Gastvortrag in englischer Sprache
Mittwoch, 2. Juni 15-17 Uhr Hörsaal C. 105
Wednesday, 2 June, 3-5 p.m., lecture room C.105
Prof. Aleksandra Sumorok,
Wladyslaw Strzeminski Academy, Łódź/Poland

Between the abstract and figurative art, between the modern and classical architecture - art in Poland (1945-1968).

“Art in post-war Poland –
Modern or traditional? Modern or national?
Free or dependant on political forces? Democratic or totalitarian?
Affirmative or contesting the New Order?
Autonomy or censorship?
Individual expression or the pursuit of a common cause?
Involved in social matters or for `its own sake`?
Realistic or abstract?
Figurative or non-figurative?
Many questions and ambiguous answers concerning art created in the difficult times of post-war reality”.



The lecture will provide an introduction to the Polish history of visual arts, architecture, design in the post war period, 1945-1968. It will briefly present the social, aesthetic, theoretical, and political forces that influenced the art, architecture and design of this time.
After 1945, Poland became one of the Eastern Bloc communist countries strictly dependent on the USSR. Consequently, the new political situation led to far-reaching, unavoidable changes in the sphere of culture.

The first after war period, 1945-1949, was the time of the preliminary transformations, the so-called `mild revolution`, the debate on the form and role of art in the `independent` Poland, the significance of the national style. However, despite arising problems, the art remained diverse and independent. The crucial, tragic, moment for Polish culture was the year 1949 when the socialist realism doctrine was introduced and the artistic life started to be standardized. Nevertheless, the ideological, dogmatic model of art, especially architecture, was seldom put into practice. Architectural objects of that period were `non-orthodox` mainly because the doctrine was implemented only for a short time, adapted very fast and underwent even faster degradation.

Another breakthrough for the culture was the year 1956, the `time of thaw`. Liberalization in the communist party, political and economical changes led to cultural transition, openness and the `explosion` of modernity. After the time of obligatory realism, figurative art and classical, conservative forms we could observe the interest in various forms of non-figurative art and modern architecture and design. The language of absolute, `pure forms` became the synonym of the artistic freedom, independence, the defence against the involvement in politics.

The lecture will focus on numerous problems affecting Polish culture in the post war period**:** the problem of identity and autonomity, the aspect**s** of the national, the conservative and the modern and, last but not least, the avant-garde forms. Its aim is to present the socialist legacy and heritage, in both possitive and negative aspects, to emphasize the connection between the past events, trends, history and contemporary issues, to overthrow the stereotypes, the schematic views and beliefs.