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Nowa Huta

District Guide



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A Stormy History from the Stalin Era to “Solidarity”



Nowa Huta – once a separate town, now a district of Krakow – was created in the 1950s. A most interesting and complete implementation of the plans of the architects of socialist realism. The unique urban layout of Nowa Huta has been included in the register of the monuments of Krakow. **Efforts are underway to get Nowa Huta entered on the UNESCO World Heritage list.**

With its wide streets and grand and well-appointed houses, it became the place where the ruling party wanted to form a new socialist society. Not everything, however, went according to plan. On 27th April 1960, riots broke out in connection with the construction of a church in which people were killed or wounded. The town – already conjoined with Krakow in one organism – revealed its new face: it became a threat to the system. While it was celebrating its 30th anniversary, the turbulent 80s were already coming. It turned out that not only could 1st May marches take place along the wide streets but opposition demonstrations as well. **Huge, well-organised gatherings of people became the support of “Solidarity” which transformed Nowa Huta into one of its major strongholds in Poland.**

Excavations for the first block in Nowa Huta began on June 23rd, 1949. Shortly after, on 26th April 1950, the first ground was broken in the construction of a plant, later named the Lenin Steelworks. **At its peak in 1977, the Steelworks employed 38 thousand people and produced 6.7 million tons of steel per annum (today, approx. 1 million).** The basis of the plan of construction of the centre of Nowa Huta was three axes: one linking the new town and the historic centre of Krakow (the City Axis), the conglomerate (the Axis of Labour) and the Town Hall Square (the Axis of Recreation). Based on these, Tadeusz Ptaszynski – the main architect of Nowa Huta – designed the Central Square (now the Ronald Reagan Square) with five arteries coming out of it, surrounded by the city in the shape of a half-octagon. According to the ideology of socialist realism, art was to be “socialist in content and national in form”. Spared from the horrors of war were: the Renaissance Krakow, Zamość and Kazimierz on the Vistula River. Therefore, Renaissance was seen as our “national form” and it was decided to create Nowa Huta in that style. From a formal point of view, the architecture of Polish socialist realism was not related to Russia, where classicism reigned supreme, but it had its own original character.

1 POLAND ARCELORMITTAL SA – Branch in Krakow (the former Lenin Steelworks, later the Sendzimir Steelworks)

Since 2003, the Sendzimir Steelworks have been part of the consortium of Polish Steelworks SA. It was bought by LNM, owned by the Indian steel magnate, Lakshmi Mittal (in 2005–2007, the steelworks was renamed Mittal Steel Poland SA).

The main entrance to the steelworks at 1 Ujastek Street, built in 1952–1955, is one of the best examples of socialist realism in Polish design.

Its designers were Janusz Ballenstadt and Janusz and Marta Ingarden. The huge gate, flanked by two office buildings, bears all of the hallmarks of the Renaissance style which was the model. The Administrative Centre of the Steelworks was nicknamed the “Doge’s Palace” or the “Vatican”. Its magnificent interior was partially modified during the reconstruction of the 1990s, but it is one of the best preserved examples



of design from the 1950s, with marble frames and specially designed furniture.

The Steelworks is gargantuan – hundreds of buildings, tangled pipes and tracks running off in different directions. The area of the plant is about 1000 hectares. When a gantry moves, it's like an earthquake. **In some of the halls, there would be space for several Krakow Market Squares arranged side by side.** Vats the height of small houses, filled with molten metal, are reminiscent of the bubbling lava of volcanoes.

After 1989, the plant went through numerous changes. This started with the patron (1990) – Vladimir I. Lenin was no longer appropriate in the new era, so the Steelworks was renamed as the Tadeusz Sendzimir Steelworks – after a prominent American design engineer of Polish origin. The restructuring of the steelworks' began. They began to close individual departments. Some were too toxic, others unprofitable or obsolete. The “Zgniatacz” rolling mill, among others, was closed – the main bastion of “Solidarity” in the Steelworks. A commemorative monument, dedicated to all those who contributed a part of their life to the creation of the conglomerate's first free trade union, was unveiled in September 2005 in the vicinity of Central Square. After some time, the Steelworks, owned by the Treasury, was included in the Polish Steelworks holding, and then sold to a private investor, Lakshmi Mittal. The new owner carried out a series of investments, the demolition of old halls and erection of modern facilities in their place.



