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## NEW PATTERNS OF THE POLISH MIDDLE CLASS HOME INTERIORS IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD

In 1925 "Świat Kobiety" (Women's World), a biweekly popular during the inter-war period, published an article by Juliuszowa Albinowska entitled *Some Remarks on the Culture of Our Homes*. Its author declared: "In the second half of the past century and at the beginning of the twentieth century our flats were overfilled with an enormous number of machine-produced furniture. It was almost regarded as good taste to have a home brimming with outfitting so as to eliminate all empty space (...) Slowly, those veritable storehouses of dust and dirt, heavy drapes, festoons, and especially paper bouquets and similar absurdities were thrown out. Our rooms, and especially our living rooms, were gradually emptied of harmful and frequently abominable accretions; fresh air, light and space regained their former rights, beneficial for hygiene and health. Slowly, we are returning to the past, although we still remain distant from the scarce and beautiful artistic furniture of the eighteenth century or the beginning of the nineteenth century. Today, the binding principle should be few items, albeit all attractive and practical, as many as it is necessary, and with each object purposeful and practical; as few as possible curtains, portières, drapes, etc. We should do without them whenever it is possible (...)".<sup>1</sup>

The postulates formulated by J. Albinowska corresponded to the universally propagated new patterns of interior design. Emphasis was placed predominantly on the functional nature of the interiors and their hygienic and aesthetic qualities. New models were launched by men and women alike, professional designers

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<sup>1</sup> J. Albinowska, *Nieco o kulturze naszych mieszkań (Some Remarks on the Culture of Our Homes)*, "Świat Kobiety", V, 1925, № 1, p. 9.

and amateurs, art critics and journalists, whose postulates were addressed mainly to women — ladies of the house.

Let us begin with a presentation of the most innovative interior design proposals conceived by the Polish avantgarde. They were closely linked with the programme of inexpensive residential housing, expounded and realised chiefly by members of the "Praesens" group, founded in 1926. The leading representatives of this movement included Barbara Brukalska, who together with her husband, Stanisław, designed several estates of the Warsaw Housing Cooperative in the Żoliborz district, intended for workers (1927–1939).

Brukalska, an adherent of pure functionalism and the Le Corbusier idea of the "machine for living", also proposed how to design small (one- two-, or three-room) workers' flats. She combined a programme of radical utilitarianism with social aspects. In 1929, Brukalska proclaimed that her design were to be cheap and accessible to families living without a servant<sup>2</sup>. Taking into consideration restricted space and the habits of future residents, she suggested that a single interior should combine the functions of a kitchen and a dining room, and that the outfitting be limited to the simplest, indispensable furniture (table, chairs), and especially a practical and hygienic system of built-in closets, table tops, sinks and cookers. Painting the walls white, with white tiles, linoleum on the floor and the use of light-coloured oilcloth whenever possible, were to render the kitchen similar to a laboratory.

Foreseeing difficulties with the acceptance of this rational outfitting of the new interior by the workers Brukalska wished to create a *fait accompli*. She declared that "we present the kitchens already furnished, since no one would be capable of fitting into this small space their tables and sideboards, often so irrationally designed"<sup>3</sup>.

The realisation of arranging model-like flats in the Warsaw Housing Cooperative settlements encountered great obstacles. The reason lay both in finances (the settlement was completed during the Great Depression, social factors and customs — frequently, workers' families preferred their irrational sideboards

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<sup>2</sup> B. Brukalska, *Kuchnia współczesna (The Contemporary Kitchen)*, "Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie", 1, 1929, N° 1, pp. 8–11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

to built-in closets. The programme of extreme functionalism, devoid of social acceptance, proved to be a fiasco. Nonetheless, the Brukalskis remained faithful to their vision as late as the mid-1930s. They continued to design simplified furniture — for the “Smallest flat” exhibition held in 1930, the “Interior” competition organised in 1932 by the Institute for Art Propaganda, and an exhibition held in houses of the Society of Workers Settlements in the Warsaw district of Koło in 1935. Photographs and presentations of their design were published in the monthly “Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie” (House, Settlement, Apartament), consistently faithful to functionalism<sup>4</sup>.

A pioneering orientation similar to the one followed by Barbara Brukalska was pursued by Nina Jankowska, architect and interior designer. Jankowska was also engaged in the idea of furnishing “the smallest flat” with normalised, mass-produced and inexpensive furniture, preferably built-in (closets, couches)<sup>5</sup>.

