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Hans Poelzig and the Problem of Functional House

From Landhaus to the Modern Movement House in Weissenhof Estate

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to indicate the role played by Hans Poelzig in the first half of the 20th century in creating the way towards modernity and especially towards the modern, functional house. The article is mainly the result of literary and archival studies and shows the architectural activity of Hans Poelzig. At the beginning of the 20th century, Poelzig twice proposed a single-family house of the Landhaus type in Wrocław as a model of the solution that he considered the best at that time. These were: a model house of the ‘Atristic Craft Exhibition’ from 1904 and a single-family house in the Zalesie estate from 1906, its form related to the Heimatschutz movement, which promoted the use of regional forms in architecture. Thanks to cooperation with the company Christoph & Unmack from Niesky, in 1926, Poelzig designed a wooden single-family house using construction techniques introduced by this company. It is an Existenzminimum house, promoted in the second half of the 1920s. A truly modern approach to the design of a single-family house was presented by the architect in 1927, in the model experimental Werkbund estate – Weissenhof in Stuttgart. The house had a very modest form, consistent with the conditions of the exhibition, the most important of which was a flat roof. In 1928, Poelzig designed two traditional houses – a single-family house and a semi-detached house in Berlin in the Am Fischthalgrund housing estate. A truly modern one was the architect’s own house, designed with his second wife, Marlene Moeschke, between 1928 and 1930. The final statement on modern housing was the house presented at the exhibition entitled *Berliner Sommerschau 1932: Sonne, Luft und Haus für Alle ...*, where the architect presented a “growing house.” Hans Poelzig is considered one of the precursors of modernism, he prepared a new generation of architects to solve new tasks regarding modern apartments and their equipment, but he himself was not fully enchanted by the new style of Neues Bauen.

Keywords: Hans Poelzig, one-family houses, modernizm, Landhaus, Christoph & Unmack, Weissenhof, am Fischthalgrund, growing house

INTRODUCTION

Hans Poelzig (1860–1936) is not only one of the most outstanding architects of Wrocław, but also of Germany and Europe. He was an excellent teacher and an innovative architectural designer. Born in Berlin in 1869, the architect came to Wrocław at the turn of the 20th century to take up a position as a teacher of architectural drawing and carpentry at the Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts (Königliche Akademie für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe).¹ Poelzig was appointed to the Royal Academy in 1900 as a result of a bold act of patronage, as Wolfgang Pehnt writes.² Until then, the 31-year-old architect had no spectacular achievements of his own. His brief stint at the technical office of the Ministry of Public Works did not constitute any credible evidence of his qualifications for teaching at the school. This made it all the more surprising how boldly the young architect made his presence felt, gaining recognition and respect among his colleagues and students. By 1903, he had already become the director of the Wrocław school, which was then entering its ‘golden age.’

Poelzig was keenly interested in the problem of housing and residential development. In his article published in 1906 in *Das Deutsche Kunstgewerbe*, Poelzig wrote: ‘Today, the world is ruled by economics, and society demands that creators solve the growing problems of housing architecture, which are a particular challenge for artists designing urban development’.³ Already at the beginning of the 20th century, the problem of housing shortages became prevalent in large European cities. In his design work, Poelzig solved problems that became a life mission for many representatives of the younger generation. He was a proponent of the ‘total work of art’ (‘Gesamtkunstwerk’), which is the result of collaboration between artists from various fields of art, for whom architecture is the mother of the whole.⁴ However, did his proposals have a decisive influence on the development of housing at that time? We will try to shed light on this issue in this article.

The subject of the research was Hans Poelzig’s design activity in the field of residential architecture, and the aim was to show the role he played in creating the path to functional housing. The architect is called the ‘father of modernists’ in Germany and is the author of many outstanding works of architecture that reveal a preference for modern forms. However, his residential designs clearly show a lack of consistency in his choice of style. Unfortunately, most of them have not survived to this day.

¹ The Wrocław Academy was the successor to the Royal School of Construction, Arts and Crafts (Königliche Bau-, Kunst- und Handwerksschule), which had been established through the merger of the Provincial School of Art (Provinzial-Kunstschule) and the School of Construction (Bauschule). The former had been founded by the Prussian King Frederick William II on May 28, 1791, and opened on December 1 of the same year, while the latter was founded in 1800. In 1875, however, the School of Construction was separated from the School of Art, which was then renamed the Royal School of Arts and Crafts (Königliche Kunst- und Kunstgewerbeschule). In 1911, the Royal School was transformed into an academy, initially royal and subsequently state-run.

² Pehnt, W. (2000). Wille zum Ausdruck: Zum Leben und Werk Hans Poelzig. In W. Pehnt & M. Schirren (Eds.), *Hans Poelzig: Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler* (p. 19). DVA.

³ Poelzig, H. (1906). [Gärung in der] Architektur. In *Das deutsche Kunstgewerbe 1906: Zur 3. Deutschen Kunstgewerbeausstellung in Dresden 1906* (pp. 17–20). Verlagsanstalt F. Bruckmann.

⁴ Dobesz, J. (1998). Hans Poelzig i wrocławska Akademia Sztuki. In O. Czerner, E. Małachowicz, & S. Lose (Eds.), *Ten wspaniały wrocławski modernizm: Materiały z konferencji Komisji Architektury i Urbanistyki Wrocławskiego Oddziału PAN* (p. 14). Via.

