TRACING PRÆSENS
Roots and Context of Modern Movement in Poland

by

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ABSTRACT

During the 1920s and 1930s, in the aftermath of World War 1, Europe had a vivid political, economic, and cultural scene. During this period nations were rebuilding their homes and values. This dynamic environment nurtured and accelerated the development of several significant modern movements, events and modes of thought, including the ideas of: Le Corbusier, CIAM, Werkbund, Bauhaus, De Stijl, Constructivism, Suprematism and others.

In 1918 Poland reemerged as a sovereign state after 150 years of foreign occupation. Polish artists were able to switch their primary focus from patriotic and nationalistic issues of preserving national culture and identity to more universal and progressive ideas. The first important group of the Polish artistic avant-garde was the Formists. This group became active in Krakow around 1919-1921. By 1924 another influential group, Blok, was officially established. It promoted socially aware, logical and utilitarian art designed for industrial mass production. Artists also called for collaboration with architects.

In retrospective, one of the most significant artistic events during this period, but considered marginal at the time, was the formation in Warsaw of the avant-garde group Praesens. The group was launched on the initiative of a young architect, Szymon Syrkus, and included a new generation of architects and artists. Together they began the essential task of solving the social problems of the time, which they believed, could be achieved only as a result of common efforts. Ideologically, the members of Praesens subscribed to the principles embodied in functionalism. The name of the group Praesens (a Latin word similar in meaning to the English "presence") was a manifestation of the arrival of the young artistic avant-garde and its existence.

Figure 1. Side elevation (North) of the house on Katowicka Street rendered from computer model (by the author). Architects Bohdan Lachert and Jozef Szanajca, 1928.
on the cultural scene. The use of a foreign word also suggested the international interests and character of
the group, which was typical for the Modern Movement.

*Figure 2.*
Warsaw Housing Co-operative
block of flats in the Colony 7 by
Barbara and Stanislaw
Bukalski, Zoliborz district
Warsaw, 1935.
Members of Praesens propagated their ideas by projects, lectures and publications. They also introduced the Modern Movement to Poland and contributed to the development of international events. In particular, young Polish architects were actively participating in the early works of CIAM.

The progressive architects of Praesens were involved in housing projects. Low-income housing was the primary focus of their efforts, as this was perceived as one of the most immediate social needs. They worked with other organizations established to improve the conditions in workers' housing. WSM (Warsaw Housing Cooperative) and TOR (The Association for Workers' Housing) received in Poland the greatest accolades in this area, as well as international recognition at CIAM meetings. Praesens architects also taught at the Warsaw School of Architecture, where they passed on modernist ideas to a younger generation. Their educational activities were important to the assimilation of the Modern Movement in Poland and are an important link with traditions broken by WW2 and the resulting change in the political situation. Their principles regarding modern design survived decades of neglect and abuse and are currently being harvested by contemporary Polish architects.

This study was conducted exclusively using digital tools. Digitally recorded data was processed in image processing software. Drafting, modeling and animation tools were used for the reconstruction and analysis. The final presentation was composed using multimedia software.

Extensive application of digital media in this study allows a better comprehension of the subject and demonstrates the significance of the group Praesens. Digital tools facilitate research and analysis. Digital reconstruction of buildings or their fragments enhances the understanding of tradition. Also, because of the dynamic character of the media it is possible to consider and compare different aspects of various projects. Through the interaction with studied buildings an opportunity to break from the linear character of the analytical process is introduced. Finally, the result of the study is a multimedia publication, which allows a multi-faceted presentation, and one that is more engaging for a viewer because of its interactivity and non-linear structure.

Three architectural teams distinguished themselves among the members of Praesens, as they strongly marked Polish Modern Architecture with their projects and related professional activities. The teams were formed by: Helena and Szymon Syrkus, Barbara and Stanislaw Brukalski, and Bohdan Lachert and Jozef Szanajca. The subject of this study is narrowed down to the work by these three teams, and selected projects are analyzed in detail. The work of other architects related to Praesens or to the principles of the Modern Movement is also referenced in the CD-ROM presentation.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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List of Files Included on a CD and CD-ROM Presentation Description

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WWI accelerated the re-evaluation of artistic and social ideas in Europe. As the new world was emerging from the trauma and rubble, there was a growing notion that social changes were necessary. Artists believed in the influence of their work and were positioning themselves not just as active participants, but also as leaders of the events. Several movements in Europe had a formative impact on Polish modern art during the 1920s, and they influenced its further development through the 1930s. Traditionally, the Polish artistic community had intellectual ties with Western Europe. It was a custom for young people to travel to learn about other countries within Europe, or even take formal education there, and as a result to bring home new ideas from the West. The art, literature and philosophy of these countries were studied with interest and became inspirational to the development of national Polish culture.

The close character of the relationship with the Modern Movement in Europe during the
1920s was reflected in the publications by the Praesens, where projects by Le Corbusier, Gropius, Reitveld, Perret, Stam, Oud, Aalto, Ginsburg and others were discussed.¹

Most inspirational for Polish modernists in this period were the following people and movements:

**Figure 4.** (Previous page) Submissions for the competition for the League of Nations Palace in Geneva (1927) by Szymon Syrkus and Henryk Oderfeld (bottom), Bohdan Lachert, Jozef Szanajca and Stanislaw Hempel (top). The prize won with these projects by young Praesens members was an invitation from Siegfried Giedion to work with CIAM.

**Figure 5.** Le Corbusier’s submission for the League of Nations competition (1927) was the first serious challenge to official academicians. The scheme proposed a new institutional building, which would bring the principles of modern architecture to public attention and to the commanding heights of world government.

1. The flow of ideas from Communist Russia was tempered at that time because of the political situation. Before WW1 Poland was in colonial dependence with Russia. In 1920 there was a war with the Bolsheviks, where the Polish Army defeated Red Army in a patriotic effort. Therefore relationships with this country in the 1920s and the 1930s were distant.
Ideas of Le Corbusier.
The Swiss-French architect played an important role in the development of a new socially aware architectural movement and made the greatest impact on the formation of modern architectural thought in Poland. Le Corbusier was a founding member of CIAM, which served him as a platform for further work and elaboration of his ideas, and for advertising them internationally. Le Corbusier's objective was to create a new living space for a "new man" in a world changed dramatically after World War I.

His comprehensive approach to the problem of providing a livable space produced several studies on minimal and affordable housing projects as well as plans for whole districts and cities (figure 3).

Events in Germany: Bauhaus and Werkbund.¹ Due to a favorable political situation, there was a boom in the construction of housing oriented towards the working classes. Several projects were realized in Frankfurt, Karlsruhe, Dessau and Berlin (W.Gropius², E.May, B.Taut,

Figure 6. Gropius' House at Bauhaus, Dessau. Walter Gropius, 1925-1926.

1. The Werkbund was formed in 1907 by leading German architects and industrialists. Its purpose was to improve the quality of German industrial design in order to compete more advantageously with English industrialists, who were both more efficient and more progressive at the time. The Werkbund promoted new construction technologies and encouraged research and experiments in this area. It coordinated events and sponsored large scale cooperative enterprises. By 1926 it had become the most powerful European influence in modern design.

2. Head of the Bauhaus April 1919 - April 1928
Mies van der Rohe\(^1\)). During this time a lot of effort was invested in experimental and social housing projects. The objective was to discover the most efficient models of habitation. Attention was focused on planning and minimum living area standards as well as inexpensive and time-effective technologies. The Bauhaus, created in Weimar in 1919, had a strong influence on the artistic and architectural scene in Germany and throughout Europe. It developed new ideas for education and advertised unification of fine arts and architecture. It also boosted social awareness and promoted a progressive approach to the planning of housing projects. The introduction of industrial methods of construction (Torten\(^2\)) and experiments with different technologies (skeleton and frame buildings) were significant contributions from the Bauhaus to the development of new residential models in Europe (figure 6). One of the most important achievements of the Werkbund was the organization of its second exhibition at Weissenhof in Stuttgart in 1927. Mies van der Rohe was a planner of this event, which advertised new ideas in the planning and construction of residential projects. The exhibition was also a review of progressive architectural thought in housing and an important statement by modernists regarding the current state and the future of architecture. CIAM and Polish participation. Perhaps the most important role of CIAM (Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne), formed in La Sarraz in early 1928, was that of a forum for sharing ideas. The majority of its participants were young professionals from European countries. These congresses were mainly preoccupied with the practical aspects of modern architecture. The subjects included technology and its influence on architecture, living standards, economy of construction, urban-

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1. Mies van der Rohe was also a director of the Bauhaus since August 1930 until its final closure in July 1933.
2. Dessau-Torten settlement, Walter Gropius 1926-1928. It consisted of terraced row houses. Rigorous rationalization and assembly line organization of work were applied during construction of the project. A crane was used to place concrete beams on the load-bearing walls perpendicular to the exterior walls.