These conceptions — undoubtedly original, practical and hygienic as well as convenient for industrial production (and thus easily accessible due to their low prices) were not, as has been mentioned, welcomed by the workers, who regarded them as distant from the old tradition — cold and impersonal, devoid of even a shade of individualism and decorativeness, they did not fit the well-embedded conceptions about the appearance of a prosperous or merely “decent looking” home. For this reason, in 1933 Helena Wolska regretfully declared in “Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie”, a constant forum of the proposals made by Brukalska and Jankowska: “Experience teaches us that once the worker’s family becomes more well-to-do, even in the most modest meaning of that word, it is inclined rather towards a bourgeois style, to use this term, and does not prove to be a willing buyer of outfitting and furniture devised for the rational smallest flat”<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Konkurs “Wnętrze” (Competition “Interior”), “Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie”, IV, 1932, № 4, p. 7; Kącik meblarski (Furniture Corner), *ibid.*, V, 1933, p. 25; Projekt metalowego wieszaka (The Design of a Metal Coat-hanger), *ibid.*, VI, 1934, № 1, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> N. Jankowska, *Umeblowanie najmniejszego mieszkania (Furnishing the Smallest Flat)*, “Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie”, II, 1930, № 12, pp. 4–7; Konkurs “Wnętrze”, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> H. Wolska, *Najmniejsze mieszkanie i przedmioty codziennego użytku (The Smallest Flat and Daily Appliances)*, “Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie”, V, 1933, № 12, p. 15.

A year later, Anna Kowalska wrote in the same periodical an article symptomatically entitled: *Urządzanie wewnętrzne mieszkań a powstawanie ruder* (*Interior Design and the Creation ofhovels*): "Workers, even those who possess rationally devised flats built by architects (e.g. in the Warsaw Housing Cooperative), are capable of classically cluttering their flat by filling it with a great number of pretentious, non-aesthetic objects, embellished with a multitude of ornaments totally at odds with the smooth walls, doors, wide windows and, generally speaking, the modern flat as such"<sup>7</sup>. This statement was illustrated with a view of a room brimming with massive furniture, with pride of place given to a double bed with high piles of bedding, a wall hanging depicting swans hanging above it, and lacy doilies covering all the furniture. Justifying this lack of good taste by referring to childhood habits (or perhaps the observation of interiors belonging to the *petite bourgeoisie*, which constituted a desirable and, as a rule, the only known model — A.S.) Kowalska burdened the intelligentsia with the same sin of bad taste. She ended her rather sad observations with the opinion: "Even a partial change in the level of the interior design of small and smallest flats will require lengthy and obstinate educational endeavours"<sup>8</sup>.

The task of the dissemination of new models of interior design in forms more moderate than the above presented avantgarde solutions (for the medium prosperous working intelligentsia, who did not live in the "smallest flats", but three- four-room flats, at the time regarded as not very spacious) was pursued predominantly by the Warsaw-based "Ład" (Harmony) cooperative. From the time of its establishment in 1926 the cooperative pursued activity aimed at the modernisation of Polish interiors, conducted already at the beginning of the twentieth century by the "Polish Applied Art" Society and developed since 1913 by the "Cracow Workshops". In accordance with the "Ład" premises all elements of interior design produced by its members were maintained in the style of the Polish Art Deco<sup>9</sup>. Such features were characteristic

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<sup>7</sup> A. Kowalska, *Urządzenie wewnętrzne mieszkań a powstawanie ruder* (*Interior Design and the Creation ofhovels*), "Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie", VI, 1934, N° 9-12, pp. 26-27.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> A. Sieradzka, *Art Deco w Europie i w Polsce* (*Art Deco in Europe and Poland*), Warszawa 1996, p. 140.

also for the furniture designed for "Ład" by the graduates of the Schools of Fine Arts in Warsaw: made of native wood, upholstered with Jacquard or homespun fabrics, and inspired by folk or Biedermeier design. Similarly to other examples of "Ład" production (fabrics, ceramics, metal art) the furniture possessed the features of craftwork and was relatively expensive.