In preparing this text, the traditional tools of the architectural historian were used. The main role in acquiring knowledge was played by the study of archives and literature, both pre-war and contemporary. In situ research was possible to a very limited extent, as most of the houses no longer exist.

STATE OF RESEARCH

Until the discovery of expressionism in the 1960s, Poelzig was given virtually no place in history. Leading architectural historians remained silent about his work. Nikolaus Pevsner, who knew Poelzig personally and interviewed him, we find only three mentions in *Pioneers of Modern Design*,⁵ from 1936. Henry Russell Hitchcock devoted one paragraph to Poelzig in his 500-page magnum opus *Architecture Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, from 1958.⁶

The change did not come until the early 1970s. Wolfgang Pehnt, in *Expressionist Architecture*,⁷ in 1973, in the chapter Introduction to the Theatre of the Five Thousand (pp. 13-22), describes Poelzig as an expressionist, and in the chapter Around 1910, he describes his works alongside those of Max Berg, Peter Behrens, Paul Bonatz, and Hermann Muthesius (pp. 65-72), and in the chapter Cinema (pp. 165-168), he describes the set designs for the film Golem in 1920 and Poelzig’s cinema buildings designs. The same author – Wolfgang Pehnt – in 1977, in his work entitled *Die Kunst des 20 Jahrhunderts 1880 – 1940*, which is volume 12 of the monumental *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte*,⁸ wrote the chapter Architektur, in which he describes Poelzig’s work. Another important author is Julius Posener, who published Poelzig’s texts and their commentary in 1970.⁹ This author’s subsequent publications on Poelzig date from 1979 – a chapter in a publication on Berlin architecture¹⁰ – and 1994 – a monograph on the architect himself.¹¹ Finally, the third significant author who developed research on Poelzig was Matthias Schirren, author of a monograph¹² from 1989 on the plans and drawings from the former Museum of Transport and Construction in Berlin.

Another change came in 2000, when a large collective monograph devoted to Poelzig was published – Hans Poelzig in Wrocław, architecture and art 1900-1916,¹³ edited by

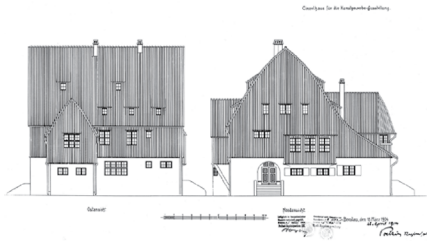


Fig. 1. Wrocław, then Breslau, model single-family house of the “Special Exhibition” of the Artistic Crafts Association at the Artistic Crafts Exhibition, no longer extant, design of the eastern and northern façades, Hans Poelzig, 1904; source: Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, Building Archive of the City of Wrocław.



Fig. 2. Wrocław, then Breslau, model single-family house of the “Special Exhibition” of the Artistic Crafts Association at the Artistic Crafts Exhibition, no longer extant, eastern façade, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1904; source: K. Masner, *Das Einfamilienhaus des Kunstgewerbevereins*, Berlin, 1905.

Jerzy Ilkosz and Beate Störtkuhl, concerning his Wrocław period, containing a catalog of works and source texts. The publication accompanied an exhibition organized by the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław. Another monograph describing Poelzig’s entire oeuvre, Hans Poelzig, *Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler*,¹⁴ edited by Wolfgang Pehnt and Matthias Schirren, was published in 2007. It contains a catalog of all the architect’s works and his correspondence, which can be considered source material. The publication accompanied an exhibition presented in Berlin at the Akademie der Künste and in Frankfurt am Main at the Deutsches Architekturmuseum.

In addition, some of the architect’s houses have been discussed in other monographic studies or scientific articles. These include: a single-family house at the ‘Arts and Crafts Exhibition’ (‘Ausstellung für Handwerk und Kunstgewerbe’) in Wrocław in 1904 and his own house in Wrocław at Chopina Street;¹⁵ a single-family house in the model Werkbund estate – Weissenhof in Stuttgart from 1927;¹⁶ and the ‘growing house’ presented at an exhibition in Berlin in 1932.¹⁷ An extensive and very interesting text on the interiors designed by Poelzig in Wrocław, written by Maria Zwierz, has just been sent to print.¹⁸

DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE AT THE ‘ARTISTIC CRAFTS EXHIBITION’ IN WROCLAW, 1904, NO LONGER STANDING¹⁹

The Association of Artistic Crafts for Wrocław and the Province of Silesia took part in the exhibition entitled ‘Ausstellung für Handwerk und Kunstgewerbe’ (‘Arts and Crafts Exhibition’), organized by the Chamber of Crafts in 1904 in Wrocław, presenting a ‘Sonderausstellung’ (‘Special Exhibition’), which featured a single-family house designed by Hans Poelzig (Figs. 1 and 2). In this design, the architect wanted to present ‘a program of fighting against luxury and appearances, as well as a protest against superficiality, pointlessness, the primacy of decoration, and waste of materials’.²⁰

¹⁴ Pehnt, W., & Schirren, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Hans Poelzig: Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler*. DVA.

¹⁵ Zwierz, M. (2016). Architektura i rozplanowanie terenu wystaw. In *Tradycje wystawiennicze we Wrocławiu w latach 1818–1948* (pp. 107-150). Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu; Störtkuhl, B. (n.d.). Die Pläne zur Breslauer ‘Ausstellung für Handwerk und Kunstgewerbe’ von 1904 in Bauarchiv Stads Breslau. In *Jahrbuch des Bundesinstituts für ostdeutsche Kultur und Geschichte* (Vol. 2, pp. 59–85). R. Oldenbourg Verlag.