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Figure 7. "Functional Warsaw" scheme, first presented at CIAM in 1933, was a precursory work concerning spatial planning. It went beyond stipulated city boundaries and regional limits, spreading before urban planners much wider mental horizons.

Jan Chmielewski, Szymon Syrkus, final scheme, 1934.

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strong appearance at the fourth congress, which analyzed functional aspects of the 33 world cities. Among the plans recognized as exemplary were the plans for Barcelona and the "Functional Warsaw" scheme ("Warszawa Funkcjonalna" - Jan Chmielewski and Szymon Syrkus, see figure 7).

Figure 8. Model of the monument to the Third International. Tatlin, 1919-1920.

De Stijl. One of the most original and artistically coherent movements, its members included Mondrian, Van Doesburg, Oud, Rietveld. It encompassed art, applied arts (furniture, design...), industrial design and architecture. The influence of De Stijl spread throughout Europe (it had a great impact on the German Bauhaus as well as art and architecture in other countries) (figure 9).

Figure 9. Schroder House in Utrecht. Built according to the Neo-Plastic canon of dynamic architecture liberated from restrictions of load bearing walls and pierced openings. G. Rietveld, 1923.
Constructivism. A very dynamic and significant movement, Constructivism developed in Russia in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Its ideas attracted many socially aware artists and architects in Europe, who collaborated with Russian organizations and architects. In the Soviet Union progressive architects worked on plans for whole cities to reflect political and social changes in the nation. New complexes were to provide housing for the masses, facilitate industrial development and transportation (N. Milutin, E. May). In architecture, problems of functionality and artistic expression of industrial and social development were best represented in the works of El Lissitzky, L.W. & A. Wiesninow, K. Mielnikow, M.J. Ginsburg and others (figure 8).

Suprematism and Kazimierz Malevich. From 1913, Kazimierz Malevich (a Russian of Polish descent) developed his ideas in painting and sculpture. In 1920 he published his manifesto “From Cubism to Suprematism”, where he established his own new and highly abstract rules and philosophy of art. Most famous and inspiring for the European avant-garde were his three dimensional compositions “architectons” (figure 10). His ideas were known

Figure 10. “Alpha” - Architectural sculpture or “Architecton” by K. Malevich, 1920.
in the West, for example they greatly influenced Constructivists and De Stijl. Malevich had a direct connection with the Polish avant-garde as he visited Poland for the opening of the exhibition of his work in Warsaw in 1926.

Polish Modern Art in 1920s.

Before 1918, when Poland was a disjointed country occupied by foreign forces, its literature and its art were above all nationalistic, exalting the values of the people, culture, mysticism and attachment to the land. Prior to WW1 members of the Polish artistic community were rarely concerned with foreign modernist movements. Some exceptions include interest in German Expressionism and traces of Futurism¹ and Cubism². From 1918 onwards, once Poland was finally reunified, avant-garde movements were able to take shape.

The first phase of a Polish art avant-garde was Formizm (Formism), 1919-1921. It was represented by artists of various attitudes - from Expressionism to Futurism and Cubism - in the journal Formisci (The Formists). The group was centered in Krakow. Its members viewed art as a continuation of certain formal traditions, which was distinct from artistic groups in other countries, who were generally breaking with traditions.

Under the influence of Russian Constructivism and Suprematism, young artists became interested in industrial civilization. Blok was the first group of Polish Constructivists. Their program was first clearly put forth in the catalogue of the Exhibition of New Art held in Vilna in 1923. The show was quite radical; it featured landscape postcards with ironic comments, a collection of foreign books and periodicals on new art as well as abstract and purist works by seven artists, including Szczuka, Strzeminski, Stazewski and Zarnower. The postulates published there emphasized the inseparability of art and social issues. The official birth of the group was marked by the publication of the

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1. Found in Jerzy Jankowski's phonetically spelled poems.
2. Found in the work of Zbigniew Pronaszko and August Zamoyski in sculpture, and above all of the painter and poet Tytus Czyzewski.
first issue of the *Blok* magazine in March 1924\(^1\) (figure 12), and by the exhibition in a Warsaw automobile showroom.

Visual discipline, strict interdependence of forms, and clarity of the work of art were considered the main virtues to strive towards. Beauty was eliminated as a positive aesthetic category and was replaced by the notion of an organic or logical relationship of shapes and ultimately by the utility of a work of art as a product designed for social consumption. The assigning of such tasks to the new art resulted from an optimistic faith in modern technology and production\(^2\). Both formal and ideological principles included in the artistic program of the group were to be carried out through a series of creative activities.

Figure 12. Cover page of Issue 8-9 of the Magazine *Blok*, November/December 1924. The magazine was the only means of practical expression of the utopian ideas of Polish constructivists. It was published irregularly in small quantities (500 copies) and distributed in Warsaw only.

1. Eleven issues were published in total between 1924 and 1925.
2. Artists often identified social revolution with artistic revolution. Szczuka even called for the employment of artists in the process of industrial production. According to him, artists should use the devices of modern technology to bring out the constructional values of the new materials commonly employed in production, and to create objects that have full practical justification. Like many other artists who professed the death of easel art, he destroyed or discarded his youthful paintings and spatial constructions.
Blok consolidated itself during the first year, but it was already apparent that there were two incompatible programs, which were to lead to a split a year later. The two theories as put forward by Strzeminski and Szczuka differed significantly. Although the basic approach was similar, the systems and methods through which the common tasks were to be executed proved to be incompatible. The Utilitarian theory favored by Szczuka required that art be dictated by social needs, whereas Strzeminski's Unism (figure 11) promoted an autonomous art which itself dictated the social order. In Unism the fundamental principle of the work of art was its homogeneity. It should be perceived as one visual entity with no contrasts. Katarzyna Kobro (figure 13) adapted ideas of Unism to sculpture. Mathematical relations of proportions governed her synthetic compositions of planes.

Ideas of continual progress and a utilitarian approach stimulated an interest in building and resulted in the concept of the "renewal of architecture". Influenced by Le Corbusier's "Vers une Architecture" (1923) the artists undertook architectural projects in pursuit of the harmony between art and life, and architecture and technology. Subsequently they entered into collaboration with architects, among whom Szymon Syrkus occupied a prime position.

**Figure 13.** "Spatial Composition" - a sculpture by Katarzyna Kobro, 1929.
Program statements of the group Praesens emphasized the union of the new architecture with social demands.

By way of experiment, the architectonic approach provides new opportunities, not only artistic as it might seem but also social. For architecture changes the social pattern, as the social pattern changes architecture.¹

Figure 14. Cover page of the first issue of the quarterly magazine Praesens, 1926.

1. Sykusz, S. Preliminary of Architecture, editorial article and manifesto of the group published in the first issue of the Praesens magazine.
The foremost role of the modern architect was to serve society and then the individual. High social awareness among the members of Praesens is demonstrated by their involvement in residential projects. Housing was one of the greatest social needs of the time and one where architecture could prominently influence society.

The name of the group was also a statement. Praesens is a Latin word, a participle of the verb Praesum and means at hand, present, in person. The Polish avant-garde manifested its arrival and existence on the cultural scene and stated that new ideas were a fact that needed to be fully accounted for and assimilated. Praesens is pronounced similarly to the English word Presence and this confirms the intended general meaning of the name. It also suggests the international character of a group, which was characteristic for the Modern Movement. The belief held that solutions for artistic, architectural and social problems should be found as a result of common efforts by representatives of different countries or in a process of sharing thoughts internationally and analyzing the progress of foreign teams.

1. The verb Praesum means to be before, to preside over and also to have charge of, to rule, to command. This reveals a hidden message of the group's program and leading role in pursuit of artistic and social progress, which Praesens members were undertaking.

