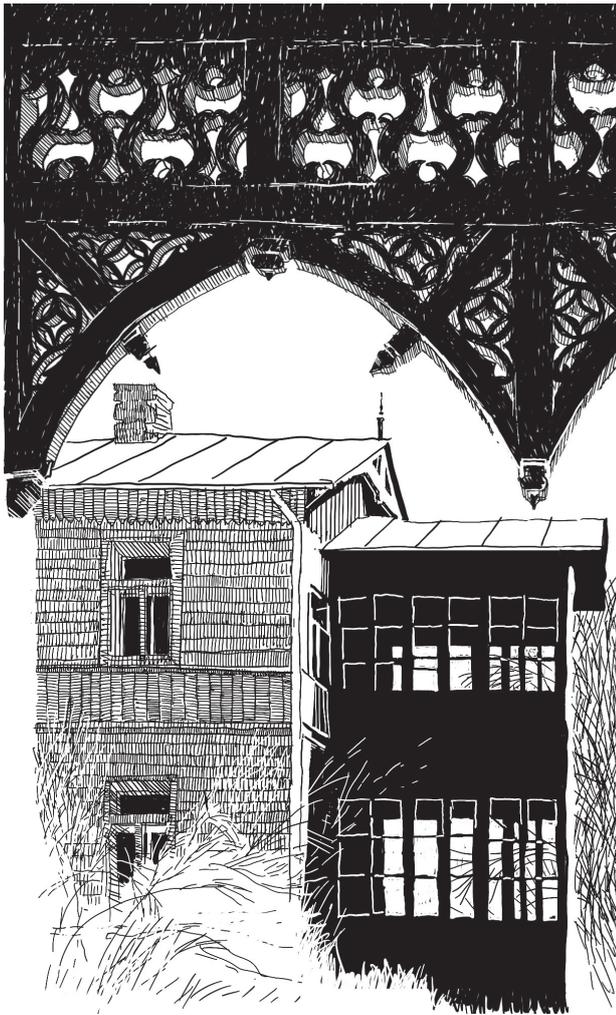


Fig. 4. Abram Gurewicz Health Resort – the verandas – one of the main features of the so called “Świdermajer” architecture, which were to separate and link the interior with the exterior in the same time.

In the understanding of A. Monestirolì, the cut-out wooden planks were decorations and not only mere ornaments (drawing T. Trzupek)

Il. 4. Uzdrowisko Abrama Gurewicza – werandy, jedna z głównych cech tzw. architektury świdermajer, jednocześnie miały oddzielać i łączyć wnętrze z zewnątrz.

W rozumieniu A. Monestiroliego wycinane deski były dekoracją, a nie tylko ornamentem (rys. T. Trzupek)

an additive, specifically shaped body. Its other features, such as colors, materials and façade composition, are characteristic of the Nadświdrzańska architecture as a group.

In 2015, when the preliminary works related to the modernization of the facility and its adaptation to a modern medical clinic were commenced, designers from the Warsaw-based Grupa 5 Architekci studio faced two major challenges. These translated into specific design decisions, supervised by the Masovian Conservator of Monuments, requiring a precise definition of priorities essential for maintaining the architectural character of the building.

The first issue concerned the existing building substance. During its several decades of history, the building changed its users and was rebuilt several times, including

even enlarging it during the Nazi occupation with additional brick segments referring to the style of reduction classicism, which was the official style of the Third Reich. After the pre-war period of splendor, when the building was a guesthouse with an exotic garden advertised as “A. Gurewicz’s Health Resort”, the building served as a military aviation hospital, and from 1960 to 1991 it served as a medical high school for nurses [11, p. 5].

The monument, left unattended in recent years before modernization by the Polish Alzheimer Foundation, which was its another owner, was in agonizing technical condition in 2015. The construction expertise of the existing object showed a diversified internal structure of the building deviating from its original purely wooden structure. In the four wings of the building, including the former villa “Gurewiczanka”, in the 1980s, in place of the former internal wooden structure, brick walls and Klein ceilings were made, and a reinforced concrete staircase was also implemented in one of these wings. However, when the building was rebuilt from the inside, the wooden structure of the external walls was preserved along with the formwork attached to it and ornamented with it. The internal wooden structure was preserved in its entirety in only two wings of the building, which, according to the authors of the expert opinion, were not suitable for repair due to their disastrous condition and should be dismantled and then recreated in the present form<sup>7</sup>.