Nowa Huta is, in a sense, the oldest part of Krakow. Despite the fact that construction only started in 1949, archaeological research revealed that **continuous settlement there had existed at least as early as 5000 BC**, while the area of the current Old Town was not inhabited until the 8th century AD.

A memorial from ancient times proved to be a **mound located next to the fence of the plant** (near the intersection of Ujastek and T. Ptaszycki Streets). It is referred to as **Wanda's Mound – the daughter of the founder of the city, Krak**. According to the legend, she committed suicide in the Vistula River in order not to let control over Poland fall into German hands, becoming a symbol of sacrifice for the homeland. Currently, Wanda's Mound is marked with a small monument erected in the 19th century, according to a design by the eminent Polish painter, Jan Matejko who lived in a nearby manor house in Krzesławice.

3 The Manor House of Jan Matejko and Saint John the Baptist Church

The manor house of Jan Matejko in Krzesławice (25 Wańkowicza street) is now the property of the Society of Friends of Fine Arts in Krakow. A low-storey building with an extension, the historic studio of the master, Jan, is open to the public. In five large rooms, furniture, paintings and everyday objects from the eighteenth and nineteenth century are exhibited, all associated with prominent residents of the manor. The first



of these was Hugo Kołłątaj – the famous political activist of the Enlightenment, a co-founder of the first European constitution, called the 3rd May Constitution, to mark the day of its announcement. He leased the manor in Krzesławice in 1778 from the Academy of Krakow, of which he was rector. In 1876, the manor was bought by the greatest Polish painter of the nineteenth century, Jan Matejko. He purchased the property with the proceeds of the sale of the “Batory at Pskov” painting. The manor in Krzesławice became his favourite place for relaxation. Every free moment he had, he went there to escape the hustle and bustle of Krakow. You can see there the famous “Gallery of portraits of Polish kings”, illustrations for Niemcewicz’s *Śpiewy historyczne* – widely regarded as the first example of Roman-

ticism in Polish art, and the easels of Matejko, his chests for drawings, paintings and prints. The place is surrounded by a magnificent English park, connected with the recreational area of the Nowa Huta Lagoon. Near the Jan Matejko manor, there is a wooden single-nave church, the Church of John the Baptist and Our Lady of Carmel. This place of worship was built in 1633–1648. It was originally located in Jawornik near Myślenice, but when a new church was built there in the 1980s, it was no longer needed and threatened with demolition. It was transported to Nowa Huta in 1983–1985, with a tower added which was originally not there.



4 Wanda and Villa Housing Estate

The construction of Nowa Huta was based on the concept of a “neighbourhood unit”, created in the United States in the 20s, when architects were working on a plan to expand New York.

The “unit” was to be a residential estate housing 4000–5000 people, equipped with the necessary infrastructure for life and forming a separate town. The values of the Nowa Huta development were described as follows: “Around the main axis, there are located housing estates that make up, to some extent, individual organisms. Each housing estate has everything that is needed to fully support the residents. There are shops, services, community centres, a school, a kindergarten, a nursery, a cinema. Each housing estate has its own communal garage for cars. Within their own housing estate, the residents can meet all their everyday needs. **The buildings of the first period are located on an archshaped plan from the convent in Mogiła to Kocmyrzowska Street**, creating charming housing estates full of trees and flowers. The first house constructed here is located at Mierzwy Street (14 Wandy Housing Estate, there is a memorial plaque on it). It is during the construction of the housing estates that the famous work foreman, Piotr Ożański, broke his record for a bricklayer master and his team, capable of laying 60 thousand bricks in less than 8 hours. **He became the inspiration for Mateusz Birkut – the hero in the Andrzej Wajda film “Man of Marble”.**