Praesens can be read however in many different ways. The technique of abbreviating long expressions or names and creating new words is common in the German and Russian languages. It was especially and often used in Communist Russia, where Suprematists and Constructivists were European pioneers in redefining arts, architecture and urban planning. It seemed therefore to be a modern way of communication and a stylish trend. Polish "sens" has a similar meaning to English "sense", therefore "pra-(e)-sens" would suggest the group's preoccupation with substantial or primary issues. Another way of deconstructing the word would be "pra-esens", which could be understood as a deformed Polish "pra-esencja" (where "esencja" means "essence" or fundamental and substantial contents).

All the above interpretations are indications of the progressive character of the group and its links with the European avant-garde.
The group **Praesens**, when established in 1926, was to unite artists and architects and had a broad program, including both visual arts and architecture. Szymon Syrkus was a leader of the group. Other founding members included his younger colleagues from the School of Architecture, architects Szanajca, and Lachert, as well as painters, among them former Blok members, Strzeminski and Zalewski. Helena Syrkus was the secretary of the group. Barbara and Stanislaw Bruckalski, Lachert and Szanajca's university friends, joined soon afterwards with a few other young architects (Anatolia and Roman Piotrowski, Zygmunt Skibniewski, Stanislaw Hempel, Waclaw Chyrosz, Aleksander Szniolish).

*Figure 15.* Celebration of the opening of the Kazimierz Malevich exhibition at Hotel Polonia in Warsaw, 1926.
*Praesens* was a forum for discussion and the exchange of ideas. The goal of the group was the popularization of new trends in architecture and art. One of the tools used in this task was a magazine, *Praesens* (figure 14), published quarterly. In the first issue of the magazine, in an introductory article Syrkuś, as editor, further defined the program of the group: to unify architecture with industry and to adapt architecture to mass production. He postulated that architecture should be flexible and adjust quickly to changing life conditions (for example he explained the benefits of a moving partition system). It should adapt to the needs of the users and the technological advances in the construction industry. He proposed that architectural spaces themselves should be designed to facilitate everyday tasks and to simplify life, just as the industrial process simplifies the production of objects. The *Praesens* magazine published the work of the members, but also other projects introducing modern architectural solutions. Most articles and projects presented in the magazine dealt with the social aspects of architecture.

Smaller professional teams formed within the group and they included those of Helena and Szymon Syrkuś, Bohdan Lachert and Józef Szarajća and finally Barbara and Stanisław Brukalski. Members continued to work together on the issues that served their common goal. In September of 1926 they organized an "Exhibition of Modern Architecture" in Warsaw. Related works of non-members were exhibited as well, as *Praesens* valued every voice supporting their ideas. The group was also among the initiators of the Machine Age Exposition, in New York in 1927. Another important initiative by *Praesens* was organizing an exhibition in Poland for Kazimierz Malevich. He visited Warsaw in 1926 for the opening of the exhibition (figure 15), which was the starting point of his European tour that aimed at a mass dissemination of his ideas. Malevich’s "architectons" were received with great interest in Poland and he was to establish a special connection with the Polish avant-garde.

Members of *Praesens* attended many CIAM conferences and beginning with CIAM2, par-

1. Only two issues of the magazine were published.
2. They joined *Praesens* in 1929.
Figure 16. Le Corbusier, S. Giedion, H. Syrku, C. van Eesteren during CIAM IV on ship Patris II, 1934.
ticipated actively in the works of this organization. They prepared several speeches and reports and contributed to exhibitions organized by CIAM. Helena and Szymon Syrkus (figure 16) attended the congresses on a regular basis. From 1933 Helena was the secretary of all the pre-war congresses and participated in editing the Charter of Athens (1934). Later, in 1947, she was elected the vice-president of the CIAM Council. Some of the most significant contributions of the Polish group included presentations on minimum dwelling projects at CIAM2 in Frankfurt and The Functional Warsaw study prepared by S. Syrus and J. Chmielewski for CIAM4. Participants returned to Poland with information about the Congresses and their ideas. They propagated these ideas through their application in projects, publishing reports and articles, and lectures.

The work of Praesens was governed by the main principle of functionalism in architecture, where architectural form is the result of the plan and structure of a building (including materials and methods used for construction). Members of the group believed in the standardization of construction, as a necessity for economical reasons. Construction of typical units and application of new building technologies resulted in shortened construction time, saved labor and lowered material costs. Units, buildings and housing complexes designed according to contemporary needs and life styles should allow maximum savings of physical effort, space and time. Small units were often necessitated by economic conditions and the goal to provide workers with places at affordable rents. However maximum attention was paid to the efficiency of the units. Planning of kitchens and flexibility of living spaces were the focus of the ongoing efforts. Unit designs included the planning of functional spaces and details of built-in furniture. The modern environment was to accommodate and stimulate changes in lifestyle, work and leisure.


1. Bohdan Lachert, Jozef Szanajca and Szymon Syrus were invited by Siegfried Giedion to participate in the works of CIAM as members of the
social philosophy. There was a heavy emphasis on the planning of kitchens and other utility spaces, which were perceived at the time as women's domain. Despite the modernist desire to revolutionize society, the role of a family, and first of all a woman in the family, was seen in a relatively conservative way. Even when working families were considered (where a woman had a job outside her home), a woman was expected to do most of the household chores. Therefore architects considered functional planning critical in easing women's workload and a means for gaining some leisure time for her.

Construction of affordable, small and easily available flats was postulated and the use of standard, prefabricated elements was advised. As previously exemplified by Le Corbusier, space was considered in terms of the relationship between residential and green areas. Furthermore, painters and sculptors were expected to work in close cooperation with architects, projecting color designs onto large surfaces of buildings, and inserting their compositions into open spaces. Their joint efforts would

Figure 17. Preliminary design of the Rakowiec Estate of the Warsaw Housing Cooperative was a collaborative work by the group Praesens. It was continued by Helena and Szymon Syrkus, 1930-1936. The project, built on an extremely tight budget, provided minimum dwellings for workers and was an experiment in standardization. Contemporary view.
thus result in a complete artistic whole, uniting urban planning, architecture and art.

Young members of the group were also involved in design education at the School of Architecture, at the Warsaw University of Technology\(^1\). Their publications and activities had a significant impact on the development of progressive methods of architectural education in Poland. They introduced to students and Polish architects the work of Le Corbusier and his program of modern architecture. They emphasized the importance of the relationship of architectural activities to social problems. The majority of their works consisted of housing projects and studies with a focus on affordable and social housing.

The collaboration between architects and artists did not go smoothly. In many cases the Architects had to made difficult decisions to compromise artistic ideas of the projects in order to realize them. It was deemed impossible to use the most modern construction techniques and materials as a result of investors' conservatism and many of the buildings erected did not satisfy the requirements that the group had originally set itself. One of the obstacles was the masonry type of construction used traditionally in Poland, which imposed limitations on building form\(^2\). Contractors' unwillingness to experiment with new techniques and the ready availability of masonry workers made masonry structures prevail in residential buildings. The artists gradually withdrew from the group. They were disappointed with the fact that the artistic program wasn't fully respected and they believed that their contribution to the projects was only marginal. In the 1930s, the group functioned only as a team of architects.

The houses produced by the architects from the Praesens group examined in this study possess, in different degrees, several common features that make them relevant today and prove them to be objects worth studying.

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1. The School of Architecture in Warsaw was founded in 1915. It is located in Warsaw's old downtown area at 55 Koszykowa Street. The Warsaw School of modern architecture, which developed between the wars, may be characterized by its creativity within the boundaries of rational design. This tradition continues today and includes a heavy emphasis on practice as a part of the education of young architects, as many of the professors have been, and continue to be, actively engaged in practicing Architecture.
2. Size of openings, spans, overhangs and other elements are limited in this type of construction.
Figure 18. A proposal for the high-rise residential buildings. Apartment blocks composed of pairs of parallel buildings were joined by hanging galleries. Two level units were accessible from exterior walkways. Jozef Szajnca, Graduation Project, 1926-1927.
Reflecting upon the early examples and models from which many contemporary (i.e. late 1980's and 1990's) buildings originate is a refreshing, learning experience which allows a glance from a different perspective at the common principles of design. The following features qualify them as modernist buildings:

- **Functional plan**
  - Functional section
  Because a functional planning of these buildings was strongly emphasized during their design, the interior spaces are well thought out and connected logically to serve well the needs of modern life. Although our standards and expectations have changed dramatically during the last eight decades, the very basic life needs and routines are adequately accommodated in these houses.