¹⁶ Among the many publications on the Weissenhof estate, the following should be mentioned: Cramer, J., & Gutschow, N. (1984). *Bauausstellungen: Eine Architekturgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Verlag W. Kohlhammer; Gschwind, F., & Groke, K. (2008). *Weissenhof Museum im Haus Le Corbusier*. Karl Krämer Verlag; Joedicke, J. (1989). *Weissenhof Siedlung Stuttgart*. Karl Krämer Verlag; Kirsch, K. (1987). *Die Weißenhofsiedlung*. Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt; Kirsch, K. (1994). Die Weißenhofsiedlung: Ein internationales Manifest. In V. M. Lampugnani & R. Schneider (Eds.), *Moderne Architektur in Deutschland 1900 bis 1950: Expressionismus und Neue Sachlichkeit* (pp. 205–224). Verlag Gerd Hatje; Flüsch, Ch., Gaukel, I., Gschwind, F., Krämer, A., & Medek, H. (2016). Wzorcowe osiedle Weissenhof w Stuttgarcie (1927). In J. Urbanik (Ed.), *Droga ku nowoczesności: Osiedla Werkbundu 1927-1932* (pp. 42–83). Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu.

¹⁷ Urbanik, J. (2020). Dom rosnący w międzywojennych Niemczech. In M. J. Sołtysik & M. Stępa (Eds.), *Architektura XX wieku: Zachowanie jej autentyczności i integralności w Gdyni i w Europie* (pp. 71–78). Urząd Miasta Gdyni; Urbanik, J. (2020). ‘The growing house’: The way to solve the housing problem in interwar Germany. In J. Charytonowicz & Ch. Falcão (Eds.), *Advances in human factors in architecture, sustainable urban planning and infrastructure* (pp. 243–255). Springer.

¹⁸ Zwierz, M. (2022). *Projekty wnętrz mieszkalnych autorstwa Hansa Poelziga w czasie pobytu architekta we Wrocławiu w latach 1900–1916* [Unpublished manuscript submitted for publication in the exhibition catalogue from Wrocław to New York and Back: Hans Poelzig and the Style of Materials]. Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu.

¹⁹ Poelzig, H. (1904). Das Musterhaus auf der Ausstellung für Handwerk und Kunstgewerbe in Breslau. *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, 24, 547–548.

²⁰ Buchwald, C. (1904). Sonderausstellung des Kunstgewerbevereins für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien. In *Catalogue of the ‘Special Exhibition’* (p. 4). Kunstgewerbeverein für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien.

In the introduction to the exhibition catalog, Conrad Buchwald wrote: ‘We should develop a model of a German house that combines all the achievements of our artistic craftsmanship from its heyday at the end of the 19th century. Architecture that unites the decorativeness of art with the functionality of handicrafts poses a new challenge for our rapidly declining housing construction. The urban tenement house is not yet able to meet this challenge; only the detached single-family house can take on the challenge of the new era. We are hearing more and more about the hopes associated with this form of housing, and if we were to name its most prominent supporters, we would mention the names of Alfred Lichtwark and Hermann Muthesius. (...) The hope for a revival of housing culture has its source precisely in the single-family house.’²¹We read further: ‘It is easy to deduce what is meant by the term ‘single-family house’. It is certainly not a villa, often found in the suburbs of many of our cities, with a facade that pitifully imitates a medieval town hall or an Italian Renaissance palace. A simple and functional structure and well-designed interiors – this is how we understand a true single-family home, and this is how we want to show it to others.’²²

The house was intended for a wealthy family living in the suburbs of a metropolis. It was a so-called Landhaus, promoted in Germany by Herman Muthesius as a counterproposal to the large suburban villas of villa colonies established by private investors. In these houses, utility rooms, such as kitchens and servants’ quarters, were located in the basement, living rooms on the high ground floor, and bedrooms on the first floor. No connections between private rooms and the garden were sought; on the contrary, bay windows and verandas rather emphasized the location of the living room.²³

In Poelzig’s Landhaus-style show villa, on the other hand, the parents’ rooms and the dining room were located around the hall on the ground floor, covering two floors, while the first floor housed a living room for children with a place for the lady of the house and bedrooms for all members of the household. The attic housed a wardrobe, a bathroom, and a guest room. The height of the rooms was 3 m on the ground floor and first floor, and 5.50 m in the hall. The kitchen and servants’ quarters were located on the ground floor, from where a separate exit led to the vegetable garden. The entrance was directly connected to the kitchen by a corridor, which also served as a utility room; the laundry room, ironing room, mangle, etc. were located in the attic. The house was built with a solid frame structure, which was plastered on the ground floor and covered with brick on the first floor. The gables were covered with monk and nun tiles. Poelzig designed furniture for the hall, dining room, living room, study, parents’ bedroom, kitchen, servants’ room, and other utility rooms, thus realizing the idea of a Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art).

²¹ Buchwald, C. (1904). Sonderausstellung des Kunstgewerbevereins für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien. In *Catalogue of the ‘Special Exhibition’* (p. 4). Kunstgewerbeverein für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien.

²² Buchwald, C. (1904). Sonderausstellung des Kunstgewerbevereins für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien. In *Catalogue of the ‘Special Exhibition’* (p. 4). Kunstgewerbeverein für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien.