5 Monastery Complex of the Cisterian Order

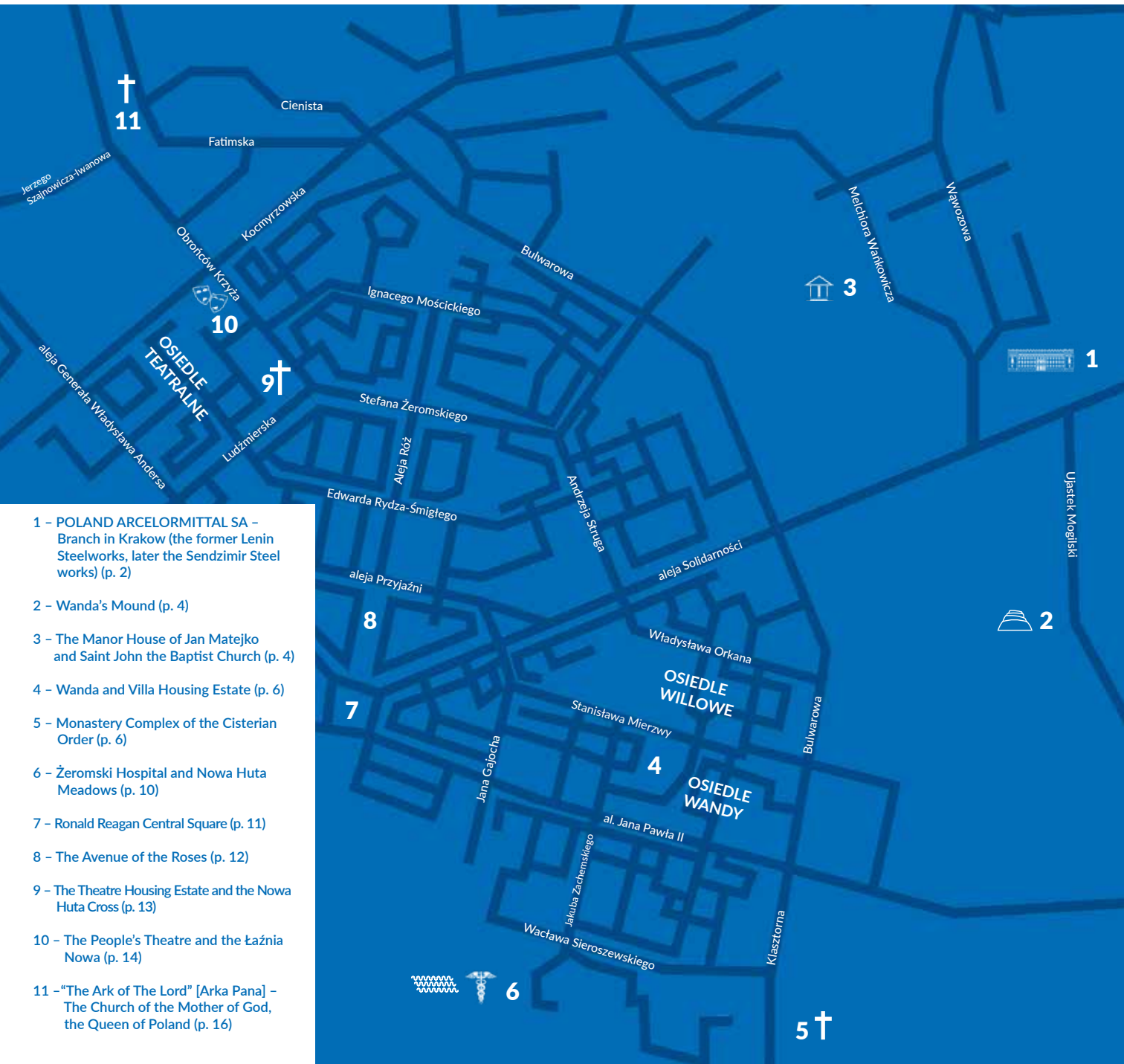
The church dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St. Wenceslas (11 Klasztorna) in Mogiła and the Cistercian monastery adjacent to it are among the most cherished sacred buildings in the Małopolska Region. The famous miraculous crucifix is kept there. The sculpture is unusual – it survived a fire in the church in 1447 as the only thing to do so, despite the fact that the fire consumed the hair of Christ and his perizonium. Since then, the Saviour has had a wig made of natural hair, his hips have been tied with genuine fabric. The crucifix was transported to the present chapel in 1588, previously it was at the intersection of the transept with the main nave. The Holy Cross chapel, surrounded by a beautiful lattice, was founded by Stefan Żółkiewski – it was in gratitude for being saved during the memorable Battle of Cecora.