- **Open spaces**
  - Open plan, horizontal and vertical spatial connections and openness between spaces serving different functions was a feature of modern architecture. It is a scheme used commonly by various contemporary designers. Unconstrained lines of vision and double height spaces remove the feeling of confinement even in relatively small spaces. This also allows more flexibility and serves well various everyday and changing needs.

- **Comprehensive design**
  - The houses were designed in complete detail. Interior features, millwork and furniture were well planned and proportioned for the spaces provided. Most of the details are quite basic and modest, but they are still significant features especially in smaller spaces. It is a reminder of the vast extent of the designer's responsibilities in every housing project.

- **Interior and furniture design**
  - The furniture designed for these houses was smaller, lighter and more efficient in the use of material than traditional furniture. It complements modern interiors well. It is still comfortable and functional. Its simplicity adds to the quality of grace and
Figure 19. Four different types of wood frame buildings were proposed for a new neighborhood in Klementynow near Warsaw. Each type could be also repeated in a semi-detached or row configuration. This was an experimental project, as light wood-frame structure was not widely known in Poland at that time. Bohdan Lachert, Jozef Szanajca, 1926.
timelessness. Furniture often consists of built-in pieces and becomes an inseparable element of design, a part of the "machine for living".

Relationship to the site and urban approach
Consistent with the idea that "there is no architecture without urbanism", the houses are examples of responsible urban design at a very small scale. A well positioned building related to its site is more comfortable to live in and complements its neighborhood, regardless of the details of the specific formal approach.

Form and artistic influences
The vocabulary used in these houses became a part of a common architectural language. The expression of structure and technological detail forms an aesthetic statement at the same time. It is not the decoration, but the building materials, function, massing and the relation of its elements (walls, windows etc.), that decide the character and the quality of the building.

Formal and functional consistency
The houses are very strong formal statements. They are well designed both functionally as living units and in terms of their urban scale. This overall design consistency and boldness is a lasting quality.

Figure 20. Partial model of the House on Katowicka Street. Architects Lachert and Szanajca, 1928.
NEW URBAN HABITAT IN POLAND
1918-1939 AND BEYOND

The growing desire to build a New World on the basis of social equality after WW1 was evident in a number of initiatives and approaches in social housing. Most European countries were facing similar problems related to the substandard living conditions of the working classes. In Germany and even more so in Poland, which were both strongly affected by the war, the situation was the most severe. International collaboration was perceived as an essential means for finding universal solutions for housing problems. It was best realized by CIAM. At the very first congress in La Sarraz (26-29 June 1928) issues of housing were discussed in the context of urban and rural areas. In Poland an inquiry from 1921 (IGS - The Institute of State Economy - Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego) revealed a dramatic situation in housing conditions among workers. Most of the homes didn’t meet the basic requirements of accommodation such as the number of persons per room, accessibility of kitchens and bathrooms, heating and natural lighting.

The Polish Association for Housing Reform (Polskie Towarzystwo Reformy Mieszkaniowej) was originated in 1929. It conducted several studies on housing typology and efficiency, including large scale planning and construction methods. There was a growing interest in industrial methods of construction and the planning of large-scale complexes. Szymon Syrkus attempted to introduce German construction experiments in Poland. He argued...
that in the planning of new buildings, costs
should be balanced with cultural and hygienic
necessities and that a habitation of an insuffi-
cient area is not functional and therefore more
expensive. As in other countries, Polish archi-
tects were preoccupied with experiments in
new technologies that were less labor-inten-
sive (figure 19). International events like the
exhibitions in Stuttgart (1927) and Wroclaw
(1929) were widely published in the profes-
sional press. Methodology of design, typology,
efficiency of typical units and living conditions
(space, sun) were all primary issues of discus-
sions (figure 18).

TOR (The Association for Workers' Housing -
Towarzystwo Osiedli Robotniczych), created in
1934, was a government agency. Even though
its operations were limited by funding, TOR
completed several housing projects including

Figure 21: TOR Housing estate in Kolo,
Warsaw was a complex of nine mid-rise
blocks of flats for workers. Pietrowski,
Szulc, Lichtenstein, Brzożowski, 1935.
the estate in Kolo, Warsaw (figure 21). It also sponsored several studies and competitions, and the winners were young architects such as B. & S. Brukalski and H. & S. Syrkus.

Cooperatives were a new form of ownership and organization of housing. The form and comfort of dwellings was tailored according to the financial capabilities of a specific economic group. The general goal was to provide the best living conditions at the lowest price. WSM (Warsaw Housing Cooperative - Warszawska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa) had the largest portfolio of built projects\(^1\) and it was oriented towards workers (figure 2). Several smaller cooperatives were aimed at working professionals or middle class government employees\(^2\) (figure 22).

Unfortunately, except for the many efforts by young architects and social activists, socially oriented housing made up only 5% of the total number of urban habitations built during these years.

1. It included WSM Rakowiec by H. & S. Syrkus and consecutive colonies of WSM Zoliborz, where colonies 4, 7 and 9 were by B. & S. Brukalski.
2. These included Journalists Cooperative in Zoliborz (with projects by Kazimierz Tolleczko and a team Bohdan Lachert, Roman Piotrowski, Jozef Szanajca), “Temida” Cooperative for physicians in Lekarska Street (by Piotr Kwiek) and MSW Cooperative for government employees in Rakowiecka Street (by Jan Stefanowicz).
WW2 brought development in Poland to a sudden halt (figure 23). It caused a total destruction of the Polish economy and a collapse of Polish culture. It also ruined personal lives. Jozef Szananca, an officer of the Polish Army, was killed on September 24, 1939.

Szymon Syrkus spent part of the war in a concentration camp.

After WW2 the difficult situation in housing changed for the worse due to the wide destruction of Warsaw and many other Polish cities.

Figure 23. Extent of destruction in Warsaw during WW2, 1945.
Pro-Communist governments used the reconstruction of habitat as a political issue, consequently imposing very rigid rules on the planning of individual units, forms of buildings and whole cities. The bureaucratic directives varied over time. In the 1950s they denied modern ideas in favor of a pro-Soviet Socio-Realistic decorative and eclectic style (figure 24). In the 1960s, when the political and social climate changed, modern ideas, including the industrial production of buildings were revisited. However, it was politicians rather than architects who made the major planning decisions. As a result large complexes were built without regard to scale, the character of their sites, or a balance with social services, transportation systems and other functions (figure 25). The quality of the units and buildings was compromised, as the pro-Communist government was primarily interested in the quantity of units provided for socio-political reasons of pro-Communist propaganda as well as to satisfy the ever-growing demand. This led to a general denial of modern patterns and ideas within the general public.

Figure 24. MDM, Warsaw, (Marszalkowska Residential District - Marszalkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa) was planned and detailed in 1951-1952 in the official style of Socio-Realism. S. Jankowski, J. Knothe, J. Sigalin, Z. Stepinski.
Therefore the 1960s and 1970s are a dark page in the history of Polish residential architecture. Government corporations controlled the construction of huge complexes of standardized apartment buildings. Pre-cast concrete panels were a preferred method of construction. Due to economic and time constraints there was little time for proper construction detailing or attention to the quality of execution and coordination with other trades. Community planning was also inadequate. Large districts of Polish cities are a sad testimony to these practices and became ghettos, where the quality of life continues to decline. They proved to be disastrous to the physical landscape of the cities and for society. Residents of these places with no identity and no sense of community remain anonymous in their tiny units, which are often substandard relative to their needs. Complexes of pre-cast slab buildings became a maintenance nightmare due to technological difficulties. They also nourished anti-social behaviors and are vulnerable to more serious social problems.

The social beliefs of former *Praesens* members induced them to compromise with post war realities in a hope for wider application of their ideas. Helena and Szymon Syrkus even became active members of the Party. Others

*Figure 25. "Za Zelazna Brama" housing estate in the central Warsaw.*
became disillusioned and the ties between them loosened. All the members of Praesens were teaching at the Warsaw School of Architecture where by educating others, they often escaped from current realities. Even during the period of the denial of modernist ideas they were attempting to convey the main principles of rational design, thereby extending the tradition of functionalism in architecture.