The first generation of "Ład" designers included Maria Bielska and Halina Karpińska, whose interiors were full of still rather solid pieces of furniture, decorated by means of intarsio, and not concealing their folk or Biedermeier origin. This was the style represented by "The Bedroom" by Bielska and Karpińska, featured at the General National Exhibition in Poznań in 1929<sup>10</sup> or "The Dining Room", also designed by the two artists, shown at the "Art of the interior and embroidery" exhibition, displayed at the Institute of Art Propaganda in 1936<sup>11</sup>. The same exhibit featured works by members of the younger "Ład" generation — Maria Czermińska-Sawicka, Krystyna Dydyńska and Janina Grzędzielska. In her "The Dining Room" project, Czermińska-Sawicka went even further in simplifying Biedermeier patterns by granting geometric shape to the furniture and depriving it of all decoration, although she used exotic and expensive rosewood. "The Living Room" by Dydyńska and Grzędzielska was composed by loosely arranged, enormous upholstered armchairs and a sofa as well as a low table made of nut-tree wood.

Neither the simplification of forms nor the supplementation of "Ład" interiors with a minimal number of purely decorative objects, in accordance with the aesthetic of the period, met with acclaim of critics. The few positive opinions, i.e. by well known art critics: Stanisław Woźnicki and Waclaw Husarski, underlined the discreet traditionalism of the works by Czermińska-Sawicka, noticed the skillful merge of functionalism and the folk lineage of the furniture by Bielska, and appreciated the pioneering qualities of "The Living Room" by Dydyńska and Grzędziel-

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<sup>10</sup> M. Dłutek, *Prezentacje produkcji meblarskiej "Ładu" do 1939 roku (Presentation of "Ład" Furniture Production till 1939)*, "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki", XLVIII, 1986, N° 1, p. 71.

<sup>11</sup> A. K. Olszewski, *Wokół ideologii wnętrza lat trzydziestych (On the Ideology of the Interior in the 1930s)*, in: *Sztuka lat trzydziestych (Art of the 1930s)*, Warszawa 1991, pp. 17-24.

ska<sup>12</sup>. On the other hand, Jadwiga Puciata-Pawłowska, who generally praised the “Ład” exhibitions, expressed reservations as regards the excessively luxurious rosewood furniture by Czerwińska-Sawicka<sup>13</sup>. Stefania Podhorska-Okołów charged all of the displayed “Ład” furniture with pretentiousness, pseudo-folk qualities, and operating with a conventional “bourgeois” system of sets of furniture intended for particular interiors; her remark concerning the presentation of, i.a. “upholstered furniture almost totally devoid of wood and as if transferred from the second half of the past century into modern interiors” pertained primarily to the heavily upholstered furniture from “The Living Room” by Dydyńska and Grzędzińska<sup>14</sup>.

A competing exhibition was “Architecture of the Interior”, opened in 1937 in the seat of the Institute of Art Propaganda — the first presentation of the Interior Studio, created in the Department of Architecture and History of Art at the Warsaw Polytechnic<sup>15</sup>. The intention of the designers-architects gathered in the Studio was the creation of a new type of Polish furniture, with forms deprived of folk reminiscences or symptoms of superficial decorativeness, and thus simpler although not as elegant as the “Ład” designs. At the 1937 exhibition Zofia Dzięwulka showed “A Living Room”, combining the function of a salon, a boudoir and bedroom, with several simple pieces of furniture (a sofa, a chest of drawers, a bench, a table and an armchair), whose geometric severity was alleviated only by the slightly curved legs. The “Summer-residence Room” designed by Nina Jankowska was dominated by artistic “rusticalism” fashionable during the second half of the 1930s — the fireplace was made of roughly hewn rocks, the rocking chair was covered with a striped homespun, and the table, standing on pseudo-trestles and with a heavy top, was surrounded by a bench and simple chairs.

<sup>12</sup> S. Woźnicki, *Wystawa “Sztuka wnętrza” w IPISie (The “Art of the Interior” Exhibition in IPIS)*, “Plastyka” 1936, № 2 (10–11), pp. 197–200; W. Husarski, *Wystawy “Sztuka wnętrza” i “Sztuka hafciarska” w IPISie (The “Art of the Interior” and “Art of Embroidery” Exhibitions in IPIS)*, “Wiadomości Literackie” 1936, № 8, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> J. Puciata-Pawłowska, *Sztuka wnętrza (Art of the Interior)*, “Pion” 1936, № 10, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> S.[tefania] P.[odhorska] O.[kołów], *Wystawa Ładu (The Ład Exhibition)*, “Bluszcz” 1936, № 9, pp. 12–13.