Both the construction expertise, the architectural inventory and the analysis of archival photos showed that the surviving, though heavily degraded external ornament required numerous replacements and additions. The only larger elements of the building that have survived to this day in a relatively intact condition were richly decorated wooden verandas – ventilated and thus not exposed to progressive biological corrosion.

At the beginning of the design work, a fundamental question arose related to the need to define the adopted conservation formula, namely, which historical elements can be preserved and which should be recreated, bearing in mind the most important values of the existing architecture [18, pp. 102–108] (Fig. 5).

### *The identity of the function*

The first issue concerned the function of the modernized building, which was to consist of a medical center with a hotel part and a small orthopedic hospital with operating rooms with an ICU, rehabilitation rooms and heavy diagnostics. The related question could not be reduced to

<sup>7</sup> The geometry of the existing building as deformed due to the subsidence of shallow foundation footings. The foundation walls, which do not have any insulation and are significantly damp, cannot be used as foundations for the modernized facility. The static and strength analysis included in the expert opinion showed that the preserved roof truss did not meet the load requirements already at the time of the building’s construction. The on-site inspection revealed leaking roofing in many places, causing flooding of the building. The wooden walls were assessed in the expert opinion as damp, corroded as a result of fungus and insect activity and deformed. Biological corrosion, which is still active, caused advanced degradation of the wooden ceilings and their fragmentary collapse in many places.



Fig. 5. Biologically corroded wooden walls and ceilings of the Abram Gurewicz Health Resort – condition in 2015  
(source: archive of the Grupa 5 Architekci)

Il. 5. Biologicznie skorodowane drewniane ściany i stropy Uzdrowiska Abrama Gurewicza – stan w 2015 r.  
(źródło: archiwum Grupy 5 Architekci)

a purely functional problem, separate from conservation issues. It concerned the real possibilities of designing a partially wooden and strictly limited size historic building, a hospital function with advanced medical technology and extensive installations. Therefore, the conservation issues overlapped with the contemporary rigors related to the design of health care facilities, concerning, inter alia, the need to strengthen the structure, the requirements of the Department of Health and Safety and fire regulations [18, pp. 102–108]. Both the authors of the modernization project from Grupa 5 Architekci studio, and the authors of the conservation work program involved in the project, as well as the representatives of the Provincial Conservator of Monuments decided that maintaining the building's medical function, referring to its original purpose, is an important value related to the identity of the place. Among the inhabitants of Otwock, this investment began to be perceived as an important stage in regaining the status of a health resort supporting the development of tourism [19, pp. 95–110].

The distribution of functions in the designed modernization partially corresponded to the historical layout. The hotel rooms and the restaurant are situated in their original location. In this part of the building, a few original interior design elements have been preserved, such as the cast iron railing of the staircase, tiled stoves and internal wooden carpentry, which have been renovated and partially relocated. The interior design of this part of the building made as part of the modernization (by Grupa 5 Architekci, Renata Pieńkowska and Urszula Brzozowska-Majdecka), along with selected contemporary furniture, can be perceived as today's interpretation of the pre-war decor captured in the photos in the archival advertising materials of the Abram Gurewicz Health Resort.

The planning of the medical functions required respect for the characteristic additivity of the object and the intimate scale of its individual wings. For this reason, some of the designed functions, which did not fit into the given cubic capacity, were located in the basement (including diagnostics rooms), as the temporary disassembly of the building during its implementation allowed for its basement. The equipment related to emergency supply of electricity and heat to hospital, also outside the outline of the monumental building, was located in a new technical pavilion erected on the site of the former free-standing boiler room. At the back of the modernized guesthouse, the designers from Group 5 Architects designed a modern building of a swimming pool and spa, unfinished so far, in the scale of the wings of the historic building and constituting a contemporary interpretation of local historical architecture with a veranda with an exposed wooden structure but devoid of ornaments and maintained in a minimalist style.

The valorization method and its priorities were defined in the program of conservation works prepared by Fest-grupa. The desire to maintain the authenticity of the function ("subject to changes of the structure of demands" [11, p. 16]) was confirmed, the need to maintain the authenticity of the form while retaining the traces of subsequent changes in the building and preserving the authenticity of the structure and material of coniferous wood within the external walls was emphasized. The study clearly emphasizes that [...] *one of the key elements for the artistic value is the location of the former guesthouse building in a forest garden and the organic connection with the surroundings by means of open arbours, glazing and terraces* [11, p. 17].