Currently, since 1989 modern ideas are being truly rediscovered due to the new conditions of the market economy and a fully democratic government. Formerly suppressed by Socio-Realism and mass production, modern ideas are finally being harvested again. Many young

Figure 26. Infill residential building on Rozana Street, Warsaw. Wojciech Szymborski, Jacek Zielonka, 1998.
architects find modern language the most natural for the expression of the form of the building (figures 26, 27, 28), because the principles of functionalism are traditionally emphasized in architectural education in Poland. Interestingly, the youngest generation, which grew up in the period of the denial of modernism and without deep knowledge of it, intuitively applies with great success the language created by their teachers in 1920s and 1930s. In this partially retrospective approach to design, the sources of inspiration are some of the best examples in 20th century Polish architecture, which have now become canon. Hundreds of new modern buildings are being constructed in Polish cities, some of them excellent examples of this approach, connecting to a disrupted tradition. They are combining formal attitude with high awareness of the site, its surrounding, and social and individual needs.

Application of modernist schemes in contemporary Polish architecture has a profound reason and goes much further beyond the mere stylis-

Figure 27. Contemporary residential building on Saska Street in Warsaw inspired by modernist architecture of 1920's and 1930's. Architects Wojciech Szymborski and Jacek Zielonka, 1998.
tic detailing. It is a continuation of rich material and intellectual tradition and this quality distinguishes many newly completed projects. They fit well in their neighborhoods and complement their immediate surroundings. Because the underlying modernist tradition was influencing architecture in Poland throughout 20th century, current projects often seem to be the results of the evolution of their precedents. The most successful of the buildings grow from their sites nurtured by a history of the land and add a layer of complexity to their surroundings, blending with their neighbors at the same time and becoming inseparable objects in the cityscape.

Figure 28. Residential complex on Hożusza Street in Zoliborz district of Warsaw consists of apartment building and town homes. JEMS Architects (Olgierd Jagiello, Maciej Miłobędzki, Jerzy Szczepanik-Dzikowski, Violetta Popiel-Machniczka), 1993-1997.
Figure 29. Sequence of animation images. Residence on Wałęcznych Street. Architects H. & S. Syrkus, 1936.
The implementation of digital technology in design or research has a significant impact on its results.

Digital tools were applied in all stages of this study including research, analysis and presentation. Interactivity existed on two levels making this study non-linear. First, it occurred during the process of research and analysis, between the author and the studied objects and second it is an essential feature of the final presentation of the material.

The study was conducted in three major phases. Phase one consisted of research and analysis of collected materials. In the second

**Figure 30.** Modelling of fragments. Row houses in journalists’ complex in Zoliborz district of Warsaw. Architects Szanajca, Piotrowski, 1934.
phase, presentation material was prepared. It was finally composed in the digital presentation of the third phase. The result of the process is interactive media, a form still relatively new for a didactic document. It has to be noted that the final phase of the production of digital presentation requires as much effort as the previous ones. The challenges include the logical organization/reorganization of the material, the creation of an interactive graphical interface with functioning elements, and the processing of the relatively large amount of data.

Figure 31. Computer model of the House on Niegolewskiego Street by Barbara and Stanislaw Brukalski, 1927. At different levels of completeness the model attracts attention to different aspects of the building: structure, formal composition and massing.
The format of the presentation allows to view it linearly or to browse through selected chapters and projects. Linear presentation in a traditional way introduces the projects' background and the authors. It continues with the description of the actual projects, starting with the three houses by the Praesens architects, which were analyzed in detail. Other projects are introduced after that chronologically. In a non-linear exploration of the material the chapters can be omitted and the projects can be found and selected from the timeline diagram by the date or by the author.

Several tools were used during this process. Images and videos were captured with digital cameras; existing drawings and old photographs were scanned and processed in Photoshop. Drafting tools (Vectorworks, AutoCAD, Corel Draw) were used for drawing and analyzing plans and elevations. Modeling, rendering and animation was completed in FormZ, Maya and Electric Image. The final interactive document was composed in Director and Flash.

Figure 32. Partially rendered partial model of the House on Katowicka Street reveals the composition of interior and structural elements. B. Lachert and J. Szanajca, 1928.
The computer reconstruction of fragments enhances understanding of tradition. The process of modeling buildings, or even their pieces, is a learning experience, where we discover and comprehend their structure, inherent relationships, proportions and principles of composition (figure 31, 33). This work also permits us to see buildings from a different perspective and to discover their new dimensions. Especially interesting is the role of 3D models. The very nature of most modeling tools - models are built in wire frame and then rendered at a specified level of material realism - reveals a hidden structure in the stud-

Figure 33. Geometrical analysis of the Residence on Walecznych Street by H. & S. Syrkus, 1936.
ied objects (figure 32). Also, as limited graphical material exists for some of the presented projects, digital reconstruction became an irreplaceable tool for their comprehensive representation.

The digital model facilitates the study of various aspects of a project. For example, it is easy to display it with different levels of detail. Portions, systems or elements of the building can be separated and studied, and the sculptural values are more clearly viewed. Therefore, a vocabulary of architectural objects can be more easily and precisely defined. The recreation of drawings and the building of models convey us back in time where we can simulate or try to understand the design processes of the past. Buildings located on tight urban sites can usually be seen only from a limited perspective. The digital rebuilding of these structures lets us see them with designer's eyes. For example the side elevation of the house on Katowicka Street, blocked by neighboring buildings, can be fully appreciated only when reconstructed (figure1).

The computer models provide us with the advantage of viewing them dynamically and of examining them more comprehensively. Such examination reveals and confirms that the original architectural ideas represent still powerful formal statements and great aesthetic values. We can better understand the architects' intentions or perhaps discover new unintentional, unexpected and fascinating aspects of their projects. Various aspects of models can be compared this way and the most essential spatial or formal relationships extracted. The projects and design ideas can be better understood and evaluated, and this permits greater learning opportunities. Through this method it is possible to switch between scales of viewing - between overall form and a specific aspect of a detail and to provide opportunities to shift attention from one detail of the project to another, as well as to modify the approach during the actual analysis.
Figure 34. CIAM 7, Bergamo, 1949. Standing: Le Corbusier; seated, Helena Syrkus, Sert, Giedion

Tracing Praesens
The Polish avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s actively participated in the early stages of the international Modern Movement, which was most clearly manifested in their work with CIAM. Polish modernists in this period created unique work, which contributed to the development of new ideas internationally and was seminal for a European architectural tradition. In Poland this culture was suddenly disrupted by the war and post war conditions, but decades later it is being rediscovered, over and over again, because it has a profound rationale.

The immediate continuation and critique of the modernist tradition was undertaken by members of a subsequent generation, which included Jerzy Soltan, and other members of Team 10. Jerzy Soltan worked with Le Corbusier in his Paris studio, where he helped develop the Modulor. He contributed to the development of architectural thought through his teachings, projects and writings. He also participated in the post war CIAM meetings. The work by him and other Team 10 members is yet to be recognized internationally and propagated.

Modernist ideas left a permanent mark on Polish architecture and their influence continues today. Functionalism became a feature of architecture in Poland and governed even during the periods of changing aesthetics, politics and ideologies. This was possible partially...
because the members of the early avant-garde continued to teach at the Warsaw School of Architecture. Today the School remains an important center of architectural thought and education. The modern idea of functionalism is ever present in its didactic approach and this constitutes a link with the pre-war avant-garde traditions. This link was never fully broken and the ideas of functionalism continued to influence younger generations of architects. At present, as Poland enjoys once again fully democratic conditions, modern ideas become more pronounced in architectural design as many young architects rediscover and are inspired by the pioneering examples of Polish contemporary architecture of the 1920s and 1930s.

The modern avant-garde was deeply involved in social issues. Social content is visible in most of the projects from this period. This also became a lasting influence, as social awareness spread in general through the architectural profession. The contemporary understanding of the creative role of an architect working for the benefit of the whole society originated from modernist ideas.