<sup>15</sup> *Meble wnetrz mieszkalnych (Furniture in Residential Interiors)*, Warszawa 1937.

The "Architecture of the interior" exhibition and the above mentioned works met with a more positive appraisal than the "Ład" exhibition, although in this case, too, the critics perceived a divergence with the needs and expectations of the Polish public. The presented interiors were charged with superficial luxury "straight out of Hollywood", a departure from daily life, and expensive furniture — which remained artistic, and thus unsuitable for mass-scale, cheap industrial production<sup>16</sup>. True, the proposed type of interior design could be seen in the stage design for some Polish films from the second half of the 1930s (e.g. the motion picture "Madame Minister is Dancing", from 1938, with decorations by Stefan Norris), but it was much more difficult to see it on a daily basis, since opulent modern flats remained hidden from the average user in the private villas or houses built in the "beautiful districts"<sup>17</sup>. Here were located all the sophisticated interiors, equipped with the "wonders" of modern technology, such as the bathroom belonging to the celebrated film star Jadwiga Smosarska, designed in 1935 by her with the cooperation of the architect Edward Seydenbeutel in her private villa in Warsaw — glistening tiles, shining taps and the astonishingly sophisticated simplicity of numerous installations<sup>18</sup>.

The evolution from severe, egalitarian utilitarianism to costly "interiors from the world of elitist luxury, resembling stage design rather than practical everyday life"<sup>19</sup> was experienced, apart from Nina Jankowska, also by Barbara Brukalska. Already the very titles of her design, shown in 1936 at an introductory display prior to the international Parisian exhibition "Art and Technology in Contemporary Art" testified about the complete abandonment of the idea of "the smallest flat". The design in question included "Fragment of an interior for a wealthy person", with a growing tree and a winter garden, a black granite floor, and an armchair covered with a white sheep fur, as well as the more democratic "Flat of a manual worker"; presumably, its resident was to live in the countryside, since the interior contained a kitchen stove with

<sup>16</sup> A. K. Olszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> T. S. Jaroszewski, *Piękne dzielnice. Uwagi o architekturze luksusowej w Warszawie w latach trzydziestych (Beautiful Districts. Remarks on Luxury Architecture in Warsaw during the 1930s)*, in: *Sztuka lat trzydziestych, op. cit.*, pp. 167–202.

<sup>18</sup> P. M. Lubiński, *Łazienka (The Bathroom)*, "Arkady" 1935, N° 8, pp. 230–237.

<sup>19</sup> A. K. Olszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

a large chimney hood, a shelf displaying plates arranged “village style” as well as benches and chairs standing next to the table<sup>20</sup>. The stage design arrangement and a total neglect of reality were also represented by Brukalska in 1937 at the Paris exhibition, when she proposed a “leisure room” which was supposed to reflect the ambience and high standard of the outfitting of a “villa of an aeroplane constructor”<sup>21</sup>. Hence the main decorative accent was a wall displaying a chart of flights, engraved in linoleum, while the furniture consisted of a sofa covered with calf hide, a vast armchair covered with white sheepskin, a metal table with a glass top, and an ash bench standing in front of a sandstone fireplace.

This sophisticated, artificial simplicity, natural raw materials and forms with a supposedly traditional, national lineage, produced critical reactions. “A visitor may think that Polish pilots are extremely wealthy since they can afford to turn one room into a hall. Valiant pilots do live in Poland, but their hallway is situated in Paris” — Włodzimierz Podoski wrote scathingly<sup>22</sup>, while Zofia Norblin-Chrzanowska added a comment formulated from the aesthetic-hygienic viewpoint: “Old fashioned sheepskin obliterating the shape of the furniture, an infallible reservoir of dust”<sup>23</sup>.

Negative opinions about the *rustique* current in Polish interior architecture from the second half of the 1930s, individualised beyond the limits of daily practicality, pertained not only to design proposed by Brukalska or Jankowska — just as critical were the comments about interiors featured by Jan Bogusławski, Stefan Listowski or Jerzy Hryniewiecki, also shown in Paris<sup>24</sup>. Nonetheless, it was the women who in accordance with tradition and a

<sup>20</sup> J. Hryniewiecki, *Na temat pokazu fragmentów wnętrz projektowanych na Wystawę paryską 1937 (About the Display of Fragments of Interiors Designed for the Paris Exhibition of 1937)*, “Arkady” 1936, N° 12, pp. 680–686.