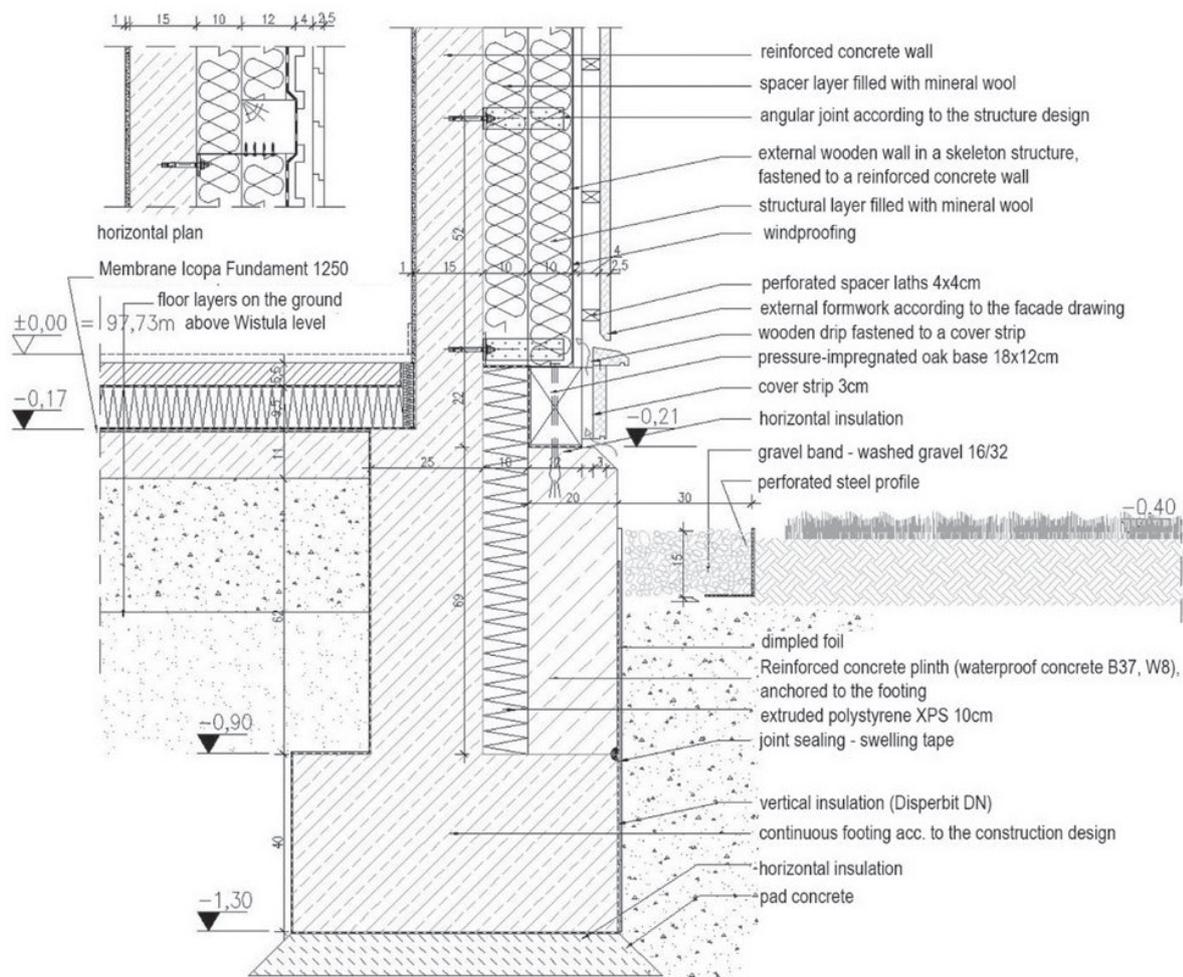


Fig. 6. Cross-section through the footing and the outer wall of the modernized Abram Gurewicz Health Resort, consisting of a thin inner reinforced concrete partition and a self-supporting wooden outer structure with formwork mounted on it (source: archive of Grupa 5 Architekci)

II. 6. Przekrój przez podstawę i ścianę zewnętrzną zmodernizowanego Uzdrawiska Abrama Gurewicza, składającego się z cienkiej wewnętrznej przegrody żelbetowej i samonośnej drewnianej konstrukcji zewnętrznej z zamontowanym szalunkiem (źródło: archiwum Grupy 5 Architekci)