²³ Tomaszewicz, A. (2019). *Wrocławskie wille i osiedla willowe doby historyzmu*. Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Wrocławskiej.



Fig. 3. Wrocław, then Breslau, architect’s own house, F. Chopin Street (Leerbeutelstraße), no longer extant, view from the street, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1906; source: *Dekorative Kunst*, vol. 15, 1907, p. 226.

In the introduction to the exhibition catalog, Hermann Muthesius wrote: ‘We certainly have a duty to support the social class that would initiate the process of settling in detached houses. There is no doubt that living in a single-family home provides the most valuable experiences and inspires spiritual and artistic development. For is there any chance at all of creating a real home in a rented apartment, which may become unaffordable for us as early as the next payment date, if only because of an increase in benefits?’²⁴ Poelzig certainly did not have in mind the social class – the workers – that his younger colleagues focused on after World War I.

DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE IN THE ZALESIE HOUSING ESTATE (LEERBAUTEL), CHOPINA STREET, 1906, NO LONGER STANDING

In 1906, Poelzig built his own Landhaus-style house (Fig. 3) in the Zalesie housing estate in Wrocław, similar to the exhibition house from 1904. The two-story villa with a gable roof and dormers revealed the forms of a Silesian country house, in line with the Heimatschutz reform movement.²⁵ The gable walls were covered with ceramic tiles on the first floor. The rest of the façade was covered with plaster in two colors – white

²⁴ Buchwald, C. (1904). Sonderausstellung des Kunstgewerbevereins für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien. In *Catalogue of the ‘Special Exhibition’* (p. 4). Kunstgewerbeverein für Breslau und die Provinz Schlesien.

²⁵ Störkuhl, B. (2022). Między nostalgią za małą ojczyzną a typizacją: Koncepcje architektury regionalnej w pierwszych dekadach XX wieku. In I. Liżewska (Ed.), *Architektura regionalna: Rzeczywista potrzeba czy iluzja? O budowaniu zgodnie z tradycją i krajobrazem* (pp. 113–126). Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, during the emergence of national movements, the turn towards folk culture had significant social importance. At that time, one of the largest social movements, known as Heimatschutz, was established in Germany. It was not limited to nature conservation and the preservation of historical monuments, but also sought new forms in architecture, focusing on the adaptation of regional building styles. The idea of a return to regional style was promoted by the Deutscher Bund für Heimatschutz [German Association for the Protection of the Homeland], founded in 1904. Folk culture became a symbol of the small homeland. The new ideas were promoted in particular by the architects Paul Schultze-Naumburg (1869–1949) and Hermann Muthesius (1861–1927). The homeland preservation movement during the Empire and the Weimar Republic gained a large following throughout Germany.

and gray – to imitate a half-timbered structure. The whole building was set on a stone plinth. Inside, on the ground floor, around a large hall covering two floors, the architect designed a living room, dining room, kitchen, his own studio, and rooms for the servants. On the first floor, there were bedrooms, and in the attic, there were rooms for guests. The interior of the house was connected to the garden by a covered porch accessible from the dining room.²⁶ In Landhaus designs, particular emphasis was placed on connecting the house with the garden. The interior design resembled that of a model house from 1904. The architect designed similar furniture in 1905 for Oskar Brieger,²⁷ a professor of medicine in Wrocław (Fig. 4). Unfortunately, his own house in the Zalesie housing estate no longer exists, having been demolished in 1971.

In 1914, Poelzig designed a house in Brochów, Wrocław (never build) for the Gemeinnützige Gartenstadt Gesellschaft Breslau-Brockau, which, although much smaller, resembles the previous villas and is closer to tradition than modernity. The house was probably intended as a model for larger garden estates, which were very popular at the time.²⁸

DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE, KARPACZ, 1926

Thanks to his collaboration with the Christoph & Unmack company from Niesky (Oberlausitz),²⁹ Poelzig designed a single-family house using the materials and construction techniques promoted by this company (of which he was a member of the board in 1926–1927). Built according to this design in 1926, the wooden house in Karpacz, a single-story building covered with a slightly sloping hipped roof (Fig. 5), was no longer a luxurious pre-World War I villa, but an Existenzminimum-type house, promoted in the second half of the 1920s. Similar houses were also designed by Konrad Waxmann, who collaborated with the company, including for the director of Christoph & Unmack (Goethestrasse) and for Albert Einstein in Caputh near Potsdam.³⁰ These were intended

²⁶ Eysymontt, R., Ilkosz, J., Tomaszewicz, A., & Urbanik, J. (Eds.). (2011). *Leksykon architektury Wrocławia* (pp. 741–742). Via Nova.

²⁷ The furniture came into the possession of the Stern family when Professor Brieger's daughter, Käthe, married Dr. Rudolf Stern. It formed part of her dowry and was taken to New York in 1938, when the family fled Wrocław to escape the persecution of citizens of Jewish origin. The furniture returned to Wrocław in 2022, when it was donated to the Museum of Architecture by Rudolf's son and heir, Fritz Stern.

²⁸ Ilkosz, J., & Störckuhl, B. (Eds.). (2000). *Hans Poelzig we Wrocławiu: Architektura i sztuka 1900–1916* (pp. 504–505). Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu; Via Nova.