The founder of both the convent and the wooden church of St. Bartholomew across the street, was the Bishop of Krakow,



Bl. Iwo Odrowąż. He brought the Cistercians to Mogiła from Silesia. They settled there in 1222. Their activities began with putting a cross on Wanda's Mound, a pagan cult site at this time. During the Renaissance, Mogiła became famous especially in the field of painting. The unprecedented quality of the art was due to a Cistercian monk, Stanisław Samostrzelnik, working at the court of King Sigismund the Old. His paintings can be admired in the church and the monastery library. In 1716–1786, the Studium Generale of the Cistercian province was based in the Mogiła monastery, where philosophy, theology, canon law and church history were taught. **It was the first institution of higher education in the Nowa Huta of today.** As the Mogiła church, as a place of worship, was closed to the faithful in the times of Bl. Iwo Odrowąż, another church was built for them, the church of St. Bartholomew. In its current form, it dates from 1466 and is the work of a master carpenter, Maciej Mączka. The church has three naves, unlike similar wooden buildings of this type in Poland. Its interior comes from the Rococo era and shows deserving people of the Mogiła convent. Next to the church, there is a preserved wooden bell tower dating from 1752 with a domed roof and a gate.





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Żeromski Hospital and Nowa Huta Meadows

Near the Ronald Reagan Square is located the Stefan Żeromski Specialist Hospital (66 Na Skarpie Housing Estate), built in 1954 as a municipal hospital. Its architects, S. Porębowicz and S. Skrzyński, created the original building **in the style of socialist realism, with numerous references to Baroque and Renaissance**. In front of the main entrance, there is a bronze bust of the patron saint of the hospital, the work of M. Konieczny. The hospital is located on a slope behind which the so-called **Nowa Huta Meadows can be found – an enormous expanse of green areas (approx. 70 ha)**. In the old days, the capricious Vistula River, not enclosed by dykes, often changed its course. In the 18th century, it flowed along the slope on which Nowa Huta was later built. The last remnants of the old river bed are these vast meadows. In the 1950s, the idea was mooted of creating a park there with a two-kilometre lake. **When the idea was abandoned, the place became a haven for 370 species of plants and 69 species of birds, including many listed in the “Red Book of Endangered Species”**. This area was designated as protected for ecological reasons by the decision of the City Council. In the future, the Old Vistula Park is planned to be created there.



Ronald Reagan Central Square

The Ronald Reagan Central Square and its surroundings can be likened to a specific exposition of the history of Polish architecture over the last half a century. This is because **there are buildings from all periods of post-war construction**, executed by outstanding Polish architects, including: Bolesław Skrzybalski, Janusz and Marta Ingarden, Adam Fołtyn, Tadeusz Janowski, Tadeusz Rembiesa, Stanisław Juchnowicz and Romuald Loegler. Nowa Huta was built during the Stalin era – it was a town of strategic importance to the armaments industry; therefore, it was always likely to be one of the first places to be bombed.

Its various quarters resemble medieval fortresses with an entire network of passages and means of security. For someone who does not know Nowa Huta, it is a complicated maze (even entrances to housing estates are hidden behind walls and are invisible from the side view).

Between 1952 and 1960, **more than 250 shelters were built under Nowa Huta**. They were created under blocks, health centres, schools, kindergartens and cultural institutions. Most of them are now basements or warehouses, but work is in progress to create a tourist route around the Nowa Huta shelters, which would attract tourists and revitalize the oldest part of Nowa Huta. **The most spectacular shelters that have survived to the present day are located under the administration buildings of the plant and the Żeromski hospital**. Every day, you can explore one of the two shelters in the former “Światowid” cinema. It houses the **Museum of the PRL** (in the organizational stage). The resulting institution, except for temporary exhibitions, houses a semi-temporary exhibition “Atomic horror. Shelters in Nowa Huta”, developed in the shelter, renovated and specially equipped for this occasion.

