



BEFORE



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AFTER

Previous state

Szczecin is one of the largest victims of historical violence in Poland. Until 1945, the city lay within the borders of Germany, after which it was suddenly incorporated into Poland. Instant exchange of its population deconstructed the social fabric and distorted the city's identity. Before the war, the current Solidarność Square was the showcase of the city, featuring a quarter of representative tenements, bordering with one of the most elegant city squares and the Municipal Theater, enclosed by the Konzerthaus in the North. The entire neighborhood was teeming with life. This fragment of the city suffered particular damage during bombing raids of the Allied forces – the quarter and its vicinity ceased to exist, creating a gap in the urban tissue. Furthermore, as a result of technocratic decisions, this frag-

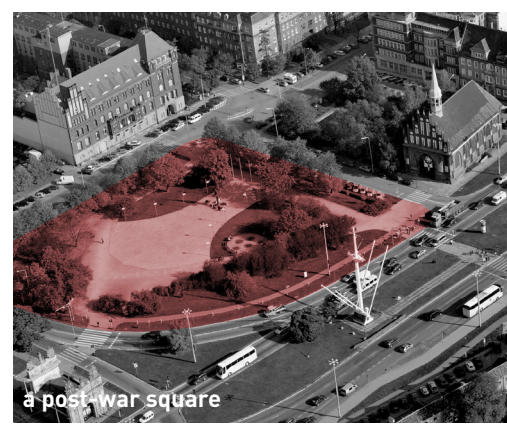
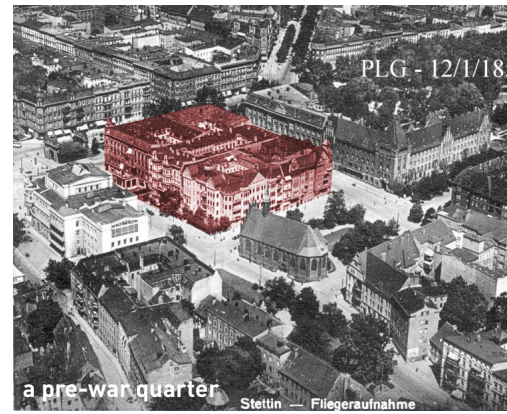
ment of the city was converted into a transportation route. This quasi-square became the arena for dramatic events in 1970. A worker protest was pacified, and 16 protesters were killed. From that moment on, a new spirit overcame this place, as it became a symbol of fight for freedom. Since 2005, the victims of December have been commemorated by a monument.

Aim of the intervention

For years, the Solidarność Square had been a square by name only – with vague borders, open frontages, burdensome busy street neighborhood and the absence of a defined function, despite the dominating one – to commemorate the events of December 1970. The forgotten square-yard was enlivened during official celebrations only.

In the 21st century, the area became the arena of significant architectural interventions. In 2014, the former Konzerthaus was replaced by a new philharmonic venue designed by Estudio Barozzi Veiga. The building became the new city icon, winning the main Mies van der Rohe award in 2015.

The next initiative, which contributed changing the perception of the space was the "Przełomy" Dialogue Centre – a division of the National Museum, devoted to the contemporary history of Szczecin, an account of the city's identity creation. In 2009, a competition for the design of a new museum building and reconstruction of the Solidarność square was announced. Our goal was not only to design the museum, but to transform the dysfunctional, degraded space to a whole public space facilitating human interactions.