²⁹ Herbert, G. (1986). *The dream of the factory-made house: Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann*. The MIT Press; Wachsmann, K. (1930). *Holzhausbau: Technik und Gestaltung*. Ernst Wasmuth Verlag; Wurm, H. (1969). Die Industrialisierung des Holzhausbaues: 'Christoph und Unmack' Tradition. *Zeitschrift für Firmengeschichte und Unternehmerbiographie*, 14, 198–211. The company Christoph & Unmack from Niesky (Oberlausitz) produced building assembly systems from prefabricated wooden elements. Many architectural exhibitions from that period featured houses built by this company. In its catalogues, it offered a panel system for the construction of portable houses and apartment blocks, timber-frame structures, and so-called semi-portable buildings, in which wooden supports reinforced the structure and were either visible on the outside or hidden in the joints of the wooden panels. Before World War I, the company mainly produced portable buildings assembled from wooden panels, which were used in various European countries as military barracks and field hospitals. From 1899, this system was also used to build school pavilions, holiday homes, and children's sanatoria. Above all, it was used to build a new type of school: the Waldschule (Freiluftschule), an open-air school with outdoor classes, limited teaching time, and a reduced number of pupils, intended for sickly children. The first such school was established by Neuffert in Charlottenburg. This type of building was considered healthy because of its natural air exchange, or 'breathing walls' (*Meyers Lexikon*, Vol. 12, p. 967). In 1885, after receiving a large order from the Prussian Ministry of War, the company moved from Copenhagen to Niesky. Branches of the company were established in Austria, France, Poland, and England, but none of them survived after 1918. During World War I, orders for military barracks dominated production. After the war, the company sought new markets, focusing on the construction of residential houses and entire housing estates, whose shortage was particularly acute in Germany. The company established contact with architects such as Albin Müller, Hans Scharoun, Henry van de Velde, Gustav Wolf, and others. In 1926–1927, Hans Poelzig was appointed to the company's board of directors.

³⁰ Widera, B. (2023). Tradycja i nowatorstwo willi Alberta Einsteina w Caputh. *Architectus*, 3, 28–39.



Fig. 4. Wrocław, then Breslau, furniture for the Wrocław professor of medicine Oskar Brieger, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1905; source: exhibition Hans Poelzig and the Style of Materials, Museum of Architecture in Wrocław, 2022; photo: Jerzy Ilkosz.



Fig. 5. Karpacz, then Krummhübel, single-family house, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1926; photo: Michał Duda, 2002.

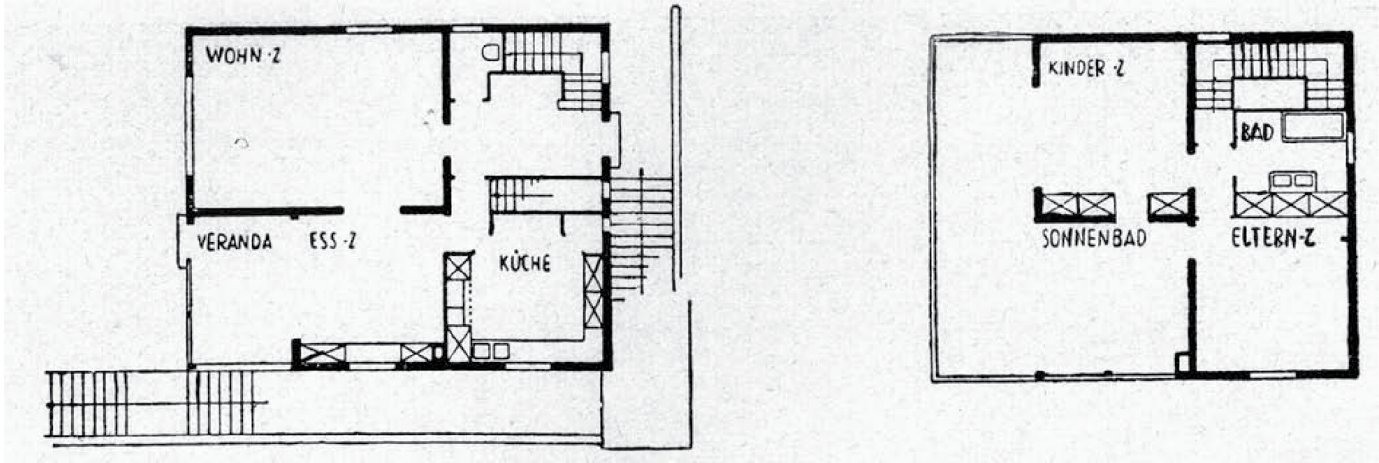


Fig. 6. Stuttgart, single-family house at the Weissenhof model Werkbund estate, Rathenaustraße 7, no longer extant, ground- and first-floor plans, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1927; source: *Die Form*, vol. 2, 1927, p. 281a.

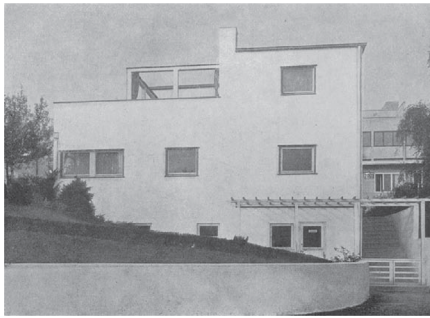


Fig. 7. Stuttgart, single-family house at the Weissenhof model Werkbund estate, Rathenaustraße 7, no longer extant, view from the street, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1927; source: *Bauen und Wohnen*, 1927, p. 100.