<sup>21</sup> *Katalog oficjalny Sekcji Polskiej na Wystawie międzynarodowej “Sztuka i technika w życiu współczesnym” (The Official Catalogue of the Polish Section at the International Exhibition “Art and Technology in Contemporary Art”)*, Paris 1937, pp. 23–26.

<sup>22</sup> W. Podoski, *Pawilon polski w Paryżu (The Polish Pavilion in Paris)*, “Myśl Narodowa” 1937, N° 44, p. 680.

<sup>23</sup> Z. Norblin-Chrzanowska, *Walory propagandowe i estetyczne pawilonu polskiego na Wystawie paryskiej (The Propaganda and Aesthetic Assets of the Polish Pavilion at the Paris Exhibition)*, “Świat” 1937, pp. 10–11.

<sup>24</sup> A. K. Olszewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–38.



still universal conviction about their dominating role in shaping the aesthetics of daily life, were to propose, propagate and implement new interior design patterns. This task was fulfilled by female art critics to a degree greater than the professional designers. The above mentioned Stefania Podhorska-Okolów, Jadwiga Puciata-Pawłowska, Zofia Norblin-Chrzanowska or Ewa Luskina and Nela Samotyhowa published their statements (albeit rather sporadically, usually upon the occasion of successive interior design exhibitions) in assorted periodicals<sup>25</sup>, for instance, in the monthly "Arkady", issued in 1935–1939 and popularising extensively everything connected with modern interior design<sup>26</sup>.

The largest and possibly the most "energetic" group of adherents of new tendencies in interior architecture during the inter-war period were authors of feuilletons written for women's magazines. Their endeavours had a good chance for producing tangible results, since they were addressed not to a limited group of connoisseurs (as in the case of "Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie") or the cultural elites of the period (e.g. the luxury "Arkady" periodical engaged in conducting "a subtle game with snobbery"<sup>27</sup>), but to ordinary housewives from the medium wealthy, large- and small-town inhabitants, especially the working intelligentsia<sup>28</sup>.

A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the texts issued in women's periodicals, and concerning the modernisation and design of interiors, indicates that primacy should be ascribed to the biweekly "Świat Kobiety", published in 1920–1939. Much attention was devoted to those topics in the "Świat Kobiety"

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<sup>25</sup> M. Dłutek, *Meblarstwo w piśmiennictwie polskim w latach 1900–1939* (Furniture in Polish Publications in the Years 1900–1939), Warszawa 1991, pp. 7–13, 30–34, 123–135.

<sup>26</sup> M. Borowski, "Arkady" (1935–1939) — kompleksowe spojrzenie na sztukę. Ideowo-artystyczna problematyka czasopisma ("Arkady" (1935–1939) — a Complex View of Art. The Ideological-Artistic Themes of the Periodical), in: *Sztuka dwudziestolecia międzywojennego. Materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki. Warszawa, październik 1980* (Art in the Inter-war Period. Material from a Session of the Association of Art Historians. Warszawa, October 1980), Warszawa 1982, pp. 155–168.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>28</sup> The majority of the new interiors design was addressed to the town population — the well-off or average wealthy intelligentsia, rarely the owners of villas and more often the residents of rent houses. The absence of similar advice intended for landowners could be explained by the fact that modern interior design did not have any aesthetic or practical justification of existence in the, as a rule, large and old manor houses, outfitted with furnishing inherited from ancestors.

Almanac, published systematically since 1925, where the problem of residential design was discussed in special sections: "Home of the refined woman" or "The culture of interiors", which identified the way of designing homes with the intellectual level of their residents.

The authors writing in "Świat Kobiety" chose different forms of statements for the purpose of promoting models of hygienic, aesthetic and, primarily functional interiors, universally launched during the inter-war period. The most legible forms were the "letters" or "conversations" by Zina Kulczycka, author of feuilletons engaged in the problem of residential interiors. Kulczycka answered concrete questions, and advised how to resolve current problems of the functioning and design of assorted interiors; a similar, chatty tone pervaded her statements in the "practical corner" and the aforementioned almanacs.