Digital tools bring unique qualities to research and architectural work. Implementing new

Figure 35. Details of contemporary residential multi-family residential buildings in Warsaw.
media is important in understanding the subject of study, as they allow a different approach in research and wider analysis. Therefore they bring a better understanding of tradition and present findings in a form that is more influential and easier to comprehend. Especially powerful are interactive presentations, where a user can choose the sequence of exploring the document and view it dynamically. In this study digital tools facilitated separation of formal aspects of projects and the analysis of their functional character. The final presentation on a CD-ROM is written in a flexible format that can be viewed linearly or explored in a non-linear way by the user.

Several housing projects are presented and referred to in this study. Some of them are large complexes and were a product of the united efforts by many individuals and organizations. A detailed examination is conducted on a selected few, smaller buildings. They are the most interesting objects for the contemporary viewer, as they represent and contain the complexity of formal, spatial, ideological and technological issues of their time. These proj-

Figure 36. Modeling of fragments. Entry stair. Residence on Wałecznich Street. H. & S. Syrkus, 1936.
ects were houses designed for clients, or as the architects' own residences. Therefore the authors enjoyed the greatest freedom in this work and were able to exercise their creative skills and incorporate the most innovative ideas. These buildings were the laboratories for conducting architectural experiments and testing details and technologies, some of which were incorporated later into larger complexes.

Further, it must be noted that some of these buildings are monuments of modern Polish architecture and are referred to quite often in various publications. There are however no in-depth studies of these buildings and more extensive analyses of them are yet to come.

"Tracing Praesens" CD-ROM presents important achievements of the Polish modernists of the 1920s and the 1930s. They are located in time and in relation to the events in Europe during that period to illustrate their significance for both Polish and European modern culture. Their tradition in Poland continues today.

Figure 37. Group photograph, Amsterdam CIRPAC meeting, 1935. Bottom row, from right to left: Vladimir Antolic (Yugoslavia), Van Eesteren, Gropius, Giedion, Helena Syrkus, Ernest Weissmann (Yugoslavia).


   Tom XVI - Architektura dawna a współczesność. (Volume XVI - Ancient architecture versus presence; page 103, an article by Helena Syrkus)

   Tom VIII - Polska nowatorska myśl architektoniczna w latach 1918-1939 (Volume VIII - Polish progressive architectural ideas in 1918-1939)
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 | List of Projects Hyperlinked on a CD | Page 49
APPENDIX 2 | Biographical Notes of the Group Praesens | Page 53
PROJECTS PRESENTED IN DETAIL

House on Katowicka Street; Bohdan Lachert and Jozef Szanajca, 1928.
Innovative in its form and structure (a system of perpendicular load bearing walls allowed the application of continuous ribbon windows on the elevations), the house received a lot of attention even during construction. Currently it is on the list of heritage buildings. It consists of three three-level town homes whose interior living spaces are designed for maximum openness and are interconnected vertically.

Residence on Niegolewskiego Street; Barbara and Stanislaw Brukalski, 1927-1928.
The Architects' own residence and studio was inspired by the ideas of Neo-Plasticism, paintings by Mondrian and the work of De Stijl. In its detail the house bears some resemblance to the Residence in Utrecht by G.T. Rietveld (1924). It is, however, more innovative spatially with its open living space, studio overlooking the double height space above the entrance hall and the strong, unifying vertical element of a spiral staircase. The residence was planned on three levels, where a large
portion of the third level was devoted to a rooftop garden. Since 1973 it has been on the list of heritage buildings.

Residence on Walecznych Street; Helena and Szymon Syrkus, 1936. This strictly functional house was one in a series of testing grounds for developing efficient residential spaces. The issues of function, necessity, comfort and luxury of every day living were the main design objectives of this project.

Figure 38. WSM Colony 9, building at 8 Prochnik Street, Warsaw. Barbara and Stanislaw Brukalski, 1938.
OTHER PROJECTS

Submission for Housing Competition and Expo in Lwow, Bohdan Lachert and Jozef Szanajca, 1926.

Proposals for affordable wood frame houses, Bohdan Lachert and Jozef Szanajca, 1926.

Thesis project by Jozef Szanajca, 1927.

WSM Colony IV. Barbara and Stanislaw Brukalski, 1927.

Szyller Residence in Saska Kempa district of Warsaw, Bohdan Lachert and Jozef Szanajca, 1928.


WSM Colony VII. Barbara and Stanislaw Brukalski, 1930-1934.

WSM Rakowiec. Helena and Szymon Syrkus, 1931-1936.

Residence in Pinsk. Helena and Szymon Syrkus, 1926.

Residence in Milanowek. Helena and Szymon Syrkus, 1926.

MSW Housing on Rakowiecka Street. J. Stefanowicz, 1931.

Temida Housing Cooperative, Piotr Kwiek, 1933.

Town-homes on Dziennikarska Street. J. Szanajca, B. Lachert, J. Reda, R. Piotrowski, 1934.


Building on Slowackiego Street. Stanislaw Brukalski, Jozef Szanajca, 1935.
Apartments on Jaworzynska Street. Helena and Szymon Syrkus, 1937.


Apartments on Walecznych Street; Helena and Szymon Syrkus, 1937.

WSM Colony IX. Barbara and Stanislaw Brukalski 1938.

Apartments on Al. Przyjaciol, Juliusz Zurawski, 1938.

Figure 39. Housing for Government Clerks. Slowackiego Street, Warsaw. Stanislaw Brukalski, Jozef Szanaica, 1935.
APPENDIX 2
Biographical Notes of the Group Praesens

Brukalski, Barbara and Stanislaw

Their private house was completed in 1929 at 5 Niegolewskiego Street, Warsaw, Zoliborz. It is one of the most interesting examples of Polish Modern Architecture and is currently on the list of heritage buildings (since 1973). Consecutive WSM colonies in Zoliborz are their greatest professional achievement. These housing complexes and especially unit layouts are proof of their leadership in architecture of the second Polish Republic. They were designing in compliance with Polish capabilities (economic), traditions and habits but also according to world trends. Their designs were comprehensive; they knew the meaning of every day convenience and reasonable comfort.

The Brukalski also designed furniture and interiors. In 1937 they received a commission for interiors of Polish Ocean Liners. Stanislaw Brukalski, working with a brilliant artist on interiors of the Polish transatlantic liners “Batory” and “Pilsudski”, produced remarkable designs. They participated in competitions for residential and public interiors.

Stanislaw and Barbara met at the Warsaw School of Architecture. They usually worked on the projects together.
1925 - they won competition for the 4th WSM Colony in Warsaw (workers' housing). It resulted in the beginning of their common architectural practice. The economic values of their projects were considered one of the most important criteria for the jury. WSM's objective was to contest the problem of homelessness. The Brukalski couple won the competition because of their innovative approach reducing the cost of construction (for example they were using a floor to floor height - 270cm as opposed to traditional height of 360cm; they also discarded all decoration - not necessarily because they didn't like it, but as an offensive element of a building at a time of dire social needs and difficulties).

Architectural tradition in the Brukalski family is passed on from generation to generation and continues today.

Work:
1927 - design and construction of WSM Colony IV in Zoliborz, Warsaw (as a result of a WSM invited competition).

1928-1939 - WSM Colony IV, VII and IX.
1927-1938 - interiors for Ocean Liners - "Batory"; "Pilsudski"; "Sobieski".
1929 - Brukalski Residence on Niegolewskiego Street, Warsaw (Golden Medal at Paris Exhibition in 1937).
1927-1939 - several awards in competitions for housing complexes, residential buildings and interiors. Construction of several residential buildings, retail interiors and commercial pavilions.

1945-1960 - WSM Colony XI, XII, XIII in Zoliborz

Publications:
1934 - paper for CIAM congress in Athens "Social principles for design of housing complexes (published in Poland by the Ministry of Restoration in 1948)"
Barbara Brukalska 1899 - 1980

Attracted to nature and landscape she first studied agriculture in Pulawy (didn’t finish) as her parents owned large properties in this region.

1934 - graduated from the School of Architecture - Warsaw Technical University.