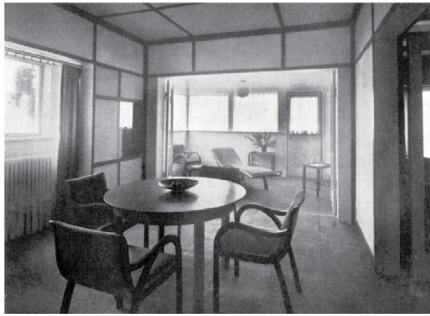


Fig. 8. Stuttgart, single-family house at the Weissenhof model Werkbund estate, Rathenaustraße 7, no longer extant, interior of the living room and veranda, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1927; source: *Die Form*, vol. 2, 1927, p. 282.

to be summer houses, but were used all year round. Poelzig's house in Karpacz has survived to this day.

In 1927, Poelzig designed another weekend house for the same company, as a model house shown at the 'Das Wochenende' exhibition in Berlin. The house had a square layout, with a veranda across its entire width, and the interior was arranged around a centrally located living room.

DETACHED SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE IN THE MODEL WERKBUND HOUSING ESTATE – WEISSENHOF, STUTTGART, 1927, RATHENAUSTRASSE 7, NO LONGER STANDING

At this point, it is important to emphasize the unique role played by the Werkbund in the early days of modern architecture. Its leader and one of its initiators was Hermann Muthesius, who proclaimed the following program of modern architectural art: 'More content and less art'.³¹ It was he who defined the task of the Werkbund as follows: 'from making a small cushion for a sofa to building cities (vom Sophakissen zum Städtebau)'.³² The new principles of contemporary residential architecture were largely defined by the German Werkbund in the early years of its activity, when Muthesius warned: 'Those who seek artistry beyond pure necessity are embarking on a dangerous path'.³³

It was not until 1927 that Poelzig joined the European avant-garde represented by a young generation of architects and designed a house for the Werkbund's model experimental housing estate, Weissenhof in Stuttgart (Fig. 6, 7, 8), which was part of the famous exhibition 'Die Wohnung'. Built in 1927, the house had a very modest area and form, which was probably due not so much to the architect's beliefs as to the conditions set by the exhibition organizers, the most important of which was a flat roof. Unfortunately, the house was demolished during the war.

³¹ Muthesius, H. (1909). *Sztuka stosowana i architektura* (p. 40). Wydawnictwo Miejskiego Muzeum Techniczno-Przemysłowego.

³² B. A. (1930). Wystawa Werkbundu we Wrocławiu. *Rzeczy Piękne*, p. 70.

³³ Sławińska, J. (1991). *Architektura i ruchy społecznego protestu* (p. 8). Politechnika Wrocławska.

The objectives of organizing the ‘Die Wohnung’ exhibition in Stuttgart, combined with the model Weissehof housing estate,³⁴ were formulated in a manifesto and program for the entire project, published in December 1926.³⁵ This document pointed out that the most important issue in housing construction was the design of the building plan, i.e., adapting it to the housing needs of contemporary people. An apartment should be comfortable and practical, with the smallest possible floor space.³⁶ Therefore, the functional design of a small apartment had to be rethought, as the financial resources allocated for its construction had to be used optimally.³⁷

The architect designed a two-story house. On the ground floor, he placed a living room, kitchen, and dining room connected to a veranda, and on the first floor, he placed the parents’ and children’s bedrooms, a bathroom, and a large roof terrace. The interiors, which were open to the public during the exhibition, were furnished with furniture designed by the architect himself, in accordance with the principle of Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art).

Detached and semi-detached houses in the Am Fischtalgrund housing estate, Berlin, 1928

Just one year after the Stuttgart exhibition ‘Die Wohnung,’ Poelzig designed two traditional houses – a detached house and a semi-detached – in Berlin in the Am Fischtalgrund housing estate for the GAGFAH (Gemeinnützige A.G. für Angestellten Heimstätten) company on the 10th anniversary of its existence (Fig. 9). They were built in 1928 and had a rather traditional form, with their white facades varied by brick gable frames and brick plinths (Fig. 10).

The housing estate was built in 1928–29 under the direction of Heinrich Tessenow. It was designed by 16 architects³⁸ with the aim of presenting apartments and houses for low- and middle-income families. Five of them (Heinrich Tessenow, Paul Schmitthener, Alexander Klein, Paul Mebes, and Gustav Wolf) were members of the RFG research society (Reichsforschungsgesellschaft für Wirtschaftlichkeit im Bau- und Wohnungswesen

³⁴ In 1927, the exhibition Die Wohnung and the Weissenhof housing estate were organized in Stuttgart. Seventeen architects from five countries, representing the European avant-garde, were invited to participate in the project: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Adolf G. Schneck, Walter Gropius, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Bruno Taut, Max Taut, Hans Poelzig, Richard Döcker, Adolf Rading, Peter Behrens, and Hans Scharoun from Germany; Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud and Mart Stam from the Netherlands; Victor Bourgeois from Belgium; Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret from France; and Josef Frank from Austria. The urban concept was designed by Mies van der Rohe. The estate comprised both multi-family and single-family houses, including terraced and detached buildings.

³⁵ Cramer, J., & Gutschow, N. (1984). *Bauausstellungen: Eine Architekturgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (p. 124). Verlag W. Kohlhammer. The document was signed by the main organizers of the project: Peter Bruckmann, first chairman of the Werkbund; Mies van der Rohe, second chairman of the Werkbund; Gustav Stotz; and Geh. Hofrat.

³⁶ It was pointed out that the size and number of rooms are determined by the basic needs of the residents, which must be met. These were: housing, food, sleeping, washing, laundry, and cooking.