Suitably designed kitchens and children's room comprised topics constantly discussed by Kulczycka, who devoted much attention to the kitchen which, in her opinion, should have been adapted to new conditions prevailing after the first world war, when "the lady of the house is increasingly frequently forced to manage without live-in servants"<sup>29</sup>. Similarly to the avantgarde female designers, Kulczycka postulated that the kitchen should be a spacious interior, with walls painted light colours (oil paint at the very least halfway) and simple furniture. In contrast to the laboratory-like proposals by representatives of functionalism, the kitchen propagated by Kulczycka did not lack decorative accents, predominantly closely associated with a given utilitarian element of the outfitting. Such accents produced the impression of coziness, since, as Kulczycka wrote, "you and your helper will work quite differently in a pleasant kitchen. After all, it should not be entered with a feeling of distaste, but be a bright and gleamingly clean interior"<sup>30</sup>. Kulczycka recommended the use of assorted curtains — for windows, shelves for holding dishes, the dish cloth hanger or the kitchen sink, and made of colourful cotton, or grey, modestly embroidered linen.

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<sup>29</sup> Z. Kulczycka, *Kuchnia (The Kitchen)*, "Świat Kobiety", VII, 1927, № 12, p. 276.

<sup>30</sup> Z. Kulczycka, *Dom kulturalnej kobiety (The Home of the Cultured Woman)*, in: Almanac of "Świat Kobiety" vol. 1, Lwów 1926, p. 82.

One of the most frequently discussed problems, especially in reference to families living in town, was the arrangement of a separate room for the children. Even in a large multi-room flat the younger children usually lived in the bedroom of their parents, and the older did not have a place of their own — they slept on folding beds or the sofa in the living room, and did their homework at a living room or dining room table, while books and toys were “tucked away” in different corners of the flat. “Świat Kobiety” encouraged to provide the children with the possible largest and airiest room, outfitted with varnished furniture, easy to keep clean, and a varnished floor, and to introduce colourful and even bright accents (curtains, pictures, paper cutouts displayed on the walls)<sup>31</sup>.

Directives concerning rational interior design had to take into consideration the altered living conditions of the intelligentsia in towns, with rather limited incomes: the above mentioned absence of servants, the small supply of flats with moderate rent, which signified the necessity of living in small (according to the standards of the period, i.e. three- or four-room) flats and, finally, a different life style, which preferred meetings in cafes and restaurants to crowded family reunions. All those factors called for changes in the traditional function of certain interiors, and thus their different outfitting. Zina Kulczycka postulated a resignation from a separate salon of dining room, and their replacement with a single “living room” (a counterpart of the present-day, “day room”), with dining and leisure nooks<sup>32</sup>.

Apart from detailed advice, “Świat Kobiety” and its almanacs contained articles about interiors. The author dealt with the appearance of the walls, which should be painted discreet, toned down and light colours and constitute a neutral backdrop for several excellent paintings or graphic works<sup>33</sup>. They propagated new, more hygienic and practical methods of using thin and

<sup>31</sup> Z. Kulczycka, *Pokój dla dzieci (The Children's Room)*, “Świat Kobiety”, V, 1925, N° 10, p. 233; J. Jonscherowa, *Pokój dziecięcy (The Children's Room)*, *ibid.*, XI, 1931, N° 18, p. 429.

<sup>32</sup> Z. Kulczycka, *Zaciszny kącik (Cozy Nook)*, “Świat Kobiety”, V, 1925, N° 17, p. 392; eadem, *Pokoje dla starszej młodzieży (Rooms for Teenagers)*, *ibid.*, VI, 1926, N° 18, p. 361; eadem, *Pokój, w którym mieszkamy (Our Living Room)*, *ibid.*, VII, 1927, N° 4, p. 85.

<sup>33</sup> M. Geszwidowa, *O ścianach, tapetach, obrazach słów kilka (A Few Words about Walls, Wallpaper and Pictures)*, “Świat Kobiety”, V, 1925, N° 70, p. 472; Z. Kulczycka, *Dom kulturalnej kobiety*, *op. cit.*, pp. 84–85.

colourful curtains, without heavy plush or velvet drapes<sup>34</sup>. The authors discussed "the small world of bric a brac", which "despite slogans of purposefulness and usefulness (...) continue to tempt. They entice because they have nothing in common with this stuffy topic"<sup>35</sup>. Nonetheless, the authors recommended a limitation of decorative bric a brac to several items made of glass or silver, whose simple form and noble material correspond to the new aesthetics. Similar postulates of using simplest objects on a daily basis, and of "coquetting with the past" on special occasions, were made as regards table setting: "Everyday afternoon tea sets have introduced a certain native note, colourful and gay, thanks to the frequent use of folk fabrics as tablecloths and hand-painted faience (...) the elegant setting uses a lace tablecloth, original empire or Biedermeier teacups, and flat silver cakes stands. The place of skillfully arranged napkins is taken by candlesticks and flowers, conceived as the only decoration"<sup>36</sup>. The latter recommendations remained fully in accordance with the style of table setting launched by the refined "Arkady"<sup>37</sup>.