Individual work:
1948 - 1951 - interiors for ten historic buildings in Old Town Square in Warsaw.
From 1949 - restoration and new churches in Jezysz, Ostroleka, Izabelin.
1950-1964 - restoration of the historical building "Under the Eagles" (including interiors) - a branch of The National Bank of Poland - Jasna Street, Warsaw).
1959 - housing complex WSM Okecie II

Figure 40. Barbara Brukalska
Teaching:
1946-48 - associate professor at the School of Architecture. She specialized in housing. In her studio at the School she worked with students on small housing projects.
Since 1948 - Professor - Department of Architectural Design and Composition
1965 - Professor - Department of Housing

Competitions:
1937 - three awards (I, II and III) for residential interiors for the International Exhibition in Paris.
1962 - 1st award (and construction) of the "Rodz. Matysiakow" House for Seniors.

In her professional practice she paid a lot of attention to the design of functional units. A kitchen, as a heart of the house always received the closest attention:

Architects should cover in their design a wide range of scales from urban planning to unit planning and even furniture layouts. Every effort afforded in unit planning and ergonomic studies will pay back hundred times. Rational and functional planning of kitchens is critical for women's work, the amount of free time they can afford and lifestyle of the whole family.

Barbara Brukalska was very active politically and stood behind her democratic ideas even in the difficult late 1930s when extreme right wing groups and parties had growing popularity. To her, work and involvement in social housing projects didn't contain much political meaning. She considered it her professional mission and social obligation.
Redakcja i wydawcy czasopisma PRAESENS stwierdzają niniejszym, że

P. Stanisław Brukalski
jest stałym współpracownikiem wymienionego czasopisma. Wszystkie władze proszone są o udzielanie mu wszelkiej pomocy i ułatwień przy wykonywaniu przezeń obowiązków zawodowych.

Le Redaction et les Editeurs du périodique PRAESENS certifient que

M. Stanisław Brukalski
est rédacteur du périodique susmentionné. Toutes les autorités sont priées de bien vouloir lui prêter aide et de lui faciliter l'accomplissement de ses devoirs professionnels.

Figure 41. Stanisław Brukalski's Praesens membership ID. 1927.

Tracing Praesens 57
Stanislaw Brukalski 1894 - 1967

Born in Warsaw, where he also attended high school.

1916 - started School of Architecture in Milan (his high school diploma was not allowing him an entrance to the University in Russia - which was occupying Poland).

1917 - joined Polish Army - Legions. He was seriously wounded; awarded a “Cross of Independence”. Later captured and spent the rest of the WW1 in a concentration camp.

1927 - graduated from the School of Architecture - The Warsaw Technical University. After graduation worked as an assistant Professor.

1929 - abandoned his university career and devoted himself to architectural practice.

Individual work:

1934-1935 - house for the employees of The Warsaw Technical University on Tarczynska Street in Warsaw.

1937 (with Bohdan Pniewski) - Polish Pavilion for International Exhibition in Paris.

1936-1938 - building for the Ministry of Defense on Rakowiecka Street.

1945-1960 - restoration and addition to Raczyński Palace on Krakowskie Przedmiescie Street, Warsaw - conversion to the Fine Arts School.


1952-56 - Community Center and Theatre for WSM in Zolibor. (“Social House” and “Komedia Theatre”)

Publications:

Several articles on housing in “Architektura and Budownictwo” magazine.

Teaching:

1945-1948 - Associate Professor at The School of Architecture, The Warsaw Technical University.

1948 - Professor - Department of Architectural Design and Composition

1958-1960 - Dean of The School of Architecture in Warsaw.
Syrkus, Helena and Szymon

Participated in a wide range of political, social and professional activities. They were members of CIAM. They represented Poland at Congresses and prepared presentations. Helena was the vice president of CIAM in 1947.

They were both members of the Party after the War. Helena was a leader of the organization at the School of Architecture, where she was teaching. For them, WSM activities had a more political (than social) meaning - for which they were sometimes criticized by colleagues (Barbara Brukalska).

One of their major projects was the Warsaw Building Cooperative’s Rakowiec Housing Estate, launched by Praesens (a pioneer attempt in collective work).

They exercised extreme care in the design of residential units. They were satisfied with a unit plan only if it was possible to have six different furniture layouts for it. They demonstrated keen attention to detail. The result of this work were economical but also surprisingly functional and comfortable units (given the very tight area and budget constraints). They had a well-earned respect for their residential work.

Active educators. During the war they taught secret classes for architectural students.

Work:
Till 1939 - Residential buildings in steel frame in Skolimow and concrete frame in Saski Kepa, on Niepodleglosci Avenue, on Jaworzynska Street, on Zlota Street. Convalescent houses in Konstancin and Srodborow. Dairy factory Colony II and III for WSM in Rakowiec, Warsaw.
1947-1950 - Residential complex in Kolo, Warsaw Residential complex “Praga 1” Community house in Rakowiec, Warsaw School on Filtrowa Street, Warsaw
1954-1960
Projects for typical buildings and units
- for industrially manufactured pre-cast panel buildings

Publications:
1930 - "About a simultaneous action theatre"
1931 - "Industrial production of living units"
1933 - participated in editing of the Charter of Athens, CIAM
1935 - "De l'architecture et de la production des habitations ouvrières"
1938 - "10 years of CIAM"
1940 - "Social services in a residential complex"
1947 - "Construction of the WSM Colony II in Kolo, Warsaw"
1937 & 1941- articles in "Gli elementi dell'architettura Funzionale"

Szymon Syrkus 1893-1964
Architect and town-planner.
Born in Warsaw, April 1893; died there June 8, 1964.

Studies: In Vienna, Grat, Dorpat, Moscow, and School of Fine Arts in Krakow - architecture, painting and sculpture.
1922 - graduated from the School of Architecture, Warsaw Technical University

Figure 42. Szymon Syrkus
1922-1924 - apprenticeship in Berlin and Paris (Academie des Beaux Arts)
1924 - joined Blok.

Collaborated with Szczuka and Zarnower on many of the designs for the apartment buildings presented at the first International Exhibition of Modern Architecture in Warsaw, 1926.

In 1926 he was one of the founding members of the group Praesens, a leader of the group and an initiator of the Praesens journal. The program of the group was formulated in Syrkus' editorial the "Preliminary of Architecture" in the first issue. It professed a close link between architecture and industry as the only truly 20th-century solution to the problem of the future development of architecture.

From 1928 to 1957 he was on the CIRPAC Executive Board. In 1927, he participated in the International Theatre Exhibition in New York. He designed the Simultaneous Theatre With A. Pronaszko, S. Zaleski and H. Syrkus. The idea consisted of a huge stage apparatus able to produce simultaneous effects. It was never executed but it was one of the most radical proposals for theatre architecture and can be compared with Walter Gropius' design for the Total Theatre.

During the WW2 Szymon Syrus was a director of a secret studio conducting planning studies for Warsaw. These studies looked to the future and included concepts for post-war Warsaw. Later arrested, S.Syrkus spent the war in a concentration camp.

His most interesting commissions include Old People's Home (in collaboration with Henryk Oderfeld), 1925; Fertilizer Pavilion at the Universal National Exhibition in Poznan, 1929; private residences and apartment buildings, housing estates in and near Warsaw. He was also a prolific writer.

Individual Work:
Till 1928 - Seniors Housing on Gorczewska Street, Warsaw
Building for Social Security office in Brzesc on Bug (1st award in a competition and construction)
1929 - pavilion at national exhibition in Poznan
- Project for a Simultaneous Action Theatre (with Andrzej Pronaszko)
1932 - 1st Award in a competition for a Convalescent House for Teachers.

Publications:
1934 - “Functional Warsaw” with Jan Chmielewski
- Articles in professional magazines in Poland and abroad

Teaching
The School of Architecture, The Warsaw Technical University

Appointed as a Professor on the basis of his achievements in architectural practice and research before the war. In 1950’s he was criticized for his modernist opinions and image. To comply with the requirements of the social-realism he looked for inspiration in the early Greek architecture. In his teaching he united architectural and urban issues.

Figure 43. Helena Syrus
Helena Syrkus 1900-1982

Born in Warsaw, May 14, 1900. She died there, November 20, 1982.

Studies: 1918-1925 - The School of Architecture, The Warsaw Technical University and Department of Philosophy, University of Warsaw
1926 - member of *Preasens* group and its secretary.
1929 - became a member of the Polish CIAM section (till 1957).
Starting 1933, the year of the Athens Congress, she was the secretary of all the pre-war congresses.
1948-1957 - member of the Executive Committee of UIA, UIA representative at UNESCO
1947 - at the Congress in Bridgewater, was elected a Vice-President of the CIAM Council alongside Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius.