The defensive character of the city was a burden to the militias which, in the 1980s, during the period of martial law, dispersed anti-government demonstrations. Other buildings are the so-called punktowce (point buildings) from the 1960s within Center D (arch. Janusz Ingarden). **They were called “Swedish” as they were modelled on buildings erected at that time in Stockholm.** The Nowa Huta Cultural Centre dates back to the 70s, when –according to the official propaganda – “Poland grew stronger, and the people began to lead prosperous lives”. Due to the economic crisis which took place then, the construction of this multi-functional facility took over 10 years. **Despite its difficult beginning, this centre is now one of the most thriving centres on the cultural map of Krakow.** It organizes comprehensive educational and entertainment activities, offering dozens of ways to develop individual talents and artistic abilities for people of all ages. Its range of events, including numerous exhibitions of contemporary art, is addressed not only to the inhabitants of Nowa Huta. In the early 70s, the West started to move away from the style known as modernism which took the form of large blocks of flats in Poland. A slow return to historical styles began. And then it turned out that the architecture of socialist realism, condemned by many, became the precursor for the West. The new style – postmodernism – resulted in the Centre C Housing Estate in Nowa Huta, built in the 1980s (arch. Romuald Loegler).

8

The Avenue of the Roses

Originally, this was supposed to be a promenade connecting the main communication hub – the Central Square and the main forum of Nowa Huta – the Town Hall Square. The latter never came to fruition and the Avenue of the Roses has become typical of a socialist urban road to nowhere. On one side, it



visually closed the Krzesławickie Hill, on the other – Beskidy. On 20th April 1970, the cornerstone was laid for the monument on the Avenue of Roses and a tender was announced which was won by Marian Konieczny. On 17th April 1973, the statue of W.I. Lenin – “The leader of the revolution”, composed of 74 elements and weighing 7 tons – was erected at its place of destination. **On 18th April 1979 a powerful explosion took place at the Avenue of the Roses.** A bomb was placed under the statue, but only Lenin's heel fell off as a result. Finally, the monument was removed on 10th December 1989. It was taken to Wróblowice and there it stayed in a disused fort until 1992, when a Swedish millionaire Big Bengt Erlandsson purchased it for 100 thousand crowns and exported it from Poland. Today it can be admired in “Halltjapara”, a town of curiosities in Stockholm. On the Avenue of the Roses, there is a second Nowa Huta Museum. A branch of the Krakow Historical Museum, the History of Nowa Huta, housed in the premises of the former scout depot, focuses on the broader history of the district, including the period before 1949. It attracts people both to exhibitions presenting the PRL face of Nowa Huta and displays describing the history of the villages, in the area where it was built – Czyżyny, Mogiła, Bieńczyce.

The Theatre Housing Estate and the Nowa Huta Cross

9



The site of today's Theatre Housing Estate was once called “Taiwan” since its construction was started away from the existing buildings and new blocks looked like islands in an ocean of waving grain. At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, the “Świt” cinema and the **People's Theatre** were established. After 1956, authorities gave permission for a church to be built, but they



later withdrew that decision and gave the order to erect a school on the site of the place of worship. This resulted, on 27th April 1960, in the riots known as the battle of the **Nowa Huta Cross**. **The confrontation of social protest with the decisions of the authorities was bloody.** It is not known how many demonstrators suffered during the protests - losses among the militia forces were determined as 200 injured (including 15 seriously injured), and four times as many were probably injured among the civilians. In 2001, next to the historical cross, there was a small church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (2 Ludźmierska Street), the work of Krakow architects, Krzysztof Ingarden and Przemysław Gawor. The school located nearby is called the "Millenium School" (35 Theatre Housing Estate), and is a good example of modernist architecture, and its designer, Józef Gołąb, is considered one of the most important Polish architects of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