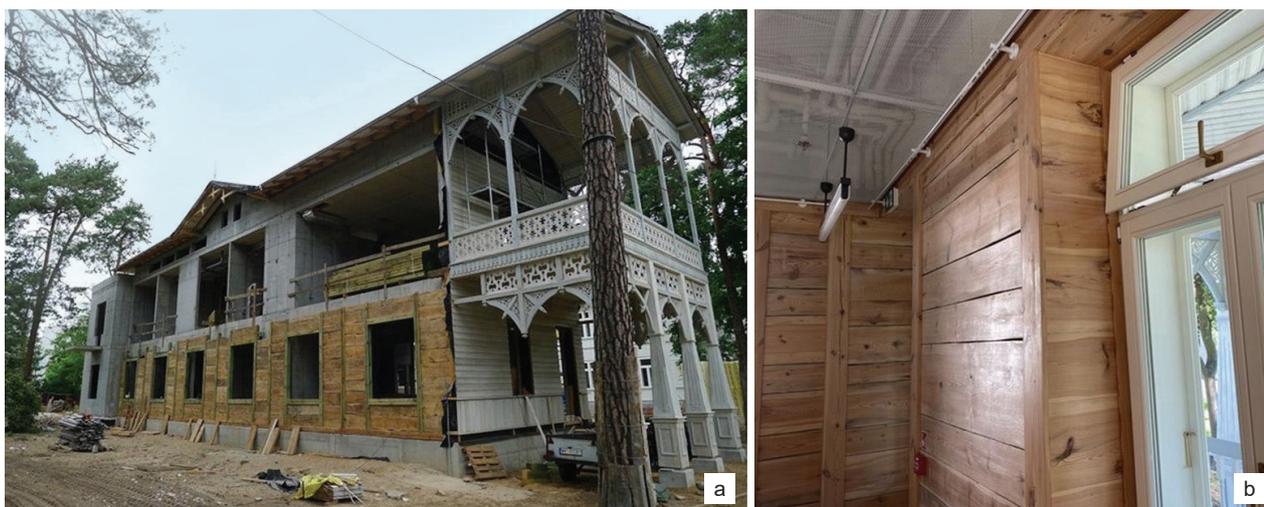


Fig. 7. Abram Gurewicz Health Resort:

- a) the preserved wooden elements of the post-and-plank structure are being reassembled on the southern façade of the southern wing,  
 b) display of the post-and-plank (characteristic for Mazovia) structure in the interior of a public café (source: archive of Grupa 5 Architekci)

II. 7. Uzdrawisko Abrama Gurewicza:

- a) montaż zachowanych drewnianych elementów konstrukcji słupowo-ryglowej na elewacji południowej południowego skrzydła,  
 b) ekspozycja konstrukcji słupowo-ryglowej (charakterystycznej dla regionu Mazowsza) we wnętrzu kawiarni publicznej (źródło: archiwum Grupy 5 Architekci)



Fig. 8. Elements of the Abram Gurewicz Health Resort recreated on the basis of archival photos: a turret (a) and a sun terrace (b) in the northern wing of the building (photo by A. Grzesik, K. Mycielski, archive Grupa 5 Architekci)

Il. 8. Elementy Uzdrowiska Abrama Gurewicza odtworzone na podstawie archiwalnych zdjęć: wieżyczka (a) i taras słoneczny (b) w skrzydle północnym budynku (fot. A. Grzesik, K. Mycielski, archiwum Grupa 5 Architekci)

### *The identity of the form*

The degree of degradation of the building, including its secondary brick part (and, as it turned out after the uncovering works on the construction site – made contrary to the art of construction), influenced the decision to completely demolish and dismantle the building, to select carefully biologically non-corroded wooden elements in consultation with wood experts from the Warsaw University of Life Sciences and about to recreate faithfully its form and decoration. It was found that the seriously damaged internal structure of the building (and largely not preserved as wooden to this day, or documented by an inventory) has a largely utilitarian value, not translating into the most important values related to the identity of the Nadświdrzańska architecture. Inside the building, it was replaced with another utilitarian structure – reinforced concrete, adapted to the demanding modern standards of healthcare facilities<sup>8</sup>.

In the spatial sense, the adopted principle can be compared to the modernist concept of “box in the box” – the new monolithic reinforced concrete structure was

covered with the fully preserved but largely reconstructed traditional wooden structure, both skeletal and post-and-plank, typical of the historical buildings of Mazovia. Only in this way was the historical structure of the external walls covered with a shuttering and wooden ornament (Figs. 6, 7).