³⁷ It was suggested that the condition for a proper solution for a small apartment was to take into account elements such as built-in wardrobes and a complete kitchen. The simplification and functionality of the interior design of the apartment, the removal of the unnecessary, was to facilitate and simplify housework.

³⁸ Kirschbaum, J. (Ed.). (1985). *Siedlungen der 20er Jahre (Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Nationalkomitees für Denkmalschutz, Vol. 28, pp. 142–143)*. Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Denkmalschutz; Lampmann, G. (1928). Neue Siedlungen in Berlin: Die Gegfah-Siedlung im Fischtalgrund. *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, 48(47), 753–759. The Fischtalgrund housing estate was designed by Hans Gerlach, Ernst Grabbe, Wilhelm Jost, Fritz Keller, Aleksander Klein, Arnold Knoblauch, Paul Mebes and Paul Emmerich, Hans Poelzig, Erich Richter, Emil Rüster, Fritz Schopohl, Paul Schmitthener, Georg Steinmetz, Karl Weißhaupt, and Gustav Wolf. From September 1 to October 31, 1928, the estate, comprising 75 single-family houses and 40 apartments in multi-family buildings, was presented as an exhibition entitled ‘Building and Living’ (Ausstellung Bauen und Wohnen).

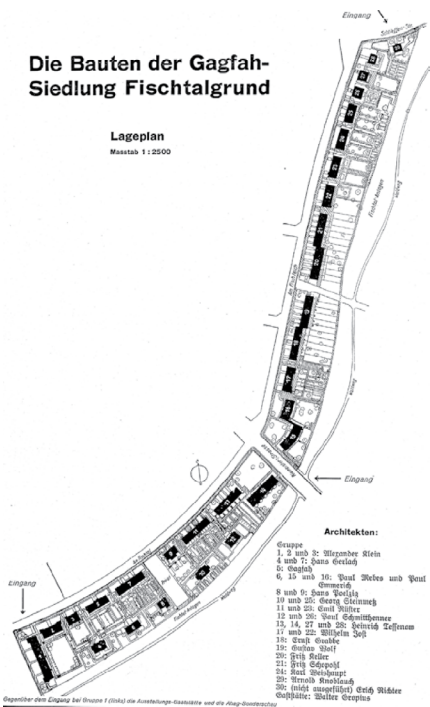


Fig. 9. Berlin, plan of the Am Fischtalgrund model housing estate, GAGFAH, 1928, designed by Heinrich Tessenow; houses nos. 8 and 9 designed by Hans Poelzig; source: *Bauwelt*, vol. 19, 1928, no. 34, p. 772.



Fig. 10. Berlin, two-family house at the Am Fischtalgrund model housing estate, GAGFAH, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1928; photo: Jerzy Ilkosc, 2015.

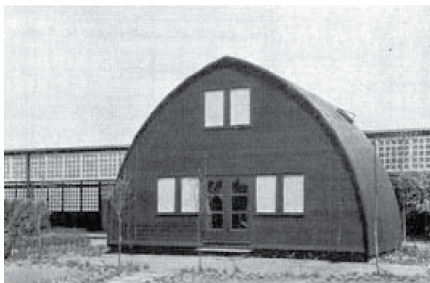


Fig. 11. Berlin, “growing house” presented at the exhibition Berlin Summer Show 1932: Sun, Air, and Home for Everyone. Exhibition of Growing Houses, Small Gardens, and Weekend Houses (Berliner Sommerschau 1932: Sonne, Luft und Haus für Alle. Ausstellung für Anbauhaus, Kleingärten und Wochenende), no longer extant, first and second day of house assembly, view from the garden, and interior of the living room, designed by Hans Poelzig, 1932; source: M. Wagner, *Das wachsende Haus, Berlin*, 1932, p. 56.

– State Research Society for the Economics of Construction and Housing), whose aim was to study the optimization of living space. This means that the organization’s guidelines on the cost and size of houses were probably taken into account. New technological advances were used, although the form of the houses did not fit into the Neues Bauen trend. The estate was intended for people with traditional views on architecture. All houses were covered with gable roofs.

Hugo Häring compared the cost per square meter of houses in the Weissenhof housing estate in Stuttgart and Fischtalgrund in Berlin.³⁹ However, the Stuttgart proposals turned out to be the cheapest: Hans Poelzig (detached single-family house, 173 RM), Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (multi-family house, 200 RM), Johannes J.P. Oud (terraced single-family houses, 206.85 RM) and Ludwig Hilbersheimer (detached single-family house, 219 RM). The only competition for these came from the Berlin proposals – Alexander Klein (multi-family house, 215 RM), Hans Gerlach (single-family terraced houses, 230 RM) and Hans Poelzig (two-family house, 287.75 RM).

The Am Fischtalgrund housing estate was located in the immediate vicinity of Bruno Taut’s Onkel Toms Hütte housing estate, which was a manifesto of Neues Bauen. The houses Am Fischtgrund were a kind of reaction to modernism – in this context, it was even written about the ‘roof war’ (‘Zehlendorfer Dächerkrieg’).⁴⁰

His own detached house, designed with his wife Marlene Poelzig, Berlin – Charlottenburg, 1928–1930, Tannenbergallee, no longer standing.