"Świat Kobiocy" also mentioned decorating interiors with fresh (never artificial) flowers, a topic always connected with women; here, too, the authors propagated modern solutions: moderation and simplicity "free from all excess", "concern for the whole", harmony between the vase and the displayed flowers: "One or two lilies in a large glass container against the background of a dark drape (...) Three tulips gracing a small silver vase (...) Chrysanthemums in a large Japanese vase. A single rose (...) springing from an elongated light-coloured vase. A bouquet of wild flowers is best placed in folk ceramics"<sup>38</sup>.

The readers were informed that the most fashionable potted plants (in 1931) were cacti, since "they adapt themselves to the simplicity of our homes thanks to their simplified shape (...) they are just as fashionable as the palms of yore"<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> *Dekorowanie okien (Window Decorations)*, "Świat Kobiocy", V, 1925, N° 6, pp. 138-139.

<sup>35</sup> J. Osińska, *Mały świat drobiazgow (The Small World of Bric a Brac)*, in: Sixth Almanac of "Świat Kobiocy", Lwów MCMXXXI (1931), pp. 48-54.

<sup>36</sup> J. Osińska, *Dookoła stołu (Around the Table)*, *ibid.*, pp. 56-60.

<sup>37</sup> J. Prądmowska, *Pod Arkadami (Under the Arcades)*, "Arkady" 1935, N° 6, pp. 367-368.

<sup>38</sup> J. Osińska, *Kwiaty (Flowers)*, in: Sixth Almanac of "Świat Kobiocy", *op. cit.*, pp. 42-45.

This was the path — from palms in a gloomy salon, bromming with heavy, pseudo-period furniture, heavy drapes and overflowing with a myriad of useless bric a brac, to cacti in a spacious “living room”, rationally and simply furnished, with light curtains and only a few artistic object “pleasant to the eye” — which was to be followed by the interiors of Polish homes during the inter-war period.

Did the efforts made by the designers and journalists produced desired effects? Unfortunately, as a rule, they proved to have been futile. The majority of the middle-class homes (civil servants, petty shopkeepers or craftsmen), not to mention the workers, cultivated the strongly embedded principle of a division between special-occasion interiors (corresponding to the salons of the past), full of “brilliantly varnished” furniture, walls painted with a gay pattern, and doilies and with pride of place given to the palm, on the one hand, and everyday interiors, stuffy and gloomy kitchens with a towering sideboard, and a “display” of pots and pans arranged on shelves. The kitchens were used not only for cooking, but also for eating, sleeping and almost always for socialising.

This character of the homes was to a great measure determined by the economic conditions of the families, although a considerable fault for this state of things lay with the Polish industry and crafts. As Jerzy Hryniewiecki, architect and interior designer, wrote in 1936: “The blue- or white-collar worker lives aesthetically only in those cases when large industry or small, cheap workshops provide him with available elements of furnishing. Our large industry is, unfortunately, the last domain upon which art exerts its impact. More, we still cultivate the mistaken principle that beauty is the privilege of the rich. All individual efforts connected with inexpensive and fine interiors were doomed. In this atmosphere, the «artistic» piece of furniture, even if it were to be closely affiliated with the kitchen stool or peasant chair, immediately became a luxury item. Its simplicity and conciseness were usually applied only as a contrast with carpets and furs, since recently operating with contrasts of material has become the canon of contemporary interiors”<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>40</sup> J. Hryniewiecki, *op. cit.*, pp. 680–681.

All those factors did not favour a widespread implementation of new interior design proposals. Both the designers and the journalists were well aware of the situation. After the second world war they embarked upon an intensification of undertakings in favour of rationalising and increasing the aesthetics of Polish interiors. An appraisal of the outcome of those efforts belongs already to the history of culture of the second half of the twentieth century.

*(Translated by Aleksandra Rodzińska-Chojnowska)*