On the initiative of the architects and the investor, and at the same time the owner of the building (Carolina Car Company) and with the approval of the Masovian Monument Conservator, in the northern wing of the building, elements of architecture important for the character of the place, the existence of which in the pre-war period were confirmed by archival photographs – a wooden tower and a terrace for sunbathing, were recreated (Fig. 8).

### *The identity of the material*

The structure of the external walls was best recreated from the elements preserved on the southern façade of the wing of the building housing hotel rooms. The sunlit wall did not suffer from fungal growth. In addition, in the same south wing, in the interior of a public cafe (the entrance of which is located in the arcade of a representative open-work veranda), selected elements of the post-and-plank structure were displayed.

In the existing building, five types of preserved external shuttering were discovered, which, in consultation with the conservation services, were limited to three – authentically historical – on the reconstructed façades. However, during the construction works it was decided that the formwork should be reconstructed in its entirety, and not the preserved one supplemented, as the old elements with the new ones could not undergo similar deformations.

<sup>8</sup> According to *Program prac konserwatorskich dot. budynku dawnego uzdrowiska Abrama Gurewicza w Otwocku* [The program of conservation works on the building of the former Abram Gurewicz Health Resort in Otwock] prepared by the Festgrupa company, *The aim of the project is to adapt the building of the former Gurewicz guesthouse to new functions, while maintaining the highest possible authenticity of the substance in the face of its serious degradation (vide: mycological and construction expertise). The new structure of the partitions will be a reinforced concrete monolith inserted into the interior, while maintaining the structural system of the external perimeter walls of the building* [11, p. 3].

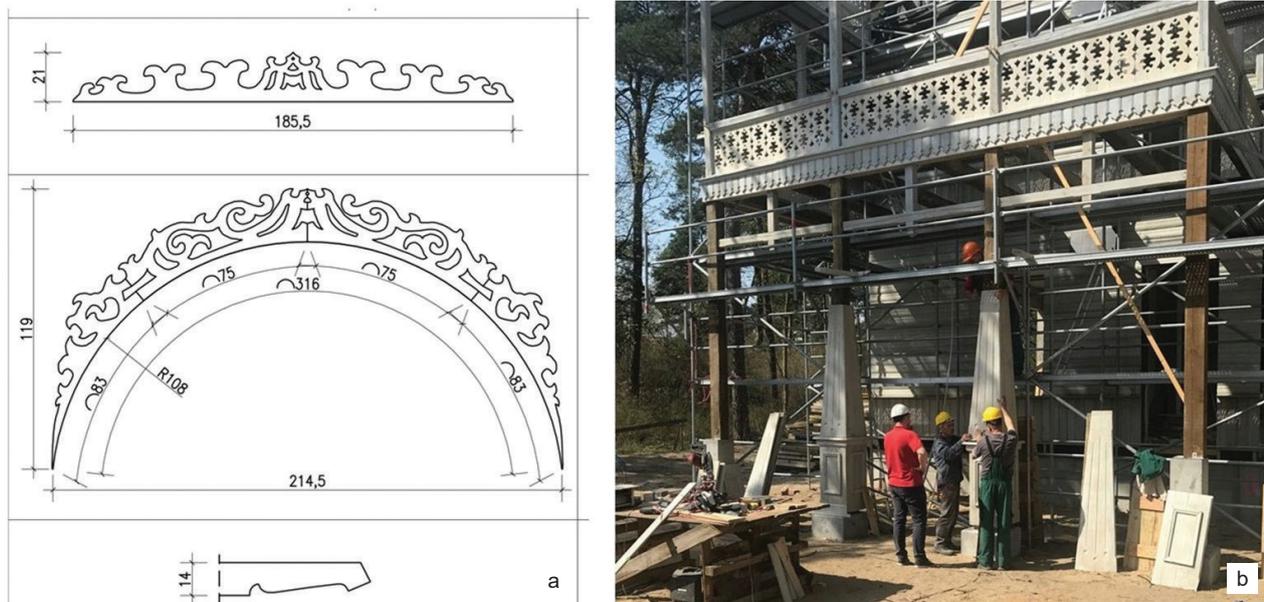


Fig. 9. The inventory drawings of the preserved woodcarving details of the Abram Gurewicz Health Resort made in 2015 (a) and reassembly of the openwork southern veranda (b)  
(source: archive of Grupa 5 Architekci)