As an architect, she experimented with new systems (steel framework or course walls).

In October 1939, she organized the PAU (Architectural and Town-Planning Studio). The Studio produced numerous designs and studies, which were used in the first plans for the rebuilding of Warsaw after the War.

Major Work:
Experimental theatre in the district of Zoliborz in Warsaw, 1932-34; private residences, housing estates.

Publications:
1936 - "Les logements et les cites ouvrieres en Pologne" in Le livre du V-e Conges CIAM
1949 - "Social housing in a district, town and region"

Teaching:
At the School of Architecture, Warsaw Technical University.
Till 1952 - assistant to Prof. Szymon Syrkus.
Since 1955 till 1970s - Professor in the studio of Residential Architecture
Since 1964 - head of the studio of Residential Architecture
Bohdan Lachert and Jozef Szanajca

They met as students at the School of Architecture in Warsaw. Became friends and collaborators. From 1926 to 1939 they ran an architectural studio. Lachert and Szanajca's characteristic feature was their experimental attitude towards the use of new building methods and new materials. Results of that, among other things, can be seen in a building at 9/13 Katowicka Street, where a functional system of three-level townhouses has a superb facing and a horizontal arrangement of windows. North unit of the building on Katowicka was the original Lachert's house (sold in 1988).

Their joint oeuvre includes a design for the School of Political Science (a competition entry) - strikingly innovative, it was never executed. Lachert, Szanajca and Niemciewski won six first prizes in the competition "Affordable House", Lvov. They proposed remarkably successful solutions within the framework of the functional system for terraced houses, semi-

Figure 44. Bohdan Lachert and Jozef Szanajca in 1938.
detached houses and blocks of flats. Lachert and Szanajca distinguished themselves again as the authors of a design for the League of Nations Palace in Geneva (1927). This gained them international recognition of their work and an invitation to CIAM.

The Lachert family had a very close relationship with Jozef Szanajca, who took part in all important family events. He was also Rudof’s godfather. Bohdan carved a bust of Jozef, which can be seen in Jozef Szanajca Street in Warsaw.

Other architects and artists were common guests at Lachert’s home. Among them were the Brukalski family and the Syrkus family. They always had long vivid discussions on artistic subjects.

Work:
1925-1939
1st Award in a competition for the entrance to horseracing grounds in Mokotow, Warsaw.
1st Award in a competition for a residence
10 awards (with Lech Niemojewski) at the “Affordable House” exhibition
1st Award in a competition for Students’ Housing (with W. Winkler)
1st Award (with W. Winkler) in a competition for a Ministry of Post and Telecommunication building in Warsaw.
1st Award (with W. Winkler) in a competition for a housing complex for the army officers in Krakow.
1st Award (with W. Winkler) in a competition for residences for the army officers in Bielsko.
Bohdan Lachert’s house on Katowicka Street in Warsaw, 1928;
The Centro Cement Pavilion at the Universal National Exhibition in Poznan 1929;
Jozef Szanajca 1902-1939

Born in Lublin, March 17, 1902; killed in Plazewo near Tomaszow Lubelski, September 24, 1939.

1920-1927 - Studied at the School of Architecture, Warsaw Technical University.

He was among the most dynamic representatives of the generation of young architects active after World War I, who in the mid-twenties, were anxious to introduce functionalism to Polish architecture. He was one of the founders of the group Praesens, with which he participated in several exhibitions:

1926, Warsaw - 1st International Exhibition of Modern Architecture;
1927, New York - The Machine Age Exposition;
1928, Vilno
1928, Cracow
1928, Paris - Salon d'Automne;

1929, The Universal National Exhibition in Poznan

In 1931 he organized the Polish section at an exhibition of cities and homes in Berlin

In 1937 he was co-organizer of the Polish Economy Pavilion, L'Art et Technique, Paris and was awarded the Grand Prix.

During the seventeen years of his work, he produced almost one hundred and fifty designs, often with Bohdan Lachert, as well as with Lech Niemojewski, Barbara and Stanislaw Bruckalski, Stanislaw Hempel and Jan Reda. He won twenty-five prizes in various architectural competitions.

His most interesting works, which follow the premises of functional architecture, include:

Buildings for ZUS (Social Insurance Institution) in the district of Zoliborz in Warsaw;
ZUS convalescent homes in Tuszynek and Kurek, 1937-38
Bohdan Lachert 1900-1986

Born in Moscow, June 13, 1900. He died in Warsaw in 1986.

1926 - graduated from the School of Architecture - Warsaw Technical University.
1926 - one of the founding members of the group Praesens (with Jozef Szanajca, Szymon Syrkus and others). Introduced to Praesens by Syrkus, with whom he entered into collaboration soon after graduation.

His father worked for a big company with a head office in Moscow. The family lived in Moscow where 5 children were born: Bohdan was the oldest one, and then there was Maria, Zygmunt, Czeslaw and Anna. Children spent their summer holidays on a farm in Polish Ciechanki.

In 1918 the family moved (or escaped) from Moscow to Poland.

Bohdan Lachert believed in the potential of architectural profession. It's under his influence that his two sons became architects.

After the war, Bohdan Lachert designed a prominent housing complex in Muranow, Warsaw. His idea was to create a monument of the War and the Warsaw Ghetto. His project was modified to a large extent though (for political reasons) and Bohdan quit his job (even though he was a member of the Party at that point). Bohdan's political opinions stayed on the left side till the end of his life. In architecture he was a follower of Le Corbusier. He believed in good architecture for common people.

For his 80-th birthday he received a special award from SARP (The Association of Polish Architects).

Lachert on architecture:

In the thirties, the architects, appreciating the importance of utilitarian problems, undertook creative work, which demanded that all the respective utilitarian functions of the buildings should be
evident in both their exterior and interior appearance. This trend, known as Functionalism, was, unfortunately interpreted falsely as one rejecting all of the excessive decoration and shaping of a work of art based on artistic prerequisites (...).

The difficulties in the re-creating of an architectural design, that is, of an architectural work of art, can in reality, be by-passed if its author gives up all the unconventional features of his work, which are not accepted with univocal acclaim. Such resignation is either a forced act or constitutes a safeguarding decision made in the anticipation that such a forced act may occur. The resignation of an architect and the giving up of the attitude of an artist, should result in his withdrawing from creative work (...)

An architect's imagination, active while he is engaged in his creative work, does not function on the principle of a program: the pictures projected by his imagination whirl in the atmosphere of the undertaken subject matter and are directed by his professional ability and aesthetic sensitivity. (...) An architect should possess not the intention of re-creation of his primary vision but also, or rather, he should be aware of the necessity to be subject to the self-generating consequences, that is, he should rather work as a teacher, so to speak, influencing the development of his pupil's personality without having, however, the possibility of shaping it entirely at his will. (...) The emotional experiences of the architect are one of the main stimuli to undertake work

Figure 45. Bohdan Lachert
in the field of architecture, often surpassing in intention the potential of the architect's own physical resources.

Work:
1925-1939
Convalescent home for tuberculosis patients (for National Retirement Fund) in Warsaw.
Three Schools of Commerce in Vilno
School in Sulejowek
Hotels in Skolimow and Kamienna Gora
Residential buildings in Gdynia, Warsaw, Komorow and Wesola.
Post office building in Stanislawow.
After 1945
Restoration of PKO building on Marszalkowska Street in Warsaw.
Post office building on Zygmuntowska Street in Warsaw.
Cemetery of Soviet Soldiers in Warsaw
“Muranow” residential district in Warsaw.

After 1964
Residential complex in Pulawy.

Teaching:
1926 Began to lecture at the School of Architecture, Warsaw Technical University
1929-1937 - instructor of architecture at the Department of Civil Engineering - Warsaw Technical University.
1940-1944 - lectures at the (underground) City School of Building Technology
1945-1948 - associate professor at the School of Architecture - studio for design of industrial buildings
1948-1960 - professor at the School of Architecture - studio for design of industrial buildings
1960 - till 1980s head of the studio for design of Residential Complexes
1950-1954 - dean of the School of Architecture