The architect’s own house, designed with his second wife, the young sculptor Marlene Moeschke, was truly modern. The house was built between 1928 and 1930 in the Charlottenburg district, but it has not survived to this day. It was a two-story house with a flat roof and a strongly protruding eaves, the only decoration of the smooth, light-colored facades being simple windows adapted in size to the function of the rooms.⁴¹

‘THE GROWING HOUSE’ – EXHIBITION, BERLIN, 1932, NO LONGER STANDING

One of the most interesting proposals of the interwar period was the so-called ‘growing house’ (das wachsende Haus) promoted by the most important architects of Neues Bauen, including Hans Poelzig. In 1932, Martin Wagner, Berlin’s city architect (Stadtbaurat), published a book entitled Das wachsende Haus. Ein Beitrag zur Lösung der städtischen Wohnungsfrage (The Growing House. A Contribution to Solving the City’s Housing Problem), presenting a new concept of a smart house – ergonomic, ecological, economical, and flexible. The book presented the results of a competition initiated by Hans Poelzig. Over a thousand architects took part in this competition in November and December 1931. Wagner published 24 proposals, which were presented at the Berlin

³⁹ Häring, H. (1928). Bauen und Wohnen: Bemerkungen zu der Ausstellungssiedlung der Gagfah. *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, 48(47), 759–761.

⁴⁰ Kirschbaum, J. (Ed.). (1985). *Siedlungen der 20er Jahre (Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Nationalkomitees für Denkmalschutz, Vol. 28, p. 142)*. Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Denkmalschutz.

⁴¹ Pehnt, W. (2000). Wille zum Ausdruck: Zum Leben und Werk Hans Poelzig. In W. Pehnt & M. Schirren (Eds.), *Hans Poelzig: Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler* (p. 47). DVA.

exhibition grounds (Messegelände) at an exhibition entitled ‘Berliner Sommerschau 1932, Sonne, Luft und Haus für Alle. Ausstellung für Anbauhaus, Kleingärten und Wochenende’ (‘Berlin Summer Show 1932, Sun, Air and a Home for Everyone. Exhibition of Growing Houses, Small Gardens and Weekend Homes’) from May 7 to August 7.⁴² The designs of the exhibition houses took into account the possibility of their expansion in accordance with the changing needs of the residents. They could be enlarged in several stages according to the architect’s guidelines. This concept was probably related to the so-called Lebensreform, a reform focusing on improving the health conditions of society (among other things, by promoting a new way of life in new, hygienic homes).

Hans Poelzig designed a house with two floors under a high, curved roof (Fig. 11). The structure consisted of wooden trusses placed next to each other. A characteristic feature of this type of solution was the almost complete absence of external walls (only gables). The roof was covered with zinc sheet metal and insulated with cork boards and plywood on the inside. This resulted in a maximum living space of over 90 m². In the minimum version, the architect proposed an area of 27.53 m². The house could be assembled in one week,⁴³ and the assembly process is shown in figure 11. It should be noted that this type of roof construction had previously been used by Ernst May in Wrocław when he collaborated with the Schlesische Heimstätte construction company between 1918 and 1925. At the ‘Die Wohnung’ exhibition in Stuttgart, on the exhibition grounds near the Weissenhof housing estate, a curved roof structure was displayed. However, it never went into mass production.

SUMMARY

Hans Poelzig is considered one of the precursors of modernism and one of the most important architects of the 20th century. He was actively involved in the design of functional housing and was also a proponent of total work of art (Gesamtkunstwerk), which is the result of collaboration between artists from various fields of art, for whom architecture is the mother of the whole. He prepared a new generation of architects to tackle new tasks related to modern housing and its furnishings. They took part in Werkbund exhibitions and designed modern housing estates as part of urban construction programs. Hans Poelzig was their master and teacher. But was he himself enchanted by the new Neues Bauen style? His single-family houses testify to his moderate enthusiasm for modernity. Wolfgang Pehnt wrote that Poelzig did not allow a definitive break with the past, as his avant-garde colleagues from Neues Bauen did after 1920.⁴⁴ Poelzig did not want to be dependent on history, but he also argued that its standards and lessons should not

⁴² Urbanik, J. (2020). Dom rosnący w międzywojennych Niemczech. In M. J. Sołtysik & M. Stępa (Eds.), *Architektura XX wieku: Zachowanie jej autentyczności i integralności w Gdyni i w Europie* (pp. 71–78). Urząd Miasta Gdyni.

⁴³ Wagner, M. (1932). *Das wachsende Haus* (pp. 53–56). Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong & Co.

⁴⁴ Pehnt, W. (2000). Wille zum Ausdruck: Zum Leben und Werk Hans Poelzig. In W. Pehnt & M. Schirren (Eds.), *Hans Poelzig: Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler* (p. 18). DVA.

be rejected. ‘I also hate history insofar as it wants to constrain me, and I love the past insofar as it awakens my artistic instincts’.⁴⁵

From 1933, all architectural work in Germany was controlled by the Reich Ministry of Propaganda under the Act of September 22. The Reich Chamber of Fine Arts (Reichskammer der bildenden Künste) was established, bringing together architects under the control of the NSDAP. Membership in this section was a prerequisite for architects to obtain a work permit. Hans Poelzig could no longer find his place in the new era. He planned to leave for Turkey, but his plans were interrupted by his untimely death in 1936.

⁴⁵ Pehnt, W. (2000). Wille zum Ausdruck: Zum Leben und Werk Hans Poelzig. In W. Pehnt & M. Schirren (Eds.), *Hans Poelzig: Architekt, Lehrer, Künstler* (p. 18). DVA.

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