II. 9 Rysunki inwentaryzacyjne zachowanych detali snycerskich Uzdrawiska Abrama Gurewicza wykonane w 2015 r. (a) i ponowny montaż ażurowej werandy południowej (b)  
(źródło: archiwum Grupy 5 Architekci)



Fig. 10. The wooden veranda of the Abram Gurewicz Health Resort adjacent to the central wing of the eastern façade of the building after its renovation and reassembly  
(photo by A. Grzesik, the archive of Grupa 5 Architekci)

II. 10. Drewniana weranda Uzdrawiska Abrama Gurewicza przylegająca do środkowego skrzydła elewacji wschodniej budynku po jego remoncie i ponownym montażu  
(fot. A. Grzesik, archiwum Grupy 5 Architekci)

This would cause the wooden structure of the façade to degrade quickly again.

The precisely inventoried decorative openwork elements were recreated on the construction site by highlander craftsmen. The exception were two representative wooden verandas, which, after the disassembly, careful cleaning and impregnation, were retained in the original with the fittings, which, due to the fundamental role played by these elements in the context of the identity of the Nadświdrzańska architecture, was a key achievement of the entire modernization (Fig. 9).

### Summary and conclusions

Modernization of the Abram Gurewicz Health Resort in Otwock and adapting it to a modern medical function, both due to the modern requirements put forward to such facilities and the disastrous technical condition of the monument and its previous numerous reconstructions, required many consciously made compromise design decisions. The authenticity that is still visible in the modernized building was determined by the clear conservation formula consisting in the careful reconstruction of the

wooden self-supporting structure of the external walls, the ornament covering it, and above all in the renovation and preservation of the original wooden verandas of the building. The ornaments appearing on them are more than just ornaments – they constitute a kind of decoration in the understanding of Antonio Monestiroli, and thus are one of the main identity factors of the Nadświdrzańska architecture (Fig. 10). Efforts have been made to maintain the continuity of the medical function, consistency of form (both historical and new extensions) and maintain the material identity of the object by preserving and conserving the historical tissue using the latest conservation methods.

One should point out the formal uniqueness of Abram Gurewicz Health Resort compared to other buildings of the Nadświdrzańska architecture, but also the representativeness of the features present. Interdisciplinary collaboration with specialists in various fields, including monument conservators, and the use of scientific research to set design priorities early in the design process, provide the possibility to create a bridge between practice and theory.

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### Abstract

#### Design priorities on the example of the modernization of Abram Gurewicz Health Resort in Otwock

The purpose of the paper is to present Abram Gurewicz Health Resort in Otwock as a non-typical but also unique example of the Nadświdrzańska architecture. The next aim is to reevaluate the concept of decoration as the constitutive factor of the Nadświdrzańska architecture, using Monestiroli's theories regarding ornament and decoration. A comparative analysis of the Gurewicz building against the background of other buildings of

the Nadświdrzańska architecture shows that the discussed building is a specific version of a characteristic composition of forms. Another goal is to show the processes behind the reconstruction of the Health Resort in the context of the situation of that object in 2015 in order to finally carry out design priorities behind the modernization based on the preservation of three identities: function, form and material.

**Key words:** Świdermajer, Nadświdrzańska architecture, wooden architecture, modernization

### *Streszczenie*

#### *Priorytety projektowe na przykładzie modernizacji Uzdrawiska Abrama Gurewicza w Otwocku*

Celem autorów artykułu jest przedstawienie Uzdrawiska Abrama Gurewicza w Otwocku jako nietypowego i unikatowego przykładu architektury nadświdrzańskiej. Kolejnym celem jest przewartościowanie koncepcji dekoracji jako konstytutywnego czynnika architektury nadświdrzańskiej przy wykorzystaniu teorii Monestirolego dotyczących ornamentu i dekoracji. Analiza budynku Gurewicza na tle innych budowli architektury nadświdrzańskiej pokazuje, że omawiany zabytek jest specyficzną wersją charakterystycznej kompozycji form. Autorzy artykułu ukazali także procesy przebudowy uzdrawiska w kontekście sytuacji tego obiektu w 2015 r. Przedstawione zostały priorytety projektowe modernizacji opartej na zachowaniu trzech tożsamości: funkcji, formy i materiału.

**Słowa kluczowe:** świdermajer, architektura nadświdrzańska, architektura drewniana, modernizacja