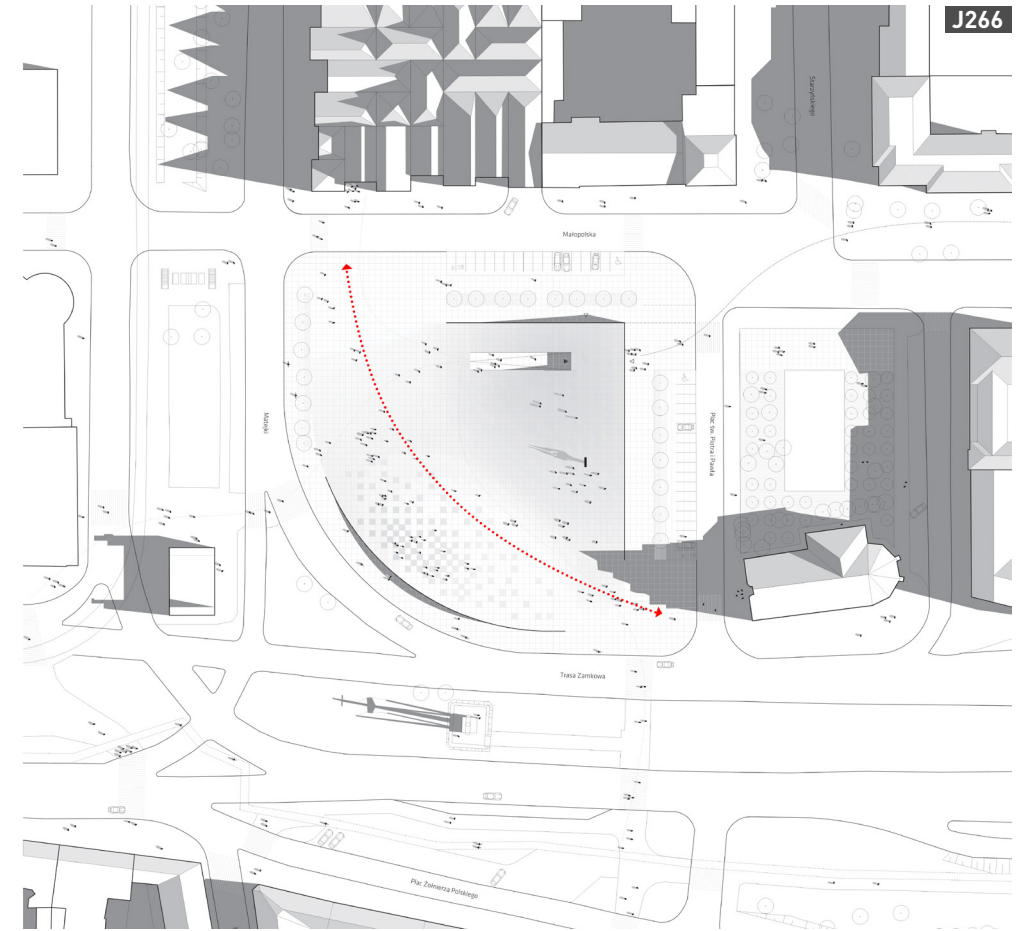
Description

Two contradictory traditions: of a quarter and of a square were the point of departure for the design, an urban design hybrid which encloses the space as a quarter, while retaining the values of open public space. A natural consequence of the decision to retain the open character of the square was thus to hide a great part of the new building's cubature underground. The layout formed by the above-ground part of the building was completed by an analogous elevation, closing up the urban interior and shielding it from the tumult of the busy street. The design eliminates any barriers encountered at the meeting point of the square and the city, and creates a foreground for the new philharmonic, preserving the directions for existing pedestrian routes while offering a bicycle path, and includes the original tree stand.

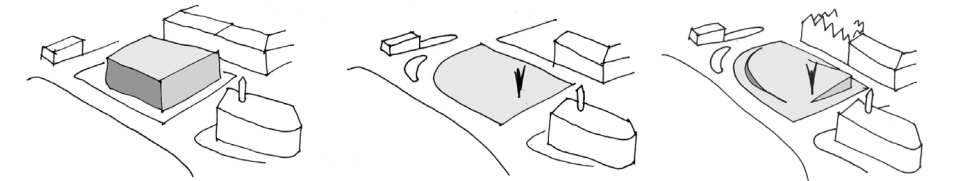
Assessment

The new square, including the museum located underneath, has clearly defined frames. Yet, its open formula encourages its users to express their impact. Artificial hills provide an opportunity for discovering new outlooks on the city, welcome walking tours and invite to sunbathing. The slanted floor inspires various activities: for skateboarders, this is the ideal spot to practice. In the winter, the square serves as a sled track. Framed by the elevated corners, the space became a kind of an open amphitheater, with everyday urban life as the stage. The yard has retained its symbolic dimension – the monument is still attracting veterans during annual celebration events. However, it ceased to dominate. Initially, Solidarity activists had reservations to the use of the square by skateboarders. They claimed it inappropriate, considering the

history of the place. However, the skateboarder community assured that they would not interrupt any celebrations or skate on the monument. This was probably the first instance of agreement in Szczecin made by various social groups without official assistance. Today, the square is used by all age groups, which can amicably coexist with one another. The new square and the museum building are a bridge overlooking the decades of Szczecin's history. Like a keystone, they are the place where all of the memories, symbols, historical events converge. Thanks to the urban design hybrid applied, the tear in the urban fabric was sewed together, creating an important place contributing to the reconstruction of the city's identity, and a vibrant and multidimensional urban space.



site plan 1:2000



idea diagram



National Museum in Szczecin – Dialogue Centre Przełomy | KWK Promes Robert Konieczny | 1