10 The People's Theatre and the Łaźnia Nowa

For years, it has been said that Nowa Huta is famous for two things: good steel and good theatre, despite the fact that the main theatre building, planned for the Central Square, has never been built, only a small stage has been constructed, which is today's People's Theatre (34 Theatre Housing Estate). Designed by Jan Dąbrowski and Janusz Ingarden, it started performances on 3rd December 1955 with a play entitled "Cracovians and Highlanders" by Wojciech Bogusławski. The choice of play was not accidental - the action takes place at the nearby convent in Mogiła. In memory of this performance, **the housing estate in front of the theatre was named the Cracovians and Highlanders Housing Estate.** In the theatre, there were many prominent directors, including Krystyna Skuszanka, Jerzy Krasowski, Józef Szajna, and such actors as Franciszek Pieczka and Witold Pyrkosz.

Due to the character of the district, considered to be unsuitable for theatre, there were artists in Nowa Huta who had not had a chance to break through with their avant-garde ideas in any other market. In time, the aggressive avant-garde was replaced by a more subdued, educational repertoire. The arrival as managing director of Jerzy Fedorowicz in 1989 coincided with the political changes in Poland and opened a new period in the history of the People's Theatre, and the staging of the *Man of Marble* became a symbolic acknowledgement of the previous history



The Snow Queen on the People's Theatre stage. Photo: S. Strama.

of this place. The Nowa Huta theatre was again being talked about - due to bold social experiments. The staging of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by J. Fedorowicz, **featuring young people from Nowa Huta subcultures.**

Today, however, the second Nowa Huta theatre, run by Bartosz Szydłowski, is more often spoken about, both in Krakow and throughout Poland. The Łaźnia Nowa, located in the buildings of the old school workshops on the School Housing Estate, considered one of **the most interesting places on the theatrical map of Krakow**, is also the heart of one of the most interesting Polish theatre festivals - the "Divine Comedy". The Łaźnia Nowa combines artistic and social activities - Performances are staged in the post-industrial halls often with the participation of local residents, including: festivals, concerts, exhibitions, film screenings and multimedia, meetings and workshops. The Łaźnia Nowa Projects are also performed in the open air: on the streets of Nowa Huta, in the yards and housing estates, as well as at the Nowa Huta Lagoon.

... www.ludowy.pl, www.laznianowa.pl

“The Ark of The Lord” [Arka Pana] – The Church of the Mother of God, the Queen of Poland



The church was built mainly thanks to the efforts of Pope John Paul II – the then archbishop of Krakow and the Pastor at Bieńczyce, Father Józef Gorzelany, whom he appointed in 1965. The church was consecrated on 15th May 1977. The Krakow architect Wojciech Pietrzyk proposed a building in the shape of Noah's Ark settled on Mount Ararat. For the people who wanted to survive the hard times of communism, the metaphor was very clear. The last erected element from among the foundations was the 70-meter high mast in the shape of a cross with a crown, because the authorities did not want the Christian symbol to tower above the surrounding blocks. The construction of the “Ark” became a symbol of the unity of the whole Christian world. Pope Paul VI sent a stone from the tomb of St. Peter in the Vatican which became the cornerstone of the new church. Dutch Christians donated 7 bells, and Cardinal König of Vienna – a chrome plate to make the cross-mast. The main altar is made of Carrara marble – the same which was once used by Michelangelo in Rome.

A small rutile crystal mounted in the tabernacle was brought back from the Moon by the crew of Apollo-11.

Equally of interest is the rest of the furnishing. The very expressive Christ on the side of the nave is the work of a Krakow sculptor, Bronisław Chromy. In the underground Chapel of Reconciliation, you can see numerous pietàs by a Zakopane sculptor, Antoni Rząsa. Near the “Ark of the Lord”, during the time of martial law, numerous clashes between the local population and the militia took place. This was usually after masses celebrated in the hope of the liberation of the motherland from totalitarian oppression. A small monument dedicated to the victims of martial law marks the dates. It is set in the place where an agent of the Security Services shot a steelworker, Bogusław Włosik.

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ISBN: 978-83-65529-61-9



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